

English

2: Speaking and listening skills; puppetry and drama

Main ideas

- Development of speaking and listening skills are prerequisites of learning to read.
- Strategies for encouraging language development
- Strategies for developing good listening

Outcomes

On completion of this session teachers will:

- be able to employ a variety of strategies to encourage speaking and listening in the classroom
- be equipped with ideas and resources for using puppetry and drama in the classroom

Content

Listening to stories

There is a saying, “Before children are ready to learn to read they need to have listened to at least 1000 stories.”

A message to parents: Ten read-aloud commandments

Mem Fox

1. Spend at least ten wildly happy minutes *every single day* reading aloud.
2. Read at least three stories a day: it may be the same story three times. Children need to hear a thousand stories before they can begin to learn to read.
3. Read aloud with animation. Listen to your own voice and don't be dull, or flat, or boring. Hang loose and be loud, have fun and laugh a lot.
4. Read with joy and enjoyment: real enjoyment for yourself and great joy for the listeners.
5. Read the stories that the kids love, over and over and over again, and always read in the same ‘tune’ for each book: i.e. with the same intonations on each page, each time.
6. Let children hear lots of language by talking to them constantly about the pictures, or anything else connected to the book; or sing any old song that you can remember; or say nursery rhymes in a bouncy way; or be noisy together doing clapping games.
7. Look for rhyme, rhythm or repetition in books for young children, and make sure the books are really short.
8. Play games with the things that you and the child can see on the page, such as letting the children finish rhymes, and finding the letters that start the

child's name and yours, remembering that it's never work, it's always a fabulous game.

9. Never ever *teach* reading, or get tense around books.

10. Please read aloud every day, mums and dads, because you just love being with your child, not because it's the right thing to do.

Other strategies for encouraging language development

Teachers can encourage children's spoken language development through play, through reading books aloud, and through conversations. Reading books aloud can lead to discussion. The teacher's role in extending children's vocabulary is crucial.

Teachers can encourage children to share ideas by asking open-ended questions, e.g.

*How did you make this? Can you tell me about this?
not... Is this a tower? Do you like making things?*

The role of play in early literacy

When children engage in play they are often experimenting with words, rules and ideas. In play they can solve problems, correct mistakes and take on various social roles.

Examples of play situations: home corner; office centres; restaurants; building construction; doctors and nurses; shops

Use sharing and show-and-tell

Some teachers limit the number of children for show-and-tell to 4 or 5 because it otherwise goes on too long. Another way is to break into groups for show-and-tell so that more children get a turn.

Variations on show-and-tell:

Place objects in a bag and encourage children to guess the item, then say something about it.

Bring in a surprise item to share with the children

Allow children to share what they have made or drawn in art and craft time.

Dramatize a story

Read a simple or familiar storybook. Bible stories are good. Form groups and distribute some props and encourage the children to use their own dialogue to retell the story.

Describe a picture

Cut out pictures from magazines, advertisements, calendars; use pictures from books. Ask questions:

Who or what is in the picture?

What are the people/animals doing?

Tell me about the colours /shapes/sizes.

When/where did this happen?

What could happen next?

Tell me about the background.

Later ask the children to make up a story based on the picture.

Listening to each other

Divide the children into pairs. One talks to the other about a topic, e.g. the food I like best. Then they change roles so that the listener becomes the speaker. Now share with the whole group what your partner likes.

Another way to do this is to divide children into threes. There are two speakers and an observer. The observer has to report to the group what the two speakers said.

Listening games for lower primary

1. Doggy doggy, who's got the bone – The 'doggy' sits in the centre of the circle with eyes closed. The 'bone' is on the ground behind him. Someone is chosen to creep up and steal the bone. The 'doggy' must listen to where the footsteps came from. When the 'thief' is back in his place, the signal is given by the chant, "Doggie, doggie, who's got the bone?" and the 'doggie' must guess who stole the bone.
2. Razzle Tazzle – Similar to "Doggie Doggie" – Instead of a bone, use a bell, or some jingle bells. Say: Razzle, Tazzle can you tell who has come to steal your bell?
3. Environmental sounds. Ask the children to be as quiet as possible, to close their eyes for 30 seconds and see how many sounds they can hear.
4. Near and far sounds
5. High and low sounds
6. Play a recording of sounds and ask children to close their eyes and identify the sounds they hear.
7. Simon says
8. Percussion sounds - Ask children to close their eyes and make three sounds on three different percussion instruments, e.g. a triangle, a drum, cymbals. Children have to say the order in which they heard the sounds.
9. Animal sounds - Children take turns in making three animal sounds. Someone is chosen to say what the sounds were in the right order.
10. Following instructions - Give one child three instructions to be carried out, e.g. walk to the door, put your hands on your head, come back and stand near the chair. Alternatively ask for a series of objects to be brought to you – e.g. "Bring me a pencil, a book a cup and a button."
11. Whisper a message around the circle. The last person speaks out the message aloud. Has it changed from the original message?

12. Who am I? The teacher selects one child who hides his eyes. Someone is chosen to stand behind the child and say. "Who am I?" A variation on this is the game "Kangaroo Skippy Roo".

13. Listen for the rhyming words

14. Echo claps

Listening for initial sounds

1. Which is different? – Encourage the children to listen for the first sound in the word, e.g. biscuits, butter, bread, cake
2. Show pictures of objects and children must identify the beginning sound

Listening for middle and final sounds

1. Pick out all the words that end with a particular consonant, e.g. rub tub, cup
2. Pick out all the words that have the same short vowel sound in the middle of 3 letter words e.g. pat, pet, man

Listening games and activities for middle / upper primary

Many of the games and activities for lower primary can be extended to middle / upper primary. In addition:

1. Listening comprehension – children listen to a story and teacher asks questions about the story.
2. Following instructions
3. Rhythm activities
4. Listen to a series of numbers and record or repeat them
5. Listening to a speaker in a small group and reporting back

Puppetry and drama

Group work

Make up a play for puppets or dramatization. Perform it for the whole group.

Assessment

On Practicum:

Set up an activity to encourage speaking and listening. Describe your activity and take photographs of the set up if appropriate, e.g. a puppet theatre, a play situation.