

2017

## Vocabulary matters : why vocabulary instruction is important and how to implement quality instruction in preschool

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### Recommended Citation

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## Vocabulary matters : why vocabulary instruction is important and how to implement quality instruction in preschool

### Abstract

This review examined why vocabulary instruction is important in preschool, and ways that a teacher can implement quality vocabulary instruction into the classroom. The review describes why vocabulary instruction is crucial in preschool, and then provides five different ways that a teacher can implement vocabulary instruction into the preschool classroom. Vocabulary instruction is valuable as it builds the foundation for later reading skills, such as comprehension. The conclusion of this literature review provides recommendations on how to implement vocabulary instruction into preschools, educational policies, and teacher practices.

VOCABULARY MATTERS: WHY VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION IS  
IMPORTANT AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT QUALITY INSTRUCTION IN  
PRESCHOOL

A Graduate Research Paper

Submitted to the

Division of Early Childhood Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By Melanie Blocker

May 2017

This Research Paper by: Melanie Blocker

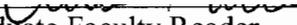
Titled: Vocabulary Matters: Why Vocabulary Instruction is Important and How to Implement Quality Instruction in Preschool

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education.

5/11/17  
Date Approved

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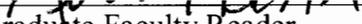
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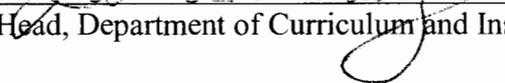
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## ABSTRACT

This review examined why vocabulary instruction is important in preschool, and ways that a teacher can implement quality vocabulary instruction into the classroom. The review describes why vocabulary instruction is crucial in preschool, and then provides five different ways that a teacher can implement vocabulary instruction into the preschool classroom. Vocabulary instruction is valuable as it builds the foundation for later reading skills, such as comprehension. The conclusion of this literature review provides recommendations on how to implement vocabulary instruction into preschools, educational policies, and teacher practices.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Vocabulary and Preschool**

Children in preschool come from various backgrounds, home lives, and socio-economic statuses. Some children have had a variety of literacy exposures and opportunities before entering preschool and others have had few. According to a study done by Hart and Risley (2003), “In four years, an average child in a professional family would accumulate experience with almost 45 million words, an average child in a working-class family 26 million words, and an average child in a welfare family 13 million words” (p. 9). Most children though have been exposed to vocabulary and have been talking and expressing themselves. The exposures a child has before entering preschool builds the base of their vocabulary knowledge. Upon entering preschool, the teacher has a monumental task of taking a child where he or she is at with his or her vocabulary and building upon it and helping them develop his or her vocabulary so he or she will be successful in later grades at reading.

Vocabulary instruction is one component of literacy instruction that is taught in preschool. “Vocabulary is the bedrock of language and early literacy, and its size and quality have consequences for school readiness and early literacy development” (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008, as cited in Roskos & Burstein, 2011, p.268). Neumann & Dwyer (2009) talk about how the word, “vocabulary”, refers to the words we must know to communicate successfully, such as expressive vocabulary (words in speaking) and receptive vocabulary (words in listening). A child will use the words he or she hears in a conversation in order to make sense of the words they will ultimately see in print. It is because of this that

vocabulary instruction needs to be more than identifying or labeling words. Vocabulary should be about helping a child to build word meaning and show the ideas that these words represent. Neuman and Dwyer (2009) suggest in order to help a child learn about words you need to provide strategies for teaching the vocabulary words you want the children to know, such as engaging the children with the new word, showing them a picture to go along with the word, or providing opportunities to use and practice the vocabulary word in the correct context. When a child understands a word and its connections to concepts and facts, a child is able to develop skills that will help in comprehending a text.

Researchers have been looking at vocabulary instruction since the 1920s and found that growth in reading ability will lead to continual growth in knowledge of words. Vocabulary knowledge plays one of its most important roles in oral reading instruction. Vocabulary instruction has both oral and print forms. The greater a child's vocabulary knowledge, the easier it will be for them to be able to read a text and decode words that they might not know (NPR, 2000).

There are various models and ideas that have been researched and presented on the best ways to teach vocabulary to children. Wasik & Iannone-Campbell (2013) state that there are five ways in which to develop vocabulary.

The first is children need to have opportunities to hear words multiple times in a meaningful context so they can start to solidify the link between a word and its meaning and how it is used in communication with people (Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2013). An example of this would be using the word spatula in different contexts. The art center in a preschool classroom could have spatulas that the children could use with play-doh,

pretending to scrape up cookies. Another area spatulas could be provided in the classroom is the dramatic play center, children could use them to pretend cook.

The second way to enhance vocabulary is for children to hear the word within in the context of a familiar word which allows the child to make the unfamiliar word more relevant to him or her. An example of this would be placing the word hippopotamus with words like horse, dog, and sheep (Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2013). The example of placing the word hippopotamus with like words provides the child with a better opportunity to learn the unfamiliar word. It can be hard for a child to learn new words if the majority of the words are unfamiliar, placing into context with familiar words allows the child to make sense of the new word.

The third way children learn vocabulary is from having conversations with adults, who encourage them to talk and give meaningful feedback on their remarks that support linguistic and cognitive development. According to Dickinson and Tabors (Dickerson, 2011; Dickerson and Tabors, 2007), teacher and child conversations, high-quality conversation during free play, and book reading are connected to gains in children's language production (as cited in Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2013).

The fourth way children will learn vocabulary is when words are presented in a meaningful context or theme. An example of this is teaching the words hammer, hard hat, and tool belt when you are doing a unit on construction or building rather than presenting the words randomly. It was found if a preschool teacher taught vocabulary in the context of a theme, mentioning words in storybooks and then in a variety of theme-related activities children were more likely to learn the vocabulary (Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2013).

The fifth way is through explicit definitions of words. This could be done through including explanations of the function of an object or pictures and props. Explicit definitions need to be provided several times in order for a child to build their knowledge of a word (Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2013).

Being aware of the different ways to develop a child's vocabulary and what kind of instruction to provide in the classroom can help teachers to know what will be most beneficial in building a preschooler's vocabulary.

Vocabulary is something preschoolers are exposed to on a daily basis. Vocabulary instruction needs to be in place within the preschool curriculum. "Vocabulary development goes to the core of language and literacy development, thus accounting for its high priority in preschool early literacy programs" (Roskos & Burstein, 2011, p. 282).

### **Importance of vocabulary instruction in preschool**

The preschool years are a great time for conversation and building up a child's vocabulary knowledge before he or she begins to start learning how to read. According to the Risley (1995) study (as cited in Christ & Wang, 2010) of children's vocabulary development, 3 year old children who came from families with low incomes knew six hundred fewer words than children the same age from families with higher incomes. In the second grade, the gap widened to about four thousand words. This information demonstrates the need to purposefully teach vocabulary in early childhood (Christ & Wang, 2010).

Preschool allows children the opportunity to benefit from vocabulary-building experiences with a trained professional. It also allows for interaction with peers who might have greater knowledge of vocabulary in a classroom setting that allows for interaction with materials including books (Wasik & Hindman, 2014). "The highest rate of vocabulary

development occurs during the preschool years; therefore, it represents a crucial time when we can intervene” (Neuman & Wright, 2014, p.4).

The Early Literacy Implementation (ELI) initiative has put a huge focus on literacy in early childhood. This Iowa initiative places certain requirements that teachers must meet in regards to literacy. A preschool teacher must give the Individual Growth and Development Indicators of Early Literacy (IGDIs) (McConnell, S., Bradfield, T., Wackerle-Hollman, A., & Rodriquez, M., 2013) assessment three time a year. The picture naming section on the assessments would pertain to a child’s vocabulary. The Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment that is used in preschool also has an objective that relate to child’s vocabulary development. (Objective 9a: Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary) (Heroman, C., Burts, D. C., Berke, K., & Bickart, T. S., 2010).

Since vocabulary plays a significant role of a preschooler’s learning experiences due to the later effects it plays in a child’s ability to read, vocabulary development is important for preschoolers. This is especially true for children from low socioeconomic homes have fewer opportunities to learn vocabulary at home (Wasik, 2010). Parents, teachers and administrators need to be aware of the importance of a child’s vocabulary development so that they can help prevent later struggles in reading. Parents should be building a child’s vocabulary before he/she enters preschool and then teachers should be building upon that base, helping to increase each child’s vocabulary knowledge.

### **Teachers’ role in preschoolers’ vocabulary development**

This review will help teachers to understand why vocabulary instruction is important to include in the preschool curriculum and how a teacher can best implement vocabulary instruction in the classroom that will be beneficial to all children. If a teacher understands

the critical role a child's vocabulary development plays in later reading skills, then he/she can share this information with parents and know how to implement the best strategies to help build and improve a child's vocabulary during preschool. "Vocabulary is the bedrock of language and early literacy, and its size and quality have consequences for school readiness and early literacy development" (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008 as cited in Roskos & Burstein, 2011 p. 268) The information reviewed here will give teachers helpful ways to implement vocabulary instruction in their classroom.

Examining the research on vocabulary instruction in preschool classrooms is important for informing teachers how they can best be implementing vocabulary instruction in their classroom in ways that help meet the children's needs and allow them to become successful readers in later grades. Vocabulary instruction in preschool is laying the ground work and creating a base of knowledge that will help throughout school.

### **Defining words**

In order to be able to better understand some of the terms that will be used in this paper, I have defined them in the list below:

- Early Literacy Implementation (ELI)- According to the Heartland AEA website <http://www.heartlandaea.org/instructional-services/cia/literacy/early-literacy-implementation-eli/>, ELI is a piece of legislation that promotes and secures the steps needed to provide evidence-based programming and instruction to teachers, assess early readers and their literacy skills and abilities, and provide extra help and intervention for non-proficient students. The main goal of Iowa's ELI (Early Literacy Implementation) is to make sure that all students are proficient in reading by the end of third grade.

- Individual Growth and Development Indicators of Early Literacy (IGDIs)-an assessment tool used to evaluate children in literacy. McConnell, S., (Bradfield, T., Wackerle-Hollman, A., & Rodriguez, M., 2013).
- Shared book reading- “an interaction that happens between an adult and child when reading or looking at a book” (Gonzalez et al., 2013, p. 214).
- *Doors to Discovery*- “comprehensive pre-kindergarten literacy program that has five areas used within it: oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, alphabet knowledge, and comprehension” (Han, Roskos, Christie, Manzuk, & Vukelich, 2005, p. 335).
- E-books- books that can be read on a computer or tablet.
- Incidental exposure- the words appeared in a story but did not receive any additional instruction or attention from the instructor. The word was not directly defined, rather heard in a sentence (Loftus-Rattan, Mitchell, & Coyne, 2016).
- Embedded instruction- “words that appear in storybook and also receive additional instruction from the instructor.” The instructor points out the words before the reading of the story (Loftus-Rattan, Mitchell, & Coyne, 2016, p. 398).
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III (PPVT)-“is an aged-normed receptive vocabulary measure in which, for each item on the assessment, children are shown four pictures and asked to point to the picture that corresponds to the word spoken by the test administrator” ( Silverman & Crandell, 2010, p. 326).

- *WOW* curriculum- “is a supplemental intervention that is used to support vocabulary instruction and conceptual development for preschool children” (Neuman, Newman, & Dwyer, 2011, p. 254).
- Root words- “help children to gain more words and keep pace with peers in developing age-normal vocabulary” (Roskos & Burstein, 2011, p. 274).
- Exceptional Coaching for Early Language and Literacy (ExCELL) - a coaching program that helps teachers learn how to teach vocabulary to children. It involves training and specific steps and interventions to implement in the classroom (Wasik & Hindman, 2014).
- Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) - “is an alternative approach to academic assessment. It uses test materials that are based on the classroom’s curriculum” (Roskos, Ergul, Bryan, Burstein, Christie, & Han, 2008, p. 279).

### **Research Questions**

To investigate the research with respect to literacy, in particular vocabulary instruction in preschool, I will address the following questions:

1. Why is vocabulary an important component of literacy to be taught in preschool?
2. How can vocabulary instruction be implemented in the preschool classroom?

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

This review of literature will provide teachers with background on the importance of vocabulary instruction in preschool literacy instruction. It will also provide teachers with several resources on how vocabulary instruction can be implemented into their classrooms. This review will examine several research studies and articles on the importance of vocabulary instruction in preschool and how teachers can implement or add to the vocabulary instruction taking place in the preschool classroom. It will present teachers with various ways that vocabulary can be taught to preschool children. The review will be broken down into two sections, the first addressing the importance of vocabulary instruction in preschool and the second explaining five ways that vocabulary instruction can be implemented in preschool.

#### **Why vocabulary instruction needs to be in preschool**

Teaching vocabulary in a preschool setting is important due to the ramifications it can have on later reading success. A child who has a strong vocabulary base will help children build and support their decoding abilities which goes hand in hand with reading comprehension (Korat & Shamir, 2012). In order for a child to gather enough vocabulary words to make sure they are on grade level for reading comprehension, children need to learn around two new word meanings per day starting from the time they are one year old. The gaining of new words establishes a foundation of root words which in turn will help a child “grow” more words that they will need in order to meet later reading demands in school (Han, Roskos, Christie, Mandzuk & Vukelich, 2005). Preschool is the start of school for

many children, and provides a great opportunity for children to be exposed to a variety of learning opportunities that can help build children's vocabulary.

Vocabulary instruction should begin in preschool, because the experiences that take place provide children the opportunity to benefit from vocabulary-building experiences with a professional in a small group setting. The preschool environment creates a space where children can interact and play with different materials that a child might not have in a home setting. It also provides a chance to be with peers whom children can converse with and in turn might expose them to a variety of vocabulary words they have not heard before (Wasik & Hindman, 2014). The preschool years has also been found to be an area where the highest rate of vocabulary development takes place. Preschool age is an optimal time when a teacher can set up interventions and help those children who have smaller vocabularies make the gains they need (Neuman & Wright, 2014).

Lee (2008) conducted a study regarding expressive vocabulary size at age two and the effects it had on later language and literacy skills from ages three through eleven. The study looked at children who had a large expressive vocabulary size at age two and those with a smaller expressive vocabulary. The findings from the study showed that the size of the vocabulary a child has at two years old can have an impact on his/her later language and literacy achievement through grade five. This study demonstrates that vocabulary exposure needs to start before preschool and continue through the preschool years and beyond to allow a child to become successful in reading.

Dickinson and Porche (2011), explored the amount of interactions and content of these interactions in preschool rooms. The children's interactions with his or her teacher were documented and used to predict children's language when the children were in kindergarten

and their language and reading comprehension when they reached fourth grade. There were 83 children that were four-years-old scattered among 65 classrooms when the study began in preschool. There were only 2 children from each classroom. Observations took place in the Head Start classrooms and private preschool programs that served children who received state vouchers for low-income families. The classroom settings were similar in their environmental makeup in regard to schedules and the activities that took place. The teachers in the classrooms were interviewed about their professional history and the children were audiotaped during large groups, book reading, small groups, meal time, and free play. The people collecting the data also did observations of the classroom interactions and took notes. In order to see how often a child heard or used low-frequency words the researchers developed a word list that acted as a filter to screen out common words. The type of teacher words during free play, the amount of sophisticated vocabulary, and teacher words during large groups and book reading were all recorded.

After preschool, when the children entered kindergarten, and again in the fourth grade, they were given several tests that explored growth in language and literacy skills. In the kindergarten test the children were shown a series of three pictures of a toy bear family on a picnic flying a kite and asked to tell a story about what was taking place. The stories were audiotaped and used to collect data for the study. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (Dunn & Dunn, 1981) was also used to assess receptive vocabulary at kindergarten and fourth grade. In fourth grade the children were given the reading comprehension measure from the California Achievement Test (CTB Macmillian/McGraw-Hill, 1992). The test consisted of the children reading narrative and expository passages silently and then trying to answer fifty multiple choice questions within 50 minutes.

Dickinson and Porche (2011) found that a child's fourth grade comprehension was related to a teacher's use of sophisticated vocabulary during free play and in group settings. The fourth grade vocabulary was related to teachers talking during book reading during the preschool and kindergarten years. A teacher's talk during free play also influenced a child's emerging language and literacy skills. The teachers who used more diverse words gave children the opportunity to learn vocabulary that they might not otherwise learn.

Learning of vocabulary words in preschool can help promote later decoding by providing children access to pronunciations of words. An increase in reading skills was shown to help strengthen their vocabulary knowledge. Preschool provides opportunities for a child's vocabulary development that can later on in school help them in reading (Dickinson & Porche, 2011).

### **Implementing Vocabulary instruction in preschool**

There are a variety of methods/ways that a teacher can implement vocabulary instruction into the preschool classroom. I am going to focus on five ways that I have found would be beneficial for a preschool teacher to implement within their classroom. The five ways to help teach vocabulary in preschool are: books/technology, conversations, direct instruction, curriculum programs, and book reading.

#### **E-books/technology as vocabulary instruction**

The first way a teacher can teach vocabulary is through e-books. Broemmel, Moran, and Wooten (2015) conducted a study where they looked at the influence of an animated book on a child's vocabulary and language development in the preschool setting. The study took place at a university laboratory school and a Head Start center in the southeastern United States. At both of the sites there was an experimental group where the children used

e-books and regular picture books, and then a control group that just used traditional picture books. There were twenty three children involved in the study. Before the study took place the children were given the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test of Receptive Language (PPVT) The data from the study was collected for three weeks. To start the study the teacher introduced and read the book to the class. After the read-aloud the researcher picked children that he/she was going to focus on for the study. The children that were the focus of the study were asked to individually retell the story and were recorded. All of the children had access to the hard copies of the story in the control group and e-books in the experimental group. The researchers made sure the children who were the focus of the study read each book at least three times over the three-day span. The children who were the focus of the study also partook in a curriculum based vocabulary measure. This was done so the children's retelling of the story could be audio taped. The researchers were observing and documenting the focus children's interactions that occurred with the e-books.

Three books from a selection of thirty-eight titles were chosen. The data for the study came from a curriculum-based vocabulary measure, audio-taped book retellings, a teacher focus group, and researchers' notes. The results from the study showed that e-books could play an important role in helping a child develop vocabulary. The children who were in the study showed a significant increase in the use of relevant vocabulary after several exposures to books, either traditional or e-books. The exposure to e-books or traditional books contribute to a child's vocabulary growth.

This study shows that e-books can be an effective way to teach vocabulary in the classroom. An e-book could be one way a teacher uses to implement vocabulary instruction in the classroom. A teacher could use e-books for group time which would allow children to

look at the e-books independently without a teacher having to do the reading of the story, but would still allow the children to receive the similar benefit as if a teacher were reading the book to the child. The e-books are something children could do independently while the teacher works with other children on vocabulary instruction or those that might need extra help. The e-books allow a child to be read the story and hear it, rather than just looking at the pictures, the child has the benefit of hearing a story being read by someone even if the teacher is not the one reading it.

Korat and Shamir (2012) conducted a study that also involved using e-books to help support children's vocabulary. The study had 288 Israeli children from twelve classes, six of which were pre-kindergarten classes and six of which were kindergarten classes. Children in the study were randomly assigned to an intervention group and those in that group read the e-book on a computer. The children that were involved with the computer worked two at a time and this work took place in their classroom. Each session lasted around twenty-five minutes. The children in the study only used the "read story with dictionary" mode, which means the story was orally read to them and also had a dictionary portion that provided explanations of difficult words for the children. The word was pronounced, shown on the screen and supported with pictures. The children's vocabulary was tested before and after the reading of target words. The children were asked the meanings of sixteen words that came from the e-book. The results of the study showed that the children who were in the experimental group and participated in the e-books advanced significantly more than the children from the control group that were not exposed to the e-book. The use of e-books showed that they have the potential to support a child's learning of words when implemented with a computerized dictionary. The results also point to the fact the children as young as

preschool can learn to identify words after they have been exposed to a highlighted word in the e-book. The study showed that the reading of an e-book that contains highlighted text provides a different setting for children to learn from that might contribute to their reading skills. The results show the importance of teaching words to children through repeated exposure, such as the defining of words in an e-book and that including a dictionary in the e-books can allow a child to become more familiar with the words read in the story. Lastly, the results of the study demonstrated a relationship between vocabulary learning and story comprehension. When a child is able to understand the meaning of the word that is being read in a story it makes it easier for a child to understand the story as a whole and comprehend what was happening. E-books could be one tool that preschool teachers use to help build a child's vocabulary. It could be one part of the vocabulary instruction that a teacher uses to make sure a child is getting enough vocabulary instruction. E-books could also be a way to intervene and help a child who has a smaller vocabulary base to overcome that gap.

Television can also play a role in a child's learning of vocabulary. Larson and Rahn (2015) looked at Sesame Street and the vocabulary instruction that takes place on the show. Larson and Rahn looked at how Sesame Street's word on the street initiative aligns with research-based practices of teaching vocabulary to children and how to supplement conventional vocabulary instruction. They looked at 170 target words from seven seasons of Word on the Street to evaluate the appropriateness of preschool vocabulary instruction. Following that they reviewed ninety-six episodes to determine teaching strategies that were used in the show. Sesame Street created the Word on the Street initiative in order to help improve vocabulary development in young children in hopes of reducing the number of

children who might be at risk of language delays. The target words on the show are introduced by a Muppet at the start of the episode by the Muppet asking people for the meaning of the word and examples. The target word is then repeated at a later time in the episode in a story-like section where the characters work together to solve a problem. Finally, a celebrity explains the meaning of the word. The findings from the study were that the Word on the Street includes many research-based vocabulary instruction practices. One piece that stood out was the how the study used videos for the teaching of new vocabulary words, specifically words that were verbs. They found that the use of videos was one of the strengths of the Word on the Street program and something that could be used in order to help teach vocabulary. This study shows that some television shows, like Sesame Street could be used in the classroom to help enhance or teach components of vocabulary to children. Clips of Sesame Street that focus on vocabulary, specifically teaching of words, could be used to support vocabulary instruction that is already taking place in the classroom or to introduce new words to children.

### **Conversations as vocabulary instruction**

The second way a teacher can teach vocabulary is through conversations. “Before age two, children’s receptive vocabularies are estimated to be four times greater than their speaking vocabularies. They acquire new words within highly contextualized social interactions and benefit from direct linkages between words and referents” (Ard & Beverly, 2004, p. 17). Ard and Beverly (2004), looked at how adult questions and comments affect a child’s vocabulary. The study had forty normally developing preschoolers in four groups of ten children. Each of the groups represented one of the four conditions: repeated joint book reading only (JBRO), joint book reading with questions (JBRQ), repeated joint book reading

with comments (JBRC), and repeated joint book reading with both questions and comments (JBRQC). A story was made up that contained ten nonsense words which consisted of verbs and nouns. The words were placed in an original story scripted by the first author and went along with the wordless picture book of *Frog on His Own*. There were scripted questions and comments that went along with the target words. The results of the study showed that children who heard adult interactive strategies learned on average seven words, which was two more on the receptive posttest than the children who heard the repeated book reading only. Children who experienced adult questions, comments, or the combination of them also exceeded the other group by around two words in receptive-word learning. This study shows that adult conversations can impact a child's learning. Book reading is one way to engage children in conversation about what is taking place in the story and ask questions. Based upon this research the conversations that a teacher or adult has during reading could have a positive impact on a child's learning of new vocabulary.

Ruston and Schwanenflugel (2010) also did a study that involved looking at conversation. They were looking at how a conversation intervention would impact a child's expressive vocabulary growth. The researchers examined the impact of a conversation intervention on children's vocabulary and whether the impact would be greater on those children who already had a smaller vocabulary levels. There were 73 children who participated in the ten week experimental intervention and participated in a total of 500 minutes of conversation. The children who were in the experimental group received twenty-five minutes of intensive conversations with an adult two times during the week. The adults emphasized the use of rare words in their conversations. The children in the control group and experimental group were given an expressive vocabulary test (EVT) (Williams, (1997)

as cited in Ruston & Schwanenflugel (2010). The results showed that the experimental group had greater growth than the control group, and those children who initially had smaller vocabularies did benefited from the intensive conversation intervention. The results provided evidence that an intensive conversation intervention between an adult and child in the classroom can be an effective strategy to help children with smaller vocabularies while improving the vocabularies of all children in the classroom. Adults, and especially teachers, need to be having conversations with the children in their classroom on a daily basis. The conversation that takes place between a child and teacher could enhance the vocabulary growth that children make while in preschool. Planning a time to make sure meaningful conversations take place in the classroom could impact children's vocabulary growth.

Hart and Risley (2003) looked at the word differences among children from different socioeconomic statuses. The study consisted of 42 families over a two and half year period of sequential monthly hour-long observations. The children were seven-to-nine months old when the study started and three -years-old at the end of the study. A portion of the study looked at 29 families study when the students were approximately nine or ten years old and their school performance in third grade. The goal of the study was to see what was happening in children's early experiences that would account for the differences in vocabulary growth rates in four-year-olds. The results of the study showed a variety of things. First, the families differed in the amount of experience with language and interaction they provided to their children. The differences that the children experienced in terms of language were linked to their language accomplishments at age three. The growth the children made, including their vocabulary use, was related to the parents' vocabulary. Between 86 and 98 percent "of the words recorded in each child's vocabulary consisted of words also recorded in their

parents' vocabularies. By the age of 34-36 months, the children were also talking and using a number of different words very similar to the averages of their parents" (Hart & Risley, 2003, p.7). A second part of the study was focused on predicting how a child would do in school based on what was happening at the age two. The researchers found that the measures of accomplishments at age three predicted measures of language skills at nine to ten years of age. This study sheds light on the importance of vocabulary in conversations during the early years before a child enters preschool. The first three years of a child's life is important in a developing a child's vocabulary, and parents should try to foster children's vocabularies before, during and after they enter preschool in order for them to make sufficient growth in their vocabulary knowledge.

#### **Direct teaching as vocabulary instruction**

The third way a teacher can teach vocabulary is through direct instruction. Stoner, Beck, Dennis, and Parette (2011) conducted a study that looked at the impact of the use of instructional technology on direct vocabulary instruction. There were 30 three- and four-year-olds in 2 preschool classrooms involved. The children in the study were identified as at-risk social-emotionally and academically by the federal guidelines, were not receiving support services, and were not on an IEP (Individualized Education Program). Thirty vocabulary words were chosen from two curriculum units, one on animals and the other on transportation; the combined total of words from the two units was sixty. The words included nouns and were identified as instructional targets in the curriculum. The children had not received formal instruction on the chosen words before the study began. The instruction for the study presented vocabulary words in picture form with one group and through projection and animation for the other group. The pictures in the study were produced using Board

Maker. The pictures were then used to make books. Eight books made by speech-language pathology graduate clinicians using PowerPoint and included the targeted words. The children were shown both the picture card created book and the picture card book that used the projection screen with animation, making each child his or her own control for the study. A pretest, intervention and posttest were conducted. The pictures that did not use technology were read to the children using a book format; after the reading of the book, two children were chosen (rotated so every child got a chance) to pick a vocabulary word while the picture was shown to them. The researcher would say an action word, such as “run” for the animal unit and “go fast” for the transportation unit. The second child chose one word for the whole class to perform the action. An example of this would be if a child chose turtle and the second child chose run the class would pretend to be a turtle that was running. Once the actions were completed, the board with the thirty targeted vocabulary words was displayed for the children to name together. The instruction was the same for both conditions, other than the same pictures that were used in the books were projected on a screen instead of being shown in book format. The person conducting the study also put the children’s choices of words into action using Intellitools Classroom Suite which animated the book. The results showed that all children gained from pretest to posttest, no matter what method of instruction was used. Both formats of books, the traditional picture book and the one with technology produced the same increases on expressive vocabulary and word retrieval. The improvements that the children made from beginning to the end of the study provide evidence for direct vocabulary instruction occurring in the preschool classroom. The research illustrates that children who are at risk improved with instruction of identifying the meaning of words. Technology can aid with the direct instruction, but the use of technology did not

result in greater levels of improvement. This study illustrates directly teaching vocabulary words while reading stories improves when instruction of words is being taught and when during the reading of stories.

Loftus-Rattan, Mitchell, and Coyne (2016) explored direct vocabulary instruction in preschool comparing extended instruction, embedded instruction, and incidental exposure of vocabulary. A total of 25 preschool students participated in the study and were taught nine vocabulary words that were chosen from a storybook that was read three times a week. There were three conditions that were used in the study, incidental exposure, embedded instruction, and extended instruction. Incidental exposure occurred when the words were in the storybook, but there was no additional instruction or time spent on the words. Embedded instruction consisted of the words appearing in the storybook and receiving additional instruction from the instructor. The extended instruction consisted of prompting the children to listen for three specific words during the reading of the story and the words from the embedded instruction and to raise his or her hand when he or she heard the words in the story. While the story was read, children identified the word and repeated the word with the teacher. The following quote is an example of what a teacher would do while reading the story of Goldilocks and wanting to teach the word weald. "A weald is a forest, or some woods. "You must promise not to take the shortcut through the woods," she said. In the picture [point], Goldilocks is going into the weald or into the woods. Everyone say weald" (Loftus-Rattan et al., 2016, p. 398). The extended instruction provided the children with more intense instruction and follow up activities every time after reading the story. The findings in the study showed that children learned words better when they received the extended instruction as compared to the incidental or embedded instructional conditions. Loftus-

Rattan, Mitchell, and Coyne (2016) concluded, “We recommend that preschool teachers identify a small number of words as the focus of direct instruction. This instruction should provide definitions within the context of a storybook reading and also included interactive discussions or activities that allow students to use and understand the words in various contexts. Students may also benefit from the use of pictures to demonstrate word meanings” (p. 407).

### **Curriculum programs for vocabulary instruction**

The fourth way a teacher can teach vocabulary is by using specific curriculum programs. The *Doors to Discovery (2002)* is an example of an early literacy programs that addresses vocabulary. Roskos et al., (2008) did a study on the *Doors to Discovery (2002)* curriculum to see how typically developing children, children with special needs, and children who were identified as at risk made vocabulary growth when their teachers used the *Doors to Discovery* curriculum. There were 56 children from 15 preschool classrooms that participated in the study. *The Doors* program is divided into monthly units that focus on topics that are interesting to children. The study focused on the following units: Vroom! Vroom!, a transportation unit; Backyard Detectives, a nature unit; and Tabby Tiger’s Diner, a unit on food and restaurants. *The Doors (2002)* program contains three different types of instructional strategies, large group time, discovery centers, and small group time. A Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) strategy was used to keep track of the children’s knowledge of vocabulary and was done with the same five students each week, two typically achieving students, two students with special needs, and one student considered at-risk. There were 218 words from the CBM that were used, which accounted for 25 percent of the target words included in the program. The results of the study showed that all three groups of

children made gains in vocabulary, but the rate of vocabulary growth was different between the three groups, with typical achieving children gaining the most over time. Another aspect of this study was the potential influences of vocabulary composition on vocabulary comprehension. “When the target vocabulary consisted primarily of root and common words needed for reading and when these words were clustered into relatively few semantic neighborhoods (conceptual topics), children performed better on vocabulary tasks” (Roskos et al., 2008, p. 287). This study provides information that there are literacy programs schools can purchase that will help preschoolers learn vocabulary. Children identified as at-risk might need additional vocabulary instruction or interventions to reach the same level as their peers, but this curriculum program can provide a base for effective vocabulary instruction.

*Exceptional Coaching for Early Language and Literacy (ExCELL)* developed by Wasik and Hindman (2014) studied how *ExCELL* teachers’ and children’s use of focal vocabulary changed during conversations of shared book reading. Wasik and Hindman wanted to know if a child’s vocabulary learning throughout the preschool year could be predicted.

The *ExCELL* model consists of a series of randomized control trials that took place from 1997 to 2012. Teachers were provided with at least one academic year of training that consisted for one workshop per month, followed by 3 weeks of in-the- classroom-coaching in the areas of oral language, phonological sensitivity, alphabet knowledge, and writing. The goal of the *ExCELL* model is to have teachers use shared book readings as a main method of vocabulary instruction. The model shows teachers how to point out new vocabulary words by

reading books organized into themes, having conversations about the words, and participating in follow-up activities that allow the child to talk and use the words.

Participants in this study included 268 children from three Head Start programs. Two programs were chosen at random to be part of the intervention group, which included seventeen intervention teachers and eight comparison teachers. The results from the study indicated teachers who were trained in the *ExCELL* program used more target theme-related vocabulary during book reading than teachers who were untrained. Wasik and Hindman also found teachers who talked more about the vocabulary words during the book reading were able to build stronger skills in the children over the school year. Children learned more new words in the classrooms where teachers repeated the vocabulary words, once the children had used them in conversation. “This is an interesting and important finding for two reasons. It reinforces the importance of getting children to use the vocabulary in conversations. It may not be sufficient for children to hear adults use vocabulary words; they may need to use the words themselves” (Wasik & Hindman, 2014, p. 1051). This study of the *ExCELL* program shows that reading books to children, having conversations with children, allowing children to use vocabulary words they have been exposed to in the classroom, and building on a child’s prior knowledge are all important factors in helping a child learn vocabulary in preschool.

A third curriculum program reviewed regarding vocabulary development is the *World of Words (WOW)* (Neuman, Dwyer, Koh, & Wright, 2007). Neuman, Newman, and Dwyer (2011) investigated the *WOW* instructional program to see if preschoolers can learn words through categorization which may improve their ability to retain words and their conceptual properties. The study was done with three- and four- year- old children from 28 Head Start

classrooms in twelve schools that were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. The children were assessed on word knowledge, expressive language, conceptual knowledge, and categories and properties during the intervention. The study lasted over a year span and consisted of an eight-day instructional sequence. The sequence was designed to help teachers scaffold the children's learning of the words and concepts. The first lesson focused on building background knowledge and providing meaning. Following this instruction, the teacher would begin to build on what children already knew and had learned by establishing intertextual connections across different things, such as books or video. Lastly, the teacher would provide the children with opportunities for open-ended discussions. The results of the study showed that the children who participated in the intervention learned the curriculum vocabulary associated with the topics, and were better able to identify concepts and the conceptual properties and categories of the words studied. Those in the treatment group improved considerably in their ability to categorize and conceptualize new words, as compared to the control group. The ability to categorize words allowed the children in the treatment group to apply what they learned from a word to develop knowledge of new words because of their ability to categorize words. This study shows the need for content vocabulary instruction in preschool. Vocabulary instruction needs to be an integral part of a preschooler's curriculum, and *WOW* is one type of program that could be used to support vocabulary development. Word classification and using words in categories is an important aspect that teachers could implement into their instruction.

Another study (Han et al., 2005) compared the earlier referenced curriculum *Doors to Discovery* (2002) with the *Creative Curriculum* (Dodge, Colker, & Heroman, 2000) examined vocabulary learning as a function of the two curriculums. The researchers wanted

to examine the amount of teacher and child talk in both curriculums, the difference in the quality of teacher talk, how the quality of teacher talk in *Doors Curriculum* had changed in terms of the use of rare words, and how new words are taught in large group over time. The sample information for this study was retrieved from video data of large group activity time collected in the original *Doors to Discovery (2002)* study. The teachers using the creative curriculum was videotaped once a week. The results of the study found that the children in the *Doors* program showed significantly more talk than in *Creative Curriculum* classrooms, which indicates that the amount of child talk was different between the programs. The teachers in the *Doors* program also displayed substantial increases in the frequency of the use of rare words in the different units. Lastly, the teachers using *Doors (2002)* used more sophisticated strategies to introduce new vocabulary words. This study highlights the value of the conversations that teachers have with preschool; however, the curriculum implemented can make an impact on child talk.

Neuman and Kaefer (2013) used an instructional intervention that included a two week topic from the *WOW* curriculum to examine how supplemental vocabulary instruction differed in whole group and small group instruction. The researchers used a within-subject design and had 108 preschool children from twelve Head Start classrooms participate in an eight-week long intervention that included four topics of targeted vocabulary instruction, done in either small or whole group. There were pre- and posttests for the children that looked at the children's word learning and conceptual and categorical knowledge. The goal of this study was to see if intense small group instruction in vocabulary would have a stronger impact on vocabulary growth than less intense large group instruction, and possibly be especially helpful to children at risk for a delay in vocabulary. The results of the study

found that group size did not make a difference. The children both groups make gains in word knowledge, concepts and categories. The study also showed that grouping patterns by themselves do not appear to guarantee greater intensity of vocabulary instruction, but what teachers do within those groups can make a difference in whether or not they lead to more rigorous instruction for those preschoolers who could be at risk in reading. This study sheds light on what teachers can do in the classroom for vocabulary instruction, and that group size does not matter per se, but, rather it is what teachers do for vocabulary instruction that matters. Teachers need to provide quality instruction in order to help preschoolers who are at risk or who have poor vocabulary, if teachers want to help with later reading skills

### **Book reading as vocabulary instruction**

The fifth way a teacher can teach vocabulary is through book reading. “Through book reading, children learn vocabulary that they may not necessarily encounter in daily conversations and learn about conventions of print and the syntactic structure of language” (Wasik & Bond, 2001, p. 243). Wasik and Bond (2001) examined how interactive book reading techniques and extension activities affect children’s vocabulary learning. There were 127 four-year-olds from low-income families in the study. Two teachers were randomly assigned to the intervention group and two assigned to the control group. The goal of the study was to determine the impact of providing children with multiple opportunities to interact with vocabulary words through reading books, story props, and extension activities. The results of the study indicated that the children whose teachers provided numerous opportunities to interact with vocabulary words learned more book-related vocabulary compared to those who were only exposed to books. Wasik and Bond found that the use of story props gave life to the words and also provided supplementary opportunities for the

children to hear and label a word. The extension activities in the study allowed the children to have more meaningful contexts in which they could use the vocabulary from the book. This study provides evidence that book reading can have a positive impact on a child's vocabulary development. Book reading, interacting during stories, open-ended questions, story props and conversations about the books can be a beneficial addition to a preschooler's vocabulary instruction.

Leung (2008) also did a study that looked at books. This study had 37 preschool children who attended a YWCA Child Development Center. The focus was on preschool children's development of vocabulary through participating in an interactive read-aloud story based on informational texts. The children participated in small group book readings that were interactive and revolved around the science topic of light and color. Before the study took place, each child was assessed to determine if he or she had a large, average, or small vocabulary using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, (PPVT) and Expressive Vocabulary Test (EVT) assessment. The children participated in an interactive reading of an informational picture book and then did hands-on science activities. The results of the study showed that there was an increase in scores on the EVT which measures expressive vocabulary. It was found that the children in the study who participated in one-on-one book retellings were better able to explain the meaning of target words related to science concepts and used considerably more target words from the first to the last story retelling. The results from the study indicated that preschoolers can learn scientific terms such as "electromagnetic" through book reading and hands-on experiences. "Results support research that has found that repeated readings and small group interactive discussions of concepts are important for developing vocabulary knowledge, especially for children with low general

vocabulary knowledge” (Leung, 2008, p. 191). This study demonstrated that combining science vocabulary words with read alouds and hands on activities has the potential to increase a child’s vocabulary. The academic area of science provides another chance for vocabulary instruction to be taught in preschool.

Neuman, Kaefer, and Pinkham (2016) did a similar study that looked at vocabulary growth through the use of books and science. The study had 17 preschool teachers and 268 children. There were nine classrooms that were assigned to the treatment group and eight to the control group. The group that was part of the treatment group received a science-focused shared-book reading intervention for four days a week, for approximately twelve to fifteen minutes per day, over the course of twelve weeks, while the other class kept their usual routine.

The purpose of the study was to examine how the shared book reading approach for integrating literacy and science instruction, with a focus on teaching science vocabulary, could improve low-income preschoolers’ word knowledge, conceptual development, and content knowledge of life sciences. The results indicated that there was significant growth in vocabulary and conceptual knowledge among treatment group children when compared to the control group children. Also surfacing from the research, was evidence that children in the treatment group were better able to apply the knowledge they had learned to an understanding of the core themes related to the survival and life cycle of organisms, one of the areas covered in the shared book readings. Lastly, the children in the treatment group acquired greater knowledge of the information-text genre than those in the control group. These children were better able to identify the purposes for reading an information text, identify the labels in the text, and describe how pictures reinforced the content of the text.

This study provides insight into how content specific shared book reading can help improve a child's vocabulary and how vocabulary instruction can take place in other areas than literacy.

Gonzalez et al., (2012) examined the impact of book on preschoolers' receptive and expressive vocabulary knowledge. The study took place over eighteen weeks and involved 13 teachers and 100 children. The children took part in ninety 20 minute small group sessions that were guided by teacher engaged in shared reading instruction. The results indicated that the conversations that take place after the reading of a book had more benefits compared to conversations that take place during the reading of a book. The findings also indicate that interactive reading, including talking before, during, and after a story can help build a child's vocabulary.

Silverman and Crandell (2010) looked at the relationship between teachers' vocabulary instruction during read-aloud and non-read-aloud times in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. In the study, 16 teachers were observed during a 90 minute language arts block, and a total of 244 children assessed on target word knowledge and general vocabulary knowledge at the beginning and end of the school year. The results of the study demonstrated that there were five practices teachers use to teach vocabulary:

1. Acting out and illustrating words
2. Analyzing words semantically
3. Applying words in new contexts
4. Defining words explicitly in rich context
5. Word study

In addition, the results from the study showed that teachers taught vocabulary during read-aloud times, but also extended vocabulary instruction at other times during the day with

activities that did not include reading. The teachers' use of vocabulary instruction practices during read-aloud time had a positive effect on the children's vocabulary learning. This study provides evidence that reading books to children is important for building vocabulary, but teachers also need to have non-read aloud vocabulary instruction. Teachers need to take into account all children, especially those with lower vocabulary knowledge. There needs to be strong vocabulary instruction in every aspect of the classroom in order to try and ensure all children are successful in learning vocabulary.

This chapter delved into why vocabulary instruction is important and how a teacher can implement different vocabulary instructional methods into the preschool classroom. Vocabulary is one of the basic needs for reading success and leads to better comprehension in later school years. There have been numerous studies that have looked at the positive impact a strong vocabulary has on later reading skills. The preschool classroom provides a great opportunity for rich vocabulary instruction to take place that will carry on into a child's later learning. Preschool teachers who understand the importance of vocabulary growth and the impact on reading success later will know why vocabulary needs to be focal point in preschool literacy instruction.

The next chapter will present conclusions and recommendations related to vocabulary instruction for preschoolers.

## **Chapter III**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Conclusions**

Vocabulary instruction is an important component of literacy instruction in preschool. When children are exposed to a variety of words in reading it helps them build up their vocabularies. It also provides children with an understanding of a variety of words which in turn can help with later reading comprehension. When a child is exposed to vocabulary in a variety of ways, such as book reading, direct teaching of vocabulary words, conversations, and being given the opportunity to use the words on his or her own, it all builds a child's vocabulary.

A child needs to be taught vocabulary in many different ways. If the preschool literacy instruction has a solid framework in place, a child is going to benefit not only during the preschool year but throughout his or her later years of schooling. The vocabulary instruction that occurs in preschool is laying the foundation for children's word knowledge, which they will carry with them beyond preschool. If a child in preschool has multiple exposures to words, and a variety of ways that vocabulary instruction is implemented in the classroom, this will allow the child to grow in his or her rate of vocabulary knowledge development and offer him or her the most beneficial opportunity to increase vocabulary.

#### **Conclusions from the Literature**

Various studies (Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Lee, 2011; Hart & Risley, 2003) have established the importance of vocabulary instruction in preschool. The research has shown that vocabulary knowledge is linked to later reading comprehension. By understanding the importance of vocabulary instruction taking place at the preschool level, a preschool teacher

can understand the impact vocabulary instruction in the classroom can have down the road for a child. Teaching vocabulary in different ways will allow a preschool teacher be better equipped to meet the needs of all children and provide well-rounded vocabulary instruction. Educators need to know the impact that vocabulary can have on later reading skills and that vocabulary needs to be taught from an early age to have the greatest impact on children's learning during later schooling.

Understanding the different ways that vocabulary can be taught, using multiple resources such as books, props, technology, etc., and a variety of strategies to implement vocabulary instruction in the classroom will have the strongest impact on a child. According to Wasik & Iannone-Campbell (2012), the research on vocabulary development has helped us understand ways teachers can support children's vocabulary growth. "Providing multiple opportunities to use words, relating unfamiliar words to familiar words, presenting words within a meaningful context or theme, providing explicit definitions of words, and scaffolding children's language through meaningful feedback" (2012, p. 331). Studies done by Korat and Shamir (2012), Ard & Beverly, 2004, Ruston and Schwanenflugel, 2010, and Loftus-Rattan, Mitchell, and Coyne, 2016 have shown different ways in which a teacher can teach vocabulary and the resources that can be used to help aid in the teaching of vocabulary to preschoolers.

### **Recommendations**

This review of research on the importance of vocabulary instruction and how to implement it into the classroom identified several strategies a teacher can use to support vocabulary development in the preschool classroom. My five recommendations stem from the five areas I addressed about implementing vocabulary into the preschool classroom. "By

beginning at the preschool level to consciously enhance children's content area vocabulary development, we can help to close the gap in literacy learning that often occurs in kindergarten and first grade" (Leung, 2008, p. 191).

My first recommendation is to read books to preschoolers. The study done by Wasik and Bond (2001) supports the importance of book reading in the classroom. The results from their study indicated that children who had multiple opportunities to interact with vocabulary words from the stories learned more book-related vocabulary compared to children who were just shown books. Reading books to children can provide opportunities for children to hear words they might not hear in daily conversations. According to Wasik & Iannone-Campbell (2013), teachers should select vocabulary words from books that help support the current theme, are unfamiliar to the children, and are critical to the comprehension of the story. The vocabulary words that are read during read-alouds should be taught when encountered in the story. Teachers can implement this strategy into their current classroom instruction by reading the book first and going through and finding words that they think would be helpful and meaningful to teach. A teacher could preselect five words that he or she wants to focus on in the story and then teach those words during the reading of the story. After reading the story the teacher could extend those words into conversations with the child, such as during play time and having the child use the word on his or her own in conversations. If a teacher purposefully selects words every time when reading books to children, the opportunity is provided to help them build their vocabulary knowledge. Additionally it exposes children child to a variety of words that they might not have learned or heard otherwise.

My second recommendation is to engage preschoolers in meaningful conversations on a daily basis, whether it be through books, play, or personal conversations with the

children. Ard & Beverly (2004), Ruston and Schwanenflugel (2010), and Hart and Risley (2003) all did studies that focused on different ways conversations could be used to teach preschoolers vocabulary words. The three ways I suggest to use conversations to teach vocabulary in the preschool classroom are through book reading, center time (play time), and daily conversation.

Books are a wonderful resource and can provide a vast number of ways to teach different concepts in literacy, especially vocabulary, because they contain a multitude of words. Teachers can use the books they read in the classroom to guide their of vocabulary words. When reading a book teachers can expand on what is going on in the book by asking open-ended questions and posing questions that get the children thinking and talking about what is happening in the story. This gives the children a chance to talk and use words instead of the teacher doing all the talking. It also provides a chance for children to practice saying and using words that they might not encounter in daily conversations.

Center time, or what is known as play time to preschoolers, provides an excellent time for all sorts of conversations to take place, whether it is between two children or a child and a teacher. Center time allows for purposeful, strategic conversations that can build vocabulary. Wasik and Iannone-Campbell (2013) state that center time allows for small group experiences where children have the chance to talk and listen to both teachers and peers. Center time also allows for teachers to focus on individual children and provide the feedback they need to build on their vocabulary. Additionally, center time allows for children to engage in conversations and practice the words that they might have heard in a story. Placing props or items from stories into the centers will prompt children to use new vocabulary words. An example of this would be to place the props that go along with a story

into a center for the children to interact with and possible provide the opportunity to retell the story. For example, when reading the book *If You Give a Mouse Cookie* by Laura Numeroff, the items that the mouse asked for in the story, such as a straw, milk, mirror, etc. could be provided for the children to use. This would provide the chance for a child to use the items to retell the story and practice using some the language from the story in his or her conversations.

The conversations that a teacher has with a child on a daily basis can be meaningful and help foster a child's vocabulary growth, if conversation is used to its fullest potential. Teachers should reflect upon their questions to ensure they are not just asking yes/no questions to a child when talking with the child. Teachers should aim to ask deeper and more open-ended questions. The more expansive the question asked by a teacher, the greater the opportunity the child has to engage in a meaningful vocabulary rich conversation.

My third recommendation is to make sure there is direct instruction of teaching vocabulary words. Loftus-Rattan, Mitchell, and Coyne (2016), and Stoner, Beck, Dennis, and Parette (2011) did studies on direct vocabulary instruction in preschool. When a teacher is using direct vocabulary instruction, he or she is specifically teaching a word to the child. A child is being told what the word means and how it is used in a sentence or conversation. An efficient strategy teachers can use is tying their unit words together with the words he or she directly teaches. For example, if one of the words a teacher wants to teach in a construction unit is the word, bulldozer, the teacher could find a story that contains the word, read it to the class. During the reading of the story, when the word appears the teacher can define the word. After reading the story, the teacher can write it on the board for the children to see. The teacher can then allow the children to practice saying the word and using it in a

sentence. An additional strategy for the teacher includes placing bulldozers in the blocks center for the children to play with and act out different scenarios. This strategy allows the children another opportunity to use the word on their own.

My fourth recommendation is using e-books and technology in the classroom. The studies done by Broemmel, Moran, and Wooten (2015), Korat and Shamir (2012 and Larson and Rahn (2015) address how the use of e-books or technology can be another resource to aid in the instruction of vocabulary. Teachers can use technology and e-books in a variety of ways within the classroom. One way I recommend implementing e-books is to download books onto an I-pad that the children can listen to independently. Korat & Shamir (2012) stated, "Reading a digital story with highlighted text is a different context in which young children might pay attention to the text and advance their reading skills" (p. 147). There is a series called *I like books* by Innovative Investments and Grasshopper Apps that reads the books to the children, but also shows the words on the screen and highlights each word as it is read.

My fifth recommendation is investigating the curriculum of *The Doors to Discover*, which is a curriculum that can be used for vocabulary instruction in preschool. *The Doors to Discovery* curriculum surfaced in several studies I reviewed, and I feel is one that I think is worth examining for preschool teachers to purchase and use in the classroom. Roskos et al., (2008) did a study on *Doors to Discovery* and Han, Roskos, Christie, Mandzuk, and Vukelich (2005) compared *Doors to Discovery* to *Creative Curriculum*. The *Doors to Discovery* curriculum would provide a base to use when teaching vocabulary. What I liked most about the *Doors to Discovery* curriculum was that it splits instruction into three chunks, large group time, discovery centers, and small group time (Roskos et al, 2008). I think the three chunks

provides a teacher with a chance to introduce a story or vocabulary lesson to the whole class, but also allows the children to have play time and explore the concepts taught during large group, while still encompassing the small group that would provide time for a teacher to work more one-on-one with the children. A teacher could add other instructional methods where needed and supplement for those children who might need additional vocabulary instruction.

### **Future Projects/Research**

Future research about what is the best curriculum for preschool teachers to use in the classroom needs to be studied. While there have been some projects and studies done with several curriculum programs, there is not enough research to determine the best curriculum to use for all children. Some of the curriculums provide great tools to teach vocabulary, but do not take into account children with special needs or low vocabulary levels when entering preschool.

I believe there also needs to be professional development opportunities available for teachers that demonstrates the best practices for teaching vocabulary to preschoolers. Teachers need training and an understanding of what they can be doing to help children learn vocabulary.

Lastly, I think there needs to be more research on what parents can do to help foster a child's vocabulary before he or she enters preschool. The family is a child's first educator and the early years are very important in a child's development and learning. Families need resources and to know the importance of early vocabulary development on later learning, especially how the size of their children's vocabulary knowledge impacts reading skills and comprehension.

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