Professional Learning Community

EMERGENT LITERACY

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Module 4: Oral Language

(Sessions 10–12)

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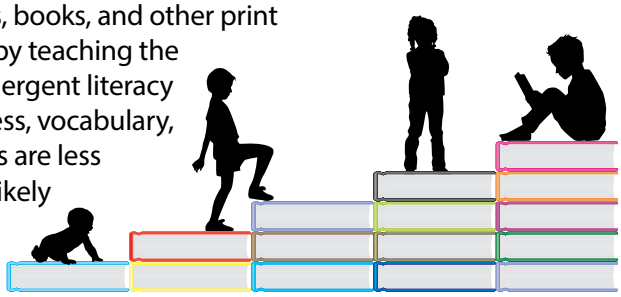
Introduction

Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy was developed to support preschool teachers through collaborative learning experiences in a literacy professional learning community (PLC). PLCs are a form of professional development in which small groups of educators with shared interests work together with the goals of expanding their knowledge and refining their craft. PLC members often share the goal of improving student achievement by enhancing their own teaching practice.

PLCs typically meet regularly to learn new topics, share ideas, and solve problems. Teams determine the topics they want to learn and the methods they want to use to gain the knowledge. PLC members might read and discuss articles or books, attend trainings or conferences on an area of interest, or ask an expert to speak to the group. A facilitator or team leader might guide PLC members in learning a new topic, perhaps with professional development materials designed to walk them through the content.

Children entering kindergarten and grade 1 vary greatly in their emergent literacy skills. Children with strong literacy skills in early elementary school are likely to become good readers, while children with weak literacy skills are likely to remain poor readers.[1] Families provide children with their first literacy experiences using interactions, conversations, books, and other print materials. Preschool teachers continue that learning by teaching the foundations of literacy, or emergent literacy skills. Emergent literacy skills include print knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and oral language. Preschoolers who learn these skills are less likely to develop future reading problems and more likely to read with ease, understand what they read, and succeed in school.[2]



The *Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy* materials can be downloaded for free at https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/elplc.

Purpose of This Guide

This guide was developed for preschool teachers to participate in the *Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy*, which helps preschool teachers in collaborative learning experiences apply evidence-based strategies in their instruction. In turn, preschool teachers can provide 3- to 5-year-old children with evidence-based language and literacy instruction. Through this collaborative learning experience, preschool teachers expand their knowledge base as they read, discuss, share, and apply evidence-based key ideas and strategies.

1 Duncan et al., 2007; Juel, 1988; Wagner, Torgesen, & Rashotte, 1994; Wagner et al., 1997.
2 Kaplan & Walpole, 2005; Sparks, Patton, & Murdoch, 2014.

Overview of Modules and Sessions

The *Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy* comprises four modules: Print Knowledge, Phonological Awareness, Vocabulary, and Oral Language (table 1). Each module includes 3 sessions, for a total of 12 sessions. The first two sessions of each module take about 90 minutes to complete, and the last session of each module takes about 60 minutes. The topics of the sessions are the emergent literacy skills that preschoolers need in order to become successful readers. The accompanying Facilitator Guide includes a structured plan for a facilitator to lead participants through each session.

It is recommended that the sessions be completed in sequential order. The timeline for completing them is flexible; they can serve as a year's worth or more of professional learning. If the recommended time for each session is not available, complete what you can with the time you have and then pick up where you left off the next time you meet.

Table 1: Overview of Session Topics and Timing by Module

Module	Session and Topic	Minutes
1 Print Knowledge	1. What Print Knowledge Is, Why It Is Important, How to Teach It Effectively	90
	2. Teaching Print Knowledge and Using Small-Group Explicit Instruction	90
	3. Teaching Print Knowledge Using Print Referencing During Read-Alouds, Considerations for English Learner Students and Students With Disabilities, and Additional Resources	60
2 Phonological Awareness	4. What Phonological Awareness Is, When It Develops, and Why It Is Important	90
	5. Levels of Phonological Awareness and Features and Examples of Effective Phonological Awareness Instruction	90
	6. Phonological Awareness Instruction In Action, Considerations for English Learner Students and Students With Disabilities, and Additional Resources	60
3 Vocabulary	7. Background on Vocabulary	90
	8. How Do Children Learn New Words, Which Words Do I Teach, and How Do I Use Dialogic Reading to Teach Vocabulary?	90
	9. More Ways to Teach Vocabulary, Considerations for English Learner Students and Students With Disabilities, and Additional Resources	60
4 Oral Language	10. What is Oral Language, Why Is It Important, How Do Children Develop Syntax, and How Do I Teach Syntax?	90
	11. Teaching Oral Language Through Conversations and Supporting Peer-to-Peer Language Interactions	90
	12. Oral Language and Listening Comprehension, Considerations for English Learner Students and Students With Disabilities, and Additional Resources	60

Five-Step Process for Each PLC Session

Each session follows a five-step process for collaborative learning (table 2). The process was adapted from Wald and Castleberry's (2000) five stages of work for teams engaging in a collaborative learning cycle.

Table 2: Five-Step Process for Each Session

Step	Description
STEP 1	**Debrief** Participants discuss their experiences with and reflections on an instructional practice that they have planned and implemented since the previous session.
STEP 2	**Define and Discuss Session Goals and Content** Facilitator gives brief statements about previous session goals and the current session's goals: "where we've been and where we're going." Facilitator shares foundational and background information while engaging participants in discussions or activities that support prior reading.
STEP 3	**Learn and Confirm** Participants explore new practices and compare them to current practices. Participants access and build their background knowledge and experiences related to the session's topic. Participants are explicitly taught the session's content through, for example, models, videos, and discussions.
STEP 4	**Collaborate and Practice** Participants collaborate in pairs or small groups to practice applying strategies and activities.
STEP 5	**Reflect, Plan, and Implement** Participants reflect on what they learned during the session, plan how the activities and strategies will be implemented in their classroom before the next session, and then implement their plan in their classroom. All participants will be prepared at the start of the next session to share their experiences.

Organization of this Guide

For each module, the Participant Guide includes a self-study reading assignment to be completed before each session and a set of activities to be completed during and after each session. The guide also includes a copy of the presentation slides used during each session (with room for notes), a set of reproducible materials that can be used in the classroom, a glossary of terms used throughout the module, and a list of resources that participants can explore for additional information.

Self-Study Reading

Before each session, you will complete a self-study reading that provides evidence-based content on the topic of that session. The reading includes the what, why, and how for each instructional practice as well as classroom scenarios that demonstrate effective instruction. During each session, you will have the opportunity to discuss, view examples of practice, and process the information. Participating in the sessions will help you develop a deeper understanding of the self-study reading content.
The last section of the self-study reading in the third session of each module provides a list of free additional resources related to the module's topic, including articles, websites, and children's activities.

Activities

The first activity in each module is to answer a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the module topic based on your background knowledge and experience. The FAQs are based on education leaders' submissions that were compiled during the development of *Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy*. At the end of each module, you will revisit the FAQs and reflect on how your understanding changed over the course of the module.

During each session you will engage in collaborative hands-on activities, some of which incorporate videos. For example, after viewing and discussing a video about play-based language interactions, you will engage in planning how to incorporate play-based language interactions in your classroom. In other activities you will be asked to share and reflect on your classroom teaching experiences. Table 3 includes information about the videos on oral language instruction in preschool classrooms.

Table 3: Videos of Oral Language Instruction in Preschool Classrooms

Title	Link	Duration
Video 1: Play-Based Language Interactions	https://youtu.be/NFBZrhPFfZc	7:41
Video 2: Small-Group Explicit Instruction (Sequencing)	https://youtu.be/H09JTmeoJAo	8:00
Video 3: Engaging in Multiturn Conversations	https://youtu.be/EsYcG_wAhxg	6:59
Video 4: Interactive Reading	https://youtu.be/y2qXtXtS50A	8:51
Video 5: Listening Comprehension (Story Circle)	https://youtu.be/l2sydGWZ_uE	8:04

At the end of each session is a set of self-study activities for you to apply what was discussed during the session and to encourage self-study between sessions. The self-study activities will take approximately 30–60 minutes to complete. Each self-study activity follows the same structure that includes something for you to:

DO

DO an action step, such as trying a new strategy in your classroom and responding to reflection questions.

WATCH

WATCH, for example, a video about applying instructional strategies.

READ

READ to prepare for the next PLC session.

Slides

The slides presented by the facilitator during each session are provided after the self-study reading assignment and activities for the three sessions in each module. Use them for reference and notetaking during and between sessions.

Reproducible Materials

Reproducible instructional materials used throughout the sessions are provided after the presentation slides. You are encouraged to use these materials in your classroom.

Glossary

The glossary defines the words in bold type and is located after the Reproducible Materials section.

Session Schedule

Use table 4 to keep track of your session schedule. The gray color indicates the other modules that comprise this PLC. Our current focus is Module 4, Oral Language.

Table 4: Session Schedule

Module	Session and Topic	Duration	Date and Time	Place	Completed
1 PRINT KNOWLEDGE	1. What Print Knowledge Is, Why It Is Important, How to Teach It Effectively	90 minutes			
	2. Teaching Print Knowledge and Using Small-Group Explicit Instruction	90 minutes			
	3. Teaching Print Knowledge Using Print Referencing During Read-Alouds, Considerations for English Learner Students and Students With Disabilities, and Additional Resources	60 minutes			
2 PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS	4. What Phonological Awareness Is, When It Develops, and Why It Is Important	90 minutes			
	5. Levels of Phonological Awareness and Features and Examples of Effective Phonological Awareness Instruction	90 minutes			
	6. Phonological Awareness Instruction in Action, Considerations for English Learner Students and Students With Disabilities, and Additional Resources	60 minutes			
3 VOCABULARY	7. Background on Vocabulary	90 minutes			
	8. How Do Children Learn New Words, Which Words Do I Teach, and How Do I Use Dialogic Reading to Teach Vocabulary?	90 minutes			
	9. More Ways to Teach Vocabulary, Considerations for English Learner Students and Students With Disabilities, and Additional Resources	60 minutes			
4 ORAL LANGUAGE	10. What is Oral Language, Why Is It Important, How Do Children Develop Syntax, and How Do I Teach Syntax?	90 minutes			
	11. Teaching Oral Language Through Conversations and Supporting Peer-to-Peer Language Interactions	90 minutes			
	12. Oral Language and Listening Comprehension, Considerations for English Learner Students and Students With Disabilities, and Additional Resources	60 minutes			

Session 10: What Is Oral Language, Why Is It Important, How Do Children Develop Syntax, and How Do I Teach Syntax?

Key Terms	Definition
adapt	Making changes to instruction that allow children equal access to the content being taught. Adaptations can include accommodations and modifications.
decontextualized language	Language used to describe or explain past or future events or to talk about people, places, actions, and objects that are not visible in the moment.
differentiate	Matching instruction to each child's needs and abilities.
expansion	Repeating a child's utterances with a few additional words and, often, slightly more advanced sentence structure.
feedback	Providing specific information about what children are saying or doing to help them learn or practice a new skill or concept. It can include encouragement, redirection, prompts and cues, partition of the problem into smaller steps, visuals, and modeling.
language interactions	Conversations that could be about experiences children have, such as playing in the park, and discussions you facilitate about books that you read to children.
oral language	The system of words and word combinations used to communicate with others through speaking and listening. We use oral language to express and comprehend knowledge, ideas, and feelings.
play-based interactions with teacher scaffolding	Supporting children's language development during play while allowing children to direct their own play activities.
pragmatics	How language is used in social situations. It includes what you say, how you say it, and your nonverbal communication.
recast	Repeating a child's utterance with varied syntax to model more correct language.
Simple View of Reading	States that reading comprehension (RC) equals the product of decoding (D) and language comprehension (LC), or D x LC = RC.
syntactic development	How children gradually develop expressive oral language that follows grammatical rules when they talk and eventually write.
syntax	The rules used to put words together to make phrases and sentences.

Self-Study Reading

What Is Oral Language?

Oral language is the system of words and word combinations used to communicate with others through speaking and listening. We use oral language to express and comprehend knowledge, ideas, and feelings. Oral language allows us to connect words, to communicate, and to understand. It is the foundation on which all emergent literacy and later reading is built. Children who show early difficulties with oral language may have difficulty learning to read once formal reading instruction begins.[3] In contrast, children who achieve oral language milestones are more likely to learn conventional reading skills when those skills are taught later on. Preschool teachers can help children build oral language by planning and facilitating activities focused on oral expression and listening comprehension.

A traditional, broad model of oral language includes five components: vocabulary, syntax, morphological skills, pragmatics, and phonological skills.[4] Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings. It includes the words that make up speech (what we say) and text (what we read and write). **Syntax** refers to the rules used to put words together to make phrases and sentences. Morphological skills include understanding individual word parts, such as prefixes and suffixes, their meanings, and how they combine to form words. **Pragmatics** is how language is used in social situations. It includes what you say, how you say it, and your nonverbal communication. Phonological skills include the organization of sounds in a language and involve use and understanding of receptive and productive speech sounds.

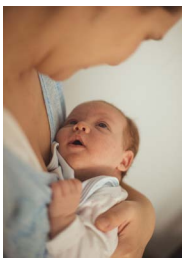
One of the best ways for preschool teachers to support children's oral language is through language interactions. This module explores ways for preschool teachers to plan and implement meaningful language interactions to strengthen these key aspects of children's oral language development:

- Syntax (Session 10).
- Conversation and Pragmatics (Session 11).
- Listening comprehension (Session 12).

This session begins with background information about oral language and then provides in-depth information about syntax.

When Does Oral Language Develop?

Right from Birth!



Children receive language through the interactions they have with the people around them starting at birth. The amount and quality of language children hear from birth are vital to their ability to use oral language to communicate as they develop. In general, infants become aware of the sounds and words being spoken by the adults around them. They begin to communicate by making sounds and gestures and then using their first words. Toddlers begin to use words and talk in simple sentences, ask questions, and give opinions. Toddlers also begin to use language to express how they feel, share their ideas, and get information. Preschoolers begin to use more complex sentences and improve their oral language by integrating the language of adults around them, from having interactions and conversations, and by hearing new ideas expressed to them through oral stories and through books that are read to them.

3 Biemiller, 2006; Hart & Risley, 1995, 2003; Scarborough, Dobrich, & Hager, 1991; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998.
4 Lesaux & Harris, 2014.

Oral Language Development Milestones

Although children learn to communicate using oral language at different rates, research shows some general patterns of typical language development. Most children learn how to form words and sentences in a similar order. The Additional Resources section at the end of Session 12 provides more information on how language typically develops for children age 3-5. For example, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's speech, language, and hearing development chart provides parent-friendly developmental milestones from birth to 5.

Why is Oral Language Important?

The Value of Communicating

Strong oral language skills are key to successfully communicating ideas, needs, and goals and to developing personal relationships with family and friends. The preschool years are a critical time for children to develop oral language skills, and teachers play an important role in helping them do this.

How much you talk and respond to children and what you say to them can positively impact their oral language development. In turn, children with better oral language skills will be better communicators and, eventually, better readers.

The activities and opportunities you provide children can help ensure that they have a smooth transition into formal reading.[5] Plan to provide activities and opportunities throughout the school day by engaging children in meaningful conversations. Strive to understand where children are in their language development so that you can differentiate your responses during conversations. You can encourage children with better developed oral language to extend a simple sentence into a complex sentence by, for example, asking "Wh" questions (who, what, where, when, why) and how questions. You can encourage children with less developed oral language to speak in complete sentences during a conversation by, for example, modeling speaking in complete sentences. And you can encourage children who are still using just one to two words at a time to extend their verbalizations to four or more words, also through modeling and through consistent use of language scaffolds, which are discussed in more detail later in this module.

Language Is Knowledge

Module 3 (Vocabulary) discussed the **Simple View of Reading**.[6] The Simple View of Reading states that reading comprehension (RC) equals the product of decoding (D) and language comprehension (LC), or D x LC = RC. Essentially, to comprehend what is read, a child must be able to decode the words and have the oral language comprehension to understand the author's message. See Module 3 for more information about the Simple View of Reading; the same information applies for the broader view of oral language discussed in this module.

Once children begin formal reading instruction, they will learn how to decode words in order to develop fluent word reading skills. The more words children have in their oral vocabulary, the easier it will be to read and understand what is read.[7] Consider a student in grade 1 trying to decode the unfamiliar word *broccoli*. If the student has heard and used the word before, he or she will find it easier to read and understand the word.[8]

5 Pullen & Justice, 2003.
6 Gough & Tunmer, 1986.
7 Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006; Kamil & Hiebert, 2005; National Reading Panel, 2000.
8 Kamil & Hiebert, 2005.

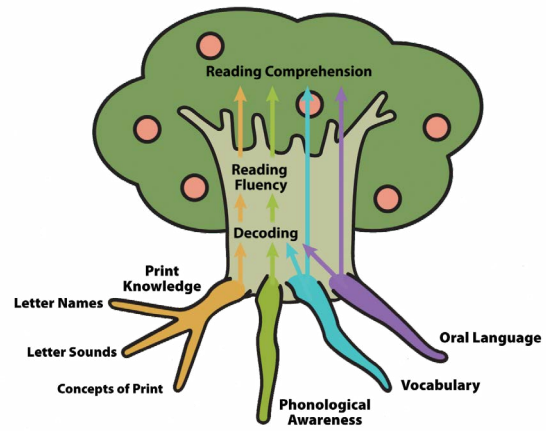
Oral language is directly related to reading comprehension. In fact, reading comprehension depends on oral language abilities.[9] Understanding word meanings, concepts, and sentence structures presented in text (whether the child reads it or listens to it being read) enables the reader, or listener, to understand the meaning.[10]

Language Connections

Consider what we have discussed and read about in our PLC sessions—oral language is the foundation of almost all of it!

- Module 1 focused on print knowledge, which includes knowing letter names, letter sounds, and concepts of print. As children develop print knowledge, they begin to understand the *connection between oral and written language*—including how print carries meaning.
- Module 2 discussed phonological awareness, which includes identifying and manipulating *units of oral language*, such as words, syllables, and onsets and rimes.
- Module 3 covered vocabulary, which is the knowledge of words and word meanings and an important part of oral language. Children need to *understand what words mean in order to understand what people say and read to them.*

Knowledge Building and Language Connections



Remember the literacy tree animation in Module 2? The roots of the literacy tree—print knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and oral language—nourish and support the tree so it can grow. Oral language is connected to all aspects of the literacy tree and of similar "trees" for math, science, social skills, and self-regulation. Strong evidence connects oral language skills in early childhood to success in reading, math, science, social skills, and self-regulation throughout schooling.[11]

Oral language is important for math and science because that content includes advanced vocabulary and complex concepts. Advanced vocabulary is what was referred to as technical words in Module 3 of this PLC--words that are important for a specific topic but do not frequently occur across different contexts. To comprehend the content, children must learn the specific vocabulary and concepts that make up each content area. To succeed in these subject areas, children must be able to receptively understand the information presented and expressively communicate what they know.

Oral language skills include listening and speaking. These skills allow children to communicate their own thoughts and experiences. Children with a larger vocabulary and more sophisticated oral language skills are better able to develop friendships, interact with other children and adults, and express their own needs and feelings. Children who can describe an experience, ask for help, and express feelings are better able to adapt to challenges and new situations both in school and at home. These actions strengthen the self-regulation tree and the social skills tree. Even if there were no such thing as reading, oral language would be among the most important skills to develop because it permeates almost every aspect of life!

9 Kintsch & Kintsch, 2005.
10 Kintsch & Kintsch, 2005.
11 Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2016; Pace, Alper, Burchinal, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2019; Toll & Van Luit, 2014.

Oral Language is Included in State Standards

Every state addresses oral language in its early learning standards. Locate, download, and review your state standards to see how your state has included oral language as a key learning goal for children. If you work with 3 and 4-year-old children, it is important to become familiar with your state's learning standards for both age-ranges. In fact, since children's learning and development are not uniform, it is helpful for all teachers to be familiar with learning progressions so they can build upon the individual and developmental characteristics of each child. When reviewing your state's standards for 3- and 4-year-olds, you may find that they are located within different documents. For example, many states include 3-year-old standards within early learning guidelines for children birth through three. In addition, it can be helpful to familiarize yourself with the kindergarten standards related to language and literacy in your state. These are likely in a separate document as well.

How Do Children Develop Syntax?

Syntax

One aspect of oral language is syntax. Syntax, which is an element of grammar, is the rules used to put words together to make phrases and sentences. Other aspects of grammar relate to how we indicate plurals, show past and future tense in words and phrases, and form new words from existing words by adding prefixes and suffixes. The rules of syntax and grammar are an integral part of oral language.[12]

Syntactic Development

Think about how over a few short years a child begins to utter sounds and syllables, then uses words and phrases, and finally speaks in sentences using grammatical rules! **Syntactic development** is how children gradually develop expressive oral language that follows these rules when they talk and eventually write. The complexity of children's oral language increases over time, typically in systematic ways. Table 5 shows a sequence that moves from two-word statements to complex sentence structures that follow other grammatical rules, such as how to use plurals and past tense conjugations.

Table 5: Example of a Child's Syntactic Development

Child Says	Demonstrated Syntactic Feature
1. "Eat cracker."	Putting two words together to communicate.
2. "Eating crackers."	Putting words together with suffixes: -ing, -s.
3. "I was eating crackers." And eventually, "I ate the crackers."	Putting words together to form a complete sentence. Use of regular and irregular past tense conjugations also develops within phrases and sentences.
4. "Can I eat crackers?"	Putting words together to form a question.
5. "I am eating crackers, and you are drinking milk."	Putting two ideas together into one complex sentence.

Most children learn to follow spoken sentence structures used by the people around them by age 5 simply by listening to others' speech patterns. Children learn to follow the syntactic rules when they have many opportunities to talk with more mature users of language, who model well-spoken language. When young children have meaningful interactions and are exposed to a lot of diverse language, their later syntactic development improves.[13] When children have insufficient experiences during the toddler and preschool years to form a syntactical knowledge base, they may have gaps in understanding. For example, a child may not understand a complex sentence used in the classroom, such as "Put your jackets on before you line up."

12 Bloom & Lahey, 1978.
13 Hart & Risley, 1995; Weisleder & Fernald, 2013.

Language Complexity

When children increase their language complexity, they can express and understand more complicated ideas. Examples of increasing language complexity include knowing how to use suffixes, or word endings, such as *-s*, *-es*, and *-ed* and using more complex sentences that include conjunctions, such as *or* and *because*. Having more complex language gives children the tools to think about and understand more advanced concepts and to express their ideas more accurately.

Module 3 (Vocabulary) discussed the importance of considering different parts of speech (noun, verb, adjective, preposition, adverb) when selecting words to teach. This will not only help ensure that children learn a variety of different parts of speech but will also support their language complexity. It is not necessary to label parts of speech in preschool, but incidental language scaffolds that emphasize how to use various parts of speech and intentional syntax practice opportunities will help children enhance their understanding of the use of language. These strategies can be especially important for children with weaker language skills and limited vocabularies.

Modeling Language Is Not Enough

Children's language develops through interactions with more knowledgeable peers.[14] When you model more complex language, children start to imitate and learn the syntax of language.[15]

It is not enough to only model language for children's language to grow. You must also talk with children and provide opportunities for them to talk as much as possible.

Session 11 discusses language-supportive strategies such as engaging children in multiturn conversations and strategic scaffolding; these techniques also help children develop their syntactic knowledge. Most important is eliciting language from children by talking with them frequently throughout the day. Sometimes you will have an instructional goal in mind during conversations, while other times you will just engage children in multiturn conversations to get them practicing their oral language skills.

How Do I Teach Syntax?

The sections below highlight three strategies for supporting children's syntax and overall grammatical development throughout the day:

- Using **play-based interactions with teacher scaffolding**: embedding incidental supports for language development in regularly occurring play-based conversations that follow children's interests.
- Embedding **brief language interactions:** incorporating brief but intentional opportunities for children to practice new phrases and more complex sentence structures into daily routines such as transitions, centers, and circle time.
- Encouraging **decontextualized language:** creating opportunities to talk about the past and the future, using decontextualized language.

Using Play-Based Interactions with Teacher Scaffolding

Module 3 (Session 9) described the importance of play for preschoolers' growth and development,[16] including strategies for use during play-based interactions with teacher guidance to support vocabulary knowledge. The strategies included asking questions, providing meaningful feedback, introducing new

14 Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1967.
15 Zauche, Thul, Mahoney, & Stapel-Wax, 2016.
16 McInnes, Howard, Crowley, & Miles, 2013.

vocabulary words, and using wait time effectively.[17] Those strategies, implemented during play-based interactions with teacher scaffolding, also apply to supporting children's syntactic development.

During **play-based interactions with teacher scaffolding**, you use scaffolding techniques to allow children to acquire new information in the context of activities in which they are already engaged.[18] The goal of play-based interactions is for you to scaffold children's language development during play while allowing children to direct their own play activities. Two strategies that you can use to scaffold children's syntax development during play-based interactions are recasts and expansions.

Recasts

A **recast** is when you repeat a child's utterance with varied syntax to model more correct language.[19] For example, if a child says, "The cat eated the treats," you might respond with, "Oh, the cat ate the treats." You recast the language by refining the word or grammar elements immediately after the child says it. For example, you may alter the verb tense (*stopped*), change *is* to *are*, add an article (*the*), or add a descriptive word (*yellow*) to model a more accurate and precise utterance. If a child says, "He laughing," you can recast by saying, "He is laughing." Use stress and intonation to highlight the words you want the child to focus on.

Using recasts while talking with children allows them to hear more accurate and descriptive language. Children are not prompted to repeat your recast because recasts are meant to model language for children without correcting them.[20] Recasts can be used as needed throughout the day and in all settings. Table 6 includes examples of recasts during play-based interactions.

Table 6: Recasts During Play-Based Interactions

Setting	Child Utterance	Recast	Syntactic Feature
Kitchen center	"I want spoon."	"Do you want the spoon?" *As you offer the child the spoon.*	Use of article (the).
Block center	"Girl are building."	"Yes. The girls are building." *With an emphasis on girls.*	Subject-verb sentence using plurals.
Playground (playing hop-scotch)	"I jumped highest than you!"	"Wow! You jumped high*er* than me!"	Use of suffixes.

Expansions

An **expansion** is when you repeat children's utterances with a few additional words and, often, slightly more advanced sentence structure.[21] Expansions provide a more sophisticated language model. You add to what the children said to make it sound like an adult utterance. As with recasts, expanding children's language is done subtly to keep the conversation flowing while not making the children realize that they are being corrected. Expansions can also support your goals to elicit more turns during conversations (a topic discussed more in Session 11). For example, if you ask what a child is doing, and the child says, "eating." You can respond by saying, "Oh, you are eating your lunch. What are you eating for lunch?" This allows the child to hear the response in a complete sentence using more complex language and to receive encouragement to say more. Table 7 includes examples of expansions during play-based interactions.

17 Wasik & Jacobi-Vessels, 2017.
18 Wasik & Jacobi-Vessels, 2017; Fisher, Hirsh-Pasek, Newcombe, & Golinkoff, 2013.
19 Justice, Mashburn, Pence, & Wiggins, 2008.
20 Cleave, Becker, Curran, Van Horne, & Fey, 2015.
21 Pullen & Justice, 2003.

Table 7: Expansions During Play-Based Interactions

Setting	Child Utterance	Expansion
Art center	"I need blue."	"Here is the blue paint."
Reading center	"I will read."	"You will read *The Chick and the Duckling*."
House center	"The baby is crying."	"Yes, maybe the baby is crying because she is tired."

Embedding Brief Language Interactions

Support for language development in the preschool classroom does not always, or even often, require elaborate or extended lessons. Instead, you can embed short but powerful opportunities for children to practice using sophisticated language features, such as conjunctions and adverbs, into ongoing activities throughout the day. Table 8 includes examples of brief language interaction activities that you could embed at different times across the day, such as transitions, circle time, center time, and outside time. Some of the activity examples are perfect for one-on-one conversations with a specific child. Others work well for larger groups of children.

Table 8 also includes multiple language features that you can target during these interactions. Most of these language features make children say longer and more complex sentences. They all help children say exactly what they mean, in a way that sounds more like how an older child or adult might speak. The language features in the table are just examples. Some children may have already mastered using them. You will know because you will hear these children using the features in their natural conversation with you and with other children. For children whose language is limited, you may find it easier to focus first on less challenging language features, such as adding an -s to make a word plural or changing the verb tense when talking about something that already happened. More information on the language features that may be more appropriate for children with weaker language skills is at the end of Session 12.

Table 8: Examples of Brief Embedded Language Interactions

Activity Name	Target Language Feature	Primary Goal	Examples
How Should I . . .?	*-ly* adverbs	Children learn the function of adverbs ending in *-ly*. These words tell how something happened.	Provide a tray with shaving cream. "Let's make pictures in the shaving cream. I will tell you how I want you to draw. Watch. I am going to draw a flower *slowly*. Now, you draw a flower *slowly*. Now, draw a cloud *quickly*. Tell me how you drew." Provide cereal that you can thread onto pipe cleaners or string. "Let's make a necklace. How should I put the cereal onto the string?" Act out two different ways—*carefully* and *carelessly*. "Which way was better to put the cereal onto the string?

Activity Name	Target Language Feature	Primary Goal	Examples
Copy Me!	*-ly* adverbs	Children learn the function of adverbs ending in *-ly*. These words tell how something happened. Children learn new vocabulary to describe actions.	During circle time provide small musical instruments such as drums and tambourines. "Watch me play the instrument. Am I playing *softly* or *loudly*?" (softly). "Now you play the same way. How are we playing? We are playing *softly*. Now, let's play *loudly*. How are we playing now?" Extend the activity with different ways to play that are described as smoothly, evenly, and the like. Model describing the motions in complete sentences.
Which One Next?	Elaborated noun phrases	Children learn the purpose of elaborated noun phrases and how to use them in their descriptions.	During clean-up time ask children to bring you (or to put away) specific objects that you describe by color, number, or shape. "Donovan, please put away the blue puppet." "Shante, please bring me three yellow cars." Then have the children give one another specific instructions on what to clean up using the describing words.
Senses Stroll	Elaborated noun phrases	Children learn the purpose of elaborated noun phrases and how to use them in their descriptions.	Take the children on a walk outside. "As we walk, or stroll, let's pay attention to what we see, hear, smell, and feel. How does the sun feel on your face—*hot* or *cold*? Tell me how the wind sounds—*howling* or *whispering*." Model combining what the children say into complete sentences.
In or Out	Prepositions	Children learn the function of spatial prepositions, particularly *inside/outside* and *in/out*, and answer the question, "Where?"	Provide a block center area and masking tape. Use tape to make shape outlines on the floor. "We are going to put some blocks *inside* the shape outline and some blocks *outside* the shape outline. Watch me. I am moving this block *inside* the shape. Where is the block?"
Above or Below	Prepositions	Children learn the function of spatial prepositions, particularly *above/below* and *up/down*, and answer the question, "Where?"	Provide time to play outside on the playground. "Are you *above* the slide or *below* the slide? Are you holding the ball *above* your head or *below* your head? Is Billy *above* Jose on the see-saw, or is Jose *above* Billy on the see-saw?"
Let's Make a Choice!	Conjunctions	Children learn the function of conjunctions and how to use them in conversation.	Provide menus and other restaurant props in the dramatic play area. "We are ordering food at a restaurant. Let's see what is on the menu. I can have a sandwich *or* soup. When I have a choice to make, I use the word *or*. Which one will you choose?"

Activity Name	Target Language Feature	Primary Goal	Examples
When Would I . . . ?	Before and after	Children learn the appropriate context in which to use time-specific prepositions such as *before* and *after* and answer the question, "When?"	During a transition time prompt the children to choose *before* or *after* to determine when something would happen. "When would I get dressed for school, *before* school or *after* school?" "When would I hear a rooster crow, *before* breakfast or *after* dinner?" "When would I see lightning, *before* the thunder or *after* a rainbow appears?"
What Am I Describing?	Because	Children learn the function of conjunctions, particularly *because*, and how to use them in conversation. *Because* is the reason why we do things and answers the question, "Why?"	Provide cars, trucks, tracks, and tunnels during center time. "Stop before crossing the street *because* you want to make sure there is not a car coming. *Why* do we want to stop before crossing the street?"
Tell Me Why	Because	Children learn the function of conjunctions, particularly *because*, and how to use them in conversation. *Because* is the reason why we do things and answers the question, "Why?"	Provide two cars of different colors. Provide a bridge or tunnel for the cars to drive over or through. "Every time I ask you *why*, you will answer with *because*. The blue car is stopping *because* the red car is in the way. *Why* is the blue car stopping? *Because* the red car is in the way."

Although the activities in the table may seem too brief to make a difference in children's language development, they do! Because they take so little time, you can embed many of them during the day and many more across the week. The cumulative opportunities that you provide children to engage in these short dialogues are what can little by little help support growth in their language. If you consistently use these techniques with children, over time you will notice an increase in the length, complexity, and variety of the phrases that the children use.

These brief interactions include a systematic, multiple-turn format. The first turn is yours and starts with modeling the new language feature. Then, you give a verbal prompt for the children to try. Your next turn includes providing **feedback**, or specific information about what children are saying or doing to help them learn or practice a new skill or concept (including encouragement, redirection, prompts and cues, breaking down the problem into smaller steps, using visuals, and modeling) after the children's language contribution. When children correctly use the new language feature, specific positive feedback will signal that their communication attempt paid off and that expressing themselves in this new way worked. When children come close but do not quite master the new language feature in a sentence, a gentle recast or expansion that provides a second clear model gives them more information on how the language feature works so that they are more likely to get it right

the next time. For example, during an autumn day on the playground, you might say, "Let's describe the leaves all over the ground. I hear lots of crunchy leaves." One child might respond: "I see orange!" You can then say, "Yes, I see many orange leaves."

These embedded language interactions are easy to **adapt** and **differentiate**. You can use the same context and format to teach multiple syntax features. For example, the block area activity can be used to practice many different prepositions, such as *below*, *beyond*, and *between*. You also can easily make them more or less challenging for different children. One way to increase the challenge is to remove the initial model before asking a child to use a new feature. One way to make the activity simpler is to turn open-ended questions into two-choice questions. Remember that children are unique in their comprehension and mastery of language features. Sometimes, the same child may benefit from the less or the more challenging interaction with different new features.

After using embedded language interactions, you can further enhance learning by paying attention to children's language use later in the day and in the following weeks. When you "catch them in the act" of spontaneously using these new language features, you can express appreciation and provide further positive reinforcement for their efforts at more advanced ways of speaking. For example, perhaps you have been supporting children's use of new prepositional phrases by using some of these brief interaction ideas. If you later hear a child say, "You left it behind the swings" (after you say, "Where did I put that ball?"), you can respond, "Yes, it is here behind the swings! Thanks so much for telling me right where I left the ball!"

Encouraging Decontextualized Language

Decontextualized language is language used to describe or explain past or future events or to talk about people, places, actions, and objects that are not visible in the moment. Session 12 discusses the many ways to use book reading to support this aspect of children's language development, which is important for listening comprehension. Supporting decontextualized language without books is also important because learning to use language to describe contexts outside of the here and now helps children develop their syntax and grammar, too!

Why? When we talk with someone in the same room, we can use gestures (pointing), vague labels ("that thing"), and imprecise language ("the one you just dropped") to describe objects and events that both participants in the conversation can see while they are talking. However, when describing something that we cannot see or hear, we have to use much more specific language, including more complex syntax, to clearly communicate what we are trying to say. For example, imagine a teacher telling children where to go during an upcoming fire drill. She might say, "We have to walk to the playground and then stand underneath the basketball net." This complex sentence conveys detailed information about the sequence of events and the destination for their walk—*underneath the basketball net*. It simply does not work as well to say, "We will go out there." Where is *there*? As another example, one child telling another to "put that in here" during clean up works only when they are side by side. Describing to the teacher how they both "put the Legos on the bottom shelf because that's where they fit" means using much more complex wording.

By modeling such advanced language, you can demonstrate how to create an accurate, and specific, visual representation of the message you are communicating. As with other aspects of language, however, just modeling is insufficient. Provide children with numerous opportunities to practice using precise language themselves. You can accomplish this by asking children to:

- Tell you at the end of the day exactly what they did during center time.
- Tell you as you line up what they want to do on the playground.
- Describe to the class at circle time what they did over the weekend.
- Paint pictures and then describe them to friends who cannot see the images.
- Hide special toys around the room and then use only language, not gestures, to direct friends to find them.
- Make up a story about a favorite character.
- Connect something a character did in a story with their own lives or experiences.
- Tell you about their favorite thing to do at home.
- Share what they would do if they suddenly had a fantasy superpower, such as flying, becoming really huge, or very tiny.
- Tell the class what they want to do as an occupation when they grow up.
- Describe what happened at their last birthday or holiday celebration.
- Draw bird's-eye view maps of the classroom layout and then describe them to peers.

Activity 1

FAQs About Oral Language

Directions: Complete the chart's middle column. We will return to this activity at the end of this module to complete the third column and compare your responses.

FAQ	My Response Before Session 10	My Response After Session 12
1. How does oral language development prepare children to be good readers?		
2. What is decontextualized language, and why is it important?		
3. How do I teach syntax? Should I correct children's grammar? If so, how?		
4. How can interactive reading help children develop oral language?		
5. What do I do differently—if anything—for oral language development for English learner students?		

Activity 2

Video-Viewing Guide for Play-Based Language Interactions With Teacher Scaffolding

Directions: Watch **Video 1: Play-Based Language Interactions** (https://youtu.be/NFBZrhPFfZc). Then answer the questions below.

Question	Answer
1. How does the teacher phrase questions or comments to prompt the child to say the syntax target in the response? Provide an example.	
2. What does the teacher do when a child does not say the syntax target spontaneously?	
3. How does the teacher ensure that the language interactions stay play-based?	
4. How does the teacher know which children will benefit from play-based language interactions and which children will need explicit small-group language instruction?	

Activity 3

Planning Play-Based Language Interactions With Teacher Scaffolding

Directions: Read the steps below and complete the table. The first row is an example.

- Child: Determine which children need syntax practice. Match your feedback to each child's language skills by adjusting your questions or comments to be simpler or more complex.
- Syntax Target: Plan the list of syntax targets that you will use with the children.
- Location or Center: Determine the location where interactions may occur.
- Potential Conversation Starters: Think of ways to initiate a conversation using the syntax targets.
- Potential Feedback: Consider what feedback you will give to scaffold the use of the syntax target.

Child	Syntax Target	Location or Center	Potential Conversation Starters	Potential Feedback
Sam Smith	Past (*-ed*) and Present (*-ing*)	outside or playground	"I see you are jump*ing* rope! Yesterday, you did the same thing. What did you do yesterday?"	"Yes! You jump*ed* rope yesterday! It already happened, so you jump*ed* rope."

Activity 4

Reflect, Plan, and Implement (Self-Study)

Directions: Before the next session, complete the DO, WATCH, READ activities below.

DO

Implement some or all of the play-based language interactions you developed for Activity 3. Focus on the children you identified and the syntax targets you planned to work on with them. Then answer the reflection questions below.

Question	Answers
1. How did you select the children with whom you interacted?	
2. What syntax concepts did you choose to target?	
3. What is one example of a recast or expansion that you used during your play-based language interactions?	
4. How did you follow the children's lead?	
5. If a child was unable to produce the syntax target, how did you scaffold instruction for the child to express himself or herself more clearly using the syntax target?	
6. What scaffold did you find was most helpful in guiding the children to the desired response?	
7. What are some taught syntax targets that you have noticed children using with you and one another after engaging in the play-based language interactions?	

Activity 4 (continued)

Reflect, Plan, and Implement (Self-Study)

WATCH	**Video 2: Small-Group Explicit Instruction (Sequencing)** (https://youtu.be/H09JTmeoJAo). Then answer the questions below.

Question	Answers
1. Should all children receive small-group explicit syntax instruction? If not, which ones should?	
2. Does the teacher use the parts of speech labels, noun or verb, in her lesson with the children? If not, why not?	
3. How does the teacher correct word usage, left out words, or verb conjugation?	
4. How could the teacher scaffold instruction for a child who was able to get the three puzzle words in the correct order and then had to make a sentence?	

READ	• Self-Study Reading for Session 11 on pages 18–28. • Optional: Select a resource to read from the Additional Resources section on pages 43–45.

Questions and comments during or after reading.	

Session 11: Teaching Oral Language Through Conversations and Supporting Peer-to-Peer Language Interactions

Key Terms	Definition
active listening	Paying close attention to what children are saying or expressing and using that information to respond accordingly. Active listening helps children feel heard and understood and helps facilitate more meaningful multiturn conversations.
conversation	When two or more people talk with each other to share ideas and information.
modeling	Providing an example using words and actions. It is when teachers demonstrate how to do or say something.
multiturn conversations	Back-and-forth turns during which you build on and connect with a child's statements, questions, and responses.
peer-to-peer language interactions	Conversations among children.
pragmatics	How language is used in social situations. It includes what you say, how you say it, and your nonverbal communication.
strategic scaffolding of language	Providing an intentional response to a child during a conversation.

Self-Study Reading

Teaching Oral Language Through Conversations

This session focuses on two aspects of oral language that can enhance children's language skills: conversations and pragmatics.

Conversation is when two or more people talk with each other to share ideas and information. Children usually enjoy talking with adults, so take advantage of any available moment to have a conversation with a child or a group of children. An added benefit of having conversations with children is that it helps you develop connections with them, learn about their interests, and boost their sense of belonging. Think about all the times you have conversations with children in your class—during playground time, circle time, snack time, centers, and dismissal. Talking with young children encourages not only the development of their oral language but also their cognitive development, social skills, and emotional maturity. [22]

22 Test, Cunningham, & Lee, 2010.

Pragmatics is how language is used in social situations, including daily conversations. Pragmatics includes what you say, how you say it, and your nonverbal communication.

- *What you say* might be asking a question when you do not understand something, greeting someone as they come to your home, or informing someone about directions to meet you for lunch.
- *How you say something* could be adapting the volume of your voice depending on whether you are at a loud concert or at the movies. It could also mean being aware of your listener's knowledge of a topic and providing more or less information as needed.
- *Nonverbal communication* includes facial expressions, eye contact, and personal space.

Pragmatics is an important part of oral language development and can be modeled throughout the day. Consider how pragmatics plays a role in how you greet individual children each morning compared to when you are preparing for a class-wide field trip. In the first example you may be more relaxed and can laugh and have fun with the children. In the second example you will probably be more serious in tone and actions, ensuring that all the children are where they need to be for a safe trip. Pragmatics should be considered in all conversations with children, as they will imitate your language and actions.

Children need practice having conversations with you and other adults. Consider who does most of the talking in your classroom. Although it is important for you to talk to children about the classroom rules and procedures, it is equally important that you talk with children about things that interest them, how they feel, and what they are curious about. Children should talk with you and others as much, or more than, you talk to them.

Children's oral language, cognitive, and social development is more advanced depending on how often you have conversations with children and the quality of those conversations. The frequency and quality of your conversations with children affect the speed of their oral language, cognitive, and social development.[23]

Having high-quality conversations means asking thought-provoking questions, responding meaningfully to children's words, giving your full attention, and using a positive tone of voice.[24] Being intentional in the conversations you have with children and planning and encouraging conversations among the children in your classroom can build their language skills. You can be intentional about classroom conversations by:

- Engaging in multiturn conversations.
- Modeling language during conversations.
- Providing strategic scaffolding during conversations.

Engaging in Multiturn Conversations

Engaging children in multiturn conversations is an instructional strategy that develops children's oral language skills. **Multiturn conversations** involve back-and-forth turns during which you build on and connect with a child's statements, questions, and responses. These extended conversations are most productive when they take place one-on-one or in small groups. That way, each child gets multiple turns to practice talking as you build on what they say by adding new words and new ideas and by asking questions that encourage using language to express ideas.

23 Belsky et al., 2007; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network, 2000.
24 Test et al., 2010.

Have Concrete Language Goals

You should have concrete goals for children's language development during multiturn conversations based on children's current language skills. Some children may have little experience engaging in back-and-forth conversation, while others have a lot. Understanding where each child is helps you know what to focus on during multiturn conversations. Examples of language goals for preschool children include:

- The child is able to continue a conversation on a single topic.
- The child communicates in increasingly longer utterances.
- The child regularly initiates conversations with teachers and with peers.
- The child increasingly uses standard grammar and syntax.

Make Conversations a Priority

Although it may be challenging to have one-on-one conversations with each child every day, you have many opportunities, such as centers, transitions, routines, and mealtimes, throughout the preschool day to engage children in multiturn conversations. Consider looking back at Module 2 when you planned your classroom schedule to identify these times. Think about your classroom schedule and visualize what children are doing and how you might be able to engage in conversations with each child. For example, when children are at centers, consider setting up a schedule over a week to cycle through each center to engage each child in conversations. Work with classroom helpers, teacher assistants, and volunteers to prioritize back-and-forth talk with children.

Encourage Balance in Conversations

As the teacher, you can encourage balance in conversations. Here are some ways in which to do so:

- Pay attention to all child initiations, even if a child initiates nonverbally. An example of a nonverbal initiation is when one child moves closer to two children playing and talking at the blocks center.
- Ensure that children have ample opportunities to talk during the day so that they are talking even more than you.
- Monitor who is doing the talking in your classroom so that everyone participates in conversations as opposed to just a few children who are the most talkative.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage children to respond with more than one-word answers.

Read the scenario below for an example of engaging a child in a spontaneous multiturn conversation.

> The teacher is sitting outside with a small group of children right after playing with various balls on the playground. The teacher says, "Can you tell me about a type of game you like to play with a ball?" One child says, "I play catch!" The teacher says, "Tell me about playing catch." The child responds, "I play with my friend. He gots a baseball glove, and I have one. We throw the baseball." The teacher responds, "That sounds like fun! Your friend has a baseball glove, and you throw the baseball to each other. How often do you get to play catch with your friend?"

Children benefit from multiturn conversations when they are encouraged to expand their knowledge and thoughts and use more sophisticated vocabulary.[25] Many children enjoy talking about topics they are interested in and about activities in which they have participated. You can capitalize on this by **actively listening**, building on their statements, commenting on the ongoing activity and conversational topic, and asking open-ended questions about those topics. By actively listening, you can hear children elaborate their ideas on, feelings about, and reactions to a topic.[26]

25 Early et al., 2010; Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2003.
26 Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006; Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2012.

Review the examples of multiturn conversations in figures 1–4 to generate ideas of how to enhance your conversations with children in your classroom.

Figure 1: Actively Listening During Multiturn Conversations

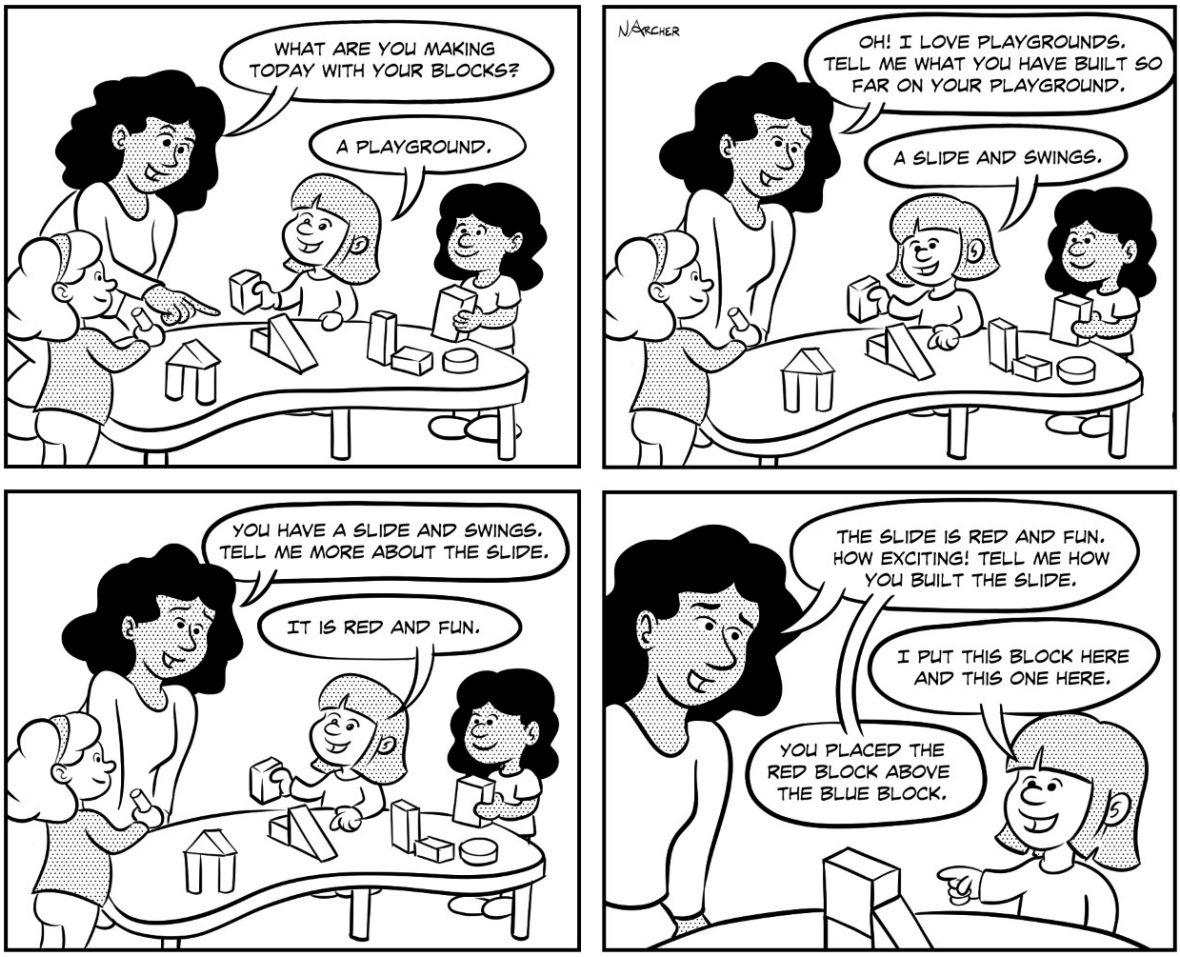


Figure 2: Building on Children's Statements During Multiturn Conversations

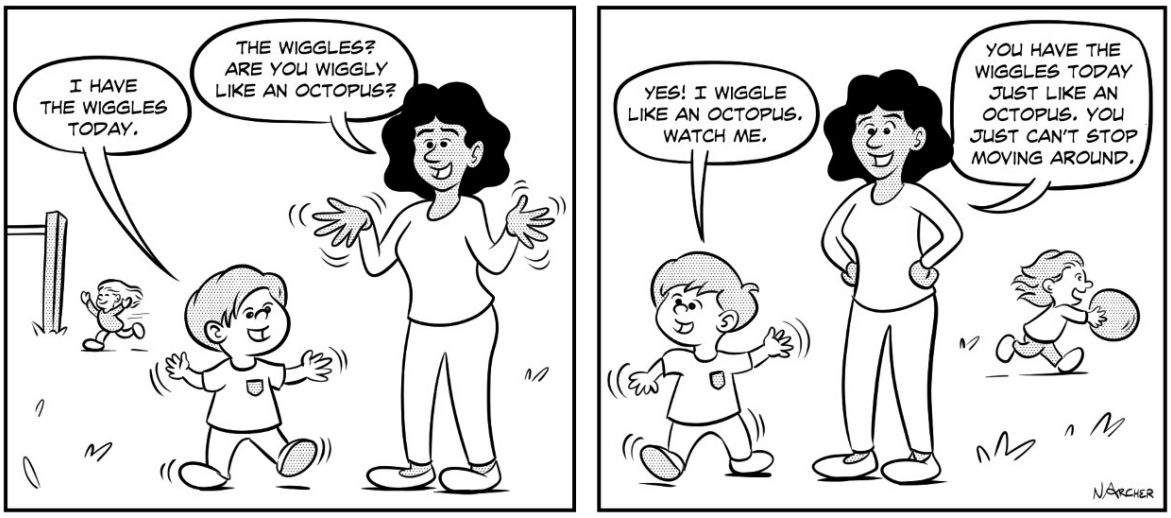


Figure 3: Commenting on Ongoing Activity/Conversational Topic During Multiturn Conversations

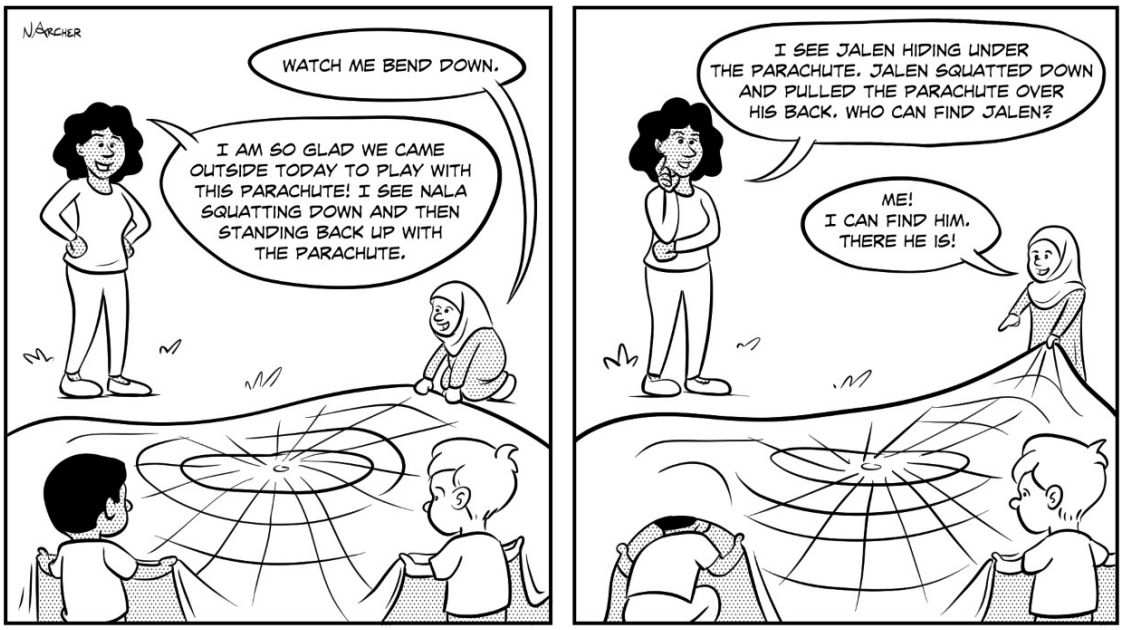
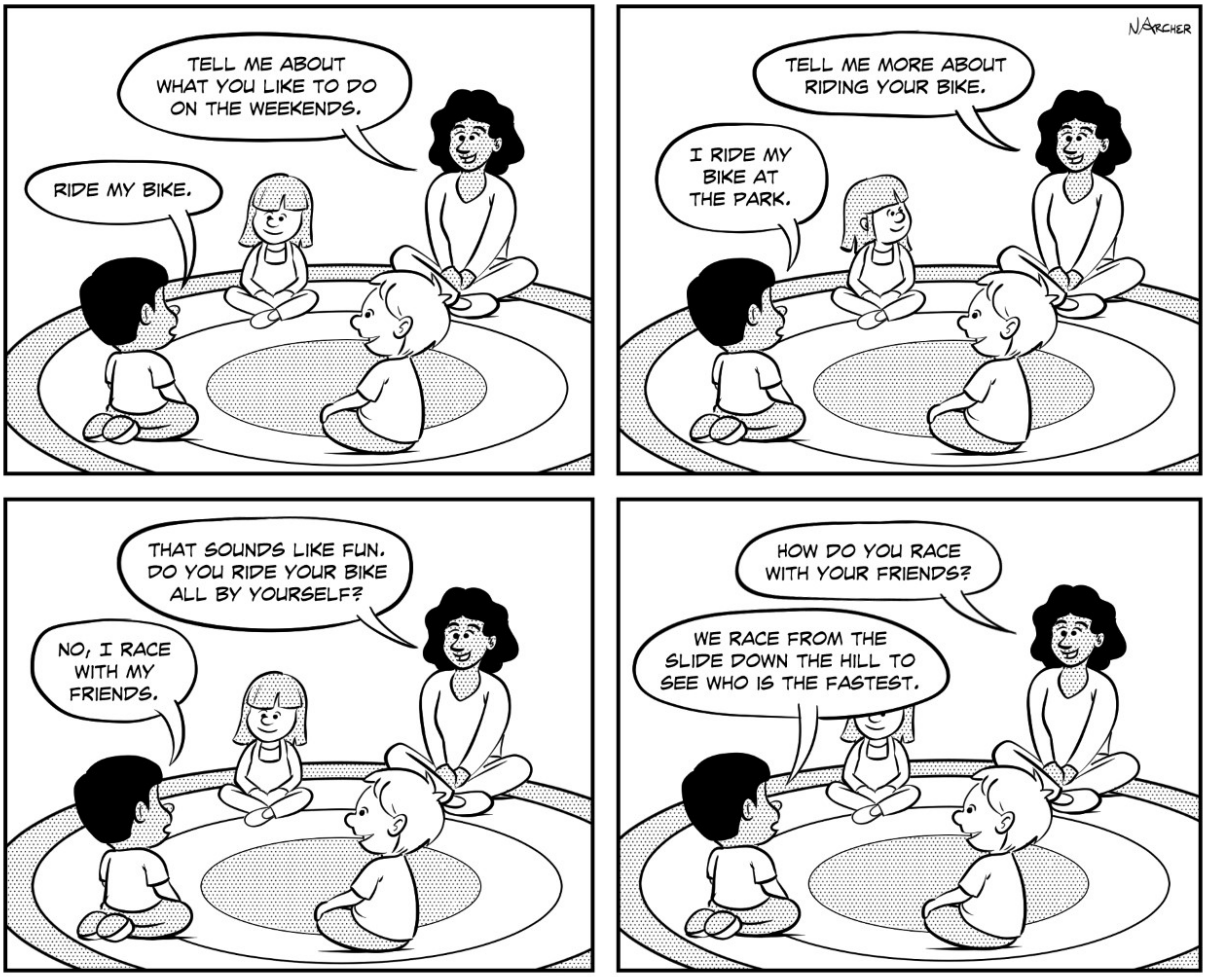


Figure 4: Asking Open-Ended Questions During Multiturn Conversations



Modeling Language During Conversations

Another important way that children learn about language is through hearing others talk and respond. **Modeling** is providing an example through your words and actions. Children's oral language develops as they listen to you model language that includes rich vocabulary, abstract words and concepts, and a variety of grammatical forms. Modeling is a strategy that requires teachers to reflect on their own conversation skills because children will imitate what adults say! Ways to model include responding to children in meaningful ways as well as demonstrating conversational skills and pragmatics. As with all skills, children in your classroom will have a range of oral language levels. Having and reflecting on intentional and frequent conversations with children will provide informal progress monitoring data about how each child's language skills are progressing. You can use this information to thoughtfully differentiate modeling during your next conversation.

Respond to Children

Responding to children's actions and words lets them know that what they do and say is important. During conversations with children, your responses model language, which also supports pragmatics. You can model how to have a conversation by:

- Listening closely and responding in a meaningful way to children's actions and words.
- Providing wait time so children are better able to process the comment or question, determine their response, and formulate a reply.
- Maintaining a topic of conversation across multiple turns for each speaker.

Robust Topics of Interest

Children are more likely to internalize your words and use them spontaneously in their own utterances when you engage them in conversations about robust topics of interest. For example, if a small group of children are building a house in the block area, you might engage in the play and ask "I wonder" questions about the structure, the tools they might use, who might live there, and so on. The more you talk with children in a responsive and encouraging way, the better developed their thinking, emotions, and literacy will be.

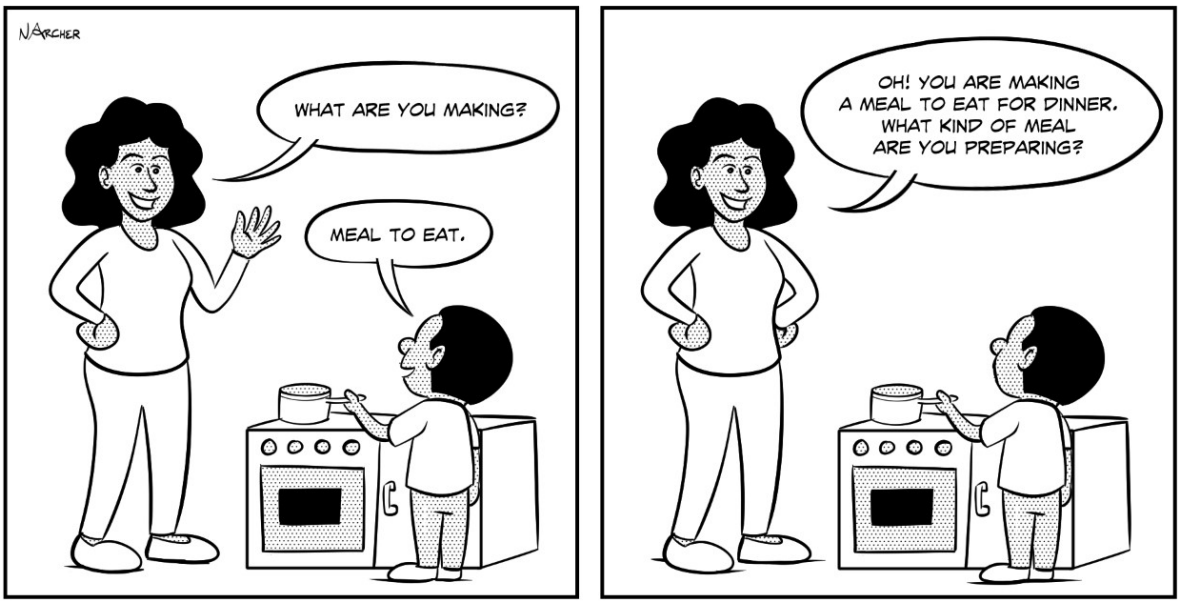
Model How to Engage in Conversation

As you talk with children, model how to engage in conversations by using good conversation skills and pragmatics. The examples below illustrate several ways a teacher engages in natural conversations with children, while modeling aspects of language. When talking with children, be sure to give them time to respond. Wait at least three seconds for children to reply before making an additional comment or asking another question. You may be surprised how long 3 seconds is! Additional wait time may be needed for English learner students and students who have language delays. The other important thing to note is that pragmatics is cultural.[27] For example, making eye contact may or may not be appropriate, depending on the child's culture.

Review figures 5–7 that show examples of how to model aspects of language throughout the day in different context.

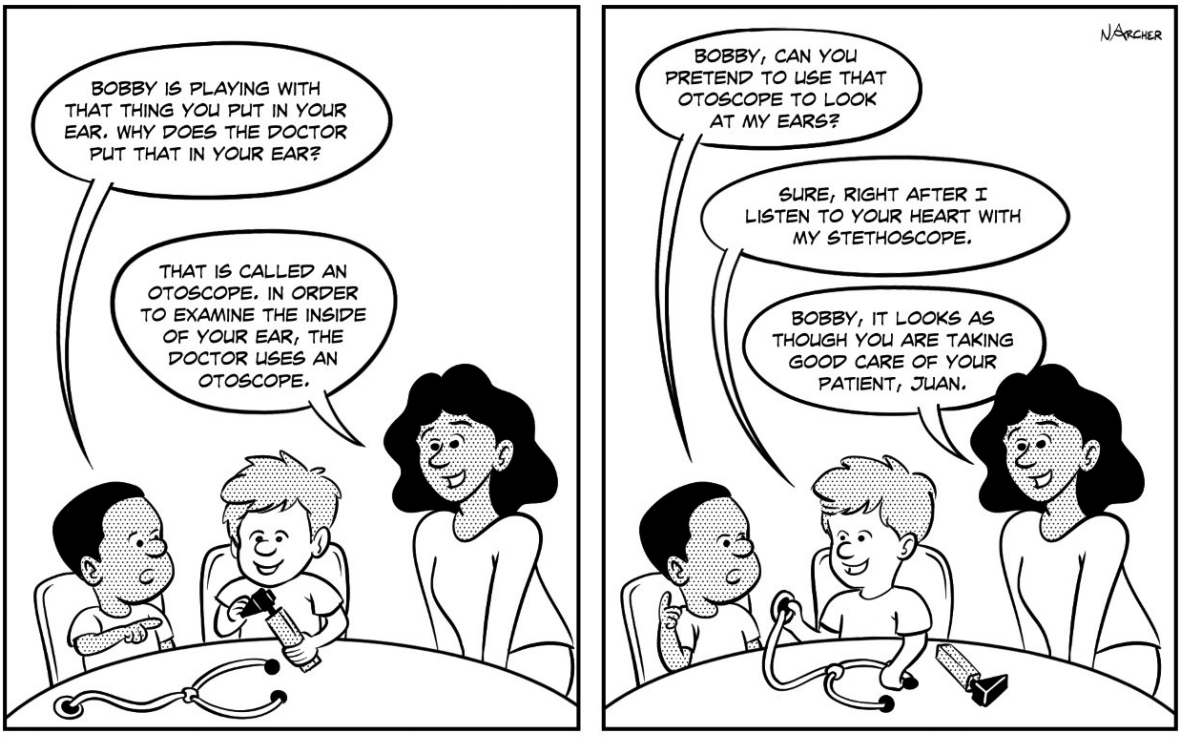
27 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.

Figure 5: Model Using Complete Sentences With Correct Syntax



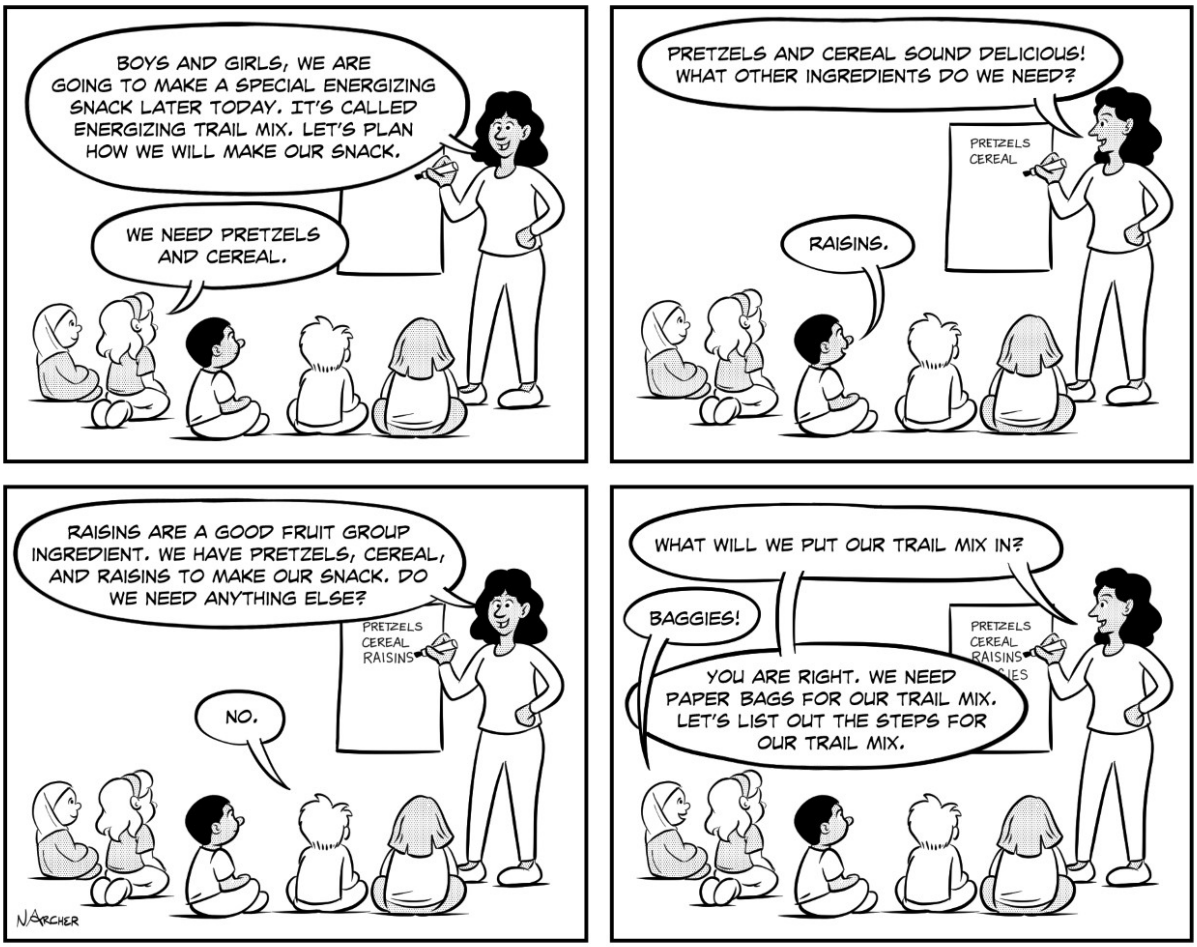
Notice how the teacher repeated what the child said using more sophisticated language to provide a model of a sentence using correct syntax. This modeling allowed the child to hear the response in a complete sentence using more complex language. Another language goal is for children to use words to express their ideas and to ask questions about things they do not understand. See figure 6 for an example of how to encourage this.

Figure 6: Model Using Words to Express Ideas and Explain New Concepts



You can model how to use words to answer questions about topics that are decontextualized, or not in the here-and-now. See figure 7 for an example of a teacher facilitating a discussion during circle time. The teacher and children are developing a plan to make a special nutritious snack later that day to eat during afternoon snack time.

Figure 7: Model Decontextualized Language



Provide Strategic Scaffolding During Conversations

Strategic scaffolding of language is providing an intentional response to children during a conversation. Try to meet children where they are linguistically and help them progress through conversations. Your responses allow children to expand their knowledge and thoughts about a topic. An example of strategic scaffolding is open-ended questions, which are questions that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. "Do you like carrots?" is not an open-ended question, but "Why are carrots your favorite vegetable?" is because it requires more than a one-word answer.

As you engage children in multiturn conversations, provide scaffolding to support more sophisticated vocabulary and sentence structure. You should understand the different scaffolding options so that you can try to match the right scaffolding technique with what a child says. The more you know about each child's current language skills, the more you can plan ahead about which types of scaffolds might work best for each child during your individual conversations. Although you cannot predict what a child might say, having multiple scaffolds in mind to choose from will help you select well and support the child's oral language development. Table 9 provides examples of language scaffolds and of the supportive intentions they help fulfill.

Table 9: Examples of Language Scaffolds

Scaffold	Example	Teacher's Intention
Restate the child's utterance.	**Child (while in the kitchen center):** "Her cook." **Teacher:** "Yes. She is cooking."	The teacher does not tell the child that he made a mistake or repeat the error. The teacher repeats the child's utterance, modeling correct syntax.
Expand ideas by elaborating on what the child said.	**Child:** "I'm standing on one foot." **Teacher:** "When you stand on one foot, you *balance*."	The teacher introduces or reinforces the meaning of *balance* by using the word in an expansion.
Model using words to describe the child's actions.	**Child:** "They are moving fast!" **Teacher:** "Ethan is sprinting toward the swings. He wants to have the first turn. Sophia skips behind him. She doesn't mind if Ethan goes first."	The teacher is exposing the child to *sprint* and *skip*. The teacher is also using the prepositions *toward* and *behind* to help the child locate the actions.
Ask open-ended questions on topics of interest to the child to maintain conversations.	**Child:** "Look at my picture!" **Teacher:** "Emma, what did you paint a picture of?" **Child:** "It's for my gymnastics. It has a balance beam and mats."	The teacher has given the child an opportunity to talk about and explain her artwork without changing the focus of the conversation. Following the child's lead and interest in the conversation allows for multiple turns.
Ask thought-provoking questions that encourage a child to think of and verbalize other solutions.	**Child:** "We all want to play on the see-saw!" **Teacher:** "You three friends have a problem. All of you want to play on the see-saw, but there are only two seats. Is there any way a third friend could also use the see-saw to help us learn something new?"	The teacher is attempting to have the children solve their own problem and include all the children. The teacher is also hoping the children might try to sit the third child in various places to see what happens and thus learn something new about balance.

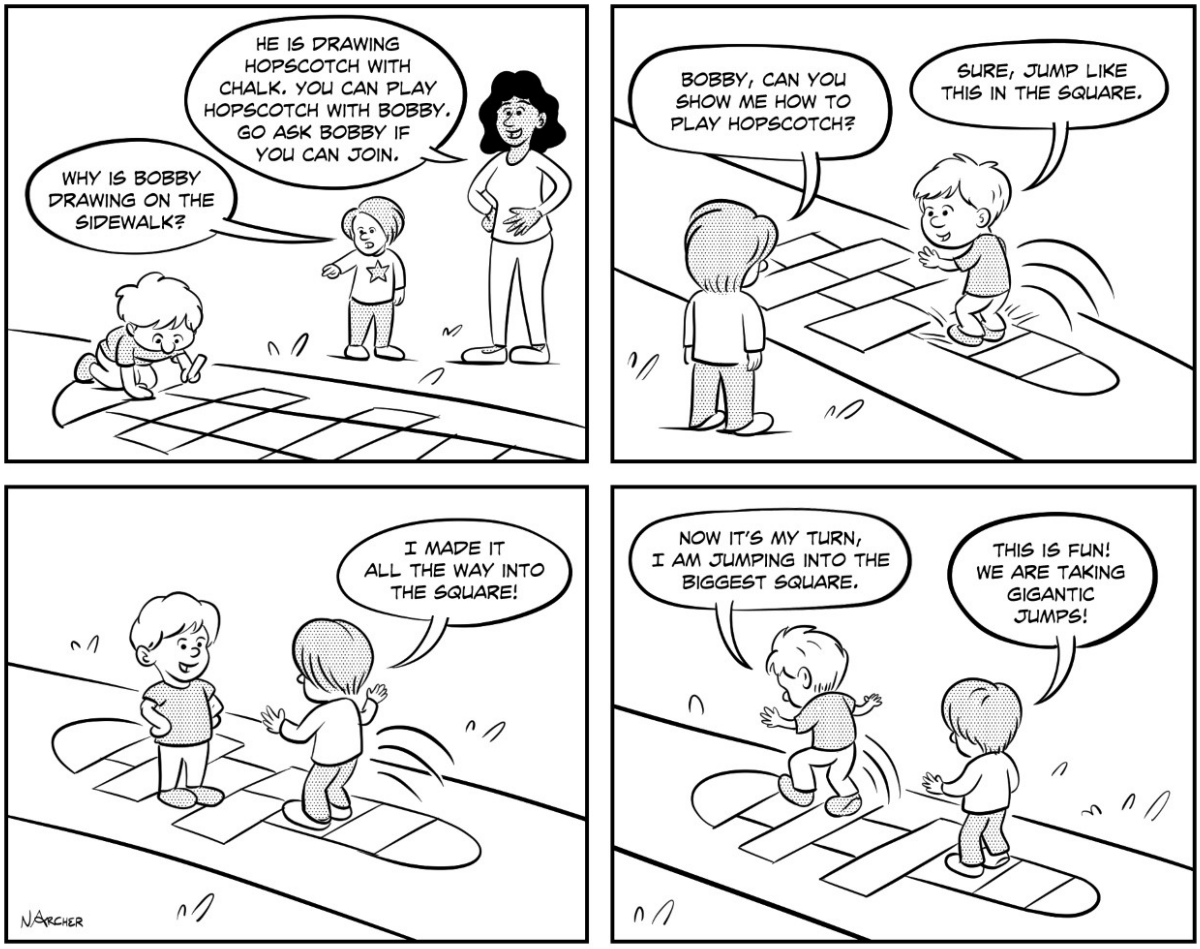
Supporting Peer-to-Peer Language Interactions

In addition to talking with children, you can encourage and support **peer-to-peer language** interactions. Peer-to-peer language interactions are conversations among children. For some children these interactions happen naturally—for example, during playtime—but other children may need teacher support. Children who are shy, are English learner students, or have language delays may be less likely to talk often with peers—they may need your support and encouragement! The goals for children engaging in peer-to-peer language interactions include:

- Providing ample opportunities for free play, guided play, and small-group interactions.
- Providing multiple opportunities and meaningful contexts to practice newly acquired language skills.
- Supporting strong social communication skills that are important for later school success.
- Sharing and learning information from each other.
- Fostering social skills that enable children to develop secure relationships with others.

See figure 8 for an example of a teacher supporting peer-to-peer language interactions while on the playground.

Figure 8: Supporting Peer-to-Peer Language Interactions



You can support peer-to-peer language interactions by encouraging conversations during mealtime and free play. Be attentive during these times so that you can recognize opportunities to encourage social interactions and include more children in ongoing conversations. Strategies to support peer-to-peer language interactions include:[28]

- Provide interesting and engaging props and play ideas.
- Encourage children to communicate and interact with each other, and model how to do so.
- Prompt children to ask other children for assistance.
- Assign roles or characters during pretend play.
- Provide opportunities for children to be "teachers."
- Comment and praise children's attempts at peer language interactions.
- Facilitate children's abilities to use words instead of actions when emotionally upset with other children.

28 Mashburn, Justice, Downer, & Pianta, 2009; Wilcox, Murphy, Bacon, & Thomas, 2001.

Below is a summary of how to make conversations a priority in your classroom.

Tips for Making Classroom Conversations a Priority
✓ Use every opportunity to engage children in conversation (centers, circle time, mealtime, transitions, and playground time).
✓ Talk with all children.
✓ Be mindful that some children are quieter than others and may need more encouragement and opportunities to talk.
✓ Comment on children's words and actions to create a gentle volley of language.
✓ Ask open-ended questions.
✓ Provide children time to respond.
✓ Stay engaged during conversations.
✓ Model language that includes rich vocabulary, abstract words and concepts, and a variety of grammatical forms.
✓ Reflect on conversations with children and use your reflections to differentiate modeling during your next conversation.
✓ Scaffold language using sophisticated vocabulary and sentence structure during conversations.
✓ Have concrete goals about how you want each child's language to develop.
✓ Encourage and facilitate peer-to-peer language interactions.

Activity 5

Video-Viewing Guide for Engaging in Multiturn Conversations

Directions: Watch **Video 3: Engaging in Multiturn Conversations**(https://youtu.be/EsYcG_wAhxg). Then answer the questions below.

Question	Answer
1. What did the teacher say to restate or expand on a child's utterance?	
2. How did the teacher encourage a child to say more about a topic?	
3. What open-ended questions did the teacher ask?	
4. How did the teacher facilitate peer-to-peer language interactions?	
5. What did you notice about the contexts, or settings, of the conversations?	
6. What are new settings in which you will try to engage children in multiturn conversations?	

Activity 6

Conversation Starters and Continuers

Directions: Review the example of a conversation starter and continuers and notice the context in which it takes place.

Context: Art Center	
Teacher Conversation Starter	**Teacher Conversation Continuers**
Do you like coloring or painting better?	Why do you like coloring/painting better than coloring/painting?
	Tell me about what you like to color/paint.
	Where would you hang your best picture that you colored/painted? Why?

Directions: In each table below, record a context, how you plan to start a conversation with a child in that context, and how you might continue the conversation. Share ideas with a colleague.

Context:	
Teacher Conversation Starter	**Teacher Conversation Continuers**

Context:	
Teacher Conversation Starter	**Teacher Conversation Continuers**

Directions: Read what the child says to initiate a conversation. Record how you might respond to engage in a multiturn conversation.

Child Says	**How will you continue the conversation?**
During outside play time a child says, "I run."	
During snack time a child asks, "Why do I have to eat my apple?"	
During outside play time a child says, "Watch me!"	
During story time a child says, "One time, I made dinner with my dad."	
At the art center a child says, "Look at my picture."	

Activity 7

Reflect, Plan, and Implement (Self-Study)

Directions: Before our next session, complete the DO, WATCH, READ activities below.

DO	• Video record yourself having a conversation with a child. If you do not have access to a video camera, you can use a tablet or smartphone, if available. If there are regulations about video recording children in your classroom, set up the device so only you are in the video or the child's back is to the device. • Bring an expository (informational) text to the next session.
WATCH	• The video of yourself engaging in a conversation with a child. Reflect on the questions in the first column below. Write your answers in the second column.

Question	Answer
1. What open-ended questions did you ask?	
2. How did you actively listen?	
3. How did you build on the child's comments?	
4. Did you provide wait time after asking a question?	
5. Did you model by using complete sentences and correct syntax?	
6. Which language scaffolds did you use?	

READ	• Self-Study Reading for Session 12 on pages 32–35. • Optional: One resource from the Additional Resources section on pages 43–45.
Questions and comments about the Self-Study Reading.	
Questions, comments, and one thing you learned about the additional resource reading.	

Session 12: Oral Language and Listening Comprehension, Considerations for English Learner Students and Students With Disabilities, and Additional Resources

Key Terms	Definition
decontextualized language	Language used to describe or explain past or future events or to talk about people, places, actions, and objects that are not visible in the moment.
discussion questions	Questions developed to support specific learning goals for interactive reading.
elaboration	Replacing some of the words in children's responses. It is a valuable strategy for modeling vocabulary.
expansion	Repeating a child's utterances with a few additional words and, often, slightly more advanced sentence structure
expository text	Factual text meant to inform, explain, or persuade.
follow-up questions	The ways in which a teacher responds to children's answers to initial questions during interactive reading.
highly concentrated target language model	Intentionally modeling many examples of the language structure in a single interaction.
interactive reading	Intentionally using concrete and abstract comments and questions to facilitate a discussion while reading quality literature.
language-rich environment	A classroom environment that intentionally and consistently engages children in language and literacy activities.
listening comprehension	The ability to understand spoken language. It is sometimes referred to as oral comprehension.
narrative text	A text structure that tells a story and usually includes a beginning, middle, and ending as well as story elements, referred to as story grammar (characters, setting, problem, and solution).
parallel talk	When the teacher describes a child's activities in the moment.
personal narrative	Experiences that happened in the past or are expected to happen in the future.
repetition	Repeating exactly what a child says.
self-talk	When the teacher describes his or her own activities in the moment.
text structure	The way text is organized.

Self-Study Reading

Listening Comprehension

This session focuses on another aspect of oral language: listening comprehension. **Listening comprehension**, sometimes referred to as oral comprehension, is the ability to understand spoken language. Listening comprehension allows us to understand conversations that we hear and engage in as well as understand stories (narrative) or informational (expository) text that is read aloud. A child who responds appropriately to a question is demonstrating listening comprehension.

One important example of good listening comprehension is when children listen to a story read out loud and can understand it, remember it, discuss it, and retell it using their own words. Children use their developing language capabilities, including their vocabulary and syntax skills practiced during conversations, to comprehend text read aloud. Listening comprehension develops over time. The same skills that support listening comprehension are used for reading comprehension once a child begins to read. So it is important to provide opportunities for children to practice understanding text read aloud to them by frequently reading books to them, talking about the books (using interactive reading), teaching about text structure, and extending listening comprehension opportunities.

Using Interactive Reading

Interactive reading involves intentionally using concrete and abstract comments and questions to facilitate a discussion while reading quality literature with children.[29] As you interact with children through the shared context of a book, have a conversation that links the story to children's experiences, builds their vocabulary knowledge, and enhances their language skills.

Module 3 introduced Dialogic Reading, which is a specific version of interactive reading designed for small-group interactions. This session introduces more general strategies for reading to any size group. As with Dialogic Reading, during any interactive reading, ensure that each child has multiple opportunities to engage in the conversation. Reading books more than once can extend conversations about the book and increase the opportunities for children to participate. Three steps can guide your plan for an interactive reading lesson: select a book, develop and ask discussion questions, and develop and ask follow-up questions.[30]

Step 1: Select a Book

The first step in interactive reading is to select a book that will meet your specific instructional goals related to listening comprehension. You might have more than one learning goal for interactive reading. You can support broad language-focused goals for children during interactive reading by:

- Engaging children in multiturn conversations about a book read aloud.
- Asking questions about text read aloud to prompt children to use an increasingly complex sentence structure.

29 Massey, 2013.
30 Shanahan et al., 2010.

You can support specific listening comprehension goals by:

- Asking children to identify specific story elements while they retell a story.
- Encouraging children to ask and answer appropriate questions about a story read aloud (for example, "What happened first in the story?", "What do you think will happen next?", "What was so funny about…?", and "How would you feel if…?").
- Prompting children to tell the main idea (or most important thing) or topic of a story or informational text read aloud.
- Encouraging use of existing knowledge to make connections with story details or informational text read aloud.
- Asking factual questions about an informational text read aloud to allow children to show their understanding.

If a learning goal is to help children show their understanding by answering factual questions about an informational text read aloud, select an informational (expository) text as opposed to a story (narrative). In addition, select a book that supports your theme and includes vocabulary from the network of words you created for the theme. And select books that are interesting and engaging for your children! See the Dialogic Reading section of Module 3 for more tips about selecting books.

Step 2: Develop and Ask Discussion Questions

After determining the learning goals and selecting a book, develop discussion questions. **Discussion questions** should support the learning goals. For example, if a learning goal is to connect details from a story to children's existing knowledge, develop questions that prompt children to think about their knowledge in relation to the text you read aloud:

- "How were snacks in the book similar to the snack we had this morning?"
- "How do you know that the children in the book chose a nutritious snack?"

Discussion questions can be asked before, during, and after you read the text aloud. For questions to be asked during reading, determine where in the text they will be asked. Make a planning document or use sticky notes to remind yourself where you will ask the questions to facilitate a smooth discussion. Examples of discussion questions to ask as you read the book include:

- "What is this?" (while pointing to an object in the book).
- "How is the sister helping her brother in the kitchen?"
- "What happened to the dinner the family made?"

Some examples of discussion questions to ask after reading the book include:

- "What do you think the family will do the next time they make that meal?"
- "Can you describe how to prepare your favorite meal?"

Step 3: Ask Follow-Up Questions

Follow-up questions are the ways in which you respond to children's answers to initial questions. Asking follow-up questions can lead children to think about and elaborate on their answers and the meaning of the text. Examples of follow-up questions include "Why do you think that happened?", "Do you agree with _____'s answer? Why or why not?", and "What happened in the story that makes you think that?"

Pay attention to how discussions play out in the classroom. What often happens is that the teacher asks a question, one child answers the question, the teacher evaluates the child's response, and the teacher asks another unrelated question and calls on a different child to respond. The goal is to move away from this surface-level, ask-answer-evaluate cycle. By preparing and asking questions and follow-up questions, a more collaborative discussion can occur that allows children to build their listening comprehension. Extending a topic focus encourages multiple children to engage in the discussion with you and with one another. This way, you are also supporting peer-to-peer language interactions. As with all the strategies discussed in this PLC, you should model and guide children in responding to questions while keeping them focused on the meaning of the text in order to enhance their listening comprehension.

Scaffolds for Interactive Reading Discussions

Think of your initial questions and prompts and your follow-up questions as a form of scaffolding. Some of these scaffolds are designed to provide a guiding structure for children, which can be helpful as they learn to respond to your questions in longer phrases and in complete sentences. See table 10 for examples of strategic scaffolding techniques that support children's use of complete sentences.

Table 10: Scaffolds for Eliciting Longer Responses

Scaffold Description	Scaffold Example
Provide a sentence stem and have the child repeat it as part of the response.	"What did the caterpillar eat? Start your response with, 'The caterpillar ate _____.'"
Provide key words to embed in the child's response. Prompt the child to repeat the sentence as part of the response.	"How would you *combine*, or put together, the food that the caterpillar ate to make a healthy lunch? Start your response with, 'To make a healthy lunch, I would *combine* _____.'"
Use target vocabulary words.	"What type of food did the caterpillar eat that was not good for him? Remember to use the word *unhealthy* in your example."

Although you can plan some follow-up questions in advance, many follow-up questions are determined by you in the moment, based on a child's response. While you listen to children respond, think purposefully about what they are saying to convey their thoughts. In doing so, you can plan how to respond in a way that helps move the children to the next level in their language development. One effective way to provide this kind of support is to expand or elaborate children's responses to provide appropriate and more sophisticated language models during interactive reading. To **expand** children's responses, embed their response in a sentence that has more words than they used. You can also **elaborate** children's responses by adding more information on the topic being discussed. Expanding and elaborating children's responses model more complex language features such as syntax and vocabulary. See table 11 for examples of how to expand and elaborate children's responses.

Table 11: Expand and Elaborate Children's Responses

EXPAND	
Child Says	**Teacher Response**
"Eat cake!"	"The caterpillar ate cake." The teacher used the child's words to model a more complete sentence structure and more complex syntax (past tense of "eat").
"He ate plums. He ate strawberries."	"He ate plums and was still hungry, so he ate strawberries." The teacher used the child's words and combined the sentences into a compound sentence using the conjunction *so*.
"It ate cheese and pears."	"Yes! The caterpillar ate yellow cheese and green pears." The teacher used the child's words in the expansion. The teacher modeled a use of more specific language (*caterpillar* rather than *it*) and the use of the conjunction *and*. She also added descriptive words (*yellow, green*).
ELABORATE	
Child Says	**Teacher Response**
"I like apples."	"I like to eat *honey crisp* apples because they taste delicious." As the teacher elaborated, she emphasized additional words to draw children's attention to the vocabulary. She also modeled a more complex sentence structure and syntax by using the conjunction because.
The caterpillar ate a lot of different food.	"He sure did. The caterpillar ate multiple kinds of fruit, such as apples, pears, plums, and strawberries." The teacher acknowledges the child's comment and uses this opportunity to add specific details about the category (*fruit*) of food consumed. She also modeled use of the more sophisticated term *multiple* by connecting it to the child's reference to different food.

Using Narrative and Expository Text Structure

Text structure is the way text is organized. Using different types of texts for read-alouds and for exploration in preschool helps children begin to learn about how different materials are organized, which supports children's later reading comprehension.[31] The two common text types are narrative texts (which tell a story) and expository texts (which provide factual information meant to inform, explain, or persuade). The different purposes of these types of texts mean there are differences in how the information is presented, in other words, how the text is structured. For example, a cookbook conveys information and is structured a certain way compared to the story structure of the "The Three Little Pigs."

Different text structures provide a framework for teachers to teach different concepts and vocabulary and to support specific skills. For example, a narrative text provides an opportunity to discuss things like characters and settings with children and expository texts provide a framework to explore real-world facts, discuss comparisons, and explore cause and effect. This section describes these two types of text structures in detail, why it is important to use both types of texts when working with young children, and how to use both types of texts to enhance oral language and listening comprehension.

When selecting narrative and expository texts to share with children, consider the concepts and words from the network of words tied to your instructional theme.

31 Duke & Pearson, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000; Pressley, 2000.

Narrative Text

Narrative text tells a story and usually includes a beginning, middle, and ending. Narrative text structure often includes story elements, referred to as story grammar, which include the characters, setting, problem, and solution. Examples of narrative text include stories, myths, legends, science fiction, and fables. Being able to recognize narrative text structure will allow children to visualize the setting and characters and even think about what might happen in the middle or at the end of the story when you begin to read a new narrative to them. When introducing narrative text structure, use texts with obvious story grammar elements to help children more quickly identify the elements. For example, in most versions of "The Three Little Pigs" the story grammar elements are obvious. With the right prompts from you, children can identify the pigs and the wolf as the characters, the pigs' houses as the setting, the wolf blowing down the pigs' houses as the problem, and the pigs all living in the strongest house made of brick as the solution.

Personal narratives are experiences that happened in the past or will happen in the future. For example, a child who describes going to the park over the weekend is providing a personal narrative. Children's descriptions of their experiences helps them understand narrative text that is read out loud to them. This is because, like personal narratives, narrative text typically includes many more descriptions of past and future events than occur when engaging in an oral conversation. So children sharing personal narratives help lay the foundation for understanding narrative text.

Decontextualized language is the language used to describe or explain past or future events or to talk about people, places, actions, and objects that are not visible in the moment.[32] For example, a child who describes visiting a grandparent last week is using decontextualized language. Plan frequent activities, such as show-and-tell, that provide opportunities for children to share personal narratives. In Session 10 you learned how decontextualized language activities can support children's use of more advanced syntax. Children combine their increasingly sophisticated language skills (including rich vocabulary and complex syntax) with their understanding of narrative structure to share elaborated personal narratives. Sharing personal narratives provides children opportunities to enhance their listening comprehension and oral language skills because it requires them to:

- Organize thoughts.
- Use language structure, such as linking words (first, then, after) and causal words (because, so that).
- Practice social skills.
- Think about story grammar (setting, characters, problem, solution).
- Use descriptive vocabulary to share details of the story with others.

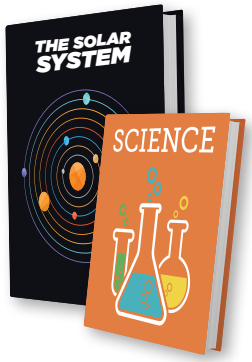
Table 12 includes activities to facilitate children's understanding of personal narratives and narratives read aloud.

32 Snow, 1991.

Table 12: Activities for Narratives to Enhance Listening Comprehension

Personal Narrative Activities	Read-Aloud Narrative Activities
Encourage children to tell stories about personal experiences such as going to the grocery store, taking a walk, or visiting a relative.	Use a puppet to ask questions that prompt prediction before and while you read a story out loud. "What do you think might happen?" and "Why do you think that?"
Have a class pet (stuffed animal) that goes home each weekend with a different child. The child takes care of the animal all weekend and orally shares the narrative about their adventures with peers on Monday.	Ask sequencing questions. "What happened first?", "What happened next?", and "What happened at the end?"
During an interaction where a child dictates a story that you write down, highlight the story grammar elements. Point out the characters, setting, problem, and solution.	Ask questions to link characteristics of characters to child experiences. "Why didn't Hannah want to eat the broccoli?" and "Do you feel the same or different? Why?"
Ask children to discuss what happened on a recent field trip or walk around the neighborhood. Emphasize the chronological sequence of events.	Ask cause and effect questions. "Why did the caterpillar have a stomachache?"
Use a visual aid such as a story map to help children recall a birthday memory and identify the details of the memory including the characters, setting, and main events.	Have children use pictured icons that represent story grammar elements to assist their retell of a story they have heard several times.

Expository Text



Expository text is factual text meant to inform, explain, or persuade. Examples of expository text are textbooks, newspapers, diaries, brochures, biographies, and autobiographies. Books about scientific inventions, various types of machines, or aspects of the natural world also are expository texts. Unlike narrative text that typically follows the text structure of story grammar, authors use a variety of text structures to organize ideas for expository text. These text structures include description, sequence, problem and solution, compare and contrast, and cause and effect. You can explain to young children the "way books work" when they are not stories in a way that supports comprehension of the book. For example, if a book was clearly organized in a chronology like planting seeds, waiting for them to grow, watering them, and ultimately harvesting crops, it would support comprehension to point out that the book is ordered that way and to use ordinal language to support that understanding. This does not have to include explicit terminology about text structure patterns. See table 13 for the purpose and questions to use for interactive book reading using expository text.

Table 13: Expository Text Structure

Expository Text Structure	Purpose	Questions to Use for Interactive Book Reading
Description	To explain or describe a topic by providing characteristics or examples.	What is being described? How is it described? What are the most important characteristics?
Sequence	To provide information about the order in which events, actions, or steps in a process occur.	What is the sequence of events? What are the steps, directions, or procedures? What happened first?
Problem and Solution	To state one or more problems and provide solutions to each one.	What is the problem? How will the problem be solved? What solutions have been offered or tried? What are the pros and cons of solutions? Why is the solution a bad or good one?
Compare and Contrast	To identify or describe what is similar (compare) or different (contrast) between two or more topics.	What two things do we learn about? How are those things alike or the same (compare)? How are those things different (contrast)?
Cause and Effect	To explain why or how something happened or happens (effect is what happened; cause is why it happened).	What special or important things happened? What made those things (name specific event) happen?

Scaffolds for Narrative and Expository Text Structure

As you engage children in discussions about texts with different text structures, use instructional scaffolds designed to match children's current language skills (table 14). As you listen to children talk about the text, plan how you will scaffold (respond) to move them to the next level of language development. Although your initial question format may typically start as open-ended, some children with less advanced language skills will benefit from more supportive questioning formats such as fill-in-the-blank and forced-choice options.

Table 14: Examples of Scaffolds for Narrative and Expository Text Structure

Text Structure	Scaffold Example
Story grammar	Use a graphic organizer to guide a discussion about a narrative text. As you determine the story grammar elements, write them on the graphic organizer. Framework for discussion: "Where did the story happen? Start your response with 'The story happened _____.'" "Who is the story about? Is this story about a caterpillar or a spider?" "What was the problem the caterpillar had? Start your response with 'The caterpillar's problem was _____.'" "The caterpillar's problem was that he had a stomachache. How did he solve his problem? Start your response with 'The caterpillar solved his problem by _____.'"
Sequencing	"What did the caterpillar eat first? Help finish my answer: 'First, the caterpillar ate _____.'" "What did the caterpillar eat next? Start your response with 'Next, the caterpillar ate _____.'" Refer to the book to remind children the order in which the caterpillar ate the food.
Cause and effect	"Why did the caterpillar have a stomachache? Did he have a stomachache because he was hungry or because he ate too much?"

Understanding text structure is linked to children's syntax and grammar development, as previously discussed. For example, key words such as *before, after, because*, and *during* are aspects of sentence structure that support comprehension of the features of text structure and of texts that include these structures. Learning about narrative and expository text structure will be new to children and potentially challenging to understand. Teach one text structure at a time, especially for expository text, to help children better understand and eventually differentiate among various text structures. Reading and discussing the text structure of the same book multiple times can support understanding of text structure.

Extending Listening Comprehension Opportunities

This section discusses ways to enhance listening comprehension by providing interactive language opportunities in your classroom. Interactive language opportunities include a combination of teacher-led instruction and peer interaction to enhance language skills. This PLC has described several examples of teacher-led instruction to promote oral language, including Dialogic Reading, explicit vocabulary instruction, and interactive reading. Table 15 provides other examples of interactive language activities to extend children's listening comprehension opportunities in your classroom. As with all activities included in this PLC, you should model the activities before asking children to engage in them.

Table 15: Examples of Listening Comprehension Extension Activities

Activity	Example
Story Circle	The teacher organizes children into small groups of four or five. She tells a brief example story to model the activity. She helps children take turns telling a story in response to a brief prompt. The teacher facilitates turn-taking and models listening attentively. She tells them a story she created that begins with "If I could fly like a butterfly, ..." The teacher says, "If I could fly like a butterfly, I would soar through the air and admire the bright colorful flowers. Then I would smell the freshly cut grass. After that, I would land on a little girl's shoulder while she rides her bike. Now, it's your turn. Tell me your story that begins 'If I could fly like a butterfly, ...'" The children then take turns telling their version of the story while the other children in the group listen. As an extension activity, after one child tells a story, the teacher asks another child to retell the story.
Story Retell	The teacher reads aloud *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* and then uses picture cards to prompt children to retell the story. The teacher uses prompts such as "What happened first?", "What happened next?", "What happened after that?", and "What happened at the end?" The teacher models how to look back at the text as a support when needed by saying, "Let's look back at the book to see what happened next."
Dramatic Play	The teacher reads aloud *Soup Day* (about a girl and her mother who buy ingredients at the grocery store and then follow several steps to make soup). At the dramatic play center the plastic vegetables and other types of food are set up in the kitchen area for children to act out the story. As needed, the teacher uses guided play interaction prompts to support children's use of story-relevant vocabulary and story grammar elements.
Turn and Talk	The teacher reads aloud *Mouse Shapes* and points out the circles and triangles in the book. She asks the children to turn to their partners and tell them what other circles and triangles they see around the classroom.
Writing	Following a class field trip to the fire station, the teacher prompts the children to describe their experiences during the trip. The teacher writes down what the children say on a piece of chart paper. She points to the words as she reads the shared writing out loud. An alternative to this is to have each child draw a picture of something they learned or their favorite part of their field trip to the fire station. Each child then writes (scribbles, labels, "writes" a sentence) about his or her drawing.

Considerations for English Learner Students and Students With Disabilities

This section describes general principles and strategies for English learner students and students with disabilities. Although some of the same strategies may benefit both groups of children, remember that most English learner students do not have language impairments. Their language limitations, including grammatical mistakes, are similar to what your expressive language features might be like if you were learning a new language!

Supports for language development in preschool classrooms that benefit all children, particularly English learner students and students with disabilities, include visual aids, gestures that convey meaning, simplified directions, and repeated information. Both English leaner students and students with disabilities may need more time to practice with teacher feedback, more explicit instruction, or another modified strategy. These children need abundant exposure to conversation with adults and peers and need to be included in all language-focused interactions. Facilitating peer interaction is particularly important for English learner students and students with disabilities who are timid in initiating conversations with peers. Reluctant speakers can even be assigned roles or characters for pretend play to give children a purpose for their communication.

English Learner Students

English learner students acquire spoken language the same way that native English speakers do: by being engaged in conversation. Because English learner students are acquiring a new language, the focus should be on the message rather than the conventions of language. For example, when putting on a jacket to go outside, an English learner student may say, "I put on my jackets." Instead of focusing on the unnecessary plural -s, the teacher might praise the child for completing a task and verbalizing with appropriate vocabulary. A positive response might be, "I'm so glad you put on your jacket and are ready for the playground!"

Supportive Environment

In order to facilitate conversations, you might pair talkative native English speakers with English learner students. Pairing or grouping children of mixed abilities allows both teachers and more advanced language users to model for and assist English learner students. This strategy also can be beneficial for students with disabilities.

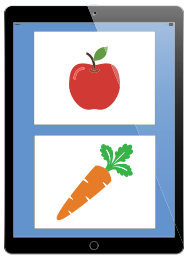
English learner students may be particularly challenged when trying to understand or use complex syntax in sentences. For those students you can verbally emphasize more complex language features and use the conversational scaffolds discussed throughout this module to support comprehension and production. As needed, simplify the message and repeat key vocabulary words to support comprehension.[33] Determine instructional goals for each child to differentiate instruction, in both individual and small-group settings, in order to meet each child's learning needs. Involving parents and other community members who speak the child's native language can make the child more comfortable with the teacher and in the classroom. Focused small-group interventions and explicit language instruction also have been identified as beneficial for English learner students.[34]

Students with Disabilities

Language development varies from child to child during the preschool and kindergarten years. Some children are initially slow to acquire language skills but then make more rapid gains once exposed to environments full of language learning opportunities. In contrast, a subset of children with moderate to severe language delays will not catch up without support from teachers and language development specialists. You should consult with these specialists if you are concerned about a child's language development. Most children with language impairments show weaknesses in vocabulary, syntax, and listening comprehension rather than isolated limitations, but every child with a language impairment may have a unique profile of skills.

Some children may demonstrate common delays in how clearly they can pronounce certain sounds, such as /f/ and /th/. For most children this will resolve over time as they become more fluent language learners. However, children's speech should be generally comprehensible by an unfamiliar adult by around age 4; a child with speech that is consistently difficult to understand may need specialized speech intervention.

Alternative Forms of Communication



Some instructional supports can benefit many children, including those with typical language development and those who may have an impairment and need supplemental specialized supports. Augmentative and alternative forms of communication can be appropriate and helpful for students with disabilities (as well as English learner students). Technology, including tablet applications, can provide an

33 Gutiérrez-Clellen, Simon-Cereijido, & Sweet, 2012.
34 Castro, Páez, Dickinson, & Frede, 2011.

opportunity for children to communicate, but review them to determine whether they meet children's needs. You should encourage children whose disabilities lead to delays or impairments in their verbal communication to communicate nonverbally and praise them for their efforts.[35]

Differentiated Materials

In order to provide many opportunities for students with disabilities to engage in conversations, provide a variety of materials throughout the classroom that accommodate each child's interests and abilities. The variety of materials allows for differentiated instruction to occur throughout the preschool day. Learning centers are particularly suited to differentiated instruction through diverse materials. During center time children have the freedom to follow their interests and practice skills, including oral language. For example, to retell a story at a listening comprehension center, one child may use three picture icons that represent the beginning, middle, and end of the story. Another child might use six picture icons that represent the beginning, middle, end, and details of the story. A third child might draw pictures to represent the story, while another child writes the story. Each of these children has differentiated the same learning center to meet his or her own learning goals.[36]

Focused Stimulation

One approach that may be useful for enhancing the oral language skills of students with disabilities is focused stimulation.[37] Three focused stimulation strategies—self-talk and parallel talk, repetitions, and highly concentrated target language models—can be used during any ongoing activity:

- **Self-talk** occurs when the teacher describes his or her own activities in the moment. For example, a teacher in the block center might say, "I am stacking the arch block on top of the two long blocks." **Parallel talk** occurs when the teacher describes a child's activities in the moment. For example, a teacher watching the children on the playground might say, "Billy is pushing Wendell on the swing." Both self-talk and parallel talk expose children to specific language structures, including pronouns, adjectives, and prepositions.

- **Repetitions** occur when the teacher repeats exactly what the child said. Repetitions allow children to connect their own language to their environment. An example of a repetition might occur after a child says, "Girl running." The teacher could say, "You're right! Girl running."

- Children with particular weaknesses in their expressive vocabulary or in their use of grammatical structures such as plurals, past tense verbs, possessive pronouns, or auxiliary verbs (for example, *is, are, will*) may benefit from highly concentrated target language models. A **highly concentrated target language model** is a focused stimulation technique in which adults intentionally model many examples of the language structure in a single interaction. For example, during a play session in the block area, the teacher may model correct plural use in sentences such as "I am stacking three blocks", "I have one curved block and you have two curved blocks", and "Miranda built a house with four doors." This dense presentation of targeted language can also be used to model new vocabulary words. This modeling technique can be paired with other scaffolds such as recasts. For example, if a child says, "She building," you can respond, "Yes, she is building."

35 Wilcox et al., 2001.
36 Justice & Vukelich, 2008.
37 Pullen & Justice, 2003.

Additional Resources

This section includes additional evidence-based instructional resources and articles to enhance oral language instruction and extend knowledge about effective early childhood instruction. The resources and articles in this section were free and readily available when this document was finalized.

Oral Language Instructional Resources

- *Voluntary Prekindergarten Learning Center Activities* developed by a team of teachers and researchers at the Florida Center for Reading Research: Language and Vocabulary
  https://fcrr.org/student-center-activities/pre-kindergarten
  - Language and Vocabulary/Sentence Structure/Snake Stories
    https://fcrr.org/sites/g/files/upcbnu2836/files/media/PDFs/student_center_activities/vpk_language_and_vocabulary/LV16-1_color.pdf
  - Language and Vocabulary/Sentence Structure/Sequence Trains
    https://fcrr.org/sites/g/files/upcbnu2836/files/media/PDFs/student_center_activities/vpk_language_and_vocabulary/LV20-1_color.pdf
- *Office of Early Learning at the Florida Department of Education* provides information and resources for early learning education.
  - *Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program Teacher Toolkit – Language and Vocabulary*
    http://www.flvpkonline.org/langVoc/index2.htm
- *Reading Rockets* (readingrockets.org) provides free, evidence-based resources and information about reading.
  - Oral Language Research
    Evidence-based articles and books on oral language.
    https://www.readingrockets.org/research/oral-language
- *American Speech and Hearing Association* (https://www.asha.org) provides free, evidence-based resources and information about making effective communication accessible and achievable.
  - Social Communication
    Information about how to help children understand and use rules for how we use language in different situations and with different people.
    https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/Social-Communication/
  - Typical Speech and Language Development
    Charts include when most children reach each speech and language milestone.
    https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/chart/

Related Articles

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Activity 8

Video-Viewing Guide for Interactive Reading

Directions: Watch **Video 4: Interactive Reading** (https://youtu.be/y2qXtXtS5OA). Then answer the questions below.

Question	Answer
1. Provide specific evidence of how the teacher prepares for interactive reading.	
2. What should teachers consider when planning an interactive read-aloud?	
3. What skill or concept does the teacher focus on during the interactive reading of the expository book? Why does this book work well for this skill?	
4. How does the teacher phrase questions or comments to introduce the concept of cause and effect? Provide an example.	
5. What does the teacher do after the interactive reading session with the children?	

Activity 9

Interactive Reading Lesson Plan for Expository Text Structure

Directions: Expository text is factual text meant to inform, explain, or persuade. Analyze the expository book you brought to today's session and develop an interactive reading lesson. You may use the same book and work in pairs. Use the guiding questions below and the Self-Study Reading on pages 33–40 as a resource.

Question	Notes
1. Review your expository text and determine a focus or learning goal of the lesson. Expository text structure includes: • Description • Sequence • Problem and Solution • Compare and Contrast • Cause and Effect Which text structure will you focus on for this lesson? Explain why.	
2. Determine discussion questions that support the focus or learning goal. Identify when you will ask each question (before, during, or after reading). Write each question on a sticky note and place it in the book at the appropriate place.	
3. Determine follow-up questions (for example, Why do you think that happened?). Follow-up questions are ways to respond to children's answers to initial questions. Although you can plan some follow-up questions, many are determined in the moment.	
4. Plan instructional scaffolds. Scaffolds are also often determined in the moment as you think purposefully about what children are saying. Examples of scaffolds include sentence stems and expanding and elaborating on a child's utterance.	

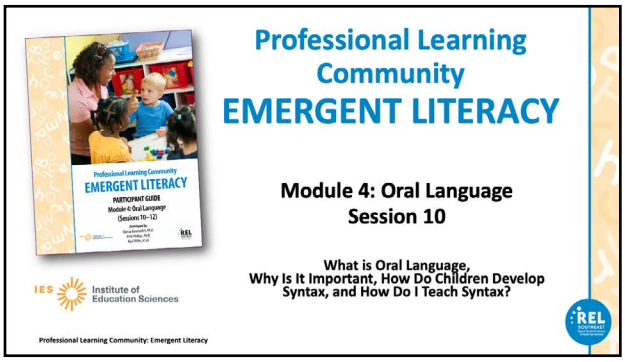
Activity 10

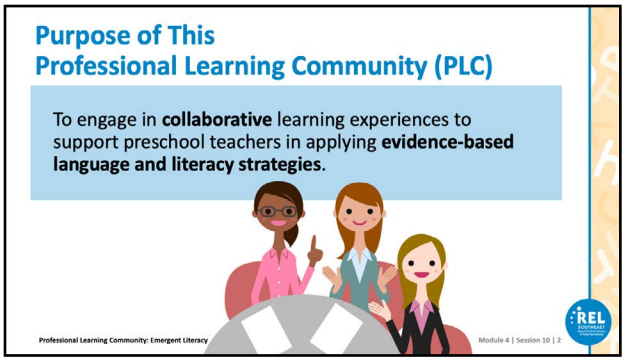
Video-Viewing Guide for Listening Comprehension (Story Circle)

Directions: Watch **Video 5: Listening Comprehension (Story Circle)** (https://youtu.be/l2sydGWZ_uE). Then answer the questions below.

Question	Answer
1. How did the teacher lead the instruction?	
2. How did the teacher scaffold the instruction when the children did not identify the setting of the story?	
3. How did the teacher facilitate and support peer-to-peer interaction?	
4. How did the teacher model and encourage attentive listening?	
5. What did the teacher do so the children knew she was listening to their stories?	

Slides


Professional Learning Community
EMERGENT LITERACY
Module 4: Oral Language
Session 10
What is Oral Language, Why Is It Important, How Do Children Develop Syntax, and How Do I Teach Syntax?
IES Institute of Education Sciences
REL
Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy


Purpose of This Professional Learning Community (PLC)
To engage in collaborative learning experiences to support preschool teachers in applying evidence-based language and literacy strategies.
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Norms for Our PLC
Cell phones on silent
Pay attention to self and others
Presume positive intentions
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REL

Modules and Sessions

Module	Topic	Session	Minutes
1	Print Knowledge	1	90
		2	90
		3	60
2	Phonological Awareness	4	90
		5	90
		6	60
3	Vocabulary	7	90
		8	90
		9	60
4	Oral Language	10	90
		11	90
		12	60

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Five-Step Process for PLC Sessions

STEP 1 **Debrief**

STEP 2 **Define and Discuss Session Goals and Content**

STEP 3 **Learn and Confirm**

STEP 4 **Collaborate and Practice**

STEP 5 **Reflect, Plan, and Implement**

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STEP 1 Debrief

Activity 12: **Reflect, Plan, and Implement (Self-Study)**

DO
- Implement a lesson plan to explicitly teach a word. Answer the reflection questions.

WATCH
- Video 5: Explicit Instruction for Specific Words and answer reflection questions.

READ
- Self-Study Reading for Session 10 located in the Participant Guide for Module 4: Oral Language (Sessions 10–12).

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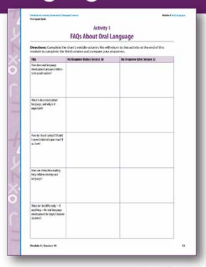
Activity 1: FAQs About Oral Language

- Record your responses in the middle column of the table.
- We will return to this activity at the end of the module to compare responses.



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STEP 2

Define and Discuss Session Goals and Content

- Understand oral language, when it develops, and why it is important to teach.
- Understand how children develop syntax.
- Understand and apply instructional strategies to teach syntax:
  - ✓Play-based language interactions with teacher scaffolding
  - ✓Brief language interactions
  - ✓Decontextualized language

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Turn and Talk

- What is oral language?
- When does oral language develop?
- Why is oral language important?

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Oral Language

- Is the system of words and word combinations used to communicate with others through speaking and listening.
- Develops from birth!
- Is used to express and comprehend knowledge, ideas, and feelings.

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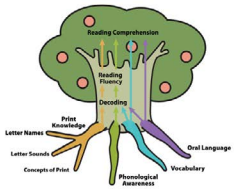
Language Is Knowledge

The Literacy Tree



The Simple View of Reading

$$D \times LC = RC$$

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Oral Language Is Included In State Standards

Look at our state's standards and notice how oral language is included as a key learning goal.

Highlight key words related to oral language.

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Syntax

- Rules used to put words together to make meaningful phrases and sentences.
- An element of grammar.
- Syntactic development
  - ✓Sounds
  - ✓Syllables
  - ✓Words
  - ✓Phrases
  - ✓Sentences

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How to Support Children's Syntax and Grammar Development

- Modeling is important but not enough.
- Talk **with** children and provide meaningful opportunities for them to talk as much as possible through
  - ✓Using play-based interactions with teacher scaffolding.
  - ✓Embedding brief language interactions.
  - ✓Encouraging decontextualized language.

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Using Play-Based Interactions with Teacher Scaffolding

- Free play and play-based interactions with teacher scaffolding should be a daily part of every preschool classroom.
- Scaffold children's language development as they direct their own play activities.

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Scaffolds for Play-Based Interactions

Recast

Repeating a child's utterance with varied syntax to model more correct language.

Child: "He jump."

*Teacher: "Yes. He jump**ed**."*

Expansion

Repeating a child's utterances with a few additional words and, often, slightly more advanced sentence structure.

C: "She paint."

T: "Yes. She is painting at the art center."

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Module 4 | Session 10 | 16

Scaffolds: Recasts and Expansions

- Refine the word or grammatical element immediately after the child says it.
- Use stress and intonation to highlight the words you want the child to focus on.
- Model language for children without correcting them.

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Module 4 | Session 10 | 17

How Would You Recast or Expand?

- I want grapes.
- I goed fast.
- I made this picture for you.
- I can't will go today.
- They wants to go.
- I made a tower.

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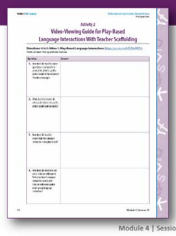
Module 4 | Session 10 | 18

STEP 3

Learn and Confirm

Activity 2: **Video-Viewing Guide for Play-Based Language Interactions with Teacher Scaffolding**



Video 1: Play-Based Language Interactions

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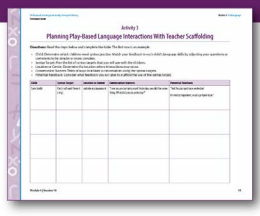
STEP 4

Collaborate and Practice

Activity 3: **Planning Play-Based Interactions with Teacher Scaffolding**



Use table 8 on pages 8–10.

- ✓ Child
- ✓ Syntax target
- ✓ Location or center
- ✓ Conversation starter
- ✓ Potential feedback

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Module 4 | Session 10 | 20

Embedding Brief Language Interactions

Conversations about experiences children have and discussions you facilitate about books read to children. These conversations are:

- ✓ Embedded throughout the day.
- ✓ Brief.
- ✓ Frequent.
- ✓ Used one-on-one or with larger groups.
- ✓ Opportunities to provide feedback.

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Module 4 | Session 10 | 21

Encouraging Decontextualized Language

- Language used to describe or explain past or future events or to talk about people, places, actions, and objects that are not visible in the moment.
  "This weekend I gave my brown furry dog a soapy bath. What did you do this weekend?"
- Modeling is not enough.
- Provide numerous opportunities for children to practice using precise language.

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Module 4 | Session 10 | 22

STEP 5 **Reflect, Plan, and Implement**

Activity 4: Reflect, Plan, and Implement (Self-Study)

DO
- Implement the play-based language interactions plan (Activity 3). Answer the reflection questions.

WATCH
- Video 2: Small-Group Explicit Instruction (Sequencing) and answer the reflection questions.

READ
- Self-Study Reading for Session 11 on pages 18–28.
- Optional: One resource from the Additional Resources section.

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Module 4 | Session 10 | 23

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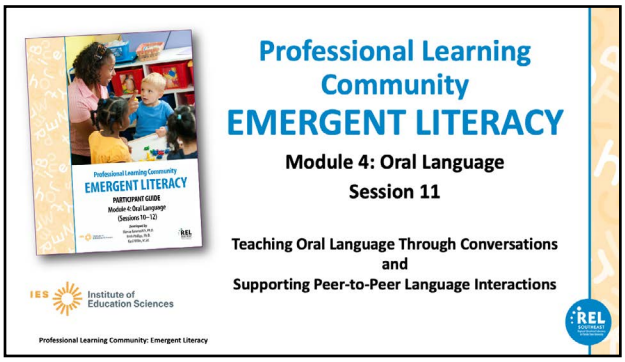
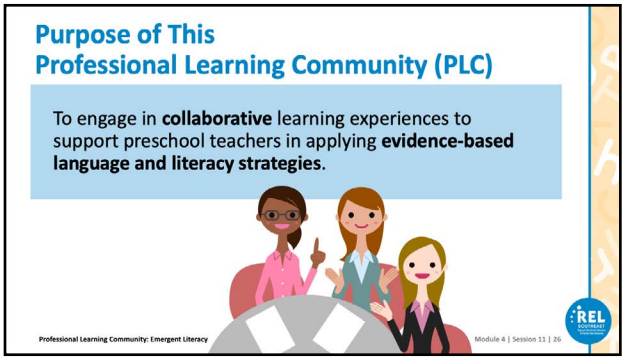
Module 4 | Session 10 | 24


Professional Learning Community
EMERGENT LITERACY
PARTICIPANT GUIDE
Module 4: Oral Language
(Sessions 10–12)
Professional Learning Community
EMERGENT LITERACY
Module 4: Oral Language
Session 11
Teaching Oral Language Through Conversations
and
Supporting Peer-to-Peer Language Interactions
IES Institute of Education Sciences
Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy


Purpose of This
Professional Learning Community (PLC)
To engage in collaborative learning experiences to support preschool teachers in applying evidence-based language and literacy strategies.
Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy
Module 4 | Session 11 | 26

Norms for Our PLC
Cell phones on silent
Pay attention to self and others
Presume positive intentions
Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy
Module 4 | Session 11 | 27

STEP 1

Debrief

Activity 4: Reflect, Plan, and Implement (Self-Study)

DO
- Implement the play-based language interactions plan (Activity 3). Answer the reflection questions.

WATCH
- Video 2: Small-Group Explicit Instruction (Sequencing)
  Answer the reflection questions.

READ
- Self-Study Reading for Session 11 on pages 18–28.
- Optional: One resource from the Additional Resources section.

Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy
Module 4 | Session 11 | 28

STEP 2

Define and Discuss Session Goals and Content

- Review main ideas from Session 10.
- Goals for Session 11 include understanding the importance of daily conversations and paying attention to pragmatics.
- Learn conversational strategies that will support oral language development:
  - ✓Engaging in multiturn conversations
  - ✓Modeling language during conversations
  - ✓Providing strategic scaffolding during conversations
- Learn how to support peer-to-peer language interactions.

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Module 4 | Session 11 | 29

Turn and Talk

- How do you encourage conversations in your classroom?
- Who does most of the talking in your classroom?

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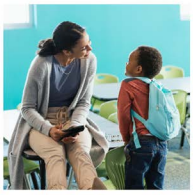
Module 4 | Session 11 | 30

Conversation

- When two or more people talk with each other to share ideas and information.
- Helps you build connections with children and learn about their interests.
- Encourages children's cognitive development, social skills, and emotional maturity.



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Pragmatics

- Is how language is used during daily conversations:
  - ✓What you say.
  - ✓How you say it.
  - ✓Nonverbal communication.
- Can be modeled throughout the day.

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Module 4| Session 11 | 32

High-Quality Conversations

- Ask thought-provoking questions.
- Respond meaningfully to children's words.
- Give your full attention to children.
- Talk often with children using a positive tone of voice.

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Module 4| Session 11 | 33

Multiturn Conversations

- An instructional strategy that involves back-and-forth turns where you build on and connect with a child's statements, questions, and responses.
- Most productive one-on-one or in small groups.
- Each child needs multiple turns to practice talking.

How to Implement Multiturn Conversations

- Make conversation a priority.
- Consider language goals.
- Listen actively by:
  - ✓Building on children's statements.
  - ✓Commenting on ongoing activities.
  - ✓Asking open-ended questions.

One-Minute Conversation

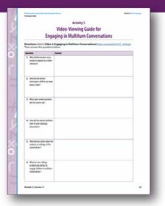
1. In pairs, have a one-minute conversation about a topic in which you both are interested.
2. Make a tally mark each time you say something.
3. After one minute, count your tally marks.
   - How many turns did you have?
   - What did you say and do to keep the conversation going on the same topic?

STEP 3

Learn and Confirm

Activity 5: **Video-Viewing Guide for Engaging in Multiturn Conversations**

Video 3: Engaging in Multiturn Conversations



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Module 4 | Session 11 | 37

Example of Conversation Starter and Continuers

During transition time…

STARTER: What is your favorite thing to do at home?

- Who does this activity with you?
- How do you do this activity?
- Why is this your favorite activity to do at home?

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Module 4| Session 11 | 38

Example of Conversation Starter and Continuers

During snack time…

STARTER: If you could make your whole house out of food, what food would you use?

- Why would you use that food?
- How would you build your house?
- Would your house be built out of healthy food? What makes it healthy (or not healthy)?

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STEP 4

Collaborate and Practice

Activity 6: Conversation Starters and Continuers

1. Review the example.
2. Create two examples for your classroom. Share your ideas with a shoulder partner.
3. In the last table, record how you would respond to what the child says to continue the conversation.

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Module 4 | Session 11 | 40

Modeling Language During Conversations

As children listen to you model language that includes rich vocabulary, abstract words and concepts, and a variety of grammatical forms, their oral language will develop.

Model conversational skills by:

- Listening closely and responding in a meaningful way to children's actions and words.
- Providing wait time so children are better able to process the comment or question, determine their response, and formulate a reply.
- Maintaining a topic of conversation across multiple turns for each speaker.

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Module 4 | Session 11 | 41

Strategic Scaffolding During Conversations

- **Strategic scaffolding of language** is providing an intentional response to a child during conversations.
- Know each child's current language skills so you can match the scaffold to what the child says. Examples of language scaffolds include
  - ✓ Restate the child's utterance.
  - ✓ Expand ideas by elaborating on what the child said.
  - ✓ Model using words to describe the child's actions.
  - ✓ Ask open-ended questions on topics of child interest to maintain conversations.
  - ✓ Ask thought-provoking questions that encourage the child to think of and verbalize other solutions.

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Module 4 | Session 11 | 42

Peer-to-Peer Language Interactions

- Provide ample opportunities for free play, guided play, and small-group interactions.
- Provide multiple opportunities and meaningful contexts to practice newly acquired language skills.
- Support strong social communication skills.
- Share with and learn information from each other.
- Foster social skills that enable children to develop secure relationships with others.

Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy

Module 4 | Session 11 | 43

STEP 5

Reflect, Plan, and Implement

Activity 7: **Reflect, Plan, and Implement (Self-Study)**

DO
- Video record yourself having a conversation with a child.
- Bring an expository (informational) text to next session.

WATCH
- The video of yourself and answer the reflection questions.

READ
- Self-Study Reading for Session 12 on pages 32–46.
- Optional: One resource from the Additional Resources section.

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Module 4 | Session 11 | 44

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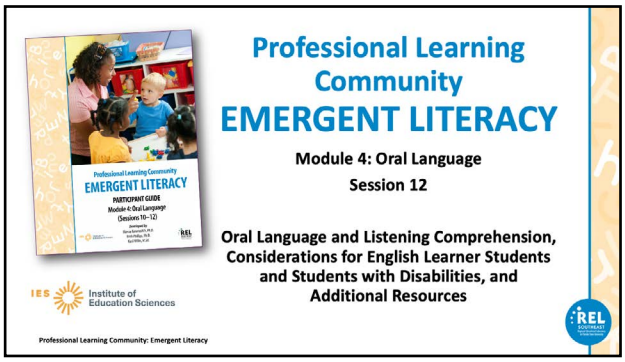
Module 4 | Session 11 | 45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Module 4: Oral Language
(Sessions 10–12)
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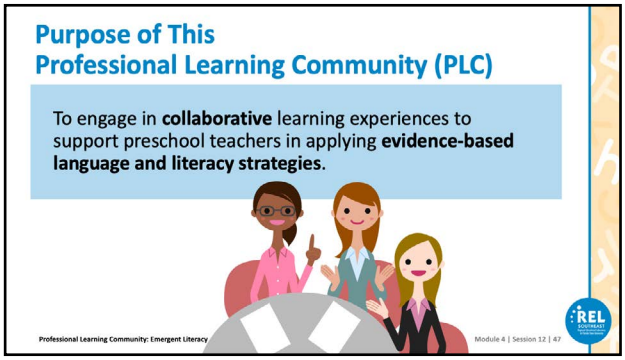
Professional Learning Community
EMERGENT LITERACY
Module 4: Oral Language
Session 12
Oral Language and Listening Comprehension, Considerations for English Learner Students and Students with Disabilities, and Additional Resources
Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy


Purpose of This Professional Learning Community (PLC)
To engage in collaborative learning experiences to support preschool teachers in applying evidence-based language and literacy strategies.
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Module 4 | Session 12 | 47

Norms for Our PLC
Cell phones on silent
Pay attention to self and others
Presume positive intentions
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Module 4 | Session 12 | 48

STEP 1

Debrief

Activity 7: **Reflect, Plan, and Implement (Self-Study)**

DO
- Video record yourself having a conversation with a child.
- Bring an expository (informational) text to next session.

WATCH
- The video of yourself and answer the reflection questions.

READ
- Self-Study Reading for Session 12 on pages 32–46.
- Optional: One resource from the Additional Resources section.

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Module 4 | Session 12 | 49

STEP 2

Define and Discuss Session Goals and Content

- Review main ideas from Sessions 10 and 11.

Goals for Session 12:
- Understand listening comprehension.
- Learn listening comprehension strategies:
  - ✓ Interactive reading
  - ✓ Teaching about text structure
  - ✓ Extending listening comprehension opportunities
- Learn about considerations for English learner students and students with disabilities.

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Module 4 | Session 12 | 50

Listening Comprehension

- Is the ability to understand spoken language.
- Sometimes referred to as oral comprehension.
- Allows us to understand conversations we hear and engage in.
- Allows us to understand what we read or what is read out loud.

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Module 4 | Session 12 | 51

Interactive Reading

- Intentional use of concrete and abstract comments and questions to facilitate a discussion while reading quality literature.
- Use with any group size.
- Provide multiple opportunities for children to engage in conversation.
- Read the same book more than once to extend the conversation and increase child participation.

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Module 4| Session 12 | 52

Three Steps for Interactive Reading

1. Select a book.
   - Consider instructional goals, theme, vocabulary from your network of words, and children's interests.
2. Develop and ask discussion questions.
   - Develop questions that support the learning goal.
   - Determine when to ask questions: before, during, or after reading.
3. Ask follow-up questions.
   - Respond to children by providing feedback and scaffolding.

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Module 4| Session 12 | 53

Scaffolds for Interactive Reading

- **Expand** a child's response by embedding the response in a sentence that has more words than the child used.
  - Child: "Sheep drive!"
  - Teacher: "The sheep drove the jeep. Where did they drive the jeep?"
- **Elaborate** a child's response by adding more information on the topic being discussed.
  - Child: "Sheep crying."
  - Teacher: "The sheep are crying because they are sad. Why do you think the sheep are sad?"

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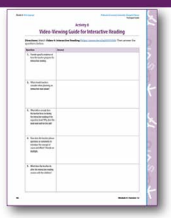
STEP 3

Learn and Confirm

Activity 8: Video-Viewing Guide for Interactive Reading

Video 4: Interactive Reading



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Module 4 | Session 12 | 55

Text Structure

- The way a text is organized.
- What is the text structure of a recipe?
- If we help children understand text structure, they will be better able to comprehend the text we read to them now and the text they read on their own when they are older.

Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy

Module 4| Session 12 | 56

Narrative Text Structure

- Tells a story and usually has a beginning, middle, and ending.
- Includes story elements, referred to as story grammar: characters, setting, problem, and solution.
  - Examples: stories , myths, legends, science fiction, fables.
  - **Personal narratives** are personal experiences that happened in the past or will happen in the future.
  - **Decontextualized language** is language used to describe or explain past or future events or to talk about people, places, actions, and objects that are not visible in the moment.

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Think-Pair-Share

- What is one activity that I currently do in my classroom when we read narratives that enhances listening comprehension?
- What is one activity from the table that I will try in my classroom?

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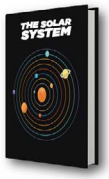
Module 4 | Session 12 | 58

Expository Text Structure

- Is factual text that is meant to inform, explain, or persuade.
  - Examples: textbooks, newspapers, diaries, brochures, biographies, autobiographies.
- Include a variety of text structures to organize expository text:
  - Description
  - Sequence
  - Problem and Solution
  - Compare and Contrast
  - Cause and Effect
- A single text can include multiple text structures.



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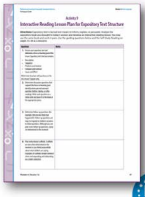
STEP 4

Collaborate and Practice

Activity 9: **Interactive Reading Lesson Plan for Expository Text**

1. Analyze the expository text you brought today. You may use the same book and work in pairs.
2. Plan for an interactive reading lesson using the guiding questions.
3. Use the Self-Study Reading on pages 33–40 as a resource.



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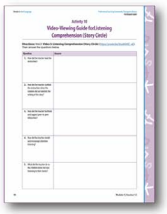
Activity 10: Video-Viewing Guide for Listening Comprehension (Story Circle)

Video 5: Listening Comprehension (Story Circle)



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Module 4 | Session 12 | 61

Considerations for Differentiating Instruction

- Supportive environment
- Alternative forms of communication
- Differentiated materials
- Focused stimulation strategies

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Revisit Questions From Session 10

Activity 1: FAQs About Oral Language

- Record your responses in the third column.
- How did your responses change from Session 10?

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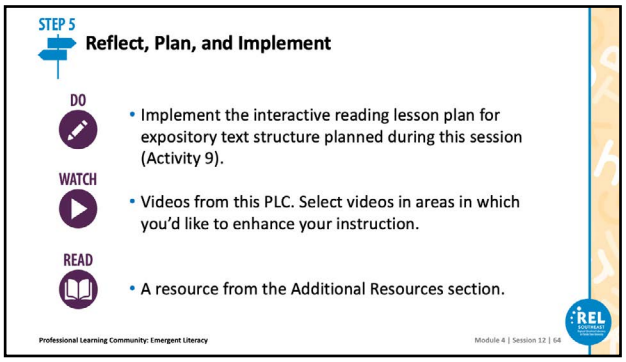
STEP 5
Reflect, Plan, and Implement
DO
• Implement the interactive reading lesson plan for expository text structure planned during this session (Activity 9).
WATCH
• Videos from this PLC. Select videos in areas in which you'd like to enhance your instruction.
READ
• A resource from the Additional Resources section.
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We have completed
Session 12
Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy
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Reproducible Materials

Oral Language: Key Instructional Practices

Oral Language

The system of words and word combinations used to communicate with others through speaking and listening.

Expressive language is language that is spoken while receptive language is language that is heard.

Play-Based Interactions with Teacher Scaffolding

Supporting children's language development during play.

Recast

Repeating a child's utterance with varied syntax to model language that is more correct.

Child: I jumped highest than you!

Teacher: You jumped higher than me!

Expand

Repeating a child's utterance with a few additional words with slightly more advanced sentence structure.

Child: The baby is crying.

Teacher: Maybe the baby is crying, because she is tired.

Embed Brief Language Interactions

Short opportunities for children to practice using sophisticated language features, such as conjunctions and adverbs, throughout the day.

Teacher: Watch me play the instrument. Am I playing softly or loudly? Now you play. How are you playing the instrument?

Encourage Decontextualized Language

Describing or explaining past or future events of things not visible at the moment.

Teacher: As you line up for the playground, tell me what you want to do on the playground.

Teacher: What is your favorite thing to do at home?

Strategically Scaffold During Conversations

Providing an intentional response to a child during conversations, using these strategies:

- **Restate Utterances** / **Child:** Her cook. / **Teacher:** Yes, she is cooking.
- **Expand Ideas by Elaborating** / Child: I'm standing on one foot. / **Teacher:** When you stand on one foot, you balance.
- **Model Using Words to Describe Actions** / Child: They are moving fast. / **Teacher:** Ethan is sprinting toward the swings.
- **Ask Open-Ended Questions** / Child: Look at my picture. / **Teacher:** What did you paint in your picture?
- **Ask Thought-Provoking Questions** / Child: We all want to see-saw. / **Teacher:** What are your ideas to solve this problem?

Interactive Reading

1. Select a book.
2. Develop discussion questions.
3. Ask follow-up questions.

Glossary

Active listening is paying close attention to what children are saying or expressing and using that information to respond accordingly. Active listening helps children feel heard and understood and helps facilitate more meaningful multiturn conversations.

Adapting is making changes to instruction that allow students equal access to the content being taught. Adaptations can include accommodations and modifications.

Conversation is when two or more people talk with each other to share ideas and information.

Decontextualized language is the language used to describe or explain past or future events or to talk about people, places, actions, and objects that are not visible in the moment.

Differentiated instruction is matching instruction to each child's different needs and abilities.

Discussion questions are questions developed to support specific learning goals for interactive reading.

Elaboration is replacing some of the words in children's responses. It is a valuable strategy for modeling vocabulary.

Expansion is repeating a child's utterances with a few additional words and, often, slightly more advanced sentence structure.

Expository text is factual text meant to inform, explain, or persuade.

Expressive language is language that is spoken.

Feedback is providing specific information about what children are saying or doing to help them learn or practice a new skill or concept. It can include encouragement, redirection, prompts and cues, breaking down the problem into smaller steps, using visuals, and modeling.

Follow-up questions are the ways in which a teacher responds to children's answers to initial questions during interactive reading.

Highly concentrated target language model is intentionally modeling many examples of the language structure in a single interaction.

Interactive reading is intentionally using concrete and abstract comments and questions to facilitate a discussion while reading quality literature.

Language interactions are conversations that could be about experiences children have, such as playing in the park, and discussions you facilitate about books that you read to children.

Language-rich environment is a classroom environment that intentionally and consistently engages children in language and literacy activities.

Listening comprehension is the ability to understand spoken language. It is sometimes referred to as oral comprehension.

Modeling is providing an example using words and actions. It is when teachers demonstrate how to do or say something.

Multiturn conversations are back-and-forth turns during which you build on and connect with a child's statements, questions, and responses.

Narrative text is a text structure that tells a story and usually includes a beginning, middle, and ending as well as story elements, referred to as story grammar (characters, setting, problem, and solution).

Oral language is the system of words and word combinations used to communicate with others through speaking and listening. We use oral language to express and comprehend knowledge, ideas, and feelings.

Parallel talk is when the teacher describes a child's activities in the moment.

Personal narratives are experiences that happened in the past or will happen in the future.

Peer-to-peer language interactions are conversations among children.

Play-based interactions with teacher scaffolding is supporting children's language development during play while allowing children to direct their own play activities.

Pragmatics is how language is used in social situations. It includes what you say, how you say it, and your nonverbal communication.

Recast is repeating a child's utterance with varied syntax to model more correct language.

Receptive language is language that is heard.

Repetition is repeating exactly what the child said.

Self-talk is when the teacher describes his or her own activities in the moment.

Simple View of Reading states that reading comprehension *(RC)* equals the product of decoding *(D)* and language comprehension *(LC)*, or $D \times LC = RC$.

Strategic scaffolding of language is providing an intentional response to a child during a conversation.

Syntactic development is how children gradually develop expressive oral language that follows the rules used to put words together to make phrases and sentences (syntax).

Syntax refers to the rules used to put words together to make phrases and sentences.

Text structure is the way text is organized.

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