Emergent Literacy: How Early Childhood Teachers Can Foster Language Development

Ohio Striving Readers Literacy Academy 2019

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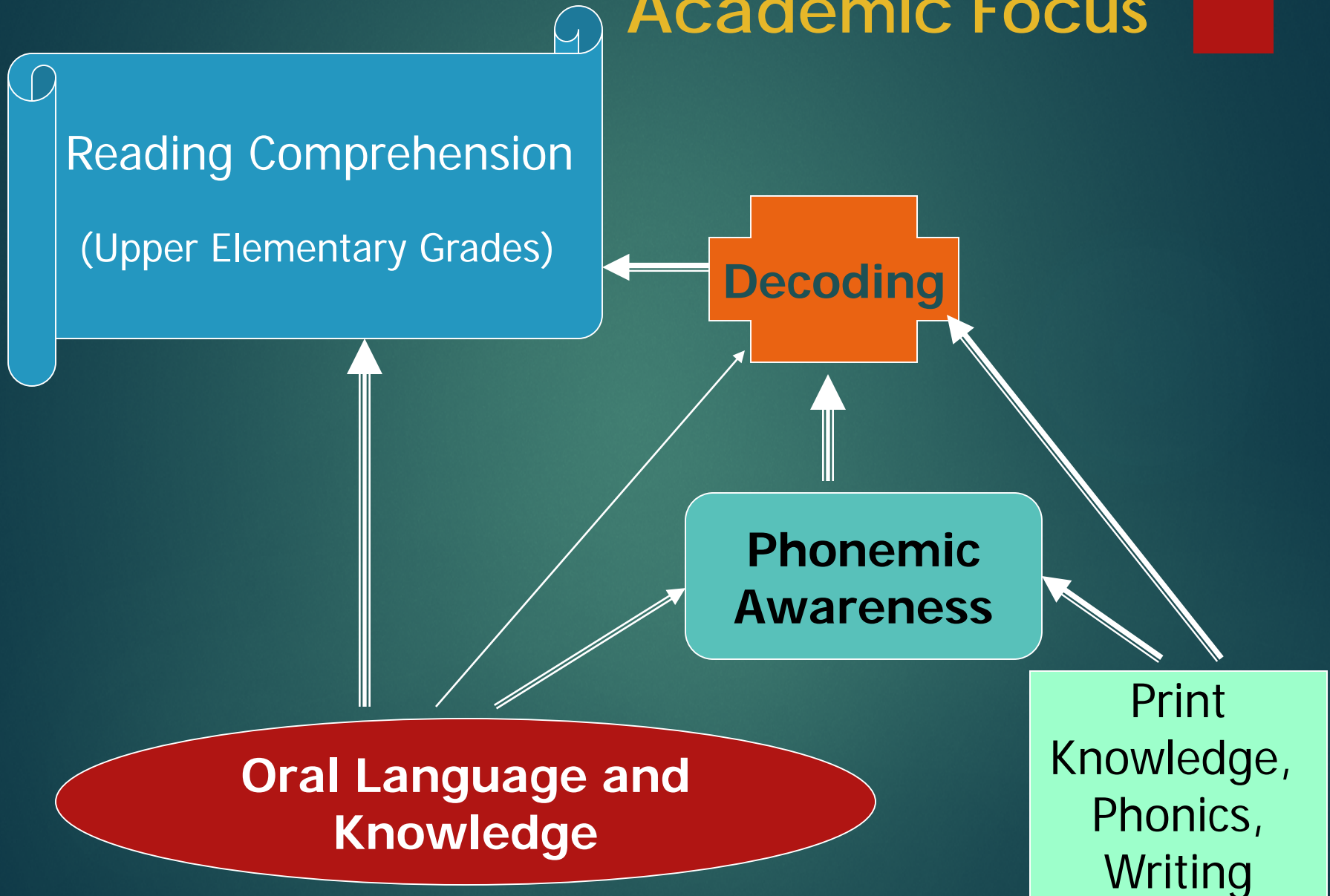PEABODY COLLEGE, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

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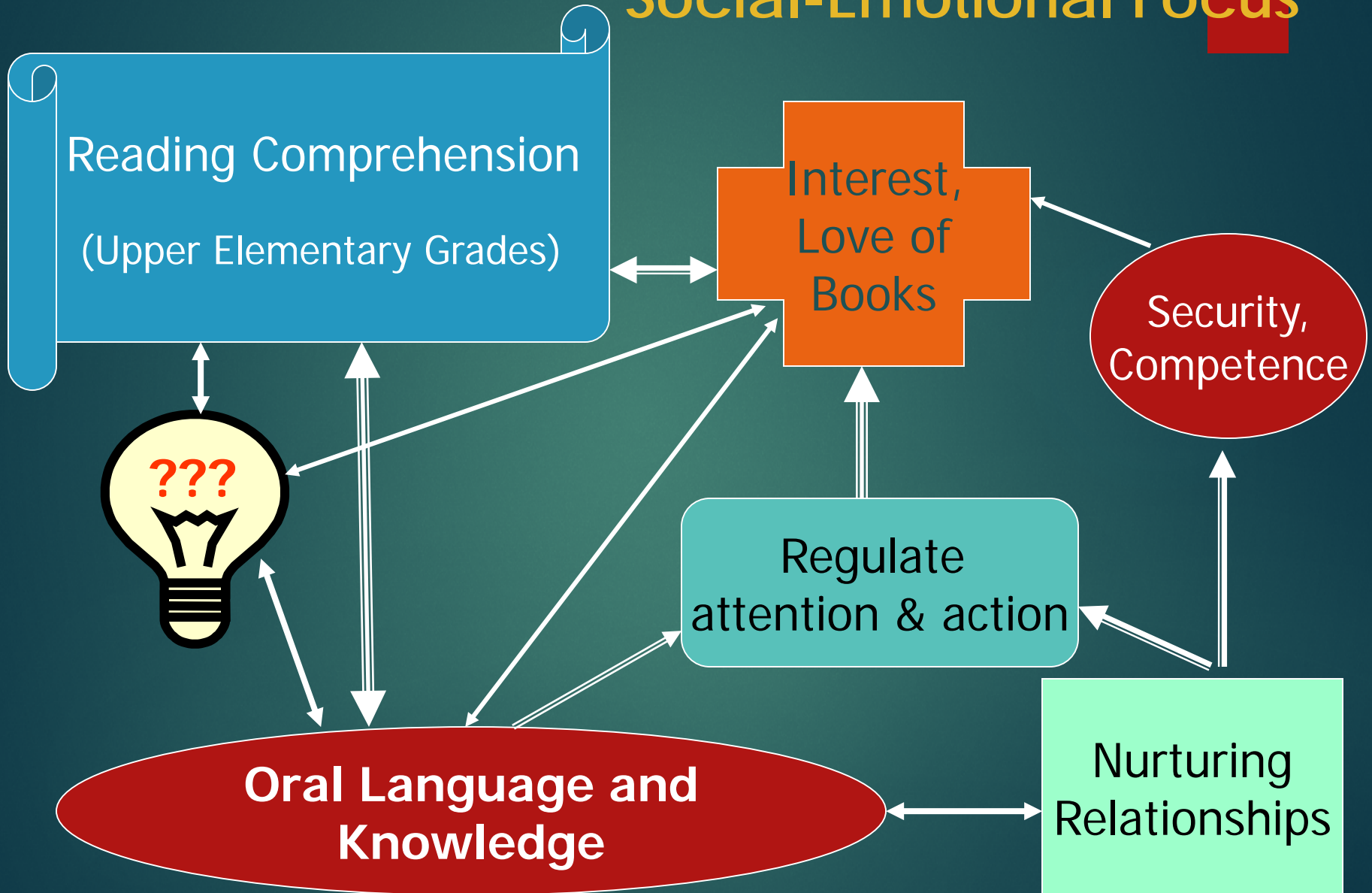
VANDERBILT PEABODY COLLEGE

The Foundational Role of Language: Social-Emotional Focus

Reading Comprehension (Upper Elementary Grades)

Interest, Love of Books

Security, Competence

???

Regulate attention & action

Oral Language and Knowledge

Nurturing Relationships

The Simple View of Reading

By grade 4 language comprehension is the strongest predictor of reading comprehension (Cain et al., 2016; Vellutino et al., 2006).

Beginning readers' primary challenge

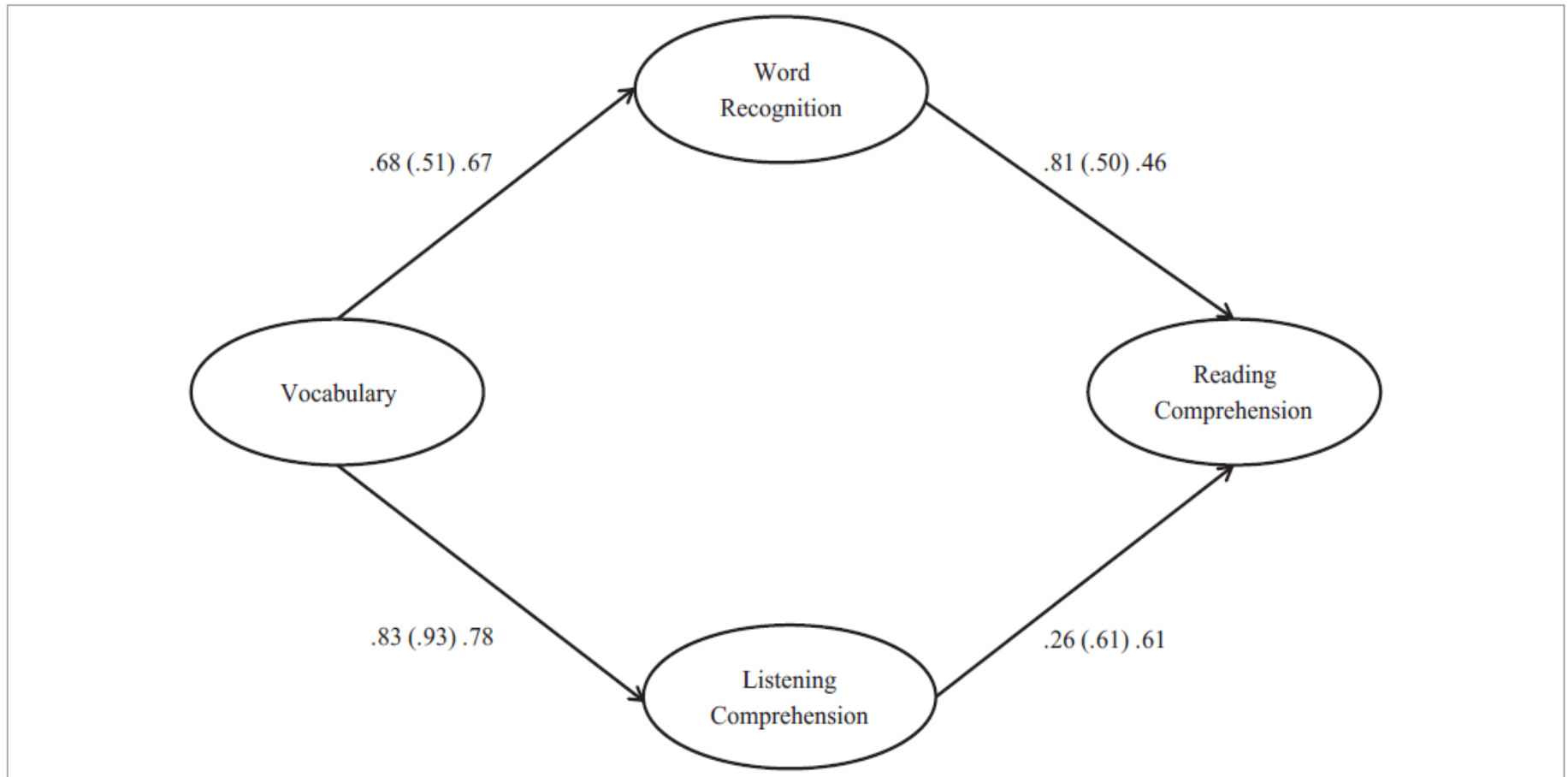Decoding: turning print into words

Self-Regulation

Language Comprehension

Helps with initial reading. Critical for comprehension.
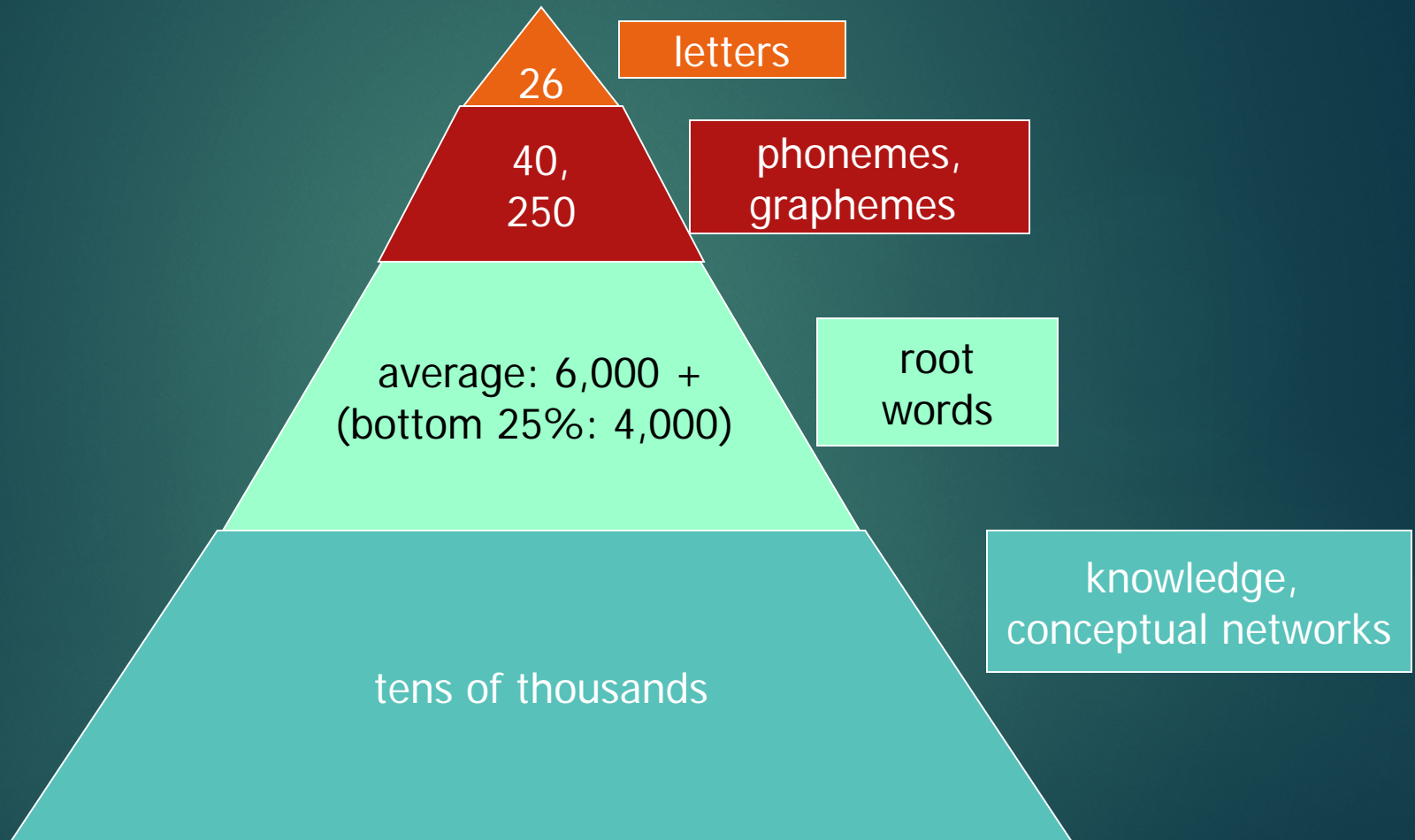
Improves learning from instruction

Vocabulary Has Important Indirect Effects on Reading Comprehension (K – 3) xxxx, 2016

FIGURE 3
Vocabulary Model

Note. Standardized estimates from the structural model, where ".83 (.93) .78" represents the results for the first, second, and third grades, respectively. All paths are significantly different from zero (*p* < .05).

Align Instructional Priorities with Learning Challenges in the Primary Grades

letters

26

40, 250

phonemes, graphemes

average: 6,000 +
(bottom 25%: 4,000)

root words

knowledge,
conceptual networks

tens of thousands

Vocabulary Scores Are Low for Many Poor and Minority Children

- Head Start average 4 year old child:
  - receptive vocabulary score equivalent to that of an average child who is 2 years 10 months old.

- Bilingual children:
  - even weaker language skills in first language and in English.

Phonological Awareness Skills Begin to Diverge in the Preschool Years
(Lonigan, Burgess, Anthony, & Barker, 1998).

Rhyme Oddity:

Percentage of Children Above Chance

Early Skills Predict Later Literacy

Long-term Studies: Early Language Predicts Later Reading Comprehension

➢ Age 3 → Grade 4 (NICHD 2005; Walker et. al., 1994)

➢ Age 4 → grade 4 (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002)

➢ Kindergarten → Grade 7 (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001)

➢ Grade 1 voc. → grade 11 comprehension (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997)

➢ ELLs: English language at entry to school predicts English through grade six and reading comprehension at 8th grade (Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2011, 2017).

# Academic Language
(Barnes, Grifenhagen & Dickinson, 2016)

▶ Certain ways of using language are especially important for academic success.

  ➢ Sophisticated vocabulary: broad and deep vocabulary knowledge

  ➢ Complex grammar

  ➢ Use language to talk about the future, past and to give explanations.

▶ These uses of language predictor later language and reading (Rowe, 2012).

▶ Some homes naturally foster language that is aligned with them.

Language Contributes to Early Reading

- Language learning principles
- Key classroom supports
- Building support for learning in homes
- Fostering strong language programs

Grade 1 – 3 Predictors of Grade 3 Comprehension
- Over time listening comprehension becomes more important and word reading accuracy becomes a less important predictor (Pentimonti et. al., 2015)

FIGURE 2
Word Reading Fluency and Word Reading Accuracy Model
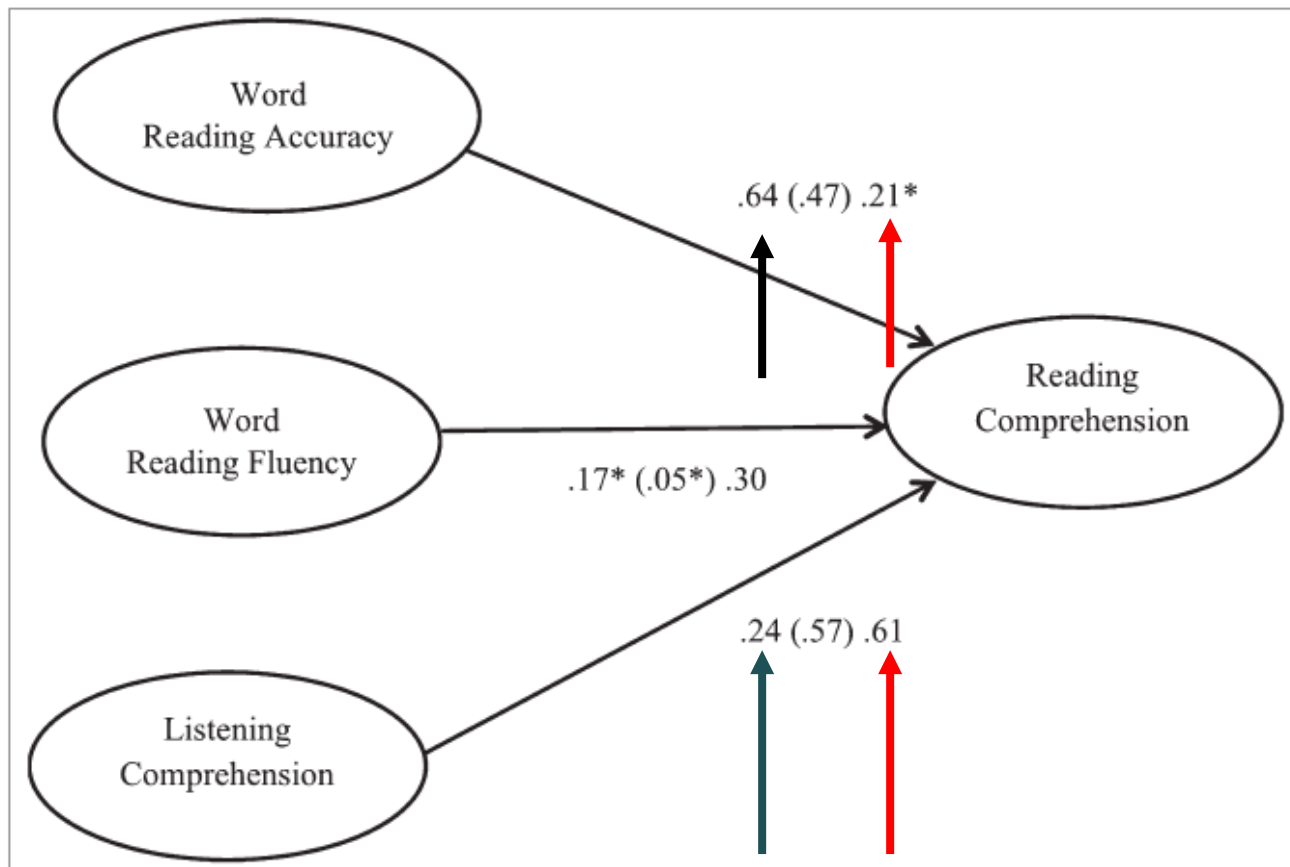
Basic Principles of Language Development and Instruction

Creating Language Learning Opportunities in Classrooms

▶ **Principles of language support**

➢ I will discuss seven principles and show video clips to illustrate key points.

▶ **Programmatic Considerations**

➢ I will illustrate the points using classroom activities the provide opportunities to support language learning.

Children are Talking

➢ Children are talking and stretching their language abilities: vocabulary, syntax, pragmatic skills.

➢ Teachers listen actively.

➢ Teachers avoid mechanical replies: "That's nice." "Good job."

➢ Teachers plan group activities to encourage verbal participation.
  ➢ Meal times
  ➢ Music
  ➢ Book reading

Be Available For Informal Talk

- Be physically available
  - During centers time stay in one location for a time
  - Sustain eye contact and be at to child's level
  - Move to settings where children are engaged (e.g., outside, during centers time)

- Be mentally available
  - When children arrive connect with them through talk.
  - Use snack and meal times to deepen personal connections through talk about past events and future plans

Extend the Conversation

➢ Extend conversation by asking questions that seek <u>clarification</u>, <u>elaboration</u> and <u>explanation</u>.

  ➢ Strive for five back-and-forth exchanges:

  1. T: What are you drawing?

  2. C: A doggie

  3. T: Can you tell me about your doggie?

  4. C: It's mine.

  5. T: Oh that is interesting. Do you have a new doggie?

➢ Express interest

  a) Make personal connections, don't take over

  b) Maintain eye contact

Ask Questions that Support and Deepen the Conversation

► Ask questions that support the child
  ➤ Tailored to the situation and the child's need
  ➤ Close-ended questions can support children with weaker language, can establish a shared topic.
  ➤ Open-ended questions allow the child "space" to construct meaning. Support stronger language use.

► Deepen thinking with **why** and **how** questions.
  ➤ Social focus; "How do you feel about that?" "Why do you think he did that?" "How do you think he is feeling?"
  ➤ Science focus: "Why did that happen?" " How do you think that got here?"

Teach Information and Ways of Thinking

- ▶ Provide conceptual knowledge that children need to understand stories, events and processes.

- ▶ Encourage children to reason and speculate. Build from concrete experiences.

- ▶ Teach using explicit and implicit methods.
  - ➤ Word meanings are explicitly taught.
  - ➤ Teachers model correct grammar and pronunciation rather than correcting explicitly. Use recasts and rephrasing.
  - ➤ Children who display incorrect understanding of word meanings are gently corrected.

- ▶ Repeated exposures provide practice and deepen understanding of word meanings.

Model Use of Comprehensible, Sophisticated Language

▶ Use varied and precise **vocabulary** during activities in ways that communicates the meaning of new words (e.g., point a picture, define the word, gesture).

▶ Use adult **grammatical constructions** as part of conversations and activities in which the child understands what is being talked about.

➢ During hands on activities, reading, song lyrics

Create a Classroom Culture that Respects Conversations

▶ Establish norms that limit interruptions of 1-1 conversations (between teacher and child; child and child).

▶ Encourage children to listen to and respond to other children in group discussions.

▶ Create time for conversations.

Head Start Lunch Conversation

▶ Teacher is working in a classroom with 12 ELL children, 9 different languages

▶ Chance conversation at the end of lunch

▶ Watch, note strategies and discuss with those near you

JOHN: I saw a raccoon in the tree last night.
  CHLDREN TALK: 9 word utterance about an event in the past.
TCH: You saw a raccoon …. last night?
  AVAILABLE: Stayed sitting at the table
  EXTEND: Followed child.
  ASK: open-ended.
JOHN: Only in the tree. Up in the tree.
TCH: That's so funny because you know what? Last weekend when I went to New Hampshire, I saw a raccoon up in a tree. What did your raccoon do?
  EXTEND: Personal connection, interest
  ASK: Open-ended
  MODEL: Three clause16 word sentence about a past event.
JOHN: It was …. It was moving.
E: XXX Cindy.
TCH: Wait. I want to hear about John's raccoon. He saw a raccoon last night. What was it doing last night, John?
  CULTURE OF CONVERSATION: Protected conversation
  SUSTAIN - ASK: Open-ended question to elicit details
JOHN: It … it was moving.
TCH: It was moving. Can you show me how?
   SUSTAIN - ASK: Open-ended question to elicit details (non-verbal invitation)
JOHN: It was …. it's eyes was open.

TCH: It's eyes **were** open; so it was awake.
   MODEL/TEACH: Recast using adult grammar and precise vocabulary
JOHN: Yeah
TCH: Can you show me how it was moving? Can you show us how it was moving?
   SUSTAIN - ASK: Open-ended question to elicit details (non-verbal invitation)
JOHN: It was moving backwards.
TCH: Moving backward?
   ASK – SUSTAIN: Close-ended
JOHN: Yeah.
TCH: Did it … it didn't fall off the tree though?
   ASK – SUSTAIN: Close-ended
JOHN: No.
TCH: No. And then what did it do after it was moving?
   ASK – SUSTAIN: Open-ended
JOHN: It …. it just came at me. It was walk. It just climbed right into the tree.
   CHLDREN TALK: 7 word utterance about an event in the past. John's language capability is challenged.
TCH: Oh, it climbed inside the tree.
   MODEL/TEACH: Demonstrates use of precise vocabulary
JOHN: Yeah.

Noteworthy Features

- Children are talking
  - John's talk was the focus. He produced 9 and 7 word utterances about the past.
  - Cindy listened intently and waited for him to finish.
  - Her pacing matched his relatively slow pace.
- BE available
  - T. Was sitting and stayed.
  - T. turned and focused on the child.
- Extend the conversation
  - Sustained topic over multiple turns using varied open- and close-end questioning
  - Expressed interest:
    - Connected to her own experience; did not take over
    - Maintained eye contact

► Ask questions that support and extend
  ➢ Mixture of open and closed questions.
► Teach information
  ➢ Used implicit instructional methods: recasts
► Model use
  ➢ Used sophisticated language.
  ➢ Taught by demonstrating accurate use.
► Culture of conversation
  ➢ Deflected interruption; explicitly and implicitly encouraged others to listen.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Mealtime Conversations Can Contribute to Language Development
(Weizman & Snow, 2001)

In homes during meal times more words were used than during book reading, toy play or science play.
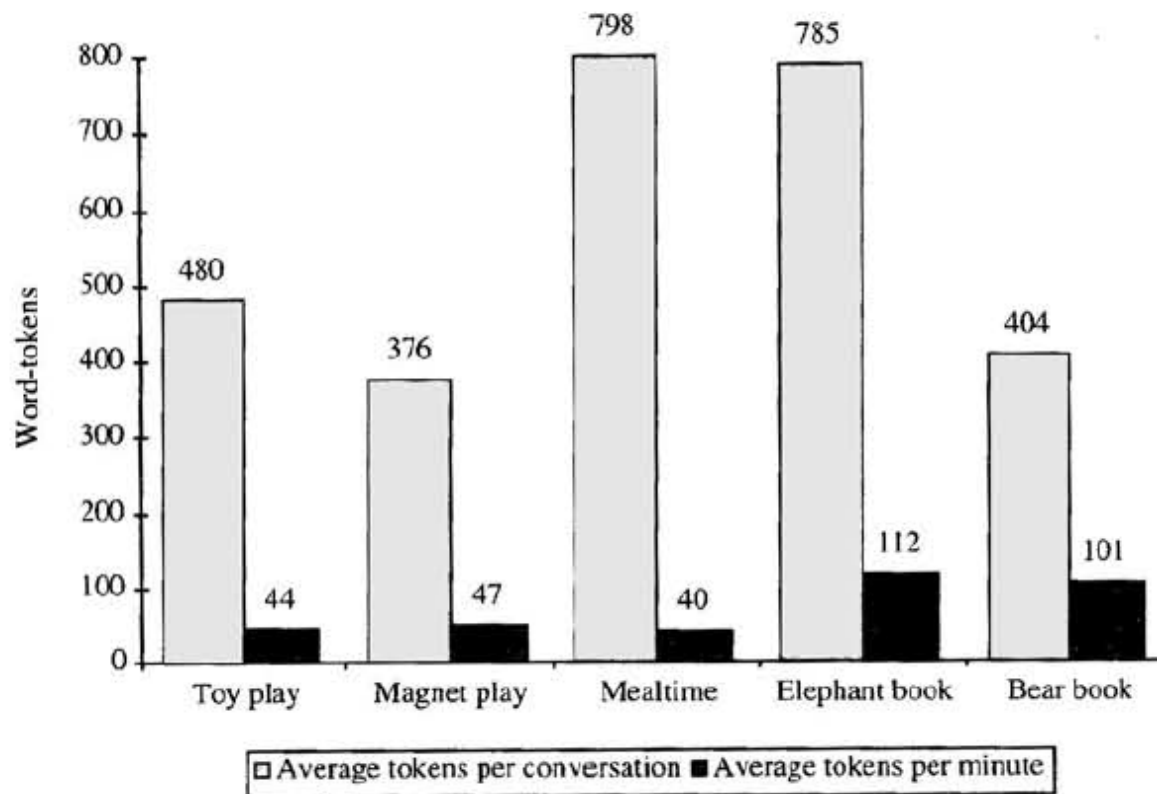

Figure 1. Average number of word-tokens per conversation and average number of word-tokens per minute to which low-income children were exposed, by setting.

Mealtime Conversations Can Contribute to Language Development
(Weizman & Snow, 2001)

- ► Measures of talk during book reading, toy play and meal times in kindergarten were used to predict Kindergarten and grade four vocabulary (PPVT).

- ► The number and variety of sophisticated words used in each activity were correlated with later PPVT.

- ► Meal time was the strongest predictor.