
Oral Language Development

Oral language relates to the communication mechanism of literacy which includes speaking and listening. Oral language is the system through which words are used to express knowledge, ideas, and feelings. Developing oral language will eventually mean developing the skills and knowledge that go into listening and speaking. All of which have a strong relationship between reading and writing comprehension. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's division of Heinemann (2019) explains oral language development as the communication competencies that teachers continuously build upon each child's enrolment to the school. Oral language is developed in connection with beginning reading and writing because acquiring literacy is an interdependent process in which all language learning takes place according to the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt division of Heinemann (2019).

Stages of oral language development

Phonological skills- The phonological stage may be described as the prelinguistic stage because the child's awareness of sound is being learned when there is some utterance within their languages such as the sounds of syllables and rhymes.

Begin with sounds that are similar in pronunciation: vowels and consonant /ma/ /ca/ /pa/ called CV-syllable structure.

Later consonant clusters; and often the syllable-final consonant is often excluded for eg. "cat" becomes /ka/

When children use the phonological system of their native language, they must master the fine muscle coordination necessary to produce a rich variety of sounds. They will learn and understand that sounds have meaning and realize that their pronunciation must match the adult form. The adult phonological system is achieved only when children model to imitate and are provided with encouragement to continue their linguistic development.

- **Pragmatics-** Pragmatics refers to the realization of the social rules of communication (Snow and Uccelli 2009). This includes what we say, how we say it, and our body language.
- **Syntax-** Syntax is the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language.
- **Morphological skills-** Morphological awareness, which is an understanding of how words can be broken down into smaller units of meaning such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes, has emerged as an important contributor to word reading and comprehension skills.
- **Vocabulary-** Vocabulary/ vocabulary knowledge, also referred to as semantic knowledge, involves understanding the meanings of words and phrases (aka receptive vocabulary) and using those words and phrases to communicate effectively (aka expressive vocabulary).
- **Semantics-** The branch of linguistics and logic concerned with meaning. The two main areas are logical semantics, concerned with matters such as sense and reference and presupposition and implication, and lexical semantics, concerned with the analysis of

word meanings and relations between them.

- **Lexicon-** A lexicon is a list of words that belong to a particular language. A dictionary is a list of words and phrases that are (or were) in common usage, together with their definitions - so a dictionary is different from a lexicon because a lexicon is a simple list and doesn't define the word.
- The Components of Oral Language via (readingrockets.org)

Oral language, the complex system that relates sounds to meanings, is made up of three components: phonological, semantic, and syntactic (Lindfors, 1987).

According to readingrockets.org, the phonological component involves the rules for combining sounds. The speakers of English, for example, it is known that English words can end, but not begin, with an -ng sound. The knowledge of these rules is not made aware to the general public, but our ability to understand and pronounce English words demonstrates that we do know a vast number of rules. Knowing that the semantic component is made up of morphemes, the smallest units of meaning that can 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 also stated by readingrocket.org.

Readingrocket.org highlights 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 rules being made up of the other components, syntactic rules become increasingly complex as the child develops. When combining two morphemes, the child will go on to combine words with suffixes or inflections (-s or -ing, as in papers and eating) and eventually creates questions, statements, commands, etc. He/she also learns to combine two ideas into one complex sentence.

Because speakers of the English language are constantly used, these three components of language together, usually in social situations. Some language experts would add a fourth component: pragmatics, which deals with rules of language use.

The pragmatic rules are put in place as parts of our communicative competence, our ability to speak appropriately in different situations, for example, in a conversational way at home and in a more formal way at a job interview. Young children today are required to learn the ways of speaking in the daycare center or school where, for example, teachers often ask rhetorical questions. Knowing the pragmatic rules is as important as learning the rules of the other components of language since people are perceived and judged based on both what they say and when they say it.

Oral language is one of many of the foundational building blocks of learning. Try these simple strategies with your students, and give them the boost in confidence they need for future academic and social success.

List of strategies that focus on Oral Language instruction (Adapted from Tompkins{2009})

- Anticipation Guides
- Book Talks
- Choral Reading
- Grand Conversations
- Hot Seat
- Interactive Read Aloud
- Language Experience Approach
- Questioning the Author
- Reciprocal Questioning
- Story Retelling
- Tea Party