

The Power of Read Alouds: What Vocabulary Instruction Should Look and Sound Like

Presented by Dr. Margie B. Gillis, President of Literacy How, Inc.
New Jersey IDA Conference
October 17, 2025

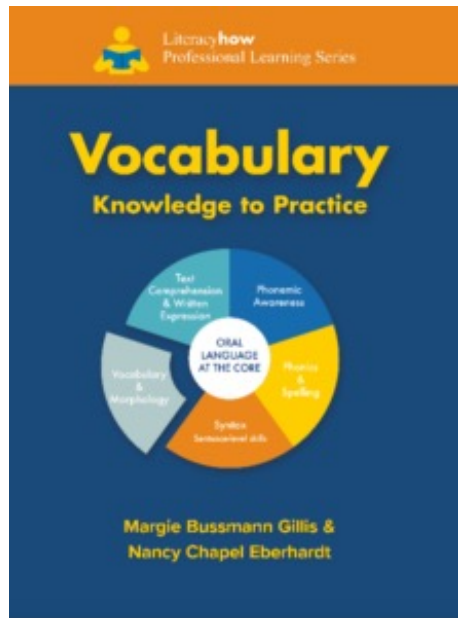


Objectives

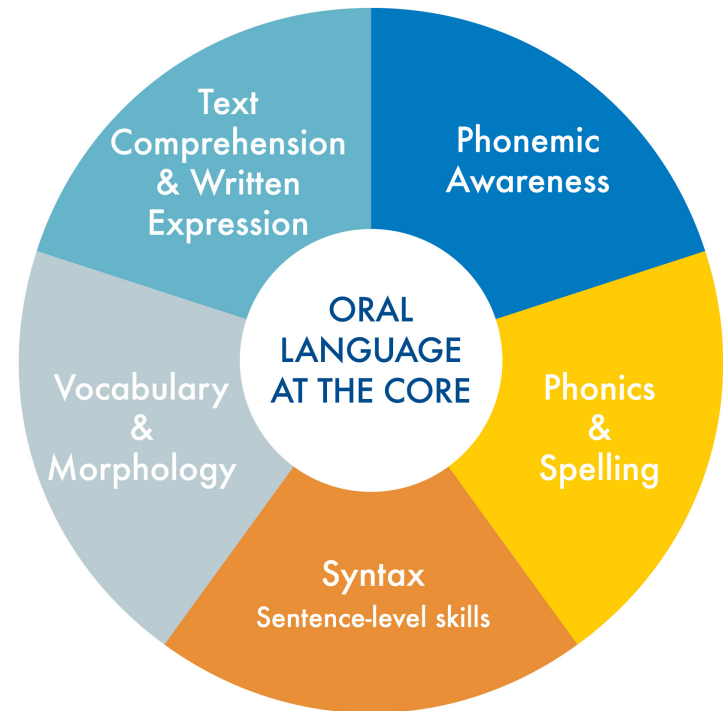
After completing this workshop, participants should be able to answer the following questions:

- What do students need to know about words, so they become part of their lexicon and they use them in their speaking and writing?
- Why is it important to be selective when choosing words to teach?
- What are some categories that should be considered for word selection?
- What are some key instructional activities to engage students in word learning?

The Literacy How Reading Wheel



www.literacyhow.org

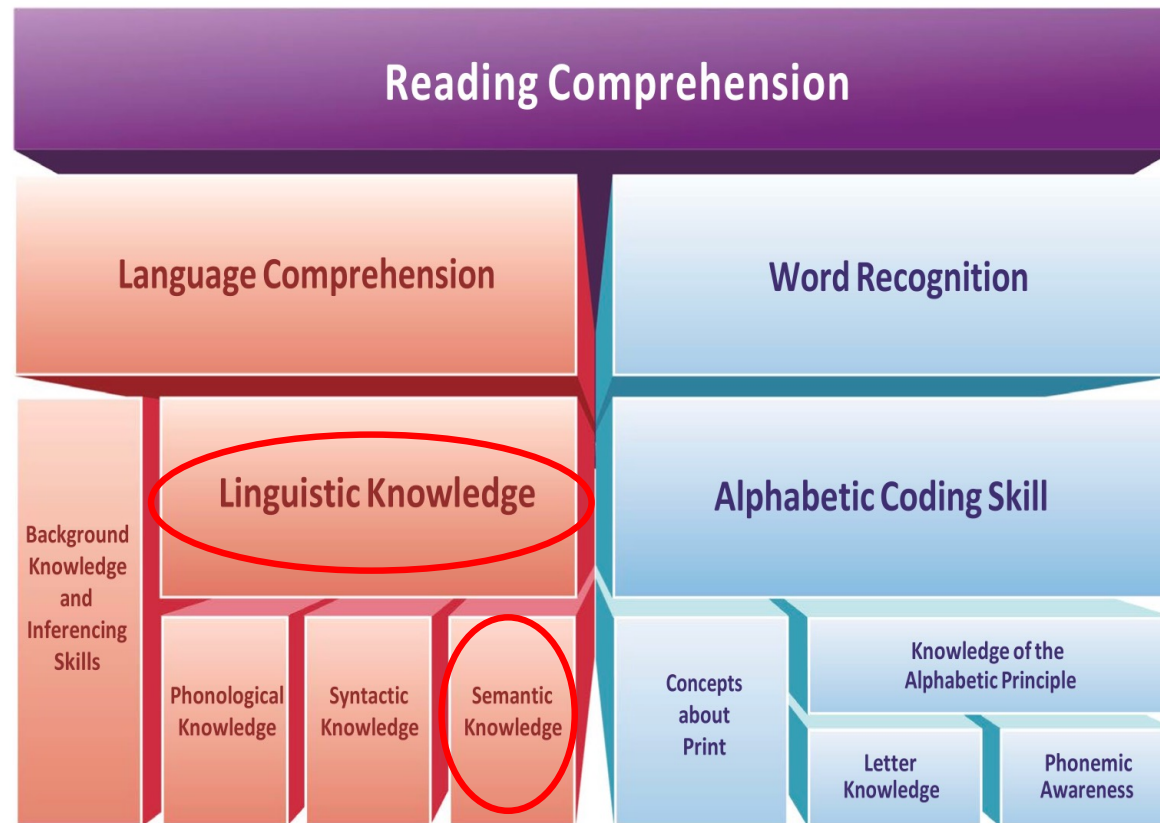


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Word Knowledge

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	Don't know	Seen and/or heard	Know something about it/can relate to a situation	Know well and use
cognate				
lexicon				
morphology				
multi-componential				
orthography				
polysemous				
semantics				



Simple View of Reading: Let's Talk about Language Comprehension

Note. The color figure can be viewed in the online version of this article at <http://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com>.

Source: Hoover and Tunmer (2020a)

STRANDS OF EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

LC

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE
(facts, concepts, etc.)

VOCABULARY
(breadth, precision, links, etc.)

LANGUAGE STRUCTURES
(syntax, semantics, etc.)

VERBAL REASONING
(inference, metaphor, etc.)

LITERACY KNOWLEDGE
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

WORD RECOGNITION

D

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

DECODING (alphabetic principle,
spelling-sound correspondences)

SIGHT RECOGNITION
(of familiar words)

SKILLED READING:
Fluent execution and
coordination of word
recognition and text
comprehension.

RC

increasingly
automatic

increasingly
strategic

Source: Neuman, Susan B. and Dickinson, David K., "Handbook of Early Literacy Research" Adapted from the work of Hollis Scarborough, 2001

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Vocabulary vs. Semantics

Vocabulary

The collection of words a person knows

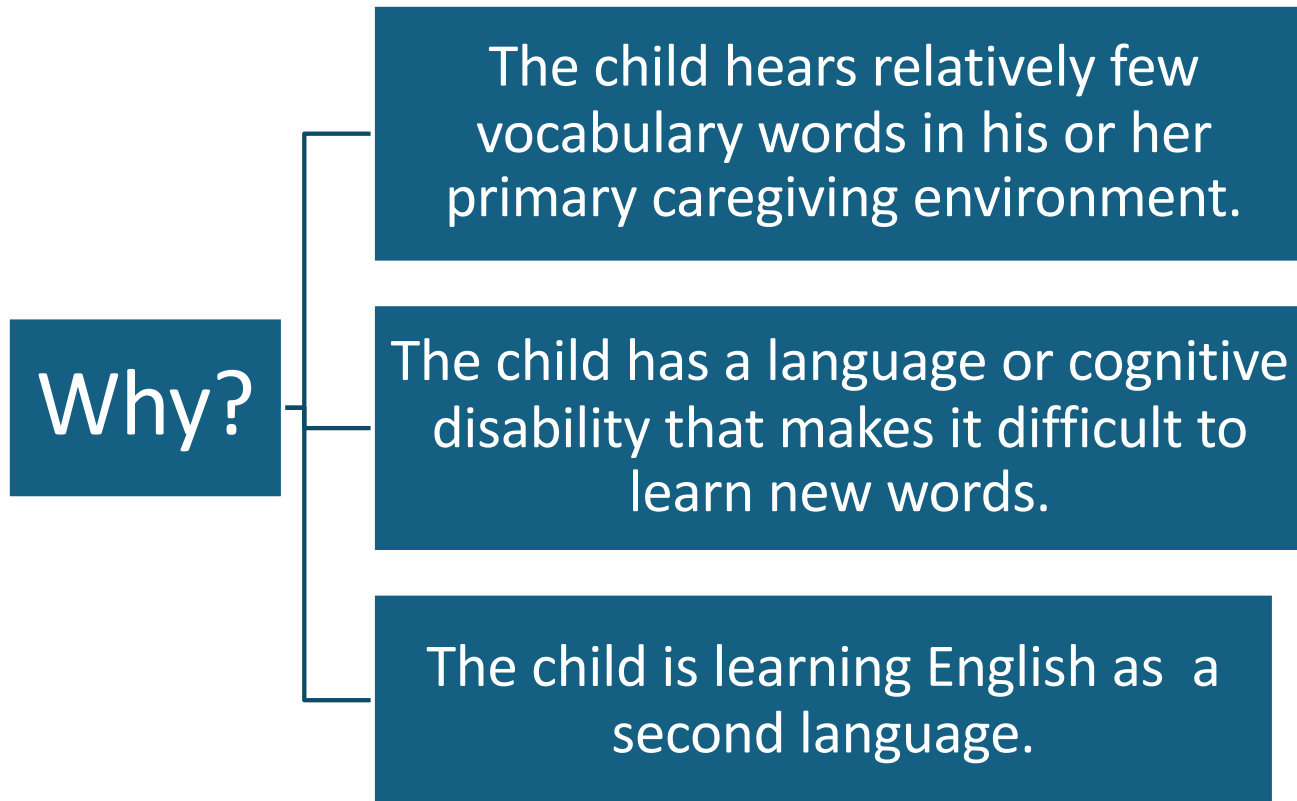


Semantics

the relationship between words, phrases, and sentences and their meanings including synonyms, antonyms and homonyms



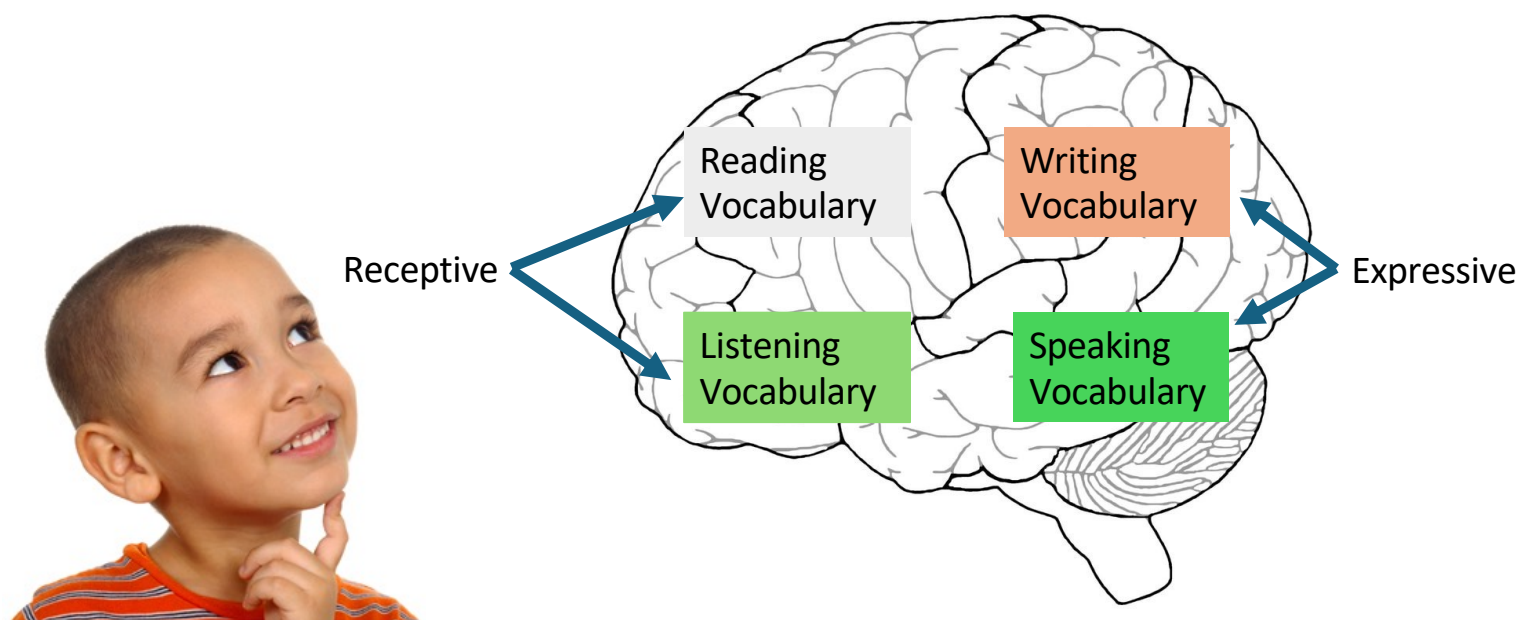
Students May Have Limited Vocabulary



How Do We Know a Word's Meaning?

- Word knowledge exists on a continuum (Dale, 1965).
- An individual's vocabulary can be described in terms of its **breadth** (how many words the person is at least able to recognize in context) and **depth** (how well the words are known).
- **Quantity** of words known (**breadth** of vocabulary) is related to the **quality** of word memories (**depth** of vocabulary).
- The more words we know, the richer the networks of association in our mental dictionaries – referred to as our **lexicon**.
- The more words we know, the more easily we learn new words (e.g., **the rich get richer and the poor get poorer** in terms of vocabulary growth, beyond the critical period of early language development).

The Mental Dictionary



How do we understand and use language?

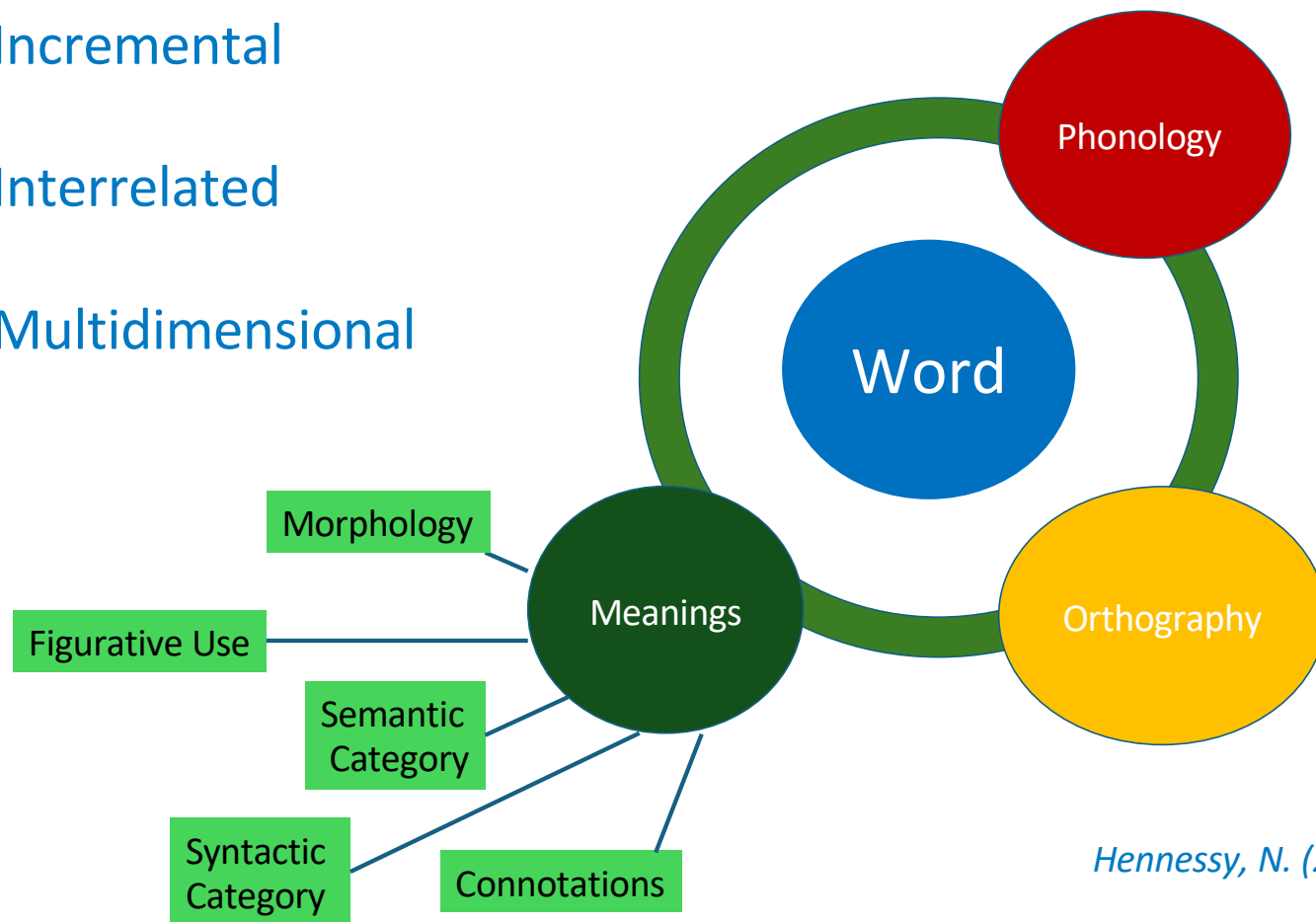
Hennessy, N. (2021)

When We Learn Words

Incremental

Interrelated

Multidimensional



Hennessey, N. (2021)

How Vocabulary Impacts Reading Comprehension

- More attention can be available for monitoring when words are recognized automatically.
- A large vocabulary helps the reader notice when something they read does not make sense.
- Vocabulary interacts with background information and use of metacognitive (i.e., thinking while reading) strategies

Cognates

Words that sound and look similar across two languages and have similar meanings (e.g., family/familia; intelligent /inteligente)



Handout

Examples of Cognates

Occupations

Spanish

carpintero

arquitecto

artista

dentista

doctor

autor

English

carpenter

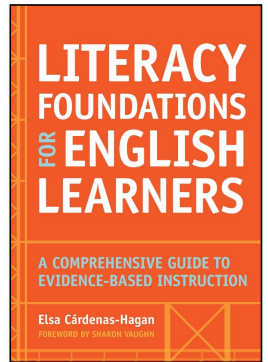
architect

artist

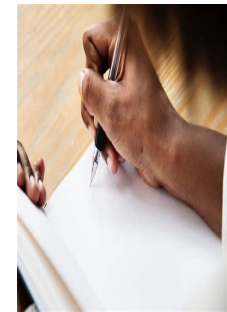
dentist

dentist

author



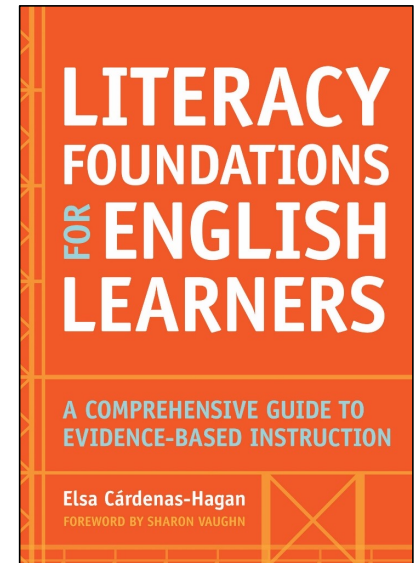
Elsa Cardenas-Hagan, 2023



Connections for Multilingual Learners: Cognate Awareness



- The ability to identify words from other languages that share similar spellings and meanings
- English shares cognates with many languages
- One example:
 - canoe (English/Catalan),
 - canoa (Spanish/Italian/Portuguese)
 - canoë (French)
 - kanu (German)
 - каное (Ukrainian)



Elsa Cardenas-Hagan, 2023

Multi-Language Learners

Effective vocabulary instruction for MLLs focuses on vocabulary and language structures essential to understanding text.

Contextualized through:

- Simple explanations
- Models
- Demonstrations
- Graphic organizers
- Concrete experiences
- Take full advantage of cognates
- Realia

How Vocabulary Impacts Writing

Knowing words allows us to express our thoughts, convey our ideas, and describe our feelings. Using precise language and concise verbiage is what we strive for in written expression.



What happens if a child doesn't have the words to express her thoughts, convey her ideas, or describe her feelings?

Word Variety

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Concise & Precise language with **vivid** verbs!

Write a
sentence
about the
photo using a
vivid verb



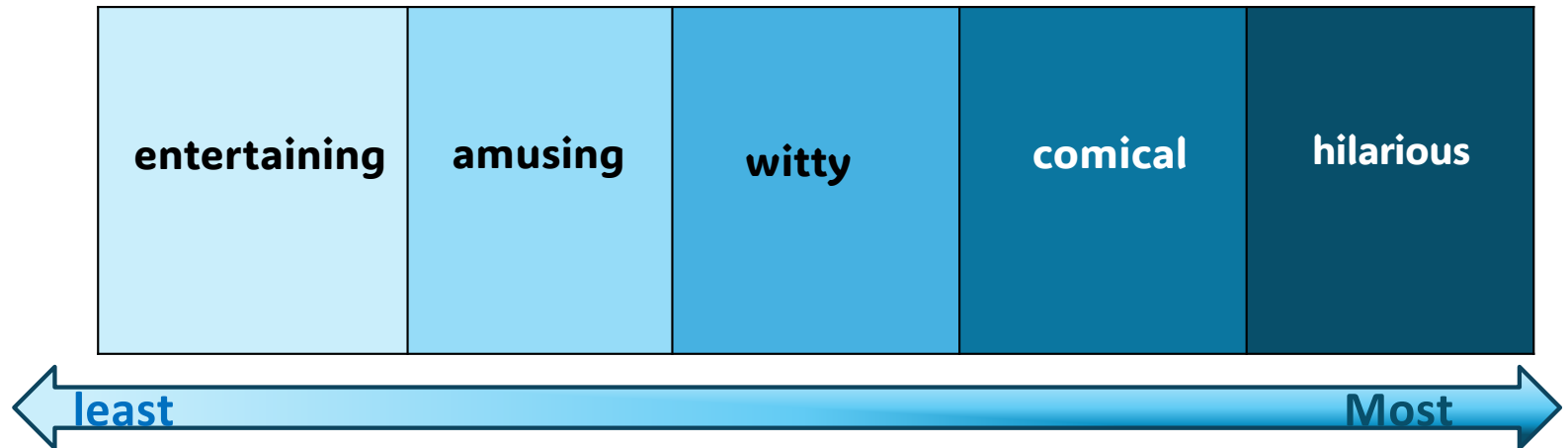
sprinted
accelerated
raced
bounded
dashed

The determined cheetah accelerated toward the herd of unsuspecting zebra.

Precise Language

The movie was so funny - I **laughed** nonstop from beginning to end.

How
funny,
precisely?

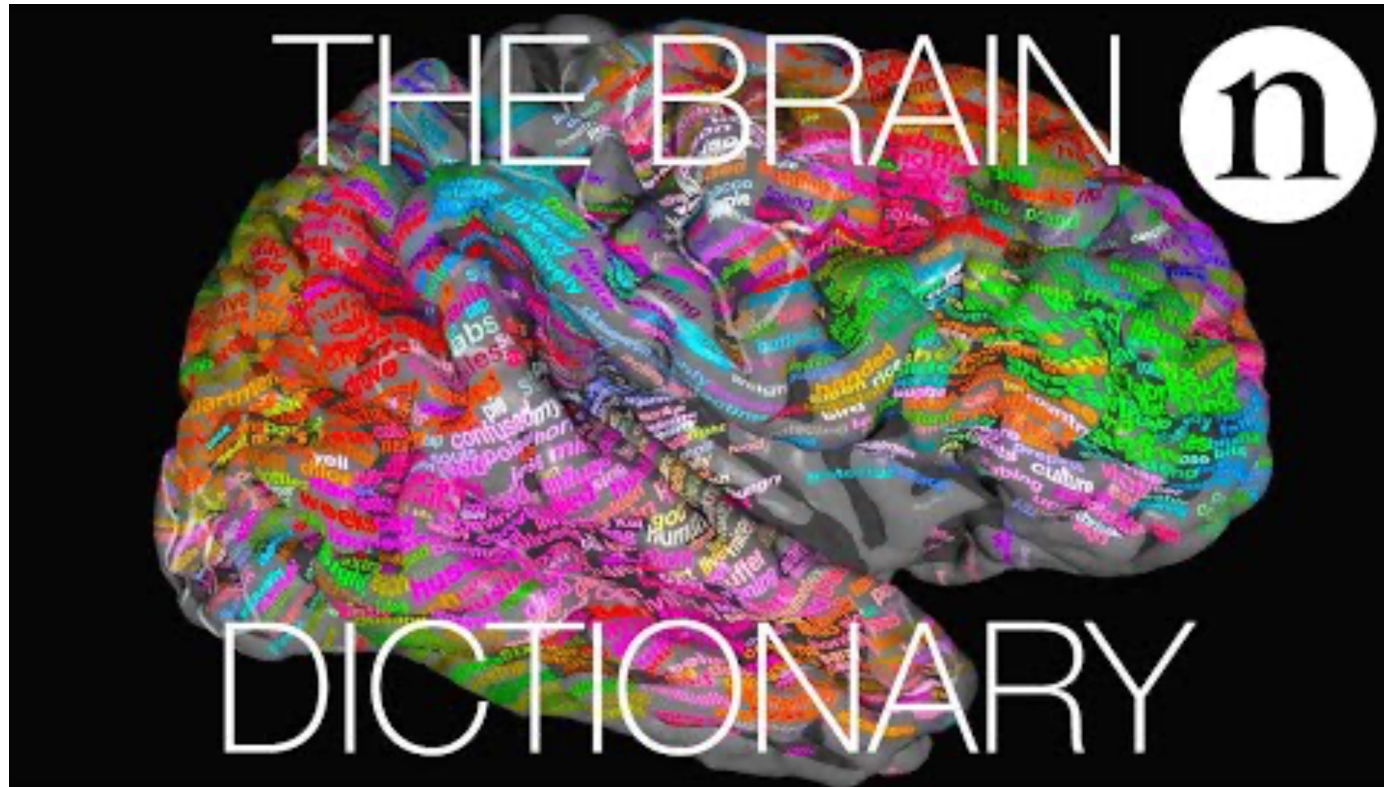


How Words Make Us Think and Feel

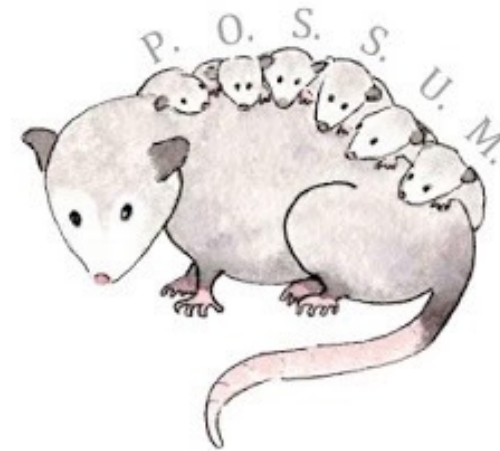
- Words may have positive or negative associations.
- A word's meaning may be connected to many different memories.

Turn and Talk: Choose a word that you both know well and independently list all your associations to that word in one minute. Then compare.

Semantic Neighborhood



Wait a
millisecond!



P—Phonology (sound)
 O—Orthography (spelling)
 S—Syntax (grammar)
 S—Semantics (vocabulary)
 U—Understanding (content & context)
 M—Morphology (word study)

All practiced in reading and writing!

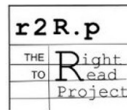
Aspect of Word Knowledge	Definition
Phonology	The rules that govern the sound structure of a language.
Orthography	The rules that govern letter patterns and the ways in which they are combined in a language.
Semantics	The size of a vocabulary; the breadth and depth of students' vocabulary skills.
Syntax	The ways words function within sentences and contexts (e.g., noun, verb, adjective).
Morphology	The system for organizing and understanding the varied uses of the smallest units of meaning (morphemes).

What We Know About Words

“I desperately searched for the crimson **bow** and knew immediately it was your boat.”

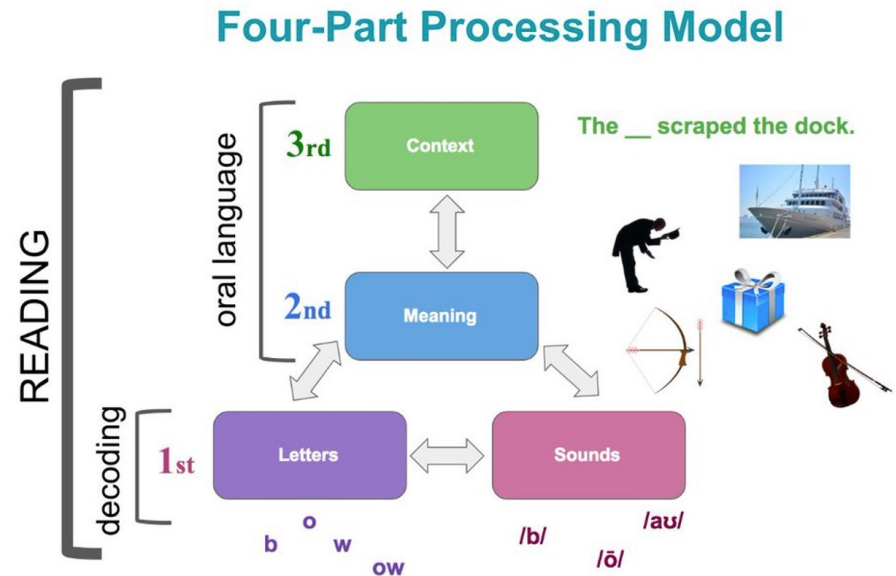
- The sounds in the word – **phonology**
- How it's spelled – **orthography**
- What it means – **semantics**
- How it's used in a sentence – **syntax**

Semantic-Contextual Information



“I desperately searched for the crimson bow and knew immediately it was your boat.”

Tales of Literacy for the 21st Century, Maryanne Wolf



“Contextual analysis can be used to verify the accuracy and fit of the word in the sentence or larger discourse. Contextual analysis, however, should not be relied upon to identify the word.”

- Resource Guide to the Foundational Skills of the Common Core State Standards

Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis

What does this word mean?

Look who can
spell it!



Syntax Is Used to Interpret Word Meaning

*Icebergs melt and fall apart as they **drift** through the ocean.*

Words with **multiple meanings** require context to determine meaning.

drift (n) A **drift** is a mass of snow that has built up into a pile with the movement of wind.

(v) When something **drifts** somewhere, it is carried there by the movement of wind or water.

Humor

- Humor is centered around semantics.
- The punchline is in direct contrast with what is expected from the setup of the joke. It doesn't fit the initial schema.

What did one math book say to another?
Don't bother me, I've got problems of my own.

Why did the children eat their homework?
Their teacher said it was a piece of cake.



Humor for 2nd Graders



"Now let's see what this list says."

Amelia Bedelia read,

*Change the towels in the green
bathroom.*

Amelia Bedelia found
the green bathroom.

"Those towels are very nice.
Why change them?" she thought.



Humor for Fifth Graders

Why are sports stadiums so cool?
They are filled with fans.

You want to hear a joke about pizza?
Nevermind, it's too cheesy.



Book Language

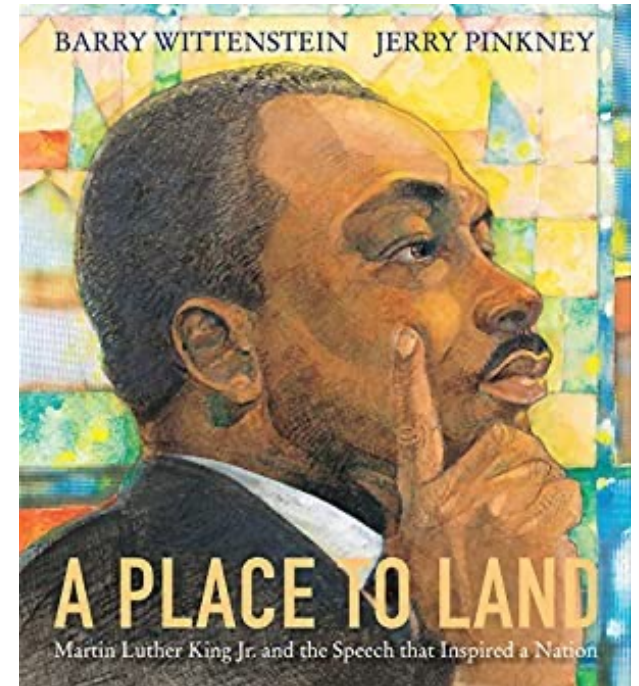
“To tell a story to a distant reader, the author must use very different language than the speech of everyday conversations. The result is book language, with more words, more detail, and different sentence structure.”

MacDonald, 2025

Book Language

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“Upstairs, alone in his suite, surrounded by rough drafts and scribbled notes on yellow legal pads, Martin saw Rosa, Fannie Lou, Emmett, Medgar, the children of Birmingham, and so many others – their faces forever seared into his memory.”



Which words might be challenging?

Shared Reading

“Exposure to book language provides **opportunities to experience words and sentences that are rarely encountered in conversations**. These systematic differences start early in life and are evident in the books children hear in the context of shared reading. From infancy onward, children have opportunity to learn from this input. Such learning establishes the foundations for more advanced language development as well as literacy, and establishes the distributional properties that will become inherent in their adult language systems.”

Nation et al, 2022

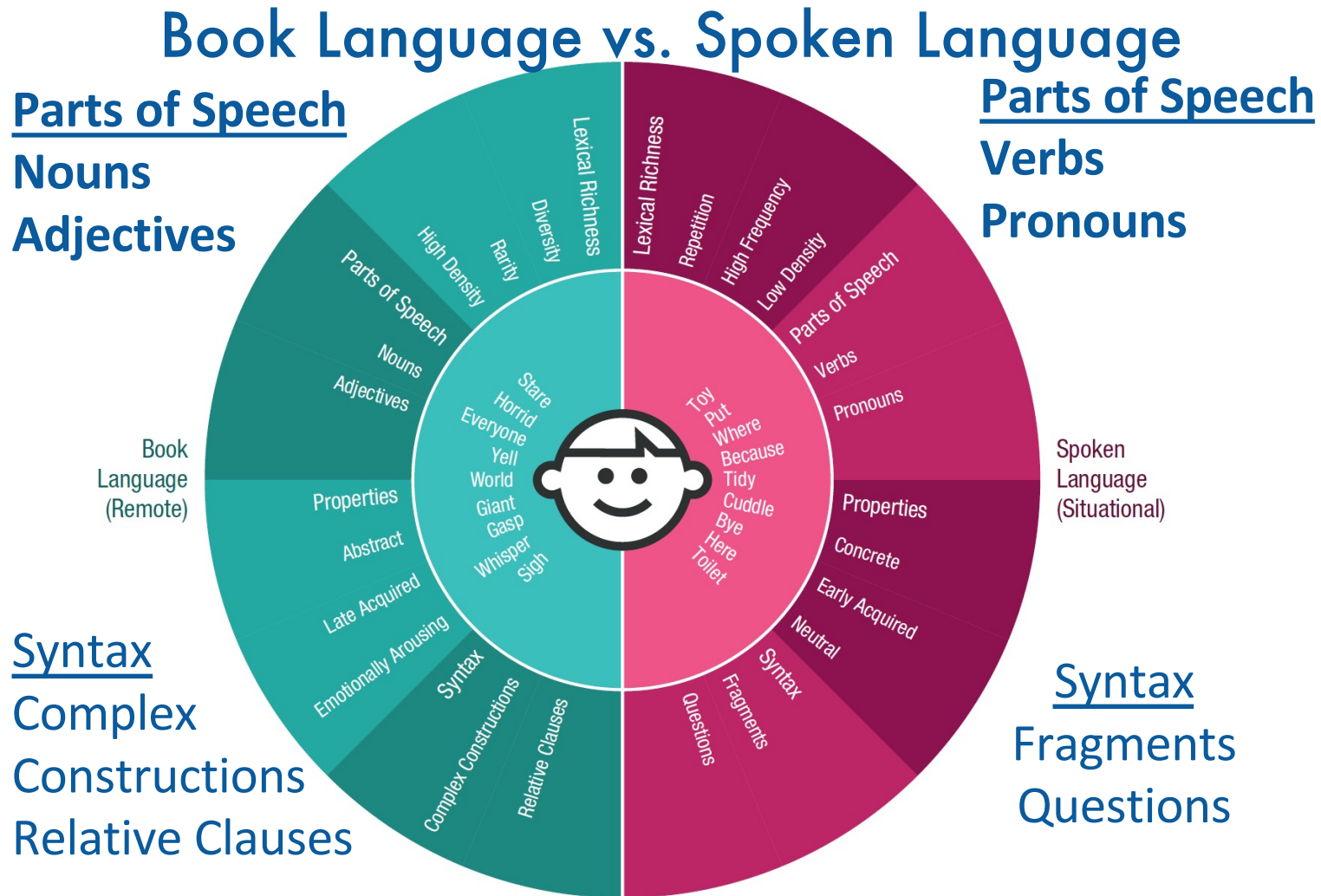


Fig. 1. Infographic summarizing key differences in the nature of language input children experience via books and spoken language. The outer ring contrasts features and properties for the two registers, and example words are shown in the inner ring (for data and annotated examples, see Dawson, Hsaio, et al., 2021; Hsiao et al., 2022).

Nation et al, 2022

Word Tiers (Beck & McKeown)

Tier 1: Basic words

Tier 2: Rich words that can be used in many contexts

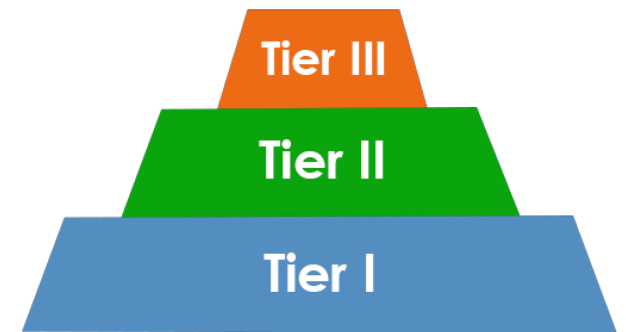
Tier 3: Specialized vocabulary for a specific domain

Which tier?

electric
elated
book

happy
canopy
hesitant

habitat
rabbit
determined



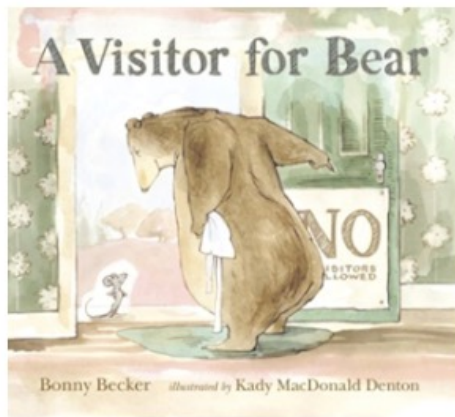
Turn and Talk

Word Selection

- Is it a word students are unlikely to know?
- Is it a generally useful word?
- Will students encounter or potentially use the word across many domains?
- Can the word be defined in everyday language?
(critical to bridge new to known)

Rich Words Found in Children's Literature

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hollered
blubbered
murmured

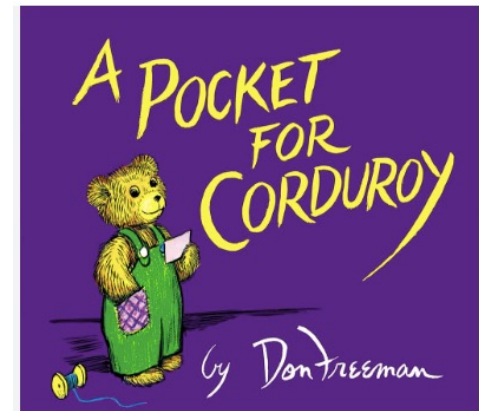
bellowed
grumbled
exclaimed

A Visitor for Bear by Bonny Becker

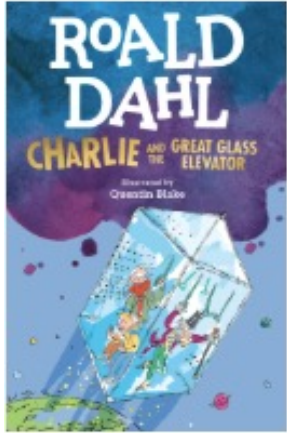
reluctant
hesitate
precious

insisted
exclaimed
patiently

A Pocket for Corduroy by Don Freeman



Vocabulary Found in Books For Older Students



- swarming
- maneuver
- victory

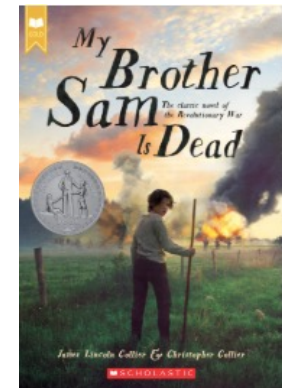
plunged
slunk/slink
proper

Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator by Roald Dahl

- trousers
- rebellion
- envious

boasting
occasionally
remain

My Brother Sam is Dead by James and Christopher Collier



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Let's Find Tier Two Words

Demi, *The Empty Pot*



The Emperor loved birds and animals, but flowers most of all, and he tended his own garden every day.

The emperor loved birds and animals, but flowers most of all, and he tended his garden every day.



But the Emperor was very old. He needed to choose a successor to the throne.

But the emperor was very old. He needed to choose a successor to the throne.

What words did you pick?

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What Words Would You Select to Teach?

“Now remember,” Mother said, “your father and I are bringing some guests by after the opera, so please keep the house neat.”

“Quite so,” added Father, tucking his scarf inside his coat.

Mother peered into the hall mirror and carefully pinned her hat in place, then knelt and kissed both children good-bye.

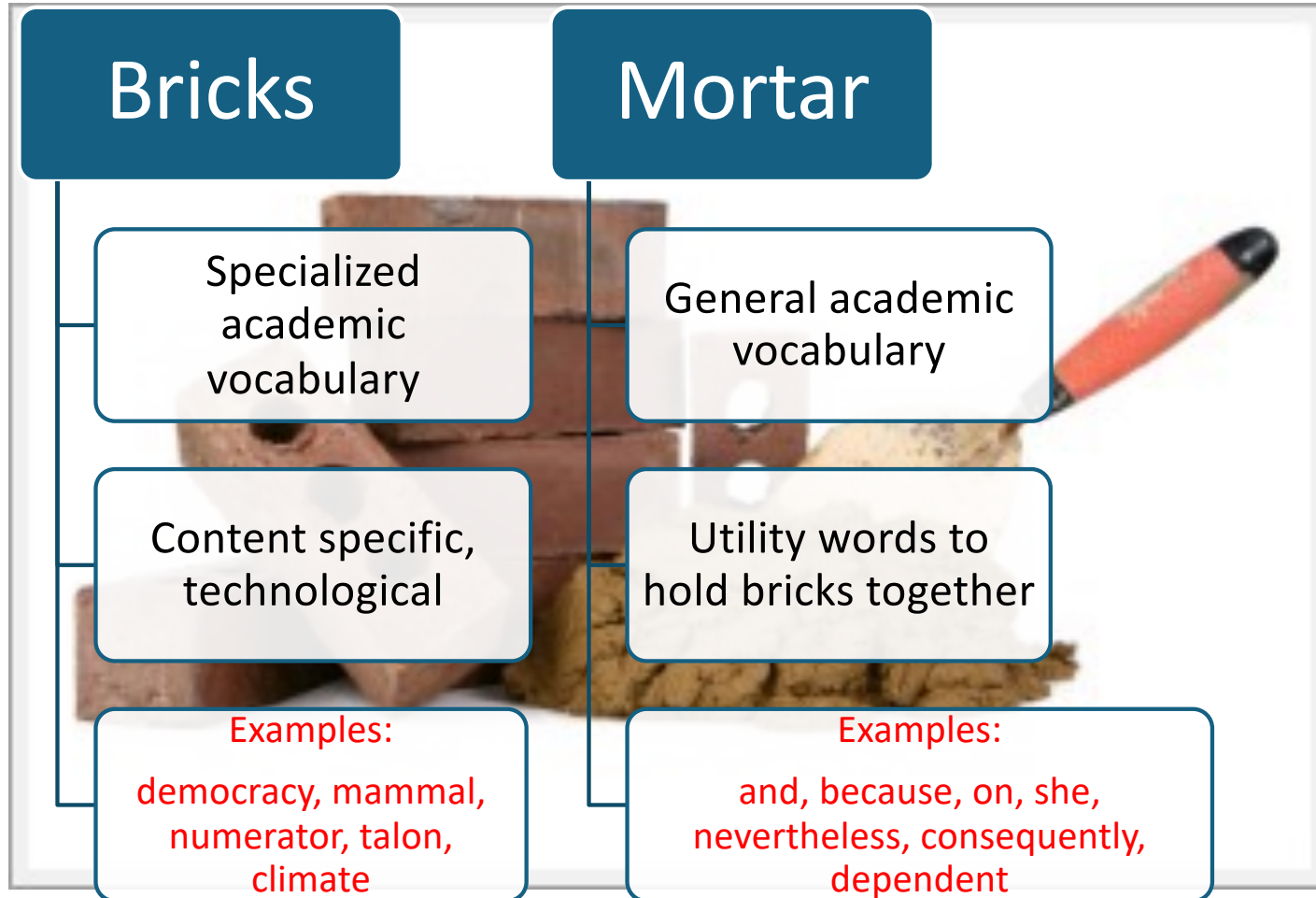
When the front door closed, Judy and Peter giggled with delight. They took all the toys out of their toy chest and made a terrible mess. But their laughter slowly turned to silence till finally Peter slouched into a chair.

“You know what?” he said. “I’m really bored.”

“Me too,” sighed Judy. “Why don’t we go outside and play?”



*Van Allsburg,
Jumanji*



Word Selection: 3 Categories

Content (Brick) Words		
Multiple Meaning (Polysemy)	Morphological Elements	Word Networks
bat (animal, action, sport equipment)	bat/bats	bat , mammal, habitat, sonar ³
season (time of year, flavoring for food)	seasons, seasoning, seasoned, season	season , climate, weather, environment, temperature, geography
bat, as part of common phrases or idioms (e.g., <i>bat your eyes, go to bat for someone</i>) blue (a color, a feeling of dejection) and as part of a common phrase or idiom (e.g., <i>out of the blue</i>, meaning suddenly)	seasonal (-al), batty (-y), unlock (un-), reread (re-), bluest (-est)⁶ evaporate, -s, -ed, -ion for evaporates, evaporated, and evaporation	 evaporation, liquid, gas, atmosphere, moisture

Mortar/Glue Words

Prepositions
Conjunctions
Pronouns
Academic Language

in, on
and
she, they, it
look, sort, think, write

Prepositions
Conjunctions
Pronouns
Academic Language

under, over
because, then
it, them
locate, understand, describe

Prepositions
Conjunctions
Pronouns
Academic Language

against, among
however, therefore
its, their
analyze, imagine, prove

Cohesive Ties

Pronouns

what
who
you
it
he
his
they
these
her
this
I
yours
we
their
each
them
she
many
its
most

From the First
100 HFW*

*High
Frequency
Words

Connectives

Prepositions

of
to
in
for
on
as
with
at
into
after
from
by
about
up
out
like
than
over
down

Conjunctions

Coordinating
or
and
but
so

Subordinating
if
than

Adverbs

what
when
as
not
there
which
how
then
no
who
so
now
only
very
after
just
where
most



When Ping received his seed from the Emperor, he was the happiest child of all. He was sure he could grow the most beautiful flower.



Ping filled a flowerpot with rich soil. He planted the seed in it very carefully.

When Ping received his seed from the Emperor, he was the happiest child of all. He was sure he could grow the most beautiful flower.

Ping filled a flowerpot with rich soil. He planted the seed in it very carefully.

Can you find words with prefixes or suffixes?

Can you find a multiple meaning word?

Demi, *The Empty Pot*

Using Brick and Mortar Words

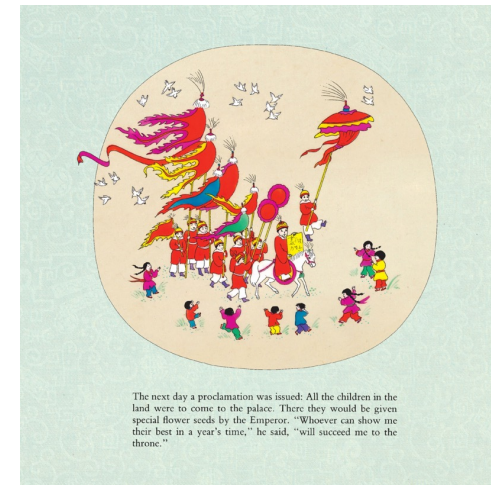


Brick Words: successor, proclamation

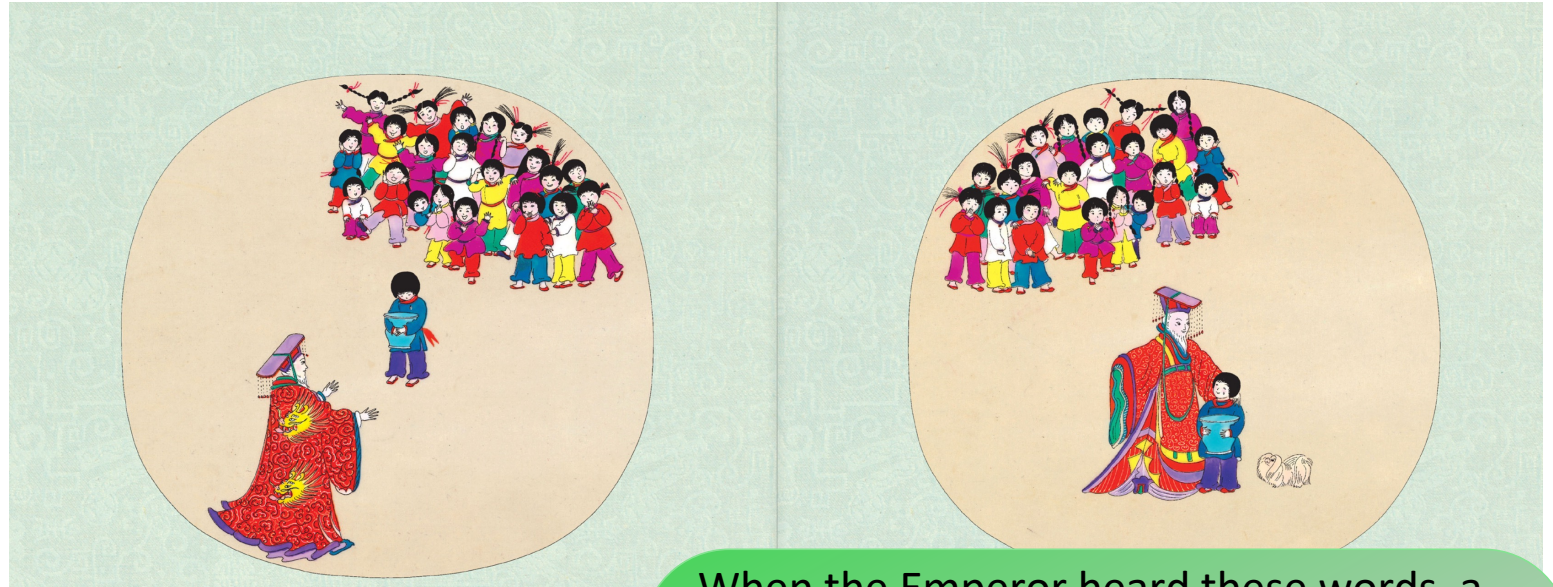
Mortar Words: because, so

The emperor needed a successor because he is getting old.

The emperor sent a proclamation, so all the children came to the palace.



Find Brick and Mortar Words



Ping started to cry and replied, "I planted the seed you gave me and I watered it every day, but it didn't sprout. I put it in a better pot with better soil, but still it didn't sprout! I tended it all year long, but nothing grew. So today I had to bring an empty pot without a flower. It was the best I could do."

When the Emperor heard these words, a smile slowly spread over his face, and he put his arm around Ping. Then he exclaimed to one and all, "I have found him! I have found the one person worthy of being Emperor! "Where you got your seeds from, I do not know. For the seeds I gave you had all been cooked. So it was impossible for any of them to grow."

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Multiple Meaning Words (Polysemous)

Quickly **staple** these papers together. [v]

Corn is a **staple** crop for farmers. [adj]

One wire **staple** held the four sutures.

[n]

multiple

20 is a **multiple** of 5 [n]

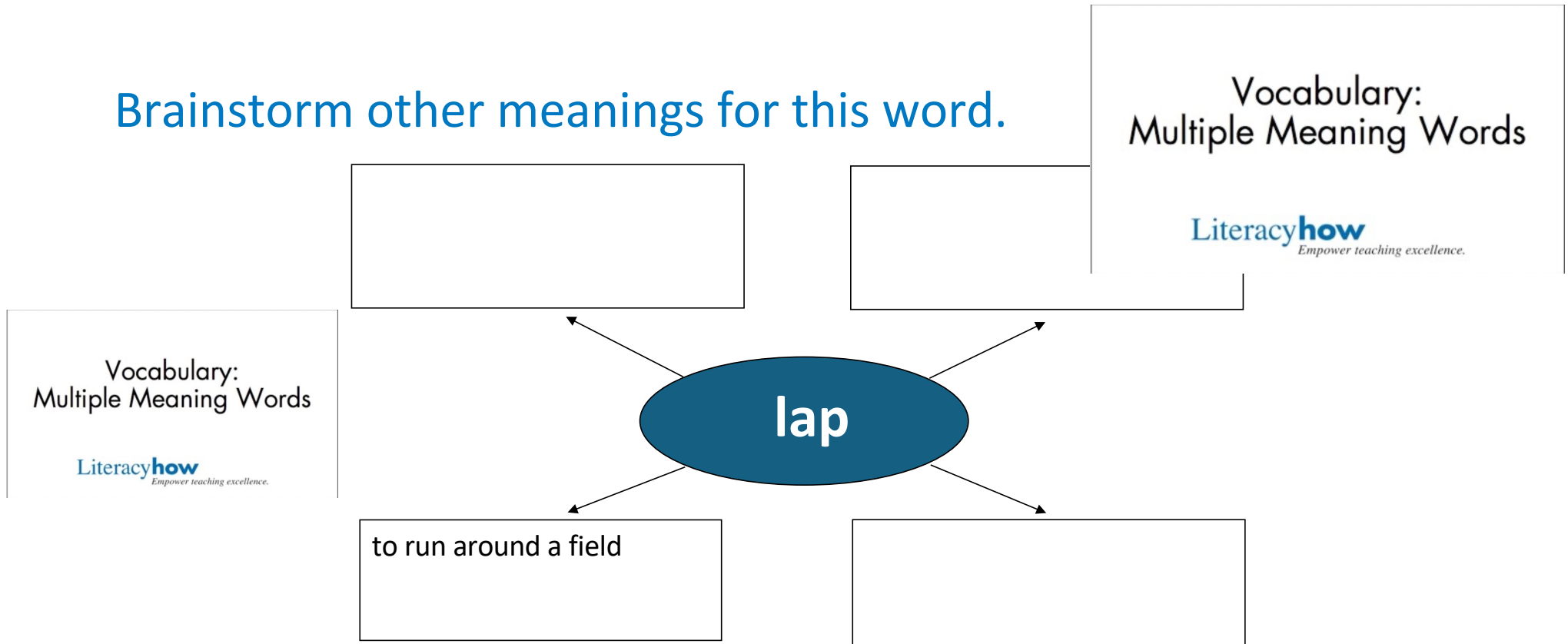
The process requires **multiple** steps. [adj]

Choose words that
are useful in multiple
contexts.

Words with Multiple Meanings

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Brainstorm other meanings for this word.



A multiple meaning word is **polysemous**.

Multiple Meaning Words in a '-dge' Lesson

The word "lodge" has several definitions — it can mean a cabin, a beaver's dwelling, or to jam something in a small space. Exploring words with multiple meanings helps students build a deeper vocabulary. At Burgess-Peterson Academy in Atlanta, second-grade teacher Marlene Gannaway and reading coach Carla Stanford take time to discuss words with multiple meanings during a phonics lesson on the '-dge' spelling rule. Students define words like "lodge" and "judge" and use them in sentences to help store them in their long-term memory.

Be sure to check out our [full skill explainer](#) on how to teach the '-dge' spelling rule.

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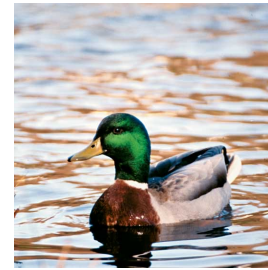
READING
UNIVERSE

Multiple Meaning Words in a '-dge' Lesson



Multiple Meanings Rely on Background Knowledge

The **duck** paddled around the pond.
(n: web-footed water bird)



The six-foot basketball players **duck** through doorways. (v: to bend quickly)

She took to paddling the kayak *like a duck to water*. (idiom: to have a natural talent for something)



“... four, five, six,” he counted. “Bitten by tsetse fly, **contract** sleeping sickness, lose one turn.”

Judy heard a faint buzzing noise and watched a small insect land on Peter’s nose. Peter lifted his hand to brush the bug away, but then stopped, gave a tremendous yawn, and fell sound asleep, his head on the table.

“Peter, Peter, wake up!” cried Judy. But it was no use. She grabbed the dice and moved to a blank. She rolled again and waited in amazement. “Rhinoceros stampede, go back two spaces.”

As fast as he had fallen asleep, Peter awoke. Together they listened to a rumble in the hallway. It grew louder and louder. Suddenly a herd of rhinos charged through the living room and into the dining room, crushing all the furniture in their path. Peter and Judy covered their ears as sounds of splintering wood and breaking china filled the house.

Find Multiple Meaning Words

Van Allsburg, Jumanji

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Idiomatic Expressions

An idiom is a combination of words (i.e., a phrase) where the words together have a meaning that is different from the dictionary definitions of the individual words.

Marissa sent me on a **wild goose chase** because after three hours of looking, I never did find the earring she lost.



When little Mary didn't get to watch her favorite TV. show, she **turned on the waterworks**.



I better start saving now because the concert will cost a **pretty penny**.





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When Ping received his seed from the Emperor, he was the happiest child of all. He was sure he could grow the most beautiful flower.



Ping filled a flowerpot with rich soil. He planted the seed in it very carefully.

Ping filled a flowerpot with rich soil. He planted the seed in it very carefully.

Find a compound word?

Find a multiple meaning word?

Word Selection: 3 Categories

Content (Brick) Words		
Multiple Meaning (Polysemy)	Morphological Elements	Word Networks
bat (animal, action, sport equipment)	bat/bats	bat , mammal, habitat, sonar ³
season (time of year, flavoring for food)	seasons, seasoning, seasoned, season	season , climate, weather, environment, temperature, geography
bat, as part of common phrases or idioms (e.g., <i>bat your eyes, go to bat for someone</i>) blue (a color, a feeling of dejection) and as part of a common phrase or idiom (e.g., <i>out of the blue</i>, meaning suddenly)	seasonal (-al), batty (-y), unlock (un-), reread (re-), bluest (-est)⁶ evaporate, -s, -ed, -ion for evaporates, evaporated, and evaporation	 evaporation, liquid, gas, atmosphere, moisture

Word Awareness

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Compound Words

one word	+	one word	=	one new compound word
cup 		cake 		cupcake 
sun 		shine 		sunshine 
lip 		stick 		lipstick 
star 		fish 		starfish 
cart 		wheel 		cartwheel 
basket 		ball 		basketball 

What Do You Call An Alligator in a Vest?

WHAT DO YOU CALL AN
ALLIGATOR IN A VEST?



AN INVESTIGATOR.

Morphology

Morphemes can be combined and recombined to form many words like Lego pieces are rearranged into countless structures.

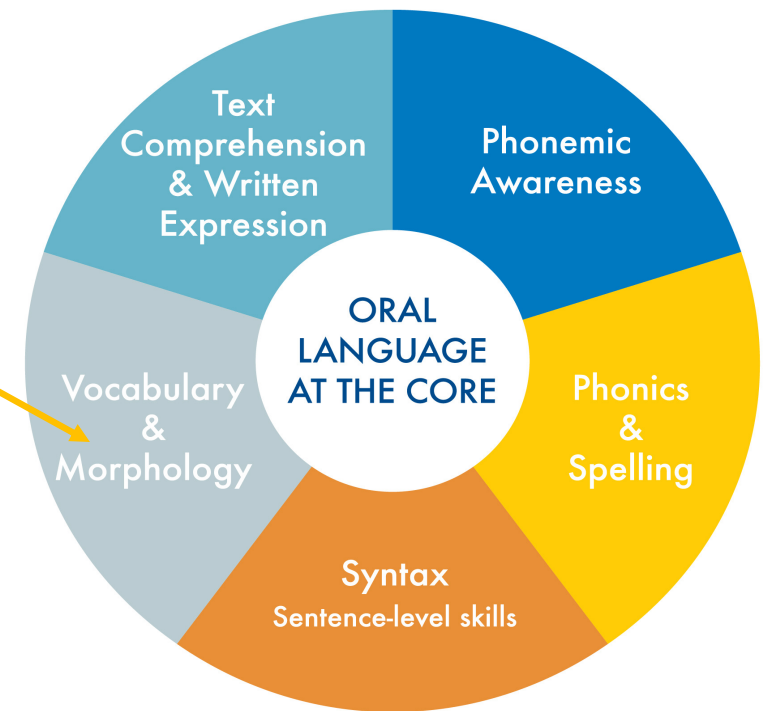
tooth + brush = toothbrush

kitten + s = kittens

love + ed = loved

power + ful = full of power

re + spect = respect



Inflectional endings

Number: Adding –s changes a singular noun to a plural noun.

dog**s** = more than one dog = plural

Tense: Adding –s signals the number and tense (time) of a verb.

The dog sit**s**. Means one dog sitting now.

Ownership: Adding 's to a noun shows ownership, which means possession.

the dog'**s** bone The bone belongs to the dog.

Morph Sort, Stage 0: p. 29

Picture/Sound Sort Singular/Plural



Stage 1

Morph Sort

Happening Now

fill
jump
camps
hand
kicks
melt
playing

Already Happened

filled
jumped
camped
handed
kicked
melted
played

Stage 2

Morph Sort

er- one who

farmer
jumper
camper
writer
kicker
reader
player

er- comparison

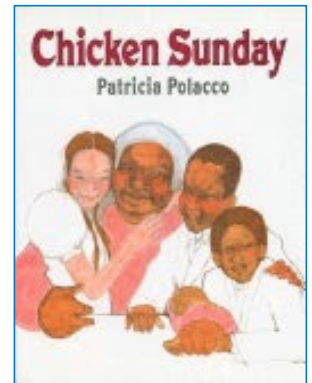
slower
faster
blacker
pinker
sunnier
cloudier
softer

Morph Sort brought to writing

element: inflectional ending -ed

Sort the words by the ending sound(s) to connect with spelling

performed	told	crossed	squeezed	glistened
knew	exchanged	wanted	reached	counted
agreed	pelted	glared	curled	wagged



Write a sentence using 2 words from above:

Mr. Kodinski's eyes glistened and his mouth curled into a smile.

“... four, five, six,” he counted. “Bitten by tsetse fly, contract sleeping sickness, lose one turn.”

Judy heard a faint buzzing noise and watched a small insect land on Peter’s nose. Peter lifted his hand to brush the bug away, but then stopped, gave a tremendous yawn, and fell sound asleep, his head on the table.

“Peter, Peter, wake up!” cried Judy. But it was no use. She grabbed the dice and moved to a blank. She rolled again and waited in amazement. “Rhinoceros stampede, go back two spaces.”

As fast as he had fallen asleep, Peter awoke. Together they listened to a rumble in the hallway. It grew louder and louder. Suddenly a herd of rhinos charged through the living room and into the dining room, crushing all the furniture in their path. Peter and Judy covered their ears as sounds of splintering wood and breaking china filled the house.

Find Words with Prefixes and Suffixes

Van Allsburg, Jumanji

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Word Networks

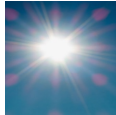
- Many Tier 3 words are part of a word network.
- Word networks provide another way to increase vocabulary within and across content areas.
- Methods and activities are especially useful for teaching disciplinary content (i.e., science, social studies).

Word Networks

Semantic Sort: Building Knowledge & Vocabulary

Topic: Plants

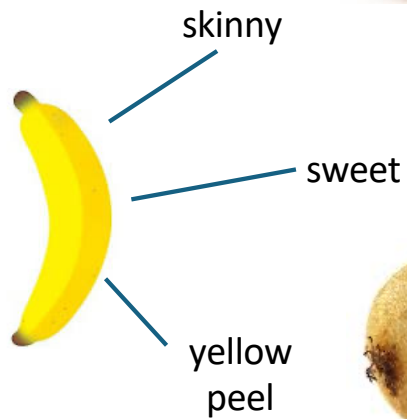
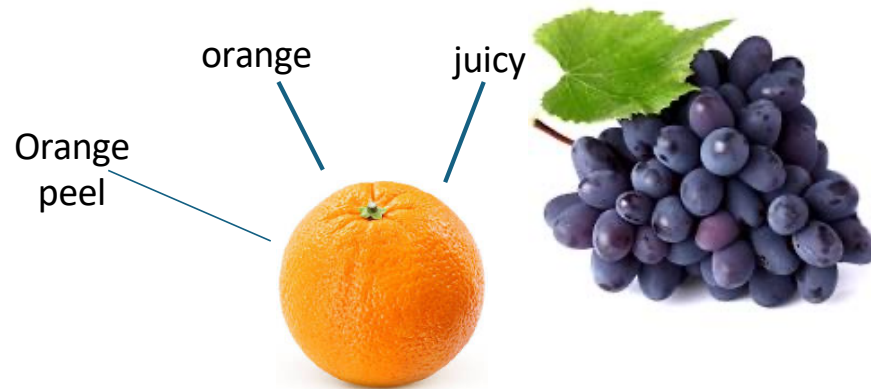
Open sort: How might you group these words/concepts into categories?

dirt 	leaf 	stem 	medicine 	sun 
shade 	water 	decoration 	flower 	

A C T I V I T Y

Networks & Categories

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Fruit





Kindergarten Semantic Sort

Judy took her turn and landed on a blank space. Her brother took the dice and rolled a three.

“Oh, no,” he moaned. “‘Volcano erupts, go back three spaces.’” The room became warm and started to shake a little. Molten lava poured from the fireplace opening. It hit the water on the floor and the room filled with steam. Judy rolled the dice and moved ahead.

“‘Discover shortcut, roll again.’ Oh dear!” she cried. Judy saw the snake unwrapping himself from the clock.

“If you roll a twelve you can get out of the jungle,” said Peter.

“Please, please,” Judy begged as she shook the dice. The snake was wriggling his way to the floor. She dropped the dice from her hand. One six, then another. Judy grabbed her piece and slammed it to the board. “JUMANJI,” she yelled, as loud as she could.

Find Words Related to the Story’s Theme

Van Allsburg, Jumanji

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Semantic sort brought to writing

Sort these words into 3 categories:

sputtered

eggs

corn-on-the-cob

lump of beeswax

candle

fried spoon bread

chirped

collard greens

hoppin' john

announced

a funnel

shouted

Think about your
process as you
create your
categories.

Write about your process!

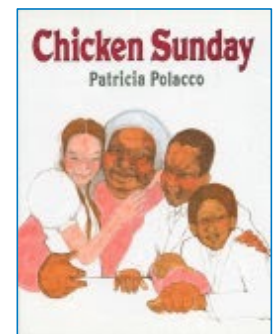
First, _____.

Then, _____.

Next, _____.

After that, _____.

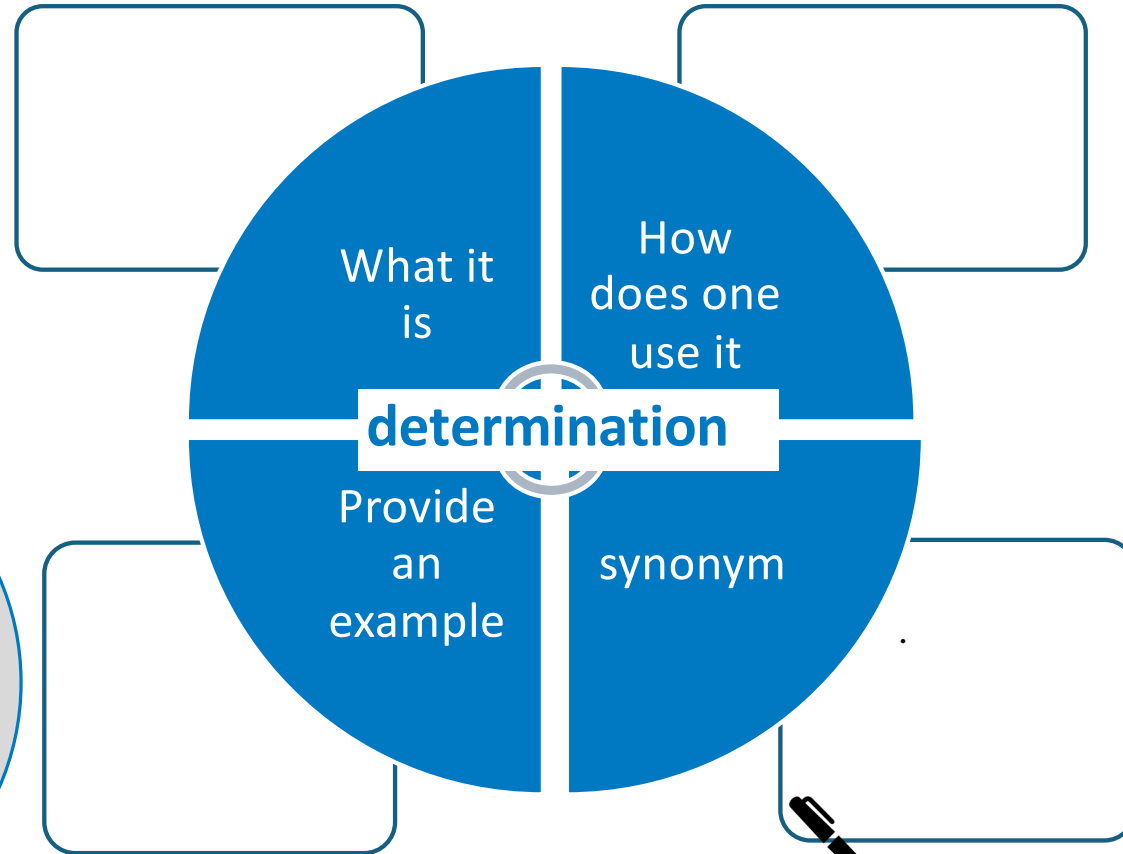
Finally, _____.



Semantic Mapping brought to writing

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Read the
Readworks
article, *Kerri Strug
and the
Magnificent
Seven*



Write a sentence using the information on the semantic map.

Shared Attributes Within Semantic Networks

What is the shared attribute or semantic feature that all things in each list have in common?

1. blab, dish, spill, tell
2. command, control, option, return
3. cheese, cup, pan, short
4. bae, creek, see, straight



Connections

Group words that share a common thread.

Play

Clever Connections Game



Overview

There are words that can go together. You can make pairs, triples, even four in a group! Try to find out how/why words go together? Do they start with the same letter? Are they about the same thing?

Have Fun!



Connections

Group words that share a common thread.

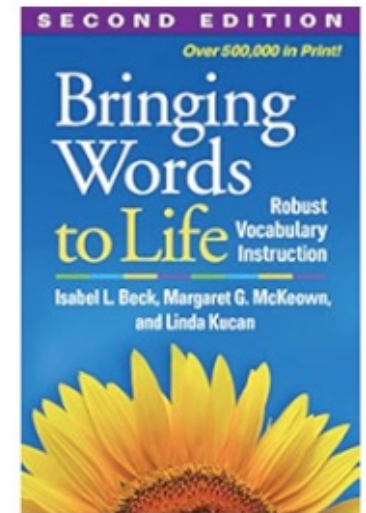
Play

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Principles of Effective Instruction

Teacher reads aloud and...

- Focuses on words that are contextualized in literature
- Chooses words that are useful in many situations
- Provides clear, accessible explanations and examples of word meanings in various contexts
- Provides opportunities for students to actively engage in activities
- Provides multiple exposures over time



7 Features of a Word

1. Pronunciation

The word *skip* has one syllable — /skip/.

The individual sounds in *skip* are /s/, /k/, /ɪ/, and /p/.

The vowel sound is short 'i'.

2. Spelling

- The sound /s/ is spelled with the letter 's'.
- The sound /k/ is spelled with the letter 'k'.
- The sound /ɪ/ is spelled with the letter 'i'.
- The sound /p/ is spelled with the letter 'p'.

3. Definition

The word *skip* has multiple meanings.

- To move forward by lightly stepping from one foot to the other with a hop or bounce.
- To omit or move past a step in a series of actions

4. Function (part of speech)

Skip is a verb. It usually comes after the subject of the sentence and before the object.

5. Syntax (position in sentence)

When the word *skip* is used as an action, it typically follows the subject of the sentence.

6. Semantic network (a structure for how words are connected in meaning)

The word *skip* has a semantic network that includes synonyms such as *hop*, *leap*, *dance*, *tiptoe*, and *step*, along with associated concepts such as *jump rope*, *playground*, and *counting*.

7. Morphological structure

The base word *skip* can have suffixes added that change the word's meaning, such as *skips*, *skipped*, *skipping*, and *skipper*.



Student-friendly definition

determined

If you are ***determined*** to do something, you have made a firm decision to do it and you will not let anything stop you.

What's the word? Ask students to repeat the word multiple times!

See it! Say it!

Student-Friendly Definitions

- Avoid conventional dictionaries that have formal definitions that are difficult for students to understand.
- Explain the meaning of the word as it applies to the **context** where it is used.
- Explain the meaning in everyday language using simple words.
- Try starting your definition with one of the following:
 - *If you....* If you gape at something, you look at it with your eyes and mouth open.
 - *When you....* When you are drowsy, you feel sleepy.
 - *If someone....* If someone is annoying you, it means they are doing something that you don't like.
 - *If something is...* If something is ghastly, it is very scary or yucky.
- Try to find examples of the word through child-friendly contexts such as images.

Precision in Use of Vocabulary: Scaling

least tolerable

most tolerable



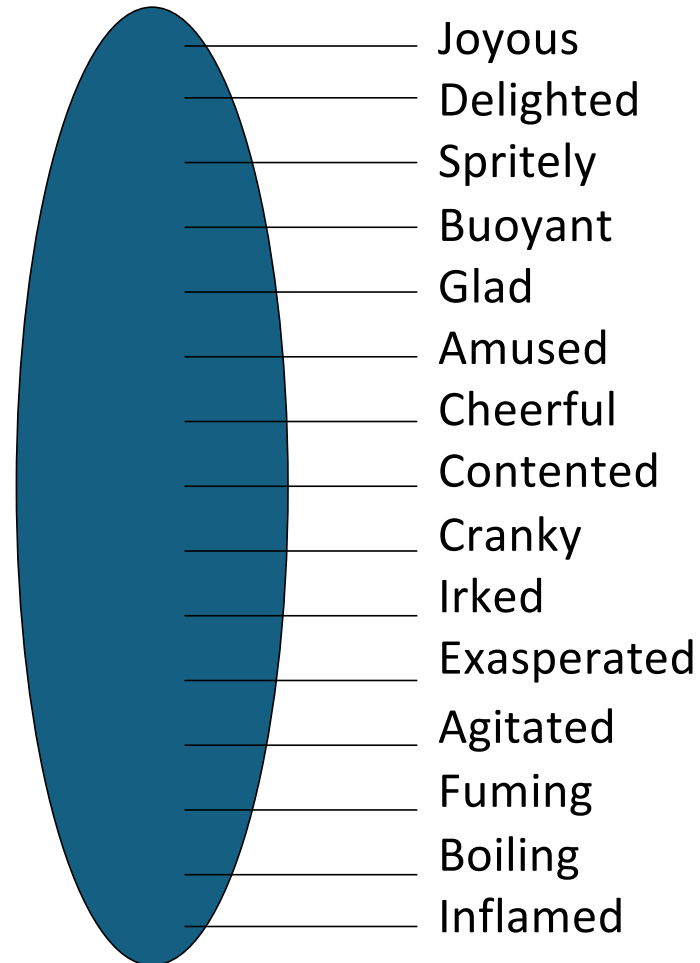
having a tooth drilled

sister taking my stuff

a long bus ride

Thermometer (Scaling) Happy - Angry

Handout



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Word networks can be used to help students learn sets of words that share synonymous meanings (e.g., miniature, petite, and small) or shades of meaning (e.g., small, larger, gigantic).

Word Conscious Classrooms

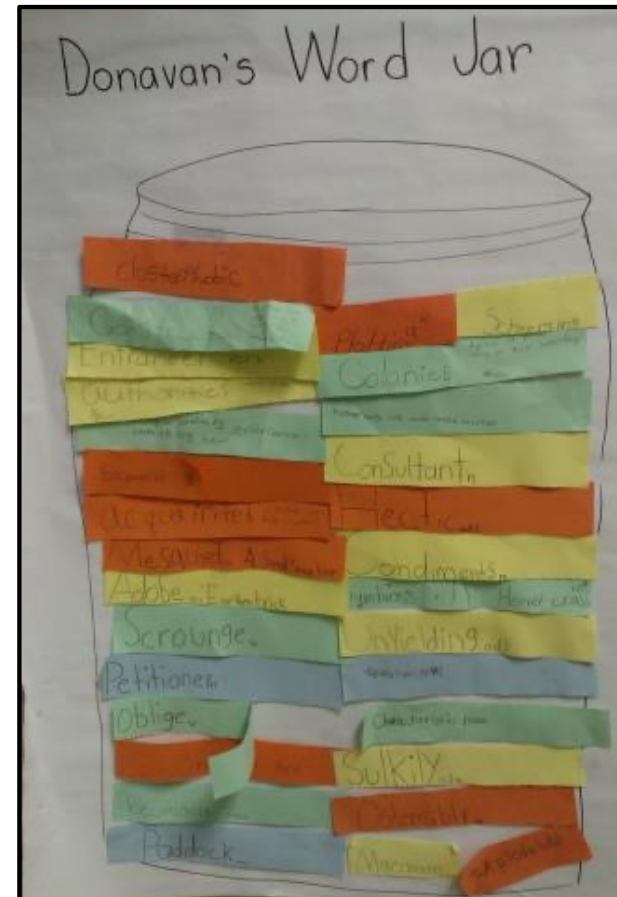
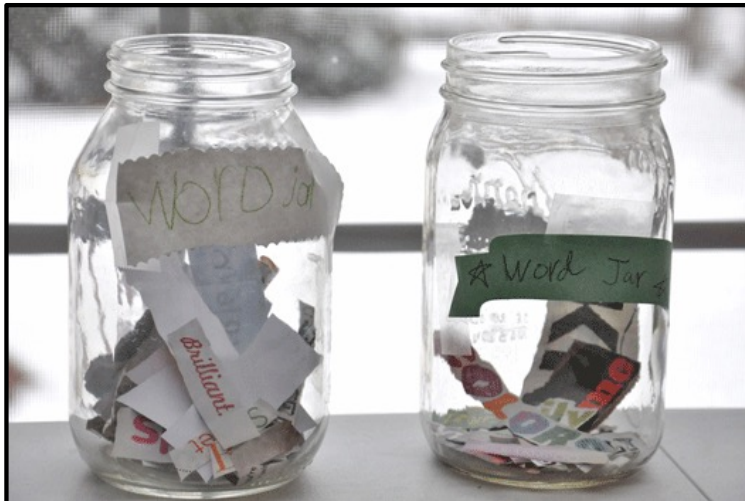
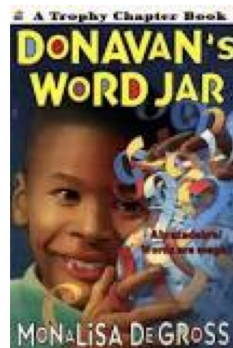
Example: Rather than reminding a student that he didn't quite close the door, the teacher might tell the student to close the door because it is **ajar**.

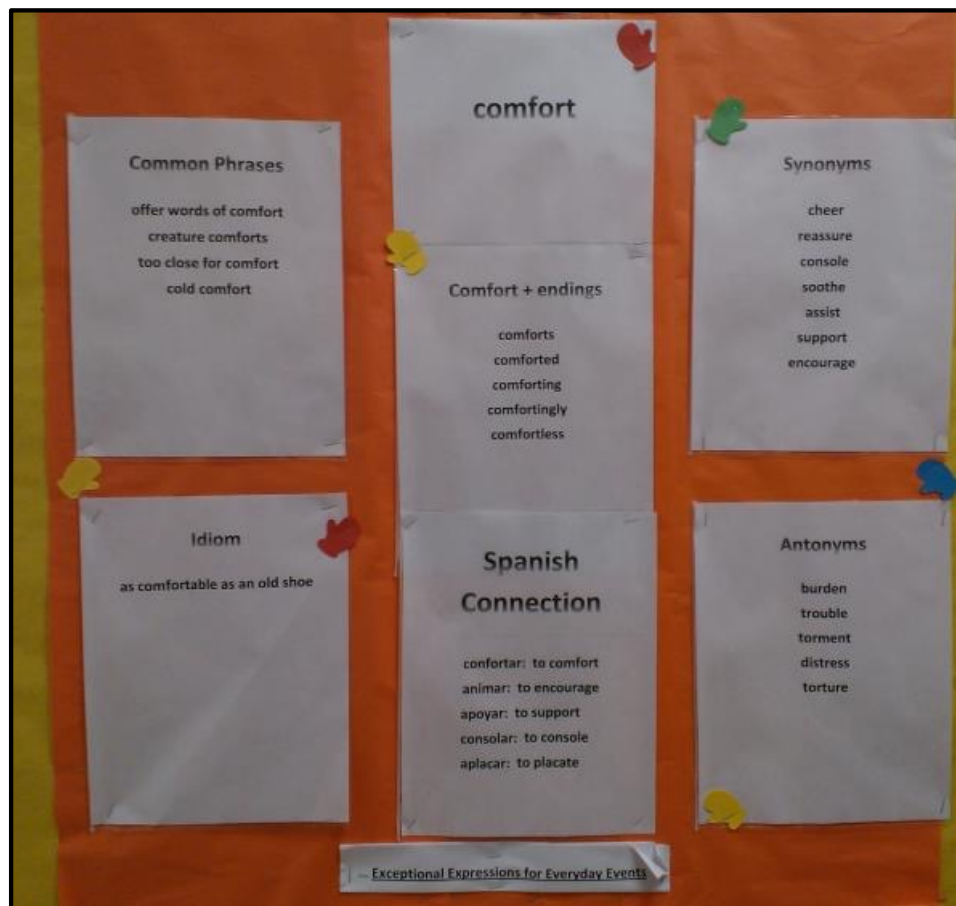
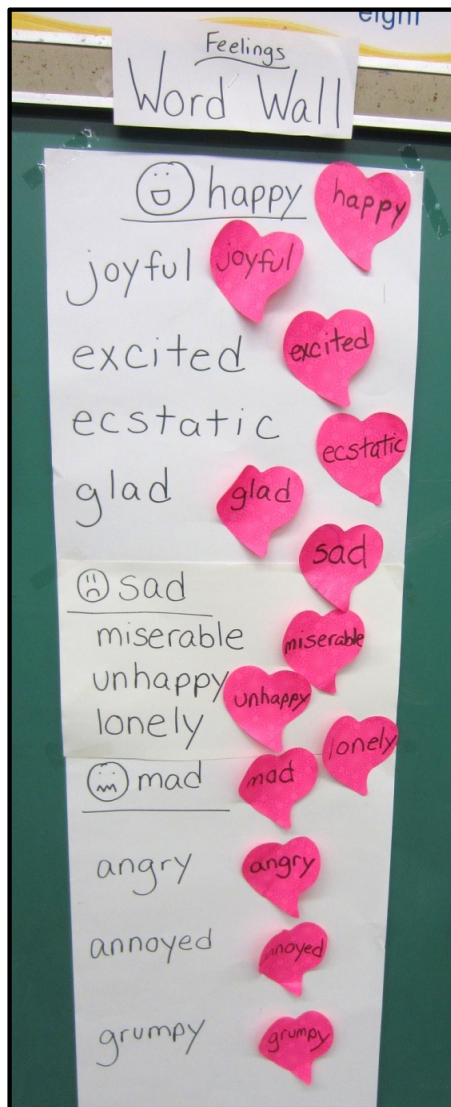
Example: Rather than asking a student to water a drooping plant, the teacher might say that the plant is becoming **dehydrated**.

Example: Rather than telling the students to line up faster, the teacher might tell the students to stop **dawdling**.

Word Jars

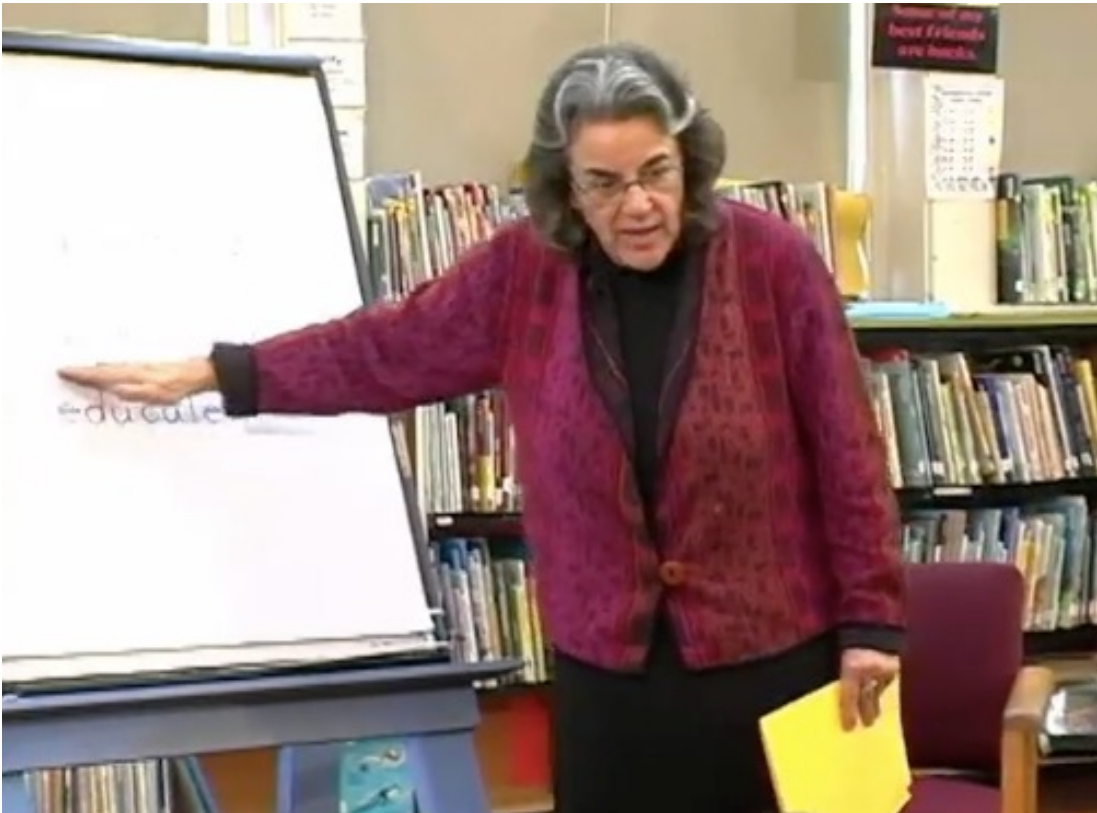
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Vocabulary Instruction – 2nd Grade

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Watch this video and jot down answers to these questions:

1. What instructional steps were used to introduce each of the vocabulary words?
2. What other good instructional practices did you observe?

Introductory Vocabulary Lesson

- Introduce the word and provide a student-friendly definition

- Show students written word
- Pronounce the word and have students repeat

- Provide multiple examples

- Concrete, visual, or verbal

- Check student understanding

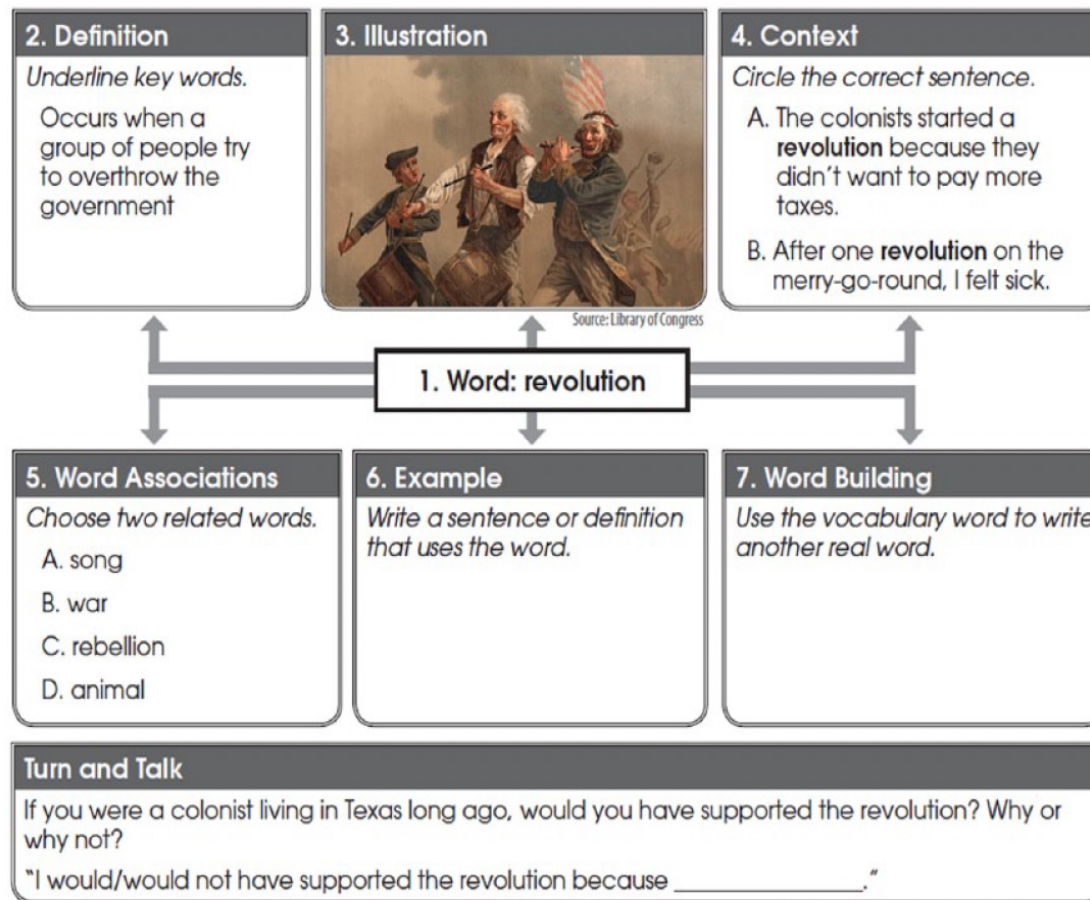
- Students discern between examples and non-examples
- Students generate examples

- Actively involve students throughout

- Choral response, partner response, thumbs up, word repetition

Anita Archer, 2024

Figure 3. STRIVE vocabulary map



Enhancing Adolescents' Comprehension of Text by Building Vocabulary Knowledge

Elizabeth Swanson, Sharon Vaughn, and Jade Wexler

What Works
Clearinghouse™

Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4-9

Educator's Practice Guide

A publication of the National Center for Education Evaluation (NCEE) at IES

Recommendation 3, Part A: *Build students' world and word knowledge so they can make sense of the text.*

How-to Step 1: Develop world knowledge that is relevant for making sense of the passage.

How-to Step 2: Teach the meaning of a few words that are essential for understanding the passage.

How-to Step 3: Teach students how to derive meanings of unknown words using context.

How-to Step 4: Teach prefixes and suffixes to help students derive meanings of words.

How-to Step 5: Teach the meaning of Latin and Greek roots.

Multi-componential Instruction

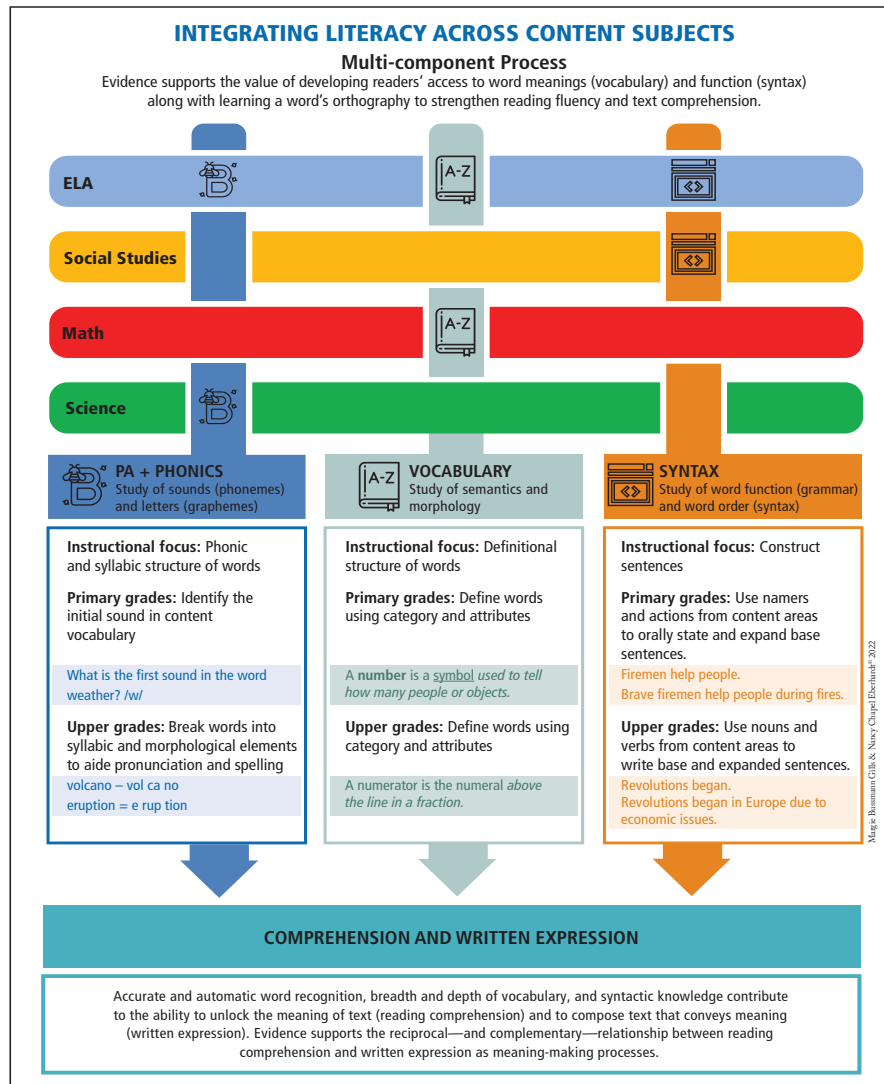
A multi-component approach for developing fluency involves instructional activities that concurrently build students' automaticity with the five aspects of word knowledge, while providing daily practice connecting all five of these components and applying them to connected text. Providing early word reading instruction in a manner that draws students' attention to multiple components of word knowledge has proven beneficial for facilitating early reading skills (Henbest & Apel, 2017).

Orkin et al, The Reading League Journal, 2022

Integrating Literacy Across Content Subjects

Power of Practice Perspectives 2023 Issue

Nancy C. Eberhardt and
Margie B. Gillis



Summary

- Purposefully select words from read aloud or other text that will increase students' vocabulary knowledge and overall language ability.
- Provide direct instruction for any words needed for comprehension prior to reading (e.g., general, academic and domain specific).
- Utilize explicit strategies to introduce and promote understanding of vocabulary such as student-friendly definitions, semantic classification, word awareness, and word networks.
- Provide repeated opportunities for students to practice new vocabulary in writing and speaking, encouraging students to use words during the school day and at home.

Thank You!

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