

Unlocking language learning: Maximising the potential of picture books in VYL and YL classrooms

Webinar handout

by Fiona Hunter

Here are some activities you can use to help maximise language learning from picture books.

Teacher-led listen and respond activities

In these activities the children have to understand and respond to language, rather than having to produce it. The idea is to include exposure to 'bigger language' as well as your target language, e.g. No, no, no. That's not my Mum. My mum hasn't got a trunk. That's an **elephant**.

1. **Splat games** - children listen and point or touch an image or text.

You can vary the format: flashcards around the room; pictures on the board; A4 posters; cards in the centre of a circle with 'slamming' toys.

2. **More settled games** - children play in pairs or small groups.

- Fishing - attach paper clips to flashcards and play at collecting them with magnetic rods.
- Bingo - listen and check off items. Don't forget that 'bigger language'!
- Categorising tasks - Children group according to instructions then invent their own.

3. **Drama - TPR games**

Play traditional games like musical statues where the children listen and interpret your prompts, or re-enact the story as a whole class.

4. **Songs** - Adapt songs to include both implicit and explicit language. Children can respond with actions or join in if they are able.

5. **Crafts** - Incorporate 'bigger language' in prompts while completing a craft activity. Include a cut and paste element, so that the children have to listen and then find the relevant part to collect, e.g. 'It hasn't got legs. It's long' = the children collect a snake.

Teacher-guided activities

In these activities the children have to produce the target language to complete the activity/task.

1. Whole class activities

Children take turns leading activities such as those discussed above and guessing games. They can also be in control of nominating the next item to collect or colour during craft activities.

2. Small group / pair games - teacher prompts and intentionally uses 'bigger language'

- Pelmanism - pairs take turns turning over two cards to find a match.
- Rock, paper, scissors - pairs play and the winner makes a sentence, asks a question or any other action you have specified in relation to your language objectives.
- Board games - children play and follow instructions to produce the language you specify.

3. Crafts

- Cut and paste crafts - The children ask you or each other for the items they need, using the target language. Try to include 'bigger language' in your teacher talk.
- Prompt and game crafts - children use the crafts in dialogues and roleplays, e.g. puppets in a dialogue, storytelling with mini-books, games with fortune tellers.

Child-led experimentation activities

In these activities the children are given more freedom to use what language they have at their disposal. As the teacher, your role is to observe and provide support when asked for. It's your opportunity to notice what language they are choosing to use and which language might require more work in the future. Some activities are:

- **Roleplay and drama play**
- **Story retelling**
- **Learning stations** with props, books, puppets, crafts and games from previous lessons

A recording of Fiona Hunter's webinar can be watched here:

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/supporting-literacy-development-mini-event>