Linguistic Instructional Methods of the Word Recognition and Sociopsycholinguistic Views

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Educators have different opinions in determining the correct or most appropriate approach to linguistics. Some favor the Word Recognition View which involves developing language through the use of phonics, word study, and vocabulary instructional strategies. Others follow the Sociopsycholinguistic View which believes in building upon an innate knowledge of language through reading and writing (Concordia University, n.d.). They believe that reading is a process of constructing meaning (Love for Literacy, 2011). Teachers who follow the Word Recognition View focus on phonics, pre-reading activities, and oral reading (Kim, n.d., para. 1). There is a high emphasis on sound structure and using that knowledge to decode words and read sentences” (Wright, 2010, as cited by “Word,” n.d., para. 4). Those who practice according to the Sociopsycholinguistic View, use background knowledge and cues to comprehend text as opposed to pre-reading activities (Concordia, n.d.). It is believed that students will naturally increase their skills in reading and writing when given the opportunity to engage in texts they find interesting (“Word,” n.d., para. 3). Many teachers may value a combination of implementing instructional strategies and techniques characteristic of both the Word Recognition View and the Sociopsycholinguistic View.

From the Word Recognition perspective, vocabulary is crucial to academic and language development (Kentuckyvoice, 2012, para. 4). Teachers typically utilize pre-reading strategies to activate prior knowledge, introduce new vocabulary, and not only prepare for upcoming content, but they repeatedly teach the words throughout the lesson (Kentuckyvoice, 2012, para. 4). Followers of the Word Recognition View also believe that phonics instruction can help children master the sound structure of words through systematic and explicit instructional techniques (Turnbull & Justice, 2012, p. 278).
There are many instructional strategies that are consistent with the World Recognition View to help build literacy skills. Teachers can choose from researched based programs to teach phonics and structural analysis which includes learning letter sounds and combinations, memorizing sight words, and learning the etymology of vocabulary so students can break words into parts such as the prefix, root and suffix (Love for Literacy, 2011). This can be accomplished through reading and re-reading texts with the assistance of pictures and illustrations, as well as using engaging activities to break down word parts and make word relationships (“Word,” n.d., para. 5). “In addition to phonics and word recognition instruction, opportunities for children to hear and participate in read-aloud experiences and to engage in independent wide reading contribute directly to their ability to understand what they read” (Texas Education Agency, 2002, p. 18). Prior to reading text selections, teachers should pre-teach potentially difficult words (Love for Literacy, 2011). Strategies for introducing vocabulary include using graphic organizers such as word maps to help students understand the definitions and the usage of the words (Kentuckyvoice, 2012, para. 5). Students can also role play and use visual supports to help them learn the vocabulary words (Kentuckyvoice, 2012, para. 5).

From the Sociopsycholinguistic perspective, reading is a process that uses social, psychological, and developmental practices to comprehend text by activating prior knowledge, make relationships with beliefs and emotions, and discuss and summarize the meaning of reading selections (“Word,” n.d., para. 5). Sociopsycholinguistic teachers may be validated in their concerns that defining words is ultimately a waste of valuable reading time due to the fact that students don’t always choose the appropriate definitions, nor do they understand how utilize the word merely based on definitions. (Kentuckyvoice, 2012, para. 2-3). Sociopsycholinguistic teachers believe it is more effective to learn vocabulary as it is encountered in the text
Instead of just recognizing words during a reading selection, Sociopsycholinguistic teachers concentrate on helping students make meaning of vocabulary encountered in a text (Kentuckyvoice, 2012, para. 2).

There are instructional strategies that parallel the Sociopsycholinguistic View that cannot be ignored. Through the use of graphophonics, syntax, and semantics, students infer, predict, and integrate information within a text (Kentuckyvoice, 2012, para. 2). "Readers combine cues from the text with their own knowledge of the world to make sense of what they are reading" (Freeman & Freeman, 2004, p. 26, as cited by Love for Literacy, 2011). Readers draw upon the visual and sound indicators while considering their own background knowledge to gain meaning while reading (Love for Literacy, 2011). In the classroom, students engage in numerous reading selections to acquire vocabulary through their encounters with words in different contexts (Concordia University, n.d.). This method of learning can take place during times of reading and comprehension activities regardless of the content (Love for Literacy, 2011).

Regardless of whether teachers choose the Word Recognition or Sociopsycholinguistic approach, Turnbull and Justice (2012) recognize that “one important reason children’s metalinguistic abilities undergo dramatic growth in the school-age years is that many of the activities children engage in during these years draw on language analysis (p. 277). Do teachers have to take on a single view, or can they draw from a collection of activities deemed appropriate for any group of students based on profiles, needs, and interests? Perhaps teachers would like to combine instructional methods of teaching phonics, pre-reading activities, word study, and vocabulary instructional strategies as described by the Word Recognition View in conjunction with using background knowledge, cues, encountering new vocabulary while reading texts, and
producing authentic written responses that can be reviewed by peers and teachers alike
(Concordia University, n.d.).
References


