TEACHING VOCABULARY

RWBA Guide to Successful Instruction of Vocabulary, Spelling, and Oracy Development

Why Closing the Word Gap Matters

For further training, resources, and support:

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- Over half the teachers surveyed by the *Oxford Language Report* (2019) said that 'at least 40% of their pupils lacked the vocabulary to access their learning.'
- 'Children with a poor vocabulary at age five are four times more likely to struggle with reading in adulthood and three times more likely to have mental health issues.' (*Language as a Child Wellbeing Indicator*, 2017)
- '62% [of teachers] surveyed believe that children who are moving to secondary school in September will struggle more with their speaking and understanding, in comparison to those who started secondary school before the Covid-19 pandemic.' (*Speaking Up for the Covid Generation*, July 2021)
- 'Pupils' acquistion and command of vocabulary are key to their learning and progress across the whole curriculum.' (DfE, 2014)

Vocabulary Policy

(CURRENTLY IN DRAFT STAGES)

A whole school vocabulary policy is currently being drafted, as a subsection to the new Literacy policy. The benefits of developing our students' vocabulary are clearly defined in current research but are also recognised in the initial findings of the Literacy Working Group.

The aims of this policy are to move RWBA towards being a word-rich school, where pupils are empowered by wide vocabularies that give them the foundations for success across all subject disciplines. No student should be held back by a restricted vocabulary and the consequences that ensue from being unable to join in the conversation, whether academic, social or professional.

How to Monitor Progress in Vocabulary and Oracy as an Individual Teacher?

KS3 students will continue to complete tests to determine both reading and spelling ages. This data should inform how you plan, prepare resources, and deliver reading material and writing tasks.

Progress in subject terminology could be done through informal observation, 1-2-1 intervention in lessons, low stakes spelling quizzes, and application of vocabulary in written work.

The Matthew Effect

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Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.
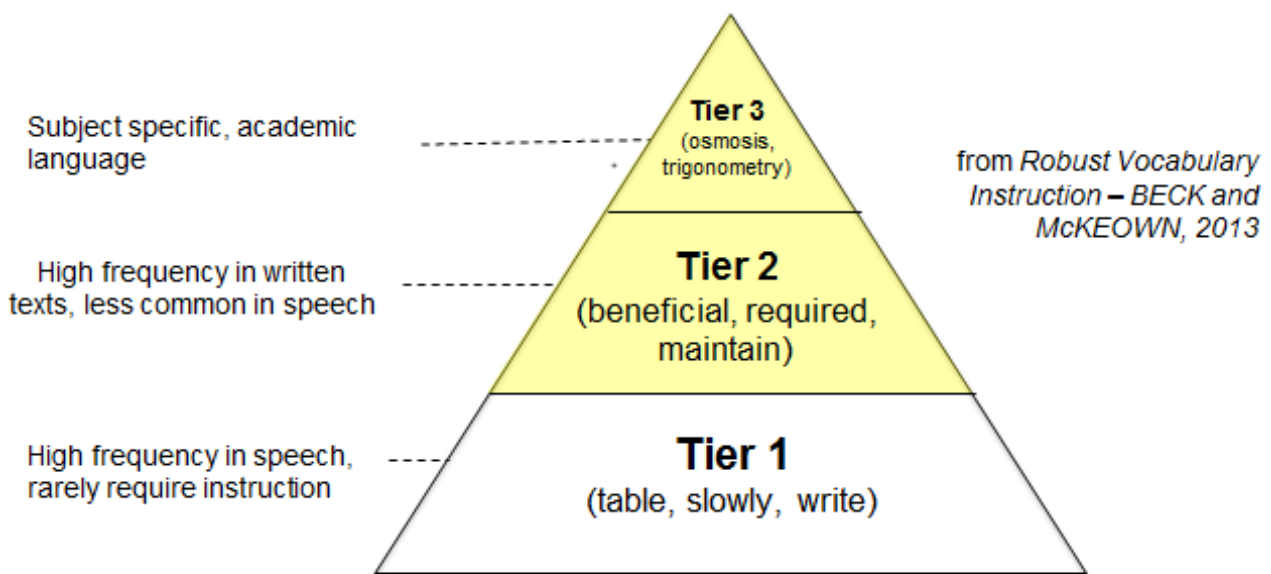
Matthew 13:12

The wider a students vocabulary, the more they can access, learn and develop. The more restricted their vocabulary, the less they can access and the less they develop their skills across the curriculum.

Success in achieving our aims is down to you working on the basics in enabling the development of vocabulary in the classroom. This document will hopefully provide you with some useful strategies but there's a few **simple things to bear in mind**:

1. Avoid 'dumbing down' language when conversing with students. Utilise a wide vocabulary and explore those words in context or repeat new words alongside simple synonyms they may recognise.
2. Know the difference between the different word tiers (Beck and McKeown, 1985).
3. Recognise that students have their own (perhaps alien to us!) lexicon that we ought to respect and even celebrate.

Subject specific, academic language - - - - - - - - - **Tier 3** (osmosis, trigonometry)

from *Robust Vocabulary Instruction – BECK and McKEOWN, 2013*

High frequency in written texts, less common in speech - - - - - - - **Tier 2** (beneficial, required, maintain)

High frequency in speech, rarely require instruction - - - - - **Tier 1** (table, slowly, write)

Word of the Week

Word of the Week is a whole school strategy that aims to develop students' vocabulary by exploring word origins and constructions in order to enable them to make links between groups of words, meanings, and spellings. Students are introduced to a wide range of Tier 2 and 3 words that link to their iLearn programme of study and/or the value of the month.

The booklets are meant as an initial prompt: students can complete one, some or all the tasks each week. Tutors should be engaging their classes in a discussions and fun activities that explore the word in more detail. Vocabulary instruction should not be completed in silence nor independently: students will require guidance and support to make progress.
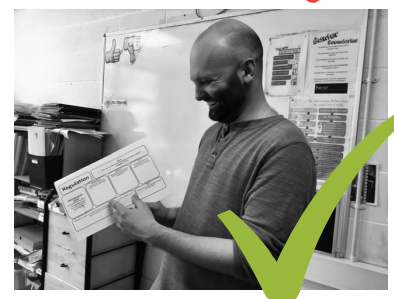
Practical Strategies

- **Introduce a range of meaningful contexts**: expose students to a new word repeatedly and in different contexts.
- **Compare different meanings and effects of words**: prompt students to think about where else they have come across a word you are focusing on (e.g. pitch is different in Music, PE, Science, Media).
- **Break down words into root, prefix, suffix**. The WotW booklet has a guide to how words are formed. Encourage students to make links between groupings of words.
- **Model using dictionaries and thesauruses**. Explore synonyms and antonyms.
- **Model using a wide vocabulary in your own speech**.
- Have high expectations of students verbal contributions: full sentences and precise vocabulary. **Prompt and scaffold this precision** (if they say 'stuff', prompt them to find a more precise word, 'chemicals').
- Illustrate or mime words to **create a visual aid** for later recall.
- **Play word games** (I've suggested a few online ones in the WotW booklet PPt): Taboo, Word Without End, Just a Minute, Hangman.
- **Teach vocabulary explicitly**: check understanding frequently, dedicate time to exploring new words, ensure each unit of work has an associated word list that you teach and test.
- **Encourage reading for pleasure**: talk about what you're reading, give time to students to discuss their reading, give time to students to read.
- **Link explicitly to their reading**: support weaker readers with challenging vocab., introduce the challenging words prior to studying a text, scaffold reading tasks and use DARTs to help students access the information, read aloud clearly to students, use **Reciprocal Reading** and reference to the **reading strategies** to support students in tackling trickier texts.
- Make word maps that explore meanings and structures of words. Make cross-curricular links.
- **Teach writing as a process**, with a focus on mining for vocabulary as a pre-writing task. Share work and vocabulary used. *VCOP* is a useful tool for this (pairs or groups collect Vocabulary, Connective words, Openers, Punctuation required for a particular form of writing).
- **Display academic words, connecting words, or key subject discipline spellings.**
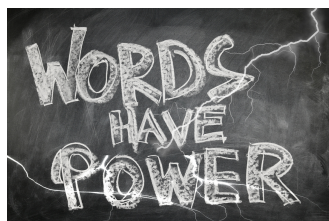
For a pack of subject specific (Maths, Science, Geography, History) templates and activities go to:

www.teachitenglish.co.uk/wordgap