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Enhancing Students' Learning with Word-Games: A Case of Hospitality OB Class

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ENHANCING STUDENTS' LEARNING WITH WORD-GAMES: A CASE OF HOSPITALITY OB CLASS

The practice and the need it addresses

Challenges of vocabulary

Learning a new subject involves learning and memorizing a new set of vocabulary (Parry, 1995), a challenge for an increasingly international student population (e.g., Barron & Arcodia, 2002; McDowell, 1998; Zimmermann, 2009).

Learning new vocabularies in a language that is not their first language is especially difficult for students (Huckin, Haynes, Coady, 1995). A failure to facilitate these students to learn the terminology

- hurts their academic performance (Senko & Harackiewicz, 2005),
- threatens their satisfaction and adaptation (Zimmermann, 2009),
- lowers their interest in the subject (Lyons, 2007),
- causes low retention/completion (Zepke & Leach, 2005).

Word games

Games I used:

- cross-word puzzle
- Scramble word game
- Decoding word game

How to make it fun and interesting?

- Use them as a revision test
- With low stake (6.25% of grade)
- In team-based (1 submission per team)
- Encourage collaboration
- Open-book/ cheat sheet allowed
- With 25-30 questions per test
- Each team is a different game
- 45-60 minutes per game
- Provide immediate feedback

Evidence this practice benefits UNLV Students

Benefits of word games

- The use of word games can increase students' interest in the subject-matter (e.g., Feinstein, Mnn, & Corsun, 2002; Jonathan, Jonthan, Michael, & Caroline, 2006)
- enhance the growth of vocabulary (Haggard, 1986; Brown, 1995).
- Providing cues, such as a number of characters and possible characters helps students recalling the vocabulary (Dubin & Olshain, 1995), minimizes perceived difficulties, increases students' learning-efficacy and performance (Schunk, 1991).

UNLV Evidence

- 102 OB students agreed to a response to the survey (response rate = 90%)

Measures:

- Interestingness ("How much you like this course assessment". "How much you agree that the following course assessments are fun")
- Usefulness (*How much you agree that the following course assessments help you to understand the OB concepts" and "How much you agree that the following course assessments allow you to learn how to apply OB concepts")

Results:

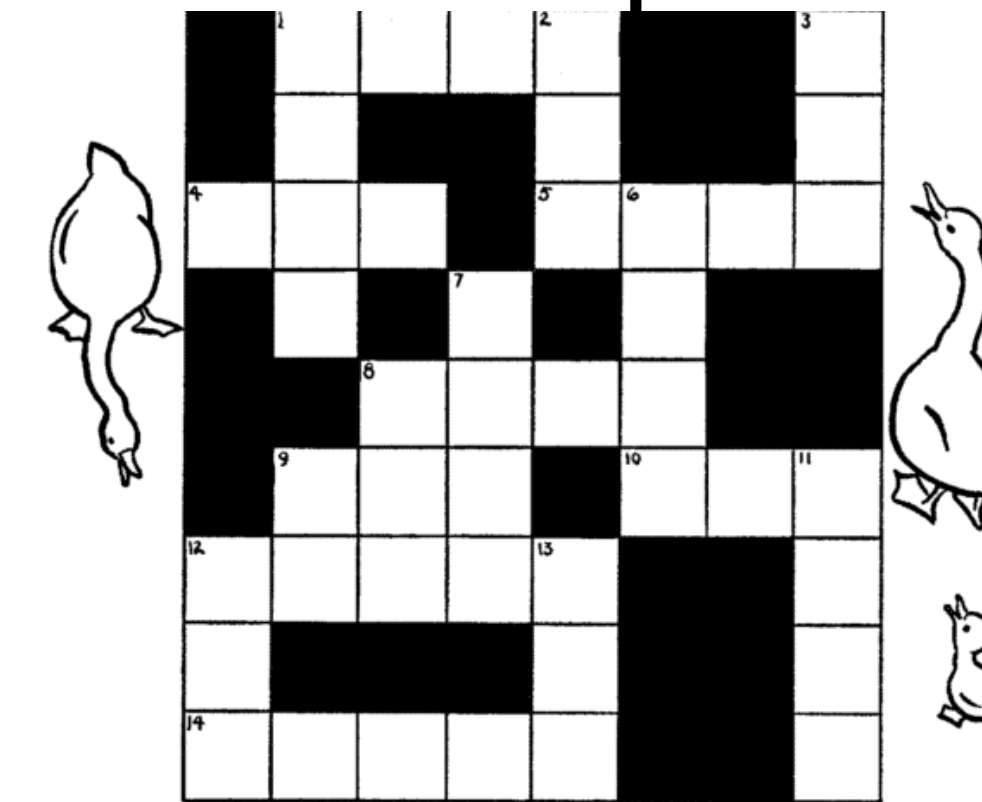
- two word-games did not differ in terms of interestingness and usefulness
- word games are more interesting than multiple choice questions
- the perceived usefulness is lower for word games than for multiple choice questions
- non-English speaking students have more difficulties in completing the word-games than English speaking questions
- Better memorization of key terms
- Improved examination performance

Student comments:

- "Test where more creative then the normal short answer or scantron format."
- "tests were great."
- "Tests were made in a fun way"
- "group tests were active, fun, and engaging."
- "tests directly reflected the material"

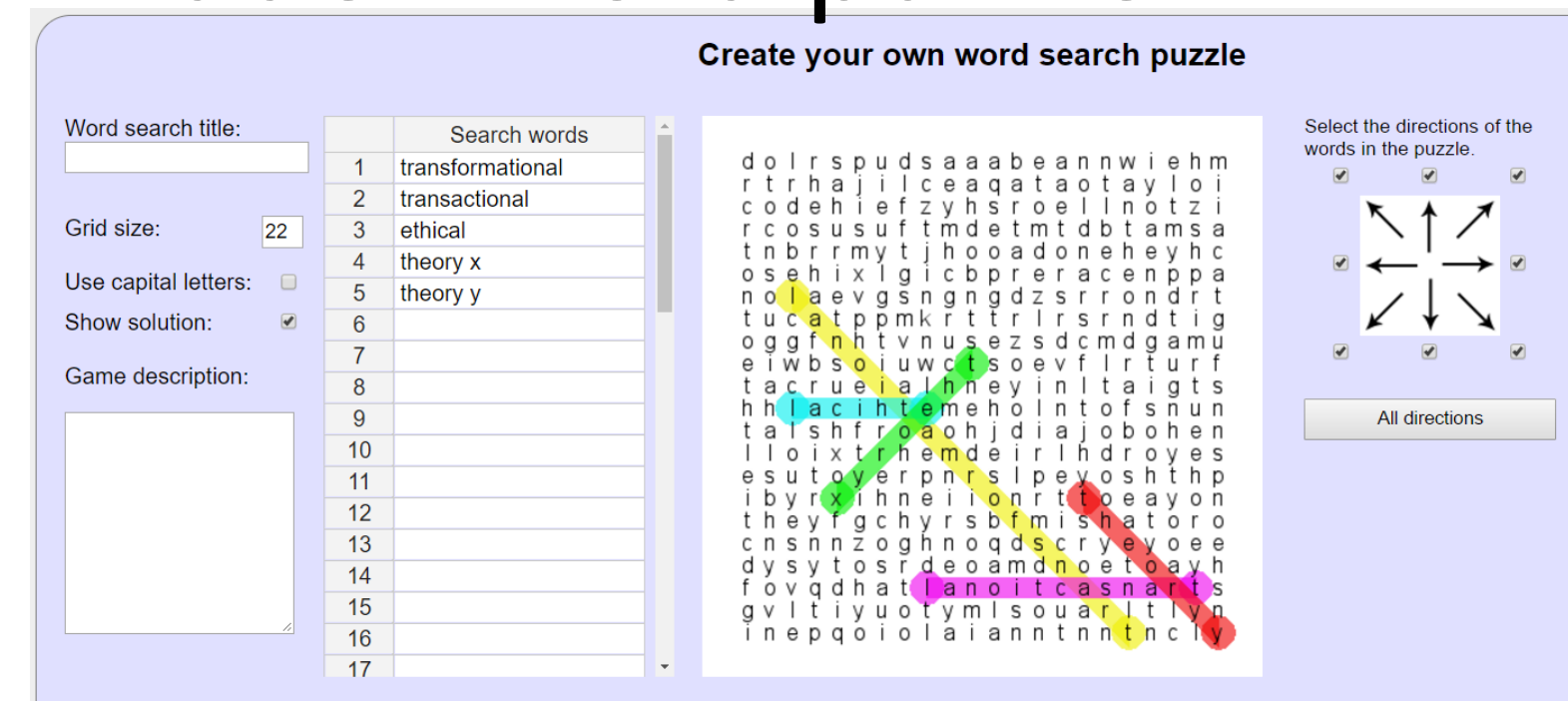
Resources and where to find them

Crossword puzzle



- Across:
1. Yield of a planted field
 4. A kind of tree, like oak
 5. This machine digs up fields
 8. A place where animals and crops are raised
 9. Opposite of stand
 10. Sack to carry feed in
 12. An animal to ride on
 14. A long-necked bird which honks
- Down:
1. A baby horse
 2. A baby dog
 3. An animal that gives milk
 6. A baby sheep
 7. Animals that chase mice
 8. A kind of evergreen tree
 9. Word that rhymes with go
 11. Animal with horns
 12. Another word for pig
 13. What we see with

Hidden word puzzle



Decoding game

Before the era of smartphones, people text using number-pad on their phone (see Figure). One day, you try to text your classmates some answers to the HMD307 test. All of your smartphones are dead and you only have your old Nokia phone with you. Unfortunately, even the Nokia phone is not working correctly. The phone doesn't display the text. Instead, it shows only the numbers of the keys you have pressed. For example, when you type "love hmd307", your phone shows "5683046307". Now you and your friends have to decipher the message. A layout of the keyboard is printed on the worksheet.



1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
*	0	#

More games ideas can be found at <http://www.edu-games.org/>

How other UNLV teachers might adopt this practice

When to use a word game?

Word games work best for class when

- Your class has a lot of terminology
- Remember those terminology is a key part of the class
- Students have difficulties remembering the terminology

Challenges of using word games

- Word game is time-consuming: around 1 hours for each 30 questions game
- Creating and grading a word game is more difficult than multiple-choice questions
- Clear instruction is needed as students are unfamiliar with this type of assessment
- Word games are better at lower level learning objective (e.g., remember, understand) than higher level learning objective (e.g., apply, analyze, evaluate, create)

