FACILITATING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE EARLY YEARS
如何引導和培養幼兒英文學習能力？

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Through the lens of a reader

Mrs Potter kept a spotless house. The windows glistened. The floors glowed.

She even dusted the chickens until they squawked.

Everything in Mrs Potter's house was swept and washed and polished and mopped perfectly clean.
What is involved in reading?

The Many Strands that are Woven into Skilled Reading
(Scarborough, 2001)

**LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION**

- **BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE** (facts, concepts, etc.)
- **VOCABULARY** (breadth, precision, links, etc.)
- **LANGUAGE STRUCTURES** (syntax, semantics, etc.)
- **VERBAL REASONING** (inference, metaphor, etc.)
- **LITERACY KNOWLEDGE** (print concepts, genres, etc.)

**WORD RECOGNITION**

- **PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS** (syllables, phonemes, etc.)
- **DECODING** (alphabetic principle, spelling-sound correspondences)
- **SIGHT RECOGNITION** (of familiar words)

**SKILLED READING:** Fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension.
Why vocabulary?

• Vocabulary is linked to reading, comprehension and academic achievement.

• Vocabulary size in the early years predict reading comprehension and language abilities in later grades.

The shift from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*

(Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Metsala & Walley, 1998; Scarborough, 2001; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002; Walker, Greenwood, Hart & Carta, 1994; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998)
Differences in vocabulary emerge early

(Hart & Risley, 1995)
Differences in the quantity and quality of words across social class

• 30 million word gap
  • Children from professional families heard three times as many words as compared to children from welfare families.

• Parents from higher socio-economic status (SES) groups
  (a) responded more to their children;
  (b) had more affirmation and encouragement; and
  (c) fewer prohibitions.

(Hart & Risley, 1995)
What kinds of experiences support vocabulary development?

• Quantity and Quality of Input

  1) Quality adult-child conversations
  2) Rich and stimulating home environment
  3) Interactive book reading experiences
1) What does quality adult-child conversations look like?

- Sheer amount of talk

- Responsiveness to your child’s interest; joint attention

- Diversity and richness of words (e.g., sophisticated vocabulary; different word types; complexity of utterances)

- Tone of speech (e.g., commands and directives vs. encouragements)

- Decontextualized language /extended discourse (e.g., explanations, narratives about past and future events, pretend play utterances)

2) What does a supportive home environment look like?

- Amount of books and materials at home
- Quantity and quality of reading with and to your child
- Frequency of field trips (e.g., visiting the library, the zoo, the park etc.)
- Parents’ own reading behaviour

(Kalia & Reese, 2009; Sénéchal, 2006; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Sénéchal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998)
Why read to/with your child?

• Children can listen at a higher level than they can read in the early years.

• The language structures, vocabulary, and topics/contents covered in books are more varied than in speech.

• Parents’ use of language is more diverse during storybook reading than in other situations.

(Song, Tamis-LeMonda, Yoshikawa, Kahana-Kalman, & Wu, 2012)
3) What are the characteristics of interactive book reading?

- **Dialogic reading**
  - Parents as active listeners and children as storytellers
  - Parents prompting the child, posing questions and elaborating on children’s responses

(Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan, Fischel, DeBaryshe, Valdez-Menchaca & Caulfield, 1988)
3) What are the characteristics of interactive book reading?

- **CROWD** questions
  - Completion prompts
    - “Brown bear, brown bear, what did you see? I see a red bird looking at ____.”
  - Recall prompts
    - “Do you remember what happened to Sally when she shared her goodies with her friends?”
  - Open-ended prompts
    - “Tell me what is going on in this picture.”
  - **Wh**-prompts
    - What, where, why, when questions

- **Distancing prompts**
  - “Do you remember taking the plane together? How did it feel?”
3) What are the characteristics of interactive book reading?

• Non-immediate talk
  • Beyond the “here and now”
  • Talk that includes making predictions, making connections to past experiences and to the world, drawing inferences, analyzing information
  • “What do you think will happen next?”

(De Temple & Snow, 2003)
How to select storybooks?

• A variety of books (picture books, songs and rhymes, nonfiction)

• Plot, theme and content

• Language

• Illustrations

Know your child
What if you are not too comfortable with English?

• Using the language that parents feel most comfortable with is important
  • Model for language development
  • Socialization
  • Communication
  • Parent-child relations
When schools come into the equation

• Direct and rich instruction in vocabulary

• Frequent encounters of words in multiple contexts
• Definitional and contextual information about the word
• Active processing in thinking about and interacting with words
• Analytical, interactive and phonological aspects of a word
• Interactive follow-up activities or discussion that compares, analyzes and uses words

(Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013; Coyne, McCoach, & Kapp, 2007; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986)
To conclude

• Speaking and listening as a foundation

• Learning words in *meaningful, interactive and responsive* contexts

• “The Communication Dance”!

• The role of the home and school

(Hart & Risley, 1995; Konishi, Kanero, Freeman, Hirsh-Pasek, 2014; Tabor & Dickinson, 2001)
Thank You
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