

LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE

It is well understood that academic success depends on learning to read well. And learning to read well depends on rich language knowledge - which presents unique challenges for English learners and others who have not acquired academic English.

Many English Learners:

- Achieve oral fluency in everyday language, yet...
- Lag in measures of academic success and tasks requiring academic language proficiency



Why is this the case?

Explicit English language instruction rarely continues beyond the intermediate level.

Many English learners with several years of schooling in the United States have acquired a great deal of English through experiences in school and community. They have sufficient language skills to appear fluent in English and may perform fairly well on tasks requiring non-academic uses of language. Yet, they often do poorly on academic tests or other tasks requiring the precise word choices or complex grammatical constructions. They have gained social/conversational English fluency, but are missing the academic language required in school. Teachers may not realize there is a gap between the language a student knows and what is required to succeed academically.

A lack of adequate progress in reading is not necessarily a sign that students have a language or reading disability, but often is the result of insufficient explicit instruction and abundant practice in the vocabulary and grammatical forms of English to be able to use them flexibly to communicate academic English.

Challenges

English Learners face a daunting task. They must gain a multi-faced knowledge of the English language as they learn grade level subject matter content.

- Phonology, rhythm, cadence
- Vocabulary (basic, general utility, low utility/content specific),
- Syntax (word order),
- Language forms (structures, verb tenses, grammar),
- Functions of language use for both social and academic purposes,
- Formal and informal discourse styles for speaking and writing, and
- Cultural contexts

Students learning English as a second language must learn every word and sentence combination native English speakers have spent thousands of hours internalizing during their early childhoods. This must be done in a condensed time frame, and often only during the hours a student is in school. Additionally, they must learn the language being taught in every subject area. This

includes the conceptual and concrete language taught not only in the current year, but also the foundational vocabulary taught in each previous year. Consider what it takes to learn abstract concepts like “plot,” ideas like “democracy,” techniques like “estimating” in a second language.

English also happens to be rich in idioms and figurative language. English Learners must learn both the literal and idiomatic meanings of hundreds of sayings and expressions English speakers use on a daily basis. The challenges are enormous, when learning terms like “off the record” or “tongue-in-cheek” which pepper everyday speech, literature and informational text. This requires English learners to learn both the literal and idiomatic meanings of hundreds of sayings and expressions native English-speakers use on a daily basis.

They must do this all the while competing with native-English speaking peers who are rapidly increasing their knowledge of the English language inside and outside the classroom and applying that knowledge to subject matter learning.

A Few Notes on Variations

How quickly and efficiently an English Learner progresses in acquiring and learning a second language depends on a number of factors, including his or her level of language and literacy development in the primary language, time in U.S. schools, type of instructional program, age, individual experiences and, most importantly, *quality of instruction*.

Students glean a great deal of English knowledge from daily experiences in the natural process of language learning. However, it is common to note a long-term English Learner who may have internalized certain complex verb forms, yet consistently misuse others and lack knowledge of precise vocabulary for fairly common objects, such as “countertop”, “skyscraper” or “pedal”.

Experience tells us that a student’s receptive and expressive language abilities are often at different levels. For example, a student’s ability to understand oral explanations and answer specific questions may far exceed his or her ability to fully express content understanding. Many students are able to express their thinking more clearly when speaking than when writing. Older English Learners whose first exposure to English was through formal instruction (possibly their home countries), but have had little exposure to everyday interactions in that language, may be more competent reading and writing English than speaking or understanding spoken language. But for the vast majority of English learners, exposure to everyday language oral proficiency develops more quickly than formal oral and written language.

Achieving full proficiency in English includes far more than mere fluency in conversation or everyday uses of language. It means students must know English well enough to be “fully competitive in academic uses of English with their age equivalent speaking peers”

Hakuta, 2000

Grounding Instruction: Comprehensible Delivery of Content Instruction

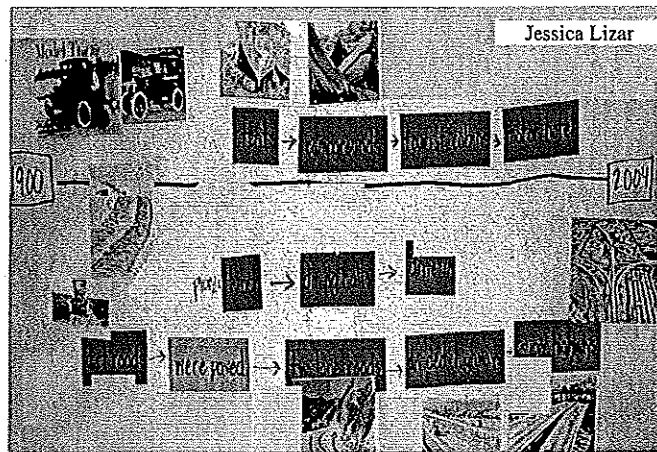
Effective instruction incorporates a range of strategies to scaffold instruction: whether grade-level content standards or ELD standards. In addition to carefully designed techniques to make content comprehensible, this can also include ad-hoc teaching at teachable moments and planned opportunities to practice needed language. The language of instruction is English. If possible, the primary language is used to preview/review lessons or provide clarification, and for some student-to-student interactions.

Below is an example from a 3rd grade Language Arts lesson about summarizing an informational piece about how car travel has changed over time.

Comprehension Task: Discuss changes in travel over the past century.

Instructional Strategies to make the content comprehensible include:

- Link to prior knowledge - our car travel experiences
- Use graphic organizers - 1900 to 2000 timeline
- Summarize key ideas - word card for each of three aspects of development
- Add visual support - pictures of old and new



This is essential for all instruction: reading, math, social studies, science, writing, and ELD. But by itself even the most thoughtful scaffolding for content instruction is not sufficient to ensure students know and *can use the language necessary to express their understanding of taught content.*

English Language Instruction for Content Learning

This occurs throughout the day as a horizontal slice of the curriculum, across all subject areas. Explicit language instruction is an investment of time to render content understandable to the student and ensure they have the language needed to construct and express their understanding of the concept.

To plan for English language support for content learning, analyze the language demands of the upcoming content lesson and determine what general vocabulary and sentence structures are essential for students to be able to respond orally and in writing.

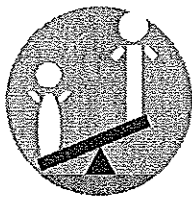
For example, before teaching a content lesson using the concept of cause and effect, it is helpful to teach students to use a structure they will be applying to the content, such as: *If... might/will.*

We recommend using a familiar or previously taught aspect of the topic to introduce new language patterns: *If I forget to water the plant, it might die; if an animal is deprived of water, it*

will die. In this way, English learners have the opportunity to become familiar with the language when they encounter it in the lesson.

This language instruction does not replace teaching any part of content lessons. Instead, it teaches English learners foundational vocabulary and the use of language patterns they may not know so that they are better equipped to understand and communicate their understanding of the lesson.

This English language instruction can be provided before and/or during the lesson and must include opportunities for students to practice the new language they will be using. Once the teacher has analyzed the language needs of the lesson, English language can also be woven throughout content instruction at the needed moment. The teacher can also use knowledge of students' primary language to bridge to English by identifying cognates, contrasting syntax, and so on whenever possible.

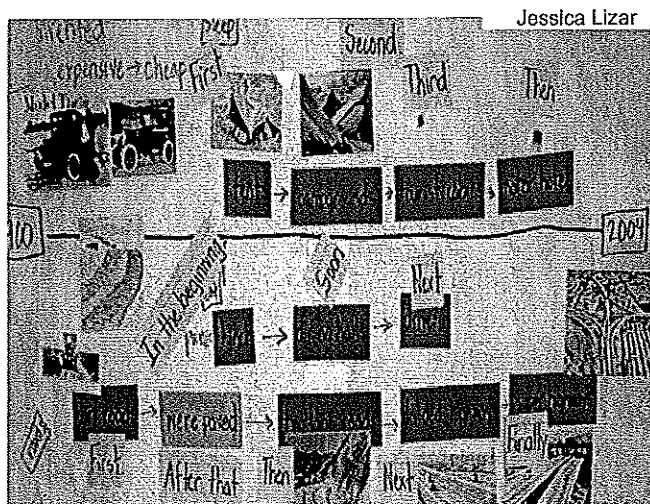


A seesaw can be a helpful metaphor for planning instruction. One learning demand should be in the “up” position at a time. For example, while teaching *new demanding language* for the content, use *familiar content* so students can focus on the language aspect and the demand of the content aspect is low. Then once the new language is more familiar, raise the demand on content learning (the familiar language is now a “low” cognitive demand). This way students can focus attention on one chunk of new learning at a time, then quickly apply it. This effectively develops “knowns” onto which they can map “unknowns.”

To continue with the example above, remember the comprehension task was to discuss changes in travel over the past century. In order to ensure students are able to use sentences with sequence words, the teacher infuses explicit language instruction.

English Language Instruction Objective: Teach and rehearse language for sequence using a familiar aspect of the topic to be applied to the content lesson.

Using a timeline to organize the content, the teacher may model adding sequence words to changes in simple sentences such as, *At first, people traveled on dirt road. After that, the roads were paved. Then there were two-lane roads. Next, there were divided highways. Finally, there were super highways.* After modeling and having students chorally practice, she gives students a chance to practice generating brief sentences using the content vocabulary with new language (sequence words).



Once these words are familiar, she teaches more advanced sentence patterns to communicate what they have learned more completely. They may learn a topic sentence and significant detail sentences, such as: *Car travel has changed over the past century in several (significant, important, etc.) ways. People used to _____. Then they _____. Now they _____.*

FUNCTIONS (COGNITIVE TASKS)

Functions are the tasks, or purposes, and uses of language (Halliday, 1973, Brown, 1994). That is, we use language to accomplish something in formal or informal settings, and for social or academic purposes.

Language functions are the cognitive tasks that drive us to connect thought and language. Taking Halliday's view that language is a "system of meanings" (Bloor and Bloor, 1995), we assert that teaching English learners how to use language for a variety of academic and non-academic purposes is both effective and rigorous. Language functions are used to express the cognition described in content standards.

Language functions are used on a continuum from simple to complex, orally (express opinion, participate in a discussion) and in writing (persuasion, description). They are determined by the situation and by the content concept. Many language functions have both everyday and academic applications while some, such as writing a lab report, are specific to academics. The language function determines the required language forms and sentence structures, in addition to informing text structure.

In this handbook, we focus attention on dominant functions that encompass the bulk of the cognitive tasks found in secondary content course work:

- Compare/Contrast
- Cause & Effect
- Description/Elaboration
- Problem/Solution or Proposition & Support
- Sequence

Very often, more than one function appears in a particular passage or text. Embedded in these dominant functions can be related functions, such as:

- Predict
- Describe
- State an opinion
- Draw conclusions

Common classroom tasks that call upon students to utilize various functions:

Proposition and Support	Description/Elaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Interpret a literary work◆ Defend a civic action◆ Debate a controversial issue◆ Support a hypothesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Analyze a character's appearance or behavior◆ Explain the components in a system◆ Preview the elements in a process◆ Provide concrete examples of an abstract idea
Sequencing	Comparison
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Narrate an autobiographical incident◆ Outline the steps in a process◆ Develop a historical timeline◆ Chronicle scientific observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Consider significance of shared traits in characters◆ Analyze treatment of theme across genres◆ Identify elements of differing approaches or theories◆ Evaluate opposing viewpoints

A THUMBNAIL LOOK AT COMMON FUNCTIONS

Content Function	Sample Tasks	Sample Ways to Show Relationships		
		Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced
Elaboration/ Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe attributes, qualities, characteristics and properties Explain relationship of objects in space 	<i>Has/have, is/are</i> <i>Next to, close to, above, under, behind</i>	<i>Usually, often</i> <i>Contain, consist, demonstrate</i> <i>Near, between, among, beside</i>	<i>Tend to</i> <i>Exhibit, associated with, defined by, consists of</i> <i>Adjacent, alongside, parallel to, in relation to</i>
Compare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and express how two or more things are similar and how they are different 	<i>Like</i> <i>Are the same because...</i> <i>Both</i> <i>___er, ___est</i>	<i>Just like</i> <i>Are similar because...</i> <i>Have in common</i> <i>Compared to</i>	<i>Just as</i> <i>Shared/common attributes</i> <i>By comparison</i>
Contrast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and express how two or more things are different 	<i>But, however</i> <i>Unlike</i> <i>___er than</i>	<i>In contrast</i> <i>On the other hand</i> <i>Differences between</i>	<i>Whereas</i> <i>As opposed to</i> <i>A distinction between...</i>
Identify Cause and Effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the cause of an outcome Express why something occurred 	<i>Because</i> <i>Because of</i> <i>So</i>	<i>As a result of</i> <i>Therefore</i> <i>If....then</i> <i>The cause was</i>	<i>Consequently, thus</i> <i>Due to</i> <i>This led to (caused)</i>
Proposition & Support Problem/Solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defend an opinion Explain reasoning Justify a position 	<i>I think/believe</i> <i>One reason that</i> <i>My (his, her) opinion</i> <i>My (his, her, our) idea</i>	<i>In my opinion</i> <i>Point of view</i> <i>Believes that</i> <i>In support of, against</i> <i>Provides evidence, make an argument</i>	<i>From the perspective of</i> <i>Take a stand</i> <i>Express the view</i> <i>Thesis, position, claim, statement</i>
Sequence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relate steps in a process Express time relationships and actions within a larger event 	<i>First, Second</i> <i>Next, Later, Then</i> <i>Before/ After</i>	<i>While, Now, Finally</i> <i>Earlier</i> <i>For the past</i>	<i>Prior to</i> <i>Previously</i> <i>Since</i> <i>Eventually</i> <i>Subsequently</i>
Summarize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express main ideas and significant details 	<i>The author (story) tells/says</i> <i>Important because</i>	<i>In summary</i> <i>Explains, discusses</i>	<i>Illustrates, mentions, concludes, explores, focuses on</i>



LANGUAGE TOOLS

Communicative competence depends on the integration of acquired language knowledge with proficient use of language forms and vocabulary appropriate to cognitive functions.

The acquisition of vocabulary, grammar rules, discourse rules, and other organizational competencies results in nothing if the learner cannot use those forms for the functional purpose of transmitting and receiving thoughts, ideas, and feelings between speaker and hearer or reader and writer. While forms are the outward manifestation of language, *functions are the realization of those forms* (Brown, 1994, p.231).

A fully proficient English speaker and writer needs a rich and varied knowledge of English. This includes knowing and being able to use multiple meaning words and idiomatic phrases and expressions. The proficient English speaker must also have internalized a multitude of language patterns and be able to navigate a range of syntactical structures.

To support students in acquiring this knowledge, we need clear guidance about what language to teach. The construction metaphor of “bricks” and “mortar” has been helpful in making these decisions. The “bricks” refer to the vocabulary specific to the content topic at hand; it is what we are thinking, talking, reading, and writing about.

Rich vocabulary knowledge (bricks)

Word knowledge is critical to comprehension and effective writing. As students develop English proficiency, the vocabulary they learn and practice becomes increasingly sophisticated, growing from words needed to discuss here-and-now, concrete and observable experiences at early stages, to past and future experiences at more intermediate levels, to events not in students’ experience and abstractions at the advanced levels.

Topic-specific vocabulary moves from:

- Basic words (rules, promise, water, air, city) to
- More specific general utility words and phrases (laws, pledge, liquid, gas, suburb) to
- Increasingly precise terms (judicial system, allegiance, properties, solid matter, rural community)

Some brick words are common, general utility and are used across multiple topics (*earthquake, temperature, consume, navigate, Arctic, snore*), while others are low utility words quite specific to a content topic, such as *photosynthesis, carburetor, and wingspan*.

When reading about global warming, topic specific brick vocabulary will include *carbon dioxide, greenhouse gases, and climate change*. Reading about American history calls for knowledge of *constitution, Mid-Atlantic States, taxation*, while studying biology calls for knowledge of *cell, membrane, nucleus*, etc. So we may teach:

Plant	Animal
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cell walls▪ Chloroplasts with chlorophyll▪ Regular shape (generally rectangular)▪ Large vacuoles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cell membrane▪ Nucleus▪ Cytoplasm with mitochondria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ No cell walls▪ No chloroplasts▪ Round or irregular shape▪ Small vacuoles (if any)

Understanding of Sentence Patterns (Mortar)

To continue with the construction metaphor, “mortar” is the functional language that is required to generate connected print and speech. It is grammar in action. It is what keeps us from speaking in single words and phrases.

Mortar words and phrases are the parts of the sentence that organize the bricks to express an intended meaning. Without the mortar, we have a list of vocabulary words (or a pile of bricks). Once we decide what we want to communicate, we use our knowledge of grammar and syntax to construct sentences and paragraphs that convey our meaning. We might use the above vocabulary to express understanding with:

Both plant and animal cells have a nucleus, however plant cells have chloroplasts and animal cells do not.

Plant and animal cells are similar because they both have a cell membrane, nucleus, and mitochondria. A difference is that plant cells usually have a regular shape, whereas animal cells usually have a very irregular shape.

The ability to put grammatical knowledge to use allows us to generate language. The “mortar” is the structure - or frame - of the sentence. It is the language that holds topic-specific words or “bricks” together in a way that enables us to express our thoughts on that topic.

We use language features and structures of English to create the organizational patterns for discourse, reading and writing, complex language, and cognitive processes. These structures are determined by need (the language function or purpose, plus the topic at hand), and students’ level of proficiency. Highly proficient English speakers are able to utilize them with agility. These tools include word knowledge and language features, subject/verb agreement, conjunctions to make complex and compound sentences, and word order (syntax).

Mastery of language and syntactical features allows students’ full participation in academics by enabling them to put ideas together in a wide range of ways.

This approach to language development draws on Long’s “Focus on Form” (1988), and does not practice isolated language features. Rather, it focuses on form within a meaning-based context (Doughty and Williams, 1998) and using communicative functions (e.g., using the past tense to describe what happened in a science experiment or historical event) relevant to academic purposes.

Native English speakers automatically use an extensive range of language structures. They have spent thousands of hours internalizing the workings of English, beginning at home and continuing throughout their school years. Proficient English-speakers rely on this broad scope of language knowledge to communicate.

English learners must accelerate their learning of how English works. This includes learning to use not only a multitude of words, but also a breadth of language patterns to communicate relationships between and among ideas. The intentional and purposeful teaching of language structures – the mortar – enables English Learners to internalize the patterns needed to express concepts, ideas and thinking.

As complexity of academic content increases, the learner must be able to know and use increasingly complex language structures. Consider these examples of *sequence*:

- ◆ First, oxygen goes in through the nose. It gets warmed up. Next, it goes through the trachea.
- ◆ The respiratory system delivers air to the body. Air first enters through the nose, then goes through the trachea,
- ◆ The respiratory system does several things to deliver air to the body. Air initially enters through the nose then it passes through the trachea.

LANGUAGE TEACHING: INCLUDING BOTH BRICKS AND MORTAR

A rich and varied knowledge of English is needed to become a fully proficient English speaker and writer. This includes knowing and being able to use multiple meaning words and idiomatic phrases and expressions. They must also have internalized knowledge of a multitude of language patterns utilizing accepted syntax.



Let's delve more specifically into what language to be taught. We have found the construction metaphor of "bricks" and "mortar" to be helpful. The "bricks" are the vocabulary words specific to the topic at hand; it is what we are thinking, talking, reading and writing about.

Some brick words are common, general utility and are used across multiple topics (*earthquake, temperature, jacket, raced, map, mouse, snoring*), while others are less commonly used, low utility words, such as *photosynthesis, carburetor, and wingspan*.

Topic specific vocabulary when reading Jack and the Beanstalk will include *bean, trade, and beanstalk*. Reading about California history calls for knowing *Native American, mission, and coastline*, while studying animal habitats calls for *habitat*, of course, and words like *adaptation, predator, and bobcat*.

To continue with our construction metaphor, **mortar** is the functional language that is required to generate connected speech. It is grammar in action. It is what keeps us from speaking in single words and phrases.

Mortar words and phrases are the parts of the sentence that organize the **bricks** to express an intended meaning. Without the **mortar**, we have a list of vocabulary words (or a pile of **bricks**). Once we decide what we want to communicate, we use our knowledge of grammar and syntax to construct sentences that convey our meaning.

For example, in order to generate language to express their understanding of main events in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, students need to be able to construct sentences with subject/verb/object using past tense and adverbs:

Jack traded the family cow for magic beans.
Subject past tense verb object prepositional phrase

His mother threw them out of the window.
Subject verb object prepositional phrase

The next morning, Jack saw a giant beanstalk.
Adverb subject past tense verb object

These can be simplified at earlier levels of proficiency: Jack traded the family cow. He got magic beans, and so on. It can also be made more complex: Jack disappointed his mother by trading the family cow for a handful of beans.

Students at more **Advanced** levels of English proficiency need instruction in more specific vocabulary to extend their language foundation to communicate in increasingly precise and varied ways:

If we want to be healthy, we need to eat a variety of foods. Part of a healthy diet includes _____. This is important because _____.

_____ is a healthy choice because it provides _____.

When I was younger, I thought _____. Now I know _____.

I didn't use to like _____ until I tried them with/at _____.

Learning to express ideas in this way is not part of content instruction, because the goal in content instruction is to teach health concepts, while the goal here (in Systematic ELD) is to teach language. In these lessons, the goal is not learning about healthy eating – though that may be a by-product. It is to teach students the vocabulary and language patterns needed to express what they know and are learning based on their level of proficiency. It is English language development instruction using a healthy diet theme.

Building a Rich and Varied Vocabulary

Words that are taught and practiced should become increasingly sophisticated, growing from words needed to discuss here-and-now, concrete and observable experiences at the beginning levels, to past and future experiences at more intermediate levels, to events not in students' experience and abstractions at the advanced levels.

Vocabulary for the topics being taught should move from:

- ◆ Basic words, to
- ◆ More specific general utility words and phrases, to
- ◆ Increasingly precise terms.

As mentioned earlier, how the teacher moves along a continuum varies depending on students' age and both personal and school-based experiences. Some illustrative examples of this progression are organized by common topics below. These examples are designed to trigger your thinking about what kinds of words to teach at different levels of proficiency.

Animals

Dog, cat → puppy, kitten, bark, meow → breed, Labrador, Manx

Farm, farmer, → farming, barn, fence, hay → stable, crop, pasture, silo, corral

Horse → colt, mare, neigh, gallop → foal, canter, whinny

Body

Body, head → shoulders, stomach, waist → digestive system, nerves

Hand, finger → fingernail → palm, knuckles → opposable thumb

Leg, feet, toes → knees, thighs, ankles → calves, shins, muscles, joints

Walk, run, sit → walk fast, race, squat, kneel → stroll, saunter, sprint

Government

Rules → laws → court, judicial system

Promise → pledge → allegiance

Flag → symbol, Statue of Liberty → monument, crest

Classroom Objects

Paper, glue, scissors → stapler, ruler, paperclip → thumbtack, pushpin

Tape → Scotch tape, masking tape → tape dispenser

Pencil → crayon, pen, marker → permanent marker, felt-tip pen, colored pencil

Book, story → dictionary, novel, → thesaurus, historical novel

Classroom Activities

Read → skim, study, look at → peruse, devour

Draw → sketch, outline → map out

Ask, tell → answer, explain → respond, request, elaborate, pose a question

Colors

Blue → light blue, sky blue → aqua, navy, turquoise

Red → dark red → scarlet, crimson

Purple → violet → lavender, lilac, periwinkle

White, black → tan, gray, silver, gold → amber, ashy, beige, whitish

Community

House, store, school → mall, post office, church → pharmacy, supermarket

City → community, neighborhood, crowded → suburb, rural area, overcrowded

Doctor, nurse → dentist, pharmacist, surgeon → lab technician, oral surgeon

Family

Father, sister, grandma → nephew, grandson, stepmother → relatives, ancestors

Celebrate → tradition, holiday → custom

Foods

Apple, fruit → core, seeds, skin → Fuji

Milk, cheese → yogurt, dairy → lactose

Meat, fish, chicken → beef, turkey leg → poultry, Halibut

Ocean Life

Fish, sea → fins, scales, school of fish, swim → gills, spawn

Octopus → ink, tentacles → squid, squirt out

Swim → float, sink, dive → propel

Sand, beach → dunes, rocky shore → coral reef

Personal experience

Play, like → had fun, enjoyed, remember → delighted, will always remember

Laugh → giggle → crack-up, chuckle

Want → choose → prefer, select

Taking turns, sharing → cooperate, be fair → cooperation, fair play

Physical World

Water → liquid, gas, air, solid → properties, solid matter, evaporate

Size, big, little → heavy, small, medium → weight, gigantic, tiny, average

Hard, smooth → rough, silky, stiff → textured, coarse, glossy, flexible

Hot, cold → warm, cool, get hotter/cooler → tepid, chilly, cool off, heat up

Grow → develop, get ripe → mature, age, ripen

Transportation

Street → road, freeway, airport → thoroughfare, boulevard, harbor, port

Car, truck, bus → taxi, ambulance → tow truck, emergency vehicle

Bicycle → bike, tricycle, skateboard → unicycle, stroller

Build Word Knowledge Through Use of Affixes

Another way we increase the sophistication of students' vocabulary knowledge is to teach variations of words through the use affixes. An example (beginning with the most straightforward) is taking a common adjective and teaching the comparative and superlative forms:

Happy → happier, happiest

Turning it into an opposite by adding *un-*:

Happy → unhappy

Adding *-ly* to use it as an adverb:

Happy → happily, unhappily



Converting an adjective to a noun by adding *-ness*:

She was happy. → She was filled with happiness.

Synonyms

Those who are proficient in a language are adept at expressing the same idea in various ways. A rich vocabulary includes knowledge of synonyms - knowing other words that have the same or similar meaning. As students move through levels of proficiency we must teach them to understand and use a variety of synonyms:

Happy → glad, cheerful → joyful, content, pleased → delighted, ecstatic, blissful

Including idiomatic expressions, such as *in high spirits* and *on cloud nine*.

Said → spoke, answered, replied → responded, stated → retorted, pronounced

Multiple meaning words

English is rich in multiple meaning words that sometimes make sense only in context:

Can I **play**? → He **plays** the piano. Let's **play** soccer. → We went to see a **play** at the theater. She made a double **play** at the game.

Sometimes multiple meaning words are different parts of speech, such as

Auxiliary verb: Can I play?

I can do my times tables.

Verb: These are tomatoes I canned last summer.

Noun: Let's play *Kick the Can*

A can of soda

Or more difficult sometimes, as colloquialisms: She was **canned** from her job.

He went to the **can**.

Multiple meanings of words can be taught as they come up during teachable moments when students are confused by a word being used in a way in which they are not familiar.

Or these words can be the subject of a lesson when these words are in the range of vocabulary being taught. Be sure to use many examples.