

# Part 1

## Children's Speaking/Listening



# 1

## Emergent Literacy

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### CONCEPT

Emergent literacy is the overall process through which young children learn to read and write in a natural, self-discovery manner that begins at birth and can continue through the preschool years and into the early elementary years with proper support. Children then continue learning these skills by being taught in a conventional manner. Literacy itself encompasses the skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Circuits in the brain are already set up for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to emerge naturally into speaking the language(s) they hear spoken around them. Children do not have to be taught language. But learning to read and write must be converted by young children into this language module of the brain by hearing and seeing language in its spoken and written forms. In other words, speaking is natural, but reading and writing are not. They have to be acquired. They can either emerge naturally if the circumstances are right or they have to be taught, or both.

Some young children seem to learn to read on their own from stories read to them, from computer programs they use, and from the printed material they see around them. But most children need adult assistance to involve them in appropriate literacy activities and to help them interpret what they are seeing and hearing. The natural emergence process occurs when children discover how to read and write on their own from these activities. The conventional process of learning to read and write occurs when teachers take charge and have children follow their directions. During the preschool years,

*Children can emerge into reading on their own with appropriate books and support.*



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| <p><b>Listening.</b> Sharpen children's abilities to attend to sounds.</p> <p><b>Rhyming.</b> Focus children's attention on ending sounds of words.</p> <p><b>Words and sentences.</b> Develop children's awareness that language is made up of strings of words.</p> <p><b>Syllables.</b> Develop children's ability to separate words into syllables.</p> <p><b>Sound matching.</b> Ask children which words start with a specific sound.</p> <p><b>Initial and final sounds.</b> Ask children which sound occurs at the beginning or at the end of a word.</p> <p><b>Blending.</b> Ask children to combine sounds to form words.</p> <p><b>Segmentation.</b> Ask children to break up words into sounds.</p> <p><b>Phonemic manipulation.</b> Ask children to say words with or without certain sounds.</p> |
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FIGURE 1-1 SBRR Direct Instructional Activities.

both processes are in play, but it is emergent literacy that should be encouraged whenever possible. Preschool children may function at either or both of these levels. If children are able to develop skills as they engage in literacy activities on their own, they are exhibiting emergent literacy. If children are taught by the teacher, they are learning through conventional teaching.

In recent years experimental research has swung away from emergent literacy and has identified a core of skills that young children need to master to become proficient readers and writers (see Figure 1-1). These strategies, known as *scientifically based reading research* (SBRR), focus on the visual and auditory processing aspects of literacy as *taught by a teacher*, whereas emergent literacy focuses on the social and meaning-based aspects of literacy as *they emerge* with a teacher's support. Many early childhood specialists now feel that a combination of the two strategies is the most effective early literacy instruction. Vukelich and Christie (2009) have developed eight basic principles of effective early literacy instruction by combining emergent literacy and SBRR. The 50 early literacy strategies included in this text expand on these ideas (see Figure 1-2).

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| <p><b>1. Early language and literacy focus:</b> Oral language; alphabet knowledge; phonological awareness; concepts of print</p> <p><b>2. Oral language foundation:</b> Have rich conversations; topical vocabularies; photo narration</p> <p><b>3. Storybook reading:</b> In large and small groups; with individuals; a variety of books; children participating</p> <p><b>4. Planned classroom environment:</b> Print-rich environment; well-stocked library; reading center; writing center; listening center</p> | <p><b>5. Emergent reading and writing:</b> Investigate books that are read; read lists, schedules, calendars; incorporate literacy into play; use shared reading and shared writing</p> <p><b>6. Direct instruction used carefully:</b> In shared reading, shared writing; in rhymes, songs, games</p> <p><b>7. Help parents support children's language, reading, and writing:</b> Connect with significant people; stress importance of home help; send books and activities home</p> <p><b>8. Assessment guided by standards:</b> State research-based guidelines</p> |
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FIGURE 1-2 Balanced Early Literacy Instruction.

### Activities

1. *Make a list of all the speaking activities involving the children and you for one week.* Be sure to include types of child-child communication and teacher-child communication. Include story reading, storytelling, dramatic play, and block play. Include any speaking activities with toy phones, microphones, tape recorders, or other specific speaking setups. Decide which of these activities promotes emergent literacy.
2. *Make a list of all the listening activities involving the children.* Include story reading and storytelling, tape, CD, or video listening, music, word sounds, animal sounds, and other specific listening activities. Decide which of these activities promotes emergent literacy.
3. *Make a list of all the reading activities involving children.* Tell how each activity promotes specific emergent reading skills.
4. *Make a list of all the writing activities involving the children.* Tell how each activity promotes specific emergent writing skills. Collect writing artifacts made by the children and tell how each demonstrates the progress of the child. Be sure to include art.
5. *Compare your results in these four areas with the charts in Figures 1–1 and 1–2.* Have you included in your curriculum all of the activities listed in Figure 1–2? Are there areas where you can improve your program?

## SUGGESTED READINGS

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- Beaty, J. J., & Pratt, L. (2011). *Early literacy in preschool and kindergarten: A multicultural perspective*. 3rd ed. Boston: Pearson.
- Vukelich, C., & Christie, J. (2009). *Building a foundation for preschool literacy: Effective instruction for children's reading and writing development*. 2nd ed. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

# 2

## Speaking Words

### CONCEPT 1

Literacy for young children begins with speaking and listening to words and sentences. Roskos, Tabors, and Lenhart (2009) tell us that oral language is the foundation of learning to read and write. For children to become literate, they need to hear language spoken around them. They need to speak it themselves. Learning the sounds of language is the key to their later recognition of written words and letters. Teachers need to spend time daily talking to individuals about things they find interesting, and motivating other children to join in the talk.

Roskos et al. also point out that from age 3 onward “children should encounter and explore at least two to four new words each day” (p. 1). When teachers use new words, they need to point them out. When children use new words, they need to be recognized and commended.

Do not correct mispronounced words. Young children need to feel confident in their early stages of language acquisition. They will hear you pronouncing the words correctly and eventually copy you. Young children learn best through play. Be sure to include many word games on a daily basis. Small groups work best so that no one needs to wait long for a turn. Make *spoken words* the core of your literacy curriculum.

*Children can learn to express their feelings in words.*



### Activities 1

1. “*Pack Your Backpack*” game. Sit in a circle with a small group and an empty backpack. Say: “I’m packing my backpack for a trip to Mars, and in it I put a \_\_\_\_\_.” Make your pretend item something the children will remember, such as “a gorilla” or “a motorcycle.” Then pass the backpack to the child next to you, having her repeat what you said and add a pretend something of her own. Keep the game going as long as the children can keep remembering the items and adding new things. Make positive comments on words the children use (e.g., “A snorkel! Isn’t that wonderful? Josh is going to take a snorkel to Mars! Can you tell the others what a snorkel is?”).
2. “*Follow-the-Leader Word Fishing*.” Lead the class around the room, one behind the other, pretending you are the captain of a fishing boat. Use an aquarium fish net if you have one. As you walk say: “Words, words, words, words. I’m going to catch a word.” As you go by the block center, pick up a toy locomotive (or bulldozer) in your net and say, “I’ve caught a locomotive, a locomotive, a locomotive.” Have everyone behind you repeat the word out loud until you put the locomotive on a table and catch a new word, perhaps a toy dinosaur, saying: “I’ve caught a tyrannosaurus, a tyrannosaurus, a tyrannosaurus.” When the children catch on, give the next child behind you the net and a chance to catch a new word. After everyone has had a turn, hold up each of the caught items on the table for the children to name. (This is a favorite game, by the way.)

## CONCEPT 2

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Brain imagery by neuroscientists has discovered that “reading relies on brain circuits already in place for language” (Shaywitz, 2003, p. 67). Teachers need to encourage children to use these language circuits even before circuits for reading are in place. Thus, young children need to become aware of the sounds of words and use them repeatedly before they encounter written words.

### Activities 2

Wonderful word sounds can be found in books that tell *cumulative stories* where words must be repeated over and over each time a new object is added. You can read the story while children join in with the repeated words.

1. Read ***The Empanadas that Abuela Made*** (Bertand, D. G., 2003, Houston: Pinata Books, bilingual). Each ingredient for the pumpkin tarts is added one by one by grandchildren, grandfather, dog, cousins, and family, as your listeners repeat the verse on every page. Do it in Spanish and your children will soon be speaking words in that language. Follow the recipe on the last page to make your own tarts.
2. Read ***The Gingerbread Cowboy*** (Squires, J., 2006, New York: Geringer). The gingerbread cowboy jumps out of the rancher’s oven and runs away from a horned lizard, a roadrunner, a band of javelinas, a herd of long-horned cattle, and finally some hungry cowboys until he is “rescued” by—yes, a coyote. Children love to repeat “giddyup, giddyup as fast as you can,” and laugh at the pictures as you flip the pages.
3. Read ***The Runaway Tortilla*** (Kimmel, E. A., 2000, Delray Beach FL: Winslow). It rolls away from two horned toads scampering, three donkeys trotting, four jackrabbits leaping, five rattlesnakes hissing, and six buckaroos loping along until Señor Coyote also fools it into rolling into his mouth.
4. Read ***Roar of a Snore*** (Arnold, M. D., 2006, New York: Dial Press). A snore wakes up Jack, so he goes searching for who is making it, waking up Blue, who wakes up Mama Gwyn, Baby Sue, Papa Ben, Josie Jo, Jenny Lynn, and all the critters in the barn, who all go searching. Children repeat the names of all the searchers every time a new one is added.

## CONCEPT 3

Other words children need to know and say out loud are emotional words from times when they are angry. The more emotional the word, the more meaningful it becomes to a child. Having children repeat emotional words aloud helps them to diffuse the emotion, but they remember the word and its sound. Children need to know as many words as possible to describe their feelings. They may not know many words that express anger. You can help by using some of the words in Figure 2–1 and helping children to say them aloud when upsetting situations occur. Feeling words can help diffuse a situation if a child says, “I’m mad!” instead of acting out the anger by yelling or hitting. These words not only help them express their anger but also help them feel better. Children like to use big words like these.

### Activities 3

Reading books about becoming angry also helps. If you cannot acquire any of these books from a library or bookstore, make up your own anger stories or bring in a pot and have a “mean soup day,” shouting angry words into the pot while stirring out the emotion.

1. Read **Mean Soup** (Everitt, B., 1992, San Diego: Harcourt). Horace has a bad day at school, so his mother puts on a pot of water to make mean soup. For the ingredients, they shout all their troubles away into the pot until they end up smiling. You can bring in a pot for pretend mean soup and have upset children shout and stir words into it that tell how they feel until they feel good again.
2. Read **Sometimes I’m Bombaloo** (Vail, R., 2002, New York: Scholastic). Katie Honor is usually a good kid, but sometimes when things do not go right she becomes Bombaloo, who shows her teeth, makes fierce noises instead of words, and throws things. What words would your children use if they were Bombaloo?
3. Read **When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry** (Bang, M., 1999, New York: Blue Sky Press). When her sister snatches her toy gorilla away, Sophie gets so angry she roars a red roar like a volcano. What anger words can your children roar?
4. Read **Grumpy Gloria** (Dewdney, A., 2006, New York: Viking Press). Here is a wonderfully funny book about a pet dog, Gloria, and all the grumpy words she feels—snort, scowl, crabby, grouchy—when the children try to have fun with her.

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|-----------|-------------|
| Mad       | Irritated   |
| Angry     | Incensed    |
| Crabby    | Exasperated |
| Cross     | Boiling     |
| Upset     | Fuming      |
| Annoyed   | Furious     |
| Disgusted | Enraged     |
| Grumpy    | Infuriated  |

FIGURE 2–1 Feeling Words to Express Anger.



## SUGGESTED READINGS

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- Kalmar, K. (2008). Let's give children something to talk about! Oral language and preschool literacy. *Young Children*, 63(1), 88–92.
- Roskos, K. A., Tabors, P. O., & Lenhart, L. A. (2009). *Oral language and early literacy in preschool: Talking, reading, and writing*. 2nd ed. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Shaywitz, S. (2003). *Overcoming dyslexia: A new and complete science-based program for reading problems at any level*. New York: Knopf.
- Vance, E., & Weaver, P. J. (2003). Words to describe feelings. *Young Children*, 58(4), 45.