



3. Summerschool der Doktoratsschule Fachdidaktik

Interdisziplinäres DoktorandInnenkolloquium

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It's all in the words: vocabulary enhancement and reading instruction – what insights into 3rd grade elementary school classrooms can tell about the knowledge and needs of elementary school teachers.

Particularly at the later stages of reading development when reading comprehension increases in importance not only for the reader but also in the education context, the reader's vocabulary has an impact on how well information can be extracted from read texts (Wolf, 2010; Carlisle & Katz, 2005; Koda, 2007; Klicpera, Schabmann & Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2013). Research has shown that about 98% of the words in a text need to be familiar to the reader in order to make meaning from text (c.f. Carver, 2000; Hu & Nation, 2000). For students from disadvantaged backgrounds, however, this becomes particularly difficult to achieve since they have shown to know about 15 000 words less than their more advantaged peers (Wolf, 2010). Such findings highlight the importance of vocabulary instruction when teaching reading. For that reason this presentation (a) investigates how vocabulary enhancement is implemented in 3rd grade elementary school classrooms, and (b) analyzes the professional needs of teachers when it comes to teaching vocabulary.

Data was collected within the context of a small scale observational study carried out in 13 Styrian 3rd grade elementary school classrooms. In all classrooms approximately 30% of the students were learners of German as a second language. Each classroom was observed during one vocabulary lesson with a specifically designed observation protocol focusing on tasks and activities so that conclusions can be drawn about the knowledge and needs of teachers in this particular area of language teaching.

The data allows for the assumption that teachers particularly in the elementary grades still need support in how to teach vocabulary. For instance, activities with vocabulary words highly focus on meta-linguistic awareness raising; hardly touching upon comprehension and meaning. Therefore, suggestions will be provided for how to improve current practices in vocabulary teaching through specifically tailored, evidence based professional development programs.

References:

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