2025

BUILDING SKILLED READERS:

BEST PRACTICE IN READING INSTRUCTION

SESSION 4:

From listening to understanding: The keys to comprehending language

- Laura Glisson

Proudly Sponsored By

PhonicBooks®

Decodable Readers Australia

PLD™

MultiLit

Learning Difficulties Australia

Learning Difficulties Australia is an association of teachers and other professionals dedicated to assisting students with learning difficulties through effective teaching practices based on scientific research.

www.ldaustralia.org

enquiries@ldaustralia.org

@LearningDifficultiesAustralia

@LD_Australia

Laura Glisson

Laura Glisson (BaSc, MPhil Speech Pathology)

Certified Practicing Speech Pathologist

Co-director and Co-founder of Tracks to Literacy

Director of Fieldwork (Speech Pathology) Curtin University

Member of the LaLYP Research Lab at Curtin University

LDA Bulletin Editor

Research and clinical interest in Developmental Language Disorder, literacy, reading and writing and social-emotional mental health in children and adolescents

From Listening to Understanding: The Keys to Comprehending Language

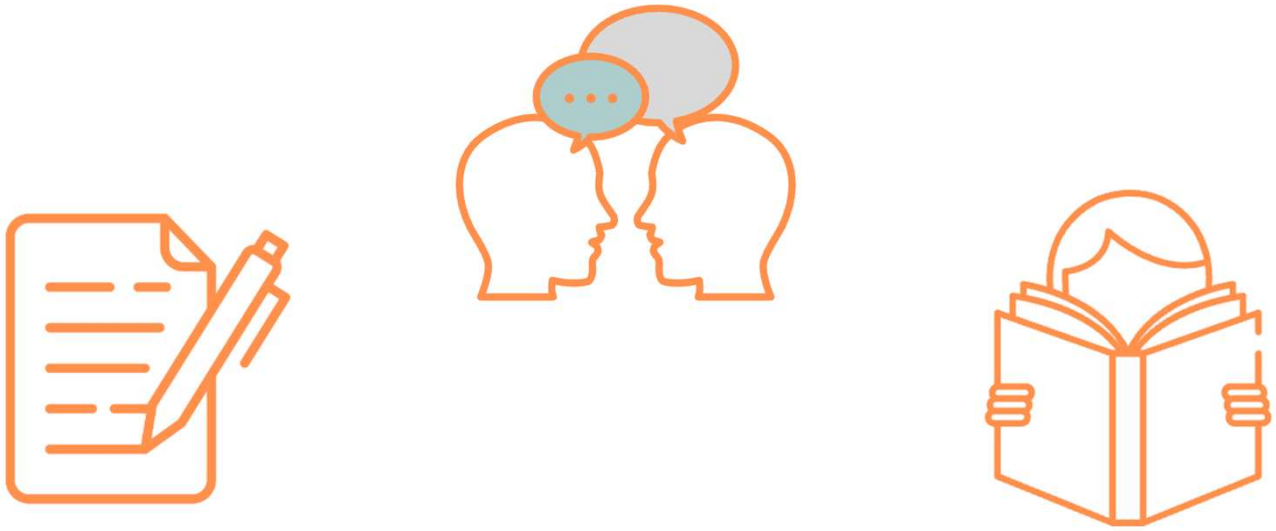
Presented by Laura Glisson (BaSc, MPhil Speech Pathology, CPSP SPA)

Co-Director and Co-Founder, Tracks to Literacy

Director of Fieldwork (Speech Pathology), Curtin University

www.trackstoliteracy.com

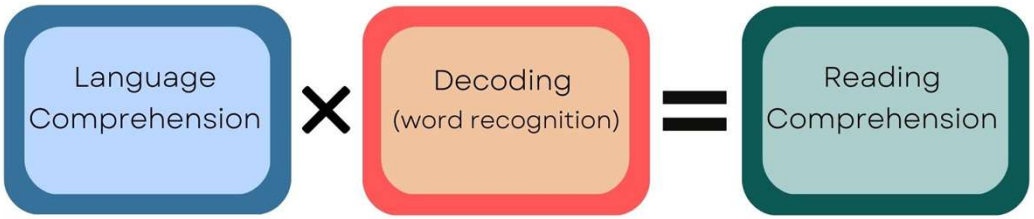
laura@trackstoliteracy.com



Oral Language, Reading and Writing

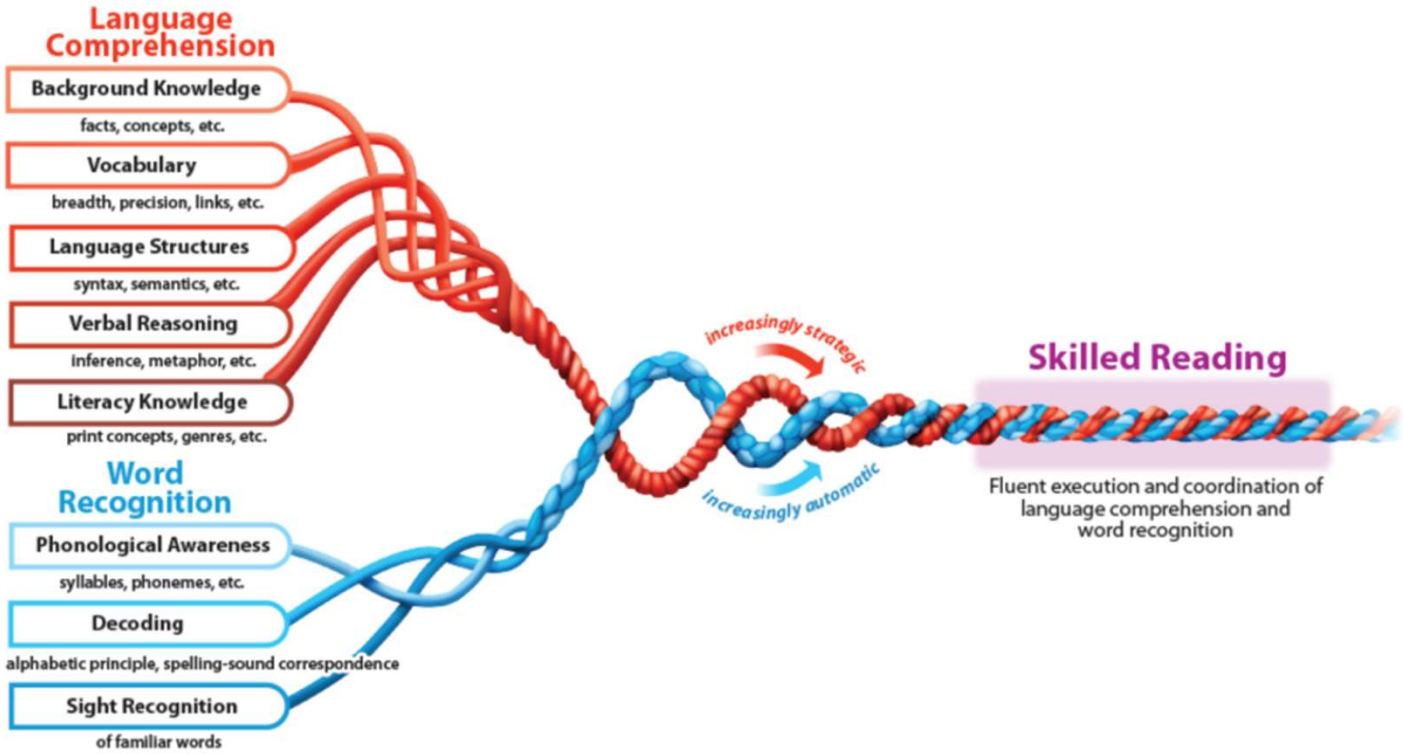
The Simple View of Reading

(Gough & Tunmer,1986)



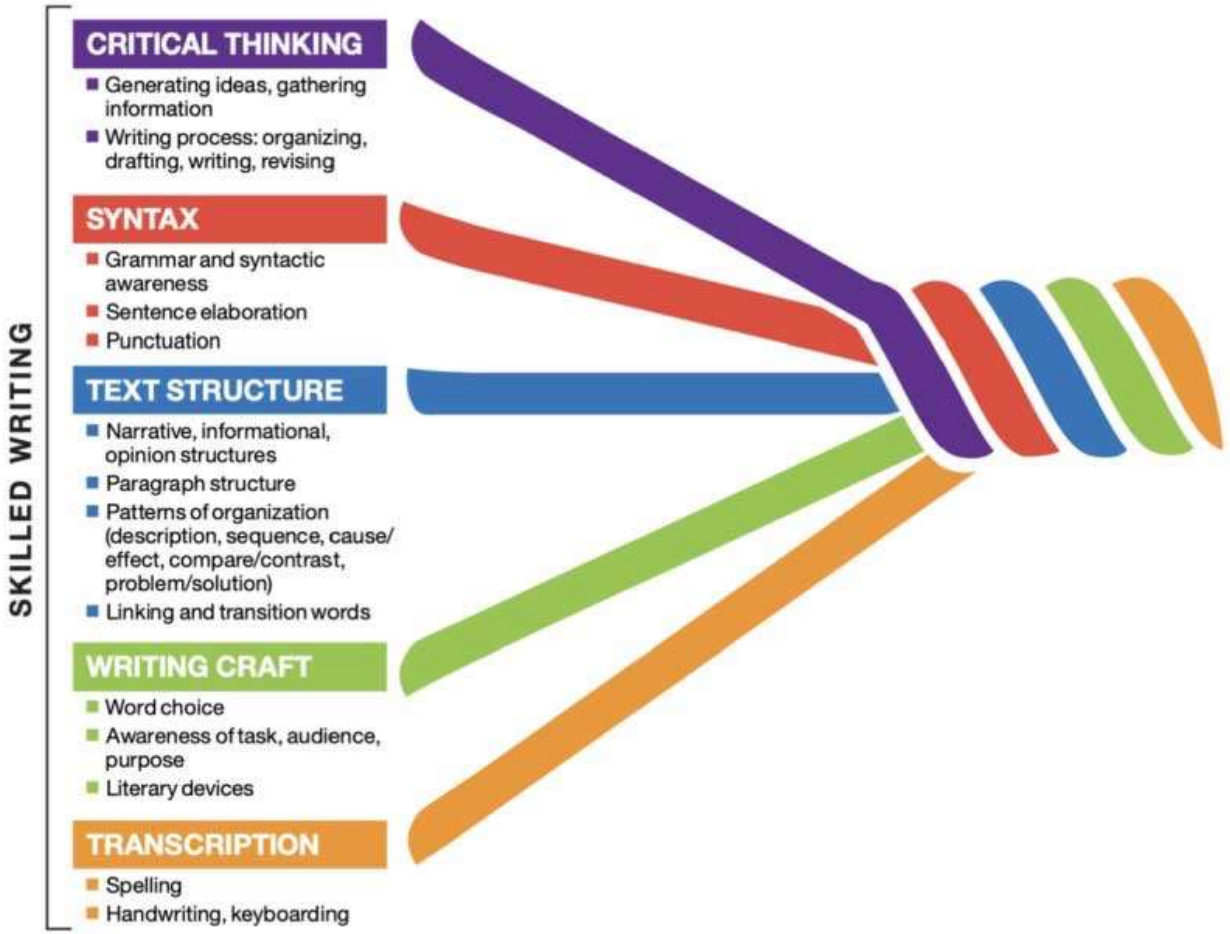
Reading Rope

(Scarborough, 2001)

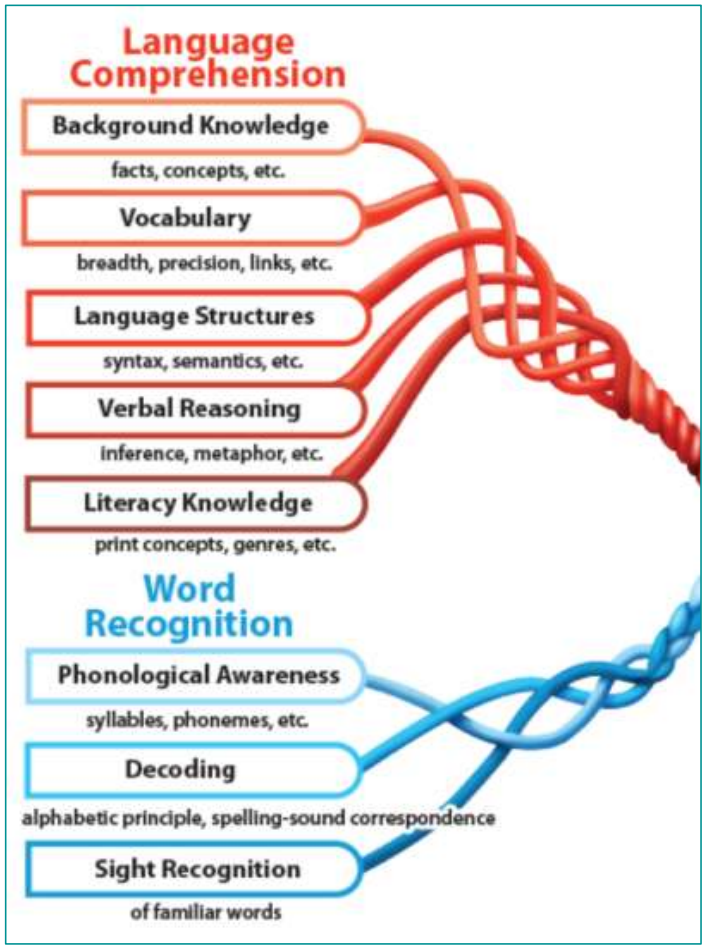


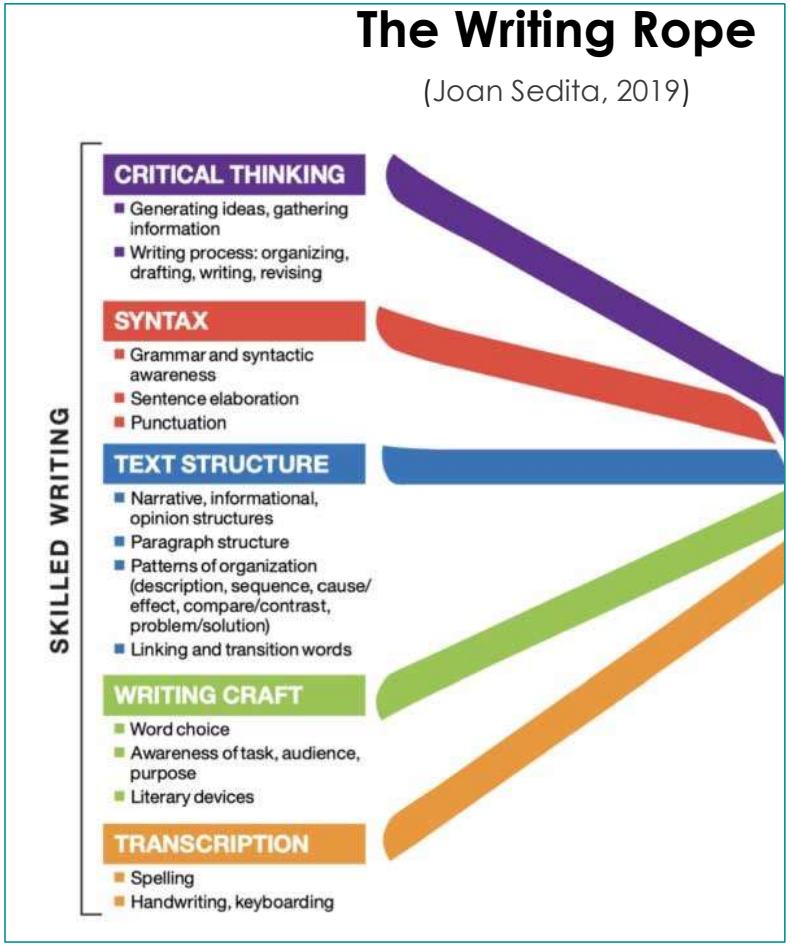
The Writing Rope

(Joan Sedita, 2019)

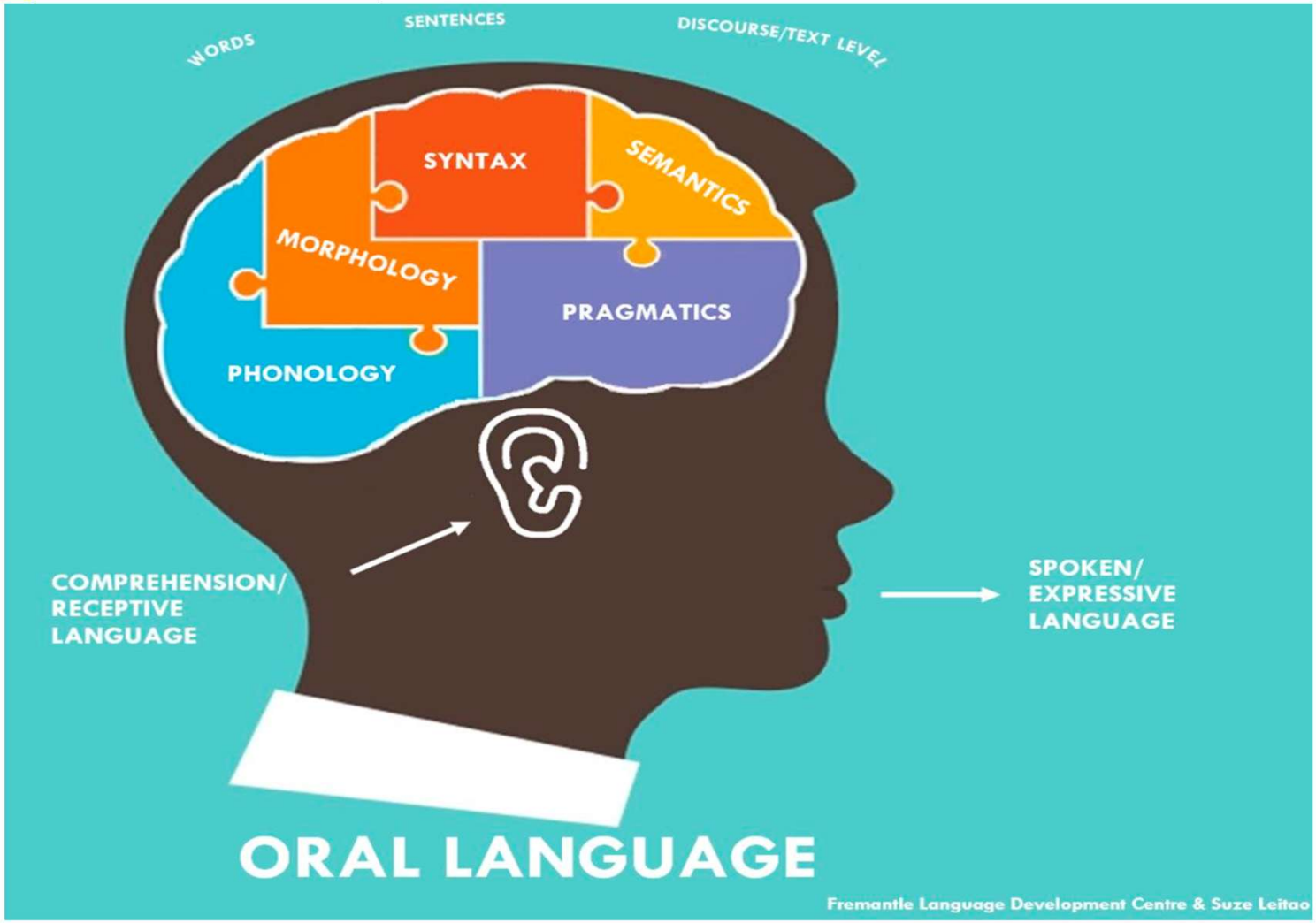


Language, reading and writing





Oral Language


WORDS
SENTENCES
DISCOURSE/TEXT LEVEL
SYNTAX
SEMANTICS
MORPHOLOGY
PRAGMATICS
PHONOLOGY
COMPREHENSION/
RECEPTIVE
LANGUAGE
SPOKEN/
EXPRESSIVE
LANGUAGE
ORAL LANGUAGE
Fremantle Language Development Centre & Suze Leitao

Communication Milestones

Communication milestones

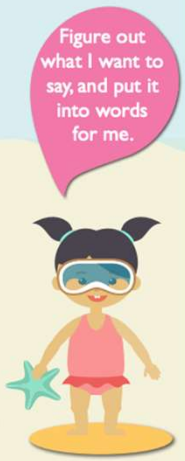
At 3 years
children can usually..

understanding

- follow more complex two part instructions (e.g., give me the teddy and throw the ball)
- understand simple wh-questions, such as 'what', 'where' and 'who'
- understand the concepts of 'same' and 'different'
- sort items into groups when asked (e.g., toys vs food)
- recognise some basic colours.

speaking

- say four to five words in a sentence
- use a variety of words for names, actions, locations and descriptions
- ask questions using 'what', 'where' and 'who'
- talk about something in the past, but may use '-ed' a lot (e.g., 'he goed there')
- have a conversation, but may not take turns or stay on topic.



Speech Pathology Australia
www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

Communication milestones

At 4 years
children can usually..

understanding

- answer most questions about daily tasks
- understand most wh-questions, including those about a story they have recently heard
- understand some numbers
- show an awareness that some words start or finish with the same sounds.

speaking

- use words, such as 'and', 'but' and 'because', to make longer sentences
- describe recent events, such as morning routines
- ask lots of questions
- use personal pronouns (e.g., he/she, me/you) and negations (e.g., don't/can't)
- count to five and name a few colours.

Speech Pathology Australia
www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

Communication milestones

At 5 years
children can usually..

understanding

- follow three part instructions (e.g., put on your shoes, get your backpack and line up outside)
- understand time related words
- (e.g., 'before', 'after', 'now' and 'later')
- start thinking about the meaning of words when learning
- understand instructions without stopping to listen
- begin to recognise some letters, sounds and numbers.

speaking

- use well formed sentences to be understood by most people
- take turns in increasingly longer conversations
- tell simple, short stories with beginning, middle and end
- use past and future verbs correctly (e.g., 'went', 'will go')
- use most speech sounds, but still may have difficulties with 's', 'r', 'l' and 'th'.

Speech Pathology Australia
www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

Typical Oral Language Development

Age	Oral Language Skills
3-4 years	• Groups objects such as foods, clothes, etc. • Identifies colours. • Uses most speech sounds but may distort some of the more difficult sounds such as /l/, /r/, /s/, /sh/, /ch/, /y/, /v/, /z/, /th/. These sounds may not be fully mastered until age 7 or 8 • Uses consonants in the beginning, middle, and ends of words. Some of the more difficult consonants may be distorted but attempts to say them. • Strangers can understand much of what is said. • Able to describe the use (function) of objects such as "fork," "car," etc. • Has fun with language. Enjoys poems and recognises language absurdities such as, "Is that an elephant on your head?". • Expresses ideas and feelings rather than just talking about the world around him or her • Uses verbs that end in "ing," such as "walking," "talking". • Answers simple questions such as "What do you do when you are hungry?". • Repeats sentences.

Typical Oral Language Development

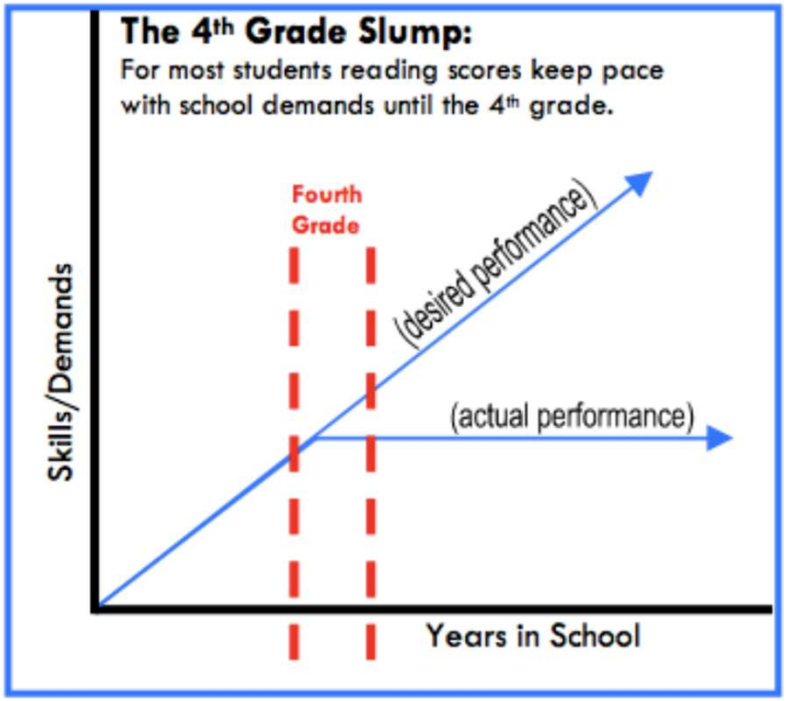
Age	Oral Language Skills
4 - 5 years	• Understands spatial concepts such as “behind,” “next to”. • Understands complex questions. • Speech is understandable but makes mistakes pronouncing long, difficult, or complex words such as “hippopotamus”. • Says about 200 - 300 different words. • Uses some irregular past tense verbs such as “ran,” “fell”. • Describes how to do things such as painting a picture. • Can define some words. • Lists items that belong in a category such as animals, vehicles, etc. • Answers “why” questions.

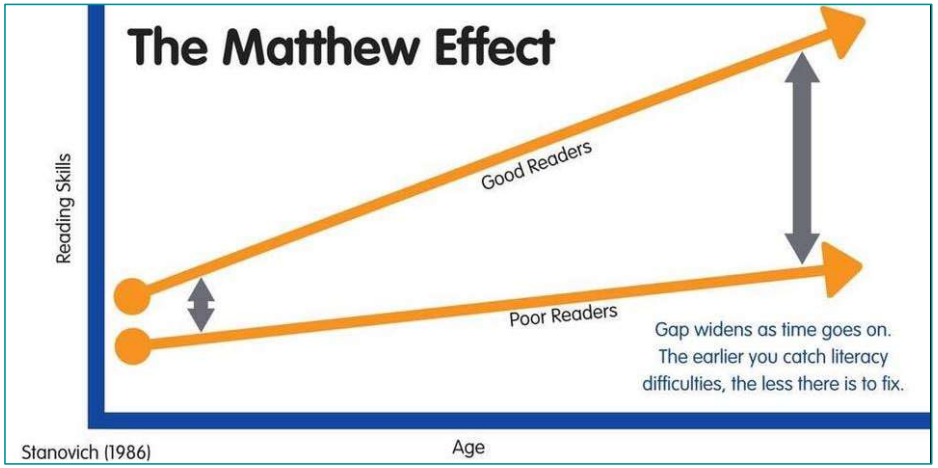
Typical Oral Language Development

Age	Oral Language Skills
5 years	• Understands more than 2,000 words. • Understands time sequences (what happened first, second, third, etc.) • Carries out a series of three directions. • Understands rhyming. • Engages in conversation. • Sentences can be 8 or more words in length. • Uses compound and complex sentences. • Describes objects. • Uses imagination to create stories.

Typical Oral Language Development

Age	Oral Language Skills
By age 7	• Focus on one thing for longer without being reminded. • Follow and remember a story that is told over several days. • Understand long instructions, for example, 'Put your toys back in the cupboard, go upstairs and find your swimming things'. • Learn that the same word can mean two things, such as 'orange' the fruit and 'orange' the colour. • Learn that different words can mean the same thing, such as 'minus' and 'take away'. • Understand feelings and descriptive words like 'carefully', 'slowly' or 'surprised. • Talk for lots of different reasons, such as to share complex ideas, to solve problems or to tell jokes. • Use long sentences and put the right endings on their words, for example 'My teddy like**s** sit**ting** on a bed because bed**s** are soft**er**'. • Use words like 'so', 'because' to join their sentences together. For example, 'It's my birthday so I'm saying up late'. • Can take turns to talk in conversations with adults and children in lots of different situations, either with one person or in a group. • Talk clearly so that unfamiliar people can understand them almost all of the time. They might still make mistakes in tricky words, like saying 'spash' instead of 'splash'. • Talk quite smoothly and don't repeat the first sound in words or get 'stuck' trying to get a word out.



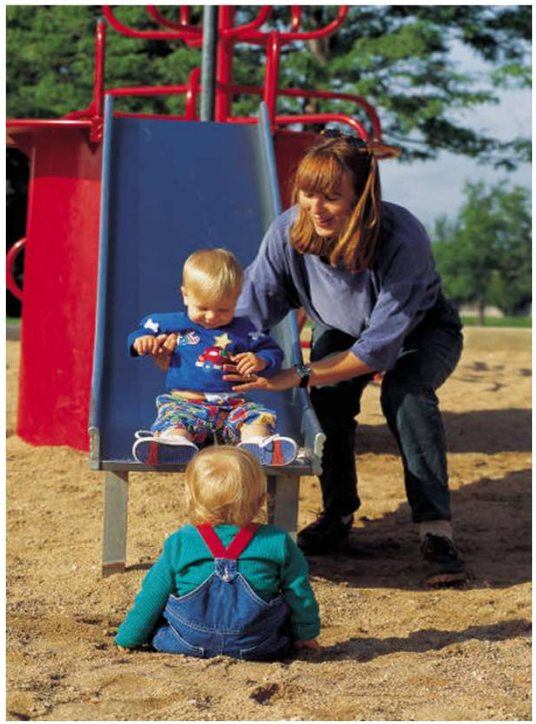


Contributions to the slump:

- **Socio-economic status (SES)** (e.g. Bowey, 1995; Hecht, Burgess, Torgesen, Wagner, & RashoXe, 2000; Raz & Bryant, 1990; National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), 2014; Noble, Farah, & McCandiss, 2006; White, 1982)
- **English-language learners (ELL)** (e.g. NAEP, 2014; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003)

The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap

(Hart & Risley. 1995)

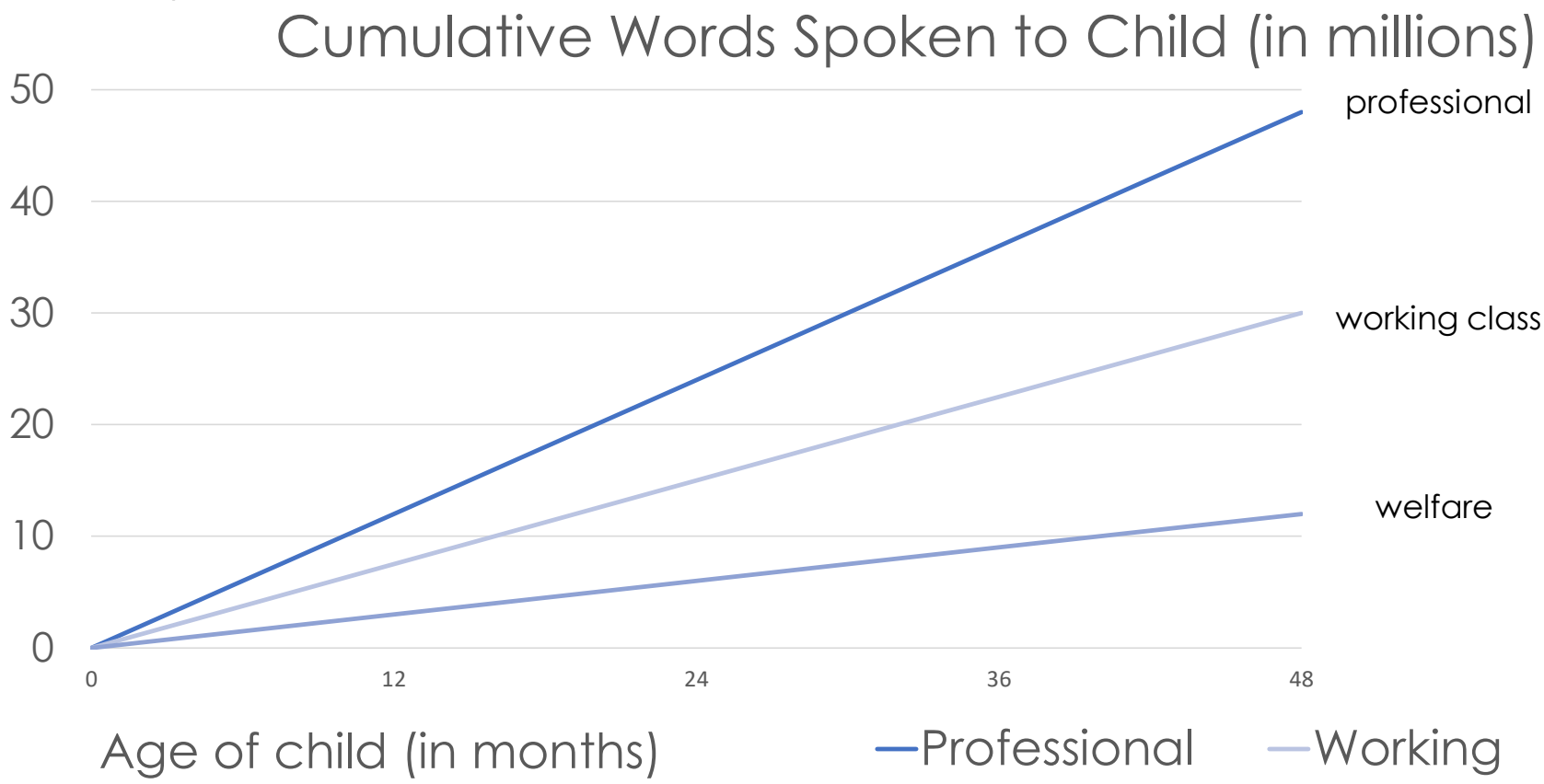


Hart and Risley (1995) conducted a longitudinal study of children and families from three groups:

- Families on welfare
- Working-class families
- Professional families

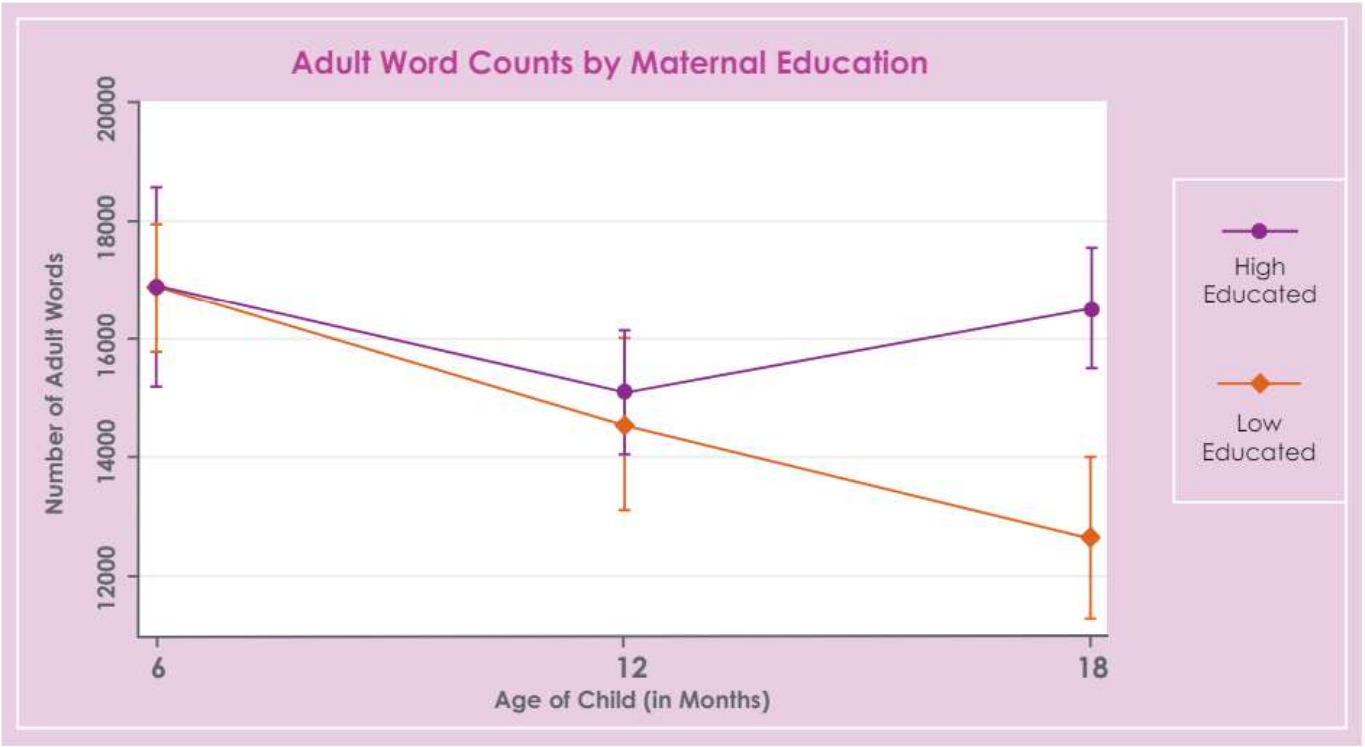
The Early Catastrophe:
The 30 Million Word Gap

(Hart & Risley. 1995)



Language in Little Ones

A word gap between high and low educated families emerges by 18 months.



Difference of **3,851 words at 18 months**

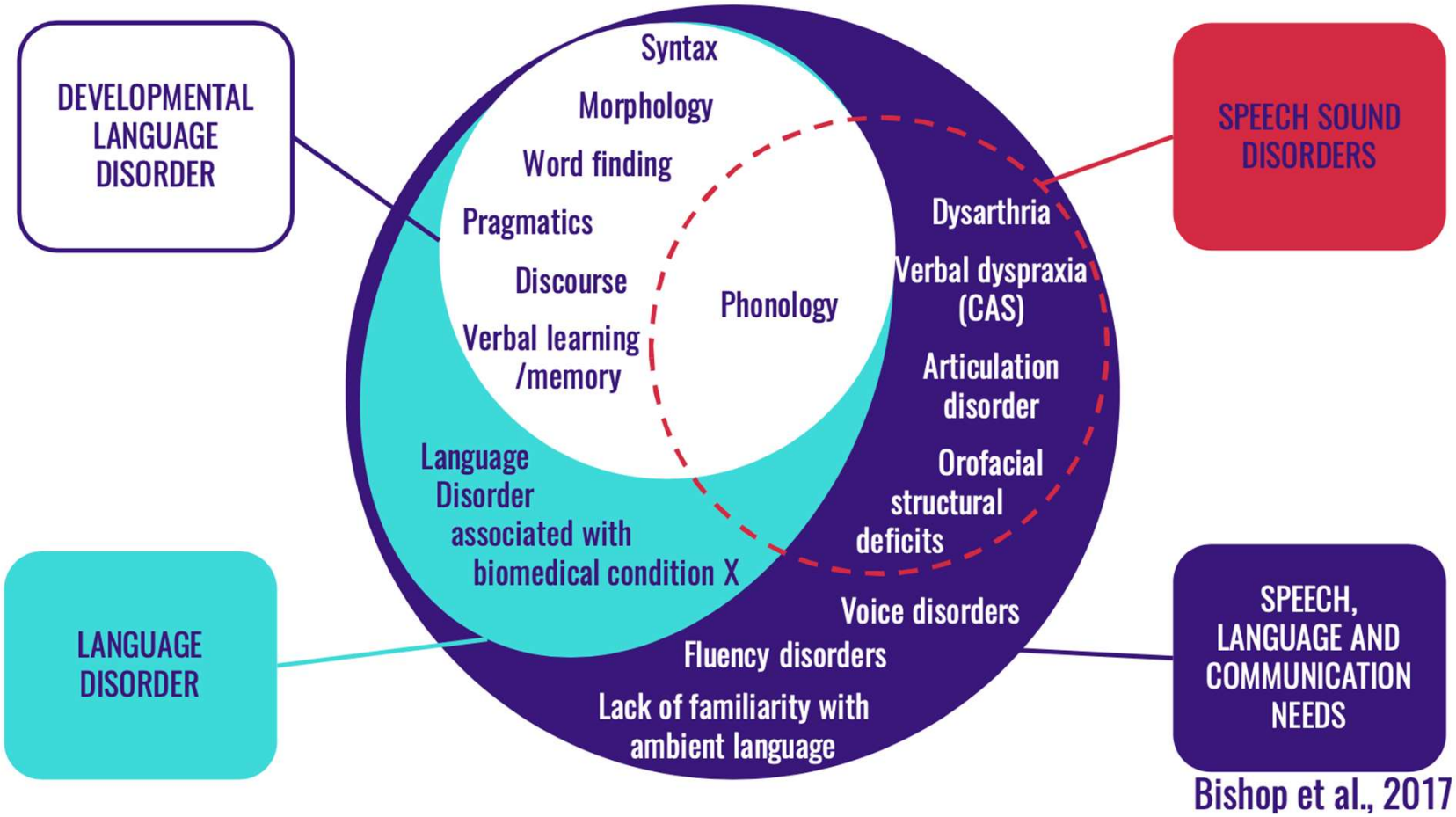
Higher educated parents talked more

Low educated families **decrease amount spoken to children** over time

High educated families **remained relatively consistent**

Brushe, M., Lynch, J., Reilly, S., Melhuish, E., Mittinty, M., Hiyare, A. & Brinkman, S. (2021). Research Snapshot. The word gap emerges by 18 months. Available at: https://www. telethonkids.org.au/projects/LiLO/findings-from-the-lilo-study/

Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)



Bishop et al., 2017

SLCN in the Classroom

In any given classroom:

- **~20% of children** have a speech, language or communication disorder, or are vulnerable or at risk.
- **Children living in socioeconomically disadvantaged locations and Indigenous children are 4x more likely to have SLCNs**
- **DLD is more common than dyslexia or ASD - 1 in 14 children (~2 students in every class)**
- **50%** of children with DLD will go on to be diagnosed with an **SLD** (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia)

Long-term impact:

"Between 50-70% of children with emotional and behavioural problems have clinically significant language deficits" (Benner, Nelson & Epstein 2002).

"60% of children who pass through young offender institutions have communication difficulties" (Bryan, Garvani, Gregory & Kilner, 2015).

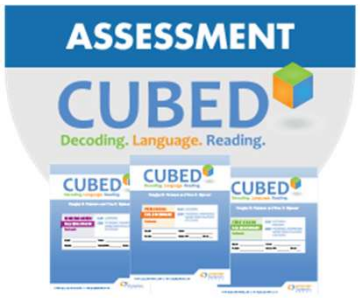
So, what can we do about it?

High quality Tier 1 instruction from school entry, with a focus on:

- oral language – vocabulary, spoken syntax and morphology, listening comprehension, social skills, story-telling, play, phonological awareness
- knowledge building – instruction with deliberate decisions about knowledge to teach
- structured synthetic phonics, oral reading fluency, spelling
- wide reading of fiction and non-fiction texts

So, what can we do about it?

Oral language assessment and screening – EARLY!

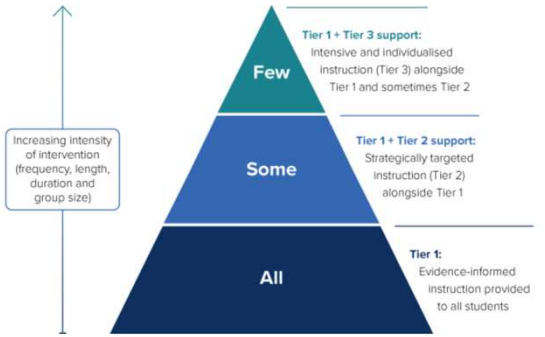


OxEd & Assessment

Language Screen

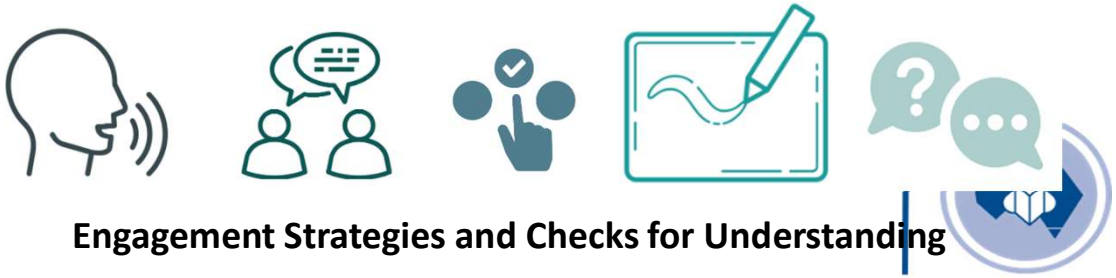
Reading Screen

RTI/MTSS for oral language ***and*** literacy



High-impact instructional approach – explicit teaching, review, spaced-retrieval practice, engagement, CFUs

I Do, We Do, You Do



Engagement Strategies and Checks for Understanding

Rethinking Comprehension

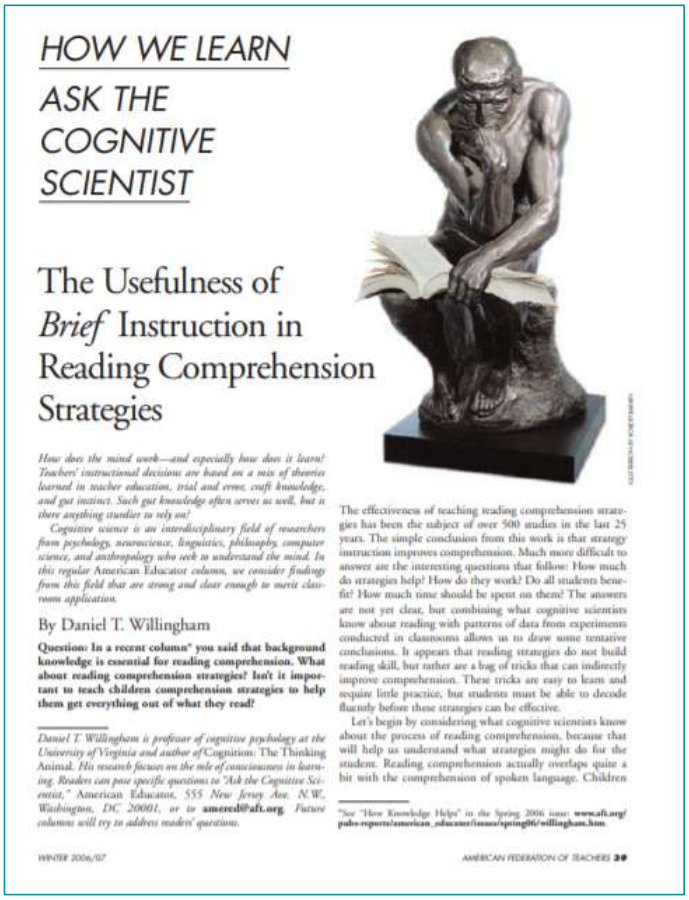
- **Comprehension is an outcome, not a strategy**

- **Comprehension is:**
  - an act of understanding what you have read
  - extracting meaning from what you read
  - the understanding and interpretation of what you have read
  - making sense of what you read

- **The student:**
  - reads the words accurately and fluently
  - understands the meaning of the words
  - has adequate background knowledge
  - focuses attention on critical content

Archer, A (2022). Background Knowledge: Key to Learning & Reading Comprehension. Oregon RTI Annual Conference. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eU_IWCmz-2M

Reading instruction – Strategies or knowledge?



HOW WE LEARN

ASK THE COGNITIVE SCIENTIST

The Usefulness of *Brief* Instruction in Reading Comprehension Strategies

How does the mind work—and especially how does it learn? Teachers' instructional decisions are based on a mix of theories learned in teacher education, trial and error, craft knowledge, and gut instinct. Such gut knowledge often serves us well, but is there anything sturdier to rely on?

Cognitive science is an interdisciplinary field of researchers from psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, philosophy, computer science, and anthropology who seek to understand the mind. In this regular American Educator *column, we consider findings from this field that are strong and clear enough to merit classroom application.*

By Daniel T. Willingham

Question: In a recent column* you said that background knowledge is essential for reading comprehension. What about reading comprehension strategies? Isn't it important to teach children comprehension strategies to help them get everything out of what they read?

The effectiveness of teaching reading comprehension strategies has been the subject of over 500 studies in the last 25 years. The simple conclusion from this work is that strategy instruction improves comprehension. Much more difficult to answer are the interesting questions that follow: How much do strategies help? How do they work? Do all students benefit? How much time should be spent on them? The answers are not yet clear, but combining what cognitive scientists know about reading with patterns of data from experiments conducted in classrooms allows us to draw some tentative conclusions. It appears that reading strategies do not build reading skill, but rather are a bag of tricks that can indirectly improve comprehension. These tricks are easy to learn and require little practice, but students must be able to decode fluently before these strategies can be effective.

Let's begin by considering what cognitive scientists know about the process of reading comprehension, because that will help us understand what strategies might do for the student. Reading comprehension actually overlaps quite a bit with the comprehension of spoken language. Children

Daniel T. Willingham is professor of cognitive psychology at the University of Virginia and author of Cognition: The Thinking Animal. *His research focuses on the role of consciousness in learning. Readers can pose specific questions to "Ask the Cognitive Scientist," American Educator, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001, or to* **amered@aft.org**. *Future columns will try to address readers' questions.*

*See "How Knowledge Helps" in the Spring 2006 issue: **www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/spring06/willingham.htm**.

WINTER 2006/07

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS 39

"…*reading strategies do not build reading skill, but rather are a bag of tricks that can indirectly* ***improve comprehension. These tricks are easy to learn and require little practice.***"

"Acquiring a broad vocabulary and a rich base of background knowledge will yield more substantial and longer-term benefits."

Willingham (2006). https://education.ufl.edu/patterson/files/2020/10/Willingham-ComprehensionStrategies.pdf

Background knowledge

Why?

"Whether or not readers understand a text depends far more on how much background knowledge and vocabulary they have relating to the topic than on how much they've practised comprehension skills."

Dan Willingham (2018)

"Research over the past 40 years or so has made it clear that the knowledge that students bring to a text - any text - will have an impact on what is comprehended or learned from that text. The more you know, the better your comprehension tends to be."

Timothy Shanahan

Background knowledge

Consider this text

Churniak swings and hits a slow bouncing ball toward the shortstop. Haley comes in, fields it, and throws to first, but too late. Churniak is on first with a single, Johnson stayed on third. The next batter is Whitcomb, the Cougars' left-fielder.

The ball is returned to Claresen. He gets the sign and winds up, and throws a slider that Whitcomb hits between Manfred and Roberts for a hit.

Dulaney comes in and picks up the ball. Johnson has scored, and Churniak is heading for third. Here comes the throw and Churniak is out. Churniak argues but to no avail.

Findings:

Background knowledge

How?

(Archer, 2022).

Background knowledge checklist – At our school, we:

1. Read informative read-alouds in the primary grades including books on the same topic to build knowledge networks.
2. Directly teach science, social studies, and health.
3. Read informative passages in intervention.
4. Review background knowledge using retrieval practice
5. Directly teach critical knowledge before passage reading.

Background knowledge

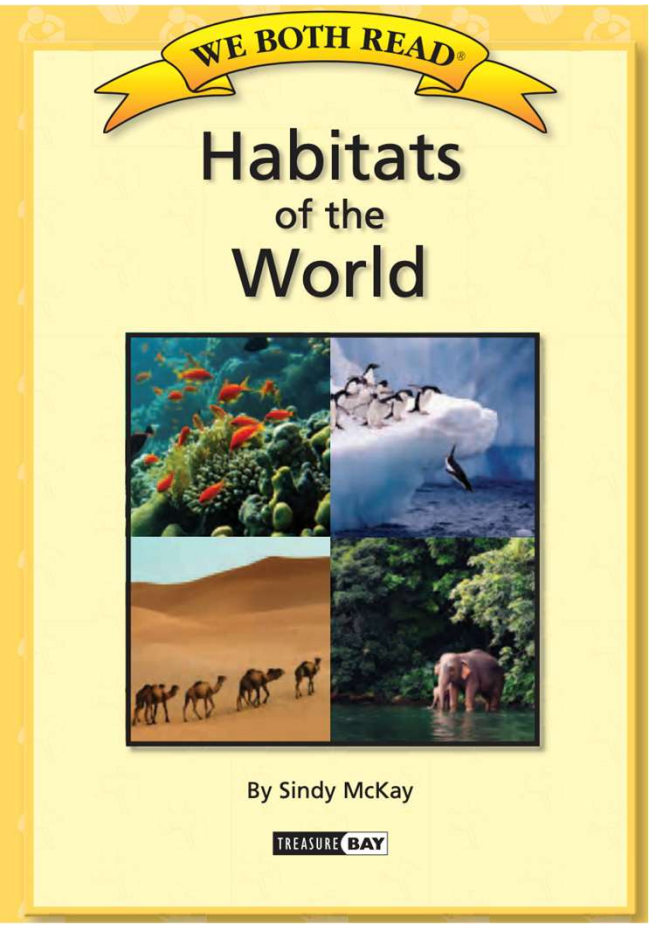
- **Knowledge Networks & Read Alouds**

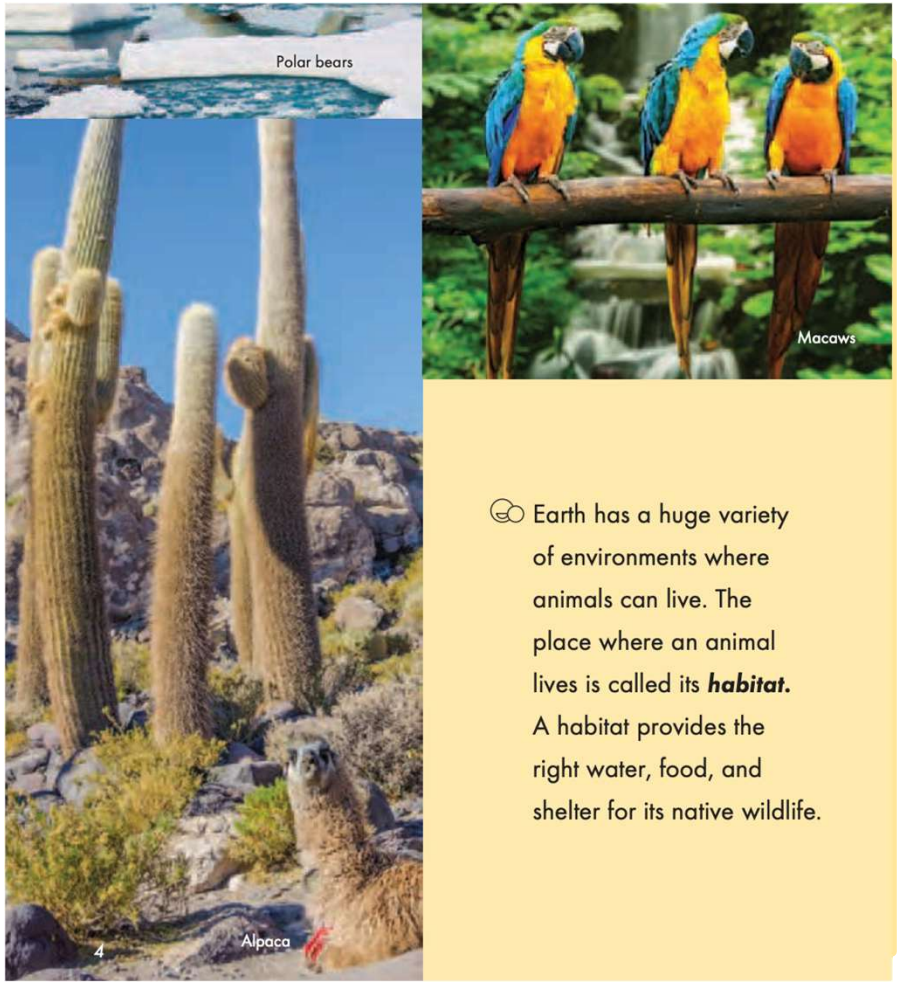
- **Building background knowledge through selection of instructional texts (and videos) on a topic.**
  - Narrative texts
  - Informational texts

- **One half of all primary read-alouds should be informational texts (Duke, 2013).**
  - sparks curiosity and desire to learn
  - helps students identify with people different to themselves
  - complements fiction reading in the primary years (Duke, 2004; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Background knowledge

- **Read-Alouds**





- ✓ Attend
- ✓ Intend
- ✓ Rehearse
- ✓ Retrieve

Background knowledge

What knowledge?

Introduce facts and knowledge that are:

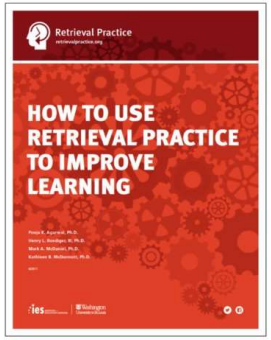
1. Critical content
2. Useful for immediate comprehension
3. Useful in the future
4. Meaningfully connected to other knowledge

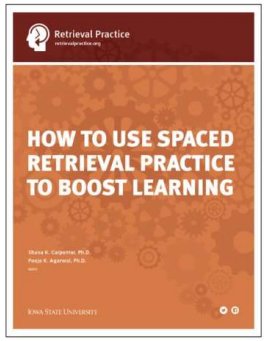
Note: Even a thin slice of knowledge supports comprehension and learning. In other words, surface level knowledge helps.

Background knowledge

How do students learn and retain factual knowledge?

- ✓ Attend
- ✓ Intend
- ✓ Rehearse
- ✓ Retrieve





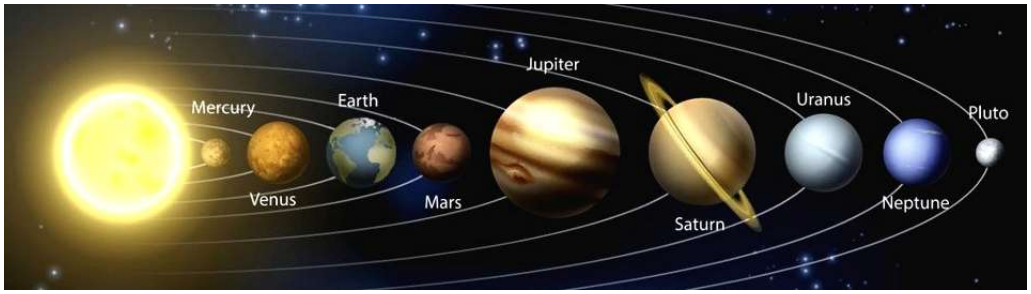
https://www.retrievalpractice.org/retrievalpractice

Background knowledge

Before reading a passage

Images

Milky way



Solar system

Satellite

Decide

What is **critical**?

What information would **ease acquisition of knowledge?**

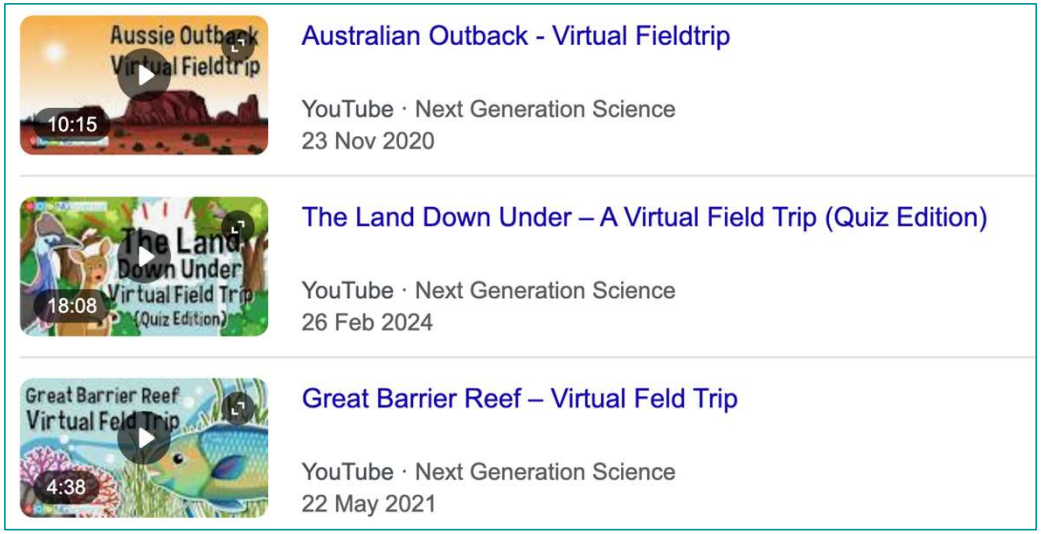
What information would **reduce cognitive load**?

Background knowledge

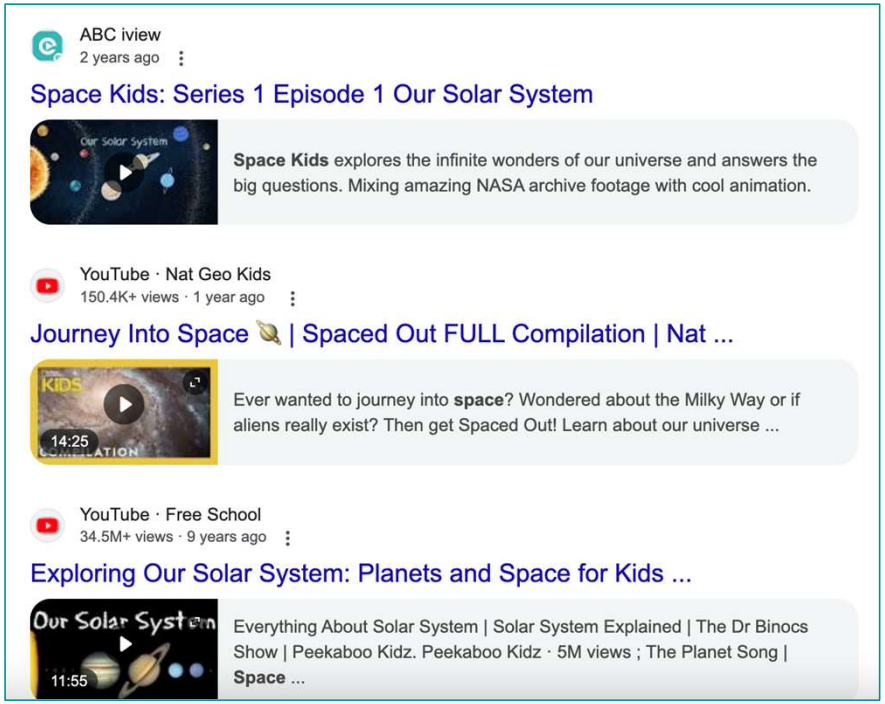
Before introducing a topic

Shared experiences

Incursions, excursions, virtual fieldtrips



Short video clips

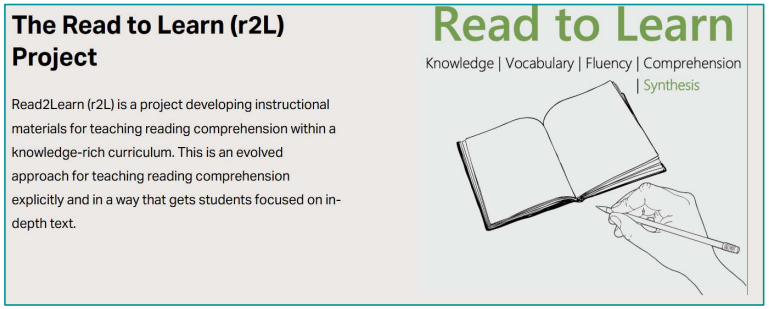


Recommended free resource

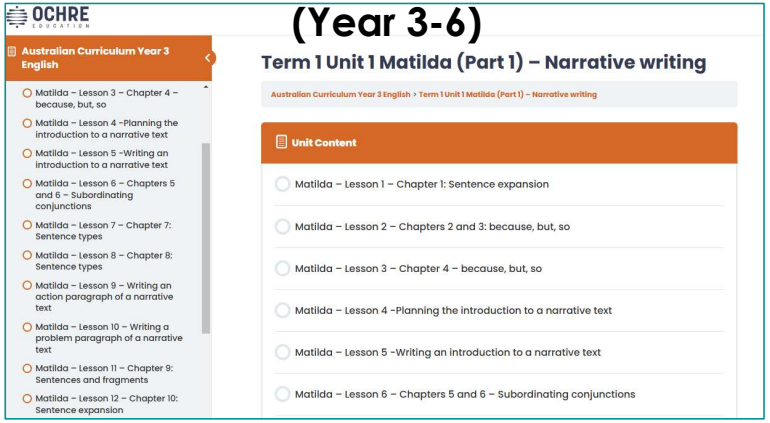
Core Knowledge

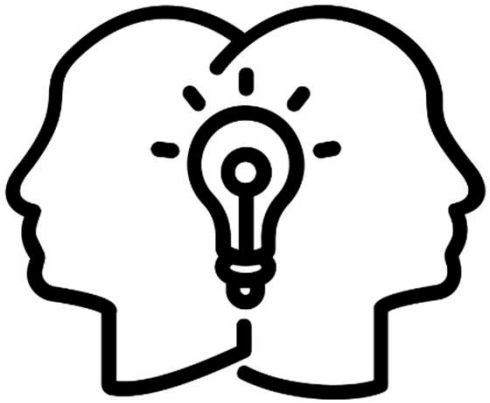
https://www.coreknowledge.org/

Think Forward Educators – Read2Learn Units



Ochre Novel Studies (Year 3-6)





What do you think of when you hear the word ‘beach’?

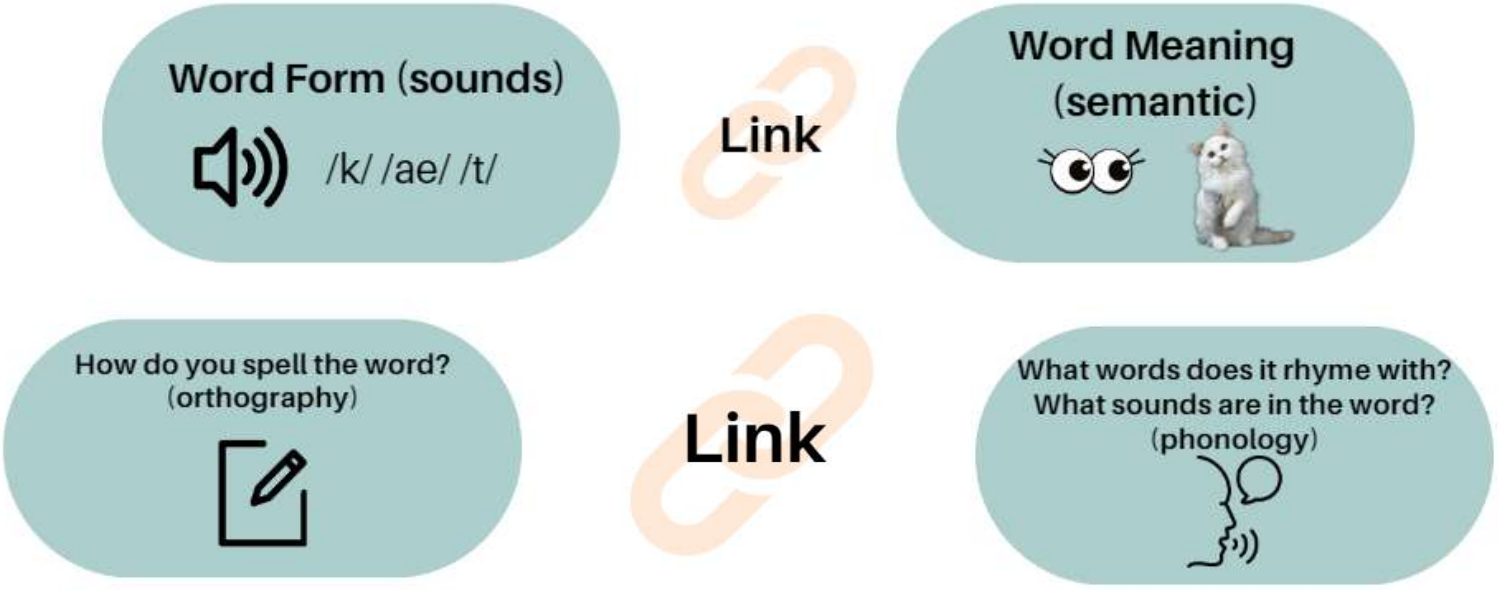
Vocabulary vs Semantics

This is a cat.

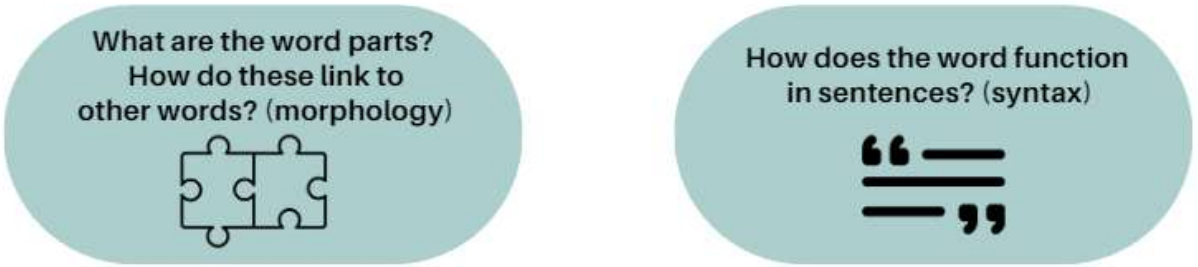
These are all cats too….

How do we learn words?

Fast Mapping



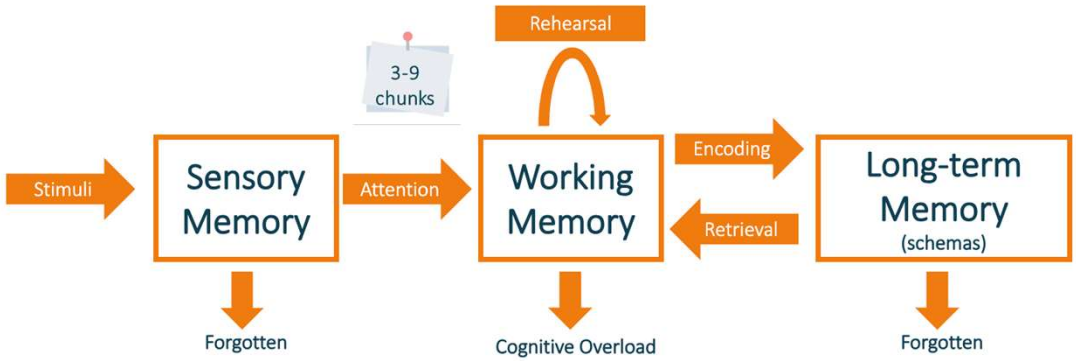
Slow Mapping



Think of the brain as a filing cabinet of words

Vocabulary

Organisation
(storage and retrieval)



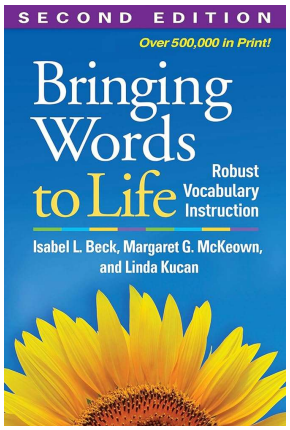
Principles of Effective Vocabulary Instruction

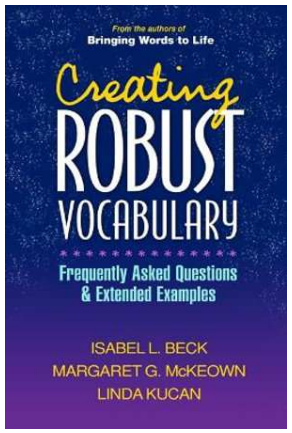
1. **Teach vocabulary directly and sequentially (within a knowledge rich curriculum)**
2. **Activating prior knowledge and interest**
3. **Knowledge ratings**
4. **Wide reading**
5. **Multiple exposures to the new word**
6. **Pronouncing the word**
7. **Break the word into sound units (onset-rime, syllables, phonemes)**
8. **Identify key morphemes and root words**
9. **Semantic mapping and graphic organisers**
10. **Provide opportunities for deep processing**

(Jitendra, Edwards, Sacks & Jacobsen, 2004,Taylor, Mraz, Nichols, Rickelman & Wood, 2009)

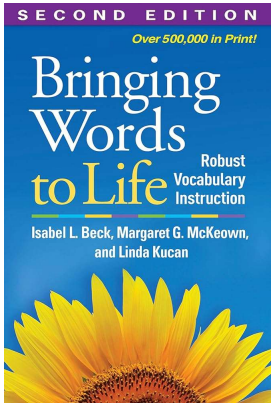
Choosing words to teach

- generally useful - **see in texts, describing own experiences**
- **interesting**
- appropriate to student's pre-existing knowledge
- expand ideas
- relates to a topic of study/interest
- **understand and communicate in a particular subject**





Choosing words to teach



Tier 1: Basic, high-frequency words commonly used in everyday language. Typically acquired naturally through exposure to language and are often known by most native speakers. E.g., "dog," "cat," "happy," and "run."

Tier 2: More sophisticated words that occur less frequently in everyday language. Crucial for comprehension and academic success. Often encountered in academic texts, discussions, and formal writing. E.g., "exhausting," "stupendous," "contribute," and "explain."

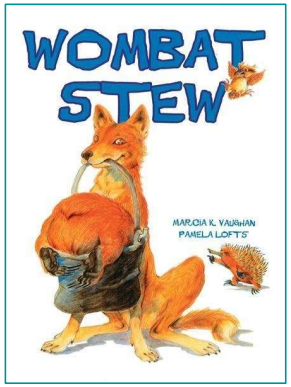
Tier 3: Domain-specific words specific to certain subjects or fields of study. Lower frequency in general language usage. Typically learned in context within specific academic disciplines. E.g., "photosynthesis," "isotope," "equilibrium," and "constitution."

How many words?

- Most **"typical" 5-year-olds** have a vocabulary of about **10,000 words**.
- In school, children learn vocabulary at a rapid rate each year (Merritt, 2016).
- Nagy & Scott (2000) – **between 2,000-3,000 new words per year.**
- Others say up to **5,000 new words per year** (Miller & Gildea, 1987).
- Somewhere **between 6-12 new words each day.**

Before the lesson

1. Say & sound/clap the word
2. Define the word / say a synonym
3. Say the word again & write it down

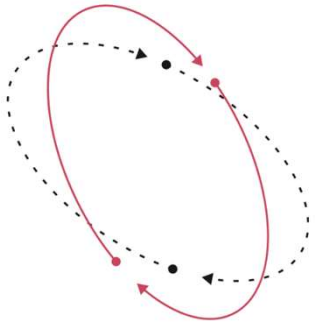


During the lesson

1. Say & sound/clap the word
2. Define the word / say a synonym
3. Say the word again & write it down

satellites

orbit



Man-made satellites orbit around planets or moons. They transmit information from one place to another.

transmit

Teacher cue:
1. Active tracking
2. Choral reading
3. Pronouncing
4. Choral response
5. Guided notes

Image credit: Canva and Vecteezy

During reading

1. Say & sound/clap the word
2. Define the word / say a synonym
3. Reread the sentence with the word

"I dub thee Sir Edmond."

Dub means to give a name or a title to someone.

Image credit: Canva and Vecteezy

Explicit teaching

- **Review and activate prior knowledge**

Animals






mammals	insects	amphibians	fish	reptiles	birds

Teacher cue:

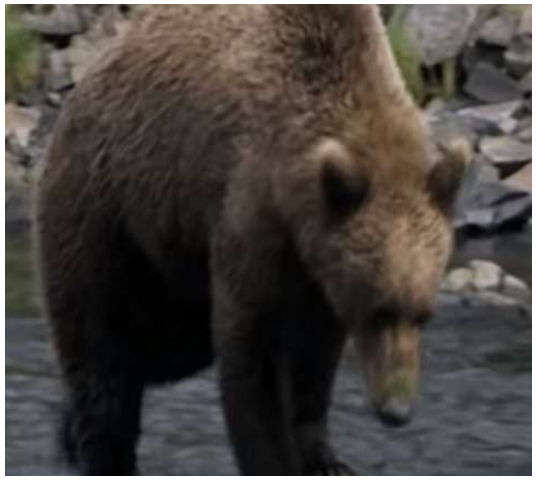
1. Think-pair-share, choral response, non-volunteer
2. Generate animal examples
3. Name animal pictures
4. Animal categories
5. Generate 2x animals & say category & why (TPS)

Image credit: Vecteezy

Explicit teaching
Review and activate prior knowledge

- ✓ Attend
- ✓ Intend
- ✓ Rehearse
- ✓ Retrieve

Let's watch a video about mammals



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGonwMTPV6g

Teacher cue:
1. Think-pair-share
2. Whiteboards
3. Non-volunteers
4. Choral response

Explicit teaching

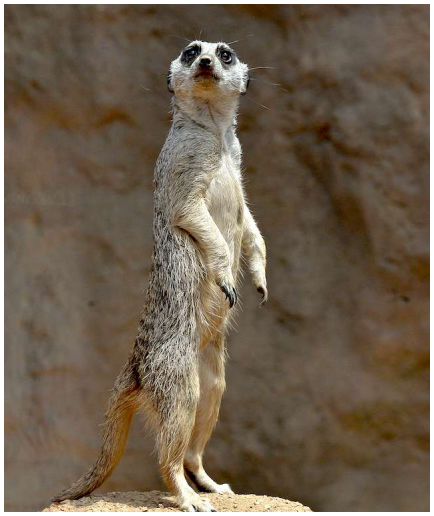
Review and activate prior knowledge

Name these mammals

lion

elephant

monkey



meerkat

Teacher cue:

1. Choral response

Image credit: Vecteezy

Explicit teaching

Definition

Mammals

- A mammal is an animal that breathes air, has a backbone, and grows hair.
- Female mammals make milk.
- Mammals are very clever.
- Cats, dogs, horses, humans and whales are all examples of mammals.

Images created using Widgit Online.

How well do I know that word?

No idea!	Some idea	I know it!
 I've never seen or head the word before.	 I think I've seen or head the word before, but I'm not sure I know what it means.	 I know what it means. I can define it and use it in a sentence.
omnivore	*herbivore*	*carnivore*
	prey	*predator*


billy


billabong


wombat


dingo


gooey


slurped

Images created using Widgit Online.

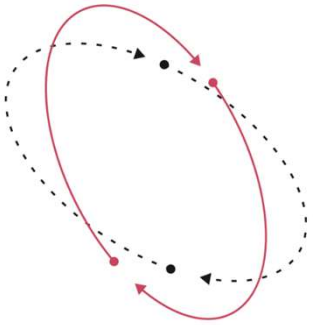
Morphological awareness

What is morphology?
- The study of words and their parts

Morphemes are:
- The smallest meaningful units of meaning

Morphemes include:
- free morphemes (words)
- prefixes
- suffixes
- base/root words

Why teach morphology?
- To improve reading and spelling accuracy
- To improve vocabulary and reading comprehension



orbit (verb)

orbits

orbiting

orbited

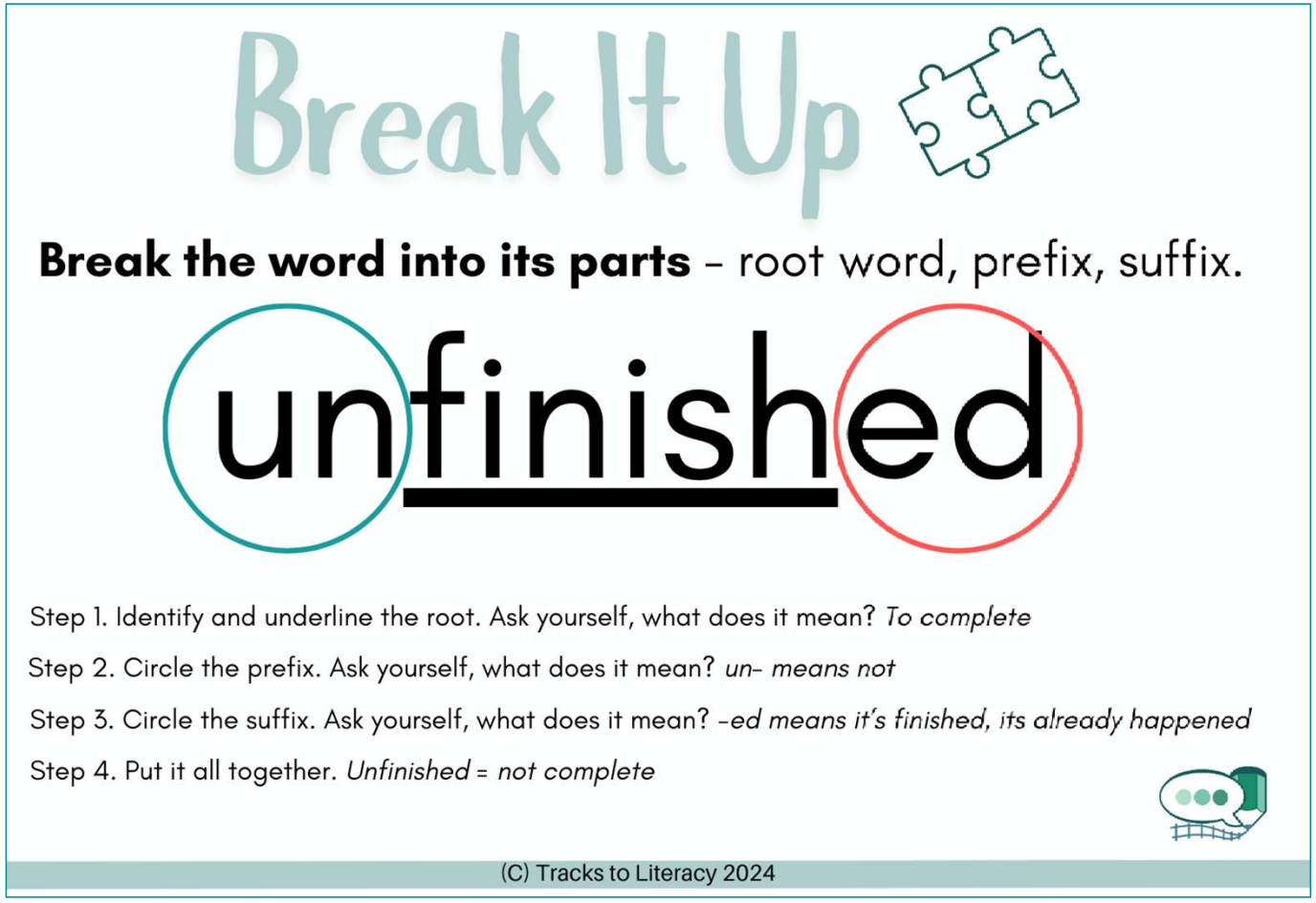
transmit (verb)

transmits

transmitting

transmitted

Morphological analysis



Morphological analysis

transmit (verb)

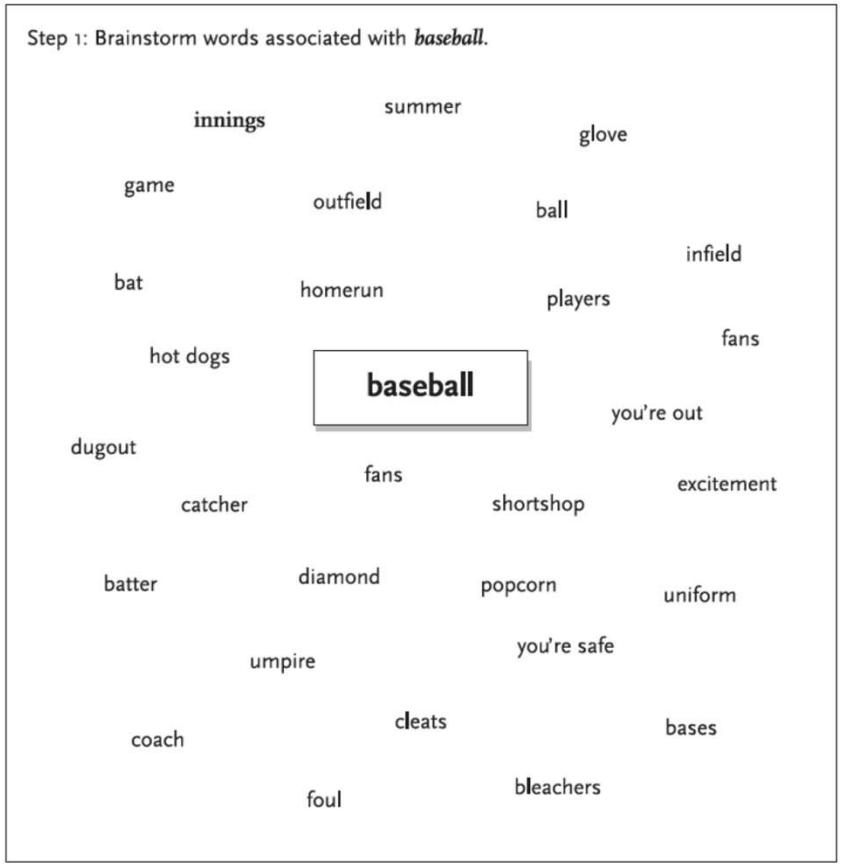
trans = across, beyond

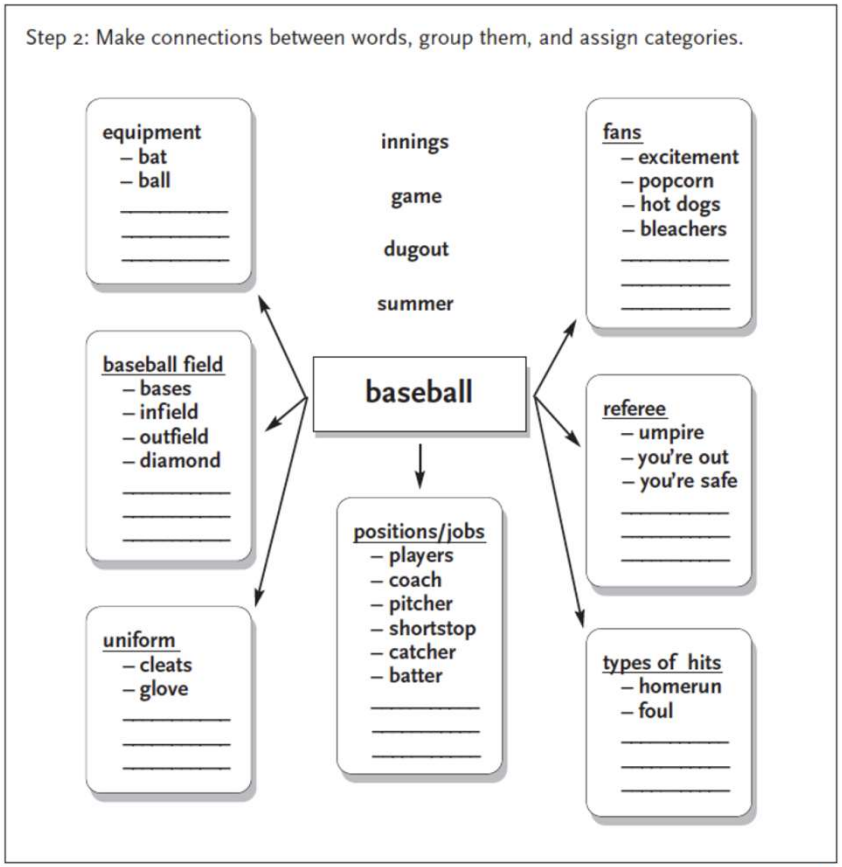
-mit (Latin mittere) = to release, let go, send, though

retransmit
transmission

transit
transatlantic

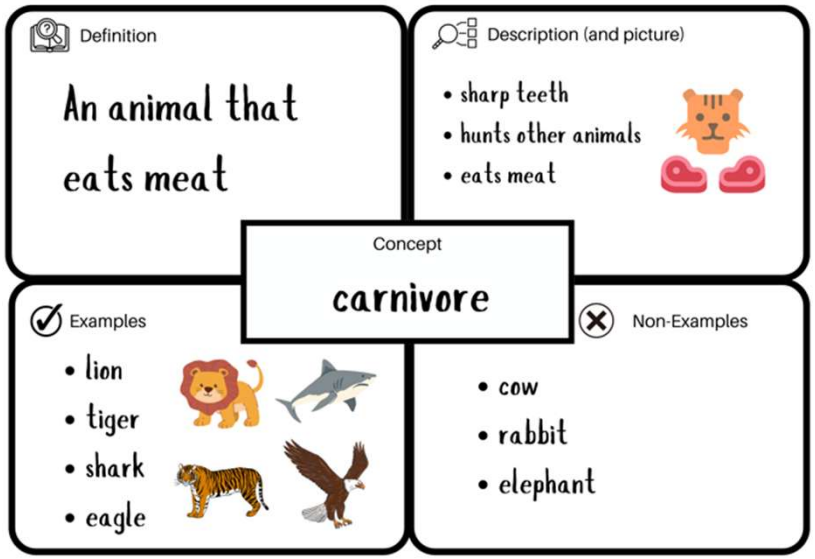
Semantic mapping

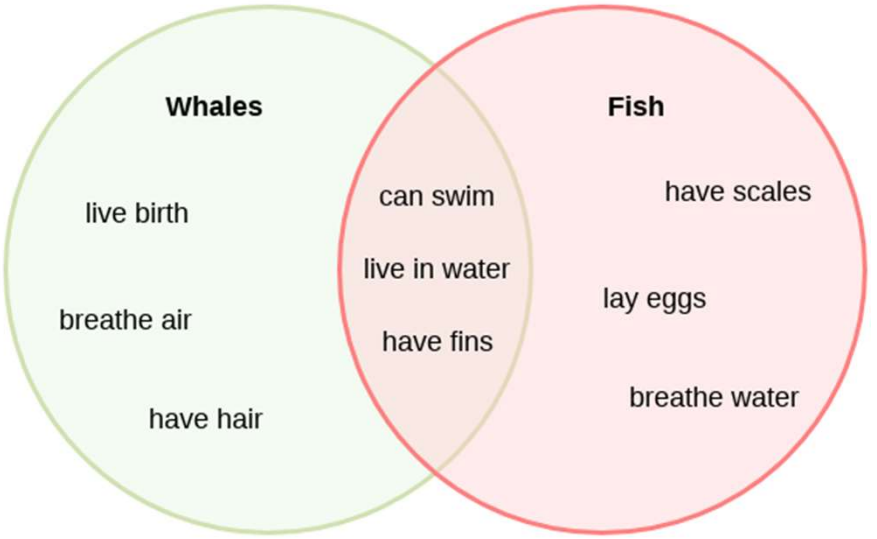




https://keystoliteracy.com/blog/semantic-mapping-to-grow-vocabulary/

Graphic organisers





Animal	How they eat	How they move	How they communicate
Snake	hunt, bite, squeeze, kill	slither, slide, swim	hiss
Horse	chew, chomp, grind	run, gallop, walk, trot	neigh, paw at the ground
Elephant	pull, scoop, chew	run, charge, walk	trumpet

Everything covered so far, plus

- Teaching in a topic, or theme
- Using semantic organisation activities
- Knowledge rich curriculum
- Fiction and non-fiction texts aligned with the topic and theme
- Syntax and sentence-level writing and speaking
- Narrative and story telling

Explicit teaching

Concept knowledge

Student friendly definition

Examples and non-examples

Organising information

Sentence-level activities

Guided notes

Explicit teaching

Concept knowledge

Learning intention

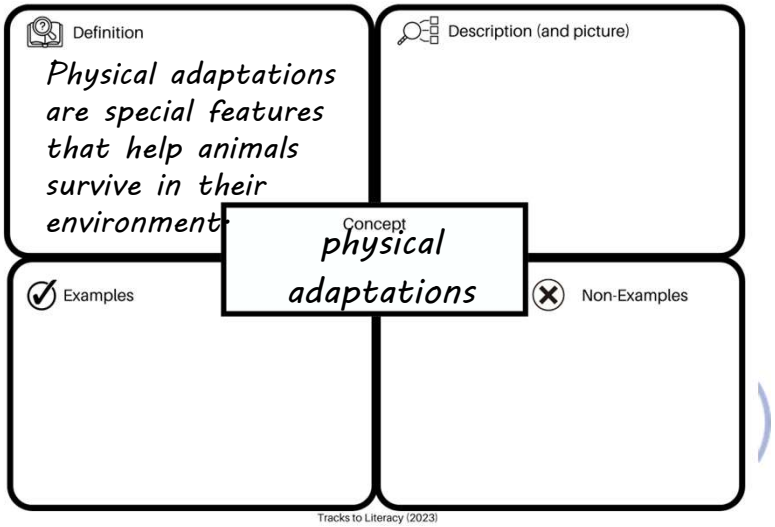
This term, we are learning about **animal adaptations**.
Today, we are going to learn about **physical adaptations**.

Success criteria

By the end of the lesson, you will be able to:
1. define 'physical adaptations'
2. give an example of 2 physical adaptations
3. explain explain how these adaptations help the animal survive

Definition

Physical adaptations are special features that help animals survive in their environment.



Teacher cue:
1. Active tracking
2. Choral reading
3. Pronouncing
4. Choral response
5. Guided notes

Image credit: Canva

Explicit teaching

Concept knowledge

Definition

Physical adaptations are special features that help animals survive in their environment.

Examples / Non-examples

Physical adaptation ✓

camel's hump

Not Physical adaptation ✗

cat wearing a collar

Teacher cue:

1. Active tracking
2. Choral reading
3. Pronouncing
4. Choral response
5. Guided notes

Image credit: Canva

Explicit teaching

Concept knowledge

Examples / Non-examples

Physical adaptation ✓

polar bear's thick fur

Not Physical adaptation ✗

bear hibernating

Teacher cue:

1. Active tracking
2. Choral reading
3. Pronouncing
4. Choral response
5. Guided notes

Image credit: Canva

Explicit teaching
Concept knowledge

Organise information

Animal	Physical adaptation	How it helps
camel	hump – stores fat and energy	survive for long periods without eating or drinking
dolphins	smooth, streamline bodies	
polar bear	double-layered fur	

Sentence-level activity

Combine these sentences

A camel's hump is a physical adaptation.

A camel's hump stores fat.

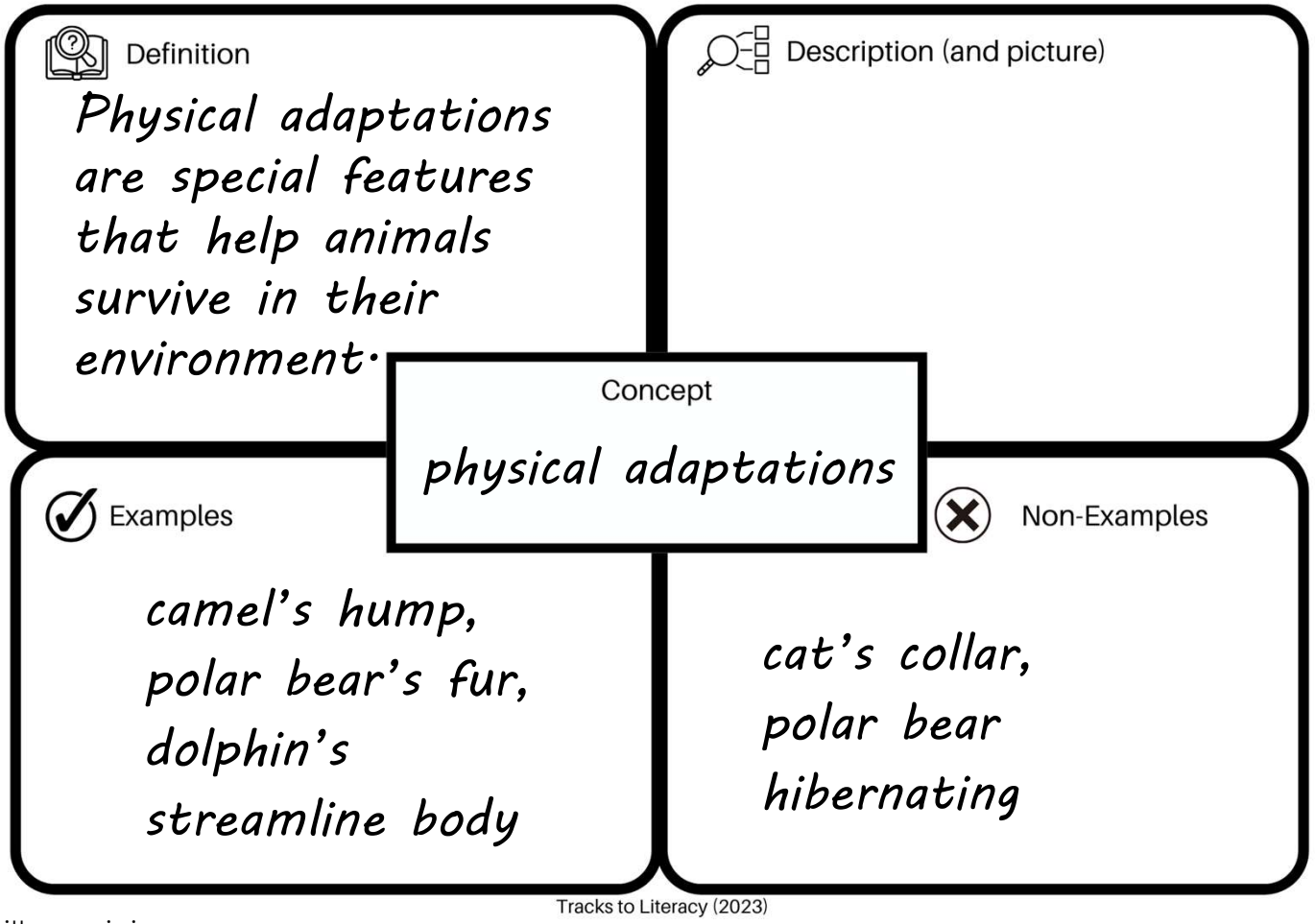
Camels can go for long periods of time without drinking or eating.

A camel's hump is a physical adaptation which stores fat and enables it to go for long periods of time without drinking or eating.

Image credit: Canva

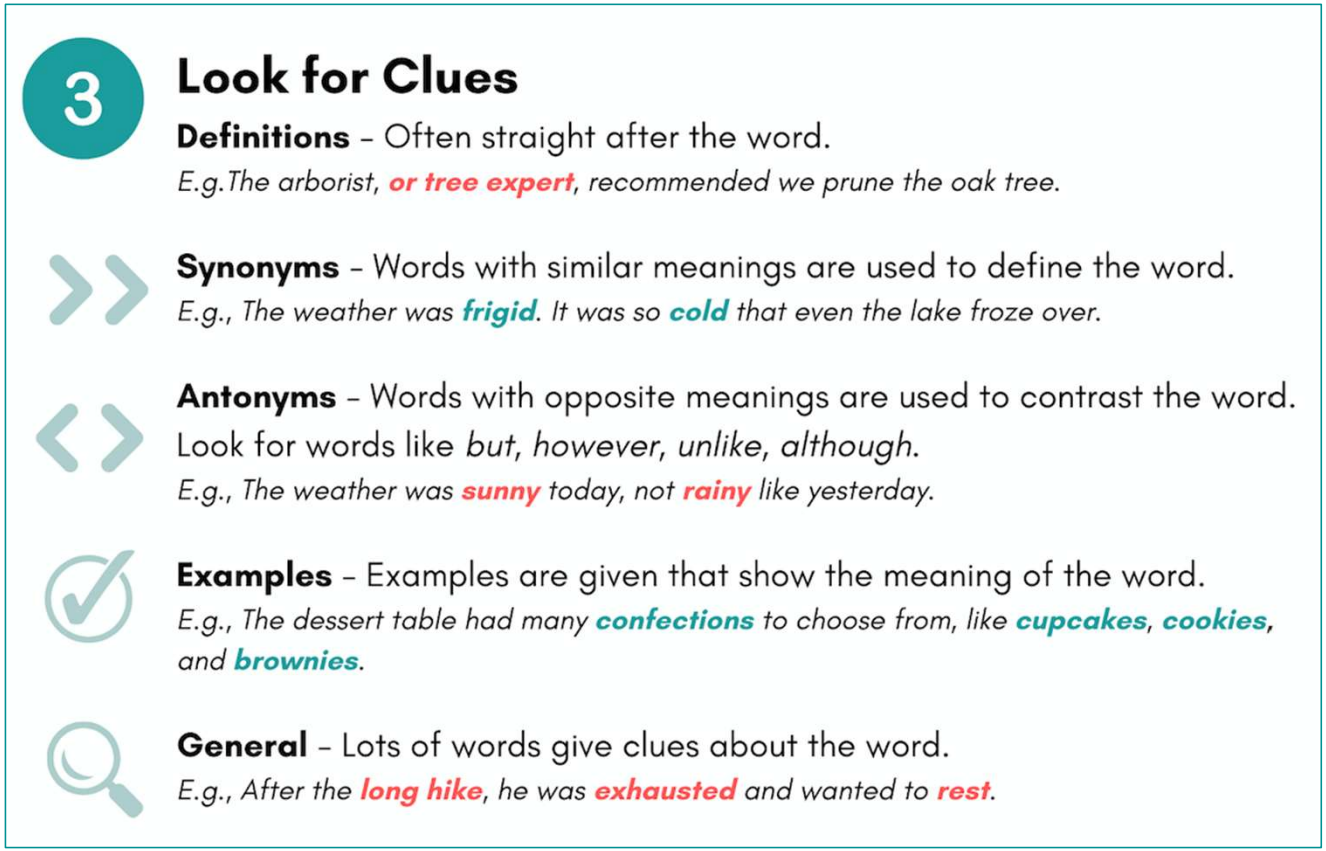
Explicit teaching Concept knowledge

Guided notes



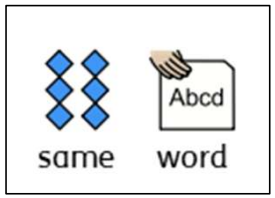
Word relationships

- Multiple meaning words
- Synonyms
- Antonyms
- Associations
- Analogies



Word choice

Word clines / Word ladders / Word gradients



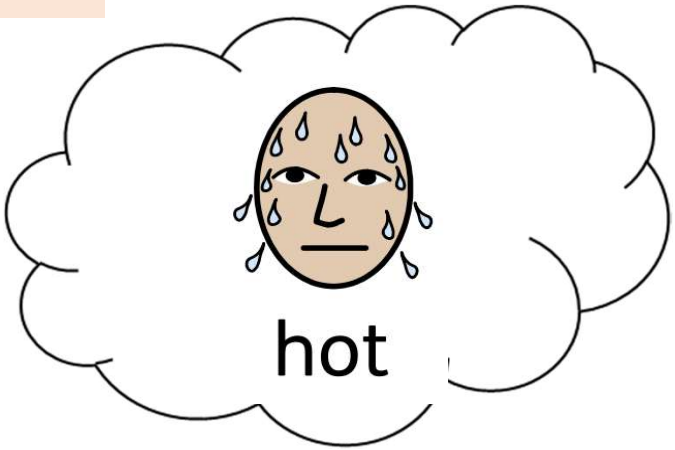
Synonyms for hot

warm

burning up

sweltering

sunburnt



scorching

boiling

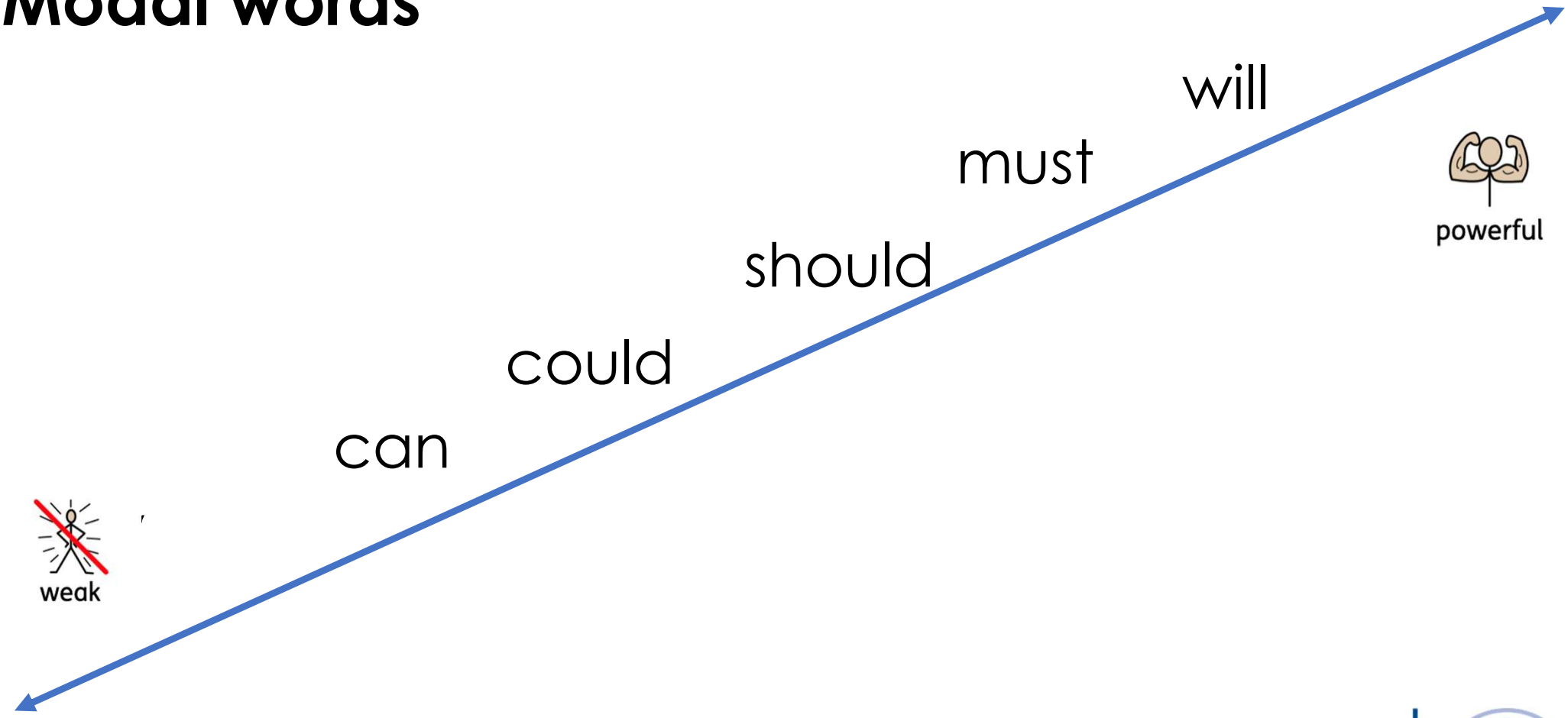
roasting

toasty

sweaty

Images created using Widgit Online.

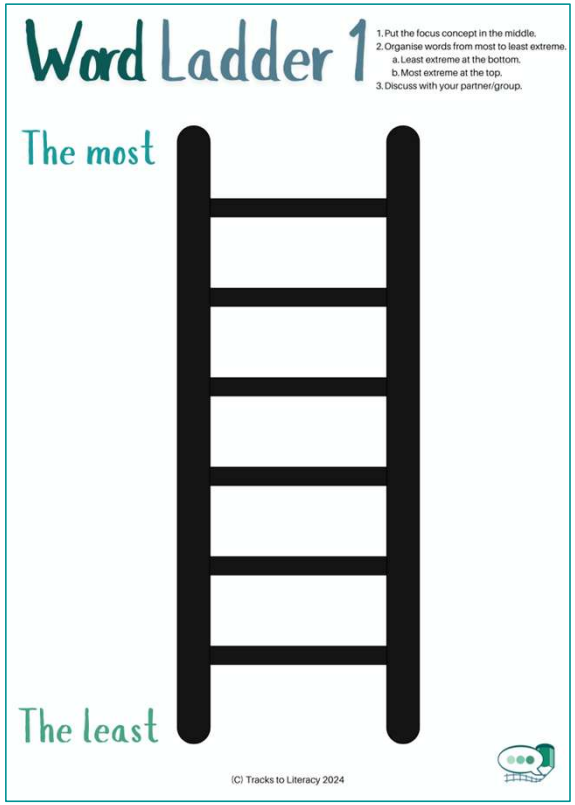
Modal words



Images created using Widgit Online.

Word choice

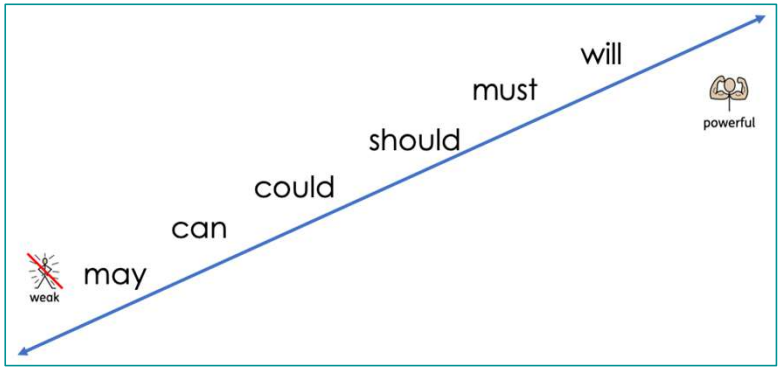
Word clines / Word ladders / Word gradients / Semantic gradients



A graded sequence of words arranged in a continuum.

Increases vocabulary breadth and depth.

Verb	walk	pace, tread, stroll, saunter, march, amble, hike, promenade, pootle, tiptoe, shuffle
Adjective	cold	cool, freezing, tepid, wintery, shivery, mild, icy
Adverb	slowly	gradually, leisurely, unhurriedly, sluggishly, gently



Grammar

Syntax

The rules that organise words into a sentence.

Syntax includes:

- Word type & order in a sentence
- Sentence organisation
- Word relationships
- How words combine to form phrases, clauses and sentences

Morphology

The rules that organise the structure and form of words. A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit in a language.

Morphology includes:

- Roots
- Affixes
- Stems
- Morphemes
- Inflection
- Derivation

Morphology is related to etymology.

Punctuation

Written symbols used to seperate sentences and their elements, clarify meaning and indicate pauses, intonation and emphasis.

Punctuation marks aid comprehension.

Common punctuation marks:

. , ? ! "" ' : ; – ()

Syntax instruction

General principles

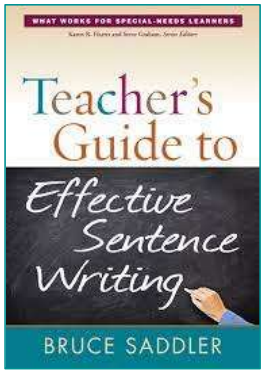
- Systematic and explicit
- Clear and consistent metalanguage
- Functional grammar approach
- Short targeted lessons – 15-minutes
- Embedded within meaningful reading and writing tasks
- Gradual release of responsibility
- Frequent student responses
- Feedback and correction
- Cumulative review

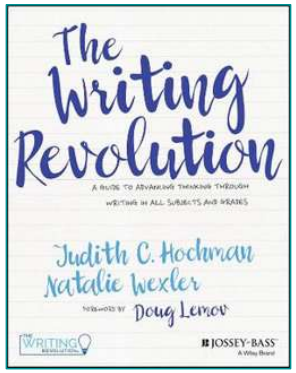
Syntax instruction

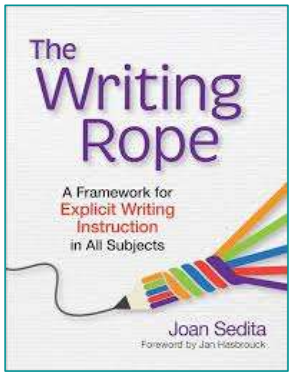
High-impact activities

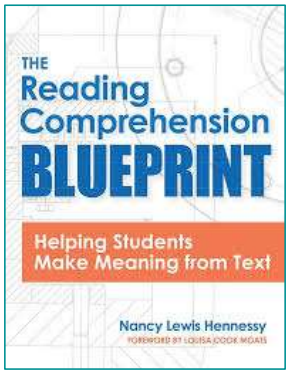
1. Sentence elaboration
   - sentence expanding
   - sentence stems

2. Sentence combining







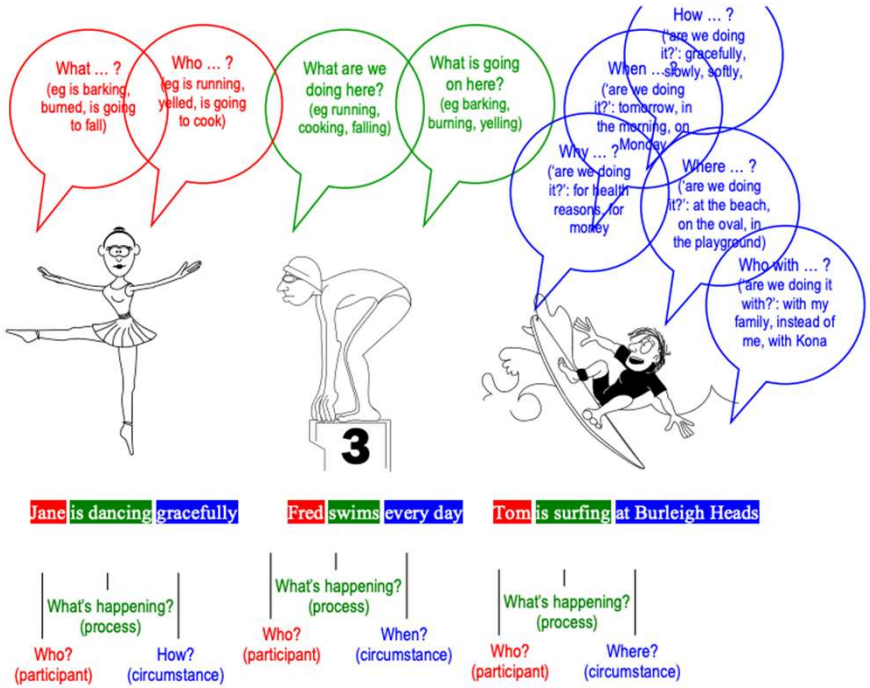


Syntax instruction

General principles

Clear and concise metalanguage

Functional grammar approach



The Syntax Project

Who/what?

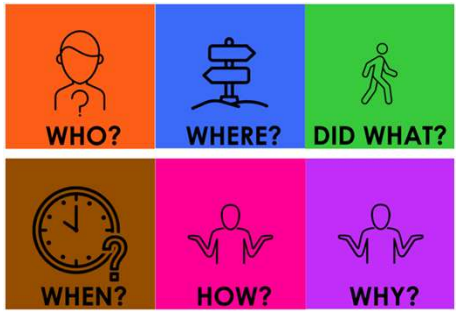
(did/will do/doing) What?

When?

Where?

Why?

How?



Colourful Semantics

Syntax Concepts & Metalanguage - Word types

Nouns

Adjectives

Prepositions

Auxiliaries

Verbs

Adverbs

Articles & determiners

Conjunctions

Syntax Concepts & Metalanguage

Sentence Forms

- Simple
- Compound
- Complex
- Compound-complex
- Active and passive

Sentence Types

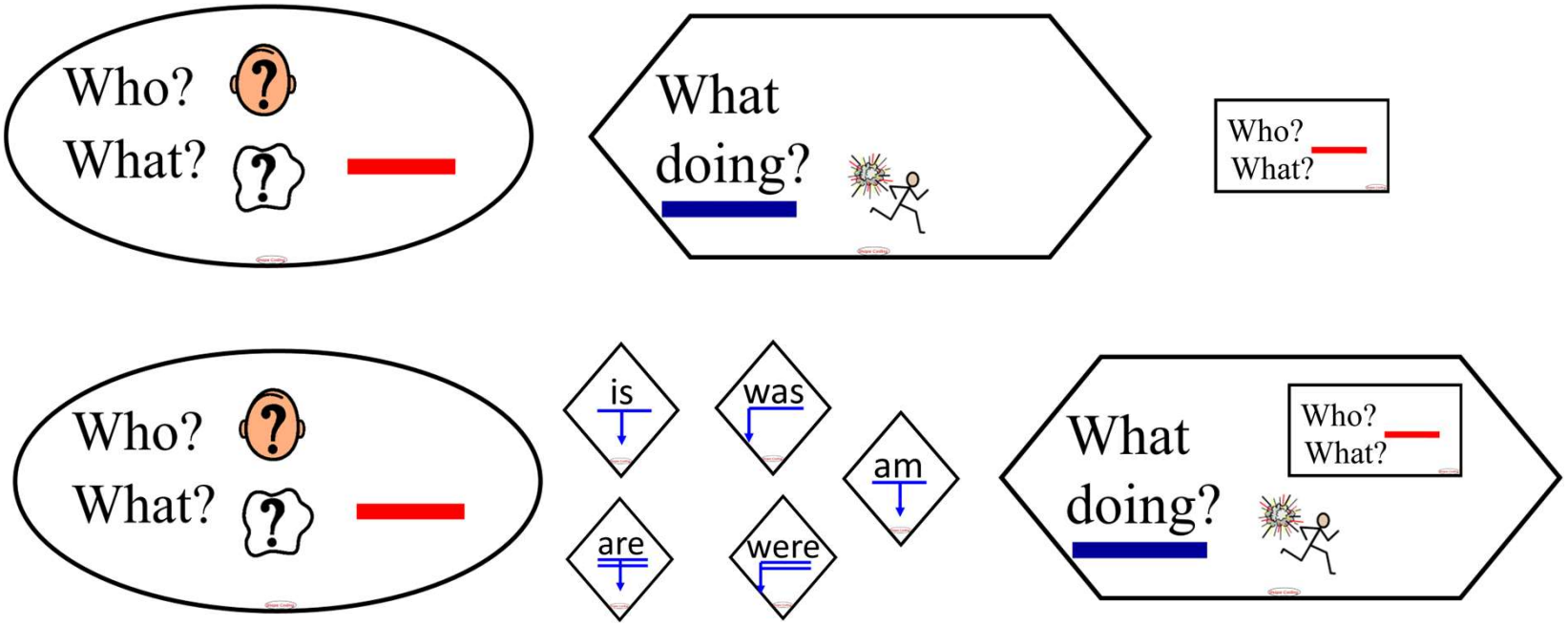
- Statement
- Question
- Command
- Exclamation

Sentence Constituents

- Subject
- Verb
- Object
- Adjectives
- Adverbial of time
- Adverbial of place
- Adverbial of manner
- Conjunctions
- Relative clauses
- Appositives

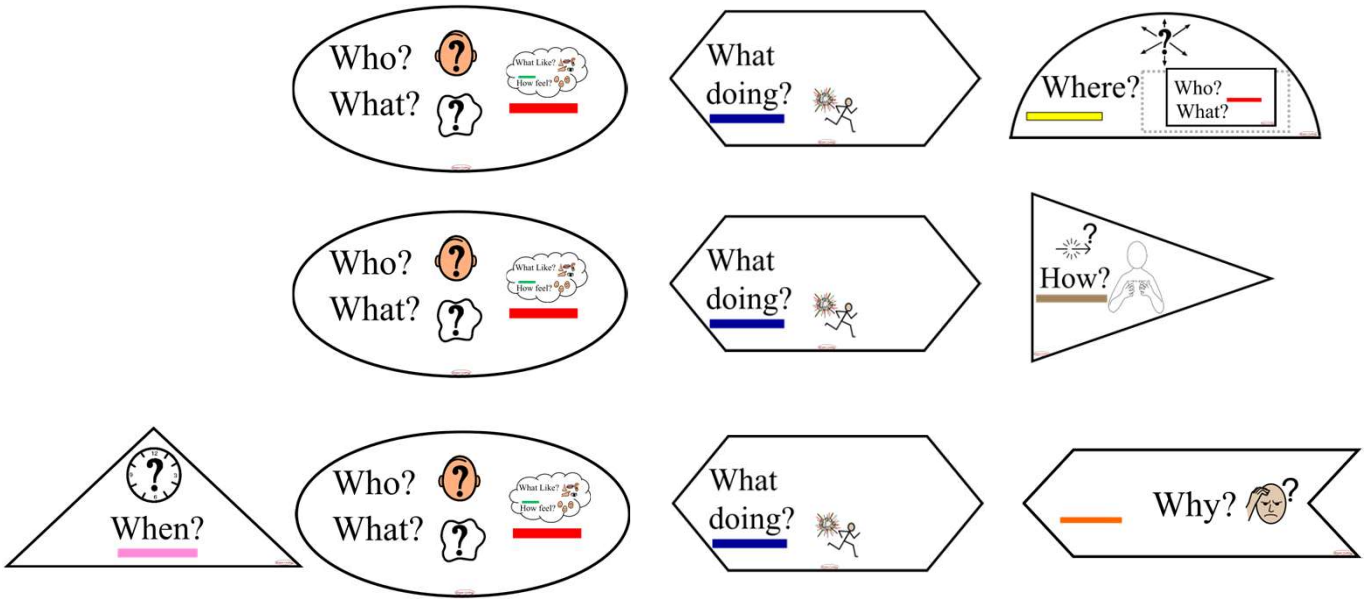
Syntax Concepts & Metalanguage

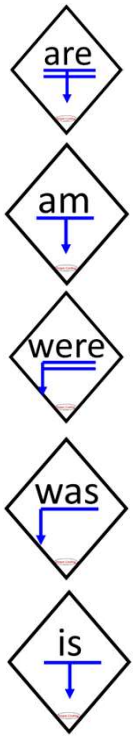
- **Subject:** who or what the sentence is about. The who/what doing the doing.
- **Verb:** the doing in a sentence. What is happening. What is doing.
- **Object:** the who or what receiving the doing.



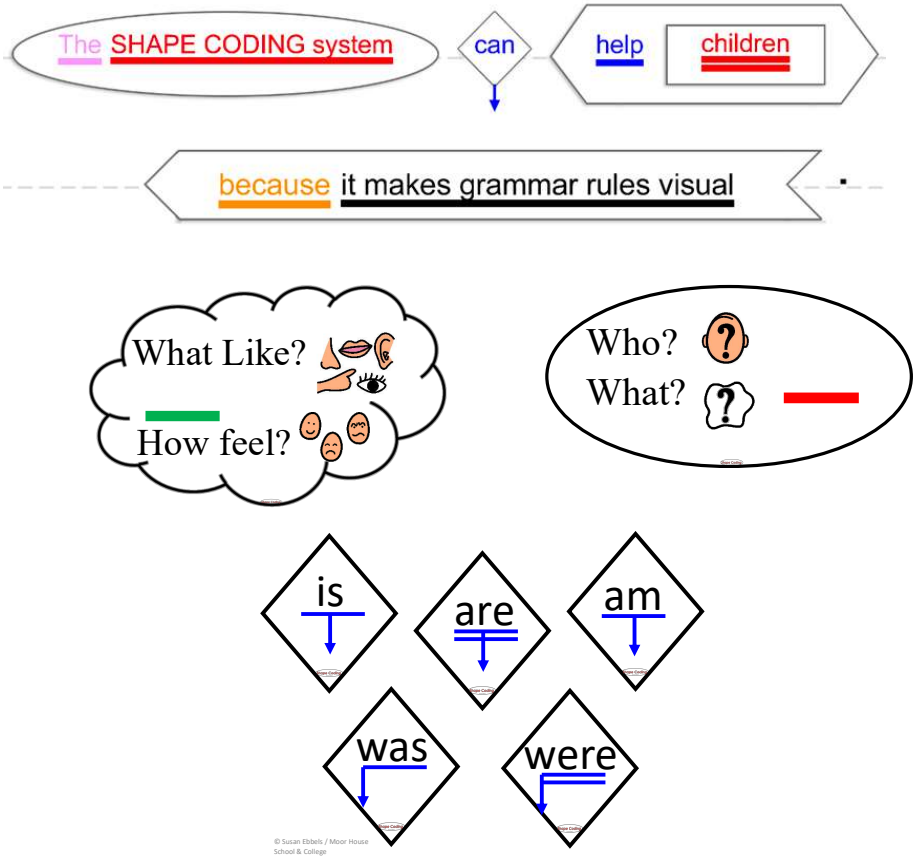
Syntax Concepts & Metalanguage

- **Adjective:** What is the who/what like? What is it like?
- **Adverbial of place:** Where the thing is being done/happening.
- **Adverbial of time:** When the thing is being done/happening.
- **Adverbial of manner:** How the thing is being done/happening.





Shape Coding



Colourful Semantics

Syntax instruction

5 activities for teaching sentence types

1. Sort sentences into sentence types
2. Identify sentence type and add punctuation
3. Change the sentence
4. Sentence generation
5. Find examples

She was running.
Stop running!
Was she running?
She's running so fast!

SENTENCE FORMS		
Statement	.	
Question	?	
Exclamation	!	
Command	.!	

The Grammar Project OCHRE EDUCATION

sentence

- A complete thought that makes sense.
- Has a **subject** (who/what?).
- Has a **verb** (do?).
- Starts with a capital letter.
  Proper nouns start with a capital letter.
- Ends with a punctuation mark (. ? !).

Examples:

She ran quickly.
Pat ate apples.
Tim napped.

command

A command tells us to do something.
Ends in a full stop (.) or an exclamation mark (!).

Examples

Come here.

Stop!

Go and visit the Serpentine Falls.

exclamation

A sentence that expresses emotion or force.
It ends in an exclamation mark (!).

Examples

That is awful!

I love this song!

We must protect the Serpentine Falls!

question

A question asks us something. Often begins with the words: what, when, how, why, who, where, do, did, can, will.
Ends with a question mark (?)

Examples

Do you like strawberries?

What time is it?

Have you ever been to the Serpentine Falls?

statement

A statement tells us something.
It gives an idea or an argument. It ends in a full stop (.)

Examples

He doesn't like cats.

I play sport on Saturdays.

The Serpentine Falls are in the Serpentine National Park.

Sentence generation

Sentence types

93 FREE busy picture scenes
https://shorturl.at/cmt48

Generate a statement, question, exclamation and command about the picture

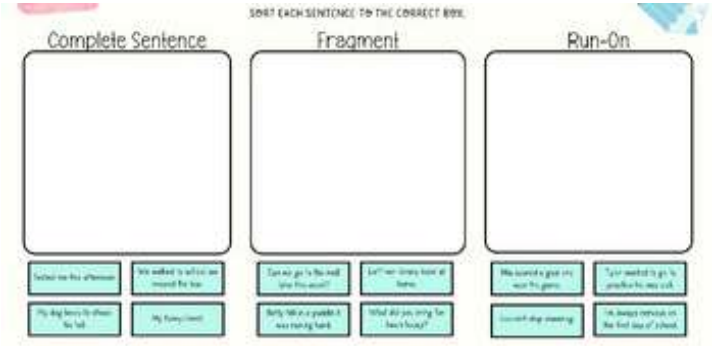
SENTENCE FORMS	
Statement .	
Question ?	
Exclamation !	
Command . !	

(The Intervention Express, Glisson & Simpson, 2024)

Syntax instruction

3 activities for sentence basics

1. Sentence or fragment?



2. Wh-Questioning
   - sentence expansion
   - picture-prompted generation

SENTENCE PARTS

Who/what	(is/was) doing what?	What like? (which one, what kind, how many)	When? Where? How? Why?

3. Sort sentence parts
   - subject-predicate
   - phrases and clauses
   - independent and dependent clauses

Read this sentence

When Miss Trunchbull arrived, everyone made a path, so tha get through

38 Image credit: Pixabay

Match the words on the le they answer on the right

made a path	
upon Miss Trunchbull's arrival	
so that she could easily get thr	
everyone	who?

39

Expand the sentence:
Miss Trunchbull puts children in The Chokey.

When	Whenever children misbehave
Who	Miss Trunchbull
What	puts children in The Chokey
Why	for punishment

comma

Whenever children misbehave, Miss Trunchbull puts children in The Chokey because she believes they need punishment.

45

Ochre Education – Year 3 novel study (Matilda)
https://ochre.org.au/resources/ac/year_3/english?selectUnit=3en01a

What about in K/PP?

Icons from The Grammar Project. Photo from The Language Express, 2015. Used with permission.

Picture prompted generation

SENTENCE PARTS			
Who/what	(is/was) doing what?	What like? (which one, what kind, how many)	When? Where? How? Why?

Sentence forms

Compound Sentence

I , for and nor but or yet so I

Independent clause + FANBOYS + Independent clause
(separated with a coordinating conjunction)
comma required
*I am starving, **but** the fridge is empty!*

Complex Sentence

ID

Independent clause + Dependent clause
(separated with a subordinating conjunction)
no comma required
*It starts to rain **whenever** I go for a walk.*

Complex Sentence

D , I

Dependent clause + Independent clause
(preceded with a subordinating conjunction)
comma required
***Whenever** I go for a walk, it starts to rain.*

Complex Sentence

Dependent clause used to define the subject or object
(using a relative pronoun or relative adjective)
commas required for non-essential relative clauses
*Suzie, **who** was an avid reader, couldn't wait to read the class novel.*
*Suzie loved any book **that** included magic or adventure.*

(The Syntax Project with reference to Van Cleave, 2014)

Conjunctions

Subordinating Conjunctions

I	S	A	W	A	W	A	B	U	B
if	since	as	when	although	while	after	before	until	because

Coordinating Conjunctions

F	A	N	B	O	Y	S
for	and	nor	but	or	yet	so

Sequencing	Adding Information	Cause/Effect	Comparing	Contrasting	Clarifying/ Explaining	Concluding / Summarising
first, second, third	additionally	because	similarly	but	for example	in conclusion
next	also	as a result	likewise	although	for instance	to sum up
then	furthermore	therefore	in the same way	despite	specifically	in summary
after that	moreover	consequently		while	in other words	overall
finally	in addition	thus		whereas	namely	ultimately
before	another	so		however	that is	finally
later		due to		on the other hand		
subsequently				in contrast		
				unlike		

Sentence elaboration

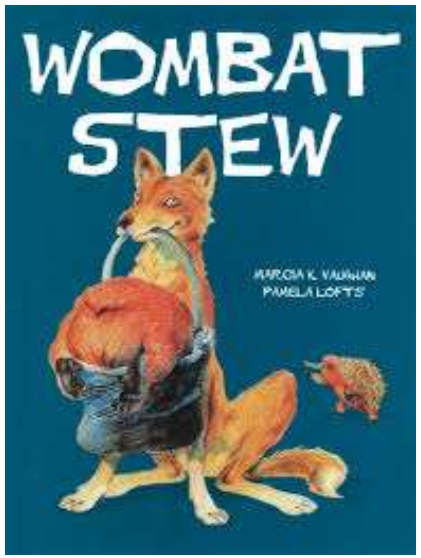
Can be done orally

Sentence stems

Adding a second clause to the end of a sentence when given a conjunction

The clever dingo caught a wombat because……

The clever dingo caught a wombat because he was hungry.



The clever dingo caught a wombat, but……

The clever dingo caught a wombat, but the wombat's friends didn't want him to be eaten.

The wombat's friends didn't want him to be eaten, so……

The wombat's friends didn't want him to be eaten, so they decided to trick the dingo.

Sentence elaboration

Sentence stems

Climate change is when the Earth's weather patterns change over time, mostly because of human activities. People burn fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas for energy, which releases harmful gases called greenhouse gases into the air. These gases trap heat in the atmosphere, making the Earth warmer. This is called global warming. As the Earth gets hotter, the ice at the North and South Poles begins to melt, causing sea levels to rise. When sea levels rise, places near the coast can flood more easily, which can damage homes and habitats.

Climate change also leads to more extreme weather. Some places may have stronger storms, longer droughts, or more bushfires. These changes make it harder for animals to survive, especially if their homes are destroyed or their food becomes harder to find. People can be affected too, as crops might not grow well in hotter or drier conditions.

Although climate change is a big problem, there are ways we can help. If we save energy, walk or ride bikes more, plant trees, and use less plastic, we can make a difference. While one person alone can't stop climate change, if everyone works together, we can protect our planet for the future.

Climate change is a big problem, because…

Climate change is a big problem, but…

Climate change is a big problem, so…

Sentence Summaries

Read this extract from *The Iron Man*

‘Hogarth’s father put on speed, he aimed his car at the foot. Crash! He knocked the foot out of the wa faster and faster. And behind him, on the boom went up, as if an iron skyscraper ha iron giant, with his foot knocked from und over.’

Summarise **what happened to the Iron Man** in t

44 *The Iron Man* by Ted Hughes, p. 32

Write the key information

‘Hogarth’s father put on speed, he aimed his car at the foot. Crash! He knocked the foot out of the way. He drove on, faster and faster. And behind him, on the road, a clattering boom went up, as if an iron skyscraper had collapsed. The iron giant, with his foot knocked from under him, had toppled over.’

who/what	the Iron Man
(did/will do) what	toppled over
when	the car ran into the Iron man’s foot
how	with a clattering boom

Summary sentence: When the car ran into the Iron Man’s foot, he toppled over with a clattering boom.

Ochre Education – Year 3 novel study (The Iron Man)
https://ochre.org.au/resources/ac/year_3/english?selectUnit=3en01a

Language Structures

Connectives

Connectives and their functions.

Function	Meaning and examples
Continuity	Additive: *and, secondly, furthermore, in addition ...*
Temporal	Before: *earlier, previously ...* Later: *afterwards, subsequently ...* Simultaneously: *during, while, at the same time ...*
Causal	Cause/effect relation: *because, consequently, so, for this reason ...*
Contrast	Opposites: *conversely, on the other hand ...* Alternatives: *alternatively, instead ...*

Source: Oakhill, J., Cain, K., & Elbro, C. (2014). *Understanding and teaching reading comprehension: A handbook*. Routledge.

Language Structures

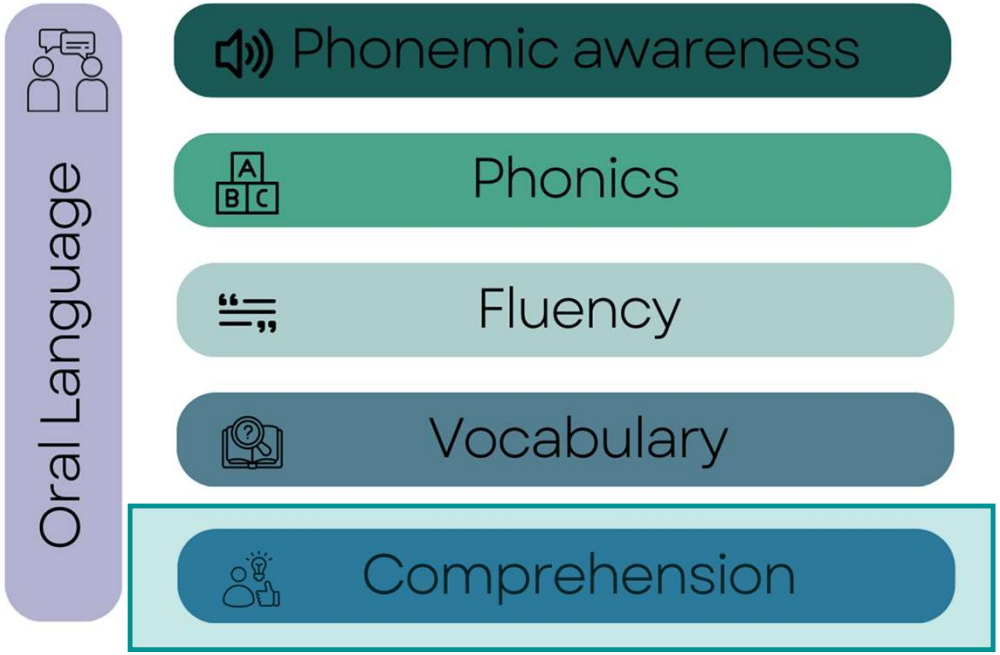
References (anaphors)

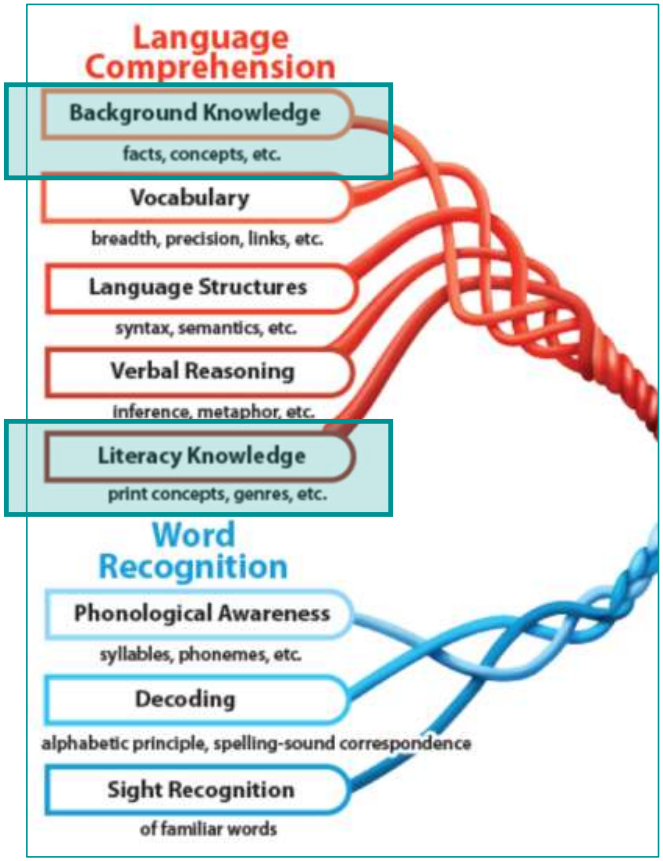
Anaphors: ellipses and pronouns

- **Pronouns:**
  - 'Zoe and Lyla were great playmates. Zoe and Lyla played together every day'
  - 'Zoe and Lyla were great playmates. *They* played together every day'.

- **Ellipses**:
  - 'Andrew enjoys cycling to work. Ben enjoys cycling to work, too'.
  - 'Andrew enjoys cycling to work. Ben *does*, too.'

Text Structure

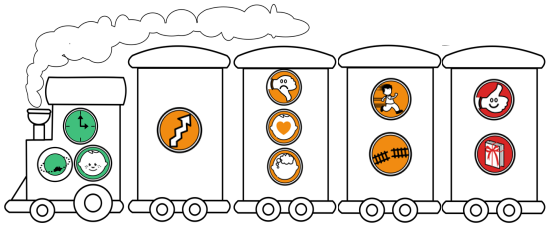




Knowledge of text structure

5-step process (K-2)

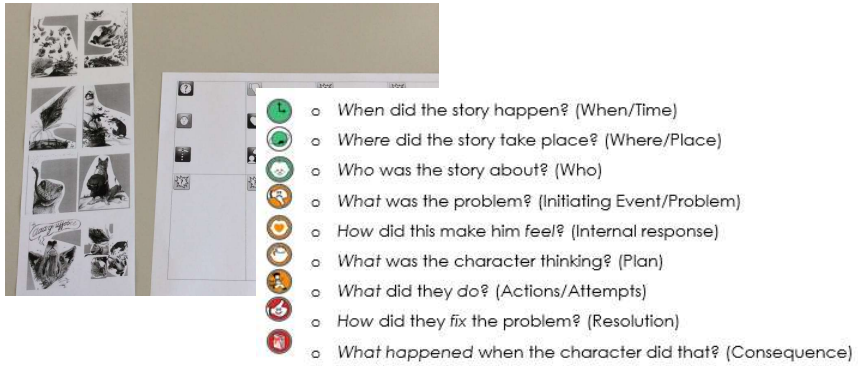
Step 1: Teach/review text structure elements



Step 2: Activate prior knowledge

Step 3: Read text and identify macro elements

Step 4: Answer questions & recall macro elements



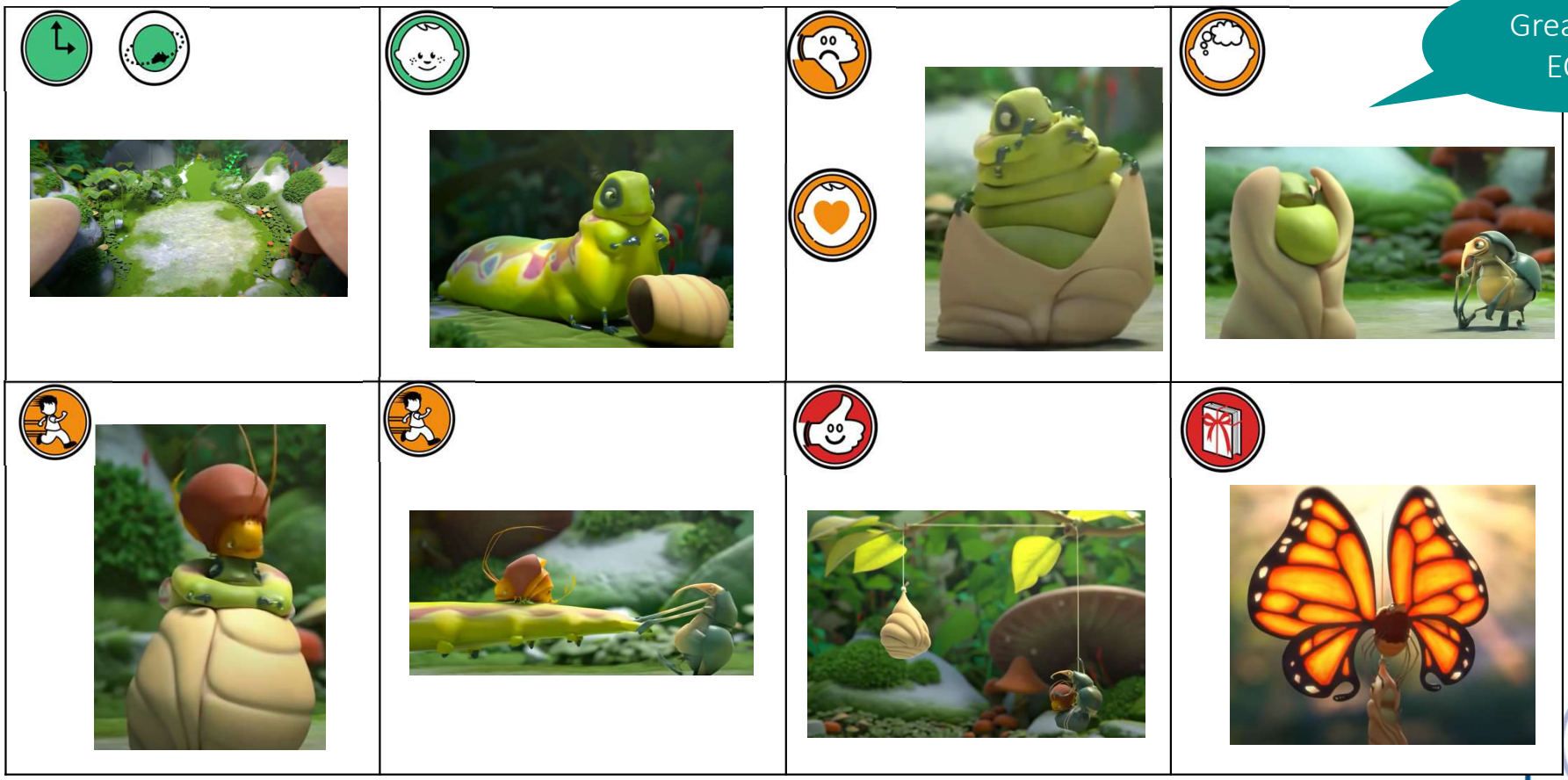
Step 5: Orally retell text

Icons and graphic organisers from the Text Express, 2024. Used with permission.

Wordless videos

Sweet Cocoon

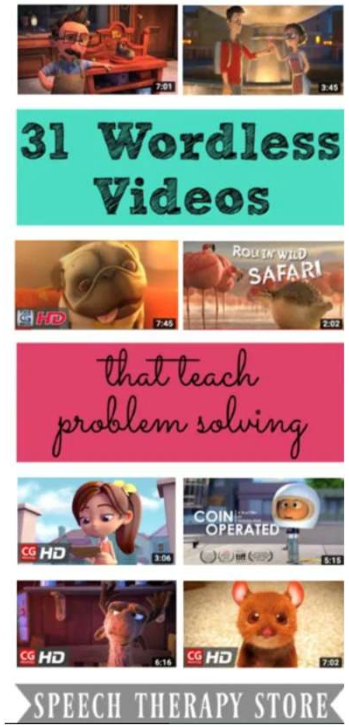
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0a0aNqTehM&list=PLqsg_Nxt-nOGQM1EkOkbQHA1kKEEpYAFQ&index=2

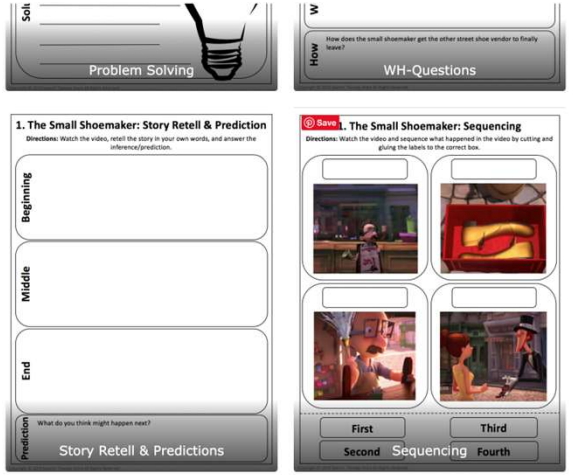


Great for ECE

Icons from the Text Express, 2024. Used with permission.

Animated videos





- https://www.speechtherapystore.com/wordless-videos-to-teach-problem-solving/
- 31 wordless videos with great story structures
- Accompanying free activity pack

Simon's Cat

An abundance of silent videos suitable for narrative (and sentence) writing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0ffwDYo00Q&list=PLagyxbJHFyL11iTef4c6ALIDsD--nXkeI

Ormie the Pig

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUm-vAOmV1o

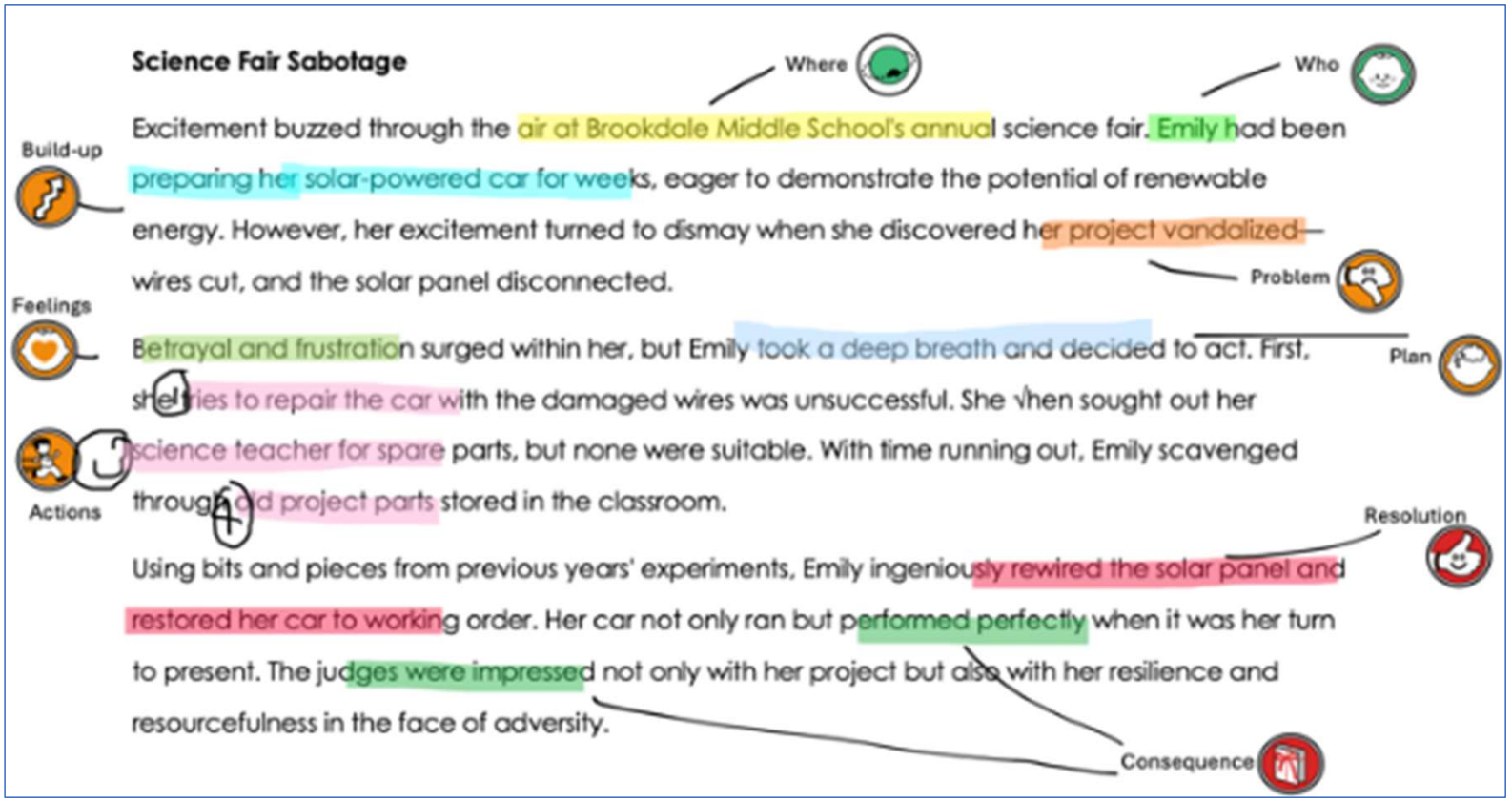
Bernard Bear

https://www.youtube.com/user/bernardbear

Knowledge of text structure

Years 3-6

Annotate text to identify macro features



Knowledge of text structure

Somebody-Wanted-But-So-When

Somebody	Wanted	But	So	Then
The protagonist or central character of the story – the "somebody" who drives the narrative.	The character's goal, desire, plan or objective. The goal drives the plot.	The conflict the main character faces - the obstacle / complication that prevents the character from achieving their goal.	The actions the character took to overcome the problem – how they attempt to resolve the conflict.	The resolution of the story - the achievement of the goal, a change in the character, or the conflict's conclusion.
Who is the main character? 	**What did the character want?** 	**What was the problem?** 	**What did the character do in response?** 	**What was the resolution?** 

Somebody
Wanted
But
So
Then

Example: 'Little Red Riding Hood'

Somebody	Wanted	But	So	Then
Little Red Riding Hood	...**wanted** to visit her grandmother and bring her a basket of goodies.	**But** she encountered a wolf who tricked her and wanted to eat her and her grandmother.	**So**, she talked to the wolf and eventually discovered his plan.	**Then** a woodsman came, scared the wolf away, and saved Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother.

Example: 'Holes'

Somebody	Wanted	But	So	Then
Stanley Yelnats	...**wanted** to break his family's curse and prove his innocence after being wrongly accused of stealing.	**But** he was sent to Camp Green Lake, where the warden forced the boys to dig holes in the desert as punishment.	**So**, Stanley dug the holes and eventually discovered that they were looking for buried treasure.	**Then**, Stanley found the treasure, broke the family curse, and was able to clear his name and return home with a fortune.

Knowledge of text structure

Somebody-Wanted-But-So-When

Somebody	Wanted	But	So	Then
The protagonist or central character of the story – the "somebody" who drives the narrative.	The character's goal, desire, plan or objective. The goal drives the plot.	The conflict the main character faces - the obstacle / complication that prevents the character from achieving their goal.	The actions the character took to overcome the problem – how they attempt to resolve the conflict.	The resolution of the story - the achievement of the goal, a change in the character, or the conflict's conclusion.
Who is the main character?	**What did the character want?**	**What was the problem?**	**What did the character do in response?**	**What was the resolution?**

Example: 'Little Red Riding Hood'

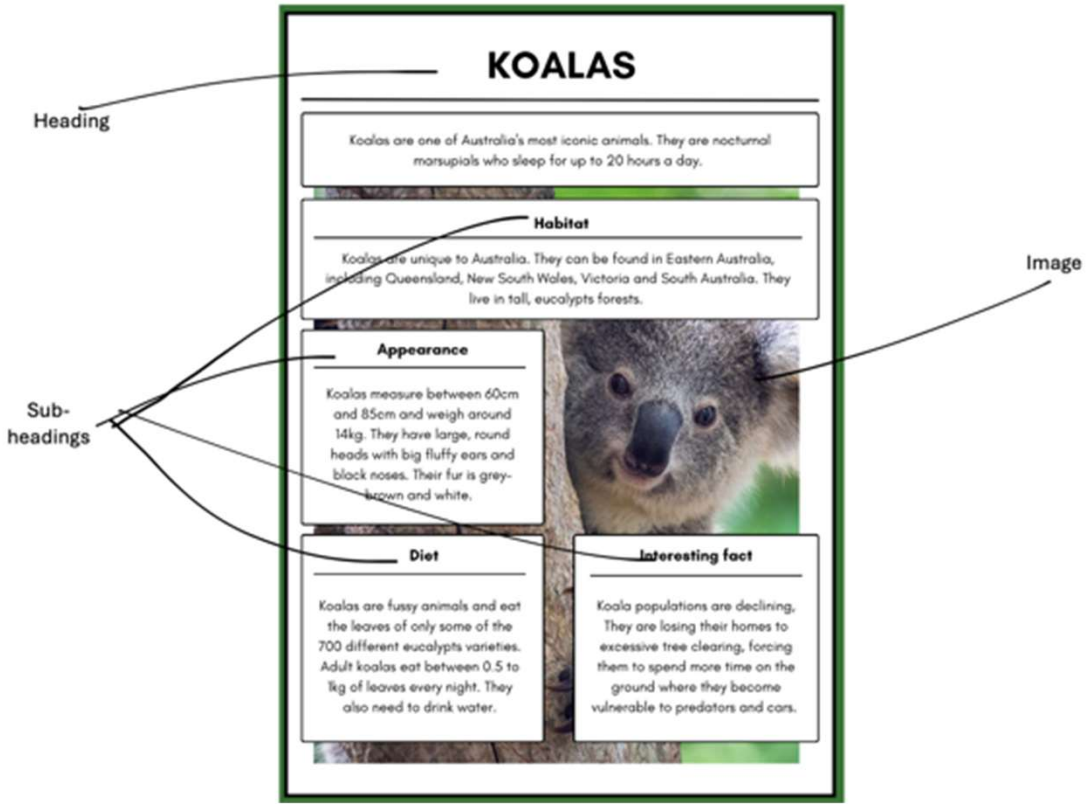
Somebody	Wanted	But	So	Then
Little Red Riding Hood	...**wanted** to visit her grandmother and bring her a basket of goodies.	**But** she encountered a wolf who tricked her and wanted to eat her and her grandmother.	**So**, she talked to the wolf and eventually discovered his plan.	**Then** a woodsman came, scared the wolf away, and saved Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother.

Example: 'Holes'

Somebody	Wanted	But	So	Then
Stanley Yelnats	...**wanted** to break his family's curse and prove his innocence after being wrongly accused of stealing.	**But** he was sent to Camp Green Lake, where the warden forced the boys to dig holes in the desert as punishment.	**So**, Stanley dug the holes and eventually discovered that they were looking for buried treasure.	**Then**, Stanley found the treasure, broke the family curse, and was able to clear his name and return home with a fortune.

Knowledge of text structure

Summarising and main idea



STEP 1: PREVIEW THE TEXT

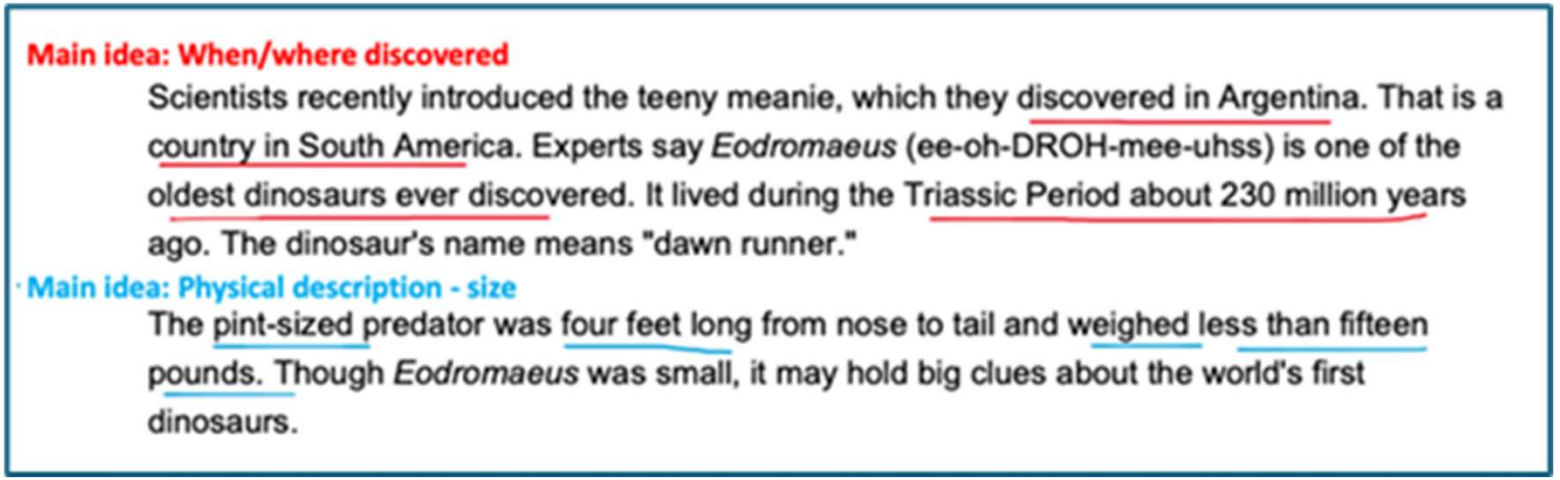
- Scan the text and identify any text features (i.e., title, cover, illustrations, headings or subheadings.
- Ask students to state what the main topic or idea is based on these features.

Knowledge of text structure

Summarising and main idea

STEP 2: IDENTIFY KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

- During and after reading, identify (model, use think alouds, or guide students) key words or phrases that indicate what the main idea of a section of the text is.
- Use highlighting or annotations to support



Main idea: When/where discovered

Scientists recently introduced the teeny meanie, which they discovered in Argentina. That is a country in South America. Experts say *Eodromaeus* (ee-oh-DROH-mee-uhss) is one of the oldest dinosaurs ever discovered. It lived during the Triassic Period about 230 million years ago. The dinosaur's name means "dawn runner."

Main idea: Physical description - size

The pint-sized predator was four feet long from nose to tail and weighed less than fifteen pounds. Though *Eodromaeus* was small, it may hold big clues about the world's first dinosaurs.

Knowledge of text structure

Summarising and main idea

Religion played a significant role in Ancient Egyptian society. The Egyptians believed in many gods and goddesses, each representing different aspects of life and nature. They built grand temples to honour these deities and practised rituals to gain their favour. The afterlife was also a crucial part of their beliefs, leading to elaborate burial practices and the creation of richly decorated tombs filled with treasures.

Main idea: Religion was important in Ancient Egypt
Supporting details:
- gods and goddesses
- built grand temples
- practised rituals
- afterlife was very important
- elaborate burial practices
- decorated tombs

STEP 3: DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN MAIN IDEA AND DETAILS

- Involves identifying the main message or most important point the author is trying to make vs the supporting information that explains, expands, or provides evidence.

Knowledge of text structure

Summarising and main idea

STEP 4: SUMMARISE INDIVIDUAL PARAGRAPHS

During reading, use the *Sentence Summary Strategy*

Religion played a significant role in Ancient Egyptian society. The Egyptians believed in many gods and goddesses, each representing different aspects of life and nature. They built grand temples to honour these deities and practised rituals to gain their favour. The afterlife was also a crucial part of their beliefs, leading to elaborate burial practices and the creation of richly decorated tombs filled with treasures.

Who/what:	ancient Egyptians
did/will do:	built grand temples led elaborate burial practices decorated tombs
Why:	to honour deities afterlife was a crucial part of their beliefs

The ancient Egyptians built grand temples and decorated tombs, to honour the deities because the afterlife was a crucial part of their beliefs.

Knowledge of text structure

Column-notes

A structure for students to record important information from any type of text (e.g., video, printed text, website). Use words and/or illustrations to record ideas.

- **Step 1**. Educator provide blank column-notes template or one with predetermined main idea/section headings.
- **Step 2.** During reading, guide students to identify main idea for each paragraph/section of the text.
- **Step 3.** After reading, guide students to fill in the column notes template. Add main idea/section headings on the left side and write dot-pointed notes on the right side.
- **Step 4.** Students synthesise the main idea of the notes by writing a one-sentence summary at the end of the notes.

Information text

Topic/text: Ancient Egypt

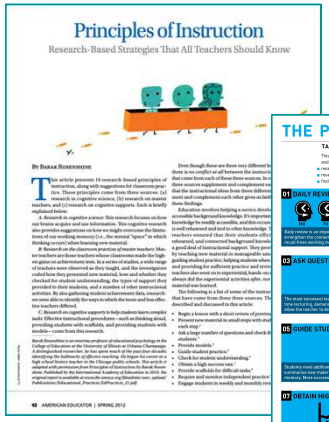
Main idea	Notes
architecture	• Impressive – really big • Intriguing • Massive structures • Examples: pyramids, tombs for pharaohs, Sphinx, Pyramid of Giza
location	• In northeastern Africa • Hot desert • Near the Nile River • Nile River – provided water for farming & crops • Lots of food – led to a rise in civilization
Pharaohs	• Rulers of Ancient Egypt • Political leaders and gods • Many rules and they held immense power • Famous: Tutankhamun and Ramses II • Left behind grand monuments and artifacts
Religion	• Thought the pharaohs were gods • Afterlife was very important to them • Practised rituals and built temples to honour gods • Buried people in decorated tombs and filled the tombs with treasure

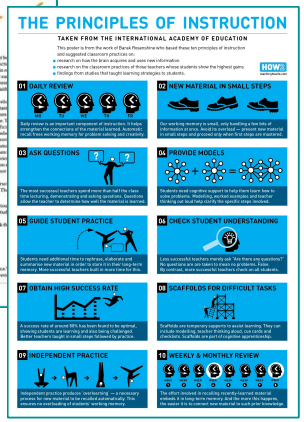
Summary, take home messages & questions

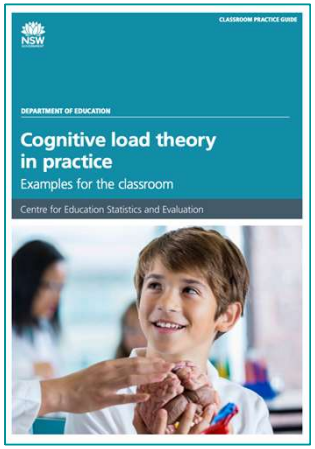
www.trackstoliteracy.com

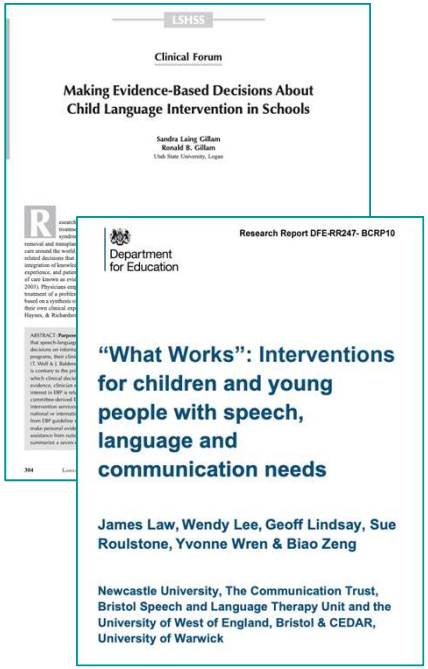
laura@trackstoliteracy.com

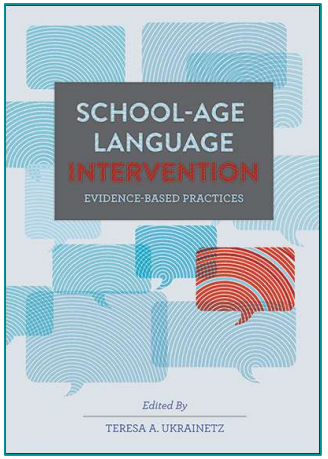
The Evidence Base – Oral Language

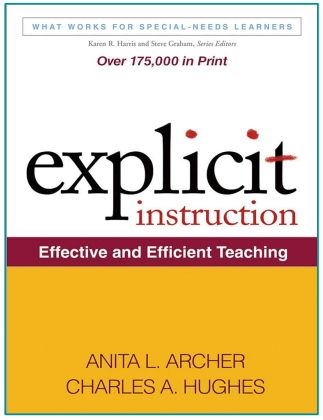


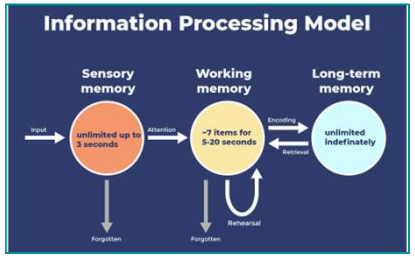


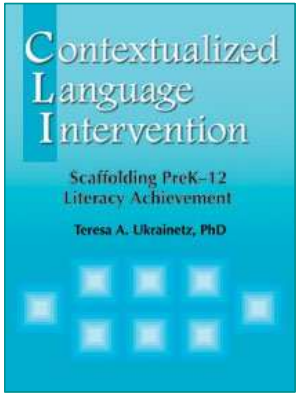




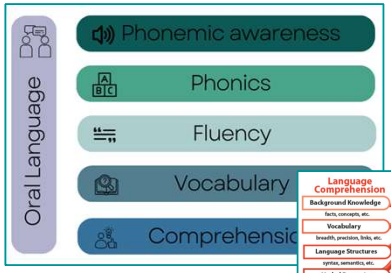








The Evidence Base – Reading Comprehension



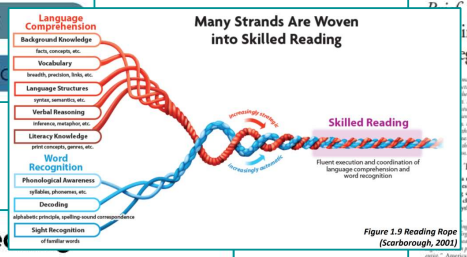
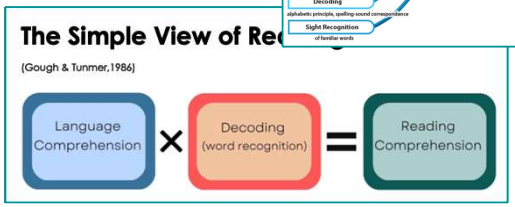
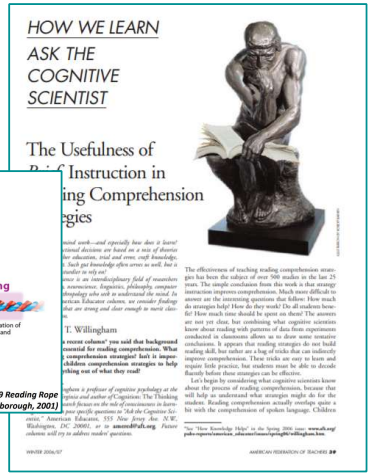
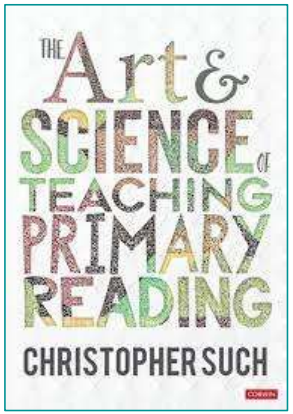
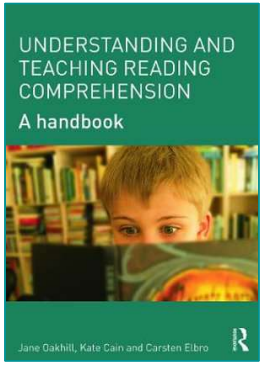


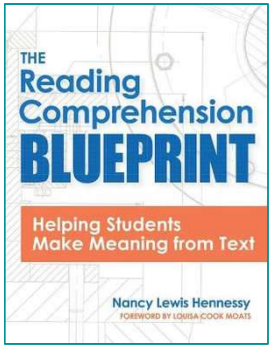
Figure 1.9 Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001)

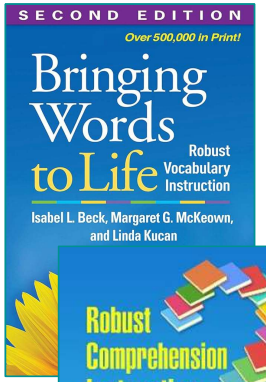


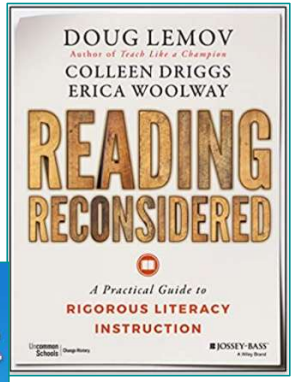


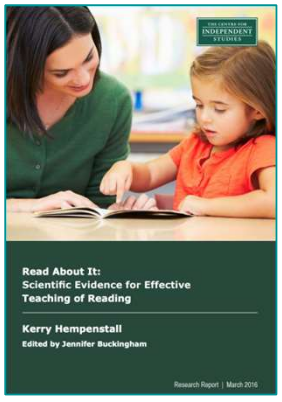


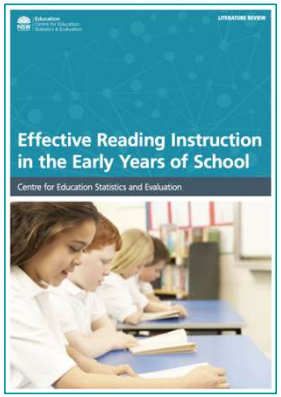


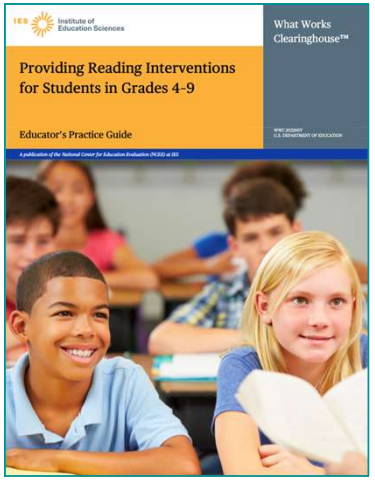


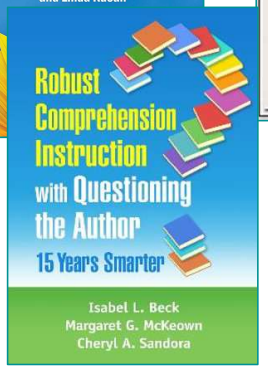




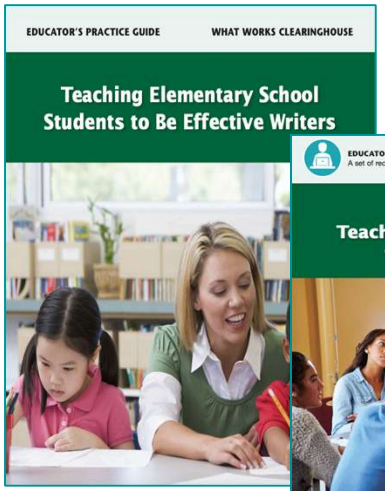


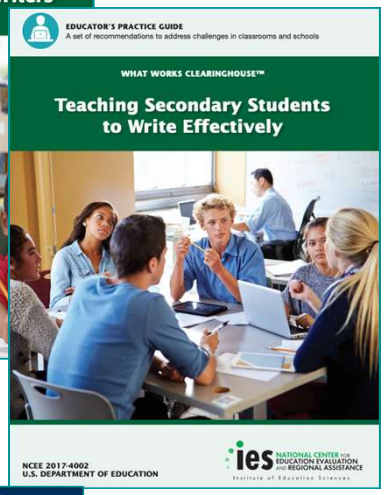


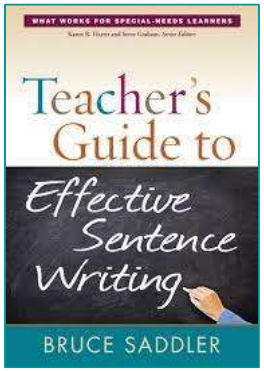


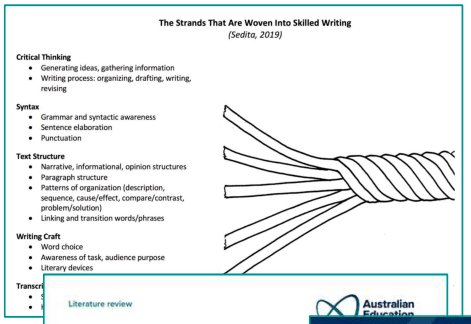


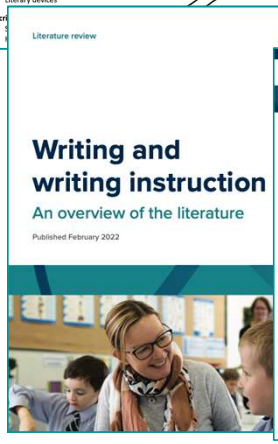
The Evidence Base - Writing

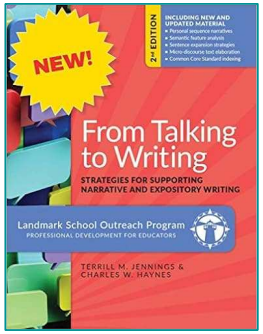


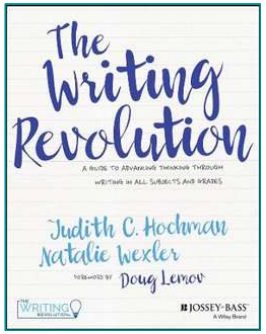


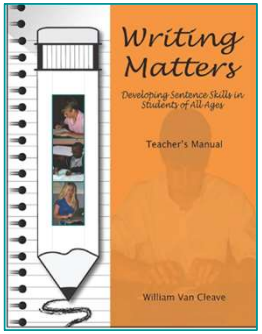


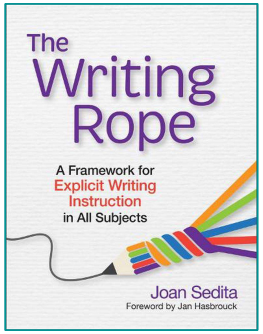












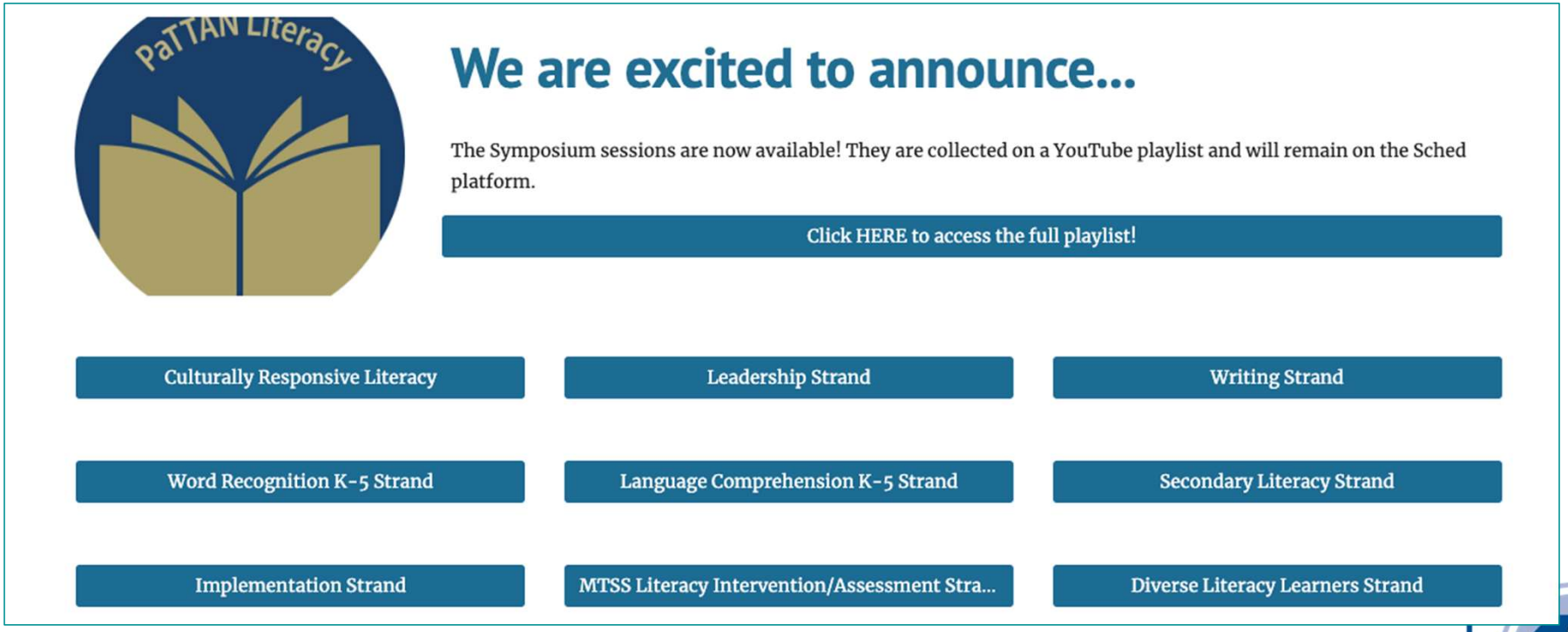
Recommended sources for further reading (and viewing)

2020 PaTTAN Literacy Symposium:

- The Science of Reading Strand https://sites.google.com/pattan.net/pattan-literacy/2020-pattan-literacy-symposium/science-of-reading-strand?authuser=0
- Word Recognition Strand https://sites.google.com/pattan.net/pattan-literacy/2020-pattan-literacy-symposium/word-recognition-strand?authuser=0
- Language Comprehension Strand https://sites.google.com/pattan.net/pattan-literacy/2020-pattan-literacy-symposium/language-comprehension-stran

Recommended sources for further reading (and viewing)

2022 PaTTAN Literacy Symposium



Recommended sources for further reading (and listening)

Science of Reading: The Podcast

Series 3 – Deconstructing the Rope episodes