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| **Why do we need to improve children’s vocabulary?**Once a child has acquired language, their thinking is transformed forever. (Vygotsky 1962, 1978) Research shows the helping children develop better oral language skills can help them become better at reasoning and learning, both together and on their own.  Vocabulary matters   * Vocabulary knowledge plays a central role in reading comprehension. * As a pupil progresses through schools, they need to be adding at least 3,000 new words to their vocabulary per year if they are to keep up with the increasingly challenging requirements of academic texts. * Much of our vocabulary acquisition happens incidentally; through ***oral interactions, through being read to and through independent reading.*** | |  |  | **Step 3: Show**  ***This is the bit that really deepens understanding and quickly highlights which children haven’t really understood.***   * Ask children to quickly draw a picture, symbol or graphic to represent the word. * Ask them to explain what they have drawn and why.   **Step 4: Discuss**   * Ask children to compare the words to others. Children to think about synonyms or antonyms. If none exist, go for the terms “similar” or “different”. * Ask children to devise metaphors or analogies for the word. E.g. melancholy “Melancholy is a tear running slowly down your cheek.” This will be tricky at first.   **Step 5: Refine and Reflect**   * Children go back to their vocabulary notebook and look at their original notes about the word. * Children decide if they want to make any changes. * Encourage children to share any changes and explain why they made the changes.   **Step 6: Play!**   * By now, the children should have a good understanding of the new word. |
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| **How can we improve children’s vocabulary?**  ***Bedrock Teaching Sequence for new vocabulary***  ***The word to be taught needs to be carefully selected (word list or from current novel study/theme) and the lesson prepared.***  **Step 1: Explain**   * Provide a description, explanation or a sentence based example of the new word, in language the pupils will understand. Provide examples from their own lives. * It must not be a definition. Research has shown that when pupils learn a teacher’s definition of a word, learning is less effective. * Ensure you refer to the word class so that pupils understand usage rules, such as noun, verb or adjective. * Give examples of the word used in different tenses, if appropriate. * No recording is required at this stage.   **Step 2: Restate**   * Ask the pupils (in pairs or in a group) to explain to each other what the word means and create examples of the word in use. * Take feedback and correct where necessary.   Ask pupils to make a note of **their understanding** of the word. | |  |  | Research behind the Bedrock teaching steps  **The Early Catastrophe**   * Hart & Risley (2003): By the age of 4, a child from a ‘welfare’ family is exposed to 30 million fewer words than a child from a ‘professional’ family. Further, between 86 and 98% of words in a child’s vocabulary are also found in their parents’ vocabulary * Similarly, in the UK, The Millennium Cohort Study found that by the age of 5, children from low income households were over a year behind in vocabulary compared with children from high income households. * Research suggests that to understand any written text, we have to know the meaning of 90-95% of the words used. * **The language poor gets poorer, whilst the language rich gets richer**. |
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| **Acquiring new vocabulary**   * It has been estimated that pupils acquire around 3,000 to 5,000 new words each academic year. The vast majority is learned incidentally, through wider reading and verbal interactions. * However, there are many obstacles that could prevent a child from developing enough vocabulary through incidental learning to be successful at school.   **1. Reticent readers:**   * A keen and successful reader who reads for 20 minutes a day will encounter 2 million words a year. * A reticent reader who reads for less than a minute a day will encounter just 8000.   **2. Children who enter school with limited vocabulary:**   * The gap that already exists when they start school becomes increasingly significant throughout schooling, as the factors that prevented language acquisition in the first place continue to have an impact.   **3. Additional reading or learning needs:**   * Weakness in phonemic awareness, phonics and lack of fluency make reading more difficult and picking up language incidentally much less likely. * The gap that already exists between stronger and weaker readers continues to grow. |  | |  | **4. EAL learners:**  These pupils need extra support to bridge the gap.   * Research (Nagy 1980, Beck, McKeown et al 2002) suggests a student learns around 3000 new words every academic year. Beck et al assert that this figure relies heavily on wider reading and less than 10% of these words are explicitly taught.   ***For reticent readers, this approach is simply not good enough.***  Consider this  A child with a weak vocabulary will probably comprehend no more than 1000 words. If you teach them and they learn 300 words a year then you have increased their vocabulary by 30%. |
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