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Specifications for the Development of Effective Academic Vocabulary Activities in Intensive

English Programs

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A selected project submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Specifications for the Development of Effective Academic Vocabulary Activities in Intensive

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With the new curriculum at the English Language Center (ELC) at Brigham Young University (BYU) including a program focused specifically on preparing students to succeed in academic institutions wherein the language of instruction is English, a need for a systematic approach to vocabulary instruction was identified. Specifically, the Academic Program focuses on the Academic Word List (AWL) in order to provide a broad base of words that can best prepare students for the academic world. This project followed the ADDIE model (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate) to craft a systematic approach to developing vocabulary learning activities. An analysis of existing gaps in the Academic Program's vocabulary learning objectives, along with an examination of teachers' attitudes and understanding, was conducted. A similar need was also proposed as existing in many Intensive English Programs (IEPs) around the world.

This was followed by research into effective principles of L2 vocabulary learning, through which four principles were distilled. These principles are: the use of a variety of strategies, multiple exposures to target words, practice that includes production, and the need for flexibility and practicality in the vocabulary activities. These four principles became the guiding principles in the development of a system for creating effective vocabulary learning activities. This system and many suggested activities comprise a guide, or set of specifications, that can be used by teachers at IEPs, with a specific eye to the ELC to effectively, and with little extra effort, create and utilize their own effective vocabulary learning activities.

Keywords: vocabulary learning, second language, ESL, EFL, specifications, vocabulary learning activities, Academic Word List, Intensive English Program,

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Part I: The Write-Up

Introduction

Background

Early in the summer of 2009, Dr. James Hartshorn of the ELC asked if I could help with

the development of some new materials for the revamped curriculum at the ELC. The project

was to compose an original passage which would use thirty of the items on the Academic Word

List (Coxhead, 2000). The Academic Word List is a list that Averil Coxhead compiled through a

process of vocabulary analysis of multiple academic disciplines. She identified 570 words that

occurred with high frequency—across registers and academic disciplines. The AWL has become,

along with the 2000 High Frequency words and the General Service List, a commonly used list

of target vocabulary in ESL/EFL contexts. In the context of the ELC, since there were nineteen

sub-lists of thirty words from the AWL, there would be nineteen passages that needed to be

written for the new curriculum. The curriculum committee had already determined the general

themes that the passages should relate to and I was needed to do the actual writing of the

passages.

This was my introduction to the new curriculum at the ELC. I had worked at the ELC

previously for two years, during which the curriculum involved five proficiency levels that each

had four skill areas. The curriculum coordinator at the ELC refers to this approach as "four

across and five down." The new curriculum would consist of two separate programs: the

Foundations and Academic Programs. Lower-level students would be placed into the

Foundations Program and higher-level students would be placed into the Academic Program. I

was asked to write reading passages specifically for the Academic Program. When the nineteen passages were written, I was then asked to head up a team that would create a robust packet, which would include definitions and word-manipulation activities, for each passage.

At the end of October of 2009, I began teaching at the ELC again and spent some time looking into how the packets I had created were being utilized. Through discussions with students and ELC teachers, it became clear that the packets that I had put so much effort into creating were not being utilized as expected. With further investigation I learned that this under-utilization was due to a lack of understanding of the packets' role in the classroom. This was a valid concern, especially coming from teachers who were already dealing with the conversion from a long-standing curriculum to a new one. It turned out that there was no systematic approach to the use of the vocabulary learning packets, and to take that a step further, there was not an explicit statement that the packets should be used as either homework or material for classroom discussion.

Given my previous involvement in developing the new curriculum, I decided that it would be useful for me to continue that work for my Master's Project. The project began as a large compilation of principle-driven vocabulary-learning activities and materials; however, it soon evolved into a detailed set of specifications that teachers would be able to utilize in their own endeavors to create effective vocabulary learning activities. As this project crystallized, there was clearly a need for it at the BYU's English Language Center. However, it is also clear that a set of principle-driven specifications can have a wider application in other Intensive English Programs (IEP). Thus, the ELC is the specific context for this project, however, the hope is that this project will make a difference for other IEPs.

Due to the fact that the word 'specifications' will be used throughout this document, it is worth taking a moment to define this word in the context of this project. For the purposes of this project, 'specifications' is defined as a set of guidelines for how to create or develop something. Specifications are used in a variety of fields which range from architecture to language teaching. Research conducted on the use of specifications in language testing applies appropriately to using specifications in materials development, and in this case, the development of effective vocabulary learning materials. Brown (2004) explains that specifications in the context of language testing ought to include an outline, a list of skills to be tested, and a description of the appearance of the test. In much the same manner, the specifications that are at the heart of this project outline a specific set of principles to be applied, and a series of steps to be taken, in the creation of effective vocabulary learning materials. Hence, for this project, the term 'specifications' refers to a set of guidelines that any teacher, anywhere, should be able to use to easily and with little trouble create effective vocabulary learning activities.

Need

In the interest of providing a specific and detailed context for this project, the English Language Center's students and instructional system will be described. The ELC's population consists of adult students of English who come from nearly thirty different nations. These students demonstrate a wide variety of proficiency levels and also study at the ELC with different goals. In order to cater to these students' needs, the ELC has divided its curriculum into two major programs: the Foundations Program and the Academic Program. This curriculum was implemented in September of 2009. The Foundations Program focuses on enabling students from the low to intermediate levels to learn to use English at its fundamental, and mostly for communicative purposes. The Academic Program focuses on preparing students to succeed in

post-secondary education settings where English is the language of instruction. Because of this overall objective of the Academic Program, one of the enabling objectives of the Academic curriculum is to help students gain mastery of the Academic Word List. To gain mastery, in this setting, is to be able to recognize a word, understand the meaning and derivations of that word, and use some of those derivations in a sentence, both written and spoken. It is important to note that the AWL is a somewhat unique vocabulary list. Because this list is drawn from multiple registers and academic disciplines, these words rarely have homographs. This is good news for students, who do not have to learn multiple senses of the AWL words, since most AWL words do not have multiple senses.

Given that learning the AWL is such a crucial part of the Academic Program at the ELC and is expected to be a part of the program at other IEPs, it follows that a systematic approach for teachers to enable their students to learn, review and master the AWL words would need to be implemented. Such a systematic approach has not been implemented at the ELC as of the date of this writing, so this project seeks to both suggest a systematic approach for vocabulary learning in the Academic Program as well as to provide a guideline for how teachers can implement that approach.

It is worth pointing out that some work has gone into designing and developing a systematic approach to teaching vocabulary in the Foundations Program at the ELC. Inho Jung (2010) developed a list of 500 essential words for students in the Foundations Program, drawing from textbooks and other reading and content material that is used in this program. Some of these 500 essential words can be found on the AWL. Thus, if Jung's list were implemented along with a systematic approach for instruction, this would function as a sort of transition from

learning vocabulary in the Foundations Program to learning academic vocabulary in the Academic Program.

As has been indicated, while this project focuses on the specific context of helping ELC teachers to create and implement effective AWL learning activities, there are potentially wider applications. Given that the specifications are based on a thorough survey of current research regarding L2 vocabulary learning, the specifications can also form the basis of a vocabulary learning workbook. This workbook could include the specifications, but could also include a robust listing and description of multiple effective learning activities. Furthermore, this workbook could provide a suggested approach and system to use the activities most effectively.

Literature Review

During recent years, researchers and teachers in L2 fields have revealed the need for an increased emphasis on vocabulary learning. As this need has become more illuminated and urgent, the crucial issues of "what vocabulary", *meaning* versus *form*, and *explicit* versus *implicit* have been debated. Krashen (1989) set forth the Input Hypothesis, wherein he proposed that students acquire a second language based on a great deal of comprehensible input that is one step beyond the learner's abilities. He stated that students will acquire a second language best by being exposed to language through a large amount of voluntary reading. In essence, Krashen's position is that implicit learning is the quickest route to acquiring a language. It is important to note that Krashen distinguishes language acquisition from language learning. His position is that acquisition occurs as a result of subconscious processes in which students perform a variety of communicative tasks. He further states that learning occurs through formal instruction and conscious processes, and finally that learning involves a monitor.

Krashen's influence on ideas related to implicit and explicit learning is significant. Fuente (2002) expanded on some of Krashen's ideas when she conducted a study in which the effect of negotiation, an explicit teaching strategy, on vocabulary learning and retention was examined. She found that negotiation that included students' productive practice of targeted vocabulary greatly enhanced their ability to learn and retain the words. Nation (2001) also points out that direct instruction of vocabulary plays a crucial role in the initial learning of a target word. He additionally states that once a target word is learned, students should be left to experience target words in "meaning focused use" (p. 34). Nation's position seems to reflect common thought on vocabulary acquisition and learning. Given that this project deals specifically with explicit teaching of vocabulary, it is accepted, for the purposes of this project, that explicit teaching of vocabulary is effective.

With that being said, it is still vital to discover the best current practice for teaching vocabulary. Thus, the specifications that have been created are based on principles illuminated by current research. What is more, the many suggested activities included in the specifications are designed to accommodate most of the principles that research sheds light on. In other words, these principles found in research have become the guiding principles for the specifications and the activities.

The first guiding principle is that successful language students utilize a wide variety of strategies to learn and retain new vocabulary. Fan (2003) conducted an expansive study on strategies utilized by learners of English. Her subjects were students in Hong Kong, and her purpose was to determine which vocabulary learning strategies the students used, and perceived as useful, in the acquisition of vocabulary. She found that students tended to use several types of strategies, with strategies for relating words and using dictionary-type resources being the most

common. In evaluating her students, Fan discovered that students tended to be more successful when they used multiple self-selected strategies for a given task. Additionally, Folse (2004) summarized his research by stating, "Good learners use a wide variety of VLSs (Vocabulary Learning Strategies); the good students have developed an individualized set of strategies that works best for their needs and personalities" (pp. 87-88). This being the case, teachers will be most effective if they expose their students to activities that utilize myriad strategies, so that the students can then choose those strategies that work best for them. Finally, in Gardner's (2007) study of children's use of context cues and dictionary definitions in vocabulary learning, he found that when these approaches were combined, significantly greater gains were made than when only one approach was utilized. One implication of this result is that a combination of strategies is more effective than focusing on only one.

The second principle states that it is through multiple salient encounters with a word and its various collocations that a student can gain mastery of that word. Huckin and Coady (1999) conducted a review of research regarding incidental learning of vocabulary in a second language. They indicate that it is now widely accepted that a great deal of a learner's vocabulary is acquired incidentally while doing extensive reading. They also state that incidental vocabulary acquisition depends on multiple exposures to a word in different contexts. It is also important to note that these multiple exposures, or encounters, need to be salient. A student will gain little to nothing from an encounter with a new word in which the student has no clue what that new word means and which also offers no clue as to what the word means. Hence, the idea of salience in these encounters is vital.

Furthermore, Jenkins, Stein and Wysocki (1984) conducted a study which sought to test the idea that new vocabulary knowledge can be acquired through incidental learning. As part of

their study, they presented target words in a variety of contexts, endeavoring to expose students to the target words multiple times. They found that mastery of the target words increased in direct correlation to the number of exposures to those target words. Stoller and Grabe (1993) also point out that knowledge of new words is clarified and added to through multiple, repeated exposures to those words. While many of these researchers are referring specifically to incidental learning of vocabulary, the principle of multiple exposures can also be an important part of targeted, direct vocabulary learning. Hence, the principle of multiple meaningful exposures to target words is proposed as a guiding principle for this project.

The third guiding principle is that practice must include production activities to help students be successful in their word learning processes (Nation, 2001). This implies that utilizing only receptive knowledge activities is inadequate. What is more, this production practice must stretch the students' abilities. Similar to Nation's position is that stated by Fuente (2002) as a result of her study involving negotiation strategies being used by students. Her study indicated that not only was explicit teaching of vocabulary useful for students, but that when those students were required to produce target words in negotiation activities, learning and retention was increased. Laufer and Hulstijn (1998) referred to this type of production as "pushed output." In other words, when a student must produce target words in order to demonstrate comprehension and participate fully in their learning experiences, this "pushed output" enhances learning. Laufer and Hulstijn further stated that productive activities which demand extra mental effort produced better vocabulary retention.

The final guiding principle states that for the activities to be useful to teachers at the ELC, the activities must be flexible and practical. This principle is included because ELC classes are fairly regimented and teachers will need to be able to adapt activities as they can. Benesch

(1996) describes a process of conducting a needs analysis in which her students had a variety of contradictory demands that influenced their priorities. She points out that the class in question required her to be quite flexible in her approach to learning activities in order to meet the needs of the students in an efficient and practical manner. Considering the fact that teachers at the ELC and in many other contexts deal with students at varying levels of proficiency and, often, with vastly different goals, this flexibility that Benesch utilized is vital to successful teaching. In truth, the principle of flexibility applies to more than vocabulary. However, given its importance to the practical, day-to-day success of teachers, this guiding principle is included in this project.

Process

With four guiding principles for effective vocabulary learning activities set forth, I shall now explain the process used to craft the specifications. This project has used the ADDIE model (Molenda, 2003) as a guide. This model suggests five major stages in the process of creating any kind of instructional material:

Analysis

The analysis portion of this project occurred over a few months. The first step of this analysis occurred during an evaluation meeting. Midway through the first semester with the new curriculum, teachers and curriculum committee members gathered in a formal meeting to discuss the new programs. The objective of this meeting was to address any continuing confusion and questions, highlight aspects of the new curriculum that were working, and verify that all of the instructors were following the curriculum appropriately.

A major concern indicated by teachers during this meeting was how to utilize the vocabulary packets that were provided for their students. Despite the presence of adequate materials for students to become initially familiar with the target AWL items, teachers were still uncertain as to how to meld these materials into class time and homework assignments. This lack of certainty and clarity resulted in the fact that the vocabulary-learning materials were not utilized as originally intended.

As the need for a system of vocabulary instruction and learning became apparent, a round of interviews, both one-on-one and in groups, with teachers and with members of the steering committee of the ELC was conducted. Again, one of the common concerns expressed in these discussions was the lack of any kind of specific instructions as to how to utilize the existing vocabulary learning materials. Another common issue was the fact that teachers are often overwhelmed with the demands placed on them regarding the number of areas to cover in the classroom. Because of these demands, teachers find themselves lacking the time and energy needed to create and implement effective vocabulary learning activities.

With these concerns expressed, along with the continuing need for students to be given direct opportunities to learn items on the AWL list, a need became clear. Through discussions with the Curriculum Coordinator at the ELC, the decision was made to develop a series of specifications that would explicitly and systematically outline the principles and steps involved in creating effective vocabulary-learning activities. These activities would need to meld easily and conveniently with the existing curriculum. With this understanding being reached, the Analysis stage of the ADDIE model was completed.

Design

The Design stage of this process involved several iterations of a document that set down specifications for building vocabulary activities. Multiple factors were considered at this stage. Initially, some basics were defined: the specifications would focus on the Academic Program, particularly the Academic Word List; for the specifications to be effective, they would need to highlight specific principles that should guide vocabulary learning; and the specifications would need to act as a blueprint so that any teacher with any level of ability could quickly and efficiently create a vocabulary learning activity. Identifying the principles to be used required a comprehensive review of current literature, which yielded the four major guiding principles of the specifications. These principles are: the use of a variety of strategies, providing multiple exposures to target words, opportunities for production, and flexibility and practicality in the approach to activity development.

Content of the specifications became an important design question. As principles took shape, it was important to stay focused on providing not just another written resource giving advice but to provide a real tool that could be used. Thus, the decision to include a large number of suggested activities with explanations thereof was made. A further decision was made to create and include a worksheet that laid out steps and crucial features of activity building.

A further design question was concerned with the layout and presentation of the specifications. The projected users of the specifications document include teachers with varying levels of experience, as well as teacher educators and directors of the program. Because the audience for the specifications is potentially quite wide, the decision was made to keep the layout of the specifications very straightforward. Thus, a logical order was established for the content of the specifications document: 1) Context, 2) Need, 3) Principles, 4) Specifications and Activities.

Finally, because the ELC's Academic Program is divided into four skill areas, the specifications include sections devoted specifically to each skill area. These sections include a brief discussion of constraints that affect vocabulary learning in that skill area, the principles that should guide vocabulary learning activities, a set of steps for building vocabulary learning activities and finally a set of suggested activities with detailed explanations of how to build and execute them.

Development

It was decided early in this process that developing raw materials and a scope and sequence for vocabulary activity use would push this project into the realm of impossibility given the time constraints of an MA project. Namely, the MA project is expected to require around ninety hours of work. It is projected that the process of developing the materials would itself take up to ninety hours. However, the development stage still played a crucial role in this project.

With the design and outline of the specifications document set down, the development stage consisted of actually creating the document. This stage involved multiple drafts. Each draft was critiqued with a few major questions in mind:

1. Is the document clear in its layout and is the rationale behind the inclusion of each piece of information transparent?

2. Are there questions that a teacher using these specifications might ask that this iteration does not answer?

3. Is the use of the guiding principles clear for each suggested activity?

4. To what degree does this set of specifications meet the objectives of the project? Will it, in fact, help a teacher design and build an effective vocabulary learning activity with a minimum of time and effort?

The ultimate goal of the project is to provide a practical guide that will not add significantly to teachers' workloads but will still provide teachers with the tools and resources they need to be able to build and utilize effective vocabulary learning activities. The development stage was completed when it was felt that the specifications had reached a point where the opinions of outside raters would be the only way to know if the specifications were meeting their goal of providing a practical, workable tool for IEP teachers.

Implementation

Given that the objective of the project was to create specifications that teachers could use to create effective and practical vocabulary learning activities on their own, the implementation of the project involved several teachers at the ELC. The process of selecting teachers, giving them the opportunity to use the specifications to create a vocabulary learning activity, and discussing with them their experience involved both email communication and face-to-face interaction.

Because the initial pool of teachers who used the specifications was so small, a second round of implementation was completed one month later, at the beginning of a new semester. This second round of implementations was followed by another round of evaluations. This section will treat the two rounds of implementation and the following section will deal with the two rounds of evaluation.

Round one: Implementation.

The implementation process began with an email sent out to all of the teachers at the ELC. Although the specifications are designed for use in the Academic Program rather than in the Foundations Program, this distinction was not made in the first email. It was hoped that by not making this distinction, more teachers might respond and volunteer to help with the implementation of the specifications. The thinking behind this approach was that it was very likely that most teachers at the ELC would eventually teach in the Academic Program, so it would be acceptable for any teacher to use the specifications. This approach turned out to be somewhat ineffective. The total number of volunteers, out of nearly thirty teachers at the ELC, was four. Of these original four volunteers, only one was a teacher in the Academic Program. Because the specifications truly are designed with the AWL in mind, it was expected that teachers who were not working in the Academic Program would not find much use relevant for the specifications. As will be seen in the evaluations section, the expectation that teachers in the Foundations Program would find the specifications somewhat less relevant to their program was borne out.

The first email requested volunteers to help with the implementation and evaluation of the specifications. For the full text of this first email, see Appendix 2 (Email #1). As has been alluded to, only four teachers responded to this first email. All four teachers eventually tried out the specifications. These teachers were asked to proceed with the specifications as follows:

1. Familiarize themselves with the overall system outlined in the specifications.

2. Choose a skill area for which to create a vocabulary-learning or review activity. Skill area refers to the four skill areas in the ELC program: Reading, Writing, Listening/Speaking,

and Grammar. Teachers were asked to choose the skill area that they were teaching at the time.

3. Create an activity that they would feel comfortable using in their classroom. While developing the activity, they were to pay attention to the time they spent doing so.

4. Use the activity created in their classroom.

5. Respond to some interview and survey questions to evaluate their experience.

This approach was effective in that it did not require a major time commitment and the teachers were able to create their activities and implement them based on their own needs and time constraints. They were also able to experiment with the specifications without explanation or other guidance to prepare them. This allowed the experience to be even more authentic in its approximation of the real situations in which teachers usually find themselves. Because these issues epitomize the reality of the situations that the specifications are expected to be used in, this approach was seen as useful.

Despite the effectiveness of the approach, the number of participants in the implementation was inadequate. Because of this, a second round of implementation and evaluation was executed.

Round two: Implementation.

In order to increase participation from volunteers, a new approach to recruiting was planned. After some discussion with both the Director and the Curriculum Coordinator of the ELC, the plan for this second round was made. This plan would consist of the following:

1. A new email requesting assistance would be written by the project developer.

2. This new email would be sent to the Director and the Curriculum Coordinator for their approval.

3. The Director would send the email, the entire text of which can be found in Appendix 2 under Email #2, to the entire faculty of the ELC, informing and reminding the teachers that:

    a. the ELC is a lab school.

    b. collaboration and coordination is an inherent part of the ELC experience.

    c. it was expected that there would be a lot of participation in this project.

    d. there would be a follow-up carried out to ensure plenty of participation.

4. After teachers had responded to this second email, the same approach used in Round One would be followed.

As would be expected, an email from the director of the ELC program generated a far greater response than the response in Round One. Indeed, eight teachers out of twenty who were working in the Academic Program during the Summer semester of 2010 responded within 24 hours. These teachers were asked to follow the same approach that the original group of respondents followed. Namely, they were asked to:

1. Familiarize themselves with the overall system outlined in the specifications.

2. Choose a skill area for which to create a vocabulary-learning or review activity. Teachers were asked to choose the skill area that they were teaching at the time.

3. Create an activity that they would feel comfortable using in their classroom. While developing the activity, they were to pay attention to the time they spent doing so.

4. Use the activity created in their classroom.

5. Respond to some interview and survey questions to evaluate their experience.

An additional request made was that the teachers complete their implementation and respond to survey questions regarding their experience within two weeks.

Evaluation

The evaluation of this project consisted of two rounds, each one following a round of implementation. Before beginning their experience with the specifications, the participating teachers were clearly informed that they would be asked to provide feedback in an interview format or by responding to a survey. Thus, after the implementation had been completed, the teachers were interviewed or were directed to a Qualtrics survey. The set of questions for each teacher was the same. This questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3.

Round one: Evaluation.

As has been mentioned above, four teachers with varying levels of teaching experience volunteered to help implement this project in Round One. As was also mentioned, only one of those original four teachers was a teacher in the Academic Program. Because of the fact that three of the volunteers came from the Foundations Program and one of them came from the Academic Program, the feedback provided by the two sets of teachers was distinctly different.

The Foundations teachers, overall, responded positively to the specifications packet. They said that it was useful to have a centralized and standardized set of principles and guidelines that served to help them build vocabulary learning activities. Furthermore, they particularly enjoyed the numerous specific suggestions for activities included in the packet. However, the common concern of these teachers was that there was not a specific vocabulary list that the specifications related to for the Foundations Program. Thus, they felt that the specifications were not particularly helpful to them in their current teaching situation. This concern did not come as a surprise, considering that the specifications were designed specifically for the AWL.

The single Academic Program teacher gave very similar feedback to that given by the Foundations teachers. Specifically, it was useful to have a straightforward set of principles on which to base activities. It was also useful to have a worksheet with steps for creating an effective vocabulary-learning activity. This teacher stated that the specifications were of good practical use, due to the fact that they specifically related to the AWL.

Both types of teachers reported that they expended very little effort and time in creating a vocabulary learning activity that they were happy with. In fact, the most commonly reported amount of time spent was between ten and twenty minutes. This fulfills a major objective of the project, which is to help teachers create effective activities which minimize inconvenience and maximize flexibility and practicality.

Round two: Evaluation.

The second set of teachers who implemented the specifications tool provided some important feedback. In general, these teachers were able to follow the suggested timeline, which asked them to try the specifications and respond to a questionnaire inside of a two week period, thus their responses to the questionnaire were based on fresh experience.

The questionnaire consisted of three major types of question which related to the overall impression of the guide, most helpful/useful aspect of the guide, and least helpful/useful aspect of the guide. In general, the teachers' responses to the questions indicated that the guide was helpful and that they would use it again given the opportunity.

When asked to rate their overall experience with the survey, using a ten-point scale with 1 indicating a bad experience and 10 indicating a good one, all eight teachers chose six or above. Additionally, teachers responded that the guide was useful and relevant to their specific situation, utilized principles effectively, and was very easy to use. Specifically, teachers' favorite features

of the guide were the wide variety of suggested activities and the inclusion of principles that should be used in activity development.

When asked to indicate areas for improvement, teachers overwhelmingly pointed out that the activities generally needed more explanation and specific instructions as to how to execute them. There was also a request that there be more raw materials available to them for use in their activities, such as posters, more flashcards and thematically-grouped lists.

Finally, the teachers who implemented the specifications varied widely in their experience in the classroom. However, despite this varying experience, all teachers except one reported that, through using the specifications, they were able to create an effective vocabulary learning activity in under twenty minutes.

Modifications

Based on the feedback from teachers involved in both rounds of implementation and evaluation, more activities have been included in the final specifications and the instructions for the activities have been expanded. Essentially, changes were made to the activity descriptions, making them more detailed and clear in how they could be built and executed. Furthermore, the section on each skill area was modified so that it included a concise set of steps and principles that ought to be followed in order to create an effective vocabulary learning activity for the given skill area.

With these changes and enhancements, along with many more activities and their descriptions being added, it is expected that the specifications will become a useful tool at the ELC.

Suggestions for the Future

The specifications crafted through this project outline a systematic approach that teachers can use to create effective vocabulary learning activities. However, in the context of the ELC, there remain many materials that need to be developed in order for teachers' activities to be possible without their making the materials on their own. Thus, it is suggested that a future MA project be performed wherein the candidate creates materials such as flashcards, word usage posters, and a wide variety of other materials that can be used in conjunction with these specifications.

Furthermore, given the crucial nature of learning vocabulary, the ELC might explore the possibility of adding a vocabulary course to their curriculum. Two major options present themselves for how this additional vocabulary course could be implemented. The first possibility is for the course to be added to the list of optional Friday classes that are already offered for a slight fee. This would be a simple approach, as there already exist a mechanism and system for said classes. However, many of these classes have either low or no attendance, given their optional nature. What is more, a class that happens once-a-week and only at the end of the week and just before the weekend might not be up to the task of keeping vocabulary fresh in students' minds. Thus, another suggestion that might work would be for each school day to begin in a vocabulary class of thirty minutes. This class could be taught by a regular ELC teacher and could count, in contract hours, as half of a regular class. The specifications and materials developed in connection with this project could potentially form the basis of the curriculum for the vocabulary classes.

On the subject of additional vocabulary instruction, there is another option that would not involve the use of classroom resources. This would be weekly assigned homework for students

to spend at least thirty minutes on a website, such as www.quizlet.com, using multi-media flashcards to gain their first introduction to the week's target AWL words. Advantages to this approach include the elimination of a need to allocate resources for a new class and the simplicity and customizability of student-led, independently completed homework.

In addition to the suggestions mentioned above, two ideas for changes in the approach to learning and teaching vocabulary have arisen in connection with this project. The first is to add a new method for creating AWL sub-lists. Teachers might find it easier to create association-based activities if the AWL were broken down into small sub-lists wherein the words related. This would be time-consuming given the non-thematic nature of the AWL words; however, this could be a major facet of a project conducted by a future MA candidate. The second idea is that it would be extremely helpful to produce AWL sub-lists that include L1 glosses for the most common L1s present at the ELC, and then these lists should be made available to teachers and students.

Conclusion

Upon completing the initial process, some aspects of the specifications appeared to be very effective and useful, while several areas, specifically the activities and their descriptions, had been identified as needing improvement. Most importantly, however, teachers found the specifications to be useful and many of those who used the specifications expressed a desire to use them again in the future. Furthermore, the presence of guiding principles added to the usefulness of the specifications. One teacher pointed out that he felt greater confidence in his activity, due to the fact that he had built it with the guiding principles in mind. Moreover, the

success of the specifications at the ELC indicates that this type of tool has the potential for a wider application in other ESL and EFL contexts.

The catalyst for this project was a lack of certainty in teachers as to how academic vocabulary ought to be taught in the ELC classrooms. As was mentioned previously, this issue became clear through interviews. What has not been mentioned is that through ongoing interaction with ESL teachers, another problem has been identified: a lack of conversion to the idea that vocabulary can be taught effectively in the classroom. However, based on the feedback received from teachers who used the specifications, and based on my own experience in this project, a real difference can be made with this project.

Due to the need to sift through large amounts of research that focuses on effective L2 vocabulary teaching, I have found that many teachers around the world are having success. This is heartening. Furthermore, while the four principles distilled from the literature are by no means the only good principles out there, they certainly form a solid foundation upon which to build vocabulary learning activities. Teachers who might need greater confidence, knowledge, or only ideas can benefit from a document that clearly outlines fundamental principles of good vocabulary learning activities in conjunction with a specific plan for how to build those activities. Add to these features substantial lists of suggested activities and these specifications can be expected to be of real, practical assistance to teachers at any level of experience and in any program. Essentially, these specifications arm teachers, whether at the ELC or in other IEPs, with fundamentals and specifics that will help them realize their objectives of teaching vocabulary, without placing further onerous burdens upon them.

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Part 2: The Project

The Specifications

Specifications for the Development of Effective Academic Vocabulary Activities in Intensive English Programs

A Master's Project by Jared Nathan Garrett

Academic Word List Instruction— Specifications for Materials Development

Executive Summary

The Why

The English Language Center has recently restructured its curriculum to consist of two programs that are designed to more specifically meet the needs of students. One of those programs is the Academic Program, which aims to help students prepare to be successful in universities where instruction is in English. A chief feature of the Academic Program is the Academic Word List; students in this program are expected to gain at least 80% receptive and productive mastery of these words. Indeed, the Academic Program includes a regular assessment system to gauge the students' progress with these target words. However, currently there is no systematic way to go about teaching students in the Academic Program the items on the Academic Word List (AWL). In other words, teachers are currently left to their own devices to create learning activities and materials to use in vocabulary instruction and practice. These teachers are generally capable teachers who simply do not have the time to devote to specialized study of vocabulary learning research and development of effective materials.

This project provides teachers with a resource for effectively teaching the AWL.

The What

This project is a set of specifications, or blueprints, for the creation and implementation of effective vocabulary learning and practice activities. For this project, *specifications* refer to guidelines that can be used by various teachers to create consistently effective vocabulary learning activities. Both experienced and novice teachers will have no trouble using the specifications as a guide to developing useful vocabulary-learning materials.

These specifications set forth a systematic approach to teaching the AWL items. Included also are some suggested materials and activities that can be used to help teachers in the instruction of these words.

The Who

This set of specifications and the abovementioned sample materials are designed for use at the ELC by ELC teachers. Furthermore, the materials that are developed as part of this project will be flexible and practical enough that any teacher can use them easily. In summary: the *who* for this project is any teacher at the ELC. While the current project is context-specific, this set of specification is principles-based. Because these principles are true in any context, there is plenty of potential for these specifications to be utilized in a wide variety of L2 teaching situations.

The How

The specifications are essentially detailed plans with which a teacher can develop consistent and effective vocabulary building activities. Included in the specifications are suggested activities and an explanation of the principles that make those activities effective. These specifications set forth detailed instructions on how to develop the materials and activities being suggested.

The materials are packets of activities that have been hand-developed for use by the teachers. Given that the primary focus of this project is to create essentially a set of blueprints for future materials development, the sample materials are limited.

Introduction

The ELC

These specifications relate to vocabulary instruction, specifically instruction and practice of the 570 AWL items, at the English Language Center at Brigham Young University. While there is certainly a potentially broader application for guidelines on developing powerful vocabulary-learning materials, these specifications are designed with the ELC in mind. Thus, it is useful to understand the system—its constraints, sequence and layout—before getting to the specifications themselves.

The ELC's population consists of adult students of English who come from all over the world. These students have a wide variety of proficiency levels and also study at the ELC with different goals. In order to cater to these students' needs, the ELC has divided its curriculum into two major programs: Foundations and Academic. The Foundations program focuses on enabling students from the lowest levels to what might be referred to as intermediate or upper-intermediate to use English at its fundamental and mostly for communicative purposes. The Academic program focuses on preparing students to succeed in post-secondary education settings where English is the language of instruction.

Both programs are divided into three levels. For Foundations, these are Foundations A, B, and C. Likewise, Academic A, B, And C are the levels for the other program. Each program also has a 'Prep' level for those students whose diagnostic scores do not definitively place them in the lowest level of the programs. Furthermore, classes in Foundations are divided into four major skill areas: Oral Communication Accuracy, Oral Communication Fluency, Reading, and Writing & Structure. Academic-program classes are divided into the four skill areas of: Linguistic Accuracy, Listening/Speaking, Reading and Writing.

An example can help ground this explanation in real world terms. It is conceivable that a student might arrive at the ELC with very minimal exposure to English and be placed in Foundations Prep. The student's first semester would then be spent entirely on mastering the objectives of the Foundations Prep level. This student could then move up through each level of the Foundations

program, with each level's duration lasting a semester and then, if proficiency levels are adequate, move to the Academic program. Upon starting the Academic program, the student studies somewhat different skill areas designed to prepare him for university-level studies where English is the medium of instruction. Given adequate proficiency scores, the student advances through one level per semester.

Another, more common example is for a student to be placed in a level inside of a program and spend that first semester in that level, focusing on each skill area's objectives for that level. If the end-of-semester proficiency scores are sufficient, the student then advances until she has either accomplished her personal goals, such as passing the TOEFL, or she leaves the ELC.

As for the teachers at the ELC, they primarily come from a pool of TESOL and Language Acquisition Masters Degree candidates in BYU's programs. Teachers must complete a TESOL Certificate program before they can qualify to teach at the ELC. Teaching at the ELC serves as both part-time employment and a practicum for these students to apply what they learn in their program. Due to the transient nature of this situation—graduate students might only spend from one to four semesters teaching at the ELC—the program has quite an eclectic mixture of teachers. These teachers vary greatly in their experience, abilities and in their native languages.

With all of this being said, there are several general constraints that these specifications and materials work under:
1. Teachers do not have much time to spend adapting to the ELC's unique instructional system.
2. All instructions and sample materials should be extremely transparent and detailed to facilitate teachers' success.
3. Learners have a variety of needs and proficiency levels.
4. Teachers do not have much time to focus on vocabulary, but spend most of their class time on skill and strategy building.
5. Only students in the Academic program work with AWL items. These materials, thus, focus entirely on the Academic program.

Vocabulary Learning in the Academic Program

One of the primary purposes of the Academic Program at the ELC is to prepare students to succeed in universities where English is the language of instruction. Indeed, a major objective of the Academic program is that students will gain mastery of the 570 AWL items by the time students finish the program.

To facilitate instruction, the ELC has randomly divided the AWL into ten sub-lists. Nine of these sub-lists have sixty words and the last sub-list has thirty. The sub-lists have also been divided into sub-list halves that number thirty words. The sub-list halves are labeled AWL SL1A (Academic Word List Sub-List 1A), AWL SL1B (Academic Word List Sub-List 1B) AWL SL2B and so on. To sum up, there are ten sub-lists and nineteen total sub-list halves.

The first ten sub-list halves, from AWL SL1A to AWL SL5B, are covered throughout the Academic A program's semester of instruction. Likewise, the last nine sub-list halves, from AWL 6A to AWL SL10A are covered throughout the Academic B program's semester of instruction. Finally, students in Academic C are expected to have been exposed to all nineteen of the sub-lists before they begin their Academic C semester, so these students review all 570 words on the AWL.

In addition to setting forth principles and methodologies for the learning of vocabulary, the guidelines included herein describe multiple approaches and activities for each sub-list half. It is expected that sometime in the future another graduate student or other interested parties will develop individual packets of activities for each sub-list half—potentially basing these packets on the suggested activities and the specifications explained herein.

Guiding Principles

The specifications included in this document are based on principles illuminated by current research. Each of the guiding principles below will be identified by a box icon throughout this document to illustrate the principle(s) guiding the activities described. Many activities are designed to accommodate most of these guiding principles.

The guiding principles behind these specifications and sample materials come from experts on the subject of L2 vocabulary learning. The first principle is that successful language students utilize a wide variety of strategies to learn and retain new vocabulary (Folse, 2004; Gardner, 2007). The second principle states that it is through multiple salient, or in other words, accessible and meaningful, exposures to a word and its various collocations that a student can gain mastery of that word (Folse, 2004; Jenkins, Stein & Wysocki, 1984; Gardner, 2008). Thirdly, practice must include production activities to help students be successful in their word learning (Nation, 2001). This implies that utilizing only receptive knowledge activities is inadequate. The final guiding principle states that for the activities to be useful to teachers at the ELC, the activities must be flexible and practical. This is because ELC classes are quite strictly regimented and teachers will need to be able to adapt activities as they can (Benesch, 1996).

S
- A wide variety of **strategies**

E
- Multiple meaningful **exposures** to words in accessible context

P
- Practice includes **production**

F/P
- Activities must be **flexible** and **practical**

The overall approach of the vocabulary-learning materials that are based on these specifications must be one that creates a pedagogical context that enables learners to glean meaning (Beck, McKeown & McCaslin, 1983).

Because ELC teachers are faced with multiple issues and challenges that demand their attention, it is necessary to explicitly state expectations with regards to AWL instruction. Reading teachers will introduce each AWL sub-list half. They will also take some time during the week to review a previously introduced list. Additionally, the other skill areas will spend at least ten minutes per week reviewing a given sub-list half—which sub-list half will be determined by a rotating schedule. The overall objective for the time spent on AWL instruction and practice should be to strengthen students in their ability to understand and use the target items. Thus, this practice time ought to provide repeated exposures to words and opportunities to practice using those words in various contexts.

In conclusion, ten minutes spent on vocabulary per week in each skill area is limited. Thus, teachers should take advantage of vocabulary learning and strengthening opportunities as they arise. For example, if a Listening/Speaking teacher is working with students on speech required for a class presentation, the teacher could ask students to use a few AWL items that relate to transitions and organization in their dialogues. Additionally, all activities described herein would function well as warm-ups, attention-getting activities, and strategy/skill training.

Skill Areas

Reading Skill Area

Known and expected constraints in regards to vocabulary instruction in Reading classes include:
- 10-15 minutes, one day per week, to introduce each sub-list half
- one new sub-list half per week
- 10-15 minutes each week to review previously learned AWL items
- not all reading material will align thematically, so repeated exposure to words will need to be deliberately planned

Academic Program Reading teachers will:
- Bear primary responsibility for vocabulary introduction and reinforcement
- Introduce the target AWL items through:
  - Initial pronunciation modeling
  - Initial comprehension assistance using L1 glosses, simplified definitions, teacher explanations, gestures, or images
- Reinforce comprehension and retention by utilizing:
  - AWL reading passages
  - Activities to produce and recognize target AWL items

Specifications for Vocabulary Activities in the Reading Skill Area

I. Use the following principles.
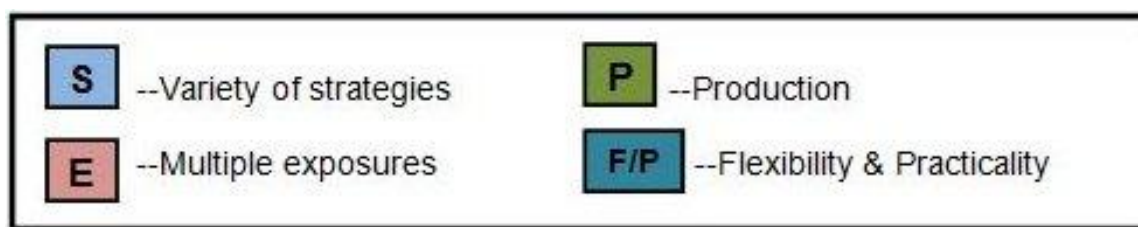
II. Identify experiential objectives (the phrase *experiential objectives* is used at the ELC to refer to objectives regarding what actions the students will take)

    eg: Students will identify good and bad word usage
        Students will practice pronouncing target words

III. Identify performance objectives (the phrase *performance objectives* is used at the ELC to refer to objectives regarding the level at which students can perform)

    eg: Students will identify correct word usage with 80% accuracy
        Students will produce target words with natural pronunciation

IV. Determine how much time you will devote to the activity
       A. Consider your daily objectives
       B. Consider activity's objectives

V. Settle upon a base activity
       A. Option 1: Generate an original activity
           i. Decide upon the basic performance of the activity (game, recognition, matching, guessing, etc.)
           ii. Build your activity on a foundation of the principles described above
       B. Option 2: Identify an existing activity
           i. Draw from your experience or the list of suggested activities, included below
           ii. Keep the guiding principles in mind as you proceed
       C. Remember that reading does not easily lend itself to production, however, it is important to create activities that do require production in order to overcome this challenge

VI. Adapt activity to better meet your students' needs
       A. Consider your students' level and social abilities
       B. Remember to be creative in building activities that require production

VII. Materials
       A. Gather existing materials from the Teacher's Resource Library
       B. Adapt any materials as needed for your specific activity

VIII. Execution
       A. Plan how you will present the activity
       B. You might want to identify an informal script to follow in order to present the activity clearly and avoid repetition
       C. Be aware of your time

Suggested Activities for Reading Classes

(Note: Icons for the Guiding Principles are included in the order that each activity utilizes each principle. In other words, if an activity utilizes a variety of strategies more than other principles, the **S** icon will appear first.)

1) <u>Vocabulary Introductions</u>   **S**   **E**   **P**   **F/P**

In general, the students' initial encounter with the target words will consist of providing a list of the target words along with a list of accessible English glosses (Dictionary definitions that have been somewhat simplified might be best). This introduction can take a variety of formats:

- Students can go through the list of words, highlighting only those words that they feel they do not know yet. They can then study the glosses provided individually or as a class.

- At some point during the initial encounter with the words, pronunciation should be modeled. This could be done by the teacher or with a prepared recording.

- The list of words can be sectioned and divided amongst a few groups in the class. Each group can then study their section. After a few minutes, each group teaches the rest of the class the words in their section.

- The introduction to the words can simply be done as a class, word by word.

- As part of the introduction, students can create a word wall entry for each word on the list. This can be done as a class or in groups.

Important: Students should be exposed to the list, pronunciations, and the words' glosses before any contextual reading is done.

2) Association: **E** **P**

To review a sub-list of words, or perhaps more than one sub-list, students can participate in an activity to group the words through the process of association. For this to be effective, the teacher will need to provide a trigger word and some examples from the list of word of some associations with that trigger word.

Example
Students are presented with a list of 30 words. These words are included:

rigid   military   unified   ethical   initial

The teacher provides a trigger word of 'Army.' The teacher then says that an army has **rigid** rules and is a part of a country's **military**. The army is supposed to be **unified** and they are supposed to be **ethical** in their actions.

This is an association activity that shows some relation between four of those five words. Clearly, these relationships only function in the context of 'Army,' and other associations are possible in other contexts. After teachers have demonstrated this activity, teachers can then choose to provide contexts, or trigger words, or can ask students to generate their own contexts and then place associate target words independently.

3) Association posters: E   F/P

With the above activity in mind, it would be useful for a teacher to prepare poster-sized illustrations of associated and relationships. With these posters prepared, the teacher can quickly and conveniently demonstrate how association activities can be done, leaving more time for students to practice. What is more, these posters can remain on the walls of the classroom for later practice.

> **ARMY**
>
> **rigid   military   unified   ethical**
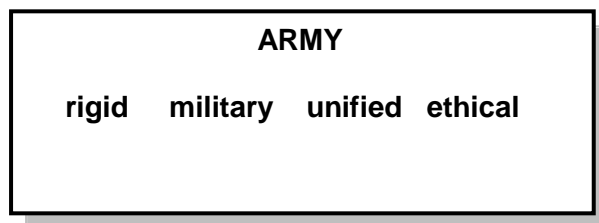
Note that if there is space left on the poster for more words that can be associated to the context, those words can be added to the poster as they arise.

4) Automatic recognition: S   P

Pre-made laminated flashcards of each target AWL item can be used for this activity. These flashcards are available in room 103. Working with an entire sub-list—sixty words—students are divided into pairs and each pair might receive as many as ten flashcards. One student holds the pile of flashcards and flashes the top card at her partner as quickly as she can. The partner must quickly recognize the word and say what it is. This can enhance automaticity.

There are many options for tools that can be used to create these flashcards. One of the more useful tools for flashcard creation and activities is www.quizlet.com. This website allows

teachers to input words and definitions, as well as appropriate, related images to build web-based flashcards. Additionally, users can print the flashcards they build. Then it is a simple matter to have the printed cards laminated.

5) <u>Jeopardy</u>: **E** **S**

Using flash cards that display the use of target AWL items, students must identify good and bad usages for given target words. This could be done in a 'Jeopardy' format with the target words acting as the category titles and the points spaces being filled with the samples.

Sample flashcards might look like this:

Front→

> **Esteban dislikes the <u>rigid</u> rules of the military.**

Back→

> **Good**

Front→

> **Esteban wants to be <u>rigid</u>.**

Back→

> **Bad**

To play Jeopardy with these flashcards, the teacher can choose up to ten target words to work with. The teacher then makes up to five sentences for each word, with at least two of the sentences using the target word incorrectly. These sentences should be on flashcards. Next, the teacher arranges the flashcards in columns, with the target word indicated at the top of each column. The flashcards should be placed with their sentences facing out.

With the cards arranged, the students are divided into two or three teams. One team is selected to go first. The team chooses a target word and then indicates which sentence they would like to

evaluate. The team then has a time limit in which they must indicate whether the usage is good or bad. Correct answers are awarded points.

A final, crucial point to be made about Jeopardy and other activities that demonstrate target words in context is that teachers must be aware of the other words that are included in the context. For example, in the above flashcards, the word 'military' is used. Before deciding to use this word, the teacher should be certain that his or her students already know that word in order to facilitate a focus on the target words.

6) <u>Web-based flashcards</u>:   `E`   `S`   `F/P`

Internet-based flashcard drills and games can be built and manipulated on www.quizlet.com. All of the AWL items can be found on this website. Simply go to the site, search for "Academic Word List" and scroll through the choices of flashcard sets until you find one you like and wish to use. This type of activity can be done during a regular or periodic time in the computer lab.

7) <u>Definitions galore</u>:   `E`   `S`   `F/P`

Use the website: http://www.uefap.com/vocab/select/awl.htm to learn words in the AWL word families. This website also includes hyperlinks to the definition for each AWL item. Teachers can require students to spend a certain amount of homework time on this website. Teachers might also spend some time in the computer lab on this website.

8) <u>Hangman:</u>   `P`   `F/P`   `E`

It is important to remember that some students might not be familiar with this game, and some might even have a cultural aversion to it. Be sensitive!

Hangman is a simple game that allows students to focus on word form rather than meaning. Because of this, the game should be fast-paced so that students do not lose interest and so that they gain valuable skills from it.

To play Hangman, simply choose a word off the target list, do not allow the students to refer to any list, and have them take turns, either in turns or individually, guessing letters. When a team or individual guesses a word correctly, a point is awarded. Another point should be awarded to the team or individual who can use the word correctly in a sentence.

Writing Skill Area

Known and expected constraints in regards to vocabulary instruction in Writing classes include:
- limited class time available for vocabulary practice
- limited homework time for vocabulary-focused tasks
- materials that do not always easily lend themselves to explicit vocabulary instruction
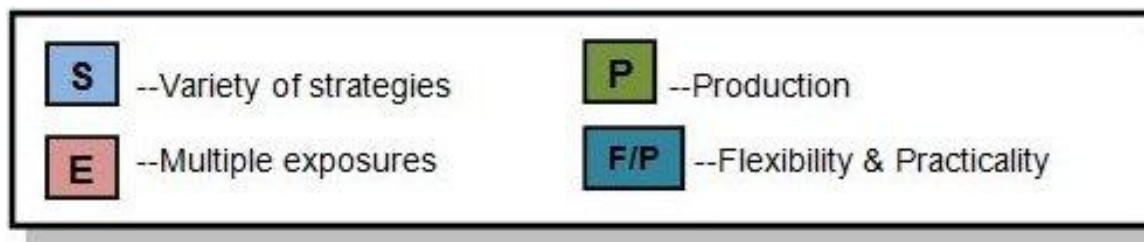
Academic Program Writing teachers will:
- bear major responsibility for vocabulary reinforcement through:
  - Recognition and production activities
  - Informal and formal reviews of meanings and usage
- review one sub-list half per week, as dictated by the rotating schedule
- spend at least ten minutes on vocabulary review each week
- seek and utilize other opportunities to reinforce vocabulary retention in regular classroom activities such as writing exercises

NOTE: ESL learners consistently cite lack of vocabulary knowledge as a major impediment to their writing in English (Folse, 2004). Because of this, it is vital for writing teachers to spend some dedicated time strengthening students' vocabulary.

Specifications for Vocabulary Activities in the Writing Skill Area

I. Use the following principles.

| S | --Variety of strategies | P | --Production |
| E | --Multiple exposures | F/P | --Flexibility & Practicality |

II. Identify experiential objectives (the phrase *experiential objectives* is used at the ELC to refer to objectives regarding what actions the students will take)

    eg: Students will write use words in two phrases
             Students will include three target words in a free-write

III. Identify performance objectives (the phrase *performance objectives* is used at the ELC to refer to objectives regarding the level at which students can perform)

    eg: Students will use words in writing with 90% accuracy
             Students will demonstrate ability to fluently use target words

IV. Determine how much time you will devote to the activity

        A. Consider your daily objectives
        B. Consider activity's objectives

V. Settle upon a base activity
        A. Option 1: Generate an original activity
            i. Decide upon the basic performance of the activity (game, recognition, matching, guessing, etc.)
            ii. Build your activity on a foundation of the principles described above
        B. Option 2: Identify an existing activity
            i. Draw from your experience or the list of suggested activities, included below
            ii. Keep the guiding principles in mind as you proceed
        C. Because writing is a challenge, it can be useful to use the same activity more than once.

VI. Adapt activity to better meet your students' needs
        A. Consider your students' level and social abilities
        B. With writing, it is helpful to use a competitive game to increase fluency

VII. Materials
        A. Gather existing materials from the Teacher's Resource Library
        B. Adapt any materials as needed for your specific activity

VIII. Execution
        A. Plan how you will present the activity
        B. You might want to identify an informal script to follow in order to present the activity clearly and avoid repetition
        C. Be aware of your time

Suggested Activities for Writing Classes

(Note: Icons for the Guiding Principles are included in the order that each activity utilizes each principle. In other words, if an activity utilizes a variety of strategies more than other principles, the **S** icon will appear first.)

1) <u>**Sentence completion**</u>:   **P**   **F/P**   **E**   **S**

Students form pairs and are given a list of partially completed sentences that need an AWL target word and a few other words to be completed. Students also receive a list of AWL items that can be used in the sentences. They must complete each sentence—if they can use more than one of the target words in a single sentence—that is fine. First pair to turn in perfect sentences with perfectly used target items wins! This could be done in larger groups as well.

2) <u>Short writing</u>:   P   F/P   E   S

Students do this activity individually. Teachers select a writing prompt from a list of prompts, which can be TOEFL prompts or Ten-minute Paragraph prompts, and direct the students to write for a certain amount of time or to a certain length on the subject. Attached to each prompt should also be a set of three to as many as ten AWL target words which the students should try to use in their writing. Teachers should specify a minimum number of target words that the students need to use in their work. The teacher collects the pieces and uses them as a guide for further review of target items.

Teachers will need to spend some time preparing for this activity. When the teacher chooses the prompts from which the students will write, the teacher will also need to select appropriate AWL target words that can realistically be used in a paragraph on that topic. These words should be attached to the prompts.

3) <u>Odd man out</u>:   P   F/P   E   S

Students are presented with several sets of target AWL items and must determine which word does not fit with the others.

Example:

> **Circle the word that does not belong in this set:**
>
> elements   features   impacts   characteristics

Eventually, these sets will be pre-made as part of the module materials. However, in the interim, teachers will need to spend some time grouping words like those above. This activity can be done as a worksheet with several groupings of words or as a game or whole-class activity using a chalkboard or digital projector.

4) <u>Partial cloze:</u>   P   F/P   E   S

Students receive a list of sentences with the target AWL item removed. However, in order to keep focus on target items, and to mitigate the problem with synonyms, the first two-to-three letters of the target AWL item should remain. Students must correctly fill in the gaps in the sentences. There could be a word bank provided, or the word bank can be omitted.

Example:

Complete the sentences by writing in the correct word from the AWL:

John was late; he arrived ten minutes after the meeting <u>com   </u>.

If a teacher does not want to provide the first two or three letters of the target word, then it would be most effective to use the list of sentences and provide a limited bank of words from which students will choose to fill the blanks.

Until the time that these materials are all pre-made, the teacher will need to spend some time gathering sentences that use AWL words. It is probably easiest to simply create these sentences oneself.

5) <u>Definition matching:</u>   P   F/P   E   S

Definition matching is a low cognitive level skill. All that it requires is a list of target AWL items and a separate list of the definitions of those words. These lists can be in two separate columns on a single piece of paper. The students then simply draw a line between the word and its definition.

Example:

1. rigid

2. data

3. commence

4. analysis

a. to begin or start something, usually a meeting or event

b. firm or unbending in manner or rules

c. breaking down something into its parts in order to understand the whole

d. information, usually in number or another quantifiable format

Linguistic Accuracy Skill Area

Known and expected constraints in regards to vocabulary instruction in Linguistic Accuracy classes include:
- limited class time available for vocabulary practice
- due to focus on grammar rather than words, limited homework time for vocabulary-focused tasks
- materials that are essentially student-produced

Academic Program Linguistic Accuracy teachers will:
- spend at minimum 10 minutes each week on vocabulary strengthening activities
- help students to increase word recognition and their ability to manipulate the words through:
    - brief encounters with AWL words in short writing exercises
    - exposing students to multiple collocations
- review one sub-list half per week, as dictated by the rotating schedule
- seek and utilize other opportunities to reinforce vocabulary retention in regular classroom activities such as writing exercises

Specifications for Vocabulary Activities in the Linguistic Accuracy Skill Area

I. Use the following principles.
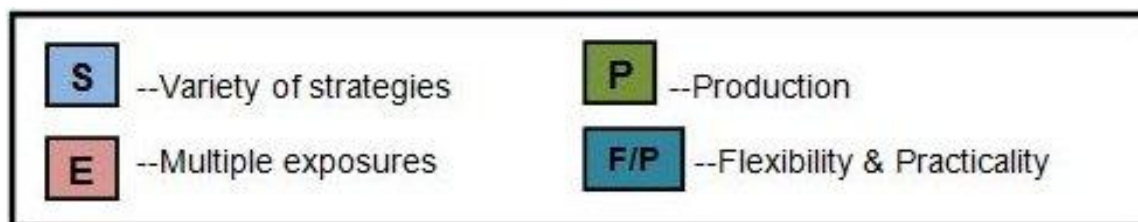
II. Identify experiential objectives (the phrase *experiential objectives* is used at the ELC to refer to objectives regarding what actions the students will take)
    eg: Students will identify good and bad word usage
            Students will use four target words in a ten-minute essay

III. Identify performance objectives (the phrase *performance objectives* is used at the ELC to refer to objectives regarding the level at which students can perform)
    eg: Students will identify correct target word usage with 80% accuracy
            Students will demonstrate fluency in use of target words in writing

IV. Determine how much time you will devote to the activity
    A. Consider your daily objectives
    B. Consider activity's objectives

C. You should have more time to review words in Linguistic Accuracy than in other classes

V. Settle upon a base activity
    A. Option 1: Generate an original activity
        i. Decide upon the basic performance of the activity (game, recognition, matching, guessing, etc.)
        ii. Build your activity on a foundation of the principles described above
    B. Option 2: Identify an existing activity
        i. Draw from your experience or the list of suggested activities, included below
        ii. Keep the guiding principles in mind as you proceed

VI. Adapt activity to better meet your students' needs
    A. Consider your students' level and social abilities
    B. With Linguistic Accuracy, try not to combine word reviews with grammar lessons

VII. Materials
    A. Gather existing materials from the Teacher's Resource Library
    B. Adapt any materials as needed for your specific activity

VIII. Execution
    A. Plan how you will present the activity
    B. You might want to identify an informal script to follow in order to present the activity clearly and avoid repetition
    C. Be aware of your time

Suggested Activities for Linguistic Accuracy Classes

(Note: Icons for the Guiding Principles are included in the order that each activity utilizes each principle. In other words, if an activity utilizes a variety of strategies more than other principles, the **S** icon will appear first.)

1) Complete the Sentences: **P** **E** **S**

The teacher provides a list of three or more sentences for the target words. Next, the students fill in a gap in a fifth sentence with a model correct sentence. Last, the students create a sixth model sentence on their own.

Example:

The scientist performed an analysis of the unusual chemical.

Police are waiting for the evidence analysis to come back before they make an arrest.

An analysis of Donne's poetry helps us understand his belief system.

Do you agree with his _____ of the _____ data? (Where should 'analysis' be placed?)

_____

(Now you write your own sentence using 'analysis' correctly.)

2) <u>Usage Flashcards:</u>   E   S   F/P

Utilize flashcards that include multiple sentences for each target word in games or drills of various types. Games can include Jeopardy, Odd Man Out, or Word-Head, which are all described in detail in other sections. These games can be done in pairs, groups or teams. These flashcards would also be useful as a 'Sentence Wall.'

3) <u>Usage Odd Man Out</u>:   F/P   E   S

Distinguish between good and bad sentences using target words. This can be done by using the Sentence Flashcards in the above activity. An important note is that the 'bad' sentences must be difficult to figure out—in other words, they cannot be silly distracters.

Here is an example of an ineffective bad usage:
Han felt like his rigid was not very pleasant.

Here is an example of bad usage that will help students learn rules:
My father's rules rigid make me upset sometimes.

4) <u>Ten Minute or TOEFL Response Writing</u>:   P   E   S   F/P

Students can be asked to write responses to TOEFL prompts and utilize a given number of target AWL words in their responses. Each prompt on the list of TOEFL prompts will have suggested AWL words that might fit into a response thereto. As mentioned in a previous activity, the teacher will need to spend some time selecting a set of words that thematically match the TOEFL prompt they will use.

5) <u>Crossword puzzles</u>:　　F/P　　E　　S　　P

These can be completed to help students get a more complete handle on the highest frequency sense of each target AWL word. Every sub-list half of the AWL has a crossword puzzle already prepared for it in the packets students currently receive. However, the definitions currently provided as clues could benefit from some simplification in many cases.

It is important to note that the definitions provided refer to the highest frequency meaning for each word.

Furthermore, if a teacher would like to create his or her own crossword, there are plenty of resources available to assist:

http://www.crosswordpuzzlegames.com/create.html
http://www.supercrosswordcreator.com/?gclid=CJikr92Mg6ICFQlZiAodrmCDDg

6) <u>Musical Spellings</u>:　　E　　P　　F/P

This game is similar to musical chairs. The teacher can arrange the students in chairs, in a circle. The students must pass around a ball or other object while music is playing. When the music stops, the student holding the object must spell the target word of the teacher's choosing.

When doing the Musical Spellings activity, it is important to understand from the outset that this activity might not necessarily be the best use of your time. It is certain that the students are being exposed to the target words, they are producing them, and this activity can be very flexible. However, it is also certain that much of the time spent doing this game will essentially be music playing. Thus, it is advisable to only do this game as a warm-up and very rarely. On the other hand, a creative teacher might be able to find a way to enhance participation in this game.

7) <u>Spelling Bee</u>: `E` `P` `F/P`

This is conducted in the same manner as traditional spelling bees. All students are competing to win. Each student must spell a word correctly—if they fail, they are eliminated. The last student to spell a target word correctly wins the game.

Much like activity 6 above, Musical Spellings, this activity will lend itself to less participation from the students. You will want to either use it very rarely, creatively find a way to enhance participation, or perhaps combine it with another activity.

8) <u>Hangman:</u> `P` `F/P` `E`

It is important to remember that some students might not be familiar with this game, and some might even have a cultural aversion to it. Be sensitive!

Hangman is a simple game that allows students to focus on word form rather than meaning. Because of this, the game should be fast-paced so that students do not lose interest and so that they gain valuable skills from it. However, it can be useful for classes and individuals who struggle with spelling.

To play Hangman, simply choose a word off the target list; do not allow the students to refer to any list; and have them take turns, either in turns or individually, guessing letters. When a team or individual guesses a word correctly, a point is awarded. Another point should be awarded to the team or individual who can use the word correctly in a sentence.

Listening/Speaking Skill Area

Known and expected constraints in regards to vocabulary instruction in Listening/Speaking classes include:
- class focus on communication strategies and academic skills such as debate
- very limited time inside the demanding objectives
- material that focuses on content and speaking skill rather than vocabulary

Academic Program Listening/Speaking teachers will:
- spend at minimum 10 minutes each week on vocabulary strengthening activities
- help students to increase AWL word recognition and their ability to manipulate the words through a variety of games and activities, generally as warm-up or attention-getting activities.
- review one sub-list half per week, as dictated by the rotating schedule
- seek and utilize other opportunities to reinforce vocabulary retention in regular classroom activities such as presentations and debates

Specifications for Vocabulary Activities in the Listening/Speaking Skill Area

I. Use the following principles.
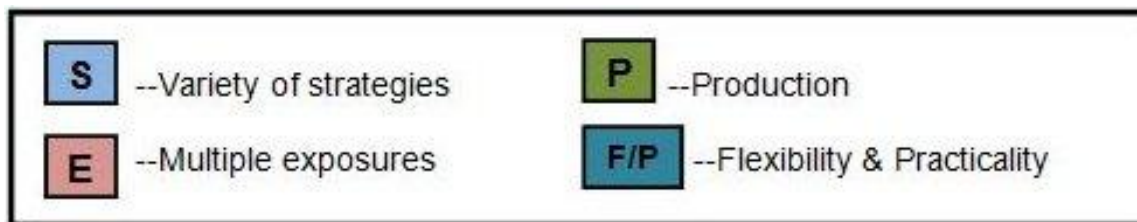
II. Identify experiential objectives (the phrase *experiential objectives* is used at the ELC to refer to objectives regarding what actions the students will take)

     eg: Students will identify use target words in spoken conversation
             Students will practice pronouncing target words

III. Identify performance objectives (the phrase *performance objectives* is used at the ELC to refer to objectives regarding the level at which students can perform)

     eg: Students will use target words correctly and fluently
             Students will produce target words with natural pronunciation

IV. Determine how much time you will devote to the activity
        A. Consider your daily objectives
        B. Consider activity's objectives

V. Settle upon a base activity
        A. Option 1: Generate an original activity

       i. Decide upon the basic performance of the activity (game, recognition, matching, guessing, etc.)

       ii. Build your activity on a foundation of the principles described above

    B. Option 2: Identify an existing activity

       i. Draw from your experience or the list of suggested activities, included below

       ii. Keep the guiding principles in mind as you proceed

    C. Plenty of games can be played with vocabulary

VI. Adapt activity to better meet your students' needs

    A. Consider your students' level and social abilities

    B. It can be useful to model pronunciation of more difficult words before beginning your activity

VII. Materials

    A. Gather existing materials from the Teacher's Resource Library

    B. Adapt any materials as needed for your specific activity

VIII. Execution

    A. Plan how you will present the activity

    B. You might want to identify an informal script to follow in order to present the activity clearly and avoid repetition

    C. Be aware of your time

Suggested Activities for Listening/Speaking Classes

(Note: Icons for the Guiding Principles are included in the order that each activity utilizes each principle. In other words, if an activity utilizes a variety of strategies more than other principles, the [S] icon will appear first.)

1) Word-Head: [F/P] [E] [S] [P]

This activity requires students to work in pairs. Each pair receives ten or more flashcards (there should be an even number). Each member of the pair gets half of the pile. One student places a flashcard against his forehead so he cannot see it but his partner can. His partner then describes, defines, or provides a synonym for the word. The partner needs to do this well enough for the person with the card on the forehead to be able to guess the word. When all pairs have completed their pile of flashcards, the piles rotate to the next pair. The activity continues until all pairs have worked with all piles of cards or until the time for the activity is used up.

2) <u>Guess the Word:</u>   F/P   E   S   P

This is a verbal version of Pictionary, but reversed. Divide the class into two teams. One person from each team goes to the chalkboard but then turns his or her back to the chalkboard. The teacher then writes an AWL word on the board and each person's team must describe the word well enough so that the person at the front can guess the word. The first team to guess the word wins a point. Game continues until a winner is determined and/or the sub-list is complete.

3) <u>Guess the Word #2:</u>   F/P   E   S   P

Students are divided into pairs or small groups. The teacher tells students which sub-list half will be used for this activity. Students take turns reading a definition or synonym of a given word and the other(s) in their small group or pair must guess the correct word. Another variation is for students to read correct sentences with target AWL items in them aloud, but excluding the AWL word. The other team members must then guess the word left out.

4) <u>Debates:</u>   F/P   E   S   P

Debates are an effective way to draw students into a communicative, problem-solving task. The AWL is easily melded into debates by choosing a topic that relates to the themes of the reading passages for each sub-list half. Once an appropriate debate topic is chosen, the teacher can then select thematically related AWL items and direct students to use a given number of the AWL items in their debate position arguments.

5) <u>Musical Basket:</u>   E   P

Materials needed: A CD Player and musical CD (any); a set of target AWL items printed and cut into strips (only the words).

The teacher gathers a set of target AWL items into a small, easy-to-hold basket, then arranges the students in a circle, sitting. Music begins to be played and the students must pass the basket around the circle. When the music is stopped, the student holding the basket must pull a strip of paper out of the basket and use the word on the strip in a sentence correctly. If the student fails,

they must replace the word strip. If the student succeeds, they may keep the word strip. At the end of the game, the student with the most word strips wins.

Variation: If a student fails to use the word correctly, the student is eliminated. Last student sitting wins!

Note: In order to enhance robust participation, the musical segments should be quite short.

6) Convert the Enemy: `E` `P`

Students are divided into two teams. The teams are arranged in a in a line facing the other team. Taking turns, each team chooses a word from a selected list and calls upon a member of the other team to define it, use it in a sentence, or express a synonym/antonym for the word. If the other team member can complete the task, a member of the asking team is 'converted' to their team and joins them. If the other team member cannot complete the task, that team member is 'converted' to the other team and joins them.

The object is to have the most team members when the game is over.

7) Thematic Pictionary: `P` `E` `S`

Pictionary is a game that involves two teams. One person from each team should go to the chalk or white-board. This student is given a word that describes the thematic connection between some of the words on the target sub-list. The students must then draw the word that describes the thematic connection as well as they can so that their team can guess the word.

When a team guesses the correct word, the team wins a point, but then has the opportunity to win more points by selecting words from the target list that relate to the theme that the word indicates.

This activity will require some preparation by the teacher. The teacher will need to choose a target sub-list to work with. Next, the teacher will have to think of several themes that can connect a few of the words on the sub-list.

Note: any of the abovementioned games in the skill areas can be adapted for use in another skill area.

Web-based Resources
There exist myriad websites devoted to supporting and assisting teachers in their English teaching endeavors. Here is a sampling of these:

- http://www.eslcafe.com/
    - Dave's ESL Café is a large site with multiple resources. Teachers can visit the site in search of jobs, lesson planning help, ideas for activities and even connections with other teachers.
- http://www.eslpartyland.com/
    - The ESL Partyland provides resources that guide teachers in melding multimedia with their activities and lessons. It also includes many resources for students to enhance their learning independently.
- http://www.englishpage.com/
    - English Page is primarily for students, but the resources they provide are creative and robust. Teachers can use these resources as an idea springboard or they can simply take the activities directly into the classroom.

<div align="center">Rotation</div>

One concern of teachers might be that they might try to do an activity that another teacher has already done with a given group of students. While this overlap likely would cause no foreseeable problems, there could be a thirteen-week schedule of activities and skill area classes included in the final, completed modules.

Credit
It is certain that many, if not all, of the activities listed in this document have been utilized for years by teachers around the world. However, credit is due to many teachers at the ELC for sharing the activities that have worked well for them in their classrooms. Particular thanks is due to Lena Shvidko for offering a substantial list of suggested activities and the instructions for how to execute them.

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(for specifications)

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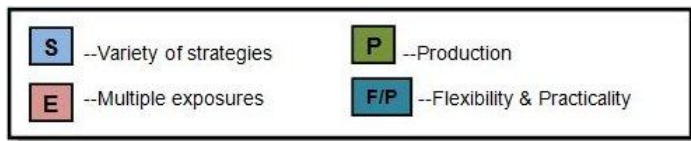
Vocabulary Activity Creation Worksheet & Checklist

Sub-List Half: (1A, 1B, so on…)   **Activity:**

Build your activity…

☐ **I.** Use the following principles.

S	--Variety of strategies	**P**	--Production
E	--Multiple exposures	**F/P**	--Flexibility & Practicality

☐ **II.** Identify experiential objectives
     eg: Students will identify use target words in spoken conversation

☐ **III.** Identify performance objectives
     eg: Students will identify good word usage 80% of the time.

☐ **IV.** Determine how much time you will devote to the activity
     A. Consider your daily objectives
     B. Consider activity's objectives

☐ **V.** Settle upon a base activity
     A. Option 1: Generate an original activity
          i. Decide upon the basic performance of the activity (game, recognition,
            matching, guessing, etc.)
          ii. Build your activity on a foundation of the principles described above
     B. Option 2: Identify an existing activity
          i. Draw from your experience or the list of suggested activities, included below
          ii. Keep the guiding principles in mind as you proceed
     C. Plenty of games can be played with vocabulary

☐ **VI.** Adapt activity to better meet your students' needs
     A. Consider your students' level and social abilities
     B. Remember to model pronunciation of more difficult words before beginning

☐ **VII.** Materials
     A. Gather existing materials from the Teacher's Resource Library
     B. Adapt any materials as needed for your specific activity

☐ **VIII.** Execution: Plan how you will explain the activity and be aware of your time.

Materials needed: (Remember to find out if the materials you need are already available from another teacher or the Teacher Resource Library.)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Emails

Email #1

Hi Fellow Teachers,
I'm sending this email as both entreaty and offer. I am working on creating a practical, actually useful! guide for teachers in all skill areas to use in their efforts to support our students' learning of vocabulary. I feel like I've pretty much got the guide done, but what lacks is some beta testers to see if this is really going to work.

I am looking for at least 4 teachers who can take from 20 minutes to 1 hour to try out my guide. What this means is that you will be given a copy of the guide and I will ask you to use it to create a vocabulary learning activity for your students. To keep the experience authentic, I wouldn't provide any instructions or tips on using the guide beyond asking you to stick to a certain skill area.

After you finish creating your activity, I would want to sit down with you for no more than fifteen minutes to ask you about your experience with my guide.

What you get:
*some cool ideas for easy, effective vocabulary learning activities
*an early look at what should be a very useful teacher tool
*mention in my write-up
*a pile of ideas for your MA project (this guide has spawned quite a few!)

What I get:
*association with nifty teachers
*implementation of my guide-- my MA moves forward
*your feedback

Please reply to this email to let me know if you can help. I am specifically looking for teachers in all skill areas. You can be a new or seasoned teacher-- I'd love to have several of varying experience levels.

Thanks!

Email #2

Dear Teachers,

This email is primarily meant for Academic program teachers.

I hope that you are all off to a great start to the summer semester. Recall that the ELC is a lab school and as such we engage in curriculum and research activities to make this the most positive teaching and learning environment possible.

Jared Garrett is completing his MA TESOL at the ELC. The project is related to helping teachers quickly and easily create effective vocabulary learning activities. He has created a guide that is designed with ELC teachers and the Academic Word List in mind. What he needs now is to find out if what he has created is actually helpful!

Please send Jared an email today and let him
know when you are available to talk with him. Because this is an ELC approved research we do hope (and expect) that all of the teachers in the Academic Program will participate in Jared's project. He will only need about thirty minutes of your time. It would be most convenient to try out his guide in the next week or two.

I'll follow up with Jared later to learn about the response to this request.

Thank you for making the ELC such a positive environment in which to teach and learn.

Thanks.

Appendix 2: The Questionnaire

Introduction

Thank you for helping me with my Master's project. I hope that your experience with the tool I made was valuable.

This questionnaire is designed to help me understand better the experience you had with the tool. Your answers will help me find out if the tool meets its objective.

This main objective is to make a systematic and simple approach to creating effective vocabulary learning activities.

There are 11 questions in this questionnaire. I think it should take no more than 10 minutes to respond to them.

Thanks again!

#1: How would you rate your overall experience with the guide that you used? Please choose one of the options below and keep in mind that 1 is bad and 10 is the best.

- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7
- ○ 8
- ○ 9
- ○ 10

#2: Please evaluate the following aspects and features of the guide.

	Excellent	Pretty Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Overall clarity	○	○	○	○	○
Relevance of the information	○	○	○	○	○
Suggested activities and explanations	○	○	○	○	○
Use of principles	○	○	○	○	○
Activity builder worksheet	○	○	○	○	○
Format and layout	○	○	○	○	○
Ease of use	○	○	○	○	○

		Excellent	Pretty Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Usefulness to YOU		○	○	○	○	○

#3: What details can you provide to support your evaluation of the above aspects and features?

#4: What was your favorite aspect, feature or part of the guide?

Why?

#5: What was your LEAST favorite?

Why?

#6: What suggestions for improvement would you make?

#7: What class(es) are you teaching at the ELC this semester?

#8: How would you describe your experience level as an ESL teacher?

- ○ Inexperienced: first semester
- ○ Somewhat experienced
- ○ Neither veteran nor novice
- ○ Pretty experienced
- ○ Veteran: been doing this for years.

#9: You prepared an activity based on the specifications in the guide. How long would you say you spent creating that activity?

- ○ 5-10 minutes
- ○ 11-20 minutes
- ○ 21-30 minutes
- ○ 31-40 minutes
- ○ 41-50 minutes
- ○ 51 minutes to an hour

#10: Would you use the specifications guide again, given the opportunity? Why?

- ○ Yes _____

- ○ No _____

#11: Is there anything else you'd like to add?