

Introduction

An important finding that emerges from the research [on language-minority children] is that word-level skills in literacy—such as decoding, word recognition and spelling—are often taught well enough to allow language-minority students to attain levels of performance equal to those of native English speakers. However, this is not the case for text-level skills—reading comprehension and writing. Language-minority students rarely approach the same levels of proficiency in text-level skills achieved by native English speakers. The research suggests one reason for the disparity between word- and text-level skills among language-minority students is their English vocabulary.

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It is estimated that native English speakers acquire something like 3,000 new words every school year (Nagy & Anderson, 1984). This increase in vocabulary accounts for a significant portion of their language and reading comprehension growth. As more words are acquired, students are able to draw finer distinctions in meaning among words, develop a stronger understanding of how words work together, and increase their sensitivity to context and communicative intent. In turn, this growing sophistication with language aids vocabulary development, making it possible to acquire words through exposure to text and conversation.

Helping English language learners (ELLs) catch up and keep up with the steady growth experienced by their English-proficient peers over years of exposure to their native tongue is imperative. We use the term *English language learners* (ELLs) to refer to students who come from homes where a language other than English is spoken and who are still acquiring proficiency in English (August & Shanahan, 2006a). Research suggests that ELLs can indeed experience accelerated growth in vocabulary, but this requires systematic and long-term vocabulary instruction (Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005). Unfortunately, recent studies suggest that the amount of instructional time devoted to vocabulary development is simply insufficient to support the level of growth needed to close the vocabulary gap between ELLs and their English-proficient peers. A Reading First impact evaluation reported that 1st-grade reading teachers spent approximately 8 minutes of their daily reading block—about 13% of instructional time—on vocabulary instruction, and 2nd-grade teachers spent approximately 12 minutes of their daily reading block—about 20% of instructional time (Gamse, Jacob, Horst, Boulay, & Unlu, 2008). A recent study of a large number of kindergarten and 1st-grade classrooms in urban and border schools in California and Texas serving ELLs reported

that vocabulary instruction comprised less than 7% of the total instructional time (Saunders, Foorman, & Carlson, 2006).

The findings of over 100 years of vocabulary research on native English speakers include the following:

- Vocabulary knowledge is one of the best indicators of verbal ability (Sternberg, 1987; Terman, 1916).
- Vocabulary knowledge contributes to young children’s phonological awareness, which in turn contributes to their word recognition (Goswami, 2001; Nagy, 2005).
- Vocabulary knowledge in kindergarten and 1st grade is a significant predictor of reading comprehension in the middle and secondary grades (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Scarborough, 1998).
- Vocabulary difficulty strongly influences the readability of text (Chall & Dale, 1995; Klare, 1984).
- Teaching vocabulary can improve reading comprehension (Baumann, 2005; Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982).
- Growing up in poverty can seriously restrict the vocabulary children learn before beginning school and make attaining an adequate vocabulary a challenging task (Coyne, Simmons, & Kame’enui, 2004; Hart & Risley, 1995; Templin, 1957; White, Graves, & Slater, 1990).
- Lack of vocabulary can be a crucial factor underlying the school failure of disadvantaged students (Becker, 1977; Biemiller, 1999).

Fortunately, since vocabulary is so important, we know a great deal about vocabulary development and about how to teach vocabulary to native English-speaking students. As we just mentioned, over 100 years of research led to the above findings, as well as to a wealth of other conclusions. Research on the development of vocabulary in ELLs mirrors many of these findings. However, research related to effective vocabulary instruction for ELLs is much more recent, and there is much less of it. Fortunately, the research we do have on instruction for ELLs suggests that much of what we have learned about teaching vocabulary to native English speakers also applies to teaching ELLs, but that some adjustments will strengthen instruction for ELLs (August & Gray, 2010; August & Shanahan, 2010a; August & Snow, 2007; Gersten & Baker, 2000; Goldenberg, 2008; Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010; Saville-Troike, 1984). The research also provides guidance about the techniques that are valuable for ELLs (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005; Carlo et al., 2004). We review the research on vocabulary learning and vocabulary instruction for both native English speakers and ELLs in some detail in Chapter 2. At this point, however, we introduce two crucial facts about vocabulary—facts to keep in mind as you read this book and plan vocabulary instruction for ELLs.

First, the vocabulary learning task is enormous! Estimates of vocabulary size vary greatly, but a reasonable estimate based on a substantial body of past and more recent scholarship (Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Anglin, 1993a, 1993b; Hiebert & Cervetti, 2012; Miller & Wakefield, 1993; Nagy & Anderson, 1984; Nagy & Herman, 1987; Snow & Kim, 2007; Stahl & Nagy, 2006; White, Graves, & Slater, 1990)

is this: The books and other reading materials used by schoolchildren include over 180,000 different words. The average child who speaks English as her native language enters school with a very small reading vocabulary, typically consisting largely of environmental print. Once in school, however, this child's reading vocabulary is likely to soar at a rate of 3,000–4,000 words a year, leading to a reading vocabulary of something like 25,000 words by 8th grade, and a reading vocabulary of something like 50,000 words by the end of high school.

Second, these figures are for native English speakers and for linguistically advantaged students, students who grow up in English-speaking homes filled with language that nourishes their growing vocabularies. Although we have very little detailed information on the sizes of ELLs' vocabularies, both common sense and the data we do have suggest that there is a tremendous range in the sizes of their vocabularies (August et al., 2005; Proctor, Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005; Snow & Kim, 2007; Swanson, Saez, & Gerber, 2006) and that the vocabulary gap is quite wide. A considerable number of recent studies that report oral language outcomes on standardized tests indicate that ELLs' performance is significantly below the average performance of native English speakers on vocabulary and other oral language proficiency outcomes such as listening comprehension, memory for sentences, and verbal analogies (Cirino, Pollard-Durodola, Foorman, Carlson, & Francis, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2011; Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2011; Manis, Lindsey, & Bailey, 2004; Oller & Eilers, 2002; Proctor et al., 2005; San Francisco, Mo, Carlo, August, & Snow, 2006; Vaughn et al., 2006). Results from a recent study suggest a developmental lag in ELLs' patterns of growth, from the preschool years through early adolescence, in oral language, relative to national norms (Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2011).

We also know that many children from low-income families enter school with vocabularies much smaller than those of their middle-class counterparts (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1995, 2003; Templin, 1957; White, Graves, & Slater, 1990). ELLs from low-income families have notably lower levels of vocabulary than those who are middle-class (Oller & Eilers, 2002). As many educators have noted, it is tremendously important to find ways to bolster the oral and reading vocabularies of all students who enter school with small stores of words (August et al., 2005; Becker, 1977; Biemiller, 1999, 2009; Carlo, 2007; Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Elley, 1991; Graves, 2006; Hirsch, 2003; Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2010, 2011; Nation, 2001; National Reading Panel, 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Schmitt, 2000; Snow & Kim, 2007).

A FOUR-PART VOCABULARY PROGRAM

This book presents a comprehensive plan for vocabulary instruction for ELLs, one broad enough to include instruction for students who are just beginning to build their English vocabularies and for students whose English vocabularies are approaching those of native speakers. Specifically, the book describes a four-pronged vocabulary program that one of us began developing 30 years ago and continues to elaborate and refine (Graves, 2006, 2009a, 2009b). The program has the following four components:

- providing rich and varied language experiences;
- teaching individual words;
- teaching word-learning strategies; and
- fostering word consciousness.

It is similar to programs described by Baumann and Kame'enui (2004); Kame'enui & Baumann, 2012), Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, and Watts-Taffe (2006), and Stahl and Nagy (2006); was recently validated in a study by Baumann, Ware, and Edwards (2007); and serves as the framework for current studies by August and Snow (2008) and Baumann, Blachowicz, Mangak, Graves, & Oleynik (2009). In the next several sections, we briefly discuss each component and the rationale behind it.

Providing Rich and Varied Language Experiences

One way to build students' vocabularies is to immerse them in a rich array of language experiences so that they learn words through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In kindergarten and the primary grades and for ELLs in the early stages of learning English vocabulary, listening and speaking are particularly important for promoting vocabulary growth (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2003). In the intermediate grades, the middle grades, and secondary school, discussion continues to be important. Students of all ages need to engage frequently in authentic discussions—give-and-take conversations in which they are given the opportunity to thoughtfully discuss topics (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Beck & McKeown, 2006; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). Increasingly from the intermediate grades on, and as students become increasingly proficient with English vocabulary, reading becomes a principal language experience for increasing their vocabularies (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). If we can substantially increase the reading students do, we can substantially increase the words they learn (Anderson, 1996; Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Krashen, 2001; Stahl, 1998).

Teaching Individual Words

Another way to help students increase their vocabularies is to teach them individual words. To be sure, the size of the vocabulary that students will eventually attain means that we cannot teach all of the words they need to learn. However, the fact that we cannot teach all of the words students need to learn does not mean that we cannot and should not teach some of them. Fortunately, research has revealed a good deal about effective—and ineffective—approaches to teaching individual words (Beck, McKeown, & Omanson, 1987; Graves, 2009a; Mezynski, 1983; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). Vocabulary instruction is most effective when learners are given both definitional and contextual information, when learners actively process the new word meanings, and when they experience multiple encounters with words. Said somewhat differently, vocabulary instruction is most effective—and most likely to influence students' comprehension—when it is rich, deep, and extended. At the same time, because there are so many words to teach, not all of them can or should receive rich, deep, and extended instruction. Thus, there is a

need for rich, deep, and extended instruction on some words and less robust, introductory instruction on others.

Teaching Word-Learning Strategies

A third approach to helping students increase their vocabularies is to teach word-learning strategies. One widely recommended strategy is that of using word parts to unlock the meanings of unknown words, and doing so is well-supported by research (Baumann, Font, Edwards, & Boland, 2005; Carlyle, 2007). If students can use their knowledge of prefixes, suffixes, and roots to recognize and understand the various members of word families—for example *indicate*, *indicates*, *indicated*, *indicating*, *indication*, and *indicator*—the number of individual words they need to learn is significantly reduced. Using context to infer word meanings is another widely recommended strategy. As Sternberg (1987) has forcefully pointed out, “Most vocabulary is learned from context.” If we can improve students’ abilities to use context to glean word meanings, they will markedly increase their vocabularies. Using the dictionary and similar reference tools is a third recommended approach, and many students need assistance in more effectively using these tools (Graves, 2006; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). Dealing with multiword units is another task ELLs need to master. Finally, for Spanish-speaking ELLs and others whose native language shares etymological roots with English, learning to use cognate knowledge can be a powerful word-learning strategy (August et al., 2005; Bravo, Hiebert, & Pearson, 2007; Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005).

Fostering Word Consciousness

The last component of the four-part program is fostering word consciousness. The term *word consciousness* refers to an awareness of and interest in words and their meanings. Word consciousness involves both a cognitive and an affective stance toward words and integrates metacognition about words, motivation to learn words, and a deep and lasting interest in words (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2008; Scott, Skobel, & Wells, 2008).

Students who are word conscious are aware of the words around them—those they read and hear and those they write and speak. This awareness involves an appreciation of the power of words, an understanding of why certain words are used instead of others, and a sense of the words that could be used in place of those selected by a writer or speaker. It also involves, as Scott and Nagy (2004) emphasize, recognition of the communicative power of words, of the differences between spoken and written language, and of the particular importance of word choice in written language. And it involves an interest in learning and using new words and becoming more skillful and precise in word usage.

With something like 50,000 words to learn and with most of this word learning taking place incidentally as students are reading and listening, a positive disposition toward word learning is crucial. Word consciousness exists at many levels of complexity and sophistication, and can and should be fostered among preschoolers as well as among students in and beyond high school.

THE LIKELY EFFECT OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ON VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION FOR ELLS

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCSS, 2010a) are a set of standards for K–12 students developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Governors Association Center for Best Practices. The *Standards* are designed to define the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college or the workplace.

Although they leave room for local innovation and do not specify how teachers should teach, the *Standards* are very likely to have a profound effect on education in the United States. At the present time, 45 of the 50 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the *Standards*, and two consortia are developing tests that will assess students' mastery of them. The tests are expected to be widely used, and teachers, schools, and districts are expected to do their best to prepare students to succeed on them.

The question here is how the *Standards* will affect vocabulary instruction for ELLs. We believe that the answer is "markedly," and we see three features of them that are likely to bring about this marked effect.

First, vocabulary is very prominently featured. Vocabulary is referred to almost 200 times in the *Standards*. It is included at all grade levels and in all strands of the document: in reading, in writing, in speaking and listening, and in language. And it is included in both the English Language Arts section and in the Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technology section.

Second, one central purpose of the *Standards* is to ensure that all students, regardless of where they live and go to school or their linguistic backgrounds, develop the knowledge and skills specified. Regarding their application to ELLs, the *Standards* specifically state that while it is "beyond the scope of the *Standards* to define the full range of supports appropriate for English language learners . . . , all students must have the opportunity to learn and meet the same high standards."

Third, another central purpose of the *Standards* is to make education more rigorous. A large part of this rigor is to be achieved by using more canonical texts, more complex texts, and more informational texts. All this means texts with more challenging vocabulary—vocabulary that will require significant scaffolding for many ELLs.

In addition to considering the *Common Core Standards*, it is also important to consider the *Pre K–12 English Language Proficiency Standards*, which were published by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in 2006. While the *Common Core Standards* do not give specific attention to the needs of ELLs, the *TESOL Standards* were developed specifically for ELLs. As noted on the TESOL website—www.tesol.org—the standards "were developed through a collaborative process involving hundreds of ESL teachers, researchers, administrators, and language arts specialists . . . [to] provide national coherence for students and the educators who serve them." As the website further indicates, the standards "acknowledge the central role of language in the achievement of content and highlight the learning styles and particular instructional and assessment needs of learners who are still developing proficiency in English." These standards are quite detailed and provide information on five curricular areas (social/intercultural inter-

actions, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies), five grade-level clusters (PreK–K, 1–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 9–12), five language proficiency levels (starting, emerging, developing, expanding, and bridging), and four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

AN OVERVIEW OF THIS BOOK

This opening chapter has discussed the importance of vocabulary for ELLs, noted the huge number of words to be learned and the fact that many ELLs' vocabularies are considerably smaller than those of their native English-speaking peers, and briefly described the four-part program that is described in detail in this book. The remainder of the book consists of six chapters, each of which is briefly described below.

Chapter 2, "Learning Words in a Second Language," begins with a discussion of the vocabulary learning task ELLs face; moves to a discussion of the role of individual, home, school, and instructional context in developing English vocabulary in ELLs; and concludes with a discussion of effective vocabulary instruction. The discussion of effective instruction includes information on providing rich and varied language experiences, teaching individual words, teaching word-learning strategies, fostering word consciousness, and important considerations for ELLs.

Chapter 3, "Providing Rich and Varied Language Experiences," deals with the first part of the four-part program. The first section of the chapter stresses the importance of promoting incidental word learning and discusses ways of doing so through listening, discussion, reading, and writing. The second section describes ways of directly building children's oral vocabularies using shared book reading—a procedure that is particularly useful for building the oral vocabularies of primary-grade ELLs and older ELLs who enter school with much smaller vocabularies than their English-only peers.

Chapter 4, "Teaching Individual Words," describes the second part of the four-part program. The first section of the chapter discusses foundational issues for ELLs, such as the number of words they must learn, levels of word knowledge, the various word-learning tasks that different words represent, identifying and selecting vocabulary to teach, and some principles of vocabulary instruction. The second and much longer section presents detailed descriptions of specific procedures for providing introductory instruction, stronger and more powerful instruction, and repetition and review.

Chapter 5, "Teaching Word-Learning Strategies," describes the third part of the program. This chapter describes powerful procedures for teaching ELLs to use word parts, context, cognates, and the dictionary in learning English words. It also discusses dealing with multiword units, describes strategies students can use in dealing with unknown words, suggests some personal approaches students can take to building their vocabularies, and considers when word-learning strategies should be taught.

Chapter 6, "Promoting Word Consciousness," deals with the fourth and final part of the program. This chapter describes various approaches to get ELLs interested and excited about words. The approaches include creating a word-rich

environment, recognizing and promoting adept diction, promoting word play, fostering word consciousness through writing, involving students in original investigations, and teaching students about words.

Chapter 7, “Empirically Validated Vocabulary Programs for English Language Learners,” describes four programs of vocabulary instruction for ELLs that have been evaluated in formal studies. Particular attention is given to how the methods build on what we know about effective first-language vocabulary instruction and highlight modifications that appear to benefit ELLs.

The book concludes with a list of children’s literature cited, a list of references, and a detailed index.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

There are, of course, myriad other sources of information on teaching ELLs. Here we highlight four of these other sources, our four co-publishers: The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), the International Reading Association (IRA), Teachers College Press, and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

CAL (www.cal.org) is a private, nonprofit professional organization that “provides a range of research-based information, tools, and resources related to language and culture.” Their catalog currently lists over 200 publications on topics related to language education, linguistics, policy, and cultural education. While many of these are text-based, CAL publications also include audios, videos, software, and CDs. Additionally, CAL personnel “conduct research, develop instructional materials and language tests, provide technical assistance and professional development, conduct needs assessment and program evaluations, and disseminate information and resources related to language and culture.”

IRA (www.reading.org) is a nonprofit professional organization dedicated to “improving the quality of reading instruction, disseminating research and information about reading, [and] encouraging the lifetime habit of reading.” Their catalog currently lists over 150 books, brochures, and videos on topics relating to reading and literacy more generally, including a number of publications focusing on English language learners. IRA also holds an annual conference, as well as regional and state conferences, and publishes *The Reading Teacher* (a journal for elementary teachers), *The Journal of Adolescent Literacy*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*.

Teachers College Press (www.tpress.com) is a university press that currently publishes well over 500 books dealing with a wide variety of educational topics. Teachers College Press books seek to “expand the dialogue between theory and practice” by, for example, “looking at education, learning, and service in diverse ways” and “providing substantive resources for all of the participants in the educational process” (for example, teachers, teacher educators, researchers, administrators, parents, and students). Included in their catalog are books on English language learners and a series of books on language and literacy.

TESOL (www.tesol.org) is a professional organization whose mission is to “advance professional expertise in English language teaching and learning for

speakers of other languages worldwide.” Their catalog currently includes over 100 books on a range of topics of interest to English language teaching professionals. TESOL also holds an annual convention and publishes *TESOL Quarterly* (a print journal for teachers and researchers), *TESOL Journal* (a practitioner-oriented electronic journal), position statements on various issues related to language learning, and the PreK–12 English Language Proficiency standards we described previously, as well as several other sets of standards.