

Overview

For more information, please contact the VINE project <vineproject.ucsc.edu>

The papers presented in this symposium reflect multiple approaches to documenting and analyzing students' growth in word consciousness and literacy skills during a large-scale intervention study. We use multiple paths, and multiple methods, to explore the results of a study in which teachers foster students' skills, knowledge and dispositions so that they embrace identities as literate beings who are interested in words, use words effectively in communication, and recognize the power of language in both reading and writing.

1 *Vocabulary growth over time: Results of a multiple level vocabulary assessment based on grade level materials*

Judith A. Scott, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

Susan L. Flinspach, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

Tatiana F. Miller, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

Jack Vevea, *University of California, Merced*

Ondine Gage-Serio, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

2 *Rare Words in Students' Writing as a Measure of Vocabulary*

Susan L. Flinspach, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

Judith A. Scott, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

Tatiana F. Miller, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

Jack Vevea, *University of California, Merced*

Charlotte Zeamer, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

3 *The Impact of Word Consciousness on 4th Grade Students' Writing*

Katharine Davies Samway, *San Jose State University*

4 *A Case Study of One Teacher's Developing Word Consciousness and Classroom Practice*

Tatiana F. Miller, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

Ondine Gage-Serio, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

Susan L. Flinspach, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

Judith A. Scott, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

Discussant: William Nagy, *Seattle Pacific University*

Introduction to the VINE project and the 2009 Symposium

This symposium presents four papers that have evolved out of a federal grant to study vocabulary learning and teaching through word consciousness. The VINE Project started in March 2006 and is officially over in March 2010. The project was designed to enhance fourth-grade vocabulary knowledge, writing skills, and reading comprehension, particularly for English Learners (ELs) and those traditionally underserved in schools, through a focus on the development of word consciousness. The VINE Project has been helping teachers expand their own word consciousness and foster it in their students. The intervention calls for teachers to integrate word-conscious instruction into all subject areas and to use books and other texts with rich language as models for writing. Our intervention teachers create and adapt word-conscious teaching strategies that help students build their metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness of words and gain facility with academic language. The teachers have taken multiple paths towards word consciousness. We, in turn, have followed their progress with multiple methods of inquiry. The papers presented in this symposium document and analyze how teachers built their students' word consciousness and literacy skills, particularly during the second year of our intervention, 2007-2008. They discuss how teachers can foster students' skills, knowledge and dispositions so that they become interested in words, use words effectively in communication, and recognize the power of language in both reading and writing.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this research is compelling. Vocabulary knowledge is central in the overall literacy development of students, particularly English learners (Carlo, August, McLaughlin, Snow, Dressler, Lippman, Lively, & White, 2004; Cummins, 2000; Nation, 2001; NICHD, 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Knowledge of academic vocabulary can help reading comprehension (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2002), influence the development of writing skills (August & Shanahan, 2006; Samway, 2006), and facilitate access to the rest of the curriculum. Average and above-average native English-speakers in the United States leave high school having acquired approximately 40,000 receptive vocabulary words (Nagy & Herman, 1987). Yet typical vocabulary instruction in North American has neglected the fact that English learners must learn a vast number of English words, particularly vocabulary words that are found in texts and academic language, if they are to catch up with their English-only peers (Scott, Jamieson, & Asselin, 2002). Providing students with effective vocabulary instruction that addresses this challenge is a growing concern of teachers.

To learn vocabulary at school, students must be aware of the differences between academic language – in which words are the currency of the realm – and other language registers with which they are likely to be far more familiar. Students' identities as readers or as word learners depend on the literacy practices of the communities with which they identify. To want to learn the academic words of schooling, students must see themselves as participants, or at least as potential participants, in the arena of schools where words function as powerful tools (Gee, 2004; Dutro, Kazemi, & Balf, 2005). In other words, they need to develop a sense of belonging in the academic community of the classroom.

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Word consciousness facilitates the development of students' literate identities through activities that enhance students' sense of ownership of academic language and the teachers' explicit, consistent and constant attention to the use and power of words. This attention to words occurs throughout the day in listening to read alouds, writing, games, and lessons on topics such as persuasive language, shades of meaning, and morphology. The symposium will lay out an overall conceptual framework for the development of word consciousness and then present four studies that capture some of the findings from our three-year intervention study of word consciousness in linguistically and culturally diverse fourth-grade classrooms.

Overview of the Research Participants and Analyses

Whereas the four papers in this session draw on data from all three years of our project, most of the analyses center on the second school year, 2007 to 2008. The research participants that year were 16 fourth-grade teachers (8 control and 8 intervention) and 381 fourth-grade students drawn from five school districts located in metropolitan and smaller-city settings of California. Although our sample had 35 fifth graders in three 4th/5th split classes, the analyses reported here include just the fourth graders.

In the analyses, approximately 32 percent of the students were English learners, and the student participants came from backgrounds representing over twenty home languages. More than half of the VINE students, 52 percent, speak a language other than English at home; many reported that they spoke both their home language and English out of school. In the smaller-city schools, Spanish was frequently the students' primary language. The language situation was more complicated in the metropolitan schools,

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though, with students from households representing many different home languages including Vietnamese, Filipino, and Japanese. After English, Spanish was the most common home language for VINE students overall, spoken by 36 percent in 2007-2008.

Students in the analyses were classified by the state of California into one of four categories of English proficiency: 1) those whose only reported home language was English; 2) bilingual students who were fluent in English when they first enrolled in school; 3) English learners; and 4) former English learners who had been reclassified as proficient in English. In 2007-2008, 45 percent of the 381 VINE fourth graders had only English for their home language. Ten percent spoke more than one language at home but had always been fluent in English. Thirty-two percent of the students were learning English, and ten percent had been reclassified as English proficient after having been English learners in school. Most of the VINE English learners, 76 percent, were Spanish speakers.

The study was designed to enable us to use a mixed methods approach to analysis. The quantitative design was based on a randomized experimental approach in which we asked for a pool of volunteer teachers and randomly selected who would be assigned to experimental and control conditions. In each subsequent year, new volunteers became the control teachers, and both the control and intervention teachers from the previous year became intervention teachers. Thus, the number of participants grew each year, although there was some attrition due to moving, changing grade levels, pregnancies, and health. The intervention teachers received our professional development and were involved in an ongoing conversation on the topic of word consciousness. The control teachers continued their practices without knowledge of the VINE intervention.

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Our word-consciousness intervention was innovative. We did not present a set curriculum to teachers; rather, we developed, as a community, a growing understanding of what word consciousness is and what it might look like as it is infused into each teacher's classroom. It is not an "add on" or a replacement for other activities. Instead, the teachers' word-consciousness skills evolved through the ways that they talk with their students and foster metacognitive awareness of language use.

Four of the multiple forms of inquiry used to study this innovation are presented in this symposium. In the first paper, we discuss an HLM analysis of our vocabulary tests. The second paper examines the rare words that students used in their narrative writing. We analyze student writing over the course of an academic year in the third paper, and the last paper reports on the journey, and the impact of the journey, of one of our intervention teachers.