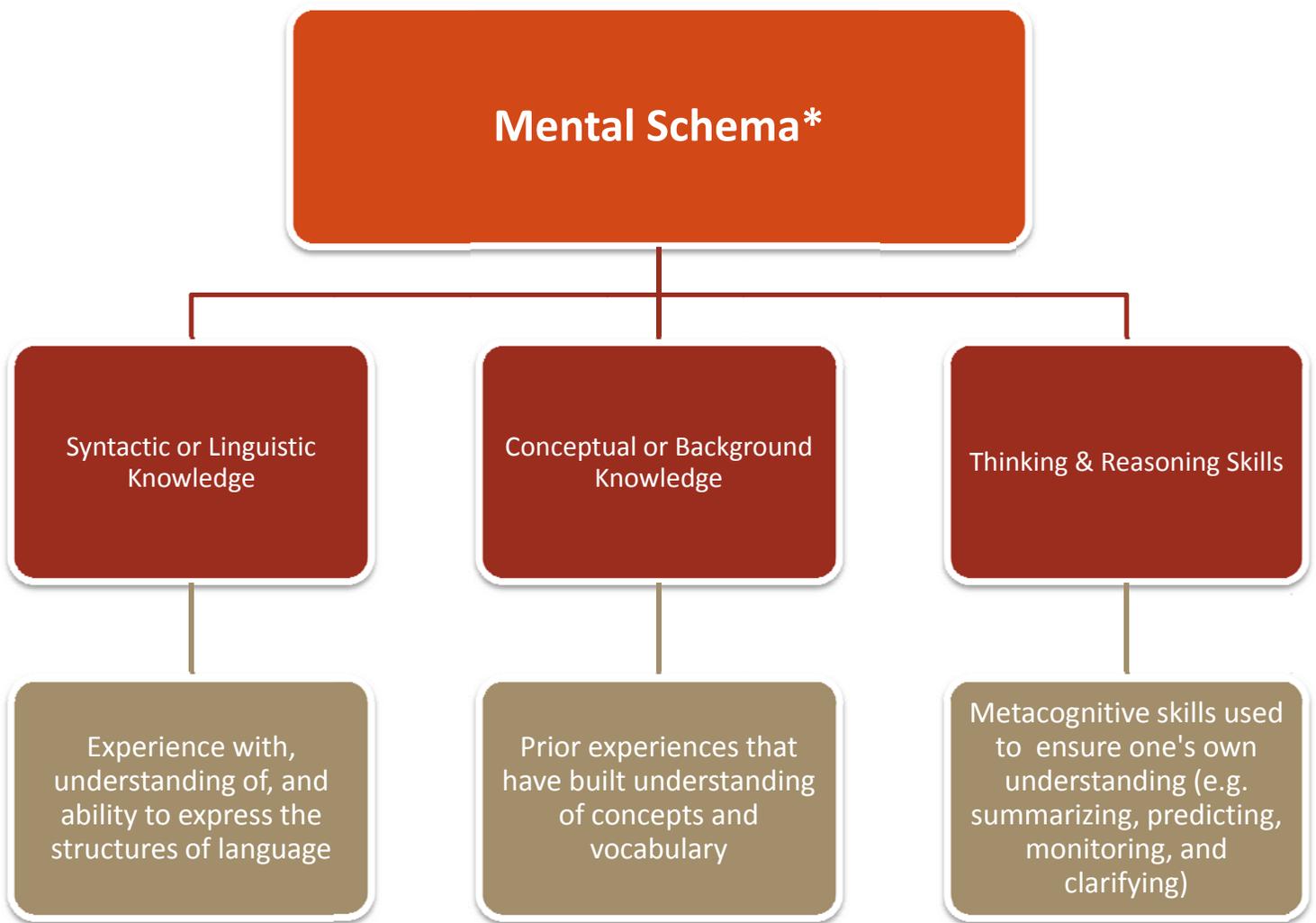


The Mental Schema Necessary for Reading

Prerequisites for the Comprehension of Oral or Written Language



When remediating mental schema needs, the entire day, instructional environment, and instructional strategies need to be organized in such a way as to support the conceptual, language and brain development needs of the child. Taking every opportunity possible to build background knowledge, vocabulary, and thinking skills is essential.

Of further note, whereas the mechanical skills of reading can usually be learned in a specific scope and sequence (i.e. phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency), the various components of a student's mental schema are developed in a more complex manner. Thus, when considering students who are struggling, it is important to keep in mind the variables that make up the student's mental schema and provide instruction that is accordingly robust. Is the student experiencing difficulty due to a lack in one area or a combination of multiple areas?

Comprehension difficulties can be prevented by actively building comprehension skills as well as linguistic and conceptual knowledge, beginning in the earliest grades. Comprehension can be enhanced through instruction focused on concept and vocabulary growth and background knowledge, instruction about the syntax and rhetorical structures of written language, and direct instruction about comprehension strategies such as summarizing, predicting, and monitoring. Comprehension also takes practice, which is gained by reading independently, by reading in pairs or groups, and by being read aloud to. (*Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children - Executive Summary*, March 1998)

* Sources for division of mental schema taken in part from *CORE Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures for Kindergarten Through Eighth Grade* (p.9).