A Bibliography of Studies Relative to the Teaching of Vocabulary: Grades Five through Adult.

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Part one of this bibliography lists 47 studies on the teaching of vocabulary, grades five through adult. Studies are divided into four sections on the basis of the measure used in comparing methods: general vocabulary; content area vocabulary; word lists, word parts, and related tasks; and concepts. For each study, the students involved, methods compared, and findings are briefly described. Part two of the bibliography lists other selected studies relevant to the teaching of vocabulary. (AA)
A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF STUDIES RELATIVE TO
THE TEACHING OF VOCABULARY: GRADES FIVE THROUGH ADULT

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PART I

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES RELATED TO THE
TEACHING OF VOCABULARY: FIFTH GRADE TO ADULT LEVEL
(1950-1975)

A. Programs Evaluated on Basis of Improvement in General Vocabulary

Alexander, J.E. A programmed versus a conventional approach to vocabu-
lar development in college remedial reading classes. (Doctoral disser-
tation, University of Kentucky, 1968). Dissertation Abstracts International,

Students: 90 college freshmen in compulsory remedial reading classes
Methods compared: Programmed and dictionary approaches
Findings: Both methods considered equally effective

Biedermann, F. A comparison of the effects of two methods on the reading
vocabulary, comprehension, accuracy and rate of selected students at the
George Washington University. (Doctoral dissertation, George Washington
University, 1974). Order No. 75-12, 606.

Students: 70 volunteers from college undergraduate psychology classes
Methods compared: Vocabulary expansion, paperback scanning, and inci-
dental learning (control)
Findings: Students using paperback scanning method indicated as superior
in reading accuracy; no significant differences between groups on
other variables

Blevins, M.L. A comparative study of three methods of instruction in vocabu-
lar achievement of students in the Adult Institute. (Doctoral dissertation,
Oklahoma State University, 1970). Dissertation Abstracts International, 31
(10A), p. 5108, Order No. 71-11, 105.

Students: 36 adults in an Adult Institute
Methods compared: Two types of contextual methods ("natural" and "con-
trived") and an approach identified as Practical High School English
Findings: Significant advantage in favor of the "natural" contextual
and Practical High School English approaches

Bohac, J.J. & Frank, P.R. The effectiveness of the teaching machine as a
method of teaching vocabulary and the relationships of personality types to
the teaching machine as a method of instruction. (Doctoral dissertation,
United States International University, 1969). Dissertation Abstracts Inter-
national, 31(12A), p. 6394, Order No. 70-20, 721.

Students: 149 high school students involved in an English Learning
Center Program
Methods compared: Teaching machine programs vs programmed workbooks vs
incidental learning (control)
Findings: Teaching machine group showed significantly higher gain in
vocabulary acquisition; showed slight loss on follow-up retention
Anxiety level and introversion-extroversion factors did not affect results.


**Students:** Entering university freshmen who ranked in lowest decile on placement test.

**Methods compared:** Teaching of teacher-made lists from students' texts vs encouraging students to make own lists vs "no treatment" group.

**Findings:** No significant differences between groups.


**Students:** College students in reading efficiency courses.

**Methods compared:** Use of vocabulary texts vs incidental learning (control).

**Findings:** Experimental group made greater gains on Nelson Denny Vocabulary section; statistical significance not given.

Note: This was one of several "experiments" reported in this article. See Section C for others.


**Students:** Students in an undergraduate collegiate business communication course.

**Methods compared:** Use of programmed vocabulary books vs incidental learning (control).

**Findings:** No significant differences between groups in vocabulary or comprehension growth, or in written communication ability.


**Students:** 74 college freshmen enrolled in a speech class.

**Methods compared:** Direct teaching of instructor-selected words vs incidental learning (control).

**Findings:** No significant differences in vocabulary growth between experimental and control groups.

Students: 823 students in grades 7, 8, and 9 from two suburban public schools

Methods compared: Discovery method involving classifying vs direct teaching of word parts vs incidental learning (control)

Findings: Discovery method indicated as superior to other two groups in general vocabulary, word parts, and five other tested variables


Students: 105 ninth and tenth grade students in a remedial reading class

Methods compared: Teacher-directed program on word parts and words of foreign origin and unusual extraction vs use of programmed vocabulary book

Findings: Teacher-directed group made significant gains in vocabulary; group using programmed materials did not


Students: 407 college students enrolled in reading improvement and study skills classes

Methods compared: Learning of words students selected through skimming articles vs incidental learning (control)

Findings: Experimental group of "reading class" students made significantly greater gains in vocabulary growth than control group but "study skills" class students did not


Students: 691 eighth grade students from forty-two schools

Methods compared: An author designed multi-level vocabulary program vs a published vocabulary program vs incidental learning (control)

Findings: No significant differences among the three groups on word knowledge or reading comprehension


Students: 164 ninth graders

Methods compared: A direct teaching approach vs interest-in-words approach vs wide-reading approach vs incidental learning (control)

Findings: Interest-in-words group was the only one in which significant gains in vocabulary were made, and the only group which differed significantly from the control group; there were no significant differences between experimental groups.

Students: 511 students in English classes
Methods compared: Discovery method, an analytical method involving classification vs direct teaching of word parts vs indirect learning (control)
Findings: Group using discovery method surpassed other groups in knowledge of word parts, vocabulary, spelling, and visual memory


Students: One hundred students from four sixth grade classes
Methods compared: Semi-programmed series of forty lessons emphasizing word meaning through structural elements, etymology, mnemonic devices, context, and sentence structure vs incidental classroom learning (control)
Findings: Experimental groups made significantly greater gains in comprehension; differences between experimental and control groups on vocabulary "approached significance"


Students: 163 sixth graders
Methods compared: Group studying multiple-meaning abstract words vs group studying words chosen from study skills texts vs group studying key words in World Book Encyclopedia reprints
Findings: All three groups made significant vocabulary gains; differences between groups were not significant


Students: Thirty-two fifth grade children reading at or above grade level
Methods compared: Use of controlled reader vs "regular" reading lessons involving reading and discussing various selections
Findings: No significant differences between groups


Students: 429 sixth grade children representing sixteen classes from two communities
Methods compared: Presentation of multiple meaning vocabulary by (1) large-group instruction using transparencies; (2) large-group instruction using every student response sheets and (3) a small-group method in which work-sheets were substituted for transparencies to convey same information
Findings: No significant differences between groups

Students: Air force personnel enrolled in remedial reading program
Methods compared: Remedial reading program featuring audio-visual materials vs group studying materials of same content without audio-visual aids
Findings: The multi-media approach was indicated as having significant effects on word recognition achievement but not on reading test scores or on word recognition


Students: 58 students in sixth grade culturally disadvantaged neighborhood
Methods compared: Basal reader method vs method using controlled readers and tachistoscopes
Findings: Statistically significant results found the machine method superior with reference to performance on vocabulary, speed, and accuracy sub-tests


Students: 429 eighth grade students in urban inner-city school
Methods compared: Vocabulary lessons designed to improve qualitative vocabulary vs placebo lessons—two different time schedules
Findings: Experimental groups attained significantly higher scores in qualitative vocabulary; timing of lessons was not a significant factor


Students: College students in a developmental reading course, composed of black and white students
Methods compared: (1) Teacher-directed large-group instruction and independent self-instruction; (2) test response teaching strategies—workbook plus supplementary reading materials; (3) self-instruction test response strategies and multi-media presentation
Findings: Treatment (3) produced significantly greater gains in comprehension scores; an ordinal interaction between race and treatment was found to be affecting the criterion vocabulary scores
B. Programs in which Evaluation Was Based on Instructional Effects on Content Area Vocabulary Acquisition and Performance


Students: Tenth grade biology students
Methods compared: A series of interlocking substudies involving vocabulary preteaching, various approaches to directions, and reinforcements
Findings: A modified method proved most effective


Students: Second-year high school typewriting students
Methods compared: Typing of paragraphs with technical terms included vs typing of irrelevant material (control) vs paragraphs typed and explained
Findings: Experimental groups significantly superior to control groups on learning and retention of technical business vocabulary


Students: Sixth, seventh, and eighth graders in public school social science classes
Methods compared: Presentation of vocabulary using visual aids including films, filmstrips, and opaque projectors vs presentation of vocabulary with more limited visual aids
Findings: Students in experimental group made significantly greater gains in vocabulary growth


Students: 52 college freshmen in a first semester social science course
Methods compared: Presentation of pertinent social studies vocabulary vs incidental learning (control)
Findings: Results favoring the experimental group were not statistically significant; students in lowest quartile on pre-tests showed greatest degree of improvement

Students: College students assisting in project designed to expedite vocabulary acquisition by computer use
Methods compared: Conceptually important terms were selected from text chosen for purpose; blocked-presentation methods were compared
Findings: Spaced presentation was indicated as more effective
Note: Author considered implications for computer-assisted instruction (CAI) as most important contribution of study


Students: 200 tenth grade biology students
Methods compared: Use of vocabulary books especially prepared to stress structural elements in conjunction with an ongoing biology program vs classroom instruction without vocabulary element (control)
Findings: Experimental group significantly superior in acquisition of vocabulary and in retention of terms

Romano, L. The role of sixteen millimeter motion pictures and projected still pictures in science unit vocabulary learning at grades five, six, and seven. Journal of Experimental Education, 1956, 25, pp. 49-58.

Students: Equal numbers of fifth, sixth, and seventh grade public school children
Methods compared: Vocabulary emphasis using audio-visual materials including movies and slides vs vocabulary emphasis including audio-visual materials but excluding movies or slides
Findings: Students in experimental groups had greater increases in vocabulary than control group


Students: 394 fifth graders in twenty-four arithmetic classes
Methods compared: Groups presented with four direct-study techniques to aid development in mathematics vs groups in which no special attention to vocabulary was given (control)
Findings: Experimental groups performed better on tests involving arithmetic problem solving, and attained significantly higher scores on post-tests of arithmetic concepts.

Note: A summary of this study can be found in the Elementary School Journal, December, 1964.

Students: Six secondary school general science classes (147 students)
Methods compared: Three combinations of visual aids used in content and vocabulary presentation
Findings: All three methods proved equally effective in promoting vocabulary growth in science

C. Programs Evaluated on the Basis of Instructional Effects on Learning of Word Lists, Word Parts, and Related Tasks


Students: College students (?)
Methods compared: Various combinations of "part" and "whole word" learning of unknown words
Findings: Mixed; some statistically significant superiority indicated for the pre-teaching of stems


Experiment 1
Students: University students in reading efficiency class
Methods compared: Use of vocabulary text only (control) vs text plus word game supplement vs text plus programmed text supplement for teaching pre-identified word parts and relevant words
Findings: Game approach indicated as most effective in identification and memorization of words; programmed text supplement more effective with generalizations

Experiment 2
Students: 75 "gifted" high school sophomores
Methods compared: Work in programmed vocabulary book for thirty minutes per week vs incidental learning of word parts (control)
Findings: Experimental group superior on re-test involving word parts and related words


Students: Seventy-seven students in seventh grade enrichment classes in a suburban intermediate school
Methods compared: Word game method vs discussion method (control) for learning 50 complex words
Findings: Both methods equally effective in learning complex vocabulary

**Students:** Graduate students enrolled in an admissions seminar

**Methods compared:** Presentation of words from Nelson Denny Reading Test in context using: (1) audio-visual approach (video tape); (2) audio approach (tape recording) and (3) visual (printed materials)

**Findings:** All three methods indicated equally effective in learning pre-identified words

Einbecker, P.G. Development of an audiovisual program based upon the acquisition of perceptual knowledge to increase college students' vocabulary, 1973. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 101 303).

**Students:** 86 junior college business education freshmen

**Methods compared:** Studying 40 words identified by pre-test (1) without any mention of root words involved; (2) with directions to learn and apply root words; and (3) with instructor-prepared audiovisual materials to stimulate learning of root words

**Findings:** No significant difference between groups on post-test on 40 learned words; however, group using audiovisual materials performed significantly better on a 100-item application test


**Students:** 200 college students in an introductory psychology course

**Methods compared:** Learning of lists of ten concrete or abstract nouns using four distinct mnemonic techniques and two different types of mediators vs learning of same words without mnemonic devices

**Findings:** Mnemonic techniques were indicated as helpful in learning concrete nouns, but not in the learning of abstract nouns


**Students:** Eighth graders in 12 language arts classes

**Methods compared:** Programmed method for teaching pre-identified vocabulary words vs conventional (teacher-directed) method

**Findings:** No significant differences in achievement indicated between the two methods

Students: 88 sixth grade middle class students

Methods compared: Four analytical procedures for learning root words, identified as: (1) diagnostic, (2) standard, (3) dictionary and (4) improved—also no-treatment controls

Findings: Mixed; all experimental groups indicated as superior to controls on criteria measures; diagnostic treatment significantly more effective with reference to time required to complete instruction


Students: 114 college students

Methods compared: Three methodology groups (repetitive, mnemonic, and unspecified) as well as two study times (5 minutes vs unlimited time) for learning thirty-five "difficult vocabulary words"

Findings: No significant differences between three methods utilized; group given "unlimited time" proved superior to group limited to five minute learning time


Students: 72 fifth grade children

Methods compared: Three methods for learning pre-identified word lists: (1) exercises worked individually; (2) exercises worked in pairs; and (3) writing of sentences using identified words

Findings: Two groups working with exercises had significantly superior performance to group writing sentences


Students: 585 seventh graders in an English class

Methods compared: Direct teaching of prefixes and related words vs incidental learning (control)

Findings: Experimental group superior on post-test covering specific prefixes and words learned; no significant differences between groups were found on a general vocabulary test, however


Students: 600 ninth grade students from two public schools

Methods compared: Presentation of the ten and the twenty most difficult words from a vocabulary pre-test using one of three methods: (1) supraliminal projection using video tape; (2) subliminal projection using video tape and (3) tape with visual presentation missing (control)

Findings: Performance of experimental groups superior to control group on post-test covering words learned; however, differences in gains between groups was not significant
D. Studies Evaluated on the Basis of Vocabulary Instruction Effects on the Learning of Concepts


- **Students:** 43 undergraduate college students in educational psychology course; 48 paid undergraduates
- **Methods compared:** Ability to complete sentences correctly when whole sentences were read orally vs sentences in which final word was essential and had to be supplied
- **Findings:** Group supplying final word in initial reading significantly superior when (1) final word had to be supplied (Experiment 1) and (2) when initial noun had to be supplied (Experiment 2)


- **Students:** 48 undergraduate college students enrolled in an educational psychology class
- **Methods compared:** Reading definitions orally vs composing sentences as aids to selecting appropriate concept from four possibilities
- **Findings:** Group which composed sentences were more accurate in selecting appropriate concept than students who read sentences orally


- **Students:** 211 college students in reading improvement program
- **Methods compared:** Deductive vs inductive vs combination vs incidental methods for learning five types of context clues and applying them
- **Findings:** No significant differences between the four groups


- **Students:** Total of 138 college students in psychology classes
- **Methods compared:** Five methods for teaching four concepts: (1) definitions; (2) sentences; (3) classification; (4) synonyms and (5) a combination method
- **Findings:** Group having mixed treatment performed better than any single treatment group; no significant differences found between the four single treatment groups


- **Students:** Forty-two fifth grade groups in a private school setting
- **Methods compared:** Teaching vocabulary concepts through direct experience vs conventional instruction (control)
- **Findings:** Both groups improved in both reading and concept achievement; experimental group improved more in concept achievement.
PART II

OTHER SELECTED STUDIES RELEVANT TO THE TEACHING OF VOCABULARY (1950-1975)


Baxter, F. B. Vocabulary development through the reading of the daily newspaper. English Journal, Jan. 1951, 40, 570-571.


Dolch, E. W. Vocabulary development. Elementary English, March, 1953, 80, 70-75.


Ristow, W. L. How accurate are students' vocabularies? The Education Digest, April 1965, 30, 49-51.


Singleton, M. Vocabulary development for the mature student. In: Causey and Bliesmer (Eds.), The National Reading Conference for Colleges and Adults. 9th NRC Yearbook, Fort Worth, Texas: National Reading Conference, 1960.


Vineyard, E. and Massey, W. The interrelationship of certain linguistic skills and their relationship with scholastic achievement when intelligence is ruled constant. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, May 1957, 48, 279-286.


