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9. Over to you!

As we explained at the outset, FLAX is both a vision and a language learning system that you can use. And we invite you to participate in both!

If you're a teacher, please use the FLAX language learning system. There are no charges: it's completely free. Moodle users can download the MoodleFLAX module; others can access FLAX from our website. You're welcome to try it out with your classes. For sustained use, we urge you to download and install the FLAX server, to avoid overloading our computers. It's easy to do, and runs on any computer. However, some advanced FLAX facilities require further work to set up (Section 8.2). If you need help, just ask us.

We like to hear from FLAX users. We're interested in your comments and suggestions, and also in more formal user studies and comparisons, to help us improve the software. If you build collections that you can share, we can put them on our website. We're particularly interested to hear about experiences with non-English language teaching.

We also invite you to help us develop the FLAX vision. And we're also working on new ideas. Here are some.

Writing aids. We are seeking ways of detecting language errors in student writing, and suggesting alternative phrasing. We have noted that lack of collocation knowledge explains why language learners find it hard to express their ideas simply, precisely, and persuasively. Yet FLAX has an enormous vocabulary of collocations – surely it can help critique, and offer constructive suggestions.

Extensive reading. FLAX supports intensive study of particular texts. A complementary approach is to encourage students to read large volumes of text. In an associated project, FERN, we are modeling users by recording their usage of glosses, and their reading speed. The system automatically selects reading material of appropriate difficulty – and on topics that interest the individual user.

Collocation learning. FLAX already includes many facilities to help students learn collocations. However, we are experimenting with further advanced facilities in connection with our three databases of collocations.

Wikipedia mining. In a separate research project, we have discovered how to link topics in documents to Wikipedia articles, and to use this to quantify the semantic relatedness of arbitrary concepts. Both can be applied to language learning, for example by adding explanatory popups for named entities such as people and places, and by assessing the relevance of student guesses in certain exercises.

FLAX is open source software and you can work on it too. Please contact us if you would like to help develop the vision.

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Further reading

The definitive account of FLAX's support for collocation learning:

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