



Speech & Language Therapy Service
#banter4bairns

Using Robust Vocabulary Instruction in the Classroom

Hints and tips taken from “Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction. Second Edition” Beck, I.L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2013)



Why Vocabulary? What the research tells us

- Oral language skills are an important predictor of attainment
- Oral vocabulary is important in enabling children to learn to read (Pullen, Tuckwiller, Konold, Maynard & Coyne, 2010).
- It is well documented that the vocabulary gap is widening.
- Research has shown that attending school has little effect on vocabulary growth (Biemiller and Boote, 2006).
- Developing oral language builds secure foundation for literacy and can have positive impact on reading comprehension (Fricke et al., 2013).



Why focus on vocabulary?

- It's not so easy to learn word meanings from written context
- Children require multiple encounters of a word to 'learn it'
- Stages of word knowledge:

Stage 1: No Knowledge

Child has never seen the word before

Stage 2: Heard it, but don't know it

Child has a general 'sense' of the word

Stage 3: Recognises it within a narrow context, and has some knowledge of it. Child knows 'it has something to do with...'

Stage 4: Knows it well

Child has a rich, decontextualised knowledge of the word



The idea behind 'Tier 2 words'

- They are important and useful
- Likely to appear frequently in a variety of contexts/texts
- There is potential to 'instruct' them

Think! Do the children already have a way of expressing the concept represented by the word?



Using Robust Vocabulary Instruction in Practice

- Select a set of tier 2 words
- Develop ‘student friendly explanations’
- Create some brief activities that will initiate their engagement with the words and their meaning

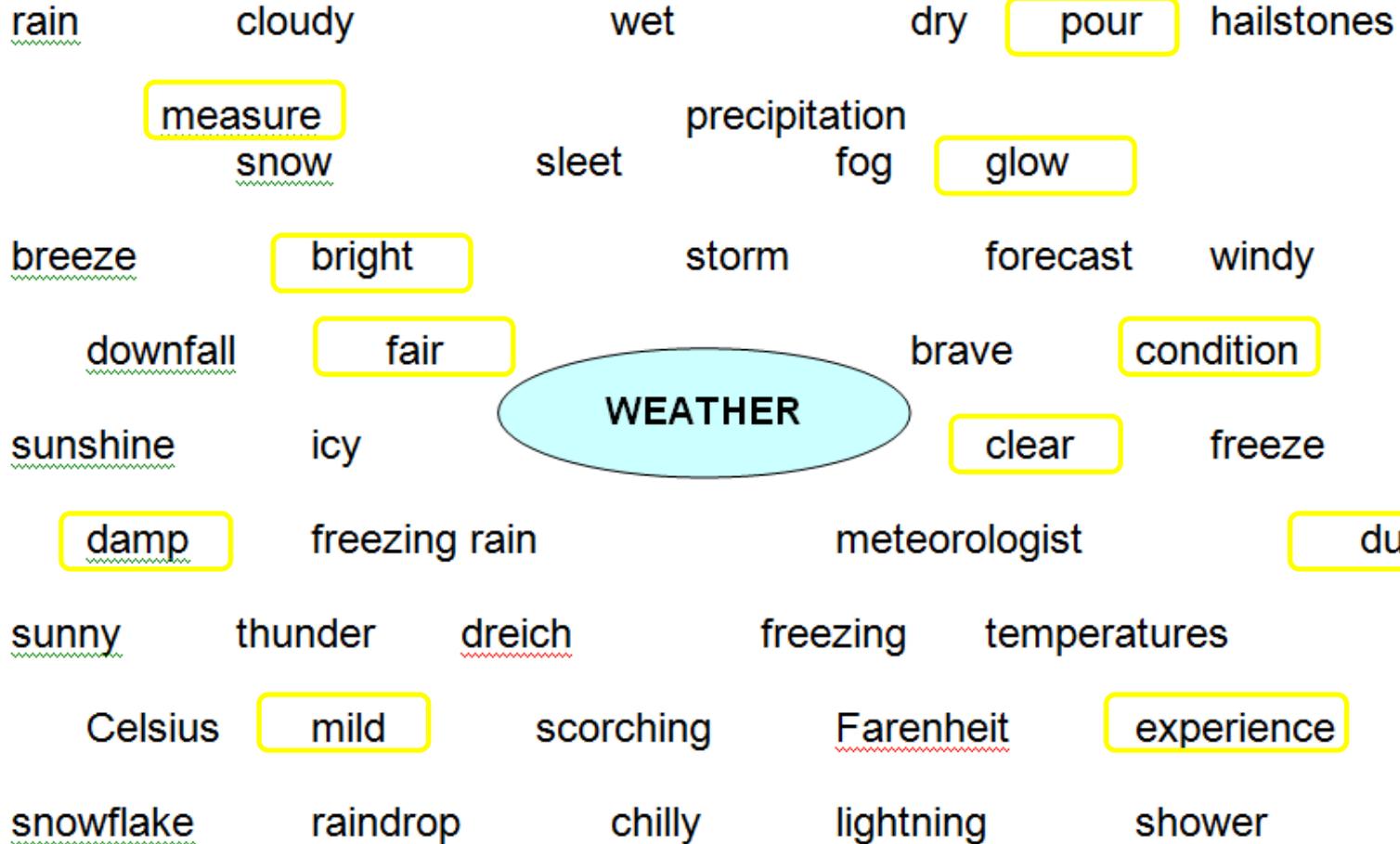


Selecting 'Tier 2 words'

- Remember: important & useful, moveable, provide extra specificity, potential to instruct.
- Children can already express the concept represented by the word
- Activity



rain cloudy wet dry pour hailstones
measure precipitation
snow sleet fog glow
breeze bright storm forecast windy
downfall fair brave condition
sunshine icy **WEATHER** clear freeze
damp freezing rain meteorologist dull
sunny thunder dreich freezing temperatures
Celsius mild scorching Fahrenheit experience
snowflake raindrop chilly lightning shower





Practical Activity

- Spend 5 minutes skim reading a part of the book you have brought along....
- Identify as many tier 2 words as you can
- Think about your rationale



When to start?

- With young children:
 - Choose words that aren't too difficult to explain
 - Complete activities after a story is read
- With older children:
 - Instruct words before a text is read (this will alleviate any comprehension difficulties)
 - Or, as the word is encountered



How many words?

- Only words that might have the potential to disrupt comprehension of major ideas
- Infants: sets of 3 over a period of a week
- P3-P5/6: sets of 5 over a period of a week
- P7: sets of 7 words over a period of a week



Things to avoid!

- Asking “who can tell me what X means?”
 - Encourages guessing
 - Wastes time
 - Students may remember incorrect word associations
- Definitions

Example: Exotic

Dictionary definition:
“foreign; strange; not native”

Difficult to draw a relationship between the 3 words

Example:
Conspicuous

Dictionary definition:
“easily seen”

Difficult to distinguish from ‘visible’

Example: Devious

Dictionary definition:
“straying from the right course; not straightforward”

Likely to be interpreted in a concrete way

Example: Typical

Dictionary definition:
“being a type”



It's better to:

- Explain a word's meaning than provide a definition
- Develop student friendly explanations
 - Capture the essence of the word and how it is typically used
 - Explain the meaning in everyday language
 - Contain the words someone, something and/or describes



Developing Student Friendly Definitions

- Dull: if you describe **someone** or **something** as dull, you mean they are not interesting or exciting
- Activity
 - Choose a word
 - Talk me through what to do



Implementing in the class

- Share the definitions
- Create activities to provide opportunities for the children to engage with the words
 - Michelle will support with this every week

Does delicate mean something small and easily broken or something big and heavy?

If a woman bought a fine lacy dress, you could say “it is delicate”. When else might you talk about something being delicate?

A beautiful butterfly would be.....

Which word does breakable make you think of? Why?

The vase was so delicate that.....

Charades

Up-leveiling sentences



Activity

- Choose a word
 - What activities could we do?



Measuring

- Depends what you want to improve
 - Speak to me
- It might be...
 - Number of tier 2 words during 15 minute daily write
 - Tallying of words used in their spoken vocabulary
 - Chart on the wall each week (masters available)

The Plan!

- Michelle & Mhairi will be supporting you, 3 sessions per week
- Michelle will support you in creating and making activities – she will make things for you!
- Shared resource base so that you can amend activities saving teacher prep time – Allstaff
- Mhairi & Michelle supporting data collection and analysis
- Most of all, enjoy it and have fun!