

VOCABULARY MATTERS



Helping Early Language and Literacy Outcomes 2 (HELLO2U)

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EDUCATION IS LIMITLESS

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY RESEARCH GROUP

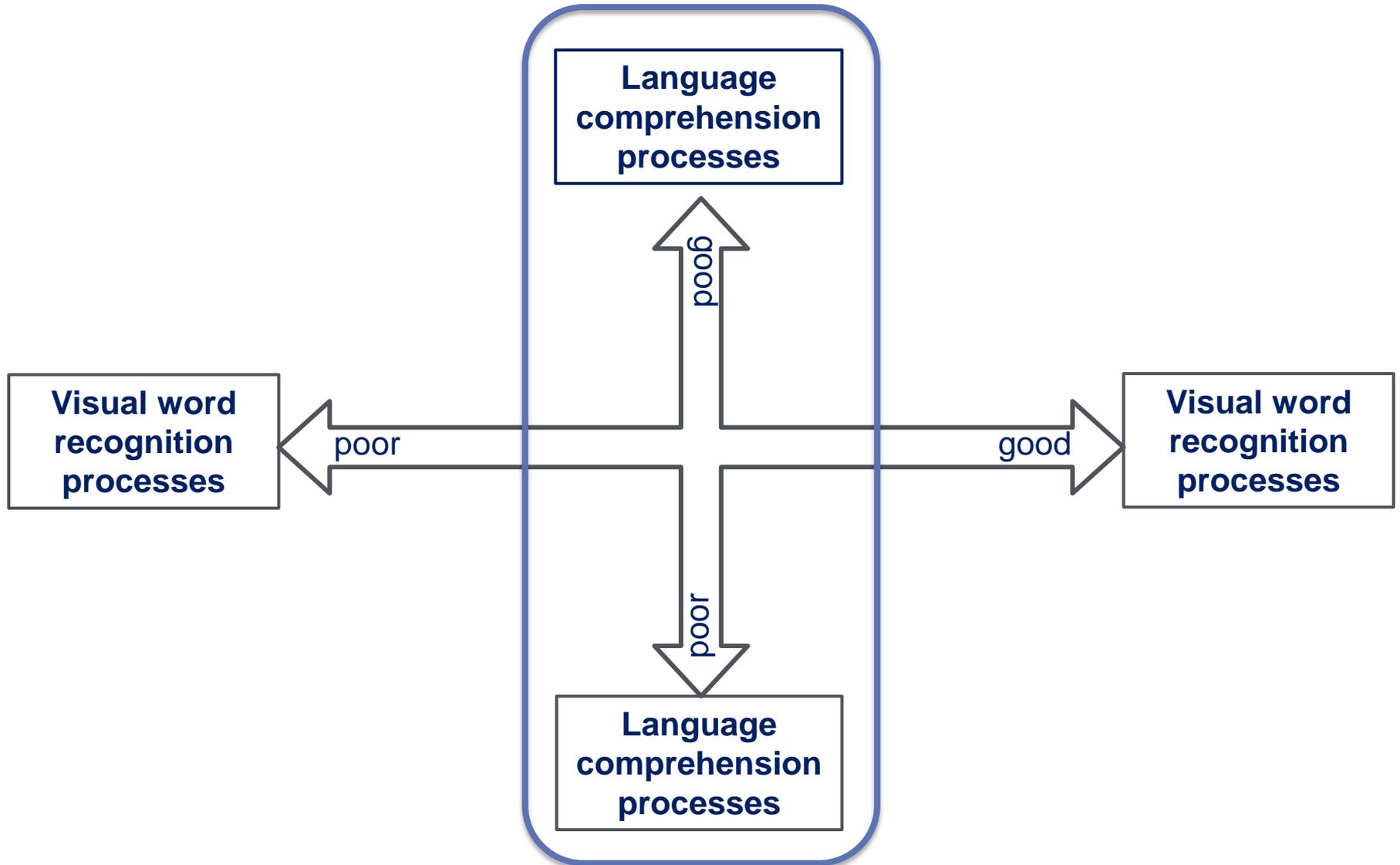
CENTRE FOR LITERACY AND MULTILINGUALISM

LIMITLESS

TODAY

- Language and literacy
- Systems of language
- Vocabulary
- What helps literacy before literacy
- Word reading processes

THE SIMPLE VIEW OF READING



LANGUAGE

- A defining human characteristic
- Biologically determined

LANGUAGE SYSTEMS

- Phonology
 - The sound system
- **Vocabulary**
 - **The words and their meaning**
- Morphology
 - The system for combining meanings within words
- Syntax
 - The system for combining words into phrases or sentences
- Semantics
 - The system for creating meaningful utterances that go beyond the individual words
- Pragmatics
 - Language in use: aspects of meaning that are dependent on the speaker, the listener and the context

VOCABULARY

- **Receptive vocabulary**

- The set of words we understand but may not actually use in everyday speech.
- Having an extensive receptive vocabulary means we can understand a wide range of communications both in spoken and written form.

- **Expressive vocabulary**

- This is the set of words we use.
- Having an extensive expressive vocabulary means we can convey our meanings accurately and precisely.

- Vocabulary grows with age.
 - It does not simply unfold.
- BUT it is not of itself a developmental skill (Paris, 2005).
- Vocabulary continues to grow throughout life.
- Languages are constantly evolving:
 - New words are added
 - Words change meaning

- ***Hoover***
- ***Wicked***

EARLY VOCABULARY

- First words are those children hear most often in their verbal environment.
 - High frequency words
 - Nouns: *Mama, Daddy, teddy*
 - Verbs: *Drink, jump*

OPEN CLASS

- Initially they express immediate needs and comment on things happening in the here and now.
- Verbs and nouns are **open class** words:
 - These are “content” words and new ones can be created to express new concepts.
- We all have thousands of these and children seem to add new examples daily.

CLOSED CLASS

- Early vocabularies also include words to structure the language.
- **Closed class** words
 - These do not carry meaning but serve to structure language to support meaning.
 - This is a small set of words and it does not develop historically.
 - Articles: *the a an*
 - Verb auxiliaries: *can is are*
 - Prepositions: *in on under*
 - Conjunctions: *and*

- The flantmet are lariton their mavrim montep rotup because it is slem, but the tarithone for lomanple is for waight so they will have to narit corine.
- Wap children pog eating risam lunches outside today sladump os ux warm, leb wap forecast dit tomorrow ux sil rain pu wimt spom poch ir stay inside.
- The children are eating their lunches outside today because it is warm, but the forecast for tomorrow is for rain so they will have to stay inside.

CONTENT WORDS

- Nouns verbs adjectives adverbs.
- At the start of school Anglin (1993) estimated vocabulary size to be ~ 1000 words.
- Children with impoverished vocabularies understand far less of what is said to them in the classroom.

- The larger the vocabulary the more they will understand.
- At the start of school vocabulary comes from their language environment.
 - But not from learning lists – it has to come from linguistic interactions and opportunities to use language.
 - **Listen, accept, expand, wait**

ADULT VOCABULARY

- Adult vocabulary is estimated to be around 50,000 words
- There is a significant spurt in vocabulary from the age of 7 yrs onwards:
 - This comes from encountering words in print
 - Reading supports vocabulary growth.

VOCABULARY BREADTH AND DEPTH

- **Breadth**

- This number of words an individual knows the meaning of.
- If we do not know the meaning of words, our ability to understand what we hear or read will be compromised.
- British picture vocabulary scales (BPVS).

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- **Depth**

- This is the richness of the semantic interconnections between words.
 - This supports fluency which in turn supports comprehension.
 - Knowing the meaning of one word may support the understanding and acquisition of a new related word.
 - Knowing that a word can have different meanings and have different syntactic status.

- Same word different meanings:
 - *Volume*
 - *Cell*
- Different word same meaning:
 - *big large giant immense vast huge massive titanic*
- Flexibility:
 - *Book* – noun
 - *Book* – adjective
 - *Book-* verb

WORD CHAINS



to



in nine semantic moves

snail

→ shell

→ peas

→ carrots

→ orange

→ marmalade

→ jam

→ traffic

→ car

→ **bike**

MORPHOLOGY

- This is the way words as units of meaning contain ROOTS and AFFIXES assembled in a meaningful way to form other acceptable recognizable words.
- Affixes are PREFIXES and SUFFIXES
- Affixes are “bits” of words that cannot exist on their own – they must be combined with root words.
- There is a “grammar” of affixation.

INFLECTIONAL MORPHOLOGY

- Suffixes added to words to create an inflected form of the same word:
 - Plurals: *cats dog horses*
 - Verb forms: *talk talks talking*
 - Past tense: *talked*
- Very early on in their language development children are able to understand and use inflectional morphology.
- It is very common for them to overgeneralise:
 - *Foots sheeps runned writed*

- Overgeneralisation is a good sign – but modelling ensures children are exposed to the “standard” form

Ch: *Those sheeps runned!*

Ad: *Yes they did – but look over there – those sheep have run to the trees.*

Ch: *I writed that.*

Ad: *Yes, that was very clever of you – do you want to add it to the story you wrote yesterday?*

DERIVATIONAL MORPHOLOGY

- This is where a new word is derived from a root meaning by the addition of affixes.
 - Suffixes:
 - *Teach*
 - *Teach+er*
 - *Teach+able*
 - Prefixes
 - *Un+teachable; un+tie*
 - *Out+grow; out+building out+side*

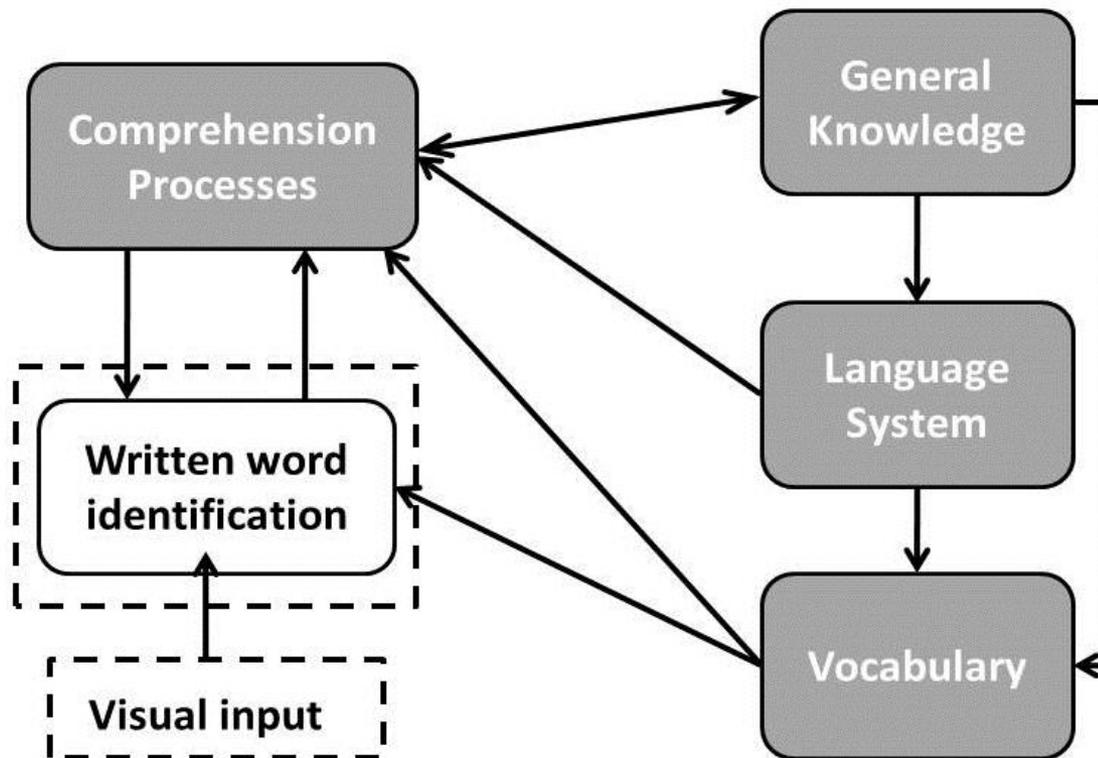
 - *Outwith without ??*

- Vocabulary size relates to the number of root words (lemmas) - not all the additional words that are created through affixation.
- When considering depth we will be interested in all the words that can be formed through affixation.
- Vocabulary size at 5 yrs is the strongest predictor of later academic success (Beimiller, 2003)
- The more extensive the vocabulary depth and breadth the better comprehension of texts is likely to be.

SES AND VOCABULARY EXPERIENCES

- Hart & Risley, 2003
 - Children from family on welfare 616 words per hour
 - Working class children 1,251 words per hour
 - Child from a professional family 2,153 words per hour
- They extrapolated from these figures.
 - In four years of experiences:
 - Welfare child – 13 million words
 - Working class child – 26 million words
 - Professional child – 45 million words

VOCABULARY IN RELATION TO READING AND LANGUAGE



Adapted from Perfetti, 1999 for Appendix 1
of the Rose Review, 2006

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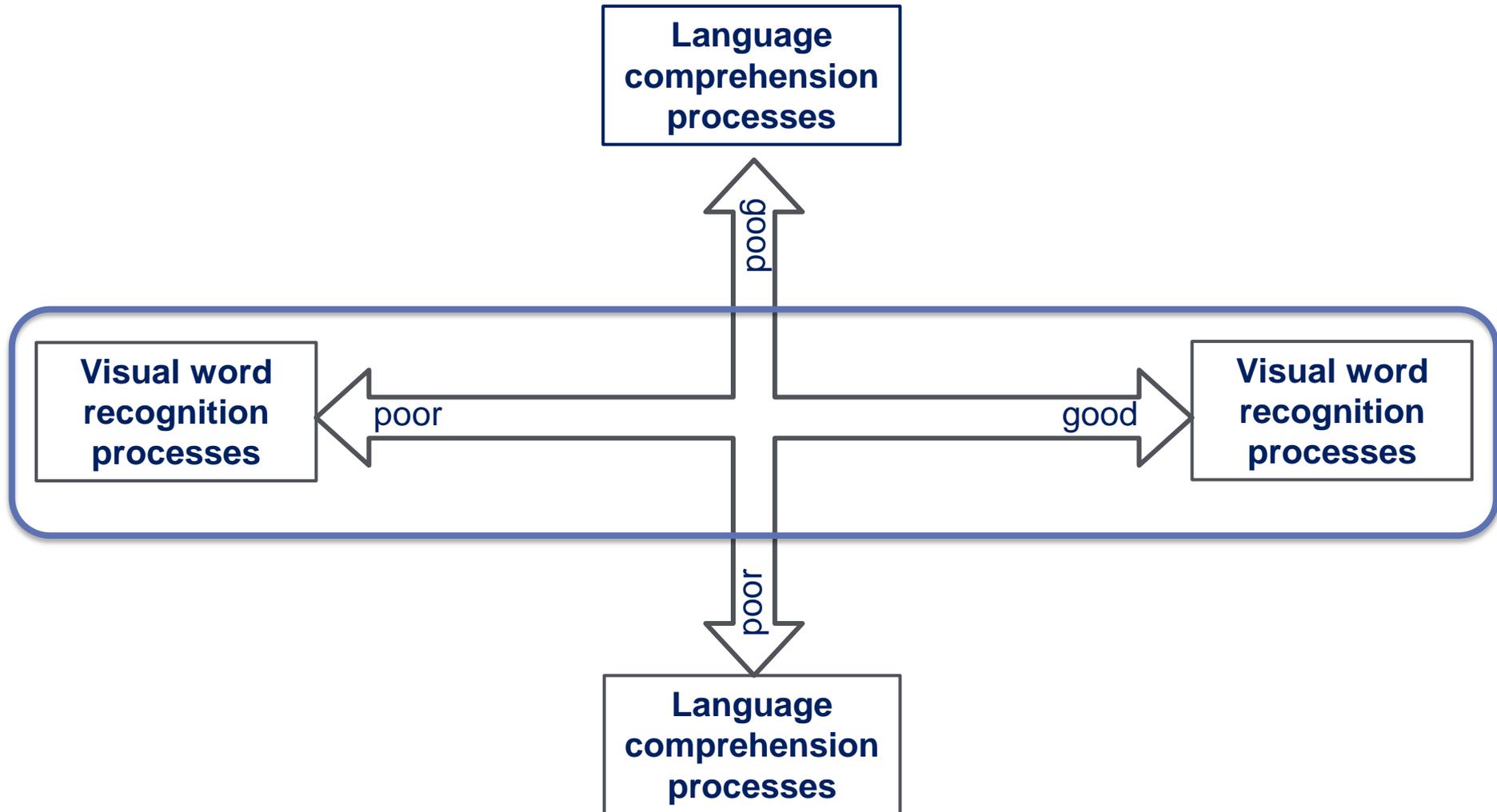
- Oral vocabulary smooths the transition from understanding spoken language to understanding written language.
 - *“Not knowing the meaning of words in a text is a bottleneck in [reading] comprehension.”* (Perfetti et al., 2005).
- However
- Most everyday conversations are composed of words that are generally in the oral vocabularies of children when they start school. This means that the conversations they hear around them are unlikely to be the source of vocabulary extension.
 - A conundrum

- Lee (2011):
 - longitudinal study of the relationship of early language at 2 yrs at literacy development up to 11 yrs.
 - Vocabulary at 2 yrs predicted reading comprehension at 9 yrs and 11 yrs.
- This relationship held even after controlling for SES, gender, ethnicity and birth order.

SCHOOLING/EDUCATION

- Schooling becomes the vehicle for vocabulary extension.
- This is particularly the vocabulary of written texts (Stainthorp & Hughes, 1999).

THE SIMPLE VIEW OF READING



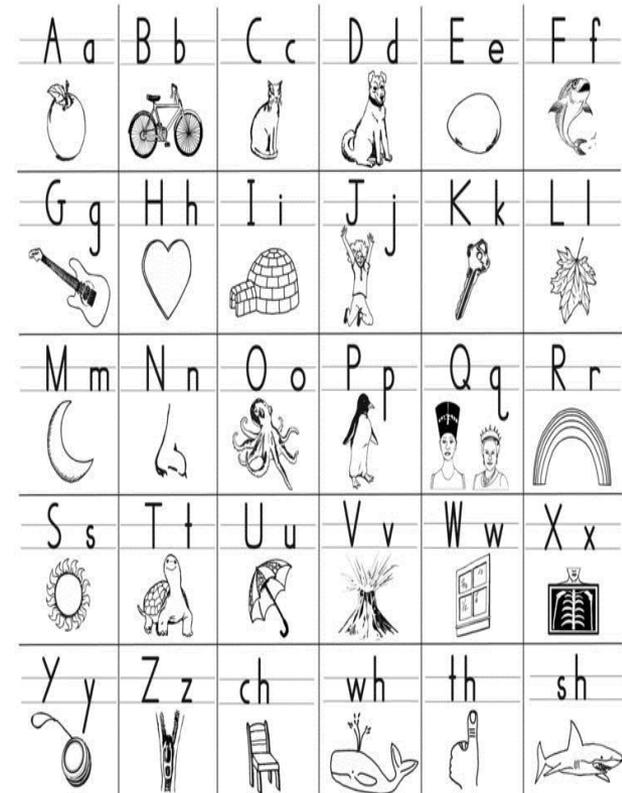
- Learning to read is NOT the same as learning to talk.
- We have to teach children to read.
- And in the beginning we have to teach children **to read the words.**
- But, before the beginning, literacy starts in the home.
- Much of this relates to language.

LITERACY ACTIVITIES AT HOME

- Parental literacy activities have a significant impact on reading acquisition (Powell et al, 2015, 2016, Stainthorp & Hughes, 1999):
 - Books
 - Libraries
 - Talk about print
 - Multiple story reading
 - Pointing
 - Questions
 - Singing rhyming
- This sets children up for being able to take advantage of literacy instruction in school.

EARLY PREDICTORS OF LATER SUCCESS

- Reading (in our system) is based on the alphabet.
- Knowledge of the alphabet at the start of reading instruction predicts later success.
- This can be letter sounds or letter names – but why not both!



- The alphabetic system is based on letters mapping onto phonemes (SOUNDS).
- This means children have to be explicitly aware of the sounds in words to be able to map the letters to their sounds..
- This is the basis of and rationale for teaching phonics as the first approach to word reading.
- Level of phonological awareness at the start of learning to read predicts later success.

LETTERS AND SOUNDS

- When we teach children phonics we teach them HOW to read words.
- We give them a skill that enables them to look at a word and unlock its sound and meaning.
- The wider the vocabulary the easier it will be to recognise the meanings that are unlocked.
- Using the alphabetic principle children can become independent readers – they can read the words for themselves and thereby unlock the meanings for themselves.

MATTHEW EFFECTS



..... *but it all begins with vocabulary!*