

Teaching Vocabulary: It's Worth the Effort!

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Introduction—why it's worth the effort
Direct Teaching of Individual Words
 Word Selection
 Rich Instruction
 Fluency and Vocabulary
 Visualization (Bell)
Vocabulary Learning Strategies
 Visual Homonyms and Organizers
 Roots and Affixes
 Using Context Clues
Encouraging Word Consciousness and Word Play
Conclusion

Introduction

- Why vocabulary study is so important
- How children learn new words
 - **YOUNG CHILDREN** learn new words primarily at home, drawn from experience. But what if home is not providing much in the way of vocabulary or varied experience?
 - **OLDER CHILDREN** learn new words primarily through wide reading. The more they read, the richer their vocabularies. But what if they're poor or reluctant readers?
- How is vocabulary generally taught?
 - Younger children: not much emphasis.
 - Older children:
 - Typical assignment is to learn 10-20 words per week, drawn from reading.
 - When children ask about word meanings, teachers often give two options: figure it out from context, or look it up in the dictionary
 - Is this working?
 - Not well enough for students who start school with less vocabulary knowledge, or for those who are poor readers
- What should we be doing? Principles of effective instruction.

Principles of Vocabulary Instruction

FEWER WORDS, MORE DEPTH

1. Select words carefully, and not too many of them!
 2. Use students' experiences to support new vocabulary learning
 - Link new vocabulary to students' prior knowledge and experience.
 - Provide definitions in terms of students' experiences, not just in terms of texts.
 3. Provide for multiple encounters with new words.
 - Offer multisensory activities, like visualizations, charades, etc. for practicing new vocabulary.
 - Offer activities that encourage both recognition and use of new words.
 4. Point out relationships among words
 - Conceptual and semantic relationships
 - Word families
 5. Explicitly teach ways to remember word meanings.
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Word Selection

GOOD SOURCES:

1. children's books
2. current events (Hurricane Katrina: *desolation, destruction, debris, disaster*)
3. commercials (*the incredible, edible egg*)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO SELECT WORDS

1. tier 1 words (happy, clock, bed)
2. tier 2 words (sinister, haunting, absurd)
3. tier 3 words (astrolabe, isotope, lathe)

HOW TO CHOOSE TIER 2 WORDS

In the end, however, it was the cows who were responsible for the wood's isolation, and the cows, through some wisdom they were not wise enough to know that they possessed, were very wise indeed. If they had made their road through the wood instead of around it, then the people would have followed the road. The people would have noticed the giant ash tree at the center of the wood, and then, in time, they'd have noticed the little spring bubbling up among its roots in spite of the pebbles piled there to conceal it. And that would have been a disaster so immense that this weary old earth, owned or not to its fiery core, would have trembled on its axis like a beetle on a pin. (from Tuck Everlasting, N. Babbitt, 1975).

Consider that tier 2 words are different for different ages (ex. *holler* might be a tier 2 word for a 3 year old but not for a 16 year old).

ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLE:

1. Biemiller (1999) believes that children learn words in a specific order and therefore cannot learn more complex words before they know simpler words.
Cook-chef, hat-beret, nighttime-nocturnal.
 2. In the case of young children, kindergarten teachers who use the rarest words were the least effective in improving students' voc. (Juel, 2002).
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Rich Instruction (Beck, McKeown, Omanson)

- Moving beyond traditional definitions
 - The _____ became well-known as a person who looks for ways to solve mysteries.
 - A sleuth helped the police by _____.
 - Unusual context
 - “When her father heard that Lisa had ripped up the letter from Steve, he commended her for it.”
 - Semantic groups
 - Moods: jovial, indignant, enthusiastic, blissful, melancholy, fatigued, meek
 - Webs
 - Words and their consequences
 - Fatigued (“Karen flew all night to Europe. She found it difficult to sleep on the plane. How do you think she felt the next day?”)
 - Relationships between words
 - Would a blissful winner of the lottery feel melancholy?
 - Would you berate someone who inspired you?
 - Active learning
 - “Word wizard”
 - “Stump the class”
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