

Developing Children's Vocabulary

January 2024

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Why is vocabulary such a key skill?

Why does it matter?

Vocabulary at age 5 is:

- the most powerful predictor of GCSE results
- the best predictor of whether children brought up in poverty are poor themselves in adult life



Why such an impact?

- Vocabulary is how you show your learning
- Poor vocabulary is linked to declining reading progress in later Primary years
- The Matthew Effect - unless specifically addressed the gap between the word rich and the word poor is ever widening

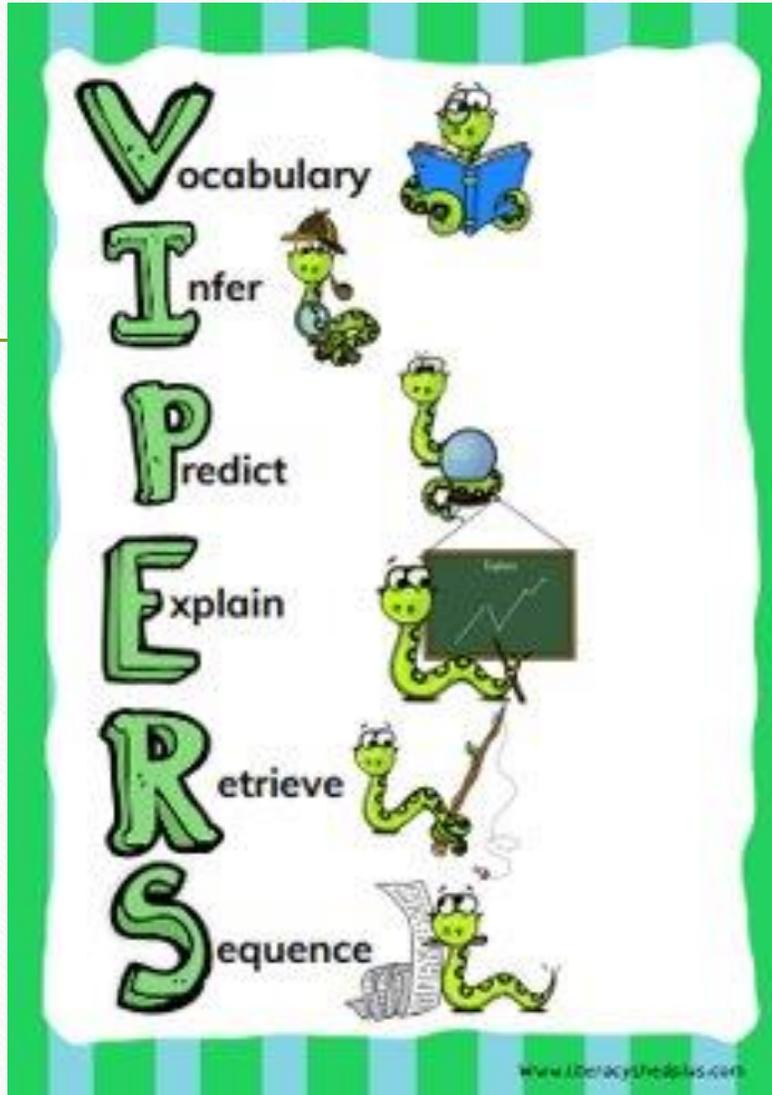
“Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them” Matt 13:12.



How children learn new words

- Children typically learn new vocabulary firstly through their own experiences
- They need to experience the word lots of times in many contexts to build up their semantic knowledge of the word
- Lots of semantic links are necessary for children learn a word e.g. function, attributes, location & category
- Phonological knowledge is needed for a child to retrieve, use and spell new words e.g. syllable structure, rhyme, word parts (morphology)





VIPERS



Levels of knowing a word:

How well do you know this word?

1	I don't know this word yet!	
2	I've heard it before – no idea what it means yet 😊	
3	I think I could guess what this word means...	
4	I know it!	

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Curtis (1987)

Difficulties using new vocabulary

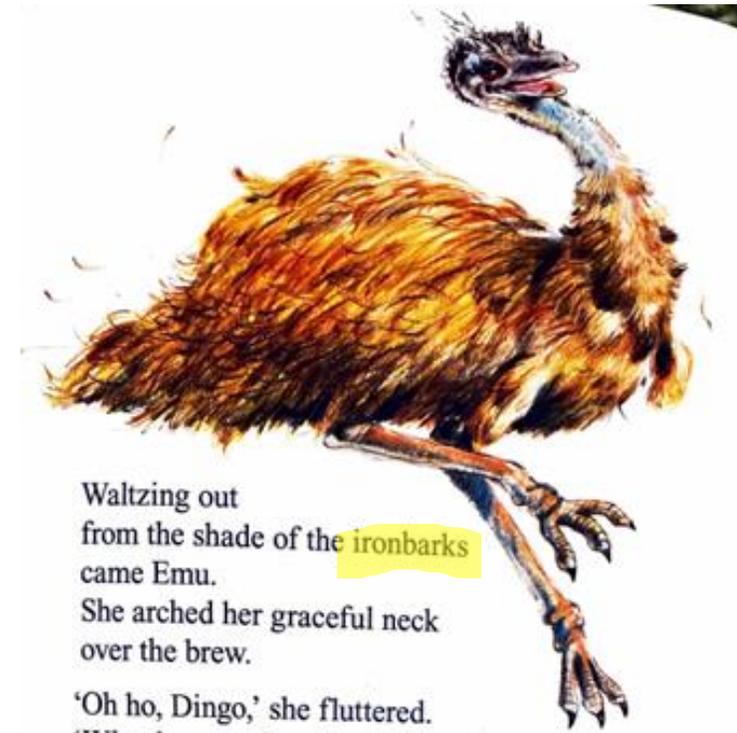
- Semantic errors e.g. “lion” for “tiger”
- Phonemic errors e.g. “pepple” for “pepper”
- Pauses
- Fillers e.g. “ummm” “thingy” “you know”
- Neologisms (new words) e.g “tower beds” for “bunk beds”
- ‘fuzzy’ phonology



The more vocabulary
you understand, you
more easily you learn
new vocabulary.

Consider the
vocabulary you used
to help you guess
what the (possibly!)
unfamiliar
vocabulary might
mean.

One day, on the banks of a **billabong**,
a very clever dingo caught a wombat . . .



Waltzing out
from the shade of the **ironbarks**
came Emu.
She arched her graceful neck
over the brew.

'Oh ho, Dingo,' she fluttered.
'What have we here?'

'Goey, chewy wombat stew,'
boasted Dingo.



Developing Your Child's Vocabulary

- Waffling!

Business Talk	Vocabulary-Rich Discussion
"Get your bag!" "Dinner is on the table." "Where is your bookbag?"	"That reminds me of when..." "Can you hear...? That's probably..."

Good opportunities for waffling may be during car journeys, while in the bath, at the dinner table and right when they're supposed to be going to sleep!

Children in Professional Families heard an average of 2,153 words per hour or 11 million words a year
By age 3 their observed cumulative vocabulary was about 1100 words

Adult Vocabulary Choices

- Make the most of your business talk! Consider phrases you use a lot and the word choices you make. E.g. "Stop meddling!"

Synonyms for:

WALK

(verb) /wa:k/

amble

/æm.bəl/

meander

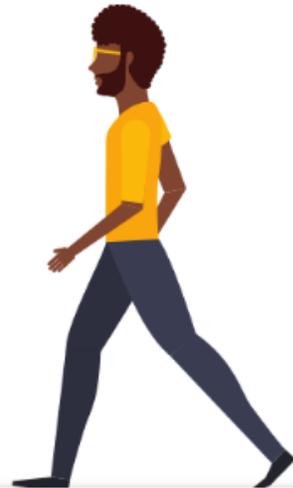
/miˈæn.də-/

stroll

/stroʊl/

trudge

/trʌdʒ/



like a bear with a sore head irritable
bad-tempered crotchety vexed touchy
fractious grouchy angry disagreeable
tetchy surly prickly
ill-humoured surly prickly
cantankerous grumpy testy
irascible crabby grumpy pettish churlish
peevish snappy short-tempered
got out of bed the wrong side cross

A cartoon illustration of a young child's face with blonde hair, looking grumpy or angry. The word "grumpy" is written in purple over the child's face. Other words like "frankly" and "activity" are also visible in the background.

Introducing New Words in Class



Tell them what new words to listen for	
YOU say the word in isolation	
YOU say it again segment into syllables	
THEY say it	
Clap it together and write it in syllables	
Talk about sounds and rhymes	
Add a picture	
Add meaning and link it to a familiar word	
Think of a gesture or action	

Reading

- The more vocabulary you have, the more easily you acquire new words. You need to understand around 80% of the words in a text to enjoy and interpret it.
- Re-reading books is crucial to familiarise children with new vocabulary.
- Try to 'magpie' unusual words you notice in your child's reading to use in day-to-day conversation. Remember, what you deem to be unusual may differ to what your child does! They are not necessarily 'exciting' words. For example, 'damp'.



Thank you so much for listening to my 'waffling'!

- <https://www.hacw.nhs.uk/childrens-speech-and-language-resources/>

Search online for 'Worcestershire Speech and Language'. It would also be useful to follow their Facebook page.

- Please do complete the feedback survey that will be sent out shortly. It helps me plan future reading events and workshops.

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