

## **EDUC 172 – Part 2-02a**

Alright let's look at some of the methods that we've got to work with difficult texts to help our students in terms of their comprehension and what we're trying to get across.

Of course, one of the most important things about reading instruction for students is working with vocabulary.

This is especially important when introducing lot of new words or texts that have a lot of challenging language. It's important that we therefore first identified the vocabulary that might give them problems.

One way to do that, of course, is to have the students themselves identify problem words but in certain instances students won't speak up.

One way around this reluctance on students' parts to admit that they don't know some words is to, of course, ask them what word somebody else might have a difficulty with.

This idea was used by Lee Gunderson at the University of British Columbia when trying to discover a more reliable way of having students self-report about the number of words they found difficult in a given passage.

What he had discovered was that students who only recognize one, two, or say three words within a given passage are usually fluent and doing fine as they can identify the meaning of those words through the context of the other words that surround them.

Students who are finding themselves with anywhere like five to ten words in a given passage may still be able to read it and have some comprehension of the text, but it's slow going and need some assistance from their teacher in order to be able to deal with that text.

Now students that haven't yet acquired cognitive academic language proficiency might identify over 10 or anywhere up to twenty words in a given text. In that case the text is too difficult for them as he would say.

It will be too challenging and it's very unlikely that they will be able to get enough out of that text to make it a worthwhile teaching tool for you.

The words that you're identifying most often of course, as we've discussed when we looked at the Jeff Severs' use the term brick-and-mortar words to define those ones which are contemplative and those ones which are more functional and providing context.

With brick words, you've already gone now and identified those both in the text you started working with and of course in your own piece of writing in which you wrote description of an object that the group had agreed on.

Now what I'd like you to do is to take the texts the you been working with and to select the brick words and now develop word clusters around them.

Word clusters are composed a terms that are analogous to, at least closely similar to, or to be contrasted with. In the passage that I read to you in the first part of this reading section of the course, you'll note that the author there - Rick Fox?- was defining the difference between ecological and anthropological approaches to environmentalism.

That is ones that were human-centered or non-human centered in their focus and ideas.

There you'll see that he is creating words that are different; you also note that he drew a comparison or an analogy to the words environmental and ecological and so there we have a similarity.

As you take the words in your text to create word clusters, so you'll be finding those things which might compare as similar to it and those that would contrast with it.

The compare-contrasting of vocabulary and that idea of presenting words and terms so that give an analogous understanding are really important; that type of syllogistic reasoning makes up an important part of say entrance exams such as GED, or law exams into University contexts.

It's often something that is identified as a particular style of abstract thought typical to many disciplines in the sciences and arts.

Therefore by doing this ahead of time for our students we not only have the ability to prepare and predict which language and concepts we will have to take more time with to help them understand but also present the terms were using in ways that help them develop a schema, a map of comprehension of those things which the term is like and those things which is unlike.

So once you've developed these clusters and listed them in a compare and contrast chart, it will be useful to write a brief definition beside each of the terms and try and be as precise as you can in providing a definition that somebody could understand if they didn't already understand the term.

So one must be careful not use words in the definition that are also not words the students can understand.

This really helps because it helps you in the moment of teaching when asked to define a term that coming up with the succinct definition to is rather difficult because you have many different related ideas connected to that term.

So this will really help to be able to prepare yourself to provide a definition students can quickly and easily absorb.

So if you will take a few moments we will do this first activity to prepare ourselves to assist students as they work with vocabulary so we'll model a little for them.

Ultimately, of course, this would be extended into your curriculum development by having students develop vocabulary lists in similar ways to really help them map out out understanding.

It also gives them the ability to work visually so that they can start comparing things on either side and develop visual relationships to words that will help their recall.

So we'll do that just as quick example based on terms that you've drawn from either your own writing or the text that you use to analyze for brick and mortar words, just using the brick works.

Go ahead do that now.