



The Lexicon

- “Mental dictionary”
- Contains all information we know about a word, including:
 - How it sounds
 - It’s meaning
 - How it appears when written
 - How is it used in a sentence





barks

cute

paw

puppy

fur



cat

log

pet

hot

collar

bone

playful



animal



Role of Vocabulary in Language Processing

- Common words are recognized faster than uncommon ones - or the *frequency effect*
- *Words in context are recognized faster than out of context words - or the context effect*





The Lexicon

- The strength of connections depends on the magnitude of activation occurring on a particular connection and between particular representations.
- The more activation occurs on a connection the stronger it gets and the faster the processing on that connection.
- High frequency words result in greater magnitude of activation than low frequency words
 - They possess stronger connections and their processing requires less time





Autism and the Lexicon

- Reduced use of language results in reduced connections as well as strength of connections
- Failure to benefit from linguistic context contributes to slowed activation





Treatment Implication

- Building fluency
- Flexible meanings and multiple meanings
- Expanding representation
 - Category programs
 - Semantic maps
 - Association drills





Fluency

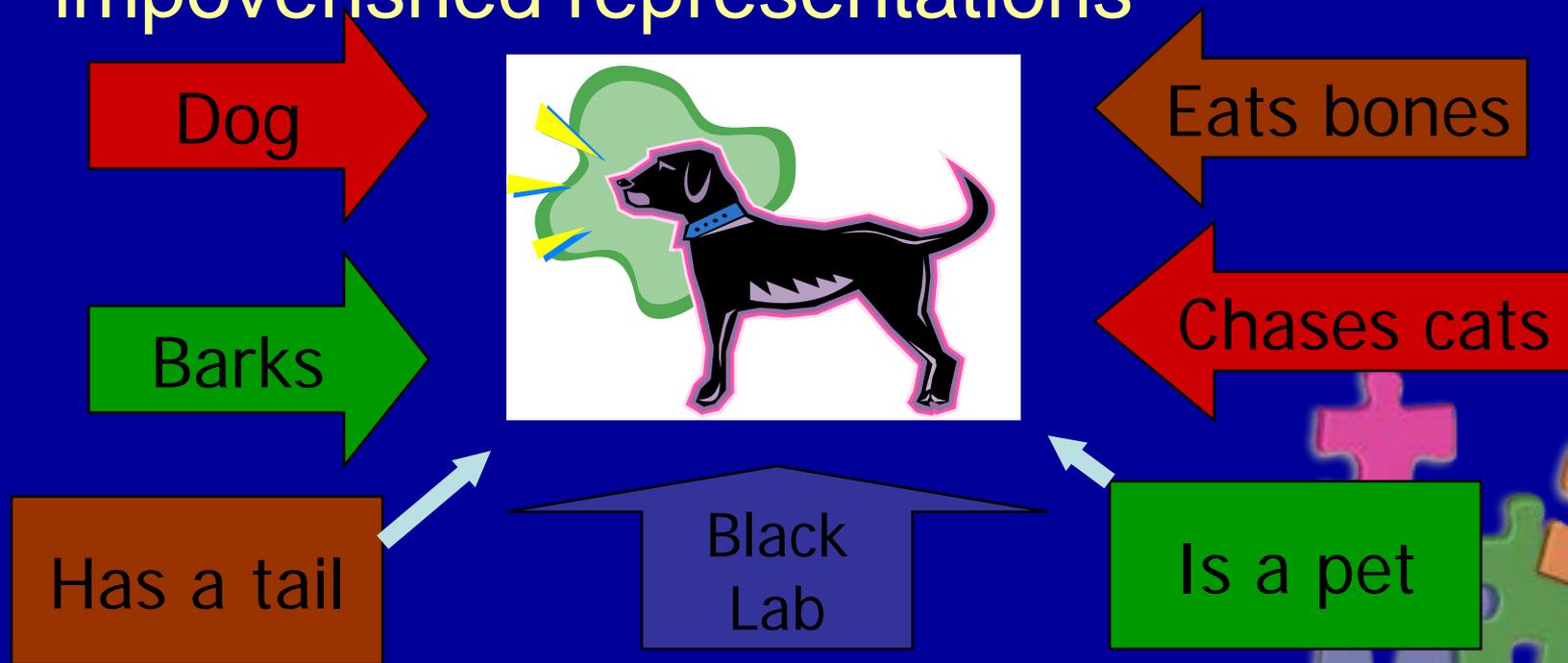
- Fluent use of vocabulary
 - Accuracy of receptive and expressive naming is insufficient. Fluent receptive and expressive drills should be included to strengthen representation.





More on Vocabulary

- One theoretical assumption about a learner with autism is that he or she has impoverished representations





Even More on Vocabulary

- Functional vocabulary
 - A learner must have sufficient vocabulary to express his or her wants and needs
- Functional vocabulary
 - A learner must have the appropriate vocabulary to be able to participate in interactions and conversations with peer groups





Final Words on Vocabulary

- Many adults may have sufficient vocabulary but the problem lies more in “use”
- Changing nature of needs (both vocabulary and social responses) must be considered and taught





Compensatory Skills

- Following up with an AAC system when not understood by the listener
- Providing visual accommodations to support comprehension
- Teach individual to ask for clarification or help when situation is unclear





Comprehension

Quality of Communication

Intent

Speech

Motivation

Vocabulary



Quality of Life

