



Language and Literacy
in the Foundation Stage



Talking and Listening

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Introduction

Children develop their talking and listening through the natural process of growing up. As they encounter new experiences and form relationships they become more aware of themselves and others as language users.

In school the purposes for talking and listening require children to use language in different ways while engaging with different audiences. Expectations of language use in the classroom often contrast with the ways in which children learn and use language at home. Therefore, teachers need to plan and provide opportunities for children which build on prior learning and background knowledge. Observations and interactions will inform planning to extend children's language development and learning.

Every experience has the potential to be a source of oral language development in an environment which extends and challenges children's language and learning abilities.



Creating an environment for developing oral language skills

A caring environment in which children feel secure and valued will allow them to express their thoughts, feelings and understanding. The classroom environment should promote language as a tool for learning across the curriculum. Teachers need to provide an environment which promotes active listening and purposeful talking.

Ways to create an environment for language development:

- arrange furniture to enable children to explore, create and move around freely;
- ensure a balance between 'quiet' and 'noisy' areas;
- set up clearly defined areas of play, (for example, art, construction, sand, water) with resources appropriate to the developing needs and interests of the children;
- discuss and agree appropriate names for each area with the children and label the areas clearly;
- set up role-play situations where teachers actively participate so that children can hear the language used in different contexts, for example, post-office, restaurant, range of shops, etc;
- provide props to support role-play;
- provide telephones and message pads and model their use;
- create a puppet corner with commercial and class-made puppets;
- establish outdoor play areas as part of the learning environment;
- provide a book area which reflects current interests, topics and takes account of different cultures. Include resources such as story-sacks, book boxes, story boxes, poetry boxes, song boxes;
- have a writing table with a changing variety of resources;
- provide a listening centre/area;
- ensure access to ICT resources which promote collaborative learning.



Strategies and Approaches

Social Conventions

Children will learn how to develop friendships, have conversations, give and receive information, share materials and ideas and show respect and consideration as they interact with others. The following experiences will assist children to develop appropriate and effective social conventions.

Conversation

Informal

Model social courtesies and conventions, for example, greetings, enquiries, turn-taking, responding, and non-verbal communication.

Structured

Involve children in purposeful conversation by introducing topics, displaying pictures, telling stories etc.

Partner Work

- Model appropriate interactions.
- Provide opportunities for children to complete tasks together:
 - shared jobs, for example, tidying the writing corner;
 - labelling, for example, own/jointly made constructions, pictures, classroom signs;
 - puppet plays;
 - brainstorming and list making;
 - role play;
 - sorting activities – open (child determines criteria) or closed (teacher sets criteria), for example, magnetic letters, objects beginning with given sounds, words, syllables;
 - writing activities, for example, greetings cards, messages;
 - problem-solving tasks, for example, complete jigsaws and puzzles, using construction materials to build models.

Talking Partners

Another child with whom ideas are shared and answers rehearsed.

- Ensure children work with different partners.
- Model how to interact.
- Provide opportunities to talk with a partner throughout the day, for example:
 - to discuss response to the question during shared reading sessions;
 - to solve a problem;
 - to make a joint prediction.



Group Discussion

With teacher guidance where appropriate.

- Encourage children to listen attentively, look at the speaker, make contributions and respond to others.
- Provide opportunities to talk in groups in different contexts, for example:
 - to contribute to displays;
 - to explore themes and ideas in stories;
 - to participate in a joint project, such as creating a story map or mind map;
 - to plan classroom activities and make decisions about their learning, for example, decide on main focus for a topic, decide how to and where to find further information.



Role-play

- Base on real or imaginative experiences.
- Speak and behave in an appropriate manner, for example, doctor in hospital, taking a message using a telephone.
- Discuss class rules and role-play scenarios, for example, asking to join in a game and resolving conflicts.



Visits and trips

- Within the school, local area and local community.
- Provide opportunities to respond to a variety of language styles.
- Encourage language development through discussion, giving descriptions, sharing information, comparing, recalling and reporting.
- Simple diary, for example, using tapes/ICT programs.

Strategies and Approaches

Language and Literacy

Developing confidence and competence in talking and listening provides a sound basis for reading and writing. The following activities will assist children to develop appropriate and effective language skills:

Books and stories

- Read to and with the children.
- Compare and contrast different versions and presentations of the same story, for example, book and video.
- Allow children to share favourite books with an individual or group.
- Shared reading sessions.
- Retelling, for example, story maps, sequencing pictures, using props and/or puppets.
- Create own stories, for example, using story boxes, text innovation, wall stories children's own work.
- Co-operative group stories, for example, modelled and shared writing.
- Drama and role-play.
- Watch and listen to media texts, for example, television programmes, talking books, audio-tapes.





Personal Recounts (News sessions)

- Model the use of a news chart or framework, for example, clown chart, 'who, where, when, what and why' grid.

When?	Who?	Where?	What?	Why?

- News pictures.
- 'Show and Tell'.
- Visits and trips.

Giving and Responding to Instructions

Based on giving and receiving instructions from adult or peer partner.

- Ordering items, for example, in the shop.
- Giving directions, for example, Roamer.
- Sequencing patterns, for example, bead threading.
- Drawing or assembling a picture.
- Choosing and placing items on a picture.
- Describe the steps in making a simple construction.
All of the above may also be used as barrier games.



Listening activities

See Phonological Awareness Booklet.

- Identify listening activities that children enjoy and motivate them to have fun with language, for example, jingles, rhymes, finger plays, nonsense rhymes.
- Create sound stories.
- Sound lotto.
- Sound walk.
- Odd one out.

Strategies and Approaches Language and Thinking

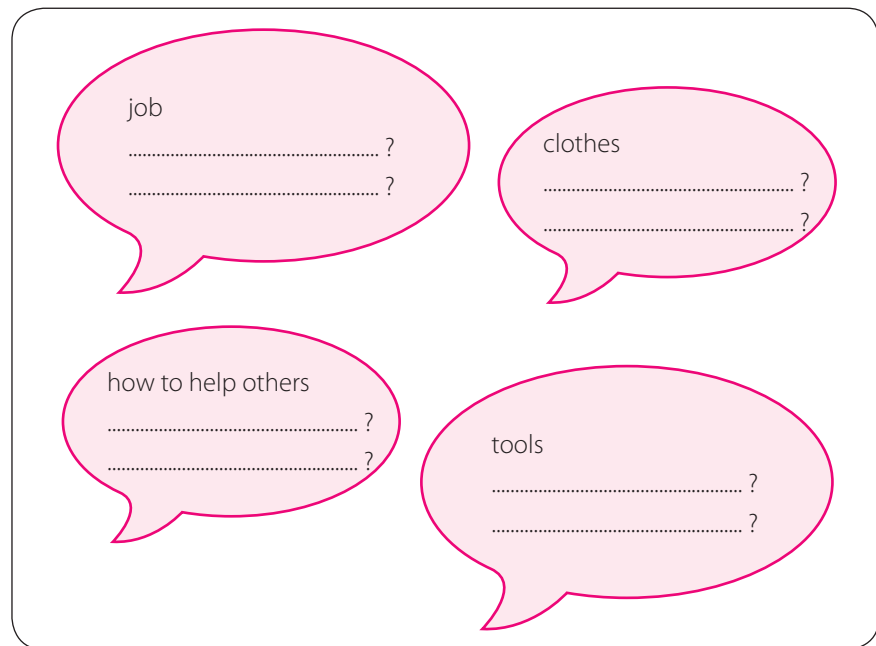
Children use language spontaneously as a tool for learning as they interact with others to explore new knowledge, create new meanings, sort out their ideas and through talk reach understanding. Throughout the day children should have opportunities to discuss, exchange views and listen to and challenge others' opinions. Sharing points of view encourages reflection and may produce important shifts in thinking. In this way children become actively involved in a process where their language and ideas are valued and extended.

Enquiry

The kinds of questions children pose provide teachers with insights into their thinking. They may reveal levels of understanding, show gaps in knowledge and indicate stages of language development. Model how to ask questions to gain, clarify or confirm information and analyse and explore ideas.

The following activities will develop enquiry skills:

- ask questions before a story to provide a focus for listening;
- ask questions about a picture ('right there' and 'think about' questions);
- question a puppet from a familiar story;
- hot-seating;
- role play;



- find solutions to questions, for example, 'how can we make a tall tower?';
- display unusual photographs or items to encourage questioning (creative enquiry);
- read books that motivate children to think about details in the text, sequence of events, cause and effects, or character traits;
- listen for a specific purpose in response to a question, for example, 'how does this piece of music tell us how the characters in the story moved?';
- riddles, for example, 'What am I?', 'Who am I?';
- devise and pose questions for interviewing people who help us in school and the community.

Classification

Children need practice in labelling and describing in order to compare objects or sort/make groups. Teachers need to model how to 'talk through' observations using the language of classification, e.g. size, shape, colour, texture, function, actions, characteristics, usefulness, value. The following activities develop the children's observational skills and descriptive language:

- compare and contrast objects;
- sort into groups – children create names for their groups, discuss their choice of criteria;

- guess my rule – children determine the criterion or criteria by which items are grouped together;
- odd one out – children decide why an item/items are excluded from a group or family;
- matching games:
 - linking and making associations, for example, sock and shoe
 - grouping items with an obvious visual feature, for example, they are all circular
 - creating a link between objects or pictures based on own experiences, e.g. crisps and juice go together because we have them for our break;
- 'show and tell' using given headings or based on agreed criteria;

What kind of thing is it?	Where do you keep it?	What can it do?	What does it look like?

- free and guided brainstorming;

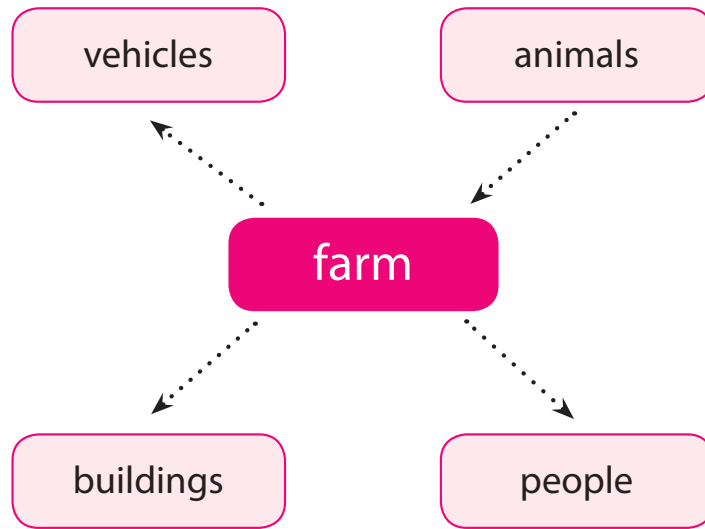
Dogs	
can	can't

- make classification charts /diagrams related to curriculum topics;

4 Legs	2 Legs



- observation frameworks;
- 'Feely' bag – to practise descriptions;
- classify storybook characters according to agreed criteria;
- mind maps.



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