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Oral Language Development:
Theory Into Practice

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Session Description

Supporting teachers' understanding of oral language development promotes equity and access to instruction for all students including English learners. In this session, classroom-based examples and research from an oral language development grant at the national New Teacher Center will be shared.

Session Outcomes

- Review research about the instructional importance of oral language development
- Understand the reciprocity between oral language, reading and writing
- Observe key approaches to support Reading Recovery students as well as classroom practices and small groups for intervention
- Identify assessments, examine texts, and understand participation structures that foster oral language for equity

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading – Grade 1

The English Language Arts and Reading Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are organized into the following strands. . . **Listening and Speaking, where students listen and respond to the ideas of others while contributing their own ideas in conversations and in groups;** and Oral and Written Conventions, where students learn how to use the oral and written conventions of the English language in speaking and writing.

Revised August 2011

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading – Grade 1

(27) Listening and Speaking/Listening. Students **use comprehension skills** to listen attentively to others in **formal and informal settings**. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to:

- (A) **listen attentively** to speakers and ask relevant questions to clarify information; and
(B) **follow, restate, and give oral** instructions that involve a **short related sequence** of actions.

Revised August 2011

- (28) Listening and Speaking/Speaking. Students **speak clearly and to the point**, using the conventions of language. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to share information and ideas about the topic under discussion, **speaking clearly** at an appropriate pace, using the conventions of language.
(29) Listening and Speaking/Teamwork. Students **work productively with others in teams**. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to follow agreed-upon rules for discussion, including listening to others, speaking when recognized, and making appropriate contributions.

Common Core State Standards

The new Common Core State Standards say that "students must have ample opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, **structured conversations**-as part of a whole class, in small groups, and with a partner. Being productive members of these conversations require that students contribute accurate relevant information; respond to and develop what others have said; make comparisons and contrasts; and analyze and synthesize a multitude of ideas in various domains."

Speaking and Listening Standards Comprehension and collaboration (standards 1-3)

- **Day-to-day, purposeful academic talk in one-on-one, small-group, and large-group settings**

Presentation of knowledge and ideas (standards 4-6)

- **Formal sharing of information and concepts, including through the use of technology**

Language Standards

Conventions of standard English Knowledge of language (standards 1-3)

- **Using standard English in formal writing and speaking**
- **Using language effectively and recognizing language varieties**

Vocabulary (standards 4-6)

- **Determining word meanings and word nuances**
- **Acquiring general academic and domain-specific words and phrases**

Note on range and content of student language use:

They must also be able to determine or clarify the meaning of grade-appropriate words encountered through listening, reading, and media use; come to appreciate that words have nonliteral meanings, shadings of meaning, and relationships to other words; and **expand their vocabulary in the course of studying content. The inclusion of Language standards in their own strand should not be taken as an indication that skills related to conventions, effective language use, and vocabulary are unimportant to reading, writing, speaking, and listening; indeed, they are inseparable from such contexts.**

Intentional Design Limitations of CCSS

What the Standards do NOT define:

- How teachers should teach
- All that can or should be taught
- The nature of advanced work beyond the core
- The interventions needed for students well below grade level
- The full range of support for English language learners and students with special needs
- Everything needed to be college and career ready

Oral Language Research

The Early Catastrophe:

The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3

- Observed 42 diverse families over 2 years
- Divided families into 3 socio-economic classes
- Analyzed child's rate of language acquisition and parent's communication style

Hart & Risley, 2003, *American Educator*
(Revisiting study from 1983)

Oral Language Research

“All the families **nurtured** their children and played and talked with them. They all disciplined their children and taught them good manners and how to dress and toilet themselves. They provided their children with much the same toys and **talked to them** about much the same things. Though different in personality and skill levels, the children all learned to talk and to be **socially appropriate** members of the family with all the basic skills needed for preschool entry.” (p.3)

Hart & Risley, 2003, *American Educator*

Oral Language Research

Words heard per hour by children from:	
Low SES family	616
Working class family	1,251
Professional family children	2,153

“These relative differences in amount of experience were so durable over the more than two years of observations that they provide the best basis we currently have for estimating children’s actual life experience.” (p.4)

Hart & Risley, 2003, *American Educator*

Oral Language Research

- Strong correlations exist between the amount and kind of language heard in infancy and abilities later in childhood.
- A child’s experience of language mattered more than any other measured factor (race, socio-economic status).

How Does this Impact the Middle Grades?

- Vocabulary knowledge in kindergarten and first grade is a significant predictor for reading comprehension in the middle and secondary grades.
- Vocabulary difficulty strongly influences the readability of text.
- Teaching vocabulary can improve reading comprehension.

- Growing up in poverty can seriously restrict the vocabulary children learn before beginning school and make attaining an adequate vocabulary a very challenging task.
- Learning English vocabulary is one of the most crucial tasks for English learners.
- Lack of vocabulary can be a crucial factor underlying the school failure of many students.

Graves, M. *Voices from the Middle*, 2007

Compelling Reasons

- Children from low socio-economic backgrounds and especially English Language Learners have vocabularies that lag their more privileged peers by thousands of words.
- Lack of oral language development is a good predictor of future struggles with reading and writing in later years.

With a colleague, take a couple of minutes to reflect on the research, and share your current understanding of the oral language support needed by Reading Recovery and Emergent Literacy students.

What new factors should be considered in today's world?

Compelling Reasons

- Literacy tools focus almost exclusively on reading and writing skills, so that even teachers and teacher leaders who are rightly concerned about **promoting oral language** lack tools that would support the effort.
- Oral Language development is a **crucial component** of Response to Intervention (RTI).
- Strategic, focused intervention around oral language addresses the **equity gap**.

Let's start by understanding the reciprocity between oral language, reading and writing. . .

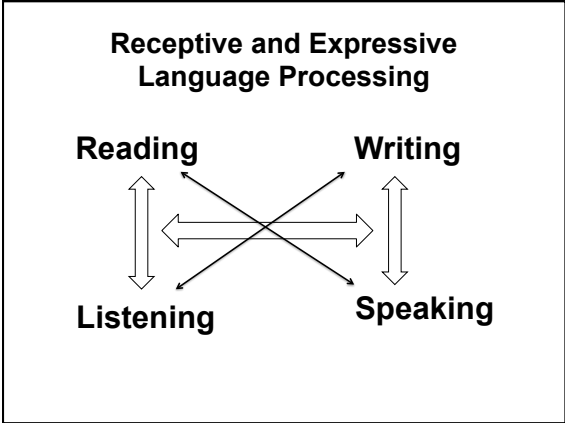
Integrative Language Processing

Is **speaking/oral language** more closely connected to:

Reading?

Writing?

Listening?



Reciprocity Builds Both Receptive and Expressive Language

Expressive Language:

- English Language Learners and Low Language students write in their oral language structures.
- Teachers need to look at the writing with two filters - **language** development and **book** language.

Reciprocity Builds Both Receptive and Expressive Language

Receptive Language:

- Teachers need to analyze students' talk and writing for oral language structures.
- A book can be used in different settings – read aloud, shared reading and guided reading. This approach can be restructured into a new interactive process for integrative language processing.

Oral Language Development

A New Definition

Oral Language Development is traditionally defined as:

- **Phonology**-Understanding sound units of language
- **Morphology**: Figuring out how to manipulate the smallest units of meaning in the language
- **Semantics/Vocabulary**: Developing understanding of words children hear and say

But these are limited and insufficient to describe Oral Language Development

Critical Components of Oral Language Development

- **Vocabulary**-Developing meanings for the words children hear and say in their conversations
- **Background knowledge**-Activating and building
- **Pragmatics**-Understanding the social uses of language including basic social rules and taking turns in a conversation
- **Syntax and structure/grammar**-Learning the patterns of how words are linked together/word order
- **Sense of story/pattern**-Speaking with others and listening to storytelling and books
- **Self-regulation** of behavior through language

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A Closer Look at Academic Discourse and Oral Language Development

In achieving literacy, young children need writing to help them learn about reading, they need reading to help them learn about writing, and they need oral language to help them learn about both.

Oral Language and Early Literacy in Preschool: Talking Reading and Writing, 2nd Ed., Roskos, Kathleen A., Tabors, Patton O., Lenhart, Lisa A., (2009) International Reading Association, p. 4.

"The skills of the average and low progress readers in these three aspects of cue gathering -- grammatical, semantic, and letter-sound correspondence--should be developed and strengthened, in that order... "

(p.309)

Clay, *Becoming Literate*, 1991

Classroom Talk

Reflecting on your context:

- What kinds of talk are encouraged?
- When is talk encouraged?
- What is the language objective for students?
- Is there a particular student or group of students the teacher needs to focus on?

Johnston, Choice Words: How Language Affects Children's Learning, 2004

Coaching for Classroom Talk

"Teachers have very different ways of thinking about who they are, who their students are, and what they think they are doing, and these ways of thinking strongly influence the language they use automatically." (p. 82)

"Talk is the basis of learning in any classroom. Through this focus on oral language and conversation, coaches/mentors can assist teachers by looking for mentoring around some of the those patterns that are most helpful to the growth of the learning community." (p. 84)

Choice Words: How Our Language Affects Children's Learning, Peter Johnston

Application to Reading Recovery

Scaffolding Learning

A teller of simple stories at five or six years of age has a constructive control of oral language, will be able to compose a simple story for his writing task, and will not find it so difficult to reconstruct the author's story he is reading.

Section 15 – Children who know little about stories and storytelling; and
Section 22 – Children aged five to nine schooled in another language, who need to make accelerated progress in English

Clay, LL2, pages 162-163 and 182-183

The teacher must make a judgement {sic}. Does this child need to hear the story once, or twice, or three time before he tries to read it? Then she must begin to taper off the support she has offered. This slight alteration provides more input for the child at the beginning of his tuition and may facilitate progress through the first book levels up to about Level 3.

Clay, LL2, pages 162-163

One: Least support needed

- **First, read the new book (Book 1) to the child (oral input).**
- **Then introduce Book 1 in the usual way.**
- **Then have the child read the new book.**
- **(Take a Running Record of Book 1 next day.)**

Clay, M.M. (2005) LITERACY LESSONS DESIGNED FOR INDIVIDUALS: PART TWO, Children who know little about stories and storytelling, p. 163

Two: More support is needed, but less than "Three" below

- Do a normal book introduction for Book 1 that you read to the child yesterday.
- Then have the child read Book 1.
(Take a Running Record of Book 1 next day.)
- Read tomorrow's new book (Book 2) to the child.

Clay, M.M. (2005) LITERACY LESSONS DESIGNED FOR INDIVIDUALS: PART TWO, Children who know little about stories and storytelling, p. 163

Three: If maximum support is needed, start here

- *Share the reading of Book 2 that you read to the child yesterday.*
- Introduce Book 1 that you have both read and shared with him over the last two days.
- Then have the child read Book 1.
(Take a Running Record of Book 1 next day.)
- Read a new book (Book 3) to the child.

Clay, M.M. (2005) LITERACY LESSONS DESIGNED FOR INDIVIDUALS: PART TWO, Children who know little about stories and storytelling p. 163

Cutting up the story (which the child composed, then wrote and then reread more than once) provides the child with opportunities to **relate reading to writing, writing to speaking, and reading to speaking.**

Clay, LL2, page 181

Making Accelerated Progress

This group of children (ELL) deserves benefit in subsequent years from having had this supplement early.

Language was the major block to their learning and in Reading Recovery they were given 30 minutes every day with a teacher who increased the time they spent talking, who personalised (sic) their instruction, and who also taught them to read and write. This gave them access to two new routes to language expansion. . . reading the text to some children is a first step towards them reading those texts for themselves. . . for the earliest stages of learning English.

Clay, (2005) Literacy lessons designed for individuals: Part Two, Children aged five to nine schooled in another language who need to make accelerated progress in English, p. 183

If children have been **slow to acquire speech** or have been offered fewer opportunities to hold conversations (for many reasons) there can be **limitations in the grammar** they control, which might mean that they have difficulties with comprehending oral and written language. Such children may **not have control** of some of the most common sentence structures used in story book English and therefore are **unable to anticipate** what may happen next in the sentences of their reading texts. (p. 38)

Clay, *Becoming Literate*, 1991

Oral Language Development

"I am encouraging teachers to understand that **learning in one language area** enriches the potential for learning in the other areas. Therefore, if we plan instruction **that links oral language and literacy learning** (writing and reading) **from the start**--so that writing and reading and oral language processing move forward together, linked and patterned, from the start--that **instruction will be more powerful.**"

Clay, *Becoming Literate*, 1991

Language and Thinking

According to Vygotsky: Speech does not merely accompany the child's activity, it serves mental orientation, conscious understanding; it helps in overcoming difficulties; it is speech for oneself, intimately and usefully connected with the children's thinking. To understand another's words, we must also understand his thought.

Vygotsky, Mind and Society, 1978

Following Vygotsky. . .

I would emphasize the value of children's talk about events and ideas for their understanding of the world, and for their growing ability to articulate that understanding orally and in writing. Creating links between words and the world, and between words and other words, is the heart of the educational process. Children's expression of ideas in the classroom are thus not just product in which they display the process by which much of that learning takes place. Teacher's "talk more" invitations can stimulate and encourage this important process...

Clay, Change Over Time, p. 31

In communication theory there is

1. a source of messages used by the sender,
2. a sender of messages,
3. a channel along which messages flow,
4. someone who listens to or receives the messages,
5. and that listener's knowledge of the code.

The sender (2) selects a message (1) and transmits it using the channel (3) (often along the airwaves), and the receiver (4) gets the message and tries to understand it (5). Communication is a two-way process; a speaker is not effective unless the conversation flows and messages are exchanged. A competent speaker and a skilled listener are required (Miller 1981).

In Clay, Change Over Time, pages 34-35

Classroom Instructional Applications

Participation Structures

Identify and observe participation structures that foster oral language and equity

Teacher's Role in Developing Language

Language Development Quality of Feedback

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Modeling • Frequent conversation • Open-ended questioning • Repetition • Self and parallel talk • Advanced language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds on strengths • Positive tone • Accurate but not corrective • Expands on child's talk • Prompts to extend thinking and talk |
|---|---|

Participation Structures: Why?

Most common and pervasive patterns of teacher/student interaction:

Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF)

- Teacher initiates a question (that T knows the answer to)
- Student responds to the question
- Teacher gives positive or negative feedback

Hoetker & Ahlbrand, 1969; Mehan 1979, Van Lier 1996

Participation Structures: Why?

"As Vygotsky pointed out, meaningfulness is what makes it possible for children to interact in productive ways, and to be in control of their learning, integrating the connections among thinking, acting, and feeling. **Without meaningful activity children do not develop internal control** (Rio and Alvarez, 2002). Yet, pressures of testing and over-stuffed curricula easily make us abandon meaningfulness and reduce our view of our work to mere individual cognitive skill building." (p.84)

Choice Words: How Language Affects Children's Learning,
Peter Johnston, 2004

Participation Structures

A paradigm shift from classroom management to fostering oral language development

Participation Structure: Turn & Talk

How

- Teacher asks an **open-ended** or **why question**
- Teacher may provide a **sentence stem** or **vocabulary**

Why

- **All students practice speaking**
 - New vocabulary or structures
- Students **practice** conversational norms
- Peers are **language models**
- **Teacher feedback**
- **Formative assessment**

Participation Structure: Write, Pair, Share

How

- Teacher asks an **open-ended** or **why question**
- Students independently **write** or **draw** a response

Why

- **Language rehearsal**
 - Thought → inner speech → external speech
- **All students practice speaking**
- Students practice conversational norms
- Peers are **language models**
- **Teacher feedback**
- **Formative assessment**

Participation Structure: Brainstorm

How

- Teacher asks an **open-ended** or **why question**
- Students orally generate **multiple responses** with a peer

Why

- **All students practice speaking**
- Students learn to **generate** and **express multiple ideas**
- **Increases flexibility with language**
- Peers are **language models**
- **Formative assessment**

Participation Structure: Elaborate

<p>How</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher asks an open-ended or why question • Students expand (elaborate) on what was said previously 	<p>Why</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students practice listening and furthering the conversation appropriately • Develops student discussion abilities (thread of reasoning) • Complex language work • Students practice conversational norms • Teacher feedback • Formative assessment
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Participation Structure: Paraphrase

<p>How</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher asks an open-ended or why question • First student answers • Second student listens carefully and restates in her own words 	<p>Why</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students practice listening • All students practice speaking • Complex language work • Increases awareness of language structure and vocabulary • Students practice conversational norms • Teacher feedback • Formative assessment
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Participation Structure: Fishbowl

<p>How</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher asks an open-ended or why question • Pair/small group models as rest of class observes and listens • Teacher thinks aloud to support students skills in observing and listening 	<p>Why</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-risk opportunity to observe and understand the interaction • Supports students to move from receptive to expressive • Supports students in how and what to listen for in conversation
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Observing Oral Language in Classroom Settings

<p>Sentence Structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorrect structure interferes with meaning • Incomplete sentence • Simple sentence • Prepositional phrase • Conjunctions (shows relation) 	<p>Language Responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher-prompted repetition • Echo (student initiated) • Mimics another's answer • No response • Unintelligible response • Code switching • Social language (less specific vocabulary) • Teacher-prompted use of academic language/ stems • Academic language (correct use of content vocabulary)
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Student Examples on the OLD Website:
community.newteachercenter.org/tp

Reading, Writing and Oral Language

Since reading and writing are language activities, it is **vital for teachers to have a clear understanding of how language develops** and to know the **most common structures** of English and how these structures are acquired by children who are learning to read and write. (p.109)

Clay, *Becoming Literate*, 1991

Thank you

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Theory into Practice

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