

# CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN LEARNING SPEAKING AND LISTENING

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**Abstract:** When observed the children's learning and their development, teachers need to understand what they see. The process of observing, noting, and recording, with the support of record like the Primary Language Record, helps to develop powers of observation, but also directs attention to what is significant in a child's behavior. The frameworks present in the Record help to structure these observations and provide the basis for a developing profile of a child's strengths and need as a learner. There are five dimensions form part of a continuum of learning; they go on being important and developing throughout a person's life as a learner: Confidence and independence, Experience, Strategies, Knowledge understanding, and reflectiveness. Classroom context is also considered for the young learners in opportunities and experiences.

**Abstrak:** Ketika mengamati perkembangan dan pembelajaran anak-anak, para guru juga harus memahami apa yang mereka lihat. Proses mengamati, mencatat, dan merekam yang dibantu dengan alat perekam bahasa, meningkatkan kualitas pengamatan, dan juga memberikan data yang signifikan tentang perilaku anak. Hasil rekaman membantu pendidik untuk membuat profil kelebihan dan kebutuhan anak-anak yang sedang diamati. Terdapat lima dimensi pembelajaran bahasa, yaitu: anak-anak berkembang seiring dengan kehidupannya sebagai siswa, percaya diri dan kebebasan, pengalaman, strategi, pemahaman terhadap ilmu pengetahuan, dan refleksi. Suasana kelas juga sangat mendukung siswa untuk mengembangkan pengalaman dan kesempatan belajar.

**Kata Kunci:** Children' language development, learning listening, learning speaking

## INTRODUCTION

All areas of the curriculum in the USA offer distinctive opportunities for developing children's speaking and listening. The purposes and type of talk appropriate in different subjects provide specific opportunities for speaking and listening. Therefore, it is necessary to teach speaking and listening explicitly across the curriculum, not just in English. The planning needs to be develop to create specific teaching opportunities and to extend and reinforce children's skills.

The oral sharing of experience and ideas supports equality of opportunity in terms of access to the curriculum and promotes children's motivation and engagement across subjects. As children's strengths and preferred learning styles differ, those children who are less comfortable and successful with written forms can communicate effectively and develop confidence through speaking and listening.

Given the significance of speaking and listening for children's learning overall language development, it is important to allow adequate curriculum model time for it to be taught and to maximize opportunities for its consolidation within existing provision. Speaking and listening objectives need to be taught explicitly and systematically, albeit usually through the medium of different curriculum areas, and require a discrete time allocation. There should also be opportunities, both planned and incidental, for the children to revisit, apply and extend the speaking and listening skills which they have been explicitly taught. The role of teacher is central to developing children's talk in the classroom. Teacher behaviors have a significant impact on what children say, how they say it and the opportunities they have to develop their skills as speakers and listener.

## **A CHILD'S PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE LEARNING**

The Primary Language Record (PLR) proposed by Barss (1990) offers a good means of communicating with others about children achievement. The model has five parts, each of which has a different dimension of learning. Although they are described separately, it is clear that all five dimensions are interconnected and that they all support each other. All five dimensions form part of a continuum of learning; they go on being important and developing throughout a person's life as a learner: (a) Confidence and independence; (b) Experience; (c) Strategies; (d) Knowledge and understanding; (e) Reflectiveness.

### **CONFIDENCE AND INDEPENDENCE**

The first dimensions deals with a child's developing confidence and independent as a learner, which reflects a growing pleasure and involvement in learning. Because this cluster involves making judgments about a child's feeling and attitudes, it does not feature in the National Curriculum attainment statement which specifically excludes attitudes from their scope-being concerned only with "knowledge, skills, and understanding". But most teachers recognize that this is a fundamental aspect of learning in language and literacy, because it involves a child's view of her/ himself as a learner. The first reading scale in the Primary Language Record is based on the dependence-to-independence axis.

Children's confidence as talkers and listeners is independent on both of the social and the learning context. The matrix on the PLR observation and sample sheet helps teachers map children's experience in a variety of settings. The level of children's confidence will be affected by their previous understanding and experience of engaging with the activity. Social relationship within a group area a crucial factor: a child who will confidently tell a story with a partner, maybe reluctant to participate with another.

Independence as talkers and listener will be established for the majority of children by the time they begin school. By the age of five, most children have acquired a wide knowledge and understanding of the language (and sometimes language) they have been learning since birth. Independence is closely linked with confidence. In more formal social contexts in the classroom, some children may need support from the adult in talking independently. At first, some children in translating from their home/community language or in explaining their meanings in English. Readiness to initiate conversation with other children and adults and to volunteer's information and asks questions can be one indicator of progress.

Evidence of children's pleasure in talking and listening might include a group of children enjoying playing with words and making up rhymes or songs together, or a child's curiosity about the meanings, shapes, sounds, and origins of words. Involvement in a task provides evidence of the learning that is going on as well as children's attitude to the task.

### **EXPERIENCE**

The second relates to a child's experience as a learner, and the range a variety of that experience (e.g. experience as a reader). As children develop, they broaden and deepen the range of their learning, and become more obviously related to the context for learning provided in the classroom, and to the resources available. (The National Curriculum Programmers of Study make clear the need for rich context for development context and literacy). in the Primary Language Record, there is constants reference to children's growing experience in language and literacy; the second reading scale based on the inexperience-to-experience axis.

Children's experience as talkers and listener will increase with the opportunities and support they have to us talk and listening for a range and variety of purposes. Evidence that children are becoming more competent and experienced language users will need to be collected over time, in different learning and social contexts, to show their growing

vocabulary and increasing control over using language for their own purposes.

### **STRATEGIES**

The third part of the continuum has to do with the learning strategies that children develop and that often reveal great deal about their view of the task. In all models of language, children have to understand how experienced language users behave, and begin to behave like them. In time they should come to see that they need a combination of strategies in order to be effective language users – for instance, in reading, they learn not to rely too heavily on a particular strategy (e.g. sounding out) to make sense of a text. Skilled and experienced talkers, readers and writers work with a wide range of strategies and use them flexibly.

The social and learning strategies children display will vary according to the task, the social grouping and the language(s) used, which is why making observation over time and across different setting is so important. Working in group will enable children to extend and modify the social strategies they use, helping a group to complete a task by reverting back to what has already been discovered or by sifting the discussion for what. Observation might reveal negative strategies-competition or conflict within a group, perhaps where one or two children are trying to dominate the discussion or are undermining others-as well as positive strategies, such as supporting another person's opinion or building on what someone else has said. Learning strategies might include the group proceeding by asking open – ended question and making hypotheses, or members of the group using personal anecdotes to contribute to the group findings.

### **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING**

The fourth part concerns a child's knowledge and understanding language and literacy. Quite often, this knowledge will be unconscious or tacit knowledge; children will be aware of the different linguistics codes that are appropriate to different social situations, or will 'know' how a story that begins in a certain way is likely to end, without necessarily being able to put such knowledge into words. The

Kingman Report was centrally concerned with this issue of 'knowledge about language'. However, children can be observed to draw on this knowledge of language in their talking, reading, and writing, and they are constantly adding to their knowledge base as they become more experienced users of language.

Children's experience of language is built from conversations at home and school, listening to and telling stories and reading books as well as TV, films and radio. The knowledge and understanding they have about language will often be implicit in the ways they use spoken language. At times this knowledge can be made explicit through discussion to help children to become more aware of the control they can have over the language they use and the language they meet. Children become aware of pattern and difference within a language at a very early stage. Some evidence for this is word-play, which can develop into poetry making letter on. As children's experience grows, they will begin to understand and use language in metaphorical ways. Bilingual children in particular, will be comparing and contrasting different aspects of the languages they speak, and can share this knowledge and understanding with others.

Most children will be adept at using different registers for different social settings, switching between the talk of the play ground, to a conversation with parents, to talking in front of a large group in a school assembly. Discussion and role-play activities will help children to reflect on this ability and to appreciate the flexibility they need as language users. A growing understanding of the different meanings and connotations of words will include recognizing that words can be used in racist or sexist ways. Knowledge about language will include and understanding of the relationship between spoken and written language. Children may recognize, for example, that dialects other than Standard English can be written as dialogue, or used in poetry.

Importantly, as children become more experienced language user, they are likely to appreciate the personal power language, gives

them in sorting out ideas, for thinking and for achieving what they want to do. They will also become more aware of the political and social power of language in the wider community, perhaps through analyzing TV, interviews and discussions.

### **REFLECTIVENESS**

The fifth dimension of model relates to the growth of reflectiveness and to a learner's developing capacity to reflect on his/her own language and language use. This capacity to reflect consciously on what is known on one's own language process is an important development in learning. A reader, for instance, may come to be more aware of her own response to a text, or of the writer's intentions, or the way the text is written – or she may realize what this text has in common with others she has read. All these realization signal a growth in reflectiveness. It is above all through talk and discussion that the learner's capacity to reflect is develop.

Through talking about their work with other children and adults, and discussing their progress in conferences with teachers, children will become more reflective learners. They will learn to assess their strengths and to think about ways in which they can become more confident and effective talkers and listeners (by deciding to work in shared language or gender groups for particular activities, or by working with a partner to present a piece of work to the rest of the class, for example). Children's increasing responsibility over their own learning is important for their progress and development.

As well as assessing themselves as speakers and listeners, they will need to be able to reflect on the meanings and intentions of other speakers. As children become more sophisticated listeners, they will learn to pick out the main threads of an argument and begin to 'read' meanings between the 'lines', listening for what is left unsaid as much as to what is said. They are likely to notice more consciously the strategies others are using, for example, by examining ways in which boys often dominate discussion, or the way one member of the group supports another.

As teachers observe and record children's oral language, the PLR talking and listening matrix will guide them in making observations of children's talk across a range of social and learning situations, in English and other community languages. The 'PLR continuum' also helps to make clear what kinds of talking and listening behavior it is useful to record in the diary section. The diary entries, based on classroom observations an listening to tape recordings of children talking together, provide important evidence for filling in the Main Record (Bi). With this information, teachers can decide what support is needed for children's further development and build this into curriculum planning. Qualitative information of this kind is valuable too, in talking about children's progress and development with individual children and their parents. Together with information from the child conference and parent discussion, the information on the Main Record can be used for making assessments about children's attainment in speaking and listening for the National Curriculum.

### **CLASSROOM CONTEXTS**

According to Barss (1990), the most important resource for spoken language development is people – other children and adults. By the time they come to school, the majority of children will already be experienced at talking and listening – able to express their meanings and intentions in a wide range of social contexts. Some children who bilingual may be especially experienced as they have been growing up using two (or sometimes more) languages. The knowledge and experience that children bring to school will be the starting point for their learning in the classroom. Children need to feel that the way they speak is acceptable in the classroom, and accepted as a powerful base for all their subsequent learning and spoken language development. Out of it they will be able both to extend their own personal repertoires and to deepen their understanding of the language they are using.

As well as learning through interaction with each other in school, children will be

learning from their interaction with more experienced users of the language – older children and adults. Young children learned to talk from conversations they held at home with the adults they lived with and with older brothers and sisters. Conversations can continue in the classroom informally in small groups and, at times, with whole class. The idea of ‘conversation’ in the classroom is important. Much interaction with children can be taken up with classroom organization and control, and opportunities for real talking can get lost. It is helpful to concentrate on sharing ideas with children – finding out how they are thinking about an investigation or topic, or how they arrived solution. As in all conversation it is important to contribute ideas and questions of your own and to participate yourself. This gives children and adults interested in their ideas and their thinking, and an adults who can offer models for ways of talking and listening.

For talking and listening to be valued, children need to know that it is taken seriously and that it helps them in their learning. To help children understand that taking and listening are a part of ‘real work’, it will be important to discuss with them the role of talk in the classroom – to make explicit what it offers. Discussions like these will obviously go alongside the more hidden messages about its importance.

Talking and listening do not only offer paths to learning for individuals in the classroom, but also has an importance beyond the individual – for the shared learning of the classroom. Like writing, talk can be a mirror for reflecting the purposes for learning in the classroom. In sharing ideas and feelings and knowledge with the rest of the class, a child will be extending her own repertoire. The public purposes will feed the personal range. A good classroom for talking will be one where this interaction between the personal is being fostered. This means working towards classroom that are essential collaborative and not competitive.

For children’s listening and talking development the physical organization of the

room will be important. Space and furniture needs to be arranged so that children can work in a variety of contexts, (pairs, small groups, large groups) and can hold conversation easily. Initially, children might gain experience of collaborative talk through working with a friend on a familiar task, leading up to working in a group of three or four, perhaps with the children they knows less well and on less familiar or more demanding tasks.

In every classroom there needs to be an area of the room where the whole class can come together for discussion and to share their experiences – stories they have written, models they have made, etc. This will sometimes also be the area where the teacher adopts a more traditional talking role, (preparing the class for group activities, giving routine instructions, leading group in shared reading or writing etc) as well as the area where the teacher reads aloud stories and novels. There also needs to be in every classroom (space permitting) private areas where children can meet away from the immediate attention of adult. The ‘home corner’ (and variations on it) provides this powerfully for young children; the play needs of older children can sometimes be forgotten.

Taking talk seriously in the classroom can be an important starting point for an individual teacher. But to be truly successful for children it need to be taken seriously by all the staff and made an important part of the school policy. Schools are at different starting points, and have different experience of organizing talking, collaborative classrooms. Teachers need to be able to pace themselves and gradually try out new ways of working they have the support of colleagues, and of a policy that has been decides collectively.

Every classroom offers children opportunities for talking and listening to each other. All children know this – whether talking is sanctioned or not! If children are to build on the opportunities that each classroom can offer for their learning and language development, teachers may need to focus more consciously on the talk potential of each task or activity. It is one that offers opportunities for talking and

collaboration? Can it be organized in such a way that talk and collaboration will be an important dimension? For example, children can be led to share their ideas and observation by inviting them to make a joint record of what they see and think on one piece of paper.

Children's language grows when they are put into learning contexts which make new demands on them, challenging them to find the words they need for explaining what they see, what they feel and what they mean. Every learning context in the classroom – problem – solving, math's investigations, CDT projects, observations in science, testing out hypotheses, making and telling stories – all potentially offer challenges to children's spoken language. It is helpful to consider the processes that children are involved in through an activity and to anticipate what range of language particular processes give children access to.

The books – stories, poems and rhymes – that are available for children in the reading area and in special displays, have a very important role to play in children's spoken language development. The language that children meet in story, poems and rhyme will feed their growing spoken repertoire. Equal in importance to the reading that children do for themselves will be the reading that adults do for them. It has particular importance for bilingual children moving into a new language, as well as for the access it gives all children to the standard language – giving opportunities for hearing, before using and exploring it themselves. Bilingual children also need to hear stories read aloud in their 'first' languages.

Talking and listening needs special resources - expect perhaps for a Listening Area. Here there can be a range of material for listening to: taped stories, both published and classroom-made (by adults or children) to accompany books, or cut-out figures, models, and objects, and in dialects, and in the languages spoken by bilingual children in the class as well as in English. In some classrooms there are headphones for children to use, but where there is space and little fear of distraction, listening with a friend and not wearing

headphones allows for a much more interactive listening time.

These are some of the resources, experiences and contexts important for supporting children's spoken language development in the classroom. They provide essential conditions for that development. Narrative plays a powerful role in young children's learning and language development, and particularly in extending their spoken language. Children often contribute to discussion by telling stories – stories about their own experiences, their family, things they have seen on television. Through the story, children shape their experiences and begin to develop their ideas and understanding about the world.

By hearing stories read and told, both at home and at school, children are being introduced to some of the different ways that the language is used in its spoken and written forms. For bilingual children moving into English, stories provide an important route into the sounds and rhythms, vocabulary and structure of the new language. Where storytelling is an important shared activity in the classroom, it can support language learning and language growth, as well as developing children's existing abilities as storytellers.

Tape recording children's storytelling provides a way of preserving stories which can then be shared without being written down. This can support bilingual children story telling being written down. This can support bilingual children story telling in their 'first' language. They may be more confident talking in their home/community language (s) than writing them. Children can add sound effects and music enjoy performing a story as a group with each telling a different part of taking on different characters roles.

Sharing books in small groups and pairs, children can talk their way through a book in an informal setting, offering each other support and contributing to the pleasure of exploring the meanings in the pictures and texts.

Much of young children's learning develops through play. Play and drama activities

provide very important contexts in the classroom for children to explore and learn about language – either through talk initiated by the children themselves e.g. in the home corner, alone or in situations organized by teacher e.g. To extend a story by role-playing what the bears might say to Goldilocks.

In the 'home-corner', post office' or 'doctor's surgery' or any other dramatic play area, and outside in the playground, children make their own decisions about what they talk about and which voices and roles they use. This is an opportunity for spontaneous talk, alone or in role-play with others. Dramatic play areas also provide an informal setting in which bilingual children can move freely between English and their home/community language(s).

Cross-curricular investigations offer a variety of settings and purposes for talking and listening, with children working independently in pairs or in groups or with the teachers. Collaborative activities with English speaking peers give bilingual children particular support for understanding and opportunities for making friends through working together. Through sharing what they have done in a larger group, children will become more explicit than in a small working collaborative group where a level of shared knowledge has been developed. Children will need to draw on different language and both their vocabulary and the language forms they use will be extended.

There need to be opportunities for children to think consciously about aspects of spoken language. This might involve a small group discussing the language they speak, and where and to whom they speak them and why. They could be encouraged to experiment with language through word-play and make up their own rhymes, riddles and songs. Such as close focus on spoken language will help to stimulate their curiosity about language and languages.

## CONCLUSION

It is important to be clear about the nature of the speaking and listening being assessed, to apply agreed criteria, and to find efficient ways of noting achievements. To be

able to trace progress it is necessary to make some notes, otherwise at the end of year reports can only be based on memory and impression. There may be memorable occasions and lasting impressions, but these are unlikely to be a sufficient basis for reliable assessment of all children across a range of work,

When specific activities are set up, it is possible to make judgment about more children because the criteria are clear and the teacher knows what to listen for. On these occasions, children may also be able to make records of how they think they have done and discuss with their peers how they worked together against a checklist of questions and criteria.

It is best to try to collect evidence when (1) Activities have been specifically set up to teach speaking and listening and the criteria for success are very clear and have been shared with children. In this case any notes should be made against criteria. For example, if a task asks children to give instructions, then the criteria are likely to relate to the brevity and clarity of the wording, the sequence in which the instructions are given, and the choice of appropriate vocabulary to convey any technical information. (2) The planned activities include substantial oral or group work, which may be related to other aspects of English or another curriculum area. This could include group work in literacy hour. In this case, the task should include explicit instruction about the nature of the talk expected, such as the roles group members should take, the phrasing of the work so there are times built in for planning, recapping, agreeing action and reviewing progress, any particular demands in terms of vocabulary and grammar. (3) A contribution is recognized as excellent or significant for a particular child.

It is important to separate children's skills and achievement from the social dimensions of groups and preferred in the classroom. Recognizing the oral achievement of the child who only speaks confidently to the teacher on a one-to-one basis, or the child who is verbose in all situations, can be difficult.

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