

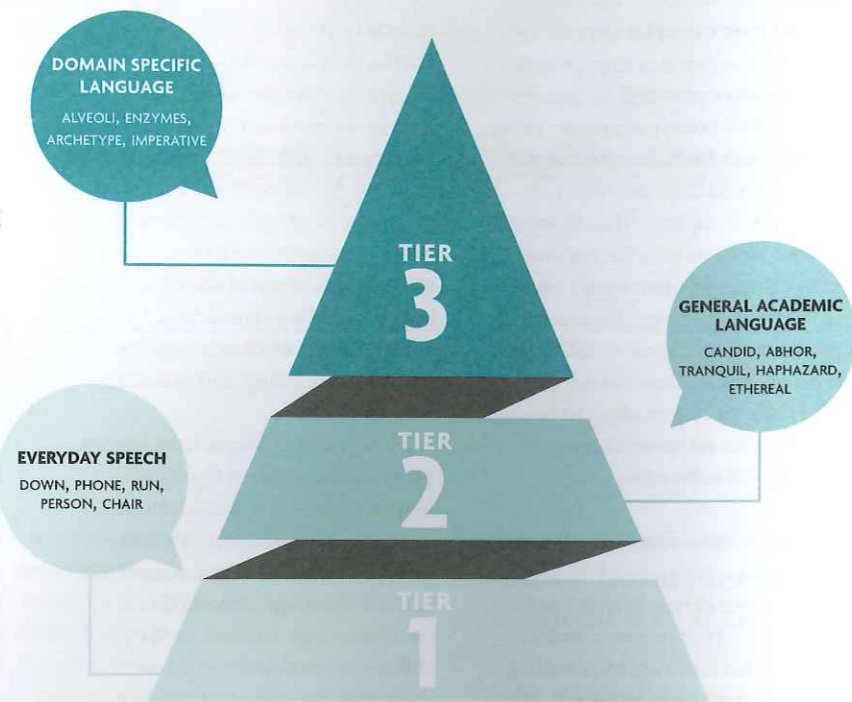
› ‘more generative practice tests... may lead to the best long-term learning’ (Fiorella and Mayer, 2015, p. 111). Robert Bjork (2012) further explains that self-testing has a more powerful effect without cues or being primed. The most influential text, however, is *Bringing Words to Life* (Beck et al., 2002). It provides robust and clear instructional methods for making vocabulary stick. One of the most powerful takeaways for me is: ‘[You need to acquire] 400 words a year to make a significant contribution to verbal functioning’, which gives me a rough goal against which to measure. There are also references to the ineffectiveness of dictionary work, which spoke to me as, when I was first Head of English a long while ago, colleagues asked if we could ‘finally’ buy dictionary boxes. I agreed with pleasure. Years later, the dictionaries sit in boxes around the department, underused and of limited impact. *Bringing Words to Life* explains a better way to capture meaning for students than looking in a dictionary! However, what gets educators particularly interested is the famous reference to ‘tier 2 language’, illustrated in Figure 1.

Tier 2 words are essentially ‘more mature and precise’ words for ideas that students already have. This is where Hirsch’s ‘shallow... to deep knowledge’ idea is most helpful. The more tier 2 words a student has, the better equipped they are to read a range of texts.

Accordingly, I created a list of tier 2 words. I downloaded about 1,600 words from a US website named Flocabulary (www.flocabulary.com). I then simply chopped out words I thought were too simplistic, created a spreadsheet and enabled it to randomly present different words in a form of spaced retrieval. If you so wish, you can download the list from my blog (thespacebetweenclub.wordpress.com).

Through discussion and ‘cold call’, students will acquire working definitions

FIGURE 1:  
TIERS OF DOMAIN SPECIFIC LANGUAGE ILLUSTRATED



### The more tier 2 words a student has, the better equipped they are to read a range of texts

of about 10 words each lesson. I will next use generative learning, which should take about 15 minutes of one lesson a week. Here are some examples: one activity is to challenge students to generate situations, contexts and examples, therefore integrating their new vocabulary. For example, *How might a (1) cook (2) musician (3) basketball player (4) teacher show they are (1) versatile (2) expert (3) industrious (4) innovative?* Or perhaps

an even more demanding example of generative elaboration: *Do people with privilege prosper? What might a meticulous person be vulnerable to?* *Bringing Words to Life* has a panoply of activities to help secure students’ understanding and, therefore, boost vocabulary in the long term, the goal being that young people become increasingly confident readers and successful learners across the curriculum. I am particularly curious as to whether the tasks that are more demanding generatively have greater impact or stickiness. Through the project, which will launch in September 2018, I hope to explore the best ways to ensure vocabulary sticks.

## Building vocabulary across a 3D curriculum

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In building our curriculum, we sought to structure it so that key concepts and vocabulary were revisited and reinforced, making them unforgettable. As a result, we constructed a 3D curriculum where explicit links were made within subjects, across subjects and across years, with repetition of vocabulary at its heart.

Beck’s work (2013) gave us strategies to reinforce vocabulary within a unit of work and, by dividing words into three tiers, helped us decide which words would have most impact. However, when thinking about teaching for long-term learning, we decided that the most important vocabulary sometimes straddled tiers 2 and 3. We’ve dubbed these ‘2.5’ words. These are words that may begin as technical ‘tier 3’ words, but become appropriated and used in a looser way. For example, children may first encounter the word ‘meander’ as a tier 3 word in geography, when studying rivers, but then encounter it in English when it is used to describe someone’s thoughts or journey. Reminding children of the ‘tier 3’ usage not only consolidates recollection of the technical use, but also aids comprehension of the looser tier 2 meaning.

We thought about where these opportunities may occur across the curriculum. There’s no point in a teacher simply saying, ‘remember when you studied rivers in geography?’ and assuming that children will make the right links. Instead, they need to be explicit and go over the technical meaning, even if the original exposure to the word did not take place in their year group or subject. This has meant highlighting which vocabulary we want

staff to reinforce. For example, consider the words ‘tyrant’, ‘tyranny’ and ‘tyrannical’. Children first encounter ‘tyrant’ in the Early Years, learning about dinosaurs and Tyrannosaurus Rex. So when teaching about King John and the Magna Carta, teachers exploit this prior knowledge when describing an oppressive ruler as tyrannical. Later history lessons, studying Hitler, provide opportunities to revisit the idea of tyranny and remind ourselves of when we have encountered it previously. Each time we revisit a tier 3 word in a different setting, our understanding of it becomes denser – more solid and more nuanced.

It’s not just about being clear about tier 3 vocabulary in other subjects, or tier 2 vocabulary in English, it’s also about looking for ways in which we can take some of this vocabulary ‘for a walk’ across our 3D curriculum.

The online edition of this journal includes two further articles exploring approaches to vocabulary instruction: *Breathing life into vocabulary teaching in the primary classroom* by Sonia Thompson, and *Word power: Creating a language-rich environment* by Kelly Ashley. These can be accessed at: [impact.chartered.college](http://impact.chartered.college).

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