

**Academic Vocabulary:
Engaging Activities for
English Learners (and Others!)
K-8**

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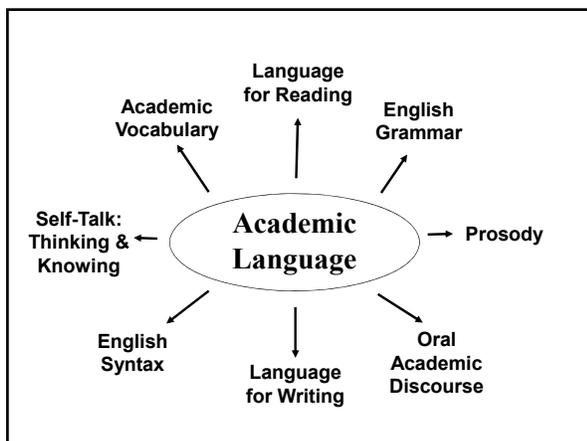
One of the most persistent findings in reading research is that the extent of students' vocabulary knowledge relates strongly to their reading comprehension and to their overall academic success.

(Lehr, Osborn, & Hiebert, 2004)

Social or conversational language is generally more concrete than abstract, and it is usually supported by contextual clues, such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language.

“Academic language is the set of words, grammar, and organizational strategies used to describe complex ideas, higher-order thinking processes, and abstract concepts”

(Zwiers, 2008, p. 20).



**Academic Vocabulary:
Three Legs on a Stool**



**Content Vocabulary:
Subject Specific &
Technical Terms**

**Word Parts:
Roots & Affixes**

**General Academic Vocabulary:
Cross-Curricular Terms/Process & Function**

Academic Vocabulary

(Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012)

- **Content vocabulary: Subject Specific & Technical Terms:** Key vocabulary words, terms, and concepts associated with a particular topic being taught; they're typically found in informational and expository texts that students read; frequently are highlighted or in bold in texts. Examples include:
 - ***Social Studies*** lesson on ***Revolutionary War***: ***democracy, freedom of religion, Redcoats, Patriots, Paul Revere, George Washington***
 - ***Life Science*** lesson on ***Plant Life***: ***xylem, phloem, chlorophyll, stomata, respiration***
 - ***Language Arts*** lesson on ***story elements***: ***characters, setting, plot, rising action, falling action, denouement, climax, conclusion***

Academic Vocabulary

(Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012)

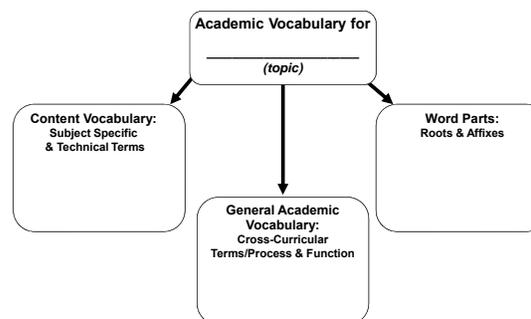
- **General Academic Vocabulary: Cross Curricular Terms/Process & Function...** are academic words students must learn because they're used in all academic disciplines. Often, they're not explicitly taught, yet they are the ones that frequently trip up English learners and struggling readers...and they're often found on state tests.
 - **Words with multiple meanings:** *table and chair (social use); math and science tables (academic use)*
 - **Cross-curricular terms:** *measure, chart, model, structure, symbol, predict, infer, effect, result, conclusion, in reference to..., situation, source, evidence, modify*
 - **Language processes & function:** *discuss, skim, scan, question, argue, describe, compare, explain, list, debate, classify, support your answer, provide examples, summarize, outline, give an opinion, therefore, in conclusion, whereas, moreover, and furthermore; words that indicate sequence such as first, then, next, finally, and at last.*

Academic Vocabulary

(Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012)

- **Word Parts: Roots and Affixes:** These enable students to learn new vocabulary, primarily based upon English morphology (*affixes, roots, base words*).
- **Example: Photosynthesis:** *photocopy, photograph, photography, photoelectron, photo-finish, photogenic;*
- Students learn how these English words are related by both structure (prefix + root + suffix), and meaning. The root *photo* means "light," thus providing a clue to a word's meaning if it has this root.
- English words related by structure are almost always related by meaning (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2011).

Teaching Academic Vocabulary



Finding Academic Vocabulary in Content Standards K-2 English-Language Arts

- Match oral words to printed words.
- Identify and describe the elements of **plot, setting**, and **character(s)** in a **story**, as well as the story's **beginning, middle** and **ending**.
- Distinguish between **complete** and **incomplete sentences**.

Key: Underline = academic vocabulary (process/function); **Bold** = content vocabulary

Finding Academic Vocabulary in Content Standards 3-5 English-Language Arts

- Ask questions and support answers by connecting prior knowledge with **literal information** found in, and inferred from, the text.
- Identify and use **past, present, and future verb tenses** properly in writing and speaking.
- Make and confirm predictions about text by using prior knowledge and ideas presented in the text itself, including **illustrations, titles, topic sentences, important words, and foreshadowing clues**.

Key: Underline = academic vocabulary (process/function); **Bold** = content vocabulary

Finding Academic Vocabulary in Content Standards 6-8 English-Language Arts

- Determine the **adequacy** and **appropriateness** of the evidence for an **author's conclusions**.
- Support all statements and claims with **anecdotes**, **descriptions**, **facts** and **statistics**, and **specific examples**.
- Analyze the relevance of the **setting** (e.g. place, time, customs) to the **mood**, **tone**, and **meaning** of the text.

Key: Underline = academic vocabulary (process/function); **Bold** = content vocabulary

General Academic Vocabulary in Common Core ELA

- **Kindergarten:** Associate the long and short sounds with common spellings.
- **Second:** Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.
- **Fourth:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on other's ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **Sixth:** Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

Teaching Content Vocabulary Subject Specific and Technical Terms

4-Corners Vocabulary

Illustration (1)	Sentence (3)
Definition (2)	Word (4)

(Vogt and Echevarria, 2008, pp. 40-41)

4-Corners Vocabulary

Illustration (1) 	Sentence (3) The fluffiest clouds, that look like cotton, are called cumulus clouds.
Definition (2) A white billowy cloud type with a dark flat base (from the Latin <i>cumulus</i> , meaning a "heap")	Word (4) cumulus

(Vogt and Echevarria, 2008, pp. 40-41)

Semantic Feature Analysis

(Fisher & Frey, 2008)

Topic: Transportation

Words	Features				

Semantic Feature Analysis
(Fisher & Frey, 2008)

Topic: Immigration in the Early 1900's

Words	Features				
	<i>Seeking better life</i>	<i>Escape religious persecution</i>	<i>Brought against will</i>	<i>Suffered prejudice in U.S.</i>	<i>Lived in tenements</i>
Russia					
Europe					
El Salvador					
China					
Africa					

Teaching General Academic Vocabulary: Cross-Curricular Terms/Process & Function



Signal Words
(Vogt & Echevarria, 2008, p. 36-39)

- Create posters with the following **Signal Words**. As ELs (and other students) are reading and writing, draw their attention to the posters for specific text structures. Clip art illustrations further enhance student understandings. For example, for Cause and Effect:

 +
  +
  =
 



Signal Words: Compare and Contrast
(Vogt & Echevarria, 2008)

If you are asked to **compare** two or more things, use these words:

- as well as
- also
- too
- like
- much as
- similarly
- similar to

If you are asked to **contrast** two or more things, use these words:

- however
- but
- on the other hand
- while
- although
- different from
- less than
- yet
- whereas



Signal Words: Cause and Effect or Problem and Solution
(Vogt & Echevarria, 2008)

If you are asked to describe **cause and effect** or **problem and solution**, use these words:

- because
- since
- therefore
- consequently
- in order that
- so that

- as a consequence
- as a result
- then
- if...then
- thus
- due to



Signal Words: Sequence or Order
(Vogt & Echevarria, 2008)

If you are asked to describe the **sequence** or **order** in which things happened or occurred, use these words:

- first
- second
- third
- in the first place
- first of all
- then
- before

- after
- last
- meanwhile
- now
- finally
- for one thing
- next



Signal Words: Description or List
(Vogt & Echevarria, 2008)

If you are asked to write a description or list, use these words:

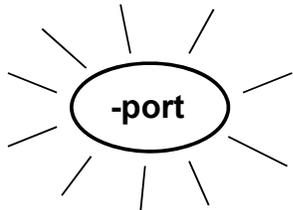
- to illustrate
- for instance
- in addition
- and
- again
- moreover
- also
- too
- furthermore
- another
- first of all

**Contextualized
Academic Vocabulary List**

Discuss	to speak with others about a topic	
Summarize	to present the main points of a topic	

**Teaching Words Parts:
Roots and Affixes**

Which of these words are related to the meaning of the root *-port*?



-port

Word Generation
(Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008, p. 66-67)

Common Word Roots

- See attached list.
- Note that the roots with asterisks are clues to over 100,000 English words!
- These are for your use...to raise students' awareness of English structure (not for students to memorize...☺).

**Picture and Words Sorts:
It's All About Contrasts**
(Bear, et. al, 2007)

- **Sorting Pictures**
- **Sorting Words: Sound, Pattern, Structure, Rhyme, Concept**
- **Open Sorts** (kids choose)
- **Closed Sorts** (teacher chooses)
- **Blind Sorts** (kids sort w/o knowing pattern in advance)
- **Speed Sorts** (kids sort as quickly and accurately as they can)

Closed Word Sort: Sound

ran	table	oddballs
apple	taste	paid
fan	cape	freight
Alan	paste	
can	cake	

Word Sort: Sound/Structure

hoped	frosted	oddballs
walked	tasted	ran
peeped	fretted	slept
leaped	pasted	
wiped	toasted	

Word Sort: Structure (American Revolution)

-tion	-sion	-tation
revolution taxation frustration participation solution transition nation	tension passion mission vision	representation plantation

Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008

Word Hunts (Bear, et. al, 2011)

Students search through free-reading books, content texts, picture books, newspapers and magazines to find examples of other words that exemplify the pattern being studied.

Vocabulary Self-Assessment

Vocabulary words	I know it.	I have seen it or heard it.	I don't know it.
taxation			
self-governance			
right to bear arms			

Word Play Develops Word Consciousness

(Stahl & Nagy, 2006, pp. 147-148)

Include activities in which students manipulate words, sort words, laugh, and giggle about funny and tricky words and phrases:

- *A bike can't stand alone because it's two-tired.*
- *Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.*
- *A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.*
- *Those who get too big for their britches will be exposed in the end.*

Homographs:

- *We polish the Polish furniture.*
- *He could lead if he would get the lead out.*
- *The present is a good time to present the present.*
- *I did not object to the object.*

Things to Ponder (Barone, 2008)...

- Not all words need explicit instruction, but many do.
- Children need many exposures to good literature, including nonfiction and informational texts (many picture books do not include unfamiliar words).
- Struggling readers read less, read less-complex texts, and thus are exposed to fewer words.
- Proficient readers read more complex texts and encounter more words.
- Thus, the gap grows between struggling and proficient readers.

So...

- Read-aloud from a wide variety of books at different reading levels, on different topics, and include both narrative and expository texts.
- Develop word consciousness (awareness and love of words) in your students.
- Teach academic vocabulary, including content words, cross-curricular and language process/function words, and word parts (roots and affixes) that develop knowledge of English structure.

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