

Penno, J.F., Wilkinson, I.A.G., & Moore, D.W. (2002). Vocabulary acquisition from teacher explanation and repeated listening to stories: Do they overcome the Matthew effect? *Journal of Educational Psychology, 94*(1), 23-33.

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Summary: Forty-seven students from diverse backgrounds in a suburban Auckland, New Zealand school listened to three separate stories over a period of three weeks to determine the efficacy of frequency of exposure and teacher explanation on vocabulary growth. Both techniques, frequency exposure and teacher explanation, increased vocabulary learning. However, neither intervention was able to overcome the Matthew effect. That is, higher ability students made greater vocabulary gains than their lower ability counterparts. I think an explanation of the Matthew effect is needed

Assumptions:

- Incidental learning from oral or written content contributes to vocabulary growth.
- Listening to stories repeatedly or with teacher explanation may help overcome the Matthew effect.
- Exposure to new vocabulary with the context of a story may result in vocabulary learning.
- Different techniques, story repetition, and teacher explanation, would affect students differently based on their language abilities.
- The effect of explanation may be generalized to non-target words.

Results:

- Repeated exposure to a story and explaining targeted words proved significant in increasing the students' vocabulary.
- Vocabulary gains can be achieved in telling of a story; however, multiple tellings promote greater understanding of targeted words.
- Incidental vocabulary learning did occur by listening to a story, but greater vocabulary gains were made when an explanation of targeted words was provided.
- A combination of repeated exposure and explanation is more beneficial than either in isolation.
- Listening to stories did not overcome the Matthew effect. Both listening and explanation of vocabulary items benefited higher ability students more so than lower ability students.

Conclusions:

- Listening to stories improves vocabulary acquisition.
- Listening to stories repeatedly and with explanation of targeted vocabulary items is more effective than simply listening.
- Explanation of targeted words assisted in gains with non-targeted vocabulary.
- The techniques employed in this study failed to overcome the Matthew effect.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Teachers should read stories to children daily. Children, particularly in their early years, can learn vocabulary by listening to stories.
- Teachers should use repetition and explanation of particular words to help students increase vocabulary.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- LLs can develop training on using multiple strategies, particularly for low ability students.
- Ceiling effects should be considered when evaluating the findings of generalization words. Does not seem like a suggestion for LLs
- Further research is needed to determine if there is an optimal number of exposures to a story before the effect begins to dissipate.