The National Learning and Teaching Conference

Brisbane, 6–8 November 2014
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Presenter: Noella Mackenzie

NURTURING VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT:

How does vocabulary impact learning?
Introductions

Why did you come to this workshop?
How important is vocabulary to learning?

Why?
Learning is fundamentally and profoundly dependent on vocabulary knowledge.
“Learners need access to the meanings of words that are used by adults (particularly teachers) and other students, as well as those used in books and multimedia, if they are to participate in their community contexts and learn effectively.” (Daffern & Mackenzie, in press)
The significance of vocabulary ("oral Language"). . .

. . . has often been underestimated because it is not a prerequisite for first or second grade reading success. It is not until reading texts involve age-normal vocabulary demands that early (kindergarten or prekindergarten) vocabulary becomes a significant predictor of reading comprehension.

Text participation

When students read words, understand their meaning and can pick up on subtleties in text (spoken or written), they become text participants.
Reading

- decoding skills,
- fluency skill, and
- comprehension skills

all draw upon students’ known vocabulary.
Lexical sophistication refers to the difficulty or maturity of words used, while lexical density refers to the balance between content words (e.g., house) and grammatical function words (e.g., the, is) (Hudson, 2009).
Six Dimensions of Writing

Mackenzie, Scull & Munsie, 2013

- Text structure
- Sentence and grammatical features
- Vocabulary
- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Handwriting/legibility
Knowing words is multi-faceted

‘knowledge of the multiple related meanings and shades of meaning for the word, knowledge of its semantic associations, knowledge of its meanings in different contexts, and knowledge of its different morphological forms’ (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2012, p. 348).

N. Mackenzie, CSU, 2014
Homographs

Students need to know multiple meanings for words and know which is appropriate within particular contexts.

We will ‘house’ the guinea pigs in their new ‘house’.
Vocabulary development

From age three children demonstrate an ability to assimilate and comprehend a new word after hearing it only once or twice.

Hoffnung et al, 2013, p. 270
school students:

The average student learns between 5 and 10 words per day (2000 and 4000 per year) during primary and high school.
Definitions of key Vocabulary terminology:

Expressive Vocabulary:
Requires a speaker or writer to produce a specific label for a particular meaning.

Receptive Vocabulary:
Requires a reader to associate a specific meaning with a given label as in reading or listening.
Definitions of key Vocabulary terminology:

Contextual Analysis:
A strategy readers use to infer or predict a word from the context in which it appears.

Morphemic Analysis:
A strategy in which the meanings of words can be determined or inferred by examining their meaningful parts (i.e., prefixes, suffixes, roots, etc.)
When children start at your school . . . what would you say about their vocabulary development?

Share . . .

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Diverse populations – equity issues

... a marked difference between the vocabulary knowledge of children from high and low socioeconomic backgrounds has been well documented (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008).

... the teaching of vocabulary is an equity issue and deserving of teachers’ time and energy.
Cumulative Vocabulary Experiences: Words heard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Status</th>
<th>per hour</th>
<th>In a 100 hour week</th>
<th>In a 5,200 hour Year</th>
<th>In 4 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>62,000</td>
<td>3 million</td>
<td>13 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>1,251</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>6 million</td>
<td>26 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>2,153</td>
<td>215,000</td>
<td>11 million</td>
<td>45 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Listening and Speaking

- Young children's listening and speaking competence is in advance of their reading and writing competence.

- That is, they can understand much more sophisticated content presented in oral language than they can read independently.
Learning new words

the learner needs to encounter the word in context and understand its meaning, how it relates to other words around it and how it may change in different contexts.

N. Mackenzie, CSU, 2014
The teacher impact

- teacher modelling
- teacher interest in words
- teacher awareness
- teacher word radar
- teacher responsiveness

- The Weather Watcher ... Lane & Allen
What do you/your teachers do to promote vocabulary development?

Share . . .
Learning new words

• Every new word (letter) must take a journey
  • from being new
  • to only just known (and easily confused)
  • to working to get a solution
  • to easily produced but easily thrown (perhaps in a different context)
  • to a well-known response in most contexts
  • and later... known in any variant form

Adapted from Clay, 2001, p.20
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Example (for “stale”)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inappropriate use in phrase or sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>He stale on this</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inappropriate definition</strong></td>
<td><em>Stale means a hat</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Stale is stale</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Stale bale</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incomplete Knowledge</strong></td>
<td><em>Bread is stale</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Stale means yucky</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>No good</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complete Knowledge</strong></td>
<td><em>The food is old, so it’s stale now</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Food that’s old, it’s not fresh</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Justice, Meier & Walpole, 2005
Word knowledge

A= I know the word and could easily give a precise definition, precise synonyms and use the word in a sentence.
B= I have some knowledge of the word, could use in a sentence.
C= I have heard the word but don’t feel confident in providing a definition or putting into a sentence
D= I have no knowledge of the word.

1. Euphoria
2. Gentry
3. Geophyte
4. Novice
How did you go?

How important is vocabulary knowledge to us?

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Explicit instruction and modelling

... goes beyond the standard dictionary definitions to include opportunities for students to see how words can change meaning in different contexts (Hirsch, 2003).

e.g. He read his ‘home reader’ to his Mum and then his dad came over to read to him from a new chapter book.
Promoting word consciousness

... through the use of puns, jokes, cross word puzzles, anagrams and word games.
Explicit instruction and modelling

. . . important as are opportunities for definitional vocabulary work, which will require students to explore different aspects of words.
Spontaneous or planned

N. Mackenzie, CSU, 2014
Your turn – choose one and in pairs create a word cline for:

- Happiness
- Fear
- Temperature
- Energy levels
- Enthusiasm
How did you go?

What are the strengths of these kinds of activities?

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The importance of ‘Read Aloud’ & Choosing books to support vocabulary development

a great deal of vocabulary acquisition occurs before children . . . are reading books that introduce unfamiliar vocabulary

N. Mackenzie, CSU, 2014
Story reading and vocabulary development

Text read:

• once without explanation – 4% gain in word meanings

• 3-4 times without explanation – 10-15% gain

• 3-4 times with explanation – 14-29% gain
Choosing texts and words to teach

• Based on need

• texts that provides **some new vocabulary and some recently introduced vocabulary**, surrounded by many well-known words.

• a balance of mostly known words with some new
Which words?

**Function words**: approximately 100 ‘function words’, which account for almost 50 percent of all words used in the English language. Function words contribute to the **syntax** of language rather than the meaning.

**Commonly used words:**
Tier 1, 2 and 3 words
Beck, McKeown & Lucan, 2002
“Tier one” words are basic-level words (e.g., *dog, baby, happy, pretty*) – rarely require instruction at school

“Tier two” words are words that add precision to an individual’s vocabulary (e.g., *stale, awful, snuggle, twitch*) by providing new ways to express concepts that are already understood. They are known to mature readers but may be unfamiliar to many younger students. They are not topic specific.

“Tier three” words are used rarely (low frequency) and only in highly specific situations (e.g., *decibel, cataclysm, atom*) probably best learned in a content area.

(Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002)
During dinner, the last Potoroo kept glancing nervously at Miss Lily’s enormous snout, at her strong, sharp teeth.

Suddenly her joy evaporated. ‘I can’t take this,’ she whispered. ‘I did something dreadful. I wanted the boa so much that I stole a bit of it.’
Selecting Tier 2 words to teach

During dinner, the last Potoroo kept glancing nervously at Miss Lily’s enormous snout, at her strong, sharp teeth.

Suddenly her joy evaporated. ‘I can’t take this,’ she whispered. ‘I did something dreadful. I wanted the boa so much that I stole a bit of it.’
Choosing texts

Task – review texts and identify Tier 2 words

Clive Eats Alligators
Alison Lester

MY FARM
Alison Lester

The Magic Hat
Mem Fox

ALWAYS LEARNING
N.Mackenzie, CSU, 2014
PEARSON
How well is read aloud used at your school?

How carefully are texts chosen?

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Which definition is correct?

Millefiori

1. *noun*, a coralline hydrozoan of the genus *Millefiora*, having a smooth calcareous surface with many perforations.

2. *noun*, the imitation or representation of aspects of the sensible world, especially human actions, in literature and art.

3. *noun*, glasswork made by fusing coloured glass rods in a kiln.

4. *noun*, a genus of about 400 species of herbs and shrubs, in the subfamily *Millesoideae* of the legume family *Millesabaceae*. 
Which definition is correct?

3. **Millefiori**: *noun*, glasswork made by fusing coloured glass rods in a kiln.
How did you go?

What are the strengths of these kinds of activities?
Expanding a sentence

Now ask the students to create their own sentence using Figure 6.5.

Figure 6.5
Expanding a sentence

Make your own gap-filling exercises from English texts.

Choose a s____, interesting English text that is not too d____ (e.g. lyrics, text from your textbook, news, excerpt from a story/novel). Copy the text and d______ some words in the copy, e.g.:

prepositions
adjectives
verbs in a certain tense

Try to fill the g____ correctly and then take the o______ text to check your answers.

This is more fun when doing it with f______. Everyone prepares a short text and gives a c____ to the others, who will try to fill the gaps c__________.

To make things a bit easier, you can provide the w______ in a different order or as a translation.
During dinner, the last Potoroo kept ................. nervously at Miss Lily’s enormous ................., at her strong, ................. teeth.

............. dinner, the .................Potoroo kept glancing ................. at Miss Lily’s ................. snout, at her ................., sharp teeth.
How did you go?

What are the strengths of these kinds of activities?

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What do you want to take from this session?

How could this impact learners at your school?

Who do you need to work with to get change at your school?

What should be your first step?
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