Promoting Oral Language to Increase Writing Skills in the Classroom
Handout

Empowered Learner Conference 2026	Sara Straley Cooper, MSP, CCC-SLP

What is Language?

- Form: Rules of language structure
    - Phonology
    - Morphology
    - Syntax
- Content: "What" is communicated
    - Semantics
    - World Knowledge
- Use: "Why" and "How" we communicate
    - Pragmatic Language

Oral and Written Language

- Oral: Listening and Speaking Skills
    - According to ASHA's website, "a spoken language disorder represents a persistent difficulty in the acquisition and use of listening and speaking skills across any of the five language domains: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics."
- Written: Reading and Writing Skills
    - According to ASHA's website, "a disorder of written language involves a significant impairment in fluent word reading (i.e., reading decoding and sight word recognition), reading comprehension, written spelling, and/or written expression (Ehri, 2000; Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Kamhi & Catts, 2012; Tunmer & Chapman, 2007, 2012)."

Features of Oral and Written Language

Oral Language
- Low variety of words
- Words with fewer syllables
- Shorter sentences
- More use of personal pronouns (I, me, mine)
- Fewer quantifying words or numerical words
- More vague quantifying terms (many, few, some)
- More extreme and superlative words (none, all, every, always, never)
- More qualifying elements (clauses beginning with unless and except)
- More repetition of words and syllables
- Higher use of contractions
- More interjections (Wow!, No way!)
- More colloquial and nonstandard words

Written Language
- High variety of words
- Multisyllabic & multimorphemic words
- Longer sentences; more complex
- Cannot utilize vague referents (personal pronouns, over "there")
- Higher level vocabulary utilization
- More formal tone

Reading Rope & Active View of Reading

Scarborough's Reading Rope
- Expanded upon the Simple View of Reading
- Defined the underlying skills that make up the Language Comprehension and Word Recognition 'Strands'
  - Word Recognition skills become more automatic as children become skilled readers
  - Language Comprehension becomes more strategic as children become skilled readers

Duke & Cartwright's Active View of Reading
- Expanded upon the Reading Rope
- Word Recognition and Language Comprehension are bridged by skills that fall within both categories
  - Print Concepts
  - Reading Fluency
  - Vocabulary Knowledge
  - Morphological Awareness
  - Graphophonological-Semantic Cognitive Flexibility
    - Letter-sound meaning flexibility (missed/mist, braid/bread)
- Vocabulary and morphological awareness skills are necessary for reading morphologically complex words- many English words fall into this category

Strategies

Background Knowledge
- Utilize a variety of materials to present information
- Anticipation Guides
- Paired Readings
- Paired Visuals
- Questions & Prompts
- Virtual & Real-Time Experiences
- Vocabulary Connections

Vocabulary
- Target Tier 2 Vocabulary Words
- Expose students to vocabulary multiple times and in multiple context
- Preview & Review Terms
- Visual Supports
- Examples & Non-Examples
- Explicit vs. Implicit Teaching
- Spaced, Interleaved Practice
- Connect to similar, familiar words
- Discuss multiple meanings, usages

Language Structures
- Model - Recast - Expand
- Read Alouds (expose students to complex written language at grade-level)
- Think Alouds
- Promote student use of structures
- Provide opportunities for practice

Verbal Reasoning
- Think Alouds/Read Alouds
- Guided Questioning
- Visual & Textual Clues
- Local Coherence Inferences
    - Cohesive ties
    - Connective words

- Global Coherence Inferences
  - Frame questions to guide students to combine text and background knowledge
- Graphic Organizers
- Upward & Downward Scaffolding (Strive for 5)
  - Ask Open-Ended Questions
  - Consider Student Response
  - Decide to Support or Challenge
  - Assess Student Response
  - Keep Conversation Going

Literacy Knowledge
- Narrative & Expository Texts
  - Purpose
  - Structure
  - Features/Characteristics
  - Signal Words
  - Key Questions
- KAT Framework
  - Identify the text structure
  - Use a consistent sentence stem to create a main idea statement (based on structure)
  - Develop a summary using key details that support the created main idea statement
  - Answer inference questions by synthesizing structure, main idea, and prior knowledge
  - Use structure to answer multiple-choice questions about the text's main idea/details

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EF Skills for Writing
Writing is impacted by Executive Functions: Working Memory, Inhibitory Control, and Flexible Thinking/Shifting
- Set Goals
- Make a Plan
- Get Organized
- Self Regulate
- Mentor

Sentence-Level Writing
- Analyze sentences in reading passages
- Use Sentence Frames
- Deconstruct Sentences
- Rearrange Sentence Parts
- Combine Sentences
- Expand Sentences

Paragraph/Discourse-Level Writing
- Color Coding
- Graphic Organizers and Informal Outlines
- Models
- Conferencing
- Break Assignments into Chunks
- Sentence Frames or Writing Templates

Resource Links:
- https://www.smartspeechtherapy.com/how-to-use-kat/
- https://pattan-live.s3.amazonaws.com/events/events/Wijekumar_et_al_2023_KAT_article_The_Reading_League_Journal.pdf
- https://www.nellkduke.org/the-active-view-of-reading
- https://literacyhow.org/oral-language/
- https://readinguniverse.org/article/explore-teaching-topics/writing/teaching-children-to-write-well-with-joan-sedita-m-ed
- https://keystoliteracy.com/blog/anxiety-executive-functions-and-writing/
- https://fcrr.org/
- https://www.ldatschool.ca/oral-language-skills/
- https://www.ldatschool.ca/supporting-oral-language-in-the-classroom/

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