Oral Language and Vocabulary Development
Kindergarten & First Grade

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What is Oral Language Development?
Session Objectives:

By the end of this session you will be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is oral language development?
2. What does research tell us about oral language development?
3. What are the components of systematic and explicit oral language instruction in kindergarten and first grade?
4. What is the role of oral language instruction in Reading First classrooms?
Layout of Presentation

- Important Beginnings – Background and Theory
- Happenings – A Few Details
  - Questions to extent talk time – cue cards
  - Read alouds
    - Narrative text - Retell
- Happy Endings – Suffixes
Learning Language is Developmental

Birth to One Year

One to Two Years

Two to Three Years

Three to Four Years

Four to Five Years
What is Language?

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) defines language as “...A code made up of rules that include what words mean, how to make words, how to put them together, and what word combinations are best in what situations. Speech is the oral form of language.”

www.asha.org/public/speech/development
The Seven Components of Our Language System

- **Phonology**: The basic sound units of language (phonemes)
- **Morphology**: Units of meaning within words; the way words are formed (morphemes)
- **Syntax**: Phrase and sentence structure – what makes sense (grammar)
- **Semantics**: The way language conveys meaning
- **Pragmatics**: Appropriate word choice and use in context to communicate effectively
- **Orthography**: Spelling patterns
- **Vocabulary**: Knowledge of the meaning and pronunciation of words (lexicon)

- L.C. Moats (2000) and Burns, Griffin, & Snow (1999)
Four Processing Systems

- Concept & Information; Sentence Context; Text Structure
- Vocabulary
- Phonemic Awareness
- Speech sound system
- Phonological Processor
- Orthographic Processor
- Phonics
- Writing output
- Reading input
- Speech output
- Fluency
- Letter memory
Proficiency in oral language provides children with a vital tool for thought. Without fluent and structured oral language, children will find it very difficult to think.

Jerome Bruner (1983)
The Average Child...

- Watches 21-23 hours of television per week (not including videos)
- Most American children spend more hours watching television than any other activity, besides sleeping and going to school.

(AC Neilson Company)
Electronic Entertainment does not encourage good communication skills.
Listening

- A child needs to be able to interpret and attach meaning to information they receive through the phonological processor and formulate a response.

- Attaching meaning depends on their lexicon helped by the ability to visualize.

- Listening comprehension is a key to reading comprehension and written composition.

  \[ \text{Listening Comprehension} \times \text{Decoding} = \text{RC} \]

- Simple view of reading (Gough & Tunner, 1986)
What is Listening Comprehension?

Language ability + Background knowledge

LETRS – Module 6
Moats, 2004
Do we teach listening?
Trouble with Language Expression?

- Fend off the verbal tigers to ensure this child has all the time needed to organize ideas into sentences.
- Be a good listener and try to divine what the child wants to say.
- Model and help frame a sentence to express an idea.
  - You saw animals at the zoo? What did they look like, sound like, smell like?
Trouble with Language Expression?

- Acknowledge and praise any grammatically reasonable version of the idea, even if it seems immature in terms of the child’s age.

- Many children experience “word finding” problems. This makes it difficult to think of nouns and verbs. Encourage them to take time and to think of a real word instead of “filler” words. (thingy, stuff)

- Prompts that may be useful: gesture, beginning sound, multiple choice.
Teach the Meaning of Critical, Unknown Vocabulary Words

Children’s vocabulary in the early grades related to reading comprehension in the upper grades.

- Preschool – Children’s vocabulary correlated with reading comprehension in upper elementary school. (Tabors, 2001)

- Kindergarten – Vocabulary size was an effective predictor of reading comprehension in middle elementary years. (Scarborough, 1998)

- First Grade – Orally tested vocabulary was a proficient predictor of reading comprehension ten years later. (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1997)

- Third Grade – Children with restricted vocabulary have declining comprehension scores in later elementary years. (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990)
What does research tell us about oral language development?
Primary Conclusions from National Reading Panel (2000)

1. Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly.
2. Repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items are important.
3. Learning in rich contexts is valuable for vocabulary learning.
4. Vocabulary learning should entail active engagement in learning tasks.
5. Dependency on a single vocabulary instructional method will not result in optimal learning.
What is Oral Language?

- Information Sharing
- Telling Others How You Feel
- Advice
- Persuading Others
- Entertaining
- Sharing Ideas
- Remembering
- Special Situations
The Importance of Oral Language Development

Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children

Betty Hart & Todd R. Risley

Foreword by Lois Bloom
Teach the Meaning of Critical Unknown Vocabulary Words

- **Why the vocabulary gap?**

- Children enter school with different levels of vocabulary. (Hart & Risley, 1995)

- **Cumulative vocabulary (Age 4)**
  - Children from professional families 1100 words
  - Children from working class families 700 words
  - Children from welfare families 500 words

- Linguistically “poor” first graders knew 5,000 words; linguistically “rich” first graders knew 20,000 words. (Moats, 2001)
Teach the Meaning of Critical, Unknown Vocabulary Words

- Why the vocabulary gap?
  - Children who enter school with limited vocabulary knowledge grow more discrepant over time from their peers who have rich vocabulary knowledge. (Baker, Simmons, & Kame’enui, 1997)
  - Gap in word knowledge persists through the elementary years. (White, Graves, & Slater, 1990)
  - The vocabulary gap between struggling readers and proficient readers grows each year. (Stanovich, 1986)
Mimicking Parent Talk

- Three little girls swimming and playing a game in the pool... Overheard conversation:
  
  - “You need to take responsibility for your position.” More jabbering... “you made a commitment now live up to it!” ....... “Let’s go to the side and regroup.”

- The child making the comments was 7. What are conversations like at home?
Teach the Meaning of Critical, Unknown Vocabulary Words

Why?

- Vocabulary is causally related to reading comprehension.
- “Indeed, one of the most enduring findings in reading research is the extent to which students’ vocabulary knowledge relates to their reading comprehension.” (Osborn & Hiebert, 2004)
How does vocabulary contribute to the acquisition of reading comprehension?

- The obvious way – knowing the meanings of the words in text is necessary to understand the message being conveyed.

- Other probable, less obvious ways –
  - Vocabulary contributes to the development of phonemic awareness (Metsala, 1998; Lonegan, 2004)
  - Vocabulary contributes to more accurate decoding of words whose printed form is unfamiliar (Ehri, 2002)
  - Vocabulary contributes to reading fluency because it reads to more accurate reading practice.
How Does Pre-K Vocabulary Develop?

- Use of varied vocabulary during meal times.
- Intellectually challenging conversation.
- Rich curriculum in preschool.
- Dialogic reading in school.

G. Whitehurst, C. Lonegan;
D. Dickinson, C. Snow

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How Many Words Do Children Know?

- Children need to learn 2,000 to 3,000 new words each year from 3rd grade onward, about 6–8 per day.
- In 1st and 2nd grade, children need to learn 800+ words per year, about 2 per day.
- Children who are behind by 1st grade have a hard time making up the gap.

Biemiller, Nagy & Anderson
Differences in Vocabulary Knowledge among Students from Different Ability and SES Groups

First grade children from high SES groups knew about 2 times as many words as children from lower SES groups.

(Graves, et. al., 1987)

Low SES children are exposed to one-third of the verbiage that children from high SES, highly verbal families are exposed to.

(Hart & Risley, 1995)
How Many Words Do Children Know at School Entry?

- On entering school, low SES children may know one-half or fewer of the word meanings known by typical middle class children, and far fewer than more privileged children.

  (Hart & Risley, 1995)

- The gap continues to widen – “Matthew Effect”

  (Stanovich)
(Stanovich, 2000)  
(table graph showing the amount of words exposed to in a year. <1 min. of reading a day = 8,000 words per year. 4.6 minutes a day = 282,000 words per year. 20 minutes a day = 1,800,000 words per year.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time spent reading each day</th>
<th>Exposed to 1,800,000 words per year</th>
<th>Exposed to 282,000 words per year</th>
<th>Exposed to 8,000 words per year</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 minute</td>
<td></td>
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<td>4.6 minutes</td>
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<td>20 minutes</td>
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The Challenge of Vocabulary Instruction for Reading First Schools

1. Biemiller (2005) found that average students knew about 6,000 root words by the end of 2nd grade.

2. Students in lowest quartile knew about 4,000 words.

3. Students in the lowest quartile enter kindergarten knowing between 2000 and 2500 words, so must learn 3500 to 4000 words to “close the gap.”

4. Currently, lowest quartile students learn about 500 – 600 words a year.

5. Must add another 500 words a year to even approach “closing the gap”
The Language Experience Gap: “Word Poverty”

- Not all children are fortunate to be born into homes where parents or caregivers provide rich language experiences. These disadvantaged children enter our kindergartens lacking oral language skills.
  - (Moats, 2001)
The Language Experience Gap: “Word Poverty”

- Children arrive in kindergarten with huge discrepancies in oral language development . . . and the gap between language-advanced and language-delayed children grows throughout the elementary school years.

  (Biemiller 2001)
Cumulative Language Experiences
30 Million Word Difference

Children from:
- Professional Families
- Working Class Families
- Welfare Families
The Effects of Weaknesses in Oral Language on Reading Growth

The graph represents the reading age level vs. age between high oral language kindergarten and low oral language in kindergarten. At the age of 12, there is a 5.2 year difference in reading achievement. High oral language kindergarten has a higher reading level compared to low oral language kindergarten.
Is it possible for teachers to design instruction that will close the language experience gap?

YES!

Teachers can be instrumental in closing the language experience gap.

Students who struggle with a language deficit will need many language-rich experiences, as well as systematic and explicit instruction to help them catch up to their more verbal peers!
Kindergarten Accomplishments in Reading related to Oral Language

- Uses new vocabulary and grammatical constructions in own speech.
- Makes appropriate switches from oral to written language situations.
- Notices when simple sentences fail to make sense.
- Retells, reenacts, or dramatizes stories or parts of stories.
- Listens attentively to books teacher reads to class.
- Correctly answers questions about stories read aloud.

First Grade Accomplishments in Reading related to Oral Language

- Shows evidence of expanding language repertory, including increasing appropriate use of standard more formal language registers.
- Discusses prior knowledge of topics in expository texts.
- Discusses how, why, and what-if questions in sharing nonfiction texts.
- Describes new information gained from texts in own words.
- Predicts and justifies what will happen next in text.

Oral Language: The First Line of Defense

“If we are to increase children’s ability to profit from education, we will have to enrich their oral language development during the early years of schooling”

Biemiller, American Educator, Spring 2003

daily classroom conversation and daily oral language
morning message
teacher read-aloud, songs, audio books, etc.
Stretching Their World

Students will incorporate the words that teachers use frequently in the classroom. The words become part of their expressive vocabulary.
Oral Language Weekly Activities

- **MONDAY – Naming**
  - Objects related to topic
  - People related to topic
  - Related objects by categories
  - Parts or objects related to topic by attributes

- **TUESDAY – More Naming (Review/Extend)**
  - Similar objects
  - Objects associated in some way
  - More detailed associations with this object
Oral Language Weekly Activities

- WEDNESDAY – Describing (2-3 objects/pics)
  - Name
  - Category, class, or group
  - Function
    - Who might use object? How?
    - Where might I find this object? Where go to buy or find?
  - Attributes
    - What does it look like?
    - Size, color, shape, texture, taste, etc.
  - Compare
    - How different from other similar objects in same class?
Oral Language Weekly
Activities

- **THURSDAY** – Things to think about
  - Counting Syllables
  - General Knowledge

- **FRIDAY** – Critical Thinking
  - Relationships
    - How do these 2 words go together?
    - Color, size, class, shape, parts, synonyms, opposites, etc.
  - Odd One Out
    - Which one doesn’t belong, why?
When To Do?

- Incorporate during entire school day
- While reading a book to students
- Lining up to change classes
- “Sponge activities” to fill wait time with class
Questions to Extent
Language - Cue Cards
Label it...What is it?
What color is it?
What is it made of?
Where do you find it?

- Pictures of a barn with a large silo.
- A picture of a grocery store.
- A picture of a house.
What shape is it?
What size is it?
What category does it belong to?
What do you need to make it work?
Use your senses to describe it...
Activity
Figure out the label...

- Partner chatter -
- Spend 2 minutes describing an object – pictures to follow...
- Partner 1 describes the object using the cue cards
- Partner 2 needs to write down all the descriptive words to describe the object
- Wait for more instructions
- Switch word lists between groups and see if you can figure out what has been described.
Read Alouds
Supporting Oral Language Development and Vocabulary Growth Through Read-Alouds

- Always peruse the book before reading it aloud to your students.
- Select the words you want children to learn.
- Read the book aloud – the first reading should have minimal interruptions.
- During the second reading interrupt your reading to explain the meaning of targeted words.
- The teacher-student talk that surrounds a read aloud is valuable.
Read Aloud: The Why

- Enhance language abilities
- Increase vocabulary
- Enhance comprehension abilities
Read Aloud: The Why

- Gives students exposure to rich vocabulary.
- Provide students with a model of effective reading strategies.
- Models for students how to think about text in their journey towards becoming fluent and independent readers.
**Fast Mapping**
Direct, brief explanation of meaning can establish initial “fast mapping” of meaning.

Substitute critical unknown vocabulary with a student friendly synonym or brief phrase.

As initially mapped words are encountered in other contexts, their meaning is extended and deepened.
ELL Students and Reading Aloud

Beneficial to ELL Students:

- Aids in development of social and academic language.
- Increases vocabulary.
- Teaches students to determine between important and unimportant points in the text.
ELL Students and Reading Aloud

Especially important instructional strategies for ELL students during Read Aloud:

- Use of **background knowledge** will support comprehension and vocabulary retention.
- Use of words students are already familiar with to define new words (fast-mapping & pre-teaching critical vocabulary)

- **High Risk (HR):** These students have not learned many of the prerequisite skills assumed by the grade level comprehensive reading program.
Elements of narrative text include:

- Characters (people or animals the story is about)
- Setting (when and where the story is being told)
- Events (beginning, leading up to the climax, release of tension, resolution, ending)
- Climax (the problem)
- Resolution (solution to the problem)
Happy Endings - Suffixes

- The importance of suffixes in our language and teaching the meaning of suffixes.
Roots and Affixes

Suffixes

- 16 suffixes account for 87% of suffixed words
- -s/-es, -ed, -ing (65%)
- -ly, -er/-or, -ion/-tion, -able/-ible, -al,
  -y, -ness, -ity, -ment (22 %)

White, Sowell and Yanagihara (1989)
Prefixes Deserve Instruction Too!

- 20 most common prefixes account for 97% of all prefixed words:

  un-[not], re-[back, again], in- (im-, il-, ir-) [not] dis-[not; apart] (58%)

  en-/em-[in], non-[not], in-/im-[in], over-[above, more], mis-[not], sub-[under], pre-[before], inter-[between], fore-[in front], de-[away, from], trans-[across], super-[more than], semi-[half], anti-[against], mid-[middle], under-[below, less], com-/con-/col-/cor-[together, with] (39%)

White, Sowell and Yanagihara (1989)
Children will talk more if we...

- Wait a few seconds before we reply to what they say.
- Look at their faces
- Show you are listening
- Talk about what they want to talk about
- Talk about what they are doing
- Use new words (excursion, expedition)
- Repeat new words often
- Avoid interrupting them
- Avoid changing topics quickly
Remember This…

“The limits of my language means the limits of my world.”

Wittgenstein
Thank You

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