

Vocabulary Assessment

Measuring the impact of instruction

Resources: *Not all are specifically cited within this document.*

Archer, A. L. (2011, July). *Dynamic vocabulary instruction in secondary classrooms (slides 105-108)*. Retrieved from

<http://adolescentlitpln.wikispaces.com/file/view/Secondary+Vocabulary+revised+Jan2010.pdf>

Dougherty Stahl, K.A., & Bravo, M.A. (2010, April). Contemporary classroom vocabulary assessment for content areas. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(7), 566–578. Retrieved from

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/41555/>.

Pearson, D. P., Hiebert, E.H., Kamil, M. (2007, April/May/June). Vocabulary assessment: What we know and what we need to learn. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 42(2) 282-296.

REL Central. (2012, October). *Ask-a-REL response: "What does the research say about assessment development for vocabulary."* Marzano Research, (personal communication, October 4, 2012).

Assessment Items

What does the research say about assessment development for vocabulary?

Current research and theory in vocabulary assessment holds that vocabulary development occurs in a continuum, or a series of stages. As a result, assessment should be designed not to determine whether or not a student “knows” a word, but to determine the current stage of a student’s understanding of that word.

Vocabulary is multidimensional, incremental, context-dependent, and develops over a lifetime (National Reading Panel, 2000). An individual’s word knowledge falls along a continuum, including the following stages (Beck, McKeown, and Omanson, as cited in Dougherty Stahl and Bravo, 2000).

1. No knowledge of a word
2. Narrow but context-bound understanding of a word
3. Knowledge of a word, but not being able to recall it readily to use it
4. Decontextualized knowledge of a word’s meaning, relationship to other words, and extensions to metaphorical uses

Scott, Hoover, Flinsbach, and Vevea (2008) indicated that there were three critical principles of vocabulary development that should be considered as a part of vocabulary assessment.

1. *Incrementality*: Mastering a new word is an incremental process growing over time and with frequent exposure to a word.
2. *Multidimensionality*: Word knowledge requires more than just knowing the meaning of the word. Knowledge incorporates knowing that not all words are considered equal, syntactic awareness (knowing the part of speech to which the word belongs), and knowing the word as a part of its larger family. Dougherty Stahl, and Bravo (2000) add that multidimensionality also involves understanding that a term has more than one meaning and usage, and has various lexical relationships with other words.
3. *Opportunity to learn*: Tested vocabulary words should relate to classroom content to increase number of exposures and not be chosen arbitrarily.

In summary, in order to adequately assess vocabulary knowledge, current approaches stress that assessment must take into account the varied and complex nature of vocabulary knowledge development and move beyond simply testing the definition of a word.

Assessment Items

Matching / Multiple Choice

- Students choose a best response from options provided.
- Use suggested item quality writing guidelines (e.g., NDE C4L Item Writing Guidelines).

The following article headline appears on an Internet page: “Hackers Anticipate Launch of Windows Vista in 2007.” What can you infer about the hackers described in this article?

- A. They are ignoring the launch of Windows Vista.
- B. They are fearful of the launch of Windows Vista.
- C. They look forward to the launch of Windows Vista.
- D. They are unconcerned about the launch of Windows Vista.

Adding Value

- design answer options to include examples, non-examples, context analysis and other nuances of word meaning (rather than simple definitions)
- include a student self-assessment of word knowledge
- follow up with questions that ask students to use the word or examine context

After the prize winners were announced, Stacy ran to console Meg. How do you think Meg had done on the contest?

Yes/No Items (Beck & McKeown, 2007)

- Students respond yes/no or true/false to each of four questions per word.
 - Two questions ask whether a presented meaning matches a given word (for example, “Does extraordinary mean very special?”) (Beck & McKeown, 2007)
 - Two questions ask students to judge whether a particular context illustrates a word’s meaning (for example, “Would it be extraordinary to see a monkey at a zoo?”).
- Can be scored per word (at least $\frac{3}{4}$ items per word correct = 1) or by counting each item separately

- Does diligent mean talented?
- Is a person described as diligent usually hard-working?
- If Jason was a diligent worker, would he come to work on time?
- If Jason was a diligent worker, would he procrastinate on projects?

- Under state capitalism, the central government would
- establish prices and wages?
 - allow the free market to set all prices and wages
 - subsidize important industries?
 - stay out of economic issues?

(in REL Central, 2012 & Archer, 2012)

Assessment Items

Examples / Non-examples

- Students identify examples and non-examples or generate examples.

Is each of the statements an example or non-example of the target word?

proclaim

- A woman refuses to talk to reporters about the election.
- A woman tells reporters which candidate won the election.

In a sentence or two, write an example of the target word.

(Archer, 2012)

Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS)

- Dougherty Stahl, K.A., & Bravo, M.A. (2010, April). Contemporary classroom vocabulary assessment for content areas. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(7), 566–578. Retrieved from <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/41555/>.
- VKS combines student self-reported knowledge of a word with a constructed response to demonstrate knowledge of the target word. Students self-identify their level of knowledge on a five-point scale..
 1. I don't remember having seen this word before.
 2. I have seen this word before, but I don't think I know what it means.
 3. I have seen this word before, and I think it means _____ (synonym or translation).
 4. I know this word. It means _____ (synonym or translation).
 5. I can use this word in a sentence: _____.
- Each question is assigned an increasing point value to earn up to 5 points per word.

“Any incorrect response in category 3 yields a score of 2 points for the total item even if the student attempted category 4 and category 5 unsuccessfully. If the sentence in category 5 demonstrates the correct meaning but the word is not used appropriately in the sentence context, a score of 3 is given. A score of 4 is given if the wrong grammatical form of the target word is used in the correct context. A score of 5 reflects semantically and grammatically correct use of the *target* word” (Dougherty Stahl & Bravo, 571).

(REL Central, 2012)

Assessment Items

Open-Ended

- Given the word, students provide a description of meaning and may also be prompted to provide a sentence using the word or examples.
- Using a simple rubric increases reliability and allows for comparison between pre and post tests.

Write a description of the word's meaning and provide an example or use in a meaningful sentence.

- 3 accurate description & meaningful use
- 2 partial description and/or use,
- 1 inaccurate, incomplete description
- 0 no evidence of understanding

Student Perceptions

- Students are prompted to identify their perceived understanding.

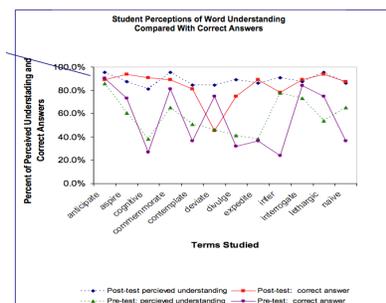
A - I know this word deeply, and I can use it accurately.
B - When I hear or read this word, I can figure out a general idea of its meaning.
C - I've seen this word before, but I don't know what it means.
D - I don't remember having ever seen this word.

- Students are asked to identify the strategies that helped them understand word meaning.

Which strategies were most helpful for you when learning these words/ concepts? (Choose all that apply)

- identifying examples & non-examples
- drawing a picture in your notes
- writing a definition in your own words
- vocabulary games (e.g., Taboo)

- These are not usually calculated into a score; rather they are compared, by word, against performance on other items testing understanding.



Item Type	Sample Using One of My Words
Multiple Choice / Matching	
Yes / No	
Examples / Non-Examples	
Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS)	
Open-Ended (meaning & use)	
Student Perceptions	

Item Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Multiple Choice / Matching		
Yes / No		
Examples / Non-Examples		
Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS)		
Open-Ended (meaning & use)		
Student Perceptions		