We Love Words: Engaging Students with Vocabulary

Margaret Ann Richiek
Northeastern Illinois University
mrichek@ameritech.net

Susanne Picchi
Joliet Junior College
spicchi@jjc.edu

Cengage Developmental English Webinar
March 6, 2012
PURPOSE: TO PROVIDE EASY TO DO, PROFITABLE STRATEGIES THAT ENGAGE STUDENTS AND INCREASE LEARNING.
1. Vocabulary is an extremely powerful predictor of achievement.
2. Vocabulary learning is gradual. Practice is needed.
3. People learn when they are engaged.
STRATEGY ONE: MILLION DOLLAR WORDS

Students assign dollar values to words they are learning. Then they write sentences that “add up” to a specific value. Derivatives of words may be used.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>Class One</th>
<th>Class Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>albatross</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>berserk</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nemesis</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jovial</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentor</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narcissistic</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parrot</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scapegoat</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sheepish</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sluggish</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bedlam</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devastate</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forum</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hierarchy</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hypochondriac</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incumbent</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moratorium</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nepotism</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ostracize</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>previously</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*From *World of Essential College Vocabulary, Book 2*
My mom is a **hypochondriac** who always thinks she has cancer.
There was **bedlam** at the concert when the audience went **berserk** because the singer **parroted** another singer’s song.
At the zoo, I saw an **albatross** who was running in circles and acting **berserk**.
I had many **nemeses** in my previous school, which is why I transferred.
About a year ago, I was in a relationship with a guy who was narcissistic and thought everything was about him. When his friends came over, their conversation was like a forum about their different Xbox Games. Because his scores were always the highest, he was the incumbent champ at Xbox. His hypochondriac grandmother finally threw his friends out of the house because she claims she was too ill to listen to them shouting while playing games.
Kiara’s grade school classroom was bedlam when the children found out that school was canceled because of snow. Previously, they came to school in the snow. The administrative hierarchy changed their minds about cancelling school when the children acted berserk and parroted the principal’s announcement.
STRATEGY TWO – SAY IT IN ENGLISH

Students complain that the words they are learning are not English. So we challenge them to “translate” sentences and definitions.
He felt remorse when he realized that he had unwittingly made his aunt’s chronic condition worse.

First, someone read it.

We asked if sentence was positive or negative.

Students were asked to put the sentence into “English.”

remorse: bad, regret (improved through instructor effort)

unwittingly: mistakenly

chronic: continuing/ongoing

We asked if the aunt was feeling better.

He felt regret when he realized that he had mistakenly made his aunt’s continuing condition worse.
I will not assent to marring the finish on the authentic antique.

assent: approve  marring: damaging, effacing(!)  authentic: real
I will not approve to (of) damaging the finish on the real antique.

The nomadic salesman was chronically homesick.

nomadic: traveling  chronically: faking (changed); ongoing
The traveling salesman was ongoing (sic) homesick.
Implicit in our dissent in voting for your proposal is our feeling that you need to enhance it.

Hinted at in our disagreement in voting for your proposal is our feeling that you need to improve it. (A discussion of implicit followed.)

Our problems have become acute since the dormant business condition has become explicit.

Our problems have become urgent since the inactive business condition has become clear. (Did they realize they had a problem before?)
Say It In English: Definitions

Some that we accepted...

• **fallacy**  false idea
• **hypothesis**  not tested yet
• **judicious**  good sense or choices
• **detrimental**  harmful
• **shun**  ignore on purpose
Some that we improved...

- divisive disagreements
- amnesty breaking law
- judicious showing good judgment
STRAIGHT THRE– WORD ASSOCIATIONS

You know the definition, but what does it mean to you?

What would you picture when you hear the word *nomad*?
associations: homeless person, reminds me of being “no-mad(!)”

What does *consolidate* mean?
putting things together
association: mixing rice with something else

What does *dormant* mean? not active
associations: volcano, flowers not growing (corrected), grass in the winter

What does *implicit* mean? hinted at
associations, none. We asked what would be “implicit” if you didn’t attend class: you didn’t care. What would be “implicit” in a fashionable woman: hairdressers, dressers. Implicit in a baby crying: He is unhappy, he needs something.
STRATEGY THREE – AUTOMATICITY REVIEW

In this fast-paced game, students are divided into two teams, and given words they should have studied. Words are put on the board, an overhead, or cards. We give each student, in turn, a task. If answered correctly, the team gets a point. If not, the other team gets a chance to try.

You may ask students to
• define the word
• pronounce the word (correctly!) (Point to it)
• put two words in one sentence
• give a derivative that fits in a sentence
• spell a different form of a word
• tell which word goes in a sentence
impose
incline
influence
innate
intake
emit
eradicate
exclude
exodus
exonerate
contrary
counteract
counterfeit
counterpart
counterproductive
afflict
blatant
chronicle
diminish
periphery
counterpart
counterproductive
afflict
latent
chronicle
diminish
periphery

1 2

| 1 | 2 |
STRATEGY FIVE—ALTERNATIVE FORMS

Students receive credit for finding suffixes in words. They must locate the root word and write it separately. Then they must underline all suffixes and write them separately.

enduringly endure
   -ing
   -ly

renationalization nation
re- -al
   -ize
   -tion
Creating Lists

nation
national
international
multinational
nationalization
nationalized
nationalize

serve
reservice
reserves
served
preservice
serving
servant
serviceable
inservice
Finding Affixes in Running Text

He used tactics such as demonstrations and marches, as well as nonviolent, public disobedience to unjust laws.

Moreover, the rise of personal isolation caused by extensive cell phone use makes it less likely that pedestrians will help strangers in need or exchange pleasantries in a chance encounter—two occurrences that make urban living invigorating.
He used tactics such as demonstrations and marches, as well as nonviolent, public disobedience to unjust laws.

Moreover, the rise of personal isolation caused by extensive cell phone use makes it less likely that pedestrians will help strangers in need or exchange pleasantries in a chance encounter—two occurrences that make urban living invigorating.
## What is it about reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Difficult words per 1,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstracts of scientific articles</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers, magazines</td>
<td>66-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular adult books, comics</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s books</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult and children’s shows</td>
<td>20-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Rogers, Sesame Street</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert witness testimony</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College grads to friends, spouses</td>
<td>17*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*See next page for reference*
Statistics for Language adapted from Hayes and Ahrens (1988), cited in West and Stanovich (2001). Rare words per 1,000.


Can be accessed at [http://www.csun.edu/~krowlands/Content/Academic_Resources/Reading/Useful%20Articles/Cunningham-What%20Reading%20Does%20for%20the%20Mind.pdf](http://www.csun.edu/~krowlands/Content/Academic_Resources/Reading/Useful%20Articles/Cunningham-What%20Reading%20Does%20for%20the%20Mind.pdf)

for original citations, see
From a list of words, students must guess which word is being described from a list of successive clues:

**Word 1**
1. it’s a noun and verb
2. it’s a positive word*
3. it means “say yes” assent

**Word 2**
1. it’s a negative word
2. it means to spoil*
3. it has three letters mar

**Word 3**
1. has three syllables
2. fits into “I x-x-x-ly made an error”
3. has a double letter*
4. means “without being aware” unwitting

**Word 4**
1. has a “y” (four words given)
2. fits in “Bad working conditions may be a ___ for a strike.”
3. makes things go faster catalyst
STRATEGY SEVEN – SENTENCE STARTERS

Students are presented with a sentence stem containing a word, and they must individually complete the sentence.

Examples would be:

I am dubious ________________________________.

I have misgivings about him because
______________________________________________.

My lucrative career ____________________________.
If I had to subdue a lion, my fear would be intense. If I had to subdue a lion, I would start off by feeding him food and then I would begin to nurture him.

First she lost her equilibrium and then fell right on her bottom. First she lost her equilibrium and then she fell off the balance beam.

The zealous student never misses a day of school. The zealous student finished all her homework. The zealous student was dedicated to his homework and football.

The obsolete computer was no longer in use because it was old and broken. The obsolete computer sits in the attic and collects dust. *The obsolete computer was out of style it was very old.*

The chivalrous knight showed mercy to the defeated and loyalty to his overlord or master.
STRATEGY EIGHT – BUILD A WORD

To practice classical word parts, students can use prefixes, roots, and suffixes:

circum- tain
re- ject
dis- duce
ex- stan/stance
sub- tract
in- vers/vert
scribe/script
Prefix

Root Word

Suffix
Review of Structural Elements

Prefix     anti-
Root       -audi-
Suffix     -ology
Antiaudiology (against the study of hearing)

Prefix     co-
Root       -cred-
Suffix     -phobia
Cocredphobia (fear of believing what someone else believes)

Prefix     tri-
Root       -greg-
Suffix     -script
Trigregscript (writing about three flocks)
Students create an image chart of their vocabulary words. Each word they are studying must have a visual with an accompanying sentence. Students email these to the instructor, but print a copy to study from.

Courtesy of Kristine Demke
From years of attrition a river had formed through the canyon.

A successful entrepreneur seems to be a very hardworking and driven individual.
If the nuclear planet in Japan has a radiation leak, it could end up being a catastroph for many people.

It seems as if my stepfather who is a union worker is part of a bureaucracy, because if he does not follow the rules of the union he can get reprimanded or thrown out.
The End!!

Thanks for coming and we hope you can use these ideas.

Peggy and Susanne