# Morphology and Semantics Project: *The Giving tree*

By: Kelly Broshears

***Link to the voiced over narration:

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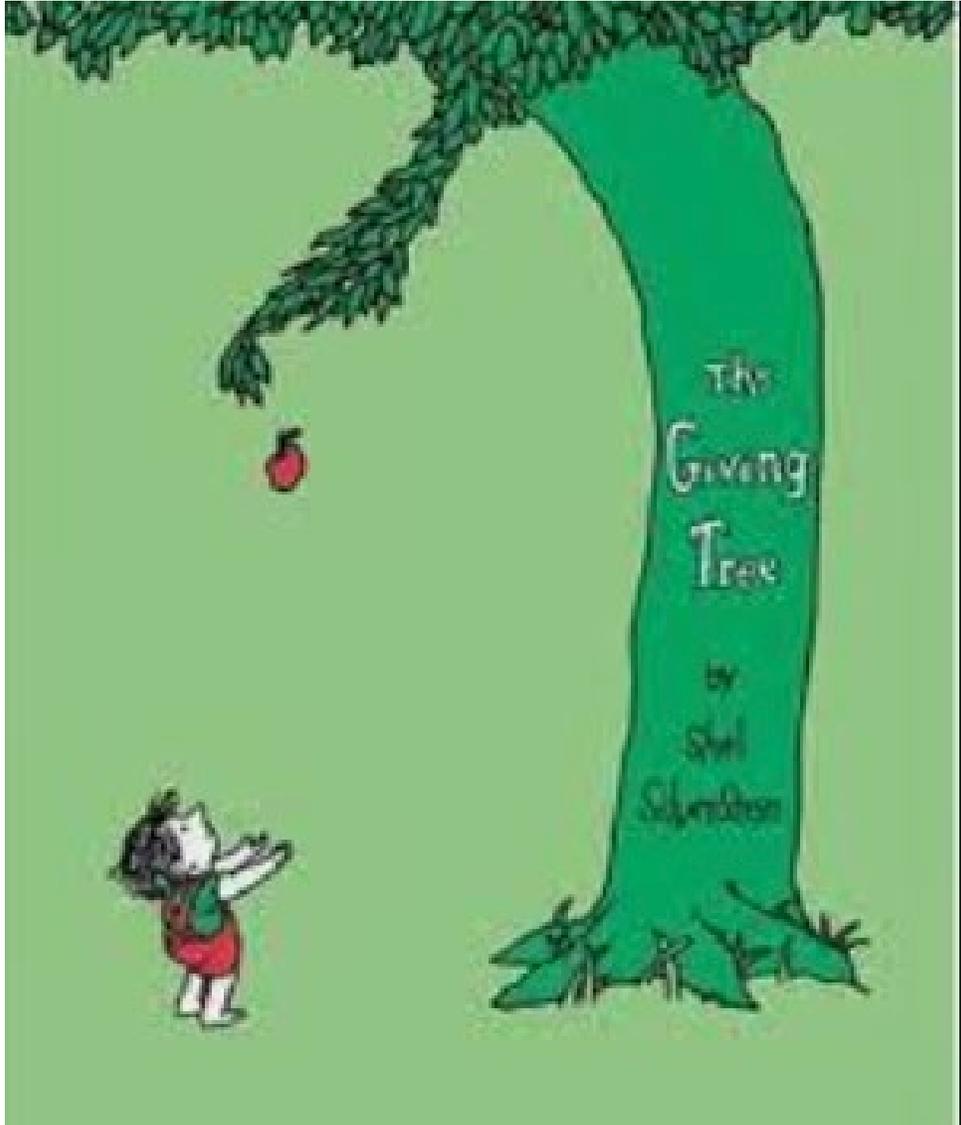
The Giving Tree
By: Shel Silverstein

- For the morphology and semantics project, I have chosen to use the children's book *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein as my sample to analyze.

- This book has 621 total words in it.

- I chose this book as it is relative to my practice as a kindergarten teacher.
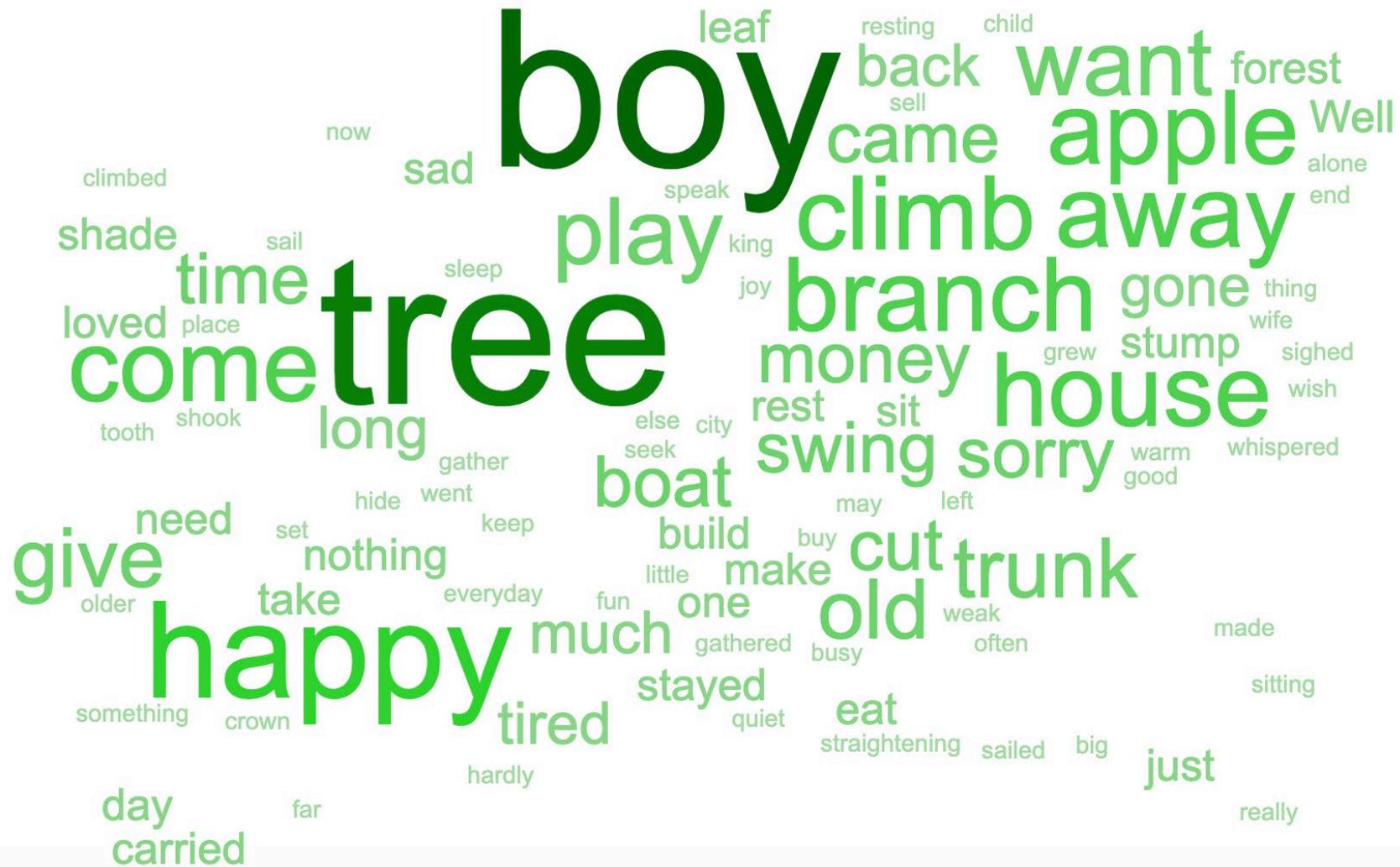
Here is the Wordsift created for The Giving Tree.

What the data suggests:

▶ After determining the text I wanted to use, I realized that many words in the text do not include many common features for a strong morphological analysis.

▶ The words in this book contain various parts of speech such as adjectives, nouns, and verbs.

▶ The morphemes in this book are mostly *free morphemes* meaning that "they can stand alone by themselves as single words" (Yule, 74)

▶ There are only a few examples of bound morphemes that will be addressed soon. Bound morphemes can be defined as morphemes that "cannot normally stand alone and are typically attached to another form" (Yule 74)

▶ Many of the words derive from Old English or Latin roots.

Morphological Analysis: Boy

▶ The word boy appears in this book 26 times, making it the most common word in the book.

▶ The word boy is a noun that comes from the 14-century word *boie* meaning "male child before puberty" (Harper, 21)

▶ Although it appears the most in the book, *boy* is not a word that is capable of being broken down into several morphemes.

▶ This makes the word *boy* a free morpheme as well as a lexical morpheme.

Morphological Analysis: Tree

- The word tree appears in this book 23 times, making it the 2nd most common word in the book.

- The word tree is a noun that comes from the Old English word *treo* meaning "timber, wood, beam, log, stake" (Harper, 21)

- Like the word boy, *tree* is not a word that is capable of being broken down into several morphemes.

- *Tree* is a free morpheme as well as a lexical morpheme.
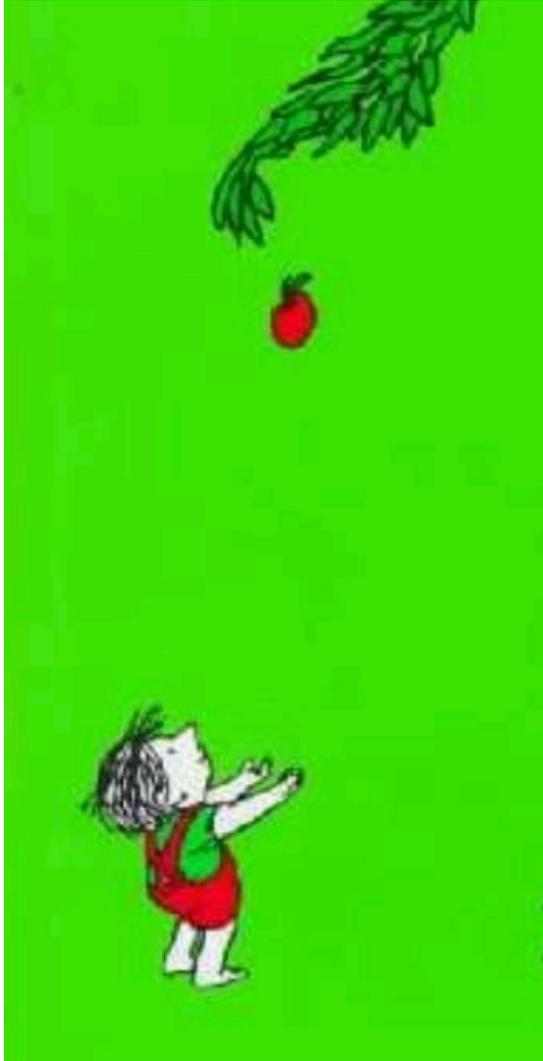
Morphological Analysis: Give

- The word give appears in this book only 5 times.

- The word give is a verb that comes from Middle English word *yeve* meaning "that which is offered" (Harper, 21)

- Like the previous words tree and boy, give is not a word that is capable of being broken down into several morphemes.

- *Give* is a free morpheme, however, that can be combined with other morphemes to change the meaning or the tense of the word (ex: given)

Morphological Analysis: loved

► The word loved appears in this book only twice, however, it is a good example of a word than can be further broken down.

► Loved is a past tense verb made up of the free morpheme "love" and the bound morpheme (suffix) –ed.

► The word love comes from the Latin root word *am* which also means love. This is how in other languages we get words like *amor* which means love in Spanish. (Harper, 21)
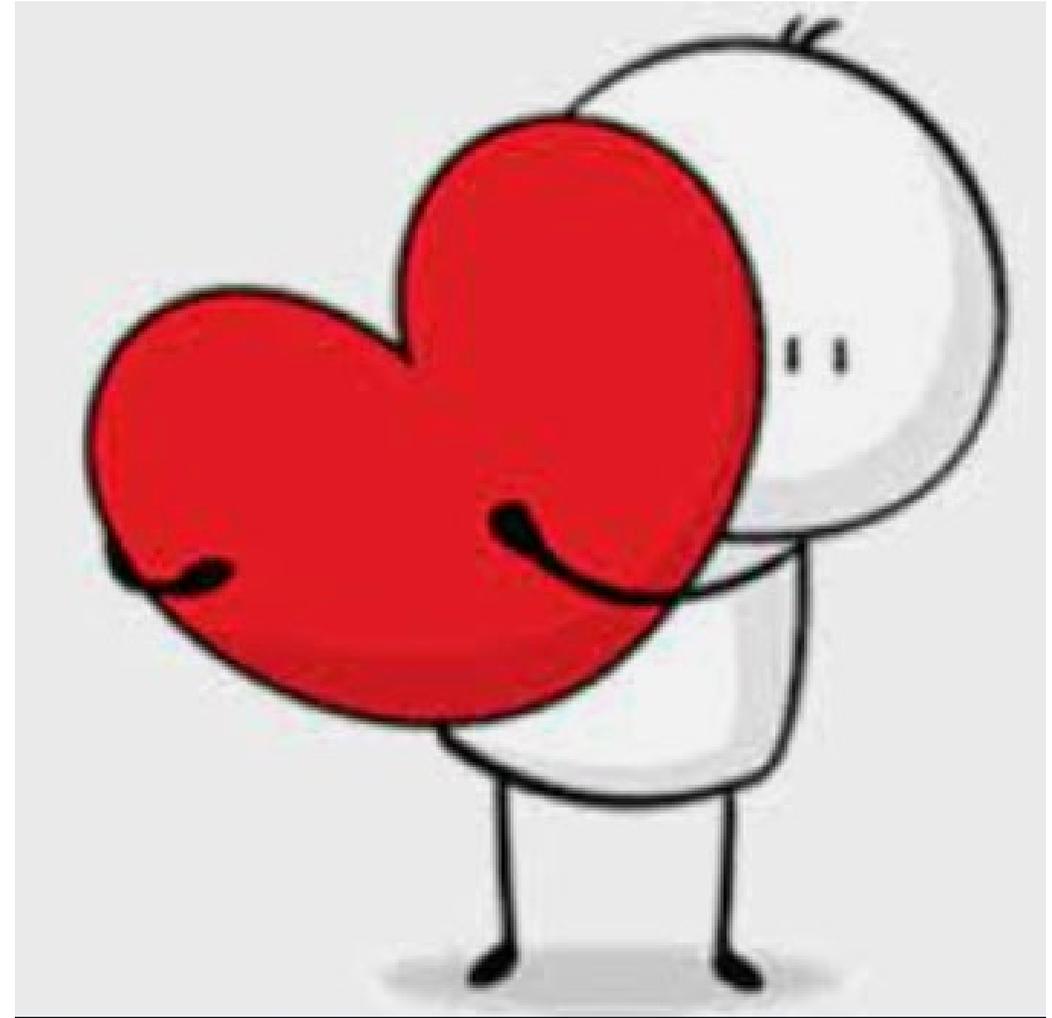
Morphological Analysis: Sit/sitting

- The two words, sit and sitting, are seen a total of 3 times in the book.

- Mentioning both of these verbs in together one slide because sit is the stem for sitting.

- Sit is a free morpheme, while –ing at the end of sitting is a bound morpheme/suffix. When you put the –ing onto the free morpheme sit changes the meaning to sitting.

- Both of these verbs in the book are used to represent the present tense.
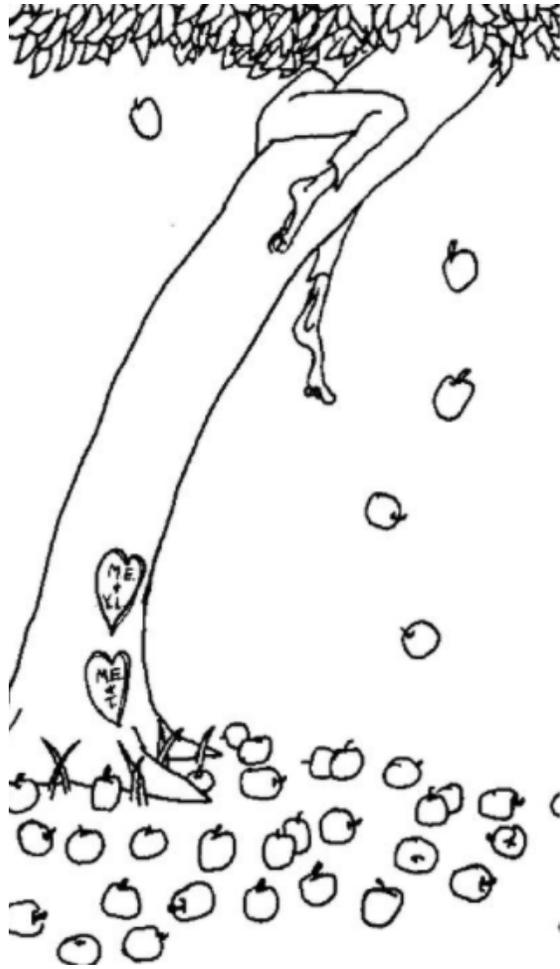
Morphological Analysis: Climb/climbed

▶ Climb is heard in *The Giving Tree* 7 times according to the Wordsift. The word climbed is only heard once.

▶ Just like sit and sitting, mentioning these 2 verbs together in one slide because climb is the stem for climbed.

▶ Climb is a free morpheme, while -ed at the end of climbed is a bound morpheme/suffix. When you put the -ed onto the free morpheme climb, the meaning of the lexical morpheme changes to climbed.

▶ The new meaning shows the word climb coming from the present tense to the past with climbed.

Morphological Analysis: Happy

▶ The word happy appears in the book 11 times.

▶ Happy comes from the Middle English word *hap* meaning chance or fortune. In the 14th century the word happy was developed by adding the –y adjective suffix meaning "full of or characterized by" from the Old English –ig. (Harper, 21)

▶ Although I cannot break happy down further, you can add many prefixes/suffixes to change the meaning:

  ▶ Un-happy

  ▶ Happiness

  ▶ Happily

Morphological Analysis: Play

- The word play appears in *The Giving Tree* 6 times.

- Play is a verb that derives from the Old English word *plegian* meaning to "move lightly and quickly, occupy or busy oneself, amuse oneself; engage in active exercise; frolic; engage in children's play; make sport of, mock; perform music," (Harper, 21)

- When teaching children, you can add many prefixes/suffixes to change the meaning:

  - Player-changes it to a noun

  - Playing- makes the verb tense present.

  - Played- changes it to the past tense.

Morphological Analysis: house

- The word house appears in *The Giving Tree* 7 times.

- House is a noun that derives from the Old English word *hus* meaning "dwelling, shelter, building designed to be used as a residence" (Harper, 21)

- House is a free morpheme or could also be called a lexical morpheme, it can stand completely alone.

Morphological Analysis: branch

- The word branch appears in *The Giving Tree* 7 times.

- Branch is a noun that derives from the from Old French word *branche* meaning "branch, bough, twig; branch of a family" from all the way back in the 12th century. (Harper, 21)

- Branch is a free morpheme or could also be called a lexical morpheme, it can stand alone, however, you can add an –s to the word to make branches, a plural word.

Would these words be difficult for children?

- For most students, I believe these words would be difficult.

- The words that would be the most difficult are the words that include bound morphemes.

- Bound morphemes are difficult because when you add a prefix or a suffix to a word it can change the meaning of the word. This means that students would first have to understand the meanings behind each of those bound morphemes as well as the free morphemes mentioned.

What kind of word-learning strategies could you design for your students?

- **Scavenger Hunt:** Using the data from the Wordsift, many of these words come up more than once. I would teach the book over a week and I would introduce a word each day and go over the parts of the words. Then, I would have students go on a word scavenger hunt in the book and put a sticky note whenever they saw the word.

- **Semantic Map:** I would like to use semantic maps with this book. I would introduce a word (ex: happy) and have students talk about other words that have similar meanings to the word,

What kind of word-learning strategies could you design for your students?

▶ **ELL cognate pairs:** For everyone, but mostly English language learners, I would work with students to come up with cognate pairs. Students would have to produce a similar word with a similar meaning to the English word meaning in their own languages. This will help students make a concrete connection between the two languages and will help the information stick.

▶ **Context games:** One idea I thought of would be a game in regard to the context of the word. I would introduce a word and would read the definition of the word. Then, I would give 3 sentences with the word but two do not make sense in the context. Students would have to choose which sentence would make sense.

How would you teach this text??

▶ As mentioned briefly in an earlier slide, I would teach this text with children in the K-grade 3 age range.

▶ I would like to teach the book and do a study of it over one week. Each day I would focus on another vocabulary word from the Wordsift. I would begin the lesson by doing a simple morphological analysis of the word if it is applicable. Then after teaching into the word, I would read the book aloud to students again.

▶ Students would then work in groups to find all the places that word is in the book.

▶ Afterwards, students would do a retell of one part of the story where they found that word in the story.

▶ This way students are not only getting the vocabulary, but they are also getting the understanding of what is happening in the book.

References:

- Harper, D. (2021). *Online Etymology Dictionary. Etymonline.com*

- Yule, G. (6th ed.). (2016). *The Study of Language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- *Wordsift.org*