

WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT TEACHING READING TO STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH?

CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS

How L1 (First Language or Home Language) and L2 (Second Language/Subsequent Languages) Readers Learn Vocabulary

Children learn most of their vocabulary indirectly through

- conversations with other people, but mainly with adults;
- listening to others read to them and talking about the text that was read aloud; and
- reading extensively on their own.

(Adler; 2001; Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA), 2001)

Problems with Learning Vocabulary for L2 Readers

Children may not have any adults who speak English in their environment.

Parents or adults may not read to them in English or their first language.

Parents or adults may not have time to speak with and read to them.

They may not have books in either their L1 or their L2.

As a result, they do not know the 5,000-7,000 words that their English speaking peers know before they begin formal instruction in reading, and they do not have the intuitive sense of English grammar that their peers have.

(Singer, 1981, cited in Grabe, 1991)

What Research Says: How Well Children Will Learn New Words

1. A good predictor of how well children will learn a new word is the number of times they encounter it.
2. The best predictor of how well children will learn a new word is the richness and diversity of meaningful contexts in which they encounter it.

(McKeown, Beck, Omanson, & Pople, 1985, pp. 522-535)

Teaching Vocabulary

Indirect Instruction

- Conversations with others
- Listening to others read
- Reading independently

Direct Instruction

Teach

- The new vocabulary needed for reading
- Important words, those key to understanding the text
- Useful words, those that will be used again and again
- Difficult words, those that have multiple means or those that may be difficult, such as idioms

Provide

- Instruction that actively involves students with the new vocabulary
- Opportunities for repeated involvement with the new vocabulary in numerous contexts

Teach word learning strategies

- How to use dictionaries
- How to use other reference aids
- How to use word parts

Affixes—prefixes and suffixes

Base words—words from which other words are formed, such as “use,” “useful,” “usefulness,” “unused,” and “reused.”

Root words—words from other languages that are the origin of many English words, such as “porter,” “transport,” “export,” and “import,” from the Latin root “port” meaning “to carry.”

- How to use context clues—clues provided in the words and sentences that surround the new word

Effective Instructional Strategies for Teaching Vocabulary to L1 Readers

- Explicit instructions, e.g., explanations of definitions, instruction about strategies to attack unknown words using prefixes or roots, or preteaching vocabulary before reading
- Implicit instructions, e.g., exposure to a wide range of reading materials

- **Multimedia methods, e.g., inclusion of semantic maps or other kinds of graphic displays**
- **Capacity methods, e.g., opportunities to practice reading to increase automaticity**
- **Association methods, e.g., opportunities for learners to make connections between what they know and the words they encounter that they don't know.**

(National Reading Panel, 2000)

Characteristics of Effective Vocabulary Instruction for L2 Readers

- **The vocabulary and language structures essential to understanding the text are the focus of instruction.**
- **Key vocabulary is contextualized through simple explanations, demonstrations, concrete experiences, realia, models, and graphic organizers.**
- **Key vocabulary is taught so it is pronounceable and repeatable and draws on students' knowledge of English sound-symbol relationships, spelling, morphology, word formation, and grammar.**
- **Synonyms, multiple meanings, and cognates are included as part of instruction.**
- **Vocabulary instruction includes "school language," e.g., predict, explain, classify, compare, and summarize.**

(Birch, 2000; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004)

Suggestions for Helping L2 Learners Learn Vocabulary

- **Select text that has a limited number of new words.**
- **Arrange for numerous opportunities for independent reading.**
- **Teach top-down strategies.**
- **Teach new vocabulary so that it is pronounceable, repeatable, and readily comprehended by teaching students to rely on their knowledge of one or more of the following: English letter-sound relationships, spelling affixes, word formation, and grammar.**
- **Teach students the different meanings of words.**
- **Teach students word recognition strategies.**
- **Teach students how to recognize words that should be learned productively (most words) and those that should be learned receptively (few words).**

(Birch, 2000)