

What teachers need to know about language

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To survive in the economic and social world of the 21st century children are under pressure to become skilled users of language

Teachers need a thorough understanding of how language works in education

They must receive preparation in educational linguistics

Why do teachers need to know more about language?

- To structure their own language for maximum clarity
- To understand what children are saying – this is the key to analysing what learners know and how they understand
- To work with children from many different cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds
- To select materials at the right level for the stage of language development of the learners
- To support language development
- To assess accurately
- Understanding how language works is as basic to education as knowing about addition and subtraction

What should teachers know about oral language ?

- Oral language is the foundation for literacy
- The basic units of language
- Principles of word formation – breaking words into component parts and recognising familiar morphemes – aids in vocabulary acquisition (e.g. enjoy, enjoyment, enjoyable)
- How the lexicon is acquired and structured – knowing words more deeply is as important as knowing more words - words must be taught in relation to other words within the same topic (e.g. buying, selling, paying, money, change)

Teachers should know about academic language

A focus on language is crucial –no matter what subject is being taught

Academic language is learned through practice and exposure from the beginning to the end of schooling and beyond

Explicit teaching of academic language is necessary for children to be successful

Vocabulary in Academic language

- Terminology : words needed to teach and learn the lesson content
- Definition of words (personal experience vs precise conventional meaning)
(e.g. a bird in a cage vs a bird has wings and can fly)
- Adult meaning of words and multiple meanings
(e.g. "find" in mathematics)
- Multisyllabic words (hopelessness)
- Word families (enjoy, enjoyment, enjoyable)
- Awareness of *root words* (*like in unlike , likely, likeable*)is necessary for formation of associational networks
- Words used in education (remember, doubt, conclude, interpret, predict)
- Connectives (but, although, however)
- Adverbs of magnitude (slightly, somewhat, unusually)
- Meaning of *in ,on, at* to mark time
- Organization of word meaning : Categorization
- Figurative language – idioms, metaphors

Syntax in Academic Language

- New inflectional prefixes (un-, dis-, non-, ir-)
- Subject , object and reflexive pronouns
- Pronominal reference
- Adjective ordering
- Distinction between mass and count nouns and their quantifiers (much and little for mass nouns) (many and few for count nouns)
- Demonstrative adjectives e.g “this”
- Complex sentences e.g passives, relative clauses, embedding , comparatives
- Children with low school achievement have less complex syntax

Uses of academic language

- Explaining
- Expressing
- Describing
- Reporting
- Reasoning
- Imagining
- Hypothesising (how about? What if?)
- Persuading(yes but..., ifthen)
- Infererring
- Predicting

Discourse in Academic Language

- Units of language more than one sentence long: allows for the organization of oral and written language to convey cohesion across sentences (e.g. we walked for charity and in so doing we raised money for the Children's fund)
- Learners need to know how to produce extended texts (e.g narratives and expository text)
- Academic language has coherence between sentences by condensing concepts and presenting them in dense constructions (e.g., *A wire is cut into four pieces of different lengths. Each piece is stretched between two supports to the same tightness. Which of the pieces would give the highest pitch if it were plucked in the middle?*)

What should teachers know about written language?

- How it differs from speech
- Complicated spelling
- Integrating phonics with attention to meaning
- Structuring narratives and expository text
- Grammatical understanding
- How language is used in text

Written language for:

- Summarizing texts
- Analysing texts
- Extract meaning from text – what is the writer's intention?
- Relate text to other ideas and information
- Use grammatical devices for combining sentences
- Compose and write extended reasoned text
- Interpret word problems

Academic Language in Foundation phase

- E.g. Question asking and answering

- Teacher says: The man broke his leg and points to the poster showing the man broke his leg.
- Teacher asks: What did the man do? Point to the broken leg.
- Teacher answers with the learners: The man broke his leg.
- Teacher asks: Who broke his leg? Point to the man.
- Learners answer.

Sentence	Question 1	Question 2
He carried bunches of flowers.	What did he do? He <u>carried bunches of flowers.</u>	Who carried bunches of flowers? <u>He</u> carried bunches of flowers.
She felt very sick.	How did she feel? She felt <u>very sick.</u>	Who felt very sick? <u>She</u> felt sick.
He read the newspaper.	What did he do? He <u>read the newspaper.</u>	Who read the newspaper? <u>He</u> read the newspaper.
The old man wore his slippers to the hospital.	What did the old man do? The old man <u>wore his slippers to the hospital.</u>	Who wore his slippers to the hospital? <u>The old man</u> wore his slippers to the hospital.
The two doctors looked at the x-rays.	What did the two doctors do? The two doctors <u>looked at the x-rays.</u>	Who looked at the x-rays? <u>The two doctors</u> looked at the x-rays.

Academic Language in Intermediate Phase

- E.g. Vocabulary cards

INSERT WORD HERE
E.G. Century

INSERT prefix =
CENT (Hundred)

Meaning = a hundred years

Write sentence
The first two numbers of the
date changes every century
1999-2000

Academic language in senior phase

- E.G. Discourse
- The earth's structure consists of four layers : the inner core, outer core, mantle and crust . *This* forms the basis of plate tectonic theory *which* explains earthquakes, mountain building and other geological phenomena.
- Replace *this* and *which* with the phrase to which it refers
- *This = the earth's structure consists of 4 layers*
- *Which= Plate tectonic theory*