

INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY LEARNING

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Annotation

This article reveals awesome examples of incidental learning of a child developing vocabulary. Students can acquire vocabulary incidentally by engaging in rich oral-language experiences at home and at school, listening to books read aloud to them, and reading widely on their own. Parents encourage their children by asking many questions and assist them to learn about things and ideas, when they come to school with oral vocabularies many times larger than children from disadvantaged homes.

Keywords: incidental, background, inadequate, language drawbacks.

Introduction

It is known that children acquire vocabulary indirectly, first of all by listening when others speak or to read to them and by using words to talk to others. When children start reading and writing, they acquire more words through understanding what they are reading and then incorporate those words into their speaking and writing.

The way of usage of vocabulary varies greatly among learners. Knowledge gap between groups of children may be observed when children start schooling.

There might be noticed that some students have a richer, fuller vocabulary whereas some of their classmates don't.

- Language rich home with lots of verbal stimulation
- Wide background experiences
- Read to at home and at school
- Read a lot independently
- Early development of word consciousness

For some students who have a limited, inadequate vocabulary compared to most of their classmates due to lack of the following language drawbacks.

- Speaking/vocabulary not encouraged at home
- Limited experiences outside of home
- Limited exposure to books
- Reluctant reader
- Second language—English language learners

If children have been encouraged by parents to ask many questions and to learn about things and ideas, they will come to school with oral vocabularies many times larger than children from disadvantaged homes. Without intervention this gap grows ever larger as students proceed through school (Hart and Risley, 1995).

Scientific research show that we know that vocabulary supports reading development and increases comprehension skill. Students who are with low vocabulary scores tend to have low

comprehension and students with satisfactory or high vocabulary scores tend to have satisfactory or high comprehension scores.

The report of the National Reading Panel states that the complex process of comprehension is critical to the development of children's reading skills and cannot be understood without a clear understanding of the role that vocabulary development and instruction play in understanding what is read (NRP, 2000).

Vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in almost all areas of language learning. As Nation (2001) points out, "vocabulary learning is not a goal in itself; it is done to help learners listen, speak, read, or write more effectively" (p. 362). As a result, learning a language is dependent on learning its vocabulary.

Furthermore, to improve incidental vocabulary-learning in the EFL classroom, it would be effective for teachers to provide students with target vocabulary items through tasks, as well as to ask them to verbalize the target words. For example, students can read and retell a text generatively, that is, in their own words (Joe, 1998). Also, in order to learn unknown words while reading a text, students can access a dictionary with various look-up options such as pictorial and verbal cues (Laufer and Hill, 2000). Retelling orally or verbalizing what we have read greatly improves vocabulary gains for unfamiliar words because it demands a higher level of generation. Such a task can also be designed for different situations (Joe, 1998).

A good example of incidental learning is when a child finds a bug outside (or sometimes inside!) At that point, you can ask the child how many legs it has, or something similar. Ask them to identify antennae, legs, eyes, color and size. You could also ask them what kind of home it might live in or what it might eat. How do we close the gap for students who have limited or inadequate vocabularies? The National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that there is no single research-based method for developing vocabulary and closing the gap. From its analysis, the panel recommended using a variety of indirect (incidental) and direct (intentional) methods of vocabulary instruction. Students can acquire vocabulary incidentally by engaging in rich oral-language experiences at home and at school, listening to books read aloud to them, and reading widely on their own. Researchers have mentioned a variety of definitions of intentional vocabulary learning so far. Some researchers such as Hulstijn (2003) defined it as a way of learning in which the learner is informed and knows what he/she is going to learn. In other words, the tasks are completed based on the target vocabulary. From mid-childhood onward, children learn hundreds of new words every year incidentally through reading. Yet little is known about this process and the circumstances in which vocabulary acquisition is maximized. Their results showed that incidental vocabulary learning from reading occurred at several levels and the gain scores depended on the test type, but not much new vocabulary was learned. Drawing on the review of literature, it has been found that the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategies by learners are using a bilingual dictionary, verbal and written repetition, studying the spelling, guessing from context, and asking classmates for meaning (Schmitt, 1997. (1997)

1. Focus on rich meanings, not just dictionary definitions. ...
2. Emphasize the connections among words. ...
3. Promote usage of the words. ...
4. Review is important.

5. Involve students in identifying some of the words to be studied.

Set up an interesting environment for a child – for example, a play area with favourite objects and/or activities. Restrict access to an interesting object in some way – for example, by putting it in a place that's visible but out of reach. Wait for the child to ask for the object or make a gesture like pointing. Direct vocabulary learning refers to students learning vocabulary through explicit instruction in both individual words and word-learning strategies. Direct vocabulary instruction aids in reading comprehension.

Most students acquire vocabulary incidentally through indirect exposure to words at home and at school—by listening and talking, by listening to books read aloud to them, and by reading widely on their own.

Comprehension, or extracting meaning from what you read, is the ultimate goal of reading. Experienced readers take this for granted and may not appreciate the reading comprehension skills required. The process of comprehension is both interactive and strategic. Rather than passively reading text, readers must analyze it, internalize it and make it their own.

In order to read with comprehension, developing readers must be able to read with some proficiency and then receive explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies (Tierney, 1982).

The process of comprehending text begins before children can read, when someone reads a picture book to them. They listen to the words, see the pictures in the book, and may start to associate the words on the page with the words they are hearing and the ideas they represent.

In order to learn comprehension strategies, students need modeling, practice, and feedback. The key comprehension strategies are described below.

When students preview text, they tap into what they already know that will help them to understand the text they are about to read. This provides a framework for any new information they read.

When students make predictions about the text they are about to read, it sets up expectations based on their prior knowledge about similar topics. As they read, they may mentally revise their prediction as they gain more information.

Identifying the main idea and summarizing requires that students determine what is important and then put it in their own words. Implicit in this process is trying to understand the author's purpose in writing the text.

Asking and answering questions about text is another strategy that helps students focus on the meaning of text. Teachers can help by modeling both the process of asking good questions and strategies for finding the answers in the text.

In order to make inferences about something that is not explicitly stated in the text, students must learn to draw on prior knowledge and recognize clues in the text itself.

Studies have shown that students who visualize while reading have better recall than those who do not (Pressley, 1977). Readers can take advantage of illustrations that are embedded in the text or create their own mental images or drawings when reading text without illustrations.

Use the techniques contained in this article to maximize your acquisition of new words and broaden your understanding of the world in which we live. Students can acquire vocabulary incidentally by engaging in rich oral-language experiences at home and at school, listening to books read aloud to them, and reading widely on their own.

Expository text is typically structured with visual cues such as headings and subheadings that provide clear cues as to the structure of the information. The first sentence in a paragraph is also typically a topic sentence that clearly states what the paragraph is about.

Expository text also often uses one of five common text structures as an organizing principle:

- Cause and effect
- Problem and solution
- Compare and contrast
- Description
- Time order (sequence of events, actions, or steps)

Visualization, or visual imagery, is another very important comprehension tool that students need to learn and use independently in order to enhance their vocabulary knowledge. When students form pictures in their minds of what they read, they are better able to remember and understand words and texts (Gambrell and Jawitz, 1993).

Visualization is one way which can empower the students while they encounter with unknown words and can help students successfully achieve comprehension of the text. This is because it is a skill that improves their visual imagery; it is a realistic tool to help them learn vocabulary and comprehend text (Gambrell and Jawitz, 1993). Some research suggests that major differences between students who are efficient at comprehending and those who are not is that the former are better able to develop visualizations during the reading process. Seeing the author's message being processed or presented through words, seeing 'the movie,' increases students' abilities to make connections, inferences, predictions, and commit their sense to memory for recall (Ekwall and Shanker, 1998).

Sometimes a word's natural context (in text or literature) is not informative or helpful for deriving word meanings (Beck et al., 2013). It is useful to intentionally create and develop instructional contexts that provide strong clues to a word's meaning. These are usually created by teachers, but they can sometimes be found in commercial reading programs.

and easy-to-understand explanations are introduced in context, knowledge of those words increases (Biemiller and Boote, 2006) and word meanings are better learned (Stahl and Fairbanks, 1986). When an unfamiliar word is likely to affect comprehension, the most effective time to introduce the word's meaning may be at the moment the word is met in the text.

Research by Nagy and Scott (2000) showed that students use contextual analysis to infer the meaning of a word by looking closely at surrounding text. Since students encounter such an enormous number of words as they read, some researchers believe that even a small improvement in the ability to use context clues has the potential to produce substantial, long-term vocabulary growth (Nagy, Herman, and Anderson, 1985; Nagy, Anderson, and Herman, 1987; Swanborn and de Glopper, 1999).

For many students, it is easier to remember a word's meaning by making a quick sketch that connects the word to something personally meaningful to the student. The student applies each target word to a new, familiar context. The student does not have to spend a lot of time making a great drawing. The important thing is that the sketch makes sense and helps the student connect with the meaning of the word.

Applying the target words provides another context for learning word meanings. When students are challenged to apply the target words to their own experiences, they have another opportunity to understand the meaning of each word at a personal level. This allows for deep processing of the meaning of each word. The ability to analyze word parts also helps when students are faced with unknown vocabulary. If students know the meanings of root words and affixes, they are more likely to understand a word containing these word parts. Explicit instruction in word parts includes teaching meanings of word parts and disassembling and reassembling words to derive meaning (Baumann et al., 2002; Baumann, Edwards, Boland, Olejnik, and Kame'enui, 2003; Graves, 2004).

Word consciousness is an interest in and awareness of words (Anderson and Nagy, 1992; Graves and Watts-Taffe, 2002). Students who are word conscious are aware of the words around them—those they read and hear and those they write and speak (Graves and Watts-Taffe, 2002). Word-conscious students use words skillfully. They are aware of the subtleties of word meaning. They are curious about language, and they enjoy playing with words and investigating the origins and histories of words.

Teachers need to take word-consciousness into account throughout their instructional day—not just during vocabulary lessons (Scott and Nagy, 2004). It is important to build a classroom “rich in words” (Beck et al., 2002). Students should have access to resources such as dictionaries, thesauruses, word walls, crossword puzzles, Scrabble® and other word games, literature, poetry books, joke books, and word-play activities.

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