

Vocabulary

1: a list or collection of words or of words and phrases usually alphabetically arranged and explained or defined: lexicon. The *vocabulary* for the week is posted online every Monday.

2a: a sum or stock of words employed by a language, group, individual, or work or in a field of knowledge a child with a large *vocabulary* the *vocabulary* of physicians a writer known for employing a rich *vocabulary*

b : a list or collection of terms or codes available for use (as in an indexing system) ... the oldest Sumerian cuneiform writing could not render normal prose but was a mere telegraphic shorthand, whose *vocabulary* was restricted to names, numerals, units of measure, words for objects counted, and a few adjectives.— Jared Diamon

3: a supply of expressive techniques or devices (as of an art form) an impressive musical *vocabulary*

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Types of Vocabulary

A vocabulary means both a list of words and the range of words known by any one person. A person's vocabulary develops with age and learning.

The word vocabulary entered the English lexicon in the 1530s and is derived from the Latin word 'vocabularium,' meaning 'a list of words.' It gained its modern meaning, the sum of all words known by a person, in the 1700s. Eminent writers such as William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens are known for their large vocabularies.

If the term is used to mean a list of words, there are several types of vocabulary. These can be divided, as with grammatical classes, into *adjectives*, *nouns* and *verbs*. They could also be divided, as with the different fields of semantics, into categories as diverse as *emotions*, *colors*, *animals* and *human body parts*. When

dealing with the types of vocabulary, the four types, including listening, speaking, reading and writing, are the most commonly used types.

A person's knowledge of words is divided into two broad types of vocabulary: the active and the passive.

An active piece of vocabulary is a word a person uses and a passive word is one that a person understands, but does not use. There are several degrees of knowledge ranging from no understanding of a word to the full knowledge of the word's meaning, forms and how to use it.

A read vocabulary is a passive one. This means it is the words understood by the reader when he or she is reading a piece of written text. The person is able to recognize the form of the letters and how they correspond to one another, and how their sum is understood. This also includes understanding a word's spelling, meaning and the exact meaning in its context.

Typically, there are four main types of vocabulary. These are reading, writing, listening and speaking vocabularies.

Listening is also a **passive** type of vocabulary. The listener is able to link the words being spoken to their meaning. This level of understanding is aided by word context, intonation and, if there is visual contact with the speaker, by gestures and facial expressions. Listening is, like reading, an interpretational form of vocabulary. Writing is the **active** vocabulary equivalent to reading. With reading, it forms the core skills needed for someone to be literate. The writer demonstrates his or her knowledge of a word in terms of its meaning and how to spell it and use it correctly.

Speaking is one of the types of vocabulary that demonstrates a person's knowledge of words. It is an **active** demonstration that can also rely on other elements such as facial expressions, intonation, pitch and gestures to help others understand its meaning. Knowledge of a word is demonstrated by its good usage and pronunciation.

Another classification by DataWORKS divides vocabulary into three distinct types.

1. Academic Vocabulary

Academic Vocabulary can be defined as words that are not tied to any particular course or content area. These are words that students may be exposed to during any subject or class, whether it is math or social science. Typically, these are words that regularly appear in academic texts and tests, but they are not often explicitly taught. Academic Vocabulary words often show up as the skill words in Learning objectives, but can occur at any point during a lesson as well. Because of this, it is most effective to teach Academic Vocabulary words as they arise, within the context of a lesson.

Examples

consist, constitute, distribute, establish, indicate, occur, significant, recognize, respond

2. Content Vocabulary

Contrasted with Academic Vocabulary, Content Vocabulary includes words that are specific to a given domain or subject area, rarely being found outside of their particular content area. Often, these words can be found directly in the content standards and are present as the concept words (typically nouns) in a Learning Objective. Content Vocabulary words are addressed extensively in the Concept Development of a lesson, through the use of clear definitions, examples, and Checking for Understanding questions, as these words and terms are frequently the foundation of a lesson.

Examples

Affixes, dialogue, exponents, circumference, cellular respiration, photosynthesis, legislature

3. Support Vocabulary

The third type of vocabulary is Support Vocabulary. Support Vocabulary consists of any remaining words that ELs (and all other students) need to know in order to understand a particular sentence or phrase used in a lesson. Support Vocabulary words are unrelated to grade-level concepts and skills and can typically be found in reading passages or text. These words are often not critical for the success of the lesson, so little time needs to be spent on teaching Support Vocabulary beyond

ensuring that the students understand any meaning in the context of the lesson.

Examples

starboard, attic, marbled, invested, stocks, calorimeter, galleon, hostler

Common Core Types of Vocabulary

Similarly, the Common Core State Standards classify vocabulary into three Tiers: Tier One, Tier Two, and Tier Three words.

Tier One : Basic Vocabulary

Tier One words consist of everyday speech, which CCSS notes will not present a challenge to native English speakers, though attention to Tier One words may be necessary for English Learners. Regardless of the student population, Tier One words are not meant to be the focus of instruction, as they are often acquired through regular speech.

Tier one consists of the most **basic words**. These words rarely require direct instruction and typically do not have multiple meanings. Sight words, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and early reading words occur at this level. Examples of tier one words are: book, girl, sad, run, dog, and orange. There about 8,000 word families in English included in tier one.

Tier Two : High Frequency/ Multiple Meaning Vocabulary

Tier Two words are referred to in the standards as “general academic words.” Tier Two words closely parallel the category of Academic Vocabulary. Because of their importance in comprehending complex texts and wide applicability to all content areas, CCSS notes that teaching Tier Two words is critical throughout all grades and subjects.

Tier two consists of **high frequency** words that occur across a variety of domains. That is, these words occur often in mature language situations such as adult conversations and literature, and therefore strongly influence speaking and reading. Following is a list of standards for tier two words:

- Important for reading comprehension

- Characteristic of mature language users
- Contain multiple meanings
- Increased descriptive vocabulary (words that allow students to describe concepts in a detailed manner)

- Used across a variety of environments (generalization)

Tier two words are the most important words for direct instruction because they are good indicators of a student's progress through school. Examples of tier two words are: masterpiece, fortunate, industrious, measure, and benevolent. There are about 7,000 word families in English (or 700 per year) in tier two.

Tier Three: Low Frequency/ Context-Specific Vocabulary

Tier Three words, similar to Content Vocabulary, are domain-specific words – that is, their use is closely tied to a single area of study. These words are necessary for understanding new concepts taught during lessons, and, accordingly, appropriate attention should be paid to Tier Three words.

Tier three consists of low-frequency words that occur in specific domains. Domains include subjects in school, hobbies, occupations, geographic regions, technology, weather, etc. We usually learn these words when a specific need arises, such as learning amino acid during a chemistry lesson. Examples of tier three words are: economics, isotope, asphalt, Revolutionary War, and, crepe. The remaining 400,000 words in English fall in this tier.

It important to remember that tier two and three words are not all clear-cut in their tier classification. There is more than one way to select the words. Word knowledge is subject to personal experience.

Types of Vocabulary

(Across Grades)

DataWORKS		<p>Academic Vocabulary</p> <p>- used across all disciplines <i>(Often not taught in Textbooks)</i></p> <p><u>Examples:</u> <i>distinguish, corresponds, combine, separate, analysis, symbolic</i></p>	<p>Content Vocabulary</p> <p>- content specific <i>(Taught during Concept Development in EDI Lessons)</i></p> <p><u>Examples:</u> <i>main idea, thesis statement, figurative language. denominator, linear equation, addition, ratios, perimeter Civil War, separation of powers, legislative branch. mitosis, cell wall, photosynthesis, Solar System</i></p>	<p>Support Vocabulary</p> <p>- in specific textbooks and worksheets; may be challenging for EL students <i>(Often over-emphasized in Textbooks)</i></p> <p><u>Examples:</u> <i>halibut, hammock, port, starboard</i></p>
	Common Core	<p>Tier One words (everyday speech)</p> <p>Beginning ELD</p>	<p>Tier Two words (general academic words)</p> <p><u>Examples in Informational text:</u> <i>relative, vary, formulate, specificity, accumulate</i></p> <p><u>Examples in Technical text:</u> <i>calibrate, itemize, periphery</i></p> <p><u>Examples in Literary text:</u> <i>misfortune, dignified, faltered, unabashedly</i></p>	<p>Tier Three words (domain-specific words)</p> <p><u>Examples:</u> <i>lava, legislature, circumference, aorta</i></p>

21 Ideas for Teaching Vocabulary

MARCH 13, 2017 BY **LISA VAN GEMERT**

I'm sharing 21 ideas for teaching vocabulary. You may not be able to use all of them, but I hope you can find some ideas that will work well for you! I've shared books about vocabulary instruction, as well as the theory and techniques. This post is a lot more practical. We're all about ideas today!

IDEA #1: Semantic Maps

In this activity, the teacher chooses a word and displays it for the class on a whiteboard, etc..

Students read the word and then think of words that come to mind when they see that word (this is awesome because it activates prior learning).

A list is created of all of the words that come to mind, and then those words are categorized. This can be done as a whole class or in small groups. Students then create a "map" using a graphic organizer and discuss it. Additional or substitute categories can be suggested.

As students read through the text, they can add related words to the map.

IDEA #2: Eye Spy

Give students a list of words to search for in a text or have them find unfamiliar words. You can award points to the words based on different criteria (longest new word, word with most consonants, etc.). Invest in a set of inexpensive dollar store magnifying glasses to make this more game-like. Do this as a pre-reading activity.

IDEA #3: Making Choices

Students show their understanding of vocabulary by saying the word when it applies, or remaining silent when it doesn't.

For example: "Say radiant if any of these things would make someone look radiant."

- Winning a million dollars.
- Earning a gold medal.

- Walking to the post office.
- Cleaning your room.
- Having a picture you painted hung in the school library. (This idea is from the book *Bringing Words to Life*, recommended in the books section.)

IDEA #4: Sorting Hat

Use a Harry Potter theme to have students sort words into categories. They can pull them out of a hat. If you give them the categories, it's called a "closed sort." If they come up with their own categories, it's called "open sort."

IDEA #5: Word Pairs

Give students words in pairs and have them evaluate if the words are the same, opposite, go together, or are unrelated. (adapted from *Word Power: What Every Educator Needs to Know about Teaching Vocabulary*)

IDEA #6: Linear Array

In this strategy, students use a graphic organizer that is a rectangle, three ovals, and then another rectangle, all in a line. The word in question goes in the rectangle on the far left. The rectangle on the far right is filled in with a word that is the opposite. The center three ovals are filled in with words that go from the far left to the far right, gradually become less similar until they reach the opposite. For example, microscopic, tiny, small, bigger, large. (adapted from *Words, Words, Words: Teaching Vocabulary in Grades 4 – 12*)

IDEA #7: Games

Many "real" games work well for vocab play and practice. Games such as *Balderdash*, *Taboo*, *Scrabble*, *Blurt*, *Bananagrams*, word bingo, and others are fun. There are online games as well, such as Scholastic's Synonym Toast.

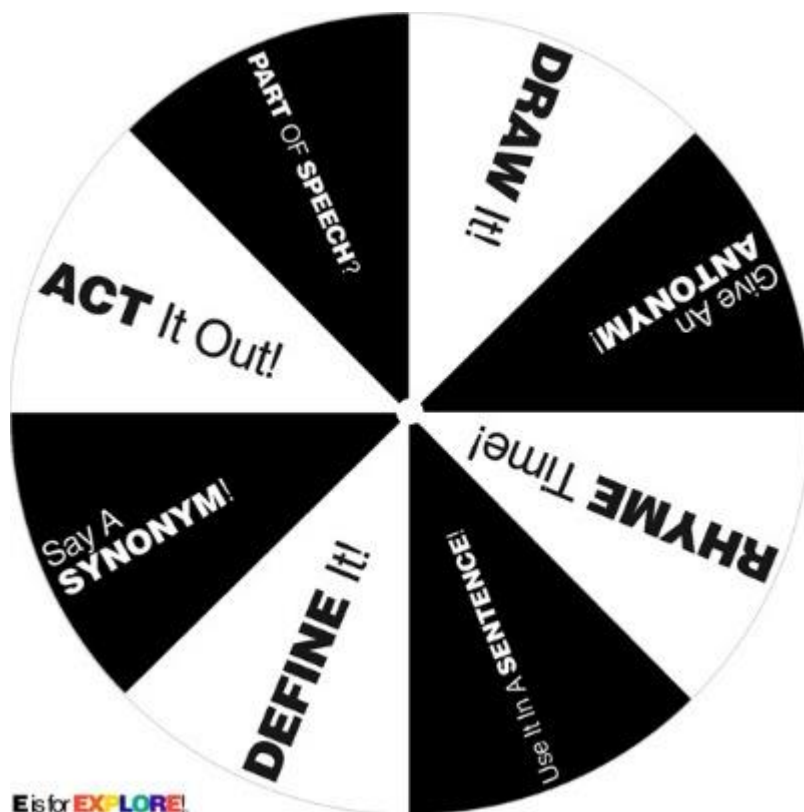
[Note: I am a notoriously horrible Scrabble player, and every time I play I think, "English teachers should be better at this." It's not my favorite.]

IDEA #8: Scavenger Hunt

Have a word scavenger hunt in books, magazines, articles on the net, or in the school or home. Don't just go for numbers; go for unusual words, academic vocabulary, weird spellings, homophones, etc.

IDEA #9: Word Wheel

Copy and paste this image onto a sheet of cardstock and make a vocab spinner game. EisforExplore shares the whole idea here.



IDEA #10: Vocabulary Photo Album

Using a simple, inexpensive photo album, students create a visual glossary of key words.

IDEA #11: Tally

Use tally marks to track words you're trying to practice. Mark whenever the teacher says the word in context, and mark twice when a student does. Alternately, you can have the tally marks be even, but play the teacher versus the class.

IDEA #12: Relay for Words

Print out words on one set of cards (copy this set a few times) and definitions, context, or sentences in which they could be used (fill-in-the-blank) on another set (just one set).

Jumble up the words in a pile in the middle of the floor, and jumble up the definitions, context, and sentences to keep with you. Break students into teams of five-ish.

Call out the definition/context/sentence and give students some think time (8 – 10 seconds) to talk about what word it might be. After the discussion time, call out "Word!" One member from each team runs to the center and tries to find the word in the pile. I like having multiple sets of the words so more than one team can get it.

Check to make sure they're correct, and then discuss it briefly before the next round.

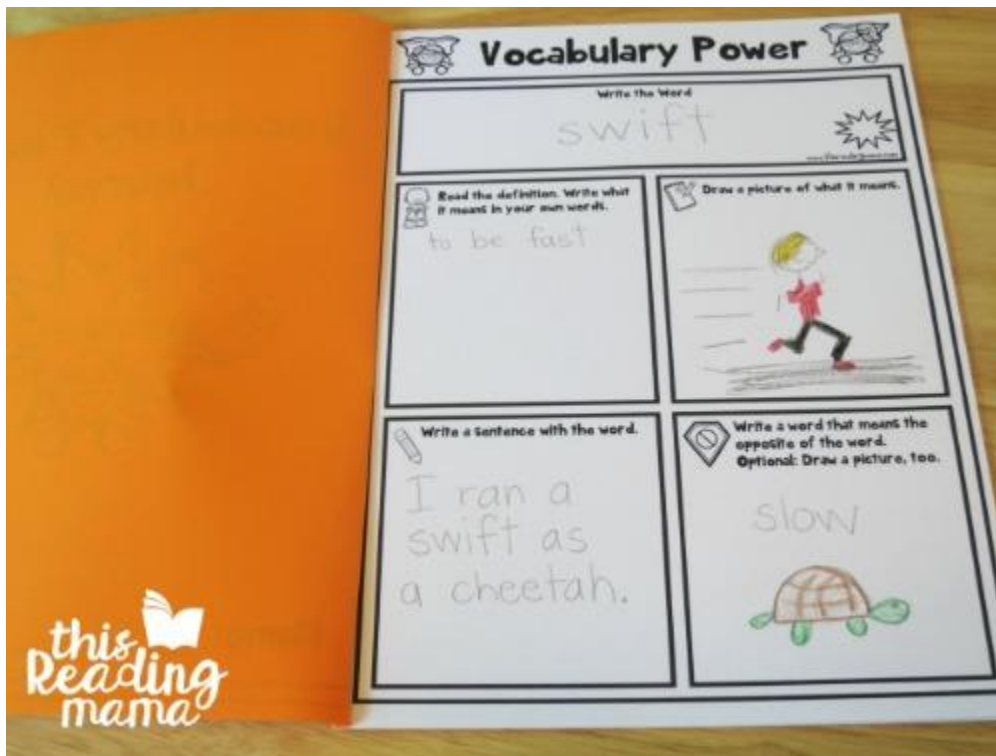
Note: I got this idea from another teacher's site, but I cannot for the life of me remember where. I have searched Google for it, and can't find it. A small prize to the person who can figure out the originator of the idea!

IDEA #13: Vocabulary Relay

This is a different relay activity than the one above. In this version, teams of students race to fill in words responsive to a category that start with the letters of the alphabet in order. Shared by Sarah Ressler, this activity is one that has a thematic base, and would work really well to target academic vocabulary.

IDEA #13: Comic Strip Word Activity (elementary)

Try this fun activity from This Reading Mama (It's a free printable). She's got another great idea on teaching words in context, too.



IDEA #14: Paper Plate Vocab

I love this inexpensive matching game from Finding Joy in Fifth Grade, and I think students could create it themselves.



IDEA #15: Vocab on the Move

Students all have a sentence strip with a word with which they are familiar in a “crown” on their heads. (this is a review activity, not an initial teaching activity). The students don’t know what word he or she has. They walk around the classroom asking each other a series of questions to determine the meaning of their word.

You can grab directions here and see students playing it here (scroll down).

IDEA #16: Word Sneak

Based on the game played by Jimmy Fallon, this teacher created a fun Word Sneak game awesome for secondary students! It’s free in her TpT store.

IDEA #17: Frayer Model

The Frayer Model is an oldie-but-goodie vocab activity model in which student work in multiple ways in a specifically laid out graphic organizer to engage with words. Find examples and great resources in The Teacher Toolkit.

IDEA #18: Tweet

Have students create a “tweet” that a word would send out or with the word in the tweet in context. You can use a tool like Prank-me-Not or Siminator to make it look real.

IDEA #19: Brain Power Words

This is a strong academic vocabulary activity that takes a little bit of time, but would really help get the words past the superficial level of understanding.

- Ask small groups of students to preview sections of a text and identify difficult words.
- For long chapters, assign different sections to different groups.
- Students place a Post-it next to the words in the text they identify as potentially difficult.
- After identifying the words, the group goes back and uses context clues to hypothesize what the words might mean.
 - Clues of substitution: A known word would make sense in the context and is probably a good definition.
 - Clues of definition: The word is defined in the text (many textbooks do this).
 - Clues of opposition: Words “not, unlike” etc. are excellent clues to what a word is not and thus help define the words.
- After the Brain Power Words list is identified and definitions sought, the students check their work with the teacher.

This strategy is from Becky McTague and Margaret Richek (it’s in the book *Reading Success for Struggling Adolescent Learners* by Susan Lenski and Jill Lewis).

IDEA #20: The Concept Cube

Students receive six-square pattern on tag-board that can be folded up and taped into a three-dimensional cube, which will be 4” on each side. You can create these digitally at the ReadWriteThink website.

You can print out a blank cube and have students print the responses below, or complete it online and then print it out.

Before folding, students write clearly in each square following the directions below.

Each student is given one challenging vocabulary word from a recent reading and asked to:

- Write the assigned vocabulary word in one square.
- Write a synonym (word or phrase) in another square.
- Write an antonym (word or phrase) in another square.
- Write a category or categories it could belong to.
- Write the essential characteristics of the concept of this word.
- Give one example.

Cut, fold, and tape the cube.

Roll the cube and read what comes up on the “top”; the student must tell the relationship of that word or phrase to the original word.

After students know their own cube without any errors, they exchange with a peer.

This idea is from *Bridge of Vocabulary: Evidence-Based Activities for Academic Success*

IDEA #21: Phone a Friend

Search TeacherspayTeachers or Teachers Notebook for vocabulary activities you can use or adapt. The beauty of this is that you can search by grade level and subject, so you can focus on what you’re studying.

A caveat to this is that if you create something grade level or content specific, you can share it with other teachers, too.

Teaching Vocabulary

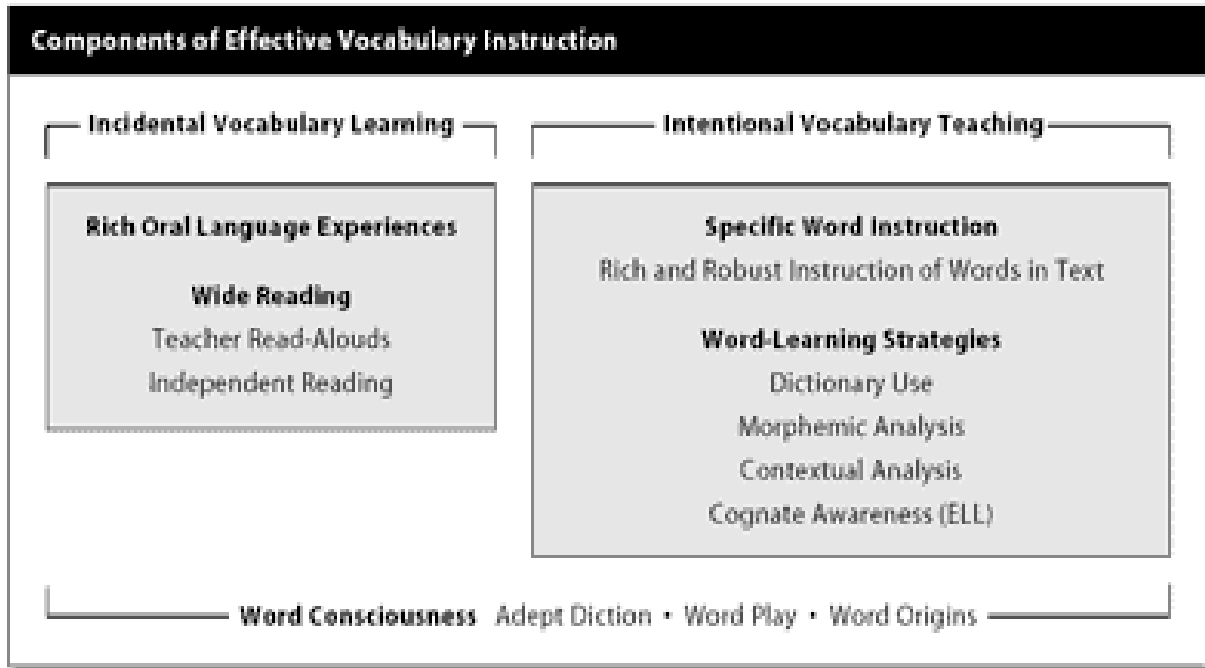
By: Linda Diamond, Linda Gutlohn



Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings. As Steven Stahl (2005) puts it, "*Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world.*"

Vocabulary knowledge is not something that can ever be fully mastered; it is something that expands and deepens over the course of a lifetime. Instruction in vocabulary involves far more than looking up words in a dictionary and using the words in a sentence. Vocabulary is acquired incidentally through indirect exposure to words and intentionally through explicit instruction in specific words and word-learning strategies. According to Michael Graves (2000), there are **four components of an effective vocabulary program:**

1. **Wide or extensive independent reading** to expand word knowledge
2. **Instruction in specific words** to enhance comprehension of texts containing those words
3. **Instruction in independent word-learning** strategies, and
4. **Word consciousness and word-play activities** to motivate and enhance learning



Components of vocabulary instruction

The National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that there is no single research-based method for teaching vocabulary. From its analysis, the panel recommended using a variety of direct and indirect methods of vocabulary instruction.

Intentional vocabulary teaching

Specific Word Instruction

- Selecting Words to Teach
- Rich and Robust Instruction

Word-Learning Strategies

- Dictionary Use
- Morphemic Analysis
- Cognate Awareness (ELL)
- Contextual Analysis

According to the National Reading Panel (2000), explicit instruction of vocabulary is highly effective. To develop vocabulary intentionally, students should be

explicitly taught both specific words and word-learning strategies. To deepen students' knowledge of word meanings, specific word instruction should be robust (Beck et al., 2002). Seeing vocabulary in rich contexts provided by authentic texts, rather than in isolated vocabulary drills, produces robust vocabulary learning (National Reading Panel, 2000). Such instruction often does not begin with a definition, for the ability to give a definition is often the result of knowing what the word means. Rich and robust vocabulary instruction goes beyond definitional knowledge; it gets students actively engaged in using and thinking about word meanings and in creating relationships among words.

Research shows that there are more words to be learned than can be directly taught in even the most ambitious program of vocabulary instruction. Explicit instruction in word-learning strategies gives students tools for independently determining the meanings of unfamiliar words that have not been explicitly introduced in class. Since students encounter so many unfamiliar words in their reading, any help provided by such strategies can be useful.

Word-learning strategies include dictionary use, morphemic analysis, and contextual analysis. For English language learners (ELLs) whose language shares cognates with English, cognate awareness is also an important strategy.

Dictionary use teaches students about multiple word meanings, as well as the importance of choosing the appropriate definition to fit the particular context.

Morphemic analysis is the process of deriving a word's meaning by analyzing its meaningful parts, or morphemes. Such word parts include root words, prefixes, and suffixes.

Contextual analysis involves inferring the meaning of an unfamiliar word by scrutinizing the text surrounding it. Instruction in contextual analysis generally involves teaching students to employ both generic and specific types of context clues.

Fostering Word Consciousness

A more general way to help students develop vocabulary is by fostering word consciousness, an awareness of and interest in words. **Word consciousness** is not an isolated component of vocabulary instruction; it needs to be taken into account each and every day (Scott and Nagy, 2004). It can be developed at all times and in several ways: through encouraging adept diction, through word play, and through research on word origins or histories. According to Graves (2000), "If we can get students interested in playing with words and language, then we are at least

halfway to the goal of creating the sort of word-conscious students who will make words a lifetime interest."

Multiple exposures in multiple contexts

One principle of effective vocabulary learning is to provide multiple exposures to a word's meaning. There is great improvement in vocabulary when students encounter vocabulary words often (National Reading Panel, 2000). According to Stahl (2005), students probably have to see a word more than once to place it firmly in their long-term memories. "This does not mean mere repetition or drill of the word," but seeing the word in different and multiple contexts. In other words, it is important that vocabulary instruction provide students with opportunities to encounter words repeatedly and in more than one context.

Restructuring of vocabulary tasks

Findings of the National Reading Panel

- Intentional instruction of vocabulary items is required for specific texts.
- Repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items are important.
- Learning in rich contexts is valuable for vocabulary learning. Vocabulary tasks should be restructured as necessary.
- Vocabulary learning should entail active engagement in learning tasks.
- Computer technology can be used effectively to help teach vocabulary.
- Vocabulary can be acquired through incidental learning. How vocabulary is assessed and evaluated can have differential effects on instruction.
- Dependence on a single vocabulary instructional method will not result in optimal learning.

It is often assumed that when students do not learn new vocabulary words, they simply need to practice the words some more. Research has shown, however, that it is often the case that students simply do not understand the instructional task involved (National Reading Panel, 2000). Rather than focus only on the words themselves, teachers should be certain that students fully understand the instructional tasks (Schwartz and Raphael, 1985). The restructuring of learning materials or strategies in various ways often can lead to increased vocabulary acquisition, especially for low-achieving or at-risk students (National Reading Panel, 2000). According to Kamil (2004), "once students know what is expected of them in a vocabulary task, they often learn rapidly."

Incidental vocabulary learning

The scientific research on vocabulary instruction reveals that *most vocabulary is acquired incidentally through indirect exposure to words*. Students can acquire vocabulary incidentally by engaging in rich oral-language experiences at home and at school, listening to books read aloud to them, and reading widely on their own. Reading volume is very important in terms of long-term vocabulary development (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998). Kamil and Hiebert (2005) reason that *extensive reading* gives students repeated or multiple exposures to words and is also one of the means by which students see vocabulary in rich contexts. Cunningham (2005) recommends providing *structured read-aloud* and *discussion sessions* and *extending independent reading* experiences outside school hours to encourage vocabulary growth in students.

Instruction for English language learners (ELLs)

An increasing number of students come from homes in which English is not the primary language. From 1979 to 2003, the number of students who spoke English with difficulty increased by 124 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). In 2003, students who spoke English with difficulty represented approximately 5 percent of the school population—up from 3 percent in 1979.

Not surprisingly, vocabulary development is especially important for English-language learners (ELLs). Poor vocabulary is a serious issue for these students (Calderon et al., 2005). ELLs who have deficits in their vocabulary are less able to comprehend text at grade level than their English-only (EO) peers (August et al., 2005). Findings indicate that research-based strategies used with EO students are also effective with ELLs, although the strategies must be adapted to strengths and needs of ELLs (Calderon et al., 2005).

Diane August and her colleagues (2005) suggest several strategies that appear to be especially valuable for building the vocabularies of ELLs. These strategies include taking advantage of students' *first language* if the language shares cognates with English, teaching the meaning of basic words, and providing sufficient review and reinforcement. Because English and Spanish share a large number of cognate pairs, the first instructional strategy is especially useful for Spanish-speaking ELLs. These students can draw on their cognate knowledge as a means of figuring out unfamiliar words in English. A second instructional strategy for ELLs is learning the meanings of *basic words*—words that most students already know. Basic words can be found on lists, such as the Dale-Chall List (Chall and Dale, 1995). A third instructional strategy that ELLs particularly benefit from is *review and*

reinforcement. These methods include read-alouds, teacher-directed activities, listening to audiotapes, activities to extend word use outside of the classroom, and parent involvement.

Strategies for ELLs:

- Take advantage of students' first language
 - Teach the meaning of basic words
 - Review and reinforcement
-

Lesson model for: Word consciousness

Benchmarks

- ability to interpret literal and figurative meanings of idioms
- ability to research origins of idioms

Grade level

- Kindergarten and above

Grouping

- whole class
- small group or pairs

Materials

- small plastic toy horses
- drawing paper
- crayons or markers
- dictionaries

Animal idioms

An idiom is a phrase or expression in which the entire meaning is different from the usual meanings of the individual words within it. Idioms are fun to work with

because they are part of everyday vocabulary. Students enjoy working with figurative meanings, as well as imagining possible literal meanings for the expressions. They also enjoy finding out about the origins of idiomatic expressions, some of which are very old. Introducing idioms by topic can make them easier for students to remember. This sample lesson model focuses on introducing idioms that make use of animals or animal comparisons.

Explanation

Tell students that an idiom is an expression that cannot be fully understood by the meanings of the individual words that are contained within it. The meaning of the whole idiom has little, often nothing, to do with the meanings of the words taken one by one. Point out to students that idioms are often used in writing or speech to make expression more colorful and that some of the most colorful English idioms make use of animals or animal comparisons. Explain that many idioms have interesting origins that may not make literal sense to us today, but made perfectly good sense during the times in which they were coined.

Tell students that the expression "to hold your horses" is an idiom. Demonstrate its literal meaning by holding a bunch of small plastic toy horses in your hand. Tell students that when someone tells you "to hold your horses" it would be silly to think that they wanted you to hold a bunch of horses in your hand. The whole expression "to hold your horses" actually means "to slow down, wait a minute, or be more patient." For example, if you were impatiently waiting for your sister to get off the phone, your sister might say to you, "Hold your horses. I'll be off the phone in a minute!"

Tell students that "to be raining cats and dogs" is another idiom. Ask students whether, if someone said it's "raining cats and dogs," they would expect to look up and see animals falling from the sky. Then explain to them that "raining cats and dogs" is used to describe when it's raining really heavily or really hard. Ask volunteers to describe a time they remember when it was "raining cats and dogs."

Ask students to draw pictures of the literal meaning of either "to hold your horses" or "to be raining cats and dogs." Then have them take turns showing their illustration and using the idiom correctly in a context sentence.

Collaborative practice

Tell students that they are going to work together in groups to make a drawing of an animal idiom's literal meaning and then act out its real, or figurative, meaning. They will see if the drawings and skits they make provide enough information for

their classmates to figure out what the idiom really means. To begin, select a group of three students to demonstrate the activity. Tell this group that their idiom is "to let the cat out of the bag" and that this idiom means "to give away a secret."

Divide the group tasks as follows: One student will draw the idiom the way it would look if it meant literally what it said: by drawing a sketch of a cat leaping out of a paper bag. This student labels the drawing with the idiom, "to let the cat out of the bag." The other two students develop a brief skit about the figurative meaning of the idiom: "to give away a secret." For example, they could develop a simple scene where someone finds out about a surprise birthday party, because a brother or sister gives it away beforehand. The last line could be: "You let the cat out of the bag."

When the group is finished, have them show the idiom's literal meaning in the drawing, and then act out its figurative meaning in the skit. Have the group challenge their classmates to guess the idiom's figurative, or intended, meaning and then correctly use the idiom in a sentence: Nancy let the cat out of the bag when she told Nick about the surprise birthday party. When the whole class has understood how this activity works, assign a different animal idiom, with its figurative meaning, to other groups of students. Each group then works out its plan for making the drawing and acting out the skit. Have the groups take turns demonstrating their idioms to the class, so the class can guess the idiom's figurative meaning and use it in a sentence.

Animal idioms

to have ants in your pants

to take the bull by the horns

to let the cat out of the bag

to have the cat get your tongue

to be raining cats and dogs

the straw that broke the camel's back

to have a cow

to wait until the cows come home

to be in the doghouse

to be in a fine kettle of fish

to seem a little fishy

to live high on the hog

to look a gift horse in the mouth

to eat like a horse

to hear it straight from the horse's mouth

to hold your horses

to put the cart before the horse

to change horses in midstream

to let sleeping dogs lie

English-language learner: Learning about idioms can be particularly helpful for ELLs because the gap between the literal meaning of individual words and the intended meaning of the expression often causes trouble in translation.

Lesson model for: Word-meaning recall

Benchmark

- ability to remember word meanings

Grade level

- Grade 3 and above

Grouping

- whole class
- small group or pairs
- individual

Sample texts

- "Alaska Adventure" (Resources)
- "Studying the Sky" (Resources)

Keyword method

Mnemonic strategies are systematic procedures for enhancing memory. The word mnemonic comes from Mnemosyne, the name of Greek goddess of memory. The keyword method, a mnemonic strategy, has been shown to be effective with students who have learning difficulties and those who are at risk for educational failure. According to the National Reading Panel, the keyword method may lead to significant improvement in students' recall of new vocabulary words. This sample lesson model targets two contextualized vocabulary words. The same model can be adapted and used to enhance recall of vocabulary words in any commercial reading program.

Direct Explanation

Explain to students that you are going to show them how to use the keyword method, a useful strategy for remembering the meanings of vocabulary words. Tell them you are going to model the strategy twice, using the words *archipelago* and *lunar*.

Teach/Model

- **Define the target word**

Read aloud the following sentence from "Alaska Adventure."

The Aleutian *archipelago* stretches for more than a thousand miles.

Then tell students that an archipelago is "a group of islands."

- **Think of a keyword for the target word**

Say: To help me remember the meaning of the word *archipelago*, a group of islands, I am going to think of another word, called a "keyword." The keyword is a word that sounds like *archipelago* and also is a word that can be easily pictured. My keyword for *archipelago* is *pelican*. *Pelican* sounds like *archipelago* and is the name of a water bird with a very large bill.

- **Link the keyword with the meaning of the target word**

Explain to students that the next step is to create an image of the keyword *pelican* and the meaning of the target word *archipelago* interacting in some way. Tell them it is important that the keyword and the meaning actually interact and are not simply presented in the same picture. On the board, sketch a picture of a pelican flying over a group of small islands.

Say: *Look at the picture of the pelican flying over the group of islands.*

Ask: *Pelican is the keyword for what word?* (archipelago)

Say: *Yes, archipelago. To recall the meaning of the word archipelago, imagine a pelican flying over a group of small islands.*

- **Recall the meaning of the target word**

Tell students that when they see or hear the word *archipelago*, they should first think of its keyword and then try to remember the picture of the keyword and the meaning interacting.

Ask: *What is the keyword for archipelago? (Pelican) In the sketch, where was the pelican flying? (over a group of islands)*

Say: *Right, over a group of islands.*

Ask: *So what does archipelago mean? (a group of islands)*

English Language-Learners: Point out to Spanish-speaking ELLs that archipelago and archipelago are cognates.

Lesson model for: Contextual analysis

Benchmarks

- ability to recognize types of semantic context clues
- ability to use context clues to infer word meanings

Grade level

- Grade 4 and above

Prerequisite

- Context Clues

Grouping

- whole class
- small group or pairs
- individual

Teaching chart

- Types of Helpful Context Clues (Resources)

Materials

- copies of Types of Helpful

Context clues chart

- transparencies
- blue, red, and green overhead transparency markers

Introducing types of context clues

Instruction in specific types of context clues is an effective approach for teaching students to use context to infer word meanings. Baumann and his colleagues recommend teaching five types of context clues: definition, synonym, antonym, example, and general. This sample lesson model can be adapted and used to enhance contextual analysis instruction in any commercial reading program.

Direct explanation

Tell students that they can sometimes use context clues to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word they come across in their reading. Remind them that context clues are the words, phrases, and sentences surrounding an unfamiliar word that can give hints or clues to its meaning. Caution students that although these clues can prove to be helpful, they can sometimes be misleading.

Teach/Model

Definition context clues

Give students copies of the Types of Helpful Context Clues chart. Briefly go over the chart, identifying the types of context clues and discussing the example for each one. Tell students that they should refer to the chart as they learn more about the five different types of context clues.

Explain to students that in a definition clue the author provides the reader with the specific definition, or meaning, of a word right in the sentence. Point out that words such as are, is, means, and refers to can signal that a definition clue may follow. Then print the following sentences on a transparency:

A conga is a barrel-shaped drum.

At night you can see constellations, or groups of stars, in the sky.

Read aloud the first sentence.

Say: *I'm going to look for a context clue to help me understand the meaning of the word conga.*

Underline *conga* in blue.

Say: *In the sentence, I see the word is. The word is can signal a definition context clue.*

Underline *is* in red.

Say: *The phrase a barrel-shaped drum follows the word is.*

Underline the context clue in green.

Say: *A conga is a barrel-shaped drum. The author has given a definition context clue.*



Marzano's 6-Step Process for Building Academic Vocabulary

by Dr. Kimberly Tyson
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Step 1

The teacher provides a **description, explanation, or example** of the term.

Step 2

Linguistic:
Students restate the description, explanation, or example *in their own words*.

Step 3

Non-linguistic:
Students construct a picture, pictograph, symbolic representation, or act out the term.

Step 4

The teacher extends and refines understanding of the word by engaging students in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms in **vocabulary notebooks**.

Step 5

Periodically ask students to **discuss the terms** with one another.

Step 6

Involve students in **games** that enable them to play with the terms and reinforce word knowledge.

Marzano, R. J. (2004). *Building background knowledge for academic achievement: Research on what works in schools*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Marzano's 6-Steps to Vocabulary Teaching/ Building

by Kimberly Tyson, Ph. D.

Vocabulary and its strong relationship to comprehension has been verified over and over again. Vocabulary plays an important part in learning to read as well as reading to learn. We also know that increasing vocabulary knowledge plays a large part in overall school success and has a direct impact on comprehension.

Effective vocabulary instruction is a key foundation to helping students acquire a wide and diverse vocabulary. Students need both direct and indirect instruction in vocabulary and word meanings as well as multiple exposures to words. It is through multiple exposures and repetition that students begin to understand the nuances of words and how to use them when speaking and writing.

Additionally, active engagement helps students take part in the learning process and begin to “own” the words and understand word meaning in multiple contexts. Independent reading, intentional read alouds, and wide reading all encourage students’ long-term vocabulary development and growth.

Teachers need a variety of instructional strategies for teaching vocabulary. Unfortunately, there remains a gap between what we know are effective strategies and what often takes place in the classroom. In *Building Background Knowledge*, Bob Marzano laid out a six-step process for building academic vocabulary. It includes direct instruction, linguistic and nonlinguistic definitions, recording word learning in a notebook or journal, talking about words, and playing with words. Multiple exposures are at the heart of the process.

Vocabulary Instructional Strategies: Marzano's 6-Step Process

The six-step process includes the following steps:

1. The teacher provides a *description, explanation, or example* of the term.
2. *Linguistic definition* – students restate the description, explanation, or example in their own words.
3. *Nonlinguistic definition* – students construct a picture, pictograph, symbolic representation, or act out the term.
4. The teacher extends and refines understanding of the word by engaging students in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms in *vocabulary notebooks*.
5. Periodically ask students to *discuss the terms* with one another.

6. Involve students in *games* that enable them to play with the terms and reinforce word knowledge.

For several years, I've been teaching this process to teachers and helping them implement it in their classrooms. I've found that when teachers become intentional in regard to vocabulary instruction, they become more excited about word learning and observing growth in their students. Soon, teachers get on board with a school wide vocabulary improvement effort and they begin selecting words with more intention, develop a toolbox of vocabulary strategies, create word walls to support learning, and observe growth in learning and achievement.

As a teacher, you can't teach every word which is why students also need to be engaged in independent reading to build their vocabulary. However, for targeted words that are key to mastering content or comprehending text, you should try implementing the six-step process. Since Marzano's six-step process has been around a number of years, he reports several "lessons learned." Keep these in mind as you implement the six-step process:

- The process works best when you **don't skip any steps**. Don't pick and choose which step you "like" best – do all 6 steps.
- Students need to **generate their own definition** of a term – sometimes I call this a "kid friendly" definition.
- Step 3 – the nonlinguistic definition – is a powerful and important step. When students **visualize**, create a pictogram, or act out a word, they learn it well and achievement soars.
- Games – Step 6 – help students **play with words** and internalize word meanings in a non-threatening atmosphere.

I find that teachers like to use this summary as they're learning the six-step process. Use the six-step process as a grade-level team or content-area team and report back to each other.