

Vocabulary Development

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It is not surprising that vocabulary is a learning tool that allows us to access conceptual knowledge. It is not surprising either that knowledge and richness provided by vocabulary pave the way to understanding or that the meaning of a word is determined by the context.

This collection of 9 essays, written between 2018 and 2019 and published in the journal “Education Sciences”, introduces new paradigms of theoretical reflection and likewise highlights innovative teaching practices. From a theoretical view, the complexity of the matter focuses on the continuum from word knowledge to its absence. As the authors point out in the Preface: “Readers who know a word in its fullest sense can associate experiences and concepts with it and continue the life-long process of word learning”. The Special Issue Vocabulary Development is edited

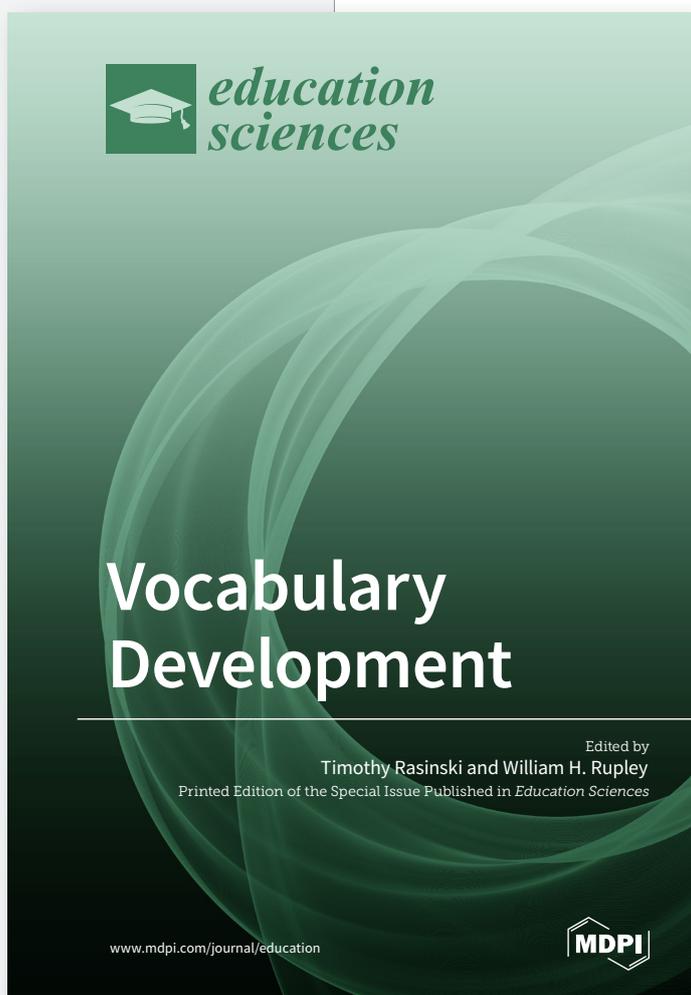
by distinguished experts in the field, that are also the authors of the Preface: Timothy Rasinski and William H. Rupley.

Timothy Rasinski is Professor of Literacy Education at the Kent State University and director of its award winning reading clinic; William H. Rupley is Professor, Distinguished Research Fellow, and a Regents Scholar in the department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture, College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University and Editor-in-Chief of “Reading Psychology: An International Journal”. We are pleased to publish, for divulgation purposes, the Preface to this Issue and sincerely thank the authors for allowing us to reprint it (Note of the Italian Editor).

Preface

Vocabulary knowledge has long been recognized as an essential component of reading comprehension and is a contributing factor for using reading as means of learning.

Vocabulary can and does impact meaningful comprehension of text



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for struggling through accomplished readers. Simply put, readers who know the meaning to the words they encounter when reading a text are more likely to comprehend that text; readers with large vocabularies tend to be more proficient readers. Therefore, vocabulary emphasis should be a major feature of every reading instruction program. Vocabulary can be thought of as hooks for background knowledge, concepts about the world, understanding discipline content, integration of new learning with what is known and representation of abstract understandings. Simply stated, the breadth and depth of our vocabulary enables the interaction with and the comprehension of text. As you read the following chapters of this book, you probably will encounter words that are either new to you or different in meaning from those with which you are familiar. You may figure out the meaning of the word by using the context, because it is the context in which words appear that determine their meaning. For example, the word *set* has 464 definitions in the Oxford English Dictionary. Each definition is dependent upon context: I will set the glass on the table. I am all set to go. I can only play one set of tennis. Thus, the relationship between getting meaning from text and vocabulary is a shared one. Vocabulary growth is a partial outcome of comprehending what is read and comprehension capabilities are inextricably bound with knowledge of word meaning in context. Words for which readers know the meaning in context represent the concepts and informational knowledge available to them to make sense of what they read. Enhancement and growth of vocabulary knowledge facilitates the reader's processing of text and engagement with the author's writing. Through such engagement, readers can formulate and validate concepts, meaning, and new learnings. This fabric of comprehension is a result of weaving together the shared vocabulary that forms the experiences of author and reader.

Growth in word knowledge is a continuum from no knowledge; to a gist level of knowing; such as knowing that *bruhaha* refers to some sort of unrest; to a narrow contextual grasp of meaning; to a rich, decontextualized level of word meaning. Definitional knowledge is a narrow form of word knowledge that at the outset of comprehending its meaning is limited by how it is defined within a resource such as a dictionary. However, although such resources are of minimal help in understanding the word and all its derivations, definitional knowledge of words has potential to ripen into knowing such words learned through definitional examples contribute to text cohesiveness in multiple text encounters. Competent readers construct meaning as they read and use context to grasp the meaning of unknown words as they are encountered by using their knowledge of language structure integrated with their experiences and background knowledge. Experiences with language and concepts facilitates the growth, refinement, and concrete construction of new vocabulary knowledge.

The direct implication for reading instruction is that to increase learners' vocabularies they must encounter new words in both spoken and written language, facilitating their abilities to construct meaning for new words representative of their background knowledge.

In the classroom, it is our view that vocabulary learning should include both direct/explicit instruction and opportunities for incidental learning. Both types of learning need to provide practice and application of the new words in reading, speaking and writing. We are not referring to instructional practices that require rote memorization and meaningless construction of written sentences using the word. Such practices limit a learners' developing any cognitive connection with the value of learning the words' meanings. Learning words' meaning within the context of reading text, writing text, and understanding oral language makes such learning functionally important to the learners and will promote new word learning in both narrative and disciplinary texts.

Expanding students' experiential and conceptual backgrounds leads to furthering developing and

increasing their knowledge of words. Meaning vocabulary is a salient factor in practice and application of word recognition strategies, fluency and prosody, comprehension and ultimately learning. Readers who know a word in its fullest sense can associate experiences and concepts with it and continue the life-long process of word learning.

This chapters in this volume offer new insights into vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary teaching. Topics range from a presentation of theories of vocabulary that guide instruction, to features of words that affect vocabulary difficulty, to innovative methods and approaches for teaching vocabulary. Particular emphasis is placed on teaching academic and discipline-related words that are critical to success in content area learning. Our hope for this volume is that it may spark a renewed interest in research into vocabulary and vocabulary instruction and move toward making vocabulary instruction an even more integral part of all literacy and disciplinary instruction.

Timothy Rasinski, William H. Rupley
Special Issue Editors

* Timothy Rasinski is a professor of literacy education at Kent State University and director of its award winning reading clinic. He also holds the Rebecca Tolle and Burton W. Gorman Endowed Chair in Educational Leadership. Tim has written over 200 articles and has authored, co-authored or edited over 50 books or curriculum programs on reading education. He is author of the best selling books on reading fluency *The Fluent Reader* and *The Megabook of Fluency*. Tim's scholarly interests include reading fluency and word study, reading in the elementary and middle grades, and readers who struggle. His research on reading has been cited by the National Reading Panel and has been published in journals such as "Reading Research Quarterly", "The Reading Teacher", "Reading Psychology", and "The Journal of Educational Research". Tim is the first author of the fluency chapter for the *Handbook of Reading Research, Volume IV*. Tim served a three year term on the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association and was co-editor of "The Reading Teacher", the world's most widely read journal of literacy education. He has also served as co-editor of the "Journal of Literacy Research". Rasinski is past-president of the College Reading Association and he has won the A. B. Herr and Laureate Awards from the College Reading Association for his scholarly contributions to literacy education. In 2010 Tim was elected to the International Reading Hall of Fame. Prior to coming to Kent State Tim taught literacy education at the University of Georgia. He taught for several years as an elementary and middle school classroom and Title I teacher in Omaha, Nebraska.

Professional Development Areas of Expertise

- Working with Struggling Readers
- Developing Foundational Reading Skills in Young Readers
- Effective Teaching of Phonics and Word Study
- Teaching Fluency: The Neglected but Critical Goal of the Reading Curriculum
- Parental Involvement in Reading

** William H. Rupley, Professor, Distinguish Research Fellow, and a Regents Scholar in the department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture, College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University. Professor Rupley is the Editor-in-Chief of "Reading Psychology: An International Journal".

Much of his research has used randomized designs to explore the effects of teachers' instructional strategies on students' reading achievement and structural equation modeling and canonical analyses to explore cognitive and conceptual components of reading acquisition in elementary students.

He has been either the principal or co-principal investigator for over five million dollars in federal and state professional development and teacher training grants since 2000. He has published more than 150 articles and columns in both application and research journals and is coauthor of four books on reading instruction and reading assessment. Professor Rupley teaches both undergraduate and graduate classes in literacy and literacy language in STEM.

