

General Suggestions for Vocabulary Development and Development of Meaning Associations at School

1. Use basal readers or listings of the most frequent words to choose words at the student's grade or linguistic level.

- Teach the vocabulary within a story or unit approach rather than out of context in listings. Retention is low when the words are taught in random groupings. If the words are taught within stories the student may be asked to "make-up" a definition for the words and to use them in more than one context or sense.

Example: Suppose the word is "shimmering" and the sentence in the story is "The moonlight was shimmering on the lake". The teacher may discuss other uses of the word, such as "The lady's earring was shimmering in the sunlight."

- Multiple meanings should be discussed and words used in their many senses.

Example: Suppose the word is "ease".

Multiple meanings: "I did it with ease."
"I eased into the water."
"This should ease the pain."

- Include idiomatic or metaphorical meanings also.

Example: Suppose the word is "ear". An ear may refer to the "ear on the side of your head" or an "ear of corn" but can also be used in figurative senses, such as "He has an ear for music" or "I'm all ears".

- If the words are taught within a unit approach or thematic units, a number of units may be taught and then connections between these specified.

Example: Farm vocabulary with a unit on growing food may be taught. This can be followed by a unit on grocery stores and then one on home management for foods. Then the connections between all of these may be taught. In this way, you are teaching a semantic network within each unit and the larger one "food" (the subordinate). These procedures are also useful for developing general knowledge.

2. Students should also be taught to use context to discover the meaning of words, multiple meanings, or differences in shades of meaning.

Example: Suppose the word "cat" is being used in different senses.

"I have a cat at home." (One thinks of a domestic cat.)
"It was a ferocious cat." (One thinks of a jungle cat or wildcat.)
"He was a cool cat." (One thinks of the figurative sense and thinks of a man who is coy and has low affect.)

The meaning of a word and indeed a whole sentence may be changed as the result of further context processing.

Example: "All's terrible punch has brought many a big man to his knees; therefore, I will never drink that awful liquor again."

3. You may also use the "communication game" where the student describes everything he can about an object, picture, or word without the teacher being able to see the object or picture or know the word. This will increase full meaning of words.
4. Work with teaching superordinate and subordinate classification will also be useful.

Example: Pictures of animals can be categorized into jungle, farm, forest, domestic, etc. A new category of "bird" may also be made by resorting the parrot from the jungle, the owl from the forest, the love bird from the domestic category, the chicken from the farm, etc. into a new category.

Work with opposites (antonyms) and words that mean the same (synonyms) may be useful.

5. Multiple and figurative meanings may be taught by using a thesaurus (including computer word processing programs), joke books, riddle books, and materials used for Language Arts Programs or Language Intervention.

Source: **GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE** by Dr. Genese Warr-Leeper, Western University, Ontario