Building Vocabulary and Context Clues

Workshop for Future Nursing Professionals
Let's see if you have the symptoms...

Dr. Killrabbit & Elmer Fudd “Hare Tonic” (1945)
http://youtu.be/-nzeyWrPamg
Workshop Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Workshop goals
3. The vocabulary requirements of the HESI Exam
4. Residual benefits of a strong vocabulary
5. Quick Pre-Test

5. Techniques for building a strong vocabulary
   1. Context clues (what surrounds the word)
   2. Word structure: prefixes, roots, and suffixes
   3. Using a dictionary and/or thesaurus to confirm and clarify meaning
   4. Applying analogies (compare relationships)
   5. Identifying synonyms
   6. Developing challenging words lists
   7. Combining vocabulary techniques

6. Hands-on practice – provided throughout the discussion of “Techniques”

7. Helpful Resources
Workshop Goals

- Expand strategies for developing a strong vocabulary
- Enhance recognition of context clues
- Build confidence in test taking related to vocabulary
- Take away some resources to continue building vocabulary skills
The vocabulary requirements of the HESI Exam

- Why are vocabulary words and context clues present on health care related entrance exams?

- As noted by one expert, “Members of the health professions use specific medical terminology to ensure accurate, concise, and consistent communication among all persons involved in the provision of health care” (Boyd and Saccoman 51).

- Further, general vocabulary words are often used in a health care context, so it is important to have a good grasp of both general vocabulary and medical terminology (Boyd and Saccoman 51).
The vocabulary requirements of the HESI Exam (Continued)

• The types of vocabulary questions on the HESI exam include the following:

  • A sentence and a “meaning” or a “definition” of a word is provided and the test-taker must choose the appropriate vocabulary word to match that meaning or definition within the context of the sentence.

  • Example:

    • What word meaning “once a year” fits best in the sentence?

      • The _____________ family reunion picnic was held at the Jones Farm instead of the county park.

        • A. Regular
        • B. Annual
        • C. Biennial
        • D. Holiday
The vocabulary requirements of the HESI Exam (Continued)

- A sentence is provided in which a vocabulary word is underlined. The test-taker must then select the “definition” or “meaning” of the vocabulary word in the context of the sentence.

  - Example:

    - Select the meaning of the underlined word in the sentence.

    - The dog developed bilateral weakness in its hindquarters, so the veterinarian created a wheeled cart to help the dog walk.

      - A. Present on two sides
      - B. Available for exercise
      - C. Affecting the left side
      - D. Affecting the right side
Residual benefits of a strong vocabulary

- A stronger vocabulary will serve your:
  - Reading skills
  - Speaking skills
  - Writing skills

- In other words, having a larger vocabulary at your disposal will allow you to communicate more effectively with others and be understood by others more clearly.
- Having a strong vocabulary can prevent mistakes with possible disastrous consequences.
Before we begin discussing the strategies... let’s perform a quick pre-test to see where you stand!

- Quick Pre-Test
Techniques for improving one’s vocabulary

1. Context clues (what surrounds the word)
2. Word structure: prefixes, roots, and suffixes
3. Using a dictionary and/or thesaurus to confirm and clarify meaning
4. Applying analogies (compare relationships)
5. Identifying synonyms
6. Developing challenging words lists
7. * Combining vocabulary techniques

*In trying to determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word, you may need to employ several of these techniques in combination.
Technique 1: Context Clues

- When you come across an unfamiliar word in your reading, the first step you should take toward discovering its meaning is to look for *context clues*.

- The context of a word is what surrounds it, which includes the sentence it appears in, other nearby sentences, or even the whole article.

Source: (Mather and McCarthy)
Recognizable context clues

- Easy context clues to recognize include:
  1) Definition
  2) Synonym
  3) Antonym
  4) Restatement
  5) Examples
  6) Explanation
  7) Word structure

Source: Boyd & Saccoman, p. 47
Classify context clues using SAGE.

A SAGE Approach

- Synonyms
- Antonyms
- Context Clues
- General Context
- Examples
When the president entered the room, he was asked to give an impromptu (unrehearsed) speech.
The new coach bolstered the team’s confidence rather than demoralizing them by pointing out their mistakes.
Some believe that meditation and stress management can be a panacea to many of our problems.
You try...

- Although he was often reckless while driving with his friends, he was very **circumspect** when his parents were in the car.

  *Circumspect* means _______.

- A. careless
- B. quiet
- C. cautious
- D. rude
You try...

- Although he was often reckless while driving with his friends, he was very **circumspect** when his parents were in the car.

  *Circumspect* means ________.
  
  - A. careless
  - B. quiet
  - C. cautious
  - D. rude
Elderly dogs are threatened by such **maladies** as arthritis, tumors, deafness, and loss of teeth.

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Technique 1: Context Clues (Continued)

- An example is provided of the word.
- Example signal words indicate that an example is coming: for instance, such as, consists of, including

Example: Some authors use pseudonyms; for example, famous American author Mark Twain’s real name was Samuel Clemens.
Try this:

- Jamie *speculated* about how much weight he wanted to gain during the three-month bodybuilding program he was beginning for the first time.
  - Knew
  - Wondered
  - Worried
  - Celebrated
Medical Roots, Prefixes, and Suffixes

Putting it all together...

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ul2lRQGuhwc
Technique 2: Word structure: prefixes, roots, and suffixes

- **Word Structure**
  - Words can be analyzed by beginning (prefix), base structure (root), and/or end (suffix) structure.
  - The meanings of an unfamiliar word can be discovered by breaking it down into its parts.
    - Ex. Gastro + itis = inflammation of stomach
    - Ex. Osteo + genesis = creation of bone
Prefixes – beginning structure of a word

- **Prefix** = Pre (before) and Fix (to fasten)
  - In other words – something attached to the beginning of something else

Examples:

- **eu** - good or well; 
  - *Euthanasia* - the act of putting someone to death painlessly

- **dys** - bad, abnormal, difficult
  - *Dysentery* - infectious disease of the large intestine marked by diarrhea

- **macro** - large or long
  - *Macrobiosis* – a dietary regimen focusing on grains and vegetables

- **micro** - small
  - *Microbe* - a disease-causing bacterium; a small bit of life.

Source: (Mather and McCarthy)
Technique 2: Word structure: prefixes, roots, and suffixes (Continued)

• Prefixes (Continued)

• Examples:

  • a(n) - not, without
    - Aseptic - Free from the living germs of disease.
    - Atrophy - a wasting away or a shrinking up of a part of the body.
    - Anemia - a condition in which a person’s blood does not have enough red blood cells.

  • poly – many
    - Polychromatic - having or exhibiting many colors

  • pro – forward
    - Prognosis - is a forecast or prediction of how a disease will probably develop in a person and what the chances are that the person will get well.
    - Progressive - moving forward

  • ped—child (Not to be confused with the Latin prefix ped also means “foot” as in pedal and pedestrian.)
    - pediatrician - a doctor who takes care of babies and children

Source: (Mather and McCarthy)
Technique 2: Word structure: prefixes, roots, and suffixes (Continued)

- **Roots** – base structure of a word
  - A root is the main (middle) part of a word
  - **Examples:**
    - aud, aus - hear, listen (audiology, audio)
    - capit, capt - head (decapitate)
    - cide, cise - cut down, kill (homicide, germicide)
    - clud, clus, claus - shut (occlusion, claustrophobia)

Source: (Mather and McCarthy)
Technique 2: Word structure: prefixes, roots, and suffixes (Continued)

• Suffixes – the concluding structure of a word

  • Suffix = (variant of sub - below or under) – something fastened underneath something

• Examples:
  • logy—study or science
    • Anthropology - Anthrop means “man,” so anthropology is the science that studies human beings, especially their origin, development, division, and customs

  • ject—throw
    • Inject - The literal meaning of inject is “to throw in.”

Source: (Mather and McCarthy)
Hands-On Practice
Match terms in the left column with their meaning in the right column.

1. -ac
2. -er
3. -iatrician
4. -iatry
5. -ic
6. -ist
7. -logist
8. -logy

A. Medical profession or treatment.
B. One who
C. One who studies; specialist
D. Practitioner
E. Pertaining to
F. Study or science of
## Hands-On Practice

Check your answers!!

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A. Medical profession or treatment.
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C. One who studies; specialist
D. Practitioner
E. Pertaining to
F. Study or science of
You try...

- Prefix: *intro-* (into)  Root: *spect* (look)

- Sometimes we need to be *introspective* and examine the choices we have made.

- A. looking ahead to the future
- B. thoughtless
- C. looking out for others
- D. thinking deeply
How did you do?

- Prefix: *intro-* (into)    Root: *spect* (look)

- Sometimes we need to be *introspective* and examine the choices we have made.

- A. looking ahead to the future
- B. thoughtless
- C. looking out for others
- D. *thinking deeply*
Technique 3: Using a dictionary and/or thesaurus to confirm and clarify meaning

- **Dictionary**

  - Take advantage of helpful dictionary resources to help advance your vocabulary
  
  - Using dictionary tools, you may find several different definitions for a particular word, but by using context clues you can pick the definition that best fits the word in its sentence.

    - Subscribe to free “word of the day” lists to help build your vocabulary and encourage the recognition of prefixes, roots, and suffixes
    - Download free vocabulary apps on your phone
    - Keep bookmarks to online dictionary sites handy when working on your computer

- **http://dictionary.reference.com/**
- **http://www.merriam-webster.com/**

Source: (Mather and McCarthy)
Technique 3: Using a dictionary and/or thesaurus to confirm and clarify meaning (Continued)

- Thesaurus

- A thesaurus gives synonyms for the most common nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in the English language which improves your writing by helping you select precisely the right word for any situation.

Source: (Mather and McCarthy)
Technique 4: Applying analogies

- Applying analogies

  - An analogy is a similarity between like features of two things, on which a comparison may be based

  - Analogies compare relationships
    - Examples: A is to B as C is to D
                Day is to night as light is to dark

  - In other words, an analogy is an equation that uses words instead of numbers.

  - Verbal analogies not only test your knowledge of vocabulary words, but also your ability to see relationships between words and the concepts the words represent.

Source: (Mather and McCarthy)
Technique 4: Applying analogies (Continued)

- Some common relationships that appear in word analogies are the following:
  - Synonym (words with the same meaning)
    - Ex. Medical and healing
  - Antonym (words with opposite meanings)
    - Watch for words like although, but, and instead

Source: (Mather and McCarthy)
Technique 4: Applying analogies (Continued)

- Can you think of **antonyms** for these words?
  - 1. birth
  - 2. illness
  - 3. obesity
Technique 5: Identifying synonyms

- Synonyms – words that have the same meaning
  - Oftentimes, synonyms are present in the sentences provided in tests as clues to the meaning of the vocabulary word
  - Or, when the definition of a word is given, the definition contains a synonym
Technique 5: Identifying synonyms (Continued)

- Example from HESI Exam:
  - Select the word that means “brief, to the point.”
    - The teacher’s instructions were given abruptly, so the student was able to complete the project in a reasonable period of time.
    
    A. Instructions
    B. Concise
    C. Complete
    D. Reasonable
Technique 5: Identifying synonyms (Continued)

- Knowing the synonyms for words, help you draw on a larger vocabulary which assists your identification of words and meanings
Technique 5: Identifying synonyms (Continued)

- Try matching the following word with their synonyms

  - prize  chaste
  - gab  abyss
  - chase  pursue
  - gulf  chat
  - pure  cherish
Technique 5: Identifying synonyms (Continued)

- Hands-On Practice
  - Identify TWO synonyms for each of the following words
    - 1. Exercise
    - 2. Mobile
    - 3. Aerobic
    - 4. Inflate
    - 5. Nasal
    - 6. Solution
    - 7. Sampling
Technique 6: Developing challenging words lists

• Master your personal vocabulary demons by developing challenging word lists
  
  • Create a memory aid that will remind you of the words that challenge you
    
    • Flash card
    • MS Word list
    • Hard copy list or chart
    • Use a cell phone app to maintain a running list of challenging words
Technique 6: Developing challenging words lists (Continued)

- Master your personal vocabulary demons by developing challenging word lists (Continued)
  - Write the word and definition correctly 10 times
  - Write a paragraph in which you use the word correctly two times
  - Say the word and definition out loud to activate your audible memory
  - Ask a friend to give you a vocabulary test
Technique 6: Developing challenging words lists (Continued)

• Hands-On Practice

• 1. Based on challenging medical terminology you’ve encountered today, or challenging medical terminology you’ve encountered in the past, create a list of 10 challenging words

• 2. Next to each challenging word, provide a definition for the word

• 3. Then, use each word in a sentence

• 4. Finally, write 5 separate sentences in which you correctly use at least two of the challenging words in each sentence
Technique 7: Combining vocabulary techniques

- Combine vocabulary techniques as Needed!

- In trying to determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word, you may need to employ several of these techniques in combination.

  Example: Context clues + a prefix

  Example: Synonym + a root
Works Cited


Questions?