

The screenshot shows the FLAX website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'flax interactive language learning' and links for 'library', 'demos', 'downloads', 'about', and 'login'. Below this is a header for 'The Best of Password' collection. A secondary navigation bar includes 'About Collection', 'Search', 'Browse', 'Activities', 'Collocations', 'Wordlist', and 'My Cherry Basket'. The main content area is titled 'Language activities' and lists seven activities, each with a title, a description, a 'Type', and 'Instructions'. Each activity also has a 'create an exercise' button.

Language activities associated with the *Best of Password* collection

4. Language activities

The purpose of FLAX is to present language activities, or games, to students to enhance their learning of a second language. The system is not, in fact, restricted to English, but some features work best if English is the target language – ones involving language parsing, for example (see Section 8.3 for a discussion of other languages).

Eleven activity types are available in FLAX to train learners' overall language ability and collocation ability. They are divided into two groups, as follows.

- Activities on Words, Sentences and Paragraphs
 - Hangman
 - Scrambled Sentences
 - Split Sentences
 - Scrambled Paragraphs
 - Word Guessing
 - Punctuation and Capitalization
- Activities on Collocations
 - Related Words
 - Collocation Matching
 - Collocation Dominoes
 - Collocation Guessing
 - Completing Collocations

In the stand-alone FLAX system, these can be accessed from the collection's home page using the *Activities* button, as shown. Beside each activity type, there are two buttons, *exercises* and *create an exercise*. The first leads to a list of exercises that have been created for this collection. The second allows you to create your own exercise. Anyone can do this – including students. In fact, it is particularly instructive for students to create activities to help reinforce something that they are learning.

However, although anyone can create exercises, only registered teachers can save them. To do so, you log in with a username and password using the button near the top right of the screen.⁸

In the Moodle FLAX system, the teacher builds individual exercises into the course, which is where students invoke them (see Section 6.3 for an explanation of FLAX activity creation in Moodle).

There is a further activity type that is specifically for collections of images:

- Activities on Image Collections
 - Image Guessing

⁸ You can register as a user of the FLAX demonstration server at <http://flax.nzdl.org> by emailing your name and the name of the organization where you work or study to flax@cs.waikato.ac.nz.

4.1 Activities on words, sentences and paragraphs

Language learners compose text from words; they build words into sentences, and sentences into paragraphs. To do this they need knowledge of words, grammar, text structure and punctuation.

Learning a word involves knowing its various forms, both inflected and derived: its meaning, common usages, and collocations. Grammar constitutes a set of rules that govern the development of each individual sentence. Text structure refers to the ways that ideas can be joined together to form paragraphs, and ultimately complete texts. Punctuation helps organize text in ways that convey the appropriate meaning. These are all fundamental aspects of language learning.

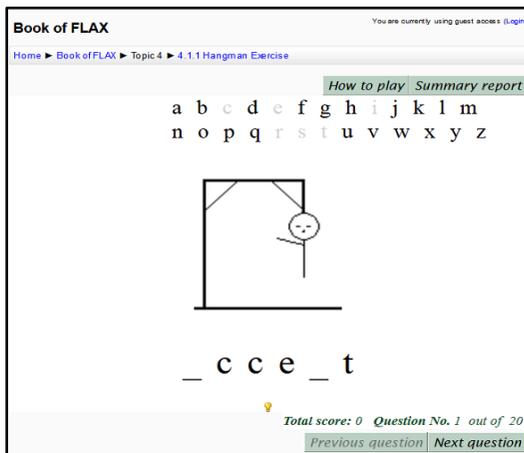
FLAX offers a wide arrange of activities that help students acquire, practice, and master this basic essential knowledge.

We begin with words and sentences, starting with an ancient game that helps improve spelling and makes vocabulary learning fun – Hangman. The next activity, Scrambled Sentences, focuses on the construction of sentences; teachers can, if they wish, target different parts of a sentence to help expose students to the basic sentence units. The next activity, Split Sentences, is an advanced form of Scrambled Sentences that guides students towards more complex sentence structures, including various types of clause.

Moving up to the level of text structure, the Scrambled Paragraphs activity draws students' attention to the flow of the text, and forces them to observe clues that signal a change of topic. The Word Guessing activity is multipurpose; it exercises spelling, helps students internalize grammar rules, and generally improves reading skills.

The Punctuation and Capitalization activity, as you can imagine, helps familiarize learners with the rules of punctuation and capitalization.

All of these activities are introduced with examples from the *Best of Password* collection. However, when you learn how to make your own collections in Chapter 6 (it's easy!), you'll be able to make activities that use words from this week's class vocabulary list, and text from your last reading assignment – or from this morning's news!



A Hangman exercise

4.1.1 Hangman

Hangman is a version of the classic paper and pencil word guessing game, designed to train players' spelling skills. The task is to guess an unknown word, one letter at a time. A mystery word is chosen for the student to guess, and is shown by a row of dashes representing the number of letters in it. When the player suggests a letter that occurs in the word, it is put in all its correct positions. If they suggest one that does not occur, one element of the stick figure is drawn. The game is over when the player completes the word, or when the diagram is finished – in which case the player has lost.

Players can increase the odds by guessing vowels or other high-frequency letters first. The twelve most frequent letters in English are, in descending order, *e, t, a, o, i, n, s, h, r, d, l,* and *u*, and almost every word contains at least one of the five vowels *a, e, i, o,* and *u*. Letters that have already been guessed correctly offer hints to the player. In addition, teachers can include hints while creating the activity.

The illustration shows a Hangman activity mid-game. *Accept* has been chosen as the mystery word (it appears in the "Why do you need to keep your first language?" article in *The Best of Password Collection*, which was used to build this particular game). The grayed-out letters have been guessed by the player. Those that do not occur in the word (*i, r,* and *s*) have resulted in parts of the stick figure being drawn. The letters that do occur (*c, e,* and *t*) were correctly placed in the word.

Since this exercise was created with hints, the player can click the light-bulb icon to view the hint provided for this word. In this case a brief definition is given (not shown).

The *Summary report*, accessible from the button at the top right, gives the start time, end time, score, and the student's final answer for each question.

This screenshot is from the Moodle version of FLAX. Everything looks identical in the stand-alone version, except that the page header is different.

In the Moodle version, all exercises, including this one, can be either "graded" or "ungraded." This screenshot is from an ungraded exercise. If grading is switched on, the *Previous question* button disappears and the *Next question* button is greyed out until the player guesses – or fails to guess – the word. Grades are recorded in the standard Moodle grading system, along with a detailed report that gives the student's answer for each question.

Exercise parameters

Choose article

- Why do you need to keep your first language?
- Working on organic farms
- Fishing
- Family history, genealogy and whakapapa
- Kiwi food
- A Maori creation story
- Adventure sports
- Making goals for learning English

Filter words by length

Min 6 Max 8

Include hint

Yes No

Number of words available

44

Activity parameters

Select: [All](#) / [None](#)

accept, maintain, everyday, heritage, academic, danger, church, parent, dominant, system, retain, language, culture, cultural, easily, contact, identity, zealand, speaker, enormous, cannot, replace, settle, quickly, become, migrant, tertiary, family, priority, succeed, effort, country, strong, english, fluency, improve, believe, because, possible, regular, fluent, problem, service, special

[Review](#) [Display](#) [Save](#)

Designing a Hangman exercise

Teacher's interface for Hangman

It is very easy to create games like this. In stand-alone FLAX, go to the collection, click *Activities*, and click *create an exercise*. You will then see the form shown opposite. Note that the *Save* button is inactive, because although anyone can create and play games in the stand-alone interface, only registered teachers can save them. In order to save a game, first sign in using the *Login* button near the top right of the screen.

Alternatively, in Moodle, turn editing on; go to *Add an activity*; and select *FLAX language exercise*. Give it a name, ensure that the correct collection and exercise type is selected, and click *Edit content*. You will see exactly the same form, except that the buttons at the bottom are *Review*, *Save and exit*, and *Cancel*, instead of *Review*, *Display*, and *Save as shown in the illustration opposite*.

The simplest way to design a Hangman game is to accept all the defaults on this form. In Moodle, simply click *Save and exit*. In the stand-alone interface, click *Save* (if you're signed in), or just *Display* to play the game you've created.

There are several options that you can specify using this form. (Click on any of the yellow question-mark icons to learn more about each option.)

For instance, you can specify the article or articles that words are taken from. Multiple articles can be selected by clicking while holding down the Ctrl or Shift key. You can also choose the minimum and maximum length of words.

As you change the preceding parameters, the *Number of words available* changes dynamically to show how many words match the restrictions you have chosen. It is often a good idea to specify more words than you need, so that you can reject unsuitable ones if necessary.

Once you have selected your restrictions, click *Review* at the bottom of the form to look at all of the words available and specify which words should be selected for the exercise. Note that there is a limit of 20 words in an exercise. If you attempt to display or save the activity with more than 20 words selected, a message box will appear informing you that too many words have been selected. If you don't select any words, the first 20 will automatically be chosen (or, if fewer than 20 words are available, all of them will be included).

If you choose to include hints, a text box will be provided for every word you select, so you can specify a hint. You might suggest a letter for the player to guess, provide a synonym for the word, or a definition, or indeed any other text that you consider appropriate.

How to play Summary report
Lifelines
They will help you. You can go to with class a make friends and other newcomers. It is better when you have friends.
<i>Total score: 0 Question No. 2 out of 3</i>
Check Answer Previous question Next question

A scrambled sentence from "Lifelines"

How to play Summary report
A Maori creation story
Ranginui and Papatuanuku loved each around so other they always hugged each other, with their arms tight much each other. Since Ranginui was the sky and Papatuanuku was the earth, no light was able to shine between them.
<i>Total score: 0 Question No. 1 out of 30</i>
Check Answer Previous question Next question

A scrambled sentence from "A Māori creation story"

How to play Summary report
The kiwi bach
There was lots to do. and Our often nothing! sofas on parents did just old lay around
<i>Total score: 0 Question No. 1 out of 18</i>
Check Answer Previous question Next question

A more difficult scrambled sentence, from "The kiwi bach"

4.1.2 Scrambled Sentences

In a Scrambled Sentence exercise, the words of sentences are rearranged and students must put them into their original order. You click the mouse on a word, drag it to the correct position, and drop it there. Only the blue words can be moved.

With FLAX, students are provided with genuine, authentic text, and the teacher can select suitable material for them to practice on.

These exercises enhance students' ability to group words into meaningful chunks, which is crucial to fluent reading. With practice, students become more adept at grouping words into phrases and sentences. As they put the sentences together, their awareness of both sentence structure and phrase structure improves. They soon learn to identify subjects and predicates, organize words into phrases, link adjectives and adverbs to the words they modify, and use conjunctions to provide cohesive ties.

The first illustration shows an exercise created from the article "Lifelines" in the *Best of Password* collection. Three words are misplaced (the ones in blue). The preceding and following sentences are given, to provide context (unless the chosen sentence is the first or last in a paragraph). The correct order here, of course, is *You can go to a class and make friends with other newcomers*. In general, complex structures or long sentences make the exercise more challenging – and perhaps frustrating.

If the words are moved into their correct positions and *Check Answer* is clicked, an encouraging message is displayed. Any words that are out of place are underlined in red. Students proceed to the next question, or, if they wish, return to earlier ones, using the buttons at the bottom.

The second illustration is from the "Māori Creation Story" in the same collection, again with three words misplaced (the sentence is *Ranginui and Papatuanuku loved each other so much they always hugged each other, with their arms tight around each other*). Had the proper nouns in a sentence like this been permuted, the task could be very difficult; teachers can avoid this when they create the exercise. A general principle that FLAX incorporates throughout is that the choices the system makes can always be overridden by the teacher – or not, at the teacher's discretion.

The third example is much harder, because almost all the words in the sentence are misplaced. (*Our parents often just lay around on old sofas and did nothing!*). Clues are provided by sentence-initial capitalization and sentence-final punctuation.

The *Summary report* button at the top right gives the start time, end time, score and the student's final answer for each question.

Select sentences	
Difficulty level ⓘ	Level 4 Level 1 Level 3 Level 2
Sentence type ⓘ	Simple <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complex <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Number of words in sentence ⓘ	Min 3 Max 30
Contains words ⓘ	
Choose sentences from article ⓘ	A Maori creation story Adventure sports Family history, genealogy and whakapapa Fishing Going to the doctor Holiday plans Kiwi food Lifelines
Number of sentences to choose from	
	31
Activity parameters	
Select sentences ⓘ	From 1 To 31
Number of words to scramble ⓘ	3
Presentation order ⓘ	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Same for each student <input type="radio"/> Different for each student
Order of sentences ⓘ	Natural order in article
<input type="button" value="Review ⓘ"/> <input type="button" value="Print ⓘ"/> <input type="button" value="Display ⓘ"/> <input type="button" value="Save ⓘ"/>	

Designing a Scrambled Sentences exercise

Teacher's interface for Scrambled Sentences

You can easily create a Scrambled Sentences exercise by accepting all the defaults on the *Edit exercise content* form shown. In Moodle, simply click *Save and exit*. In the stand-alone interface, click *Save* (if you're signed in), or just *Display* to play the activity you've created.

However, there are many options that you can specify using this form.

In the *Select Sentences* section, you can specify from which document or documents the sentences are taken, by either naming the articles or selecting a difficulty level. You can choose *Simple* (single clause) or *Complex* (multi-clause) sentences, specify how many words the sentences should contain (from 3 to 30 words by default), and even give a word or words that the target sentences must contain. Click on any of the yellow question-mark icons to learn more about each option.

The *Number of sentences to choose from*, halfway down the form, changes dynamically to show how many sentences match the restrictions you have chosen.

Under *Activity parameters*, you can specify which sentences should be selected for the exercise. Note that there is a limit of 50 sentences in an exercise. You can also specify the number of words to scramble, and whether the sentence order should be fixed, or differ for each student. If they are presented in a fixed order, you can specify whether it should be the natural order in the article, shortest or longest first, or random.

When you click *Review* at the bottom of the form, the sentences proposed for the activity will appear below. If some are unsuitable, deselect them using the checkbox beside them. It is often a good idea to specify more sentences than you need, so that you can reject unsuitable ones.

In stand-alone FLAX you can also make a printable version of the activity using the *Print* button, yielding a paper form for students to complete offline.

How to play Summary report	
They believe this will help them	and culture is language.
It is true	that it makes resettlement easier ?
Many academics believe that language is culture	and many languages.
But it is also very important	while their parents have not.
In New Zealand there are many cultures	to settle more quickly into their new country.
Often the children have become fluent English speakers	to retain your first language.
<i>Total score: 0 Question No. 1 out of 1</i>	
Check Answer Previous question Next question	

A Split Sentences exercise

4.1.3 Split Sentences

A Split Sentences exercise shows parts of sentences on the left and right, and students must match the second half of each sentence to its first half. Split Sentences aims to train students to read in chunks. The longer the chunks, the fewer the eye movements. Chunk reading can increase reading speed and lead to better comprehension.

FLAX attempts to place divisions judiciously (but the teacher can override its choices). Good divisions can give students experience with sentences of different structure: simple, compound or complex. As students match the second half with the first half of a sentence, they learn to identify different sentence patterns and sentence elements. They also learn how to join words or groups of words together using conjunctions, and their attention is drawn to connectors that show relationships among elements of a sentence.

The illustration shows a Split Sentences exercise created from the article “Why do you need to keep your first language?” in the *Best of Password* collection. The left-hand parts are shown in black and the right-hand parts in blue. Students work by moving the blue text to the appropriate place. When *Check Answer* is clicked, the correct sentences turn black.

Exercise parameters

Choose article 

- Why do you need to keep your first language?
- Working on organic farms
- Fishing
- Family history, genealogy and whakapapa
- Kiwi food
- A Maori creation story
- Adventure sports
- Making goals for learning English

Number of words in sentence  Min 3 Max 15

Max sentences per page  10

Number of sentences available

56

Review: 28 sentences selected

They believe this will help them | to settle more quickly into their new country.

It is true | that it makes resettlement easier?

Many academics believe that language is culture | and culture is language.

But it is also very important | to retain your first language.

In New Zealand there are many cultures | and many languages.

Often the children have become fluent English speakers | while their parents have not.

Designing and reviewing a *Split Sentences* exercise

Teacher's interface for Split Sentences

Creating a Split Sentences exercise is very similar to creating a Scrambled Sentences exercise. The illustration shows the *Edit exercise content* form with modified options. Four articles have been selected (the first four), and they contain 56 sentences that match the *Number of words in sentence* criterion – here, between 3 and 15 words. These will be divided into groups of ten for presentation (set by the *Max sentences per page* parameter).

The *Review* button has been clicked, which shows how the sentences have been split. FLAX attempts to place the split point in a sensible location, but you can click and drag the red bar to adjust the position of the sentence split if necessary.

In each sentence, FLAX's automatic splitting method looks for the following features, in this order:

- prepositions and subordinating conjunctions (*if, that, because, as, since, etc.*),
- coordinating conjunctions (*and, or, but*),
- *wh*-words (*where, what, when, why, which, whose, ...*),
- the word *to*, and
- semicolons or commas.

If one of these is located in the sentence, the split is placed before it. If none appear, the split is made at the sentence's halfway point.

Many migrants to New Zealand believe that they should concentrate on learning as much English as possible, as quickly as possible.

Some of these communities have made a great effort to improve this situation by running special language classes for their children, to teach them the language of their parents. Other communities have encouraged the maintenance of their first language in language nests, after-school programmes, and in church services. Communities and families who have regular contact with their home country also have less difficulty maintaining their first language.

In New Zealand there are many cultures and many languages. Communities which have made learning English a priority for their children have found after a few years that families are having problems communicating with each other. Often the children have become fluent English speakers while their parents have not. And the children have lost much of their first language, so parents and children are not able to easily communicate with each other. The children are also less able to take pride in their cultural heritage, but yet are not fully accepted by their peers in the dominant culture.

But it is also very important to retain your first language. If language is culture and culture is language, then a migrant is in danger of losing his/her cultural identity if the first language is allowed to disappear. Although the shift to fluency in English may be slower if first language use is maintained, the importance of keeping the values of your first culture alive are enormous.

Many academics believe that language is culture and culture is language. A migrant wanting to settle permanently in an English-speaking country will need to learn English to learn the culture of that country.

They believe this will help them to settle more quickly into their new country. It seems to be even more important when they have children, to encourage the children to learn English quickly. It is true that it makes resettlement easier ? it is easier to do everyday things if you can understand and be understood by those you need to deal with. It is easier to get employment, it is easier for children to succeed in a new education system, it is easier for tertiary study.

In New Zealand the Maori language was almost lost and many Maori felt lost because of that. Now there are opportunities for learning this language from an early age and the culture is becoming stronger at the same time.

To be bilingual is to speak two languages and have knowledge and understanding of two cultures. You cannot become truly bilingual if your first language is allowed to be replaced by your new language.

Total score: 0 Question No. 1 out of 1

[Check Answer](#) [Previous question](#) [Next question](#)

A Scrambled Paragraphs exercise

4.1.4 Scrambled Paragraphs

Scrambled Paragraphs is similar to Scrambled Sentences, but instead of re-arranging words in a sentence, entire paragraphs are displaced and the player must restore them to their original order.

This activity draws students' attention to the structure of a particular text, the main idea of each paragraph and the coherence from one paragraph to the next. It draws attention to linking words ("connectors") that connect paragraphs or show relationships between different ideas. Also, it teaches skimming skills; students learn to read only important words in order to grasp the main idea of a piece of text. With practice, students learn to analyze different structures, identify topic sentences, and look for transition signals. As with other FLAX activities, students work on authentic text, and the teacher can select suitable material for them to practice on.

In the illustration, a Scrambled Paragraphs exercise has been created using the article "Why do you need to keep your first language?" in *The Best of Password* collection. The blue paragraphs can be moved up and down with the mouse, but black ones are fixed. Here the teacher has chosen to fix the first and last paragraphs. When you click *Check Answer*, if everything is correct, all paragraphs turn black. If your answer is only partially correct, the incorrectly-placed paragraphs remain blue.

Scrambled Paragraphs exercises can contain several questions, each based on a different document.

Exercise parameters

Choose article Why do you need to keep your first language?

- Working on organic farms
- Fishing
- Family history, genealogy and whakapapa
- Kiwi food
- A Maori creation story
- Adventure sports
- Making goals for learning English

Activity parameters

Fix paragraphs? Fix first and last paragraphs

Presentation order Same for each student Different for each student

Review: 1 question selected

Question 1

1. Many migrants to New Zealand believe that they should concentrate on learning as much English as possible, as quickly as possible.
4. But it is also very important to retain your first language. If language is culture and culture is language, then a migrant is in danger of losing his/her cultural identity if the first language is allowed to disappear. Although the shift to fluency in English may be slower if first language use is maintained, the importance of keeping the values of your first culture alive are enormous.
3. Many academics believe that language is culture and culture is language. A migrant wanting to settle permanently in an English-speaking country will need to learn English to learn the culture of that country.
7. In New Zealand the Maori language was almost lost and many Maori felt lost because of that. Now there are opportunities for learning this language from an early age and the culture is becoming stronger at the same time.
5. In New Zealand there are many cultures and many languages. Communities which have made learning English a priority for their children have found after a few years that families are having problems communicating with each other. Often the children have become fluent English speakers while their parents have not. And the children have lost much of their first language, so parents and children are not able to easily communicate with each other. The children are also less able to take pride in their cultural heritage, but yet are not fully accepted by their peers in the dominant culture.
2. They believe this will help them to settle more quickly into their new country. It seems to be even more important when they have children, to encourage the children to learn English quickly. It is true that it makes resettlement easier? it is easier to do everyday things if you can understand and be understood by those you need to deal with. It is easier to get employment, it is easier for children to succeed in a new education system, it is easier for tertiary study.
6. Some of these communities have made a great effort to improve this situation by running special language classes for their children, to teach them the language of their parents. Other communities have encouraged the maintenance of their first language in language nests, after-school programmes, and in church services. Communities and families who have regular contact with their home country also have less difficulty maintaining their first language.
8. To be bilingual is to speak two languages and have knowledge and understanding of two cultures. You cannot become truly bilingual if your first language is allowed to be replaced by your new language.

Show answer

Review Display Save

Designing and reviewing a *Scrambled Paragraphs* exercise

Teacher's interface for Scrambled Paragraphs

As usual, these games can be created quickly. As the illustration shows, there are only a few controls on the *Edit exercise content* form. You can select an article, or several articles (using the usual method of Ctrl/Shift-clicking); each article will generate one question in the exercise. The *Fix paragraphs* parameter allows you to choose whether any paragraphs are fixed, and if so, whether the first, last, or both. "Fixing" a paragraph means that it will appear in the correct place on the student's screen and be immovable. You can also select whether or not the paragraphs will be presented in the same order for every student.

In the form shown, the *Review* button has been pressed, displaying the exercise in the lower part of the screen. The numbers beside each paragraph indicate the correct order. If you choose "same for each student" for *Presentation Order*, the paragraphs will be in the order in which students will see them, and you can move paragraphs around here to make the exercise easier or more difficult. For example, you could put all paragraphs in the correct place except for two, whose order is switched. However, if the presentation order is different for each student, the order will be random for each student.

In general, FLAX selects exercise material automatically, but the *Review* facility allows teachers to exercise control over the content to ensure that it is suitable for students.

Words for the gaps
a, and, any, are, car, course, experience, experience, farm, farms, farms, for, holiday, <http://www.wwoof.co.nz>, in, like, might, need, of, or, sometimes, started, stay, stay, There, to, to, usually, want, was, When, work, worked, Wwoof, You

Working on organic farms
Audio (British English)



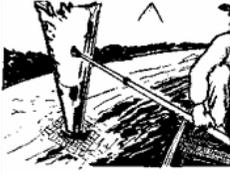
1 If you want to experience New Zealand life and would like an active holiday, why not work on a farm?

2 Wwoof, or Willing Workers on Organic Farms, is a group that in Britain about 30 years ago. There are a lot of Wwoof farms in New Zealand.

3 People stay on these farms so that they can experience organic farming, or just to farm life if they live in a city. Visitors usually with the family and help with the daily jobs. People stay on a farm for at least five days. They stay for a few weeks. You are not paid to on one of these farms, you go there for the .

Word guessing, with hints provided

Holiday plans



Sandy in New Zealand six months ago. She in a class English. She forward to December.

In December she will her first summer holiday in New Zealand. Here her plans:

Before Christmas she to Rotorua and Taupo. In Rotorua you can to the hot pools and swim. You can also in the lake and walk in the bush. Sandy to Whakarewarewa and the mud, the geysers and the Maori .

In Taupo you can and in the lake. There hot pools in Taupo too. Taupo very beautiful.

After Christmas she to Queenstown in the South Island. Queenstown very beautiful too. In Queenstown you can , or you can for a boat ride. You can also bungy jumping and up the mountain.

In January she to Christchurch. In Christchurch you can on the free bus and shopping in the city. If you like you can a boat ride on the Avon River. You can also in the park and in the hills. Sandy to the Antarctic Centre too.

Guess the verbs!

4.1.5 Word Guessing

The Word Guessing game is similar to "Fill in the blanks" that is widely used for testing knowledge of vocabulary and syntax, as well as ability in reading comprehension. Words are removed from an article and students must put them back. These target words can be content words, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, or function words, such as prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions and auxiliaries.

The first illustration uses an article called "Working on organic farms." The player has guessed four words correctly, corresponding to gaps number 1, 2, 4 and 5 – indicated by superscripts that precede the words the user has typed (*like*, *Wwoof*, *of* and *farms* respectively). However, in gap 6 the player entered the wrong word, *want*; a red box indicates that this is incorrect and should be changed. Currently, the player has clicked on gap 3 (for which the correct word is *started*). Instead of clicking, the tab key can be used to move to the next gap.

This is a difficult exercise, but is made a little easier because the teacher has included hints – the word list at the top. (Some words appear more than once because they fill different gaps.) The student can also hear the spoken text. This can be played using the widget above the story. As the number of omitted words increases, the activity gradually becomes a conventional dictation exercise.

In this illustration, the system has randomly determined which words to omit. Teachers can review the system's choices and override them. This is necessary in case, by chance, a proper name or foreign word has been omitted, which users could hardly be expected to guess (e.g., the word *Wwoof* here).

As an alternative to random selection, words of a particular part of speech can be omitted. FLAX determines parts of speech using a computer algorithm, which is not guaranteed to be completely correct – but again, the teacher can override its choices if necessary. The second illustration, based on a different article, focuses on verbs, and the learner must enter the correct verb with the correct form. In this case the teacher did not provide any hints.

Again, the *Summary report* button at the top right gives the start time, end time, and the words that have been correctly guessed. In the Moodle version, a report is produced that shows, for each user, the words that were correctly answered, and the order in which they were answered. In addition, if the exercise is graded, the results are recorded in the Moodle gradebook.

The Moodle version can operate in "group mode." Here, FLAX updates every student's screen any time someone in the class fills in a gap. A scoreboard at the bottom of the screen shows the top three students, and mousing over it shows how everyone is doing. This spurs competition – to score well, students must work fast! In group mode, participants can type messages to one another using a *Chat to others* button that appears beside the *Summary report* button at the top right.

Select documents

Difficulty level
 Level 4
 Level 1
 Level 3
 Level 2

Number of documents to choose from
 20

Activity parameters

Choose article

Choose words based on Cap size Word type

Gap size

Word type
 Verb
 Noun
 Adjective
 Adverb
 Preposition
 Determiner

Hint

Include audio with document? Yes No

Mode Individual Group

Review: 44 gaps in Article

Words of gaps are attracted are have developed is facing overcoming take are provide rafting be stays ensure provide follows is called go jet-boating have fasten powering swooping is goes provided is see close lowered are experience is sit are sit steer moving is is go ski

Adventure sports

Many young tourists are attracted to New Zealand because of the exciting adventures that are easily available.

Young New Zealanders have developed these activities because of the special thrill there is in facing and overcoming danger. The adventures can take place on land, in the air or in the water.

Water sports are very popular. The many fast-flowing rivers provide the opportunity for rafting -- particularly in the Bay of Plenty and around Queenstown. Trips can be from a few hours to several days, and a trained guide stays with the group to ensure safety and provide all the necessary equipment. If the trip follows the river underground through caves, it is called black-water rafting. On these rivers you can also go jet-boating. You will have to fasten your seat belt before powering through narrow rocky places or swooping along shallow streams.

A recent activity is canyoning, where the adventure junkie goes down rivers, waterfalls and rock faces all provided by nature. For those who like diving, it is possible to see mako sharks close up from inside the safety of a cage lowered into the water.

There are adventures on land, too. Wind-powered go-karts race along sandy beaches at high speed, and zorbing (a Kiwi invention) has you strapped inside a plastic ball that rolls downhill at speeds of up to 50km per hour.

To experience thrills in the air, there is fly-by-wire, another Kiwi invention. In this sport you sit in a car and swing to and fro like a pendulum. The thermal air currents in the central Otago region are perfect for parapenting -- a mixture of hang-gliding and parachuting. You sit in a harness under a small parachute that you can steer, moving along on the air currents. Sky-diving is even more thrilling, starting with the 30 seconds of free fall at the alarming speed of 200km per hour when you jump from the plane, but then the parachute opens and you drift down and enjoy the view. A combination activity that is most enjoyable is heli-skiing. You go up the mountains in the helicopter, and land at the top of a good slope. Then you simply ski down. There is a 10-kilometre run from the Tasman Glacier in Mt Cook National Park.

Designing and reviewing a *Word Guessing* game

Teacher's interface for Word Guessing

To create a Word Guessing game, first select an article (if you like, you can specify a difficulty level first). You can either choose the words to omit based on the gap size, and specify the gap size, or choose certain parts of speech. In the latter case you can select one or more of the following:

- Verb,
- Noun,
- Adjective,
- Adverb,
- Preposition, and
- Determiner.

You can also choose what kind of hint to give:

- None,
- First letter,
- First and last letter,
- Word list (at the top of the screen),
- Word list and first letter, and
- Word list and first and last letter.

You can also choose whether to provide the audio version of the document (if any).

If you are using Moodle, you can choose Individual mode or Group mode.

Finally, you can review and override the system's choices about which words to omit. It's a good idea to do this, otherwise you may be setting your students the impossible task of guessing obscure proper nouns, or exposing them to errors made by FLAX when identifying parts of speech.

To review and modify the game, click the *Review* button at the bottom of the form. The game appears below, as shown in the accompanying illustration (under the heading "Adventure sports," which is the chosen article). Click any gap to return the word to the text. If you change your mind, click the word again to reinstate the gap.

If you are using stand-alone FLAX, you can make a printable version using the *Print* button, which produces a paper form for students to complete offline.

. , ! ?

many migrants to new zealand believe that they should concentrate on learning as much english as possible as quickly as possible

they believe this will help them to settle more quickly into their new country it seems to be even more important when they have children to encourage the children to learn english quickly it is true that it makes resettlement easier it is easier to do everyday things if you can understand and be understood by those you need to deal with it is easier to get employment it is easier for children to succeed in a new education system it is easier for tertiary study

many academics believe that language is culture and culture is language **A** migrant wanting to settle permanently in an english- speaking country will need to learn english to learn the culture of that country

A Punctuation and Capitalization exercise

4.1.6 Punctuation and Capitalization

Punctuation and Capitalization exercises ask the user to place punctuation marks in the appropriate positions, and to put capital letters on words that need them. In order to do this, students need to understand the flow of text and identify individual sentences. FLAX uses the most common punctuation marks, namely “.” (full stop, or period), “,” (comma), “!” (exclamation mark), and “?” (question mark), and also, optionally, apostrophe.

Punctuation and capitalization are important in writing. Punctuation marks indicate the structure and organization of written language, as well as intonation and pauses when reading aloud. Capitalization helps readers find information more quickly.

These exercises help students learn how to use punctuation correctly, how to distinguish one sentence from the next, and how to indicate a break or pause within a sentence. Students also learn about the rules for capitalization.

The illustration is taken from the “Why do you need to keep your first language” article in *The Best of Password* collection. You can select the punctuation marks at the top with your mouse, drag them along the text word by word, and drop them wherever you want. If you change your mind, you can remove the mark by clicking on it.

When you mouse over a letter in the sentence, it turns temporarily into a large capital letter, and if you click it, it remains capitalized. In the illustration, the user has moused over the “A” in the phrase “A migrant wanting to settle...” (near the end), and the letter is temporarily enlarged; if the player were to click, it would turn into an ordinary capital “A”. In this case that would be the right thing to do, because this is the first word of a sentence. In addition, a period should be added after the last word, *country*, to terminate the sentence.

Exercise parameters

Choose article 

- The parliamentary system in NZ
- Writing poetry in English
- The Kwi bach
- Preserving Te Reo Maori
- Lifelines
- Going to the doctor
- Holiday plans
- The beekeeper

Activity parameters

Capital letters  Remove all capital letters

Remove apostrophes  Yes No

Question type  Whole document Paragraph by paragraph

Review: 6 questions selected

do you have a hobby
 some people like to go to a library and read books and magazines or watch tv or listen to music
 what do you like to do in your spare time

Show answer Remove question

jim's hobby is beekeeping
 he is a beekeeper
 he looks after bees to get honey
 jim has a beehive in his garden
 it is near his house
 the beehive has four white boxes
 each box has a floor and a roof
 it looks like a very very small house with no windows
 bees live in a beehive

Show answer Remove question

each beehive has only one queen bee but there may be 60000 bees in one beehive
 the queen bee is always busy
 she is bigger than the worker bees and she can lay over 2000 eggs every day
 these eggs will be new bees
 the new baby bees work inside the beehive for 20 days and then they become worker bees

Show answer Remove question

every day unless the weather is very wet the worker bees fly away and get nectar and pollen from flowers
 they carry the nectar back to the beehive in their stomachs and they carry the pollen on their legs
 the bees make the nectar into honey
 they put the honey into frames of beeswax in the beehive

Show answer Remove question

jim works hard to get a lot of honey from his beehive in summer
 he wears special clothes when he works with his bees
 he keeps his body covered especially his face
 he often uses smoke to control the bees
 sometimes a bee stings him but the lovely honey is worth some bee stings -- don't you think

Show answer Remove question

Review  Display  Save 

Designing and reviewing a *Punctuation and Capitalization* exercise

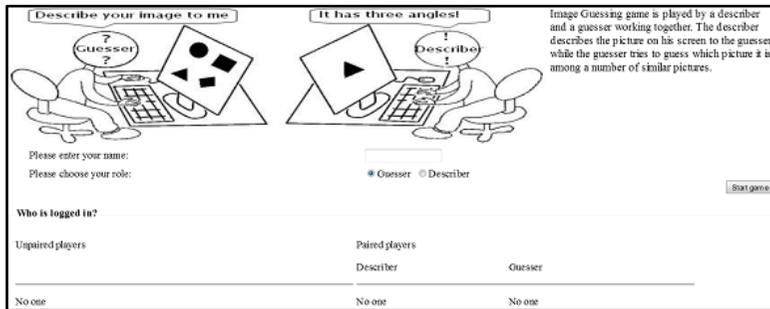
Teacher's interface for Punctuation and Capitalization

The Punctuation and Capitalization exercise options are similar to those of other exercises. The illustration shows the *Edit exercise content* screen in Moodle. First, you choose the article (or articles) from which the text should be taken. Then, you set the three *Activity parameters*.

You can choose to remove all the capital letters, only sentence-initial capitals, or no capitals at all – in which case the exercise will simply test punctuation. You can also decide whether or not apostrophes should be removed.

Finally, you can decide whether, when the exercise is presented, the paragraphs of the documents are shown individually, or whether each entire document is shown at once, as a whole.

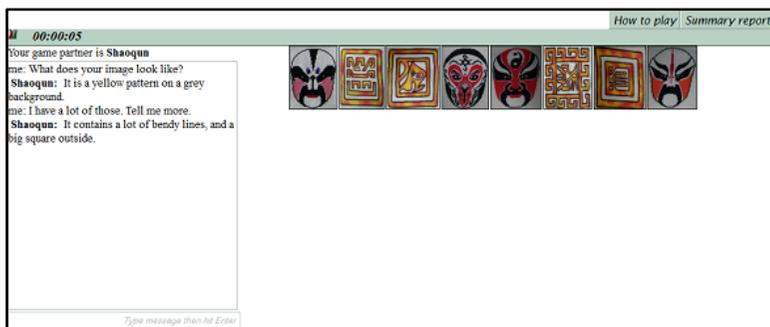
In the *Review* panel you can remove individual paragraphs, or inspect the answer first before deciding whether or not to keep a paragraph.



Signing in for Image Guessing



What the describer sees



What the guesser sees

4.1.7 Image Guessing

Image Guessing is a cooperative game based on an image collection. It involves two players, called the *describer* and the *guesser*.

The describer sees a single image, while the guesser sees thumbnails of all images in the collection. The guesser's aim is to determine which is the one the describer sees.

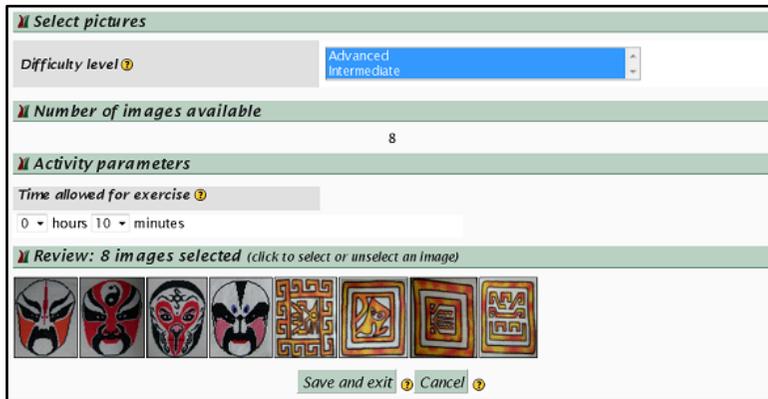
Players communicate through chat; the guesser can ask questions about which image it is, and the describer can type what it is that they see. To make themselves understood, they must express ideas unambiguously. Because they cannot use gestures or body language to hint at what they mean as in face-to-face communication, students deploy more complex structures, produce longer sentences, and order the words correctly.

Guessing games are suitable for all ages and levels, and can be fun for students. This one helps to improve communication skills, descriptive power, writing ability, and domain-specific vocabulary. Teachers can build an image collection in a particular domain that will reinforce the kind of vocabulary they are trying to teach.

The first illustration shows what learners see when they enter the game. The system pairs up students on a first come, first served basis. At any time there may be several pairs of students playing, and one or more "singles" waiting to play. Students choose whether to sign up as guesser or describer. If there is another single who has chosen the opposite role, the game starts immediately. Otherwise the student receives a message asking them to wait until someone else enters the game and chooses the opposite role.

The game begins as soon as a match is made. In the example depicted, the describer and guesser see the second and third image respectively. They type into the text box (beneath the list of messages), and when they press *return* the new message appears on their partner's screen as well. In the conversation shown, Ian (the describer) asks his partner Shaoqun (the guesser) what she sees. She responds that her image is a yellow pattern on a gray background. Ian responds that he can see lots of those, and requests more information. Shaoqun is then pressed into describing the image in more specific terms.

All the while, the clock is ticking (shown towards the top left of each image). The game ends when the guesser clicks the correct image, or when time expires.



Designing an *Image Guessing* game

Teacher's interface for Image Guessing

For Image Guessing, the teacher selects the images that will be used in the game and determines how much time to allow when it is played.

The difficulty of the exercise is governed by the content of the particular image collection used, which teachers can build for their student population. Simple images – for example, fruit, animals or cartoons – are easy for lower-level students to describe. More complex ones – for example, landscapes or abstract patterns – are more suitable for advanced students.

Teachers with classes of different abilities can build a single collection containing images of different kinds and assign them appropriate difficulty level metadata (*Advanced* and *Intermediate* in the illustration). This metadata can be used to determine which images are selected for a particular game. Alternatively, the teacher can click individual images to deselect or select them.

4.2 Activities on collocations

Collocations are very important in language learning. Novice text tends to be cumbersome and error prone because of insufficient collocation knowledge. Learners struggle to speak fluently because they have to laboriously put sentences together word by word. Students with good ideas often lose marks in writing assignments, because they don't know the most important collocations of a keyword that is central to their topic. For example, in an essay on "Smoking" one student wrote *the smokers who rely on cigarettes and have to smoking everyday* instead of using phrases like *heavy smoker* or *addicted to smoking*. Collocation knowledge affects both accuracy and fluency, and is important for all learners – particularly those who strive for a high degree of competence in a second language.

What exactly is a collocation? According to linguists, it is a conventionalized word sequence – a phenomenon found in any natural language. For example, we say *heavy smoker* instead of *strong smoker*, or *strong tea* instead of *powerful tea*. Such sequences are referred to by various names: lexical items, prefabricated chunks, routinized formula, formulaic sequences, conventionalized language forms, fixed or semi-fixed expressions, and so on. From a statistical point of view the term denotes two or more consecutive words with a special behavior – they occur together with a frequency that is greater than random. From our point of view as language teachers, collocations are simply "word combinations that I think my students would not expect to find together." FLAX identifies as collocations all high-frequency word combinations that follow one of these five syntactic patterns: verb + noun, adjective + noun, noun + noun, noun + of + noun, and preposition + noun.

FLAX provides strong support for collocation learning. It contains a massive collocation database that is built from a large corpus of text (see Chapter 7). It includes activities that make collocation learning fun and dynamic:

- Related Words,
- Collocation Matching,
- Collocation Dominoes,
- Collocation Guessing, and
- Completing Collocations.

In each case, teachers choose the words they want their students to work on and FLAX automatically retrieves their most common collocations from the database for selection by the teacher. Related Words and Collocation Matching help students differentiate words with similar meaning and usage. Collocation Dominoes and Collocation Guessing help extend learners' collocation knowledge. Unlike the other activities, Completing Collocations uses collocations generated from a document collection to facilitate topic specific collocation acquisition.

[How to play](#) [Summary report](#)

<p>abolish (1)</p> <p>abolish exchange controls</p> <p>delete data</p> <p>_____ mail</p> <p>_____ the message</p>	<p>delete (2)</p> <p>delete files</p> <p>abolish the poll tax</p> <p>abolish the monarchy</p> <p>_____ slavery</p>
--	---

Total score: 0 / 8

[Check Answer](#)

A Related Words exercise

[How to play](#) [Summary report](#)

<p>abolish (0)</p> <p>abolish exchange controls</p> <p>delete data</p> <p>delete mail</p> <p>delete the message</p>	<p>delete (0)</p> <p>delete files</p> <p>abolish the poll tax</p> <p>abolish the monarchy</p> <p>abolish slavery</p>
--	---

- After inspecting an item of mail, each user can elect to **delete the message** or retain it for later examination.
- Each user, having inspected an item of mail, can elect to **delete the message**, retain it for later examination, or have it formatted to a file for printing.

Total score: 8 / 8

[Check Answer](#)

Checking the answer and learning the context

4.2.1 Related Words

Language learners tend to rely on dictionaries to distinguish different shades of meaning of similar words such as *speak* and *tell*. However, it is time-consuming and frustrating to have to study alternative definitions and compare them, and dictionaries do not always provide sufficient examples or adequate explanation.

The Related Words activity helps learners distinguish between commonly confused words. Teachers select two or three related words that they wish to target, and the system retrieves the collocations of these words from the British National Corpus, a standard corpus of British English.

The words *abolish* and *delete* have been chosen for the illustration. The top screen shows the activity part way through. The learner has completed the phrases *delete data*, *delete files*, *abolish the monarchy*, *abolish the poll tax*, and *abolish exchange controls*. Three incomplete phrases are left: *the message*, *slavery*, and *mail*; and the header words at the top of the columns show that there remains one instance of *abolish* and two of *delete* (these are the numbers in brackets). The player uses the mouse to drag a header word and drop it into the appropriate phrase. To undo a match, click the phrase.

When the player clicks *Check Answer*, the correct collocations turn green and incorrect matches revert to the original. Green collocations can be clicked to see examples in context, taken from the British National Corpus. Here the correct phrase *delete the message* has been clicked to show two sentences that contain it; the phrase itself is in bold text.

Exercise parameters

First word

Second word

Third word (optional)

Collocation Type

Number of collocations

abolish

abolish the poll tax (7)

abolish barristers (4)

abolish blood sports (3)

abolish the monarchy (3)

abolish the distinction (3)

abolish security of (2)

abolish commoners (2)

abolish the teacher (2)

abolish apartheid (2)

abolish slavery (2)

delete

delete files (4)

delete the words (4)

delete mail (3)

delete the infected program (2)

delete data (2)

delete keys to (2)

delete text (2)

delete clause (2)

delete the proposal from (2)

delete characters (2)

Designing a *Related Words* exercise

Teacher's interface for Related Words

Creating this and other collocation activities differs from the ones we have seen earlier because the material does not come from a particular article or document collection. The teacher specifies two or three target words and desired syntactic pattern, and FLAX retrieves collocations from the database and displays them in descending order of occurrence frequency for the teacher to make selections.

The illustration uses the same words as above, *abolish* and *delete*, which have similar meanings, but are used in quite different contexts. Collocations are distinguished by their syntactic type, and the type verb + noun has been chosen. The alternatives are the other syntactic patterns mentioned earlier, namely adjective + noun, noun + noun, noun + of + noun, and preposition + noun. Our two chosen words are unambiguously verbs, and none of these patterns would return any collocations, but it is often the case that the same word appears in collocations of different types – particularly if it is a noun.

After clicking the *Review* button you are shown 10 collocations of each word, as in the image. The number in brackets indicates the frequency of the collocation in the corpus. Your job is to use the check boxes to select a few that are appropriate for your students. Initially all collocations are selected, and you can click to deselect them individually. Alternatively, click the *Deselect All* button and then select the ones you want.

You can click any phrase to view the sentences that contain it, which will help you decide on the best ones to choose. These are the examples that your students will see if they request them, as for *delete the message* in the previous section.

[How to play](#) [Summary report](#)

slice of information

part of toast

drop of the process

piece of water

Total score: 0 Question No. 6 out of 6

[Check Answer](#) [Previous question](#) [Next question](#)

A Collocation Matching exercise

[How to play](#) [Summary report](#)

slice of toast

part of the process

drop of water

piece of information

- One **piece of information** on its own is not necessarily useful.
- Keep asking: but why is that **piece of information** essential?
- Sooner or later, monologues like this, some really vital **piece of information** was liable to emerge.
- This last **piece of information** was passed Harry Dunstaple, whose skill as a gunner was now celebrated throughout the enclave.
- Indeed, knowing the cause would restrict our reading of the poems, it is the one **piece of information** we can probably do without.

Question No. 6 out of 6

[ion](#) [Next question](#)

Examples of the collocation *piece of information* from the British National Corpus

4.2.2 Collocation Matching

The Collocation Matching activity takes several words and selects one collocation (or perhaps a few) for each word, generally with the same syntactic collocation type. This is similar to the previous activity, Related Words; the difference is that Collocation Matching is intended for use with several words with typically just one collocation for each, whereas Related Words is intended to focus on two (or three) words, with several collocations of each. Collocation matching is a popular practice in language classrooms; the aim is to help learners distinguish words with similar meanings, or words that have the same usage.

For example, the verbs *condense*, *shorten*, *compress*, and *abbreviate* all mean “to make something less, shorter or smaller,” but are used in different ways. In this activity, phrases like *condense the story*, *shorten the time*, *compress the video*, and *abbreviate certain words* might be presented, so that players learn to identify the difference between these verbs in terms of their collocations.

Another example is shown in the accompanying illustrations. The quantification words *slice*, *part*, *drop*, and *piece* have been split from their associated nouns and shuffled. The player’s task is to match the left-hand quantification words with their right-hand nouns by dragging and dropping them in a way that creates the strongest partnership. Just as for the Related Words activity, players can check the answer, and click any correct match to read sample sentences in the British National Corpus.

When you have completed the exercise, you can click on any of the phrases to see sentences that include that phrase. For example, in the lower illustration, the user has clicked *piece of information*.

Exercise parameters	
Target words	drop slice bar chunk
Collocation type	noun + of + noun (slice of bread)
Number of collocations	10
drop Select All	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> drop of water (31)	<input type="checkbox"/> edge of the drop (4)
<input type="checkbox"/> drop of blood (15)	<input type="checkbox"/> drop of rum (4)
<input type="checkbox"/> drop of rain (11)	<input type="checkbox"/> drop of whisky (4)
<input type="checkbox"/> drop of alcohol (7)	<input type="checkbox"/> drop of oil (4)
<input type="checkbox"/> drop of wine (6)	<input type="checkbox"/> drop of brandy (3)
slice Select All	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> slice of bread (37)	<input type="checkbox"/> slice of the action (7)
<input type="checkbox"/> slice of toast (21)	<input type="checkbox"/> slice of history (6)
<input type="checkbox"/> slice of cake (17)	<input type="checkbox"/> slice of the market (5)
<input type="checkbox"/> slice of ham (11)	<input type="checkbox"/> slice of life (4)
<input type="checkbox"/> slice of lemon (10)	<input type="checkbox"/> slice of cheese (3)
bar Select All	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bar of chocolate (31)	<input type="checkbox"/> side of the bar (6)
<input type="checkbox"/> bar of soap (28)	<input type="checkbox"/> door of the bar (5)
<input type="checkbox"/> end of the bar (24)	<input type="checkbox"/> back of the bar (5)
<input type="checkbox"/> corner of the bar (10)	<input type="checkbox"/> length of the bar (4)
<input type="checkbox"/> underside of the bar (6)	<input type="checkbox"/> axis of the bar (4)
chunk Select All	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> chunk of text (3)	<input type="checkbox"/> chunk of the money (2)
<input type="checkbox"/> chunk of discourse (3)	<input type="checkbox"/> chunk of time (2)
<input type="checkbox"/> chunk of my life (3)	<input type="checkbox"/> chunk of pink polystyrene (2)
<input type="checkbox"/> chunk of bread (3)	<input type="checkbox"/> chunk of metal (2)
<input type="checkbox"/> chunk of meat (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> chunk of data (2)
Review Display Save	

Designing a Collocation Matching exercise

Teacher's interface for Collocation Matching

The only real difference between Collocation Matching and Related Words is in how they are intended to be used, and the student interface reflects the differing usages.

The teacher's interfaces are identical. However, the intention of Collocation Matching is for the teacher to type in a list of several target words instead of just two or three.

As before, one suitable collocation type is chosen. For the example words *drop*, *slice*, *bar*, and *chunk*, which are quantification words, noun + of + noun is an appropriate target pattern.

There are several collocations for each word. With the words *drop*, *slice*, *bar*, and *chunk*, the single most frequent collocation of each was chosen for the first example shown earlier: *drop of water*, *slice of bread*, *bar of chocolate*, and *chunk of text*. It is probably best to follow this strategy of selecting just one collocation for each word. Otherwise, repeated target words will occur on the left-hand column of the learner interface, as in the second example shown earlier, and the exercise will be more difficult.

How to play Summary report

time life trade address store book cycle furniture period

family	life	life	cycle
period			
			unions

Total score: 0 / 10
Check Answer

A Collocation Dominoes exercise

How to play Summary report

time life trade address store book cycle furniture period

family life	life cycle	cycle time	time period
-------------	------------	------------	-------------

- Even recalling details of **family life** are hard.
- What they seek is a quiet, undisturbed **family life**.
- The same macho attitudes have an effect on their **family life**.
- This girl's **family life** is ruined by a brother who drinks.
- Furniture becomes more intimate and domestic, adapted to **family life**, not public display.
- There are fears of **family life** going down the drain, as staff may get only two complete weekends off in seven.
- It is vulnerable to wider world economic forces, and stability is then to be found in respectable **family life** and firmly grounded morality.
- This seems to support the view that fewer women reach the top the difficulties they face if they try to combine **family life** and work commitments.
- She has almost always travelled alone and has lived with very poor and very rich families, participating in the most private aspects of Arab **family life**.
- They would rather play dead than face the pain of thinking about their wives and family and the ordinary small activities of **family life** which they didn't sufficiently value when they had freedom.

Total score: 5 / 10
Check Answer

Examples of the collocation *family life* from the British National Corpus

4.2.3 Collocation Dominoes

English word classes are incredibly flexible: many verbs can be used as nouns and many nouns can be used as adjectives. Even advanced learners often feel uncomfortable using certain word combinations, particularly noun + noun collocations. Collocation Dominoes is a language game designed to help learners notice the use of these fixed expressions.

In Collocation Dominoes, the last word of one collocation becomes the first word of the next:

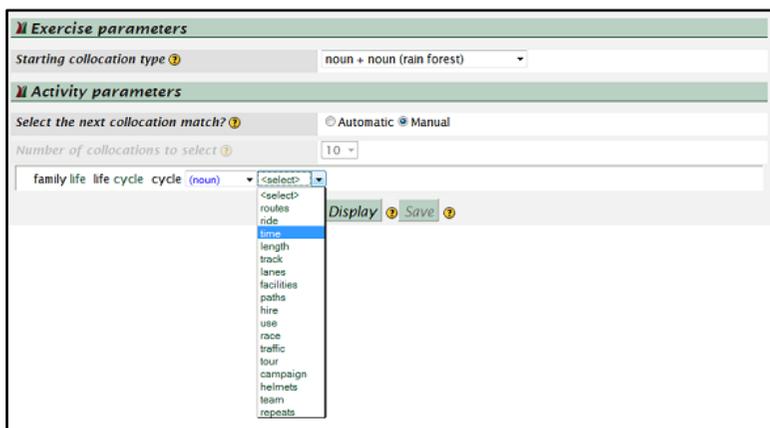
family life – life cycle – cycle time – time period ...

The first illustration shows an incomplete game comprising noun + noun collocations with the starting word “family”. The words that fill the blanks are at the top, in blue, and the learner proceeds by dragging one of them with the mouse and dropping it into a box.

According to the rules of dominoes, adjacent pairs of boxes must contain the same word – so when the user places a word in one, the system automatically puts it in the other. Moves can always be undone by clicking a word in a box.

When the user clicks *Check Answer*, any incorrectly formed collocations revert to empty boxes, and correct ones can be clicked to view sample contexts in which they occur.

You can click on any collocation you have got correct to see sentences that use it. For example, in the bottom image the user has clicked a collocation box that shows *family life*.



Designing a Collocation Dominoes exercise

Teacher's interface for Collocation Dominoes

To design a Collocation Dominoes game, you need to choose a starting collocation type from four possible syntactic patterns, noun + noun, noun + of + noun, verb + noun, and noun + verb. These patterns have been chosen because they make it relatively easy to form a set of dominoes.

Next you use the drop-down menu to determine how many collocations FLAX should consider when selecting each domino. Collocations are ordered based on frequency, and in most cases the top 10 most frequent collocations should be sufficient. The number is a compromise; if the game includes low frequency collocations, it may be too challenging for learners, whereas if the number of possible choices is small, FLAX may be unable to create a game.

FLAX is able to build up a set of dominoes automatically; you need only specify the starting word and the number of dominoes. For example, in the illustration the teacher has entered the starting word *family*, and FLAX has come up with the collocations *family life* and *life cycle*. If you are dissatisfied with any choice it makes, you can manually re-select the collocation type, or the collocation word, from a drop-down menu. The teacher here is selecting *time* as the word to follow *cycle*. If you do this, any subsequent collocations will disappear (because the next collocation depends on the previous one), and FLAX will recompute them.

If you prefer, you can choose to create a Collocation Dominoes game manually. In that case, you can select the syntactic pattern and content word for every domino.

How to play | Summary report

Possible words:
 capability mature answer ripe ability reply

levels of _____

intellectual _____

reading _____

develop the _____ to

lack of _____

linguistic _____

_____ range

have the _____ to

Bricks left: 2
Attempts: 0

Type in your guessed word:

Total score: 0 Question No. 1 out of 6

Previous question | Next question

A Collocation Guessing exercise

How to play | Summary report

Possible words:
 ability mature ripe capability reply answer

development of the ability

remarkable ability

levels of ability

intellectual ability

reading ability

develop the ability to

lack of ability

linguistic ability

ability range

Bricks left: 0
Attempts: 0

Question No. 1 out of 6

QUESTION | Next question

- Thus, it is assumed that a test of **linguistic ability** actually measures language some other characteristic.
- Another source of variation comes from the interaction of the test items with the child's **linguistic ability**.
- The main advantage of elicitation procedures is that they give a relatively high degree of control over areas of **linguistic ability** which are being assessed.
- Measures of concurrent validity must therefore be examined to determine whether the comparison measure is, in itself, a valid measure of the **linguistic ability** in question.
- Speaking as you would to an ordinary child, of a similar level of **linguistic ability**, may be the most natural response and in most cases this is likely to be a safe strategy.
- His appearance attracted the earl's attention, and Jean Oxford's **linguistic ability** is sharply contrasted with that of Jean's rival for the hand of Bloude, Oxford's daughter.
- Thus, while imitation tasks appear to provide a simple and direct way of assessing a child's **linguistic ability**, the interpretation of children's performance on imitation tasks is simple.
- A good test would be one in which each item has a high correlation with the overall test score, since this would indicate that all the items tap into the **linguistic ability** which the test purports to measure.
- Think for any checklist which claims a developmental sequence, the larger the developmental space between items, the less the checklist will discriminate levels of **linguistic ability**, and the less accurate it will be.
- On the one hand, it may be indicative of the absence of a particular **linguistic ability** while, alternatively, it may be explained by influences unrelated to **linguistic ability**, lapses in attention, bore-dom or a failure to understand instructions.

Checking the answer and learning the context

4.2.4 Collocation Guessing

The renowned English linguist J.R. Firth said, "You shall know a word by the company it keeps," and the objective of the Collocation Guessing activity is precisely that: to let learners try their hand at identifying words from the company they keep. Knowing the collocations of a word is an important aspect of one's vocabulary knowledge.

Here's how it works. The target word is removed from a selection of its collocations, and they are shown one by one to the learner, who must guess the word. For example, given

plain, dark, white, bitter, milk, bar of,

learners must guess which word collocates with all of them. The answer is obvious to chocolate lovers!

The interface is inspired by the classic computer game Tetris. A single game comprises a word and a set of collocations. Collocation "bricks" with the target word omitted drop down from the top of the panel, one by one, hard on each other's heels. The player continually enters guesses that can match all the incomplete collocations, and the game ends when the correct word is given – or the collocations run out. Bonus points are awarded depending on how few collocations have been seen before the correct word is entered.

In the top illustration, a few collocates are given - *have the ___ to, range, linguistic, lack of, develop the ___ to, reading, intellectual, and levels of*. The correct word is *ability*, and if the player types it the collocation "bricks" will turn green, just as in the other collocation activities. Otherwise, they will briefly turn red, and the game will continue. When time runs out, all the collocations turn red, as shown in the last image.

Both green and red collocations can be clicked to view more contexts. Here, *linguistic ability* has been clicked to show ten examples of its use.

Exercise parameters	
Target words	ability
Collocation type	verb + noun (tell the truth) noun + noun (rain forest) adjective + noun (heavy rain) noun + of + noun (slice of bread)
Total number of collocations	20
Activity parameters	
Display the questions in random order?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Speed	Medium
Display hint(s)?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Select hint type(s)	Number of Letters First Letter Last Letter Word List
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ability [10]	
verb + noun Select All	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> have the ability to (109)	<input type="checkbox"/> reduce the ability of (15)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> develop the ability to (19)	<input type="checkbox"/> lost the ability to (15)
<input type="checkbox"/> include the ability to (15)	
noun + noun Select All	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ability range (31)	<input type="checkbox"/> ability tests (13)
<input type="checkbox"/> language ability (17)	<input type="checkbox"/> ability groups (8)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> reading ability (13)	
adjective + noun Deselect All	
<input type="checkbox"/> natural ability (42)	<input type="checkbox"/> academic ability (23)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> linguistic ability (29)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> remarkable ability (21)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> intellectual ability (26)	
noun + of + noun Deselect All	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> lack of ability (16)	<input type="checkbox"/> development of the ability (7)
<input type="checkbox"/> levels of ability (12)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> range of ability (7)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ability of firms (7)	
Review <input type="button" value="Display"/> Save <input type="button" value=""/>	

Designing a Collocation Guessing game

Teacher's interface for Collocation Guessing

Teachers have a great deal of flexibility in designing a Collocation Guessing game.

You can choose any noun, verb or adjective as the target word. There is no limitation on the number of words: FLAX will make a separate exercise for each one.

For the type of collocations, you can select any of the syntactic patterns verb + noun, noun + noun, adjective + noun, and noun + of + noun, and you can select more than one of these in the usual way.

The dropping speed can also be adjusted from *very slow* to *very fast*.

Four types of hints are available to choose from, and you can select more than one of them. The *Number of Letters* hint will display the target word as dashes, where the number of dashes corresponds to the number of letters in the word. The *First Letter* and *Last Letter* hints will display the first or last letter of the target word. The *Word List* hint will display all the target words at the top of the panel, as in the example given earlier, where the target words are *answer*, *ability*, *capability*, *mature*, *reply*, and *ripe*.

On the facing page, the target word *ability* has been typed and all four syntactic patterns have been specified. This generates a total of 20 collocations, shown at the bottom and grouped according to their syntactic pattern. It is up to the teacher to decide which of these expressions are most appropriate for incorporating into a particular game.

[How to play](#) | [Summary report](#)

Water sports are very popular. The many fast-flowing rivers _____ the *opportunity for* rafting – particularly in the Bay of Plenty and around Queenstown. Trips can be from a few hours to several days, and a trained guide stays with the group to ensure safety and provide all the necessary equipment.

Total score: 0 Question No. 2 out of 5

[Check Answer](#) | [Previous question](#) | [Next question](#)

[A Completing Collocations exercise](#)

[How to play](#) | [Summary report](#)

On these rivers you can also go jet-boating . You will have to fasten your _____ *belt* before powering through narrow rocky places or swooping along shallow streams.

Total score: 0 Question No. 1 out of 5

[Check Answer](#) | [Previous question](#) | [Next question](#)

[A noun + noun Completing Collocations exercise](#)

For example you might help to cook dinner or do the washing up. You need to understand instructions in English and to have enough English to _____ *to the people* you are staying with.

There is fresh healthy food for all these people in New Zealand shops. All food has a label, to _____ *the buyer* what is in the food.

I feel very shy. My goal this year is to *improve* my _____ and listening. I will do this by talking to my neighbour every day.

[Completing Collocations: speak vs. tell](#)

4.2.5 Completing Collocations

Completing Collocations is like Word Guessing: certain words are omitted from a document and users fill in the gaps. However, whereas in Word Guessing the words are omitted either randomly or according to their syntactic type, Completing Collocations is more sophisticated; the missing words are chosen from collocations that have been identified in the document. FLAX chooses sentences, and highlights (in blue) selected collocations. If the paragraph contains preceding and following sentences, they are shown as well, to provide context.

The first two illustrations focus on the “Adventure sports” article. The top one includes collocations of all types. This particular question shows a *verb + noun* combination – the answer is *provide the opportunity* – but other questions will involve different collocation types.

Many teachers will prefer to focus on certain types of collocation. In the second illustration, only *noun + noun* collocations appear. This question shows *seat belt*; all other questions in this exercise will also involve *noun + noun* combinations.

It is instructive to focus on sets of words that share similar meanings but have different usage. Learners are frequently confused by common words – *make* and *do*, *see* and *look* – and find it hard to understand their differences by consulting dictionaries. For example, one dictionary defines *speak* and *tell* as

- *Speak* – say something in order to convey information, an opinion, or a feeling
- *Tell* – communicate information, facts, or news to someone in spoken or written words.

No wonder learners do not know which to use! Studying collocations is an effective way to help learners distinguish a word’s various shades of meaning.

The bottom illustration shows three questions from a third exercise that addresses precisely this distinction between *speak* and *tell*. These sentences, all containing these two words or their derivatives, are chosen from all the articles in the *Best of Password* collection.

Another exercise might focus on finding the right verb for a noun. In the teacher’s interface described next, collocations can be restricted to those that contain a certain word, and also by syntactic pattern, so one could design a *verb + noun* activity for a particular noun. As usual, the teacher can vet the collocations identified by the system to discard ones that are unsuitable.

Exercise parameters	
Choose article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parliamentary system in NZ Writing poetry in English The kwi bach Preserving Te Reo Maori Lifelines Going to the doctor Holiday plans The beekeeper
Collocation type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adjective + to + verb (necessary to control) adjective + noun (heavy rain) adjective + preposition + noun (good at sports) noun + noun (rain forest) noun + of + noun (chance of rain) preposition + noun (at home) verb + noun (make a difference) verb + preposition (go off)
Contains words	<input type="text" value="speak,tell"/>
Number of collocations to choose from	
	5
Activity parameters	
Order of sentences	Natural order in article
Review: 4 collocations selected	
<p>Click on blue words to turn it into a gap.</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. For example you might help to cook dinner or do the washing up. You need to understand instructions in English and to have enough English to speak to the people you are staying with.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2. There is fresh healthy food for all these people in New Zealand shops. All food has a label, to tell the buyer what is in the food.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3. For example you might help to cook dinner or do the washing up. You need to understand instructions in English and to have enough English to speak to the people you are staying with.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4. I feel very shy. My goal this year is to improve my speaking and listening. I will do this by talking to my neighbour every day.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5. The language is hard. They want to speak in their own language . It is difficult to save money.
<input type="button" value="Review"/> <input type="button" value="Print"/> <input type="button" value="Display"/> <input type="button" value="Save"/>	

Designing a Completing Collocations game

Teacher's interface for Completing Collocations

Completing Collocations exercises are created by filling out a form, just like the other language activities. You can select a particular article or set of articles, and a particular collocation type or types. You can specify a word or words that the collocations should contain. The *Number of collocations to choose from* field updates automatically when these parameters are entered.

In the illustration, 897 collocations were identified initially for all the documents in the *Best of Password* collection, but this immediately reduced to five when the target words "speak" and "tell" were entered. For such a specific exercise it might have been better to give the teacher more choice by basing it on a larger collection.

The *Review* button shows the collocations that the system has selected. In general, a single sentence may contain several collocations, each of which involves more than one word. FLAX generates all the examples but deselects, and grays out, subsequent ones involving the same sentence. You can reselect these individually if you wish; you can also click the blue words to turn them into gaps too.

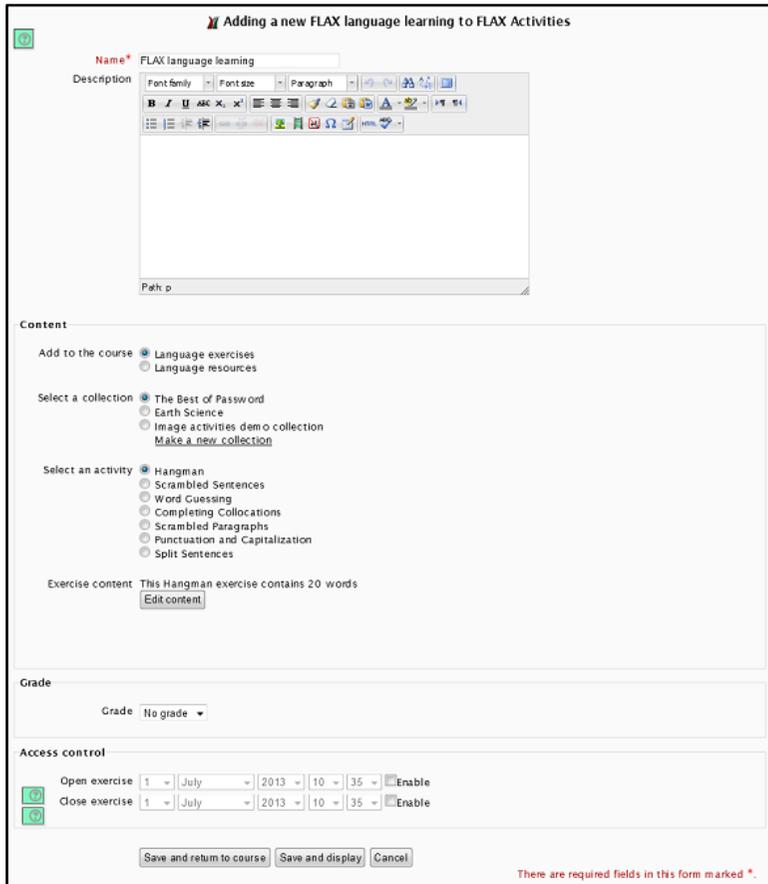
In the illustration, the five *speak* and *tell* collocations are being reviewed, and one has been grayed out by the system because its sentence contains two collocations – *English to speak to* and *speak to the people*. (Usually there are far more collocations, many of which are grayed out.) All the sentences can be selected or deselected using the tick boxes.

Scrambled Sentences Exercises

In Scrambled Sentence exercises, the task is to put the words into the correct order. Just use the mouse to drag a word and drop it into the correct position. Only colored words can be moved. Try this example:

 [4.1.2 Scrambled Sentences Kiwi Bach](#)

A FLAX exercise in a Moodle course



The screenshot shows the Moodle course editing interface for adding a new FLAX language learning activity. The form is titled "Adding a new FLAX language learning to FLAX Activities".

Name: FLAX language learning

Description: A rich text editor with a toolbar containing options for font family, font size, paragraph, bold, italic, underline, strikethrough, text color, background color, bulleted list, numbered list, link, unlink, and insert link.

Content:

- Add to the course:** Language exercises, Language resources
- Select a collection:** The Best of Password, Earth Science, Image activities demo collection, [Make a new collection](#)
- Select an activity:** Hangman, Scrambled Sentences, Word Guessing, Completing Collocations, Scrambled Paragraphs, Punctuation and Capitalization, Split Sentences
- Exercise content:** This Hangman exercise contains 20 words. [Edit content](#)

Grade: No grade

Access control:

- Open exercise:** 1 | July | 2013 | 10 | 35 | Enable
- Close exercise:** 1 | July | 2013 | 10 | 35 | Enable

Buttons: [Save and return to course](#), [Save and display](#), [Cancel](#)

There are required fields in this form marked *.

Adding a FLAX exercise to a course

4.3 Language activities in Moodle

With stand-alone FLAX, language activities are accessed through the collection itself. However, if you are using Moodle, the activities are incorporated directly into the course. They appear as a resource in the course, just like any other resource, but preceded by the FLAX logo . The accompanying image (at the top) shows a fragment of a course that contains a FLAX activity called *Scrambled Sentences exercise*. Students click the link to play the game.

To add a language activity to a course, turn editing on and use the standard Moodle *Add an activity or resource* menu. Select *FLAX language learning* and click *Add*.

This takes you to the page shown opposite, with *Language exercise* selected, where you can select a collection and then an activity type that belongs to the collection. (The other option is *Language resource*, which is described in Chapter 6.) Different activities may be associated with different collections; for example, the *Image Guessing* activity is not associated with the *Best of Password* collection because the images there are not appropriate.

Having selected a collection and an activity type, you can click *Save and return to course*, at the very end of the form. This creates an exercise with default parameters and puts it into your course.

Probably, however, you will want to configure the activity first. In that case, click *Edit content*, which takes you to the *Edit exercise content* page described in the sections above that allows you to set the parameters for the exercise, exactly the same as in stand-alone FLAX.