



Session 7

Maybe in order to understand mankind we have to look at that word itself. MANKIND. Basically, it's made up of two separate words: "mank" and "ind." What do these words mean? It's a mystery and that's why so is mankind.

-Jack Handey (Saturday Night Live)

Teaching Phonological Awareness with the Eliciting Strategy

Learning Objectives

- ◇ **Review** the terms phoneme, syllable, and high-support strategy, and **define** the term eliciting strategy.
- ◇ **Demonstrate** use of the eliciting strategy when teaching phonological awareness.
- ◇ **Analyze** children's responses to the eliciting strategy in a phonological awareness activity.
- ◇ **Reflect** on how the eliciting strategy can be used in your classroom to improve children's phonological awareness.
- ◇ **Describe** how the eliciting strategy can be used to address all four *Read It Again–PreK!* domains.

Overview

Phonological awareness is one of the most important areas of literacy development for young children. We discussed in Session 4 the following points about phonological awareness:

1. Phonological awareness describes children's sensitivity (awareness) to the phonological – or sound – structures of speech. When we produce speech, we are actually blending segments of sounds together: segments of syllables and sounds. Phonological awareness is an individual's awareness of these segments.
2. Two of the major segments that are linked together in production of speech are *syllables* and *phonemes*. A *syllable* is the smallest meaningful unit of a word, and consists of at least one vowel which creates the nucleus of the syllable. The first syllable in the following words is underlined: elevator, household, and monster. Notice that each syllable contains a vowel sound (identified in bold) and one or more consonants. Words may be one syllable in length (cat, mill, ten) or several syllables in length (elevator, household, monster). A syllable

always contains a unit called a rime – this is the vowel of the syllable plus any consonants that follow, as underlined in these single-syllable words: cat, mill, ten, and flow. The rimes of syllables are used to make rhyme patterns across words (cat/hat). Syllables are made up of individual speech sounds, called phonemes. A *phoneme* is the smallest meaningful unit of sound in speech, and when we produce syllables and words, we blend together phonemes, as in /b/ + /a/ + /t/ (bat).

3. In general, phonological awareness activities that focus on large units of sounds – syllables and rime units – are easier for young children than those that focus on small units of sound – the phoneme. One way of thinking about phonological awareness is that children progress through certain levels of awareness. They progress from a shallow level of awareness that involves awareness of syllables and rhymes to a deep level of awareness that includes awareness of phonemes.

4. A child can demonstrate his or her phonological awareness through a variety of tasks or activities:

- **Syllable blending:** Child blends several syllables to make a word (e.g., *What do you get when you say sis...ter together?*)
- **Syllable counting:** Child identifies the number of syllables contained in a word, by clapping or counting (e.g., *How many syllables are in the word elephant?*)
- **Syllable deletion:** Child removes a syllable from a multi-syllable word (e.g., *Say batman without the bat.*)
- **Rhyme detection:** Child identifies which of a set of words rhyme (*Which words rhyme: sail, boot, nail?*) or indicates whether two words rhyme (e.g., *Do sail and nail rhyme?*)
- **Rhyme production:** Child produces a word that rhymes with a target (e.g., *What rhymes with boat?*)
- **Beginning sound identification:** Child identifies the first sound of a word (e.g., *What's the first sound of the word bat?*)
- **Beginning sound matching:** Child identifies two words that share the same first sound (e.g., *What's a word that starts with the same sound as bat?*)
- **Beginning sound deletion:** Child removes the first sound from a word (e.g., *Say beat without the /b/.*)
- **Phoneme blending:** Child blends a series of sounds to make a word or syllable (e.g., *What word do the sounds /b/... /i/... /t/... make?*)
- **Phoneme segmenting:** Child breaks apart the series of sounds that make a word or syllable (e.g., *Tell me each of the sounds in the word bit.*)

As with other literacy skills, children enter the preschool classroom with a wide range of phonological awareness abilities. Some children have a deep level of awareness, whereas others have a shallow level of awareness. Or, looking at the list of phonological awareness tasks above, some children may be able to successfully complete only the first three tasks focusing on syllables of words, whereas other children may be able to successfully complete all of these tasks! The child who can complete all of the tasks above has very strong phonological awareness, whereas the child who can only complete one or two syllable-type tasks has relatively limited phonological awareness. It is important for early childhood educators to support children who may have limited phonological awareness and to challenge those children who have stronger phonological awareness.

In this session, we focus our attention on how to support children who are experiencing difficulties with activities that target phonological awareness due to limited skills in this area. As we discussed in Session 5, we can think of this support as gentle nudges we might provide a child who is climbing up a ladder. These types of gentle nudges are called high-support strategies because they are designed to give a high level of support to children who find certain activities challenging. **High-support strategies** help children to successfully participate in activities that may be difficult for them. As teachers use high-support strategies over time, children will improve their skills and move towards the top of the ladder.

The Eliciting Strategy

The high-support strategy we describe in this session is **eliciting**.

The eliciting strategy involves giving children the correct answer to a task that is difficult for them by providing an exact model of the ideal response.

By using this strategy, the child is able to participate in an activity that might otherwise have been too challenging and to progress up the ladder of learning. Let's look at an example:

Teacher: Take a look at the pictures of **milk** and the **muffin** on this page. **Milk** and **muffin** share the same first sound. When I say both **milk** and **muffin**, my mouth says 'mmm' at the beginning of each word. **Milk** and **muffin** have the same first sound. Thomas, do **milk** and **muffin** share the same first sound?

Thomas: Yes! Mmm.

Teacher: You are exactly right. When I say **milk** and **muffin**, I say the same first sound!

In the preceding example, the educator is teaching the phonological awareness skill of identifying initial sounds. She explicitly directs the children's attention to initial sounds in the two target words: *milk*, *muffin*. After explicitly discussing how these words share the same beginning sound (mmm), she asks Thomas to determine whether the two words have the same beginning sound. She models the correct answer for Thomas prior to asking him to complete the task on his own because she knows he has great difficulty with tasks like this. Therefore, the child is given assistance to successfully complete a task that he otherwise would not have been able to.

Let's look at another example:

Teacher: **Rug** and **hug** rhyme. Do **rug** and **hug** sound the same? Yes, Ricardo, they do; tell me: **rug** and **hug** rhyme!

Ricardo: **Rug** and **hug** rhyme.

In the above example, the teacher provides the correct answer to the rhyming task and asks Ricardo to respond with the answer she has modeled. Therefore, the teacher's use of the eliciting strategy has allowed Ricardo to successfully complete a phonological awareness task that would have otherwise been too challenging for him.

Terms and Background Knowledge

Vocabulary

Phoneme – The smallest meaningful unit of sound in speech; there are approximately 44 phonemes in the English language.

Syllable – The smallest meaningful unit of words; these consists of at least one vowel which is the nucleus of the syllable.

Rime – The part of a syllable (or single syllable word) that contains the vowel and any consonants that follow the vowel (as underlined in the following: bark, sun, and miss).

High-support strategy – A strategy that teachers use for tasks that are very difficult for a child, tasks that he or she is far from being able to do on his or her own.

Eliciting – A high-support strategy in which the teacher provides children with the correct answer to a task by providing an exact model of the ideal response and then eliciting that correct answer from the children.



Activity 1. Teacher Implementation of the Eliciting Strategy

As we think about using the eliciting strategy, let's consider how to support children's phonological awareness by providing exact models of the ideal response to these types of tasks. Remember, with the eliciting strategy the teacher provides a child with the correct answer and then elicits that correct response. Read the following transcript of a classroom conversation.

Teacher: I see a picture of a **dog** on this page. Let's say the word **dog**. Gabriela, how many parts does that word have?

Gabriela: D-og. (Child claps twice while saying word, indicating that it has two parts.)

Teacher: Good try, but let's say **dog** together again. **Dog. Dog** is a short word and it has only one part. Let's try another one. The word **cup** has one part. It is a short word and it only has one part. Gabriela, how many parts does the word **cup** have?

Gabriela: One – it's short.

Teacher: Great! The word **cup** is short and it has one part. Now, let's say the word **cupcake**. Cup – cake. **Cupcake** is longer and it has two parts. Gabriela, how many parts does the word **cupcake** have?

Gabriela: Cup – cake. Two parts.

Teacher: You are right. **Cupcake** is a longer word than **cup**. **Cupcake** has two parts and **cup** has just one part.

Now, answer these questions about the exchange above.

How did the teacher know when it was necessary to support this child's learning using the eliciting strategy?

Activity 1. Teacher Implementation of the Eliciting Strategy

Give an example of an instance when the teacher could have used the eliciting strategy but did not.

Give a specific example of an instance when the teacher did use the eliciting strategy.

Describe the child's response to the teacher's use of the eliciting strategy. Was the child able to successfully complete the task?

Compare the child's response to the phonological awareness task when the teacher did and did not use the eliciting strategy. How did the child's responses differ?



Activity 2. Learners' Ladders

Review the strategy of eliciting addressed in four *Read It Again—PreK!* Learners' Ladder Phonological Awareness Lessons. These lessons are:

- Learners' Ladder Lesson 2
- Learners' Ladder Lesson 6
- Learners' Ladder Lesson 30
- Learners' Ladder Lesson 54

Activity 2. Learners' Ladders

Of the examples provided in these lessons, which ones do you feel you use often in your daily instruction?

Next, review these two examples of the eliciting strategy taken from Learners' Ladder Lesson 26.

Example 1:

Teacher: **Fan** and **Phone** both begin with the 'ffff' sound. Do **fan** and **phone** begin with the same 'ffff' sound?

Example 2:

Teacher: **Mess** and **Fan** do not begin with the same first sound. Do **mess** and **fan** begin with the same first sound?

Reflect on these questions:

How should the teacher respond if the child provides an incorrect answer?

Rewrite each of these examples so that the teacher does not use the eliciting strategy. Predict how a child with limited phonological awareness would perform given these revised examples.

Listen and Learn

Activity 3.

Turn on your DVD player and select *Session 7, Activity 3* from the RIA DVD menu. You will see a teacher reading a book to a group of children. Complete the activity as described below.

Watch this teacher use the eliciting strategy to discuss a new phonological awareness activity with her students while reading *Giggle, Giggle, Quack* by Doreen Cronin.

Answer these questions:

Which phonological awareness skill was the teacher trying to target?

Describe the teacher's use of the eliciting strategy.

Describe how the children responded to this strategy.

Now, listen to what we have to say.

Turn on your DVD player and select *Session 7, Activity 3 Discussion* from the RIA DVD menu.

Activity 3.



Activity 4.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 7, Activity 4** from the RIA DVD menu. You will see a teacher reading a book to a group of children. Complete the activity as described below.

Watch this teacher attempt the eliciting strategy to discuss new phonological awareness skills with her students while reading the text *I Stink!* by Kate and Jim McMullan. After watching the video complete the following questions.

What phonological awareness skill was the teacher trying to target?

Describe the teacher's use of the eliciting strategy. Did she implement this strategy in a high-quality way in your opinion? Why or why not?

Write down the exact language you could use to implement the eliciting strategy when asking the children to identify the number of syllables in the words *throttle*, *max*, and *roar*.

Now, listen to what we have to say.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 7, Activity 4 Discussion** from the RIA DVD menu.

Activity 4.



Activity 5.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 7, Activity 5** from the RIA DVD menu. You will see a teacher reading a book to a group of children. Complete the activity as described below.

Watch this teacher use the strategy of eliciting to discuss a different domain from that of phonological awareness, namely narrative, with her students while she is reading the text *Rumble in the Jungle* by Giles Andreae and David Wojtowycz. Make notes for yourself while considering these questions:

Which narrative skill was the teacher targeting?

What kind of language did the teacher use to engage children in the eliciting strategy?

How did the children respond to this strategy?

Now, listen to what we have to say.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 7, Activity 5 Discussion** from the RIA DVD menu.

Activity 5.

Reflect and Apply

Reflect

1. Think about a child in your classroom who has difficulty with phonological awareness activities. Write that child's name here: _____.

How often do you currently use the eliciting strategy with this child when engaging in phonological awareness instruction?

To what extent would this child benefit from more exposure to this strategy?

2. Look again at the eliciting strategy as discussed in the *Read It Again–PreK! Learners' Ladders*. Do you use this strategy often in your classroom? Why or why not?

What could you do in your classroom this week to use this strategy more often?

3. Read over this excerpt from the book *In the Small, Small Pond* by Denise Fleming.

In the small, small pond....
 Wiggle, jiggle, tadpoles wriggle
 Waddle, wade, geese parade
 Hover, shiver, wings quiver
 Drowse, dose, eyes close
 Lash, lunge, herons plunge

Next reflect on the following questions:

How could you use this excerpt to teach children how to attend to the beginning sounds in words? Give a specific example of what you might say or do to teach this concept using this excerpt.

Are there children in your classroom who may have difficulty following what you say or do to teach this concept?

If there are children who may have difficulty following what you say or do to teach this concept, describe how you could use the strategy of eliciting to support their performance.

Apply

1. Find a storybook in your classroom library that has words that share the same beginning sound (e.g., *silly sally*; *lash, lunge*; *angry ants*). Select a child in your classroom to read with and pause while reading to complete some phonological awareness tasks that involve thinking about the beginning sounds of words. Practice using the eliciting strategy to help the child identify when words in the book share the same beginning sound. What kind of language did you use to apply this strategy? Did you feel that this detracted from the storybook reading session?

2. Gather a small group of children in your classroom who have difficulty with phonological awareness activities. Ask the children to identify rhyming words within the text of a storybook. First, deliver the activity without providing the high-support strategy of eliciting. Note here the language you use to introduce and facilitate this activity:

Now, deliver the activity of identifying rhyming words by providing the high-support strategy of eliciting. Note here the language you use to introduce and facilitate this activity:

3. Gather a small group of children in your classroom who have difficulty with print knowledge. Ask them to play the letter/word game with you. When you say 'letter,' they will point to a letter. When you say 'word,' they will point to a word. You can use a classroom sign, big book, or other source of print that is easy for all children in the group to see. First, deliver the activity without providing the high-support strategy of eliciting. Note here the language you use:

Now, deliver the print knowledge activity of identifying letters and words by providing the high-support strategy of eliciting. Note here the language you use:

Resources

- Adams, M. J., Foorman, B. R., Lundberg, I., & Beeler, T. (1998). *Phonological awareness in young children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Andreae, G., & Wojtowycz, D. (1996). *Rumble in the jungle*. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.
- Blachman, B. A., Ball, E. W., Black, R., & Tangel, D. M. (2000). *Road to the Code*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Cronin, D. (2002). *Giggle, giggle, quack*. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.
- Fleming, D. (2007). *In the small, small pond*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co.
- Handey, J. Retrieved March 3, 2009, from <http://thinkexist.com/quotation/maybe-in-order-to-understand-mankind-we-have-to/410948.html>.
- McMullan, K., & McMullan, J. (2006). *I stink!* New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Moats, L. C. (2000). *Speech to print: Language essentials for teachers*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- O'Connor, R. E., Notari-Syverson, A., & Vadasy, P. F. (2005). *Ladders to Literacy*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

