



Dynamic Vocabulary Instruction in the Elementary School

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Importance of Vocabulary Instruction

- Receptive Language
 - Reading Comprehension (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Nagy, 2005; Scarborough, 1998, Stahl & Fairbanks, 1987)
 - Listening Comprehension
- Expressive Language
 - Writing
 - Speaking
- Overall Reading Achievement (Stanovich, et al., 1993)
- Overall School Success (Becker, 1977; Anderson & Nagy, 1991)
- Hallmark of an Educated Individual (Beck, McKeown, Kucan, 2002)

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Importance of Vocabulary Instruction

- Children's vocabulary in the early grades related to reading comprehension in the upper grades.
 - Preschool - Children's vocabulary correlated with reading comprehension in upper elementary school. (Dickinson & Tabois, 2001)
 - Kindergarten - Vocabulary size was an effective predictor of reading comprehension in middle elementary years. (Scarborough, 1998)
 - First Grade - Orally tested vocabulary was a significant predictor of reading comprehension ten years later. (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997)
 - Third Grade - Children with restricted vocabulary have declining comprehension scores in the later elementary years. (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990)

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Importance of Vocabulary Instruction

- Vocabulary Gap
 - Children enter school with different levels of vocabulary. (Hart & Risley, 1995)
 - By the time the children were 3 years old, parents in less economically favored circumstances had said fewer words in their cumulative monthly vocabularies than the children in the most economically advantaged families in the same period of time.
 - Cumulative Vocabulary (Age 4)

■ Children from professional families	1100 words
■ Children from working class families	700 words
■ Children from welfare families	500 words

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Importance of Vocabulary Instruction

- Vocabulary Gap
 - Linguistically “poor” first graders knew 5,000 words; linguistically “rich” first graders knew 20,000 words. (Moats, 2001)
 - Children who enter school with limited vocabulary knowledge grow more discrepant over time from their peers who have rich vocabulary knowledge. (Baker, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1997)
 - The number of words students learn varies greatly.
 - 2 versus 8 words per day
 - 750 versus 3000 words per year

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Importance of Vocabulary Instruction

- Vocabulary Gap
 - Gap in word knowledge persists though the elementary years. (White, Graves, & Slater, 1990)
 - The vocabulary gap between struggling readers and proficient readers grows each year. (Stanovich, 1986)
 - After the primary grades, the “achievement gap” between socioeconomic groups is a language gap. (Hirsh, 2002)
 - For English Language Learners, the “achievement gap” is primarily a vocabulary gap. (Carlo, et al., 2004)

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Importance of Vocabulary Instruction - Conclusion

- To close the vocabulary gap, vocabulary acquisition must be accelerated through intentional instruction.
- Vocabulary instruction must be a focus in all classes in all grades.

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Components of a Vocabulary Program

- **High-quality Classroom Language** (Dickinson, Cote, & Smith, 1993)
- **Reading Aloud to Students** (Elley, 1989; Senechal, 1997)
- **Explicit Vocabulary Instruction** (Baker, Kame'enui, & Simmons, 1998; Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003; Beck & McKeown, 1991; Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Biemiller, 2004; Marzano, 2004; Paribakht & Wesche, 1997)
- **Word-Learning Strategies** (Buikima & Graves, 1993; Edwards, Font, Baumann, & Boland, 2004; Graves, 2004; White, Sowell, & Yanagihara, 1989)
- **Wide Independent Reading** (Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Nagy, Anderson, & Herman, 1987; Sternberg, 1987)

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High Quality Classroom Language

- Use high quality vocabulary in the classroom.
- To ensure understanding,
 - Tell students the meaning of words when first used.
“Don’t procrastinate on your project. Procrastinate means to put off doing something.”
 - Pair in the meaning of the word by using parallel language.
“Please refrain from talking. Please don’t talk.”
“Laws have their genesis...their beginning...in the legislative branch.”
“What is your hypothesis... your best guess?”

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Read-Alouds

- Vocabulary can be gained from listening to others read.
 - Listening to a book being read can significantly improve children’s expressive vocabulary. (Nicholson & Whyte, 1992; Senechal & Cornell, 1993)
 - Print vocabulary is more extensive and diverse than oral vocabulary. (Hays, Wolfe, & Wolfe, 1996)
 - Wide disparities exist in the amount of time parents read to their children before 1st grade.
 - Adams (1990) estimated that she spent at least 1000 hours reading books to her son before he entered first grade.
 - Teale (1984) observed that in low-income homes the children were read to for about 60 hours prior to first grade.

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Read-Alouds

- Choose interesting, engaging stories that attract and hold children's attention. The books should also be somewhat challenging. (Biemiller, 1995; Elley, 1989)
- Use performance-oriented reading. Read with expression and enthusiasm.
- Provide students with a little explanation of novel words that are encountered in context. This is another example of "fast mapping". (Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002; Brett, Rothlein & Hurley, 1996; Beck, Perfetti, & McKeon, 1982; Elley, 1989; Penno, Wilkinson, & Moore, 2002; wasik & Bond, 2001; Whitehurst et al., 1998)

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Read-Alouds

- Actively engage students during the story book reading to increase vocabulary gains. (Dickerson & Smith, 1994; Hargrave & Senechal, 2000; Senechal, 1997)
- Ask questions that promote passage comprehension. Retell and prediction questions are particularly useful.
- Use a variety of responses including:
 - Group (choral) responses
 - Partner responses
 - Physical responses

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Read-Alouds

- For young students, read the book several times to increase greater gains in vocabulary.
(Senechal, 1997)
- Provide a rich discussion before and after reading of the book.
 - *“What was your favorite part of the book?”*
 - *“What really surprised you in the story?”*
 - *“What would be another ending for the story?”*

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Read-Alouds

Did the teacher:

1. Select an interesting, engaging, challenging book? **Yes No**
2. Read the book with enthusiasm and expression? **Yes No**
3. Provide a little explanation of novel words?

Yes No

Example words:

4. Actively engage the students? **Yes No**

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Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

- Preliminary evidence..suggests that as late as Grade 5, about 80% of words are learned as a result of direct explanation, either as a result of the child's request or instruction, usually by a teacher. (Biemiller, 1999)

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Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

- Sources of words for vocabulary instruction
 - WORDS from read-aloud books
 - WORDS from core reading programs
 - WORDS from reading intervention programs
 - WORDS from content area instruction
 - Math
 - Science
 - Social studies
 - Health
 - Art, PE, music, etc.

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Explicit Vocabulary Instruction- Selection of Vocabulary

- Select a **limited number** of words for robust, explicit vocabulary instruction.
- **Three to ten words** per story or section in a chapter would be appropriate.
- Briefly **tell students the meaning of other words** that are needed for comprehension.

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Explicit Vocabulary Instruction- Selection of vocabulary

- Select words that are **unknown**.
- Select words that are **important** to passage understanding.
- Select words that students are likely to encounter in the **future** and are generally useful. (Stahl, 1986)
 - Focus on Tier Two words (Beck & McKeown, 2003)
 - Academic Vocabulary
- Select words that are more difficult to obtain.

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Explicit Instruction of Words- Selection of Vocabulary (Beck & McKeown, 1985)

- Tier One - Basic words
 - chair, bed, happy, house

- **Tier Two - Words in general use, but not common**
 - concentrate, absurd, fortunate, relieved, dignity, convenient, observation, analyze, persistence

- Tier Three - Rare words limited to a specific domain
 - tundra, igneous rocks, weathering, constitution, area, sacrifice fly, genre, foreshadowing

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Explicit Instruction of Words- Selection of Vocabulary

- “Goldilocks Words”
 - Not too difficult
 - Not too easy
 - Just right

(Stahl & Stahl, 2004)

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Explicit Instruction - Practice Activity - Select words for robust, explicit instruction. (Read-alouds)

Second Graders	Fifth Graders
Enemy Pie by Derek Munson	The Family Under the Bridge by Natalie Savage Carlson (for Chapter 1)
perfect	monsieur
trampoline	cathedral
enemy	cowered
recipe	hidey-hole
disgusting	hyacinths
earthworms	fragile
ingredients	oleanders
horrible	gratitude
nervous	fastidious
invited	loitering
relieved	roguish
boomerang	adventure

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Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words. Select 3 words for robust explicit instruction.

Reading Level: 2nd Passage: Lemonade for Sale Series: Harcourt Trophies		
announced	members	neighborhood
arrived	rebuild	lemonade
glum	squawked	clubhouse

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Explicit Instruction - Prepare - Student-Friendly Explanations

- **Dictionary Definition**
relieved - (1) To free wholly or partly from pain, stress, pressure. (2) To lessen or alleviate, as pain or pressure
- **Student-Friendly Explanation** (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2003)
 - **Is easy to understand.**
 - When something that was difficult is over or never happened at all, you feel **relieved**.

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Explicit Instruction - Prepare - Student-Friendly Explanations

- **Dictionary Definition**
 - **Attention** - a. the act or state of attending through applying the mind to an object of sense or thought
b. a condition of readiness for such attention involving a selective narrowing of consciousness and receptivity
- **Explanation from Dictionary for English Language Learners**
(*Elementary Learner's Dictionary* published by Oxford)
 - **Attention** - looking or listening carefully and with interest

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Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words. Instructional Routine

(Note: Teach words **AFTER** you have read a story to your students and **BEFORE** students read a selection.)

Step 1. Introduce the word.

- a) Write the word on the board or overhead.
- b) Read the word and have the students repeat the word.
If the word is difficult to pronounce or unfamiliar have the students repeat the word a number of times.

Introduce the word with me.

“ This word is relieved. What word?”

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Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words. Instructional Routine (continued)

Step 2. Present a student-friendly explanation.

- a) Tell students the explanation. OR
- b) Have them read the explanation with you.

Present the definition with me.

“When something that is difficult is over or never happened at all, you feel relieved. So if something that is difficult is over, you would feel _____.”

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Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words. Instructional Routine (continued)

Step 3. Illustrate the word with examples.

- a) Concrete examples.
- b) Visual representations.
- c) Verbal examples.

Present the examples with me.

“When the spelling test is over, you feel relieved.”

“When you have finished giving the speech that you dreaded, you feel relieved.”

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Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words. Instructional Routine (continued)

- Step 4. Check students’ understanding.**
Option #1. Ask deep processing questions.

Check students’ understanding with me.

When the students lined up for morning recess, Jason said, “I am so relieved that this morning is over.” Why might Jason be relieved?

When Maria was told that the soccer game had been cancelled, she said, “I am relieved.” Why might Maria be relieved?

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Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words. Instructional Routine (continued)

Step 4. **Check students' understanding.**
Option #2. **Have students discern between examples and non-examples.**

Check students' understanding with me.

“If you were nervous singing in front of others, would you feel relieved when the concert was over?”

Yes ***“Why?”***

“If you loved singing to audiences, would you feel relieved when the concert was over?” No ***“Why not?”*** *It was not difficult for you.*

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Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words. Instructional Routine (continued)

Step 4. **Check students' understanding.**
Option #3. **Have students generate their own examples.**

Check students' understanding with me.

“Tell your partner a time when you were relieved.”

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Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words. Instructional Routine (continued)

- Step 4. **Check students' understanding.**
Option #4. **Provide students with a "sentence starter". Have them say the complete sentence.**

Check students' understanding with me.

Sometimes your mother is relieved. Tell your partner when your mother is relieved. Start your sentence by saying, "My mother is relieved when _____."

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Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words.

Did the teacher:

1. Introduce the word?
2. Present a student-friendly explanation?
3. Illustrate the word with examples?
4. Check students' understanding?

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Practice Activity: Teaching Critical Vocabulary (Example A)

1. Introduce the word.

This word is **migrate**. What word?

2. Present a student-friendly explanation.

When birds or other animals move from one place to another at a certain time each year, they **migrate**. So if birds move to a new place in the winter or spring, we say that the birds _____. Animals usually migrate to find a warmer place to live or to get food.



3. Illustrate the word with examples.

Sandhill Cranes fly from the North to the South so they can live in a warmer place. Sandhill Cranes _____.

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Practice Activity: Teaching Critical Vocabulary (Example A continued)

The wildebeests in Africa move to a new place so that they can find water and grass. Wildebeests _____.



4. Check students' understanding. (Deep processing question.)

Why might birds migrate? Tell your partner. (The teacher monitors and coaches. Then the teacher calls on individuals.)

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Practice Activity: Teaching Critical Vocabulary (Example B)

1. Introduce the word.

*This word is **survive**. What word?*

2. Present a student-friendly explanation.

*When people or animals don't die when things are very bad or dangerous, they **survive**.*

3. Illustrate the word with examples.

Look at the people on this river. It is very dangerous. However, they don't get hurt or die, they _____.



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Practice Activity: Teaching Critical Vocabulary (Example B continued)

4. Check students' understanding.

(Examples and non-examples)

Get ready to tell me if this group would survive.

If the winter was very cold and all food was buried under the snow, would whooping cranes survive? _____ Ones, tell your partner why they wouldn't survive?

If whooping cranes had plenty of food and the weather was warm, would they survive? _____ Twos, tell your partner why they would survive?

(Deep Processing Questions)

If a rabbit was being chased by a coyote, what could the rabbit do to survive?

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Practice Activity: Teaching Critical Vocabulary (Example C)

1. **Introduce the word.**
“This word is **abundant**. What word? _____.
Again, _____.
2. **Introduce the meaning of the word.**
“When there is plenty of something, there is an **abundant** amount.
So, if you have plenty of something, you have an amount that is
_____.”

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Practice Activity: Teaching Critical Vocabulary (Example C continued)

3. **Illustrate with examples.**
If you have lots of food in your house, you have **abundant food**.
If you had a huge supply of paper, you would have _____.
If you had enough pencils for everyone, you would have _____.
If you had more than enough money to live on, you would have _____.
4. **Check understanding.**
Get read to tell me if this would be abundant. Say **abundant** or not.
If you had 2 pencils for the year? *Not*
If you had 40 pencils for the year? *Abundant*
If the class had 800 books? *Abundant*
If the class had 30 books? *Not*
If the family had enough food for one day? *Not*
If the family had enough food for 3 months? *Abundant*

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Practice Activity: Teaching Critical Vocabulary (Example D)

1. **Introduce the word.**
*"This word is **virtue**. What word? _____.*
*Again, _____. **Virtue** is a noun."*
2. **Introduce the meaning of the word.**
*"When someone has a really good quality like honesty, that quality is a **virtue**." So someone has really good quality, we call that quality a _____.*

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Practice Activity: Teaching Critical Vocabulary (Example D continued)

3. **Illustrate with examples. (And non-examples)**
*Being honest is a **virtue**. Lying in not a **virtue**.*
Being kind is a _____. Being mean is not a _____.
Being generous is a _____. Being greedy and not sharing is not a _____.
Being reliable is a _____. Being inconsistent so that people can not count _____ on you is not a _____.
4. **Check understanding.**
Make a list of qualities that you believe are virtues. (Students make list.)
Read your list of virtues to your partner. (As students share their ideas, move around the room and write down their ideas.)
Let's read the ideas of your classmates.

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Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words. Review

After teaching the group of vocabulary words, review the words using a “word association” activity.

Words written on board or overhead:

enemy, disgusting, invited, relieved

“Tell me the word that I am thinking of...”

Someone that hates you might be called an _____.

If you didn’t like a food, you might say it is _____.

When a test is over, you often feel _____.

When you are asked to a party, you are _____.”

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Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words. Word Walls

- Create a word wall in your classroom.
 - Post a reminder of the context.
 - Copy of the cover of the read-aloud book
 - Copy of the first page in the story
 - The topic in science or social studies
 - Post the vocabulary words.
 - Incorporate the words into your classroom language.
 - Encourage students to use the words when speaking and writing.

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Vocabulary Logs

- Have students maintain a log of vocabulary to facilitate study and review.
- What can be recorded on a vocabulary log?
 - Word
 - Student-friendly explanation
 - Any of these options
 - A sentence to illustrate the word's meaning
 - Examples and non-examples
 - An illustration
- In lower grades, create a group log on a flip chart.

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Word Walls

- Create a word wall in your classroom
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 - Post the vocabulary words.
 - Incorporate the words into your classroom language.
 - Encourage students to use the words when speaking and writing.

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Recommended Books

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G. & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: robust vocabulary instruction*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Baumann, J. F. & Kame'enui, E.J. (2004). *Vocabulary instruction: research to practice*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Diamond, L. & Gutlohn, L. (2006) *Vocabulary handbook*. Berkeley, CA: CORE. (www.corelearn.com)

Graves, M. F. (2006). *The vocabulary book: Learning and instruction*. New York, New York: Teachers College Pres.

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Recommended Books

- Marzano, R.J. (2004). *Building background knowledge for academic achievement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Marzano, R.J., & Pickering (2005). *Building academic vocabulary: Teacher's manual*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Stahl, S. A. (1998). *Vocabulary development*. Cambridge, MA : Brookline.
- Stahl, S. A., & Kapinus, B. (2001). *Word power: what every educator needs to know about teaching vocabulary*. Washington, DC: NEA.

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Dictionaries with Student-Friendly Explanations

Major distributors

Pearson/Longman Education

(www.longman.com)

(www.ldoconline.com)

Thompson/Heinle

(www.heinle.com)

www.learnersdictionary.com

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Read-Aloud References

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G. & Kucan, L. (2005).
Read-aloud anthology. Steck-Vaughn.

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G. & Kucan, L. (2002).
*Bringing words to life: robust vocabulary
instruction*. New York: The Guilford Press. (At
the back of the book, there is a list of read-alouds and selected vocabulary.)

Trelease, J. (2004) *Read aloud handbook*.
Penquin Books.

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