

FINDING OUT MORE ABOUT WORDS

# Mobile Vocabulary Learning Through Photo Blogging

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<b>Levels</b>	<i>Any</i>
<b>Aims</b>	<i>Acquire vocabulary through associations with blog photos and descriptions</i>
<b>Class Time</b>	<i>15–25 minutes</i>
<b>Preparation Time</b>	<i>20–30 minutes</i>
<b>Resources</b>	<i>Smartphones</i> <i>An account with a blogging platform, such as Blogger or WordPress</i>

## PROCEDURE

1. Compile a list of vocabulary for students to learn. The list may relate to the course textbook (if any), a language task, or their personal interests and goals. How much vocabulary to assign depends on students' language proficiency. At beginning levels, one vocabulary word per student should be doable. (Thus, you would compile 20 vocabulary words for a class of 20 students, for example.) At more advanced levels, consider challenging the class with two or three vocabulary words per student.
2. Create an account with a blogging platform, and send invitations for students to join as contributors.
3. Divide the class into pairs, and assign vocabulary to each pair. The number of vocabulary words, again, will vary with students' proficiency levels. Explain that their task is to take and upload a photo for each vocabulary word assigned to them. Each photo should be accompanied by a one-paragraph explanation, helping blog readers understand the connection between the word's meanings and the uploaded photo. Sample sentences that use the assigned vocabulary are also appropriate.
4. Read the blog posts, and check that students have understood the meanings of the vocabulary assigned to them. Consider offering feedback in the comments, such as grammar corrections (e.g., "Do you mean 'The executive



offered to *make* a deal?”) or responses to content itself (e.g., “Hmm, I don’t quite see the photo’s connection to the vocabulary here. Please revise.”).

The commenting function is already built in to the blogging platform. As long as commenting is enabled, all you need to do is type and post.

5. If time permits, invite the pairs to share their blog entries (the vocabulary words, photos, and paragraphs) in class.
6. Quiz students on the entire vocabulary list. If much of the class struggled with a particular word, ask the pair assigned to that word to upload another photo and paragraph.
7. When the class is ready, divide it into new pairs, and repeat the activity. Continue to refer to the photo blog throughout the course, and encourage—or require—students to use the words they learn in their speaking and writing. Depending on its effectiveness and on students’ interest, this activity might be used two or three times per term.

## CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. Make sure to first familiarize yourself with the blogging platform you intend to use. Otherwise, carrying out this activity—and responding to student questions or concerns—will be difficult.
2. Set ground rules for posting and commenting before the activity begins. For example, explain that while humor and creativity are appreciated, offensiveness will result in a grade deduction.
3. Encourage students to tag their blog posts. Tags can catalogue the vocabulary words in specific, meaningful groupings.
4. Consider requiring students, each time they do this activity, to comment on two or three of their classmates’ blog posts. Commenting can increase students’ personal investment in the blog. It can also foster a stronger sense of community outside of the classroom.
5. If smartphones are unavailable, students can use digital cameras and a computer with an Internet connection.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Godwin-Jones, R. (2011). Emerging technologies: Mobile apps for language learning. *Language Learning & Technology*, 15, 2–11.
- Levy, M. (2009). Technologies in use for second language learning. *Modern Language Journal*, 93, 769–782. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00972.x
- Wong, L. H., Chin, C. K., Tan, C. L., & Liu, M. (2010). Students' personal and social meaning making in a Chinese idiom mobile learning environment. *Educational Technology & Society*, 13, 15–26.