Fostering Early Language and Conversations

With Nina Rothery & Chloe Godwin

Speech

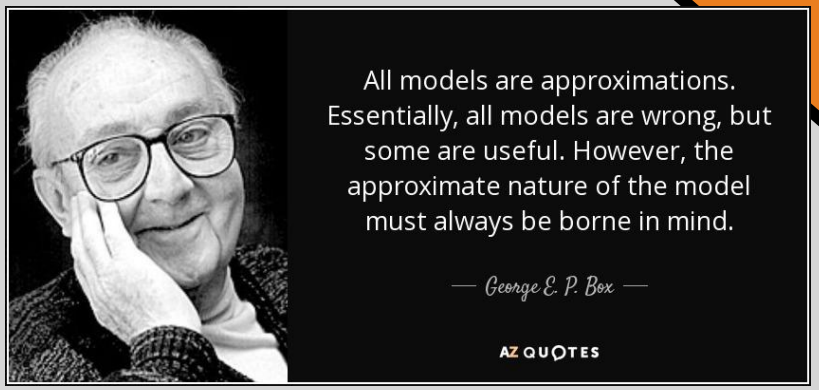
Words/sentences

Morphology and grammar

Form

Syntax/ word order

Phonology



Using gestures

Register

Use

Relationships

Conversation

Non-verbal skills

Concepts

Vocabulary

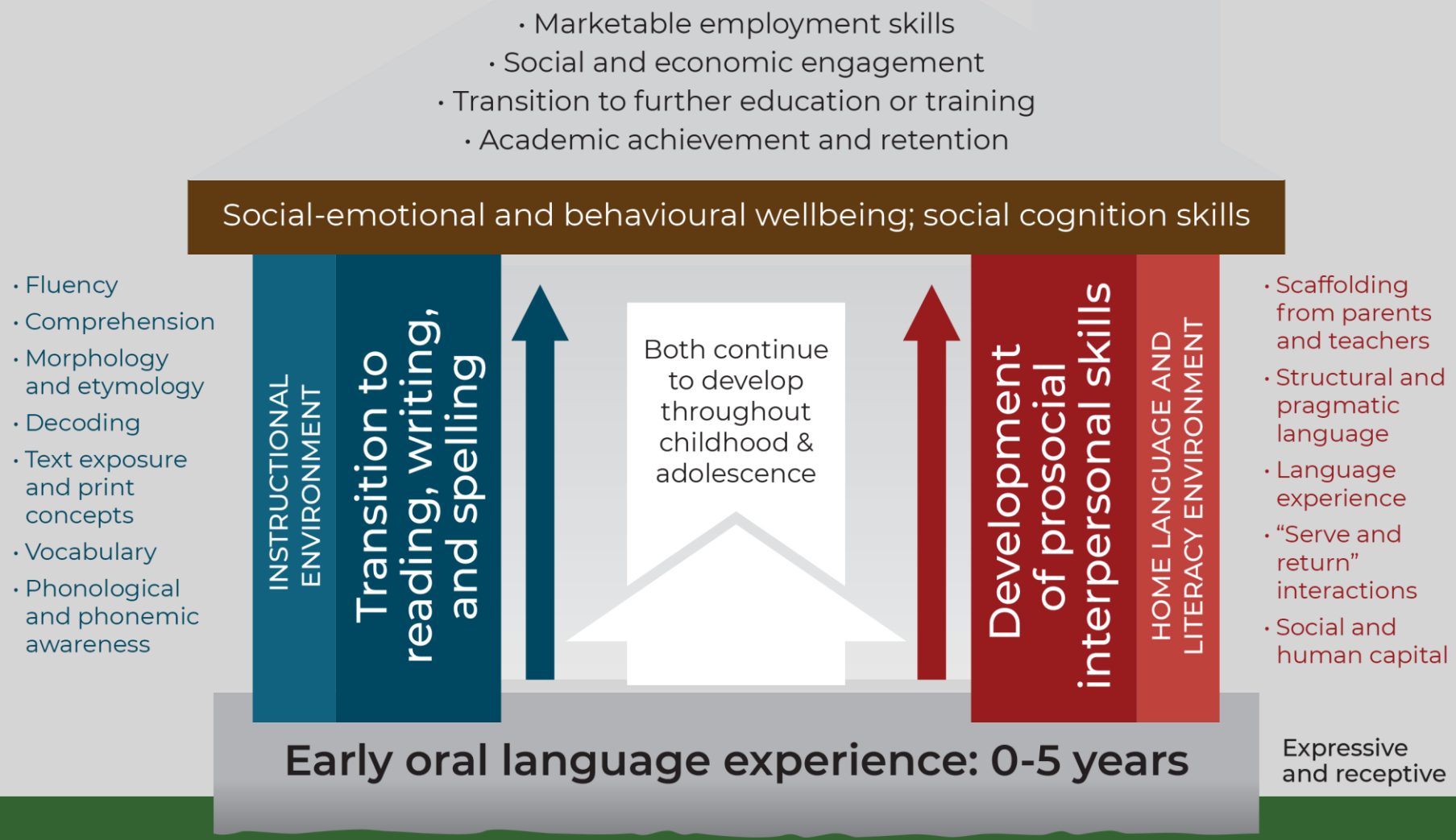
Content

Double meanings

Humour

Inference

A Model for Language


• Marketable employment skills
• Social and economic engagement
• Transition to further education or training
• Academic achievement and retention
Social-emotional and behavioural wellbeing; social cognition skills
• Fluency
• Comprehension
• Morphology and etymology
• Decoding
• Text exposure and print concepts
• Vocabulary
• Phonological and phonemic awareness
INSTRUCTIONAL ENVIRONMENT
Transition to reading, writing, and spelling
Both continue to develop throughout childhood & adolescence
Development of prosocial interpersonal skills
HOME LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ENVIRONMENT
• Scaffolding from parents and teachers
• Structural and pragmatic language
• Language experience
• "Serve and return" interactions
• Social and human capital
Early oral language experience: 0-5 years
Expressive and receptive
Solid ground: Social and emotional contexts for language use

Academic Attainment & Employability

- Language skills at age 5 are more **predictive of reading skills** at age 11 than factors such as behaviour, friendships , emotional wellbeing.
- Poor language at age five means you are **four times more likely to struggle with reading** at age 11.
- Children struggling in language development at 5 are:
  - **six times less likely to be behind in English** at age 11,
  - and **eleven times more likely to be behind in maths** at age 11**.**
- Early language skills at five are linked with **employment outcomes at age 34**.
- Approximately **60%** of young people in the youth justice system were identified as having SLCN (Bryan, 2015)**.** Only **2%** of youth offenders in one study had **accessed** any form of **SALT** services (Lanz, 2009).

Mental Health & Relationships

- Spoken language skills are important in **building and maintaining relationships**, **understanding and expressing feelings** and emotions – and **problem solving**.
- Good spoken language skills are identified as supporting **resilience** when it comes to mental health.
- Early language ability at two years predicts later **emotional and behavioural ability**
- Good language skills at 7 predict better **quality friendships** at age 16

Task 1: What is typical talk?

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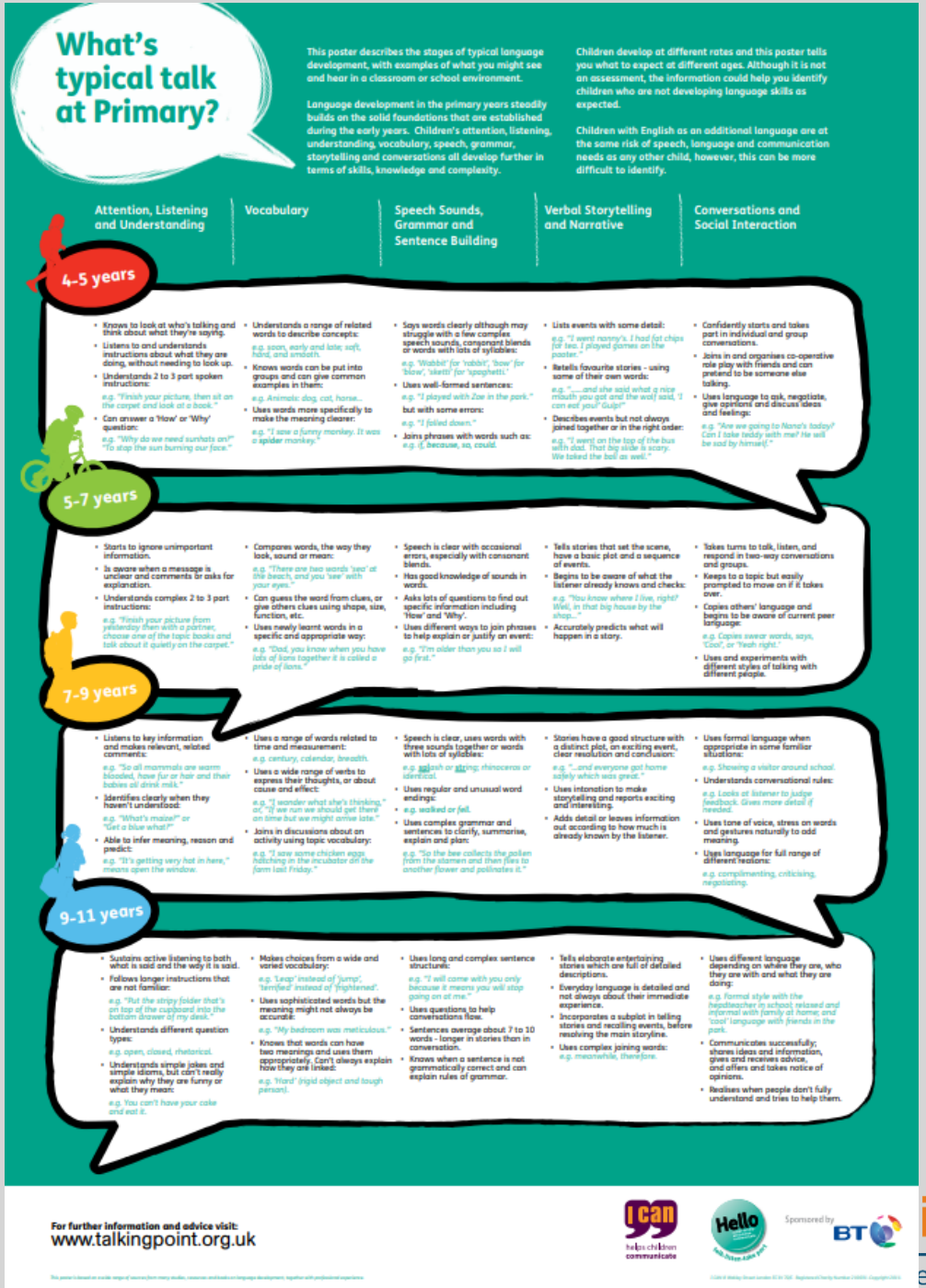
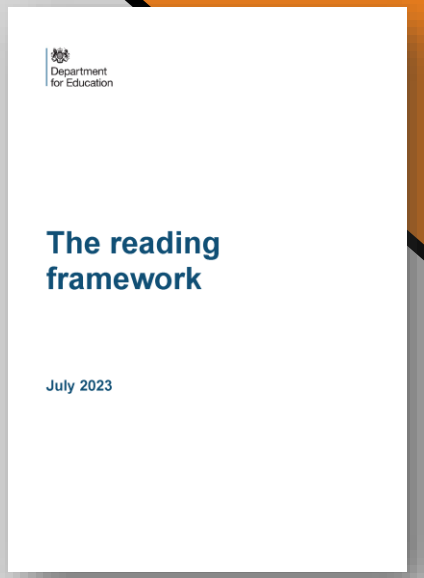


The Reading Framework



- Underpinning the reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage is the aim of reducing the language gap between children from language-rich homes and others.
- The progress of these children depends on adults engaging them in high-quality dialogue and direct teaching so that they can:

Develop their knowledge across all areas of learning

Articulate what they know and understand

- Critical to this are children's back and forth interactions with adults: These form the foundations for language and cognitive development.
- The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial.

Development is not fully sequential – stages are met and revisited throughout development.

Sh

Share attention

Be at the child's level. Pay attention to what they are focused on.

R

Respond

Follow the child's lead. Respond to their non-verbal and verbal communications. You could make a brief comment on what they can see, hear or feel.

E

Expand

Repeat what the child says and build on it by adding more words to turn it into a sentence.

C

Conversation

Have extended back and forth interactions. Give children time to listen, process and reply.

High quality interactions in the Early Years
The ShREC approach

"Sustained shared thinking involves two or more people working together to solve a problem, clarify an issue, evaluate activities, or extend a narrative. Key features include all parties contributing to the interaction – one aimed at extending and developing children's thinking."
-Matt Bromley - SecEd

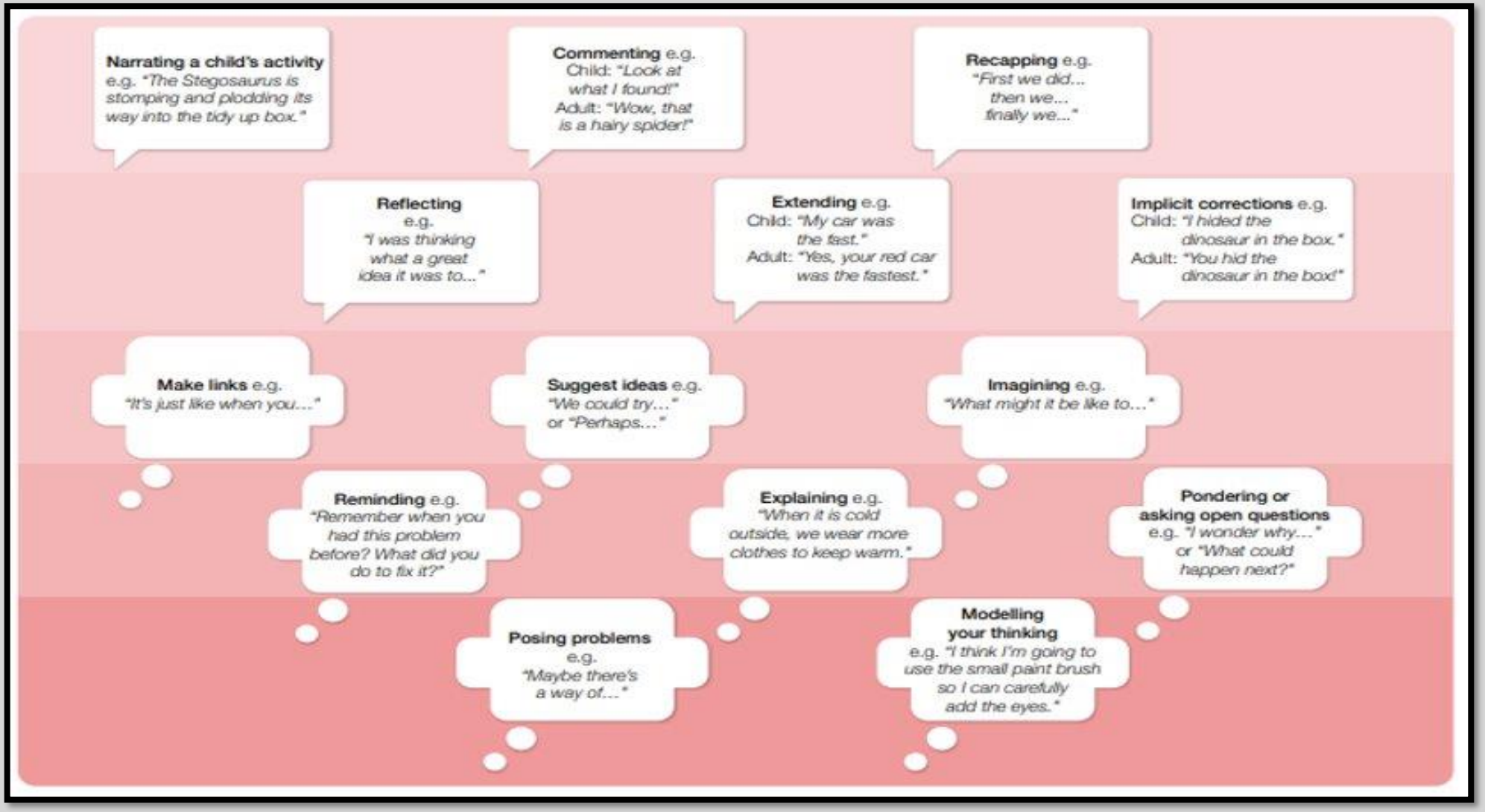
Sustained Shared Thinking

It can happen anywhere!

Incidental learning

Planned focus activities

Play – indoors and outdoors


Narrating a child's activity e.g. *"The Stegosaurus is stomping and plodding its way into the tidy up box."*
Commenting e.g. Child: *"Look at what I found!"* Adult: *"Wow, that is a hairy spider!"*
Recapping e.g. *"First we did... then we... finally we..."*
Reflecting e.g. *"I was thinking what a great idea it was to..."*
Extending e.g. Child: *"My car was the fast."* Adult: *"Yes, your red car was the fastest."*
Implicit corrections e.g. Child: *"I hided the dinosaur in the box."* Adult: *"You hid the dinosaur in the box!"*
Make links e.g. *"It's just like when you..."*
Suggest ideas e.g. *"We could try..."* or *"Perhaps..."*
Imagining e.g. *"What might it be like to..."*
Reminding e.g. *"Remember when you had this problem before? What did you do to fix it?"*
Explaining e.g. *"When it is cold outside, we wear more clothes to keep warm."*
Pondering or asking open questions e.g. *"I wonder why..."* or *"What could happen next?"*
Posing problems e.g. *"Maybe there's a way of..."*
Modelling your thinking e.g. *"I think I'm going to use the small paint brush so I can carefully add the eyes."*

Funded by

Adults scaffold talk through interaction

- What strategies were used well?

- What would be the next steps at a similar interaction with this child?

Environments scaffold talk through opportunities

Task 2: Communication Hotspots

- Create or think of a map of your classroom and / or school layout (inside and out)
- Observe children engaged in activities for a few set periods during the day
- Mark the hotspots on your map with a coloured cross – one cross for a place where there is some purposeful talk; more crosses where there is lots of purposeful talk
- With another coloured pen, mark the places where there is little talk

Teaching words and making them stick

Extending and deepening children's vocabulary

Quantity and quality count

What if you don't know some words?

How can you tell streaked tenrecs are ♦□♍♓♋●animals?

How do streaked tenrecs ♍□❍❍◆■♓♍♋♦♏?

Sometimes streaked tenrec families get ♦♏□♋❒♋♦♏♎ in the rainforest and need to ♍□❍❍◆■♓♍♋♦♏ with each other. They make high-pitched sounds when they need to find each other. This process is called ♦♦❒♓♎◆●♋♦♓□■.

Why Books?

Spoken Language	Written language
Less formal – greater use of colloquialisms	Formal tone
Spontaneous	Planned structure

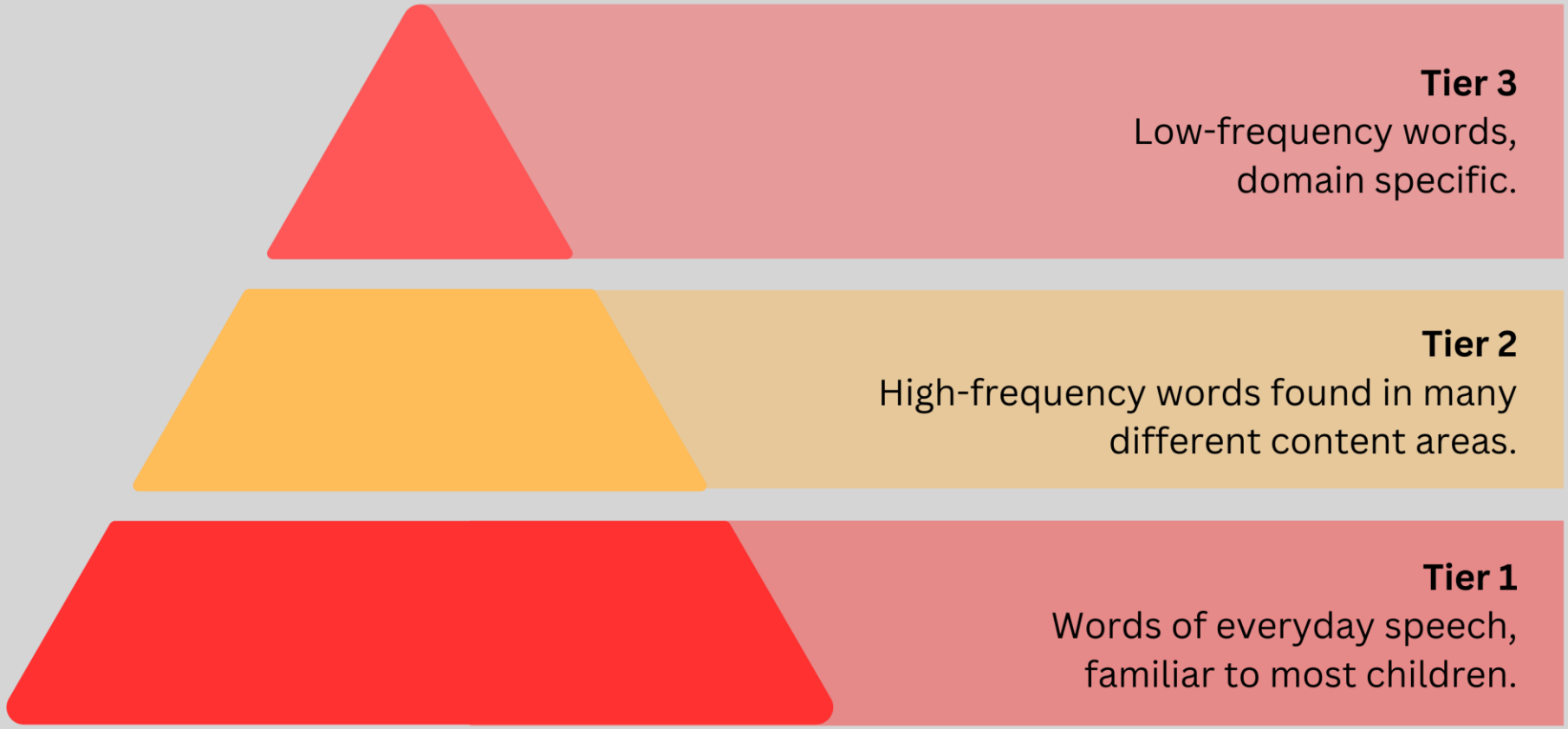
Everyday conversation

Learning words

- Learning to recognise and produce the sounds of the words;
- Learning the meaning of the word (dog = four-legged, furry animal that says woof); and
- Learning how to develop the representation of the word and generalise the word correctly (such as learning that dog can be used to refer to all different types of dogs but cannot be used to refer to any cats, no matter how similar they may look to dogs; or that go can stand in for walk, run, stroll, or drive, but, for example, walk cannot always be used in place of go).

Word	Rich, decontextualised Knowledge of a word's meaning, its relationship to other words, and its extension to metaphorical use	Knowledge of a word but not able to recall it readily enough to use in appropriate situation	Narrow context-bound knowledge	General sense; for example: 'mendacious has a negative connotation'	No knowledge
Palpable					
Admonish					
Ameliorate					
Heredity					
Table					
Fast					

What words to teach

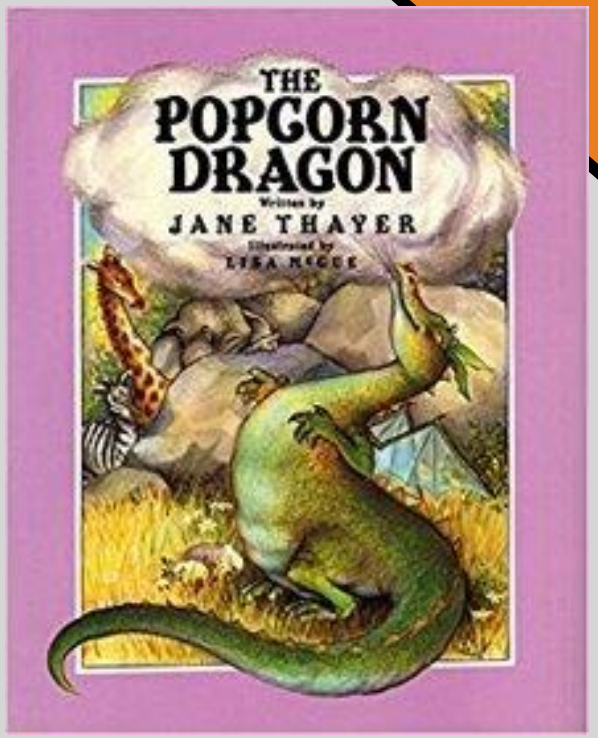


Intro to Beck's work

Some Criteria for Identifying Tier Two Words

- *Importance and utility*: Words that are characteristic of mature language users and appear frequently across a variety of domains.
- *Instructional potential*: Words that can be worked with in a variety of ways so that students can build rich representations of them and of their connections to other words and concepts.
- *Conceptual understanding*: Words for which students understand the general concept but provide precision and specificity in describing the concept.

Accidentally, drowsy, pranced, scorched, envious, delighted and forlorn

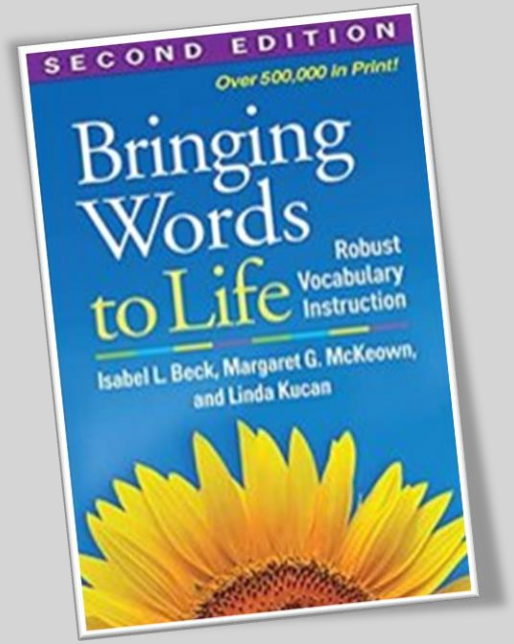


Envious- all 5 year olds know what it is like to want something someone else has

Delighted- being very happy

Forlorn – being very sad

A structure for teaching a word



1. Introduce the word in the context of the story
2. Children say the word (develop awareness of syllables, initial sounds, saying tricky clusters)
3. Child friendly explanation, "This word means..."
4. Teacher provides example of the word out of the story context "I would/might/a time I was…"
5. Children engage and interact with the word
6. Children say the word again

PEER

This is a simple sequence that can be used to support shared, or 'dialogic', reading. When reading together, adults can pause and:

- **Prompt** the child to say something about the book;
- **Evaluate** their response;
- **Expand** their response by rephrasing or adding information to it; and
- **Repeat** the prompt to help them learn from the expansion.

PEER Example

CROWD

There are **five** main types of prompts that can be used as part of the PEER sequence. The prompts can be remembered using the acronym **CROWD**:

- **C**ompletion–leave a blank at the end of a sentence for children to complete (this works particularly well with books with rhymes or repetitive phrases);
- **R**ecall–ask children about something they have already read (these prompts support children to understand the story plot);
- **O**pen-ended–often with a focus on pictures in books (this works well with illustrations and encourages children to express their ideas);
- **W**h–prompts that begin with 'who', 'what', 'where', 'why', and 'when' ('what' questions can be used to develop vocabulary); and
- **D**istancing—connects the book to children's own life experiences and provides an opportunity for high quality discussion.

Final Thoughts

- Is there anything you would like to share?
- Any takeaway thoughts?