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Bulletin

In the spotlight: Oral Language and Developmental Language Disorder

From the President

Elaine McLeish

This Bulletin report will be my final as the LDA President for the 2022/23 Council term. When I took on the role of President at the 2022 AGM in October, it was with a great deal of trepidation, feeling very underqualified for such a prestigious position and aware that LDA was at an important crossroads. However, I am grateful that my colleagues encouraged me to step up because I have learnt much from the experience and value the opportunity to work with such a fantastic team.

At times I felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities and the time commitment required, and I am in awe of my predecessors who often combined the Presidency with the demands of full-time employment and with minimal administrative support. Since our new General Manager, Dr Sherree Halliwell, commenced in May, we now have our entire staff complement, and Council administrative responsibilities have dropped enormously. As Sherree puts it, Council members no longer need to waste their time "stuck in the weeds" but can rely on our efficient staff to find the way through them.

We are fortunate to have three such dedicated staff in Sherree, Hema Desai (Education Manager) and Bec Rangas (Business Administrator), who all go above and beyond in their efforts for our organisation. Sherree and Hema have gone way above and beyond recently in providing cover for Bec during her seven weeks' leave, and we greatly appreciate this.

You will undoubtedly have noticed the impressive amount of excellent professional development opportunities we now have on our calendar, thanks to the tireless efforts of Hema in collaboration with the PD Committee. Hema has been preparing monthly eNews and generating regular social media posts to promote our events. These sessions to date have received tremendous support from members and non-members and much positive feedback. They have also generated a gratifying increase in membership. We are confident of your ongoing support as we further expand our offerings to meet your PD requirements, including a new On Demand Platform currently in the pipeline, which will significantly increase our reach. Hema is currently planning two Conferences in October and November, exploring potential sponsors for events, and thinking ahead about plans for next year. She is also working closely with our Bulletin editor, Julie Scali, on potential links between Bulletin articles and PD events.

Other news from Council

The Awards Committee is busy judging the 2023 Mona Tobias, Bruce Wicking, and Tertiary Student Awards nominations; the Consultants panel have decided on the Rosemary Carter Award recipient, our AJLD editor has decided on the Eminent Researcher Award recipient and is assessing Early Career Researcher nominations. These awards give important recognition to individuals whose achievements have made a difference to the whole education community. Stay tuned for announcements about all of this year's recipients.

To support the work of our Bulletin Editor, Sherree has recruited a copyeditor who will join LDA as a contractor on a fixed fee-for-service basis.

Representatives from LDA Council and Consultants recently met with an Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) project team on Engaged Classrooms to discuss classroom challenges when engaging students with Learning Difficulties. This meeting was an opportunity to share perspectives and inform the work.

Our Vice President, Dr Robyn Wheldall and Secretary, Steph Murphy, have prepared a submission from LDA to the National Schools Reform Agreement (NSRA)

Our other Vice President and Convenor of our IT Committee, Geoff Ongley, continues to work indefatigably on improvements to our website and also contributes an enormous amount of time and expertise to IT support for our online Professional Development and across other areas of the organisation. I can't imagine what we'd do without him.

Sherree is preparing a draft of a Strategic Plan for the Council to review, with strategic priorities for sustainability and growth and operational recommendations.

We are again planning for another hybrid AGM, which will be at our traditional venue, the Treacy Centre in Melbourne, on Saturday, October 14th. It is an excellent opportunity to catch up with people and make new connections. As is customary, there will be a presentation by the Eminent Researcher and other award recipients.

Information about nominating for the 2023/24 Council will be circulated to all voting members in mid-August, allowing sufficient time for an election in mid-September if required.

I look forward to seeing many of you in person at the AGM.

Best wishes
Elaine

Elaine McLeish is enjoying retirement from a long teaching career in primary and special education and as an LDA Consultant. She has a strong history of active contributions to LDA, serving as the LDA Referral Officer and Administration Officer for the Consultants Committee for many years. She has recently contributed as Convenor of the Consultants Committee, Vice-President, and Acting Treasurer. She is a Life Member of LDA

Elaine is also actively involved with her six grandchildren and divides her time between suburban Northcote and the wild coast of Cape Paterson in Victoria.

Consultant notes

Dr Anne Bellert, Consultant Committee Convenor

The Consultants' Committee has been steadily busy over the last few months, doing the work required of us. We have had a number of enquiries about becoming a consultant and, happily, three of these have eventuated into new consultant members. The consultant application approval process requires us to collaboratively review the submitted documents, check referees and process the paperwork to 'sign off' on new members. The committee identified some potential inconsistencies in the interpretation of current guidelines about required qualifications for new consultant members. This is something we intend to clarify soon; in order to ensure the wording we use in new consultant application guidelines is relevant both for teachers and speech and language therapists, and that the 'high bar' for LDA consultants and the reputation and integrity of the role is upheld.

By the time you read this, I think many of you will have attended some of the excellent PD that LDA offers throughout the year. We have one numeracy professional learning event scheduled – Sarah Wedderburn's 'Making Maths Real and Fun' for September, and another informative presentation by Dianne Dawson about the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) policy and practices, was run in July. Most of the remaining PD opportunities for this year focus on writing – and many of them will be concluded by the time this column goes to press.

The scope of these presentations – handwriting, text analysis, text construction and fiction writing in secondary school; provide an excellent and varied range of options for consultants to learn more about supporting students writing in a wide range of contexts. I hope you've been able to attend at least some of these PD events. As always, we are very keen to know what you thought of the presentations and how useful and relevant they are in relation to your practice as consultants. So please don't hesitate to give us some feedback.

I am really looking forward to the 2023 LDA Conference *Best Practice using an RTI (Response to Intervention) Framework* on 28 & 29 October. As I'm sure many of you are aware, the keynote presenter, Dr Anita Archer is a renowned educational consultant to school districts on explicit instruction, the design and delivery of instruction, behaviour management, and literacy instruction. I will be very interested to hear how she positions explicit instruction within the Responsiveness to Intervention (RtI) framework and I'm sure her address, along with the presentations of the other speakers will be of great interest to consultants, not least in helping you understand what is not happening in some schools. All too often, the students that end up needing extra support for learning are 'instructional casualties' whose learning needs are not met at school due to ineffective Tier 1 and Tier 2 practices. So, I'm keen to hear what Anita has to say about this!

I hope the last of the wintertime is kind to you, and that you are having a successful year as a consultant. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with the Consultants Committee; through your network or directly, if you have any questions or requests.

Dr Anne Bellert
Consultants Committee Convenor.

Are you interested in becoming a Consultant Member of LDA?

Consultant Membership is a special category of LDA membership, currently open to Specialist Teachers and Speech Pathologists with training in the learning difficulties area and experience in teaching and consulting with students with learning difficulties.

In addition to standard membership benefits, Consultant Membership provides:

- Recognition of your expertise in the LD field
- Inclusion in a Consultant Network Group
- Eligibility for inclusion in the LDA Online Referral Service

For more information about becoming a Consultant Member, please contact our Consultant Convenor at *consultant.convenor@ldaustralia.org* or phone Elaine McLeish on 0406 388 325.

We would love to hear from you!

In this issue of the Bulletin...

Julie Scali, Editor, LDA Bulletin

I am pleased to share with you our *Oral Language and Developmental Language Disorder* edition of the Bulletin. Oral language is the foundation of all literacy success and a predictor of later social skills. This edition focuses specifically on the why and what of best practice in oral storytelling instruction, language difficulties students experience, as well as considerations and recommendations for small group intervention.

Students come to school with a wide range of oral language experiences. Despite this, even children who experience the most language-rich early childhood backgrounds have a vast gap between their spoken vocabulary and the complexity of vocabulary required in understanding written texts, in even the simplest picture books. In this edition, Trina D. Spencer and Chelsea Pierce provide a practical approach in bridging this divide through oral storytelling as a best practice approach for classroom instruction. They explain the positive impact upon not only reading and writing, but also as a protective behaviour for students. It is an excellent read and I am delighted to be republishing this piece.

Our feature piece of this edition is 'Identifying and Supporting the 1 in 14 Students with Developmental Language Disorder' by Shaun Ziegenfusz. This article outlines the large number of students in our classrooms with a widely unknown disorder- Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). Shaun outlines indicators for identifying students with DLD, how to support students in the classroom, as well as suggestions for raising awareness and recommended resource links.

The second piece is entitled, "The Oral Narrative Intervention Programme – A Tier 2 small group intervention for 5–6-year-olds with storytelling difficulties".

It is written by Laura Glisson and outlines the impact of implementing oral narrative interventions in mainstream classrooms and contexts. She outlines that the explicit teaching of narrative macrostructure can have a significant impact on the development of other literacy areas

Following on from this article, Kathryn Thorburn outlines 'Oral Language and Communication in the K-2 classroom' that suggests recommendations for early assessment screening in schools, positive oral language additions to the latest NSW English curriculum, as well as promising research based on the Nuffield Early Language Intervention in a Newcastle school.

Of equal interest in a broader sense and not specifically oral language focused is a piece on an *'Introduction to multi-tiered system of supports'*. This guide for school teachers and leaders, highlights how schools can provide evidence-based literacy and numeracy support in secondary schools. It is the work of Adam Inder, Tess Marslen and Dan Carr from AERO.

To wrap-up, this edition also includes a book review entitled 'Effective Instruction in Reading and Spelling. Edited by Kevin Wheldall, Robyn Wheldall, Jennifer Buckingham, this text combines decades of scientific research about how children learn to read with teaching methods that have the strongest evidence of effectiveness, into a practical guide on how to plan and implement high quality literacy lessons. It is an excellent read for teachers and learning support specialists alike, and is in my opionion an essential inclusion in every early childhood and primary teaching preservice university degree.

I would also like to thank the wonderful staff and students of St Luke's in Woodvale, Perth; for allowing us to go into a classroom to take photographs of an oral storytelling session in action, for this Bulletin edition. You are superstars!

I hope you enjoy the wonderful contributions of this Bulletin. Happy reading!

Julie Scali
Editor, LDA Bulletin

Julie Scali is the Director of Literacy Impact, specialising in structured literacy and Response to Intervention. A former deputy principal in Australia, she now works with principals, school leaders and teachers with consultancy, professional learning and online modules to embed schoolwide evidence-based literacy approaches.

Identifying and supporting the 1 in 14 students with Developmental Language Disorder

Shaun Ziegenfusz

Understanding and speaking are powerful abilities for every student, as language is the primary modality for teaching and learning. Human brains are 'wired' to learn language. Other neurological pathways are also integrated to produce truly amazing skills, such as learning to map language into its written form through reading and writing. However, approximately 1 in 14 students have a condition called Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) that impacts their ability to understand and/or use spoken language for no known reason (Calder et al., 2022; Norbury et al., 2016). Their difficulties with language do not go away over time and are not associated with learning other languages. The term DLD was developed through an international consensus study in 2017 (see Bishop et al., 2017) and replaces previous terminology, such as specific language impairment, language learning impairment, and language delay.

Students with DLD are capable of achieving at school when the right supports are in place…

DLD has lifelong implications. Many students with DLD experience lower academic achievement than their non-DLD peers, which impacts their ability to acquire vocational qualifications and skilled employment as adults (Conti-Ramsden et al., 2018). In a systematic review of 44 studies, students with DLD demonstrated challenges across all areas of the curriculum measured, including reading, writing, spelling, narratives, and numeracy (Ziegenfusz et al., 2022). Students with DLD may follow a delayed pattern of academic achievement, as they demonstrated skills expected of students in younger grades at school. There was also individual variability with some students achieving like their non-DLD peers, while others performed lower than the expected achievement standard. Academic achievement is associated with long term mental health (Conti-Ramsden et al., 2019); students with DLD may struggle with social-emotional wellbeing (e.g., anxiety, depression) and require a high level of support or adjustment to access the talking based therapies used to treat these needs.

Identifying Students with DLD

DLD is described as a 'hidden disability', because the signs are often not always obvious. Students with DLD can talk, but may require support with:

- Following instructions
- Answering questions
- Learning new words
- Putting words together in spoken sentences
- Telling stories
- Reading
- Writing

A primary student with DLD may struggle to follow a teacher's instruction (e.g., "before we go outside, you need to put your pencil case away") or use shorter and simpler sentences than their peers when speaking (e.g., "he kick ball" instead of "he kicked the ball to his friend"). High school students with DLD may need more instruction than their peers to learn new vocabulary (e.g., hypothesis, extrapolation) and withdraw from social situations. DLD frequently occurs with other developmental conditions, such as: ADHD, specific language disorders (SLD) in reading, writing and mathematics, developmental coordination disorder/dyspraxia. These conditions will often be identified before the student's challenges with language.

It is recommended a student is assessed by a speech pathologist if they present with:

- obvious difficulties with speech, language or communication
- persistent challenging behaviour
- departures from typical development in other areas of growth or learning (e.g., fine and gross motor) in under 5 year olds
- persistent difficulties with understanding and/or using language.

Access to speech pathology services in schools is highly variable across Australia. Some education systems will fund speech pathologists to work in schools alongside teachers, while others do not.

Teachers can support the referral process by writing down their observations of the student's language, literacy, and learning to share with the speech pathologist. Teachers may also include further evidence to support the referral by using a language screening tool, such as the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals – 5th Edition Screening Test or SLS (Student Language Scale) Screener for Language and Literacy Disorders.

Speech pathologists are the primary diagnosticians for DLD. A diagnosis of DLD can be provided when the student's language skills are lower than would be expected for their age and environment, the difficulties are persistent, and have a functional impact on their day-to-day life (e.g., learning at school, participating at work). DLD is diagnosed when a student's language difficulties are not due to another biomedical condition, such as autism, intellectual disability, or sensori-neural hearing loss.

Supporting Students with DLD

Students with DLD are capable of achieving at school when the right supports are in place to enable them to access learning like their peers. For children who receive a diagnosis of DLD, it is important for teachers and speech pathologists to collaborate to support their learning. Teachers are experts in delivering the curriculum in a classroom setting, while speech pathologists have critical skills in language and literacy development (Archibald, 2017). Developing a plan and working together with the family will be key to the success of students with DLD. While DLD isn't as visibly present as a hearing aid or a wheelchair, there is still a lot that can be done to make adjustments in the classroom setting.

Language is powerful, but it is also fleeting.

When supporting students with DLD to learn, consider how to make language as tactile and visible as possible. Language is powerful, but it is also fleeting. Spoken words linger momentarily before disappearing and students are required to use their memory to retain and digest the information. By including writing, drawing, photos, gestures and sign language, the students have a concrete representation of language to affix their learning too. When giving students with DLD instructions, ensure they are listening, order information chronologically, and be concise. Then allow the student time to process and respond. Students with DLD often need multiple opportunities to learn new words (vocabulary). Some words

might pertain to the topic (e.g., maths or science terminology), while others might be the cognitive verbs required to complete a task (e.g., discuss, compare). Explicitly teach these words using word banks, mind maps, and personal dictionaries.

Literacy instruction will help develop spoken language. The language, which students with DLD experience in a textbook or poem, is very different to the conversational and instructional language used at home, school, and in the community. Explore different types of words (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs), and use these opportunities to extend spoken and written language. Teach the elements and structures unique to different texts and discourse, such as narratives, persuasions, and expository. Students with DLD can benefit from structuring their thoughts before undertaking writing tasks (e.g., drawing, note taking). Support the student with DLD to self-advocate. Whether by asking for repetition or clarification, or putting strategies in place for teachers to monitor their comprehension in the classroom. Some students with DLD self-report that if they put up their hand every time they needed help, they would spend all day with their hand in the air. Consider using a small gesture (e.g., thumb up) or a stationery item to notify the classroom teacher to check in. Finally, and most importantly, build a partnership with the student with DLD. Listen to their thoughts and opinions, then work together to implement adjustments and accommodations. Students with DLD often know what support they need in school, if only teachers and speech pathologists took the time to listen.

Raising Awareness of DLD

It is critical for teachers to know about DLD. The world is becoming increasingly DLD aware through initiatives, such as Developmental Language Disorder Awareness Day, which is celebrated in October (see www.RADLD.org). Help spread the word by getting involved and sharing information on social media or at work. In schools, it is important for students with DLD to access the adjustments and accommodations they need to achieve academically. Evidence based information, resources, and training continue to be developed and shared to inform how to best support students with DLD. Learn more about DLD by accessing the recommended resources below and share these materials with colleagues.

Resources

The DLD Project, *thedldproject.com*, including:

- Free professional development: *thedldproject.com/course/what-is-language-what-is-dld/*
- The Talking DLD Podcast: *thedldproject.com/developmental-language-disorder-dld/the-talking-dld-podcast/ or major podcast apps*
- Free resources: *thedldproject.com/families/resources-for-families/*

Raising Awareness of DLD: *www.radld.org*

Nationally Consistent Collection of Data: *www.nccd.edu.au/professional-learning/classroom-adjustments-developmental-language-disorder*.

"I've Still Got It Haven't I?": DLD in Older Children and Adolescents: *linksresources.com.au/index.php/product/free-download-ebook/*

Shaun Ziegenfusz is the Co-CEO/Co-Founder of The DLD Project, a speech pathologist, and Lecturer at Griffith University. He is a member of the Raising Awareness of Developmental Language Disorder International (RADLD) Committee. Shaun is passionate about blending clinical experience and research to support students with DLD and their families. His PhD research investigates the academic achievement and necessary supports for students with DLD from the perspective of key stakeholders.

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The Oral Narrative Intervention Programme – A Tier 2 small group intervention for 5 to 6 year olds with storytelling difficulties

Laura Glisson

Introduction

Oral narrative is the ability to tell and retell a series of causally related events in sequence, and include information about setting, character, and a central plot or theme (Glisson, Leitão and Claessen, 2019). The understanding and production of oral narrative discourse is crucial to support everyday interactions (Colozzo, Gillam, Wood et al., 2011; Fey, Catts, Proctor-Williams et al.,2004), for later academic and linguistic success (Petersen, 2010; Westby, 1985) and for supporting oral and reading comprehension development (Cain & Oakhill, 2007; Catts & Kamhi, 2005).

…many school-aged children experience oral narrative difficulties…

Oral narrative skills involve the use of macrostructure (setting, initiating event, character response, and resolution) and microstructure (complex morpho-syntax features like compound sentences, adverbial phrases) (Cortazzi & Jin, 2007; Petersen, 2010; Westby, 1985).

Typically, children develop mature narrative macrostructure around age five (Applebee, 1978; Westby, 1985; Stein & Glenn, 1979). However, many school-aged children experience oral narrative difficulties including children with developmental language disorder (DLD), children from low socio-economic backgrounds, and children from linguistically diverse backgrounds (Colozzo et al., 2011; Pearce, Williams & Steed, 2015; Petersen & Spencer, 2016). These children's narratives may show weak macrostructure (illogical sequencing of events, leaving out elements of a story, and reduced length of narratives), and/or microstructure (reduced sentence length and complexity, and reduced lexical diversity) (Colozzo et al., 2011; Fey et al., 2004). Thus, narrative is often the focus of speech pathology and educator programmes (Cirrin & Gillam, 2008; Ebbels, McCartney, Slonims, Dockrell, & Norbury, 2017; Petersen, 2010).

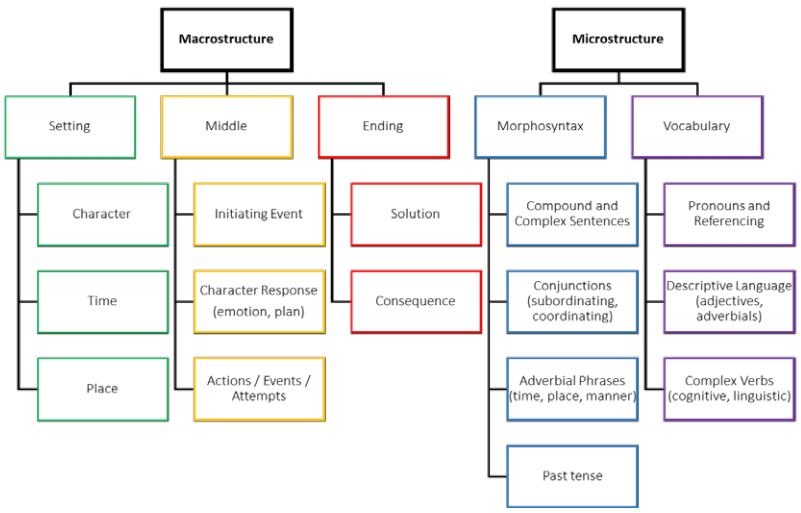

Figure 1. Problem-resolution narrative structure (Glisson et al, 2017)

A systematic review by Petersen (2010) revealed that narrative-based interventions had a moderate to large effect (*d* =.73 – 1.57) on narrative macrostructure. Effective interventions involved explicit macrostructure teaching and repeated storytelling with visual aids such as icons, and graphic organisers including story boards and planners. However, microstructure improvement results were mixed, with effect sizes varying from negative to positive (Petersen, 2010). Effective procedures for microstructure were reported as strategically modelling and eliciting correct language forms using vertical structuring and focused stimulation (Petersen, 2010). The review recommended treating narratives as a functional language target and using repeated story retelling and macrostructure focus as effective techniques.

Two prominent research groups have completed further investigation on the effects of narrative-based language intervention for pre-school (Petersen & Spencer, 2016) and school-age children (Gillam & Gillam, 2016) with language difficulties. The programmes evaluated in these studies - Story Champs (Spencer & Petersen, 2012), and Supporting Knowledge in Language and Literacy (SKILL; Gillam, Gillam & Laing, 2012) - both include the use of icons, teaching scripts, and story boards, to teach narrative macrostructure explicitly, repeated opportunities for storytelling and retelling using picture prompts, and the creation of parallel stories.

…narrative is a core focus of the Australian curriculum…

Given that narrative difficulties are present in many at-risk school-aged populations (Colozzo, et al., 2011; Pearce, et al., 2015; Petersen & Spencer, 2016), and that narrative is a core focus of the Australian curriculum, speech pathologists and teachers are increasingly implementing oral narrative interventions in mainstream classrooms and contexts. With an ever-increasingly 'crowded' curriculum, many teachers do not have the time to plan for explicit teaching (and intervention) for all areas of oral language (i.e., receptive and expressive semantics, syntax, morphology and discourse level skills). With the research suggesting that intervention focusing on explicit teaching of narrative macrostructure incorporating graphic organisers and repeated modelling and retelling of stories, could have a significant impact on the development of complex linguistic features (microstructure), in addition to macrostructure, further investigation is warranted.

The Research Project

The present study aimed to develop and evaluate the researcher-developed Oral Narrative Intervention Programme (ONIP) - a manualised, small group oral narrative intervention approach, with an explicit focus on macrostructure, and carefully scripted implicit language facilitation procedures targeting microstructure. It was hypothesised that this intervention, delivered in small groups to young children with delayed oral narrative abilities in a mainstream context, would lead to:

1. Statistically significant improvement in the inclusion of macrostructure elements in single-picture narrative generations;
2. Statistically significant improvement in the inclusion of narrative microstructure features (conjunctions, adverbials, adjectives and complex sentences) in single-picture narrative generations; and
3. Clinically significant improvement in overall oral narrative ability as measured by pre- and post-intervention scores on the Test of Narrative Language (TNL, Gillam & Pearson, 2004).

Following a pilot with eight mainstream participants (aged 5;0-6;0), in which six made clinically significant improvement as measured by the Test

Session	Intervention Focus
1	Introduction to overall narrative macrostructure. Book 1: Wombat Stew.
2	Explicit teaching of setting (when, who, where) – key focus 'who'. Book 1: Wombat Stew.
3	Explicit teaching of setting (when, who, where) – key focus 'where'. Book 2: Monkey Do!
4	Explicit teaching of setting (when, who, where) – key focus 'when'. Book 3: The Very Hungry Caterpillar.
5	Explicit teaching of central plot - 'initiating event', 'internal response' and 'plan'. Book 4: Edwina the Emu.
6	Explicit teaching of 'actions/attempts' in the middle of the story. Book 1: Wombat Stew.
7	Explicit teaching of central plot - 'initiating event', 'internal response' and 'plan'. Book 4: Edwina the Emu.
8	Explicit teaching of story ending - 'solution/resolution' and 'consequence'. Book 4: Edwina the Emu.
9	Consolidation of overall narrative macrostructure. Book 4: Edwina the Emu.

Table 1. ONIP phase one intervention structure

Session	Intervention Focus
10-12	Book 5: Rhino's Great Big Itch • First session: Book share protocol, story board, modelled and shared retell with visual and gestural support. • Second session: Book share protocol, picture sequencing and recalling text, modelled, shared and individual retell with visual and gestural support • Third session: Book share protocol, picture sequencing and recalling text, modelled, shared and individual retell with visual and gestural support.
13-15	Book 6: The Very Cranky Bear (session structure as above)
16-18	Book 7: Possum Magic (session structure as above)

Table 2. ONIP phase two intervention structure

of Narrative Language (TNL: Gillam & Pearson, 2004), the ONIP was evaluated with 11 pre-primary participants (four girls and seven boys) aged 5;0 to 5;11 (mean age of 5;7) recruited from a West Australian school (Glisson, 2017). Utilising a Phase 1 efficacy study, a multiple baseline single case experimental design (SCED) was used (Beeson & Robey, 2006). Participants were drawn from a mainstream, middle-range socio-economic school where no additional speech pathology services were being provided and typical classroom practice did not include the explicit teaching of narrative beyond the basic 'beginning', 'middle' and 'end' and weekly storybook reading. Following a selection process, including consent and standardised testing of narrative abilities, 11 participants with the lowest TNL-Narrative Language Ability Index (NLAI) scores were included. Additional standardised testing was administered prior to the intervention beginning; and included a) the core subtests from the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI; Wechsler, 1989) to assess non-verbal IQ; b) the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test 4th Edition (PPVT-IV; Dunn & Dunn, 2007) to assess receptive vocabulary, and c) the Expressive Vocabulary Test, 2nd Edition (EVT-2; Williams, 2007) to assess expressive vocabulary. These data sets were used to provide more information on participant language profiles, and not as part of any inclusion/exclusion criteria. See Glisson, Claessen & Leitão (2019) for further details.

The ONIP was delivered by the primary researcher in small groups for 30-45-minute sessions, three times a week for a period of six weeks (total of 18 sessions). The ONIP included two phases of intervention:

- Phase One focused on the explicit teaching of narrative macrostructure and introduction to the therapy procedures and contexts - including repeated book shares, graphic organisers, narrative icons and "stepping out" stories
- Phase Two focused on applying knowledge of narrative macrostructure, to support the retelling of children's books, with modelling of microstructure.

Tables 1 and 2 summarise the intervention structure of the ONIP.

The key intervention procedures and strategies in The ONIP included:

- Explicit teaching with learning intentions, success criteria and a gradual release of responsibility to teach narrative skills and concepts
- A metalinguistic approach to increase children's awareness of narrative macrostructure using teaching scripts, icons and gestures, and storybooks
- A book share protocol to support text comprehension
- Multiple opportunities to listen to and engage in storytelling
- The use of familiar children's storybooks as a context through which to teach macrostructure elements and for retelling stories
- Modified scripts of the storybooks during modelled and elicited retells
- Scripted contingent responses and cueing hierarchies for macrostructure targets
- Scripted implicit grammar facilitation techniques, which respond to a child's errors in a naturalistic way, and include recasting, expansion and vertical structuring for microstructure targets
- Active listening strategies, including routines for "whole body listening" and the use of narrative icon checklists/charts when listening to peers

For details of scripted lesson plans, contingent responses, cueing hierarchies and examples please access the manual freely at *www.trackstoliteracy.com/product-page/the-oral-narrative-intervention-programme-the-onip*.

Single-picture narrative generation samples were elicited repeatedly throughout the baseline and treatment phases; and again post-treatment to evaluate the outcome of the intervention. Statistical and visual analysis of the data revealed that participation in the programme resulted in significant changes with moderate to large effect sizes for most participants in the number of macrostructure elements, conjunctions and adverbs included in their narrative generation samples. Further, analysis of pre-post standardised narrative data revealed clinically significant improvements for 9 of the 11 participants. (For full details of the study, access the thesis at the following link *espace.curtin.edu.au/handle/20.500.11937/59145*.)

P	Age (years; months)		NLAI		Percentile Rank		Clinical Category		Hypothesis Confirmed / Unconfirmed
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	
1	5;6	5;9	85	106	16	65	Below Ave	Ave*	Confirmed
2	5;1	5;5	46	61	<1	<1	Very Poor	Very Poor	Unconfirmed
3	5;0	5;2	73	103	3	58	Poor	Ave**	Confirmed
4	5;6	5;10	82	94	12	35	Below Ave	Ave*	Confirmed
5	5;1	5;5	85	91	16	27	Below Ave	Ave*	Confirmed
6	5;3	5;6	91	97	27	27	Ave	Ave	Unconfirmed
7	5;4	5;7	73	91	3	27	Poor	Ave**	Confirmed
8	5;8	6;1	55	73	<1	3	Very Poor	Poor *	Confirmed
9	5;3	5;6	70	85	2	16	Poor	Below Ave*	Confirmed
10	5;3	5;6	70	106	2	65	Poor	Ave**	Confirmed
11	5;11	6;1	88	106	21	65	Below Ave	Ave*	Confirmed

Notes. P = Participant; TNL = Test of Narrative Language; NLAI = Narrative Language Ability Index; NLAI descriptions = >130 = very superior, 121-130 = superior, 111-120 = above average, 90-110 = average; 80-89 = below average, 70-79 = poor, <70 = very poor; Ave = Average; * = shift in one clinical boundary; ** = shift in two clinical boundaries.

Table 3. Pre- post intervention TNL - NLAI scores

Discussion

This study revealed that the ONIP resulted in a generalised improvement for nine of the eleven participants on a standardised assessment (TNL; Gillam & Pearson, 2004), indicating a clinically significant effect. Additionally, the results revealed statistically significant improvements with a moderate to large effect for seven of the eleven participants on inclusion of macrostructure elements. For the inclusion of microstructure features, the results were more varied. The ONIP resulted in a statistically significant effect for seven of the eleven participants on the number of conjunctions, and five of the eleven for adverbs, but only three improved in the total number of adjectives and none in complex C-units. This finding could be considered an artefact of the design of the narrative scripts, which included more examples of conjunctions and adverbs to link the events and actions, and less of adjectives and complex C-units. As such, this may have impacted on the frequency of these features being modelled to the participants, in turn impacting on the effectiveness of learning these targets.

Adapting The ONIP for whole class (Tier 1) instruction

Classroom teachers and speech pathologists across several countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand and Australia, have implemented The ONIP with adaptations for whole class, small group and individual contexts with a range of student groups. While these adaptations have not been formally evaluated, research evidence for oral narrative instruction and intervention more broadly, in combination with The ONIP can be used to inform practice. When adapting The ONIP for use in the classroom, in individual intervention sessions or with students with different diagnoses, the following principles of intervention are recommended:

1. Use icons, gestures and graphic organisers to explicitly teach narrative macrostructure elements and show how these elements are organised to create a cohesive narrative.
2. Support students to tell, retell and generate many stories that follow a narrative structure, with reducing visual support and scaffolding over time.
3. Include explicit and contextualised teaching of microstructure (vocabulary and morpho-syntax) within the narrative context, along with strategic modelling and elicitation of correct language forms using story scripts, recasting, vertical structuring and focused stimulation.

(For further information on how to implement and adapt The ONIP please access the intervention manual and a 75-minute webinar for free at the Tracks to Literacy website: https://www.trackstoliteracy.com/.)

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P	(H1)	(H2)	(H3)			
	TNL – NLAI	TMSS	Conjunctions	Adverbs	Adjectives	Complex C-units
1	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✗
2	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
3	✔	✗	✔	✔	✗	✗
4	✔	✗	✔	✔	✗	✗
5	✔	✔	✔	✗	✗	✗
6	✗	✔	✔	✔	✔	✗
7	✔	✔	✔	✔	✗	✗
8	✔	✔	✔	✗	✗	✗
9	✔	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
10	✔	✔	✗	✗	✗	✗
11	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✗
Total	9/11	7/11	8/11	6/11	3/11	0/11

Notes. P = participant; H1 = Hypothesis One; H2 = Hypothesis Two; H3 = Hypothesis Three; TNL = Test of Narrative Language; NLAI = Narrative Language Ability Index; Macro = Macrostructure; ✔ = hypothesis confirmed = moved clinical boundary/ies, significance using 2SD-band method or PND >70%; ✗ hypothesis unconfirmed = did not move a clinical boundary, non-significance using 2SD-band method or PND <70%.

Table 4. Summary of hypotheses (confirmed or unconfirmed)

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Classroom-based oral storytelling: reading, writing, and social benefits

Trina D. Spencer and **Chelsea Pierce**

The notion that speaking and listening skills are a necessary foundation for reading and writing is well established and pervasive in our nation's academic standards (see Figure 1; National Governors Association, Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Students' listening comprehension significantly predicts their reading comprehension (Babayiğit et al., 2020) and expressive language (i.e., speaking) fosters writing performance (Bishop & Clarkson, 2003). Extensive research documents the central role of oral language skills such as vocabulary, discourse structures, and grammatical knowledge for literacy development (Kim et al., 2015; Lervåg et al., 2018).

…students with disabilities experience difficulty learning oral language naturally…

U.S. students represent a diverse group with distinct differences in preparation for the oral language demands of academic environments. For example, many students with disabilities experience difficulty learning oral language naturally (Norbury et al., 2016), which negatively impacts their attainment of reading and writing skills (Bishop & Clarkson, 2003; Mackie et al., 2013). Students who speak a non-English language or a non-mainstream dialect of English at home may enter U.S. schools with less experience in the language (and type of language) in which reading and writing instruction takes place. The effects of poverty can also exacerbate students' oral language differences (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2013). Without the foundational oral language skills firmly established, students struggle to acquire successful reading and writing repertoires (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011, 2019).

Early oral language skills are one of the best predictors of later social skills…

In addition to its pivotal role in the development of reading and writing, oral language is necessary for social interactions and social–emotional well-being. Early oral language skills are one of the best predictors of later social skills (Pace et al., 2019) and difficulties expressing one's self is linked to behavior problems (Chow et al., 2018). Without regular exposure to sophisticated school language due to the COVID pandemic, students' oral language acumen, especially as it relates to social–emotional development, is suffering. Oral communication and social exchanges are further inhibited by wearing masks. As a result, schools (over 90% of respondents) are concerned about the impact of reduced oral language exposure on students' language and social development (Bowyer-Crane et al., 2021).

Given the large percent of students who would benefit from intentional oral

language instruction (Kieffer & Vukovic, 2012; Nakamoto et al., 2007) and the enormity of the current pandemic context, it can be overwhelming for teachers to address the diversity of students' needs in their classrooms. Avoiding the suggestion that teachers need to become language experts, science of reading experts recommend teachers focus on a few critical oral language repertoires, which include vocabulary, grammar and syntax, and text structures (Cervetti et al., 2020; Phillips Galloway et al., 2020). This cluster of language features is often referred to as academic language.

…it can be overwhelming for teachers to address the diversity of students' needs in their classrooms.

As opposed to conversational language, academic language is primarily used in school to acquire and express knowledge (Snow & Uccelli, 2009) and involves "word-, sentence-, and discourse-level language patterns" (Phillips Galloway et al., 2020, p. 331). Although there are some differences between oral and written academic language, there are also shared features. As a result, oral academic language has been identified as a pivotal skill repertoire (Snow & Uccelli,

2009) for boosting reading and writing achievement among all students. Knowledge of vocabulary, sentence structures, and discourse patterns aid social communication too.

The case for narratives

Schema theory (Mandler, 1984) posits a cognitive bridge between oral and written language that results from shared features. Whether spoken or written, narratives share word-, sentence-, and discourse-level patterns (Pinto et al., 2015), and therefore, form a suitable bridge for transferring oral academic language to written modalities (Spencer & Petersen, 2018b; Westby, 1994). This theoretical framework is bolstered by numerous correlational and causal investigations. For example, early narrative language predicts academic achievement (Bishop & Edmondson, 1987), especially reading comprehension in the fourth, seventh, and tenth grades (Snow et al., 2007), and writing (Kim et al., 2015). There is also convincing evidence that narrative-focused oral interventions improve students' reading comprehension (Clarke et al., 2010; Petersen et al., 2020) and writing skills (Petersen et al., 2022; Spencer & Petersen, 2018b).

Narrative has many definitions, depending on which discipline and literature are consulted. Sometimes, narrative is referred to as a genre in parallel to exposition (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014); sometimes, narrative is a device for making sense of emotionally charged experiences and trauma (Richardson, 2000) or a basic principle of mind that organises our thinking (Turner, 1996). For classroom purposes, we choose to define a narrative as the monologic telling or retelling of a real or imaginary past event, with causally related elements presented in temporal order, in spoken or written form. Simply put, narratives are stories.

Storytelling is a common communication modality that emerges as young as 2-year-old in typically developing children (McCabe, 2017). The plot of the story requires proper sequencing of macrostructural episodic components—problem, action, consequence—to give an organisational backbone to it. Additional components include character, setting, feeling, complication, and resolution or ending. These elements are arranged according to rules about their order and grouping called story grammar (Stein & Glenn, 1979). Story grammar provides the latticework of generative language much like a trellis offers a stable structure around which ivy grows. The story grammar framework of narratives has been adopted by U.S. schools and is pervasive in the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association, Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Explicit or tacit understanding of narratives at the discourse level is necessary to understand literature at all levels of complexity.

Narrative elements within the story grammar framework form a useful schema (Mandler, 1984) that helps to order causally and temporally related events, but comprehension also requires knowledge of words and sentence structures. Because listeners and readers are naïve to a storyteller's experiences, narratives necessitate the use of sophisticated, descriptive language (i.e., narrative language). For example, storytellers make use of causal and temporal subordinate clauses, as well as elaborated noun phrases, adjectives, and adverbs to paint clear pictures for their listeners or readers (Benson, 2009). In addition to the word-, sentence-, and discourse-level patterns available, narratives naturally integrate several cognitive abilities such as attention, memory, inferencing, and theory of mind (Curenton, 2011). As students learn to understand and produce narratives, they simultaneously learn to orchestrate the converging cognitive and linguistic processes needed for skilled reading and writing.

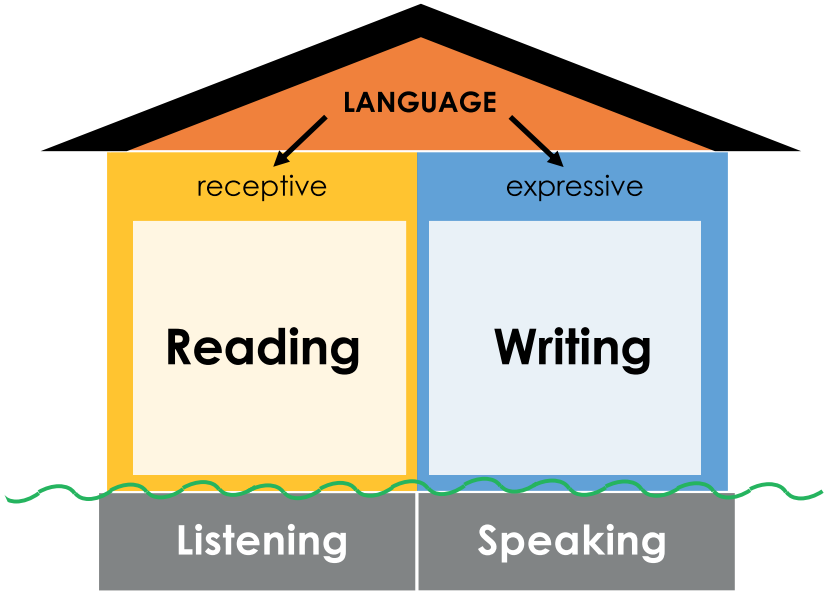

Fig 1. Listening and speaking as the foundation of reading and writing

Storytelling is fun, ubiquitous, culturally flexible, and socially important.

While the link to reading comprehension and writing is convincing by itself, there are additional reasons to use narratives in the classroom. Storytelling is fun, ubiquitous, culturally flexible, and socially important. The natural consequence of telling a story is attention, which is the most common form of approval. Children want to tell stories and gain approval from adults (e.g., "How was your day?") and peers (e.g., "That happened to me once."). Parents of children with disabilities wish for their children to be able to report about school events (Pituch et al., 2011) and children who are good storytellers are more popular among peers (McCabe & Marshall, 2006). Students do not need to be cajoled during storytelling exchanges because they generally enjoy talking about preferred topics or themselves. Furthermore, stories about personal experiences are the most common type of narrative children produce (Preece, 1987), making the teaching of narrative skills immediately useful for social contexts. Narrative communication could be leveraged to express trauma or report abuses, thereby providing a layer of protection for children (Fong et al., 2020). Although there can be cultural differences in storytelling styles and structures, narratives are common in most cultures (Westby, 1994) and can be tailored for cultural, personal, and situational relevance (Curenton, 2006, 2011).

In typical development, narratives and the academic language features are

established in students' oral language repertoires before they are expected in informational discourse and written form (Curenton, 2011). Oral language skills acquired through parents' bedtime stories and book reading are later integrated with students' code skills (i.e., decoding and spelling) to convert oral language experiences into written language success. However, students without oral narrative proficiency may struggle to make that conversion when written text is present. Similarly, students without fluent word reading skills may miss opportunities to advance their academic language. A series of studies led researchers to conclude that "comprehension-building interventions may be most beneficial when presented in a format that does not require extensive other skills such as decoding" (van den Broek et al., 2011, p. 265).

There is also the issue of cognitive load. When students are asked to work on word reading and comprehension at the same time and their decoding is not automatic, all their cognitive energy is spent on decoding with little left for comprehending. If comprehension is worked on without text, then their attention is reserved for learning vocabulary, sentence structures, and discourse structures that will transfer to written language when their code skills are proficient (van den Broek et al., 2011). Finally, students are less likely to resist oral language tasks, especially oral storytelling activities, because they are generally easier, more fun, and perceived as more relevant and useful (Curenton, 2006).

Recommendations for infusing oral storytelling in classrooms

In the remainder of this article, we present seven recommendations for infusing oral storytelling in classrooms. Because we focus on the practical and implementable aspects of oral storytelling, there is insufficient space to cover the theoretical and empirical grounding for each of the recommendations. Nonetheless, schema theory (Mandler, 1984), theories of learning (Engleman & Carnine, 1991), and an extensive research base related to effective instructional design (e.g., Watkins & Slocum, 2004) and narrative-based interventions (Favot et al., 2020; Pico et al., 2021; Stetter & Hughes, 2010) informed their selection for inclusion here. The specific recommendations were chosen because they can be put into practice tomorrow without extensive preparation or the purchase of materials.

Teach using retelling, then generalise to personal and fictional generations

Retelling is considered one of the most valid methods of measuring comprehension, whether one hears or reads a passage (Reed & Vaughn, 2012). It is a critical skill that integrates both listening for understanding and then expressing one's understanding. Working on retelling, at a minimum, sharpens students' ability to listen for patterns in stories and then organise their understanding using the relations between story events.

As retelling is a critical comprehension skill, necessary for both oral and written language comprehension, it is a great place to begin. However, in the context of oral storytelling, retelling is considered a stepping stone to more complex expressions of oral language such as personal and fictional stories. It is easier to begin teaching narratives (i.e., discourse structure) and narrative language (i.e., vocab and complex sentences) within the context of story retell activities before transferring students' knowledge of narrative to the creation of their own stories. After retelling a modeled story, teachers can ask students, "Has something like that ever happened to you?" and provide support as students generate personal stories (Spencer & Slocum, 2010).

…we present seven recommendations for infusing oral storytelling in classrooms.

Because personal stories are the form of communication students are most likely to use with friends and family, students who learn the linguistics of personal stories (e.g., past tense, first person) can put it into practice immediately. Personal stories are also needed to express emotions and report adverse experiences. Once students regularly tell personal stories, they are

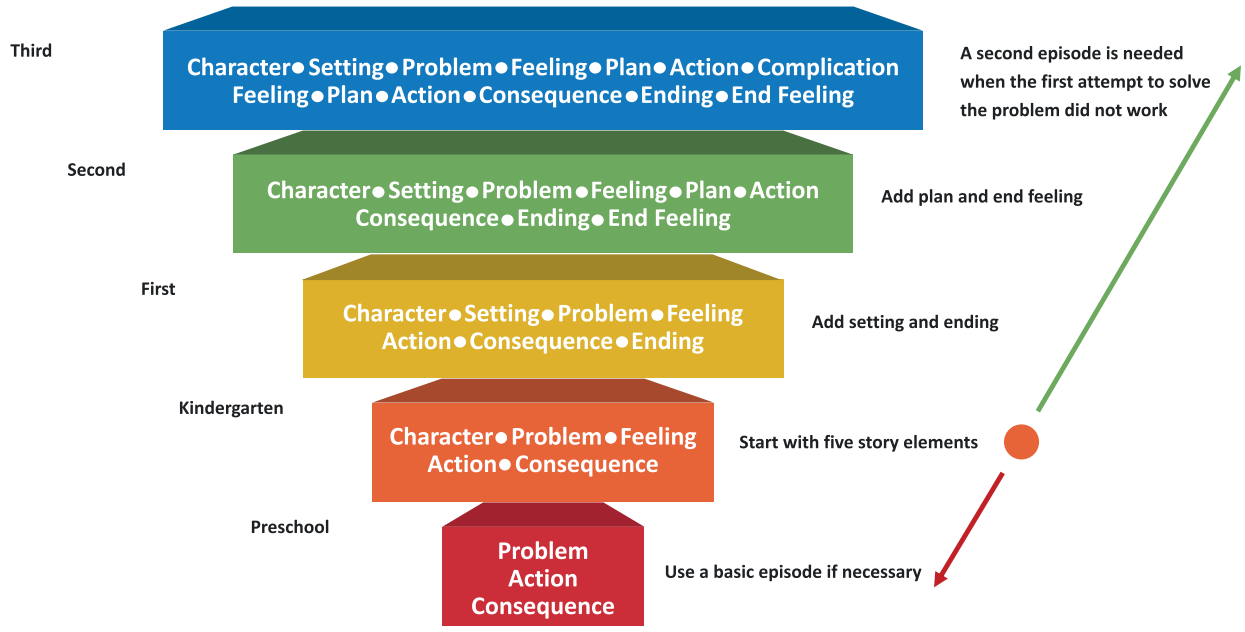

Fig 2. Story Grammar Framework

ready to create fictional stories, which are in higher demand at school. If students can develop personal and fictional generation skills via oral language, they will be better prepared to engage in personal and fictional writing tasks.

Model simple stories and increase their complexity over time

To not overwhelm or frustrate students with nascent oral language repertoires, begin with short, simple stories. Because retelling is an expressive language task dependent on a listening task, it involves the integration of cognitive-linguistic repertoires. It is truly a complex academic skill to retell something. Students benefit from the language they hear when someone reads to them; however, children's literature is not developmentally appropriate for students' expressive language (Curenton & Craig, 2011).

For story retelling activities, teachers should choose stories that are more difficult than what the students can decode but not as complex as what adults would read to them. Selecting the right type of story can be nuanced, which is why some published storytelling interventions include short and simple stories for retell practice (e.g., SKILL, Gillam & Gillam, 2016; Story Champs, Spencer & Petersen, 2018a). It is not imperative to use commercialised narrative programs. What is important is that students begin with a length and complexity of story within their zone of proximal development. In other words, select, create, or adapt stories that students may struggle to retell themselves, but can retell with teacher support. As students gain confidence and proficiency, increase the length and complexity of the stories in terms of narrative structure, complexity of sentences, and novelty of vocabulary.

For young children (e.g., 3 to 5-years old), students with significant disabilities, and those with limited English proficiency, we recommend starting with short (about 50–70 words) stories that contain all the main story grammar elements (i.e., character, problem, feeling, action, consequence). Only if necessary, should model stories be reduced to the most basic story components of problem, attempted action to solve the problem, and the consequence of that action (see Figure 2). Story grammar elements should never be taught in isolation because it removes the purpose for the story and voids the activity of meaning, and purpose and meaning promote motivation and generalisation (Gillam & Ukrainetz, 2006).

Once students can independently retell a simple story with the five main parts, add the setting and ending. As students become proficient, longer stories with more story grammar elements can be used (e.g., complication, plan, resolution, end feeling). Eventually, storybooks or students' classroom curriculum can be used to help extend their newly acquired narrative knowledge and oral academic language skills to less contrived contexts. Starting with simple stories help students experience success and acquire the academic language skills needed to be successful with more challenging narratives.

One pitfall that should be avoided is continuing intervention with simple stories for too long. They are necessary to begin with, but the complexity of model stories should increase gradually over time (Spencer & Petersen, 2020). If teachers do not modify the difficulty of stories students are asked to retell, learning stagnates. To avoid this, teachers should monitor individual students' retelling skills and adjust the stories and intervention accordingly. Free narrative retell assessments are available at www.languagedynamicsgroup.com as part of the CUBED suite of literacy assessments. Each grade level (preschool to third) set of the Narrative Language Measures Listening includes 22–25 stories with easy-to-use scoring rubrics. Teachers can use whatever grade level that developmentally appropriate for individual students to monitor their progress or to inform differentiated instruction.

Explicitly teach story grammar

When students understand the narrative discourse structures, it becomes easier to teach and practice other forms of complex language. The story grammar framework should be explicitly taught to students so that they can retell stories that include all the episodic features and as many additional story grammar elements as possible. Narrative structure does not take very long to establish so once students know the main parts of the story appropriate for their grade level (see Figure 2 for structures aligned with grade-level expectations), teachers can begin prompting students to use longer and more complex sentences and less common words. These sophisticated sentence structures are considered literate language because they are more common in written narratives (Benson, 2009). Therefore, teaching and practicing them through an easier modality (i.e., oral) will decrease the demands of understanding complex sentences when they appear in written material.

It is important that storytelling remains fun for students and they are successful so the demands should be increased gradually. These are also areas in which differentiation can occur. For example, all students in the large or small group can be expected to retell a story with the five main parts, but some students can be prompted to use complex sentences or precise vocabulary (e.g., splashed, filthy). As soon as students are ready and capable, they should be prompted to use causal and temporal subordination and elaborated noun phrases. See Figure 3 for examples of these complex sentences.

Use visual when possible

Icons, gestures, illustrations, photos, props, and videos can all be used to support students' storytelling. Ideally, there is one image for every story grammar element included in a model story, at least in the beginning. If the five main story elements are taught, including character, problem, feeling, action, and ending, then five images will help students to use at least one sentence per picture.

The fading of visuals within every intervention session helps to facilitate students' independence…

When students generate their own stories, teachers can draw the students' story parts on a white board or sticky notes. This strategy is known as pictography and can be a fun way to capture students' narrative creations (Gillam & Ukrainetz, 2006). Icons or symbols can facilitate learning the story grammar framework (Pico et al., 2021), making the abstract schema more concrete for students, especially those with disabilities (Spencer et al., 2013). In some storytelling interventions, students make gestures to correspond to the story parts (see video demonstrations at www.languagedynamicsgroup.com).

As students retell the model story, icons or gestures offer some support but less than illustrations or pictures. Illustrations and pictures

would correspond to a specific story, whereas icons and gestures can be used generically with any story. Likewise, icons or gestures can serve as prompts for students as they generate personal or fictional stories.

Visuals are powerful prompts for teaching narratives, but to avoid prompt dependency, they should be faded as quickly as possible. This is because in typical reading comprehension and writing tasks, students do not routinely have the benefit of visuals. Fading of any visual supports will prepare students for the higher demands of reading and writing. Ideally, students will be able to retell a story they heard (or read) independently and to generate personal and fictional stories in oral and written form. The fading of visuals within every intervention session helps to facilitate students' independence with these tasks, as well as sharpen cognitive repertoires.

Figure 4 shows an example of steps for retelling while fading visual supports. These steps have been used in several storytelling intervention studies with great success and with a wide range of students (Spencer et al., 2013, 2020).

Use effective and efficient prompts to individualise

Even when visuals are used, teachers will need to consistently model the language they want students to produce and prompt them to imitate the target skills. We recommend a simple, two-step prompting procedure to provide students with the right level of support, without frustrating them with lengthy least-to-most prompt hierarchies. For prompting students to include a story grammar element they may have forgotten (e.g., action), teachers can first ask a whquestion related to that part (e.g., "What did he do to fix his problem?"). If the student can retell the missing part with just the question, they can continue with the story. However, if the question prompt is ineffective, the second step is to model what the student should say and ask them to repeat the model (e.g., "He asked his mom for a bandage. Now you say that.").

If a student uses a simple sentence when the teacher expects a longer more complex one, the recommended prompt is to model what the student should say and ask them to repeat it (e.g., "Say it like this. Listen. He was sad because he fell."). The same type of model-imitate prompt can be used to get students to use specific vocabulary words (e.g., "He splashed into the puddle. You say it like that."). The models and what teachers expect of students should be shortened or lengthened according to students' individual abilities.

Promote generative language not memorisation

It is imperative that teachers promote generative language rather than memorisation during storytelling activities. There are several ways to avoid leading students into rote learning. First, model different stories in consecutive intervention sessions. The goal is for them to learn the underlying structures of stories and the language patterns used to tell stories generally. These are abstract concepts and students need multiple examples of stories with those patterns to understand them (Spencer & Petersen, 2020). That is not to say that stories can never be repeated. When it is time to increase the complexity of models, return to stories used previously, but make them longer or require the students to use longer sentences or less common vocabulary words. That way, there is something new to learn even when they know the gist of the story.

Second, vary the sentences that students are prompted to say. There are many sentence patterns students need to learn. The more patterns they learn the more likely students will recombine learned clauses to produce novel sentences. For example, students can say, "He fell in the mud." or "He got all dirty because of the mud." or "Mud was all over him." All of these sentences describe the problem of the story using different sentence patterns.

Third, reinforce and praise response variation and novel sentences students produce. Even if it is not the most complex sentence, if a student recombines words and patterns in a manner they have never heard

EXAMPLES OF
Complex Sentence Structures

CAUSAL SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

- Javon was frustrated **because** he could not reach his hat.
- Maria went to her grandmother's house **so that** she could help her clean.
- David was bored **since** he could not play on the tablet.

TEMPORAL SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

- **When** Javon stood on a stool, he could reach his hat.
- Maria got to eat cookies **after** she helped clean her grandmother's house.
- **Before** David could play on the tablet again, he had to do his homework.

ELABORATED NOUN PHRASES

- Javon, **who was short for his age**, could not reach his hat in the closet.
- Maria quickly ate cookies **that her grandmother made**.
- David could play on the tablet again, **which was his favorite thing to do**.

Fig 3. Examples of Complex Sentence Structures

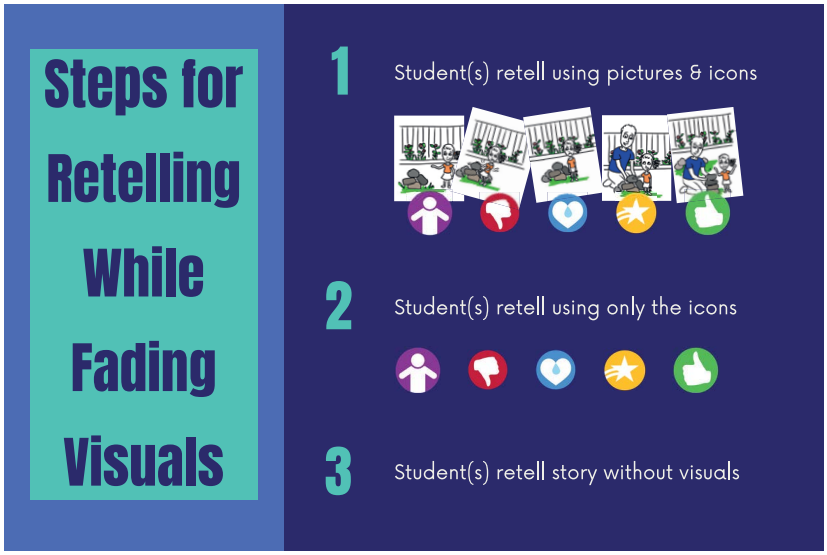

Fig 4. Example Steps for Fading Visuals

before, this is generative language and warrants celebration.

Extend storytelling into classroom routines and beyond the classroom

Once students learn the storytelling basics, students' narratives can take on many forms and functions, and storytelling activities can occur anywhere and anytime. For instance, narratives may include storylines about relevant social situations such as bullying, peer pressure, and tattling. Teachers can craft their own stories to be relatable to their students and teach problem solving. Just as students can learn the social–emotional content embedded in narratives, cultural expectations and traditions can be transmitted through storytelling. Teachers can give students opportunities to tell stories that originate from their family's culture, as many students are exposed to oral storytelling traditions at home (Au, 1993). Consider drawing ideas for stories to use in the classroom from cultural activities students engage in at home.

The only critical feature is that students should have many opportunities to tell and retell stories.

Storytelling activities do not need to be limited to teacher–student interactions either. Students can be divided into pairs to take turns retelling a story (e.g., turn-n-tell). During snack or lunch time, students can tell each other stories. Partner retelling can be incorporated into transition times such as when students must wait or move from one activity to another. This type of "transition listen" is a way to embed storytelling into less structured parts of the daily routine while still making the time productive.

Students can be encouraged to tell family members stories they learn in class. If sticky notes were used during intervention, students can take their pictography home. They should be allowed to tell the stories to family members in whatever language is most comfortable for them. Because storytelling relies on cognitive schemas, once established they are present in all the languages students use.

Finally, oral storytelling can be done remotely (e.g., Zoom, Teams). Teachers can use short YouTube videos, images in PowerPoint slides, or Boom! decks to prompt a virtual storytelling exchange. Teachers can start by creating (or reading a prepared story) and then have students take turns retelling it or generating a story for the whole group, as partners in breakout rooms, or to a family member. The possibilities are endless. The only critical feature is that students should have many opportunities to tell and retell stories.

Wrap up

There is a clear, urgent need to address oral academic language in schools due to its integral relation to reading and writing. A focus on narratives offers a promising approach for accomplishing this. We presented oral storytelling as a versatile option for promoting academic language of diverse students and offered recommendations for getting started. Although the recommendations are supported by a solid experimental literature (Favot et al., 2020; Pico et al., 2021; Stetter & Hughes, 2010) showing the effects of monolingual and bilingual oral storytelling interventions on listening comprehension, vocabulary, personal generations, reading comprehension, and writing of students in preschool to third grade, with and without disabilities (Gillam & Gillam, 2016; Hessling & Schuele, 2020; Petersen et al., 2020, 2022; Spencer et al., 2013, 2020), the true test will be in its transportability to real-world classrooms. Teachers are invited to explore how oral storytelling activities can enhance their literacy instruction and examine the extent to which narratives bridge oral and written language.

The additive social–emotional benefits of oral storytelling should not be underestimated. Although the research base is less developed for social domains, a focus on narratives may simultaneously promote social skills and language development. We know that children who can tell stories proficiently are able to express emotions and report abuse (Fong et al., 2020). As a sense-making device, storytelling can help children understand the world and heal from trauma (McCabe, 2017). At this time when students' oral language and social–emotional development is at serious risk, an approach that can enhance students' social well-being, in addition to their academic achievement, is sorely needed.

Take action!

Guidelines for putting oral storytelling into action in your classroom:

1. Teach using retelling, then generalise to personal and fictional generations
2. Model simple stories and increase their complexity over time
3. Teach story grammar before complex sentences and vocabulary
4. Use visuals when possible, but fade them
5. Use effective and efficient prompts to individualise
6. Promote generative language not memorisation
7. Extend storytelling into classroom routines and beyond the classroom

Conflict of interest

Dr. Spencer is an author of a commercialised narrative program and receives financial benefits related to its sale. Copyrighted images have been reproduced with permission. The authors did not receive funding from

public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors to write this article.

More to explore

Published narrative studies, syntheses, infographics, and video demonstrations: *TrinasToolbox.com*
Free narrative retell assessments and video demonstrations: *www.languagedynamicsgroup.com*

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Oral language and communication in the K-2 classroom

Kathryn Thorburn

The NSW K-2 English Syllabus[1] implemented in 2023, introduces for the first time Oral Language and Communication and Vocabulary outcomes in the Early Years. The structure of this new Syllabus is in alignment with well-attested theories on the science of reading. The Simple View of Reading[2] states that reading comprehension is a product of two components: word decoding and oral language comprehension. In Scarborough's Reading Rope,[3] the two components are illustrated as two main strands. The word recognition strands (e.g., phonological awareness and decoding) and the oral language comprehension strands (e.g., verbal reasoning, vocabulary, language structures) develop in tandem and "weave" together over time with teaching and practice, leading to skilled reading. Prior to the implementation of the new syllabus, many schools have made the shift to using explicit systematic synthetic phonics approaches to teach word reading skills. However, less focus has been placed on supporting oral language in the classroom in preparation for the development of reading comprehension.

Current research indicates that 20% of Australian children at the age of 4 have below average oral language skills.[4] There are also reports of a substantial gap between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged counterparts on oral language skills. Early intervention has the potential to narrow this gap. There is extensive evidence from research suggesting that oral language skills at the time of school entry will impact literacy success.[5] There is a very strong case for adding a screening tool for Oral Language (eg. CUBED Narrative Language Measures) to the Universal Screening Battery that many schools are embracing for reading (e.g. DIBELS, Acadience Reading).

There are also reports of a substantial gap between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged counterparts on oral language skills.

There is well documented evidence[6] that speaking and listening skills are necessary foundations for reading and writing. Expressive language fosters writing performance and a students' listening comprehension significantly predicts their reading comprehension. In addition, oral language is necessary for social interactions as well as social emotional wellbeing. In fact, early oral language skills are one of the best predictors of later social skills and difficulties expressing oneself is linked to behaviour problems.[6]

The Oral Language & Communication outcomes are much broader than the previous Talking and Listening Outcomes. This change also acknowledges that students can communicate without talking. Within the syllabus there are access content points for including students working below Early Stage 1 along with Complementary Content which details how a student using an alternative communication form can be achieving the outcomes.

As many teachers may already have realised, the content within the Oral Language and Communication

Outcomes can be achieved at many points of time across the day, embedded across KLAs and during tasks both inside and outside the classroom. Students use their Oral Language skills across the entire school day. The ability to listen for understanding is a key skill when participating in PDHPE, participating in a science experiment, or solving a problem in mathematics. The content does not have to be exclusive to the English Syllabus.

Similarly, the outcome content, Social and Learning Interactions can be observed and measured, not only during whole group learning time but also during small group tasks, developmental play, navigating peer interactions in the playground, negotiating group dynamics during games of soccer or handball at lunchtime or participating during sport. When formally assessed by a Speech Pathologist, these skills may be referred to as pragmatics.

The syllabus sees the addition of Oral Narrative to the content of the Oral Language and Communication Outcome. This is a welcome addition, since in typical development narratives (the ability to tell a story) and the academic language features required to do so, are established in students' oral language repertoires before they are expected in informal discourse and written form.[6] The content within this outcome provides a bridge, to support development of skills that underpin reading comprehension and writing success. 'If comprehension is worked on without text, then the student's attention is reserved for learning vocabulary, sentence structures and discourse structures that will transfer to written

language when their code skills are proficient.'[6] This allows for minimisation of cognitive load; since, when a student is required to read the text, prior to developing automaticity with decoding, little cognitive energy is available for comprehending.

The ability to retell a story is considered one of the most valid methods of measuring comprehension, whether one hears or reads a passage.[6] Furthermore, retelling is an expressive language task dependent on a listening task. It involves the integration of cognitive-linguistic repertoires; therefore, it is truly a complex academic skill to retell something.[6] In the classroom, the best starting point is to teach using retelling, then generalise to personal and fictional narratives.

There are three commonly accepted types of oral narrative; personal, functional, and imaginative. The ability to tell a personal narrative involves the generation of a prose narrative relating to personal experience, such as sharing what happened on the weekend. A functional narrative is generated when a student uses oral language to convey information, and instruction or explanation for a specific purpose; such as explaining how to pack away a game. An imaginative narrative is fictional. It may draw upon real life for inspiration but is essentially a story about an imagined world with made up people, places and events.[6] When focusing on oral narrative skills via narrative retell in the classroom, all aspects of the Oral Language & Communication outcomes are being addressed, since it integrates both listening for understanding and then expressing one's understanding through the student's response.[6]

At present the typical support model for oral language in NSW Schools is a parent paid, 1:1, withdrawn, Tier 3 style model; delivered by private speech-language pathologists. Many schools and students in regional areas are unable to access Speech Pathology services due to costs and availability. Schools in NSW also do not typically employ speech-language pathologists on staff. In 2023-2024, Hunter Christian School, a K-12 single stream Independent School in Newcastle is implementing the Nuffield Early Language Intervention as part of the AISNSW School Based Research Grant program. There are two components being delivered with kindergarten students (first year of school); a class teacher delivered, whole class NELI and an intervention NELI incorporating both small group and individual sessions, delivered by a teacher aid. Given that NELI adapts evidence-based intervention approaches frequently observed in speech-language pathology practice and provides clear instructions for use by adequately trained learning support and teacher aides, an added value of NELI is that it also helps build capacities of school staff with regard to supporting children's oral language and early reading development.

This project involves a small pilot replication of the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) Tier 2 Small Group program developed by Dr Silke Fricke (University of Sheffield), Dr Claudine Bowyer-Crane (NIESR) and Professors Margaret Snowling and Charles Hulme (University of Oxford). Longitudinal studies with the NELI program in schools across England have shown that small group intervention focusing on oral language in the first year of formal schooling can improve oral language skills.[5,7,8] In addition, there is emerging evidence that implementation of the NELI program is positively impacting behaviour and psychosocial development.[9] The new Oral Language and Communication Outcomes in the K-2 Syllabus include content related to oral language for social and learning interaction which is directly related to psychosocial development.

...the pilot project being run is anticipated to be cost effective and hence sustainable.

In 2020, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department for Education provided £9 million for schools to access the NELI programme in the academic year 2020/21. Dr Gillian West and Professor Charles Hulme at the University of Oxford, with funding from the Education Endowment Foundation, developed online materials so that school staff could easily be trained to deliver the NELI programme. Over 6,500 schools (40% of schools with Reception pupils in England) registered to receive NELI. The development of these online resources and training now makes implementation of NELI in Australian schools more viable.

In 2010/11 the *Nuffield Foundation* funded a randomised controlled trial in 15 early years settings to evaluate NELI. This research involved comparing the gains in language skills made by children who received NELI to those who did not. The children who received NELI made significantly more progress in their language skills, compared with children who did not receive the programme. Following this, the Education Endowment Foundation [10, 11, 12, 13, 14] funded two further randomised controlled trials, both independently evaluated. The report on the latest and largest trial, *published in May 2020*, involved 193 primary schools. Staff in the intervention schools received face-to-face training from Elklan using materials designed by the developers.

- The trial found that children receiving the NELI programme made the equivalent of **+3 additional months' progress** in oral language skills compared to children who did not receive NELI.
- Children receiving the NELI programme also made more progress in early word reading (+2 months) and children with English as an additional language benefited just as much from the programme as native English speakers.
- It received 5 out of 5 on the *EEF padlock scale* which means we can be very confident in the results of the evaluation.

In addition to evidence on the efficacy of NELI, modelling has been completed to determine its cost effectiveness[9, 11, 12, 13, 14]. Overall, the costs are estimated as very low. There are few, if any, direct financial costs associated with the program. Therefore, the pilot project being run is anticipated to be cost effective and hence sustainable.

With the implementation of the NSW K-2 English Syllabus, Classroom teachers are supported with a curriculum that aligns to Scarborough's Reading Rope and current research evidence. The opportunity to support both oral language and word decoding skills within a whole class context means that all students can benefit and those requiring additional intervention can be supported on a foundation of rich whole class oral language instruction and experiences, optimising outcomes for all.

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Kathryn Thorburn is a dual qualified Speech Pathologist and Teacher with a Masters in Special Education. She has 25 years experience as a Speech Pathologist and runs a small private practice, Language and Learning. Kathryn has 20 years experience in education, she is a NESA accredited teacher and has taught in mainstream classroom & school executive roles in NSW Department of Education, and AISNSW schools across K-12.

She has worked in an Education Officer: Developmental Disabilities Role within Catholic education, piloted a Rehabilitation - Education Liaison Role for the Hunter New England Paediatric Brain Injury & Rehabilitation Teams and has more recently been involved in the curriculum reform process with NESA for K-2 & 3-6 English. Kathryn is providing expert mentor support for the Hunter NELI project as part of the AISNSW School Based Research Project.

Kathryn understands first-hand the demands placed on classroom teachers, she strives to make the complex practical and to support schools in supporting learners in the most effective, time and resource efficient manner possible.

For more info, check out www.languageandlearning.com.au

Introduction to multi-tiered system of supports

Adam Inder, Tess Marslen and **Dan Carr**

This guide is for secondary school leaders and teachers looking to better support Years 7 to 9 students struggling with foundational literacy and numeracy skills. It is primarily aimed at those able to make whole-school decisions. It makes recommendations based on the best available evidence. Early foundational literacy and numeracy skills include those that are expected to be developed through primary school as per the Australian Curriculum, including:

- reading fluency
- word recognition
- written expression
- reading complex texts
- spatial reasoning
- counting and solving number problems.

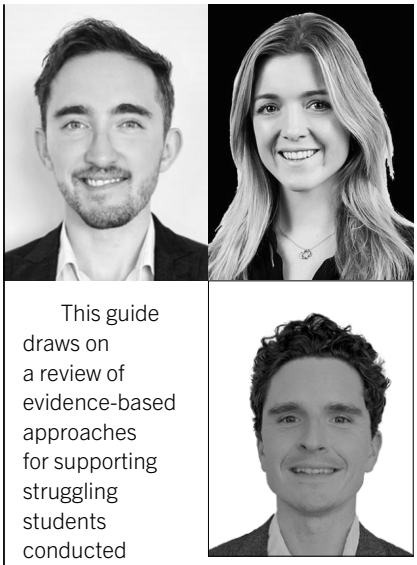
How these 'struggling students' are defined differs across systems and schools. One way of estimating the number of students in this group is to look at the share of Australian students who do not exceed the national minimum standards in NAPLAN testing (including those who are exempt from testing). By Year 9, this group consists of one-fifth of all students for numeracy and a quarter for reading.

Regardless of how they are defined, students arriving in secondary school who have not developed foundational literacy and numeracy skills will, without significant support, struggle to participate in classes that require them to engage with more complex materials and topics. These students must be identified early and receive support tailored to their learning needs.

This guide introduces the **multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)** model and explains how it can be applied in secondary schools. MTSS is a tiered model of instruction and intervention that starts with high quality core classroom instruction. Guidance for quality core instruction can be found in AERO's *Tried and Tested Guides*. MTSS also includes universal student screening, evidence-based interventions provided on a sliding scale of intensity, and progress monitoring of students receiving intervention. MTSS has evolved from the concept of 'Response to Intervention' (RtI), a tiered model of intervention provided on a sliding scale of intensity, which gained popularity after its introduction into US legislation in 2004. Since 2004, MTSS, a more comprehensive model than RtI, has become the dominant conceptualisation of intervention internationally. A tiered intervention approach is data driven, allowing all students access to intervention based on need. This emphasises equity by replacing models where access to interventions is restricted based on disability or the personal characteristics of students. Data-based decision-making offers a framework for organising interventions, communicating transparently about foundational skill development, monitoring, and celebrating student progress.

MTSS has evolved from the concept of 'Response to Intervention' (RtI).

Providing effective intervention must be part of a wider approach to delivering whole-school, evidence-based instruction and intervention. Before developing an approach to intervention, school leaders should also ensure they have a whole-school vision and school-wide, evidence based instructional model, as well as buy-in for collecting and using data to drive decisions and practice.



This guide draws on a review of evidence-based approaches for supporting struggling students conducted by Monash University, supplemented by additional cited guidance. Note that some of the examples offered may not apply in all school contexts, and professional judgments should be made where necessary to ensure the best possible support for students with disability. This resource is the first in a series that will provide guidance on how Australian secondary schools can best support struggling students.

Multi-tiered system of supports

MTSS is a tiered model of instruction that includes:

- a school-wide, multi-level system of instruction
- high-quality classroom instruction
- universal student screening
- evidence-based interventions provided on a sliding scale of intensity
- continuous, data-based progress monitoring.

High quality, evidence-based Tier 1 instruction is the foundation of MTSS. Tier 1 refers to the instruction that the whole class receives. If secondary students have already mastered foundational literacy and numeracy skills, most, if not all, will respond well

to evidence-based Tier-1 instruction in all subjects. This includes practices such as explicit instruction, spacing and retrieval, and formative assessment. For more information on evidence-based Tier 1 practices, visit the *AERO Practice Hub*. In an MTSS model, all students are screened to determine their capability in reading, writing and mathematics. The resulting data is used to inform whether students require intervention and for those that do, to tailor the intervention offered.

Tier 2 intervention involves intensifying support for students with knowledge or skill gaps that prevent them from responding to quality Tier 1 instruction. This involves the use of evidence-based instructional practices and empirically validated interventions in a small group setting.

Students who do not respond to Tier 2 intervention will require **Tier 3** intervention, which intensifies support further by increasing frequency or lowering the ratio of students to staff in small-group instruction (1:1 instruction also being an option).

Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions should be delivered by a staff member trained in an evidence-based reading, writing or mathematics intervention. Interventions should be time-limited and have clear goals and entry and exit criteria that indicate when students will no longer need support in the specific skill or knowledge targeted.

For more on Tier 2 and 3 interventions, see AERO's *MTSS evidence snapshot*.

Providing Tier 2 and 3 support is not the same as making disability adjustments, which some students require in addition to, or in lieu of intervention. Students can present in Year 7 with foundational knowledge gaps for a variety of reasons, including disrupted schooling, disengagement from learning and having English as an additional language or dialect. A collaborative effort between school leadership, classroom teachers and intervention support practitioners is required to ensure every student is offered adequate support.

Intervention is not differentiation.

Evidence from implementing MTSS in primary schools suggests that high-quality Tier 1 instruction is sufficient on its own to support approximately 80% of students to make adequate progress with no additional support. This means that 20% of students are likely to need additional support on top of Tier 1 instruction. Across secondary schools, the number of struggling students can vary significantly. For schools with larger proportions of struggling students on entry to the school, the number requiring Tier 2 and 3 interventions may be larger. However, the larger the number of these students, the greater the benefit to further focussing on foundational skills in whole-class Tier 1 instruction. If schools find that a growing number of students between Years 7 to 9 are requiring Tier 2 and 3 support, an investigation of the pedagogical practices used in classrooms (as part of Tier 1 instruction) should be undertaken to ensure all teachers are implementing evidence-based practices with fidelity.

How does MTSS relate to differentiation?

Intervention is not differentiation. Differentiated instruction can be defined as a flexible approach to teaching in which a teacher plans and carries out varied approaches to the content, the process, and/or the product in anticipation of or in response to student differences in readiness, interests, and learning. In MTSS, differentiation occurs within Tier 1. The purpose of universal screening is to identify students who, in addition to receiving differentiated instruction of secondary curriculum, require targeted interventions to address gaps in foundational skills.

These may include:

- providing skill-building in reading (for example, vocabulary and the reading of complex texts)
- writing (for example, written expression)
- mathematics (for example, conceptual understanding of equivalent fractions).

Teaching these skills to a minority of students as part of Tier 1 instruction in a secondary classroom goes beyond differentiation and adjustment may not be a reasonable expectation of teachers.

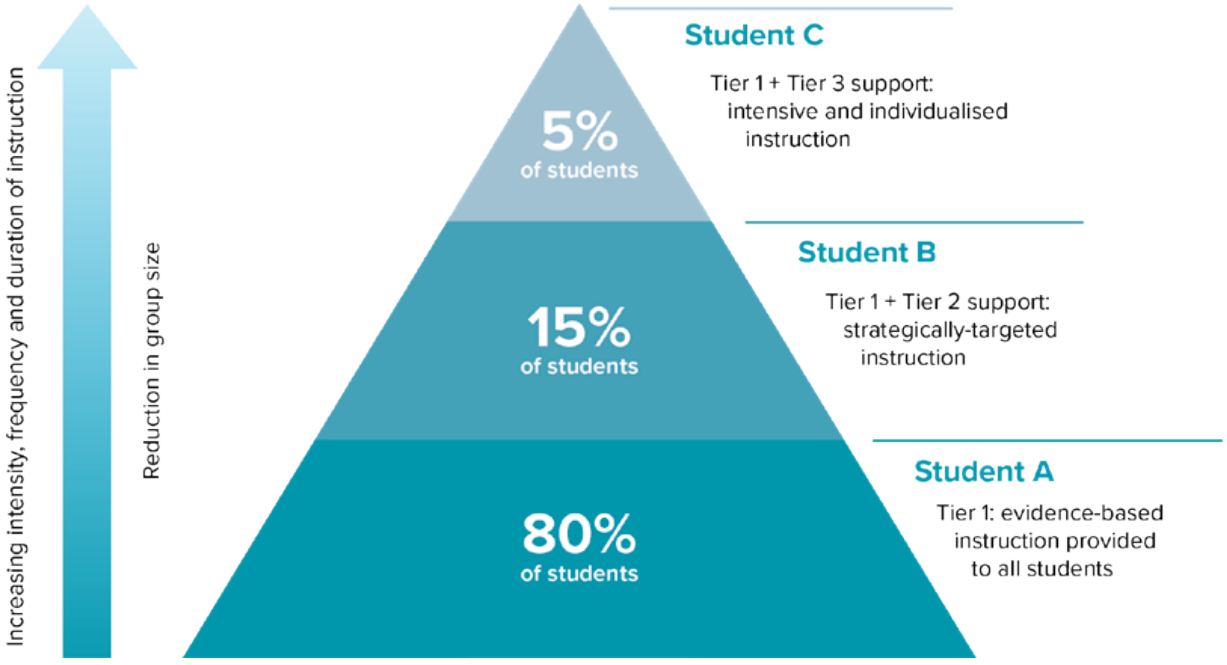


Fig 1. How tiers of support work in a multi-tiered system of supports Source: de Bruin and Stocker (2021)

Universal screening

Screening students at Tier 1 is an essential component of the MTSS model. Universal screening at Tier 1 should occur 3 times per year in primary settings, on entry to Year 7 and, ideally, at 6 month intervals throughout secondary school. In secondary settings, on-entry screening in reading, writing and mathematics is recommended, as intervention will be most effective when provided as early as possible.

Screening students at Tier 1 is an essential component of the MTSS model.

Evidence supports the use of **curriculum-based measures (CBM)** for screening at Tier 1. Despite their name, CBM are not assessments of content taught at Tier 1. CBM are brief and basic assessments of students' reading, writing and mathematics foundational skills that can be used frequently, such as weekly or biweekly, and typically take between one to 5 minutes to administer. For example, reading CBM might include an oral reading fluency (ORF) screener. If students are struggling with this, it may be followed by a phonics screener (i.e. a non-word spelling test), a comprehension screener and a morphology screener. For secondary school students who are identified as struggling in reading, writing or mathematics, further assessment should be conducted to identify the specific skills that require intervention. This enables interventions to be appropriately targeted (for example, focusing on strengthening phonemic awareness or developing vocabulary) rather than applying the same intervention for all students who struggle in a given domain.

Year 5 NAPLAN results and teacher judgements or grades from primary years can assist identification of students needing Tier 2 and 3 support, but should not be solely relied upon, given they do not provide granular and objective data on student strengths and weaknesses across the sub-components of each domain. Additionally, not all secondary schools will gain access to this data, or it may be transferred late. Also, approximately one in 20 Year 5 students do not sit NAPLAN, therefore no objective data will be available for these students.

Progress monitoring

Carefully monitoring students receiving Tier 2 and 3 interventions is also central to the MTSS model.

Monitoring student progress enables intervention to be adjusted as required. For students who do not make sufficient progress, additional work should be undertaken to ensure that the intervention appropriately targets underlying skill deficits, and that these deficits have been correctly identified. Fidelity of implementation should also be examined. Increasing the intensity of intervention (that is moving from Tier 2 to Tier 3) may also be an appropriate response should other checks be satisfied. Where sufficient progress is observed, the focus of intervention can shift to other skill gaps or the student can return to only receiving Tier 1 instruction.

The frequency of progress monitoring should increase from Tier 2 to Tier 3. Some research suggests that Tier 2 monitoring should occur at least monthly, with frequency increasing in Tier 3. Others suggest Tier 2 monitoring should be conducted weekly, with Tier 3 monitoring occurring bi-weekly or even daily. What is important is consistent and frequent progress monitoring to allow student results to be tracked.

AERO is currently researching available screening assessments and monitoring tools and will provide further recommendations in future publications.

Next steps

Consider where you see your school in a continuum of MTSS implementation.

What is your next step?

We do not have any whole-school structures that would support MTSS

Start with the foundations:

- a whole-school vision and school-wide, evidence based instructional model
- commitment to getting Tier 1 right
- buy-in for collecting and using data to drive decisions and practice.

Start by familiarising yourself and your school with the strong evidence on how students learn and the most effective teaching practices; this body of evidence is often described as the science of learning. Then familiarise yourself and your school with evidence-based instruction, before building Tier 1 capability and moving towards MTSS.

We do not have any intervention strategies in place

Begin by familiarising yourself and your colleagues with MTSS.

Develop a multi-tiered system of supports for your school, whereby students may receive support on a sliding scale of intensity. Ensure that there are structures in place to support students to receive Tiers 2 and 3 support.

Select appropriate assessment measures to screen students for competence in foundational skills.

Choose CBM assessments to screen all students for foundational skills and use student screening data to inform the number of students requiring intervention, the level of intervention required and their specific learning needs.

We are using other approaches not covered in this guide

Consider how you can embed evidence-based, specific instructional strategies into the intervention processes you already have in place.

The approaches you are using may be beneficial and aligned with theoretical models of effective learning but may not have been formally evaluated in research trials that have documented impact. It may be more effective to align your practice with what is proven to work.

We are just starting to implement some intervention processes

Ensure staff are trained in how to intervene and what specific approaches to use at Tiers 2 and 3 for reading, writing and mathematics.

Support colleagues to use data in their decision-making when identifying students, planning interventions and tracking progress.

Ensure intervention processes and all intervention decisions are overseen by a qualified teacher who has received appropriate intervention training.

We have already embedded a 3-tiered approach to intervention

You could focus on embedding, sustaining and monitoring quality practice. For example, you could:

- ensure fidelity of MTSS implementation across your school – leading staff members should conduct instructional rounds to support teachers and teacher assistants delivering intervention programs to do so with fidelity

- ensure adequate upskilling and ongoing professional learning of staff
- ensure staff are trained in the ongoing use of data to ensure students are accessing the right level and type of intervention
- support staff to implement high-quality instruction at the Tier 1 level, including effective instructional strategies such as explicit instruction.

For more information

For more information on how to implement MTSS within your school setting, see our work on the *AERO website*.

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Book Review: Effective Instruction in Reading and Spelling

Reviewed by **Julie Scali**

Wheldall, K., Wheldall, R. & Buckingham, J. (Eds) (2023). Effective instruction in reading and spelling. MRU Press.

In *Effective Instruction in Reading and Spelling*, Wheldall, Wheldall and Buckingham combine decades of scientific research about how children learn to read with teaching methods that have the strongest evidence of effectiveness, into a practical guide on how to plan and implement high quality literacy lessons. It is edited and authored by the highest calibre of education researchers and changemakers that for many years, have paved the way for best practice in instruction and intervention in the literacy space.

The late Sir Jim Rose sums up the quality of this book so well: *"This book is meticulously designed to secure high standards of literacy. A 'key message' is that we should focus on solutions not the causes in the relentless pursuit of optimal teaching and learning. In so doing, the book's coverage of robust research and proven practice is second to none. It is a seminal work with the potential to secure best practice in this territory for years to come"* Former His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Primary Education and Director of Inspection for OFSTED.

Each chapter begins with a list of summary points and concludes with links to videos, resources and further reading. On the front cover, and throughout the full colour book, are images of paper cranes that symbolise the 'Five Big Ideas'- for reading and spelling. Whilst perhaps not intentional, the paper crane images throughout- like the Japanese tale of Sudako- provide a sense of hope for our students' literacy experiences throughout the text.

In Chapter 1; Wheldall, Wheldall and Buckingham introduce the science of reading. They outline the underpinning models of reading, the three key national research paper findings and the *who, what, when, where, why* and *how* of explicit instruction in teaching reading and spelling.

It is edited and authored by the highest calibre of education researchers and changemakers that for many years, have paved the way for best practice in instruction and intervention in the literacy space.

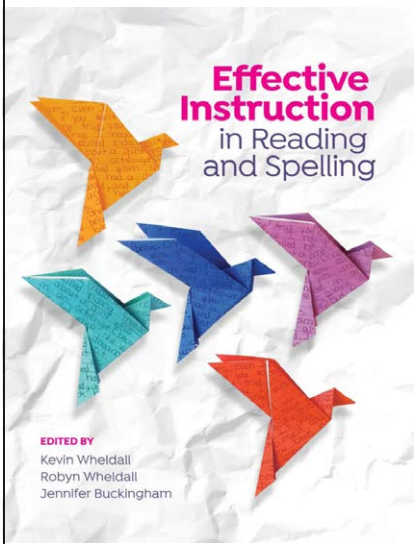
Chapter 2, authored by Kathleen Rastle, addresses 'The Alphabetic Principle'. This chapter begins with a call-to-action anecdote that outlines a federal court case in the USA brought by students against the governor of Michigan, with the panel of judges ruling that literacy is a 'fundamental right'. It explains the orthography of the English writing system, systematic phonics instruction and Rastle makes the point that understanding the alphabetic principle is necessary but *not sufficient* for successful reading acquisition.

In Chapter 3, Kevin Wheldall and Nicola Bell discuss evidence-based models of reading.

Chapter 4 authored by Wheldall, Wheldall and Carter, unpacks effective instruction and intervention including the Response to Intervention model, explicit and direct instruction as well as the five principles of 'Positive Teaching'.

Oral language is the topic of Chapter 5 and is authored by Pamela Snow and Tanya Serry. This chapter unpacks the core components of oral language, the relationship between oral language and learning to read, language difficulties including Developmental Language Disorder and suggestions for explicit instruction in oral language in the classroom. The introduction cites a quote by Britton (1983, p.15), that "Writing and reading can only be intimately interrelated by floating both on a sea of talk". The chapter includes two Year 5 student examples to demonstrate how teachers can utilise the Simple View of Reading to profile student needs.

Phonemic Awareness is the subject of Chapter 6 and is authored by Roslyn Neilson. This chapter has a series of easy reference tables with technical terminology of phonological awareness as well as reference guides for vowel phonemes and consonant phonemes; and the graphemes that usually represent them. Assessment and monitoring of phonemic awareness is outlined in detail, including suggested non-word reading tests. Neilson also outlines high impact approaches



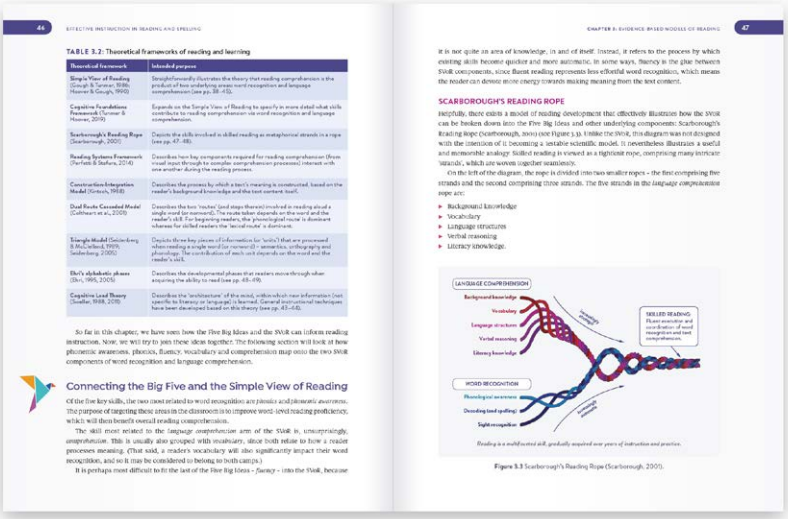


TABLE 3.2: Theoretical frameworks of reading and learning

Theoretical framework	Intended purpose
Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990)	Straightforwardly illustrates the theory that reading comprehension is the product of two underlying areas: word recognition and language comprehension (see pp. 38–43).
Cognitive Foundations Framework (Tunmer & Hoover, 2019)	Expands on the Simple View of Reading to specify in more detail what skills contribute to reading comprehension via word recognition and language comprehension.
Scarborough's Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001)	Depicts the skills involved in skilled reading as metaphorical strands in a rope (see pp. 47–48).
Reading Systems Framework (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014)	Describes how key components required for reading comprehension (from visual input through to complex comprehension processes) interact with one another during the reading process.
Construction-Integration Model (Kintsch, 1998)	Describes the process by which a text's meaning is constructed, based on the reader's background knowledge and the text content itself.
Dual Route Cascaded Model (Coltheart et al., 2001)	Describes the two 'routes' (and steps therein) involved in reading aloud a single word (or nonword). The route taken depends on the word and the reader's skill. For beginning readers, the 'phonological route' is dominant whereas for skilled readers the 'lexical route' is dominant.
Triangle Model (Seidenberg & McClelland, 1989; Seidenberg, 2005)	Depicts three key pieces of information for 'units' that are processed when reading a single word (or nonword) – semantics, orthography and phonology. The contribution of each unit depends on the word and the reader's skill.
Ehri's alphabetic phases (Ehri, 1995, 2005)	Describes the developmental phases that readers move through when acquiring the ability to read (see pp. 48–49).
Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988, 2011)	Describes the 'architecture' of the mind, within which new information (not specific to literacy or language) is learned. General instructional techniques have been developed based on this theory (see pp. 43–45).

So far in this chapter, we have seen how the Five Big Ideas and the SVoR can inform reading instruction. Now, we will try to join these ideas together. The following section will look at how phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension map onto the two SVoR components of word recognition and language comprehension.

Connecting the Big Five and the Simple View of Reading

Of the five key skills, the two most related to word recognition are phonics and phonemic awareness. The purpose of targeting these areas in the classroom is to improve word-level reading proficiency, which will then benefit overall reading comprehension.

The skill most related to the *language comprehension* arm of the SVoR is, unsurprisingly, *comprehension*. This is usually also grouped with vocabulary, since both relate to how a reader processes meaning. (That said, a reader's vocabulary will also significantly impact their word recognition, and so it may be considered to belong to both camps.)

It is perhaps most difficult to fit the last of the Five Big Ideas – *fluency* – into the SVoR, because it is not quite an area of knowledge, in and of itself. Instead, it refers to the process by which existing skills become quicker and more automatic. In some ways, fluency is the glue between SVoR components, since fluent reading represents less effortful word recognition, which means the reader can devote more energy towards making meaning from the text content.

SCARBOROUGH'S READING ROPE

Helpfully, there exists a model of reading development that effectively illustrates how the SVoR can be broken down into the Five Big Ideas and other underlying components: Scarborough's Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001) (see Figure 3.3). Unlike the SVoR, this diagram was not designed with the intention of it becoming a testable scientific model. It nevertheless illustrates a useful and memorable analogy. Skilled reading is viewed as a tightknit rope, comprising many intricate 'strands', which are woven together seamlessly.

On the left of the diagram, the rope is divided into two smaller ropes – the first comprising five strands and the second comprising three strands. The five strands in the language comprehension rope are:

- Background knowledge
- Vocabulary
- Language structures
- Verbal reasoning
- Literacy knowledge.

Figure 3.3 Scarborough's Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001).

for teaching phonemic awareness to beginning readers as well as recommendations for supporting students for whom spelling is a struggle.

Chapter 7 focuses on 'Phonics and Word Reading' and is authored by Jennifer Buckingham and Robyn Wheldall. The chapter outlines why phonics is essential in learning to read, as well as essential principles of systematic phonics instruction and considerations for selecting scope and sequences. It also unpacks morphology, decodable texts, as well as assessment and intervention for students with reading difficulties, including dyslexia.

a recent study of the six most popular books in initial teacher training courses in Australian universities, not one provided rigorous coverage of the evidence base for initial teacher instruction

In Chapter 8, Alison Madelaine focuses on spelling. In this chapter, the Simple View of Writing is explored in addition to the components of spelling and how spelling instruction should be planned. It follows on with a series of lesson examples, scripts and diagrams.

Fluency is the focus of Chapter 9 and is authored by Jennifer Buckingham. It is a highly comprehensive chapter that outlines how to explicitly teach evidence-based approaches to reading fluency; including repeated reading, choral reading, echo reading and paired partner reading. It also explains how to use Oral reading Fluency assessments (ORF) to identify risk and how to implement progress monitoring and intervention.

Chapter 10 is authored by Anna Notley and Nicola Bell who dive into vocabulary instruction, outlining real examples of how to design activities for direct, rich vocabulary instruction, how to assess vocabulary and vocabulary intervention, with an example script from Multilit's *LanguageLift*.

Chapter 11 dives into 'Reading Comprehension', authored by Jane Oakhill, Kate Cain, Carsten Elbro and Jennifer Buckingham. It explains the mental model for comprehending text and the components of reading comprehension including inference, vocabulary, background knowledge, grammar and cohesive ties, text structure and comprehension monitoring.

Finally, Chapters 12 and 13 unpack 'Assessment and Progress Monitoring' (authored by Bell, Wheldall, and Buckingham) and 'In the classroom: Planning for teaching and assessment. This final chapter draws on the extensive practical experience of Meree Reynolds and other members of the Multilit Research unit (MRU) team.

The intended audience for this book is preservice early childhood and primary teachers, and for every teacher committed to implementing literacy approaches based on the strongest scientific research available. It is particularly pertinent as an essential inclusion for every university delivering preservice teacher training; because of a recent study of the six most popular books in initial teacher training courses in Australian universities, not one provided rigorous coverage of the evidence base for initial teacher instruction (Wheldall, Wheldall & Buckingham, 2023). This book however, is the perfect inclusion for every primary teacher training degree, to support graduate and experienced teachers alike, to feel confident they are making a positive impact in the literacy outcomes of their students.

The book is available for purchase from bookshop.multilit.com. It is also available as an ebook from Vital Source, and from EBSCO (for libraries and institutions).

Julie Scali
Editor, LDA Bulletin

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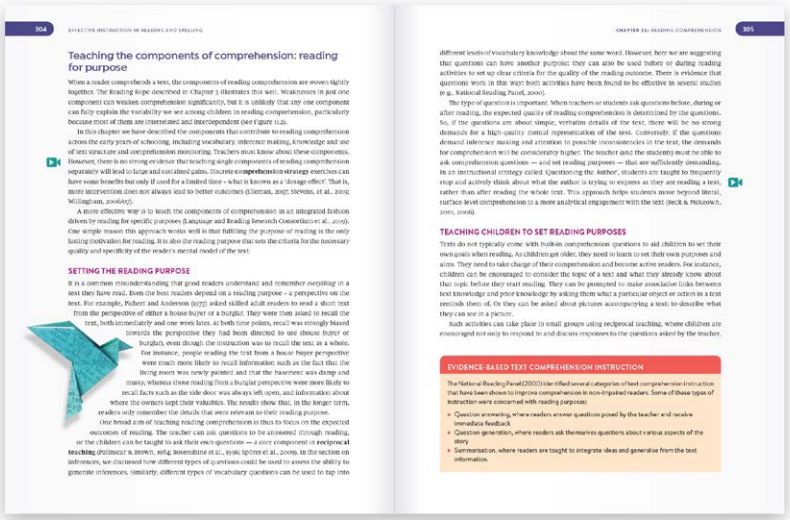

Teaching the components of comprehension: reading for purpose

When a reader comprehends a text, the components of reading comprehension are woven tightly together. The Reading Rope described in Chapter 3 illustrates this well. Weaknesses in just one component can weaken comprehension significantly, but it is unlikely that any one component can fully explain the variability we see among children in reading comprehension, particularly because most of them are interrelated and interdependent (see Figure 11.2).

In this chapter we have described the components that contribute to reading comprehension across the early years of schooling, including vocabulary, inference making, knowledge and use of text structure and comprehension monitoring. Teachers must know about these components. However, there is no strong evidence that teaching single components of reading comprehension separately will lead to large and sustained gains. Discrete **comprehension strategy** exercises can have some benefits but only if used for a limited time – what is known as a 'dosage effect'. That is, more intervention does not always lead to better outcomes (Elleman, 2017; Stevens, et al., 2021; Willingham, 2006/07).

A more effective way is to teach the components of comprehension in an integrated fashion driven by reading for specific purposes (Language and Reading Research Consortium et al., 2015). One simple reason this approach works well is that fulfilling the purpose of reading is the only lasting motivation for reading. It is also the reading purpose that sets the criteria for the necessary quality and specificity of the reader's mental model of the text.

SETTING THE READING PURPOSE

It is a common misunderstanding that good readers understand and remember *everything* in a text they have read. Even the best readers depend on a reading purpose – a perspective on the text. For example, Pichert and Anderson (1977) asked skilled adult readers to read a short text from the perspective of either a house buyer or a burglar. They were then asked to recall the text, both immediately and one week later. At both time points, recall was strongly biased towards the perspective they had been directed to use (house buyer or burglar), even though the instruction was to recall the text as a whole. For instance, people reading the text from a house buyer perspective were much more likely to recall information such as the fact that the living room was newly painted and that the basement was damp and mainly, whereas those reading from a burglar perspective were more likely to recall facts such as the side door was always left open, and information about where the owners kept their valuables. The results show that, in the longer term, readers only remember the details that were relevant to their reading purpose.

One broad aim of teaching reading comprehension is thus to focus on the expected outcomes of reading. The teacher can ask questions to be answered through reading, or the children can be taught to ask their own questions — a core component in **reciprocal teaching** (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Rosenshine et al., 1996; Spörer et al., 2009). In the section on inferences, we discussed how different types of questions could be used to assess the ability to generate inferences. Similarly, different types of vocabulary questions can be used to tap into different levels of vocabulary knowledge about the same word. However, here we are suggesting that questions can have another purpose: they can also be used before or during reading activities to set up clear criteria for the quality of the reading outcome. There is evidence that questions work in this way: both activities have been found to be effective in several studies (e.g., National Reading Panel, 2000).

The type of question is important. When teachers or students ask questions before, during or after reading, the expected quality of reading comprehension is determined by the questions. So, if the questions are about simple, verbatim details of the text, there will be no strong demands for a high-quality mental representation of the text. Conversely, if the questions demand inference making and attention to possible inconsistencies in the text, the demands for comprehension will be considerably higher. The teacher (and the students) must be able to ask comprehension questions — and set reading purposes — that are sufficiently demanding. In an instructional strategy called Questioning the Author, students are taught to frequently stop and actively think about what the author is trying to express as they are reading a text, rather than after reading the whole text. This approach helps students move beyond literal, surface-level comprehension to a more analytical engagement with the text (Beck & McKeown, 2001, 2006).

TEACHING CHILDREN TO SET READING PURPOSES

Texts do not typically come with built-in comprehension questions to aid children to set their own goals when reading. As children get older, they need to learn to set their own purposes and aims. They need to take charge of their comprehension and become active readers. For instance, children can be encouraged to consider the topic of a text and what they already know about that topic before they start reading. They can be prompted to make associative links between text knowledge and prior knowledge by asking them what a particular object or action in a text reminds them of. Or they can be asked about pictures accompanying a text: to describe what they can see in a picture.

Such activities can take place in small groups using reciprocal teaching, where children are encouraged not only to respond to and discuss responses to the questions asked by the teacher,

EVIDENCE-BASED TEXT COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION

The National Reading Panel (2000) identified several categories of text comprehension instruction that have been shown to improve comprehension in non-impaired readers. Some of these types of instruction were concerned with reading purposes:

- Question answering, where readers answer questions posed by the teacher and receive immediate feedback
- Question generation, where readers ask themselves questions about various aspects of the story
- Summarisation, where readers are taught to integrate ideas and generalise from the text information.

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