



# TEN CRITICAL FACTS FROM VOCABULARY RESEARCH

by Dr. Joe Lockavitch, author of Failure Free Reading





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## 1. Vocabulary impacts reading comprehension.

“In the upper elementary grades, *those who enter fourth grade with significant vocabulary deficits show increasing problems with reading comprehension*, even if they have good reading (word identification) skills,” (Biemiller 1999).

## 2. Poorest readers have the weakest vocabulary.

“...after grade 2, many ...[ students]... at the 25th percentile in reading comprehension have *language* comprehension levels that are too low to profit from independent reading of most “grade-level” textbooks, (Chall & Conard, 1991).

Put simply, they lack the vocabulary needed to understand grade-level texts, even if they can identify the printed words,” (Biemiller 1999).

## 3. Current teaching practices ignore the direct teaching of vocabulary.

“... only 19 minutes of 4,469 total minutes of reading instruction was devoted to vocabulary instruction,” (Rathvon, 2003).

“... teachers spent an average of only 1.67 minutes on vocabulary during each reading lesson,” (Roser and Juel, 1982).

“The only way to ensure that most words in a passage will be known is to use words already known, or to provide word knowledge support while ...[ students]... are reading or listening. The current reality is that neither of these conditions are met for many students.”

## 4. Learning vocabulary from context is not effective for poor readers.

“... learning word meanings from context does not seem to occur with particular ease,” (Biemiller 1999).

## 5. Combining explicit vocabulary instruction with a direct reading application is highly effective.

“Steve Stahl and Marilyn Fairbanks (1986) summarized research on explicit methods of teaching or promoting vocabulary growth. The general conclusion was that ‘vocabulary instruction’ has a very strong effect ... Programs which *combine* direct explanation of words with reading ... are the most effective.”

## 6. Improving listening comprehension improves reading comprehension.

“...comprehension of printed language continues to lag behind comprehension of spoken language well past third grade, (Sticht & James, 1984). *When a child can understand language equally well whether presented in print or speech, the distinction between listening and reading comprehension ceases to be important.*”

## 7. Exposure to oral language improves vocabulary growth.

*“Vocabulary learning takes place when students are immersed in words. Just as teachers have begun to use the phrase ‘flood of books’ to talk about situations where students have many and varied opportunities to read, (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988), so the phrase ‘flood of words’ is an important issue for general vocabulary development. Reading to children has been shown to extend not only their recognition of new words but also their ability to use these words in their own retellings,” (Eller, Pappas, & Brown, 1988; Elley, 1988).*



## 8. Poor readers are not exposed to challenging language.

“High school seniors near the top of their class knew about four times as many words as their lower-performing classmates,” (Smith, 1941).

“High-knowledge third graders had vocabularies about equal to lowest-performing 12th graders,” (Smith, 1941).

## 9. Repetition improves vocabulary acquisition.

“...simple exposure to new vocabulary with considerable repetition of that vocabulary, as occurs in basal readers, was sufficient to increase listening comprehension and probably vocabulary. This finding is consistent with Chall’s observation that added ‘challenge’ (more demanding texts) led to increased vocabulary acquisition and improved comprehension. Another key point is that as little as 30 minutes a day (4 days a week) of reading experience was sufficient to bring about substantial gains in reading and language achievement.”

“Repeated encounters with words in rich oral and written contexts provide experiences and clues to the word’s meaning that build over time and help develop and change our mental structures for a word’s meaning,” (Eller, Pappas, & Brown, 1988; Nagy, 1988; Vosniadou & Ortony, 1983).

## 10. Computer-assisted multi-media software programs impacts standardized reading comprehension scores.

Failure Free Reading, a pioneer in multi-media talking software, has shown evidence that a highly structured talking software format can significantly improve the standardized reading comprehension scores of lowest quartile students, (“What Works”, National Clearinghouse of National Researchers, 2007).



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Joseph F. Lockavitch, a former classroom teacher, school psychologist, university professor, special education director, and applied researcher, is the author and developer of: The Failure Free Reading Program, Don't Close the Book on Your Not-Yet Readers, Joseph's Readers Talking Software for Non-Readers, Verbal Master-An Accelerated Vocabulary Program, and The Test of Lateral Awareness and Directionality.

Dr. Lockavitch is also the author of numerous published research articles. His most recent work can be found in the Australian Journal of Learning Disabilities, the Journal of Learning Disabilities, Special Services in the Schools, The Journal of At-Risk Issues, and The Florida Reading Quarterly.

A noted speaker who is listed in Outstanding Teachers in Exceptional Education, Who's Who in American Education, and Who's Who in the South and Southwest, Dr. Lockavitch has spent the past thirty years training thousands of teachers, parents and administrators across the nation on how to meet the unique needs of America's non-readers.

Featured on the PBS NewsHour with Jim Lehrer and mentioned on national radio shows such as: Tom Joyner, Dr. Laura, Mike Gallagher, and Michael Medved, Dr. Lockavitch holds a Doctorate of Education from Boston University and a Master of Science in Special Education from Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, Connecticut.

He is currently the President of Failure Free Reading- an educational publishing and software development firm housed outside of Charlotte, North Carolina. Failure Free Reading has been used by thousands of teachers to serve hundreds of thousands of students in schools across the nation.

In addition, Failure Free Reading is one of the nation's most approved Supplemental Educational Service providers - directly serving over ten thousand students and clocking close to three hundred thousand tutoring hours.

