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P-V-S

A NEW APPROACH TO TEACHING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Conscientious teachers are constantly searching for viable procedures which will enhance pupil creativity in oral and written expression. Typically such teachers attempt to avoid the sterile, stereotyped, workbook-oriented language "lessons" and endeavor to bring into their classrooms valuable activities which provide some direction but do not stifle pupil interest or creativity. Furthermore, because the acquisition of speaking and writing skills is being encouraged in modern classroom instructional programs, those media which assist the teacher are in ever-increasing demand.

The point of the present discussion is to describe a new approach to teaching communication skills to pupils of all ages. These skills include reading, listening, speaking, and writing and are presented concurrently as well as sequentially. This is indeed a considerable improvement over the old-fashioned, usually isolated, "subject-matter" approach, which has not served well in recent educational experiences.

P-V-S: AN ECLECTIC PROCESS

One of the most effective teaching-learning devices yet devised by the present writer to foster communication skills in pupils is called P-V-S. It is a surprisingly simple procedure yet superbly effective when properly used. The letters represent words: P-V-S = Picture-Vocabulary-Story and this is the nature of the process for skills teaching.

In overview, a pupil matches vocabulary which form a picture. From the picture and the vocabulary, the pupil composes his own story.

The advantages of this process are many and there appear to be few disadvantages. Here we have a situation of flexible rigidity. Although these terms seem contradictory, for learning communication skills they are mutually complementary. As such, the P-V-S activity aids teacher and pupil alike. It takes them from the old-fashioned, frequently disliked, sterile "lessons" of the typical language learning program and places them in a position of freedom to create while using the picture and vocabulary as a guide.

P-V-S: THE PROCEDURE

The Picture-Vocabulary-Story medium is relatively simple to construct. The first step involves selection of a picture that will appeal to the pupils in your classroom. Mount that picture on a piece of cardboard; dry mounting is best. Turn the mounted picture over so that the blank back of the cardboard is face up. Now divide the back of the picture into a dozen (more or less) sections and print words in each section. The words (vocabulary) you select should be directly related to the picture and one word should be printed in each section as noted in the accompanying illustrations.

In the lower grades, there may be fewer words and in the upper grades there may be more. Obviously, the number of words used will depend upon the picture itself, the grade level or experiential level of the pupils, and the teacher's insight. Some teachers will have more words for a given picture than will other teachers. Vocabulary selection is subjective and rightly so because the teacher, selecting or making up the vocabulary to fit the picture, is in the best position to know the strengths and weaknesses of the pupils in the classroom.

Here is one suggestion for vocabulary selection which was used by the author. Choose a picture with a printed message accompanying it. Many commercial firms are advertising their wares with pictures and messages of broad, non-commercial appeal. It is from the accompanying text that vocabulary can be selected if the teacher wishes to do so.

Once the words have been printed on the blank cardboard on the other side of the picture, take an ordinary file folder and divide one page into the same number of sections as the picture back. Print the vocabulary, one word per section, on the file-folder page. *Be sure that you print the words in the same sequence as they appear on the back of the picture.* When this is finished, the file folder is complete and can be put aside for the moment.

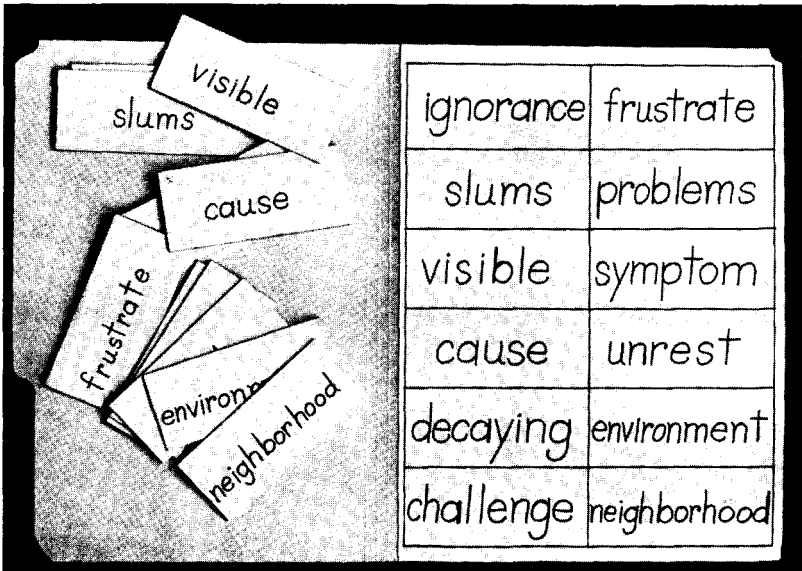
Now take the picture with the vocabulary on the back and cut it into sections so that one word is contained in one section. If, for example, there are twelve words on the back of the picture, there will be twelve sections, each containing one word. You will have a word on one side and a part of the picture on the other side. The accompanying photographs illustrate this.

P-V-S: USAGE

Place the cut up picture sections in an envelope of appropriate size and place the envelope in the file folder previously prepared. You are now ready for pupils to use the material.

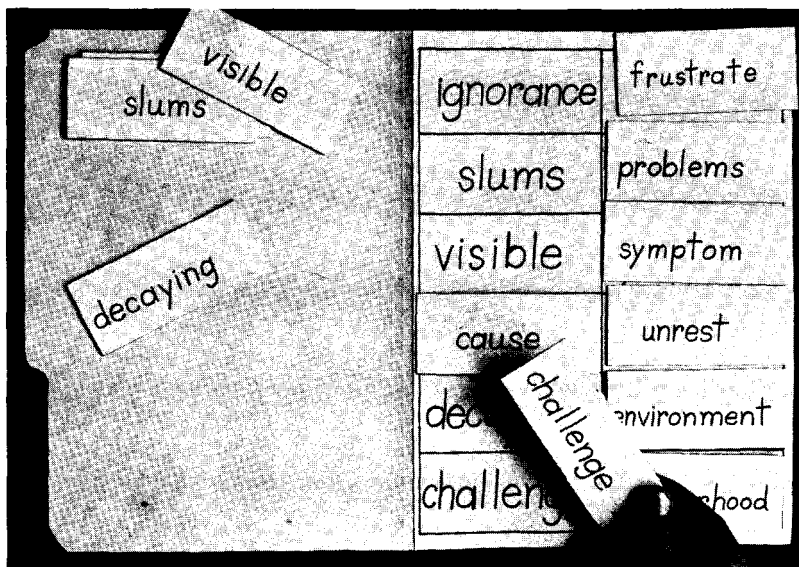
As a first step, it may be appropriate to introduce the P-V-S as a new type of puzzle or educational game. Have the pupil open the file folder and place the vocabulary cards on the blank page as shown in the first illustration. Then have him match the vocabulary cards with the words printed on the file folder. This step is shown in the second photograph. When all of the vocabulary cards have been properly placed and matched with their counterparts on the file folder, they will be in the proper sequence. This is shown in the third photograph.

At this point the pupil closes the file folder. Then he carefully flips it over and opens it. If properly handled, the picture will be face up on one page of the file folder and the original vocabulary printed on the other page will be uncovered. This is shown in the fourth photograph.



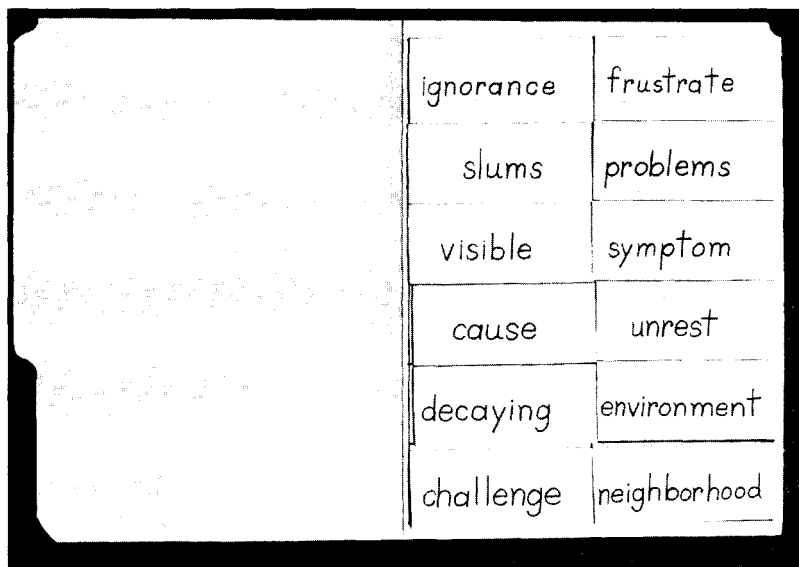
Photograph No. 1

The file folder is open. Vocabulary is printed on the right-hand page. Vocabulary cards are in the left and are ready to be placed in position.



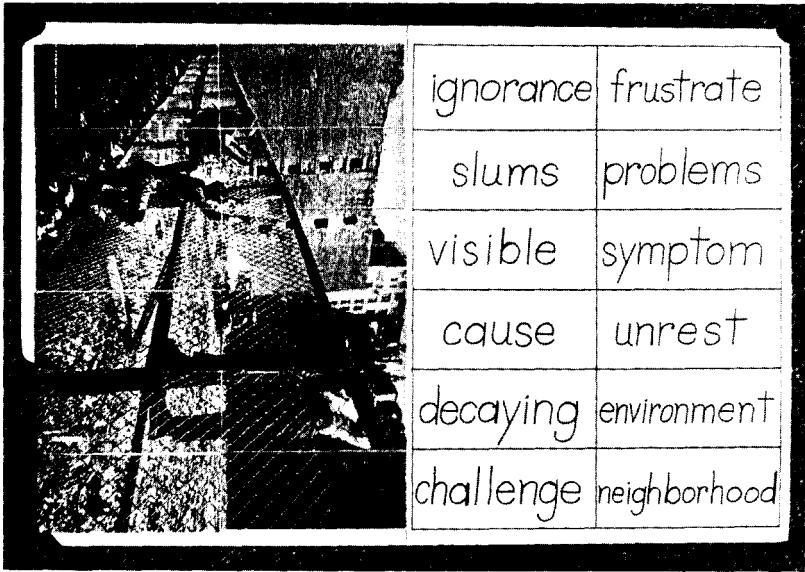
Photograph No. 2

Placing vocabulary cards in proper position. Pupils may or may not be able to pronounce words.



Photograph No. 3

Vocabulary cards are placed in their proper position. Now the pupil should close the folder and gently flip it over.



Photograph No. 4

The pupil using P-V-S is now in a position to view the picture, look at the vocabulary, and begin to think up his own story to match or incorporate both the picture and the words. This should be a very flexible procedure and teacher expectations should be adjusted to the language or communication capabilities of the individual pupil. Obviously, some students will be skillful enough to recognize, pronounce, and use each word presented. Consequently, they will be able to write a comprehensive story incorporating the vocabulary and relating it to the story. Also, there are some pupils who may be so proficient as to use the picture and vocabulary as a point of departure in writing their own creative interpretations; such students need little guidance.

On the other hand and just as obviously, there are those pupils who will have some difficulty with this process and who will need considerable assistance. The teacher, teacher aide, or another student may be utilized to assist where necessary.* For such pupils, oral expression is an excellent first step. Here the child may tell his own story to the teacher or helper. If he can recognize the words printed on the file

* Bruce A. Lloyd, "Real Team Teaching," *Education*, 87:296-300, January, 1967.

folder, fine. But if he cannot, no harm is done and the vocabulary can be developed gradually. For example, as the pupil talks about the picture, he may say a word that appears on the file folder page. If he does, the helper can point to the word indicating that it was spoken. The pupil, in turn, could write it or the helper could write it on a 3" x 5" index card and the pupil could keep this for future study.

There are many ways for the teacher to handle the story process. A few have been suggested here and the creative teacher will think of many more. Hopefully these teachers will take the time to write the author and share their ideas.