

Talk Time

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Children develop concepts, dispositions and skills in relation to:

- Oral language acquisition and use of oral vocabulary
- Reading vocabulary
- Writing vocabulary

Oral Language Requires Explicit Attention

Oral language skills are central to children's literacy, intellectual, social and emotional development. Teachers play a key role in incidentally supporting oral language development through, for example, modelling, discussion, conversations, play and the use of stories. However, effective oral language teaching also requires

explicit instruction, including the use of a number of specific methodologies and activities in the classroom, within a balanced literacy framework. Parents also play a significant role in children's oral language development.

Getting Started!

By its very nature, explicit oral language instruction adapts well to whole-class teaching, small group work or pairs.

Start with selecting your target vocabulary words/phrases/sentence structures. These may be chosen from any curricular area, a big book, textbook, lesson theme, current affairs topic or directly from a child-initiated theme (e.g., song lyrics).

The language that appears repeatedly in school does not

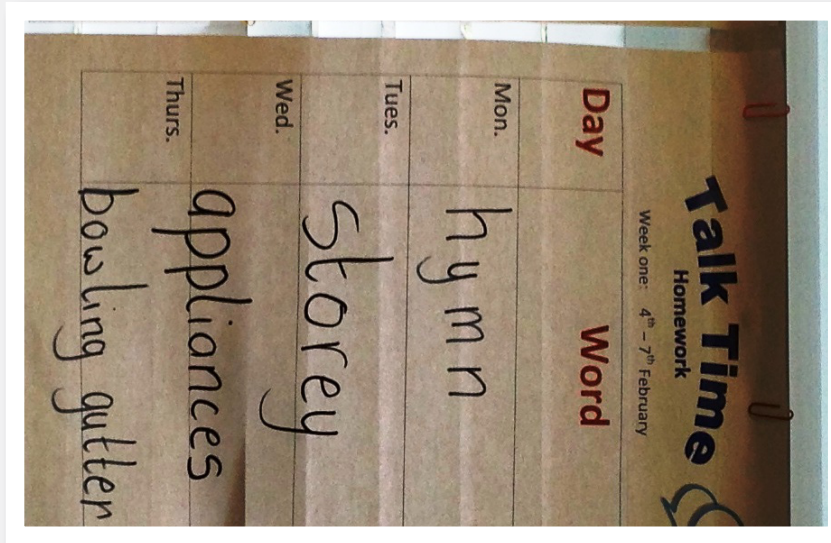
EXAMPLES OF WORD LISTS:

- Biemiller's (2009) Words Worth Teaching: 5000 most frequently known root words
- Marzano's (2004) list of content-area words and phrases across numerous subjects
- Coxhead's (2000) Academic Word List: 570 word families that represent the most repeated vocabulary from textbooks and other academic writings

necessarily include the words or phrases most frequently used in conversation. For example, a word such as 'estimate' will come up frequently in school in more than one subject (e.g., mathematics, SPHE, or English) but it is typically not used in everyday conversation. Therefore, 'estimate' would be a powerful word to explicitly teach your children. Many researchers have published lists that document the most commonly occurring words, word families and phrases.

It is important to teach children words that will come up in school over and over again across curricular areas which are less likely to be learned incidentally (e.g., Tier 2 words).

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Word walls can support oral language learning by creating a dedicated space for displaying new vocabulary, phrases and/or sentences.

How Best to Teach Oral Language: Quantity and Quality

Research gives us very clear direction on how teachers can best support the development of oral language concepts, dispositions and skills. The advice can be summarised into two key ideas – quantity and quality. The following tables illustrate practices that ensure a balance between quantity and quality when explicitly teaching vocabulary.

More specifically, teaching the word 'loyal' (a Tier 2 word) could involve using a selection of the following activities and visual organisers, orally or written, to support appropriate quantity and quality of instruction.

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QUANTITY

- Regularly promote children's engagement with discovering and learning about new words.
- Teach fewer words robustly instead of several words in an incidental, ad-hoc way.
- Provide many opportunities to hear and use new vocabulary across curricular subjects.
- Create as many opportunities as possible to use and emphasise target words in different contexts throughout the week.
- Space-out exposure to new words across several days, rather than one exposure on a single day.
- Select a minimum of one/two words a day to teach explicitly using rich vocabulary instruction.
- Repeat and review the new words taught regularly using different methodologies throughout the week.
- Test children's knowledge of the new words taught using weekly and end-of-term tests.

QUALITY

- Select Tier 2 words to teach.
- Generate examples and non-examples to illustrate the new vocabulary item.
- Brainstorm synonyms and antonyms for the new word.
- Support children to generate their own definitions of the vocabulary item, instead of using dictionary definitions.
- Discuss the difference between the new word and related words.
- Use visual organisers to support rich instruction, such as 'four squares', 'semantic maps', 'Venn diagrams', 'word lines' and 'semantic feature analyses'.
- Support children to produce their own sentences using the word(s).
- Play games that target repetition and review of the new words.
- Expand the word to new contexts (e.g., create a narrative based on the word, talk about personal experiences, encourage children to listen out for the word outside of class).

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4 SQUARE

TARGET WORD

Loyal

EXAMPLES

Pet who waits for you; friend who tells people how great you are; supporter of a sports team, win or lose

OWN DEFINITION

Someone who will always be there for you

NON-EXAMPLES

Stray dog; classmate who teases you; someone who only supports the football team at the top of the league

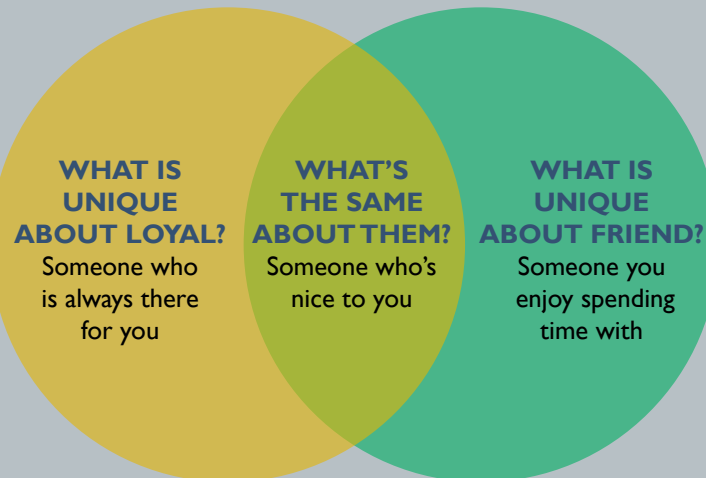
WORD LINES

Arrange the words in terms of least fan/supporter to greatest fan/supporter:

- **Follow** Ballymun Kickhams
- **Devoted to** Ballymun Kickhams
- **Loyal to** Ballymun Kickhams
- **Support** Ballymun Kickhams
- **Watch** Ballymun Kickhams play
- **Wear** Ballymun Kickhams jersey



VENN DIAGRAM



SYNONYMS

True, trustworthy, dependable

SENTENCE

My loyal friend stuck up for me in the yard

ANTONYMS

Disloyal, unreliable

LOYAL

NON-EXAMPLES:

Someone who lets you down or doesn't take your side

EXAMPLES

A friend who sticks up for you; a pet dog



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Parental Involvement

There are many ways to involve parents directly in supporting children’s oral language development. However, at times there is often an over-emphasis on written and reading homework with minimal amounts of oral language given, if at all. The following examples can support parental involvement:

- Provide parents with (i) a simple record of new vocabulary, phrases or sentence structures taught during the week and (ii) a topic to talk about for 10 minutes at home – the topics may be suggested by children or relate to a curricular area, book or other reading material. It is important to ensure children have opportunities to share the content of their discussion with their peers.
- Organise parent information workshops – gather parents together in a relaxed and supportive environment

to hear about your focus on oral language, activities you will be using and how, together, you can strengthen children’s oral language skills. This workshop could be held in the classroom and children can then show parents exactly what they are doing and how parents can further support the learning at home.

Studies have shown that parental involvement significantly impacts on a child’s progression in oral language and his/her overall achievement.

Talk Time Homework record sheet for parents sharing oral language targets and providing a topic to discuss at home

Week seven			
Day	Word	Topic to Talk about for 10 mins	Signed
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thurs			

Week eight			
Day	Word	Topic to Talk about for 10 mins	Signed
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thurs			

Week nine			
Day	Word	Topic to Talk about for 10 mins	Signed
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thurs			

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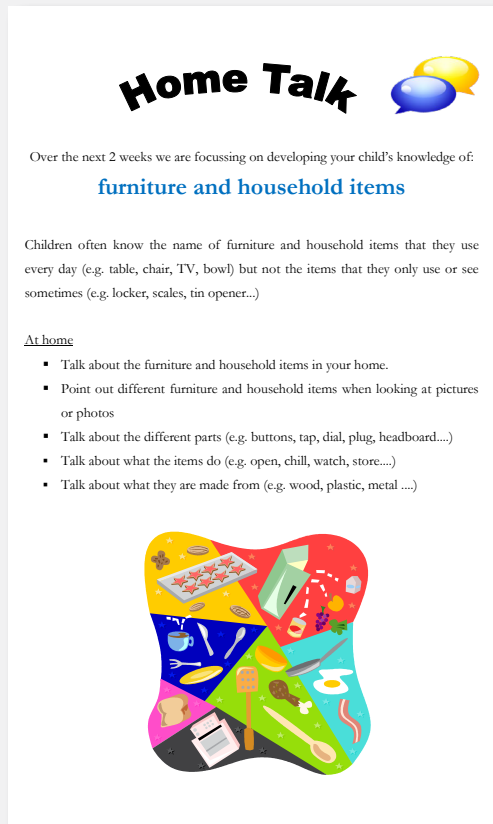
Homework




_____ Class

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- Introduce ‘Talking for Fun’ in your classroom, whereby parents are invited in to your classroom to play specific oral language board games with children (e.g., *Granny’s Candies*, *Vocab Bingo*, *Descripto Dino*, *Headbanz*, *Blurt!*, etc.)
- Share with parents specific suggestions on how they can reinforce the vocabulary, phrases or sentence structures you are teaching in class, such as the handout shown.




Home Talk 

Over the next 2 weeks we are focussing on developing your child’s knowledge of:
furniture and household items

Children often know the name of furniture and household items that they use every day (e.g. table, chair, TV, bowl) but not the items that they only use or see sometimes (e.g. locker, scales, tin opener...)

At home

- Talk about the furniture and household items in your home.
- Point out different furniture and household items when looking at pictures or photos
- Talk about the different parts (e.g. buttons, tap, dial, plug, headboard...)
- Talk about what the items do (e.g. open, chill, watch, store...)
- Talk about what they are made from (e.g. wood, plastic, metal ...)



Research and Related Reading

The key recommendations on how to support the development of children’s oral language skills can be simplified into two vital words – “quantity” and “quality”.

In terms of quantity, we know that children’s oral language skills are enriched when teachers provide many language learning experiences in the classrooms, frequently promote children’s active engagement with oral language and create many opportunities for children to communicate. We are also aware that more frequent exposures to the same oral language objective, spaced across several days, is more useful than one exposure on a single day.

Quality is typically described in the context of teacher-child interactions, rich oral language environments, and explicitly teaching oral language, instead of relying on children to “pick it up” from what they hear in the classroom.

The key recommendation on how to support the development of children’s oral language skills can be simplified into two vital words – ‘quantity’ and ‘quality’.

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Quality oral language instruction includes using evidence-based teaching methodologies such as mapping language onto what children are paying attention to, providing scaffolding for their attempts, extending their utterances, providing in-depth meanings of words, using contextual aids, ensuring multiple repetitions and reviews, and modelling the use of more complex oral language. There are numerous benefits to developing children's interest in, and engagement with new words and fostering their active involvement in the process of discovering the meanings of new words.

For further information, see the reading material suggested in the References section.

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