

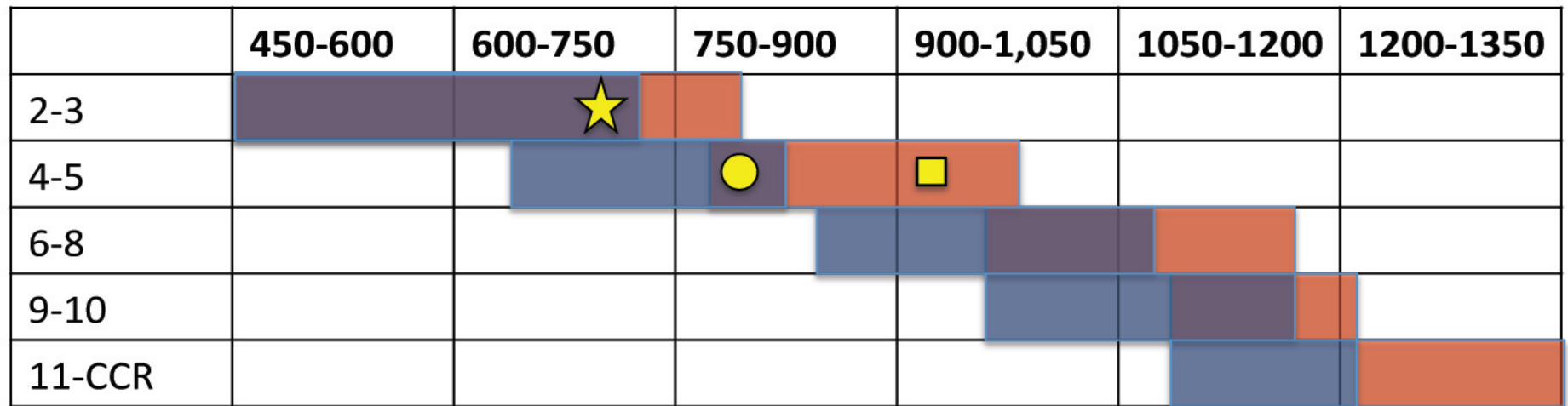


# From the Vantage Point of Struggling Readers

Elfrieda H. Hiebert  
TextProject & University of California, Santa Cruz

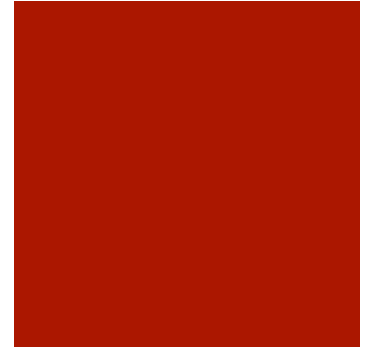
# Text Difficulty Range:

## New (Common Core State Standards) & Old (Metametrics)



|                                                                                     |                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Average level of Gr. 2-3 exemplars provided by CCS                 |
|  | Average level of Gr. 4-5 exemplars provided by CCS                 |
|  | Average Level: National Assessment of Educational Progress (Gr. 4) |

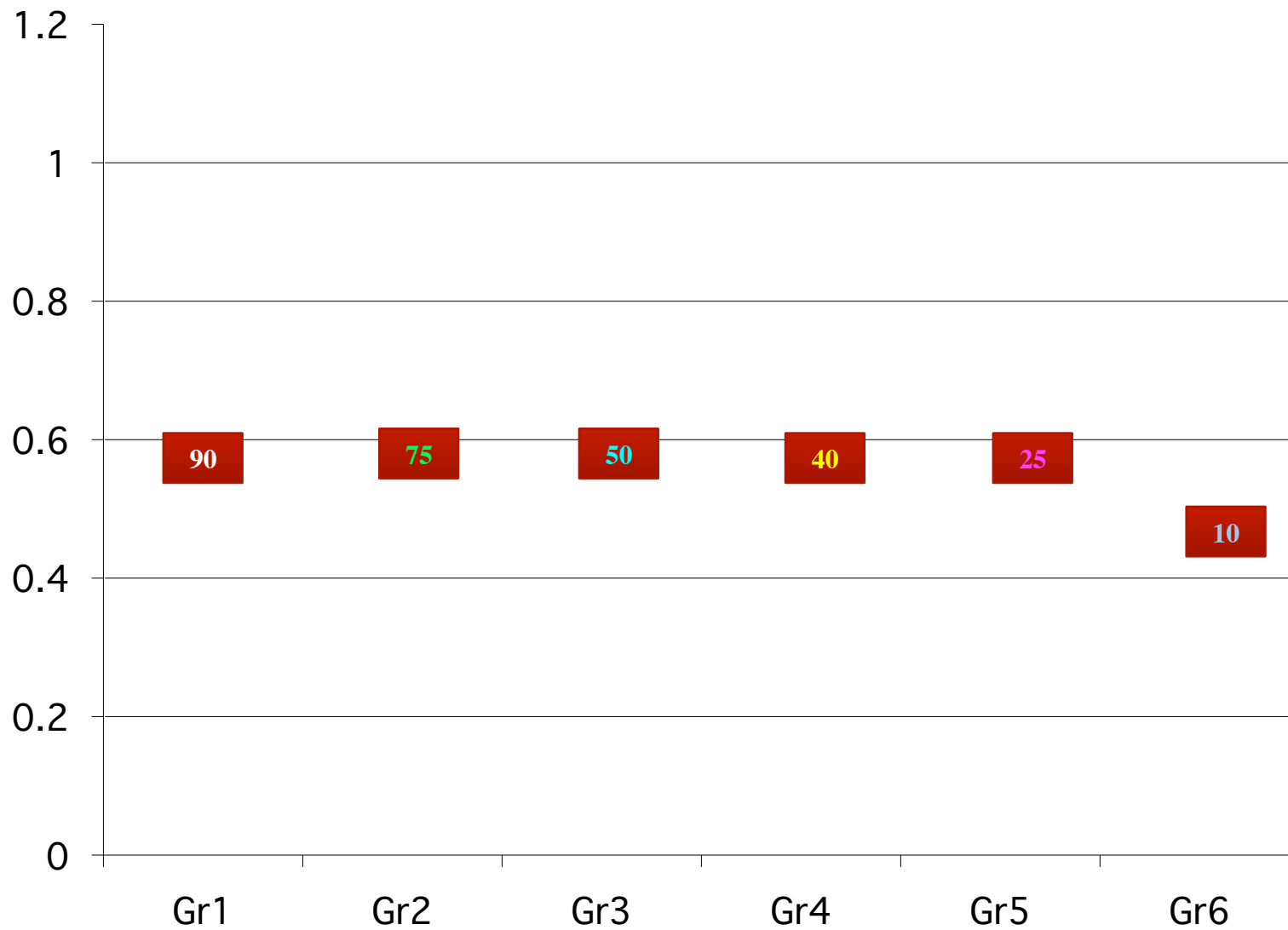
# What It Means to Read at 450 Lexile



When Allie's father came home from work Friday evening, he brought her a gift. Because I love you, he said, and kissed Allie on her nose. The gift was something that Allie really wanted - a basketball.

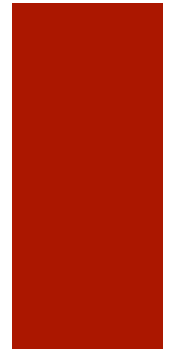
The next day, Allie and her father walked to the playground.

27 words that fall outside a  
curriculum of 1,000 most frequent  
words & words with 4 or fewer letters.



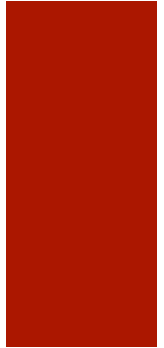
[from Hiebert, 2008]

| If you struggle with...                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | What happens when you get...                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>“But what kept you so long?” Asked his father. They were going down the mountain now, and Jonathan's father was carrying the big iron pot.</p> <p>“Well,” said Jonathan. “First I ate cookies, then I drank milk, then I slept.”</p> <p>“H'm,” said his father. “It is not the way to do things when you are sent on an errand.”</p> | <p>M. C., as he was called, felt warm, moist air surround him. Humidity trapped in the hills clung to the mountainside as the night passed on. In seconds, his skin grew clammy. But he paid no attention to the oppressive heat with its odors of summer growth and decay.</p> |



# Answer:

When the gap in reader capacity and text requirements becomes greater than approximately 90% accuracy, even comprehension of at/above level readers suffers



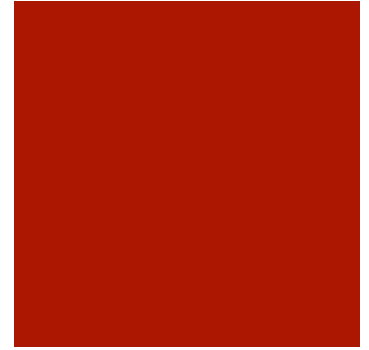
| Text-Reader Gap                   | Reader Level | Mean Comprehension (%) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| EASY (101-401L)                   | Below        | 81                     |
|                                   | At/Above     | 84                     |
| ON-LEVEL (100 below to 50L above) | Below        | 66                     |
|                                   | At/Above     | 72                     |
| STRETCH (51 to 100L above)        | Below        | 59                     |
|                                   | At/Above     | 64                     |
| DIFFICULT (101 to 400L above)     | Below        | 47                     |
|                                   | At/Above     | 53                     |

# For Struggling Readers, text capacity is

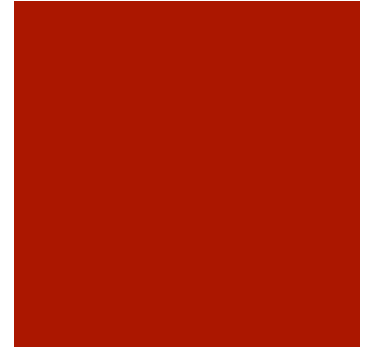
| NOT increased by...                                                                   | Increased by...                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Setting higher text levels as the standard & simply expecting them to read the texts. | Concentrated and focused opportunities to build the reading foundation, and |
|                                                                                       | Systematic and consistent opportunities to augment the foundation.          |

# The Foundation

- Approximately 90% of the words in a text need to be known for students to be able to comprehend a text.
- Happily, 90% of the words in texts are accounted for by the same 5,500 words (approximately 3,800 morphological word families)



# Augmentation



- 10% of the words in texts are accounted for by approximately 250,000+ words
  - That is: 98% of the words in English account for approximately 10% of the words in text.
  - These are the words that provide the nuance in stories and the details in both stories and informational texts
- These words fall into approximately 80,000 morphological word families.
- These words are NOT random: They pertain to concepts/themes and ideas.

# Foundation Building:

- Daily opportunities to read texts that emphasize the core vocabulary...with steady inclusion of challenging vocabulary.

Getting Ready for Grade 4™

Summer Sports

## Swimming

### Swimwear



The clothes worn by swimmers have changed a great deal over time. About 200 years ago, women wore dresses made of wool to swim. Wool absorbs water. That meant that the dresses got heavy in the water, making it hard for women to swim and not sink.

Today, a swimming suit is made to fit the body snugly. A



snug fit allows a swimmer to glide through the water. The suit is made of cloth that does not absorb water. Because the suit doesn't absorb water, the swimmer is carrying less weight and can move faster.

Another big change in swimwear is the wetsuit. A wetsuit covers almost the entire body with a close-fitting layer of special rubber. The rubber has very small bubbles of gas that make the suit lighter and better at keeping the body warm. A thin layer of water gets trapped between a person's skin and the inside of the suit. The body warms this small amount of water. Since the water can't get out, it helps to keep the body warm. A wetsuit makes it possible to swim and surf even in places where the water is cold.

Goggles are another addition to swimwear. Salt from ocean water or chemicals in swimming pools can hurt your eyes. By wearing goggles, swimmers can keep the salt and chemicals out of their eyes. Swimmers who want to keep salt and chemicals away from their noses can wear masks.

# And more daily reading...with an emphasis on information.

## What *Some People* Say About: Physical Education

### Pacifica Examiner: Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at North Shore Elementary. Every week on Friday we have a PE class. I used to hate PE classes. We used to just play games like football and basketball. I am not very good at them. Now we do exercises and play other sports. We run relays and play tennis. Our PE teacher, Mr. Kroger, says these skills will last us a lifetime.

Now our principal, Ms. Blair, says that our school is going to get rid of PE class because our test scores are so low. She also said that we are getting enough exercise after school and at recess, and that we don't need PE class. I am not very good at soccer and basketball, and so I am not signed up for after-school sports. PE class is one of the only times that I

get to run around and have fun. I think it is important to have a time during school where we learn about exercise, just like we learn about math and science. Please don't get rid of our PE class!

Sincerely,  
Gregory Diller



Talking Points for Kids™

## Physical Exercise



Written by **Elfrieda H. Hiebert**

Photo: Children from the Kadena Children's Center jumping rope. Okinawa, Japan. February, 2010  
Taken by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Meagan E. Klein. Released into Public Domain by the United States Navy.

For more information about Talking Points for Kids visit [www.textproject.org](http://www.textproject.org)  
© Elfrieda H. Hiebert. Some rights reserved (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-cd/3.0/us/>).

# And more daily reading...with the amount of text (and length of the session) increased



## Swimming Underwater



Humans can swim under water but only for short periods of time. After about two minutes, a human needs to return to the surface to get oxygen from the air.

There are animals that, like humans, use lungs for breathing. Some of these animals are much better underwater swimmers than humans. Whales can stay underwater for up to two hours without coming to the surface for air. Birds also

Photo: Humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) near Maui, Hawaii. Taken by Dr. Louis M. Herman. Released into the public domain by NOAA.

have lungs and many can stay underwater much longer than humans.

The best underwater swimmers are fish. Unlike humans, most fish breathe through gills that allow them to get oxygen from the water. Since they do not have to come to the surface, fish are excellent swimmers. Some fish can reach speeds of more than 40 miles per hour.

Almost all animals are born with either gills or lungs and have one or the other for their entire lives. But some animals are born with gills and then switch to lungs later in life. This means that they live in water for the first part of life and, later, breathe air and live on land. Frogs are an example of such animals. Frogs start out as eggs in the water. When the eggs hatch, tadpoles that breathe with gills come out. Later, tadpoles become frogs and the gills are gone. Frogs use lungs for breathing. Tadpoles can stay underwater but frogs can't. Frogs need to come to the water's surface to breathe.

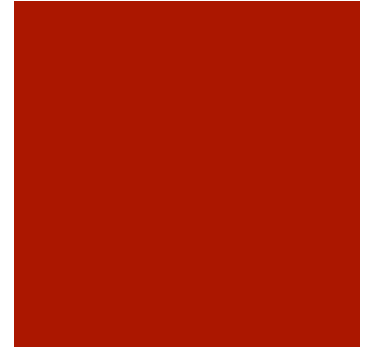




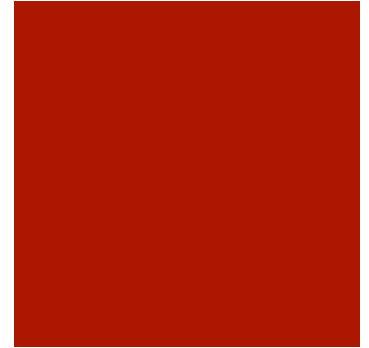
# Augmenting the Foundation

# What's Lacking in Current School Vocabulary Instruction:

- Generative
- Metalinguistic



# What Generative Means:



- Words aren't isolated islands. Words share underlying features:

The 10% of English  
Vocabulary

UNIQUE WORDS  
of Informational  
Texts:

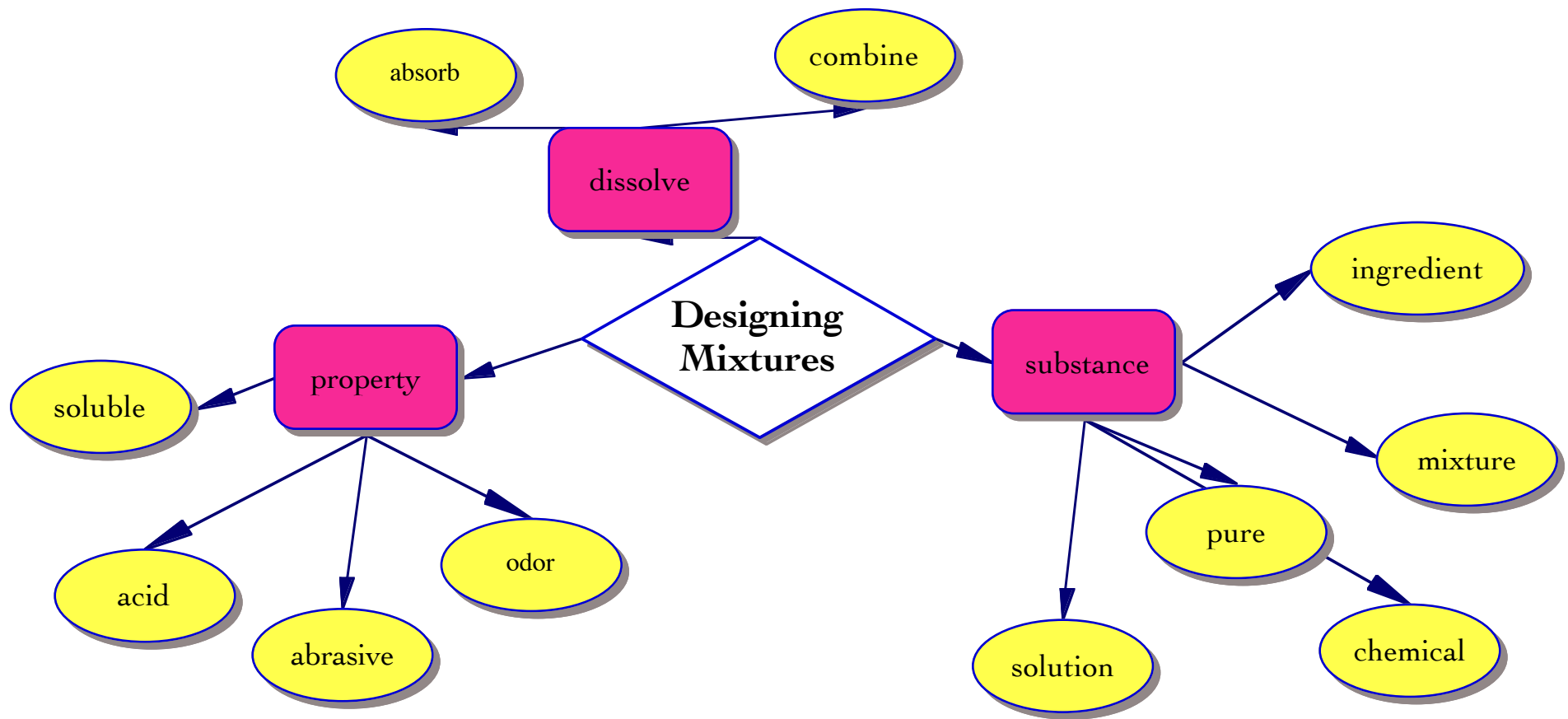
Come from  
particular  
categories/  
themes

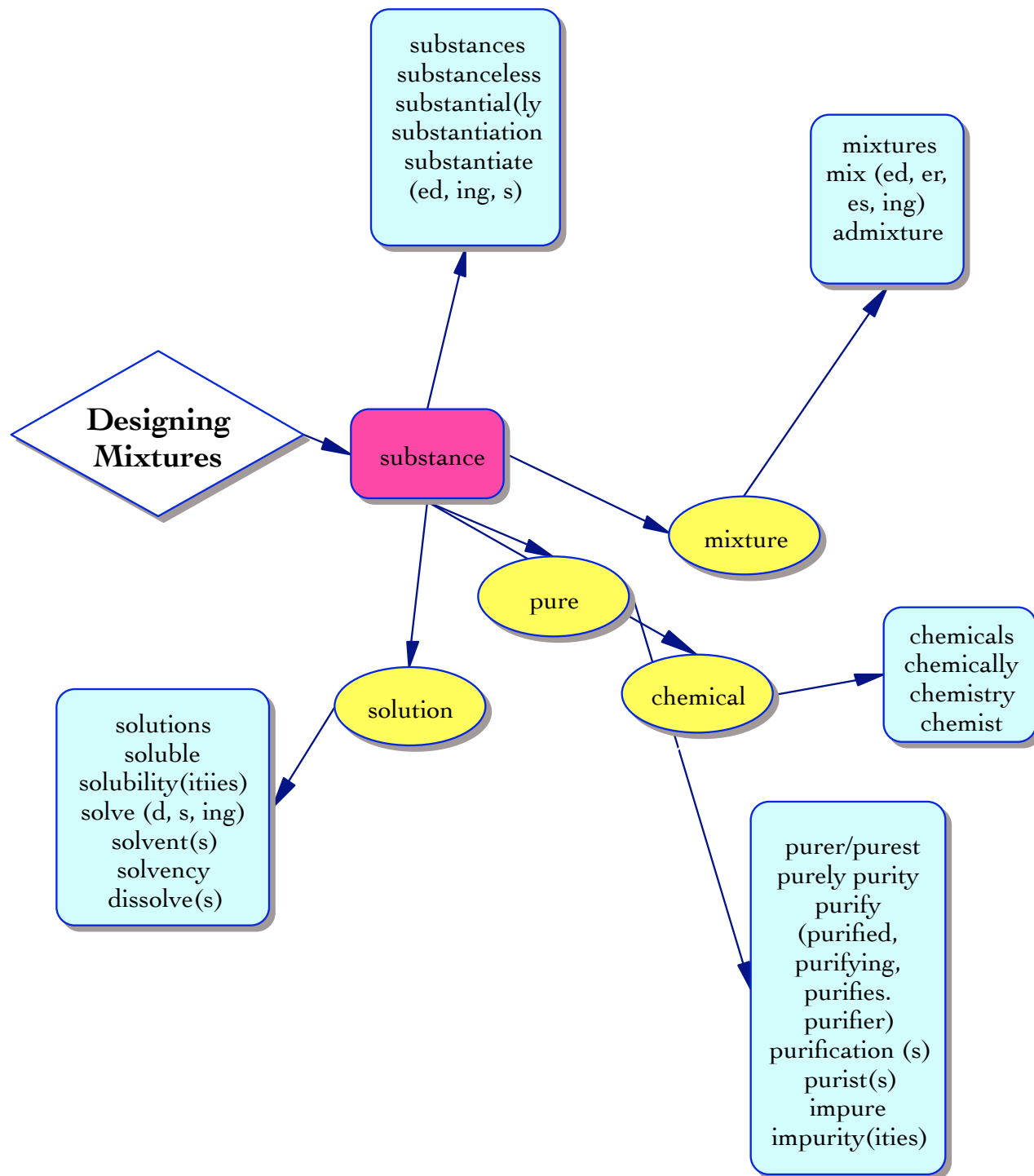
UNIQUE WORDS  
of Narrative  
Texts:

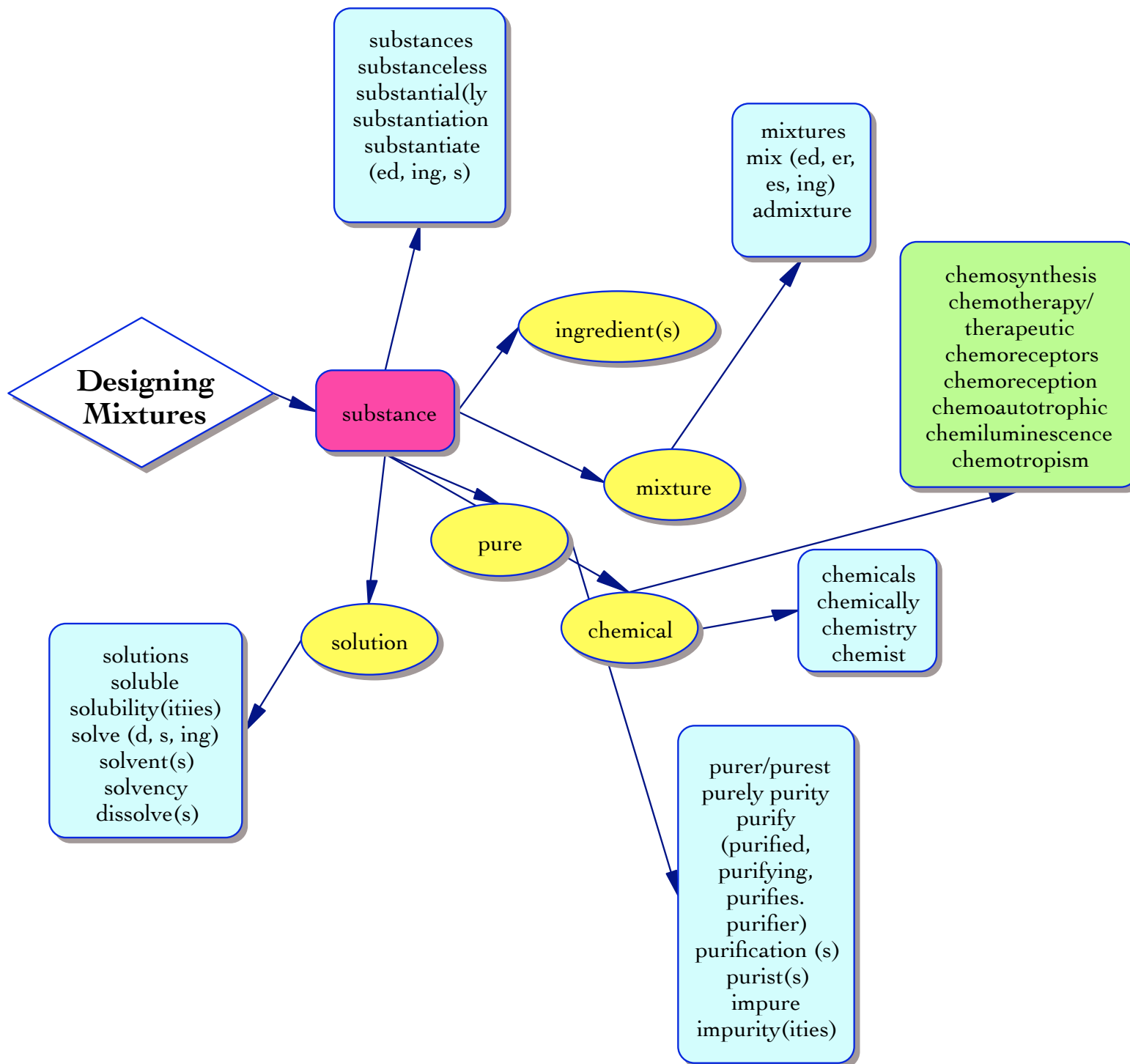
Come from  
particular  
semantic  
clusters.

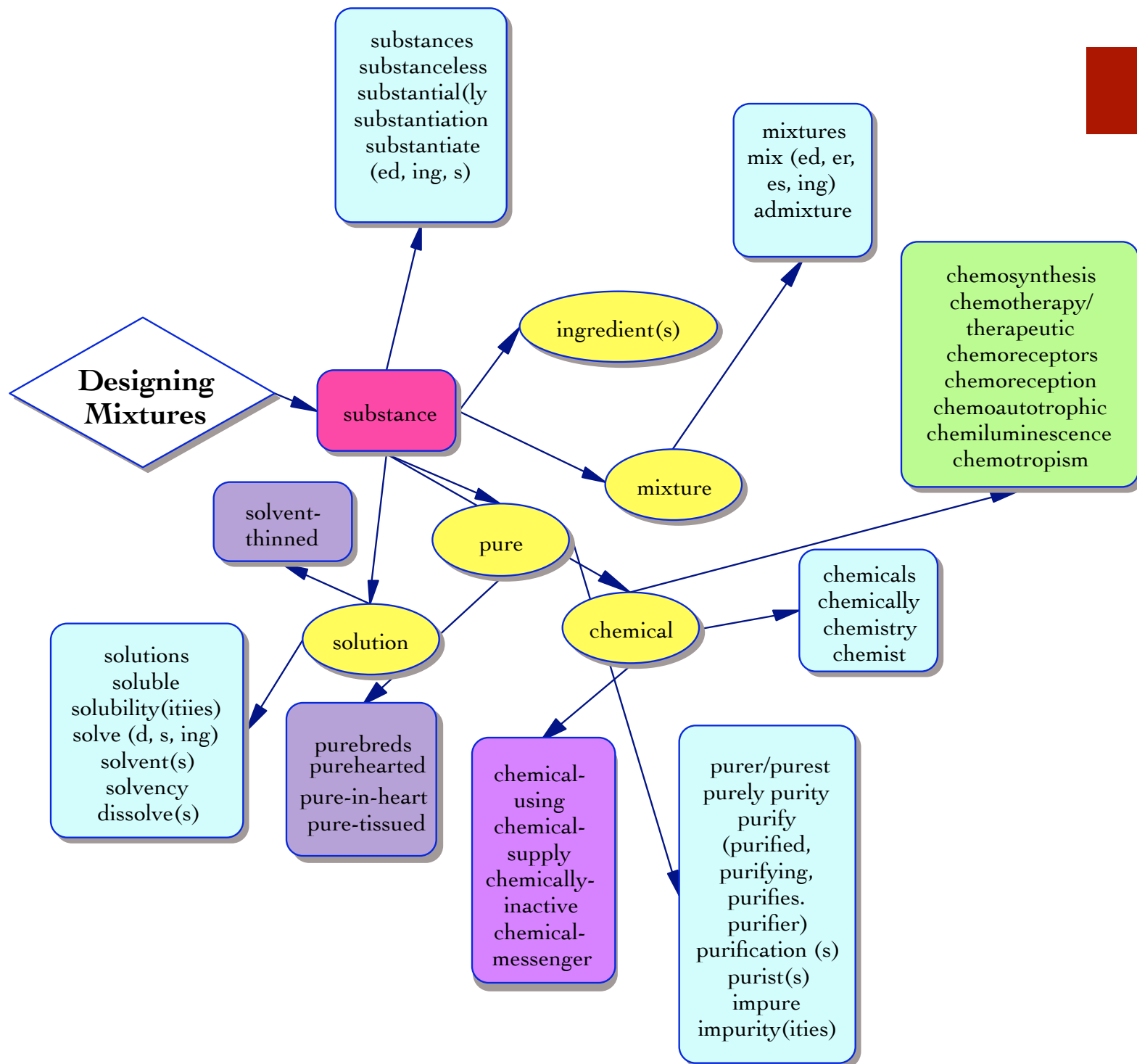
Words in both groups  
belong to  
morphological  
families

# Words from Informational Texts: An Illustration









## Words From Narrative Texts: An Illustration

| Story Word | Cluster                               | Examples of Words in Cluster (Beyond Story)                    |
|------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| amazed     | Emotions/Feelings/Happy Excitement    | surprised<br>jubilant<br>ecstatic<br>dumbfounded               |
| fascinated | Emotions/Feelings/Happy Excitement    |                                                                |
| marveled   | Emotions/Feelings/Happy Excitement    |                                                                |
|            |                                       |                                                                |
| baffled    | Communication/Mental Actions/Confused | confused<br>bewildered<br>mystified<br>perplexed<br>confounded |
| bewildered | Communication/Mental Actions/Confused |                                                                |
| stumped    | Communication/Mental Actions/Confused |                                                                |
|            |                                       |                                                                |
| humble     | Traits/Shyness/Meek                   | reluctant<br>retiring<br>self-effacing                         |
| timid      | Traits/Shyness/Meek                   |                                                                |



# Talk



## Exceptional Expressions for Everyday Events

Talking is, of course, a ubiquitous human activity. In schools, students talk to one another in the classroom, on the playground, or in the lunchroom. Teachers talk to give instruction or to counsel students. Students talk to teachers to respond to questions or to express a concern. Describing different types of talking is one way to bring exceptional expressions into everyday events.

The word **talk** can be used as a verb as well as a noun. **To talk** is to communicate verbally, through speaking rather than writing. Since the way we talk carries with it our emotions and goals, spoken communication can take many forms. Shouting, whispering, and preaching convey very different attitudes on the part of the speaker, which in turn will affect the reactions of those who hear what is said.

**Talk** as a noun is the act of verbally communicating. A teacher can have a talk with his or her students about bullying. As with the verb **talk**, there are a variety of synonyms for the noun **talk**. For example, a teacher can have a serious discussion or conversation about bullying.

## Follow-Ups

- How is articulating different from talking?
- How might a discussion be different from an utterance? A speech?

## The Spanish Connection

**Talk** comes from a Middle English word, *talkien* or *talken*. The Spanish word for **to talk** is *hablar*. *Hablar* is not a Spanish cognate of **to talk**.

## Word Changes

- Some synonyms of **talk** are also used as both verbs and nouns, for example, *chat*, *lecture*, and *gossip*.
- Many of the idioms and common phrases for **talk** incorporate the mannerism and intent of the speaker. For example, a person who “talks big” is someone who is boasting. “To talk in circles” is to repeat the same idea in a different manner that reveals nothing new and may even confuse the listener.



# Talk



## Talk as in a conversation (noun)

- conversation
- chat
- discussion
- slang
- dialogue
- chatter
- lecture
- address
- speech
- meeting
- conference
- summit
- utterance
- gossip
- comment
- debate

## Talk as in to speak casually (verb)

- chat/chatter
- scuttlebutt
- gossip
- comment
- smooze
- mention
- say
- utter
- remark

## Talk as in to speak (verb)

- speak
- verbalize
- converse
- vocalize
- articulate
- communicate
- confer
- dialogue

## Talk as in to speak in a specific way (verb)

- whisper
- flirt
- snap
- shout
- yell
- orate
- lecture
- pontificate
- address
- drone
- stammer
- bark
- slur
- bay
- jabber
- chant
- preach
- boast
- debate
- enunciate
- pronounce
- question
- ask
- declare

## Talk

## COMMON PHRASES

- Talk to me
- Talk back
- Talk over
- We need to talk

## IDIOMS

- Talk a mile a minute
- Spit it out
- Talk big
- Talk sense
- Dance around the topic
- Speak up
- Talk it up
- Talk down
- Talk is cheap
- Talk it over
- Talking to a brick wall
- Talk of the town
- Small talk
- Speak of the devil
- Sweet talk
- Talk your ear off
- Talk in circles/riddles
- Talk shop
- Walk the talk
- Talk your way out of a paper bag
- Talk until your blue in the face
- You're a fine one to talk
- Shooting the breeze

## THE SPANISH CONNECTION

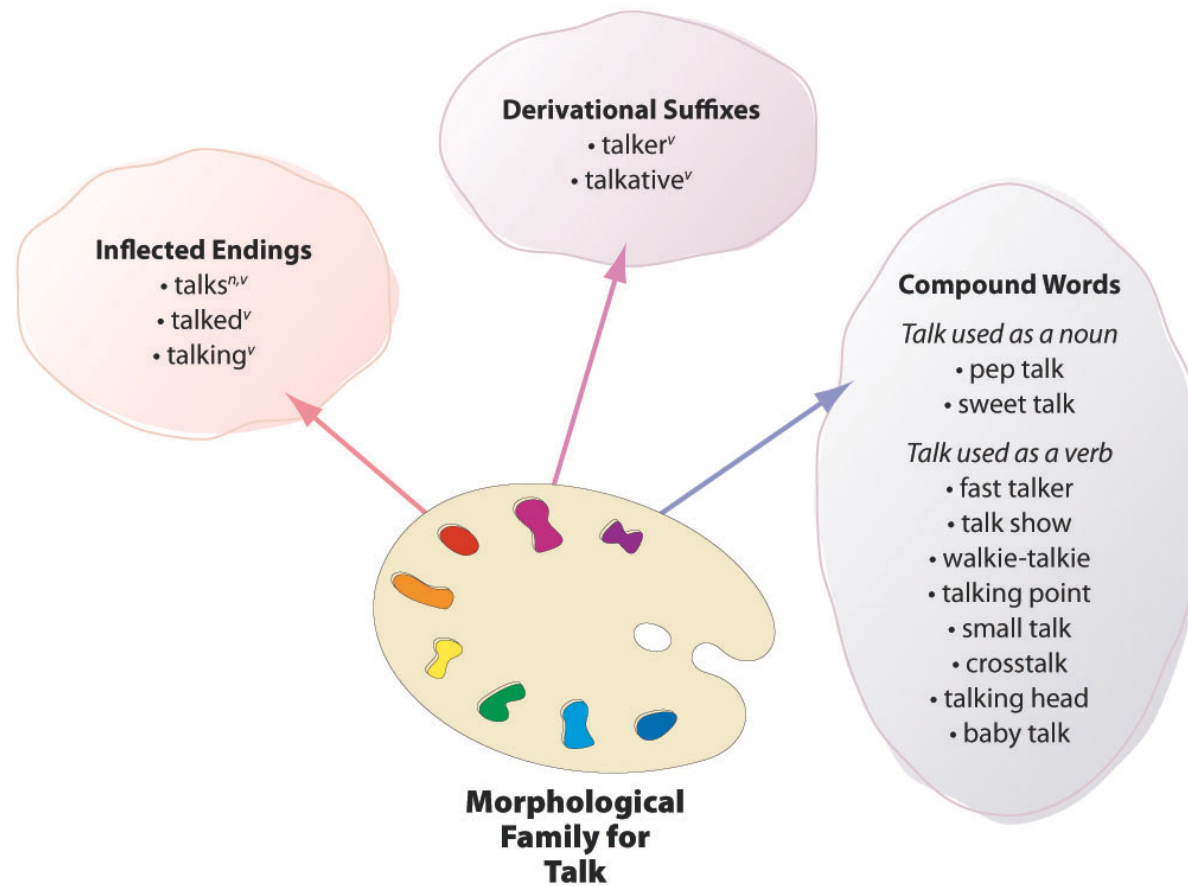
- conversation / conversación
- discussion / discusión
- to discuss / discutir
- dialogue / diálogo
- to have a dialogue / dialogar
- comment / comentario
- to comment / comentar
- to mention / mencionar
- to verbalize / verbalizar
- to converse / conversar
- to communicate / comunicar
- communication / comunicación
- pronounce / pronunciar
- to debate / debatir
- debate / debate
- enunciate / enunciar
- pronounce / pronunciar
- declare / declarar





# Talk

E4-02

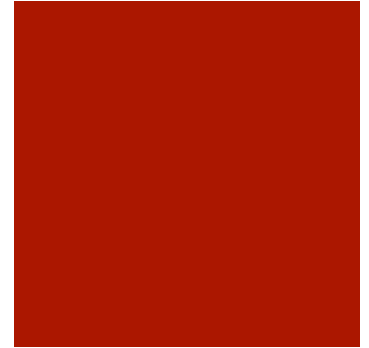


<sup>n</sup> Talk used as a noun

<sup>v</sup> Talk used as a verb



# What Metalinguistic Means:



- Every word in English can't be taught. For example, a new invention brings with it new words and new meanings to existing words. BUT: We can support students in developing a metalinguistic sense about English vocabulary.

## Word Reminders™

**1**  
**Words**  
**You Already**  
**Know**

Sometimes, a new word has a meaning close to that of a word you already know.

**2**  
**Words**  
**You Can Picture**

Sometimes, a picture can help you remember a word's meaning.

**3**  
**Word**  
**Meaning Family**

Often, the meaning of words are connected to the meanings of other words.

**4**  
**Word Part**  
**Family**

Many words belong to families of words that have the same root words and meanings. Some root words are the same in English and Spanish.

**5**  
**Word**  
**Changes**

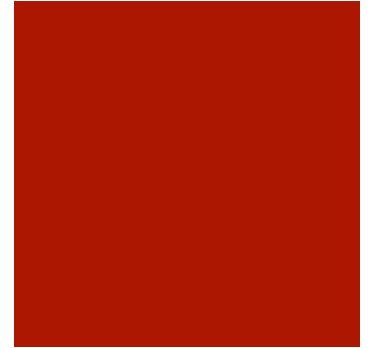
Sometimes, the same word has several different meanings. Often, the meaning of a word changes when it is in a phrase or compound word.

**6**  
**Word**  
**Summary**

Words are part of families or networks. When you learn the members of a word's family, your vocabulary grows

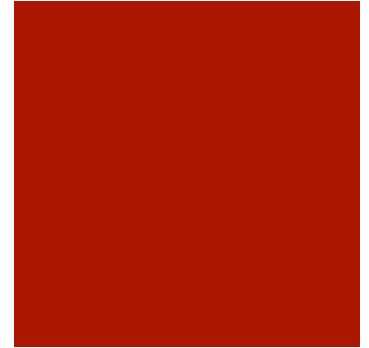
## Caveat: 90-10:

- Refers to the task of growing capacity in reading; it does NOT refer to an instructional distribution of time.



# Summary

- Foundation = Automaticity with the core vocabulary
- Augmentation: Metalinguistic awareness of types of vocabulary in narrative and informational texts



## In closing:

- We can bring struggling readers to high levels of literacy. It takes work...and knowledge.

