

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

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Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

1. Why focus on vocabulary? What the research evidence suggests.
2. Practical strategies.
3. Remote Teaching
4. Questions.



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Why focus on explicit vocabulary instruction?



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Reading comprehension strategies

Moderate impact for very low cost, based on extensive evidence.



Oral language interventions

Moderate impact for very low cost, based on extensive evidence.



Ranked third in the EEF toolkit as having a positive impact (after metacognition and feedback).

Reading comprehension approaches appear to be more effective than phonics or oral language approaches for upper primary and secondary students.

However, the research shows that all students benefit from oral language interventions, and some studies show slightly larger effects for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (up to six months' benefit).



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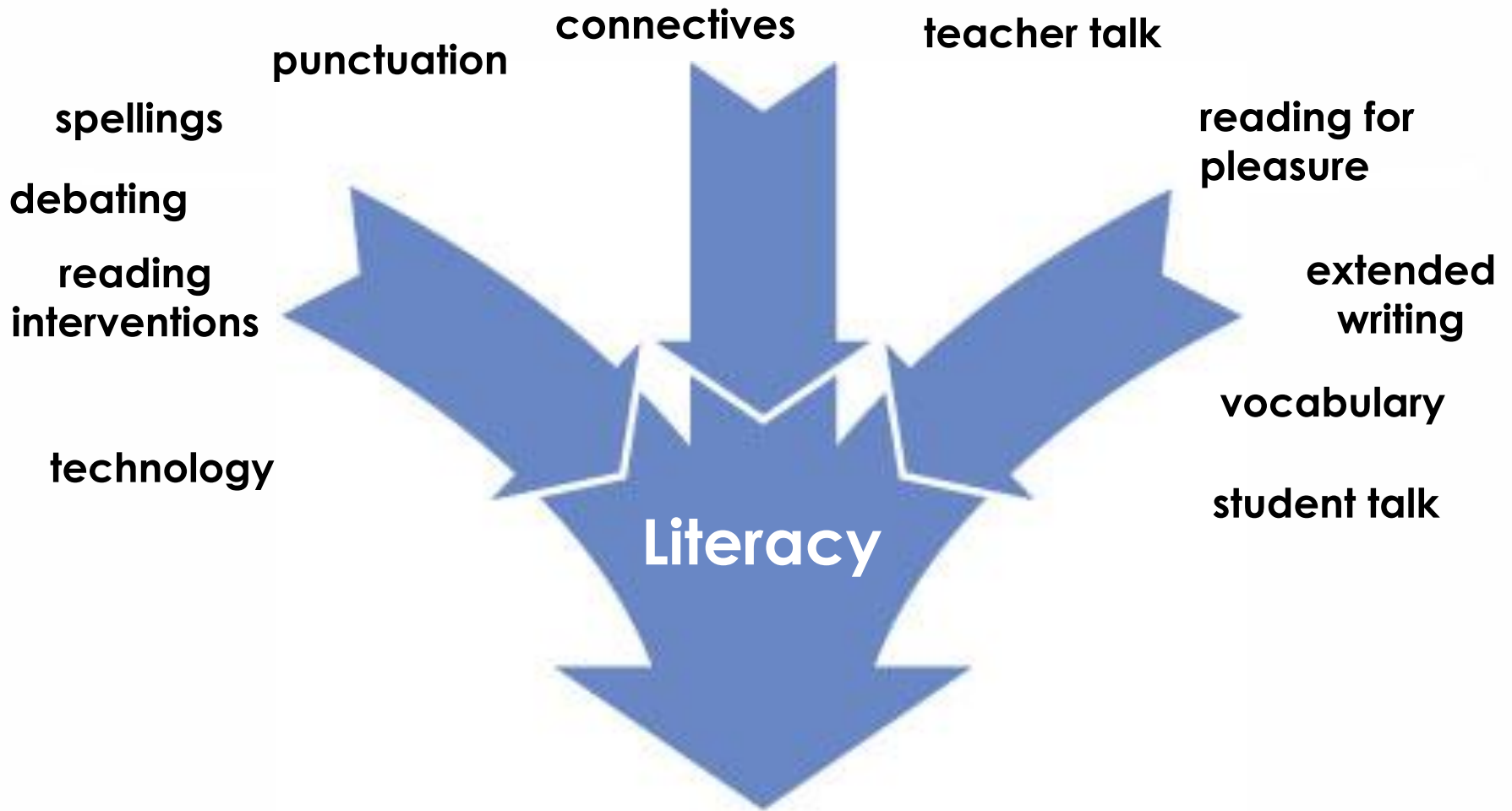
What are oral language interventions?

- Oral language interventions emphasise the importance of spoken language and verbal interaction in the classroom.
- Oral language approaches include:
 - Targeted reading aloud and discussing books with young children (Lemov also advocates this for older students).
 - **Explicitly extending pupils' spoken vocabulary**
 - The use of structured questioning to develop reading comprehension



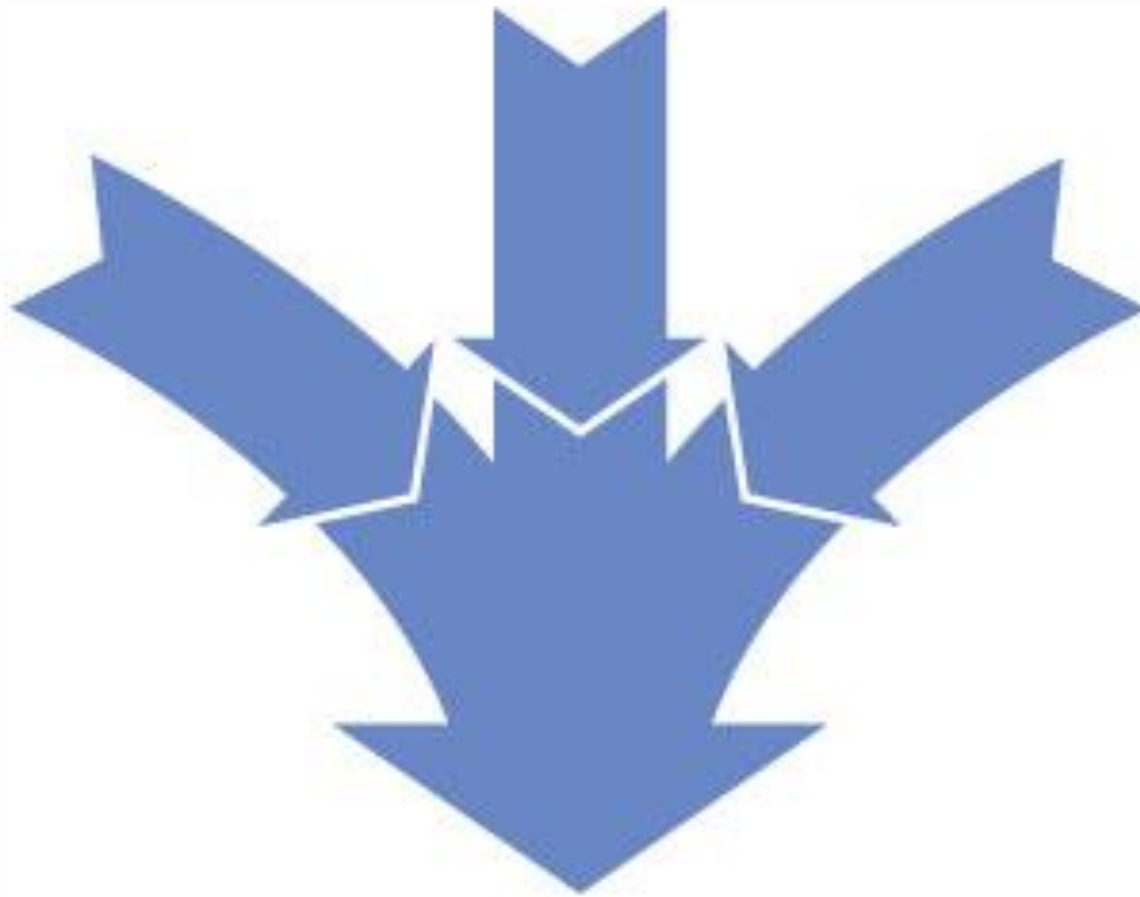
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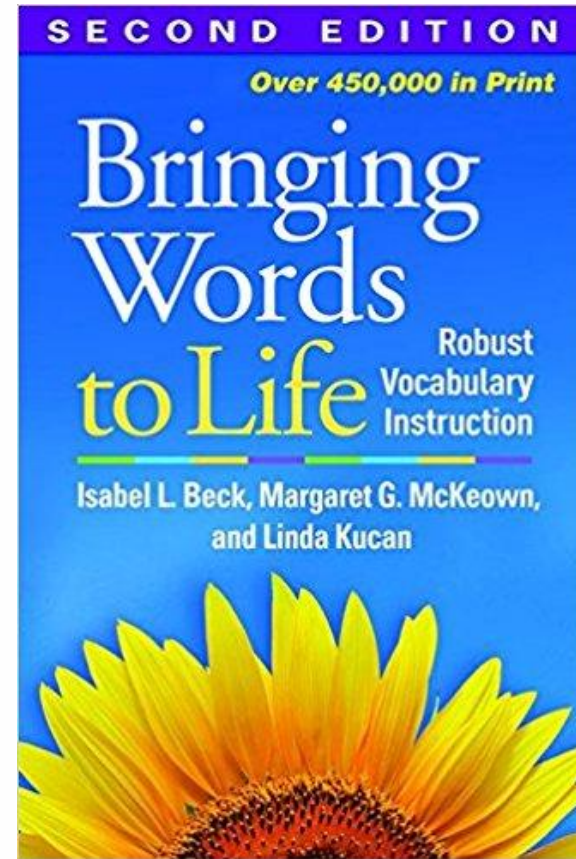
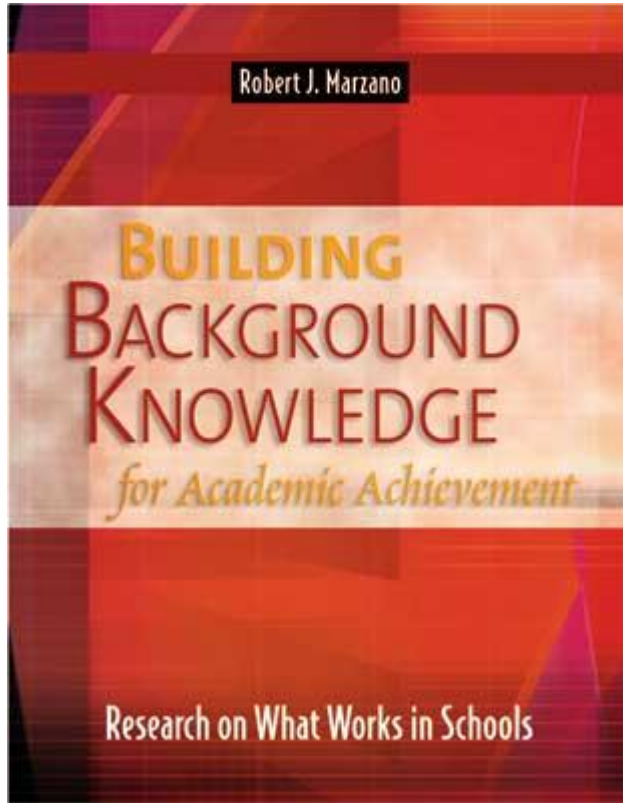
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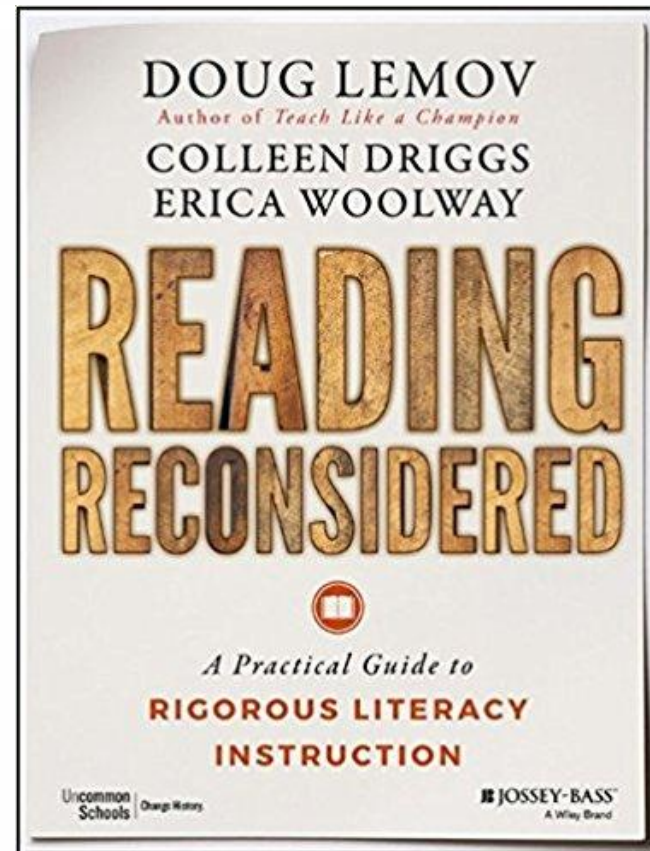
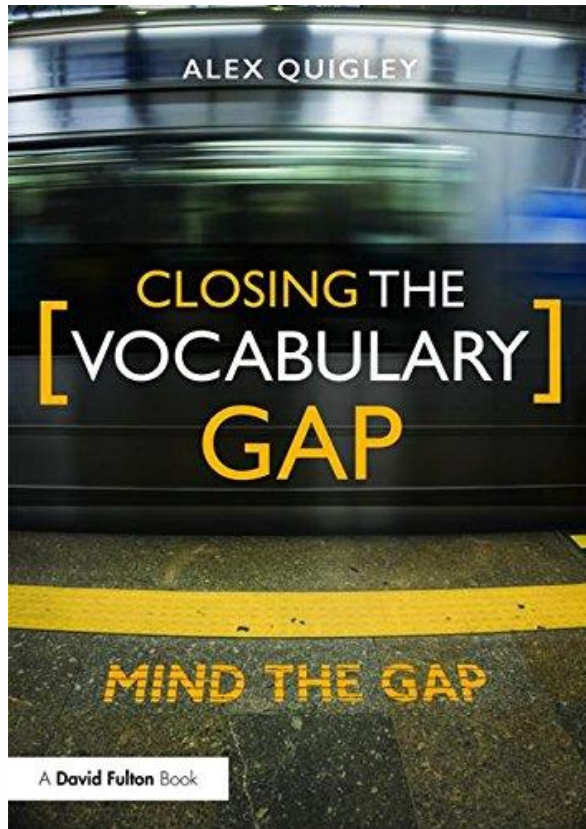
The Research Evidence



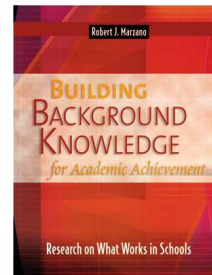
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Books Written for Teachers and Teaching Staff



Marzano



- What students already know about the content is one of the strongest indicators of how well they will learn information relative to the content. This is **background knowledge**.
- Students who have a great deal of background knowledge in a given subject area are likely to learn new information readily and quite well. The converse is also true.

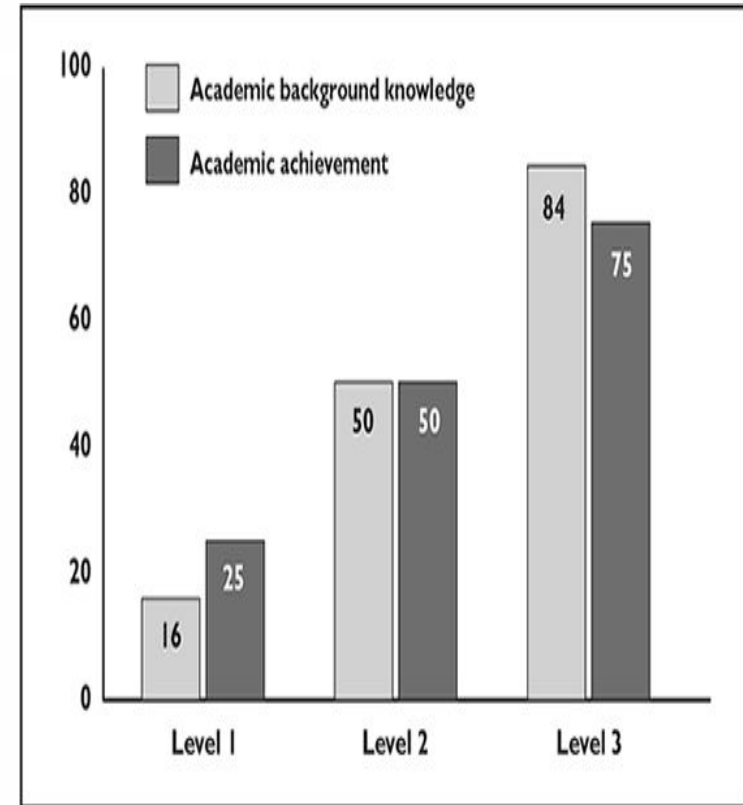


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Imagine a student, Sarah.

- Achievement is in 50th percentile
- If you increase her background knowledge by one standard deviation she will move to the 75 percentile for achievement
- Likewise, if you decrease Sarah's background knowledge by one standard deviation her achievement would be expected to drop to the 25 percentile.



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Academic Background Knowledge

- There are strong links between academic success and social and occupational success
- The qualifier *academic* is important. Marzano gives the example of two students with equal amounts of background knowledge, but one is about public transport and one is about traditional school subjects. The latter is the one that has an impact of life outcomes.



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Storing the Background Knowledge



1. **Fluid intelligence:** innate intelligence. How well we can process and store information.

Imagine a visit to a museum. A student with high fluid intelligence will process more than one with lower fluid intelligence, although the experience was the same.

2. **Number of academically orientated experiences.** More experiences equals more opportunity to process and store knowledge from those experiences.

Imagine a student who visits a museum once a week compared to student who visits a museum five times a week. The second student has four times the opportunity to develop academic background knowledge.



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Allen:
Lots of experience + high fluid intelligence = greatest knowledge

Calvin:
Lower fluid intelligence + lots of experience = greater knowledge

Barbara:
High fluid intelligence + fewer experiences = greater knowledge

Delbert, Gina and Iris are worst off.

Delbert:
High fluid intelligence + few experiences = moderate knowledge

Gina
Average fluid intelligence + limited experience = limited knowledge

Iris
low fluid intelligence + limited experience = very limited knowledge.

The darker the box, the greater the student's academic background knowledge.

		Access to Academically Oriented Experiences		
		Low	Medium	High
Information-Processing Ability	High	Delbert	Barbara	Allen
	Medium	Gina	Ethan	Calvin
	Low	Iris	Hilda	Frank



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Who are Delbert, Gina and Iris?

- Robust, lengthy research shows, for various reasons, that Delbert, Gina and Iris are children from low-income families.



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What can schools do?



- Most straightforward solution is for schools to provide more academically enriching experiences (direct experiences). However, these are logistically difficult
- Marzano advocates **indirect approaches**
- We have to start with an understanding that background knowledge is stored as packets



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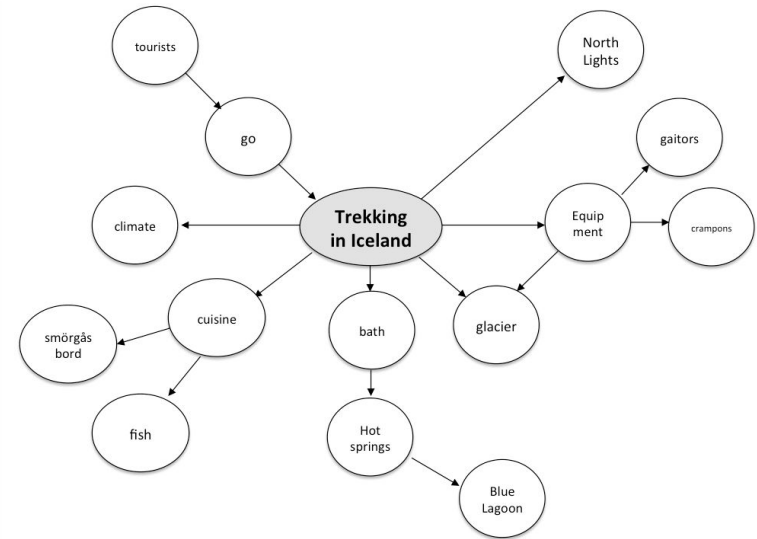


Background knowledge as packets

Example:

- Inner city child goes on a camping trip.
- Trip starts as a narrative where the child describes what happened – this is surface level.
- Over time, the descriptions become less anchored to a specific event and describe general forms instead. For example, “I slept outside in the forest” becomes ‘during camping trips you sleep outside, for example in a forest’.
- This is **episodic to semantic**.

Representation of de-contextualised propositional network



Semantic knowledge is when the student’s understanding has expanded beyond a real or imagined experience to a concept.



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What's in a Word?

- 'The research and theory strongly suggest that teaching vocabulary knowledge is synonymous with teaching background knowledge'.
- A word is the label associated with a packet of knowledge stored in permanent memory
- Consequently, the more academic words we know, the more packets of knowledge, and, hence, the more academic background knowledge we have stored.



Marzano: Summary

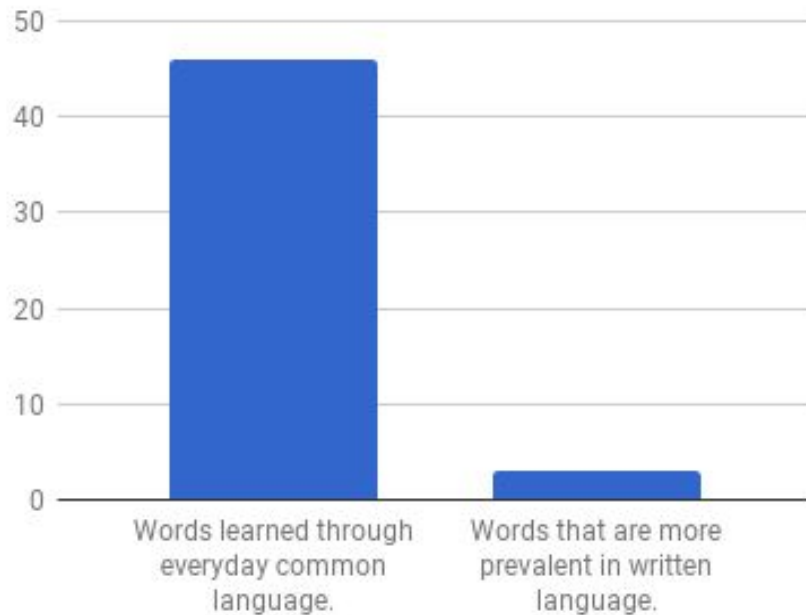
- Students with academic background knowledge achieve more highly at school, and this enhances their life chances
- The best way to increase background knowledge is through direct experience, but this is difficult for schools to achieve
- Indirect approaches can be effective, e.g. vocabulary that labels the packets of knowledge at every level



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Quick Recap: Tier One, Tier Two and Tier Three Vocabulary



1. Which description best fits Tier One vocabulary?

Tier One: Words learned through everyday common language use.

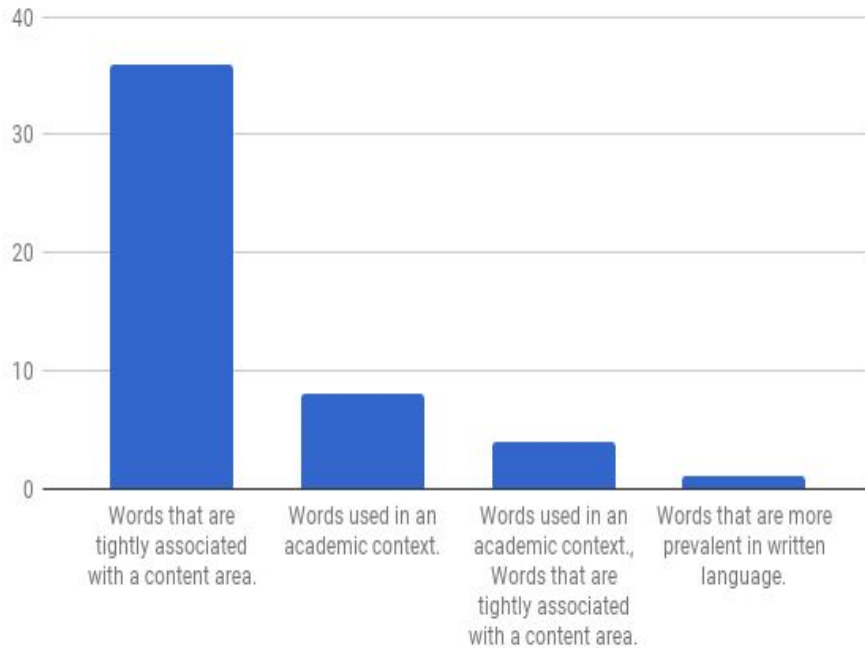
1. Which description best fits Tier One vocabulary?



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Quick Recap: Tier One, Tier Two and Tier Three Vocabulary



2. Which description best fits Tier Three vocabulary?

Tier Three: Words that are tightly associated with a content area.

Marzano argues that tier 3 vocabulary is most important for academic success as this is the vocabulary that labels the packets of knowledge.

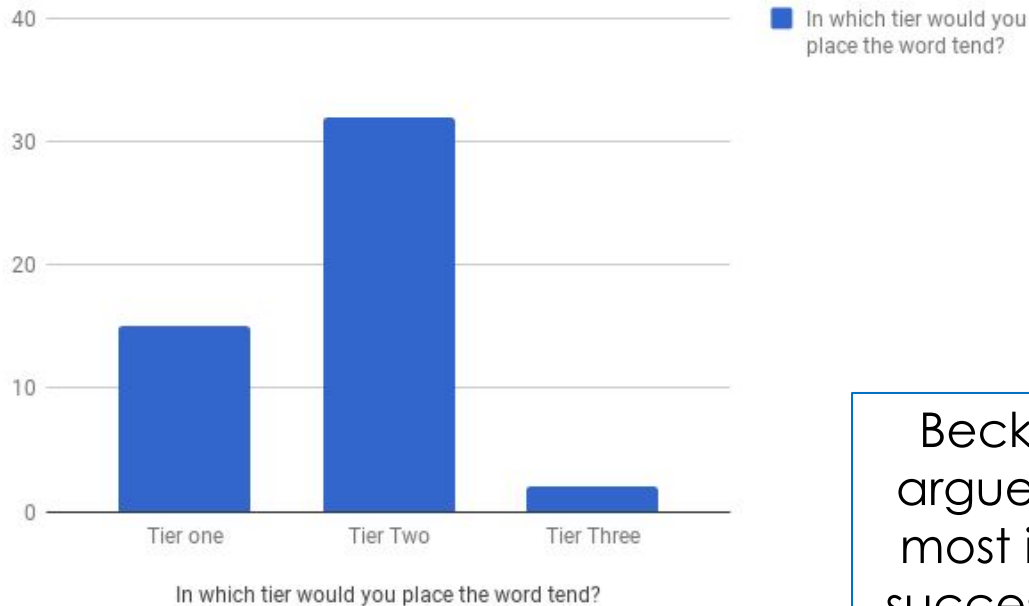
2. Which description best fits Tier Three vocabulary?



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Quick Recap: Tier One, Tier Two and Tier Three Vocabulary



Tier Two: Words that are more prevalent in written language.

Wide ranging words of high utility for literate language users, for example 'tend'.

Beck, McKeown and Kucan argue that tier 2 vocabulary is most important for academic success as these are the words that make concepts accessible.



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Which Tier 2 words should we use?

Averil Coxhead

**Academic Word
List 2000**



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Academic Word List

Corpus of 400 written academic texts, equalling about 3.5 million words in total.

Different types of texts:
- journal articles, www articles and university textbooks
- 28 different subject areas from 4 disciplines: arts, commerce, law and science.

Counted how frequently and how widely different words were used.

Selected the core academic vocabulary.

Included on the list only the words which appeared at least 100 times in the corpus as a whole and at least ten times in each of the four disciplines. A word that was found frequently in law texts but rarely in science texts, for example, was not included.

If you are planning to continue your studies in English, this list will help you.

Valuable for all students preparing for academic study, whether they are planning to follow a course in Medicine, Computer Systems Engineering, Architecture or European Law...

570 words on the Academic Word List



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Practical Strategies



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It's not the case that one either knows or does not know a word

1	Never saw it before.
2	Heard it, but don't know what it means.
3	Recognise it in context as having something to do with_____.
4	Know it well.

palpable
admonish
sagacious
ameliorate
pneumonia
heredity

Dale, 1965



It's not the case that one either knows or does not know a word

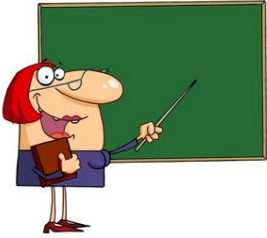
1	Do not know the word.
2	Have seen or heard the word.
3	Know something about it, can relate to a situation.
4	Know it well, can explain it, use.

palpable
admonish
sagacious
ameliorate
pneumonia
heredity

Beck, McKeown and Kucan, 2013.



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Using Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary

versus

Explicitly teaching Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary



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S

Complete a sentence **S**tem that contains the new word (good for contexts).

1. Today is **significant** for me because...
2. The best **method** for cooking rice is ...
3. The **cirrostratus** clouds looked...



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T

Test sentences: Provide some sentences that use the new word accurately and some sentences that use the new word inaccurately

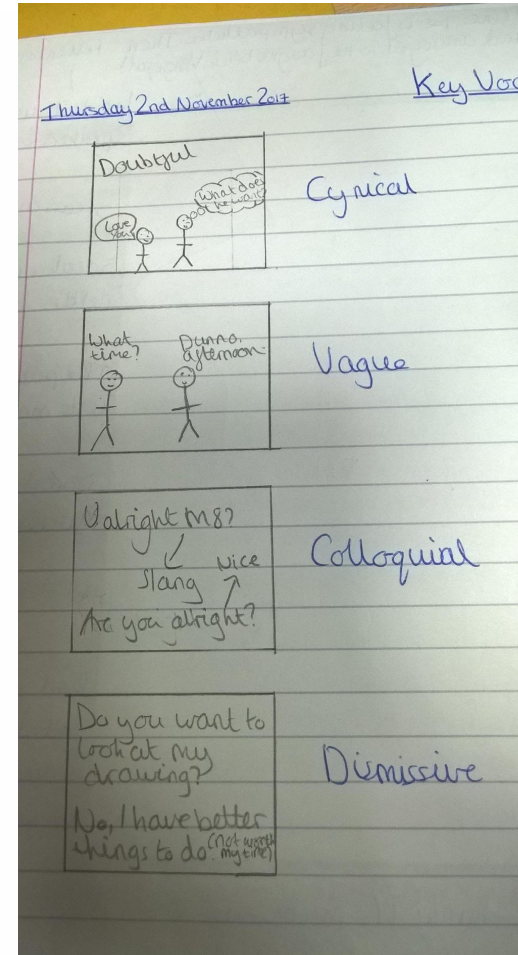
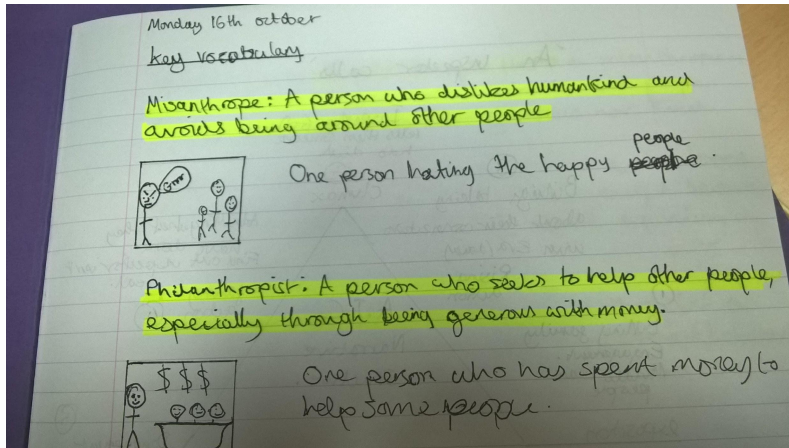
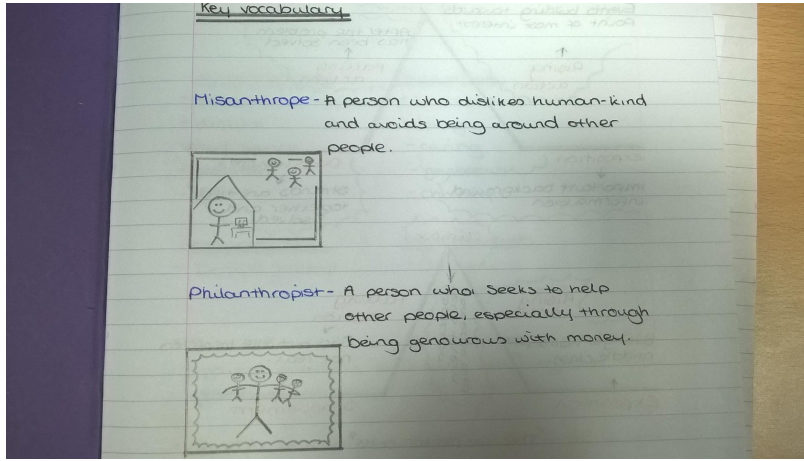
1. I forgot the date because it was **significant**.
The **significant** date is ~~etched~~ marked in my memory.
2. I was at home when it **occurred**.
I will **occur** at 3:00pm.
3. The sky was covered in **cirrostratus** cloud.
There was a patch of **cirrostratus** cloud in the sky.



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When introducing new words ask students to draw images.



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Other Practical Ways to Explicitly Teach Vocabulary

1. Example/Non-Example

- Provide statements, descriptions and comments. Students say which ones are instances of the vocabulary.
- Test sentences are an example of this strategy.
- A more challenging version is to ask students to choose which of two target words represent a situation that is described. This helps to tease out nuances.

If a room had nothing in it except a bed and a shelf, would it be **stark** or **desolate**?



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Other Practical Ways to Explicitly Teach Vocabulary

2. Word Associations

- Provide something from their own experience for students to link with new vocabulary.
- Make it more challenging by asking students to associate words with conversational expressions rather than definitions. This is more difficult as it requires interpretation rather than direct connection.

Solicitous, benign and malevolent.

Which of the following comments go with which word?

- I felt like it wanted to hurt me.
- She made endless cups of tea and kept asking if I was ok.
- Don't worry – it won't hurt you.



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Other Practical Ways to Explicitly Teach Vocabulary

3. Word Relationships

- Students have to think about how two words might be related.
- Thinking about how words interact builds knowledge of how the words work through different connections and contexts

Analogies (an extension of stem sentences):

A *congenial* person is someone who is friendly and welcoming, while an *aloof* person is...



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Other Practical Ways to Explicitly Teach Vocabulary

4. Writing

- A goal of explicit vocabulary teaching is for students to use the words in their own writing.
- Sentence stems are an example of this strategy.

More extended writing:

Write about a situation that would involve *tundra*, *habitat* and *hinterland*.



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Other Practical Ways to Explicitly Teach Vocabulary

5. Puzzles

- Provide a series of clues for a vocabulary word. Each series of clues narrows the range of possible answers.
1. You would not feel this at the start of a new job.
 2. Doing something again and again with no change would lead to this.
 3. It starts with *t* and has six letters.

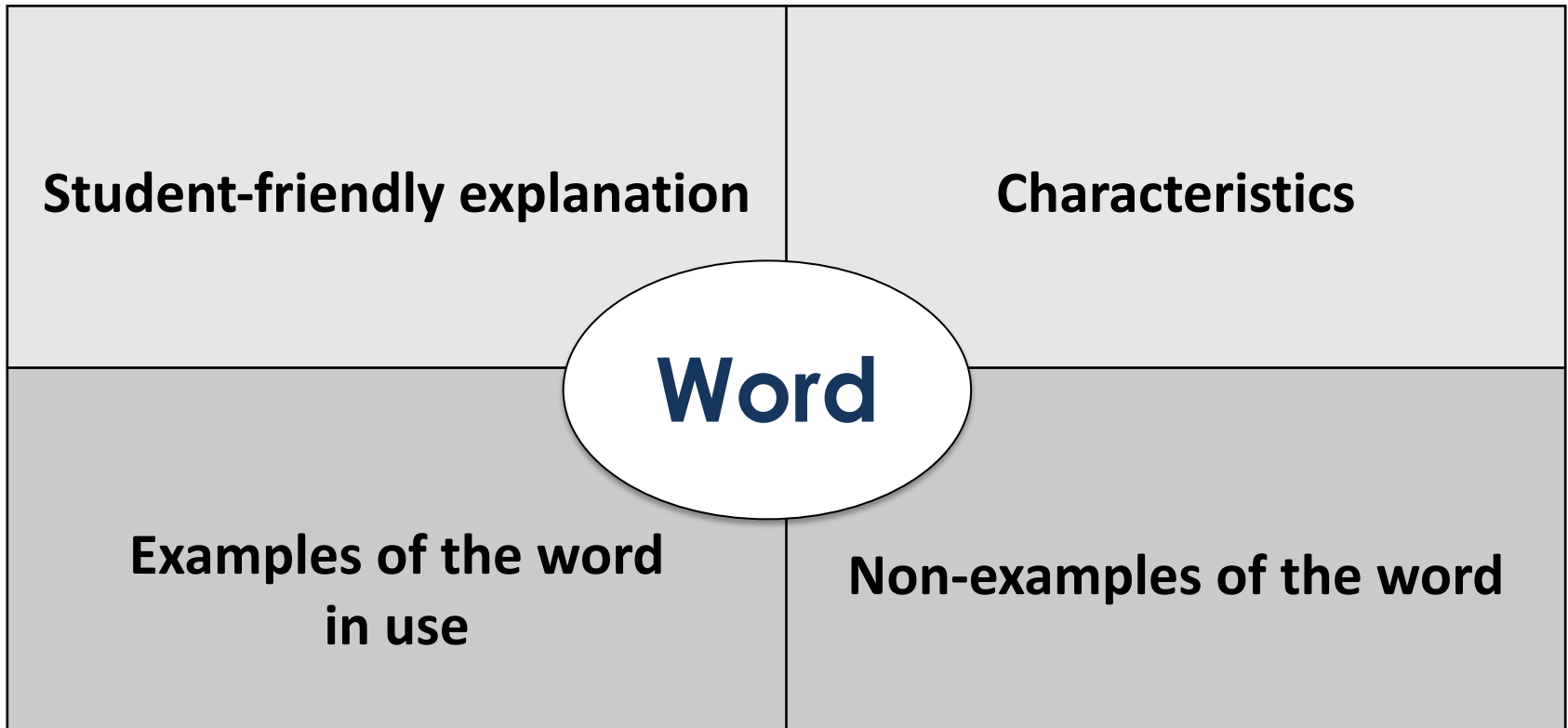


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Other Practical Ways to Explicitly Teach Vocabulary

6. Frayer Model

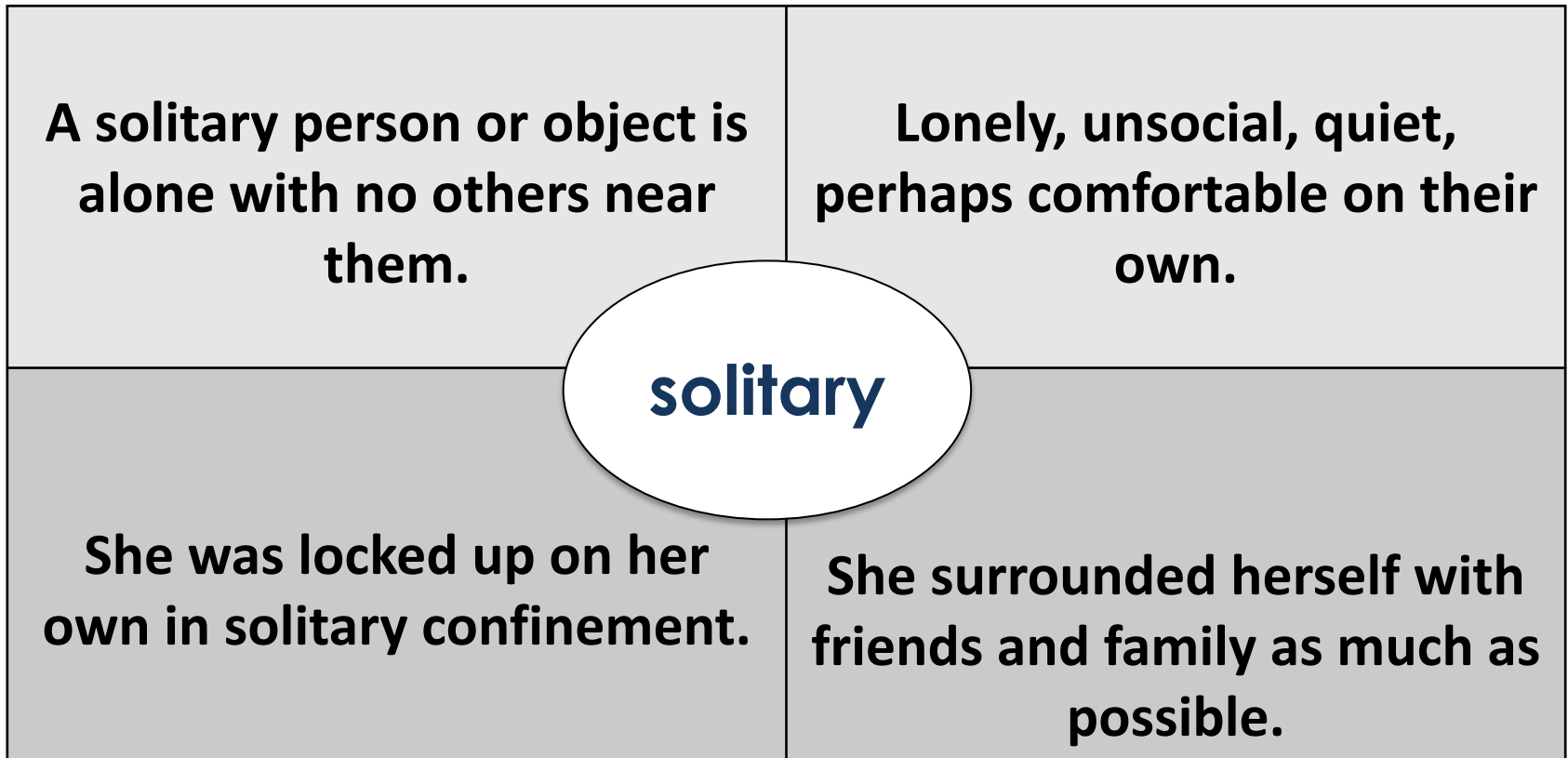


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Other Practical Ways to Explicitly Teach Vocabulary

6. Frayer Model



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Summary

- Vocabulary needs to be taught explicitly rather than by inference or context (although modelling through teacher talk is important).
- STI strategies: stem sentences, test sentences and images.
- Going beyond STI:
 1. Example/non-example
 2. Word associations
 3. Word relationships
 4. Writing
 5. Puzzles
 6. Frayer model.



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Remote Teaching



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Adapting Strategies for Remote Teaching

- Identify tier 2 or tier 3 vocabulary in any new learning that will be essential for students to understand across time, e.g. it will come up in different topics.
- Avoid giving dictionary definitions or links – offer as simple explanations as you can using tier 1 vocabulary where possible.
- Do not ask students to find or match up definitions of words – they are likely to get it wrong and embed a misconception.



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Adapting Strategies for Remote Teaching

Explicitly **teach** the vocabulary yourself. These strategies would work well remotely, especially using video input:

1. Put the focus vocabulary in complete sentences so the students see how the words work.
2. Test sentences or 'examples/non-examples' would be effective - provide the answer with an explanation!
3. Provide students with a statement and explain which word best corresponds to the statement. Again, provide an explanation.

For example: William the Conqueror's leadership.

Ruthless, benevolent or indecisive.



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Common Pitfalls



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Common Mistakes

1. Avoid using tier 2 or tier 3 vocabulary in the first phases of teaching new words.

A philanthropist is someone who uses their ~~wealth~~ to ~~benefit~~ others.

A philanthropist is someone who uses their **money** to **help** other people.



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Common Mistakes

2. It's imperative that you get students to explain **why** they have made a particular word choice. This eliminates the risk of it being a lucky guess.

Her *industrious* nature made her successful at clearing the garden of its mess.

Her *industrious* nature meant that the garden remained a mess.

I chose this sentence because *industrious* means ...



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Common Mistakes

3. Students need multiple exposure to new vocabulary in different contexts. Avoid moving on too quickly.

Careful selection of the words in the preparation stage will help (words of high utility).



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Common Mistakes

4. You cannot do it alone.

Build in **long-term** and **collaborative** planning for explicit vocabulary instruction. In secondary schools this would be a five year vocabulary plan for each curriculum area.



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