



Vocabulary Instruction

The National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000a; 2000b; 2001) identified five essential components of reading instruction. One of those components was vocabulary instruction. Attention is given to this component in every Reading Recovery lesson.

Vocabulary Instruction from *Put Reading First*

Definition: “Vocabulary refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively. In general, vocabulary can be described as oral vocabulary or reading vocabulary. Oral vocabulary refers to words that we use in speaking or recognize in listening. Reading vocabulary refers to words we recognize or use in print.” (p. 34)

- “Vocabulary plays an important part in learning to read...[and] also is very important to reading comprehension.” (p. 34)
- Beginning readers use oral vocabulary “to make sense of the words they see in print.” (p. 34)
- Beginning readers have a more difficult time reading words that are not part of their oral vocabulary. (p. 34)
- Readers must know what most of the words mean before they can comprehend what they are reading. (p. 34)
- Most vocabulary is learned indirectly “through everyday experiences with oral and written language.” (p. 35)
- “Children learn word meanings indirectly in three ways:
 - They engage daily in oral language.
 - They listen to adults read to them.
 - They read extensively on their own.” (p. 35)
- Some vocabulary must be taught directly by providing students with specific word instruction and by teaching them word-learning strategies. (pp. 36–37)
- Direct instruction of vocabulary helps students learn words “that are not part of their everyday experiences.” (p. 36)

Vocabulary Instruction in Reading Recovery Lessons

One way in which a child’s language changes after arrival at school is the “continuing development and increasing precision in the use of the sound system, the vocabulary, the sentence patterns, and the richness in the way he puts his meanings into words” (Clay, 1991, p. 73). Reading Recovery lessons include attention to the language of books and the meanings of words, building the core of known words, and fostering the processes needed to problem solve new and unfamiliar words in text reading and writing.

Assessment

In Reading Recovery, individual assessments reveal

- a child's reading vocabulary
- a child's writing vocabulary

Examples of Instructional Procedures

Reading Recovery emphasizes vocabulary in every lesson. Teachers support vocabulary development during Reading Recovery lessons by the following.

Selecting and Introducing Books

- Selecting texts that offer some challenges in word solving and yet support the child's present knowledge and skills
- Selecting a variety of texts and text types to promote flexible use of word solving
- Engaging the child in meaningful conversations when introducing a new book, allowing the child to hear the new words to be encountered in the text
- Drawing the child's attention to the important words in a new book, words that convey important ideas to support meaning of the story and language structure

Reading Books

- Providing many opportunities for reading of familiar texts. Rereading familiar texts enables the child to
 - develop alternative approaches to problem solve new and unfamiliar words,
 - expand word knowledge and vocabulary, and
 - discover new words and new features of words.
- Teaching for word-solving strategies on carefully selected continuous texts that are not too difficult
- During guided oral reading of unfamiliar text, helping the child apply knowledge of letters, sounds, and words, using this information in combination with comprehending
- Directing the child's attention to words that have been overlooked or misread by focusing on context of story, word meanings, language, or print
- Providing extensive practice in word solving (e.g., to use words the child knows in decoding unfamiliar words)
- Demonstrating ways for the child to use phonemic awareness and letter-sound relationships to monitor reading accuracy and to solve new words
- Demonstrating how to take apart and solve new and unknown words
- Demonstrating ways to work with syllables in spoken words, with onsets and rimes in spoken syllables, and with individual phonemes in spoken words as strategies for solving unfamiliar words
- Keeping a record of known reading vocabulary

Writing Stories

- Teaching for word solving of new and unfamiliar words when children are writing as well as when they are reading
- Engaging the child in meaningful conversations when constructing messages

- Guiding the child to use his oral language to compose a message or story and then to write it, encouraging increasingly more complex messages
- Helping the child remember a word in detail by having the child write high-frequency words on the working page of a writing book
- Keeping a list of words the child can write independently and a weekly progress record of accumulated writing vocabulary over time
- Teaching the child how to use analogies or spelling patterns to write new words
- Cutting a sentence the child has written into language units, phrases, words, and structural segments within words (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, syllables, letter clusters, single letters, and onset and rime) based on assessment of what the child knows; asking the child to reconstruct the sentence using letter-sound and visual information as well as language and word knowledge

Learning How Words Work

- Using magnetic letters to explore how words work (e.g., letters, letter clusters, inflectional endings, syllables, and onset and rime)

Observing Behaviors

- Examining records of oral reading and writing behaviors for evidence of meaning making while using word-solving strategies on new and unfamiliar words
- Examining records for evidence of growth in reading vocabulary and writing vocabulary

Because early literacy interventions are intended for children who have varying repertoires of knowledge, approaches to vocabulary instruction and the development of word-solving strategies must be specifically designed for each individual and monitored for progress. Teachers must be knowledgeable and flexible in supporting vocabulary development and in teaching word-learning strategies with young readers and writers.

References

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