Computer assisted focus on form
to minimise lexical errors in young learners[1]

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Resumen

El componente léxico juega un papel muy importante en los primeros estadios de la adquisición de lenguas. Por lo tanto es esencial aprender y usar las palabras de manera apropiada. Basándonos en los resultados obtenidos en un estudio sobre competencia léxica en inglés de 283 alumnos de primaria hispanohablantes, en este artículo mostramos una forma de enseñanza de vocabulario a aprendices jóvenes de inglés. Con el fin de disminuir la producción de errores léxicos y motivar al alumnado se aplica un Enfoque en la Forma combinado con un tipo de Enseñanza de Lenguas Asistida por Ordenador. Ilustramos esta práctica con dos tipos de actividades, una de ellas centrada en errores ortográficos y la otra en errores de elección de palabra debidos a transferencia.

Palabras clave: Error léxico, Enfoque en la Forma, Enseñanza de Lenguas Asistida por Ordenador, Educación primaria, Lengua inglesa.

Abstract

The lexical component plays a paramount role in the first stages of language acquisition. Hence, it is crucial to learn and use words appropriately. Based on the results obtained on a study carried out on the lexical competence in English of 283 Spanish speaking primary learners, the present article investigates a way of teaching vocabulary to young Spanish learners of English. With the aim of diminishing lexical error production and motivate learners, we adopt a Focus on Form approach enhanced by the use of computer assisted language teaching. Two types of activities are proposed to illustrate this practice: one of them focuses on spelling errors and the other on word choice errors due to transfer.

Keywords: Lexical error, Focus on Form (FonF), Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Primary education, English language.

Introduction

Words are a central component of communication; they serve the purpose of transmitting our messages. Compared to words, grammar represents a mere instrument to better articulate those ideas, being just an auxiliary element in communication. Moreover, in the first stages of language acquisition the lexical component plays a paramount role. (Harley 1995). Considering this, it is essential that words be learned and used appropriately.

The aims of our paper are manifold: 1.Stress the importance of some kind of direct teaching of vocabulary within the current meaning-/ process-oriented paradigm of language teaching; 2. Detect most frequent lexical errors in the written production of young learners; and 3. Propose a computer assisted FonF

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model to deal with vocabulary learning by young learners, and thus, minimise their most frequent lexical errors.

The paper is organised around three different parts: the first part covers the different dimensions involved in knowing a word, using a word (lexical errors), and teaching a word (implicit or explicit teaching to young learners, teaching techniques, use of CALL); the second part includes a brief summary of a study carried out on the lexical competence in English of 283 Spanish speaking primary learners whose results on lexical errors serve as the basis and justification of two types of vocabulary instruction exercises proposed in the third part of this paper.

1. **Learning and teaching a word**

1.1 Knowing a word

Different authors have provided their definitions on what knowing a word implies in language learning. Common aspects can be pointed out.

Based on Richards (1976) and Nation (1988), Laufer (1990: 148) sets out the following components of word knowledge: Form: recognizing the spoken and written form, being able to pronounce and spell the word correctly; Word structure: recognizing the basic free morpheme and the bound morphemes; being able to produce some derivations of the word; Syntactic pattern or behaviour of the word in a phrase or sentence; Meaning: paying attention to three types of meaning, i.e. referential, affective and pragmatic meaning.

On his part, Ellis (1995) points out that learning a word is recognizing it as a word and entering it into the mental lexicon. He specifies the following factors of what knowing a word means: listen to the word; read it, recognize a new orthographic pattern; pronounce it; write it, use the new orthographic pattern; syntactic properties; lexical relationships; semantic properties; referential properties.

Jiménez Catalán (2002) gathered and described studies on lexical competence from 1975 until 2000. The compilation reveals that knowing a word implies being competent in the following dimensions: linguistic dimension, i.e. phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics; sociolinguistic dimension, which implies contextual knowledge of the use of words; psycholinguistic dimension, i.e. recognizing the word, and receptive and productive knowledge, among others; and a pedagogical dimension, i.e. word learnability.

When some of these variables are violated, that is to say, when the learner does not observe any of these variables, then, a lexical error appears.

1.2 Lexical Errors: On the Way Towards Knowing a Word

Lexical errors are found to be the most numerous type of errors in several studies (Jiménez Catalán, 1992; Lennon 1996; Bouvy, 2000). For this reason and for their importance in foreign language communication and assessment, they need special consideration (see Ambroso, 2000). Lexical errors are of extreme relevance in the process of second language acquisition for three major reasons. First, they help the learner realise the gaps in his/her lexical repertoire and, therefore, the already mastered lexical aspects. Secondly, they serve the teacher to spot the problematic areas of second language vocabulary acquisition, and to act consequently choosing the appropriate materials and exercises to use in class, and the particular lexical items to treat and work with. Finally, they are very useful for the researcher to investigate the underlying processes in L2 vocabulary acquisition, providing him/her with insights into those processes. Lexical errors are the most conspicuous feature of the learners' lexical knowledge.

The importance of lexical errors in non-native interaction lies in their role as communication distractors. Several studies (e.g. Albrechtsen, Henriksen and Faerch, 1980; Faerch and Kasper, 1983) have proved that, contrary to what the general belief may be, grammatical accuracy is not essential in communication. Intelligibility and grammatical correctness do not relate closely. However, while grammar errors are not significant in communicative terms, lexical errors affect the transmission and understanding of the message variably, depending on the type of lexical error.

Inappropriate lexical use often results in an inability on the part of the hearer to decode the message of the speaker. Communication breakdowns originate generally in lexical limitations and lack of knowledge (Haastrup and Phillipson 1983). If the hearer misunderstands a lexical item, or simply cannot understand it, a disruption in communication takes place. Lexical errors have a negative effect on intelligibility and, as a consequence, they obstruct communication.

Irritation is a further consequence of the lexical error. Gass (1988) notes that obscure and puzzling utterances can have serious and damaging consequences on the public image of the learner. This learner may be considered impolite, rude, or even rather odd, if his/her contribution in the foreign language is not completely and correctly understood by the interlocutor.

Closely linked to their role as communication disturbers is the fact that lexical errors are judged the most severely, i.e. are considered the most important and serious type of errors, by native and non-native judges, and even by the learners themselves. Their destructive communicative effect is seen as responsible for this negative consideration of lexical errors in learners' production. The more an error interferes with communication, the more serious it is from the point of view of the L2 learner and teacher (Johansson 1978; Politzer 1978; Hughes and Lacarato 1982). Consistently, when a wrong word is used, the meaning is very likely to be obscured, and thus, communication fails or is interrupted.

The work by Santos (1988) is illustrative of this claim. Lexical errors were rated as the most serious ones by a set of native and non-native professors, revealing that a greater emphasis on vocabulary improvement and lexical selection is needed to improve second language writing. The author advocates including vocabulary exercises in writing courses, since faulty vocabulary resulted in an important cause leading to poor grading.

Lexical errors are frequently used as measures of second language lexical and/or general proficiency, and as markers of quality writing, e.g. scores of written compositions are based on the percentage of lexical errors (vs. effectively and well-used vocabulary) contained in that writing, among other lexical measures (frequency, originality, variation) (Engber 1995).

Consideration of these three aspects where lexical errors play a relevant role: second language vocabulary acquisition and teaching, non-native interaction and communication, and second language proficiency and quality assessment criteria, gives an idea of the importance of lexical errors and of the necessity to study them thoroughly. Determination of the particular lexical errors committed by young learners of English, and establishment of the causes that generate them will help the teacher delimitate his/her approach to English vocabulary teaching and devise exercises directed to the practice of problematic lexical areas and to remedy already existent lexical problems.

1.3 Lexical explicit teaching to young learners

Teachers should be aware of what knowing a word means and of what kind of learning strategies learners use when facing vocabulary tasks in order to devise tasks or activities aimed at minimising the number of

lexical errors committed by learners, enlarging their mental lexicons, and providing opportunities for them to apprehend new words satisfactorily.

Teaching a foreign language to young learners, e.g. primary learners, is a complex task. Teachers know that learners at this age are not especially interested in direct language instruction. They feel at ease when they interact with language through games, realia, photographs, mime and gestures, among others (Halliwell 1993). However, research points to a new direction which states that explicit teaching is required for success in vocabulary learning even in young learners.

The debate about whether or not to draw the learner's attention to linguistic form is not new at all. Krashen (1989), one of the strongest supporters of the non-interventionist position, maintains that comprehensible input, meaning-focused instruction and extensive reading are indicators of success in lexical learning. Against indirect learning, the lexical explicit position is exemplified by second language acquisition researchers who heavily rely on vocabulary frequency lists, i.e. lists of words which should be taught first, e.g. West's (1953) General Service List.

Overall, in second language learning, the last decade has witnessed a re-conciliation of both extremes by revealing FonF as a necessary practice of direct instruction within a communicative framework. In other words, FonF implies a focus on linguistic form during a meaning based activity when communication is at risk.

So far, FonF has been mostly applied to grammar rather than to lexis. Current research sheds a light on the need of some kind of lexical direct instruction in a formal context as evidenced in the results reviewed by Coady (1997). Long and Robinson (1999) and Swain (1998) also assert some sort of direct instruction and training in lexical acquisition. Paribakht and Wesche (1997) and Zimmerman (1997) provide sound evidence of the benefits of reading plus contextualized vocabulary instruction in detriment of reading alone. Groot (2000) points to the fact that within direct learning of vocabulary, context-free bilingual vocabulary lists are good for short-term retention whereas contextual presentation is advisable if long-term retention is aimed. Some researchers like Laufer (2004) go one step further in providing empirical evidence in favour of the adoption of a Focus on FormS perspective in vocabulary teaching. Be that as it may, whether focus on a particular linguistic form at a specific moment or on a list of forms, the need to include some kind of direct instruction in vocabulary teaching is completely research supported.

To our knowledge, no study targeting teaching vocabulary to young learners through FonF has been attempted (Laufer, personal communication, January 2, 2005).It seems clear that learners' characteristics match a content-oriented model of language teaching more than one oriented exclusively to language, that is to say, they prefer an implicit way of learning more than an explicit one. However, when coping with vocabulary it is an undeniable fact that, for communication purposes, children need to learn the first 1000-2000 most common words as soon as possible. Then, they will have to be first exposed to direct teaching of these word lists before they follow indirect, implicit or independent ways of learning in a formal environment (Hunt and Beglar 1998).

1.4. Computer Assisted Focus on Form

Computers' technical features appear as extremely useful in fostering vocabulary teaching. On the one hand, computers are intrinsically motivating resources for children. Today's children are surrounded by technology in their daily lives. On the contrary, in many cases computers become children's playmates. On the other hand, computers allow multimodality, i.e. the integration of visual and aural features which may be really valuable in the classroom practice, e.g. still and motion graphics, photographs, sound, text animation, use of

colours, voice recording, hyperlinks, or access to Internet resources (online dictionaries, glossaries, thesauri, etc.).

Computers offer us a way to develop dynamic teaching/learning activities. Regarding vocabulary teaching, most studies show positive effects of computer use. Wood (2001:182-184) points to some possible capabilities of new technologies to develop learners' lexical knowledge, e.g. to stimulate the deep processing of new words or to provide opportunities to apply new words to novel situations. Wood (2001:179) also refers to the positive effects of using hypertext versus linear text in activities designed to enhance children's vocabulary learning: it allows children to more readily tap into prior knowledge, to create semantic webs, to experience a new word in a variety of contexts, to take charge of their own learning by selecting the links that satisfy their curiosity, or to access online definitions, glossaries or dictionaries.

Research carried out by Al-Seghayer (2001) on the impact of glossing individual vocabulary items suggests that the use of printed text definition coupled with videoclips or animations is more effective than a still picture or a printed text definition alone. One of the reasons the author provides is that «video better builds a mental image, better creates curiosity leading to increased concentration, and embodies an advantageous combination of modalities (vivid or dynamic image, sound and printed text)» (Al-Seghayer 2001:202). The same results are obtained in a study by Clement (1997) where participants working with a motion graphics software showed superiority over a still graphics group.

2. Corpus

The following sections offer a brief summary of a research study on the lexical competence in English of Spanish speaking primary learners. The results yielded by the analysis and classification of lexical errors, (regarding their origin and considering what they reveal about vocabulary learning processes and strategies in English), will be used as the basis and justification of the proposed vocabulary instruction exercises collected in the third and last part of this paper. The data here used are part of the data collected for the research project BFF 2003-04009-C02-02 funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology.

2.1. Subjects

A total of 283 subjects participated in the study. These were Spanish-speaking beginner learners of English. All were 4th graders, and therefore, of around 10 years of age. Participants come from four primary schools in Logroño. Intact classes, representative of typical Spanish educational system, beginner learners of English as a foreign language, were chosen for the experiment. The production of 270 subjects was at the researcher's disposal.

Subjects had received a total of 419 hours of instruction in English to ensure consistency in the level of the participants, two level tests were implemented. These tests were a cloze procedure and a reading comprehension passage taken from the *Key English Tests* from the KET series of Cambridge University Press (2003).

2.2. Materials and procedures

The instruments used for the experiment were the written compositions produced by the young subjects. A 30 minute subject-bound composition was implemented by each participant, where they simulated writing a letter to a prospective English host family. In that letter they had to introduce themselves and talk about their family, their school, their hometown, their hobbies, and any other interesting thing.

This topic was chosen for two major reasons. First, it presented the advantage that it was subject-based and it somehow limited the content of the essays. However, it was also a very broad topic that allowed for a great variety of language structures and a wide range of vocabulary items, since it did not impose any great constraints on the type of language, vocabulary and grammar expected. Thus, differences in the resulting essays concerning length or thematic and linguistic content due to varying subject knowledge were ruled out.

Compositions were transformed into a computer-readable format, read and scrutinised for lexical errors. A total of 1576 lexical errors were identified, described, analysed, and classified. Repeated lexical errors by the same subject were not considered. Lexical errors were defined as deviations from the lexical norm in any way, i.e. at the phonetic/ orthographic level, at the morphological, syntactical, semantic or pragmatic levels. These lexical errors are, in short, the result of the wrong form or use of vocabulary items. Once the lexical errors contained in the 270 compositions were spotted, their analysis began. It consisted in determining the form (descriptive analysis) and source (interpretative analysis) of the lexical errors, and according to this information, they were classified into a taxonomy.

In order to determine the underlying psycholinguistic processes going on in vocabulary learning and to find out what happens during that acquisition process, i.e. learning and communication strategies, not only a definition of the object of study is necessary, but also a working taxonomy of lexical errors. This categorisation should provide information about the form and the source of the lexical error, so that it can be traced back to its origin.

In the taxonomy used in the present study, two main categories are distinguished: spelling and word choice errors. A spelling lexical error is an error in which the learner simply miswrites an existing English word:

1) I'm *beautifull.*

A word choice error originates when the learner chooses the wrong word for that particular context:

2) My *happy birthday* is in the autumn

happy birthday is used instead of *birthday* or in

3) I *leave* in the Spain

leave instead of *live*. In these cases the wrongly chosen word exists in English, although with a different meaning and/or use. However, the most frequent type of word choice errors generates in an intrusion of an L1 word (Spanish) in the L2 syntax:

4) My *pelicula preferida* is The Lord of the Rings

   My favourite movie is The Lord of the Rings

2.3 Results and discussion

The category containing the vast majority of lexical errors is that of spelling errors due to phonological or orthographic difficulties, with more than half of the total of lexical errors. The following wrong renderings of *birthday* are a good example:

5) My *bidray* is in febroary.
6) My *birthey* is the third of April.
7) My *birday* is in September.
8) My *verdey* is day 22 may.
9) On friday is my *birdthay*.

It seems that the cluster –rthd- is quite difficult for Spanish learners, who cannot apparently remember it correctly. Furthermore, the disagreement between the pronunciation of both vowels: /3:/ and /ei/, and their written rendering as –ir- and –a-, respectively, confuses the subjects and leads to spelling errors. Other examples found in this category are:

10) I'm tall, *beatefall*, thin,... for beautiful.

11) My *famili* is: *mather*, father, brother,... for family and mother, respectively.

12) My *frens* is Mario,... for friends.

13) My *ticher* is Isabel, for teacher.

These examples clearly illustrate the claim that Spanish learners have great problems to keep pronunciation and spelling separated, and they tend to spell English words as they are pronounced, such as they do in their L1, Spanish. The disagreement between pronunciation and spelling of the English system is a characteristic completely foreign to the Spanish native-speaker, who is accustomed to the enormous stability of the phonetic and orthographic systems of Spanish, and to the correspondence between both.

When Spanish learners are faced with an unknown word in English to express their thoughts, they decide to write that word in their L1. Confronted with the impossibility of employing their knowledge of the L2 system, learners must resort to the only linguistic system they are familiar with, that is, their mother tongue, Spanish in this case. This probably happens, because they know that both their teacher and the researcher were Spanish natives, and would understand them. This statement can be related to Meisel (1983, cited in Celaya 1992: 57) and Manchón (1988, cited in Celaya 1992: 91) which claim that foreign language learners tend to make use of their L1 knowledge, when they assume or know that the interlocutor understands their L1. Transfer in the form of *complete language shift* is being here used as a communication strategy. Some examples in this category of lexical error type are:

14) My favourite *comida* (Eng. food) is spaghettis, strawberries, ham, chicken.

15) My class is big, *acojedora* (Eng. snug, cosy) and *espaciosa* (Eng. big).

16) My father is tall, big and *lento* (Eng. slow).

17) My *ciudad* (Eng. city) is Logroño.

Spanish subjects opt in a number of cases for the adaptation of an L1 word to make it sound and look English. Although they seem to be aware that their "creation" is not completely correct, they underline the Spanish words, write them within brackets, or write them in different size or form, they like to have a try. The most common "adaptation procedures" are addition of an English morpheme, like the suffixes: -ent, in *ciudent* from *ciudad* (Eng. city, or elimination of word endings: *divert*, from *divertido* (Eng. funny) or *deport* from *deporte* (Eng. sport). These are clear instances of an overgeneralization strategy being applied. It requires careful observation of the English morphological rules and attentive comparison of Spanish and English morphological systems from which they abstract formation rules to be used in the anglification processes. The fact that this process demands a deeper knowledge of the L2 system can be considered the reason why subjects in the present experiment use it so rarely. These are ten year old beginner learners with scarce knowledge of the English morphological system, and even of the Spanish. This lack of internalization of the linguistic target system also explains the large number of spelling errors due to phonological and/or orthographic difficulties. The following examples illustrate this:

18) My rabbit is small, very *divert* (Sp. *divertido*, Eng. funny).

19) In mai house is famili: fatter, matter, *tater* and mai (Sp. *tato*, Eng. (younger) brother, fam.)

20) My favourite *deport* is football (Sp. *deporte*, Eng. sport)

21) My *ciudent* is Logroño (Sp. ciudad, Eng. city);

Table 1 summarises the distribution of lexical errors into types.

Lexical error type	Number of errors	total %
spelling	972	61,67
word choice	604	38,33
TOTAL	1576	100

Table 1. Summary of the results for distribution of lexical error types

Regarding the information revealed by the analysis of the lexical errors relative to the learning and communication strategies employed and to the vocabulary acquisition process undergone, two major tendencies can be observed in the lexical behaviour of the young Spanish participants. First, in those "easy" words, i.e. lexical items they already more or less mastered concerning form, meaning and use, learners have problems with their orthography, more specifically with the spelling of consonant clusters, such as *-th-* with pronunciation /θ/ or /δ/, *mother, birthday*, e.g.: *mader, birtday*; *sch,* like in *school*, e.g. *scool*; also with the spelling of the sounds /*ou*/, *hello*, e.g., *hellow*, /o:/, *small* e.g. *smooll*, and in general with vowel sounds: *miusic, inglish, keis.*

Second, the results also show a strong tendency on the part of the learners to rely on their mother tongue, Spanish. In this case, to develop the linguistic and, above all, lexical scaffolding in the target language; to enlarge the size of their L2 lexicon, and to make up for gaps and deficiencies in their knowledge of the second language, either by translating literally from Spanish:

(24) I don't eat *vegetal* (Sp. *vegetales*, Eng. vegetables)
(25) My favourite subject is *gym* (Sp. *gimnasia*, Eng. sport);

by adapting a Spanish word to the foreign phonetic, morphological and/or orthographic system, e.g. *plate, divert, deport, jinasty, ciudent*; or simply by including the Spanish word directly in the English text, for example:

(28) My eyes are *marrones* (Eng. brown)
(29) My house is very big and *ordenada* (Eng. tidy)

Strategies based on the target language appear to be of little importance and are practically absent from the repertoire of strategies used by these subjects. Except for a few overgeneralization learning and communicating strategies, learners do not resort to the second language to support their process of language learning and language use.

The analysis and classification of lexical errors yield, in short, two major evidences: the important impact of pronunciation and alien spelling on the written performance of Spanish young learners of English, and the influence of the mother tongue and of transfer strategies in the process of vocabulary development in young ESL beginners.

Summing up this last section, when pupils want to employ words they already know (concrete nouns basically), they use those L2 words, although usually committing a spelling error. If they want to say something, but lack the lexical items to express themselves (usually items belonging to the word class verb, adverb or adjective), they simply use the L1/ Spanish word to overcome that knowledge lack.

3. The teaching of Words to Young Learners: Some Practical Hints

3.1 Enhancing Word Knowledge through Computer

Most of the computer's resources can facilitate vocabulary teaching. Depending on which vocabulary feature we want learners to focus on we may make use of a technical resource. As an example, Figure 1 displays in a difficulty continuum, the main components of lexical competence which may be enhanced by the use of one or various computer's features (in red colour). Many other possibilities can be taken into account.

KNOWING A WORD		
INITIAL WORD KNOWLEDGE --------------------------- FURTHER WORD KNOWLEDGE		
PHONOLOGY • Listen • Pronounce Sound and recording device	**ORTHOGRAPHY** • **Read** • **Write** Still and motion graphics, use of colours to highlight new orthographic patterns	**MORPHOLOGY** • **Root plus affixes** • **Compound words** • **Derivation** • **Others** Still and motion graphics, use of colours to highlight affixes
		SYNTACTIC BEHAVIOUR **SEMANTIC BEHAVIOUR** **LEXICAL RELATIONS** Hyperlinks, online conceptual mappings, visual thesauri. Software allowing movement among parts to express syntactic relations, e.g. Macromedia Flash or Swishmax.
See a new word	Form a clear visual or aural image of the form of the word / Learn the meaning and/or definition Still and motion graphics / online resources, i.e. dictionaries or thesauri.	Use the word

Figure 1. Components of knowing a word enhanced by the computer's technical features. Adapted from Ellis (1994), Laufer (1990), Jiménez Catalán (2002:56), and Brown and Payne (1994, cited in Nelson 1998:428).

Heretofore, we have suggested improving the knowledge of a lexical item that young learners may have with the aid of a computer. Besides, as stated above, knowing a word also means being able to retain, recall and use it in oral and written mode. In order to attain this kind of knowledge the teacher must help the learners by providing them with enough practice opportunities, e.g. extensive reading, peer interaction in the target language or writing practice. It is important to highlight that explicit instruction by FonF activities must be present all through the process of vocabulary acquisition.

3.2 Sample Activities

Basing on the findings of the study reported above on lexical error production in young learners, two activities based on a model which integrates computer and FonF are presented below.

3.2.1   Syllable matching

Spelling lexical errors turned out to be the most numerous of our learners' sample. See Table 1. Facing the impossibility of coping with the complicated orthographical system of the English language, Spanish learners frequently make spelling errors. The disagreements in English between spelling and pronunciation together with the differences in the syllable patterning of mother and target languages are the source of this type of lexical errors. Bearing this in mind, it is reasonable to think that acquainting learners with word parts,

e.g. roots and affixes, as well as encouraging them to break up words into syllables would be useful in helping learners to acquire, retain and recall new words.

The next activity addresses the issue of spelling difficulties and illustrates a possible way to treat them. By splitting up the sample word *birthday* and the wrong renderings of this word found in the compositions of our corpus, a series of right and wrong syllable-like occurrences is obtained. The learners' task is to match these occurrences in order to find the correctly spelled word.

Title: Flying Affixes

Age: Primary school goers

Description

After watching a slideshow of rightly spelled words, e.g. wardrobe, spaghetti, beautiful, birthday, learners are confronted with split up words which include the correct version and their most frequent wrong renderings. By matching the right parts learners must get at the right words, either the expected right word appeared in the previous slideshow, e.g. birthday, or newly created words out of it, e.g. bird, they, day.

Goals

- Learners must notice the correct spelling of the word birthday.

- Learners must be made aware of the possible spelling errors affecting this word.

- Learners must learn the morphology of the word birthday.

- Bonus: Phonological information of the word birthday can be included.

Procedure

Once the most numerous spelling lexical errors of the target group have been spotted, the teacher prepares a Powerpoint slideshow that includes the correctly spelled target words displayed in subsequent slides. Following this slideshow, the screen fills with flying word parts. Learners have to get the right words by joining these word parts.

Figure 2. Flying Affixes

3.2.2 Visual mindmap

The analysis of the lexical error production by our ten year old subjects has revealed that word choice errors are the second most frequent type of lexical errors. See Table 1. Word choice lexical errors often originate in the insertion of an L1 word into the English syntax. The obvious cause for this type of error is the learners' lack of lexical knowledge, i.e. the learners simply do not know the word in English and they use the only lexical knowledge available to them, their mother tongue. The solution to this lack of knowledge is to enlarge the learners' vocabulary through explicit teaching activities. One of the best ways to make learners notice, learn and better retain and recall words is by means of visual information and motion graphics. (Rieber and Kini 1991, cited in Clement 1997:22-23, 31).

Next, embedded in a task-based framework, a mindmap activity is shown. In its implementation we have made use of computer facilities such as motion, images and sound. In order to carry this out, we have

included the use of an online thesaurus, Visual Thesaurus, since we consider it to be a powerful vocabulary teaching resource in the display of lexical information, e.g. meaning, lexical relations, collocations, morphology, and syntactic behaviour.

It is relevant to point out that in such an exercise new words must go hand in hand with known ones. Learners will get to know those new words through the ones they already master. The basis of this assumption lies on Ausubel's (1983) theory of significative learning.

Title: Mind the Map!

Age: Primary school goers

Description

Based on a visual mindmap of *city* and related words learners have to fill in the blanks responding to the different requirements in each case, e.g. match word with definition, match image with written word, match spoken word to written form, write a sentence with the word(s).

Goals

- Learners must be made aware of the lexical relations of the sample word *city*.
- Learners must learn the meaning of *city* and related (new and known) words.
- Learners must learn contextual use of the word *city*.
- Bonus: Phonological information of these words could be provided as well.

Procedure

Once the most common lexical errors of the group have been identified, the teacher will devise a semantic network or mindmap with blanks for learners to fill them in as the one shown above.

The map should combine still and motion images and graphics with aural and written information. Thus, the map could be presented through Powerpoint or alike, software which allows the integration of all these features. Other options include more sophisticated software such as Macromedia Flash, Swish or Macromedia Director.

Apart from that, the teacher could also make use of online resources such as websites on different cities, pictures of urban furniture, dictionaries and thesauri.

Figure 3. Mind the Map!

Conclusion

The present paper was designed to explore one of the ways of teaching second language vocabulary to young learners by using FonF. To do this, we based on the research findings of a previous study on lexical errors produced by young Spanish learners in written compositions. Literature on vocabulary acquisition proves that some kind of explicit instruction is required for a better attainment of lexical competence, i.e. learning words. This teaching practice is not out of place in adult education. However, working with children makes this task more complicated. As shown above, young learners can benefit from the use of computers in

teaching. By using images, sounds and animations children's motivation does not suffer from this focus on form approach. The activities here proposed attempted to minimise young learner's lexical error production by applying a focus on form approach assisted by computer applications.

Unfortunately space limitations prevent us from providing a wider range of possible activities addressing the different subtypes of lexical errors found in the research. Obviously, these activities have to be adapted to the lexical knowledge and lexical error production of each particular target group of learners. The activities above proposed and the underlying eclectic framework should be tested for efficacy in a real school context. We plan to carry out a further study to prove in a real classroom whether activities within this framework do actually result in successful learning of English vocabulary among children.

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