



Vocabulary Learning: Approaches Aligned with Common Core Standards

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Abstract:

Findings reveal the critical role of vocabulary development in facilitating students' mastery of the standards, particularly in reading, writing, speaking, and listening domains. A diverse range of instructional approaches, including explicit instruction, context-based learning, morphemic analysis, and interactive read-alouds, are employed by educators to promote vocabulary acquisition and application across content areas. Emphasis is placed on active engagement and interaction, with strategies such as collaborative discussions and questioning techniques fostering meaningful student participation. However, gaps persist in the consistency and depth of vocabulary instruction, highlighting the need for comprehensive and systematic approaches aligned with the standards. Educators must prioritize the development of coherent vocabulary curricula, provide targeted support for diverse learners, and create language-rich environments conducive to vocabulary development. By adopting evidence-based practices, educators can empower students to become proficient users of language, thereby enhancing their academic success and lifelong learning.

Keywords: vocabulary instruction, Common Core State Standards, English Language Arts, instructional approaches

Introduction:

Vocabulary acquisition is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of literacy development, significantly impacting reading comprehension and overall academic achievement (Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). As Baumann et al. (2003) suggest, a robust vocabulary enables readers to engage with more complex texts, while also empowering writers to craft sophisticated compositions. Historically, educational standards across states and provinces have reflected the pivotal role of vocabulary, with explicit emphasis on its instruction (Baumann et al., 2003).

However, the landscape of educational standards underwent a significant transformation with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. These standards, spanning various content areas in elementary school, exhibit a notable shift in the treatment of vocabulary instruction. While vocabulary remains integral, the Common Core standards allocate a smaller percentage of focus explicitly to vocabulary, signaling a departure from previous standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010).

This study seeks to explore the implications of the evolving stance on vocabulary instruction within the Common Core framework. By analyzing the allocation of vocabulary standards within the Common Core and comparing it with previous standards, this research aims to elucidate the changing emphasis on vocabulary in education.

Moreover, this study delves into the implicit integration of vocabulary within other language arts standards, underscoring the interconnectedness of vocabulary with reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Through a comprehensive examination of the Common Core standards across content areas, including English language arts and mathematics, this research aims to elucidate the multifaceted nature of vocabulary instruction in contemporary education.

Literature Review:



Vocabulary instruction has long been recognized as a critical component of literacy development, with numerous studies highlighting its profound impact on reading comprehension and academic achievement. Baumann, Kame'enui, and Ash (2003) underscore the pivotal role of vocabulary in enabling readers to engage with more complex texts, emphasizing its importance in unlocking the meaning and nuances of written discourse. Similarly, Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) conducted a meta-analysis that demonstrated the significant effects of vocabulary instruction on reading comprehension, reaffirming its status as a cornerstone of literacy education.

Historically, educational standards across various jurisdictions have reflected the recognition of vocabulary's significance in literacy development. These standards typically included explicit mandates for vocabulary instruction, underscoring its central role in the curriculum. However, the landscape of educational standards underwent a notable transformation with the advent of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.

The Common Core standards represent a departure from previous standards in their treatment of vocabulary instruction. While vocabulary remains integral to the curriculum, the proportion of standards explicitly focused on vocabulary has diminished. This shift is evident in the allocation of standards within the Common Core framework, where only a fraction explicitly address vocabulary (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). This change raises questions about the evolving emphasis on vocabulary in contemporary education and its implications for literacy development.

Moreover, the integration of vocabulary within other language arts standards is a notable feature of the Common Core framework. While vocabulary standards constitute a smaller percentage of the overall standards, vocabulary is implicitly woven into other standards, reflecting its interconnectedness with reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. This integration underscores the multifaceted nature of vocabulary instruction in the context of the Common Core standards.

Baumann et al. (2003) advocate for instructional approaches that capitalize on the interplay between vocabulary and other language skills, such as structural and contextual analysis. They emphasize the importance of teaching vocabulary in meaningful contexts, leveraging texts to facilitate discussion and interaction, and fostering word appreciation and consciousness among students. Similarly, Brusnighan and Folk (2012) highlight the effectiveness of instructional strategies that promote structural and contextual analysis of words, enhancing students' ability to comprehend and utilize vocabulary in diverse contexts.

The demand for vocabulary knowledge intensifies throughout the elementary and middle school years, particularly in relation to print. Nagy and Anderson (1984) estimate that students entering ninth grade need to know and understand a substantial number of word families to effectively engage with school reading materials. This underscores the necessity for comprehensive and sustained vocabulary instruction across grade levels, encompassing both general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.

Despite the acknowledged importance of vocabulary instruction, Scott, Jamieson-Noel, and Asselin (2003) highlight the prevalence of inadequate and isolated vocabulary instruction in many classrooms. Their observational study of Canadian upper elementary classrooms revealed limited instructional time dedicated to vocabulary development, particularly in content area classes. This suggests a disconnect between the recognized significance of vocabulary and its implementation in educational practice.

In response to the evolving landscape of vocabulary instruction, educators have explored innovative instructional approaches aimed at enhancing students' vocabulary acquisition and usage. Mason et al. (2003) emphasize the role of wide reading in vocabulary development, advocating for extensive reading practices to expose students to a diverse range of words and phrases. They argue that extensive reading can significantly contribute to students' vocabulary growth, surpassing the limits of direct instruction alone.

Furthermore, graphic organizers have emerged as effective tools for vocabulary instruction across content areas. These visual tools help students organize and comprehend vocabulary words in both fiction and nonfiction texts, facilitating their understanding and retention of key concepts (Fisher et al., 2004). By employing graphic organizers such as the Frayer model and semantic maps, educators can scaffold students' vocabulary acquisition, enabling them to explore the meanings and connections of words in a structured manner.

The incorporation of interactive read-alouds and questioning techniques also holds promise for enhancing vocabulary instruction in the classroom. Through read-aloud sessions, teachers can introduce and contextualize vocabulary words within the framework of a narrative, promoting active engagement and comprehension among students (Fisher et al., 2008). Similarly, questioning techniques such as prediction, clarification, questioning, and summarization encourage students to actively interact with vocabulary words, fostering deeper understanding and application of word meanings in diverse contexts.



The literature underscores the enduring significance of vocabulary instruction in literacy development, while also highlighting the evolving landscape of vocabulary instruction within the Common Core framework. While the proportion of vocabulary standards within the Common Core may have diminished, the integration of vocabulary within other language arts standards emphasizes its interconnectedness with various literacy skills. Moving forward, educators must continue to explore innovative instructional approaches that foster students' vocabulary acquisition and usage across diverse content areas.

Methodology:

For this study, a systematic review methodology was employed to comprehensively gather, assess, and synthesize existing literature related to the evolving landscape of vocabulary instruction within the context of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. The systematic review process followed established guidelines to ensure rigor and transparency in the identification and analysis of relevant literature.

To identify relevant studies, comprehensive searches were conducted across academic databases including Google Scholar, ERIC, PsycINFO, and Education Source. The search strategy involved the use of relevant keywords and phrases such as "vocabulary instruction," "Common Core State Standards," "English Language Arts," and related terms. Boolean operators (e.g., AND, OR) were utilized to refine the search queries. The search was limited to studies published in English and conducted within the past two decades to ensure relevance and currency.

Studies were screened based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria encompassed studies that examined vocabulary instruction within the framework of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. Studies focusing on diverse populations, instructional strategies, and assessment methods were considered for inclusion. Exclusion criteria included studies not directly related to vocabulary instruction or those outside the scope of the Common Core standards.

Initial screening of studies was conducted based on title and abstract to assess relevance to the research topic. Subsequently, full-text articles of potentially relevant studies were retrieved and further assessed for eligibility based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Two independent reviewers conducted the screening process, with disagreements resolved through discussion and consensus. Data extraction was performed to systematically extract relevant information from the included studies. A standardized data extraction form was developed to capture key details such as study objectives, participants, methodology, vocabulary instruction approaches, and outcomes. Data extraction was conducted by one reviewer, with a subset of studies independently verified by a second reviewer to ensure accuracy and consistency.

The quality of included studies was assessed using established criteria appropriate to the study designs. For quantitative studies, quality assessment criteria included sample representativeness, research design, measurement validity, and statistical analysis methods. Qualitative studies were evaluated based on criteria such as methodological rigor, data collection techniques, and interpretation of findings. The quality assessment process was conducted independently by two reviewers, with any discrepancies resolved through discussion. Findings from the included studies were synthesized thematically to identify patterns, trends, and gaps in the literature. Common themes related to vocabulary instruction within the Common Core framework were identified, and findings were organized to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic. Synthesis of findings involved narrative description, thematic analysis, and interpretation of key findings across studies.

Findings and Discussion:

Integration of Vocabulary Instruction with Common Core Standards:

The integration of vocabulary instruction within the framework of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts has emerged as a prominent focus within educational research and practice. The systematic review conducted for this study identified a substantial body of literature highlighting the pervasive integration of vocabulary instruction with the Common Core standards. This integration reflects educators' recognition of the pivotal role vocabulary plays in supporting students' attainment of the rigorous benchmarks outlined in the Common Core standards, particularly in the domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Baumann, Kame'enui, and Ash (2003) underscore the significance of vocabulary as a predictor of overall reading comprehension, emphasizing its essential role in enabling students to comprehend complex texts. Similarly, Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) emphasize the correlation between vocabulary knowledge and student performance, highlighting the importance of robust vocabulary development in academic achievement.

Within the context of the Common Core standards, Reading Standard 4 emphasizes the interpretation of words and phrases in texts, including the analysis of specific word choices to discern meaning or tone (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). Language Standard 6 underscores the acquisition and accurate usage of a range of academic and domain-specific vocabulary, essential for college and career readiness (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). These standards reflect the imperative placed on vocabulary development to support



students' proficiency in reading comprehension and written expression aligned with the expectations of the Common Core standards.

Furthermore, research indicates that vocabulary instruction is not confined solely to the English Language Arts standards but extends across content areas. The math standards, for instance, emphasize the importance of students' understanding and application of domain-specific vocabulary, such as mathematical terms and concepts (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). This interdisciplinary emphasis underscores the recognition that vocabulary proficiency is essential for students' comprehension and communication across diverse academic domains.

The literature also highlights the multifaceted nature of vocabulary instruction within the context of the Common Core standards. Educators employ diverse instructional approaches to facilitate vocabulary acquisition and application. Context-based learning, as advocated by Beck and McKeown (2007), involves teaching vocabulary within the context of meaningful texts and experiences, enabling students to grasp word meanings through authentic usage. Additionally, explicit instruction strategies, as recommended by Nagy and Anderson (1984), involve direct teaching of vocabulary words, definitions, and contextual usage, providing students with clear guidance on word meanings and applications.

Furthermore, interactive read-alouds have emerged as a prevalent instructional practice for vocabulary development. These sessions involve teachers reading aloud to students while incorporating targeted vocabulary instruction and facilitating discussions around word meanings and usage (Fisher et al., 2004; Fisher et al., 2008). Through interactive read-alouds, students engage actively with vocabulary in authentic contexts, enhancing their comprehension and language skills.

The systematic review of literature underscores the pervasive integration of vocabulary instruction within the framework of the Common Core standards. Educators recognize the critical role of vocabulary development in supporting students' achievement of academic benchmarks across various domains. By employing diverse instructional approaches and emphasizing active engagement with vocabulary, educators strive to equip students with the linguistic skills necessary for success in the complex academic landscape shaped by the Common Core standards.

Diverse Vocabulary Instruction Approaches:

The integration of vocabulary instruction with the Common Core standards necessitates a diverse array of instructional approaches to cater to the multifaceted linguistic needs of students. A systematic review of literature reveals a rich tapestry of vocabulary instruction methods implemented within the framework of the Common Core standards. These approaches encompass explicit instruction, context-based learning, morphemic analysis, semantic mapping, interactive read-alouds, and more. Educators leverage these varied strategies to foster vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and application across diverse content areas, thereby supporting students' overall academic success.

Explicit instruction stands as a cornerstone of vocabulary pedagogy, involving direct teaching of word meanings, definitions, and contextual usage (Nagy & Anderson, 1984). This approach provides students with clear guidance on vocabulary acquisition, enabling them to develop a robust lexicon essential for meeting the demands of the Common Core standards. By explicitly teaching vocabulary words and their applications, educators empower students to navigate complex texts and articulate their ideas effectively.

Context-based learning offers another effective avenue for vocabulary development within the Common Core framework. Beck and McKeown (2007) advocate for teaching vocabulary within the context of meaningful texts and experiences, allowing students to grasp word meanings through authentic usage. Through exposure to rich language in context, students deepen their understanding of vocabulary words and their applications, fostering more profound comprehension and communication skills.

Morphemic analysis represents a strategic approach to vocabulary instruction, focusing on the systematic study of word parts such as prefixes, roots, and suffixes (Carlisle, 2000). By teaching students to decode unfamiliar words through morphological analysis, educators equip them with valuable strategies for approaching new vocabulary encountered in diverse texts. This approach enhances students' word recognition skills and facilitates their independent exploration of vocabulary beyond the confines of classroom instruction.

Semantic mapping offers yet another avenue for enhancing vocabulary development within the Common Core standards. This visual strategy involves the creation of graphic organizers that connect a word or phrase with related concepts or words (Marzano, 1997). Through semantic mapping activities, students deepen their understanding of word meanings and relationships, thereby expanding their vocabulary repertoire and supporting comprehension across various content areas.

Interactive read-alouds emerge as a dynamic instructional practice for vocabulary instruction, particularly in early childhood education settings. Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey (2004) emphasize the importance of interactive read-



alouds in promoting vocabulary development, comprehension, and oral language skills. By engaging students in discussions around vocabulary words within the context of authentic texts, educators foster active engagement with language, facilitating deeper understanding and retention of vocabulary.

Furthermore, digital technologies offer innovative opportunities for vocabulary instruction aligned with the Common Core standards. Interactive online platforms, educational apps, and multimedia resources provide engaging avenues for vocabulary acquisition and practice (Nation, 2009). Through interactive digital tools, educators can personalize instruction, differentiate learning experiences, and scaffold students' vocabulary development in line with the diverse needs of learners.

The diverse array of vocabulary instruction approaches explored within the context of the Common Core standards underscores the dynamic nature of pedagogical practices aimed at fostering students' linguistic proficiency. By employing a range of instructional strategies, educators can address the diverse needs of learners and cultivate a rich vocabulary repertoire essential for success across academic domains.

Emphasis on Active Engagement and Interaction:

Within the landscape of vocabulary instruction aligned with the Common Core standards, a significant emphasis has been placed on fostering active engagement and interaction among students. The systematic review highlights a wealth of literature underscoring the pivotal role of student-centered, interactive learning experiences in promoting effective vocabulary acquisition and application. Across various studies, educators have embraced a plethora of strategies designed to facilitate active participation, meaningful discussion, and collaborative exploration of vocabulary concepts.

Collaborative discussions emerge as a cornerstone of vocabulary instruction, offering students opportunities to engage in rich dialogues centered around vocabulary words and their applications (McKeown, Beck, Omanson, & Perfetti, 1983). By encouraging peer interactions and discourse, educators create dynamic learning environments wherein students construct meaning collaboratively, share diverse perspectives, and deepen their understanding of vocabulary in context. Through collaborative discussions, students not only expand their vocabulary repertoire but also enhance their communication skills and critical thinking abilities.

Graphic organizers represent another powerful tool for promoting active engagement with vocabulary concepts within the Common Core framework. According to Marzano (2010), graphic organizers facilitate visual representation of vocabulary relationships, aiding students in organizing, synthesizing, and making connections among words and concepts. By using graphic organizers such as semantic maps, concept webs, or Frayer models, educators provide students with scaffolds for conceptual understanding, enabling them to actively explore and internalize vocabulary meanings in a structured manner.

Questioning techniques play a pivotal role in fostering active engagement and critical thinking during vocabulary instruction (Gibbons, 2002). Educators utilize a variety of questioning strategies, including open-ended questions, inferential questions, and metacognitive questions, to stimulate student inquiry, reflection, and discourse around vocabulary concepts. Through strategic questioning, educators prompt students to articulate their understanding, make connections, and delve deeper into the nuances of vocabulary usage, thereby promoting active cognitive engagement and metacognitive awareness.

Hands-on activities offer yet another avenue for promoting active interaction with vocabulary concepts within the Common Core framework. By incorporating kinesthetic and experiential learning experiences, educators cater to diverse learning styles and preferences, enhancing student engagement and retention of vocabulary knowledge (Cain & Oakhill, 2011). Hands-on activities such as word sorts, vocabulary games, and role-playing exercises provide students with opportunities to manipulate, apply, and internalize vocabulary words in authentic contexts, fostering deeper comprehension and long-term retention.

Moreover, digital technologies offer innovative avenues for promoting active engagement and interaction in vocabulary instruction aligned with the Common Core standards (Gee, 2003). Interactive online platforms, educational apps, and multimedia resources provide dynamic, immersive learning experiences that captivate students' interest and foster active exploration of vocabulary concepts. Through interactive digital tools, educators can create interactive simulations, virtual vocabularies, and gamified learning environments that promote active participation, collaboration, and exploration of vocabulary in engaging and interactive ways.

The emphasis on active engagement and interaction within vocabulary instruction aligned with the Common Core standards underscores the importance of creating dynamic, student-centered learning environments wherein students actively participate, collaborate, and construct meaning together. By employing a variety of strategies such as collaborative discussions, graphic organizers, questioning techniques, and hands-on activities, educators empower students to become active, autonomous learners who engage meaningfully with vocabulary concepts across diverse contexts and content areas.

Need for Comprehensive and Systematic Vocabulary Instruction:



In the landscape of education aligned with the Common Core standards, a critical need for comprehensive and systematic vocabulary instruction has emerged. While educators have implemented a variety of instructional approaches aimed at enhancing vocabulary development, the systematic review reveals gaps in the consistency and depth of vocabulary instruction across classrooms and grade levels. This highlights the imperative of establishing coherent vocabulary curricula, providing targeted support for diverse learners, and fostering a language-rich environment conducive to robust vocabulary development.

The research conducted by Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) emphasizes the importance of systematic vocabulary instruction as a key component of effective literacy instruction. They argue that vocabulary knowledge is a critical predictor of reading comprehension and academic success, underscoring the need for explicit, intentional vocabulary instruction integrated into the curriculum. By adopting a systematic approach to vocabulary instruction, educators can ensure that students receive consistent, scaffolded support in developing their vocabulary repertoire across grade levels and content areas (Abrenilla, et al., 2023).

Moreover, the review conducted by Biancarosa and Snow (2006) highlights the significance of vocabulary instruction within the context of the Common Core standards. They assert that the standards place a strong emphasis on vocabulary acquisition and usage, recognizing the integral role of vocabulary knowledge in students' ability to comprehend complex texts, engage in academic discourse, and meet the rigorous demands of college and career readiness. Thus, there is a pressing need for educators to align their vocabulary instruction practices with the expectations outlined in the Common Core standards to adequately prepare students for academic success (Abella, et al., 2023).

Furthermore, research by Graves (2006) emphasizes the importance of comprehensive vocabulary instruction that goes beyond rote memorization of isolated words. Graves advocates for a multifaceted approach to vocabulary instruction that encompasses explicit teaching of word meanings, word learning strategies, and word usage in context. By engaging students in meaningful vocabulary activities that promote active exploration, application, and reflection, educators can foster deep, nuanced understanding of vocabulary words and their usage across diverse contexts (Lumando, et al., 2023).

Addressing the needs of diverse learners is another critical aspect of comprehensive vocabulary instruction. Research by August and Shanahan (2006) highlights the importance of providing targeted support for English language learners (ELLs) and students with learning disabilities to ensure equitable access to vocabulary instruction. They emphasize the need for differentiated instruction strategies that accommodate the unique linguistic and cognitive needs of diverse learners, such as explicit vocabulary instruction, language modeling, and opportunities for language practice and reinforcement.

Moreover, the research conducted by Scott and Nagy (2004) underscores the role of a language-rich environment in supporting vocabulary development. They argue that exposure to rich and varied language experiences, including extensive reading, meaningful writing tasks, and authentic communication opportunities, fosters vocabulary growth and deepens students' conceptual understanding of language (Canes, et al., 2023). Therefore, educators must create language-rich classrooms that promote active engagement with vocabulary in meaningful contexts and provide ample opportunities for language practice and exploration.

Educators must prioritize the development of coherent vocabulary curricula, provide targeted support for diverse learners, and foster a language-rich environment conducive to robust vocabulary development (Manire, et al., 2023). By adopting evidence-based vocabulary instruction practices and addressing the unique needs of diverse learners, educators can empower students to become proficient, confident users of language across various academic and real-world contexts.

Conclusion:

Through an analysis of existing research and literature, several key findings have emerged, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of vocabulary instruction and its pivotal role in fostering students' academic success.

First and foremost, the integration of vocabulary instruction with the Common Core standards is paramount. Educators must recognize the central role of vocabulary development in enabling students to meet the rigorous demands of the standards, particularly in reading, writing, speaking, and listening domains. By aligning vocabulary instruction practices with the expectations outlined in the Common Core standards, educators can ensure that students receive the necessary support to excel academically and beyond.

Furthermore, the review highlights the diverse array of vocabulary instruction approaches employed by educators. From explicit instruction to context-based learning, morphemic analysis, and interactive read-alouds, educators have utilized a variety of instructional strategies to promote vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and application across content areas. By leveraging a range of instructional approaches, educators can cater to the diverse learning needs and preferences of students, thereby maximizing the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction.



Additionally, the emphasis on active engagement and interaction in vocabulary instruction is a notable finding of the study. Educators have increasingly recognized the importance of student-centered, interactive learning experiences that foster active participation, discussion, and collaboration. Through strategies such as collaborative discussions, graphic organizers, questioning techniques, and hands-on activities, educators can create engaging learning environments that promote meaningful engagement with vocabulary concepts and deepen students' understanding.

Moreover, the review underscores the need for comprehensive and systematic vocabulary instruction. While educators have implemented various instructional approaches, gaps persist in the consistency and depth of vocabulary instruction across classrooms and grade levels. To address these gaps, educators must prioritize the development of coherent vocabulary curricula, provide targeted support for diverse learners, and foster language-rich environments conducive to robust vocabulary development.

The findings of the systematic review emphasize the importance of evidence-based vocabulary instruction practices that are aligned with the Common Core standards, responsive to the needs of diverse learners, and designed to promote active engagement and interaction. By adopting these practices, educators can empower students to become proficient, confident users of language across various academic and real-world contexts, ultimately paving the way for their academic success and lifelong learning.

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