

St James' Vocabulary Overview for Key Stage 2 (KS2) using Christopher Such's Approach

Christopher Such, author of *"The Art and Science of Teaching Primary Reading,"* emphasizes the importance of a structured and evidence-based approach to vocabulary instruction. His method advocates for a balanced focus on both breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge, ensuring that children are not just exposed to new words but understand their meaning in different contexts and can use them effectively.

Key Principles from Christopher Such's Approach:

1. Explicit Vocabulary Instruction:

- New words should be explicitly taught through direct instruction rather than just relying on incidental learning from reading.
- Teachers should introduce key vocabulary before reading a text, discussing word meanings, word forms (e.g., prefixes, suffixes), and word relationships.

2. Tiered Vocabulary:

- Words can be categorized into three tiers, and teaching should focus on Tier 2 words, which are high-utility, versatile words that appear across many contexts.
- **Tier 1:** Basic, everyday words (e.g., "dog," "run").
- **Tier 2:** More sophisticated, academic words that are useful across subjects (e.g., "analyse," "justify," "contrast").
- **Tier 3:** Subject-specific vocabulary (e.g., "photosynthesis," "parliament").

3. Contextual Learning:

- Vocabulary should be taught in context. For example, using a story or subject-based topic to introduce new words helps students make connections between words and their meanings.
- Using context clues (e.g., sentence structure, surrounding words) can help children infer meanings when they encounter unfamiliar words in their reading.

4. Repeated Exposure and Practice:

- Pupils need multiple exposures to new vocabulary over time to truly understand and remember words.
- Teachers can plan for repetition through different activities such as using words in writing tasks, discussions, and across subject areas to deepen understanding.

5. Morphology Instruction:

- Focusing on word parts, such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes, helps pupils deduce the meanings of unfamiliar words. For example, understanding the prefix "un-" (meaning "not") or the suffix "-ful" (meaning "full of") can help children unlock the meaning of multiple words.

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6. Semantic Mapping and Word Relationships:

- Vocabulary instruction should involve teaching synonyms, antonyms, and word associations to help students understand words in relation to one another.
- Semantic maps, where words are organized into categories (e.g., "vehicle" with subcategories like "car," "bus," "bicycle"), help children visualize how words connect.

7. Encouraging a Love for Words:

- Like reading, vocabulary learning should be enjoyable. Encouraging curiosity about new words and providing rich reading experiences with diverse genres helps children naturally acquire and practice new vocabulary.
- Playful activities, such as word games or creative writing prompts, can boost engagement and confidence.

Examples of Vocabulary Instruction Using Christopher Such's Approach:

Tier 2 Word Example: "Evaluate"

1. Explicit Teaching:

- Define the word: "Evaluate means to judge or decide the value or quality of something."
- Provide examples: "When you evaluate a book, you think about what made it good or bad."
- Use it in context: "In our science lesson today, we are going to evaluate different materials to see which one is best for building."

2. Contextual Learning:

- Read a passage where the word "evaluate" is used. Discuss how the characters or situation required evaluation and what that process involved.

3. Repeated Exposure:

- Use the word in different subject areas (e.g., "evaluate" in math, history, or art). Provide opportunities for students to use the word in their own sentences.

4. Word Morphology:

- Break down the word: "Evaluate" comes from the Latin word "valere," meaning "to be of worth." Discuss related words like "value" or "valuable."

5. Semantic Mapping:

- Create a map around the word "evaluate," connecting it to words like "judge," "assess," "examine," and "appraise."

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Activities to Reinforce Vocabulary:

- **Word Walls:** Create a KS2 word wall where new vocabulary words are displayed. Students can refer to the wall during lessons and be encouraged to use the words in speech and writing.
- **Vocabulary Journals:** Encourage students to keep a journal of new words they learn, including definitions, example sentences, and illustrations or synonyms.
- **Morphology Games:** Use prefixes, suffixes, and root word games to help students build and explore new words.
- **Story Contexts:** After reading a class novel, highlight key vocabulary words, and ask students to explain how those words helped them understand the story better.

Assessment and Progress Monitoring:

- **Formative Assessment:** Regularly check for understanding through discussions, quizzes, and application of new vocabulary in writing.
- **Cumulative Reviews:** Revisit words periodically to reinforce retention and encourage long-term understanding.
- **Engagement in Conversations:** Encourage vocabulary-rich discussions in class to assess how students incorporate new words into their speech.

By following Such's structured yet flexible approach, KS2 students can deepen their vocabulary knowledge, which directly supports improved reading comprehension, critical thinking, and overall academic success.

