LEVELS OF COMPREHENSION

Level 1:   Meaning Access

Definition - retrieve meaning of printed word from long-term memory

Read this sentence: Can you do it?   Does it make any sense?

"Ismam stog kopob amjut metula ildat."

strawberry jam   **fruit bat**

traffic jam   **baseball bat**

EXAMPLE OF CONTEXT EFFECT IN MEANING ACCESS

After the game, Billy *runs* home. He tells his mother about the home *run* he hit for his team. The team now has a *run* of ten games without a single loss. If their *run* of good luck continues, they will be the best team in town.

Billy's mother says she is proud of him. At dinnertime, she tells him to *run* into the bathroom to wash. She tells him to be sure to *run* the water over his hands well to get all the dirt off. She also reminds him that tonight is his turn to clear the table and *run* the dishwasher.

Let's pick another word for "run." How about "race?"

EXAMPLE OF CONTEXT EFFECT IN MEANING ACCESS

Race now replaces *run*

After the game, Billy *races* home. He tells his mother about the home *race* he hit for his team. The team now has a *race* of ten games without a single loss. If their *race* of good luck continues, they will be the best team in town.

Billy's mother says she is proud of him. At dinnertime, she tells him to *race* into the bathroom to wash. She tells him to be sure to *race* the water over his hands well to get all the dirt off. She also reminds him that tonight is his turn to clear the table and *race* the dishwasher.

How do we train meaning access?

Give the Child an Opportunity to Read for Meaning

Provide Vocabulary Training

Emphasize Semantic Predictability

EXERCISES IN SEMANTIC PREDICTABILTY

e.g., fill in the missing word

John pushed the heavy _____ to the wall.

Mary swung the _____ and then ran to the base.

John kicked the old _____ down the street.

e.g., select word that fits best (consider previous sentence)

John stood in the front of the class. He was very _____.
   athletic   nervous

Mary hit the ball. It went over the _____.

   fence   pineapple

STUDY IN VOCABULARY TRAINING

4th to 6th grade students read the following passage with the difficult or the easy words.

Joe and Ann went to school in Portland. They were *antagonists* (enemies). They saw each other often. They had lots of *altercations* (fights). At the end of high school, Ann *maligned* (said bad things about) Joe. Then Ann moved away. Joe stayed in Portland. He got a job as a *bailiff* (worked for a judge). One day Joe was working, and he saw Ann. Ann did not see Joe. Ann looked *apprehensive* (afraid). She was being *incarcerated* (under arrest).

Students from both groups performed equally well on literal questions, but the students with the difficult words did much worse on inference questions.

STUDY IN VOCABULARY TRAINING
Sample of Training Format

Experimenter: This word is "altercations." What word is this?

Child: "Altercations."

Experimenter: Correct, "altercations." What does "altercations" mean? *(points to meaning on index card).*

Child: "Fights."

Experimenter: Yes, "altercations" means "fights." Listen do you have altercations with your teacher? *[child responds]* Do you have altercations with a tree? *[child responds].* So what does "altercations" mean?

Child: "Fights."

Experimenter: (after similar questions about "antagonist") Listen, Do you have any antagonists" *[child responds]* Do you have any altercations with your antagonists? *[child responds]*

LEVELS OF COMPREHENSION

Level 2:   Proposition Assembly

Definition - the process of relating words to each other to form meaningful units

Can you break this sentence into its basic propositions?
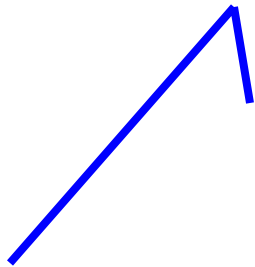
"The sick boy went home."

Propositions:

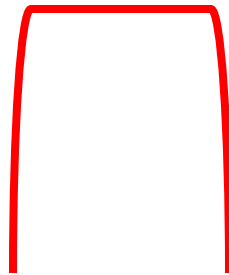**"there was a boy"   "the boy was sick"   "the boy went home"**

Key finding: reading time related to number of propositions in a sentence.

A STUDY OF PROPOSITION ASSEMBLY - LOGOGRAPHS

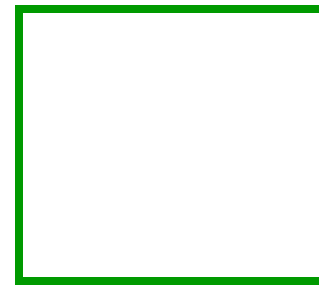**Children asked to act out logographs after they had learned what each one meant.**

jump   over   block

Key finding: non-readers and poor readers more likely to demonstrate words separately

EYE FIXATION DATA - ADULTS

Key Finding: pauses occur at end of sentences, clauses
**   implies that additional cognitive processing is occurring**

evidence of proposition assembly and sentence integration

"It was a dark and stormy night the millionaire was
murdered (died). The killer left no clues for the police
to trace."

Finding: greater pause at "killer" if word used is "died."

EYE FIXATION DATA - CHILDREN

Instructions: Please read the following paragraph

The little girl was sad because her clothes were torn. She was upset because she couldn't go to the party. She began to cry. There were big tears in her brown dress. She didn't know what to do.

Finding: pause occurs at dress, where it becomes clear that tears has been misinterpreted.

 2nd vs 5th grade - more likely to get pause with older students, and those with longer memory spans.