

Selecting Words to Teach

Though no formula or explicit list yet exists for selecting appropriate vocabulary for instruction, in the last few years several researchers have worked out strategies to identify such vocabulary. Isabel Beck and her colleagues (2002) have developed a systematic three-tier method for selecting vocabulary to teach. Margarita Calderón and her colleagues (2005) have modified Beck's tier system for English-language learners. Andrew Biemiller (2005a) and his colleagues are developing a sequenced list of words based on their findings that regardless of grade level, all students acquire words in roughly the same order.

The Three-Tier System

Beck and McKeown (1985) have evolved a system, or algorithm, for selecting the words in a text best suited for direct explanation and focused instruction. In the system, a word is classified according to its level of utility, or tier (Beck et al. 2002).

According to these researchers, a mature literate individual's vocabulary basically comprises three tiers of words: Tier-One words consist of basic words, such as *the*, *and*, *daddy*, and *food*. Except for English-language learners and students who are word impoverished, these words rarely require instruction in school.

Tier-Two words occur frequently in language, are central to comprehension, and are understood by most mature language users. Tier-Two words are the best candidates for explicit instruction. Tier-Three words are low-frequency "specialized" words that are often limited to specific fields, domains of knowledge, or content areas such as social studies or science. Tier Threes should be taught only as they arise.

This concept of word tiers is not an exact science but a helpful guideline for choosing words for instructional attention. The boundaries between the tiers are not always clear cut. Thinking in terms of tiers is just a starting point—a way to frame the task

Muhammad Alatawi: Attempt 1

Question 8 (2 points)

Explain how to pick words to teach through direct instruction.

P.421

