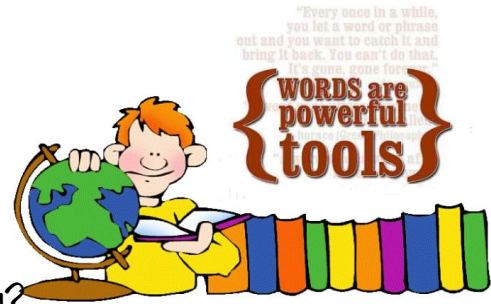


Building Vocabulary



Why do we need to build a varied vocabulary?

- It helps us express ourselves clearly.
- It allows us to distinguish one thing from another to make our message more clear. For example, a Great Dane dog is big and so is a ship on which you may take a cruise. How could you express these sizes more suitably? Big has many synonyms – mammoth, huge, Herculean, bulky, colossal, titanic, substantial – the list goes on.
- A good vocabulary allows you to paint a verbal picture for a listener allowing you to better command attention. For example, which do you find easier to listen to:
Jane is such a nice girl. She is nice in the way she supports important causes. Jane has a nice way of getting to know people and always makes them feel nice.
OR
Jane is such an accomplished girl. She is compassionate in the way she supports important causes. Jane has an empathetic way of getting to know people and always makes them feel valued.
- A good vocabulary enriches language, building it up and not diminishing it.

What the Research is telling us ...

- *By age 4 an average child in a 'professional' family would have accumulated experience with almost 45 million words.*
- *By age 4 an average child in a 'working class' family would have accumulated experience with almost 26 million words.*
- *By age 4 an average child in family of 'low socio economic status' would have accumulated experience with almost 13 million words.*



Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (2003). The early catastrophe: The 30 million word gap. *American Educator*, 27, 4-9.

20 per cent of students, and 30 per cent from disadvantaged areas, don't understand enough words when they enter school to be able to learn how to read or follow other subjects properly. (Centre for Independent Studies : Sydney, 2016)

Centre for Independent Studies research fellow Dr Jennifer Buckingham dubbed the slide in literacy as a "slow motion disaster rolling on" and is working on new analysis for a "Five from Five" launch in March of reading resources for parents, schools and governments. She said children being read to, learnt vocabulary; concepts like "under" and "over"; word sounds and exposed them to new words and meanings that spoken language didn't. "They have built up this store of knowledge so that then when they learn to read ... it really is just unlocking the codes to words they already know," she said.

Murdoch Children's Research Institute researcher Frank Oberklaid said reading was as vital as vaccination. "In the same way you immunise your child against infectious disease, the best way to immunise your child against future reading failure is to read to them every day

from a very young age,” Professor Oberklaid said. Professor Oberklaid said it was not about “hot housing” or creating “baby Einsteins”, but feeding the developing brain.

These results from the LiLO (Language in Little Ones) study suggest a socioeconomic word gap emerges between the ages of 12 and 18 months. Families from low educated backgrounds decreased the amount they spoke to their children between 6 and 18 months, compared to families from high educated backgrounds whose quantity of talk remained relatively stable across the same period. This is the first study to have used an objective measure of a child’s home language environment and been able to provide insight into the timing of the divergence of parent-child talk between maternal education groups. This finding suggests the implementation of proportionate universal programs that encourage parents to talk more to their child should occur prior to 18 months of age.

(‘The Education Word Gap Emerges by 18 months: findings from an Australian Prospective Study’ Mary E. Brushe, John Lynch, Sheena Reilly, Edward Melhuish, Murthy N. Mittinty and Sally A. Brinkman)

*Australia’s scores in international literacy tests aren’t dropping because the students who sit those tests don’t know their sounds. **They are performing poorly because they cannot comprehend what they are reading.** They have poor vocabularies and cannot follow sentences that employ more complex language structures. They cannot read between the lines.*

Our low-achieving students – both on international measures and the home grown National Assessment Program, Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests – share one, very telling, common characteristic. They don’t speak “school English”, or Standard Australian English, at home. They may speak a language other than English, or Aboriginal English, or a creole, or “bogan” English – the kind where words like “youse” feature.

But it’s not school English; it isn’t how the teacher speaks and it certainly isn’t what international tests or NAPLAN reward. So, it is the school’s job to teach school English to ensure everyone gets equal access to the learning that happens at school. And this is where we come closer to understanding why we have that growing achievement gap in Australian schools. The number of non-Standard Australian English speakers in schools has grown over the years, and Australia’s education system doesn’t cope well with “non-standard”.

***Many teachers struggle with these learners through their own limited understanding of how the English language works.** This is in no way an indictment of teachers’ own English language skills, nor of their capacity to teach students well. My observation of Australian teachers is that they are extraordinarily skilled at managing the learning process. What they do in the classrooms works wonderfully for most learners.*

*However, they are less effective with the students who write “I seen that at the movies”, or “My sister go to shopping on a car”. **All teachers can correct those errors, but far fewer can explain why they’re wrong to the students.***

Misty Adoniou, Senior Lecturer in Language, Literacy and TESL, University of Canberra ; ‘The Conversation, October, 2013

What resources do you need to help you?

- * Lots of books – factual and fictional from a range of genres – fantasy, science fiction, historical – lots!
- * A good quality general use dictionary.
- * A range of dictionaries suited to developmental needs and for working ‘up a level’ with assistance and ‘down a level’.
- * At least one ‘non-spellers’ dictionary’ – the ‘Wileman Dictionary of Australian Spelling’ and the ‘Pergamon Dictionary of Perfect Spelling’ are both worthwhile.
- * A guide to basic derivation.

- * Atlas, map of the world or globe on which you can locate the place from which the word originated. Children are like Velcro – roll them through interesting things and lots of it will stick!
- * Things to write on and with - **AND** purposes for writing.
- * An exercise book on which to write interesting words to stand in place of less descriptive words. Ideally, this would be alphabetically indexed – you can buy these commercially, or make one yourself.
- * Lots of things to read.
- * Rough paper.
- * Provide reference lists and files of words which are easily accessible around the room.
- * Have 'empty charts' (make these by laminating A4 or A3 pages) around the room to record word families, affixes and Greek and Latin roots. The students may add words.
- * Make charts of word families, affixes and roots with the students. Keep them up for access and reference. For example – Geo means 'the earth' – words in this family include geometry, geography, geology.

DID YOU KNOW THESE THINGS HAD NAMES?

1. The space between your eyebrows is called a glabella.
2. The way it smells after the rain is called petrichor.
3. The plastic or metallic coating at the end of your shoelaces is called an aglet.
4. The rumbling of stomach is actually called a wamble.
5. The cry of a new born baby is called a vagitus.
6. The prongs on a fork are called tines.
7. The sheen or light that you see when you close your eyes and press your hands on them is called phosphenes.
8. The tiny plastic table placed in the middle of a pizza box is called a box tent.
9. The day after tomorrow is called overmorrow.
10. Your tiny toe or finger is called minimus.
11. The wired cage that holds the cork in a bottle of champagne is called an agraffe.
12. The 'na na na' and 'la la la', which don't really have any meaning in the lyrics of any song, are called vocables.
13. When you combine an exclamation mark with a question mark (like this ?!), it is referred to as an interrobang.
14. The space between your nostrils is called columella nasi.
15. The armhole in clothes, where the sleeves are sewn, is called armscye.
16. The condition of finding it difficult to get out of the bed in the morning is called dysania.
17. Illegible hand-writing is called griffonage.
18. The dot over an "i" or a "j" is called tittle.
19. That utterly sick feeling you get after eating or drinking too much is called crapulence.
20. The metallic device used to measure your feet at the shoe store is called Bannock device.

HOW MANY OF THE ABOVE DID YOU ALREADY KNOW?

Word Building through Reading

- * Read to and with your students regularly – keep a words and phrases book in which to add interesting words and fascinating phrases.
- * Use a variety of resources - books, catalogues, magazines, newspapers, non-fiction materials, timetables and more – commercial and class/ home made.
- * Consult dictionaries and thesauri together when you come across interesting or unknown words.
- * Look for print in the environment - find and photograph errors – discuss what people think when they see errors!
- * Make charts together and use them together.
- * Use written communication between yourselves and others.

My brother's **aberration** is receiving much **acclaim**.
You see, he has spaghetti where he ought to have a **brain**.
His thoughts are **asymmetrical**, **amorphous** and **austere**.
And when he tries to **cogitate**, the sauce runs out his ear.

My brother's inclination is attracting some debate:
His tendency to **atrophy** is starting to **abate**.
His **incoherent musings** are increasingly **distraught**;
He's **heedless** of the **havoc** his hypotheses have wrought.

My brother's **pestilential** and **provincial** attitude
Has put me and my sister in a **pugilistic** mood.
But with all his **peccadilloes**, and with all his petty crimes
My little baby brother can be awfully cute sometimes.

Word Building through Writing

- * Let them see you writing for a range of purposes.
- * Let them write for a purpose and audience - someone who will write / email back!
- * Encourage memos on the class notice board.
- * Publish their writing.
- * Let them see you attempting an unknown word.
- * Let them see you consulting a dictionary.
- * Show them the 'Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check' method to learn a word.
- * Keep personal word lists.
- * Use approximated spellings as a point for discussing attempts and finding origins.



Word Building is Fun

- Dedicate a space in the room for exploring language.
- Add new words and their meanings.
- Slip a new word into 'dinner time talk'.
- Have a word of the day.
- In morning sessions in class have a spot for the introduction of a new word and try to slip it into conversation during the day.

- Investigate a word thoroughly using a Vocabulary Development Frame.

s-b.m. 2013

The form is a Vocabulary Development Frame with several sections:

- Word:** A decorative frame with scrollwork containing the text "Word".
- Meaning / Definition:** A large arrow-shaped box pointing left towards the "Word" section, containing the text "Meaning / Definition".
- Synonyms:** A square box with floral decorations in the top-left and bottom-right corners, containing the text "Synonyms".
- Antonyms:** A vertical rectangular box with floral decorations on the left side, containing the text "Antonyms".
- Affixes:** A square box with a checkered border, containing the text "Affixes".
- Used in a sentence ...:** A large rectangular box with decorative scrollwork at the top and bottom, containing the text "Used in a sentence ...".
- Greek & Latin Roots:** Text located in the center of the page.
- Related Words:** A vertical rectangular box with floral decorations on the right side, containing the text "Related Words".
- Part of Speech:** Text located in the center of the page.