

Vocabulary

Vocabulary development refers to the knowledge of stored information about the meanings and pronunciations of words necessary for communication. Vocabulary development is important for beginning reading in that when a student sounds out a word, he or she is also determining if the word makes sense based on his or her understanding of the word. If a student does not know the meaning of the word, it is difficult to check for the word that fits. Vocabulary development is also a primary determinant of reading comprehension. Readers cannot understand the content of what they are reading unless they understand the meaning of the majority of words in the text.

Oral language development and vocabulary development go hand in hand. Research tells us that language learning occurs through interaction. Therefore, the point of learning language and interacting socially, is not to master rules, but to make connections with other people and to make sense of experiences. Classrooms for ELLs should be full of active learners who are hardly ever silent. Structured talk about academically relevant content rather than rote memorization of word lists is necessary. It is important to model and teach deliberate strategies for clarifying word meaning as well as to provide students opportunities to use the words in context. Children have to talk as well as listen. According to Cummins (1980), students develop oral language within the first two years of immersion in the target language; however, academic language takes about 5 – 7 years. Teachers of ELLs need to provide instruction in which oral language development, content learning, and literacy development support one another. Native speakers generally learn to read words they already use in speech, while ELLs need to learn what the words mean, and how to say them as they are learning to read. In order for ELLs to catch up to native speakers, they must expand their vocabularies. Teachers can assist ELLs by directly teaching vocabulary within a meaningful context and providing them with many encounters with language. This will help children discover the joy and power of literacy.

Effective vocabulary instruction should include the following three components:

- Definitional and contextual information about a word - To know a word, students need to see it in context and learn how its meaning relates to the words around it. An approach that includes definitions and shows how words are used in various contexts can generate a full and flexible knowledge of word meanings.
- Multiple exposures to a word in different contexts - A word that is encountered once has about a 10 percent chance of being learned from context. When students see a word repeatedly, they gather more and more information about it until they get an idea of what it means.
- Encouragement of students' active participation in their word learning - Students remember words better when they relate new meanings to knowledge they already have. Group discussion of word meanings also helps students learn new vocabulary by having to actively participate in their own learning.

Considerations for ELLs in Vocabulary:

- Vocabulary needs to be taught explicitly and be a part of the daily curriculum to promote English language development. In order to read fluently and comprehend what is written, students need to use not just phonics, but also context. It is possible for students to read phonetically yet not comprehend what they read because they do not have the vocabulary.
- Scientific research on vocabulary development demonstrates that children learn the majority of their vocabulary indirectly in the following three ways:
 1. conversations, mostly with adults,
 2. listening to adults read to them, and
 3. reading extensively on their own (CIERA, 2001).

This is a challenge for ELLs because their parents and other adults in their lives are often not fluent in English. Therefore, educators *must* provide many opportunities for students to learn vocabulary directly, including explicitly teaching vocabulary words before students read a text, and providing read alouds and structured independent reading time.

- Teaching vocabulary development involves more than teaching the definition of technical or unfamiliar words in texts. Many encounters with a word in meaningful contexts are needed for students to acquire it. It also requires understanding how the words are learned in non-instructional contexts through conversation and reading. Researchers claim we don't learn much from looking up words in a dictionary and memorizing definitions (Nagy, 1989).
- When teaching vocabulary special attention must be given not only to single words but also to polywords (e.g. by the way); collocations, or word partnerships (i.e. community service); institutionalized utterances (i.e. we'll see) and idioms.
- ELLs often bring knowledge of cognates (words and concepts) from their first language that can help them make meaning of the text they are reading. Teachers need to foster an environment where students feel comfortable using what they know to make meaning of new words. Thanks to their shared Latin and Greek roots, there are many words in English with meanings and sounds similar to words in other languages such as Spanish. Teachers can use cognates to develop students' oral vocabulary. (*See attached list of common cognates on page 34.*)
- Creating a literate environment is crucial for vocabulary development of ELLs. Word walls provide a systematically organized collection of words displayed alphabetically, by phonics element, or by themes. To greater benefit ELLs, the word wall should be interactive and include: bilingual (or multilingual) words and pictures. Daily activities such as *Be a Mind Reader* and *Sight Word Bingo* make the word wall most effective. A literate environment includes the following books: picture books, alphabet books, wordless picture books, concept books, predictable books, poetry and traditional literature.

- Reading aloud is an effective way of developing vocabulary. The more opportunities for ELLs to have encounters with words, the more words they can add to their vocabulary. Literature books, trade books, poems, rhymes, etc. are filled with wonderful examples of language, words, and content. Reading aloud has been traditionally implemented as a strategy for only young students, yet it can play an effective role in the LEP classroom at any age. Picture books are excellent resources for students of all ages to build vocabulary. In addition, publishers and authors have seen the benefit of reading aloud for vocabulary instruction. Thus, there are specific books targeting vocabulary development. (*See attached list of books about words and word play on page 33.*)

Vocabulary Activities/Strategies

Critical Vocabulary

TIP: For ELLs, focus on both receptive and productive words.

Purpose:

To select only critical words to pre-teach

Materials: None

Procedure:

1. Read the text to determine the story line or main idea.
2. Select key vocabulary words that highlight the reading concept or story line.
3. Activate prior knowledge to determine which of these key vocabulary words students may already know and which are clearly explained in context. These need no explicit instruction. Identify the words that students can “think out” through the structure of the words, such as word chunks, inflectional endings (prefixes & suffixes), base words or patterns.
4. Determine the essential concept words not easily understood. These require explicit instruction. Ask yourself:
 - Which words need to be taught **before** the reading to develop key reading concepts?
 - Are there any words that need clarification **during** the reading?
 - Are there any words to address **after** the reading that may need a post discussion?
5. Select the appropriate teaching tool/strategy. For example, a concept of definition map can be used before reading to develop the key reading concept. If multiple meanings appear in the text, use a multiple meanings chart to discuss the definitions. To show relationships between certain words, use a linear array. For example, the word “chilly” can be placed on the hot/cold array.
6. Energize students for active involvement in learning.

Vocabulary Show and Tell

TIP: For older students use dictionaries to confirm definitions in text in addition to illustrating.

Purpose:

To teach and reinforce vocabulary from a given text selection

Materials: Paper, pencil, text, (basal, trade book, magazine article)

Procedure:

1. The teacher chooses 4 vocabulary words from the selection and writes them on the board.
2. Students fold paper to make four rows.
3. Students write each of the words on a row.
4. Students go back to the selection to copy the sentence in which the word appears. They then illustrate the word.
5. Finally, students write their own sentence using the word. (See sample below.)

Sample Vocabulary Show and Tell

Grouchy – “Go away!” shouted the grouchy ladybug. (*sentence from text*)

The grouchy lady was mad when the children ran through the garden.

(*original sentence*)



Friendly

Sharp

Lift

Vocabulary Map

TIP: This is a great tool to assess whether students understand the meaning of weekly vocabulary words. For older students, this could be part of a vocabulary center.

Purpose:

To help students expand word knowledge and discover relationships between words by writing definitions, sentences, synonyms, antonyms and drawing pictures

Materials:

Reading selection, paper and pencil, index cards and rings, vocabulary map (See below.)

Procedure:

1. Teacher selects reading passage and activates prior knowledge.
2. Teacher selects one or two words from the selection and asks the students to locate the word(s) in the passage.
3. Students find the word in the selection and read the sentence.
4. Teacher asks the students to write the vocabulary word in the center of the map.
5. Teacher asks the students to use context clues to provide a definition in their own words.
6. Students write the definition.
7. Teacher guides the students to accurately provide a synonym or antonym for the word.
8. Students locate the original sentence containing the word.
9. Students create a graphic representation of the word.
10. Students complete the map.

Definition

Synonym

Sentence

Picture

Chapter _____

Page _____

Concept of Definition Map

TIP: Provide opportunities for ELLs to have structured talks about word meaning to help build word association.

Purpose

Concept of Definition Maps help students expand word meanings and discover relationships. They also provide students with a way to learn vocabulary independently (Schwartz and Raphael, 1985). The map includes three relationships essential to a rich definition: (1) What is it? (2) What is it like? (3) What are some examples?

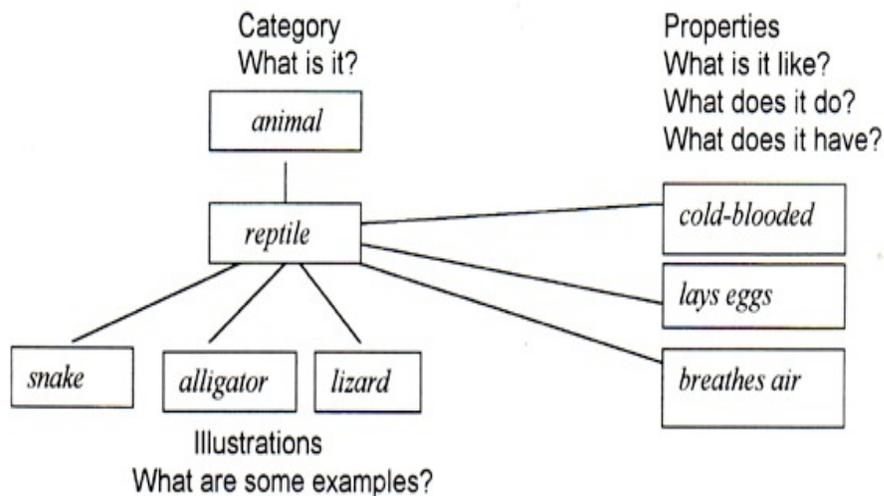
Materials:

Concept of Definition Map

Procedure:

1. Begin instruction by explaining to students that to understand new vocabulary, they need to know what makes up a definition of a word. Model this step, using a chart or overhead, with a familiar concept such as seasons.
2. Ask the students, "What is it?" (*a time of the year*). Write these descriptors on the map.
3. Next, ask students about properties: "What is it like?" Record the responses on the map (*holidays, weather related, time of the year*). Explain that these qualities are properties that differentiate *seasons* from other weather terms.
4. Ask for examples (*summer, winter, fall & spring*). After modeling with a few familiar concepts, move on to demonstrate how to write a definition including the category, properties and examples.
5. Together, draft a definition: *My favorite season is summer because the weather is warm enough to go swimming and I don't have school.*
6. Finally have students work through other examples independently. (*See below for another example.*)

Concept of Definition Map



New Definition: _____

Vocabulary Role Play

TIP: Have older students illustrate different ways the words can be used instead of performing scenes.

Purpose:

To encourage learners to make connections between their past experiences, the content being studied, and vocabulary that is new or being used in an unfamiliar way

Materials: Reading selection, cards, pocket charts (optional)

Procedure:

1. Identify the critical vocabulary.
2. Read the selection aloud focusing on how the word is used in the context of the passage. Write the words and place on a chart or board.
3. Ask students to connect the vocabulary to past experiences. Use this opportunity to explore multiple meanings of words.
4. Engage the students in sorting the words into categories, e.g. movement words, names for things, descriptive words, etc.
5. Plan with the students' different ways the words can be used. After all selected words have been discussed, put the students into groups. Ask students to create a scene using their words. (The number of words per group will vary with grade level.)
6. Give the students time to practice.
7. Give each group a time to perform the scenes. Celebrate and discuss innovative ways of using the vocabulary words. Compare and contrast the different uses of the words, emphasizing the different contexts of the scenes.

Four Square Strategy

TIP: For older students, allow the use of dictionaries to confirm definitions or elaborate meaning.

Purpose:

To help students use prior knowledge to increase vocabulary

Materials: Paper, pencil, reading selection

Procedure:

1. Select an important word from a selection or passage.
2. Have students fold papers into quarters.
3. Ask students to write the first word in square 1.
4. The teacher uses the word in an appropriate context so that students will have some clues as to its meaning.
5. In the second square, students will write something they can personally relate to the word.
6. In the third square, ask students to write a non-example for the given word.
7. Lastly, in the fourth square, have students write a definition in their own words.

SUGGESTED BOOKS ABOUT WORDS AND WORD PLAY

- Browne, P. (1996). *A gaggle of geese: The collective names of the animal kingdom*. New York: Atheneum.
- Elhert, L. (1989). *Feathers for lunch*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Frasier, D. (2000). *Miss Alaineus: A vocabulary disaster*. Sandiego, CA: Harcourt.
- Graham-Barber, L. (1995). *A chartreuse leotard in a magenta limousine: And other words named after people and places*. New York: Hyperion.
- Heller, R. (1987). *A cache of jewels and other collective nouns*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap.
- Hepworth, C. (1992). *Antics! An alphabetical anthology*. New York: Putnam.
- Lobel, A. (1990). *Allison's zinnia*. New York: Bradbury.
- Maestro, B., & Maestro, G. (1989). *Taxi: A book of city words*. New York: Clarion.
- McMillan, B. (1989). *Super, super, superwords*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.
- Moss, L. (1995). *Zinn! Zinn! Zin! A violin*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Most, B. (1991). *A dinosaur named after me*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Rotner, S. (1996). *Action alphabet*. New York: Atheneum.
- Terban, M. (1989). *Guppies in tuxedos: Funny eponyms*. New York: Clarion.
- Terban, M. (1989). *Superdupers! Really funny real words*. New York: Clarion.
- Terban, M. (1989). *It figures! Fun figures of speech*. New York: Clarion.
- Terban, M. (1989). *Scholastic dictionary of idioms*. New York: Scholastic.

ENGLISH/ SPANISH COGNATES

English	Spanish
baby	bebé
boat	bote
button	botón
center	centro
circus	circo
class	clase
color	color
computer	computadora
different	diferente
doctor	doctor
family	familia
favorite	favorito/favorite
flower	flor
fruit	fruta
grade	grado
lemon	limón
letter	letra
line	línea
lion	león
medicine	medicina
monster	monstruo
music	música
number	número
pajamas	pajama
park	parquet
pear	pera
plant	planta
restaurant	restaurante
rose (flower)	rosa
sandals	sandalias
secret	secreto
telephone	teléfono
television	television
tiger	tigre
title	título
turtle	tortuga

ENGLISH/ SPANISH COGNATES

English	Spanish
bicycle	bicicleta
bottle	botella
breeze	brisa
calendar	calendario
centimeter	centímetro
circle	círculo
club	club
dentist	dentista
difficult	difícil
dinosaur	dinosaurio
double	doble
equal	igual
famous	famoso/famosa
favor	favor
group	grupo
guitar	guitarra
kilogram	kilogramo
list	lista
map	mapa
mathematics	matemáticas
minute	minuto
mountain	montaña
north	norte
ocean	océano
part	parte
person	persona
piano	piano
poem	poema
popular	popular
practice	practicar (verb)
princess	princesa
problem	problema
rectangle	rectángulo
sack	saco
sum	suma
taxi	taxi
tower	torre
triangle	triángulo

ENGLISH/ SPANISH COGNATES

English	Spanish
artist	artista
castle	castillo
celebration	celebración
coast	costa
collection	colección
culture	cultura
desert	desierto
dictionary	diccionario
fossil	fósil
future	futuro
mask	mascara
memory	memoria
menu	menu
modern	moderno/moderna
museum	museo
nation	nación
natural	natural
necessary	necesario/necesaria
orbit	órbita
palace	palacio
perfect	perfecto/perfecta
pilot	piloto
planet	planeta
possible	posible
prepare	preparar
president	presidente
professor	professor
program	programa
second	segundo
service	servicio
similar	similar
submarine	submarine
surprise	sorpresa
telescope	telescopio
temperature	temperature
terrible	terrible
traffic	tráfico
tunnel	tunnel

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- Hadaway, N., Vardell, S., Young, T. (2002). *Literature-based instruction with English language learners*. Boston: Pearson Education Company.
- Kuder, S.J. & Hasit C. (2002). *Enhancing literacy for all students*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Peregoy, S.F. & Boyle, O.F. (2001). *Reading, writing, & learning in ESL. A resource book for k-12 teachers*. NY: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- McCormick, S. (2003). *Instructing students who have literacy problems*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education.
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- What elementary teachers need to know about language*. Retrieved on March 8, 2004, from <http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/0006fillmore.html>
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- Reutzel, D.R. & Cooter, Jr. R.B. (2003). *Strategies for reading assessment and instruction helping every child succeed*. Columbus: Merrill Prentice Hall.
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