

Vocabulary Processes by William E. Nagy and Judith A. Scott

Word knowledge refers to what a person knows about a word and how they know it. It has 5 aspects:

Incrementality- knowing words in different, non-discreet increments

Multidimensionality- their knowledge of a word is based on other knowledge

Polysemy-that words have different meanings and those meanings must be inferred by the reader

Interrelatedness -that words are not isolated bits, they are vastly interconnected

Heterogeneity- knowledge of the meaning is also based on what type of word it is

Not only do readers need word knowledge, but also metalinguistic abilities.

Metalinguistic- the ability to reflect on and manipulate the structural features of language
Under metalinguistic abilities are skills like phonemic, syntactical and morphological awareness.

Another major part of word knowledge deals with how readers come into contact with their words- through *context*

- *Contextualized language acquired through media, gestures, conversation, listening → easier to acquire*
- *Decontextualized language requires precise word choice, richer vocabulary → can be more difficult to acquire*

What does this mean for teachers?

- Drill and kill activities do not work
- students must have multiple and frequent encounters with words
- vocabulary instruction must be multi-faceted and robust
- activities like writing sentences and looking up definitions are consistently ineffective- other methods are needed!

