

Gardner, D. (2004). Vocabulary input through extensive reading: A comparison of words found in children's narrative and expository reading materials. *Applied Linguistics*, 25(1), 1-37.

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Summary: The study evaluated the lexical differences between narrative and expository reading materials for 10-11 year-old students in the fifth-grade, and how those differences might influence a student's vocabulary acquisition. Specifically, the author sought to determine the extent to which narrative and expository reading emphasize different types of words (general, academic, technical), and how these two formats may affect the type and/or degree of vocabulary acquisition for students.

Assumptions:

- Incidental Acquisition Hypothesis supports the construct that more reading, both free readings (readings chosen by the students) and wide readings (reading a variety of texts without consideration for text type), results in larger vocabulary acquisition. That is, regardless of text type (narrative or expository), greater vocabulary gains will be achieved through voluminous reading.
- The volume of reading is favored over direct vocabulary instruction.
- For second language learners, language acquisition is achieved through "a subconscious process that takes place as a motivated and relaxed learner is exposed to natural language."
- Technical or unique words promote "large scale acquisition".

Results:

- Expository text contains more academic and technical or unique words than its narrative text counterparts.
- The higher frequency of general words found in narrative texts provides more optimal lexical conditions for incidental word acquisition.
- The lexical composition of narrative texts and expository texts are largely dissimilar, particularly at specialized levels of vocabulary where the "potential for large scale acquisition is the greatest."
- The unique words found in narrative texts are usually associated with characters' names; in expository form, unique words tend to be content-specific and/or theme related.

Conclusion:

- All reading is not the same. This finding counters the claims present in the Incidental Acquisition Hypothesis, which supports free and wide reading.
- For general incidental word acquisition, narrative provides a "less lexical demanding text for the reader."
- Narratives provide fewer word types than expository text.
- Large scale vocabulary growth is more likely to occur in expository text due to its academic and technical word use.

- The specialized vocabulary needs, during a student's academic tenure, is more likely to be achieved through expository text than narrative text.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Text types offer different word learning opportunities. For general incidental word acquisition, narrative texts suffice. However, for greater academic and vocabulary gains, expository texts are preferable.
- Different acquisition processes need to be addressed for students to learn the meanings of words in "densely-packed expository materials." Graphic organizers may assist in this process.
- Formal instruction should accompany content-area readings. Instructions may include reading strategies, morphological knowledge, word-analysis, and general study strategies.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Three themes were used in this study (Mystery, Mummy, and Westward Movement). To further support the author's findings more themes should be utilized. Explain. agree—also, how is this a suggestion for literacy leaders?
- Develop training for using expository text for ESL students...Reading expository texts may help ESL students develop language skills and complex cognitive ability. This counters the claims that narrative texts are preferable for ESL students.