



## Joan Talks About the Big 5

# Oral Language and Vocabulary

Oral language and vocabulary are developed when children use their spoken language skills, including:

- **Interactive language skills**—or the ability to take turns or use gestures while speaking
- **Receptive language skills**—or the ability to hear and understand the language or languages of their environment
- **Expressive language skills**—or the ability to make or use the sounds of their language or languages



One of my first words was *jal*. I loved to play in it more than drink it! At the start of preschool I would say, "Give me *jal*." My teachers knew I was asking for water because my mother had given them a list of words I spoke only in Bengali. Later in the year, I learned the word *water*, especially when the water table was opened for play.

When my mamma and I read together, I enjoy talking about the meanings of the big words in the book and then using them in sentences. We have so much fun reading the book *Big Words for Little People*.

Dual language learners may learn some words first in one language, and other words first in another language. Once they have learned a word in one language, they only need to learn the label in the other language because they already know the concept or meaning.





**Oral language and vocabulary meet book knowledge and print concepts**

“Oral vocabulary is very important to reading comprehension; readers need to know the meanings of individual words to understand the text as a whole” (Schickedanz & Collins, 2013, p.11).



I learned words like *cooperate* and *persevere* from the book *Big Words for Little People*. Though I am not so little any more, I enjoy reading the book and using those big and juicy words because it is a mark of my *intelligence*.

Grandma tells amazing stories. Some of the stories are ones she heard as a child and others she read in books. I enjoy listening to these stories in Bengali. Today my teacher read the book *Walter the Baker*. It is a story Grandma has told me many times in Bengali.



## Oral language and vocabulary meet background knowledge

Children's knowledge bases increase as adults talk with them. This can include discussing and sharing information through casual conversations of even storytelling. Daily oral communication allows young children to ask questions that help them to clarify, learn additional information, and understand the meaning of the words in context.



My love for learning about animals from different parts of the world continues in kindergarten. I am reading about endangered white giraffes in West Africa. I first read about "the fifteen pale giraffes walking across the plains..." in *Don't Spill the Milk*.



When I was 4 years old I enjoyed reading a book called *Penguins!* with my brother. I loved to say, "There are penguins in Africa!" He explained to me that although many pictures show penguins in very cold places—some penguins live in warmer climates, like South Africa.



**Oral language and vocabulary meet alphabet knowledge and early writing**

In order for children to learn to read and write, they must learn to make the connection between oral language and its representation in print. “Spoken language and reading have much in common” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p.51). Children recognize the printed words on the page and understand what the phrases, sentences, and paragraphs say (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).



My mom and I made pizza together for my birthday. Mamma wrote the ingredients for the recipe on her shopping list. After we shopped for the ingredients, we followed the recipe, and baked the pizza. It was yummy.

For my fourth birthday I received cards in the mail. With my brother's help, I wrote and mailed thank-you cards to my friends and family. Now every day I write and draw cards, put them in envelopes, write the addresses, and pretend to mail them in a mailbox we made from a shoebox.



## Oral language and vocabulary meet phonological awareness

As children listen to languages—both their home and others—they begin to identify the sounds within each language. For example, children will note words that have similar beginning and ending sounds or words that sound the same but have different meanings.

Phonological awareness is critical in learning to read any alphabetic writing system. Awareness that print on the page is related to the sounds of language and that oral language, in turn, can be written down, is the basis of becoming literate.





## Professional References

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