

Preschool Vocabulary Development


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- Welcome!
- Very important work

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Purpose:

- Learn about why vocabulary size is important
- Learn about the process of vocabulary acquisition and types of words
- Learn how to promote vocabulary growth in preschool settings
- Foster commitment to the effort, work and sustained engagement necessary to increase vocabulary size

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How does a large vocabulary benefit development?

- Promotes social/emotional well-being
- Improves communication (receptive/expressive)
- Develops thinking and learning from experience
- Aids in the control of behavior
- Enhances school learning
- Helps reading comprehension

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Levels of word knowledge

No Knowledge	Have seen or heard	Recognize the meaning	Use in a sentence or talk.	Know multiple aspects	Know skills to learn it
bubble					
florid					

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Vocabulary learning like brushing your teeth

- Common everyday experience
- Regular repeated effort, takes attention
- Technique and knowledge required
- Benefits are cumulative
- Requires tools- brush, floss
- Get better at it with time

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ELLs- Two beautiful facts

- State of the art, optimal vocabulary development practices for English only are the same as those *absolutely necessary* for ELLs
 - Win- win situation
- Language acquisition processes essentially the same across languages
 - L1 a "filter" for L2

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English language learners

- More at risk than others for low vocabulary
- Effective caregiver engagement will call for primary language development for many
- Large primary language vocabulary beneficial to English vocabulary development
 - Already know concept, just need label
 - Higher level thinking when have rich primary language vocabulary


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Vocabulary age equivalents


Language	Kinder (5-06)	Grade 1 (6-06)	Grade 2 (7-06)
Hmong	2-04	3-10	5-07
Spanish	3-09	5-01	7-03
English	5-03	6-05	7-06

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How do children learn words?


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Word learning- simply

- Amount of talk
- Variety of talk
- TALK, TALK, TALK
 - adult input
 - child intake
 - child production
- Hear, associate, store, recognize ↔ use

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Landmark Hart & Risley study (1995)

- Amount of talk by parents at age 3 predicted language ability at age 9-10
- Number of different words used by parents at age 3 predicted language ability at age 9-10
 - Professional parents averaged 2,150 words per hour
 - Working-class averaged 1,250 words per hour
 - Welfare parents averaged 620 words per hour

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Word learning processes-not so simply

- Fast mapping (Carey, 1978)
 - Can learn with 1 exposure or hearing others use word
 - Initial word knowledge incomplete
- Object principles (Spelke, 1994; Shipley & Shepperson, 1990)
 - Pay attention to specific objects
 - Labeling, naming
- Theory of mind (Bloom, 2000)
 - Use social cues to figure out what others are referring to when they say a word
 - Social pragmatics (looking, pointing, showing)

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Fast-mapping

- Fast-mapping for younger and lower vocabulary
 - depth and polysemy for older and/or those with larger vocabularies
- Fast-mapping for preschool ELLs
- Production and use of the word helps consolidate word learning

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Object principles

- Children will be aided when they are helped to direct attention to and identify objects and exemplars that new words refer to
 - In fact they will be looking for and expecting these references
 - Gestures, pointing, gazing, showing, demonstrating
 - TPR- total physical response

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Theory of Mind

- Children have the knowledge that “word teachers” and “language models” use language initially in the context of real objects or ongoing activity and use more than just words to confer meaning
 - They will watch for and be expectant of social cues to help them acquire meaning

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Activating and building on word learning processes

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Activating and building on word learning processes

- Semantically contingent responses (respond to meaning)
- Social cues (looking, pointing, demonstrating, showing, acting)
- Complex/rarer words
- Expand on what the child says

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Practice: "Teacher I hurted myself!"

- Please write some examples of **Semantically contingent** responses
- Please write some examples of **Non contingent** responses
- Please identify **Social cues** (pragmatics) that you could use
- Please identify some **Rare/sophisticated** vocabulary words you could use in responding to this child's statement
- Please write some statements that **Expand/elaborate** what the child says.

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Use **Semantically contingent** responses

- "You hurt yourself?" May I see where you hurt yourself?"
- "How did you do it?"
- "What should we do for it? "
- "Let's go get the first aid kit so that we can fix it."

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Non contingent responses

- "I told you to be careful."
- "No- you hurt yourself."

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Use **Social cues** (Theory of mind)

- "Let's go get the first aid kit so that we can fix it." (point to where the kit is)
- "I'm looking (show looking) for the best thing to help you treat your injury. Here is a band-aid (show it), some gauze (show it) and some cream (show it)."

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Expand on what the child says

- "Here is some special cream."
"Here is some antiseptic ointment."
- Expansion:
"This ointment will kill any bad buggies (or bacteria). You don't want to get an infection. Infections will make your injury sore and red. Sometimes infections have yellow juice in them called "pus".


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Use more **complex/rarer** words


- "I'm looking (show looking) for the best thing to fix your owie".
treat your injury".
- "May I see it?"
"May I examine it?"
- "Here is some special cream."
"Here is some antiseptic ointment."

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Intentionality in Word Learning


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Word learning contexts

- Direct instruction that flexibly uses different instructional principles based on what is known about problem-solving strategies children use to learn different types of words
- Opportunity for incidental word learning based on what is known about problem-solving strategies children use to learn different types of words
- Both types of learning require teacher intentionality and specificity


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General vocabulary direct instruction principles

- Words carefully selected (generative, frequency/norms, complex/rare, content-related)
- Rich explanations of words using social cues and engaging activities
- Children say and actively use the word many times (production, with pronunciation accuracy)
- Use syntax appropriately
- Those with primary language can use it to ensure understanding the meaning
- Three E's: Excite, engage, expand


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Incidental activation of word learning processes


- Provide many words (simple, more complex)
- Use the word many times
- Clarify the referent or meaning of the word physically and/or verbally (social cues)
- Simplify syntax
- Provide for active language production and correct pronunciation

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Questions and comments

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Selecting Words

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Types of words

- Generative words for Basic communication (Ogden, 1932)
- Words frequently used in preschoolers talk at school and at home (based on research)
- Challenging, sophisticated, rare words
- Content/academic related words (storybooks, centers, activity contexts, instruction)

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Generative words for Basic English (Ogden)

- Generative words are those that can be used to maximize language and that can be used to learn other words
- 850 generative words (basic words)
 - 600 things (200 picturable),
 - 150 qualities (Nouns, operations, qualifiers, prepositions)

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Words frequently used in preschooler's talk (school and home)

- See words attached at the end of your packet
- These words might be especially useful to guide choice of words to be taught
 - Likely overlap with generative words
- Many of these words challenging to teach
- Choose 2 of these words and write how you could teach them. Share your ideas with others.

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Challenging/rare/sophisticated Words

- Words children need most help in learning
- Adult communication with “challenging talk” produces the strongest language
- A shift in vocabulary instruction to include these words is needed
- Meal time common words: bowl, spoon, knife, fork, cup,
- In a group of 3-4 come up with some more “Challenging, rare and sophisticated” words to use when talking about meal times

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Challenging/rare/sophisticated Words

- Offer children more challenging words when the goal is to stretch their vocabulary
- Make sure that teaching strategies are the richest and there is the most repetition, production and active use with these words


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Content-related words

- Words related to themes, topics, storybook meaning
- These words are those that are most centrally related to core meanings in themes, topics, or storybooks
- Use the storybook that you have to go through and select the most important “core meaning” words
- Write down a favorite theme that you use in your class and identify the “core meaning” words related to this theme


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Types of words summary


- Vocabulary development must target all types of words with teachers who are monitoring and aware of their selections:
 - Generative words
 - frequent/normative words
 - rare/challenging
 - classroom content words

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Classroom Activity Contexts for Learning Words

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Brown Bear teaches words!

- Brown bear, brown bear what do you see? You see a teacher talking to me!
- Brown bear, brown bear what do you see? You see me at a center talking to 3!
- Brown bear, brown bear what do you see? You see me hearing a story and still talking free!
- Brown bear, brown bear what do you see? You see me washing, walking and chanting fingerplays we!
- Brown bear, brown bear what do you see? You see me eating and talking more please!
- Brown bear, brown bear what do you see? Talking me, talking me, talking me!

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Classroom contexts

- Individual conversations (narrative)
- Storybook reading
- Centers
- Classroom routines
- Meal time

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Individual conversations

- Across cultures children use ***narratives*** as their basic way of talking about the world
 - Narrative is a basic, time sequence structure like a typical storybook
 - "What did you do with your family last night?"
 - "Once upon a time....."

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Individual conversations

- When individual conversations talk about the past or future, children are learning *decontextualized* language
 - This ability crucial for academic learning
 - This ability supports higher and more abstract thinking

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Conversations

- Limited in actual classrooms
- Less than 5% of time spent in individual conversations with children
- Hard for teachers
- How efficient is this process for input, intake and production?

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Center activities

- Centers specifically structured to promote language and vocabulary development are more effective than others not so designed
- All classroom centers should be intentionally and specifically structured to promote vocabulary acquisition

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Center characteristics

- Clearly identifiable and "bounded"
- Change frequently
- Integrated with specific learning purposes
- Have an adult present at them to use strategies to foster vocabulary development (expanding, social cues, semantically contingent, labeling, using narrative/decontextualized language, teaching rare/complex and generative words)
- Provide materials such as word cards, objects or pictures related to target words

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Storybook reading

- Interactive with lots of child language
- Teach words with direct explanation during or before reading
 - Vocabulary cards, carefully select words
- Repeated readings of story beneficial
- Pretend reading of storybooks
- Vocabulary words and/or storybooks in primary language for at home background knowledge building
- Story retelling, prediction

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One instructional approach

- Video tape of the story to build background knowledge
- Introduction of each vocabulary card
- Interactive storybook reading
- Realia kit activities
- Pretend "reading" individual copies of books
- Books taken home in either English or primary language before classroom instruction

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Classroom routines

- Accompany classroom routines with language and related demonstration
 - "Ok, now we will go wash our hands."
- Use transition times for nursery rhymes, songs, fingerplays
 - "Where is thumpkin?" is excellent for during hand washing

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Mealtime talk

- Mealtime talk is associated with enhanced vocabulary development (Dickinson & Tabors, 2000)
- Use of "rare words" particularly beneficial to vocabulary development
 - "bowl vs. "serving dish"
 - "spoon", "knife", "fork" vs. "utensils"
- Having routines set frees time for talk

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Questions and comments

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Engaging caregivers


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Engaging caregivers rationale

- Hart & Risley (1995) calculated that "Just to provide an average welfare child language experience equal to that of an average working class child would require 41 hours per week of out-of-home experiences as rich in words addressed to the child as that in an average professional home."

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Engaging caregivers

- Primary focus is to help caregivers increase the amount of talking that children are doing in the home
- Requires the use of primary language and helping caregivers understand the benefits of primary language
- Principle of identifying language resources/preferences in the home and building on them
- Principle of connecting home language experiences to classroom intentional vocabulary development practices

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Caregiver skill development

- Some means to help parents learn about and use the following 5 skills is needed (these skills are those associated with parenting of those whose children had the largest vocabularies)
 - Just talk (many words, and many kinds of words)
 - Be nice when talking (affirm rather than prohibit or criticize)
 - Tell children about things in the home, community
 - Give children choices in talking
 - Listen to what children say and show this by responding to them

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Engaging caregivers

- Find out what languages are used in the home and for what purposes
 - How?
- Find out when parents talk to their children
 - How?

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Engaging caregivers

- Communicate activities in a language that can be used by caregivers
 - Bilingual paraprofessionals
 - Bilingual caregivers from the classroom
 - Bilingual older children
- Provide materials in a language that can be used in the home
 - Primary language storybooks
 - Primary language newsletters

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Engaging caregivers

- Identify bilingual resource people that can be used to communicate in the primary languages you have in your settings
- Identify primary language resources that you have or need that children and their caregivers can use in their home

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Engaging caregivers

- Provide parents with a list of the focus vocabulary words that will be used in the classroom and have them use these words at home
 - Give ideas for specific activities that can be done with the words
 - Example: a game called "word finders" where the child gets a hug or praise for each time they use one of the target words

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Engaging caregivers

- Provide daily/weekly structured activities for parents to do at home
 - Link these activities with classroom activities
 - For example, if doing "Whistle for Willie" in the classroom, have parents take their children with them to the grocery store and label items as they shop
 - Bring in food containers from home and place in the related grocery store center


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Engaging caregivers in the classroom

- Plan for specific activities related to language development that parents can do in the classroom:
 - Storybook reading
 - Story dictation
 - Be the adult at one of the centers
 - Have individual conversations with children on the narrative topics that have been identified in your daily lesson plan

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Caregiver engagement research results

- Reading storybooks in primary language at home and classroom instruction each added to children's vocabulary acquisition.
- Parents selected primary language storybooks more than English storybooks
- It was possible to engage 80% of families in the primary language storybook reading program (Roberts, 2004)


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Engaging caregivers summary


- Build on family practices
- Use primary language as appropriate
- Help caregivers to know what kinds of language use in the homes will benefit vocabulary development
- Provide materials and resources
- Provide structured activities
- Engage caregivers in homes as well as classrooms in specific ways

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Questions and comments


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Sample Daily Lesson Plan form for vocabulary development

- Activities for centers:
 - Adult prompts _____
 - Speaking, writing and reading prompts _____
 - Activities to engage talking _____
 - Materials _____
- Storybook reading _____
 - Target vocabulary (book, generative, frequent/norms, rare) _____, _____, _____
 - Teaching strategies for words _____
 - Materials _____

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Sample daily lesson plan con't

- Primary language use and support
 - Caregivers _____
 - Buddies _____
 - Bilingual support staff _____
 - Activities _____
 - Materials _____
- Daily Classroom Target vocabulary (norms, generative, rare words, specific category) _____
- Individual conversations (checklist of children)
- Use of narrative/decontextualized language
 - Specific topics _____
- Caregiver/At home activity _____

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Clarifying some issues

- Preschool children with very low English can learn vocabulary from storybook reading
- Preschool children with very low English can engage in interactive storybook reading for 15-25 minutes (Roberts & Neal, 2004)
- Pronunciation matters (Roberts, 2005)
- Almost all children can be engaged in productive language right from the beginning

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Questions Raised

- How do children really learn words and how can knowledge of these processes be capitalized on in vocabulary instruction and classroom language use?
- Which words do we teach?
- How can caregivers be engaged to help with vocabulary learning?


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Training feedback

1. What did you find most helpful?
2. What did you find most challenging?
3. What would you like to know more about?
4. What more would you like to know about classroom practice?
5. What questions do you have on vocabulary acquisition and learning?


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Recommendation

- A comprehensive preschool to grade 6 vocabulary program that attends to systematically developing children's understanding of the different kinds of words needed for different cognitive purposes such as language development, reading comprehension and school learning is needed.

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Such a program would be:

- Developmentally sensitive by utilizing words in alignment with developmental norms for vocabulary development
- Draw on processes known to support learning of different types of words at different ages.

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Words to teach: A proposal

- 850 Basic English words (Ogden, 1932)
- +2640 basic reading vocabulary words
- + 50 instructional/metacognitive words
- =
- 3640 core vocabulary words
- 7 years of K-6 instruction
- 520 words a year/9 months of school=
- 58 words a month/4 weeks =
- **15 words per week to be learned**

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