ENGLISH K–6

Support Materials for Students with Special Education Needs 2011

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Speaking and listening

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Support Materials for Students with Special Education Needs

Speaking and listening

Difficulties students may experience in the speaking and listening strand

Students may experience varying degrees of difficulty in the comprehension and expression of oral language, that is speaking and listening. For the purpose of these support materials ‘speaking’ includes expressive language and speech production while ‘listening’ refers to the comprehension of oral language (receptive language). Some students may experience difficulty applying their ‘speaking’ and ‘listening’ skills for effective communication in social situations, ie interaction skills.

**Note:** Some students with special education needs may communicate through a variety of verbal or nonverbal communication forms/systems (Communication p 9).

Oral language is critical to learning and provides the basis for reading and writing development (Kamhi & Cats 2005). Students with oral language difficulties are likely to experience difficulties with comprehending and producing written language. Conversely, students who have difficulties with reading and writing often have difficulties with underlying oral language skills. These may be related to the phonological elements of language, vocabulary development and/or the use of sentence structure.

**Note:** Students who have difficulty comprehending or expressing oral language, or who experience persisting speech difficulties past the age of 7 years, should be referred to a speech pathologist/therapist.
Comprehension of oral language

The comprehension of oral language involves making sense of what is heard through an understanding of words, sentence structure and grammar, and intent or implied meaning. To comprehend another person’s intended meaning or intent requires an understanding of verbal and nonverbal cues (eg facial expressions, tone of voice and gesture) and context.

Students who experience difficulties comprehending oral language may have difficulties with:

- listening behaviours (sitting still, looking, waiting)
- selectively attending to information amidst competing noise or stimuli
- processing information at speed (with fluency)
- relating new information with existing knowledge to make meaning
- remembering information (auditory memory)
- understanding words and multiple meanings (vocabulary)
- comprehending complex or large amounts of information
- understanding abstract language, concepts or ideas
- gaining meaning from additional cues, ie context, facial expression, body language, gestures or tone
- sustaining efforts to understand.

Note: For students who experience difficulties comprehending oral language, it is important to rule out hearing impairment.

Expressive language

Expressive language involves the ability to construct and convey meaning relevant to a particular context to achieve a specific purpose, using appropriate word order.

Students who experience difficulties with expressive language may have difficulties with:

- selecting appropriate words to convey intended meaning (vocabulary)
- sequencing information/ideas
- using grammar/morphology accurately to indicate tense, number, reference or position
- combining sentences to give additional related information (compound and complex sentences)
- constructing complex sentences to convey a variety of relationships, eg time, place, manner, reason and condition
- using additional verbal (eg emphasis, intonation) and nonverbal (eg gesture and facial expression) cues to enhance meaning.
Speech production

Speech production refers to how students physically make sounds to speak. Learning to speak is a developmental skill with some sounds acquired earlier than others. Being able to speak clearly is important for effective communication (i.e., being understood by others).

Students may experience difficulties with speech for a variety of reasons, such as:
- inability to hear and discriminate between sounds (auditory discrimination)
- inability to imitate sounds
- difficulty organising, planning and sequencing sounds for speech
- difficulty producing more complex movements required for specific sounds (e.g., s, r, l, and th)
- physical issues (e.g., differences in the oral structures or weakness of the muscles used for speech, such as cleft palate).

Interaction skills

In addition to comprehension and oral language skills, effective communication involves the application of interaction skills that reflect the social conventions of the communication group.

Students who have core difficulties interacting with others can be assisted to develop acceptable interaction skills through explicit instruction and regular opportunities to interact with peers who may or may not have social skills difficulties.

Interaction skills include:
- commencing an interaction
- maintaining an interaction
- completing an interaction.

Commencing an interaction involves:
- knowing how and when to start an interaction
- using appropriate nonverbal behaviours
- recognising appropriate topics to introduce
- indicating availability and/or interest to continue the interaction.
Maintaining an interaction involves:
- listening and following someone else’s lead or topic and responding to what they say
- allowing others to contribute to the interaction and providing time for a response
- responding with sufficient fluency to keep the conversation going
- introducing new topics in an appropriate manner
- interrupting when appropriate to ask for assistance, further information or clarification
- using language and nonverbal behaviours in keeping with the social context
- understanding the intent of communication (i.e., literal and intended meanings) by interpreting verbal and nonverbal cues and context
- reading nonverbal cues from others that indicate interest, lack of interest, emphasis or a desire to speak.

Completing an interaction involves:
- recognising a partner’s desire/intent to end an interaction
- knowing how and when to finish
- responding to a partner’s closing statements.
What evidence of learning is required?

Given their critical role in developing students’ speaking and listening and consequently reading and writing, it is important for teachers to assess and carefully monitor the following aspects of oral language (as appropriate to a student’s stage of learning).

### Aspects of oral language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension of oral language</td>
<td>The comprehension of oral language has an impact on a student’s ability to express themselves and respond to others. Students need to develop an understanding of language prior to being able to use it. Difficulties with the comprehension of oral language lead to delayed expressive language (Reichle, Beukelman &amp; Light 2002). The comprehension of oral language is a strong predictor of later reading comprehension (Wise et al), with oral comprehension providing the basis for the development of reading comprehension. This relates both to an understanding of grammar/morphology and vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Vocabulary knowledge relates strongly to reading comprehension and overall academic success (Baumann, Kame`enui &amp; Ash 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of oral language</td>
<td>Expressive language enables students to communicate their wants, needs, thoughts and ideas and to relate socially to others. Expressive language is related to reading achievement (Wise, Sevcik, Morris, Lovett &amp; Wolf 2007; Cooper, Roth, Speece &amp; Schatschneider 2002) and has strong links to writing. Language structures and vocabulary develop initially through oral language use and are later incorporated into reading and writing. Difficulties students experience with grammar in their oral language will be reflected in their written language. It is important to note that expressive language difficulties can indicate underlying difficulties with the comprehension of oral language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Aspects of oral language (cont)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Production of speech sounds         | Students who have difficulty expressing themselves with clarity often become reluctant speakers. This further impacts negatively on oral language development.  
Students who continue to have difficulty producing speech sounds when they commence learning to read and write are likely to have reading and spelling difficulties (Lewis et al 2000a, 2000b and 2002). It should be noted that the more unintelligible and unusual the speech sound production problem, the more likely it is that it will impact negatively on reading and writing development (Dodd 2005). |
| Interaction skills                  | Effective participation in interactions requires students to relate to and understand others. Time spent interacting with others positively influences oral language development. |
| Understanding and use of nonverbal communication | Nonverbal communication accounts for a large proportion of the message in interactions (Mehrabian 2007; Shalleck-Klein 1998). Students need to be able to understand nonverbal cues to comprehend what others are intending to communicate, and learn to use non-verbal cues to strengthen and/or add meaning to expressive language. |

For students experiencing difficulty in speaking and listening, teachers should undertake diagnostic assessment. This enables the teacher to identify the specific areas of difficulty and to determine appropriate intervention strategies.

Following are examples of what may be observed by a teacher and the contributing knowledge, skills and strategies which may require assessment/further investigation.
Investigating oral language skills/strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What may be observed</th>
<th>Contributing skills/strategies which may require assessment/further investigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension of oral language</strong>&lt;br&gt;<code>The student:</code>&lt;br&gt;- cannot repeat sentences accurately&lt;br&gt;- has difficulty answering basic questions related to what they are doing, recent experiences or oral texts&lt;br&gt;- gives unrelated answers&lt;br&gt;- takes a long time to respond to what others say&lt;br&gt;- has difficulty following instructions of increasing length&lt;br&gt;- does one part of a multi-step instruction&lt;br&gt;- misses key information in instructions&lt;br&gt;- has a blank look when given instructions&lt;br&gt;- waits for others to respond&lt;br&gt;- is restless when listening for extended periods of time&lt;br&gt;- seems confused when outside routines</td>
<td><strong>Note:</strong> Rule out hearing impairment.&lt;br&gt;- auditory memory&lt;br&gt;- understanding of sentence structure and grammar&lt;br&gt;- receptive vocabulary (e.g., understanding of nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.)&lt;br&gt;- background knowledge related to topic&lt;br&gt;- auditory processing time&lt;br&gt;- using contextual and semantic information to infer meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expression of oral language</strong>&lt;br&gt;- uses incomplete sentences or incorrect word order&lt;br&gt;- uses short, simple sentences&lt;br&gt;- demonstrates problems with joining phrases or sentences together</td>
<td><strong>Vocabulary</strong>&lt;br&gt;- uses made up words&lt;br&gt;- uses lots of simple generic words, e.g., ‘good’, ‘big’, ‘stuff’, ‘sort of’, ‘thing’&lt;br&gt;- struggles to find the right word&lt;br&gt;- uses limited or repetitive vocabulary&lt;br&gt;- has difficulty using new words&lt;br&gt;- understanding of the concept of a sentence&lt;br&gt;- understanding of sentence structure (syntax)&lt;br&gt;- ability to combine sentences to give more information&lt;br&gt;- ability to use more complex sentence structures&lt;br&gt;- understanding and retention of vocabulary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Investigating oral language skills/strategies (cont)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What may be observed</th>
<th>Contributing skills/strategies which may require assessment/further investigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong>&lt;br&gt; <em>The student:</em>&lt;br&gt;• uses incorrect word endings or omits word endings (eg. <em>catched</em>, <em>two childs</em>)&lt;br&gt;• has difficulty with or uses incorrect tense&lt;br&gt;• uses pronouns incorrectly&lt;ref scour:breakblock_common_text&gt;&lt;/ref&gt;</td>
<td>• understanding and use of:&lt;br&gt;– morphology (word endings to indicate tense, for example <em>–ed, –ing</em> and plurals, eg <em>–es, –s</em>)&lt;br&gt;– irregular word forms&lt;br&gt;– helper verbs (for example <em>is, are, was</em>)&lt;br&gt;– pronouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction skills</strong>&lt;br&gt;• does not take turns&lt;br&gt;• corrects other people’s language&lt;br&gt;• starts interactions at inappropriate times&lt;br&gt;• interrupts interactions inappropriately&lt;br&gt;• changes topic or leaves interactions unexpectedly&lt;br&gt;• uses language and communication style inappropriate to the audience or situation, eg uses overly formal language for the context&lt;br&gt;• has difficulty working in groups&lt;br&gt;• has difficulty recounting what has happened, eg misses key information, tells information out of sequence&lt;br&gt;• has difficulty talking about anticipated events in a coherent manner&lt;br&gt;• does not understand sarcasm/idioms</td>
<td>• understanding and use of appropriate social behaviours/conventions&lt;br&gt;• skills to commence, maintain and complete interactions in a range of contexts&lt;br&gt;• cooperative learning skills (eg perspective taking, sharing, waiting, negotiating, problem solving)&lt;br&gt;• identifying and using appropriate language for the context (including audience)&lt;br&gt;• giving sufficient or necessary information depending on context&lt;br&gt;• understanding the meaning and use of nonverbal behaviours&lt;br&gt;• use of contextual clues to assist in gaining meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How will this evidence be gathered?

Oral language can be difficult to capture and assess because of its transient nature. Although it may be apparent that a student is having difficulty, it can be hard for teachers to pinpoint the nature of the difficulty.

Examples of assessment strategies for particular aspects of speaking and listening are listed below. These may involve assessment strategies used for diagnostic purposes. Most of the assessment strategies below can be planned so that they take place as part of teaching and learning experiences.

Assessing aspects of oral language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What am I assessing?</th>
<th>How will this evidence be gathered?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>The teacher:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• understanding and use of language and gestures for social purposes</td>
<td>• observes a student during an interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• uses the Interaction skills checklist (Form 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The student:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• demonstrates a familiar procedure and/or retells a story using gestures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension of oral language</strong></td>
<td><strong>The student:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• understanding of clauses/sentences</td>
<td>• identifies pictures representing sentence or clause meaning from a selection of pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The teacher:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• comprehension of questions</td>
<td>• analyses student responses to question forms and questions of increasing complexity (p 25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• comprehension of instructions of increasing length and complexity</td>
<td>• analyses student responses to instructions of increasing length and complexity (p 28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• understanding of vocabulary</td>
<td><strong>The student:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• comprehension of plural forms</td>
<td>• draws based on teacher instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– regular</td>
<td>• identifies objects or pictures that are named or described representing:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– irregular</td>
<td>– nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– function, location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– category, group, concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• identifies examples and non-examples of a concept using picture cues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• places words or phrases on a cline (eg orders the words freezing, cold, mild, warm, hot, boiling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• demonstrates what is similar/different about a pair of words using a concept map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• identifies pictures that represent singular and plural forms (eg cat/cats, child/children, man/men)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessing aspects of oral language (cont)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What am I assessing?</th>
<th>How will this evidence be gathered?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension of oral language (cont)</strong></td>
<td><strong>The teacher:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• auditory memory</td>
<td>• applies norms for digit span [p 31] (ie repetition of sequences of numbers of increasing length)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• auditory processing</td>
<td>• applies norms for recall of sentences (ie repetition of sentences of increasing word-length)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• using context to gain meaning</td>
<td>• observes and records the time required for a student to respond to oral language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• asks the student to draw information from context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expression of oral language</strong></td>
<td><strong>The teacher:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sentence development and complexity</td>
<td>• records and analyses an oral language sample at the:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sentence structure (syntax) and grammar</td>
<td>- text level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use of question forms</td>
<td>- sentence level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- word level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use of vocabulary</td>
<td><strong>The student:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• repeats sentences of increasing grammatical complexity (if students cannot repeat sentences, they will not be able to produce them)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• role-plays interviewing the teacher about objects, pictures and/or story books. The teacher analyses the student’s use of grammar and intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The teacher:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use of category words, associated words and antonyms</td>
<td>• uses a checklist during an observation of a student in a discussion/interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• analyses an oral language sample for vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• asks the student to explain the meaning of a word or phrase, or to use a word in a sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speech production</strong></td>
<td><strong>The student:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• pronunciation of speech sounds</td>
<td>• completes oral cloze sentences and sentence starters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• names objects or picture cues representing:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- nouns (eg object names, people, places)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• identifies the location of a counter placed in various positions to elicit prepositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• names members of common categories, eg furniture, fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• names opposites, eg hot/cold, up/down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speech production</strong></td>
<td><strong>The teacher:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• pronunciation of speech sounds</td>
<td>• records and analyses a student’s pronunciation of speech sounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessing interaction skills

**Interaction skills checklist**

**Purpose:** To capture an overview of a student’s use of the skills required to commence, maintain and complete interactions.

**Instructions**

**Step 1:** Observe the student across a range of contexts (eg in the playground, during structured lessons, during group work) and interacting with a range of people (eg teachers, peers).

**Step 2:** Rate each skill using the rating scale on the Interaction skills checklist (Form 1). The ratings (rarely, occasionally, usually and always) should be considered in relation to the student’s peers.

The teacher may wish firstly to complete the checklist for a student(s) with age-appropriate interaction skills and use this as a benchmark to consider the target student’s ratings.

**Step 3:** Use Form 1 to consider skills where the student rates rarely and occasionally.

**Step 4:** Prioritise the identified skills for explicit instruction or targeted practice and record in the Summary.
Assessing expression of oral language

Overview of a student’s oral language
(Derewianka 2009)

Purpose: The following analysis has been designed as an accessible tool for classroom teachers to assess and record key elements of oral language that can be used to inform language instruction. It is not intended as a detailed assessment of oral language. Oral language is considered at the text, sentence and word levels. Teachers may wish to implement the assessment as a whole or parts of the assessment according to a student’s needs.

Instructions

Step 1: Record an oral language sample on the Oral language sample record sheet (Form 2).

Step 2: Using the recorded sample, complete the text level analysis by ticking yes or no for each of the identified elements on the analysis overview of the Oral language analysis record sheet (Form 3).

Step 3: Using the recorded sample, complete the sentence level analysis by:
   i calculating average sentence length (p 18)
   ii undertaking an analysis of sentence complexity (p 21)
   iii recording the question forms (p 22) used by the student.

Note: Not all language samples will give the student the opportunity to use question forms. The teacher may need to listen to the student at other times (ie when they are making requests) to determine which question form they can use spontaneously.

Step 4: Use the Grammar at the word level checklist (Form 4) to gather detailed information about the student’s use of oral language at the word level and complete the in-depth word level analysis.

Step 5: Use the information gathered in steps 3 and 4 to complete the analysis overview at the sentence and word level on Form 3.

Step 6: Determine language targets at the text, sentence and/or the word level and record on Form 3.
Recording an oral language sample

Purpose: A transcript is used to record an oral language sample or samples from a student. The teacher then uses the transcript to analyse a student’s use of expressive oral language.

Instructions

Step 1: Select a language task.

There are a range of language tasks that teachers can use to obtain a language sample. Teachers should select a language task that reflects the language focus (i.e., type of vocabulary, tense, grammar, etc.) for assessment and that is motivating to the student. The teacher may choose to collect a range of samples. Examples of language tasks include asking a student to:

- tell a story based on a picture book
- demonstrate and explain a familiar routine
- tell a story based on a sequence of cartoons (pictures only)
- retell a story depicted in a short film
- describe a picture that depicts a wide range of actions, e.g., beach or holiday scenes
- describe funny or unusual pictures
- undertake an experiment or building activity and explain what they are doing.

Step 2: Minimise teacher talk to ensure that the sample captures expressive language rather than a student’s receptive understanding and responses to questions or instructions. This also supports the production of complete sentences rather than incomplete sentences or single words which may be elicited from questions.

Step 3: Record exactly what the student says on the Oral language sample record sheet (Form 2), leaving a line after each sentence. Aim for 10–20 sentences.

The sample can be captured using a recording device for later transcription. The teacher should use a student’s pauses and intonation to determine where an utterance or sentence ends, being aware that ‘and’ may represent a filler between sentences rather than a conjunction.

Note: The more sentences obtained, the easier it will be to identify typical structures used by the student.

Step 4: Write the correct form of the sentence under each sentence. This will help to identify specific difficulties in grammar and sentence form.
## Examples

Instructions are provided below for obtaining a language sample using a picture book, familiar routine and short film as stimulus. Each example uses the Oral language sample record sheet (Form 2).

### Example: picture book

1. Select an unfamiliar picture book with minimal text and a clear storyline.

   **Note:** Use of familiar stories is not recommended as students may have learned a text by rote but may be unable to use the same level of language complexity spontaneously.

2. Tell the student to look through the book so that they understand what happens.
   Say ‘This book tells a story in pictures. Let’s look at the story together. I’ll start, then I want you to finish the story using the pictures to help’.

3. Record exactly what the student says, including stumbles (eg ‘ums’, ‘errs’, revisions, errors, repetitions and noticeable pauses), on Form 2. Prompt the student to ‘tell more’ if needed.

### Example: familiar routine

1. Select a routine that is familiar to the student (eg getting a drink from the fridge, brushing teeth, washing face, cleaning a cup or plate, packing their bag).

2. Tell the student that they will be role-playing how they carry out a routine.
   The student should start with nothing in their hands and in a standing position.

3. Say ‘Pretend you are in your kitchen. Here is the sink (draw an outline of each object/item with your finger), here is the cold tap, here is the fridge and here is a glass. Tell and show me how you get a glass of milk from the fridge. Drink the milk and rinse your glass when you finish. Let’s start from the beginning. First you walk into the kitchen and then ...’.

4. Record exactly what the student says on Form 2. Note how well the student combines nonverbal communication with oral language. Prompt the student to ‘tell more’ if needed.

### Example: retelling a story depicted in a short film

1. Select a short film with a clear plot and little or no language.

   **Note:** This will prevent the student from imitating or rote learning the language used in the film, thus not reflecting spontaneous language use.

2. Tell the student that they are going to watch a short film with little or no talking.

3. Provide the student with a short introduction to the film, eg ‘This film is about a dog that gets lost and goes on an adventure’.

4. Say ‘I want you to watch the film. After the film is finished, you will tell me what happened. If you don’t understand what is happening in the film, ask’.

5. After the film is finished, ask the student to retell what happened in the film.

6. Record exactly what the student says on Form 2. Prompt the student to ‘tell more’ if needed.
Sentence level analysis

Teachers can assess aspects of a student’s sentence development using:

- average sentence length
- analysis of sentence complexity (p 21)
- question forms (p 22).

Average sentence length

**Purpose:** Average sentence length is an indicator of sentence complexity. It is used to compare a student’s average sentence length to what is expected for pre-school age students or students in the early stages of schooling (using norms).

It may be used to indicate an expressive language delay and the need for further analysis (i.e., for sentence complexity and grammar/syntax). A low average sentence length is likely to indicate that a student is using incomplete and/or simple sentences only.

**Note:** Students typically use sentences of five or more words by the time they start school, and are working towards about 10 words per sentence. Norms are only provided to eight years of age.

Students gradually increase the complexity of sentences they use. For students of school age, an assessment of sentence complexity provides useful information about the sentence structures being used by a student.

**Instructions**

**Step 1:** Using the Oral language sample record sheet (Form 2):

- record the total number of sentences
- add and record the total number of words
- calculate the student’s average sentence length (i.e., average number of words per sentence/utterance)

\[
\text{Average sentence length} = \frac{\text{Total number of words}}{\text{Total number of sentences}}
\]

**Note:** Count contractions (for example she’s, don’t) as two words and exclude repetitions and fillers (for example um, er).

**Step 2:** Compare the student’s average sentence length to their peers or use the following norms.

**Norms**


A general rule of thumb is that students should be producing sentences on average “as long as they are old,” if not longer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average sentence length</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3.5 words</td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 6 words</td>
<td>4–5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 7 words</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 8 words</td>
<td>7–8 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Step 3: Calculating Average Sentence Length

**Name:** Kevin S  
**Age:** 5 years 7 months  
**Date:** 2.11.2010

Kevin is in kindergarten. English is his first language.

**Description of the context:** The student was talking about a picture book showing the family going to the supermarket to buy juice.

#### Record of sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Number of words</th>
<th>Type of sentence (I,S,CD or CX)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Do apple to him drink.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: <em>Give the apple juice to him to drink.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Him the water to him.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: <em>The boy gives the water to him.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 He give to him.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: <em>He gives the water to him.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Apple to water.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: <em>?</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Going to shop.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: <em>They are going to the shop.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 You pull the door.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: <em>CORRECT.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 He’s push and open the door and walk.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: <em>He’s pushed the door open and walked through.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 He’s stand the table.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: <em>He’s standing near the table.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Him do this.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: <em>He is pushing the trolley.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 He stop crying and go away.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: <em>He stopped crying and went to get the milk.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 He liked the icecream.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: <em>He likes icecream.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Example: calculating average sentence length (cont)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record of sentences</th>
<th>Number of words</th>
<th>Type of sentence (I, S, CD or CX)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 He hate this one.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target He hates tomatoes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 He's dropped it.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target He dropped the milk.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Can't reach it.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target He can't hold it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 He give it to him.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target He gives it to him.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 He liked that one.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target He likes that one.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 The boy's crying the ???</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target The boy is crying because he wants cake.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Happy birthday to him.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target It's a birthday cake for him.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 It's grandpa.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target It's grandma.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 He's baby crying the grandpa.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target The baby that grandma is holding is crying.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of sentences: 20  
Total number of words: 84

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of incomplete (I) sentences:</th>
<th>Number of simple (S) sentences:</th>
<th>Number of compound (CD) sentences:</th>
<th>Number of complex (CX) sentences:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Average sentence length (total number of words divided by the number of sentences)

Total number of words = 84  
Number of sentences = 20  
Average sentence length = 4.2

**Interpretation:**

Given that Kevin is 5 years and 7 months and typically developing children aged 4½ years are using sentences of 3.7–4.5 words, his sentence length would be considered short for his age. In reading through his sentences it is evident that he has difficulty structuring sentences.
Analysis of sentence complexity

**Purpose:** To determine the different types of sentence structures used by a student. This involves an analysis of whether a student uses compound and complex sentences or relies heavily on simple sentences. The ability to use more complex sentences orally provides the basis for using these structures in writing.

**Instructions**

**Step 1:** Classify each sentence on the *Oral language sample record sheet (Form 2)* as either:
- incomplete (I), eg fragment, dependent clause
- simple (S), containing one clause (independent clause) that can stand alone as a complete sentence, eg *The boy ran quickly.*
- compound (CD), containing two independent clauses (ie both clauses can stand alone as simple sentences) joined by a conjunction, eg *Kevin likes to eat apples but I prefer oranges.*
- complex (CX), containing two clauses, an independent and dependent clause, where the dependent clause cannot be used on its own, eg *We ate the apples, which the others had picked because we were so hungry.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kevin likes to eat apples</th>
<th>but</th>
<th>I prefer oranges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent clause</td>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>Independent clause</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OR

**Step 2:** Record the number of each type of sentence on the record sheet.

**Step 3:** Record the total number of sentences on the record sheet.

**Step 4:** Calculate each sentence type as a percentage of the total number of sentences. That is:

- Percentage of incomplete sentences = \( \frac{\text{No. of incomplete sentences}}{\text{Total number of sentences}} \) x 100
- Percentage of simple sentences = \( \frac{\text{No. of simple sentences}}{\text{Total number of sentences}} \) x 100
- Percentage of compound sentences = \( \frac{\text{No. of compound sentences}}{\text{Total number of sentences}} \) x 100
- Percentage of complex sentences = \( \frac{\text{No. of complex sentences}}{\text{Total number of sentences}} \) x 100

**Note:** Dependent clauses are usually introduced by conjunctions (eg *after, although, before, until, because, while and when*) or relative pronouns (eg *who, which and that*).
Step 5: Consider the ratio of sentence types and conjunctions used in relation to peers or the norms provided below.

Norms
(Nippold 1998; Owens 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of sentence and conjunctions</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses simple sentences</td>
<td>2–4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses mostly simple sentences with</td>
<td>5–6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occasional early-developing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compound and complex sentences,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for example:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– He's the boy who I played with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– He was really tired and he went</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sleep</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The conjunction and is often used</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses more compound and complex</td>
<td>7–8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximately 80% of sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>used in interactions are simple.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More compound and complex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentences are used in narratives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The conjunction and is used often</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and because, then and when are</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>used sometimes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehends and uses because</td>
<td>9–10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consistently.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses compound and complex sentences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximately 60% of sentences</td>
<td>11–12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are simple sentences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses if, though, anyway, therefore,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>however.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question forms

Observe the student and circle the question starters and other forms on the table below.

Record of question forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question starters</th>
<th>where</th>
<th>when</th>
<th>how</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>what</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who</td>
<td>whose</td>
<td>why</td>
<td>which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>was</td>
<td>were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>does</td>
<td>did</td>
<td>can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could</td>
<td>would</td>
<td>may</td>
<td>will</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other question forms include:
• Tags, eg He is a boy, isn’t he?
• Intonation (rising), eg He is going?

Are questions formulated accurately? Yes No
Word level analysis  
(Derewianka 2009)

**Purpose:** To obtain and record an overview of a student’s use of grammar at the word level. Accurate use of grammar shows language sophistication, where subtle changes in grammatical use can change meaning. The aspects of grammar on the checklist are considered significant markers of grammatical development.

It should be noted that most grammatical forms are mastered by eight years of age. Some errors will still be evident in Kindergarten and Year 1 as part of normal development.

**Note:** Grammar is significantly affected for students learning English as an additional language. This is not considered as disordered.

**Instructions**

Use a language sample, or observations to record the student’s use of grammar on the Grammar at the word level checklist (Form 4).

Assessing speech production

**Pronunciation of speech sounds**

**Purpose:** To assess a student’s ability to produce speech sounds in words, identify difficulties and target speech sounds for instruction/remediation.

Sounds are assessed at the beginning, at the end and in the middle (medial) of words. Sounds are ordered according to how they are made and to represent a developmental sequence. The words listed are appropriate to the early years of schooling.

**Instructions**

**Step 1:** Show the student pictures representing one or more of the words listed on the Pronunciation of speech sounds record sheet (Form 5) representing a speech sound. Say 'I’m going to show you some pictures. Tell me what you see’.

**Step 2:** Wait for at least 10 seconds for a response. Prompt the student, if necessary, using the first sound of the word or the entire word.

**Step 3:** Record how the student says the word (phonetically) in the Production column. Underline the error sound, eg if the child says ‘gog’ instead of ‘dog’, record ‘gog’.

Record any prompts required by the student in the Production column, that is:
- VP = verbal prompt (initial sound only is demonstrated to the student)
- IM = imitation (the whole word is demonstrated to the student).

**Step 4:** Highlight the sounds that are pronounced incorrectly or omitted in the Sounds column.

For each sound pronounced incorrectly or omitted:
- circle the sound in the Sound Families list at the bottom of the record sheet
• using the key, consider whether any of the sounds are identified as either later developing or back of mouth sounds
• target sounds or sound families for instruction or remediation
• compare the student’s results to the sound acquisition norms.

Norms

Although there are individual variations, most children learn to articulate speech sounds in much the same order and at around the same age. Articulation skills develop over a period of 6–7 years, as the child learns to control and coordinate the movements of his/her tongue, lips, jaw, vocal chords, and hard and soft palate. The following table represents the expected age for the correct pronunciation of speech sounds.

Expected age for the correct pronunciation of speech sounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>/h/ /b/ /m/ /w/ /n/ /p/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>/k/ /t/ /d/ /g/ /ng/ and all vowels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>/f/ /y/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>/z/ /s/ /i/ /v/ /r/ /ch/ /sh/ blends ( ie pr, dr, br, st, str)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>/v/ /zh/ as in measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>/th/ (voiced and unvoiced)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students who are unable to say the sounds expected for his or her age after targeted intervention, should be referred to a speech therapist/pathologist.
Assessing comprehension of oral language

Analysing responses to question forms and questions of increasing complexity
(Ulliana & Mitchell 1996)

**Purpose:** To assess a student’s comprehension of question forms (ie question syntax) starting from simple modelled questions to more complex ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions.

Assessing students’ understanding of question forms is important, given the frequency with which teachers use questions to monitor students’ understanding.

**Instructions**

**Step 1:** Using the table below as a guide, determine the questions that will be asked and record these in column 1 of the Response to oral question forms record sheet (Form 6). The examples provided are a guide only and should be adapted according to the context/activity.

Plan so that questions can be asked in the context of naturally occurring interactions or activities.

**Note:** To ensure that the understanding of question forms is being assessed, the content of questions should be simple and familiar to the student.

### Types of questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘What/who’ labelling questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions that explicitly ask the name of a person, animal, place or thing, for example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What’s that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who’s that?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple ‘where’ questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions that ask about the location of a person, place or thing that is in view or in its usual place, for example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where’s your Dad?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where’s the house?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Want’ questions – choices in and out of view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions that ask what the student wants with the items/representations in and out of view, for example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do you want?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What does the boy want?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do you want a book or computer?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Yes/no information’ questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions that require the student to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ about information concerning the student, common activities, people or places, the surrounding environment, for example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is the computer on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is that yours?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Types of questions (cont)

‘Who/what/where’ questions – present context
Questions that ask simple information about the student or the surrounding environment, for example:

- Who is your teacher?
- What are you doing?
- Where is the library?

‘Who/what/where’ questions – routine past and future events
Questions that ask simple information about routine events that have occurred, or will occur in the future, for example:

- Who was there?
- What did you do on the weekend?
- Where do we go after lunch?

‘When’ questions
Questions that ask information about time and condition, for example:

- When is recess?
- When do you play inside?

‘Who/what/when/where’ questions – non-routine past and future events
Questions asking information about non-routine events that have occurred, or will occur, for example:

- Who went on the excursion?
- What happened in your holidays?
- Where are you going on Friday?

‘How’ questions
Questions that ask how (used in conjunction with another word), for example:

- How many (asking about number)
- How much (asking about cost or quantity)
- How come (asking reasons why)
- How often (asking about frequency)

Questions that ask about procedure, for example:

- How do you make toast?

Questions that ask about the state of people, situations and places, for example:

- How are you?
- How is the weather today?

‘Why’ questions
Questions that ask possible causes, reasons or intentions behind situations or actions, for example:

- Why did the ice melt?
- Why do you think it happened?
Step 2: Gain the student’s attention and ask the question using oral language only.

Give the student at least 10 seconds to respond before repeating the question.

If the student fails to answer several examples from the same category of Question form, reframe the questions as cloze statements, eg for the question “What’s that?”, the teacher might say ‘It’s a …’. If the student cannot complete the cloze statement, it will confirm that the student has difficulty comprehending the question form.

Step 3: Record the student’s response in the Student Response column on Form 6.

Step 4: Record any additional assistance required by the student or contextual supports in the Supports column.
Analysing responses to instructions of increasing length and complexity
(Ulliana & Mitchell 1996)

Purpose: To assess a student’s ability to comprehend and follow instructions of increasing length and complexity.

Comprehending and following teacher instructions requires students to:

• shift attention and selectively listen to the teacher’s language while filtering out other sensory input
• use cues from the surrounding context to add to or alter the meaning of what is said (eg environmental cues and nonverbal communication)
• extract key ‘meaning’ elements of the instruction
• remember what is said and recall the sequence of actions
• stay on task to complete what has been asked.

The instructions in the assessment are ordered according to the following factors:

• Whether they are routine or non-routine. Instructions that are heard regularly (routine) are easier to comprehend and respond to than those heard less often (non-routine).
• The presence or absence of referents. Students find it easier to follow instructions when they can see, feel or hear what is being referred to. Instructions that refer to locations, people, and items that are not visible are more difficult to understand.
• The number of steps or actions. The more steps in the instruction the more difficult it is to recall and comprehend.
• Whether the steps are sequential or non-sequential. Sequential instructions must be done in a set order and are easier to respond to than non-sequential instructions, as the first step provides an ‘in-built’ memory aid for completing the second step.

Instructions

Step 1: Using the following table as a guide, determine the instructions that will be given to the student and record in column 1 of Response to oral instructions record sheet (Form 7). The examples provided are a guide only and should be adapted according to the context/learning experience.

The instructions may be planned to be given to the whole-class or to individual students within the context of learning experiences and transition periods. It is important to note whether the student observes how other students respond before they respond.

Note: To ensure that the assessment is validly assessing the comprehension of the whole instruction, keep the content of instructions simple and familiar to the student.
## Types of instruction

### 1-part instructions

*Short 1-part instructions with no additional language* requiring a single step, for example:

- Get your readers out.

*1-part instructions with additional language* requiring a single step. Additional language may include conditional clauses, explanations or statements, for example:

- If you have finished your spelling, put it on my desk for marking.

*Multi-step 1-part instructions* requiring multiple steps that are not stated explicitly, for example:

- Pack your bag, ie lunch box, diary, hat, homework, etc.

### 2-part instructions

*2-part sequential instructions with no additional language* requiring two sequential steps, for example:

- Get your ‘show and tell’ out of your bag and take it to the mat.

*2-part sequential instructions with additional language* requiring two sequential steps. Additional information is included in the instruction, for example:

- To help write the description of the character, talk to your partner about describing words and list them in your book.

*2-part related instructions with no additional language* requiring two steps that can be done in any order and are related through a routine or activity, for example:

- Write and draw a picture of the first step of the procedure.

*2-part related instructions with additional language* requiring two steps that can be done in any order and are related through a routine or activity. Additional information is included in the instruction, for example:

- We’re running out of tim e, so even if you haven’t finished, put your journal away and get your spelling out.

*2-part unrelated instructions* requiring two steps that can be done in any order and are not related in any way, for example:

- Put your work in your tray and put your chair on the table.

### 3-part instructions

*3-part sequential instructions with no additional language* requiring the student to undertake three sequential steps, for example:

- Get your journal, open to the next new page and write the date at the top of the page.

*3-part related instructions with no additional language* requiring three steps that can be done in any order, for example:

- Put your recorders in your bags, and get your maths books and your geometry set ready.
Note: Given that students are sometimes exposed to the following types of instructions, teachers may also wish to assess them. However, teachers should be aware that using instructions at this level of complexity for students who have language difficulties is not best practice:

- 2-part unrelated instructions with additional language
- 3-part sequential instructions with additional language
- 3-part related instructions with additional language.

Step 2: Record whether the instructions are completed accurately and the time taken (e.g., immediately or after a delay) in the Student Response column. For instructions with more than one step, record the number of steps completed.

Also note whether the student’s response varies when:

- the classroom is noisy/busy (may indicate problems with selective attending or hearing)
- the student is engaged in something interesting at the time the instruction is given (may indicate student has problems shifting attention)
- there is no one for the student to copy.

Step 3: Record any additional assistance required by the student or contextual supports in the Supports column.

Examples of language supports:

- use memory devices to highlight the number of steps, e.g., ‘There are two things to remember (holds up two fingers) one, … etc’
- repeat the instruction (after waiting 15 seconds)
- rephrase the instruction
- add emphasis to key words
- reduce the length of the instruction.

Examples of nonverbal communication supports:

- use obvious eye-gaze
- turn head towards the referent
- use gestures such as pointing, touching or imitating the action used with the object.

Examples of visual supports:

- touch or show an object, photograph or picture
- draw a picture
- write key words or a list of the steps.
Norms for digit span and recall of sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Digit span</th>
<th>Sentence length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–6 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–7 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7–8 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8–9 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9–10 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–11 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11–12 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14 words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Oral cloze sentences and sentence starters

**Purpose:** To prompt students to use and demonstrate their understanding of target vocabulary (eg nouns, verbs, adjectives/adverbs).

The examples below are provided as a guide only. Teachers should select vocabulary according to the unit of work/focus of learning.

**Instructions**

Tell the student ‘I will start a sentence, I want you to finish it’.

**Examples of nouns:**
- We sleep in ...
- We keep food cold in ...
- We write with ...

**Examples of verbs:**
- Books are for ... (eg reading)
- Chairs are for ... (eg sitting)
- TVs are for ... (eg watching)
- Balls are for ... (eg throwing, catching, rolling, bouncing)
Examples of adjectives/adverbs:

- Ants are little but giants are ...
- Grass is green and the sky is ...
- Ice is cold and fire is ...
- The athlete ran ...
- At the party, we sang ...

I want you to think of as many words as you can that describe what I say.

- A cat is ... (eg furry, soft, little, black, hungry, cute)
- A flower is ....
- An apple is ...

Drawing information from context

**Purpose:** To assess a student’s ability to draw information from context.

**Instructions**

**Step 1:** Select a sequence of pictures that include a problem scenario.

**Step 2:** Tell the student to sequence the pictures from start to finish. Reorder the pictures if they are in an incorrect sequence.

**Step 3:** Ask the student to tell you about what they see.

**Step 4:** Ask questions about the problem scenario represented in the pictures. Examples of questions are included in the table below.
Examples of questions for problem scenario:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Student response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the problem here?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think it happened?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would the people be saying to each other?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What will happen next?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could they do to fix the problem?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you think of another way to fix the problem?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could they have done to prevent the problem?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you been in a situation like this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Procedures and strategies

Students benefit from repeated opportunities to listen to, comprehend and interpret oral language and to use it in a range of contexts and for a range of purposes. Teachers can positively influence student’s oral language development through the explicit teaching of sentence structure and grammar, vocabulary (p 35) and oral text types (p 40). Teachers can also support language learning by creating a language rich environment (p 43), adopting a facilitative interaction style (p 43), supporting interaction skills (p 45) and utilising classroom routines (p 45).

To use oral language effectively, students require an understanding of how language, context and nonverbal communication (p 47) are used to create meaning.

Students experiencing difficulties with oral language (p 48) are more likely to require additional modelling and practice, and need a carefully planned and systematic program. The support materials include examples of procedures and strategies that address the following difficulties:

- comprehension difficulties
- speech sound disorders
- interaction skills.
Oral language development

Vocabulary

Students commence school with varying levels of vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary learning involves acquiring new words as well as understanding existing words in greater depth. Vocabulary instruction should commence as soon as students start school and initially be developed through speaking and listening. Teachers should use the scope and sequence of grammar and punctuation for K–6 to assist them in planning and programming for vocabulary development.

Word meaning gradually develops from partial to full and flexible understanding of words. Students develop an understanding of a word’s role in language through repeated exposures to the word in a variety of contexts (Juel & Deffes 2004). Students are more likely to recall new words quickly and accurately if they need to retrieve the words frequently. Teachers should program repeat experiences where students initially hear and use target words several times a day and then every day for a short while until the words are well established.

To develop a deep understanding of a word, students need knowledge of:

• how it sounds (phonological representation)
• how it is used as part of language
• its multiple meanings
• its morphology, ie how the meaning changes with changes in structure
• how the word connects with other words and information, for example
  – semantic clusters (words that have related meanings, eg jacket, coat, jumper, sweater or iris, lily, rose, daffodil)
  – thematic clusters (words related to the same theme, eg dog, lead, collar, walk, park, panting, pat)
  – morphological groups (laugh, laughed, laughingly, laughable)
• how it is written
• how it is used in idioms, jokes, slang and puns (Johnson, Johnson & Schlicting 2004).

Vocabulary knowledge is important to the development of speaking and listening, reading and writing. Vocabulary knowledge assists students to make connections with their existing background knowledge and to make inferences.

Teachers can support vocabulary learning through:

• providing repeated exposure to new vocabulary and repeated opportunities to use it in a range of contexts
• planning and programming for the introduction of new vocabulary and strengthening understanding of existing vocabulary.

Introduction of new vocabulary

The teacher should select a limited number of instructional words that:

• can be presented in a variety of ways and that can be connected with other words and concepts, enabling students to build strong representations (Beck et al 2002)
• are important to the understanding of a text (ie to understand the main idea or concept) or appropriate to a text type
• occur regularly in texts (common words)
• may present difficulties, eg words with multiple meanings, idiomatic, ambiguous or slang words, technical terms, abbreviations.

Teachers should separate words that are closely related (eg with the same meaning) as they tend to cluster around the same concept and compete for memory space.

The teacher:
• models vocabulary using multiple modes within the context of relevant and meaningful learning experiences, ie students are provided with opportunities to hear words at the same time as being exposed to other related sensory information such as smell, touch, taste and viewing the object/person/event
• suggests ways students can use new words in situations outside the classroom and ask students to report back on their experiences, eg the teacher says ‘Tonight I want you to use the word scrumptious. You might tell your mum how tasty dinner was. You might say, “That was scrumptious mum. How did you make it so scrumptious?” Try to remember how your mum looks and what she says. Tomorrow we will talk about what happened’.
• plans and programs contexts in which the target words can be used and practised across the KLAs and activities, eg the teacher talks about:
  – the horrid effects of man-made pollution on the environment
  – the horrendous looking creatures in Where the Wild Things Are
  – the horrendous heat at lunch time
• relates new words to existing vocabulary, eg famished means the same as starving
• reads a passage which includes the word or phrase
• assists students to develop a phonological representation of how the word sounds by, for example:
  – clapping out the syllables
  – talking about the first and last sounds
  – rhyming
  – talking about smaller words within the word
• explains the meaning of the word using accessible language (at first definitions may not be exactly or technically correct). This may be supported by the following strategies:
  – simple explanations, eg for the sentence The woman’s hands ached from working on the loom all night, the teacher says ‘The word loom here means a frame that holds threads in place for weaving’
  – modelling names (eg chair), actions (eg jump), attributes (eg colour, size, shape), prepositions (eg in, on)
  – synonyms for new words (eg for the sentence He received an award for his benevolent act, the teacher says ‘benevolent means kind’)
  – initial use of vocabulary that is familiar to students (eg using the word ‘problem’ rather than ‘complication’ for narrative texts), and then pairing the subject-specific language with familiar vocabulary, eg ‘the problem or complication’
  – examples and non-examples for developing an understanding of the characteristics and/or classification of a word or concept, eg for the sentence The rodents ate the food reserves on the ship, the teacher says ‘Mice and rats are rodents. Birds and dogs are not’
  – visually illustrates a concept, eg the teacher says ‘Do you see how the blue and pink strips of paper are interwoven? The blue strip goes over and then under the pink strip.'
So when the sentence says “Her hair was interwoven with jewels and ribbons” what would it look like?

- semantic webs for more difficult words
- explains when and how the word is used, eg ‘This word is used to describe …’
- uses obvious stress and intonation within words to highlight changes in meaning, eg present (gift) and present (give or deliver)
- draws attention to features of the word, eg meaning, how it works in text, spelling and orthographic features, sound
- asks students to use the word in a personalised sentence so it is integrated into their knowledge structures in a meaningful way, for example:
  - When might you feel famished?
  - How might you act when you are famished?
  - Why might you ____________?
  - Who would you say is _______?
- provides multiple and varied opportunities for students to experience and use the word, for example:
  - reading the word in a range of contexts (eg sentence, passage, text)
  - discussions that include the use of the word
  - using the word in their writing
  - illustrating a word/concept
  - word association activities
  - choosing from a pair of target words to complete a cloze sentence
  - role-plays using new vocabulary
- compares and contrasts words (eg spelling, pronunciation, meanings) to assist students to create a link, and store and retrieve words
- asks students to apply the word to other circumstances/situations
- discusses why an author may have chosen a particular word over another similar word
- uses newly introduced words together, eg ‘Why might you scoff your food when you are feeling famished?’
- encourages students to keep a glossary of new words accompanied by a relevant example.
Supporting students to understand that words belong to the same class or category helps students to define words. Students who store words in well-developed semantic and thematic clusters can activate and retrieve related words when they hear or read them, which in turn supports word recall, and oral and silent reading comprehension.

The teacher:
- spends a short time (10–15 minutes) every day on activities to expand students’ understanding of words
- relates words diagrammatically (see below)
- uses brainstorming to develop semantic clusters, for example:
  - descriptive terms for the core word car (sleek, sporty, fuel efficient, guzzler, bomb)
  - noun-action semantic clusters, eg. for things we cut with (knife, sword, axe, mower, shaver, clippers)
  - thematic clusters by brainstorming thematic words
- encourages students to talk about related life experiences to develop thematic knowledge
- explains and models how the addition or replacement of a morpheme changes the meaning of the word to which it is added.

**Example: relationships with core word**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core word</th>
<th>car</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superordinate category</td>
<td>vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinates</td>
<td>truck, bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinates</td>
<td>Honda, Ford, Suzuki</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of thematic words for car:
- trip, drive, lift, snooze, pillow,
- I-spy game, steering wheel,
- car wash, boot, brakes
Pronouns

To systematically and explicitly teach pronouns to students who have difficulties with pronouns, the teacher:

• introduces one pronoun type at a time
• pairs the pronoun with its referent noun to highlight its meaning, for example:
  Sue went to the shops to buy some sausages.
  Sue was having a bar-b-que.
  She (pause), Sue cooked the sausages for lunch.
• uses visual supports to assist in developing the concept that pronouns ‘you’ and ‘me’ depend on who is speaking and who is listening at the time, for example:
  – provides illustrated cartoon script of dialogue between two people. Speaker and listener roles are labelled and speech bubbles show the use of ‘me’ ‘you’ and ‘I’ as roles change
  – uses name tags ‘you’ and ‘me’ that are physically exchanged as roles are assumed.
Oral text types

Teachers should systematically introduce students to the purpose, structure and typical grammatical features of text types. Teachers can support text-type learning through:

- building background knowledge through interactive speaking and listening activities
- asking questions to orient students to upcoming text content
- explaining the purpose and typical vocabulary of a text type, e.g., the teacher says
  - ‘A procedure tells us how to do something. This procedure tells us how to get to the library.
  - The goal of this procedure is to follow the step-by-step directions to the library.
  - The procedure includes lots of doing words (action verbs) like “turn”, “walk”, “climb”.
  - It tells, not asks, e.g., “turn left”. This is called a command’
- regularly modelling the oral presentation of texts, highlighting language patterns
- commencing with oral text types based on familiar information, e.g., favourite TV shows, classroom routine and/or texts
- providing instructional scaffolding, for example:
  - using visual cues such as pictures, cartoons, story maps for recounts and narratives
  - providing a structure, e.g., tell news in terms of when/where/who/what/why
  - using headings, e.g., title, author, dedication, publisher, summary of events, illustrations
  - providing visual scaffolds (e.g., illustrative framework)
  - providing starter phrases, e.g., ‘The best part of the story was …’,
    ‘I liked …’, ‘I did not like …’ for a review
- programming opportunities for rehearsal of oral presentation of texts in pairs or small groups before presenting to the whole class
- providing feedback through viewing videos of a student’s oral presentation of a text, pausing and reflecting on key aspects.

Illustrative framework

**Purpose:** The illustrative framework assists students to think about the characteristic features of a particular thing or subject to create a description. Characteristic features may range from observable qualities (such as colour, shape, size, texture and odour) to more complex descriptions of function and classification.

Using the scaffold on an interactive whiteboard, students move the grey shaded oval with the sentence starters ‘The ________ is …’, ‘It is …’, ‘It has …’ over or just below each characteristic, e.g., the student moves the oval to colour and says ‘The robot is silver and it has red eyes.’

The teacher may provide students with a checklist to monitor and provide feedback on other students’ completed descriptions.
The ________ is ________.
It is __________________.
It has __________________.

Description

used for

feels

size

shape

group

parts
Example of checklist to monitor and provide feedback on other students’ descriptions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News item</th>
<th>Student 1 was talking about</th>
<th>Student 2 was talking about</th>
<th>Student 3 was talking about</th>
<th>Student 4 was talking about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did you listen?
Supporting language learning

Creating a language-rich environment

Teachers can create a language-rich environment by:

- providing students with wide exposure to print, eg labels, word displays, posters, a variety of texts
- displaying illustrated meanings of new words around the classroom
- encouraging students to become interested in, and actively think about and use, words (Beck et al 2002), for example:
  - have a suggestion box for new target words
  - share favourite words
  - play with words
  - being ‘word detectives’ by reporting target words heard or seen and explaining how the words were used, eg ‘catching’ other students using the word across the day
- using shared reading, rhymes and songs as an opportunity for students to hear and talk about new vocabulary
- playing games that feature target words, eg charades, pictionary, celebrity heads, concentration, snakes and ladders
- embedding new vocabulary within classroom routines, lessons and informal interactions across a range of contexts and situations
- using vocabulary in advance of what students can read and write (Beck et al 2002)
- providing opportunities for students to discuss:
  - interesting events and experiences (Rose 2006)
  - similarities and differences between words
  - fiction and non-fiction texts (Rose 2006), including favourite books
  - an author’s use of words
- encouraging students to ask about words they do not understand
- providing a permanent model of target/instructional words, eg word walls
- encouraging students to read extensively (Rose 2006)
- modelling how to add and adapt sentences, eg adding detail to a sentence using adjectives, nouns, adverbial phrases.

Facilitative interaction style

Teachers can facilitate oral language development by:

- modelling a variety of language forms, ie comments, observations, remarks and statements in addition to instructions and questions (which often make up a large portion of ‘typical’ teacher talk)
- using sentences at a word length just above that being used by the majority of students (eg if most students are using a sentence length of 4–5 words, the teacher should use 6–7 words) and rephrasing (using a shorter sentence) for students experiencing difficulty
- regularly using comments to commence interactions, eg ‘You’re building a great dinosaur. He has a very long neck. I bet he can reach a lot of things to eat. I wonder what he likes to eat’
• providing multiple opportunities for students to create meaning through language in a range of contexts (eg student–teacher, teacher–student, student–student)
• encouraging students to take the lead in conversations
• giving students time to respond
• providing scaffolding to facilitate accurate responding. This is particularly useful when students are not confident in their responses. Scaffolding may include sentence starters, first sound cues, giving descriptive information, providing a choice of answers, mouthing the answer, giving gestural cues
• providing feedback by recasting and expanding.

Recasting

Recasting is an effective feedback strategy for producing long-term gains in oral language development. It is particularly useful for addressing expressive syntax difficulties.

When a student pronounces a word incorrectly, makes a grammatical error or uses an incorrect word, the teacher provides a succession of immediate error-free models so the student can hear how the word or sentence should sound. The teacher may also elaborate on what the student says by adding information.

Example: recasting for a pronunciation error
Student: I drew a dod (pointing to a drawing).
Teacher: Wow, you drew a big dog.
Teacher: A dog with, let’s see, 4 legs.
Teacher: Is that your dog?

Example: recasting for a grammatical error
Student: He caughted the ball.
Teacher: He caught the ball. You’re right.
Teacher: He caught the ball then the girl caught the ball.
Teacher: I wonder what will happen next.

The word ‘caught’ is repeated correctly on three occasions and the teacher repeats and elaborates on the student’s original sentence.

Example: recasting for a vocabulary error
Student: Nana has no eye hairs (pointing to her nana’s eyebrows).
Teacher: Nana has no eyebrows.
Teacher: Her eyebrows are gone.
Teacher: Are my eyebrows missing too? (waits for response)
Teacher: Where are your eyebrows?

The word ‘eyebrows’ is repeated correctly on four occasions. The teacher provides examples of other ways to express the same message.
Expanding

Expanding is an effective strategy for supporting oral language expression. It involves repeating what the student says and adding a comment that enhances meaning and increases complexity.

**Example: expanding on a student's comment**

Student: The car's going up the hill.
Teacher: The car's going up the hill very fast.

Supporting interaction skills

Group and pair work provide ideal opportunities for speaking and listening with peers. To work in groups, students require a combination of social, communication, organisational and independent work skills. Students who have difficulties in these areas benefit from a high level of structure to support group work.

The teacher:

- demonstrates and explains social rules using videos, photographs, role-plays, checklists and illustrations
- explicitly teaches and reinforces interaction guidelines, for example:
  - everyone has a turn
  - how to assign group roles
  - procedures for asking questions, answering questions, making suggestions and observations, disagreeing, resolving differences
  - rules on interrupting
  - active listening behaviours
  - how to support group members and encourage all members to participate
  - how to seek help from the teacher
  - summing up the group's findings
- role-plays problem-solving by using think-aloud
- organises seating to best facilitate group work and eliminate distracting input
- provides scaffolding to support task completion, for example:
  - assigns group roles, eg using job name tags
  - provides visual scaffolds, eg illustrated checklists to help students complete tasks and monitor their progress. The checklists may include:
    - materials/equipment
    - the task steps assigned to group members if necessary
    - reporting responsibilities.

Using classroom routines

Students with language difficulties are likely to find transition times challenging. The more students can rely on routines, the more attention they have to focus on other information being communicated orally. Transition times also present an ideal opportunity to support students' comprehension of procedural and recount language.
The teacher:

- outlines the classroom schedule at the beginning of the day:
  - uses a visual scaffold to assist students’ understanding of the day’s activities. The visual scaffold is placed so that students may refer to it throughout the day and cross off activities as they are completed
  - uses targeted procedural language, e.g. ‘first’, ‘then’, ‘after’, ‘next’ and ‘last’

- provides auditory and/or visual supports to indicate an upcoming transition between activities

- uses auditory and visual attention getters before giving instructions or explanations. This prompts students to use listening behaviours and to attend to relevant information. The teacher asks students to actively respond verbally or visually to the attention getters as evidence of their attention, e.g. ‘hands on desk and eyes to me’

- breaks down or chunks multi-step instructions to assist students to understand and remember the steps:
  - forecasts the number of steps using fingers as a memory aid, e.g. ‘I’m going to tell you two things’ (holds up two fingers)
  - tells students to hold up a finger for each step, e.g. ‘Get your fingers ready’
  - gives the instruction, holding up a finger for each step, e.g. ‘Number 1 (holds up first finger), put your art work in your bag, Number 2 (holds up second finger), get your maths books out’
  - checks students’ comprehension and retention using a cloze technique, e.g. ‘Let’s check if you remember, Number 1 put your ... Number 2 get your ...’

- gives instructions in the order that they are expected to occur to reduce the cognitive load, e.g. ‘Pack up your desks and then we will have fruit time’ rather than ‘Before we have fruit time, pack up your desks’

- provides visual supports or an outline of steps for 1-part instructions that involve multiple steps and occur regularly in the classroom. This assists students to remember and complete the steps for instructions with multiple steps, e.g. ‘Pack up’.

**Example: visual supports for instructions**

1) Put pencils, glue and scissors in container
2) Put rubbish in bin
3) Put books away
4) Push chair in

- provides a brief review at the end of each activity, referring to the visual schedule.

This assists students’ comprehension and provides a model of recount language. The teacher names the lesson or activity, refers to the topic or theme and recounts what students did and learned.
Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication is important for creating meaning when using oral language.

Gestures are an important aspect of nonverbal communication. Gestures include:

• descriptive gestures that portray attributes such as:
  – shape, eg tracing a circle in the air to indicate roundness
  – location, eg showing the position ‘behind’ by placing one hand behind the other
  – speed, eg rotating finger in small circles to indicate ‘faster’ or ‘hurry up’
  – texture, eg running finger across skin to indicate ‘smooth’
  – appearance, eg pulling eyes down to indicate ‘tired’
• representational gestures that stand for an object, animal, person or action, for example:
  – two fingers for rabbit ears
  – tipping an imaginary cup near mouth to indicate ‘drink’
• conventional gestures or emblems, for example:
  – holding index finger to lips to indicate ‘shh-quiet’
  – clapping
  – waving
  – holding hand up with palm out to indicate ‘stop’
  – holding thumb up to indicate ‘OK’
• emphatic or emotional gestures, for example:
  – hand movements that accompany the rhythm of speech and add emphasis
  – gestures such as hands to mouth to show surprise.

Teachers can support students’ understanding and use of gestures by:

• using gestures with key words (this also supports the understanding of words)
• teaching the form, meaning and purpose of gestures
• explaining how gestures support thinking, communication and memory
• providing opportunities for students to use gestures in role-plays.
Supporting students experiencing difficulties

Oral comprehension difficulties

The teacher:

- simplifies their language using sentences at a word-length just above what the student is using
- teaches active listening behaviours
- supports students to link new information to existing knowledge
- provides additional time for responding
- uses direct rather than indirect language with an implied meaning, for example:
  - ‘Should you be doing that?’ (indirect)
  - ‘Face the front.’ (direct)
- limits the use of sarcasm, idioms, metaphors and similes
- explains the meaning of sarcasm, idioms, metaphors and similes when they are used and how the meaning was determined (ie through tone, context, multiple meanings), eg the teacher says ‘I have a frog in my throat. That doesn’t mean that there is a small green animal living in my throat. It means, I sound croaky. Listen to my voice (demonstrates croaky quality). Frogs croak. So the saying I have a frog in my throat is because I sound like a frog’
- chunks instructions into small steps, separating instructions from explanations
- emphasises key words and pauses before saying more to help students to process and retain key information
- prompts students to listen for specific information during listening activities, eg the main idea of a short statement, or answer to a given question
- provides clear classroom routines particularly for the commencement and end of lessons or activities
- prompts students using visual or other cues.

Active listening behaviours

The explicit teaching of active listening behaviours assists students to attend to and process oral language.

The teacher:

- models and role-plays active listening behaviours, eg legs still, hands in lap, looking at the person talking, listening with ears and quiet lips (no talking)
- provides illustrated and written supports to represent active listening behaviours
- obtains students’ attention before providing instructions or information and prompts them to use listening behaviours.

Comprehending and answering questions

The teacher:

- reviews previously learned information relevant to the question, for example:

  Teacher: Remember when you poured the rice into the rice cooker. It was hard and crunchy. It made noise when we shook it. Then we cooked it and it changed. We tasted it and it was …
Student: Hot and soft
Teacher: Right. Now here is uncooked spaghetti. How does it feel?
Student: Hard
Teacher: How do you think it will feel when it is cooked?

• guides students (when necessary) to understand the meaning of a question form, eg for ‘how’:
  Teacher: How are these flowers different?
  Student: Yes, they are different
  Teacher: What colour is this flower?
  Student: Red
  Teacher: What colour is this one?
  Student: Yellow
  Teacher: So how are these flowers different?

• provides a selection of answers for students to choose from, for example:
  Teacher: What do we call this part of the flower?
  Student: I don’t know
  Teacher: Is it the stamen or the stalk?
  Student: Stalk

• provides examples of who, what, where questions using a familiar practised example, before asking students to apply the question starters to a new context, eg ‘Where were we yesterday?’, ‘What did we do?’, ‘Who was with us?’

Linking new information to existing knowledge

The teacher:
• shows concrete reminders from previous learning experiences, eg photographs, worksheets, projects, video or written records
• reviews the steps undertaken in previous experiences, for example:
  – ‘We bought two identical plants, the same height and same colour.’
  – ‘We gave the plants the same amount of water on Monday, Wednesday and Friday for two weeks.’
  – ‘We put one in the dark cupboard and one in the sunshine.’
  – ‘Look at our photos with the dates underneath.’
  – ‘Here is the film of John watering the plants with the measuring cup.’
• asks students to add a personal perspective to key information to assist them to attach relevance and meaning
• forecasts the content of learning experiences and briefly explains the relationship with previous learning, for example:
  – ‘Today it is day 15 of the experiment.
  – We will compare the two plants growing under different conditions.
  – Toby will get the plant from the cupboard, Sian will get the plant from outside.
  – I’ll put a measuring rod in each pot and take a photo of both plants. I will put the photo on the interactive white board for you to study. You will be looking for:
    • plant colour (looking at the leaves, stalk and petals)
    • plant size (using the measuring rod)
    • plant health (looking at whether the plant is firm, floppy or droopy)’
• summarises new information at the end of a lesson or activity.
Speech sound disorders

Speech sound disorders vary in nature and severity. Speech sound disorders include articulation problems (e.g., difficulty producing speech sounds) and phonological problems (e.g., not being able to distinguish between sounds and therefore produce them). Some speech problems will respond to explicit teaching in the classroom, while others require specific intervention from a speech pathologist/therapist.

Indicators that a student will benefit from explicit teaching in how to produce target sounds (sounds with which they experience difficulties) in the classroom include:

- being able to correctly imitate the sound after the teacher says the sound
- being able to hear the difference between the error sound and the correct pronunciation of the sound (auditory discrimination).

To support students with the articulation of target sounds, the teacher:

- clearly articulates spoken speech and separates syllables within words
- slows down their rate of speech
- stretches out vowel sounds slightly when saying words
- uses stress and intonation within words to highlight difficult to pronounce consonant blends (pr, str, shr)
- models the correct pronunciation of the target speech sound in isolation
- demonstrates and describes how to produce the target sound by using appropriate auditory, visual, and/or touch cues
- provides opportunities for the student to practise saying the target sound in syllables and CVC words, using adapted games with the target sound(s), for example:
  - bingo
  - memory
  - snakes and ladders
  - snap
  - fish
- provides opportunities for the student to practise saying the target sound at the beginning (e.g., foot), in the middle (e.g., elephant) and/or at end of words (e.g., knife)
- provides opportunities for the student to practise saying the target sounds in simple phrases (e.g., the fat man, a funny bus), gradually increasing the difficulty of phrases and later progressing to sentences.

Students who speak with limited clarity may require adjustments to assist them to participate effectively in speaking and listening experiences, have their communication understood by others and as a backup if a misunderstanding occurs, for example:

- the teacher cues the rest of the class about the topic a student is talking about, e.g., during ‘News’ the teacher says ‘John is going to tell us about his visit to the museum on the weekend’
- the student uses a topic or alphabet board/cards, conversation books (Beukelman & Mirenda 2005) or other forms of communication (e.g., speech generating device/communication board).
Visual cues

Visual cues are useful for speech-sounds that are made at the front of the mouth and provide good visual feedback, eg /p/, /b/, /f/, /th/, /v/, /t/ and /d/.

The teacher should sit face to face with the student so that they can see how the teacher makes the sound. The teacher explains how parts of the mouth are used (eg lips, tongue and teeth). The teacher asks the students to watch and then copy the sound. A small handheld mirror may assist the student to copy the lip, tongue and teeth positions.

Examples of using visual cues for front of mouth sounds:
- For /m/, /p/ and /b/, the teacher says ‘look at my lips, they come together. These are called lip sounds’.
- For /p/ and /b/, the teacher says ‘/p/ and /b/ are lip popper sounds. They sound like popcorn popping. Watch my lips. They start together and then pop open with a little burst of air’.
- For /t/ and /d/, the teacher says ‘/t/ and /d/ are lip-teeth sounds. For /t/ we put our top teeth on our bottom lip and blow. For /d/ we do the same thing and turn our voice box on’.

Touch cues

Touch cues are useful for speech sounds that do not provide clear visual feedback (eg back of mouth sounds). The teacher highlights where the sound is produced in the mouth and how it feels. Internal and external touch cues may also help the student to distinguish between sounds that are produced in different places in the mouth.

Examples of using touch cues to distinguish between front of mouth and back of mouth sounds:
For students who substitute front sounds /t/ and /d/ for back sounds /k/ and /g/, the teacher says ‘I want you to feel the ridge behind your top teeth with your finger and then your tongue. Now say /t/ and /d/, your tongue will move to the ridge to make these front sounds’.

‘The back sounds /k/ and /g/ are said at the back of the mouth. Make a gargling sound. I want you to feel how your tongue comes into contact with the palate at the back of the mouth. This is where you make /k/ and /g/’.

Examples of using touch cues to distinguish between voiced sounds and their unvoiced pairs:
The teacher explains that vocal cords vibrate when you make voiced sounds. The vibration can be felt by touching the front of the neck immediately in front of the larynx.

The teacher guides students to feel the difference between voiced and their unvoiced pair and explains that the sound pairs are made in exactly the same way except one involves a vibration in the vocal cords and the other no vibration.
## Sound pairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voiced sound</th>
<th>Unvoiced sound pair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sh</td>
<td>zh (as in measure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>th (as in with)</td>
<td>th (as in that)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Difficulties using interaction skills in social contexts

Some students will have specific difficulties using language to interact and to communicate messages in an effective manner within a reasonable time frame in social contexts.

The teacher:
- identifies target interaction skills requiring instruction. These may be identified using the Interaction skills checklist (Form 1)
- explicitly and systematically teaches target interaction skills
- programs opportunities for the practice of interaction skills in small groups and pairs using real life scenarios
- models appropriate nonverbal behaviours for specific contexts, for example:
  - physical proximity
  - physical contact
  - body postures
  - gestures
  - facial expressions
- provides specific and corrective feedback on students’ interaction skills
- explicitly teaches conversational rules and uses analogies to explain social conventions
- provides opportunities for students to monitor and provide feedback on other students’ interaction skills using a checklist
- uses videos and role-plays to illustrate interaction skills, practice conversational rules and provide feedback on progress.

Example: explicit teaching for staying on topic

The teacher explains that what people talk about in a conversation is called the topic or subject. To keep the conversation going and to be polite, people need to continue on the topic by:
- asking a question
- answering a question
- agreeing or disagreeing with what the other person is saying
- adding new information by making a comment.

‘The rule is to stay on topic until both or most people have finished what they wanted to say or the topic has been going for a long time.

‘You can tell it is time to change topics when the other person looks bored or there is a long pause in the conversation. If you want to change the topic you should:
- wait for a pause
- let people know you are changing the topic by using a starter or linking phrase:
  - linking phrases relate the new topic to the current topic, eg “Speaking of …”, “You said … that reminds me of …”, “Funny that you should say that because …”
  - starter phrases are used to bring up new unrelated topics, eg “I know I’m changing the topic but did you know …”. “On another note …”. ’
**Example: using analogy to teach turn-taking**

*(McAffee 2002)*

The teacher explains that a conversation is like a game of tennis. The chance to speak moves back and forth between the people in a conversation like the ball moves back and forth between players. If one person keeps the ball there is no game. This is the same for a conversation. If one person does most or all of the talking, the other person would be bored. Conversations require that each person has turns to talk.

**Example: checklist for staying on topic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
<th>Name of monitor:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker 1</th>
<th>Speaker 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Name:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stayed on topic:</th>
<th>Stayed on topic:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the time</td>
<td>All of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the time</td>
<td>Some of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tick the ways speaker 1 stayed on topic</th>
<th>Tick the ways speaker 2 stayed on topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asked questions</td>
<td>Asked questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answered questions</td>
<td>Answered questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreed or disagreed</td>
<td>Agreed or disagreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added new information</td>
<td>Added new information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tick the ways speaker 1 got off topic</td>
<td>Tick the ways speaker 2 got off topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer questions</td>
<td>Did not answer questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked off topic</td>
<td>Talked off topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not contribute</td>
<td>Did not contribute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>