

## Learning Activities that Foster Oral Language Development

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## Vocabulary Acquisition

- Both indirect and direct instruction is helpful for vocabulary acquisition
- **Indirect Instruction:** Creating a language rich environment where children have many opportunities to participate in conversations
  - Learning activities include all of the other activities in this lecture
- **Direct Instruction:** Best for more complex words that are not part of everyday experiences
  - Direct instruction has two components:
    - Instruction in word meanings
    - Teaching word-learning strategies
- Most vocabulary is learned indirectly through everyday listening, speaking, reading, and writing

## Direct Vocabulary Instruction: Word Meanings

- Only teach 2-3 words directly – words that are *complex* and *not part of everyday experiences*
- Include 3 elements:
  - Explanation (definition) of the word
  - Use the word in context (e.g., meaningful sentence)
  - Ask children for their own experiences with the word
- Emphasize the word throughout the day
- Storytelling/Storybook reading is a good context for teaching new vocabulary

## Direct Vocabulary Instruction: Word Learning Strategies

- Look up the word in the dictionary
- Context clues: Use the context of a word to identify what it means
  - *Mother bought yams at the \_\_\_\_\_.*
- Identify parts of the word (e.g., root word, prefix, suffix)
  - *Morphemic Analysis*
    - Morph = Word Segment
- Instruction in word learning strategies should start around Primary 2

## Vocabulary Learning Activities: Indirect Instruction

- **Circle/Greeting Time**
- **Dramatic Play**
- **Storytelling/Storybook Reading**
- **Asking Open-Ended Questions**
- Proverbs

## Circle Time/Greeting Time

- **Circle Time:** A learning activity where the class gathers in a circle to learn together
- Two primary goals of Circle/Greeting Time
  - Develop a sense of community
  - Develop children's speaking and listening skills
- Sub-goal: Incorporate discussions to meet learning objectives in various subjects

## Circle Time/Greeting Time

- Circle shape is used so each child can see the others
- Typically used at the beginning (and perhaps the end) of the school day
- Can be called **Greeting Time** in Nigeria (or **Farewell Time**)
- Typically 10-15 minutes (longer for older children)
- Consists of multiple brief learning activities that require children's participation
- Discussions occur in a range of topics/subjects (e.g., reading, maths, science, and/or social studies)

## Circle Time/Greeting Time Activities

- Any (and more) of these learning activities can be used
  - Begin with a welcome song, prayer, and/or national anthem
  - Children greet each other/the teacher
  - Discuss calendar/weather
  - Discuss current news/events (e.g., children who traveled, have visitors, had a new baby)
  - Give a demonstration
  - Sing songs
  - Read a book/tell a story
  - Discuss a proverb
  - Have children participate in discussions related to different subjects
  - Discuss the day's schedule

## Planning Circle Time/Greeting Time

- Identify activities that address learning objectives and/or theme for the week
  - List activities and/or key questions to ask and materials needed
- Welcome song
  - Calendar: What is today's date?
    - What day of the week is today? Yesterday? Tomorrow? How many days til Sunday?
  - *Wisdom is like a baobab tree, no one individual can embrace it*
    - **Picture:** What do you observe about my baobab tree? Describe the tree for me.
    - **Baobab Facts.**
      - Trees store water in their trunks (up to 120,000 litres) to endure drought. – elephants chew the bark because of the moisture stored in the tree
      - The baobab flowers bloom at night
      - The oldest baobab tree is thought to be 1,275 years old
      - In some countries, the dried fruit is boiled and the broth is used for a flavor of ice cream
    - **Blocks of tree.** Shape of a baobab tree. Prediction: How many of you do you think it will take to go around the tree?
      - Practical
    - **Q&A.** What do you think our proverb means?
      - It means that not just one person has all of the wisdom in the world. There are many people with wisdom, and we should seek advice and wisdom from the many people God has placed in our paths.
    - **Uses of Baobab tree:** Almost all parts are useful
      - Bark: cloth and ropes
      - Leaves: Medicines and soups
      - Fruit: Eaten raw or made into kunu
      - Animals live in the tree – trunk and crown
  - Sing tree song.

## Storytelling/Storybook Reading

- Storytelling is an important indigenous teaching strategy in Nigeria
- In addition to improving oral language, storytelling also influences attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors
- As grandmothers do, a discussion should come after a story to help children develop their understanding of the story and practice speaking skills
- Children should be told at least one story each day

## Storytelling/Storybook Reading: BDA Instructional Framework

- **Before:** Prepare children for learning by activating prior knowledge
  - Ask questions to help children begin to think about key elements in the story
  - Summarize what will happen in the story
- **During:** Tell/Read the story
- **After:** Engage in a Q&A Discussion to:
  1. Help children deepen their understanding of the story
  2. Help children make connections to their everyday lives

## Storytelling Learning Centre

- **Storytelling Learning Centre:** Space where stories are told, including folktales, proverbs, song-tales, praise songs, true stories from children's lives or completely made up stories
- **Activities:**
  - Listen to stories told by other children, a teacher, and/or community grandmother
  - Tell stories
  - Create art to decorate the learning centre (e.g., traditional art or natural art to make the learning centre look like a traditional storytelling site)

## Storytelling Learning Centre

- Example Materials
  - Traditional mat
  - Wooden stool
  - Banana leaves to create a tree for the storyteller to sit under
  - Stones and sticks for making an imaginary fire
  - Traditional wrappers, caps, and accessories for children to dress up in as they listen to or tell stories
  - Traditional musical instruments to accompany the stories

## Asking Open-Ended Questions

- “Effective questioning techniques may be among the most powerful tools that educators employ” (Woolfolk, 2007, p. 493)
- Effective questions require pupils to think deeply about what is being taught and results in meaningful learning

## Types of Questions

- Rhetorical question requires no meaningful responses from children
- Yes/no question
- Short-answer question where the answer is a fact in the story
- Thought-provoking question that requires children to think beyond information presented in class

A rich old farmer, who felt that he had not many more days to live, called his sons to his bedside. “My sons,” he said, “heed what I have to say to you. Do not on any account part with the estate that has belonged to our family for so many generations. Somewhere on it is hidden a rich treasure. I do not know the exact spot, but it is there, and you will surely find it. Spare no energy and leave no spot unturned in your search.” The father died, and no sooner was he in his grave than the sons set to work digging with all their might, turning up every foot of ground with their spades, and going over the whole farm two or three times. No hidden gold did they find; but at harvest time when they had settled their accounts and had pocketed a rich profit far greater than that of any of their neighbors, they understood that the treasure their father had told them about was the wealth of a bountiful crop, and that in their industry had they found the treasure.

## Effective Questions

### Comprehension (Understanding) Questions

1. What did the farmer tell his sons at his deathbed?
2. How did the sons look for the treasure?
3. What did they find in their search for the treasure?
4. What is the lesson we can learn from this story?

## Effective Questions

### Application Questions

1. Who do you know who works hard? What do they do to show they work hard?
2. Why is it important to work hard?
3. What happens if we do not work hard?
4. What do you work hard at?

## Dramatic Play

- **Dramatic Play:** Imaginary play
  - **Dramatic Play Learning Centre:** Small area in the classroom where children can take on different roles
- **General Dramatic Play**
  - Dress-up clothes
  - Wrappers
  - Accessories (e.g., jewelry and wigs)
  - Household accessories (e.g., flowers, mirror)

## Dramatic Play Themes

- Market Centre
- Office Centre
- Food-is-Ready Centre
- Tailor Shop
- Cultural Centre
- Housekeeping Centre
- Hospital Centre
- Farm Centre
- Space Centre
- Hat Centre
- Long Ago Centre
- Celebration Centre

## Learning Objectives

- “Unsuccessful lessons are often the result of teachers not being clear about their objectives” (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 522).
- **Step 1 in planning a successful learning activity is always:** Set the learning objective(s)
  - Learning objectives in the early years do NOT have to be behavioral, and they do NOT have to focus on mastery within the lesson
    - Young children need repeated exposure to concepts
  - Learning objectives in one learning activity can/should cross subjects and domains of development
    - E.g., nurture oral language development, social development, and character development

## Learning Objectives

- Two types of learning objectives in ECE
  - **General learning objectives:** Describe general developmental skills that children will practice during the learning activity
  - **Specific learning objectives:** Describe specific concepts/skills that children will have mastered by the end of the learning activity
- Some learning activities only meet one learning objective; other learning activities may meet multiple learning objectives
  - Be realistic in the learning objectives that each learning activity addresses
- There should be a clear part of the learning activity that addresses each learning objective

## Learning Objectives

- A learning objective should:
  - Represent an important developmental skill/concept
  - Challenge the children beyond their current level of development
  - Be clearly addressed in the learning activity

## Learning Objectives that Foster Oral Language

- **General Oral Language:** Children will develop their oral language skills.
- **Vocabulary:** Children will learn the meaning of the words \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. (Include ONLY 2 to 4 vocabulary words.)
- **Comprehension** (Listening or Reading): Children will understand \_\_\_\_\_.