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Listening



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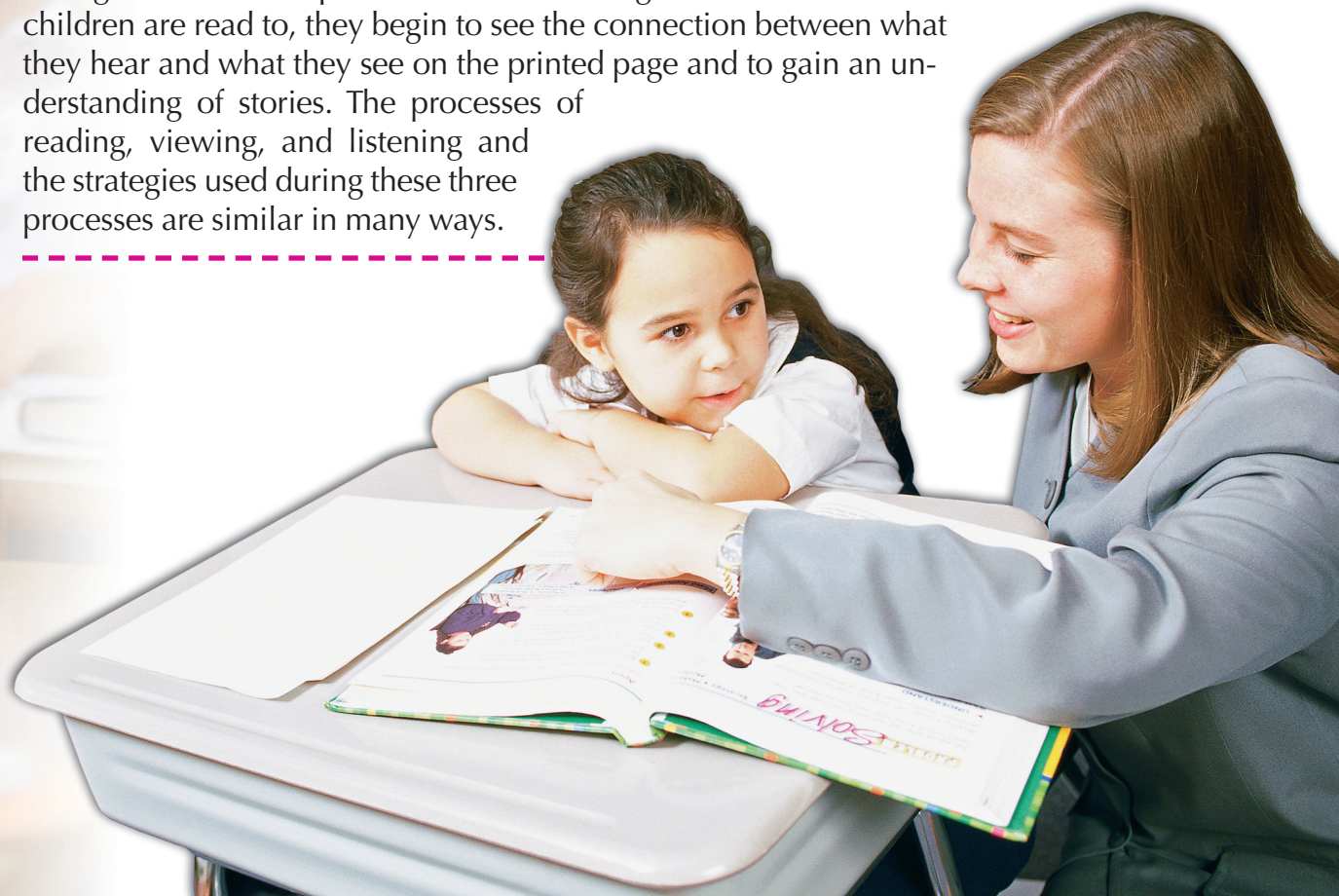




INTRODUCTION

Listening has been called the “neglected” or ignored language art for more than 50 years because it is rarely taught in kindergarten through eighth-grade classrooms (Pinnell & Jaggard, 2003). Students are admonished to listen, but few teachers teach students how to improve their listening strategies. Teachers usually assume that children come to school already knowing how to listen. Also, some teachers feel that it is more important to spend the limited instructional time available on reading and writing instruction. Despite these concerns about teaching listening, most teachers agree that students need to know how to listen because it is the most used language art (Opitz & Zbaracki, 2004).

Listening is the first language process that children acquire, and it provides the basis for the other language arts (Lundsteen, 1979). Infants use listening to begin the process of learning to comprehend and produce language. From the beginning of their lives, children listen to sounds in their immediate environment, attend to speech sounds, and construct their knowledge of oral language. Listening also is important in learning to read. Children are introduced to written language by listening to stories that parents and other caregivers read to them. When children are read to, they begin to see the connection between what they hear and what they see on the printed page and to gain an understanding of stories. The processes of reading, viewing, and listening and the strategies used during these three processes are similar in many ways.



Classroom Close-Up

Second Graders Listen to *Cook-a-Doodle-Do!*

The second graders in Mr. Hernandez's classroom are involved in a monthlong study of folktales, and this week, they're comparing several versions of "The Little Red Hen" and reading related books. On Monday, Mr. Hernandez read aloud Paul Galdone's *Little Red Hen* (1985), and the students reread it with buddies the next day. Next, he read aloud Margot Zemach's *The Little Red Hen: An Old Story* (1983), and the second graders compared it to Galdone's version. On Wednesday and Thursday, the students read "The Little Red Hen" in their basal reading textbooks and compared this version with the others.

Parent volunteers came into the classroom on Wednesday to make bread with the students. The second graders learned how to read a recipe and use measuring cups and other cooking tools as they made the bread. They baked the bread in the school kitchen, and what the students especially enjoyed was eating their freshly baked bread—still warm from the oven—dripping with butter and jam.

The next day, Mr. Hernandez read aloud *Bread, Bread, Bread* (Morris, 1989), an informational book about the kinds of bread that people eat around the world, and parents brought in different kinds of bread for the students to sample, including tortillas, rye bread, croissants, bagels, Jewish matzoh, blueberry muffins, Indian chapatty, and biscuits. As they sampled the breads, the students took turns talking about the kinds of bread their families eat.

Today, the students are sitting on a carpet as Mr. Hernandez prepares to read aloud *Cook-a-Doodle-Do!* (Stevens & Crummel, 1999), the story of the Little Red Hen's great-grandson, Big Brown Rooster, who manages to bake a strawberry shortcake with the help of three friends—Turtle, Iguana, and Pig. The teacher sets out a story box of objects related to the story: a chef's hat, a flour sifter, an egg beater, a plastic strawberry, an oven mitt, a shortcake pan, a timer, a pastry blender, and measuring cups and spoons. The students identify the objects, and Mr. Hernandez prepares a word card for each one so that students can later practice matching objects and word cards at a center. Almost immediately, Mikey guesses, "I know what the story is about! Little Red Hen is going to cook something, but it isn't bread. Um . . . Maybe it is strawberry jam to put on the bread."

"That's a good prediction, Mikey, but let me get one more clue for this

story box," Mr. Hernandez says, as he reaches over to a nearby rack of puppets. He selects a rooster puppet and adds it to the box. He looks at the students expectantly, and Mallory asks, "Is that a hen?" "No, it isn't," Mr. Hernandez replies. Again he waits, until Cristina offers, "I think it's a rooster." "You're right! A rooster is a male chicken, and a hen is a female chicken," he explains. Then Mikey revises his prediction, "Now I know! It's a story about a rooster who cooks strawberries."

Mr. Hernandez shows the cover of *Cook-a-Doodle-Do!* and reads the title. At first, the students laugh at the title, and several of them repeat it aloud. "What does the title make you think of?" Mr. Hernandez asks. Jesus jumps up and imitates a rooster: "Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo!" The students compare the sound a rooster makes to the book's title and conclude that the rooster in this book is going to do some cooking.

The teacher draws the students' attention back to the cover of the book and asks, "What do you think the rooster is going to cook?" Lacey and Connor both answer "strawberry pancakes," and the class agrees. Mr. Hernandez asks if anyone has ever tasted strawberry shortcake, but no one has. He explains what it is and tells the class it's his favorite dessert. Then he looks back at the cover, and says, "I keep looking at this picture, and it looks just like strawberry shortcake."

As Mr. Hernandez gets ready to begin reading, he says, "I hope you'll enjoy this story because it's really funny, and I want you to think about how the story compares to *The Little Red Hen*." He reads the first two pages of the story that introduce the Little Red Hen's great-grandson, Big Brown Rooster, who is the main character in the story. The students point out the similarity between Little Red Hen and Big Brown Rooster's names: They are each three words long, they each have a size word, a color word, and an animal name, and words are in the same order in each name.

Mr. Hernandez continues reading, and the students learn that Rooster does plan to make strawberry shortcake—their teacher's favorite dessert. "What's shortcake?" Larry asks. "Is it

Should teachers encourage discussion as they read a story aloud or postpone it until afterward?

Teachers often ask students to listen quietly while they read a story aloud and then encourage them to talk about it afterward, sharing ideas, clarifying confusions, and making connections to deepen their understanding. Other teachers, however, invite students to become actively involved in the story as they are reading it aloud. These teachers stop reading periodically to pose questions to stimulate discussion and ask students to make predictions. As you read this Classroom Close-Up, notice which approach Mr. Hernandez uses and think about how he uses discussion to support his second graders' comprehension.

the opposite of tall cake?” Everyone laughs, including Mr. Hernandez. He explains that shortcake is flatter than cake, like a biscuit. Mikey asks, “Is it like a brownie? Brownies are flatter than chocolate cake.” “That’s a good comparison,” Mr. Hernandez says. Sammy offers: “A tortilla is flatter than a piece of bread.” “Good! That’s another good comparison,” the teacher responds. “All this talk about food is making me hungry.”

“Look at this,” Mr. Hernandez says as he points to the cookbook that Big Brown Rooster is holding in the illustration. “That’s Little Red Hen’s cookbook—*The Joy of Cooking Alone*,” he laughs. “My wife’s favorite cookbook is called *The Joy of Cooking*,” he explains. “I wonder why the word *alone* has been added to the title of her cookbook.” “That’s because no one would help her make bread,” Mallory explains.

The teacher continues reading the story aloud. He turns the page and shows students the illustration, a picture of Big Brown Rooster talking to a dog, a cat, and a goose, and the students, remembering the events from “The Little Red Hen,” spontaneously call out to Rooster, “No, don’t ask them. They won’t help you!” Big Brown Rooster does ask the three animals to help him, and as the students predicted, they refuse. As Mr. Hernandez reads the “Not I” refrain, the students join in. Sondra comments on the similarities to “The Little Red Hen” story: “There’s a dog, a cat, and a goose like in the other story, and they won’t listen to the Big Brown Rooster either.” Then the students predict that Big Brown Rooster, like Little Red Hen, will have to cook alone.

On the next several pages, the students learn that three other animals—Turtle, who can read recipes, Iguana, who can get “stuff,” and Pig, who is a tasting expert—offer to help. The students get excited. “I think this story is going to be different. It’s better,” Cristina comments. Mr. Hernandez wonders aloud if these three animals will be good helpers, and the students agree that they will be.

The rooster calls the four of them a “team” on the next page, and Mr. Hernandez asks, “What is a team?” The students mention basketball teams and name their favorite teams, so the teacher rephrases his question: “What makes a group of basketball players a team? What do they do when they are a team?” Students respond that players work together to make a score and win a game. “So, what kind of team are the rooster, the turtle, the iguana, and the pig?” Connor explains, “They are a cooking team. I predict they will work together to cook strawberry shortcake.” Then Raymond adds, “And Mr. Hernandez is the captain of the team!”

Mr. Hernandez continues reading, as Turtle reads the recipe and Iguana collects the needed ingredients for strawberry shortcake. In the story, Iguana doesn’t know the difference between a flower and flour, and because the students seem confused, too, the teacher explains the homophones. Iguana doesn’t know about cooking tools and procedures either; he wants to use a ruler instead of a measuring cup to measure flour and he looks for teaspoons in a teapot, for example. Because the students recently used measuring cups and spoons when they baked bread, they are more knowledgeable than Iguana; Sammy says, “That iguana is silly. He’s not very smart either.” On the next page, Iguana misunderstands “stick of butter.” He breaks a stick from a tree branch, and Lacey calls out, “No, Iguana, that’s the wrong kind of stick.”

As each ingredient is added, Pig offers to taste the batter, but Big Brown Rooster replies “not yet.” Mr. Hernandez pauses after he reads this and reflects, “Pig seems very eager to taste the shortcake batter. I wonder how long he’ll wait patiently for his turn to taste.” “Maybe Big Brown Rooster should give him something else to do,” Sondra offers. “I’d tell him to go in the living room and watch a video because that’s what my mama tells my brother,” says Connor. Mr. Hernandez continues reading, and in the story, Pig is getting more desperate to taste the batter. Jesus calls out, “Oh no! Now Pig really, really wants to taste it. Something bad is going to happen.” Everyone agrees.

How do children respond to stories?

Children make different types of responses as they talk about stories. Sipe (2002) identified these five types, and Mr. Hernandez’s second graders made responses representing each type:

Dramatizing

Children spontaneously act out the story in both nonverbal and verbal ways. Mr. Hernandez’s second graders, for example, dramatized cutting strawberries and beating cream as he read aloud.

Talking Back

Children talk back to the characters, giving them advice or criticizing and complimenting them. At the beginning of the story, for example, Mr. Hernandez’s students tell Rooster not to ask the cat, the dog, and the goose for help, and later in the story, they tell Iguana that he has the wrong kind of stick.

Critiquing/Controlling

Children suggest alternative plots, characters, or settings to personalize the story. For example, several of Mr. Hernandez’s students suggest ways that Rooster could handle Pig more effectively.

Inserting

Children insert themselves or their friends into the story. One of Mr. Hernandez’s students, for example, inserts Mr. Hernandez into the story and says that he is the team captain.

Taking Over

Children take over the text and manipulate it to express their own creativity; these responses are usually humorous and provide an opportunity for children to show off. For example, after Mr. Hernandez’s students suggest several possible endings for the story after the pig eats the first strawberry shortcake, Larry gets a big laugh when he suggests a different ending using words from “The Gingerbread Man.”

Children make these types of responses when teachers encourage their active participation in the story, but the tricky part is to balance the time spent reading and talking.

The teacher reads that the characters finish mixing the ingredients and put the batter in the oven to bake. “Wow! I’m surprised that Pig is being so good,” Mallory offers. “I thought he’d gobble up all the shortcake from the mixing bowl.” The other students agree. “So, now you think the shortcake is going to turn out right?” Mr. Hernandez asks. Most of the students think that it will, but Jesus and Mikey predict trouble ahead.

Mr. Hernandez continues reading: The characters cut the strawberries in half and make whipped cream while the shortcake is in the oven. As the teacher reads, some of the students spontaneously pretend to cut strawberries or use the egg beater to whip the cream—they dramatize cooking activities.

The next several pages tell how Rooster takes the shortcake out of the oven, lets it cool, and slices it in half, and assembles the layers of shortcake with cake, whipped cream, and strawberries. Mikey notices that Pig smells the shortcake when it comes out of the oven and really wants to taste it. “I still think that Pig is bad news,” he says.

Finally the strawberry shortcake is ready to eat, and Rooster says, “If Great-Granny could see me now!” Mr. Hernandez asks what the sentence means. Connor answers, “Rooster wants her to know he is a good cook, too!” Lacey suggests, “Rooster is really proud of himself.” Raymond says, “I think Rooster wants Little Red Hen to know that he has a team to help him cook.”

Mr. Hernandez turns the page, and the students gasp: The illustration shows the strawberry shortcake falling off the plate as Iguana carries it to the table. “Oh no, it’s ruined!” Mallory says. “They can’t eat it because it’s on the floor.” “Pig can! Yes, Pig can! Now it really is his turn!” Mikey says gleefully. Jesus cheers.

“What about the other animals?” Mr. Hernandez asks. “Won’t they get to eat strawberry shortcake?” At first, the students guess that they won’t, and then Jacob offers, “Well, they could go to the store and buy more food and make another strawberry shortcake.” Most of the students agree that Jacob has a good idea, but Larry disagrees, “No way. ‘Snip, snap, snout. This story’s told out,’ said Pig.” Both the teacher and the students laugh as Larry suggests an alternative ending using the final words from the “The Gingerbread Man” story they read several weeks before.

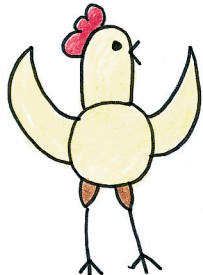
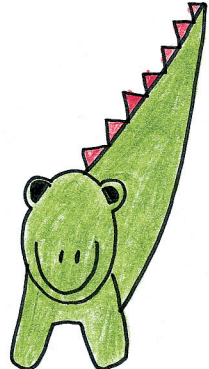


Mr. Hernandez reads the last few pages in the book, and the students learn that the animals do make another delicious strawberry shortcake for everyone to eat. The students are satisfied with how the story turned out. “I’m really glad everyone got to eat some strawberry shortcake,” Cristina says. “It’s a really good story,” Sammy

reflects, “because it’s funny and serious, too.” “What’s funny in the story?” the teacher asks. The students say that Iguana is the funniest character, and the funniest part is when the shortcake falls on the floor and Pig gobbles it up. Then Mr. Hernandez asks, “What’s serious in the story?” The students recognize the authors’ message and identify it as the serious part of the book. They say the book’s message is that a job is easier to do when you work together as a team. “I’m glad Rooster had a team,” said Sondra. “What about us?” Mr. Hernandez asks, “Do we have a team?” Mikey says, “I never really thought of it before, but I guess our class is a team.” Mr. Hernandez responds, “What do you think makes us a team?” “We help each other learn and do our work,” Larry answers. The other students agree.

Finally, Mr Hernandez shows the students the last page of the book with Little Red Hen’s recipe for strawberry shortcake, and he surprises them by announcing that he brought in the ingredients and that they will make strawberry shortcake after lunch.

The students regularly make charts using a combination of drawing and writing in their reading logs to help them remember an important idea about each story they read or listen to read aloud. After reading *Cook-a-Doodle-Do!*, they make charts about how the characters in the story were a team. Mr. Hernandez helps the students brainstorm a list of words they might want to use on their charts and writes the words on the chalkboard so that they can spell them correctly. The words they brainstorm include: *team*, *Big Brown Rooster*, *Turtle*,

One Student’s Chart About the Team

We are a Team!			
Rooster	Iguana	Turtle	Pig
			
I need a team.	I can get stuff!	I can read the recipe!	I am the taster! I like to eat.

Iguana, Pig, Little Red Hen, strawberry shortcake, helper, recipe, and taster.

As you continue reading Part 2, think about how Mr. Hernandez applies the topics being presented. Here are three questions to guide your reading:

- ◆ How did Mr. Hernandez involve students in the read-aloud?
- ◆ Which types of listening did Mr. Hernandez’s students use?
- ◆ Which listening strategies did the second graders demonstrate as they listened to the story?

Essentials

ESSENTIAL #1: The Listening Process

Listening is elusive; in fact, teachers often don’t know whether listening has occurred until they ask students to apply what they have listened to through discussions, projects, and other assignments. Even then, there is no guarantee that the students’ responses indicate that they have listened, because they may have known the material before listening or may have learned it from someone else at about the same time.

Listening, like the other language arts, involves a process. It is more than just hearing, even though we often use the terms *hearing* and *listening* synonymously (Lundsteen, 1979). Actually, hearing is only one step; the crucial part is comprehending what was heard.

The listening process has three steps: receiving, attending, and assigning meaning (Wolvin & Coakley, 1995). In the first step, listeners receive the aural stimuli or the combined aural and visual stimuli presented by the speaker. Next, listeners focus on important stimuli while ignoring other, distracting stimuli. Because so many stimuli surround students in the classroom, they must attend to the speaker’s message, focusing on the most important information in that message. In the third step, listeners comprehend or assign meaning to the speaker’s message. Responding to the message is not considered part of the listening process; the response occurs afterward, and it sets another communication process into action in which the listener becomes the message sender.

The second step of Wolvin and Coakley’s listening-process model can be called the “paying attention” component. Teachers spend a great deal of instructional time reminding students to pay attention; unfortunately, however, children often do not understand the admonition. When asked to explain what “paying attention” means, some children equate it with physical behaviors such as not kicking feet or cleaning off desks. Learning to attend to the speaker’s message is especially important because researchers have learned that students can listen to 250 words per

minute—two to three times the normal rate of talking (Foulke, 1968). This differential allows listeners time to tune in and out as well as to become distracted during listening.

How important is listening?

Listening is often called the most important language art because it is the one we use the most. Researchers report that people spend as much time listening as they do reading, writing, and talking combined (Pinnell & Jaggard, 2003). Both children and adults spend approximately half of their communication time listening. Language researcher Walter Loban described the importance of listening this way: “We listen a book a day, we speak a book a week, we read a book a month, and we write a book a year” (cited in Erickson, 1985, p. 13).



Furthermore, the intensity of students' need to attend to the speaker's message varies with their purpose for listening. Some types of listening require more attentiveness than others. Effective listeners, for example, listen differently to directions on how to reach a friend's home than they do to a poem or story being read aloud.

ESSENTIAL #2: Purposes for Listening

Why do people listen? Children often answer that they listen to learn or to avoid punishment, but according to Wolvin and Coakley (1995), people actually use different types of listening for these four purposes:

- ◆ Discriminative listening to distinguish sounds
- ◆ Aesthetic listening for enjoyment
- ◆ Efferent listening to learn information
- ◆ Critical listening to evaluate information

Discriminative Listening

People use discriminative listening to distinguish sounds and develop sensitivity to nonverbal communication. Teaching discriminative listening involves one sort of activity in the primary grades and a different activity for older students. Children use discriminative listening as they develop phonemic awareness, the ability to blend and segment the sounds in spoken words, identify rhyming words, and spell words.

Children also learn to "listen" to the nonverbal messages that people communicate. For example, young children

quickly recognize the unspoken message when a parent's expression changes from a smile to a frown or when a teacher expresses puzzlement. Older students learn the meanings of more sophisticated forms of body language, such as people folding their arms over their chest to signify stubbornness or an invasion of their space. They also recognize how teachers emphasize that something they are teaching is important, such as by writing it on the chalkboard, speaking more loudly, or repeating information.

Aesthetic Listening

People listen aesthetically when they're listening for enjoyment to stories being read aloud, as Mr. Hernandez's students did in the Classroom Close-Up. The focus of this type of listening is on the lived-through experience and the connections that listeners make to the literature.

As students listen to the teacher read aloud well-crafted stories such as *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1980) and *Thunder Cake* (Polacco, 1990), they engage with the text and step into the secondary world of the story. In *Charlotte's Web*, they feel the unlikely friendship between Charlotte and Wilbur, and in *Thunder Cake*, they understand the granddaughter's fear of thunderstorms and the urgency with which she and her grandmother collect the ingredients and prepare the thunder cake. The outcome of aesthetic listening is an emotional response. In addition to listening to teachers read stories aloud, children also listen aesthetically when they

- ◆ listen to storytellers tell stories
- ◆ listen to poets recite poems
- ◆ view puppet shows and plays
- ◆ listen to singers sing songs
- ◆ participate in choral reading and readers theatre
- ◆ view films and videotaped versions of stories

What is phonemic awareness?

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words. Children move through a continuum as they learn about the structure of language. First, they recognize that sentences are composed of words, and then that words rhyme and can be broken down into syllables and sounds. As their understanding grows, children learn to recognize words that begin or end with the same sound. Later, they learn to blend sounds into words and segment one-syllable words into sounds and longer words into syllables (Ehri et al., 2001).

Phonemic awareness is auditory; it's not the same as phonics because it doesn't involve reading and writing. It's critically important, however, that children link their understanding of the structure of words to their knowledge of letters so that they can blend sounds to decode words and segment sounds to spell words (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Researchers have found that phonemic awareness is the best predictor of whether children will learn to read successfully (Adams, 1990; Stanovich, 1993–1994). Children who learn to blend and segment sounds in kindergarten are likely to learn to read in first grade. In addition, reading instruction heightens children's understanding of phonemic awareness. Hallie Yopp (1992) concluded that phonemic awareness is both a prerequisite for and a consequence of learning to read.

Efferent Listening

People listen efferently to understand a message and remember important information. This type of listening is required in many instructional activities, particularly in thematic units. Students determine the speaker's purpose, identify the big ideas, and then organize the information in order to remember it.

Children often use efferent listening as they listen to teachers read books aloud or view videos as part of social studies and science thematic units. For instance, children learn how energy from the sun turns into energy for electricity as they listen to the teacher read *My Light* (Bang, 2004), learn about a historical mystery as they listen to the teacher read *The Lost Colony of Roanoke* (Fritz, 2004), and find out how dolphins communicate in *Dolphin Talk: Whistles, Clicks, and Clapping Jaws* (Pfeffer, 2003). Even though these books provide information, students may use a combination of aesthetic and efferent listening. Children often imagine that they're astronauts as they listen to the teacher read aloud *Exploring Our Solar System* (Ride & O'Shaughnessy, 2003), living in the secondary world of the book as they travel through space.

Critical Listening

People listen critically to evaluate a message. Critical listening is an extension of efferent listening: As in efferent listening, listeners seek to understand a message, but they also filter the message to detect propaganda and emotional appeals. Students use critical listening to listen to debates, commercials, political speeches, and other arguments.

Teachers can help students think more critically as they read aloud and discuss books. When students listen to teachers read aloud stories such as *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!* (Scieszka, 1989) and *Witness* (Hesse, 2001), they critically analyze the characters' claims, and when they read informational books, such as *Antarctica* (Cowcher, 1990), and biographies, such as *My Hiroshima* (Morimoto, 1987), they can evaluate the authors' warnings about destroying the environment and about nuclear war. Students don't automatically think critically about these books, but teachers can guide them to consider the effects of viewpoint, persuasion, and emotional appeal.

When Do Students Use Each Purpose?

Students rarely use these purposes separately. For instance, as eighth graders listen to *Catherine, Called Birdy* (Cushman, 1994), the story of a strong-willed young noblewoman set in the Middle Ages, they use several purposes simultaneously. As they listen aesthetically, they step back into history and imagine they are Birdy and feel what she is feeling. At the same time, they use efferent listening as they think about geographic locations, historical events, kings and other historical figures, and additional information the author has

What's the difference between *aesthetic* and *efferent*?

Louise Rosenblatt (1978, 2005) coined the term *aesthetic reading* to describe the stance readers take when they are reading for pleasure—involved in the lived-through experience and making connections to the literature they are reading. The focus is on their experience during reading. In contrast, Rosenblatt's term *efferent* means "to carry away." Efferent reading is practical: Students use it to identify and remember big ideas. Aesthetic and efferent reading, according to Rosenblatt, represent two ends of a continuum. Students rarely use one type of reading exclusively; instead, they use a combination of purposes. The terms *aesthetic* and *efferent* can also be used to describe two purposes of listening.

carefully included in the story. It's also possible that they use discriminative listening and notice rhyme, alliteration, and other types of wordplay. Critical listening plays a role, too, as students consider the author's viewpoint, assess emotional appeals, and think about the theme.

Teachers need to teach students about these purposes and help them set purposes for listening. Students need to know what teachers expect them to listen for, or teachers need to help students set their own purposes. When reading *Catherine, Called Birdy*, for example, teachers usually explain that students should listen aesthetically and enjoy the story, but they also point out that students should notice the historical information as they're listening. Teachers often begin discussions after reading aloud by talking about the aesthetic interpretation, but then move on to talking about the historical information children learned as they listened.

The Four Purposes of Listening

Type	Discriminative	Aesthetic	Efferent	Critical
Purpose	Distinguish among sounds	Listen for pleasure or enjoyment	Understand a message	Evaluate a message
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in phonemic awareness activities Notice rhyming words in poems and songs Recognize alliteration and onomatopoeia Experiment with tongue twisters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to stories and poems read aloud View video versions of stories Watch students perform a play or a readers theatre reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to informational books read aloud Listen to directions Listen to the teacher present information Use graphic organizers Listen to oral reports View informational videos Listen during mini-lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to debates and political speeches View commercials and advertisements Evaluate themes and arguments in books read aloud

Strategies

Listening Strategies

Listening happens every day in every classroom. Students listen as the teacher reads stories aloud, and they listen to the teacher give directions and present information. Even though listening has been called the neglected language art, there's no doubt that it plays a significant role in classroom activities. However, what has been neglected is teaching students how to be more effective listeners. Most of what has traditionally been called listening instruction is merely practice: When students listen to the teacher present information during a science unit and then complete a worksheet, for example, teachers assume that students know how to listen and that they will be able to complete the assignment. Through activities like these, students only practice whatever listening strategies they already possess.

The best way to improve children's listening is by teaching listening strategies (Brent & Anderson, 1993; Opitz & Zbaracki, 2004). Teachers use Dorn and Soffos's (2001) four teacher behaviors—modeling, coaching, scaffolding, and fading—as they teach minilessons about listening strategies and guide students to become more effective listeners.

Students use some strategies, such as activating background knowledge and monitoring their understanding, for most types of listening, but others are particularly effective for certain listening purposes. Many of these strategies are the same ones that students use for reading and viewing, the other receptive language arts.

Strategies for Discriminative Listening

As young children develop phonemic awareness, they learn to blend and segment sounds. These two strategies are especially useful when children are learning to read and spell: As they sound out words, students pronounce individual sounds and then blend them to decode the words, and when they are spelling an unfamiliar word, they pronounce the word slowly, segmenting individual sounds. Two other strategies that students acquire are savoring word play and noticing verbal and nonverbal cues. Children enjoy telling jokes and riddles and repeating tongue twisters. They apply what they've learned about wordplay when they appreciate poems they're reading and write their own wordplay and poetry.

Children also learn to notice verbal and nonverbal cues when they're listening to parents, teachers, and classmates. They learn that careful listening is enhanced by observation. Speakers direct their listeners' attention with a combination of visual and verbal cues. Visual cues include gesturing, writing

or underlining important information on the chalkboard, and changing facial expressions. Verbal cues include pausing, raising or lowering the voice, slowing down speech to stress key points, and repeating important information. Surprisingly, many students are not aware of these attention-directing behaviors, so teachers must point them out. Once students are aware of these cues, they can use them to increase their understanding of a message.

Strategies for Aesthetic Listening

Children learn to use predicting, visualizing, connecting, and summarizing strategies through minilessons, and they apply what they're learning as they listen to the teacher read stories aloud. These are the same comprehension strategies that students use when they read, but learning them through listening is often more effective.

The second graders in the Classroom Close-Up, for instance, used aesthetic listening strategies as they listened to Mr. Hernandez read aloud *Cook-a-Doodle-Do!* (Stevens & Crummel, 1999). Mikey offered predictions spontaneously, and at key points in the story, Mr. Hernandez asked the students to make additional predictions. They revised their understanding of the story as they made predictions and listened to see if they were correct. Students refined their understanding of the story as they offered comments and listened to the comments their classmates made, such as when students reflected on the pig's role in the story. The students made personal connections to their families' cooking experiences and literary connections to the "Little Red Hen" stories they had read. The title of the book provided an opportunity for language play when

Strategies Students Use as They Listen

Discriminative Listening

- blending
- segmenting
- savoring word play
- noticing verbal and nonverbal cues

Efferent Listening

- organizing
- recognizing big ideas
- questioning
- summarizing

Aesthetic Listening

- predicting
- visualizing
- connecting
- summarizing

Critical Listening

- determining the author's viewpoint
- identifying persuasive techniques
- evaluating
- drawing conclusions

Mr. Hernandez and his students compared “cock-a-doodle-doo” to “cook-a-doodle-doo.” Students also noticed the similarity between the names *Big Brown Rooster* and *Little Red Hen* and the “not I” refrain from “The Little Red Hen” story. The students used the visualizing and summarizing strategies when they made character charts after listening to Mr. Hernandez read the story.

Students do not always use every strategy as they listen to a story, but *Cook-a-Doodle-Do!* provided opportunities for the students to use all of them, and Mr. Hernandez knew how to take advantage of teachable moments.

Strategies for Efferent Listening

When students listen efferently, they focus on the big ideas and use strategies that help them recognize these ideas and organize them so they are easier to remember. For example, they use the questioning strategy to help them pick out what’s important and understand the relationships among the big ideas. Summarizing is another strategy students use to help them remember the big ideas.

Teachers often have students complete graphic organizers to highlight the big ideas and the relationships among them (Yopp & Yopp, 2001). When sixth graders listened to a presentation comparing amphibians and reptiles, for example, they made a T-chart to organize the information; they chose this graphic organizer because it emphasizes the comparison structure. They labeled one column “Amphibians” and the other “Reptiles” and wrote notes in each column while they listened to the presentation.

Strategies for Critical Listening

Listening critically means listening to evaluate or judge the message, and the most important strategy for critical listening is evaluating (Lundsteen, 1979). Students use the evaluating strategy to think about these questions:

- ◆ What is the speaker’s or author’s purpose?
- ◆ Is there an intellectual or emotional appeal?
- ◆ Are illustrations persuasive?
- ◆ Are propaganda devices being used?
- ◆ Are deceptive words or inflated language used?







As students listen to books read aloud, view commercials and advertisements, and listen to speakers, they need to ask themselves these questions in order to evaluate the message. Students also use efferent listening strategies during critical listening because critical listening is an extension of efferent listening: They organize ideas, ask questions, recog-

nize the big ideas, and summarize the presentation so that they can evaluate the message.

The Listening-Reading-Viewing Connection

Not only is it important that students learn strategies to improve their ability to listen, but students also use many of the same strategies for listening that they use for reading and viewing. Listening serves as a bridge to reading: Once students learn to use a listening strategy, they can apply what they have learned to reading and viewing. These strategies affect comprehension, no matter whether students are comprehending what they are listening to or what they are reading or viewing. Students need to learn to vary how they listen to fit their purpose for listening and develop specific strategies to use for different types of listening (Brent & Anderson, 1993; Jalongo, 1991). Capable listeners often use predicting and visualizing when listening aesthetically to stories, but many less capable listeners have only one approach to listening, no matter what the purpose: They listen as hard as they can and try to remember everything. This strategy is destined to fail for at least two reasons. First, trying to remember everything places an impossible demand on short-term memory; and second, many items in a message are not important enough to remember. Often students equate listening with intelligence, and less capable listeners assume that they are poor listeners because they “just aren’t smart enough.”

Sixth Graders’ T-Chart

Amphibians	Reptiles
Metamorphosis $\begin{matrix} \text{H}_2\text{O} \\ \downarrow \\ \text{land} \end{matrix}$	Only one form
Skin is moist	Dry skin
Smooth or warty skin	Have scales 
Lay eggs in water 	Lay eggs on land  in shells
Gills then lungs	Just lungs
Only males ♂ have voices! 	Only the Gecko has a voice!  

MINILESSON

Visualizing

Mrs. Armstrong Teaches Visualizing to Her Fourth Graders

- 1. Introduce the topic** Mrs. Armstrong introduces visualizing to her fourth-grade class. She explains that when she listens to a story read aloud, she makes pictures in her mind that go along with the story. She asks if they, too, make pictures in their minds, and many children agree that they do.
- 2. Share examples** Mrs. Armstrong begins reading Judy Blume's *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* (1972) and demonstrates how to create mind pictures of the characters and story events while reading aloud the first two chapters.
- 3. Provide information** Mrs. Armstrong explains the steps she uses in creating mind pictures:
 1. Close your eyes.
 2. Draw a picture of a scene or character in your mind.
 3. Listen for details and add them to your picture.
 4. Add colors to your mind picture.She creates a chart about visualizing, draws a person's head with a picture in it, and writes these four steps on the chart.
- 4. Supervise practice** As Mrs. Armstrong continues reading the book aloud, students practice making mind pictures. She stops reading periodically to ask students to describe how they are using the strategy. The fourth graders especially enjoy creating mind pictures near the end of the book when Peter finds out that his little brother Fudge ate his turtle.
- 5. Assess learning** After finishing the book, Mrs. Armstrong asks students to reflect on how they used the visualization strategy. One fourth grader explains:

I made a picture in my mind of how upset Peter was that Fudge ate his turtle. He was crazy for wanting to find his turtle and mad at his brother and because no one cared about his turtle, only about his brother. His face was red because he was crazy mad and he was yelling at Fudge and at his mom. He was crying and wiping at his eyes because his turtle's been eaten. Then I had a new picture in my mind when Peter got the big box with a puppy in it at the end. He was calm but not really happy. He was still sad about his turtle being dead. He had a smart look on his face because he knew it had to be a puppy and he thought to name him Turtle so he wouldn't forget. I see him holding the black and white dog and that dog is licking him all over his face.

Kucer (1991) urges teachers to talk with students about their understanding of strategies because he found that students' interpretations often don't match those of the teacher.

Because reading and listening involve many of the same strategies, teachers can teach strategies through listening and then have students apply them during reading (Pearson & Fielding, 1982; Sticht & James, 1984). As they read aloud, teachers model how to use these strategies, and after listening, students can reflect on how well they used them. It is easier for students to focus on strategy use during listening than during reading because they don't have to decode written words when listening.

MINILESSON

Getting Clues

Mrs. Rodriguez's Students Watch for Clues

- 1. Introduce the topic** Mrs. Rodriguez explains to her second graders that she often does some special things to get their attention and to tell them what information is most important when she teaches a lesson.
- 2. Share examples** Mrs. Rodriguez asks her students to watch her carefully as she begins a lesson about the body of an insect as part of a thematic unit on insects. Mrs. Rodriguez begins to speak, and she holds up three fingers as she explains that insects have three body parts. Next, she points to the three body parts on a nearby chart and names them, tapping each part with a pointer. Then she writes the names of the body parts on the chalkboard. Afterward, Mrs. Rodriguez asks students to recall what she did during the presentation, and the students correctly point out the three clues she used.
- 3. Provide information** Mrs. Rodriguez explains to students that teachers or other presenters often use clues to help listeners understand what is most important in a lesson. She explains that teachers use a variety of clues and asks her students to look for more clues as she continues the lesson. She demonstrates several more clues, including repeating an important fact and raising her voice for emphasis. Afterward, Mrs. Rodriguez asks students to identify the clues.
- 4. Supervise practice** The next day, Mrs. Rodriguez presents a lesson comparing insects and spiders, and she asks students to watch for her clues and to raise their hands to indicate that they noticed them. Afterward, she reviews the clues she used. She repeats this step for several additional lessons about insects.
- 5. Assess learning** To check their understanding about clues, Mrs. Rodriguez has her second graders make a list of the clues she used during a lesson, and they draw pictures to illustrate each clue they add to the list.

Classroom Practice

INTERACTIVE READ-ALOUDS: Getting Students Engaged in Listening

Reading aloud to students is a cherished classroom routine. In a recent study of sixth graders' reading preferences, an overwhelming 62% of students reported that they enjoy listening to the teacher read aloud (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Children's author Mem Fox (2001) and reading-aloud guru Jim Trelease (2001) both urge teachers to make time to read aloud to students every day because as they listen, students gain valuable experiences with books, enrich their background knowledge and vocabulary, and develop a love of reading. Reading aloud is art; effective readers are familiar with the book they're reading, and they read fluently and with expression, changing the tone of their voices and using pauses to enhance students' listening experience.

Reading aloud has been an informal activity in most classrooms: Teachers pick up a book, read the title aloud, and begin reading while students listen quietly. Often young children sit in a group on the floor around the teacher, and older students sit attentively at their desks. The students are passive as they listen, but afterward, they become more engaged as they talk briefly about the story and perhaps participate in a follow-up activity. The focus is on the sharing of literature with little or no student involvement until after the reading is over. Researchers who have studied reading aloud, however, have concluded that students are better listeners when they are involved while the teacher is reading, not afterward (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). This conclusion has led to the development of the interactive read-aloud procedure (Barrentine, 1996).

In an interactive read-aloud, teachers introduce the book and activate children's background knowledge before they begin to read. They model listening strategies and fluent oral reading as they read aloud, and they engage students while they read. Then after reading, they provide opportunities for students to respond to the book. The most important component, however, is how teachers involve students while they are reading aloud (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004).

One way that teachers engage students is to stop reading periodically to discuss what has just been read. What matters is when teachers stop reading: When they're

reading stories aloud, it's more effective to stop at points where students can make predictions and suggest connections, after reading episodes that students might find confusing, and just before it becomes clear how the story will end. When they're reading informational books aloud, teachers stop to talk about big ideas as they are presented, briefly explain technical terms, and emphasize connections among the big ideas. When they reading poems, teachers often read the entire poem once, and then stop as they read the poem a second time for students to play with words, notice poetic devices, and repeat favorite words and lines. Deciding how often to stop for discussion and knowing when to end the discussion and continue reading develop through practice and vary from one group of students to another. In the Classroom Close-Up, Mr. Hernandez actively involved his second graders in listening by encouraging them to talk about the story as he read it aloud.

INTERACTIVE READ-ALOUDS

1 Pick a book
Teachers choose award-winning and other high-quality books that are appropriate for students and fit into their instructional programs.

2 Preview the book
Teachers practice reading the book to ensure that they can read it fluently and to decide where to pause and engage children with the text; they write prompts on

self-stick notes to mark these pages. Teachers also think about how they will introduce the book and select difficult vocabulary words to highlight.

3 Introduce the book
Teachers activate students' background knowledge, set a clear purpose for listening, and preview the text.

4 Read the book interactively
Teachers read the book aloud,

modeling fluent and expressive reading. They stop periodically to ask questions to focus students on specific points in the text and involve them in other activities.

5 Involve students in after-reading activities
Students participate in discussions and other types of response activities.

Interactive Techniques for Stories

In addition to discussion, teachers use these activities to involve children as they read stories aloud:

- ◆ Make and revise predictions at pivotal points in the story
- ◆ Share personal, world, and literary connections
- ◆ Talk about what they're visualizing or how they're using other strategies
- ◆ Draw a picture of a character or an event
- ◆ Assume the persona of a character and share what the character might be thinking
- ◆ Reenact a scene from the story

In addition, young children who are reading patterned stories often recite repetitive refrains while the teacher is reading.

Interactive Techniques for Nonfiction

While teachers read aloud informational books or chapters in content-area textbooks, children participate in these ways:

- ◆ Ask questions or share information
- ◆ Raise their hands when they hear specific information
- ◆ Restate headings as questions
- ◆ Take notes
- ◆ Complete graphic organizers

Interactive Techniques for Poetry

Teachers often read a poem aloud several times. During the first reading, children often listen without participating, and then teachers invite them to participate in these ways as they listen a second time:

- ◆ Add sound effects
- ◆ Mumble read along with the teacher, if they can read the poem
- ◆ Repeat lines after the teacher
- ◆ Clap when they hear rhyming words, alliterations, onomatopoeia, or other poetic devices

Teachers don't have children do all these things, of course, with any one interactive read-aloud, but they choose participatory activities based on their students' interests and the material they are reading.

When Should You Reread Books?

Children—especially kindergartners and primary-grade students—often beg to have a familiar book reread. Although it's important to share a wide variety of books with children, researchers have found that children benefit in specific ways from repeated readings (Yaden, 1988). Through repetition, students gain control over the parts of a story and are better able to synthesize those parts into a whole.

The quality of children's responses to a repeated story changes, too. Martinez and Roser (1985) examined young children's responses to stories and found that as stories became increasingly familiar, children's responses indicated a greater depth of understanding. They found that children

Theory to Practice

Using Interactive Read-Alouds in a Third-Grade Classroom

During a unit on the rain forest, Mrs. Cooper uses the interactive read-aloud procedure to share stories, informational books, and poems with her third graders. She varies the engagement techniques she uses according to the book's genre and her purposes.

Book 1: *One Day in the Tropical Rain Forest*

Mrs. Cooper reads Jean Craighead George's chapter-book story *One Day in the Tropical Rain Forest* (1990). As she begins, Mrs. Cooper asks the students to listen aesthetically and to imagine that they are Tepui, an Indian boy living in the Venezuelan rain forest, who helps scientists find a new species of butterfly. The next day, she asks them to listen critically—to determine the author's message about preserving the rain forest. After she finishes reading, Mrs. Cooper invites students to draw pictures of Tepui that emphasize the author's message.

Book 2: *Nature's Green Umbrella*

Next, Mrs. Cooper reads *Nature's Green Umbrella: Tropical Rain Forests* (Gibbons, 1994), an informational book. The students divide into small groups, and each group takes responsibility for locating the answer to one of the questions about the rain forest that the class brainstormed in an earlier activity. As Mrs. Cooper reads aloud, students raise their hands when they hear the answer to their question, and she helps them write notes. Afterward, the students in each group summarize their notes and write a paragraph-length answer to their question, which they copy on chart paper, post in the classroom, and share with the class.

Book 3: *The Tree*

Several days later, Mrs. Cooper reads aloud *The Tree* (Vyner, 1994), a cumulative story about a rain forest tree. Even though it's a story, *The Tree* reads like a poem following the cumulative pattern of "This is the house that Jack built." Mrs. Cooper invites students to play with the language by reading along with her once they figure out the author's pattern. The students enjoy the book so much that Mrs. Cooper rereads it several times, with the third graders chanting as she reads. Later, many of the third graders write new versions of *The Tree* as their end-of-unit project.

talked almost twice as much about familiar books that had been reread many times as they did about unfamiliar books that had been read only once or twice. The form and focus of children's talk changed, too: Children tended to ask questions about unfamiliar stories, but they made comments about familiar ones. Children's talk about unfamiliar stories focused on characters; the focus changed to details and word meanings when they talked about familiar stories.

The researchers also found that children's comments after repeated readings were more probing and more specific, suggesting that they had greater insight into the story. Researchers investigating the value of repeated readings have focused mainly on preschool and primary-grade students, but rereading favorite stories and other types of books many have similar benefits for older students as well.

How to Choose the Best Books

Choosing books to read aloud can be difficult because teachers have access to literally thousands of books today. The most important guideline for choosing books for interactive read-alouds is to choose books that you like. A second guideline is to choose books that children will like but cannot read independently. A number of guides are available to help teachers select books, including:

- ◆ *Adventuring With Books: A Booklist for Pre-K–Grade 6* (McClure & Kristo, 2002)
- ◆ *Kaleidoscope: A Multicultural Booklist for Grades K–8* (Hansen-Krening, Aoki, & Mizokawa, 2003)
- ◆ *The New York Times Parent's Guide to the Best Books for Children* (Lipson, 2000)
- ◆ *The Read-Aloud Handbook* (Trelease, 2001)
- ◆ *Your Reading: An Annotated Booklist for Middle School and Junior High School* (Brown & Stephens, 2003)

Teachers also can check journals, including *Language Arts*, *The Reading Teacher*, *The Horn Book*, and *Book Links*, for reviews of newly published trade books for children.

Books that have received awards or other acclaim from teachers, librarians, and children make good choices. The two most prestigious awards are the Caldecott Medal and the Newbery Medal, which are awarded annually by the American Library Association. Books receive special notice in other ways, too. In many states, for example, children vote for favorite books to receive recognition, such as the Buckeye Book Award in Ohio and the Sequoyah Book Award in Oklahoma. The International Reading Association also sponsors a Children's Choices competition, in which children select their favorite books, and a similar Teachers' Choices competition; lists of these books are published annually in *The Reading Teacher*.

Benefits of Reading Aloud

It's easy to take reading aloud for granted, assuming that it is something teachers do for fun in between instructional activities. However, reading aloud to students is an important instructional activity with numerous benefits:

- ◆ Children's interest in reading is stimulated
- ◆ Children's reading interests and their taste for quality literature are broadened
- ◆ Children are introduced to the sounds of written language
- ◆ Children's knowledge of vocabulary and sentence patterns is expanded
- ◆ Children are introduced to books that are "too good to miss"
- ◆ Children listen to books that might be too difficult for them to read on their own or that are "hard to get into"
- ◆ Children see their teachers model what capable readers do
- ◆ Children's background knowledge is expanded
- ◆ Children are introduced to genres and elements of text structure
- ◆ Children are more likely to become lifelong readers
- ◆ Children become a community of learners through a pleasurable, shared experience

Can a book be too difficult to read aloud?

Teachers often read aloud grade-appropriate books that are too difficult for some students to read independently. The idea is that even if students can't read the words, they can understand the ideas presented in the book. This read-aloud strategy works for many students, but for others, it does not. For example, students may lack sufficient background knowledge on the topic or may be overwhelmed by unfamiliar vocabulary in the book. They may not listen strategically, or they may not be interested in the book.

You can solve these problems. You can build background knowledge before reading by showing a video, reading a picture book, or sharing a story box of objects. At the same time you're building background knowledge, introduce key vocabulary words, and while reading, briefly explain unfamiliar words; sometimes providing a synonym is enough. In addition, struggling students may not know how to listen. It's important to teach the listening process and ask students to use strategies, such as visualizing, while they listen.

Finally, struggling students often complain that a book is "boring," but what they generally mean is that they don't understand it. Making sure that students understand often takes care of their seeming lack of interest; however, if the book really doesn't interest students, you can create interest by making connections with their lives, showing the video version of the story, or asking students to assume a role as a character and dramatize events from the story. If none of these strategies work, then choose a different book to read.

Reading stories aloud to children has always been an important component in most kindergarten and first-grade classrooms. Sometimes teachers think they should read to children only until they learn to read for themselves, but reading aloud to share the excitement of books should remain an important part of the language arts program at all grade levels. Upper-grade students report that when they listen to the teacher read aloud, they get more interested in the book and understand it better, and the experience often makes them want to read the book themselves (Ivey, 2003). In addition, Albright (2002) examined her seventh graders' responses during interactive read-alouds of picture books, and she found that through this activity, her students were more engaged in learning, they exhibited higher-level thinking, and they enriched their content-area knowledge.

LEARNING TO "DO" SCHOOL: Ways to Improve Students' Efferent Listening

Efferent listening is the most common type of listening that students use in school: They listen efferently when teachers present information and give directions. Students may be learning about homonyms during language arts, for example, the water cycle during a science unit, or the Bill of Rights during a social studies unit. No matter the topic, teachers want students to remember the big ideas and understand the relationships among them. They can use five techniques to improve students' listening by piquing their curiosity and encouraging them to be more actively involved in listening. By incorporating these techniques into their presentations, teachers make their oral presentation more like interactive read-alouds.

Activate Background Knowledge

Teachers encourage students to activate background knowledge and build on that knowledge by having them explore the topic. They can brainstorm ideas while the teacher takes notes on chart paper, in list or cluster format. As students share ideas, the teacher asks them to elaborate, and the teacher clarifies any misconceptions. Or, students can quickwrite on the topic and then share their writing with the class. Teachers also use anticipation guides to stimulate students' interest in a topic and activate their background knowledge. They present a set of statements related to the topic, some of which are true and will be confirmed by the presentation, and others that are false and will be corrected by the presentation. Before the presentation, students read and discuss each statement and mark whether they think it is true or false. Then they listen to the presentation and mark each statement again after listening (Readence, Bean, & Baldwin, 2004).

Set a Clear Purpose

Teachers explain the purpose for listening and tell students to listen efferently, to remember information. For example, their purpose

might be to learn how to identify prefixes or to identify four reasons why pioneers traveled west in covered wagons.

Use Manipulatives

Teachers choose objects, pictures and photos, or word cards for students to examine or use in activities during the presentation. Using manipulatives increases students' interest and makes abstract ideas more concrete.

Create Graphic Organizers

Teachers create diagrams using circles, boxes, lines, and arrows to show the relationships among the big ideas, and students complete the graphic organizer by adding words during the presentation.

Have Students Take Notes

Students take notes to help them remember the big ideas as they listen to oral presentations.

Upper-grade students often use a special kind of note taking in which they divide their papers into two columns, labeling the left column *Take Notes* and the right column *Make Notes*. They take notes in the left column, but, more important, they think about the notes, make connections, and personalize the notes in the right column (Berthoff, 1981). The right column should be more extensive than the left one because this column shows students' thinking.

Teaching Students to Take Notes

Students are more active listeners when they take notes. Their interest in note taking begins when they realize that they can't store unlimited amounts of information in their minds: They need some kind of external storage system.

Teachers introduce note taking by demonstrating the procedure. They set a clear purpose, and during the oral presentation, they stop periodically, ask students to identify the big idea that was presented, and list their responses on the chalkboard. Teachers often begin by writing notes in a list format, but the notes can also be written in an outline or diagram. After an introduction to various note-taking approaches, students develop personal note-taking systems in which they write notes in their own words and use a consistent format.

Children's awareness that note taking is a strategy "to help you remember what you are listening to" starts in the primary grades. Teachers begin demonstrating the usefulness of note taking on charts with kindergartners and first graders, and second and third graders begin taking notes in their learning logs as a part of thematic units.

Teachers often teach students to take notes from informational books and reference materials. However, taking notes from a speaker is equally important, and it presents special challenges. When they are taking notes from a speaker, students cannot control the speed at which information is presented. They usually cannot listen more than once to a speaker to complete their notes, and the structure of oral presentations is often less formal than that of printed materials. Students need to become aware of these differences so that they can adapt their note-taking system to the mode of presentation.

Scaffolding English Learners

Why is listening so important for English learners?

learners?

Listening is a key to language development because children learn English as they listen to the teacher and classmates talk and read aloud.

Reason 1: Language Models

When teachers read aloud, the books provide language models. English learners acquire new vocabulary and more sophisticated language patterns and sentence structures through listening. Gibbons (2002) warns, however, that classrooms are noisy places, and the background buzz may make it harder for English learners to hear, under-

stand, and learn. Teachers can alleviate this problem by sitting English learners close to where they often talk and read to the whole class and by insisting that classmates be courteous listeners.

Reason 2: Expanding Knowledge

Students also develop background knowledge through listening. They learn new information and the vocabulary to express the ideas, and they also make new connections between the ideas and past experiences. This contribution is especially important for children of poverty, including English learners, who have limited background knowledge.

Reason 3: Transfer to Reading

Listening is an important instructional tool because it is a receptive process, like reading. Students can transfer the listening strategies they learn to reading, and both listening and reading involve the active construction of meaning.

Effective listening depends on expectations and predictions about the content, language, and genre that the listener brings to the text. In addition, whether students are successful listeners depends on their background knowledge and familiarity with the topic teachers are talking or reading about.

Minilessons are a good example of an interactive presentation of information. In a minilesson, teachers:

- ◆ Set a purpose for the lesson and connect it to ongoing activities in the classroom
- ◆ Interest students in the lesson by using student examples or examples from literature
- ◆ Involve students in activities, including brainstorming ideas, locating examples, manipulating words and sentences, discussing the topic, and making charts and posters
- ◆ Put students in small groups to experiment with the new information
- ◆ Have students make personal connections to the new information by applying it in language arts activities

Teachers improve students' efferent listening by enhancing their interest in the topic and by increasing their active involvement during listening.



Developing a Critical Ear

Students—even those in the primary grades—need to become critical listeners because they are exposed to persuasion and propaganda all around them; the biggest culprit is probably television commercials. It's essential that they listen critically in order to judge the advertising claims. For instance, do the jogging shoes actually help you run faster? Will the breakfast cereal make you a better football player? Will owning a particular pair of shoes or video game make you more popular? At school, students use critical listening to understand many stories that teachers read aloud, and social studies and science lessons on topics such as pollution, political candidates, and drugs demand that students listen and think critically.

Persuasion and Propaganda

There are three ways to persuade people. The first is by reason. We seek logical conclusions, whether from absolute facts or from strong possibilities; for example, we can be persuaded to practice more healthful living as the result of medical research. It is necessary, of course, to distinguish between reasonable arguments and unreasonable appeals. To suggest that diet pills will bring about extraordinary weight loss is an illogical appeal.

A second way is an appeal to character. We can be persuaded by what another person recommends if we trust that person. Trust comes from personal knowledge or the reputation of the person who is trying to persuade. We can believe what scientists say about the dangers of nuclear waste, but can

we believe what a sports personality says about the taste of a particular brand of coffee?

The third way is by appealing to people's emotions. Emotional appeals can be as strong as intellectual appeals. We have strong feelings and concern for ourselves and other people and animals. Fear, a need for peer acceptance, and a desire for freedom of expression are all potent feelings that influence our opinions and beliefs.

Any of these types of appeals can be used to try to persuade someone. For example, when a child tries to convince her parents that her bedtime should be delayed by 30 minutes, she might argue that neighbors allow their children to stay up later—an appeal to character. It is an appeal to reason when the argument focuses on the amount of sleep a 10-year-old needs. And when the child announces that she has the earliest bedtime of anyone in her class and it makes her feel like a baby, the appeal is to emotion. The same three appeals apply to in-school persuasion. To persuade classmates to read a particular book in a book talk “commercial,” a student might argue that classmates should read the book because it is short and interesting (reason); because it is hilarious and they'll laugh (emotion); or because it is the most popular book in the seventh grade and everyone else is reading it (character).

Propaganda Devices

Glittering Generality

Propagandists use generalities such as “environmentally safe” to enhance the quality of a product. Even though the generality is powerful, listeners think beyond the generality to assess the product.

Testimonial

Advertisers associate a product with an athlete or movie star. Listeners consider whether the person offering the testimonial has the expertise to judge the quality of the product.

Name Calling

Persuaders try to pin a bad label on someone or something they want listeners to dislike, such as calling a person “unpatriotic.” Listeners then consider the effect of the label.

Card Stacking

Propagandists often use only items that favor one side of an issue; unfavorable facts are ignored. To be objective, listeners seek information about other viewpoints.

Bandwagon

Advertisers claim that everyone is using their product. For example, “four out of five physicians recommend this medicine.” Listeners consider whether everyone really does use this product.

Rewards

Propagandists offer rewards for buying their products. Children are lured by toys in fast-food meals, and adults by rebates from manufacturers. Listeners ask whether the reward makes the product worth buying.

What is media literacy?

Today, our information and entertainment come more from the visual media—television, films and DVDs, CD-ROMs, and the Internet—than from print sources. For instance, children spend an average of 21 hours each week watching television, and they will have spent more time in front of the television than in the classroom by the time they graduate from high school (Lembo, 2000). Children's interest in the media is reflected in the books and magazines they choose to read and the topics they write about (Dyson, 2003). Because of the prevalence of media today, it's essential that children learn to both comprehend and evaluate a message rather than simply accept it at face value.

Media literacy is the ability to interpret media messages (Silverblatt, 2001). Children use critical listening, viewing, and thinking skills to analyze the media messages that inform, entertain, and sell to us every day. Children use media literacy strategies and skills, for example, when they question whether violence being depicted is normal and acceptable, examine digital photo manipulation in magazines and on the Internet, notice special effects and the placement of paid products in films, explore possible bias in news reports, and ponder the public relations “spin” on events.

Media literacy involves teaching children to ask the right questions. Teachers encourage children not to accept media presentations at face value. Instead, they should ask probing questions about the purposes, viewpoints, and motives of a message:

- ◆ What perspective is used?
- ◆ What values are conveyed?
- ◆ Which media techniques are used?
- ◆ Who is the intended audience?
- ◆ Who profits from this message? (Brunner & Tally, 1999)

Children can also ask themselves what has been omitted from the message. When children ask questions like these, they become more critical thinkers and understand that the developer's purposes, viewpoints, and motives influence the content of media productions. They also use these questions when they are listening critically to stories and informational books.

The media play an important role in children's lives (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Dyson, 1997). In fact, they are some of the most powerful cultural forces today. Because of their importance, it's crucial that teachers make time in their language arts programs for media literacy lessons so that children become savvy media consumers.

It's essential that children become critical consumers of commercials and advertisements because they are bombarded with them (Lutz, 1997). Advertisers use appeals to reason, character, and emotion just as other persuaders do to promote products, ideas, and services; however, advertisers may also use propaganda to influence our beliefs and actions. Propaganda suggests something shady or underhanded. Like persuasion, propaganda is designed to influence people's beliefs and actions, but propagandists may use certain techniques to distort, conceal, and exaggerate.

People seeking to influence us often use words that evoke a variety of responses. They claim that something is "improved," "more natural," or "50% better"—loaded words and phrases that are deceptive because they are suggestive. When a product is advertised as 50% better, for example, consumers need to ask, "50% better than what?" Advertisements rarely answer that question.

Doublespeak is another type of deceptive language characterized as evasive, euphemistic, confusing, and self-contradictory. It is language that only pretends to communicate (Lutz, 1997). Two types of doublespeak that students can understand are euphemisms and inflated language. Euphemisms are words or phrases (e.g., "passed away") that are used to avoid harsh realities, often out of concern for someone's feelings rather than to mislead. Inflated language includes words intended to make the ordinary seem extraordinary. Thus, car mechanics become "automotive internists," and used cars become "pre-owned" or even "experienced" cars.

Children need to learn that people sometimes use words that only pretend to communicate; sometimes they use words to intentionally misrepresent, as when someone advertises a vinyl wallet as "genuine imitation leather" or a ring with a glass stone as a "faux diamond." When children can interpret deceptive language, they can avoid being deceived.

To sell products, advertisers use propaganda devices, such as testimonials, the bandwagon effect, and rewards. Students can listen to commercials to find examples of each propaganda device and discuss the effect the device has on them. They can also investigate to see how the same devices vary in commercials directed toward youngsters, teenagers, and adults. For instance, a commercial for a snack food with a sticker or toy in the package will appeal to a youngster, and an advertisement for a videotape recorder offering a factory rebate will appeal to an adult. The propaganda device for the ads is the same: a reward! Propaganda devices can be used to sell ideas as well as products. Public service announcements about smoking or wearing seat belts, as well as political advertisements, endorsements, and speeches, use these devices.

Critical Thinking About Books

Many stories, informational books, and poems that teachers read aloud encourage critical thinking. When teachers read aloud stories such as *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993) and *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!* (Scieszka, 1989), students use a combination of aesthetic and critical listening: They use critical listening to evaluate the theme of *The Giver* and to determine whether the wolf's story is believable. When students listen to informational books such as *Antarctica* (Cowcher, 1990) and

Books That Encourage Critical Listening

- Avi. (1991). *Nothing but the truth*. New York: Orchard Books. (U)
- Babbitt, N. (1975). *Tuck everlasting*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. (U)
- Bunting, E. (1994). *Smoky night*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace. (P–M)
- Cohen, B. (1983). *Molly's pilgrim*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard. (M)
- Cowcher, H. (1990). *Antarctica*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. (P–M)
- Creech, S. (2004). *Heartbeat*. New York: HarperCollins. (M–U)
- Ellis, D. (2000). *The breadwinner*. Toronto: Groundwood. (M–U)
- Gantos, J. (2000). *Joey Pigza loses control*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. (M)
- Haddix, M. P. (1998). *Among the hidden*. New York: Aladdin Books. (U)
- Hesse, K. (2001). *Witness*. New York: Scholastic. (U)
- Lobel, A. (2004). *Potatoes, potatoes*. New York: Greenwillow. (P–M)
- Lowry, L. (1993). *The giver*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (U)
- Morimoto, J. (1987). *My Hiroshima*. New York: Puffin Books. (M)
- Naylor, P. R. (1991). *Shiloh*. New York: Macmillan. (M–U)
- Scieszka, J. (1989). *The true story of the 3 little pigs!* New York: Viking. (P–M)
- Siebert, D. (1991). *Sierra*. New York: HarperCollins. (M–U)
- Spinelli, J. (1997). *Wringer*. New York: HarperCollins. (M–U)
- Turner, A. (1987). *Nettie's trip south*. New York: Macmillan. (M)
- Van Allsburg, C. (1986). *The stranger*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (M)
- Whelan, G. (2000). *Homeless bird*. New York: HarperCollins. (U)
- Yolen, J. (1992). *Encounter*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace. (M)

P = primary grades (K–2); M = middle grades (3–5); U = upper grades (6–8)

Encounter (Yolen, 1992), they confront important ecological and social issues. The books provide information about the issues, and classmates share their ideas during discussions. Through these activities, students think more deeply about controversial issues and challenges and expand their own beliefs. Even some books of poetry stimulate critical listening. *Sierra* (Siebert, 1991), for example, a book-length poem about this western mountain range, ends with a warning about the threat people pose to the environment.

A IS FOR AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT: Does Anyone Assess Listening?

Even though teachers ask their students to listen for a variety of instructional activities each day, listening is almost never assessed. Because it's an invisible cognitive process, it's hard to judge how well children are listening. Usually teachers assume that children are listening if they can apply the content they listened to as they participate in a discussion, write a journal entry, or complete a graphic organizer. The problem is that even when students apply the content successfully, teachers don't know for sure that it was the result of how well they listened; it could be that they already knew the information or that they've learned to compensate for their weak listening skills by using classmates' comments to their advantage. Even more troubling is that when children can't apply the content they have heard presented, teachers don't know why. They may be ineffective listeners, but it's also possible that they didn't understand the purpose for listening, didn't activate background knowledge, or didn't have adequate knowledge about the topic. A classmate may have distracted them, or a personal problem may have occupied their thoughts. In addition, English learners might have been unfamiliar with key vocabulary words or been overwhelmed by the teacher's speed of presentation or sophisticated sentence structure.

With the current testing mandates, teachers might consider assessing listening a low priority, but because so much instruction is presented orally, that's a mistake. Assessment is an integral component of listening instruction (Opitz & Zbaracki, 2004). Teachers commonly assume that students can understand the books they read aloud—if the topic of the book is appropriate for the students' grade level but the text is too difficult for them to read themselves, then students should be able to understand the book if they listen to it read aloud. Often that is the case, but not for everyone. For children who are not successful listeners, teachers may want to check their listening capacity level using an informal reading inventory.

Assessment and instruction are linked, so teachers need to do these things to be able to assess their students' listening:

- ◆ Teach listening; don't assume that students know how to listen. Teach students about the purposes for listening and how to use the listening strategies.
- ◆ Set expectations for listening. Tell students what to listen for, and hold them accountable for listening.
- ◆ Use interaction techniques for involving students. For both reading aloud and giving oral presentations, find ways to involve students more actively.
- ◆ Monitor students' listening so that you know when listening has broken down; then you can teach them how to get back on track.
- ◆ Expect students to assess their own listening. Have them reflect on their purpose, the strategies they use, how actively they were involved, and whether they understood what they listened to.

Once teachers become more involved in teaching listening, they'll begin to assess students' listening. The purpose of this assessment is rarely to assign a grade; instead, it is to determine whether students are listening effectively so teachers can take action when students aren't successful.

Checking Children's Listening Capacity Level

Teachers can determine whether students are likely to understand grade-level books by checking their listening capacity level using an informal reading inventory (IRI), such as *The Critical Reading Inventory: Assessing Students' Reading and Thinking* (Applegate, Quinn, & Applegate, 2004). Teachers follow the instructions in the IRI manual, but instead of having students read the grade-level passage, they read it aloud to students and then ask the comprehension questions. If students answer the questions correctly, then they can usually listen to grade-level books and understand them. If students can't answer the questions, then teachers repeat the listening test using a passage for a lower grade level. Sometimes teachers find that students' listening capacity is one or more levels lower than their current grade level; for these students to listen to and understand the books that are read aloud, teachers must teach listening strategies and provide extra support while they are reading.



Review

The Big Ideas

Listening is the most basic and most used of the language processes. Despite its importance, listening instruction is neglected because teachers assume that children already know how to listen. Students need to learn how to vary the way they listen according to their purpose, and to consider their purpose as they choose which strategies to use.

These big ideas were presented in Part 2:

- ◆ Listening is a three-step process: receiving, attending, and assigning meaning.
- ◆ The four types of listening are discriminative, aesthetic, efferent, and critical.

- ◆ Teachers use interactive read-alouds to actively engage students in listening to stories, informational books, and poetry.
- ◆ Teachers also use techniques to actively involve students in listening to oral presentations.
- ◆ Teachers teach students to listen critically because they are exposed to many types of persuasion and propaganda.
- ◆ Teachers also teach students to use critical thinking in order to understand complex issues in books that teachers read aloud.

Classroom Inquiry

Because listening is going on all around you, you're likely to be interested in learning how actively involved your students are in listening. You can examine what you and your students do in the classroom and interview students to learn what they know about listening. Consider investigating one of these topics.

Purposes for Listening

Children spend nearly half of the school day listening to you and their classmates for a variety of purposes. To examine how your students use listening and what they understand about listening, you might be interested in exploring these questions:

- ◆ What types of listening activities do my students engage in?
- ◆ What listening purposes do I set for my students?
- ◆ Can my students articulate their own purposes for listening?
- ◆ How do my students vary the way they listen according to their purpose?

Listening Strategies

Students learn strategies to listen more effectively and then apply many of these strategies to reading. To explore what strategies your students use when they listen, think about these questions:

- ◆ Which listening strategies have I taught and modeled?
- ◆ How do I teach a listening strategy?
- ◆ Which listening strategies do my students use?
- ◆ Can my students explain what they do when they listen?

Interactive Read-Alouds

It's essential that students are actively involved when teachers read aloud stories, informational books, and poetry. To examine how you read aloud, ask yourself these questions:

- ◆ What steps do I follow in doing interactive read-alouds?
- ◆ How do I engage my students during interactive read-alouds?
- ◆ Which engagement techniques do my students prefer?
- ◆ Are all of my students engaged during the read-alouds?

