

# Application and Evaluation of Language Learning Software in Teaching Foreign Languages

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**Abstract:** In the context of globalization, the exchange of language across borders has become more frequent, and it is very essential to learn a language other than Mandarin Chinese. Therefore, various language learning software have appeared one after another. Currently, the application of the language learning software in the classroom has become a hot topic of discussion. This paper mainly expounds the application of language learning software in foreign language lessons for reference by relevant personnel.

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## 1 Introduction

With the development and progress of society, English language is the world's predominant lingua franca, whereas Mandarin Chinese has the highest numbers of speakers to varying degrees in the world. Various language learning software have been developed to help people learn new languages and maximize the outcome of language learning. The emergence of the Internet and mobile platforms is the reason of the high prevalence of invention of language learning software. This paper mainly uses the application of software meant for building vocabulary in English teaching as an example to illustrate the application and evaluation of language learning software in foreign language teaching.

## 2 An overview of the vocabulary building software

### 2.1 An introduction to the functions of vocabulary building software

The vocabulary building software is a mobile phone software for the learners who wish to build their vocabulary in English through memorization in accordance with their specific learning needs. This kind of software which is provided by a third-party network service provider is downloaded and installed from a mobile app store. There is hundreds of software for vocabulary building in the smartphone app store. For example, the top ten most downloaded software in the Apple App Store are Baicizhan, Shanbay, Hujiang Happy Vocabulary, MaiMemo, Youdao Vocabulary, Koudai Danci, Bubei Danci (BBDC), Bianzoubianting Danci, ZhiMi Vocabulary, and Kuaibei Danci<sup>[1]</sup>.

Each software is roughly divided into three basic interfaces - vocabulary interface, exploration interface and personalized customization interface. Some software also has courses and lecture interfaces that require additional fees, such as the Shanbay course interface for building vocabulary and the Baicizhan interface for mini lecture series. The main function of the vocabulary interface is to help users remember words in the fastest and most effective way through various vocabulary memorization methods. The main function of the exploration interface is to expand reading and discussion opportunities after learning a new vocabulary, etc.<sup>[2]</sup>. The main function of the personalized customization interface is to address the user's memory habits and memory effects every time

after learning vocabulary.

## **2.2 Principles of selecting of vocabulary building software**

When choosing the right vocabulary building software, the learners need to consider the application outcome of the software in many aspects, from the perspectives of not only the students but also the teachers. Therefore, the following principles should be considered when selecting an appropriate vocabulary building software.

(1) The principle of rationality of the vocabulary learning reinforcement method of the vocabulary building software. In the vocabulary building software, in addition to taking into account the pronunciation and interpretation of the new words, example sentences will be shown to improve the memorization of the new vocabulary the learners have just learnt from using the vocabulary building software. The applications of vocabulary in different situations will and deepen the learners' understanding of words and improve their application capabilities.

(2) The software system has the function of auto-interpretation of each and every word, and also includes the function of editing words. The system also allows the students to input the English vocabulary they learn in the colleges or universities into the system library to form their own vocabulary library. This will eventually assist the students to learn grasp a large amount of vocabulary quickly in combination with the English teaching in the classroom to realize the teaching of English vocabulary.

(3) There is a corresponding vocabulary library for the English test. In the university, the students will have to take College English Test of levels 4 and 6 or English major exams. In this case, the words and phrases that need to be used in the tests and exams must be there in the vocabulary building software to meet the needs of learners and help them learn foreign languages.

(4) The design of the vocabulary building software must be interesting and captivating in order to attract more users, which is also an approach to promote the use of the learning software. The vocabulary building software can better assist the learners to remember new vocabulary and learn English. For instance, while learning a new vocabulary, some interesting dialogues or pictures that vividly interpret and imply the application of a vocabulary will deepen the user's impression, sparking the user's interest and enthusiasm in using the software, which is in line with the purpose of the vocabulary building software.

(5) Vocabulary building software can set some reward policies. For example, a reward will be given for completing a certain amount of tasks or achieving certain goals in the learning process. This is one of the tactics to promote the usage of the software. The rewards and incentives of varying amounts or attractiveness can be pre-set according to the difficulty of the tasks. The implementation of rewards and incentives in the vocabulary building software will captivate the potential users in the effort to promote the software, and meanwhile, the users will have an excellent supplementary learning experience using the software.

## **3 Design of English vocabulary teaching in the vocabulary building**

### **3.1 Learners' needs**

As the use of mobile phones is getting more universal and the Internet technology is continuous advancing, mobile phones have gradually become the main tool for communication between people. In the vocational campus, almost every student has a smart phone, and is very skilled in the operation of the smart phone. In addition, the campus has a comprehensive coverage of wireless network that allows those in the campus using the mobile phone to access information anytime and anywhere. As a result, performing fragmented learning has become the main purpose that the students use mobile phones<sup>[3]</sup>.

In the survey of mobile phone usage in colleges and universities, 80% of the students were found to use their mobile phones in the classroom. Only 25% of the students make use of the mobile phones in classroom to facilitate auxiliary learning, while the remaining 55% of students simply play games in the classroom and watch video clips on their mobile phones. The survey also found that 45.1% of these 55% of students who use their mobile phones for entertainments in the classrooms felt guilty and were willing to correct such bad attitudes and mistakes. This indicates that many still consider the mobile phones should be used for learning as most students who use mobile phones for entertainment in the classroom also opposed to the idea of doing so. This group of students is willing to make corrections. Only one breakthrough has to be achieved so that the mobile phones which represent a wonderful platform can help students learn and master more knowledge and achieve learning outcomes. At the same time, the survey also found that students have different

attitudes towards the memorization of new vocabulary, partly because they found that they have insufficient time to engage in vocabulary building. Some students feel that it is difficult to remember or memorize new words. Thus, supplementary assistance is required to aid the students in memorizing words. This indicates that during the time when the vocabulary building software is selected and recommended, the acceptance and understanding of the students towards the content of the software's learning program must be taken into account. A vocabulary building software that most students are generally suitable for will be useful in quick mastery of a foreign language.

### 3.2 Analysis of teaching content

In the entirety of the teaching process, the teaching content is an important foundation and premise, as the content is principally reflected in the teaching materials. The *New Vision Reading and Writing English Course*, published by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, has been the preferred public English textbook for higher vocational colleges since it was published in 2004 and has been reprinted many times<sup>[4]</sup>.

This version of the textbook is a general textbook for non-English majors in universities. The structure of this book is divided into four parts. Each part has different sections. Each section shows different functions. For example, Section A includes an article in which all the new words or vocabulary that need to be learned in this chapter would appear, and even the words are graded according to the learning progress. Similar to Section A, Section B is also an independent article. It also contains the corresponding words and phrases that will be learned in this chapter. This fully takes into account the students' learning level in English, and prevents the students from learning the language and the mastering new words and vocabulary blindly, without any plans. The theme of Section C is to strengthen the proficiency of English in this chapter, and to train the students in writing essays by applying the new vocabulary they have just learnt. This section also includes some new words and applicative questions of using phrases. After learning the previous two articles, and the subsequent application of the words and phrases, this will enhance students' impression of English learning, and deepen the understanding and application of new words and phrases.

### 3.3 Design of teaching process

Prior to the lessons, the students and teachers can

perform the online uploading and sharing of vocabulary using the software, and the students can learn the vocabulary before the lesson commences. In the lesson, the teacher should make up for the vocabulary deficiencies by conducting vocabulary development and interactive communication in the classroom, in order to consolidate the vocabulary learning among the students. In the end of each lesson, the spelling practice and context enhancement will be carried out again by the teacher using the software to realize the mixed mode of both online and offline learning<sup>[5]</sup>.

In the design of teaching strategies, the lessons need to consider various factors, including the order of teaching, the teaching activities and the organization of activities. All of them need to be considered when designing teaching tasks. In this process, the vocabulary building software which is used as a supplementary teaching tool is designed so that teachers upload all the new words and phrases that need to be mastered and learned in the lessons to the software. Before the lessons, the teachers and students can use the vocabulary building software on the mobile phone to conduct pre-class preparation and learning, which is convenient for subsequent teaching. In addition, this will cultivate the self-directed learning ability in the students whereby the learning interests of the students are guided, and the new English vocabulary that has just been learned will be on the repetition of intensive practice to deepen the understanding of new words and phrases. When designing the teaching strategy, it is necessary to complete the teaching task, which includes the real communication task and the teaching communication task. In addition to the completion of the course requirements, it is also required to complete some teaching in addition to the classroom requirements in order to improve students' English usage and application level.

### 3.4 Teaching evaluation

The use of the vocabulary building software to preview before lessons, the change of attitude towards English learning, the story of the vocabulary, the performance in the game, the self-made vocabulary booklets, the transformation of self-directed learning ability, and the attendance of each lesson belong to formative evaluation<sup>[6]</sup>. Summative evaluation includes classroom performance transcripts, attendance transcripts, and pre-test papers and result transcripts. The evaluation content must be reasonably scientific and ensure the fairness and impartiality of the evaluation content.

## **4 Evaluation of the implementation and application of teaching programs**

### **4.1 Implementation process of teaching program**

The first step of the implementation process of teaching program is the selection of teaching content. This is to determine the objectives of the lesson, teaching content and tasks. A chapter that is representative of the teaching tasks should be selected. The lesson should be conducted in the form of simulation teaching epitomizes the chapter teaching. This can achieve the purpose of teaching, safeguard the quality of teaching standards, and complete the teaching tasks<sup>[7]</sup>.

The second step is to formulate the teaching content. In the beginning, the subjects of teaching, i.e. the college students, must be identified. Subsequently, teaching project, according to the teaching chapter determined in the first step, should be determined. The teaching projects are formulated according to the college English textbook that is divided into four parts. Once again, the teaching goal is determined. The teaching goals should be defined to dictate what kind of purpose, what kind of knowledge, what kind of English application level, as well as to understand the main content and cultures conveyed in passages. Then, the strategy of the entire teaching process is determined. This includes the teaching methods, such as the application of mixed-mode learning methods or collaborative teaching methods in the classroom, which help complete the tasks and objectives of teaching. Finally, a good teaching environment should be guaranteed. On the basis of college English teaching, the teachers should make sure the teaching environment, including the classroom environment and classroom learning atmosphere are conducive for learning, as well as the multimedia classroom is clean and tidy, and the teaching equipment is running well.

The third step is the design and implementation of the classroom teaching process using the vocabulary building software. In the beginning, the preparatory work before lessons has to be done. The teaching task is initiated according to the teaching method determined above. Before the lesson, the teacher sorts the new vocabulary and common vocabulary and phrases involved in the chapter into a system library according to the content of the teaching. This content will be uploaded to the vocabulary building software, and then shared with the students in the class through the relevant groups. This allows the students complete the pre-class preparation, and take a quiz for ten minutes

in the class to see their performance which will then be recorded. The results of the previous preparations will also be recorded, forming the students' usual performance results. Next, the students also follow the words and contents that need to be remembered by the teacher. Through the platform of the vocabulary building software, combined with the results of the pre-class preparation, they can add and organize the vocabulary which can also be saved for future review. When the teacher officially begins to teach, he or she will receive the results of the pre-class preparation, explain the main tasks of the lesson, and complete the vocabulary teaching content that is needed to achieve classroom interaction. Finally, the teacher will carry out some practical scenario, simulation and/or practice in the classroom to deepen students' understanding of knowledge, understanding of culture, and understanding of new words and phrases. This will also urge the students to conduct independent learning, including the self-revision of Section B of the second part of the chapter, and summarize the learning experience.

The fourth step is to follow up the final teaching situation in the classroom. After completing the classroom teaching, the teachers will consider the performance of the classroom work as part of the usual grades. During the subsequent lesson, the works that were assigned in the previous lessons were collected in the classroom<sup>[8]</sup>. The works will be evaluated, and small groups will be organized to discuss knowledge and learning experience, explaining what kind of enlightenment the students have learned in a particular chapter. In this step, each student's thought and the spirit of unity and cooperation must be respected.

### **4.2 Analysis and evaluation of teaching results**

Through the application of the vocabulary building software in foreign language teaching, some good and excellent results are possibly to be the outcomes of the software usage. The college students have changed their way of learning English. Back then, the students can only learn the knowledge from textbooks. But now, they can acquire knowledge from both textbooks and the Internet. The way to learn knowledge has gradually diversified. In addition, the students' attitudes in learning English have changed. Students begin to actively learn English, take the initiative to learn and understand a new language, transforming from passive learners to active learners. Furthermore, the reform of teaching methods which successfully changed from traditional teaching methods to mixed-mode teaching

methods. Students and teachers are the main subjects in the classroom who promote each other and coexist harmoniously, realizing the teaching of English, completing the tasks of classroom teaching and mastering the teaching content. Finally, the application of the vocabulary building software can spark and improve the interest of students' learning. With that, the learning style becomes more flexible. Also, the vocabulary building software maximizes the students' time in learning, reducing the chances of students playing games on their mobile phones.

## 5 Conclusion

Taken together, this paper mainly takes the application of vocabulary building software in foreign language teaching as an example to expound the selection and comparison of vocabulary building software, the application process of vocabulary building software in foreign language teaching, and the application method. Moreover, in combination with vocabulary building software, a set of practical English teaching guides has been developed.

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