

## Printout of MindLadder® Advisor

### Section B-5•



#### C-6: Verbal Tools

We have two vocabularies: Receptive and expressive. The receptive vocabulary is used to understand, or decode, information and the expressive is used to produce, or encode, information. We use the first to understand the thoughts that others communicate to us and the second to communicate our thoughts to them. Recognizing words correctly and using words correctly are two different mental activities. As a result, the knowledge construction function of verbal tools is best seen as having two distinct forms, one for Reception (see R-6) and one, as discussed here, for Communication (C-6).

We use words and concepts to describe to others what we know, feel and think. To accomplish this we select and organize verbal tools according to rules of sentence structure, meaning and logical inference. The more verbal tools we have, and the better we master the rules for combining them, the better we can communicate our thoughts and feelings to others.

When we don't have the verbal tools we need we tend to compensate by using words and phrases that are less precise. Sometimes we try to make up for the differences with facial expressions, gestures and body language. The aim of this knowledge construction function is to enable students to understand more precisely the need to acquire and use the most accurate and descriptive verbal tools they can.

To enable your students to understand the significance of verbal tools for communication use a variety of activities such as the following: You and your students pretend to be in a world where only a limited number of words have been created. Decide on a small number of words, say 10, and have the students discuss in groups which 10 words they would most like to have in their expressive vocabulary. Then have them use it - and stick to the rules! Have them discuss the experience: What did it do to their thought process? How difficult was

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it and how frustrated did they feel? Now have them discuss what 10 additional words they would most like to have and why. Have them try to use the expanded vocabulary. Then add 20 more words. Take a look at the language we normally have. Your students may display a newfound appreciation for its wealth and richness in the light of this exercise.

Students may wish to take the exercise further. For example, they may wish to examine what kinds of words ended up in their 10, 20 and 40 word vocabulary. Which ones came first and which later? Which were the most important ones? Count the number of each of the different kinds of words:

Common nouns (names of things – e.g. book, house, man, car)

Proper nouns (names of people and places)

Pronouns (words that replace or refer to nouns – e.g. he, she, it, them)

Adjectives (words that describe a noun or pronoun – e.g. bright, happy, hungry, dirty)

Adverbs (words that describes verbs – e.g. brightly, happily, neatly, gently, steadily, fiercely)

Conjunctions/Connectives (words that join different parts of a sentence – e.g. and, but, for, since, yet, until, where, when, however, because)

Some of your students may have emigrated from another country and others may have learned a new language in school. Have your students share what it was like to learn a new language. Some of your students may have experienced frustration when they were unable to communicate what they were thinking in a new language. Some may have been motivated by such frustrations to make an extra effort to expand their vocabulary. - People who work with second language learners know it is important not to confuse a difficulty with verbal expression with a deficiency in information processing and thinking. The frustration which the learner may feel when she tries to communicate is a good sign that more reasoning was accomplished than the learner is able to express. That is the frustration. This can be seen also in cases where the learner knows the verbal tool but is unable to retrieve it from memory (T-8); an experience that becomes more common as people get older. Retrieval problems is one of the reasons that the receptive vocabulary usually is larger than the expressive vocabulary.

Throughout your work in the classroom encourage your students to learn and use new words. In your teaching be sure to connect the new words to the students' experiences so that they will be more meaningful and thus better understood and remembered. Give your students plenty of opportunities to express themselves in speaking and in writing. Remember that many students feel they have more opportunity to express themselves in small as opposed to large groups.

Be sure each student has opportunities to express himself. Have students tell you about a story they read or describe experiences in which they have participated. Another activity is to have students keep a daily journal in which they write their own opinions and thoughts about various experiences. Language is so important to the development of cognition that any time you emphasize it in your activities with your students you will be developing both language and cognition.