

# Vocabulary!

## Valid, Viable, and Vigorous Instruction

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- Young children whose socio-economic status is lower know half the number of words as same-age children whose socio-economic status is higher. (Graves, Brunetti, & Slater, 1982; Graves & Slater, 1987 as cited in Beck et al, 2013)
- Once a young child's vocabulary is established, it remains consistent. (Biemiller, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1995; Juel, Biancarosa, Coker, and Deffes, 2003)

## Research Says \$ Matters

### Students who struggle...

- May know something is wrong but not be able to correct it.
- May struggle to find alternative language.  
(McCutchen, *Writing Research*, 2006)

Remember! To understand a piece of text, students must know the meanings of 90-95% of the words on the page.

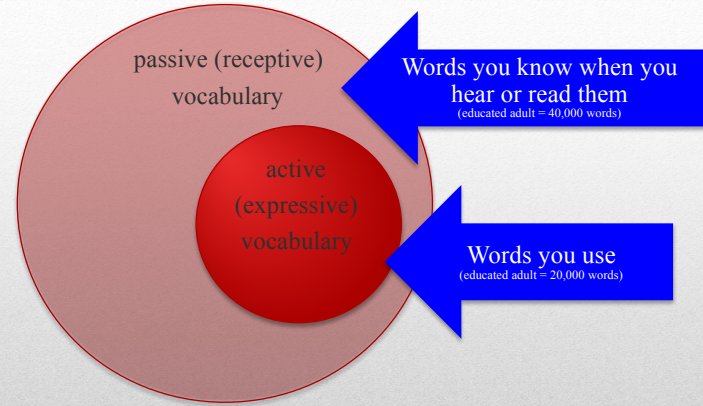
## Usage

Vocabulary has a greater impact on reading comprehension than any other measurable factor.

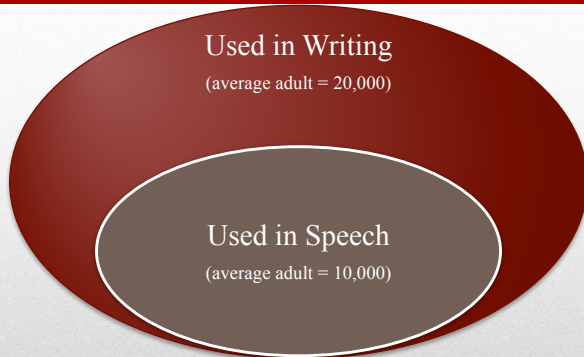
## Vocabulary to Comprehension

# FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

What do we need to learn?



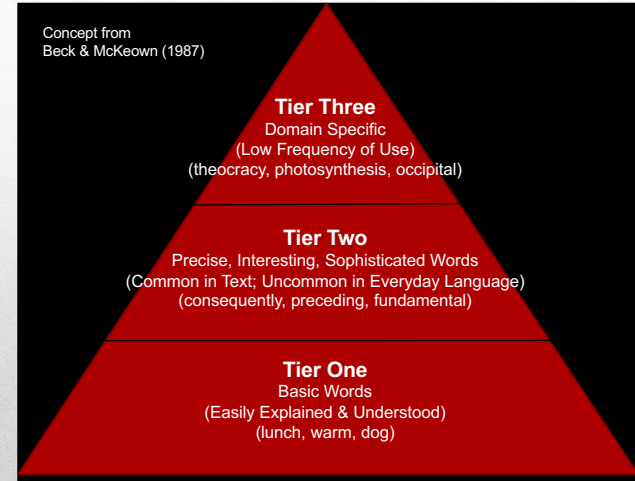
## Passive & Active Vocabulary



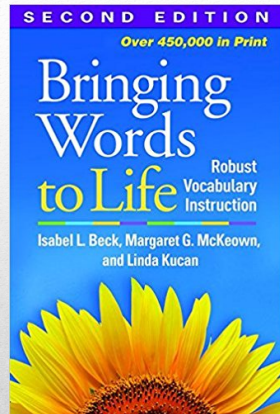
OED lists 175,000 words in current use; if you take into account all senses of these words, the count is closer 750,000 words.

## Vocabulary for Writing & Speaking

Concept from Beck & McKeown (1987)



If you haven't read *Bringing Words to Life*, you need to. This book will change how you *think about* vocabulary. More importantly, it will change how you *teach* it.



Beck et al (2013) suggest that you need 15,000 word *families* to be competent.

- You get 8000 from common speech (Tier One).
- That leaves 7000 word families to learn.

## What You Need

Younger students...

- Read-alouds, rather than books they are reading.
- 6-10 words a week, but not introduced all at the same time. (Beck et al, 2013)

Older students...

- 10 words a week, but not introduced all at the same time.
- 10 exposures each. (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986)

## How to Choose...

Ask yourself...

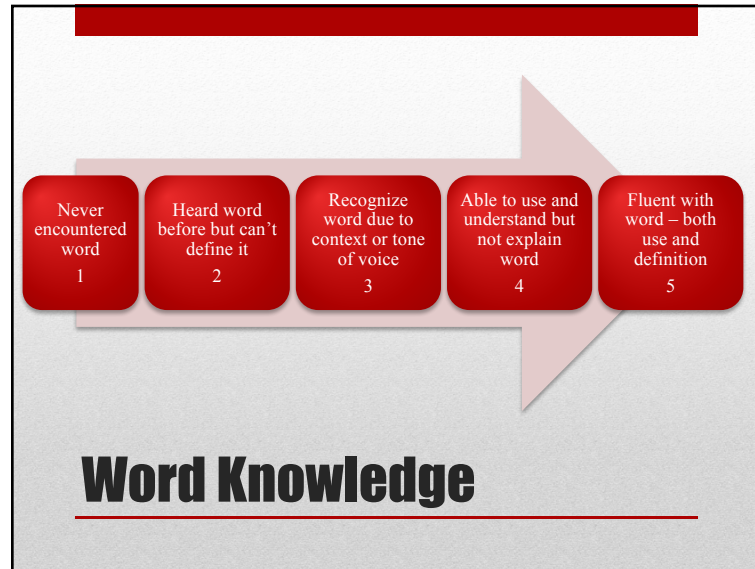
- ✓ Is it useful?
- ✓ Is it conceptually relevant/understandable?
- ✓ Is it rich?

## How to Choose...

## INITIAL DISCOVERY

Strategies to begin instruction

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**versatile** – capable of or adapted for turning easily from one to another of various tasks, fields of endeavor, etc.  
(dictionary.com – extracted 5/18)

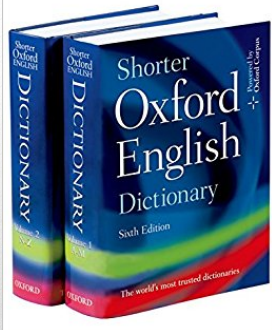
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~~**versatile** – capable of or adapted for turning easily from one to another of various tasks, fields of endeavor, etc.~~  
(dictionary.com – extracted 5/18)

*Wait a minute.*  
*Couldn't you just say **flexible**?*

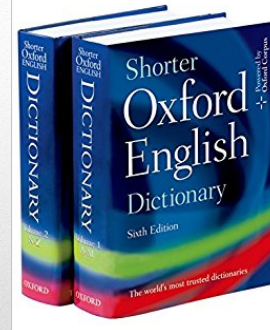
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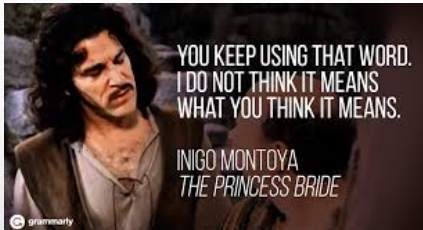
Traditional dictionaries and most basal readers do not provide accessible, useful definitions.

No research indicates a positive effect from looking words up in a traditional dictionary.



Further, knowing a definition doesn't mean knowing a word.

Knowing a word means knowing how it functions with other words and how you can use it (and how you can't).

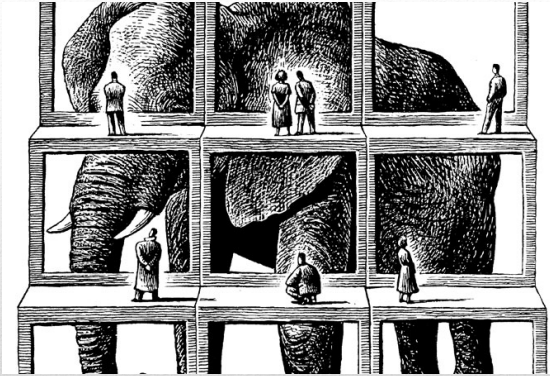


Don't ask...  
"What do you think \_\_\_\_\_ means?"



## CONTEXT MATTERS

But...



Yes, context matters...but direct instruction has a much stronger effect.

## Often...

- meaning is not evident or obvious from the surrounding text.
- students who struggle most with vocabulary also struggle with word decoding and therefore may be unable to discern context even when provided.
- even when context is provided and understood, students may not retain meaning for other contexts.

## Context Problems

- pioneer
- segregation
- climber

## Context Problems



Yes, wide reading is important, but...

The students most in need of vocabulary growth are unlikely to read widely...and to read widely in content needed.

Wide reading benefits students when...

- they read a lot.
- they read difficult enough text.
- they have the skills to infer word meaning.

Teach

?

Recall

## The Missing Link

*Concept from Shirley Kokesh*

Teach

Recognize

Recall

## The Missing Link

Teach...

**versatile** – *flexible*

*What should I say to clarify?*



**Recognize...**

1. adversary
  2. brandish
  3. diminish
  4. ominous
  5. versatile
  6. vigilant
- 

**Recall.**

What does **versatile** mean?

**Apply.**

Explain when you could use **versatile**.  
Use **versatile** in a sentence that shows its meaning.

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*Examples of usage errors from a 9<sup>th</sup> grader's work:*

- The funeral was full of **solace** after the coffin was buried into the ground.
- I took a long **strode** to second base, so that I would not get out.
- I have been told I have many **droll** personalities that no one has ever seen.

- 63% of students' sentences were judged to be "odd" (Miller & Gildea, 1985).
  - 60% of students' sentences were judged unacceptable (McKeown, 1991, 93).
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## Create a context for student sentences.

My boss acted maliciously when...

The protagonist sought revenge because...

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**catastrophe** – sudden and widespread disaster  
(dictionary.com – extracted 5/18)

Wait a minute. Couldn't you just say *disaster*? Or *major disaster*?

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**catastrophe**  
*major disaster*

Students and teacher...

- Pronounce it.
  - Write it.
  - Read it.
  - Discuss it.
- 

**catastrophe**  
*major disaster*

Why wasn't spelling on the list?

- Spelling words should be words students frequently and readily use in their writing.
  - Vocabulary words do NOT make good spelling words.
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**catastrophe**  
*major disaster*

- ✓ Teacher provides examples *interactively*.
- ✓ Students generate additional examples.
- ✓ Teacher uses it in sentences *interactively*.
- ✓ Students use it in a sentence.

Application continues throughout the week, the year, and the decade, ideally in multiple contexts.

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# MORPHOLOGY

Understanding & Teaching Meaning Families

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How would you teach a student to spell...

1. two
  2. inspiration
  3. does
- 

## Morphology

prefixes – change meaning of base

bases – core meaning in word  
**teach**

suffixes – determine number, tense, part of speech

teach  
teacher  
teachers  
teaching  
reteach  
unteachable  
misteach  
teachings

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## Morphology: Suffixes

Can determine number, tense, part of speech

- derivational (e.g., -able, -ive, -ize, -ous)  
danger to dangerous
  - inflectional (e.g., -ed, -er, -ing)  
jump to jumped or jumper
-

## Morphology: Suffixes

Can determine number, tense, part of speech

- number: bills (-s marks a plural)
- part of speech: dangerous (-ous marks an adjective)
- tense: landed (-ed marks past tense)

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Impactful Instruction

Memorize? NO.

Learn? NO.

Own? YES.

- Alter the definition each time...so they understand rather than memorize. (Beck et al, 2013, 85)

feast (n.)

- a large meal
- a big dinner party
- a special meal with lots of good food



- Associate new words with familiar words, not just in meaning but in context.

### dawn (n.)

- *user-friendly definition:*  
first time you see light before the sun rises
- *associated words:*  
morning, sun, walk, first light, beauty, jog

- Keep a vocabulary journal, and continue to develop definitions.

- Intensify instruction.

- Assess at 2 levels. (Matching and then something deeper)

A robust approach to vocabulary involves directly explaining the meanings of words along with thought-provoking, playful, and interactive follow-up.

(Beck et al, 2013)

Some sources for meaning...

Onelook

Cobuild

Longman Dictionaries

Visual Thesaurus.com

Vocabulary.com

## References & Tools

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