

# You Know What Oxygen Is?

## By Tabors, Beals, & Weizman

Presented by Cynthia Pearson and  
Pauline Panos



# Purpose of the Study



- Is the ability to comprehend text related to the size of a child's vocabulary?
- If children are helped to build greater vocabularies, will reading comprehension improve?
- What is the relationship between exposure to vocabulary in conversational situations and receptive vocabulary when children get to kindergarten?



## Three Questions



- What new vocabulary words were introduced when children were engaged in conversations?
- When were new words used at home and in what context?
- What is the relationship between conversational use of new vocabulary words and children's later vocabulary skill?



## Rare Words



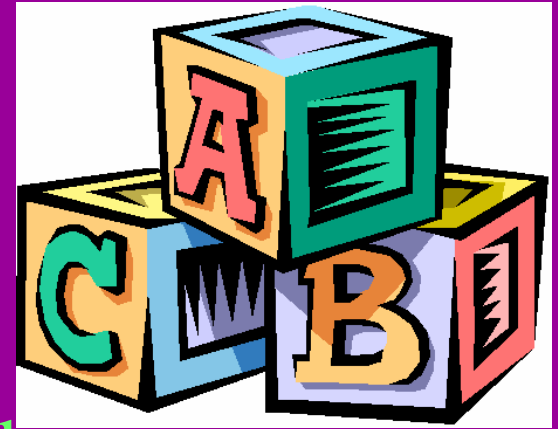
- Transcripts of conversations were run on a computer program that combined all of the words that the mothers used
- The most common words were deleted (a list of 7,881 were used)
- Proper names, exclamations, and slang were excluded
- The remaining words were “rare words.”

# Learning Rare Words

- Rare words can be learned naturally in the home during:
  - Toy Play
  - Book Reading
  - Mealtime

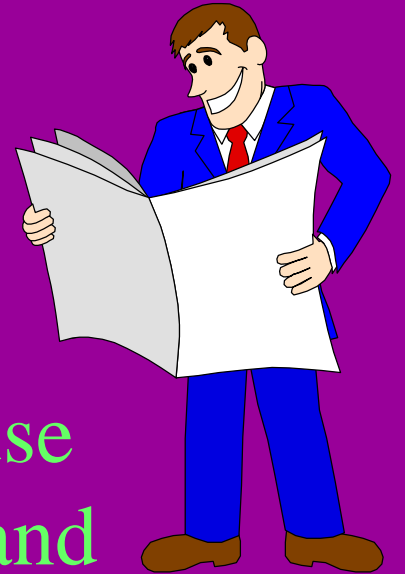


# Toy Play



- Toy play is the least complicated conversational setting because it involves just the mother and the child and there are few distractions.
- Mothers consciously introduced rare words in the course of identifying and playing with the toys.
- A rare word is often reused over time in other situations.

# Book Reading



- Book reading is more complex because there are two sources of words (text and mother)
- Rare words were explained by:
  - Referring to an Illustration
  - Giving a Definition or a Synonym
  - Using Inference or Comparison
  - Using the Child's Experience

# Mealttime



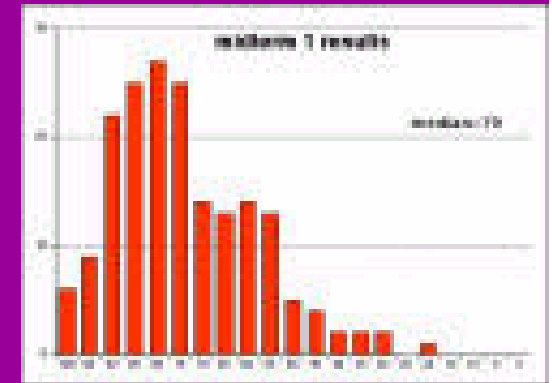
- Meal time conversations were complex because of a variety of conversational patterns.
- Informative vs. uninformative introduction of new words.
- “Fast mapping”--children gain at least some sense of the word from hearing it once (incidental exposure).

# More Mealtime Conversations

- Mealtime conversations were analyzed to see if words were used in an informative or uninformative context.
  - Physical Context
  - Prior Knowledge
  - Social Context
  - Semantic Support



# Results



- 65% of the exchanges between parents and children were informative
  - the most frequent strategy used was semantic support (61%)
  - use of physical context accounted for 19% of the exchanges
  - use of the social context strategy accounted for 13% of the exchanges
  - use of prior knowledge strategy occurred in only 7% of the exchanges.

# Relationship between rare words and kindergarten vocabulary

- The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test showed a correlation between exposure to rare words and later vocabulary knowledge.
  - “Children’s exposure during the preschool years to informative uses of rare words, and especially semantic support strategies, appears to be a strong predictor of their later vocabulary.”



# Suggestions for Parents



- Use words your child has not heard before
- Consider how you are using these words. Does your child understand the meaning?
- Use books to introduce new vocabulary
- When you visit new surroundings with your child, talk about the surroundings and introduce new vocabulary in context.

**The End**

