Word Aware

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Word Aware
Parsons & Branagan (2014, 2016)

• Developed from SLT work in socially deprived schools
• Used with hearing children with language impairments
• Limited use with deaf children
Vocabulary and attainment: hearing children

Vocabulary more relevant than nonverbal ability and socio-economic factors

Spencer, 2016

Acquisition and command of vocabulary are key to learning and progress across the whole curriculum. Teachers should therefore develop vocabulary actively, building systematically on pupils’ current knowledge.

National Curriculum, 2014
Vocabulary within the curriculum

Students who enter classrooms with a low store of vocabulary knowledge are unlikely to acquire complex knowledge through simple exposure

Ford-Connors and Paratore, 2015
Word Aware: A whole school approach

Universal provision
All children

Targeted provision
Some children

Specialist provision
Few children
Four elements to Word Aware

1. Make words count: show students that words are important by creating a word rich environment
2. Direct teaching: selecting and teaching curriculum vocabulary
3. Teaching strategies: help children develop independent word learning skills
4. Word games: promote word learning skills and motivating
MSc study using Word Aware with deaf students

- **Aim**: improve reading using a vocabulary intervention delivered in conjunction with the school’s Sounds Write programme

- 9 severe to profoundly deaf students 11-15 years old put in 2 groups according to their entry point on the Sounds Write screen

- Students received up to 24 x 20 minute sessions during lunchtimes for 6 weeks
Measuring vocabulary knowledge

• Baseline for students’ understanding of words established by showing them the word, and then asking them to rate their own understanding, either:
  – *I’ve never seen it before*
  – *I’ve heard of it but I don’t know what it means*
  – *I recognise it in context, it has something to do with….*
  – *I know it*

• If they knew the word, students were asked to explain it and were scored on their ability to give salient features
Word Wizard focuses on phonological and semantic features of the target words and using words in sentences
Results

• Students’ knowledge of targeted vocabulary improved significantly after therapy, measured by an informal vocabulary assessment.

• There was also a significant improvement in students’ self-rating of their knowledge and accuracy in explaining the target vocabulary as a result of the intervention.
• There was an unexpected significant improvement in student’s self-rating for word knowledge and their ability to give definitions for *untaught* words

• This reflected outcomes from studies with hearing children (St. John & Vance 2014; Parsons, Law & Gascoigne 2005)
• Sounds Write screen indicated statistically significant improvements in students’ blending, segmenting, sound deletion skills and non-word reading following the vocabulary intervention.

• This may be due to phonological aspects of the words being discussed as part of Word Aware.

• In addition, research has shown that vocabulary directly impacts phonics in hearing (Roy & Chiat 2013) and even more so in deaf children (Herman, Kyle & Roy 2014).
Conclusions

• Using a semantic and phonologically based vocabulary intervention with deaf children, in conjunction with a systematic phonics programme, as recommended by Easterbrooks & Stephenson (2006 - deaf) and Rose (2009 - hearing) appears to be highly beneficial in improving the reading skills of deaf students.