



Working with

Focus on literacy: Talking and listening

Introduction

Focus on literacy: Talking and listening is a mandatory policy document for all teachers in all subject areas, from Kindergarten to Year 12.

This brochure provides training and development activities to support teachers in using *Focus on Literacy: Talking and listening*. It provides guidance on ways to teach talking and listening effectively. Learning to talk and listen effectively are lifelong processes that consist of accumulating knowledge about language and using language to fulfil social, cultural and academic purposes.

These activities address the professional development needs of teachers and can be used in a number of ways:

- at a school level, to address the focus areas identified in a whole-school literacy plan
- by a faculty or stage group of teachers
- by individual teachers, to enhance ways of incorporating focused, relevant talking and listening tasks into programs.

Activities

What are our current understandings about talking and listening in all subjects?

At a staff meeting, discuss and collate staff information and opinions about the following:

(a) Understanding about talking

In the curriculum, what do you see as the role of student talking?

(b) Understanding about listening

What do you see as the role of student listening:

- to the teacher
- to peers
- to other speakers or to electronic media?

(c) Current practices

What are current practices about talking and listening and how they are taught?

What are my current practices about the integrating of talking and listening into my teaching?

(d) Concerns

What are my main concerns about teaching students to talk and listen?

What are my main concerns about *teaching about* talking and listening?

What are my main concerns about integrating talking and listening into the curriculum?

Keep a record of the issues and concerns cited in this activity.

Talking and listening are part of being literate

Read the introduction to Australia's Language and Literacy policy, 1991, located in the Introduction.

All Australians need to have effective literacy in English, not only for their personal benefit and welfare but also for Australia to reach its social and economic goals.

Discuss the implications of this for both the curriculum you teach and the role of talking and listening in your classroom.

Talking and listening play a vital role in all learning. The skills, knowledge and understandings in talking and listening deserve the same focus in the classroom as reading and writing.

Document ways talking and listening can enhance students' opportunities for learning in specific subject areas. Document ways talking and listening will vary in different areas of the curriculum.

Talking to learn

Read the quotation on page 9 of Focus on Literacy: Talking and listening.

Discuss the role of talking and listening in students' construction of knowledge. Focus the discussion in terms of your specific areas of responsibility in relation to the students you work with. The purpose is to highlight that your role is diverse and includes building opportunities for students to talk about information and ideas in small group settings.

Read the section *Talking to learn* on p. 31. Talking and listening are crucial tools for clarifying thinking and reflecting on learning in classrooms. Talking and listening play a significant role in all subjects, as

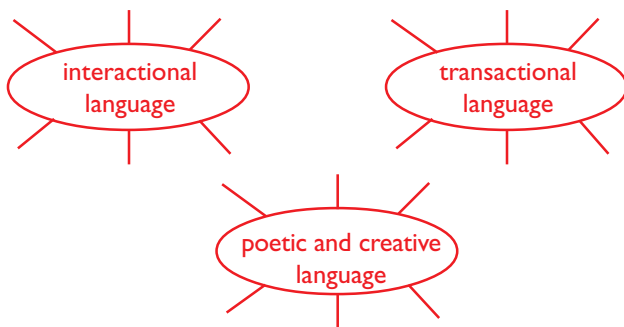
students actively transform information into knowledge.

Subject	Organisation strategies to support meaningful interaction	Building in opportunities for student to talk to learn

Types of spoken texts

Brainstorm examples of the following types of spoken texts which might be a part of your classroom activity:

- interactional language used to develop and maintain social relationships and exchange and build on ideas
- transactional language used to transfer information or exchange services
- poetic and creative language used to engage and entertain.



Social view of language

It is the purpose (**the Why?**) for talking and listening which is the main consideration for successful oral interaction. Read Chapter two.

When we consider talking and listening in the classroom we are concerned with:

- **what** is being said (the topic, sub-topics and vocabulary choices)
- **how** it is being said (e.g. sentence structure and word order, gestures, intonation, pausing and reference to any visuals)
- **who** is involved: the relationship between speaker and listener(s) in that particular context.

What are some strategies you could use in the classroom to make the *Why, What, Who* and *How* questions more explicit for students? This might involve questioning students or giving students more information.

Talk as performance



When students are speaking to class members or community members, are you confident about the amount and type of preparation that has been provided?

Assessing talk as performance

Do you already assess talk as performance?

Do you use specific criteria that have been discussed with students? Are the students aware of the criteria by which their performance will be judged?

Are the students aware of the relationship between their talk as performance and their learning?

Assessment criteria need to be clearly linked to the teaching and learning about talk as performance.

Work with a colleague to identify criteria that might be used to assess a performance.

Example of a student assessment sheet.

PUBLIC SPEAKING ASSESSMENT SHEET			
Name:			
Tick in the appropriate box for the person you are assessing.			
	Not quite	Sometimes	Always
1. Did the person speak with a clear voice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Did the person look at the audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Did the speech have an introduction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Did the speaker present a well-researched speech?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Did the speech have an ending?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Was the speech interesting to the audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Did the speaker use language appropriate to the audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Did the person speak for the required time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Did the speaker stick to the topic?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Did the speaker state his/her opinion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

An Introduction to Public Speaking for Primary School Students 35

From: *Speaking to make a difference*, Teachers handbook, 1999.

Activities

Talking with peers

Successful interaction with peers is an important aspect of talking and listening. All students need to develop ways of conversing with others.

Consider the last time you were in a task-oriented group discussion. How did you know the other group members were listening to you? Discuss with colleagues the listening behaviours that were apparent.

Did you have an opportunity to contribute your ideas? Did you have an opportunity to complete your explanations and provide relevant details?

Discuss the ways your contributions were enhanced and/or hindered.

Was the talk productive? Did you, as a group member, experience a sense of achievement?

Discuss with colleagues the relevant ways that your students:

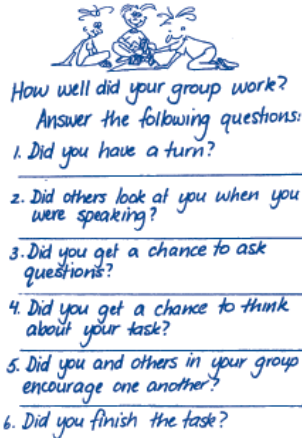
- can contribute productively to group work
- can become more active, responsive listeners
- can learn with and from other group members.

These ways will vary in range and complexity depending on the age and experience of the students you teach.

Design a reflection sheet you might use with your students. Its purpose will be for students to evaluate their role as a group member.

Collaborative learning proformas

One of the trialling teachers designed the following proformas for her students to use. It is important for students to be involved in their own learning and also to reflect on the strategies they used to negotiate meanings. Effective group work requires a clear purpose for all those involved in the task.



How well did you work with others on your team?

My role was ...

The guide
Did you ...

- make sure the task was clear to all the group?
- make sure everyone could hear you?
- make sure everyone had their say?

The scribe
Did you ...

- record all the decisions made by your group?
- write down who made suggestions?
- record information neatly?

The timekeeper
Did you ...

- keep track of the time for the whole task?
- let your group know how much time was left?
- encourage your group to stay on task?

This example is from the *English K-6 Units: Using the ESL Scales*, 1996.

Stage 2 – Cruising Through the Cosmos

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Listening

Through listening, students learn what is expected and how to act upon information and instructions. Listening is an active skill and needs to be taught as a skill in itself. Students also need to listen to the ideas and information provided by adults and peers in order to respond in a considered fashion. Responses might include silence but this would be a conscious choice on the part of the student.

In order to listen effectively, students will need relevant background information, a purpose for listening and an understanding and knowledge of the patterns and phonology of the language system.

Are you conscious of how you listen? Discuss with your colleagues various situations where you have had to listen for different purposes. Include situations where you were not familiar with the topic you were listening to.

Consider the different listening tasks you have involved your students in.

Did you explicitly teach how to listen and what cues would help?

Have you taught students how to take notes from an oral text?

In pairs, describe strategies you might try to explicitly teach specific listening skills.