

## **SUBAREA I.**

## **LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT**

### **COMPETENCY 1.0 UNDERSTAND YOUNG CHILDREN'S ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND HOW TO PROVIDE LEARNING EXPERIENCES THAT SUPPORT AND ENHANCE YOUNG CHILDREN'S LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS**

#### **Skill 1.1 Recognize characteristics of young children's oral language, factors that influence young children's development of speaking and listening skills, indicators that a young child may be experiencing difficulties in oral language development, and strategies for addressing oral language needs**

Teachers can support the development of listening and speaking skills in several ways:

- **By modeling how language is used to communicate.** Children understand the meanings conveyed through facial expressions, body gestures, and voice tones. They can then learn how to pronounce specific words; make sense of standard rules of grammar; and enlarge their vocabularies.
- **By talking with children.** Children should be encouraged to express their needs, feelings, ideas, stories, and imaginations. Children learn how to be conversation partners by taking turns, staying on the topic, and waiting until the speaker is finished.
- **By reading to children.** This allows children to enjoy spending time with a favorite adult and associate reading with these positive feelings. Children also can begin to make discoveries about the connections between spoken and written words.

In everyday language, we attach affective meanings to words unconsciously; we exercise more conscious control of informative connotations. In the process of language development, the student must come not only to grasp the definitions of words but also to become more conscious of the affective connotations and how his listeners process these connotations. Gaining this conscious control over language makes it possible to use language appropriately in various situations and to evaluate its uses in literature and other forms of communication.

**SEE** Skill 3.2 for the basic components of language including phonics, phonological awareness, syntax, semantics, morphology and pragmatics.

## ***Factors that Affect Oral Language Development***

The development of speaking and listening skills requires an intensive attention to make sure that children acquire a good stock of words, learn to listen attentively, and speak clearly and confidently. In many instances however, students with speech and listening disabilities will experience speaking and listening difficulties.

Some of the most common factors that affect oral language development are:

- ***Blindness:*** Learners who are blind will not be able to see who is speaking, nor will they be able to see facial expression and body language as an additional means of interpreting what other people are saying.
- ***Hearing Impairments/Deafness:*** A young child's inability to hear properly can affect his or her ability to learn and develop language. Before they even reach school, children undergo hearing tests, and these tests can help determine a child's ability to hear. Hearing can be impaired for many reasons. They could have been born with a hearing deficiency, have been exposed to dangerously high decibel noise, or have hearing loss resulting from recurring ear infections. Deaf learners who use sign language will only be able to follow discussion by looking at their sign language interpreter. This will inevitably slow down the speed with which they can receive inputs, and also mean that they cannot always focus on the facial expressions of the speaker.
- ***Autistic Disorders:*** Some learners with autistic disorders may find it very hard to communicate directly with other people. Their disability makes aspects of social communication, for example eye contact, particularly difficult.

## ***Delays in Oral Communication***

Speech or language delays in children can be cause for concern or intervention. Understanding the development of language in young children can provide information on delays or differences. The efficiency of language for children develops in a pragmatic manner from the caregivers and social environment that they are exposed to during this crucial time of language acquisition. The focus during this period of development should not be on perceived problems such as a child's ability to pronounce certain vowels or consonants (for example a child's pronunciation of /r/ that sounds like /w/ making the word "right" sound like "white.")

Parents and teachers must understand the difference between developmental speech, word development and language delays/differences that may present potential oral language acquisition. The ability to differentiate between the natural ability of children's language patterns and the delayed development of those patterns should be the educated focus for the adult caregivers that provide environmental stimulus and language experience for children.

The mimic pattern of children developing patterns of language is learned from the vocal experiences of word and sentence usage that they hear on a daily basis. The constant exposure to language provides a virtual Webster's Dictionary of repetitive terms and word meanings that children will acquire and use as their word usage increases exponentially through the developmental years.

Speech intelligibility guidelines provide a tracking of a child's oral speech development. General researchers have shown that the following guidelines are recognizable age/language acquisition:

- Children at 2 years old should have speech patterns that are about 70% intelligible.
- Children at 3 years old should have an increased 10% speech pattern that is about 80% intelligible.
- Children at 4 years old should have a 20% speech pattern that is about 90% intelligible.
- Children at 5 years old should have a speech pattern that is 100% intelligible.
- Children >5 years old will develop speech patterns that continue at 100% intelligibility with increased vocabulary databases.

Given the speech intelligibility guidelines, parents, adult caregivers and teachers are able to track what is normal development versus language developmental delays or differences. If a child is not developing intelligible and recognizable speech patterns at age appropriate development levels, intervention and additional in depth evaluations will provide the proper tools to address and correct language delays that could have long range impacts on a child's final development of speech pattern intelligibility of language.

Teachers and parents who have concerns about a child's language development should be proactive in addressing language delays. Contacting speech pathologists, auditory specialists to test for hearing disorders, pediatricians to test for motor functioning delays, and utilizing other assessment resources for evaluation are effective steps for those concerned about a child's language delays or differences. Early intervention is the key to addressing children's language delays or differences.

## ***Strategies for Addressing Oral Language Needs***

Oral language involves both expressive (speaking) and receptive (hearing) language skills. Some students with language impairments will request to have directions repeated, while others may not be self-monitoring enough to recognize their own lack of comprehension. Students with severe oral language disabilities will require extensive support services. However the following strategies may also be utilized:

- Demonstrate or model what you want the student to do, talking through the task while performing it.
- Provide plenty of time for verbal responses to questions
- Have the student sit close to the teacher or in front of the classroom.
- Have the student orally describe visual materials, such as a picture or poster.
- Increase oral fluency by having the student say as many words in a category as he or she can think of within a minute time period.
- Use the student's interests and nonacademic and academic strengths as conversational topics.

### **Skill 1.2      Demonstrate knowledge of developmentally appropriate strategies for promoting young children's oral communication skills and enhancing their ability to apply these skills in various contexts**

Teachers should remain focused on oral language skills throughout the day, even while teaching other subjects. The following activities encourage students to develop oral language skills in the early stages of oral language development.

#### **Activities**

##### *Encourage meaningful conversation*

Let students “read” a favorite book to you. Ask them why it is their favorite book. Ask questions prompting a purposeful discussion that allows the student to develop and demonstrate their speaking skills.

##### *Allow dramatic playtime*

Make sure children have time for “pretend play” to develop. Provide props that associate play to favorite books.

##### *Let children share personal stories*

Support their efforts to communicate complex thoughts by waiting patiently, suggesting words as needed, and encouraging their efforts to vocalize new words, while they compare their own experiences with other students.

### *Sing alphabet songs*

Sing the alphabet song in order to teach students to enjoy and identify the different musical sounds of the alphabet.

### *Teach the art of questioning*

Read a book to the students. Allow them to ask curiosity questions (who, what, why, when and where). This encourages the students to develop higher cognitive skills through questions.

### *Read rhyming books*

By listening to a favorite book of rhymes, students can identify the rhyming words and sound them out.

### *Play listening games*

Let students pretend they are talking on the phone to each other. Have them repeat the conversation. This encourages students to hear the words and then repeat them.

### *Encourage sharing of information*

By encouraging each student to share information about an idea, the student is able to vocalize words and thoughts in a logical sequence

In order to stimulate the development of their oral language skills, children should be exposed to a challenging environment that is rich in opportunities.

### **Skill 1.3 Demonstrate understanding of strategies for promoting young children's ability to listen and speak for various purposes (e.g., participating in discussions, conveying ideas and information, asking and responding to questions, interacting positively with others)**

Listening is not a skill that is talked about much, except when someone clearly does not listen. The truth is, though, that listening is a very specific skill for very specific circumstances. There are two aspects about listening that warrant attention. The first is comprehension. This is simply understanding what someone says, the purposes behind the message, and the contexts in which it is said. The second is purpose. While someone may completely understand a message, what is the listener supposed to do with it? Just nod and smile? Go out and take action? While listening comprehension is indeed a significant skill in itself that deserves a lot of focus in the classroom (much in the same way that reading comprehension does), we will focus on purpose here. Often, when we understand the purpose of listening in various contexts, comprehension will be much easier. Furthermore, when we know the purpose of listening, we can better adjust our comprehension strategies.

First, when complex or new information is provided to us orally, we must analyze and interpret that information. What is the author's most important point? How do the figures of speech impact meaning? How are conclusions arrived at? Often, making sense of this information can be tough when presented orally—first, because we have no place to go back and review material already stated; second, because oral language is so much less predictable and even than written language. However, when we focus on extracting the meaning, message, and speaker's purpose, rather than just “listen” and wait for things to make sense for us—in other words, when we are more “active” in our listening—we have greater success in interpreting speech.

Second, listening is often done for the purpose of enjoyment. We like to listen to stories; we enjoy poetry; we like radio dramas and theater. Listening to literature can also be a great pleasure. The problem today is that students have not learned to extract great pleasure on a wide-spread scale from listening to literature, poetry, or language read aloud. Perhaps that is because we have not done a good enough job of showing students how listening to literature, for example, can indeed be more interesting than television or video games. In the classrooms of exceptional teachers, we will often find that students are captivated by the reading-aloud of good literature. It is refreshing and enjoyable to just sit and soak in the language, story, and poetry of literature being read aloud. Therefore, we must teach students *how* to listen and enjoy such work. We do this by making it fun and giving many possibilities and alternatives to capture the wide array of interests in each classroom.

Finally, we will discuss listening in large and small group conversation. The difference here is that conversation requires more than just listening. It involves feedback and active involvement. This can be particularly challenging, as in our culture, we are trained to move conversations along, to discourage silence in a conversation, and to always get the last word in. This poses significant problems for the art of listening. In a discussion, for example, when we are instead preparing our next response—rather than listening to what others are saying—we do a large disservice to the entire discussion. Students need to learn how listening carefully to others in discussions actually promotes better responses on the part of subsequent speakers. One way teachers can encourage this in both large and small group discussions is to expect students to respond *directly* to the previous student's comments before moving ahead with their new comments. This will encourage them to pose their new comments in light of the comments that came just before them.

## ***Strategies for Active Listening***

Oral speech can be very difficult to follow. First, we have no written record in which to “re-read” things we didn’t hear or understand. Second, oral speech can be much less structured and even than written language. Yet, aside from re-reading, many of the skills and strategies that help us in reading comprehension can help us in listening comprehension. For example, as soon as we start listening to something new, we should tap into our prior knowledge in order to attach new information to what we already know. This will not only help us understand the new information more quickly, it will also assist us in remembering the material.

We can also look for transitions between ideas. Sometimes, in oral speech, this is pretty simple when voice tone or body language changes. Of course, we don’t have the luxury of looking at paragraphs in oral language, but we do have the animation that comes along with live speech. Human beings have to try very hard to be completely non-expressive in their speech. Listeners should take advantage of this and notice how the speaker changes character and voice in order to signal a transition of ideas.

Speaking of animation of voice and body language, listeners can also better comprehend the underlying intents of authors when they notice nonverbal cues. Simply looking to see expression on the face of a speaker can do more to signal irony, for example, than trying to extract irony from actual words. And often in oral speech, unlike written text, elements like irony are not indicated by the actual words, but rather by the tone and nonverbal cues.

One good way to follow oral speech is to take notes and outline major points. Because oral speech can be more circular (as opposed to linear) than written text, it can be of great assistance to keep track of an author’s message. Students can learn this strategy in many ways in the classroom: by taking notes of the teacher’s oral messages, as well as other students’ presentations and speeches. Other classroom methods can help students learn good listening skills. For example, teachers can have students practice following complex directions. They can also have students orally retell stories—or retell (in writing or in oral speech) oral presentations of stories or other materials. These activities give students direct practice in the very important skills of listening. They provide students with outlets in which they can slowly improve their abilities to comprehend oral language and take decisive action based on oral speech.

## ***Effective Listening***

Teachers should relate to students the specific purpose of their reading assignment. This will help them to:

- ASSOCIATE: Relate ideas to each other.
- VISUALIZE: Try to see pictures in your mind as you read.
- CONCENTRATE: Have a specific purpose for reading.
- REPEAT: Keep telling yourself important points and associate details to these points.

Oral language (listening and speaking) involves receiving and understanding messages sent by other people and also to express our own feelings and ideas. Students must learn that listening is a communication process and in order to be successful must be an active process. In other words, they must be an active participant in this communication process. In active listening, meaning and evaluation of a message must take place before a student can respond to the teacher.

## ***Speaking for Various Purposes***

Teachers can encourage the development of a child's oral language skills by providing classroom environments filled with language development opportunities. Teachers should understand that each child's language or dialect is worthy of respect as a valid system for communication. It reflects the identities, values, and experiences of the child's family and community. By allowing children to lead to discuss their culture show them that their culture is respected. Teachers should also encourage positive interaction among children within their classroom. Peer learning is an important part of language development, especially in mixed-age groups. Activities involving a wide range of materials should promote talk, such as dramatic play, block-building, book-sharing, or carpentry.

One of the most important things in helping children learn to speak is to have frequent, friendly conversations with them. Treat children as if they are conversationalists. Children learn at a very early age about how conversations work, for example: taking turns, asking questions, looking attentively, using facial expressions, etc. The following strategies can provide students with techniques on how to improve their speaking skills with one another.

## **Strategies**

- Look directly at a person when talking to them.
- Say something once and then wait for the other person to speak.
- If someone doesn't understand you, try to say it in a different way.
- Ask questions to show you are interested in what the other person has to say.
- Be sure you do not do all the talking.
- Say one thing then let the other person take a turn talking..

Young children also should be taught what not to do in a conversation, such as: don't interrupt the other person; don't ramble; don't change the topic abruptly; and don't fail to clarify when you are not understood.

### **Skill 1.4      Relate oral language development to the development of skills in written language and reading**

**SEE** Skill 2.1 for information on reading development

**SEE** Skill 5.2 for information on writing development

Almost all children learn the rules of their language at an early age through use, and over time, without formal instruction. The development of oral language is obviously genetic because humans beings are born to speak; and they have an innate gift for figuring out the rules of the language used in their environment. Children seem born not just to speak, but also to interact socially and are equipped with higher order cognitive abilities such as the ability to read and write. As with reading and writing development, language acquisition is not predictable. One child may say her first word at 10 months, another at 20 months. One child may use complex sentences at 5 1/2 years, another at 3 years.

Oral language is the complex system that relates sounds to meanings, and is made up of three components: the phonological, semantic, and syntactic. The **phonological component** involves the rules for combining sounds. Speakers of English, for example, know that an English word can end, but not begin, with an /ng/ sound. We are not aware of our knowledge of these rules, but our ability to understand and pronounce English words demonstrates that we do know a vast number of rules.

The **semantic component** is made up of morphemes, the smallest units of meaning that may be combined with each other to make up words (for example, paper + s are the two morphemes that make up papers). A dictionary contains the semantic component of a language, but also what words (and meanings) are important to the speakers of the language.

The **syntactic component** consists of the rules that enable us to combine morphemes into sentences. As soon as a child uses two morphemes together, as in "more cracker," she is using a syntactic rule about how morphemes are combined to convey meaning. Like the rules making up the other components, syntactic rules become increasingly complex as the child develops.

Young children should have ready access to writing tools with which to express themselves in order to further develop their oral language skills. Books, papers, writing tools, and functional signs should be visible everywhere in the classroom so that children can see and use literacy for reading, writing and oral development.

Some children may need direct instruction in order to master a reading, writing or speech task, and teachers must try to achieve a balance between meaningful activities and developmental practices. If a child fails to make expected progress in a certain oral language skill or if his or her literacy skills are advanced, teachers also need to prepare more individualized instructional strategies to meet the child's needs.

### **Skill 1.5 Evaluate strategies and activities for promoting young children's oral language competence**

Communication is more than words going from one person's mouth to the another person's ear. In addition to the words, messages are transferred by eye contact, physical closeness, the tone of voice, visual cues, and overall body language. Language employs symbols— gestures, visual clues, or spoken sounds—to represent communication between the teacher and the student. Children first learn to respond to messages by listening to and understanding what they hear (supported by overall body language); next, they experiment with expressing themselves through speaking.

As children become proficient in language, they expect straight messages from the teacher. A straight message is one in which words, vocal expression, and body movements are all congruent. Students need to feel secure and safe. If the message is not straight; if the words say one thing but the tone and facial expression say another, the child is confused. When students are confused, they often feel threatened in the school environment.

## ***Evaluating Messages***

Analyzing the speech of others is a very good technique for helping students improve their own public speaking abilities. Because in most circumstances, students cannot view themselves as they give speeches and presentations, when they get the opportunity to critique, question, and analyze others' speeches, they begin to learn what works and what doesn't work in effective public speaking. However, a very important word of warning: DO NOT have students critique each others' public speaking skills. It could be very damaging to a student to have his or her peers point out what did not work in a speech. Instead, video is a great tool teachers can use. Any appropriate source of public speaking can be used in the classroom for students to analyze and critique.

Some of the things students can pay attention to include the following:

- Volume: A speaker should use an appropriate volume—not too loud to be annoying, but not too soft to be inaudible.
- Pace: The rate at which words are spoken should be appropriate—not too fast to make the speech non-understandable, but not too slow so as to put listeners to sleep.
- Pronunciation: A speaker should make sure words are spoken clearly. Listeners do not have a text to go back and re-read things they didn't catch.
- Body language: While animated body language can help a speech, too much of it can be distracting. Body language should help convey the message, not detract from it.
- Word choice: The words speakers choose should be consistent with their intended purpose and the audience.
- Visual aids: Visual aids, like body language, should enhance a message. Many visual aids can be distracting, and that detracts from the message.

Overall, instead of telling students to keep these above factors in mind when presenting information orally, having them view speakers who do these things well and poorly will help them know and remember the next time they give a speech.