

Building Children's Oral Language as a Foundation for Literacy

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Reconnect & Renew

Agenda

- What is Oral Language?
- Stages of Language Development
- Relationship between Language and Literacy
- Areas of Speech and Language development
- Strategies to build oral language and literacy skills at home

What is oral language?

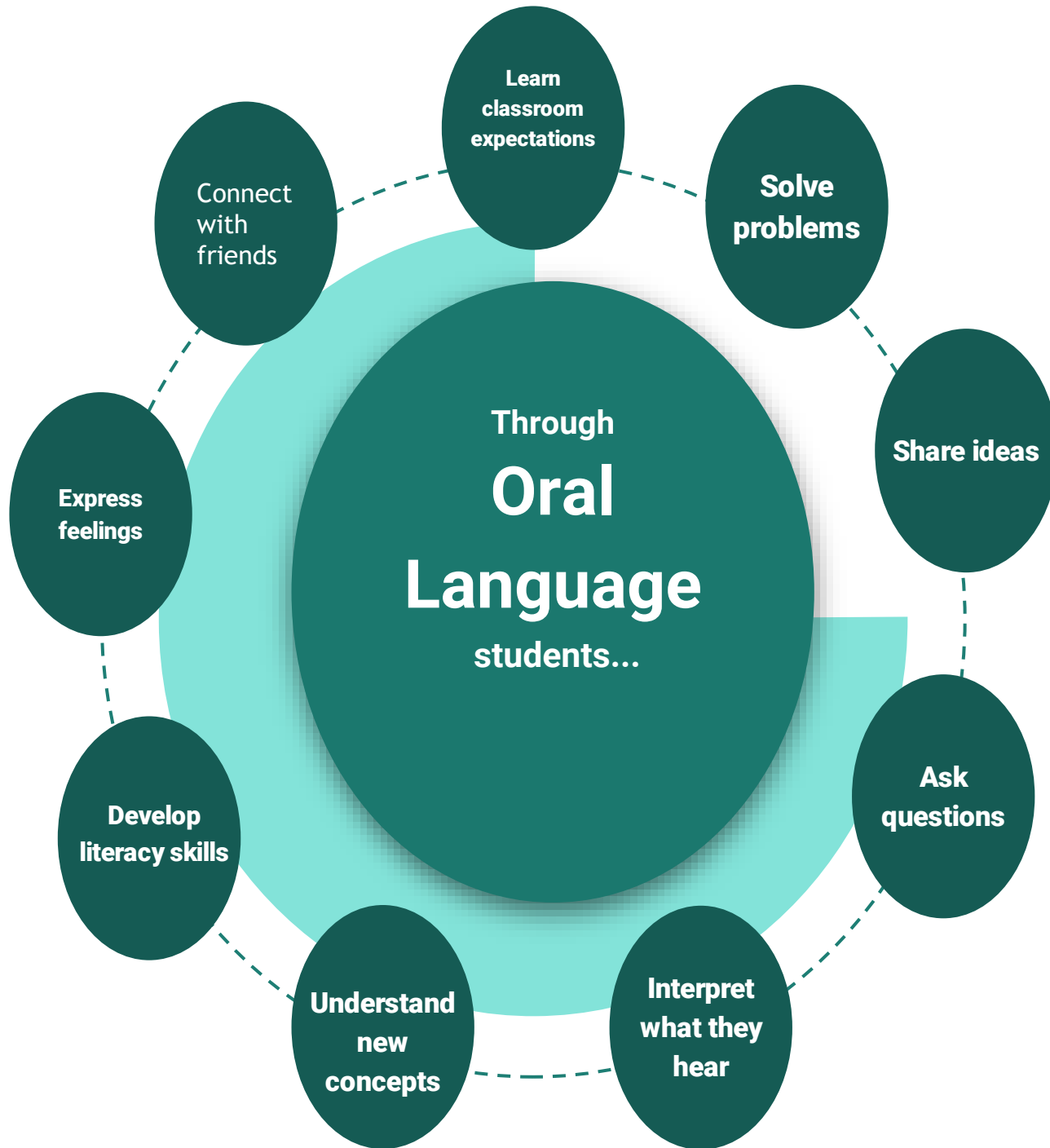
- Speaking and Understanding
- Expressive and Receptive



Oral Language is the basis for

- Literacy
- Thinking
- Socialization

It is the foundation for almost all of the learning that happens at school.



Stages of Language Development

First Word User	12-18 months
Combiner	18-24 months
Early Sentence User	2-3 years
Late Sentence User	3-5 years

Early Sentence User

- uses simple sentences with early grammar (typically up to 5 words)
- begins to use language to tell stories and engage in imaginative and pretend play
- understands many concepts and follows 2 step directions



Late Sentence User

- uses long, complex sentences and can hold conversations for extended periods of time
- uses language to think, learn and imagine
- understands stories, complex questions “Why” and “How”

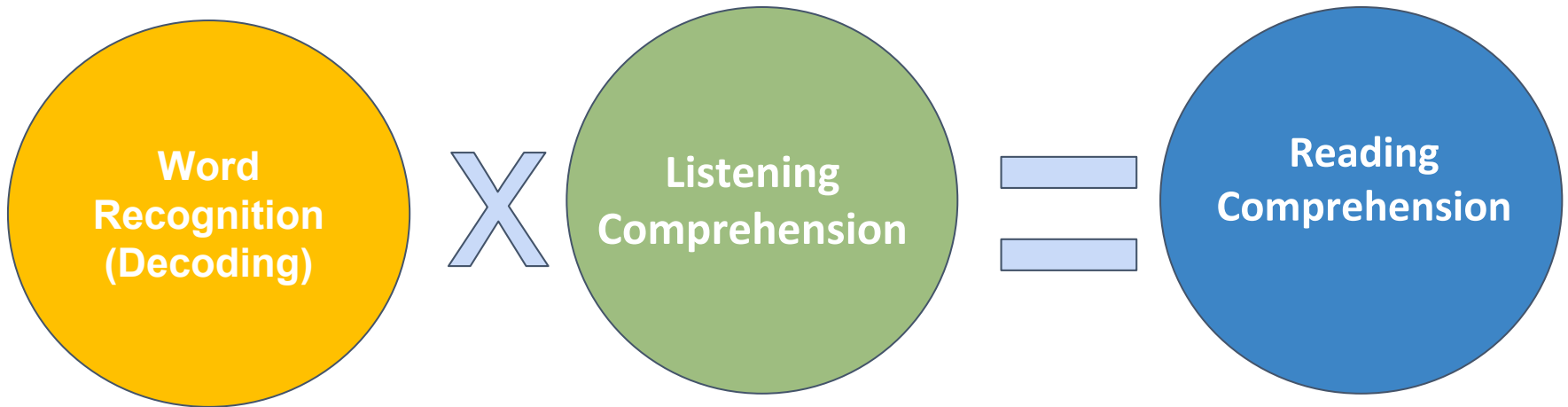


Building children's oral language as a foundation for literacy

Listening → Reading

Speaking → Writing

The Simple View of Reading



Strong reading comprehension cannot occur unless both decoding skills and language comprehension abilities are strong

Adapted from Gough and Tunmer (1986)

Skilled Readers depend on knowledge of:

- Phonological Awareness
- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Narrative Skills
- Pragmatics

English Language Learners

- Talk with your child in your first language for school success
- Strong first language skills make it easier to learn a second language at school



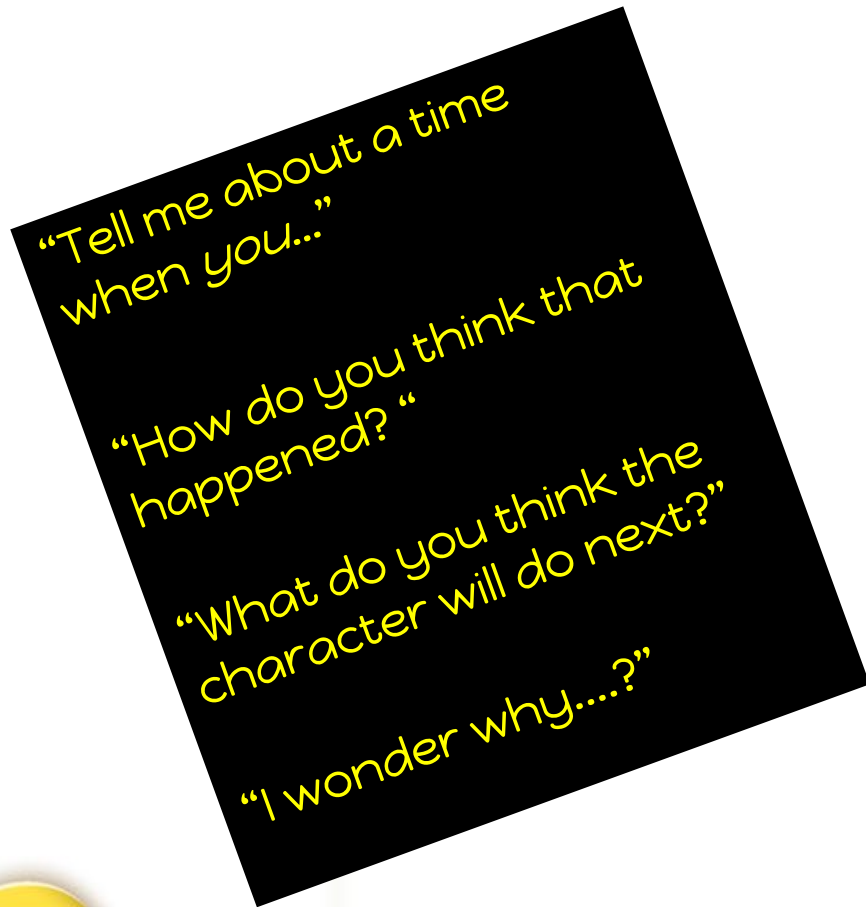
Turn Taking in Conversation

This is a crucial factor in language development, giving children an opportunity to:

- Practice using new words
- Deepen their understanding of specific vocabulary
- Improve grammar use and understanding
- Increase social communication skills



Conversational Questions



- Open-ended questions
- Questions the child can answer (appropriate level)
- Questions that encourage thinking/opinions
- Questions they can relate to and are interested in

Conversations: A Balance of Comments and Questions



Conversation Stoppers

- Too many questions asked too quickly
- Testing questions
- High level questions
- Yes/no questions
- Questions with no personal relevance

Strive for Five Turns in a Conversation



Hanen®
www.hanen.org

Turn 1

Look, I made a giant car with the blocks.

Turn 2

What an amazing car! Where are you going in your car?

Turn 3

I am driving to Africa to see the elephants.

Turn 5

No, it won't. My car can fly and go really fast!

Turn 4

All the way to Africa! Africa is very far. I think it will take you a long time to get there!

Linking

You can Link a **Comment** with a **Question**.

Wow! That's a huge castle you built.



Who's inside your castle?



Keeping the Conversation Going

Verbal Cues

- Balance of comments and questions
- Acknowledgements
- Repeating
- Paraphrasing

Non-verbal Cues

- Eye gaze
- Facial expression
- Gesture
- Pausing
- Waiting
- Leaning Forward

VOCABULARY

Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and their meanings.

- **Receptive vocabulary** includes all the words a child understands.
- **Expressive vocabulary** represents the words a child is able to retrieve and use in speaking or writing.



Types of Vocabulary Words

Children need to understand and use a wide range of words including:

- **Nouns** (to label) - including category labels
- **Verbs** (action words)
- **Adjectives** (to describe) - including how things look, feel, sound, taste and smell (size/amount: *tall, few, whole*)
Comparison: *most, shorter, fastest*
- **Prepositions** (location words) *beside, behind, in*
- **Sequence words** *first, last, before, after*
- **Time concepts**, *today, tomorrow, morning and afternoon*

Take-home strategy



Talk about **categories** in your everyday life. Provide labels for each category and model items that belong in that category.

- “Let’s play with the farm animals first - I’m picking a goat, a cow and a dog. They are all kinds of farm animals.”
- “Time to put away the laundry. I’m going to put all the shirts in this drawer. Sweaters, t-shirts and sweatshirts are all kinds of shirts.”
- “I’m putting away the groceries. First, I will put away the vegetables. I have carrots, broccoli, onions and lettuce. Those are all kinds of vegetable.”

Make Words Sparkle

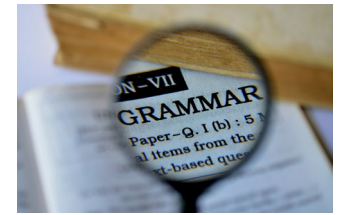


Help your child learn new words by making them stand out. You can:

- **Stress** the word by using a louder/quieter voice or by pausing before or after you say it
- **Show** your child what the word means by using real items, pictures, gestures/actions, facial expression or tone of voice
- **Tell** your child about the word by providing a category name or providing a description
- **Relate** the word to your child's experiences or to a word they already know
- **Repeat** by modeling use of the word in different situations



GRAMMAR



Our grammar system involves knowledge of both **word order** (syntax) and **root words and endings** (morphology). Grammar skills include:

- **Understanding and using pronouns correctly** *I go vs. me go. He eats vs. Him eats.*
- **Understanding and using different verb tenses**
 - Present : *They are playing the game.*
 - Past: *Yesterday, I played the game.*
 - Future: *Tomorrow, you will play the game.*
- **Using expected word order**
- **Joining sentences with words** such as *and, but, because, if...then*
- **Using proper word endings** such as plural *-s two dogs*, possessive *'s the dog's bone*
- **Using and understanding negation** *not, don't, isn't*

Typical GRAMMAR development

Typical development of grammar for a 4 year old:

- Average sentences are 4-5 words long
- Uses adult sounding grammar most of the time, including
 - Plurals
 - Regular past tense (may overgeneralize -ed)
 - Possessives
 - Uses pronouns

Typical development of grammar for a 5 year old:

- Sentences are complete, often compound and complex and 6 or more words in length
- Grammar is more mature (may still have errors)





Take-home strategy

If your child says a sentence with grammatical errors

- MODEL back by repeating their sentence, fixing the grammatical error and emphasizing the correct production
- EXPAND the sentence by adding one or two more words

Examples

If the child says ‘She ate an apple’
The adult can say ‘Yes, she **ate** an apple’.
(MODEL)



If the child says ‘Puppy run’
‘Yes, the puppy runs **in the park**’
(EXPAND)



NARRATIVES

Narrative skill involves the ability to both understand and tell/retell a story or sequence of events.

It involves the ability to **sequence**, **summarize** and **explain** events. Young children develop an understanding of how narratives are constructed by listening to stories and conversations about events in their lives.



Typical NARRATIVE development

Typical narrative development for a 4 year old:

- Can retell stories after hearing them; stories have a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Interested and able to listen to and understand longer stories

Typical narrative development for a 5 year old:

- List and describe events with some detail
- Retell favourite stories - some parts as exact repetition and some in their own words
- Begin to include problems in their own stories
- Starting to use longer and more complicated sentences in their stories



Take-home strategy

Narrate while you go about your everyday routines, e.g., cooking, bedtime

Use and emphasize sequencing words '**First**', '**Next**', '**Last**' by saying them a little bit louder. At the end, summarize the activity using sequencing words again.

After reading a story together, you can also use sequencing words to model the skill of retelling. Give your child a turn to try.

- You can also model words that
- link or contrast thoughts: **and**, **but**
- show purpose or cause: **so**, **because**
- convey time: **after**, **before**, **later**, **soon**

PRAGMATICS

Pragmatic skills (social use of language) involves both verbal and non verbal communication. A key element in successful social interaction is perspective taking. Children with age appropriate social language skills function well in classroom interactions, develop friendships and are able to navigate playground interactions.



KIDS
PLAY

Typical PRAGMATIC development for a 4 & 5 year old

- Uses facial expressions and body language to demonstrate emotions
- Uses words to invite others to play
- Uses language to resolve disputes with peers
- Engages in dramatic play - acting out whole scenes
- Expresses anger with words rather than physical actions
- Takes turns easily with other children during play

Take-home strategy



Encourage your child to talk about **how they are feeling** during everyday routines, exciting games or difficult situations. Give them the words initially if they have problems expressing themselves.

Explicitly state any non verbal cues that you see and explain your interpretation of those cues. (E.g. “I see your mouth is smiling - that makes me think that you are feeling happy”)

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Phonological awareness is the ability to break speech down into smaller parts such as:

- words,
- syllables (tulip --> tu-lip), and
- individual sounds (cat --> k+a+t),

Crucial
for
literacy
success!

and to be able to play with those sounds.

This can include rhyming, blending, segmenting, and manipulating these speech sounds.

Phonological Awareness is an auditory skill that comes before print and follows a developmental continuum.

Typical PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS development for a 5 year old

- Shows early literacy skills such as rhyming, playing with and identifying sounds
- Breaks words into syllables (pi-zza, Sa-tur-day)
- Identifies what sounds they hear at the beginning of words
- **By the end of Year 2**, be able to blend and segment words with 2 to 3 sounds, examples:
 - M -A - T (mat)
 - UP (U - P)

Take-home strategy



Add an emphasis on initial sounds of words during word games or conversations

- “I spy with my little eye something that starts with /f/”
- “Let’s put away the laundry that starts with a ‘sh’ sound... “Sh...Shirts and sh...shorts!”
- Listen for words that start with /b/ in a story book - then emphasize them.

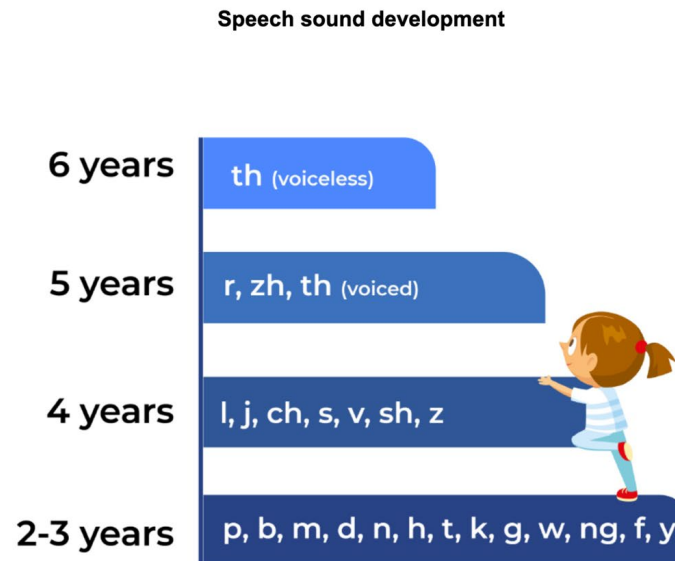
ARTICULATION

Articulation is the ability to correctly make speech sounds.

- Varies for different languages
- Speech requires ability to blend sounds and transition quickly between sounds
- **Link to literacy:** if children make an error on a speech sound, you may see that same error in reading and writing. We know that children with speech sound disorders may have more difficulty developing literacy skills.

Typical SPEECH development for a 4 & 5 year old

- Speech is understood most of the time, 90% at 5 years
- Saying most sounds correctly
- Sounds that may develop later: r, th



Average age children learn to pronounce English consonants correctly
(Based on 15 English speech acquisition studies compiled by McLeod and Crowe, 2018)

Take-home strategy



Model correct pronunciation of sounds in your own speech. Emphasize sounds by:

- saying them louder
- stretching them
- pausing before or after the sound
- repeating them

Every school has a speech-language pathologist. Ask your child's teacher if you have concerns.

FLUENCY AND VOICE

Fluency refers to the flow of speech.

- Typical dysfluencies - repeats word or phrases, makes revisions, interjections, and hesitations
- Atypical dysfluencies - repeats sound/syllable, prolongs sounds, blocks

Voice

- ability to produce and sustain voice
- can be described using volume, pitch, and quality

Ask your child's teacher if you have concerns.


Bringing it all together with a conversation during story-time...

- Recall from earlier how important it is to give your child opportunities to take turns in conversation
- **Link to literacy:** building strong oral language skills will allow children to understand more of what they read when they are able to decode.
- We can read to children **ABOVE** their own reading skill level and expose them to vocabulary and sentence structure using “the language of books”

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Turn Reading into a Conversation: How

- Talk about the cover picture with your child, asking them what the story could be about
- Pause during the reading to allow your child to comment
- Use objects and pictures to help with understanding
- Make words exciting, emphasize new ones
- Relate content to your child's own experiences
- Make Comments
- Ask conversation questions (not testing)



Sooty Tern

The markings on some eggs help them blend in with their surroundings. This is called *camouflage*. Camouflage is an egg's way of hiding.

An egg is clever.

An egg might be speckled to resemble the rocks around it. Or it might be gray, the color of mud by a lake. An egg does not want to be eaten by a raccoon or a snake or a fox or an insect.

Resources

- Talk to the student's teacher to access the School Speech-Language Pathologist
- OCDSB's SLP google site: <https://sites.google.com/ocdsb.ca/speech-language-pathology/home>
- Hanen.org has many articles and info sheets on improving interactions with children to promote language and thinking. Their "Book Nook" is an excellent resource
- First Words Preschool Program: www.firstwords.ca



Questions

