Structuring Lessons with Structure in Mind

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Why

The very foundation of literacy learning lies in the language the child has already constructed, and it is so easy for us to listen to that we take talking for granted and attend to other things.


Yet probably the most common error made by adults about the learning of young children is that we can bypass what the child is thinking and just push new knowledge into the child . .

Mouse Trap Game

Objective of Session

• **Build** students’ language structures through conversations
• **Capture** conversations by listening with intent

Object of the Game

Game Plan

• Review oral language structures from simple to more complex
• Identify conversation formats for learning
• Listen for conversation formats in lessons
• Examine pitfalls of conversations
• Explore ways to improve conversations
Structures

Oral Language Structures

• Work with a partner.
• Read the sentences in your envelope.
• Put the sentences in order from simple to complex
• Sort the sentences with descriptors.
  Level 1-Simple,
  Level 2-Prepositions
  Level 3-Conjunctions
  Level 4-Relative Pronouns
  Level 5-Adverbial Clauses


Throughout all lessons, not only these early ones, the conversation exchanges should be a very valuable context within which literacy learning becomes the focus.


Conversation Formats for Learning

• Creating a one-to-one format
• Clarifying something that is unclear
• Testing reading comprehension
• Staying open to surprises
• Checking on what experience the child brings to the text

Creating a one-to-one format

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1a Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1b Build on others’ talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1c Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion.

Teachers and caregivers must talk to particular children one to one, more often. Talk to the ones who are least able to talk to you. Talk when the going is hard. Listen when the child wants to talk to you. Reply, and extend the conversation. How many times do the turns go back and forth? Just once, or more than that?

Clarifying something that is unclear

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Every sentence the child constructs is a hypothesis about language. If he is understood his hypothesis is confirmed—the idea could be expressed that way. When a listener is puzzled, the hypothesis is rejected and a different sentence is formed. . . . If the child’s language development seems to be lagging it is misplaced sympathy to do his talking for him. Instead, put your ear closer, concentrate more sharply, smile more rewardingly and spend more time in genuine conversation, difficult though it is. To foster children’s language development, create opportunities for them to talk, and then talk with them (not at them).


Clarifying Something that is unclear

- Transcript of tricky/swinging
Clarifying Something that is unclear

Talking about building a snowman:
T: So tell me what you did.
S: I getted a ball and a ball. Oh ya.. get a... rabbit.
No, not a rabbit. (staring up at ceiling thinking)
T: A carrot?
S: Ya! a carrot! .....and circle things for the snowman face

Language is the gateway to new concepts, a means of sorting out confusions, a way to interact with people, or to get help, a way to test out what one knows. . . . children must talk, talk, talk and talk more, with an occasional “Mm-hmmm” from whoever is talking with them.


Children do not learn language by imitation. They learn to talk by talking to people who talk to them, understanding what they are trying to say.


Testing Reading Comprehension

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.3 Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.
Testing reading comprehension
After reading Sally’s Beans: (Really should have been before reading and could go under Checking on what experience child brings to text!!)
T. When you were reading this page, were you thinking about what plants need to grow?
S: (nodding)
T: What do they need?
S: Water
T: Yes, and what else?
S: Salad

Common Core
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.4 Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

Staying open to surprises
Melissa, Maria, Amiya
T-Let’s read about Maria and the alligator
A-Alligator . . .
T-That’s a big word.
A-is sleep-sleeping. Mel-M-uhhh. I keep saying Melissa. Maria. Maria is M-A-R-I-A. And my name has 2 A’s and one M. (Amiyah)
Checking on what experience the child brings to the text

Diamond checking on herself during writing:
S: space and space...good

Transcript

- Lizard
Good conversations with children will be good teaching exchanges, for in conversation a teacher as speaker has to try to work out what his or her listener is understanding.


Improving the Conversations

- Wait time
- Joint Focus
- Teachers and students both negotiate meanings and uncover confusions
- Quality interactions personalize the conversation
- Ground the talk in experience, but extend the learner

Application of Conversation Formats

- Transcript of Was/Wishy Washy

Pitfalls
Conversations involve the negotiation of meaning by either or both speakers, and so do teaching and learning interactions. Sometimes the expert sends the message and the child has to understand (receive) it. Sometimes the novice sends the message, and the expert has to try to understand it.


Capturing Conversations

- Familiar reading
- Letter and word work
- Writing
- New book

Use lesson records to illustrate.
Talking, Reading, Writing

1. Create a rich context for language learning
2. Increase language learning opportunities
3. Understand that children learn language easily through conversation
4. Consider what things make a child reluctant to speak
5. Recognize the importance of reading aloud to children

6. Create the need to produce language
7. Arrange for sources of new language
8. Realize that repeating language has severe limitations; it is not enough.
9. Think about which language structures are easier to learn
10. Understand how children discover new rules and find when to use them.

11. Understand how children learn the order of words and structures in English
12. Appreciate how children learn to say the same thing in different ways.
13. Encourage the use of alternative constructions (Expanding the phrases; Moving things around; Transforming simple statements)
14. Consider the impact of overloading the child’s grammar.

Talking with young children is very much like playing ball with them. It is a collaborative exercise, and if you do not allow your partner to be part of the collaborative exercise he or she will leave you, physically or attentionally. Reciprocity is the key to success.

Keep the ball rolling and Capture Conversations

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