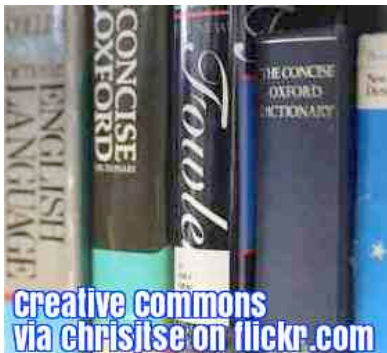## Sesame Street and IBM make vocabulary app

11th June, 2017

Sesame Workshop (the company behind the hugely successful children's TV show Sesame Street) and IBM have teamed up to create a revolutionary new app for kids to learn vocabulary. The joint venture has created the first vocabulary learning app powered by IBM's artificial intelligence software. The app discovers for itself a child's current reading level and vocabulary range, and then uses its algorithms to challenge the child with appropriate, new vocabulary to improve the child's skills. It personalizes the learning experience for children. As the child continues to use the app, it will ensure he or she has learned and understood the new words before introducing additional, tailored vocabulary items.

IBM says it has just completed a pilot program testing the app. It collected 18,000 multiple-choice assessments given to kindergarteners over a two-week period. The researchers said the results were very promising. They said the kids learned words like "arachnid," "amplify," "camouflage," and "applause," which are typically learned at a much later age. The children could also use these words in context. Sesame Workshop CEO Jeffrey Dunn said: "We expect to develop the next generation of tailored learning tools….Educational technology like the platform we've created…is a promising new channel for learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom, and we're excited to explore it further."

Sources: techcrunch.com / *kidscreen.com* / *techdigg.com*

Writing

What are the best three ways to learn vocabulary? Why are they good?

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

Sesame Street / children's TV / IBM / vocabulary / artificial intelligence / learning / pilot / program / testing / context / channel / opportunities / classroom / explore

True / False

a)   The company that makes Sesame Street is called Sesame Workshop. T / F

b)   The app uses IBM's artificial intelligence software. T / F

c)   The app personalizes vocabulary learning for each student. T / F

d)   The app cannot tailor vocabulary items for students. T / F

e)   IBM said it has tested the app with pilots. T / F

f)   Kids using the app learned words that were harder for their age. T / F

g)   The CEO of Sesame Workshop promised a new channel. T / F

h)   The CEO said there was no need to explore more opportunities. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

1.	**hugely**	a.	project
2.	**team up**	b.	chances
3.	**venture**	c.	relevant
4.	**appropriate**	d.	encouraging
5.	**additional**	e.	collaborate
6.	**pilot**	f.	initiate
7.	**promising**	g.	look into
8.	**develop**	h.	really
9.	**opportunities**	i.	experimental
10.	**explore**	j.	extra

Discussion – Student A

a)   What do you think of Sesame Street?

b)   How good is a tie-up between Sesame Street and IBM?

c)   What's the best way to learn vocabulary?

d)   Do small children need different ways of learning?

e)   How will artificial intelligence change the way we learn language?

f)   How happy are you with your level of English vocabulary?

g)   What new words have you learned recently?

h)   Would you like to use the new app?

Phrase Match

1. the company behind the hugely successful	a. choice assessments
2. create a revolutionary	b. venture
3. joint	c. further
4. artificial	d. experience
5. It personalizes the learning	e. new app
6. it has just completed a pilot	f. context
7. It collected 18,000 multiple-	g. opportunities
8. use these words in	h. children's TV show
9. learning	i. program
10. we're excited to explore it	j. intelligence

Discussion – Student B

a) What do you think about what you read?

b) What do you think of multiple-choice assessments?

c) What are your three favourite English words, and why?

d) What are your three least-favourite English words?

e) Do you prefer learning inside or outside the classroom?

f) What will the next generation of educational technology look like?

g) What technology do you use to learn English?

h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Spelling

1. create a <u>arntroovulyei</u> new app

2. joint <u>tuevrne</u>

3. <u>ctfliiaari</u> intelligence

4. uses its <u>osglmihrat</u> to challenge the child

5. <u>aotpiaerrpp</u>, new vocabulary

6. additional, <u>taderlio</u> vocabulary items

7. 18,000 multiple-choice <u>esssmastnes</u>

8. "amplify," "camouflage," and "<u>ppluaaes</u>,"

9. <u>ytlpcyail</u> learned at a much later age

10. develop the next <u>aienoetgnr</u>

11. learning <u>riptuooenstip</u>

12. we're excited to <u>exeprlo</u> it further

Role Play

Role A – Apps
You think apps are the best way to learn vocabulary. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): flash cards, reading or watching movies.

Role B – Flash Cards
You think flash cards are the best way to learn vocabulary. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): apps, reading or watching movies.

Role C – Reading
You think reading is the best way to learn vocabulary. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): flash cards, apps or watching movies.

Role D – Watching Movies
You think watching movies is the best way to learn vocabulary. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): flash cards, reading or apps.

Speaking – Vocabulary

Rank these with your partner. Put the best ways of learning vocabulary at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- picture cards
- TV shows
- English lessons
- movies
- apps
- flash cards
- vocab lists
- reading

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. a	4. c	5. j
6. i	7. d	8. f	9. b	10. g

Answers – True False

a	T	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	F	h	F

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.