

The Pedagogical Engine

Challenge: Identify Instructional Strategies

Summary:

****Origin:**** Ask Pete (Capstone Project). This artifact is the 'Vocabulary-as-a-Mechanic' (VaaM) Instructional Strategy definition. This artifact defines the instructional strategy for vocabulary acquisition. It rejects 'flashcard' rote memorization in favor of a 'Situated Pedagogy' that treats words as functional tools. The model integrates Dual Coding Theory (multimedia acquisition) with a game-based application loop to ensure durable, transferable conceptual mastery.

Reflection:

I addressed the challenge to Identify Instructional Strategies by identifying Situated Cognition (Lave & Wenger) as the primary instructional strategy for this intervention. Traditional vocabulary instruction often relies on rote memorization, which frequently results in a high rate of recall but a failure of transfer. To align the instructional strategy with the outcome of conceptual mastery, I designed the 'Vocabulary-as-a-Mechanic' (VaaM) model. This approach fundamentally shifts the pedagogical framework from 'acquisition of facts' to 'participation in a context,' treating words as functional tools required to solve narrative puzzles. I further integrated Dual Coding Theory (Paivio) as a supporting strategy to manage cognitive load. By pairing the auditory pronunciation of a word with a generative AI visual reference (e.g., an image of a 'precarious' bridge), the design scaffolds the intrinsic load of acquisition. This multimedia approach utilizes separate cognitive channels to strengthen the memory trace without overwhelming the learner. This strategic alignment ensures that the game mechanics are not merely decorative but serve as active carriers of the instructional method. Finally, I implemented a multi-layered assessment strategy to validate these instructional interventions. Moving beyond simple 'Explicit Assessment' (recall), the system utilizes 'Implicit Assessment'—tracking whether a learner successfully uses a word to advance the game state. Furthermore, I integrated a 'Conceptual Assessment' layer using the 'AI as a Mirror' feature, which prompts metacognitive reflection on why a specific word was chosen. This prompts the learner to elaborate on their reasoning, maximizing germane cognitive load and ensuring deep schema construction.

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