Institute of Education

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Blended Learning Essentials: Getting Started

Crib Sheet: Online Glossaries

What is an Online Glossary?

An online glossary can be any online space that allows learners (or their teachers or trainers) to create a list of specialized vocabulary relevant to their studies or workplace setting. Any easily editable website can be used to support a glossary, such as a wiki provided free for educators from PBworks or Wikispaces for example. More simply, an online document that can be edited by groups of learners such as a Google Doc or Primary Pad could be used. However, the VLE Moodle provides its own glossary activity that has greater functionality than will be provided by wikis and online documents. Moodle's glossary allows learners to add their own terms and definitions, comment on entries added by others, and the teacher or trainer has the option of enabling the entries to be auto-linked across the Moodle course. For example, if auto-linking is enabled for the glossary, and the learner (or teacher/trainer) has selected for their entry to be auto-linked, then whenever the word is used in a resource or activity, a hyperlink to the definition will appear.

Where can I find out how to use an Online Glossary?

Information on using the Moodle glossary module can be found here and you can view a video tutorial on the glossary activity here. Follow the links above to the sites for wiki tools and online documents to find out more about their use.

How can Online Glossaries be used in learning and teaching?

Glossaries are widely used in educational context to provide just-in-time support for learners when they need it. Online glossaries enable co-construction by learners and therefore promote active, collaborative learning experiences helping learners to feel ownership over the vocabulary of their chosen field. The resulting glossary can then be accessed in class, at home and in the workplace by means of a mobile phone, tablet or computer, meaning that learners have support wherever and whenever they need it. Co-constructed glossaries can build confidence and community as learners can track their growing, collective understanding as more and more entries are added to the glossary. The auto-link function of the Moodle glossary presents this visually as the terms in the Moodle course become highlighted as hyperlinked definitions.

Within the Vocational Education and Training sector, possible uses of an online glossary that could be adapted to your own educational context are:

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- Supporting specialist vocabulary for ESOL learners;
- Building scientific and technical vocabulary e.g. tool use and practical application in fields such as forensic science, carpentry, plumbing, hair and beauty;
- Extending written and spoken vocabulary for developing communication skills.
- Supporting core skills (e.g. numeracy) for apprentices;
- Extend the written and spoken vocabulary both technological or vocational or enriching and developing communication skills;
- Supporting specific language learning (e.g. French, German);
- Supporting specialized vocabulary in contextual studies for art and design.

Using Online Glossaries in the Vocational Education and Training Sector

Level 3 Business Studies

The teacher or trainer has created a glossary within the Moodle-based VLE and tasks the learners to add entries for all the terms they will need in order to interpret financial statements.

- Each learner must add 3 terms per session, along with an image where possible (for example, learners can take a photo of a balance sheet with their mobile phone and attach it to their definition).
- At the end of the session, the teacher or trainer selects the terms that have been correctly described and defined to auto-link within the Moodle course.
- When the learners access the Moodle course, each auto-linked term is highlighted, and when they click on the term the definition appears.

Level 1 ESOL

The teacher or trainer has created the following practice scenario for the learners: somebody has asked you for directions from Nelsons Column (in Trafalgar Square, London) to Embankment Underground Station.

- Learners must work in groups of 4 using a Google doc, to make a list of words they will use to give directions. Learners have up to 30 minutes for the task.
- Google Maps is set as a resource for the task.
- When their lists are complete, each group is asked to share the link to the Google doc via the VLE with a) their teacher or trainer and b) other students in the class.

As an extension task for those that have time, groups should add 5 more words to direct the person from Embankment Underground station to the Royal Festival Hall.

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