

Developing Language Systems for Literacy

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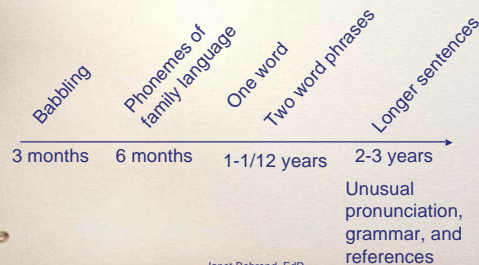
Components of Language Knowledge

- Phonological knowledge
- Semantic knowledge
- Syntactic knowledge
- Morphemic knowledge
- Pragmatic knowledge

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Language development before school



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Changes in speech at school entry

- Increase in ability to understand speakers and to be understood
- Increase in precision
- Acquires a feeling for 'book language' (BL, pp. 72-73)

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Automatic	vs.	Literate
Concrete	vs.	Abstract
Basic	vs.	Higher
Receptive	vs.	Expressive

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Pre-production

- Little or no verbal production
- Little to no comprehension
- Nods and gestures
- May use memorized phrases
- Speaks haltingly
- May recognize some written language
- May be able to write short sentences.

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Early production

- Comprehends at a social level
- Minimal verbal production
- Uses greetings
- Frequent grammatical errors
- Frequently reverts to first language

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Speech emergence

- Comprehends in most social situations
- Frequent errors in pronunciation and grammar
- Difficulty with academic language and idioms

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Intermediate fluency

- Excellent comprehension
- Few errors
- Near native speech
- Still may need vocabulary development
- May not understand nuances and humor

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Fluency

- Native-like language
- Understands nuances, humor, and satire

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For children who speak with a dialect, ask yourself:

- Does the miscue disrupt or significantly change the meaning?
- Is the child sometimes able to self-correct miscues that reflect his home language pattern?
- If a child reads a word in a way that reflects his home language pattern, does he read it in the book language in another place?
- Are these miscues becoming less common? (Compton-Lilly, p. 55)

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Think about which language structures are easier to learn.

- Some verbs (can, could, has, had, do, did, will, might) are hard
- Adjectives in the noun phrase are hard
- Question words (Easy – where, what, who, whose; Hard – why, how; Harder – when, what kind of, what if, where from)

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Human brains work in two ways with language:

- One way is to work on patterns.
- The second way is to store the regular examples together and make a rule to cover that regularity.

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Understand that children learn language easily through conversation.

- Joint focus on an activity
- Wait time
- Negotiate meanings
- Uncover confusions
- Personalize the conversation
- Shared experiences

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Joint focus on an activity

- Talking with: Explanations
- Telling stories
- Drawing and talking
- Reading aloud and talking
- Writing/viewing and talking

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- Who talks to whom?
- What do they talk about?
- Do they listen and repeat?
- How often?

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“Conversation ... is a cooperative interaction:

- participants must agree on the topic,
- they must take turns in developing it,
- and their contributions must be intelligible, relevant, and truthful.”
(Miller, 1981, p. 121, in BL, p. 334)

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Genuine conversation

- The two speakers collaborate.
- Speakers draw on their knowledge and their language...
- Speakers make listeners contribute.
- Listeners have to bring considerable information to bear on the conversation...
- Both have to check for understanding.
- Speakers and listeners cooperate.
(BDP, p. 14)

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Speakers are like teachers.

- The speaker has to get the attention of the listener.
- The speaker has to be sensitive to the listener.
- The message has to be adapted to the context or situation.
- The speaker has to listen when it is his or her turn to listen. (BDP, pp. 14-15)

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Listeners are like learners.

- They can judge whether they are getting the message.
- They can recognize when the meaning has been lost.
- They can make this known to the speaker.
- They can ask for additional information. (BDP, p. 15)

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Increase language learning opportunities.

- Have the children tell you what they would be doing at each transitional point in the lesson.
- Encourage the children to talk about the meaning of familiar text, retell the story, and repeat the patterned language structure used in the story. (Gentile, 1996)
- Talk about the pictures in the books

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Talking about pictures

- What do you see? (people, objects, size, shape, color, number)
- What's happening? (action, movement, sounds)
- Where? (place, background)
- When? (time)
- Mood or perspective? (feelings, point of view)

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Personalizing the conversation

- Talk about the children's own experience with a topic.
- Accept the children's view on a subject.
- Let the children talk about what they find interesting. (Van Dyke, 2006)

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Reformulate the child's utterances

- Summarize a long conversation.
- Rephrase in standard grammar.
- Put an idea into the child's head.
- Take the child's meaning but say it in a different way.
- Help the child pull together more than one idea. (Van Dyke, 2006)

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Encourage the use of alternative constructions.

- Expanding the phrases
- Moving things around
- Transforming simple sentences

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Consider what things make a child reluctant to speak.

- New situation
- New person
- Shyness
- Feeling inadequate
- Fear of failure
- Negative experiences
- Limited language control

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