

## Teaching Vocabulary in the Classroom

Children need to understand the meaning of key vocabulary and concepts from the curriculum, to be able to use them in their spoken and written language.

They will need to hear these words frequently before they can start to use them themselves.

They will need to be able to use these words in spoken language **before** they can write them.

### Key words

These are the words which are central to a child's understanding of the topic or subject. This could be words for objects (things), verbs (actions) and also more abstract concepts and processes (words which describe size, weight, position, emotion, time etc).

Select about 10 words from a topic or subject. Think about ways to teach these words using a range of multi sensory teaching approaches. This is beneficial for all children, not just those with language difficulties, as visual information stays in the memory longer.

### Choosing Key Vocabulary

Try to assess what kind of topic words children already know, perhaps in small groups. Make sure children have a record of vocabulary they are learning (use a vocabulary book, for example). Also, try to use display boards that link in to current topic vocabulary and encourage children to look at these. Ensure all staff in the classroom are aware of what the target key words are.

## **Pre-teaching Key Vocabulary**

Children who have language difficulties often benefit from some time to look at key words in advance of the lesson - this should be carried out in short but frequent sessions. Pre-teaching of vocabulary may be through 1:1 support in school, and/or through encouraging parents to carry out pre-learning of vocabulary at home. This helps children to become more familiar with the sounds and meaning of the words in order to access the topic in the classroom.

Other factors to consider:

- Children's listening skills - does a child need to be told what to focus on?
- Do you need to adapt your own language: is it too lengthy and complex? Are you going too fast for all the children? Can they see what you are talking about?
- How familiar are all the children with the topic, vocabulary, teaching materials?
- What sort of world experiences do the children have? How meaningful is the topic?

## **Teaching words in Context**

Children will learn words best in meaningful contexts. Vocabulary needs to be taught around a range of practical activities and discussions that place the vocabulary in context.

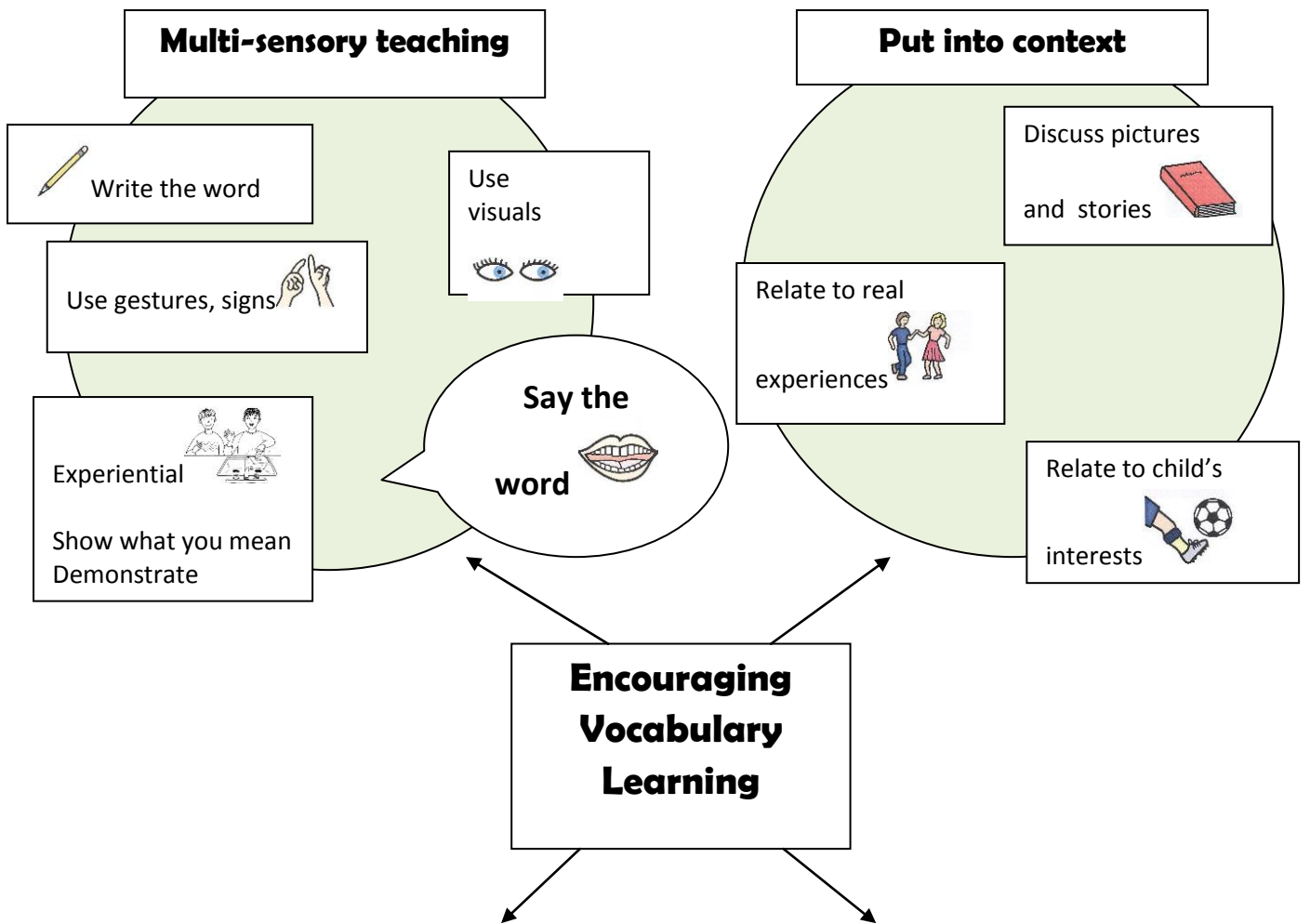
## **Ideas for Teaching Vocabulary in the Classroom**

- Use real items as much as possible. Encourage a sense of curiosity about these objects; a 'mystery' bag for example.
- Younger children benefit from opportunities to role play and use key words. They also need to hear adults model using the words in different contexts.
- Consider working with parents to support consolidation of vocabulary learning. Vocabulary books with indicators of key topics and target vocabulary can be discussed at home in different contexts to reinforce their meaning.
- Use display boards for topic words and refer to this within the teaching environment. Children can get involved in making displays, for example, sorting words into different categories.

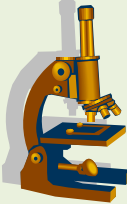
- Create resources for children to access, such as word banks or personalised word books. These can be arranged in alphabetical order, or topic order. Encourage children to take an active role in making and using these in class to develop their independence.
- Consider labels and symbols for different areas of the classroom.

### **Supporting children to manage their own vocabulary learning.**

- Teach children about making links around words and encourage the use of strategies to access words.
- Encourage children to compare words: how are they the same or different? Encourage children to sort and classify words.
- Use mind mapping techniques to look at the sounds and meanings of the word.
- Encourage children to guess what the word means from context and praise their attempts to do so.
- Encourage children to find things out for themselves by encouraging them to look things up, for example, using their word book, dictionary, computer etc.
- Reinforce words in a variety of contexts, e.g. use PE lessons to consolidate target verbs



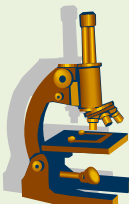
**Build links around sounds in words (spelling, reading)**



**microscope**

- What does it begin with?
- How many syllables?
- What does it sound like?
- Is it long or short?

**Build links around word meaning**



Put into a sentence

Definitions

- What does it look like?
- What do you do with it?

Categorisation

If you require resources from the Speech and Language Therapy Service, please contact the appropriate team (see children's therapy main page for contact details).

**References and Resources:**

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