

Oral Language and Vocabulary Development Activities

For Student-Student Interaction

Oral language is the ability to speak and listen. The development of thinking and reading abilities is closely linked to the development of oral language. “Speaking to learn” is the vehicle for increasing and deepening knowledge.

Think about very young toddlers. Spoken language naturally comes before written language. This developmental pattern continues throughout school: ***it is extremely difficult to read a language that still is incomprehensible to the ear.*** Initial literacy instructional priority should be given to developing oral proficiency, *concurrently supplemented with print materials* to support the development of English language skills. Extensive reading instruction is more effective after an adequate level of oral proficiency in English has been achieved (which is why Developmental Language Arts through ESOL is such an important course), but *by no means should instruction in reading be totally delayed until proficiency with oral language has been attained.* Orally, a group of students learned the Pledge of Allegiance, saying “We pledge a legions to the United States of Ameriga, and to the republicans for witches stand...” (This is actual student work!) This illustrates why the two processes of reading and speaking must be developed side by side.

There are two types of vocabulary: **active vocabulary**, which are words a person uses frequently and comfortably in speaking and writing, and **passive vocabulary**, which are words that are recognized when read or heard, but are not frequently used. The more often authentic associations are made with a word, the better it will be remembered and used. *The least efficient way to learn vocabulary is through word lists and definitions.*

Words can also be divided by function or usefulness. Isabel Beck calls them “tier” words.

- **Tier 1** consists of frequently used common words and expressions for which concepts are easily understood, such as *butterfly, clock, bed, radio, look, or walk.* These words usually don't require intense academic instruction.
- **Tier 2** words are “mortar” words—high frequency academic words used across contexts. They are more abstract, such as *setting, plot, combine, maintain, fortunate, between, coincidence, etc.* Instructional emphasis needs to be on learning and using those useful high frequency Tier 2 words that are important for comprehension, since they allow students to make connections between ideas and can productively add to a student's language ability. Tier 2 words appear in a wide variety of texts and in the written and oral language of mature language users.
- **Tier 3** words are low frequency words limited to specific domains, such as *tundra, lathe, peninsula,* and SAT-prep type words such as *palpable, acrophobia, moribund, pyre,* etc. These words are best learned when specific needs arise.

To really *know* a word, a student must (1) be able to define it, (2) recognize when to use it, (3) know its multiple meanings, (4) be able to use it correctly (and recognize when it's inappropriately used), and (5) be able to decode and spell it. To teach vocabulary, teachers must point out the word in its context, repeat it, explain it, expand upon it, and actively engage students in using it. Students who interact with words by hearing them, using them and semantically manipulating them are more likely to learn and retain new vocabulary than those who are asked to look up and define unfamiliar words.

Helping students develop oral language proficiency will help them understand words when they meet them in print. Students of any language (even English) who don't read well can usually be helped by further oral language development. ***If words aren't in students' oral working vocabulary, they won't be comprehended if they are encountered in print.*** Students who

haven't learned vocabulary or are occupied by decoding don't have enough working memory space available to focus on comprehension, or to implement reading strategies. Reading vocabulary grows out of oral vocabulary. Comprehensible input (providing students with information they can understand) results in output of oral language, and that is the basis of literacy.

While oral language is used in most classrooms, almost all of that "talking" is generally done by the teacher, not the students. Students often become passive--the teacher talks, the students (may) listen. In this type of classroom environment, students might learn the basic skills of reading and writing, but they may not learn how to think critically, express themselves orally in a fluent manner, or make independent conclusions. You don't acquire language if you don't use it.

Research by Kinsella, 2006, indicates that only 4% of an English Learners' day is spent engaging in L2 informal "student talk." Only 2% of an ELL's day is spent engaging in L2 "academic talk." Academic talk is verbal interaction about lesson content using relevant lesson vocabulary, complete sentences and appropriate syntax (word order) and grammar. Actually, in terms of Academic English, all students are "AESL"—Academic Language as a Second Language." Academic English is not a natural language – it must be taught (Kinsella, 2006).

Oral language is at the base of literacy. It involves risk taking through a willingness to confront more language than what is presently owned. It takes nerve because it also involves vulnerability; the willingness to err for the broader goal of communication; and intuition, the ability to sift for meaning. When students talk with students, there is less risk of embarrassment if words aren't correctly pronounced or used than when students talk with teachers.

Listening to spoken language is different from reading what is written. When someone is listening to conversation, a confused look may result when there is no understanding. The speaker can then explain or restate to ensure understanding. If a student doesn't understand something s/he is reading, there is no way for the author to restate or explain, and comprehension breaks down. The basis of the reading problem might be related to vocabulary.

Extensive oral language for both social and academic purposes must be incorporated into successful literacy development, but it is routinely overlooked by teachers who fear losing classroom control. Expressive vocabulary knowledge, listening comprehension, and syntactic skills are directly linked to reading and writing proficiency (Kinsella, 2006).

A common barrier to comprehension is lack of background knowledge and prior experience with words. Students cannot develop oral language and vocabulary proficiency in a quiet classroom. They need time to practice the skills they're expected to master. Using Standard English, teachers can model conversation with students. Question-answer sessions rarely develop conversational proficiency. With second language learners, acquisition of oral language almost always precedes the ability to read and write in the target language, so it is important to focus on encouraging the expression of ideas, and not focus on language or correct grammar.

It's not just English Language Learners that need to practice oral language development. Today's society does not encourage language and literacy. Sociologically, there may be two-income households or one-parent families, soccer, baseball, or ballet practice, and family dynamics that rarely allow family members to sit down at a table to eat and simply (and importantly) *talk* about the day's happenings. Technologically, TV, video games, computers, personal listening devices and even DVD players in vehicles discourage oral conversations and language development. In school, the impact of standardized testing has encouraged more test prep activity and less conversational activity. The end result for all students has been "conversation" riddled with such phrases and meaningless words as *like, you know, dude, sweet, cool, duh, whatever*—turning the

English language into sound bytes and extended similes where tense is not needed. Worse, the inability to carry on extended threads of oral conversation is linked with an inability to mentally carry written thoughts necessary for reading comprehension and academic success.

Oral language provides a foundation for communication of ideas and intelligent conversation, and the development of other language skills. Before students achieve proficiency in reading and writing, oral language is one of the most important means of learning and of acquiring knowledge.

When selecting words to teach:

- Teach words that are central to the concept students must learn.
- Teach only words students do not already know.
- Teach students to use context clues, when available.
- Teach only a few words at a time so meaning is retained.
- Relate new words to previously learned words.
- Provide multiple exposures to words.

Teachers should:

- Encourage students to bring their ideas, background knowledge, and experiences into class learning activities.
- Be responsive and accepting listeners when students are talking.
- Nurture an accepting, risk free environment where students will feel comfortable. Language is not practiced or acquired when students are afraid to use it.
- Allow students to express themselves without fear of censure – either by adults or by fellow students.
- Pose follow-up questions concerning the activities or conversations held with students. (e.g. *Tell me more, What did you do then?, How do you feel about that?, What more can you add?, ...etc.*)
- Encourage on-topic student-to-student discussions among class members.
- Provide opportunities for speaking, discussion, and expression of ideas, experiences and opinions across the whole curriculum. This will involve a range of experiences in which the size and type of audience, the situation and purpose will all vary.
- Present themselves as good models of oral language.
- Establish strategies to manage all forms of communication to ensure that all students have fair and equitable opportunities to develop their interpersonal speaking and listening skills (eg. large and small group discussions).

The general goals of English language arts across grades are:

- to develop students' English language abilities as a function of their thinking abilities
- to promote personal and social development by extending students' knowledge and use of the English language
- to encourage enjoyment of and proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English.

Engagement in the *meaningful* use of language is essential for self-discovery, expression, communication, and learning. Language growth is promoted when:

- students and teachers collaborate in a *community* of learners.
- language processes are integrated and provide a *balance* of oral language activities and literacy, a balance of content, process, and product, and a balance of resource choices. The language arts--speaking, listening, writing, reading--are interrelated and interdependent processes.

- students learn about language and develop their abilities to use language effectively in a natural way. The conventions of language, spelling, grammar, usage, and mechanics develop as part of students' speaking, listening, writing, and reading experiences. Learning the conventions of language within the context of students' own communication makes the knowledge and skills relevant and transferable into their academic language usage.
- assessment and evaluation of both process and product are continuous. Regular student self-assessment and teacher assessment of student progress and needs reflect the developmental nature of language use and learning.
- the developmental nature of students is taken into consideration. Teachers should plan language experiences to accommodate students' unique backgrounds and characteristics in order to enhance their language development.

6 Steps to Vocabulary Success

1. Provide a description, explanation, or example of the new word *along with a nonlinguistic representation*.
Determine what students already know or think they know, integrate direct experiences, stories, pictures or computer images, and create pictures about the word.
2. Ask students to restate the description, explanation, or example *in their own words*.
Let students work with peers to arrive at appropriate ways to remember the word. They may be permitted to use their heritage language for this purpose.
3. Have students construct pictures, diagrams, or graphic representations of the new term or phrase.
There is power in pictures. When students are required to create a picture or symbol, they are forced to think in non-linguistic ways and make connections to things they are familiar with. Model examples and provide assistance until the idea catches on. The internet may also provide ideas. Group work is encouraged.
4. Plan activities that require students to add new terms to their notebooks or vocabulary cards.
Highlighting prefixes, suffixes, or root words may help students remember terms; synonyms, antonyms, related words, pictures, and translations into the heritage language can also be helpful. Circulate when students are working in their notebooks to catch and correct errors as they occur. Periodically collect and check notebooks.
5. Encourage students to discuss the terms with one another.
Interacting deepens understanding. Think-pair-share activities can be helpful, particularly with others who speak the same language. Encourage students to check one another's understandings. During review activities and games, check for misconceptions.
6. Involve students in learning activities and games that require them to use the new terms.
Give periodic quizzes to check levels of knowledge, and let students pair with others of the same language to self-correct for immediate feedback and clarification, if needed.
Encourage students to create graphs or visual representations of words they've mastered.

Because students are working with other students and in notebooks, misconceptions can occur. Regularly monitoring student work for accuracy can avoid misunderstandings before they become deeply ingrained. Also, a systematic program of wide reading should be implemented since the more that students read, the more words they are exposed to.

Activities

Oral language development in school does not mean teaching children to speak so much as providing them with the skills and opportunities to communicate more effectively. Expose students to lots of words. Not all of the words encountered by students will be learned, but if they never encounter them, they will never learn them. Exposure provides students with opportunities to recognize and possibly use new words when they hear or see them again.

The interactive **activities listed alphabetically below** are only a few of the vocabulary development activities available, but they will foster positive associations with learning new words. They will also stimulate higher-level thinking skills, build vocabulary and increase reading comprehension.

Acknowledge Other's Ideas

- Write "sentence frames" on the board as conversation starters for ELLs:
- Be prepared to share your partner's ideas when randomly called upon.
- Randomly call on several students before calling on volunteers.
- Validate responses and redirect inappropriate responses or behavior.

Casual: "My idea is (like) (is the same as) _____'s idea."
"_____ said that..."
"_____ told me that..."

Academic: My idea is (similar to) (related to) _____'s idea because....
My idea builds upon _____'s idea.
I agree with _____'s perspective. I also think that....
My partner indicated that....
_____ pointed out that
_____ emphasized that....

Acronyms

Acronyms are vocabulary words, too. Select a *few* from the list below. (Some may only be of interest to adults and/or inappropriate for young students.) Put them on the board or encourage students to work in groups. Provide only the letters and see how many the students can name. Then give the answers. Challenge students to think of other acronyms. Some of those listed here will be too difficult for young students or newcomers, but for older students or more advanced speakers, this can be an interesting discussion-starter activity:

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ACRONYM	A Contrived Reduction of Nomenclature Yielding Mnemonics
ACT	American College Testing
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor & Congress of Industrial Organizations
A.M.	Ante Meridian (before the meridian, or high point of the sun in the sky)
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
BIONICS	Biology and Electronics
BMX	Bicycle Motocross
CAR-RT	Carrier Route
CD-ROM	Compact Disc, Read Only Memory
CELLA	Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment
CNN	Cable New Network
DDT	Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane

ESPN	Entertainment & Sports Programming Network
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FedEx	Federal Express
FIAT	Fabricana Italiana Automobile Torino
FTD	Florist Telegraph Delivery
GAR	Grand Army of the Republic
GIGO	Garbage In, Garbage Out (Computer jargon)
GMT	Greenwich Mean Time
GOP	Grand Old Party
GPA	Grade Point Average
HMO	Health Maintenance Organization
ISSN	International Standard Serial Number
MAFIA	Morte Alla Francia Italia Aneia (Death to the French is Italy's Cry)
MAYDAY	m'aidez (French for "help me.")
M&Ms	first letters of the last names of Forrest Mars and Bruce Murrie
MOPED	Motorized Pedal Cycle
MPH	Miles per hour
NASDAQ	National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations
PO Box	Post Office Box
P.M.	Post Meridian (or after the sun is highest in the sky)
PSAT	Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test
Q.T.	Quiet (as, "on the q.t.")
RADAR	Radio Detecting and Ranging
RIF	Reduction in Force
SAM	Surface to Air Missile
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
SCUBA	Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus
SIDS	Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
UPS	United Parcel Service
USO	United Service Organization
USPS	United States Postal Service
VCR	Videocassette Recorder
YUPPIE	Young Urban Professional
ZIP	Zone Improvement Program (as in ZIP code)

(Primary -but not exclusive- source for this list: J.C. Erwin)

Action Routines (Total Physical Response—TPR)

Action routines can be a welcome change during teaching sessions with the opportunity to walk, stretch and move around. One game young children enjoy is "Heads, shoulders, knees and toes". Another game is similar to "Simon says" with the exception that no child is 'out'. To start, the teacher places both hands on his head saying a complete sentence, "This is my head". The students follow the example and repeat the sentence simultaneously. The teacher and the children repeat the process for additional parts of the body. The teacher should clearly pronounce "This is my neck," "These are my eyes". If the children are fairly familiar with the vocabulary, one of them may pretend to be the teacher and give the instruction, or the teacher may use a doll as a substitute and teach the phrase, "This is *her* head". Older students may enjoy the opportunity to "flex" their muscles or "exercise" their options. .

Another verbal-action routine is composed of a series of instructions and directions which use common verbs. The child follows the directions given by the teacher ("Walk to the door") and says the appropriate words at the same time ("I am walking to the door"). Children may take turns giving

instructions and having the teacher do the action. Only one tense of a word should be used in each session. Opposites, such as "open" and "close", "up" and "down" should not be taught at the same time to prevent confusion. Opposites can be taught by reinforcement of the language frame, for example "open the door", "open the purse", "open the book" and later teach the word "close" in several situations.

Suggested Commands: Stand up. Come here. Go to the door. Open the book (or door, etc.). Turn on the light. Go to the window. Clap your hands. Put your hands on your hips, head, etc.. Bend over. Stretch. Turn around. Sit down.

Activate Prior Knowledge

This can be accomplished by orally activating students' existing background knowledge and attention BEFORE reading, guiding readers DURING reading, and providing review AFTER reading.

Prior knowledge can't be activated if the knowledge base doesn't exist. Therefore, it is essential to build a base if one does not exist. Through group activities, challenge students to call on their collective prior experiences. In this manner, students connect learning events rather than just remembering bits and pieces. Teachers should: (1) present information which builds background ideas, concepts, and principles; (2) show (not tell) through demonstrations, multi-media, and graphics; (3) use outside resources, trips, and speakers; and (4) talk about personal experience with the topic.

Affixes

Copy the lists of affixes. Cut them apart, putting prefixes in one container, suffixes in another. Shake them up. Ask for a student or student group to draw from a container, think of a word containing that prefix or suffix, and use it correctly in a sentence. Set a time limit. Students may assist one another. Award points for correct answers. You may want to combine this activity with "Roots" under "R" below.

Prefix	Meaning	Suffix	Meaning
ab	away from	-able, -ible	likely to be
ad, ap, at	to, toward, near	-al	referring to
bi	two	-ence, -ance, -ancy	act of, state of
com, con, col, co	with, together	-er, -or	someone who does
de	from, reverse	-ful	full of, able to
dis, dif	not, opposite from	-ian	an expert in
em, en	in, into	-ic, -ial	like, referring to
ex	out, former, beyond	-ist	one who believes in
in, im	in, into, not	-less	without
mono	one	-ly	in the manner of
ob, op	against	-ment	result of, act of
post	after	-ness	state of being
pre	before	-ous, -ious	like, full of
pro	in favor of, ahead of	-tion, -sion	act of
re	back, again	-ty, -ity	quality of
sub	under	-ward	in the direction of
super	over, greater		
trans	across		
tri	three		
un	not, opposite of		

Barrier Games

Barrier Games are a great language tool as they provide opportunity to develop skills for both speaking and listening (comprehension).

Barrier Games require pairs of players to give and receive directions while being separated by some kind of obstruction (such as an open, upright book, piece of cardboard, or box lid). Battleship, a hit and miss game using coordinates, is a common barrier game. Students can draw a picture with geometric shapes (square, rectangle, circle, star, or triangle) and have the receiver reproduce it from spoken directions (ex, put the star on top of the left end of the rectangle); students may also enjoy using lego-type blocks to re-create shapes directed by a speaker-partner who has a completed structure in front of him.

Board Games

While a steady diet of games is not recommended, for variety and occasional “just for fun” word play, Scrabble, Password, crossword puzzles, MadLibs, and other word games can be used in the listening-speaking rotation of BRIM. Dictionary “races” (who can find a word and give its meaning first) are also good activities. The goal is to expose students to lots of words, and to make vocabulary acquisition a focus of interest.

Cognates

Cognates are words that are related across languages that share similar meanings, spellings, and pronunciations. Students often use cognates from their first language as a tool for understanding a second language. Not all languages share cognates with English, but some Spanish examples are bicycle-bicicleta; family-familia; computer-computadora; biography-biografia; accident- accidente, and so forth. A *Google* search on *cognates* will yield lists of cognates from many languages.

Be aware of false cognates. These are words that look alike but do not have the same meaning. In the English and Spanish example, embarrassed (ashamed) in English and embarazada (pregnant) in Spanish are very different. In English, *pie* is a dessert, and *foot* in Spanish. Fortunately, false cognates are not as prevalent as true cognates.

Comics

Ask students to create and share their own comic strips, incorporating target vocabulary words. They can use comic strips from newspapers with the dialogues deleted or comic creator websites from the Internet. Two websites for creating comic strips are Makebeliefscomix.com and ReadWriteThink.org.

Context Clues

Not every new word will explain itself through the use of context clues. Context clues may not always be effective—“We are going to rendezvous at the restaurant.” From the context, a student may conclude that *rendezvous* means eat! On the other hand, there are sentences like this: “Bill was a good ventriloquist, able to control his voice and make it appear as though his puppet was actually speaking.” Context clues may help with word meaning, but they are not a guarantee.

Dictionary Activities

- Select an academic or generally useful word, such as *compare*, *contrast*, *whenever*, *although*, etc. and ask students to locate the word quickly in a dictionary and raise their hands when they find it. Points may be given to groups or individuals. This is great practice for familiarizing students with the dictionary as a quick-reference book.
- Another activity is to write a word on the chalkboard. Ask students to write possible definitions for a word on index cards or slips of paper. Incorrect definitions might be written, and that's ok. The teacher writes the correct definition. All the papers are shuffled; then students choose the definition(s) that are correct. Teams get points for choosing correct definitions.

Draw word meanings

Creating graphic representations of word meanings has been widely recommended. Encourage students to share their representations. In that way, they will have an opportunity to see lots of different pictorial renderings of word meanings, and may be able to enhance or revise their own mental images and drawings. Stick figures and facial expressions in a “head” (circle) are preferred over elaborate artistic efforts since the goal is to pictorially represent a word, not to create a work of art.

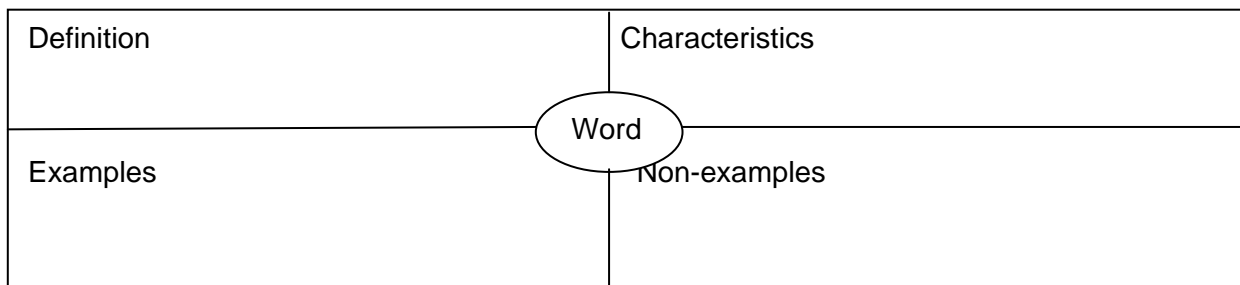


Entry Slips

Entry slips are the opposite of exit slips. Exit slips are used as a “ticket” to leave at the end of class. Entry slips are “tickets” to enter. Each student brings one word to class which they believe the entire class should learn. This could be a word from television, conversations, the newspaper, advertisements, etc. Students may give the entry slip to the teacher upon entering, or write the word on the board as they enter. The teacher selects 2-3 words from the entry slips, and the student who brought it in should explain where the word was found, and why s/he thinks the class should learn it.

Examples/non-examples

This graphic can be used to develop vocabulary in any subject area. Students who draw upon their background knowledge and experiences, and have multiple exposures to new concepts, will gain valuable perspectives on words as they help each other think through the various pieces of information demanded from this graphic based on the Frayer Model. Put a diagram like this on a chalkboard or overhead transparency, write the concept being developed in the middle, and ask students to help you fill in the rest of the chart. It does not matter which section is filled in first.



Graphic Organizers

Use graphic organizers to help students organize ideas about words.

- One example is a concept wheel, where the word is put in the middle of a circle, and concepts surround it: examples could be words that answer who, what, when, where, why, or how. Other words could be related to a specific topic: photosynthesis, for example, could be surrounded by words like sunshine, making food, sun, chlorophyll, oxygen, carbon dioxide.
- A Venn diagram could be used to explain what similarities/differences there are among words
- There are many graphic organizers. A web or tree can also be used to show relationships.

Idioms

ELLs like working with idioms because they are used so frequently by native English speakers.

Encourage ELLs to draw pictures of idioms such as “she put her foot in her mouth,” “it’s raining cats and dogs,” “I’m all ears,” “He’s got two left feet,” etc. and then discuss the meanings.

Listen & Respond

Using thumbs up or thumbs down, indicate if you’d like to be called *impish*, *stern*, etc, and be ready to explain *why*.

M&M – Model, and provide Models

This doesn’t require much additional description. Model good vocabulary strategies for students, and provide completed models so they can see what you’re saying and doing. Encourage students to also do this for their peers. Good oral language communication should be 2-way, ongoing, instructional and enjoyable.

Mile a Minute

In this game, students are divided into 2-person teams. One is a “talker” and one is a “guesser.” The talker faces a list of words on the board and tries to get the “guesser” (whose back is toward the board) to say each of the academic words being studied by quickly describing them without *saying* any of the words in the category title, or using rhyming words. For example, in the first list below, the word “*animal*” may not be said. For “mammal, however, the talker may say “*These are living things that give birth to live young. Examples are horses and monkeys.*” The talker keeps describing, talking, and pantomiming “a mile a minute” until the guesser identifies the term, then moves to the next term, until all words have been named. When a list is finished, the hands of the team go up, and they are the winners. For the next round, team members switch roles. If desired, you may limit the time each team has to one minute. Here are some examples to get you started.

Types of Animals Mammal Reptile Amphibian Bird Insect Fish Spider Canine	Shapes Square Circle Rectangle Triangle Right triangle Oval Diamond Rhombus	Parts of Speech Noun Verb Adjective Preposition Conjunction Adverb Pronoun Interjection	Units of Measure Inches Meters Gallons Hours Quarts Square yards Liters Miles	Civil War Robert E Lee Ulysses S Grant Gettysburg Slavery Antietam Emancipation Proclamation Abraham Lincoln
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Adapted from Marzano & Pickering, 2005, pp 64-66

Morning Meeting

Begin the day with 15-30 minutes of interactive time that builds a community of learners, builds academic and social skills, and provides opportunities for communication. This can also be used during the Whole Class sharing time of BRIM. There are four components:

1. Greetings – Encourage students to greet each other by name, shake hands, sing, clap, and learn greetings in different languages.
2. Sharing – Similar to “show and tell,” allow students to share activities and respond to classmates’ questions.
3. Group Activity – Everyone participates in singing, chanting, games, and so forth.
4. News and Announcements – The teacher writes a chart with the date, the day’s schedule, or some other news. Students follow along and interact with the text as the chart is composed, read aloud, and shared.

Morphological relationships

Compare such words as Tyrannosaurus and tyrant; pedestrian and pedal; duplicate and duplicity. Also talk about words that seem similar but aren’t, like gargle and garden. Also explore cognates, such as university and universidad, computer and computadora, and so forth.

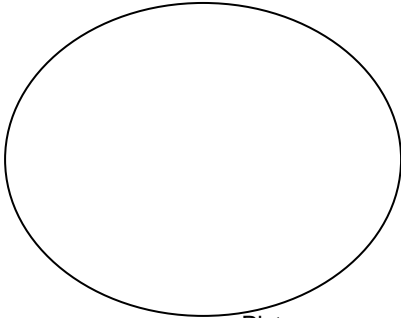
Music

Music is relaxing, and many students enjoy practicing common phrases in music rather than in conversation. Students generally respond positively to lessons and activities that involve music.

Notebooks or vocabulary logs

Require students to keep vocabulary notebooks or vocabulary logs. Words, definitions, and graphic representations can be listed (in any order) on alphabetically organized pages. About twice a week, engage students in activities that help them interact with their notebook words. The more often the words are reviewed and used, the better chance the student will have of storing them in their background knowledge and remembering them.

A vocabulary log might look something like this:

Vocabulary Word _____	Student Name _____
Where was the word heard or found? (If found in a book, write the sentence where it was found.)	
_____	

Definition _____	

Simple Synonym _____	Picture

Object Box

The Object Box or “feely bag” is a simple, ordinary box (or bag), such as a shoe box which is large enough to contain a number of simple familiar household and school objects. Students use oral language to guess what they’re touching. A variation is to use the negative descriptor (this cannot be a ___ because ___).

Paraphrasing

Encourage paraphrasing of information. *Receptive oral language* refers to a person’s ability to understand what is being said to him. Paraphrasing activities help strengthen receptive oral language skills by encouraging students to think about what has been told, and to later express the given information in a clear manner. Paraphrasing activities can take the following forms:

- Give instructions and ask students to repeat/explain them to another student.
- Get a student to help with a task. Explain what you are doing and encourage rephrasing of what you have said.
- Make reading an interactive experience:
 - Discuss pictures in a book with students.
 - Ask students to paraphrase the story.
 - Require students to predict what will happen next in the story.
 - Encourage students to make up different endings for a story.
 - Discuss what is liked / disliked about the story and characters.
 - Act out the story or create a puppet show based on the story.

Picture File

The method of using a picture file is simple. The teacher and student(s) select a subject and discuss the related pictures. Using the vocabulary the student already has, the teacher can explain the content of the pictures as s/he teaches new words. Students are encouraged to ask questions and extend the conversation to related topics. Pictures cut from magazine advertisements and other such sources can add great variety. Several pictures can be used together to form a large contextual background, and for making up stories about the pictures, and for sequencing activities.

Picture games

Picture games might also be used as guessing games when the child is fairly comfortable with the language. One student draws a card from a stack of picture cards or magazine clippings and starts to describe it. For example the pupil holding the picture might say "It is blue." "You wear it". "It keeps you warm," pausing after each sentence to see whether the others can guess the item on the clipping or card.

Read Aloud

Read alouds are essential for students of all ages. When listening to good English being modeled, students increase their understanding of how language works and hear vocabulary being used in context. Asking students to verbally summarize what they’ve heard is a good follow-up activity to check comprehension and develop synthesizing skills. Encourage students to interact with read-alouds with a “thumbs up” when they hear a new word, or recognize a vocabulary word being used in the story.

Roots

Explain that many words in English have origins in Greek or Latin. Teach word families, then have groups of students list on a chart as many words as possible that contain the root, as in this example: Port: export, import, transport, teleport, portable. Let students add to the chart as new words are discovered. Combine this activity with “Affixes” above.

Common Greek Roots		
Root	Meaning	Examples
arch	chief	monarch, archbishop, archenemy
ast	star	astronaut, astronomy, asterisk
bio	life	biology, biography, biopsy
cycl	circle, ring	bicycle, cyclone, encyclopedia
gram	letter, written	telegram, diagram, grammar, epigram
graph	write	telegraph, photograph, autograph
meter	measure	thermometer, centimeter, diameter
opt	eye	optician, optic, optometrist
phone	sound	phonograph, symphony, telephone
scope	see	microscope, periscope, stethoscope
soph	wise	philosopher, sophomore, sophisticated
Common Latin Roots		
Root	Meaning	Examples
act	do	action, react, actor, transact
belli	war	antebellum, belligerent, rebellion
cord	heart	cordial, accord, discord
fac	make	factory, manufacture, facsimile
fer	carry	transfer, ferry, reer, confer
miss	send	missile, dismiss, missionary
not	mark	notice, denote, notation, notable
nov	new	novel, novelty, innovate, novice
pop	people	population
pos	place	position, compose, deposit
rect	straight	erect, correct, rectangle, direction
spec	see	inspect, suspect, respect, spectator

Sentence completion

To avoid sentences like “*I saw a philanthropist,*” ask students to write complete sentences that indicate a word’s meaning, such as, “*The rich man was a philanthropist because...*”

Sentence starters

“Describe a time when you (blank—ex, *urged*) someone to (blank).” What happened?

Sequencing

Students frequently have difficulty following the sequence of events in a story/passage. The following activity can help pupils become familiar with the concept of sequence:

- Retell several familiar stories such as “The Three Little Pigs”, “Snow White”, etc.
- Purposely misread, mix up, or omit items and events. Give students the opportunity to correct you.

Sorting

Sorting involves manipulating vocabulary words on cards. Students work together to group, or sort, words based on commonalities such as word beginnings or endings, vowel sounds, parts of speech, rhymes, meanings, or some other common feature. Students may compare, contrast, or identify similarities while building automatic recognition of words, thus promoting fluent reading and writing. The specific ways in which words are classified or grouped is not of foremost importance—most important is the fact that students are manipulating words and talking about the reasons for their sorting.

Ask students to write the reasons why they sorted their words in the ways they did; or ask students to write a story and incorporate the words they sorted. Then ask them to sort the same words in a *different* way. This often results in very creative thinking.

Storytelling

Storytelling is a creative way to build oral language skills. Provide students with a sentence that is the beginning of a story; for example, "The boy who lived next door had a very strange pet." Have students complete the story, and then retell in their own words. Focus on the sequence of events and sentence structure. Remember to **wait patiently** while students put thoughts together, and **praise** students' efforts to use new words and sentence patterns

Synonyms/antonyms

Knowing synonyms (words with same or almost the same meaning) and antonyms (words with opposite meanings) can be beneficial in developing wide vocabularies. Encourage students to make lists, use the thesaurus, or ask friends to develop lists of words.

Word	Synonyms	Antonyms

Teacher Tips

- Teach academic word families such as predict, prediction, predictable, predictably, etc.
- Emphasize use of vocabulary needed to engage in literate discourse rather than focusing on low-incidence vocabulary that has little impact on main ideas.
- Make clear distinctions between relevant words that impact meaning, and words that will only be seen in limited circumstances.
- Looking up words is not as effective in learning vocabulary as discussing the meanings.
- Consciously create structured discussion tasks.
 - Never allow "blurting."
 - Allow students adequate "think time" before responding.
 - Encourage cooperative/collaborative discussion among students.
 - Require students to write before speaking to the class to increase participation.
 - Call on students randomly before calling for volunteers.

Tongue Twisters

These tongue twisters are great for practicing articulation, and fun, too. You will need to explain any unfamiliar vocabulary words, especially to ELLs. Students may write their own tongue twisters, but here are a few to get you started:

Mixed biscuits.

Unique New York.

Sly Sam sips Sally's soup.

For sheep soup, shoot sheep.

Super thick sticky tape.

Miss Smith dismissed us.

Six sleek swans swam swiftly southward.

Rubber baby buggy bumpers.

She sells seashells by the sea shore.

If a good cook could cook cuckoos, how many cuckoos could a good cook cook, if a good cook could cook cuckoos?

Video/DVD

Play a short video or DVD showing just the pictures without the sound. Silence is the same language for everyone. Then discuss what might be happening. This is a way to stimulate conversation in a controlled way. Play a portion with sound. Stop the film, and ask what is happening? What do you think might happen next? Encourage lots of discussion. Finish viewing, and ask students to confirm their predictions, or discuss why things didn't happen as they'd predicted. Then show the whole video again, this time without interruption.

Vocabulary Detectives

Encourage students to listen to people talking around them who are using new words and phrases, and to spot new words in reading. Have students keep simple vocabulary logs (one is shown on page 11) by writing down where the word was heard or seen, and if possible, the context in which it was noticed. Share these words as a class, and make a running list. Review the list at least once daily, and add checks or stars every time the word or phrase is heard or read again. This builds the "notice factor" --we tend to notice words reoccurring once they're pointed out.

Word Associations

From a list of words (i.e., crook, hospital, piano, kindergartner, novice, virtuoso, philanthropist, accomplice) associate pairs that might belong together, such as piano-virtuoso. The real learning comes when you ask students to explain their lists.

Word Box

Place a decorated (ex, *Talk about Words!*) shoebox in an easily accessible location. Invite students to write new or interesting words on a piece of paper or card located nearby, and put the word into the box. During a lull in classroom instruction, while waiting for buses to be called, etc. pull a card from the box and talk about it. Note to teachers: share *your* new words, too!

Word Journal

In a Word Journal kept for new words, students should write down each new word that is introduced by the teacher or another person, or one that is encountered in reading, or overheard outside of class, or heard on TV. A suggested journal format is shown here. You may add columns for synonyms, antonyms, parts of speech, etc. if desired, but requiring too much detail might deter students from using it. The first 2 columns are the most important. The others can be filled in later.

Word	Where found or heard	Possible definition	Meaningful sentence

If the word was heard, misspelling should not be penalized. If the word was found in reading, students should write the word, the page number (and book) of the word's occurrence, and a short definition, if they know it. Later, students can get into groups, compare/share word journals, add to their lists, and work in groups to write definitions and meaningful sentences, or even compositions using the words. Teachers can borrow student journals to provide writing prompts: example: Do you ever feel *sophisticated*? What does it feel like? Keeping and using a word journal will build an awareness of vocabulary, and students will actually be able to see their word knowledge grow as their journal's list expands.

Word Talk

During independent reading time or class discussion, ask students to each pick one word that interests them. During the whole class wrap up, students will share their word along with the sentence from the story (if it was found in a story or book), tell why this word was chosen, and discuss the word's meaning. Award extra points to students who participate.

Wordless books

Wordless books, cartoons, and comics can assist in encouraging oral language development as students make up stories or explain the meanings of cartoons and comics. Using "white out" in the speech bubbles of comics is another way to encourage discussion and/or writing as to what the cartoon character might be saying.

Words in a Cup

Hold an empty cup and ask, "How many words are in this cup?" (The answer is 7: segmenting words heard in English is a phonological awareness activity.) Vary the activity: How many words do you think are in this cup?" (10) "How can I take words out of the cup and still have words in a cup?" (Answer: just say, "Words in a cup.")

Word Walls/Word Box

Not every new word needs to go onto a word wall, and not every word should stay on it. Monitor student reactions to decide how many new words is too many; it's ok to focus on just a few new words at a time to avoid confusion. When a word is really learned to the point of fluency, remove it from the wall and put it into a box. Periodically review the words in the box, and enjoy the visual reinforcement and satisfaction of seeing the stack of new now-known words grow.

Writing Workshop

Writing Workshop is also a way to encourage oral language. It allows students to comment on a peer's writing with what they notice in the written piece. Oral language is also used to rehearse what students can write about.

Remember:

Good oral language communication activities should be two-way, ongoing, comprehensible, instructional, and enjoyable.

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Student's Name:		Date 1:	Score:
Home school:	Grade:	Date 2:	Score:
ESOL Category: B-1 B-2 I-1 I-2	Student Number:		

Oral English Skills Checklist

This is the student's oral language progress report.

	Listening, Speaking, and Viewing Competencies	Not Yet 0	Progressing 1	Proficient 2	Mastery 3
Social (BICS)	Communicates basic personal needs orally				
	Gives and responds to greetings, introductions, and farewells				
	Requests and gives permission				
	Produces complete phrases and simple sentences that may contain errors				
	Participates in everyday conversations about familiar topics				
	Responds to social or academic questions with basic answers				
	Demonstrates appropriate use of body language in specific situations				
Academic (CALP)	Responds to academic questions with complete answers and connected speech				
	Asks complex clarification questions				
	Defines, compares, and classifies objects using sentences				
	Asks relevant questions after listening to information				
	Rephrases, explains, revises, expands information to check comprehension				
	Demonstrates appropriate vocal quality in specific situations				
	Listens and contributes to academic discussions				

To indicate growth in skills, please observe and informally evaluate each student at the beginning and end of the Extended School Year. Use different colored ink each time, and record the dates in the same color ink as was used for the evaluation. Add the points, then place the total score into the box at the top after each evaluation.

Return this completed form to the student's home school for placement into each student's ELL Folder.