

Title: Visual Annotations in Vocabulary Acquisition: Experiences with Sona Vocabulary Assistant

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Despite changing theories about best practices in teaching foreign languages, the need to acquire large amounts of vocabulary has remained a constant. Numerous programmers and educators have created interactive tools to assist learners with vocabulary acquisition, but as the flexibility of our tools increases, additional research is needed on how to best incorporate rich media into learning materials.

Several studies have examined the effects of visual annotations on vocabulary acquisition (Chun & Plass 1996, Yoshii & Flaitz 2002). These studies focused on incidental retention in the context of reading comprehension; given the plethora of tools for learning vocabulary, it is worth testing for the effect of images in a program designed expressly for vocabulary acquisition.

Since 2006 students in Russian classes at the University of South Carolina have been using Sona Vocabulary Assistant, a cross-platform desktop application that allows for the extensive integration of visual, textual, audio, and hyperlink annotations in word lists and exercises keyed to the students' textbooks (in this case, *Golosa Books I & II*). In the fall of 2008 a study will be conducted with 1<sup>st</sup>- and 2<sup>nd</sup>-year Russian students to assess the effect of the inclusion or exclusion of visual annotations. This presentation will describe the study and discuss its results in the context of Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning (Mayer 2005, pp. 31-48).

Chun, D.M., & Plass, J.L. (1996a). Effects of multimedia annotations on vocabulary acquisition. *Modern Language Journal*, 80, 183-198.

Mayer, Richard E., editor (2005). *The Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nikolova, O.R. (2002). Effects of students' participation in authoring of multimedia materials on student acquisition of vocabulary. *Language Learning and Technology*, 6 (1), 100-122.

Yoshii, M., and Flaitz, J. (2002). Second language incidental vocabulary retention: The effect of picture and annotation types. *CALICO Journal*, 20 (1), pp. 33-58.