

"What's the Difference Between a Dimple and a Pimple?": Building Vocabulary for Children with Visual Impairments

• Frances Mary D'Andrea, Ph.D.

literacy2@mindspring.com

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This is bomb
So this is tomb.

No, this is tomb
So this is comb.

No, this is comb
So this is fomb.

No, this is foam
So this is hoam.

No this is home
So this is some.

No this is some
So this is dome.

-- from Gallagher, comedian & observer of the English language

How do we "know" words?

A continuum:

- no knowledge
- general sense of connotation
- narrow & context bound knowledge
- knowledge of word but not readily available to use in context
- rich knowledge of word including metaphorical uses
 - Beck, McKeown, & Omanson, 1987

Why worry about vocabulary?

- Has substantial influence on text comprehension
- Reciprocal relationship between vocabulary and comprehension
- Relation to background knowledge & experience
- ABC Braille Study indicated our students are behind in this area.
- **Vocabulary: Start early**
- Hart & Risley study (1995): parenting features that predicted future achievement were language diversity, feedback, guidance style, language emphasis, responsiveness
- The more limited a child's experiences with language and literacy the more likely he or she will have difficulty learning to read. (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2006).

Early strategies

- Reading aloud to your child
- Support and expand upon your child's talk
- Encourage active exploration, play, and socialization
- Build background knowledge
- Rich talk and explanations

Only The English Could Have Invented This Language

We'll begin with a box, and the plural is boxes,
But the plural of ox becomes oxen, not oxes.
One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese,
Yet the plural of moose should never be meese.
You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice,
Yet the plural of house is houses, not hice.
If the plural of man is always called men,
Then shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?
If I speak of my foot and show you my feet,
And I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet?
If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth,
Why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?
Then one may be that, and three would be those,
Yet hat in the plural would never be hose,
And the plural of cat is cats, not cose.
We speak of a brother and also of brethren,

But though we say mother, we never say methren.
Then the masculine pronouns are he, his and him,
But imagine the feminine: she, shis and shim!

—Anonymous (attributed to many different sources, lost in the mists of time)

How to select words to teach?

- Careful selection of words to teach
 - ecological inventory
 - environmental print and braille
- How generally useful it is to student
- Will see the word again and again
- How it relates to the curriculum, both with past units of study and future
- Useful to understanding the story
- understanding character, plot, events
 - Beck, McKeown, Kucan (2013)

Selecting vocabulary to teach

- Beck, McKeown, Kucan (2013) *Bringing Words to Life*

Tier 1

- words they know well
- words they use in conversation : *mother, like, happy*

Tier 3

- special & content areas: *photosynthesis, Pilgrim, isosceles, larvae*

Tier 2 Should be our focus

- words not generally used in conversation, but often in books; more sophisticated language
- concepts are familiar once words explained: *replied, mournful, drenched*
- words have good potential for instruction because introduce a variety of concepts

Use Tier 2 words yourself whenever you can! Increases interest in words and models their use.

Introducing new words in context

- review context in the story: where was word used?
- explain word in “child-friendly” language
- have the child repeat the word
- provide examples of other contexts where you’d see the word
- child provides own examples

Frustration method

Based on Frustration, Frederick, & Klausmeier (1969); helps children make connections

- Distinguish between new word & similar one
- Give examples of word
- Give nonexamples of word
- Present examples and nonexamples and ask which is which
- Ask students to come up with their own

Reinforcing vocabulary

Ask questions so students interact with words

- “Would a *drowsy* person move quickly?”
- “What might cause a *commotion* in the hallway?”
- “Show me how you might look if you were *timid*.”
- “Name some things that would make you *gleeful*.”

Choosing between examples and nonexamples. E.g. “clutching”

- holding a fistful of money
- holding mom’s hand in a crowd
- petting a cat’s fur
- blowing bubbles and catching them
 - from Beck & McKeown, & Kucan, 2013

Older students

- focus on shades of meaning:
 - *banter vs. taunting*
 - *glum vs. melancholy*
- teach roots, suffixes, prefixes
 - *calligraphy, photography, cartography*
 - *regain, regenerate, reconsider*
- Looking at context in a meaningful way

Rich vocabulary

- Read (and have students write) poetry
- Talk about figurative meanings and literal meanings
- Tie to real events and make concrete
- Think about how to make visual concepts more meaningful
- Use and encourage a rich vocabulary

Vocabulary

- Multiple exposures over time
- Introduce new vocabulary **with** reading
- Teach metaphors and similes
- Use student interest for motivation
- Model the use of rich vocabulary

A Word A Day

“A large vocabulary is like an artist having a large palette of colors. You don’t have to use all those colors in a single painting but it helps to have just the right shade when you need it. Each word brings its own shade of meaning. Each word helps us to describe our world just the way we see it.”

— Anu Garg