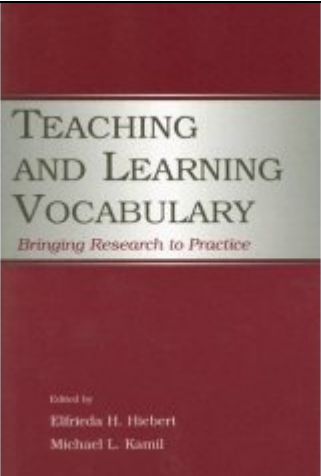




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<p><b><i>Teaching and Learning Vocabulary:  Bringing Research to Practice</i></b>  <b>Edited by Elfrieda H. Hiebert &amp; Michael  L. Kamil (2005)</b>  <b>Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associa</b>  <b>Pp. x + 273</b>  <b>ISBN: 0-8058-5286-7</b>  <b>Cost: \$39.95</b></p> <p><i>Reviewed by Evan T. Ortlieb  Valdosta State University</i></p>	
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*Teaching and Learning Vocabulary: Bringing Research to Practice* aims to detail how vocabulary is an essential element in the comprehension of text. Even though vocabulary instruction was one of the five major areas addressed by the National Reading Panel, issues related to effectively teaching vocabulary at various grade levels are still very much in debate. The challenges that vocabulary instruction present are numerous; thus, the book is segmented into three unique sections. The text is geared towards all inquirers, especially graduate students, reading specialists, college faculty members, researchers, and even curriculum directors who could gain relevant information and insight from this composite of stellar authors.

**Part I** discusses how words are taught and learned. One notion, in particular, that is addressed is that vocabulary instruction must have long term, comprehensive goals since students continually develop their word knowledge. It is essential for long-term growth given that vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension have complex causal relationships. To bring these concepts forward, four separate hypotheses are presented including the instrumentalist, knowledge, aptitude, and access propositions to specify the direct, indirect, and reciprocal effects vocabulary knowledge has on overall reading comprehension. Since prior knowledge affects how well students comprehend texts and thus infer new word meanings, it must be directly considered when publishing companies are creating informative classroom manuscripts.

Various authors suggest that opportunities must be provided for students to make progress in vocabulary acquisition, since the bulk of vocabulary learning occurs from incidental exposure to language (Sternberg, 1987). Allowing students of all ages to conduct independent reading as well as listening to read alouds are effective methods of

increasing the volume of text introduced to students—a critical aspect of verbal intelligence (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991). Explicit vocabulary word instruction is also recommended so that reading can be enjoyable and meaningful; students should be introduced to a word's meaning prior to reading it in text, especially at the early elementary grade levels.

The articles substantiate evidence that students must be exposed to vocabulary words seven to twelve times before they have ownership and can actively utilize these in their communication. Taking many forms, vocabulary instruction must contain more than the typical pull out ten words and give definitions for each. One explicit instructional model of effective vocabulary instruction calls for the slow release of teacher-directed instruction towards independent practice of determining word meaning through identifying word-parts and using context clues.

**Part II** is comprised of five chapters that focus on instruction and interventions for vocabulary enhancement to learners at all grade levels. These interventions are quite pertinent in classrooms when considering that the gap in word knowledge between low-achieving and high-achieving children widens over time. In particular, significant numbers of English-Language Learners do not possess the skills to increase their vocabulary acquisition; yet, improvement through explicit instruction of root words, cognates, and affixes can be achieved.

The quantity and quality of daily interaction with teachers impact vocabulary learning. Fostering time to develop student-teacher relationships gives students opportunities for rich verbal discussion, a significant step towards emergent literacy growth. Specific studies were conducted by authors to test vocabulary practices being used in elementary/middle school classrooms. Those approaches which yielded the best results were comprehensive in form, offering support to students' linguistic needs while targeting vocabulary development throughout their daily instruction.

Research on vocabulary instruction states the importance of a multifaceted approach. Graves (2000) identifies four areas in particular that have been empirically correlated with effective vocabulary programs, including 1) wide-ranging exposure to language through engaging in independent reading, 2) specific word instruction, 3) word-learning strategy instruction, and 4) promoting word consciousness within students. The authors restate the importance of teaching both word parts and the usage of context clues to predict word meaning within any vocabulary curriculum. In addition, sample lessons and teaching charts depict real-world scenarios for the reader to gain a better sense of how these theoretical notions would play out in the classroom. Ultimately, teachers have the final judgment about their students' prior knowledge, previous experiences, and skill level; thus, effective vocabulary programs are those that are suited to the context of each class.

**Part III** presents numerous theories of how to select appropriate words for direct vocabulary instruction. A three-tiered approach is described in that common words (Tier 1) are mostly known by students already, whereas the subject-specific or rare words

(Tier 3) will not enhance the overall reading comprehension of students since they are not easily transferred. This is the reasoning for direct instruction of sophisticated high-frequency words (Tier 2) like coincidence, absurd, or industrious. This leveled approach to vocabulary instruction is established by considering the utility, instructional potential, and conceptual understanding of a given word. If instruction including activities is centered on Tier 2 words, students could build their vocabularies with rich language useful throughout their life encounters.

Regardless of the reading curriculum, vocabulary instruction must be an integral part of teaching along with reading, discussing, and learning from literature. Utilizing clusters or groups of words according to semantic categories is one of the fundamental methods to enhance the number of words learned. Many theoretical and practical ideas are presented for policy makers, administrators, and classroom teachers to take into consideration when reflecting on their own strategies for students to effectively acquire vocabulary knowledge.

*Teaching and Learning Vocabulary: Bringing Research to Practice* is an eye-opening account into the specific procedures classroom teachers use that provide students opportunities to expand their vocabulary knowledge. Delving into vocabulary instruction is not a simple task, as many of the authors admit, yet it is crucial to develop a better understanding of how vocabulary words should be addressed by classroom teachers. These authors provide the reader with valuable accounts of empirically based vocabulary instructional techniques, many of which are experimental. Through suggesting areas for further research, readers are encouraged to develop their own investigations to continue the body of literature on vocabulary instruction throughout all levels of education, so that more is known about vocabulary acquisition and its affect on reading comprehension.

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