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Enhancing Vocabulary Instruction for Long-Term English Learners

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A. **Goals**
- **5 Principles**
- **5 Practices**
- **1 Discussion**
- **20 Resources**

B. **Principles:**

1. **Engagement.** Learners should be active, interactive, should understand what is happening and said, and should recognize relevance of what they are learning.
2. **Conscious, Direct Teaching of Important Vocabulary**. Teachers teach important words in context and point out multimodal, interactive features of text
3. **Comprehensibility.** Content makes sense to learners; learning is differentiated to include all; teachers continually check comprehension
4. **Academic Context and Content.** Vocabulary is introduced and extended through reading many genres and content areas
5. **Success.** Learners succeed at tasks and see themselves as effective learners

C. **Practices:**

1. **Choose appropriate words to teach**
   - High frequency words
   - Academic words
   - Specialized terms needed for context
   - "Portable words" needed for academic discourse (e.g., for transitions, sentence combining, comparisons…)
     Examples: **Vocabulary profiler, word lists, WordSift (see resources)**

2. **Teach important words directly:** Help learners to
   - Notice words
   - Process words deeply
   - Have repeated, spaced retrieval
     Example: **Rich Vocabulary Instruction:**
     - contextualizing each target word
     - providing student-friendly explanations
     - giving many examples
     - asking learners to provide their own examples
     - posting & using the target words

3. **Assess and provide needed background knowledge.**
   - Find out what learners know
   - Fill in needed knowledge and terms

Example: **Anticipation Guide**

Anticipation Guide for		
William Kamkwamba How I Harnessed the Wind (TED Talk, July 23, 2009)		
1 TED Tanzania creations machine	2 Malawi computer internet vomit	3 sisters wonders of science farmer poor
4 fortune famine starve swallows	5 school fees future accept	6 education library physics english
7 windmill pump irrigation defense	8 scrap yard shock absorber pvc pipe dynamo	9 reporter airplane hotel "I tried and I made it."
10 poor struggling dreams believe		

4. **Plan ways for learners to interact with you, one another, and the text**
    Example 1: **Read and Retell**

    Take turns reading William Kamkwamba's speech, "How I Harnessed the Wind" with your partner, one paragraph at a time. Then retell each paragraph. Use the key words in the box to help you.

    Example 2: **I Have, Who Has?** (Vocabulary from "How I Harnessed the Wind")

Example 3: **Lineup (How to make a windmill.)**
- Choose a sequence that learners will represent (Month/day of birth; distance they live from school; numbers in sequence; answers to math problems; phases of the moon, steps in a process)
- Teach learners the vocabulary, grammar and structures to ask and answer questions needed for the activity.
- Learners then ask and answer the questions to organize themselves into the sequence.
- Teacher and class assess the order (and practice terminology once more)

5. **Summarize, check comprehension, reteach in a new way when needed**
   Example: **Sentence Machine**
   - A line stands before the class.
   - The line answers questions with complete and grammatical sentences.
   - Each person, in order, gives one word of the sentence.
   - Help is allowed when a person asks for a hint and/or when the teacher suggests.

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How to make a windmill

1. Find or make a circular disk, windmill blades, an axel, a pulley, and a generator.
2. Mount the blades on the circular disk
3. Attach the disc along a horizontal axel to the pulley.
4. Connect the pulley to the generator.
5. The wind interacts with the blades, and moves the axel.
6. The axel moves the pulley.
7. The pulley turns the generator to make electricity.
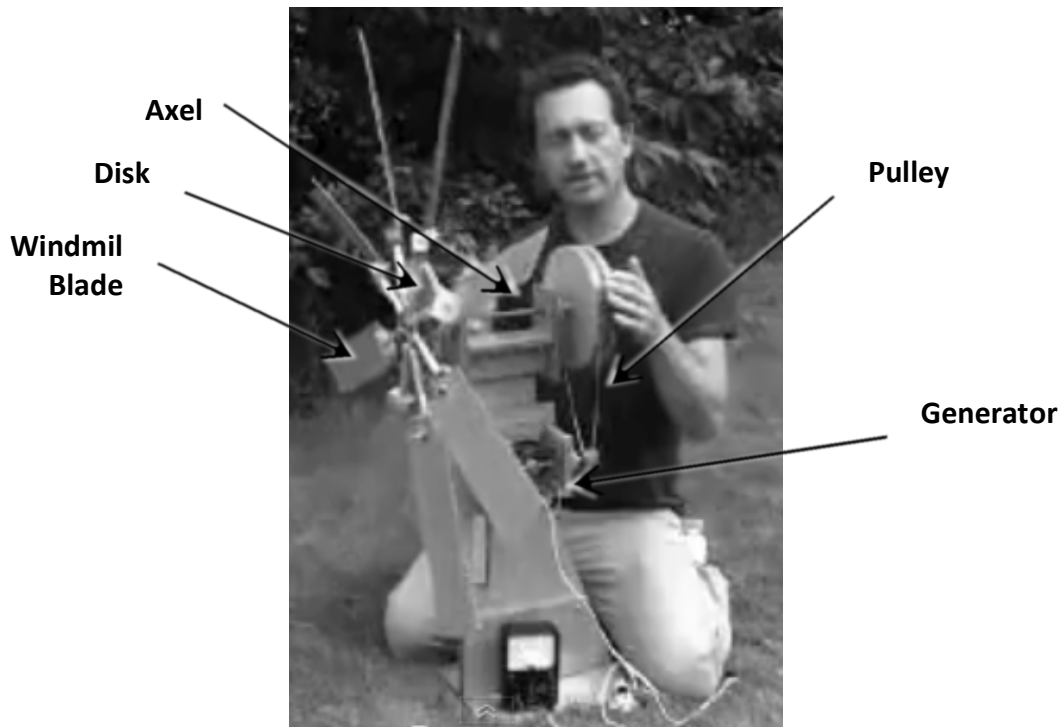
William Kamkwamba: How I Harnessed the wind
Transcript of TED Talk, July 23, 2009

1   Thank you. Two years ago, I stood on the TED stage in Arusha, Tanzania. I spoke very briefly about one of my proudest creations. It was a simple machine that changed my life.

2   Before that time, I had never been away from my home in Malawi. I had never used a computer. I had never seen the Internet. On the stage that day, I was so nervous. My English was lost. I wanted to vomit. I had never been surrounded by so many azungu -- white people.

3   There was a story I couldn't tell you then. But well, I'm feeling good right now. I would like to share that story today. We have seven children in my family. All sisters, excepting me. This is a picture of me with my dad when I was a little boy. Before I discovered the wonders of science, I was just a simple farmer in a country of poor farmers. Like everyone else, we grew maize.

4   One year our fortune turned very bad. In 2001 we experienced an awful famine. Within five months all Malawians began to starve to death. My family ate one meal per day, at night. Only three swallows of nsima (corn porridge) for each one of us. The food passes through our bodies. We drop down to nothing.

5   In Malawi, the secondary school, you have to pay school fees. Because of the hunger, I was forced to drop out of school. I looked at my father and looked at those dry fields. It was the future I couldn't accept.

6   I felt very unhappy not to be at the secondary school, so I was determined to do anything possible to receive education. So I went to a library. I read books, science books, especially physics. I couldn't read English that well. I used diagrams and pictures to learn the words around them.

7   Another book put that knowledge in my hands. It said a windmill could pump water and generate electricity. Pumping water meant irrigation, a defense against hunger, which we were experiencing by that time. So I decided I would build one windmill for myself.

8   But I didn't have materials to use, so I went to a scrap yard where I found my materials. Many people, including my mother, said I was crazy. I found a tractor fan, shock absorber, PVC pipes. Using a bicycle frame and an old bicycle dynamo, I built my machine. It was power for one light at first. And then four lights, with switches, and even a circuit breaker, modeled after an electric bell. Now another machine pumps water for irrigation.

9   Queues of people started lining up at my house to charge their mobile phones. I could not get rid of them. And the reporters came too, which led to bloggers and which led to a call from something called TED. I had never seen an airplane before. I had never slept in a hotel. So, on stage that day in Arusha, my English lost, I said something like, "I tried. And I made it."

10 So I would like to say something to all the people out there like me -- to the Africans, and the poor who are struggling with your dreams. God bless. Maybe one day you will watch this on the Internet. I say to you, trust yourself and believe. Whatever happens, don't give up. Thank you.

References & Resources

Web Resources

- Word lists for teachers http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r21270/freq_lists/
- Jim Burke's Academic Word List:
  http://www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/academicvocab.pdf
- Cobb, T. (2011). The Compleat Lexical Tutor. http://www.lextutor.ca/   Cobb provides tools and resources for teachers of vocabulary: Vocabulary Profile (VP), Academic Word List, General Word Lists, Concordancer, and many more. The experimental VP-Kids http://www.lextutor.ca/vp/kids/ offers word family lists and online text assessment for younger learners
- Coxhead, A. The Academic Word List. http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/research/awl/
- IdiomSite. Part of the Bored.com network. http://www.idiomsite.com/
- Learner dictionaries (designed specifically for learners of English):
  http://www.learnersdictionary.com/
  http://www.ldoceonline.com/
  http://nhd.heinle.com/home.aspx
- Online translations can be found through
  Google Translations http://translate.google.com/ (Google currently translates to/from 64 languages. Though most online translations are not yet reliable, especially for extended text, they are often helpful with individual words.)
- Phrasal Verb List: http://www.eslcafe.com/pv/pv-list.html
- Wordsift.com http://www.wordsift.com/

Print Resources

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