

VOCABULARY ASSESSMENT METHODS

Alijonova Dinora

Murodova Humora

4th-year student of Jizzakh State Pedagogical University

Annotation: *This article, describes how to assess a student's knowledge of vocabulary words, as well as strategies that can be used to expand students' vocabulary in preschool and elementary education.*

Keywords: *Vocabulary assessment, methods, vocabulary, children, digital tool, teaching pronunciation, and strategies.*

Vocabulary assessment is an assessment of the student's knowledge of vocabulary words. Assessments are designed to determine whether students can identify and use words. Purpose of Vocabulary Assessment Vocabulary assessment is used to assess students' mastery of vocabulary words. Formal vocabulary assessments such as tests or quizzes can be used to assess learning, while informal vocabulary assessments allow teachers to monitor students' application of learning. If students can use vocabulary words clearly in speaking or writing, teachers can determine whether their students can understand and use the words correctly.

A student's vocabulary knowledge and skills determine his or her proficiency in comprehension and language use. Therefore, whether we are teaching writing, reading, or supporting our students to communicate more effectively their ideas, vocabulary should be part of our daily instruction. The average high school student is estimated to have learned about 3,500 new words each year. To build that amount of vocabulary, we should not just focus on using dictionaries as the sole source for word information and asking students to fill in word definitions. But, we should also involve them in developing their vocabulary. This is through actively engaging them in word exploration and stimulating their interest in knowing more words. Research evidence indicates that vocabulary development is more successful when learners are fully engaged in activities that require them to attend carefully to the new words and even to use them in productive tasks.

Vocabulary acquisition is an essential component of language development in children. It is the foundation upon which reading, writing, and communication skills are built. In preschool and primary education, it is crucial to provide children with rich and varied opportunities to learn new words and to reinforce their understanding of familiar ones. Here are some strategies that teachers can use to teach vocabulary effectively.

1. Use Visual Aids

Visual aids such as pictures, charts, and diagrams can help children understand new words and concepts. Teachers can use flashcards to introduce new vocabulary words or create word walls that display words related to a particular theme or topic. This way, children can see the words in context and make connections between them.



2. Read Aloud

Reading aloud to children is an excellent way to expose them to new words and to build their vocabulary. Teachers can choose books that are appropriate for their age and level of understanding and read them aloud, pausing to explain the meaning of unfamiliar words. This way, children can learn new words in context and develop an appreciation for the power of language.

3. Play Word Games

Playing word games such as Scrabble, Boggle, or Hangman can be a fun way to teach vocabulary. These games encourage children to think creatively and use their knowledge of words to solve puzzles. Teachers can also create word games that are tailored to the needs of their students.

4. Using contextual clues

Teachers can draw on context clues to help children develop the meaning of unfamiliar words. For example, if the teacher does not know what the word "ability" means, the teacher should say that "ability is the ability of a person to do something better than others, for example: draw, sing, write a poem," the child can make a connection between the word and its meaning.

5. Encourage Word Use

Teachers should encourage children to use new vocabulary words in their daily conversations. This way, children can practice using the words in context and reinforce their understanding of them. Teachers can also provide opportunities for children to write using new vocabulary words, such as writing a story or a letter.

Vocabulary research has greatly expanded over the last three decades. Vocabulary is a multidimensional intermediate component between oral and written language (i.e. from decoding to comprehension). Numerous studies have demonstrated the impact of vocabulary on associated skills, such as general language abilities (Brinchmann et al., 2015), decoding processing (Tunmer & Chapman, 2012), comprehension (Cain & Oakhill, 2014; Ouellette & Beers, 2010; Quinn et al., 2015). Recent research cites developmental influences to explain the weight of vocabulary variation on these associated skills. When one starts to learn to read, vocabulary seems to contribute to decoding to consolidate the links among the three levels of word representation (i.e., orthographic, phonological, and semantic), but once these links are sufficiently consolidated with the acquisition of a high-quality lexicon, the link between vocabulary and decoding disappears (Chiu, 2018; Massonniè et al. 2019) and vocabulary would then predict comprehension performance (Ouellette & Beers, 2010; Tilstra et al., 2009). Moreover, the link between vocabulary and associated skills (... language and literacy skills) would be bi-directional. For example, vocabulary in young French students from grade 2 seemingly predicts decoding and reading performance and conversely, performance in decoding would predict vocabulary performance (Potocki et al., 2016; Verhoeven et al., 2011). Further research is required to understand the role (causal or not (Quinn et al., 2015)), direct influence (Tunmer & Chapman, 2012) or indirect influence



(Elwer et al.2013; Ouellette & Beers, 2010), and weight of vocabulary on associated skills. Despite the ongoing questions on the link between vocabulary and the other associated skills, there is currently a consensus on the importance of vocabulary versus word-specific knowledge (words targeting a specific field) (Kieffer & Lesus, 2012) versus embedded, (vocabulary as part of a larger construct) Selective (vocabulary assessment only) (vocabulary items in other cognitive assessment) (Pearson et al, 2007) Note: See Appendix A for more details about vocabulary dimension cement Social Education Research But the vocabulary can also be characterized by the following distinctions that relate to task characteristics. Indeed, the task can imply different types of input and output such as oral as opposed to written, and receptive (passive) as opposed to productive (active) vocabulary (Nation, 2001). These two parameters enable a distinction to be made between four competencies described in the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)); Listening (oral and receptive), reading (written and receptive), speaking (oral and productive) and writing (written and productive). In general, children exhibit a larger receptive vocabulary than productive vocabulary (ie, understand more words than they use) (Pearson et al., 2007). As described in Read (2000). a task can also include a word in context (contextualized) or presented in isolation (decontextualized). Moreover, a task can examine vocabulary as an independent construct (discrete vocabulary) or as a part of another cognitive construct such as reading comprehension for example (embedded vocabulary) (Coombe, 2011), or evaluate vocabulary for itself (selective) or in the case of more general tasks (comprehensive) (Pearson et al., 2007). See Table 1 for a recap of vocabulary conceptualizations.

Which dimensions need to be assessed?

Beyond the distinction described, ie, breadth as opposed to depth (Laufer & Goldstein, 2004; Qian & Schedl,2004), selective as opposed to embedded (Coombe, 2011), or specific versus general word knowledge (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2012), vocabulary assessment is primarily divided into two parts: assessing vocabulary knowledge (ie, type of knowledge about words) as opposed to assessing vocabulary learning (ie. the ability to learn new words). The choice of dimension to be assessed will depend on the goal. For example, following an intervention, it could be interesting to assess specific word knowledge (adapted assessment depending on the material taught) associated with an assessment of general word knowledge (standardized test) to measure acquisition of targeted words taught and meta-competencies to learn new words (Tseng et al., 2006).

In recent reviews on vocabulary assessment, authors recommended assessing both breadth and depth of vocabulary as well as both word-specific learning and general vocabulary development (Hoffman et al. (2014) in early childhood) and, assessing target words in isolation, then in a context to measure whether they can be understood during reading and whether they possibly enable more general text comprehension (Kremmel & Schmitt, 2016). This article aims to provide a review of questions on the assessment and instruction of vocabulary in children, by revisiting assumptions on vocabulary assessment



and instruction. First, we provide an overview of assumptions on vocabulary assessment and instruction. Second, we present the main tools that exist in different languages. Our review has been led to answer the following main research question. What is the advantage of new technologies for evaluating and training vocabulary? The added value of this review lies in the attempt to enhance perspectives for new valid and effective tools using digital technologies. Indeed, standardized presentation of items or precise recording of different kinds of measures are two characteristics of digital technologies that improve the validity and reliability of assessment (Terzis & Economides, 2011). Moreover, computer-based tools offer the opportunity to multiply and maximize learning sessions through autonomy in learning and appropriate and systematic feedback provided individually (Van der Kleij et al., 2015). Without claiming to be a systematic review, this article reviews some questions on research on vocabulary assessment and instruction. It seems necessary to give the importance of vocabulary in language and literacy development and the heterogeneity of vocabulary acquisition that depends on preschool word exposure mainly in a family environment (Biemiller, 2006). Children exposed to language with poor vocabulary will experience more difficulties than their peers exposed to rich vocabulary in developing general language skills, learning to read, and even learning the meanings of new words (Webb & Chang, 2015). Since the link goes both ways, children with language and literacy difficulties will then have greater difficulties in vocabulary learning than their peers who do not have language and literacy difficulties, thus illustrating the Matthew effect on vocabulary growth (Coyne et al., 2010). Early vocabulary assessment and instruction, therefore, seem essential to reduce inequalities. To answer the main research question, after providing a brief definition of the complex concept of vocabulary, we present the main tools for assessing the various dimensions of vocabulary of children across different languages. We then elaborate on the implications of vocabulary instruction and the associated recommendations. In our current review, we have included research articles, book chapters, literature reviews, and meta-analyses, which cover a long period from 1982 to 2019 and provide insights into the evolution of vocabulary-related definitions, assessment, and instruction. Thus, we identified 30 tests or subtests for vocabulary assessment or stimulation across assessment and instruction. Thus, we identified 30 tests or subtests for vocabulary assessment or stimulation across different languages, suggesting that there is international interest in investigating the issue of vocabulary (see Appendix A for a summary of the referenced tests and subtests). Finally, to understand the evolution of vocabulary instruction, we identified 34 articles (corresponding to 43 studies; see Appendix B for more details).

Conclusion: The concept of vocabulary knowledge is complex. Depending on the researcher's point of view, vocabulary does not refer to the same construct. Yet a consensus seems to be taking shape on the issue of how to define vocabulary. Vocabulary can be investigated in its breadth and depth. Generally, to assess the number of known words, standardized tests examine the connection between the form and meaning of words in a



receptive and expressive way. Because these tests are composed of an average of 100 items, they give a general indicator of the size of the child's lexicon and identify children at risk. However, the breadth of vocabulary is not the critical dimension since the depth of vocabulary is the dimension that has been reported as fundamental for reading comprehension. The major problem with the depth of vocabulary is that it reflects the entire complexity and multidimensionality of vocabulary knowledge as reported by Nagy and Scott (2000) for example. In other words, the quality of semantic knowledge about words cannot be limited to a simple test in which children are asked to define words. Generally, researchers used other tests to capture the multidimensional nature of the meaning of words such as synonym selection or word production, in line with a different theoretical approach. A review of the scientific literature suggests that vocabulary development is a multidimensional process that requires a combination of direct and indirect instruction, discussion and active learning processes. Given the large number of words that are learned during childhood and adolescence (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001; Nation, 2006), it can be argued that direct vocabulary teaching only explains a few of these words. Most of them are learned incidentally. This assumption is supported by experimental studies showing that word knowledge can be acquired through the written context (reading) and oral context (shared reading). However, some authors have sought to improve this learning by adding, on the one hand, repeated exposures to words as well as explanations of the meaning of words (embedded). These explanations involve brief definitions of word meanings. On the other hand, authors have also studied more interactive activities to improve vocabulary (extended). These methods are effective in increasing vocabulary skills and, concerning the latter, providing the components of a vocabulary learning method that is effective for both vocabulary and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000; Marulis & Neuman, 2013).

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