Choosing Which Words to Teach

Three Tier Model of Vocabulary Words

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Beck, I.L., McKeown, M.G., & Kucan, L. (2002). Bringing words to life.New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Choosing Which Words to Teach

- Tier One
  - Most basic words
  - Rarely require instruction in school
  - Examples: clock, baby, happy

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Choosing Which Words to Teach

- Tier Two
  - Words that are of high frequency for mature language users and are found across a variety of domains
  - Instruction adds productivity to an individual's ability
  - Examples: coincidence, absurd, industrious

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Choosing Which Words to Teach

- Teach Tier Two Words
    - Roll they play in literacy
    - Characterize written text
    - Not so common in everyday language
    - Come from interaction with text

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- Tier Three
  - Words whose frequency of use is quite low and is often limited to specific domains
  - Best learned when needed in a content area
  - Examples: isotope, lathe, peninsula

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Choosing Which Words to Teach

- All Tier Two Words Are Not Equally Important
  - Determine the "mileage of a word"
    - How useful is the word in a person's vocabulary repertoire

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Choosing Which Words to Teach

- All Tier Two Words Are Not Equally Important
  - Example: potable and potent
    - Potable limited to situations and contexts in which there is something to drink
    - Potent found in many situations and contexts
      - Wind
      - Voice
      - Remedy
      - idea

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How Do You Select the Words for Explicit Instruction?

- Is the word interesting? Useful? Will it be in other texts?

- Can you define the word using vocabulary the students will understand?

- How does the word relate to other words that students are learning.

  – e.g., submerge

- Will the word help with the major understanding of the selection?

Steps to Consider When Choosing Tier Two Words

1. List all the words that are likely to be unfamiliar to students.

2. Analyze the word list:
   - Which words can be categorized as Tier Two words?
   - Which of the Tier Two words are most necessary for comprehension?
   - Are there other words needed for comprehension? Which ones?

Steps to Consider When Choosing Tier Two Words

3.On the basis of your analysis, which words will you teach?

- Which will need only brief attention?
- Which will you give more elaborate attention to?

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What about English Language Learners?

"There have been only four experimental studies conducted since 1980 examining the effectiveness of interventions designed to build vocabulary among language minority students learning English as a second language. The findings indicate that research-based strategies used with first-language learners are effective with second-language learners…"

(Calderon, August, Slavin, Duran, Madden, & Cheung, 2005, p. 117)

English Language Learners?

The lexical bar is a concept that can be used to characterize distinctions between everyday oral language and academic, literate language

(Corson, 1985, 1995).

English-Language Learners

Is it likely that English speaking five-year-olds know the meanings of these words in English?

- table
- mother
- beautiful
- run
- sleep

Is it likely that Spanish speaking five-year-olds know the meanings of these words in Spanish?

- table
- mother
- beautiful
- run
- sleep

English-Language Learners

- Word learning takes place when students engage in purposeful talk with others that embeds the target words and displays their uses (Corson,1995)

- Conversation and discussion are needed to provide the necessary elaboration to master rules of use of words across contexts (Kowal & Swain, 1994)

- Meaningful contexts must be provided for functional use of language along with opportunities for practice and application (Dutro & Moran, 2003)