Teacher talk *Emperor Penguins*

Read about evidence-based theories that underpin best teaching practices. By learning more about the theory behind teaching strategies you will develop a deeper understanding of what 'works best' for the learners in your classroom.

Teacher talk will help you to understand the pedagogic practices surrounding the 'Big Six' focus areas. You will discover a range of instructional strategies that integrate these core elements of reading development.

Inclusive teaching and learning opportunities that build on the Big Six as well as students' needs, strengths and interests are vital for building student capacity in learning English. This can be a complex and challenging task. Teacher talk offers instructional strategies aimed at scaffolding the learning of a diverse range of students, including English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) students and students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Try these strategies as you share *Emperor Penguins* with your class, and use them in other aspects of your reading program. Discuss with your colleagues the instructional practices that resonate with you, and those that have been effective in your classroom.

Scaffolding

Emperor Penguins introduces scientific concepts and uses technical, Tier 3 vocabulary to do so. It's important to scaffold your learners' experiences as they explore the text so they can make meaning, understand new language and further develop their oral language.

Making meaning

As you revisit the book, allow for extended conversations around the information and concepts presented on each page. This can be done as a whole group and/or in small groups according to student needs.

During these discussions you can scaffold and support students' understanding by:
- explicitly discussing the purpose of the text
- finding out students' prior knowledge
- encouraging students to make connections to their personal experiences
- explaining important concepts
- providing time for students to retell what they have learnt.

You can further support and extend your learners and their understanding of the topic by exposing them to other texts and/or appropriate websites about emperor penguins. This can promote further in-depth discussion and new learning about the topic.

When planning teaching and learning activities for English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) students, or students with additional needs, keep in mind the concept load of the text. If needed, provide added support when reading *Emperor Penguins*. You can do this by:

- rephrasing the text to explain important concepts
- showing students how to use the visuals as an added support
- giving students extra time to respond to your questions
- encouraging students to ask questions about the information so as to clarify their understandings and build upon their knowledge.

Vocabulary building

As you come across technical words in the text, you can help your students understand this complex vocabulary by:

- providing repeated opportunities for students to hear and use new language structures and vocabulary
- allowing time for students to give definitions of particular vocabulary and to use these words in sentences during discussions
- revisiting the book to allow for extended conversations around the information, concepts and vocabulary related to the topic
- creating word lists related to the topic, and adding illustrations where necessary to support students' understanding.

Oral language development

Having a rich oral language is an important foundation for reading development, and facilitating the development of your students' oral language is an important aspect of your teaching. Here are some tips for class or small-group discussions.

- Keep a balance of 'teacher talk' and 'student talk'. Use 'teacher talk' to build upon the knowledge and oral language of your students.
- Encourage students to participate in extended dialogue. Give students time to explain their thinking further. Prompt them to tell you more and/or rephrase your question to encourage a deeper response.
- Scaffold students' responses by modelling correct language choices back to them.

Students' oral language development can be enhanced by engaging in dialogic reading. Dialogic reading focuses on having an in-depth conversation around a book as it is shared with the students. It offers students the opportunity to talk expressively.

The teacher's role in dialogic reading is to support the student by facilitating the greater exploration of texts. The adult becomes the listener by guiding the child through a series of questions or prompts in order to encourage the child to become the teller of the story (Zevenbergen and Whitehurst, 2003).

During dialogic reading sessions you can use the 'PEER' and 'CROWD' strategies (Zevenbergen and Whitehurst, 2003) to guide the conversations you have with your students around the text.

The PEER (prompt, evaluate, expand, repeat) strategy outlines a sequence to follow when asking questions. The CROWD (completion, recall, open-ended prompts, 'Wh' prompts, distancing) strategy gives examples of different ways or prompts to begin the PEER questioning sequence.

Strategy	What it means
PEER – sequence of questions	P – Prompting the student to talk about the text by using questions to begin the conversation
	E – Evaluating the student's response and providing a comment
	E – Expanding the student's answers by rephrasing, adding information or modelling correct syntax
	R – Repeating the prompt so the student has the opportunity to reuse the language
CROWD – different ways to begin the PEER questioning sequence	C – Completion prompts: the student fills in the blanks by saying a word or a phrase to finish the teacher's sentence
	R – Recall prompts: the student is asked to recall information
	O – Open-ended prompts: open-ended questions are asked
	W – 'Wh' prompts: questions beginning with who, what, where, when, why and how
	D – Distancing prompts: relate something in the story to the student's personal experiences

Australian Curriculum links

Year 1: AC9E1LA03, AC9E1LA08, AC9E1LA09, AC9E1LY05

Exploring descriptive language

Descriptive language can make a story come alive or transport a reader to a real, factual place. Building a student's understanding of adjectives and adverbial phrases and how to use them will help their language development. The more exposure students have to examples of descriptive language, the more confident they will become to use it, both orally and in their writing.

Mentor texts

You can assist your students to recognise descriptive language by using a mentor text – a text that you return to many times for different teaching and learning purposes.

The exploration of the structure and vocabulary used in descriptive language can be achieved using books (mentor texts) that offer a myriad of possibilities for our students as writers (Dorfman and Cappelli, as cited in Nicolazzo and Mackenzie, 2018).

As you share mentor texts with your students, highlight how the author has written the text and help your students to notice rich, new vocabulary and interesting sentence structures that can be incorporated into their own language or writing (Nicolazzo and Mackenzie, 2018, p204). Find repeated opportunities to highlight this language as you read aloud, lead discussions and model writing.

Use *Emperor Penguins* to explore descriptive language. As you read the text, point out and discuss the words and phrases the author uses for description. Talk about the visual images these words create and have students construct their own similar phrases.

Some examples of descriptive language in *Emperor Penguins* include:
- 'freezing cold temperature' – freezing cold ice-cream, freezing cold weather, freezing cold day
- 'icy-cold water – icy-cold weather, icy-cold land, icy-cold day
- 'bitter wind' – bitter taste, bitter person, bitter disappointment.

Scaffolding understanding

EAL/D students may need further support to understand the use of descriptive words and phrases. Plan intentional teaching opportunities to help these students understand new language structures and vocabulary. You could consider the following:
- Include opportunities for lots of repetition of a range of grammatical constructions including adverbial phrases. This repetition is required before most EAL/D students are able to rephrase and use this language.
- Model the use of new language structures and vocabulary both orally and through reading aloud. This will help students become familiar with the sounds and meaning of this type of language.
- Restructure information to help students understand the meaning of new language.
- Rephrase students' oral attempts at new language. This will illustrate to them the correct structure of the language.

Australian Curriculum links

Year 1: AC9E1LA03, AC9E1LA08, AC9E1LA09, AC9E1LE02, AC9E1LY05

Phonological awareness

Hearing the syllables in words is an important skill for students to develop. Syllable work can be done alongside discussions about the meaning of the vocabulary you come across in a text. This can involve using words on a class word list.

To emphasise each syllable in a word clap, stamp your feet or make a sound with a musical instrument as you say a word. Students repeat, guided by you and then do so independently. Begin by focusing on one-syllable words, and revisit them until students can hear that they contain one syllable. Move on to words with two syllables, three syllables and beyond as your students are ready.

For more information go to:
- NSW Department of Education: Phonological awareness
- Victorian Department of Education and Training: Phonological awareness
- Reading and Writing Centre: phonological awareness video

Phonics

As an addition to your daily systematic phonics program you can use *Emperor Penguins* to help students practise and reinforce particular phoneme-grapheme relationships. Revisit the text and highlight particular phonics concepts that your students have already learnt so they can build automaticity in recognising letter-sound relationships and decoding skills. For example, you could use the word 'staying' to focus on blending the adjacent consonant sounds *s* and *t*, or identifying the *ay* digraph and the 'ing' suffix.

When focusing on phonics instruction think about:

- being explicit in the letter–sound (grapheme–phoneme) relationships you are focusing on
- providing multiple exposures to these spelling patterns
- systematically approaching the introduction of particular spelling patterns, graphemes and phonemes that need to be covered; this Level 1 phonics scope provides a suggested sequence
- considering explicit links to handwriting.

For more information on phonics go to Phonics lessons: consonant digraphs.

> **Australian Curriculum links**
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> **Year 1:** AC9E1LY11, AC9E1LY13, AC9E1LY15, AC9E1LY09

References

Dorfman, L. R., & Cappelli, R. (2007). *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing Through Student's Literature, K-6*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Nicolazzo, M., & Mackenzie, N. M. (2018). Teaching writing strategies. In N. M. Mackenzie and J. Scull (Eds.), *Understanding and supporting young writers from birth to 8*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Zevenbergen, A. A., & Whitehurst, G. J. (2003). Dialogic reading: a shared picture book reading intervention for preschoolers. In A. Kleeck, S. Stahl, & E. Bauer (Eds.), *On reading books to children*. New York: Routledge.

This document is part of the **Literacy Hub's shared reading set**. Access more texts and related teaching materials.