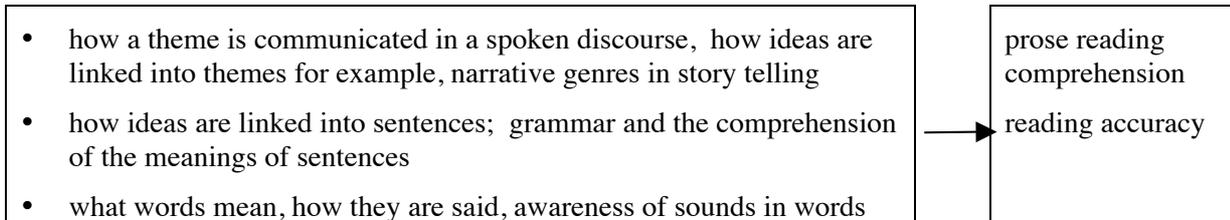


# ICPALER: A teaching friendly framework for describing oral language

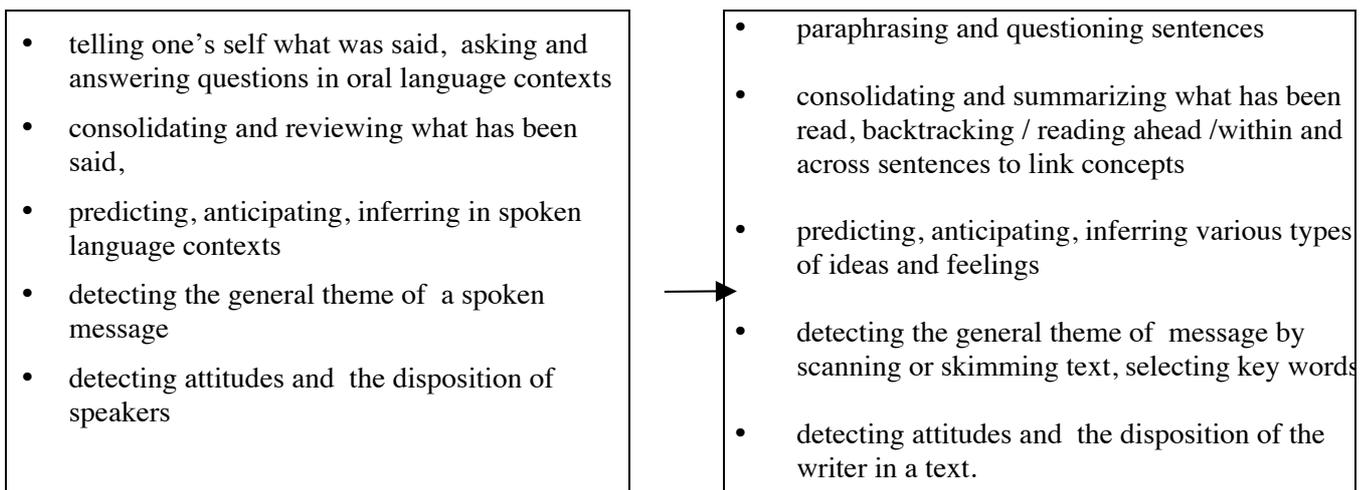
John Munro

## 1.1 Language as a key foundation to students' ability to learn

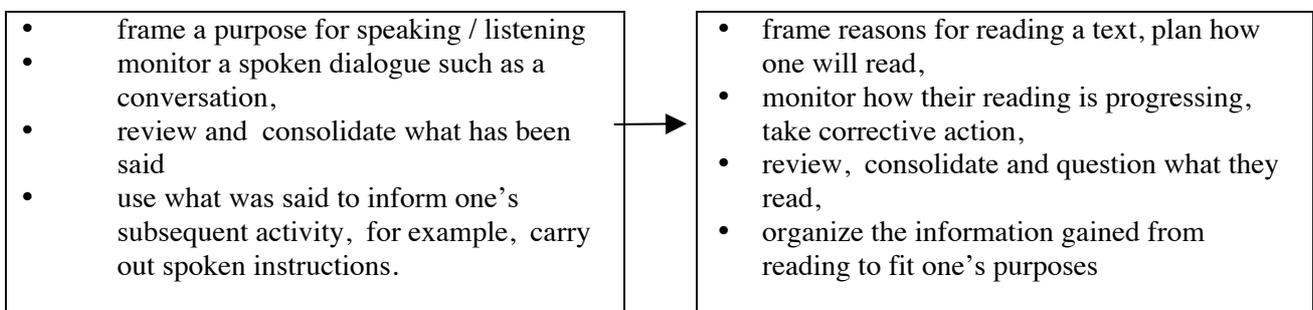
Language and the ability to communicate effectively is a key foundation to students' capacity to learn in most general ways. This is shown in the link between specific aspects of language knowledge and literacy learning.



In addition, readers use a range of strategies to comprehend the text they read. These strategies are used with sentences, paragraphs and whole texts to achieve the outcomes. They are language-based and used initially in the context of listening comprehension. They include:



Further, many of the metacognitive and self-management strategies used by readers have their origin in reading and listening contexts. These are language-based 'self talk' or 'inner language'.



More generally, oral language is used to manage and direct all aspects of classroom life.

## A framework for analysing language use : The ICPALER framework

### *A conversation between some five year olds and their teacher*

Listen to the following scenario. Pretend you are peer-aged friends in this class and continue the conversation. Work out what you would say. Reflect on what you need to know to do this.

Tom: *We finded a new doggie.*  
 Miss Brown: *What's he called, Tom?*  
 Tom: *Woofa*  
 Kath: *Our dog was ran quick. It falled over our pool. Daddie gotted him out.*  
 Will: *Gee, did it get drowned?*  
 Kath: *No, it didn't die. It just shaked and Mum towelled it.*  
 Will: *Our dog got three puppies. We call her Tess.*  
 Miss Brown: *Tom, tell us more about your dog.*  
 Tom: *It is red and brown.*  
 Miss Brown: *Does Woofa have any toys?*  
 Tom: *We gave him a ball and he bited it and made it a hole. Daddie put the inside ball.*  
 Kath: *Our dog barks all the time. He wakes me in the morgins.*

### ***What did you need to do and to know to take part in the communication ?***

Each communicator needs to

1. comprehend what was said, at least in part, by others and to express a message; use 'receptive' and 'expressive' language.
2. think about
  - what was being said; the ideas being communicated, the topic, key words.
  - how it was being said, how five year old friends would say it.
  - why you wanted to say it; your purpose for communicating.
  - how they learn to do these things and believe they could use them successfully.

We can integrate the two aspects into a chart and use it to describe the conversation as a whole.

	expressive <b>E</b>	receptive <b>R</b>
the ideas being communicated <b>I</b>		
the conventions, rules they are using. How do they use these? <b>C</b>		
the purpose for communicating (their's and others'). <b>P</b>		
how you learnt how to use language and how confident you feel about doing them <b>AL</b>		

How could you use the ICPALER framework to describe the language of your students and to:

- understand and monitor their language use and to identify the language needs of students and groups?
- identify the language demands of the teaching used?
- identify areas that need to be targeted in teaching?

### **2. Analyse the types of ideas or meanings we exchange**

What are the types of meaning in the classroom conversation ?

There are various types of meaning in the conversation: we use

- individual words;
- sentences;
- sets of sentences; these are the ‘threads’ that link or connect the sentences together and allow the conversation to ‘flow’; and
- its topic or theme.

How do language users comprehend and produce each type of meaning ?

		expressive	receptive
the ideas	individual meaning		
	single sentences		
	discourse		
	its topic or theme		
the conventions			
the purpose			
ability to learn			

### 2.1.1 What is the smallest unit of meaning in our language?

In the conversation, two types of morphemes:

some morphemes - words *doggie, get, over*

some morphemes - parts of words *-ing, -ed, -s*

The ‘morpheme’ as the smallest unit of meaning in a language. Examples:

dog, stop, ball

What are key differences between the two types?

-ed, -ing, -s

chair and chairs

jumped and jump

make and maker

act and action

**Word meanings** What behaviours would a child have to show for us to say she/he understood correctly what ‘doggie’ meant ? The child would need to :

- say in words what features a dog might have or show. They may say features that uniquely define a dog (its conceptual meaning) or features that are usually shown by dogs (its prototype meanings).
- select pictures that show dogs and the child discriminates between pictures that showed dogs and pictures that showed other pets or items.
- say what features dogs have.
- carry out actions that show the actions that dogs do.

What does a word meaning might look like?

A word meaning

- tells us what a thing ‘is’; it is linked with a list of key characteristics that define the thing uniquely.
- allows us to distinguish the thing from other things.
- may be linked with one or more ‘images’ that show us what the thing is ‘usually like’.

The criteria a child uses to define the meaning of a word gradually changes as the person develops. For the meaning of 'doggie', these are the steps a person's understanding of the meaning of doggie go through.

Step 1: the word is a label	children link the meaning of the word with a particular dog and use the word as a label for that specific dog.
Step 2: the word is linked with perceptual features	children link 'doggie' with what it looks or sounds like, how it smells (it has four legs, is often hairy, follows people, etc). Items that have these features are called 'doggies'. They may apply 'doggie' to animals that are not a dog, for example, a tiny horse or a ferret. Other times they mightn't recognise that a particular animal is a dog.
Step 3: the word is linked with functions	later they learn that dogs are defined by the things they do, for example, dogs are good at guarding things (while cats aren't), hunting and retrieving things. children can link both words and images with the word.
Step 4: link the word with more general and specific categories	later still they learn there are different types of dogs and some categories of dogs include other categories.

Children who understand 'doggie' in a 'step 2' type way would probably be unable to tell you how a doggie and a burglar alarm were similar. A child who used words in a 'step 1' way may have difficulty naming pictures of dogs in a story book.

Young children will understand a word correctly in some ways but not in others. The young children in whom we are interested will probably have their word meanings across steps 1 to 3.

We need to take this developmental sequence into account when we ask children to tell us what they think a word means; do they tell us

- (1) what examples of the item look like,
- (2) what they do or are used for,
- (3) how they are related to other general categories ?

To get an insight into how a child understands words, we need to see how the child makes decisions about what the word applies to, how it is used.

Some words are more difficult to learn; the function words.	function words	content words
	<i>what</i>	<i>dog</i>
	<i>a</i>	<i>name</i>
	<i>the</i>	<i>got</i>
	<i>to</i>	<i>new</i>
	<i>with</i>	<i>pool</i>
	<i>about</i>	<i>ball</i>

**Parts of words have meanings : 'bound' morphemes**

example	what each means	how each is used
's'	add to a verb stem, it means an action is occurring	The dog barks
'ing'	add to a verb stem, it means an action is continuing	The dog is barking
'ed'	ending on a verb to say an action occurred in the past.	hopped
's'	added to nouns to say more than one	dogs
'tion'	added to verbs to talk about objects linked with the action	describe -> description act -> action

Bound morphemes are in early language use. To help students learn these you need to

1. understand how misuse influences the message communicated and how speakers of English use them in sentence meanings, conversations or recountings.
2. observe the types of errors young children make using them.

Children learn to use the bound morphemes gradually and using them incorrectly is part of normal language acquisition. When should a teacher become concerned about errors in their use? Which types of word meaning are most difficult?

**Vocabulary as a network of meaning** The words in your vocabulary are linked into networks. When you say or hear words in a message, you usually can't help but think of related words. The words that you hear stimulate other words that are linked to those words in your vocabulary.

The networks of meanings that make up people's vocabularies influence how they comprehend and respond to what they hear. They differ in

- the richness of the meaning networks, and
- the number of meaning links available.

How are these networks of meanings used in classroom activities? When children hear particular words, for example, words in a story to which they are listening, they think of related words. The links help them to think ahead or to predict. They also help them to say something new 'in their own words' to make sense of it.

How can teachers:

- get a sense or 'estimate' of the network of meanings available to a group of children?
- assist students to enrich or build up their networks of meanings?

**Sentence ideas or sentence meanings**

A second type of idea is the meaning in each sentence. *We found a little doggie* has a different meaning from *doggie*.

Each sentence links 2 or more concepts. It is called a semantic relationship or a proposition.

Sentence meanings differ in their complexity.

Some are easier/ more difficult to comprehend

		E	R
the ideas	individual meaning		
	single sentences		
	discourse		
	its topic or theme		
the conventions			
the purpose			
ability to learn			

**Simple sentences describe one event** Sentences that describe a single event such as *Our puppie felled in our pool*.

these sentences mention	<i>Our puppie</i>	<i>felled in our pool</i>
• the action in the event	agent or doer of action	action : 'escaping from the house'
• the agent or 'doer' of the action,		
• how, when or where it is done		

Other examples of single event descriptions in the conversation include:

- *We got a new dog.*
- *Our doggie falled in our pool.*
- *Daddie got it out.*
- *Our dog got three puppies.*

Most children find single event sentence meanings relatively easy to understand. To deal with students' difficulties using single event sentence meanings you need to analyse them in this way.

**Variations of the simple sentences description of an event** A single event sentence can be said in different forms that have different functions. Examples:

type of function	example
describe or recount an event	<i>Our doggie falled in the pool.</i>
give an instruction, use the imperative function	<i>Tell me.</i>
ask a question, use the interrogative function	<i>What's its name?</i>
comment on a situation	<i>I want to see Woofa</i>
express possession	<i>We have a doggie</i>

Young children need to comprehend and use all of these forms in their classroom activities. Which ones do students find easier / harder? They learn to use each relationship first in familiar contexts. Gradually they learn to use and understood each type more generally. This has implications for how you determine the functions that any child can use.

### **More complex sentences ideas**

More complex sentence meanings usually refer to two or more events. They differ in the type of relationships they describe. Read each of these sentences and decide

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how it differs from a single event description</li> <li>• the type of sentence meaning it says, and</li> <li>• what makes it more complex than a single event sentence</li> </ul> | <p><i>He shouted while she was driving.</i><br/> <i>The dog jumps the fence and chases the cat.</i><br/> <i>He will be fined if he is caught.</i><br/> <i>All dogs begin life as puppies.</i><br/> <i>He lifted it because the water was rising.</i><br/> <i>They all had books except Ann.</i></p> |
|--|---|

Your discussion may note the following:

Sentences that refer to two events that are related in various ways: for

	example
The two events are related in time	<i>He shouted while she was driving.</i> <i>We got a doggie after we moved to our house.</i>
One event is a cause or a consequence of the second	<i>He lifted it because the water was rising.</i>
One event is conditional relationship on another	<i>He will be fined if he is caught.</i>
The two events don't both occur	<i>Ian comes but Ann doesn't.</i>
The two events have the same agent	<i>The dog jumps the fence and chases the cat.</i>

Some sentences imply a much larger set of events, such as

	example
generalizations	<i>All dogs begin life as puppies.</i>
general inclusive relationships	<i>Everyone with a pet stand up.</i>
general exclusive relationships	<i>They all swam well except Jill</i>

In our classroom activities we need to

- (1) analyse the types of sentence meanings we require students to comprehend and use.
- (2) identify where in classroom activities the various types of sentence meanings arise;
  - in the texts we ask them to read, the stories we tell
  - the speech we use as part of our teaching to instruct and explain
  - in the conversations we have with students.
- (3) Put in place teaching that helps students learn the more complex sentence meanings from the simpler meanings.

How can you identify the types of sentence meanings your young students can say and understand? You can:

- (1) identify the types of sentence meanings the children can understand or say correctly. You can say sentences of each type and ask students to:
  - Act out what was said with toys.
  - Select the pictures that match what was said.
  - Say in their own words what the sentence said.
  - Talk about what a picture show, perhaps with a sentence cue; *The lady ....*
- (2) analyze the types of sentence meanings students do not understand or say correctly to see whether the child understands or can talk about (1) the main event or (2) the other event/s. You can do this in a systematic way using of the following chart.

		expressive	receptive
simple sentences	descriptions		
	questions		
	instructions		
complex sentences	Two events linked in time or space where the		
	Cause -effect		
	Generalisation		

Children aged 3 to 6 years learn to use and comprehend a type of sentence meaning in particular contexts initially. Later they learn to use the sentence type more generally.

***Do we need to comprehend sentences before we can say them?*** It is often assumed that we need to comprehend a particular type of sentence meaning before we can use it in our speech. In fact we say new expression to actually teach ourselves about it. Children in the age range 3 to 6 years hear a type of sentence meaning they are ready to learn, and say it aloud in an imitative way. They are not saying the sentence to communicate a meaning to others, but instead to say it to themselves. Imitating it allows them to ‘put it in their minds’ better, that is, to encode or represent it in their thinking spaces.

Children in this age range teach themselves the new sentence meaning in various ways. They

- say the sentence slowly, or in parts.
- do relevant actions as they say the sentence; they help them make sense of the sentence
- repeat a new sentence type several times, as if to practise it and to automatize its form.

***Actions children can be encouraged to use to assist sentence comprehension*** They can

- 1 say aloud or repeat sentences they have heard.

- 2 say the sentences in other ways. When they see a picture in a story book, they can practise saying what it shows in different ways.
- 3 visualise or ‘make a mind picture’ of what they hear.
- 4 do the actions that they heard said and use these to assist them to recall the sentence.

The children can learn to apply these actions first in familiar contexts and practise them. They can gradually be guided to transfer them.

**Discourse ideas or meanings**

**What do we mean by discourse meanings ?**

We often communicate in messages longer than a sentence. Conversations, stories, descriptions, sets of instructions or explanations are made up of a sequence of sentences. We add the sentence meanings to make a discourse meaning.

		E	R
the ideas	individual meaning		
	single sentences		
	discourse		
	its topic or theme		
the conventions			
the purpose			
ability to learn			

What meaning gradually emerges in the conversation ? *It tells us about the experiences children in Miss Brown’s class have had with their dogs. Tom has a new red and brown dog named Woofa. It ate its ball. Kath’s dog fell in their pool and was rescued by her father. ....* This is discourse meaning.

The discourse meaning is a more elaborated idea than each sentence in isolation or the topic.

**What does the discourse meaning ‘look like ‘ ?** The discourse in the conversation:

- gives it integration or ‘flow’. Even when Kath took it in a direction perhaps not intended by Miss Brown, the sentence ideas still seemed to be in order.
- Links the separate sentence meanings and helps the communicators predict where it might go next. When Tom said *We finded a new doggie*, you might expect the next sentence to enquire about its name and the third sentence to give it.

To look at the quality of the discourse meaning ask yourself:

- Does each sentence make sense? Does the discourse as a whole makes sense?
- How well do the sentence ideas follow on from each other? How predictable is each sentence meaning from the preceding one?
- How well do the sentence ideas ‘flow’ or ‘hang together in the discourse?

**To see what students know about discourse meanings.** How might children show a poor understanding of discourse meaning in their use of language? They may have difficulty

- keeping the thread of a conversation, staying ‘on track’.
- anticipating or predicting what might be said during speaking and listening or reading.

Young children who understand the discourse meaning show an awareness of a ‘narrative genre’ or a ‘story schema’. They can recount events or tell stories that ‘hang together’.

When a child is narrating of a story or an experience note how well the child refers to:

- the main characters,
- where and when it occurs, and
- the plot of the story and the events in it.

Discuss how participants can use this to assess students’ discourse comprehension of narratives, retelling of earlier events and experiences and creative stories.

**Topic ideas or meanings**

A fourth type of idea in the earlier conversation is its topic or its theme. The topic could be ‘the dogs Miss Brown’s students have as pets’. The topic is often a summary of the discourse. Spoken messages such as a conversation, a story, a description, a set of instructions or an explanation usually have a topic or theme.

		E	R
the ideas	individual meaning		
	single sentences		
	discourse		
	its topic or theme		
the conventions			
the purpose			
ability to learn			

**2.4.1 How do we work out the topic meaning of a message ?**

What is the value of knowing the topic of a message? How do listeners work it out? Listen to this message and work out its topic. Suggest two sentences that might continue it and be consistent with the topic.

*Dripping from the shower, Jan took the call. It was Gina, sounding as joyful as a student who had just been told she had passed with flying colours. “Just one more week and I’m finished here”, she said, “a whole new life”. “So things are going slowly,” commented Jan. “I’ve seen more activity at a funeral”, replied Gina.*

The text comes from a novel entitled “Gina’s adventures on Venus”. Suggest two sentences that might continue the discourse and would be consistent with the topic.

How does knowing the topic helps speakers to stay ‘on the topic’ and say things that are ‘relevant’ ?

What do listeners do to work out the topic? Discuss and collate participants’ reports.

They may mention needing to

- make ‘informed guesses’ about the possible topic.
- test their guesses and modify these if necessary.
- retain in their short term memory enough knowledge about what is said to make a judgment.

## Developmental sequence for ideas and conventions in oral language

	the emergence of meanings	the emergence of the conventions	
Age range		Phonological development	Grammatical and discourse development
1	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use 3-4 single real words consistently in jargon-like sentences.</li> <li>combine voice and gesture meaningfully.</li> </ul>	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>learn to say the sounds m, p, b l, u, o /t/n/ in the initial position only and the vowels a, oo,</li> <li>repeat sound patterns and begin to control volume.</li> </ul>	
2	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use 20-100 words</li> <li>1/4 of their utterances are understood by others.</li> <li>respond to commands</li> <li>don't understand questions</li> <li>begin to transfer what they say in one situation to others.</li> </ul>	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show more contrasts in consonants made using the lips in initial positions</li> <li>practise perfecting sounds.</li> <li>say most vowels but not all perfectly</li> <li>Begin to use medial and final consonants.</li> </ul>	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use spontaneously single word utterances and</li> <li>imitate 2-3 word sentences, that have nouns, few verbs, adjectives and a few pronouns</li> </ul>
3	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have average vocabulary of 896 words.</li> <li>Use mainly egocentric speech</li> <li>Dramatize; they combine words and actions for their own pleasure.</li> <li>Ask questions about persons, things and actions.</li> <li>Name common colors and can say their full name and sex</li> <li>Verbalize toilet needs.</li> </ul>	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can say 2/3 of adult speech sounds and shows fairly intelligible speech, substitutes, omits and distorts many sounds inconsistently,</li> <li>use final consonants more regularly</li> <li>shows speech melody and usually well controlled voice</li> </ul>	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Say sentences of up to 5 word; <i>Mummy car stop.</i></li> <li>develop and try out their own grammatical rules</li> <li>use personal pronouns (<i>I, me, his</i>) and demonstrative pronoun (<i>that</i>), for example <i>That boy naughty</i></li> <li>begin to use phrases to designate; <i>What that thing go round ?</i></li> <li>begin to use negation (<i>no, can't, don't</i>),</li> </ul>
4.0	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have average vocabulary of 1540 words,</li> <li>use slang.</li> <li>understand isolated word meanings, but deal with whole sentences without analysing words.</li> <li>Use many <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> questions in response to what others say.</li> <li>Show a perceptual, realistic, first person focus on the topic of their speech but increasingly refer to objects, persons, events not present.</li> <li>Have collective monologues with other children but there is little co-operative thinking.</li> <li>Tell tales, recounts events.</li> </ul>	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use speech that is 98% intelligible</li> <li>Use all English vowels and following consonants: /m-/ , /-m-/, -m/; /n-/ , /-n-/, /-n/; /t-/ , /-t/; /t-/; /k-/; /p-/ , /-p-/, /b-/ , /-b-/, /f-/ , /-f-/, /h-/; /w-/ , /-w-/.</li> <li>omit some medial consonants and syllables from many words</li> <li>often do not recall unstressed parts of words.</li> <li>frequently show interrupted rhythm and <i>Speech melody</i> due to blocking on initial syllables</li> <li>speak at an increased rate.</li> </ul>	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop sentence structure, use complex and compound sentences up to 6-8 words long, say sentences of mean length 4.2 words.</li> <li>begin to experiment with alternative ways of saying a sentence idea, can modify or transform kernel sentences.</li> <li>use speech that now contains nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, interjections and articles.</li> </ul>

5.0	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have average vocabulary of 2072 words and define simple words</li> <li>• Use responsive talk and move from egocentric speech to exchanging information.</li> <li>• Talk about the perceptual features of number, speed, time, and space.</li> <li>• Retell the plots in children's plays (television and theatre).</li> <li>• Name and describe common items, objects in pictures.</li> <li>• Use some imaginative thinking, but are mainly realistic with little abstraction.</li> <li>• Categorize concrete events using similarity or difference.</li> </ul>	<p>The children</p> <p>articulate in generally intelligible ways but phonemes /z/, /v/, /r/, and /s/ are not stabilized in all positions or in all contexts</p>	<p>The children</p> <p>Show a sentence structure and grammar that is expanding rapidly in accuracy and complexity and spontaneously self correct. They are aware of the grammatical classes needed in a sentence but often use inappropriate words from the class, for example, <i>Daddy took me at the circus</i> and <i>Them childs are happy</i> .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin to experiment with alternative ways of saying a sentence idea, can modify or transform kernel sentences.</li> <li>• Elaborate sentence by using conjunctions and show embedding and more common, relative clauses. They learn to comprehend sentences that have (1) the relative clause following the main clause, for example, <i>"The girl spoke to the man who was here"</i> and (2) adverbial clauses, such as <i>"He opened the door before he turned on the lights"</i>.</li> </ul>
6.0 - 7.0	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a vocabulary of 4000 words; mean number of words is 2562</li> <li>• Form synonyms and antonyms for word meanings, for example, girl-boy, black-white, big-little, sweet-sour, etc</li> <li>• Comprehend morphemic sequences well</li> <li>• Anticipate closure in speech of others</li> <li>• ask for explanations, motives of action, etc.</li> <li>• Understand differences between time intervals, seasons of year</li> <li>• Distinguish left from right in himself.</li> <li>• Talk about causal relationships.</li> </ul>	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use the sounds /l-/, /-l/. /-l-/, /-t-/, /-0-/, /-r/, /-t-/, /j-/.</li> <li>• Show adult melody and experiment with rhythmic patterns.</li> <li>• Use facial expression that accompany rhythm changes in their speech.</li> </ul>	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• know most forms of sentence structure. They comprehend sentences with relative embedded clauses, for example, <i>"The girl who hit the boy went home"</i>. Their sentences include all grammatical categories but continue to select particular words incorrectly, for example, they may not distinguish between "mass nouns" (milk, water, etc.), and "count nouns" (dolls, toys, etc.), for example, <i>"I want much water"</i>.</li> <li>• say sentences of average length 6.5 words.</li> </ul>

7.0 - 8.0	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comprehend 6000 -8000 words and uses 2600 words</li> <li>• replace egocentric speech by inner language.</li> <li>• Complex and compound sentences should be used easily</li> <li>• Follows fairly complex directions with little repetition</li> <li>• develops true communication, share ideas; understand causal or logical relations.</li> <li>• Can relate rather involved accounts of events, many of which occurred at some time in the past</li> <li>• Can carry on conversation at rather adult level</li> </ul>	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All speech sounds, including consonant blends should be established use the sounds /-z-;/ /?-;/-?;/ /-st;/ /lz;/ /-l?;/ /-tr;/ /-kt/.</li> <li>• Control of rate, pitch, and volume are generally well and appropriately established uses subtle rhythms and intonational contours in speech melody.</li> </ul>	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use sentences of mean length 7.2 words.</li> <li>• Should be few lapses in grammatical constrictions- tense, pronouns, plurals</li> <li>• learn to use the appropriate terms and devices to connect sentences into longer text units.</li> </ul>
8.0 - 9.0	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ understand generalizations, causality and consequence in relation to real life contexts</li> <li>○ comprehend word meanings in functional ways.</li> </ul>		<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ understand and use more complex grammatical forms with relative and subordinate clauses</li> <li>○ understand the link between two or more sentences in connected prose, use sentence connectors such as “<i>however</i>”.</li> </ul>
9.0 - 10.0	<p>The children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ understand logical inclusivity in language and can identify a sentence that is more general/specific than another.</li> <li>○ comprehend word meanings in abstract ways</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

## The different types of social talk : How language is used for social purposes

In **ICPALER**, this is the **P** aspect. Compare two recent conversations, one in which each person achieved their goals for conversing and one in which some participants showed they were becoming dis-interested, bored, disengaged or alienated from other conversers. What things that made a difference? The features could include a converser who:

- dominated the ‘air play’, not turn taking, talking over other speakers, talking too loudly.
- did not use ‘conversation protocols’ satisfactorily, for example, turned to talk to others in ways that were inappropriate for the particular context.
- did not judge how much information to give at any time.
- used conversational techniques and language that were not appropriate for the audience.
- assumed the audience knew much more / or much less than they did about the topic
- misinterpreted body language and didn’t adjust to irritation and disengagement
- did not ‘listen between the lines’, infer what the other speakers were saying.
- had difficulty starting conversations effectively; his ‘opening lines’ did not work.

Knowing how to use language in social interactions to achieve various purposes or goals for communicating is called the pragmatics of language.

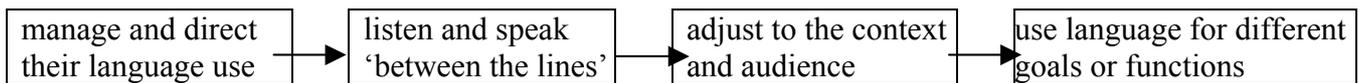
**How language is used in the conversation** In what ways did some of the speakers use language?

What was said	Possible goal or purpose for saying it
Miss Brown: <i>Tom, tell us more about your new doggie.</i>	Miss Brown’s goal: to direct the conversation, to initiate Tom’s involvement and give him the opportunity to talk about his dog.
Kath: <i>Our dog .. falled over our pool. Daddie gotted him out.</i>	Kath’s goal: to take temporary control of the conversation, to redirect it, to give herself the opportunity to indicate to the group that she had a dog as well and that things had happened to it.
Will: <i>Gee, did it get drowned?</i>	Will’s goal: to express his feeling, show his concern and to obtain more information.

Speakers use language to achieve a number of purposes. Knowing how to use language to achieve our purposes is a key part of language learning. Young children gradually learn this.

		E	R
the ideas			
the conventions			
the purpose for communicating	manage and direct their language use		
	adjust to the context and audience		
	use language for different goals or functions		
	listen and speak ‘between the lines’		
ability to learnt			

We will examine each of these components of the purposes for communicating more closely in the following sections. The sequence we will follow focuses on how young children:



***How communicators manage and direct their use of language***

Effective communicators manage and direct how they use language: they know how to:

- initiate, maintain and terminate oral transactions, including conversations,
- take turns and share the interactions,
- ‘stay on the topic’ and extend, elaborate, question or otherwise manipulate it, and
- how to adjust what they say to fit the audience and the context; they can take account of what the audience know about the topic and the ability to communicate.

Young children learn gradually to operate in these ways. Reflect on your students’ ability to use the four components and suggest successful and unsuccessful instances of each.

Components	successful example	unsuccessful example
how they initiate, maintain and terminate conversations		
how they take turns		
how to ‘stay on the topic’		
how they adjust what they say to fit the audience and the context		

You can develop behavioural checklists from this chart and examine how your students show the behaviours in activities in which they share listening to and telling stories or recounting experiences, discuss events and engage in other verbal interactions.

We can elaborate the pragmatic aspect of the framework to examine these components of language as follows:

			E	R
the ideas				
the conventions				
the purpose for communicating	manage and direct language use	how they start, maintain, end conversations		
		how they take turns		
		how to ‘stay on topic’		
		how they adjust to audience and context		
	adjust to context and audience			
use language for different goals				
listen and speak ‘between lines’				
ability to learn				

***How communicators adjust their use of language to particular context and audience***

Effective communicators take account of those with whom they are communicating and the particular context or situation in which they communicate. They adjust and modify what they say in a range of ways, for example, they:

- decide how much information to give at any time; they ‘read’ the audience to decide what it might want to hear, know or discuss.

- judge what others might know about the topic of the communication and adjust what they say accordingly. During a conversation or an informative talk, for example, they may take steps to see what others know and shape their communication according to their goals. If their goal is to assist others to learn more about the topic, they may shape what they say so that it targets the existing knowledge of the others. If their goal is to show supremacy of knowledge of the topic, on the other hand, they may communicate in ways that restrict the comprehension of others and show them where their existing knowledge is incomplete or inadequate. Effective communicators ‘read’ the knowledge of the audience and incorporate this in how they communicate, according to their goals.
- selecting the most appropriate words, sentence meanings, conventions and intonation patterns to suit the group. A communicator whose goal is to persuade others may use different language from a communicator whose goal is to inform objectively.
- knowing when they haven’t given enough information for the particular audience and again, according to their goals, take appropriate actions.
- using the context to assist in understanding the intended meaning of spoken language, for example, using body language and gestures. Communicators whose goals are to persuade others or to exert power over them may use gestures and tones more likely to elicit emotions and affect relevant to their goals.

An example of taking account of audience and context is shown in how speakers and listeners understand multiple references to particular people. Successful speakers and listeners know how to refer to events or people who have already been mentioned in a context and co-ordinate this with how they refer to other events and people for the first time. The meaning of pronouns such as ‘her’, ‘them’ ‘what’ and ‘that’ depend on the context and what has already been said.

Young children are egocentric in taking account of audience and context in what they say. Estimating what others might know about a topic or deciding what is most appropriate in particular contexts, develops gradually. Some young children talk with most adults just as they talk with their parents. They may assume that what an audience knows about a topic matches what they know.

How well do your students adjust their use of language according to the audience and context? Reflect on your students’ ability to use the five components. Suggest what successful and unsuccessful instances of each could look like in a language exchange.

Component	successful example	unsuccessful example
judge how much information to give at any time		
judge what others might know during a conversation		
select the most appropriate words, sentence meanings, conventions and intonation patterns to suit the audience		
know when they haven’t given enough information to the audience		
use the context to assist in understanding the intended meaning of spoken language.		

You can develop behavioural checklists from this chart and examine how your students display the behaviours in activities in which they share listening to and telling stories or recounting experiences, discuss events and engage in other verbal interactions.

We can elaborate the pragmatic aspect of the framework to examine this component of language as follows:

			E	R
the ideas				
the conventions				
the purpose for communicating	manage and direct language use	how they start, maintain, end conversations		
		how they take turns		
		how to 'stay on topic'		
		how they adjust to fit audience and context		
	adjust to context and audience	judge how much information to give		
		judge what others might know during conversation		
		select appropriate words and conventions		
		use the context to assist understanding		
	use language for different goals			
	the ability to learnt			

#### 4.4 *How communicators use language for different goals or functions*

Individuals differ in their goals for using language. We have already discussed the possible goals held by Miss Brown and Kath in the conversation earlier. Teachers need to be aware that:

- the goals of students at any time may differ from those of the teacher and that it is frequently useful for teachers to infer the goals of students. To do this you need to 'tune in' to how your students are using language at that time. A teacher's goal may be for students to complete a task while a student's goal, at that time, may be to inform the teacher of a recent experience and attempt to use language to do this.
- students differ in how they achieve their goals by using language. Two students may want to avoid doing a task but use language in quite different ways in their attempt to achieve this.
- students differ in how well they can infer the goals of others from the language used. Some students may not be able to infer a teacher's goal when a teacher uses sophisticated pragmatic techniques such as lowering the voice, a change in emphasis or tone, rhetorical questions or sarcasm.

Teachers and students frequently use intonation to communicate intentions. The following sets of statements have stress on different words (shown in bold). What would be the goal for stressing each word in each statement?

*Sit there please*

*Sit **there** please*

*Sit there **please***

*I didn't say that*

*I **didn't** say that*

*I didn't **say** that*

*I didn't say **that***

Being able to select the specific ideas and conventions relevant to communicating for a particular goal is a key aspect of language use.

There are two aspects to this component; being able to

- identify one’s goals for an oral communication and
- infer the goals of others for an oral communication.

Young children usually develop an awareness of the first before the second; they know what they want when they communicate before they can infer the reason why others are engaging in communication.

Some students have difficulty using language to express their intentions and to communicate their goals. They often attempt to use physical means to communicate their feelings and intentions. The physical means are usually much less effective and successful. As students progress through the school, they are expected increasingly to use language in these ways.

Reflect on two brief communication sessions, one in which the goal of each communicator was easy to infer and one in which it was more difficult:

- what were the characteristics of each interaction?
- what are the implications for a communicator who finds it hard to achieve their goals ?
- how does an audience respond when it is difficult to infer the purpose or goal of a communicator?
- what can be done to assist children to communicate their goals more easily?

How well do your students identify their goals for communicating and infer the goals of others during communication? Reflect on your students’ ability to do this.

Component	successful example	unsuccessful example
identify one’s goals for an oral communication		
infer the goals of others for an oral communication.		

You can develop behavioural checklists from this chart and examine how your students do this. We can elaborate the pragmatic aspect of the framework to examine this component of language:

			E	R
the ideas				
the conventions				
the purpose for communicating	manage and direct language use	how they start, maintain, end conversations		
		how they take turns		
		how to ‘stay on topic’		
		how they adjust to fit audience and context		
	adjust to context and audience	judge how much information to give		
		judge what others might know during conversation		
		select appropriate words and conventions		
		use the context to assist understanding		
	use language for different goals	link ideas in relation to a particular context		
		Identify the goals for an oral communication		
		Infer the goals for an oral communication		
the ability to learnt				

#### 4.5 How well do people use language to communicate non-literally?

Young children will frequently be expected to comprehend non-literal expressions such as *Get a wriggle on*, *Put on your thinking caps* or *Cut it out*. They need to show their comprehension by

acting in particular ways, for example, *I want to hear a pin drop* means: *You need to be very quiet and not talk.*

Other idioms and metaphors often used include: *You let the cat out of the bag, I'll wait until the cows come home, Pigs might fly, You swallowed it hook, line and sinker* and *He's pulling your leg.* Teachers often use them as part of classroom dialogue, for example, for behaviour and classroom management. Not all students understand them with equal facility. Many try to interpret them literally. As a consequence, they do not display the acceptable responses.

Teachers often assume that students can use the particular context to assist in understanding the intended meaning of non-literal language. A teacher may say *He's pulling your leg* to a child to indicate that the child has mis-interpreted what had been said. The child may not understand what this is intended to convey.

Teachers need to assist students to understand what non literal language means in particular contexts and how it maps into particular behaviours. They need to help students to 'listen and speak between the lines'. One clue for children is that they often suggest an unusual picture or image that is not likely to be real. They are more imaginative. They become aware, for example, that most teachers don't have cows and so why would they be '*waiting for them to come home*'.

***How well do people use language to communicate non-literally?***

Another key purpose is 'staying in a communication' by 'taking a conversation further', that is, adding to an evolving message. To extend a conversation, the conversers need to infer by going beyond what has been said and extending into related areas. Merely repeating what has already been said would not be seen as functional.

To do this, children need to integrate what has been said earlier in the context and to link this with what they already know. This helps them to develop a broader interpretation and to think about where it might be going.

the ideas			E	R
the conventions				
the purpose for communicating	manage and direct language use	how they start, maintain, end conversations		
		how they take turns		
		how to 'stay on topic'		
		how they adjust to fit audience and context		
	listen and speak 'between lines'	how they read in a message its intended meaning		
		how they use idioms and metaphors		
how they extend a language exchange				
	adjust to context and audience			
	use language for different goals			
the ability to learn				

**4.6 Using the four components of pragmatics in an integrated way**

Children ultimately need to learn to use the four components in an integrated way to achieve their purpose of communicating. They need to initiate and maintain an exchange, adjust their language to the particular context and audience, use language selectively for specific goals and functions and infer what others are saying in terms of the context and their goals for communicating.

## Analysing students' language learning capacity

In our **ICPALER** model, this is the AL aspect. All of the other aspects depend on how well the person can learn.

### What learning abilities did the children in the conversation have ?

The conversation between the five year olds provides a starting point. Each of them had been able to learn language. How they did need to think, in order to achieve this ?

**Forming and using symbols.** The children could think about items and events that weren't present; they used symbols for both items and events. Concepts are a key aspect of language learning. For the word "*doggie*", children store in memory what it symbolizes or means and how is said.

They also learn how each word is used in language. They learn that some words are the names of objects, some name actions and some name attributes or properties such as 'smallness' or 'redness'. As well as teaching students new vocabulary directly, you may need to teach some students how to learn new vocabulary for themselves; 'vocabulary learning actions'.

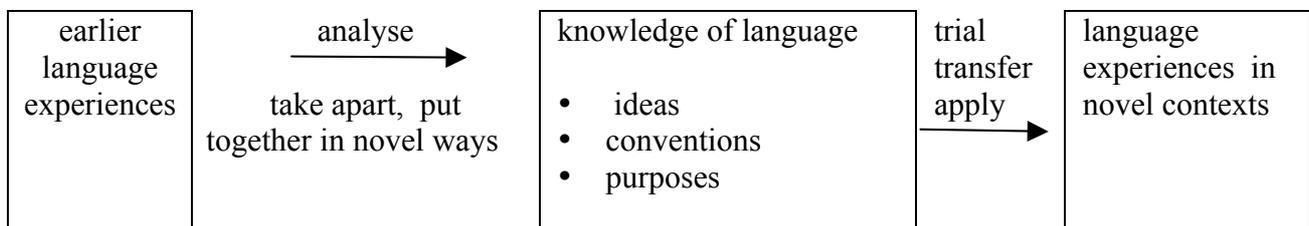
**Linking symbols in sequence or order** The children in the conversation arranged word meanings in order to express their intentions in comprehensible sentences. Arranging ideas in order and comprehending by using the word order are key abilities in learning language.

Learning to use self talk to retain the symbols in order is important here. In the teaching we will call these 'sequence learning actions'.

**Linking the ideas in meaningful relationships.** As children develop, they learn to link ideas in more complex ways. They use 'sentence learning actions' and 'discourse learning actions'.

**Transferring what they know.** Individuals transfer their knowledge of language and how it is used to other situations. This capacity to transfer what they know is an important capacity.

**Building a bank of language experiences** The language learner needs to experience language in a range of contexts and to build a bank of language experiences in memory. They use these experiences and extract a knowledge of language that they transfer and use in novel contexts.



The quality and the range of a child's language experiences can influence what they learn about language. Children's earlier language experiences differ in various ways. Being aware of some of these can help you understand why students know what they know about language.

1. They are exposed to different 'versions' of spoken language.

2. The children differ in the quality of the positive feedback they receive when they speak and listen. This feedback affects how they value language as a way of communicating, how prepared they are to experiment with it and their self confidence in using it.
3. The children differ in the modelling and the encouragement they get to imitate oral language. Some learn to imitate language selectively and to imitate how to produce it.
4. The children differ in the extent to which language is paired with related motor activities in their experiences.

Each type of language experiences teaches the child particular aspects of language learning.

***A belief that they can use language successfully : How willing are the students to use language ?*** Children need to believe that they can use language successfully. This confidence has a significant influence on how they use it. A key factor in building a positive self efficacy and an associated self confidence is the quality of the feedback an individual receives.

***Being able to perceive oral language*** To learn language, children need to detect the sound patterns that make it, to sort them out from other noises that occur at the same time, to retain them and to integrate them. Auditory perceptual abilities include being able to:

- (1) hear adequately the range of sounds that make up speech (that is, 'acuity'). Children who detect only some of the sounds that make up words will form incorrect versions of them and will have greater difficulty recognizing regularities in speech patterns. Those who have intermittent middle ear hearing loss, for example, may hear sound sequences differently on different occasions.
- (2) attend to a spoken message when there are competing sounds, for example, to attend to what the teachers is saying when children are rustling papers in the background, or footsteps in passage (that is, auditory figure-ground differentiation).
- (3) direct and maintain attention to a particular spoken message and to listen to it selectively when other people are also speaking (auditory selective attention).
- (4) make or form a complete interpretation of a message either when you only hear part of it or when you hear the message in parts (auditory gestalt or closure). In a classroom, part of a spoken message may be interrupted by other noise, so the child hears part of it.
- (5) retain and say immediately the information that was heard (short term auditory memory).

All of these auditory perceptual abilities are required for successful learning in most classrooms.

### **Later developments in the ability to learn language**

The ability to learn language develops further when young children begin to use what they know about language to direct their future learning and thinking. Oral language helps us to think about our world and to how we interact with it. It provides us with a vehicle for thinking and learning. It is a key part of our 'language learning motor'

***Learning self talk.*** Children show a change in how they process verbal information, usually about four or five years old. When they engage in an activity, for example, playing with toys, they talk to themselves about it. Their goal is not to communicate socially with another person.

Instead, they are ‘thinking aloud’ or they talking to themselves about the event and what they are doing or feeling. It is called ‘egocentric speech’.

After a period of time, the children use the egocentric speech less. At the same time they become more reflective and link what they know with the context. They learn to ‘go backwards and forwards’ in time and link an event with earlier event and then predict a future consequence.

They learn to monitor, manage and direct their learning activity and to respond in ways that are context-appropriate. They use this ‘self-talk’ to focus their attention and their thinking resources at any time. This activity is a key aspect of their thinking.

The development of self talk equips young children with thinking capacities the are critical for subsequent language learning and use. It enables them to think into the future and to plan. More generally they use it to guide their thinking and learning activity. Part of their self talk is their ‘metacognitive knowledge’ or ‘self-management strategies’.

The quality of a child’s self talk is determined by the language ideas and forms they use in their social interactions.

You can observe how well students in your class use self talk in a range of ways:

1. You can observe whether they tend to use egocentric speech when they play or do a task.
2. Before they begin a task, for example, listening to a story, you can ask them to say what they think the story will tell them and what they will do as they listen to it.
3. You can ask them to ‘think aloud’ as they work through a task, that is, say what they are looking at and thinking about as they complete the task.
4. As they listen to a story, ask them to say what they have just heard ‘in their own words.

### **Cultures differ in how they teach the ability to learn language.**

Some of the ways in which they differ include

1. The opportunities they provide for language learning.
2. The aspects of language they value and prioritise, what they see as valuable language outcomes, what they encourage the children to talk about and what is ‘taboo’.
3. the contexts in which they encourage language use.
4. The ways in which they scaffold the learning. Some cultures may encourage students to be analytic about language from a young age while others may encourage imitation.
5. How they provide feedback for the language the children use.

These areas of variation affect the implicit beliefs students have about how to learn language and how they and others are expected to behave in language transactions. They shape how the individual students will approach the language learning activity in a deep way.

Teachers of multicultural classes need to be aware of this multiplicity when implementing language teaching programs. It is unlikely that the children will be able to talk about these differences. Teachers need to be aware of the assumptions they are making in their teaching about how students learn language and to be prepared to examine options when teaching students from different cultures.