VOCABULARY INTERVENTION: WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS

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WHY TARGET VOCABULARY?

- Students' word knowledge is linked strongly to academic success

- Word knowledge is crucial for oral and written discourse as well as to reading comprehension.

- Word knowledge directly impacts learning since it determines how well students will be able to comprehend the texts they read in the upper elementary grades, in middle and high school, and in college.

- Having limited vocabulary is primary indicator of language learning disability, which in turn blocks students from obtaining critical literacy skills necessary for reading, writing, and spelling.

- "One of the most enduring findings in reading research is the extent to which students' vocabulary knowledge relates to their reading comprehension" (Osborn & Hiebert, 2004).

VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE & SES

- Vocabulary gains are affected by socioeconomic (SES) status as well as maternal education levels

- Children whose family incomes are at or below the poverty level fair much more poorly in the area of vocabulary acquisition than middle class children

- Brooks-Gunn, Klebanov, & Duncan (1996) found that children whose caregivers have not completed high school achieve significantly lower vocabulary scores than those children whose parents have more education

- Becker (2011) found that children of higher educated parents can improve their vocabulary more strongly than children whose parents have a lower educational level.
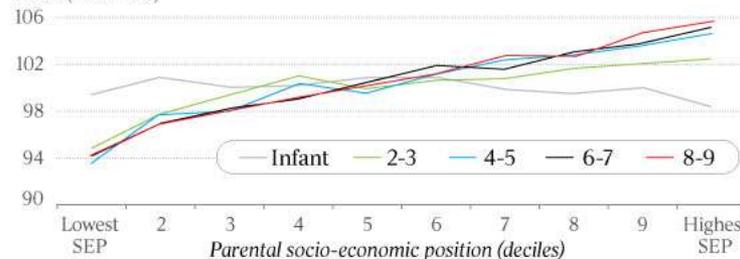
VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE & SES (CONT.)

- Australian Institute of Family Studies

  - By age 2 or 3 massive discrepancies have emerged in the social and emotional development, cognition and learning of Australian children, depending on whether they are from rich or poor households

The gap ↑ at 4-5 years and is maintained thereafter

FALLING BEHIND

Outcomes for children by socio-economic background*

Index (mean=100)

| | Infant | 2-3 | 4-5 | 6-7 | 8-9 |

Lowest SEP   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   Highest SEP

Parental socio-economic position (deciles)

* Include social and emotional development, physical growth, cognition and learning and anti-social behaviour

Source: Australian Institute of Family Studies

LIMITATIONS OF POOR READERS

- Poor readers often lack adequate vocabulary to get meaning from what they read. To them, reading is difficult and tedious, and they are unable (and often unwilling) to do the large amount of reading they must do if they are to encounter unknown words often enough to learn them.

- Matthew Effect, "rich get richer, poor get poorer", or interactions with the environment exaggerate individual differences over time

  - Good readers read more, become even better readers, and learn more words

  - Poor readers read less, become poorer readers, and learn fewer words

- The vocabulary problems of students who enter school with poorer limited vocabularies only worsen over time.

LIMITATIONS OF POOR READERS (CONT.)

- If poor readers also come from low socioeconomic status (SES) households they may have limited access to books.

- 61% of low-income families have NO BOOKS at all in their homes for their children

- In some under-resourced communities, there is ONLY 1 book for every 300 children.

- The average middle class child has 13+ books in the home.

- Consider enrichment activities to obtain books to distribute to students

  - Book Drives

STATE OF VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

- Wright & Neuman (2014) found that teachers explained word meanings during "teachable moments" in the context of other instruction :

  - Gave one-time, brief word explanations

  - Engaged in unsystematic word selection

  - Spent minimal time on vocabulary devoted to subject areas (e.g., science and social studies in which word explanations were most dense)

STATE OF VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION (CONT.)

- Wright & Neuman (2014) also found an economic status discrepancy"

  - Teachers serving in economically advantaged schools explained words more often and were more likely to address sophisticated words than teachers serving in economically disadvantaged schools.

  - They concluded that "these results suggest that the current state of instruction may be CONTRIBUTING to rather than ameliorating vocabulary gaps by socioeconomic status."
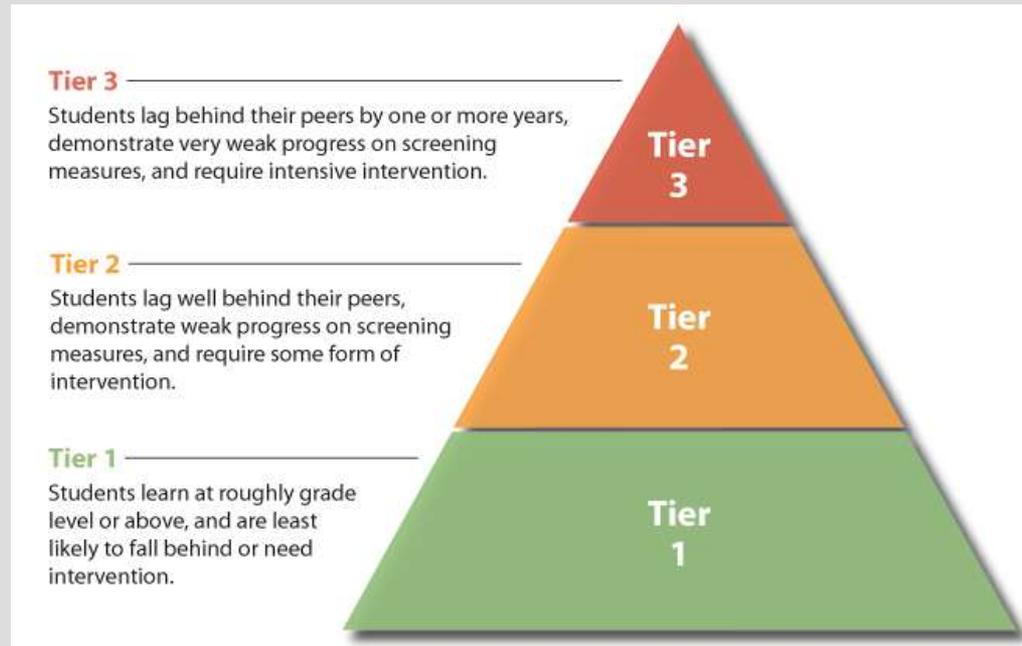
PROBLEM

- "Teachers with many struggling children often significantly reduce the quality of their own vocabulary, unconsciously, to ensure understanding." (Anita Archer, PhD)

- The same certainly goes for SLP's

- But, for many children the teacher/SLP is the highest vocabulary example in their life: "It's like having a buffet table but removing everything except a bowl of peanuts..." (Anita Archer, PhD)
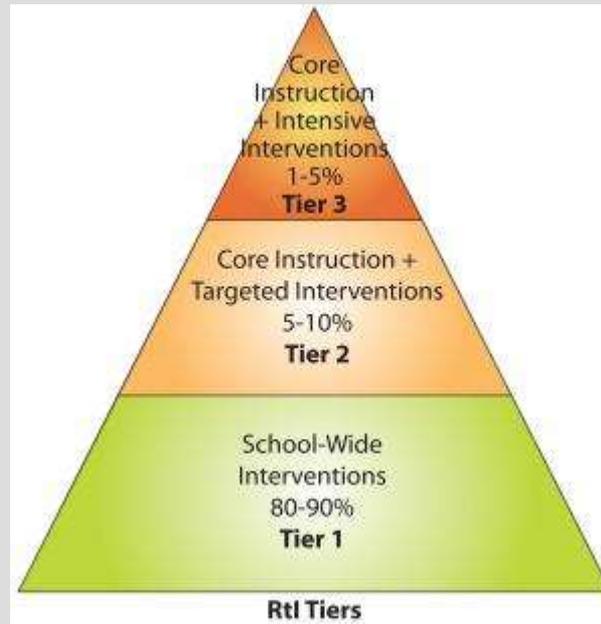
SOLUTION

- Teachers and SLPs are encouraged to use rich language skills and include the meanings of words so students are able to understand them.

- For example, both can ask students to look at the title of a book and make a hypothesis (best guess) regarding what the story is about. In this way one can expose the children to higher academic language while still providing the meaning of the word.

- If certain words are constantly in the educator's lexicon, he or she is likely to use it many times. The students are going to hear it numerous times, and it will be added to their own lexicon. The process is similar to the way children pick up vocabulary from their parents

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION IMPROVING VOCABULARY OUTCOMES

Tier 3

Students lag behind their peers by one or more years, demonstrate very weak progress on screening measures, and require intensive intervention.

Tier 2

Students lag well behind their peers, demonstrate weak progress on screening measures, and require some form of intervention.

Tier 1

Students learn at roughly grade level or above, and are least likely to fall behind or need intervention.

Tier 3

Tier 2

Tier 1

RTI TIER STUDENT PERCENTAGES

TIER II VOCABULARY

- According to Beck et al (2002) **TIER II words should be the primary focus of vocabulary interventions** since they would make the most significant impact on the child's spoken and written expression

- **Most important words for direct instruction as they facilitate academic success**

  - High frequency words which occur across a variety of domains conversations, text, etc.

  - Useful across a variety of settings and taught in a variety of ways

  - Contain multiple meanings

  - Descriptive in nature

    - Hostile, illegible, tolerate, immigrate, tremble, despicable, elapse, etc.

VOCABULARY SELECTION TIPS

- According to Judy Montgomery "You can never select the wrong words to teach."

  - Make it thematic

  - Embed it in current events (e.g., holidays, elections, seasonal activities)

  - Classroom topic related (e.g., French Revolution, the Water Cycle, Penguin Survival in the Polar Regions, etc)

  - Do not select more than 4-5 words to teach per unit to not overload the working memory (Robb, 2003)

  - Select difficult/unknown words that are critical to the passage meaning, which the students are likely to use in the future (Archer, 2015)

  - Select words used across many domains

EXAMPLES OF SPRING RELATED VOCABULARY

Adjectives:	Verbs
• Flourishing	• Awaken
• Lush	• Teem
• Verdant	• Romp
• Refreshing	• Rejuvenate
Nouns:	Idiomatic Expressions:
• Allergies	• April Showers Bring May Flowers
• Regeneration	• Green Thumb
• Outdoors	• Spring Chicken
• Seedling	• Spring Into Action
• Sapling	• Swing into spring

EFFECTIVE METHODS OF VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

- For students to learn vocabulary directly it is important to explicitly teach them individual words & word-learning strategies (NRP, 2000)

- For children with low initial vocabularies, approaches that teach word meanings as part of a semantic field are found to be especially effective (Marmolejo, 1991).

- Rich experiences/high classroom language related to the student experience/interests

- Explicit vs. incidental instruction with frequent exposure to words

- Instructional routine for vocabulary

    - Establishing word relationships

    - Word-learning strategies to impart depth of meaning

    - Morphological awareness instruction

COMPONENTS OF A STRONG VOCABULARY PROGRAM

- High-quality classroom language

- Reading aloud

- Explicit vocabulary instruction

- Instructional routine for vocabulary

- Word-learning strategies

  - Morphological awareness instruction

CREATING EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION MATERIALS

- Thematic packet which contains a variety of opportunities for students to practice word usage

- Text Page
  - A story which introduces the topic and contains context embedded vocabulary words

- Vocabulary
  - List of story embedded vocabulary words with definitions, and parts of speech

- Multiple-choice questions or open-ended questions

- Crossword puzzle with a word bank

- Fill-in the blank

- Synonym/Antonym Matching

- Explain the Multiple Meanings Words

- Create Complex Sentences (with Story Vocabulary)

COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE VOCABULARY INTERVENTIONS

- Read vocabulary words in context embedded in relevant short texts

- Teach individual vocabulary words directly to comprehend classroom-specific texts
  - Definitions

- Provide multiple exposures of vocabulary words in multiple contexts
  - synonyms, antonyms, multiple meaning words, etc.)

- Maximize multisensory intervention when learning vocabulary to maximize gains
  - Visual, auditory, tactile, etc.

COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE VOCABULARY INTERVENTIONS (CONT.)

- Use multiple instructional methods for a range of vocabulary learning tasks and outcomes

    - Read it, spell it, write it in a sentence, practice with a friend, etc.

- Usage of morphological awareness instruction

    - An ability to recognize, understand, and use word parts (prefixes, suffixes that "carry significance" when speaking and in reading tasks

- Teacher Training

friend
friends
friendship
unfriendly
friendlier
befriend

20

READING ALOUD

- Critical in preschool and the primary grades because vocabulary in print material is significantly higher than it is in conversational English.

- Teachers (and clinicians) can augment their reading by changing intonation, pointing to pictures, and acting out scenes.

- They should request responses from the students, ask for predictions, and have them retell parts of the story. Most importantly, they should take time to explain any unknown, novel words.

- Leading up to sixth grade, children gain approximately 80 percent of their vocabulary from the explicit introduction to words (explaining what they mean), research has shown.

- Students in the upper grades pick up new vocabulary from independent reading.

WHO IS AT RISK?

- Certain populations need more explicit instruction to gain the same vocabulary that other students might gain with less instruction

  - Students with speech-language deficits

  - Students with emotional behavioral disturbances

    - Behavior may interfere with learning acquisition

  - Students in elementary grades

    - Early start

  - Students at low income/poverty levels

  - Recently internationally adopted school age children

WHY ARE THESE CHILDREN AT RISK?

- "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)

- If not explicitly taught the gap will simply keep widening and widening

EXPLICIT VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

- Steps to new vocabulary introduction

  - Say the word and ensure the students can pronounce it

  - Provide a dictionary definition and a "student-friendly" explanation

  - Give examples of the definition in a sentence

  - Have the students practice using the word with each other in sentences

INSTRUCTIONAL ROUTINE FOR VOCABULARY:

- Teach students how to figure out unfamiliar words based on context

- Context clues

  - A process that adults use automatically but requires explicit instruction at the elementary level

- As early as possible teach the students how to use parts of a word (and sentence) to determine its meaning

  - Greek and Latin roots of English for kids, how to locate the meaning of the word in early texts

    - Fancy Nancy series

- By 4th grade students need to learn how to use parts of a word (and sentence) to determine its meaning.

WORD LEARNING STRATEGIES:

- Teach students how to be efficient learners

- Spend some time on teaching students how to use:

  - Online Dictionary Resources

  - Glossary

  - Dictionary

  - Thesaurus

BARRIERS

- Glossaries are readily available in the back of a text and written at an appropriate reading level.

- Dictionaries and thesauruses are less convenient

  - Students have to scan through multiple pages to find the appropriate word

  - Students have to scan through multiple meanings to find one that is suitable

SOLUTION

- Teach children how to use online dictionaries/dictionary apps

  - Especially those designed for ESL learners

- Traditional dictionaries offer accuracy and brevity

- The goal of dictionaries for ESL learners is comprehension

WHAT TO DO FOR OLDER NON-READERS?

- Teach them reading via synthetic phonics

- Additionally, make a list of 6-7 grade-level core curriculum vocabulary words

    - May be taken from a familiar text already being implemented in the classroom in some way

    - Core (grade level) vocabulary lists

- It is best when the words are gathered thematically

    - All words selected on a particular topic such as holidays, seasonal, art museum, space station, arboretum

- Introduce the words in the context of a verbally presented story or paragraph with definitions embedded in text itself

    - "we are going to a planetarium, that is a museum about stars and planets"

- During reading ask student to define the words as s/he is listening to the story, then give further examples by using the novel vocabulary in sentences.

WHAT TO DO FOR OLDER NON-READERS? (CONT)

- Ask the student to use the newly learned word in a sentence.

- To ensure that the student remembers all new words he is learning, practice the words several times a week for about a month

  - Depends on the cognition, memory and motivation of a particular student

- Once you've ensured that the student understands all the words ask him/her to create a short verbal story using most of the newly learned words

  - Have him/her attempt to recreate the original story himself

- Create a new list of thematic words and start all over again

CONCLUSION:

- While it is not easy, it is still possible to create a vocabulary rich environment even for the most disadvantaged learners

  - Older non-readers

  - Developmentally disabled

  - Cognitively impaired

- Having the right tools for the job is just a small first step in the right direction on the way to a difficult but ultimately rewarding goal.

FREE RESOURCES

- Anita Archer Strategic Literacy Videos www.scoe.org/pub/htdocs/archer-videos.html
  - Free online videos showing strategic literacy instruction in grades K-8
- Little Explorers: Picture Dictionary
  - http://www.enchantedlearning.com/Dictionary.html
- Reading Comprehension Activities
  - https://www.resourceroom.net/Comprehension/
- Greek and Latin Roots Resources
  - http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Greek-Roots-PowerPoint-Flash-Cards-Part-1
  - http://www.readingrockets.org/article/40406/
  - https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Daily-Greek-RootsPrefixes-Suffixes-2284258

RELATED SMART SPEECH THERAPY RESOURCES:

- Understanding Complex Sentences

  - http://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/shop/understanding-complex-sentences/

- Narrative Assessments of Preschool and School Aged Children

  - http://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/shop/narrative-assessments-of-preschool-and-school-aged-children/

- Creating Functional Therapy Plan

  - http://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/shop/creating-a-functional-therapy-plan-therapy-goals-soap-note-documentation/

- Assessment Checklist for Preschool Children

  - http://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/shop/speech-language-assessment-checklist-for-a-preschool-child/

- Assessment Checklist for School Children

  - http://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/shop/speech-language-assessment-checklist-for-a-school-aged-child/

- Language Difference vs. Language Disorder: Assessment & Intervention Strategies for SLPs Working with Bilingual Children

  - http://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/shop/language-difference-vs-language-disorder-assessment-intervention-strategies-for-slps-working-with-bilingual-children/

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