

Letters and Sounds: Phase 1 – Aspect 7

Oral Blending and Segmenting

Main Purposes

Tuning into Sounds

To develop oral blending and segmenting of sounds in words.

Listening and Remembering Sounds

To listen to phonemes within words and to remember them in the order in which they occur.

Talking About Sounds

To talk about the different phonemes that make up words.



Oral Blending

Tuning into Sounds – To develop oral blending and segmenting of sounds in words.

It is important that the children have plenty of experience of listening to adults modelling oral blending before they are introduced to grapheme-phoneme correspondences. For example, when giving children instructions or asking questions the adult can segment the last word into separate phonemes and then immediately blend the sounds together to say the word (e.g. 'It's time to get your c-oa-t, coat!' or 'Touch your t-oe-s, toes!' 'Who can touch their f-ee-t, feet?') Use only single-syllable words for oral blending.

Oral blending can also be modelled from time to time when books are being shared, particularly rhyming books where the last word in a rhyming couplet could be segmented into separate sounds and then blended by the adult.

Assessment Prompts – Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- blend phonemes and recognise the whole word;
- say the word and identify the object;
- blend words that begin with the same initial phoneme.



Toy Talk

Tuning into Sounds -To develop oral blending and segmenting of sounds in words.

Introduce to the children a soft toy that can only speak in 'sound-talk'. The children see the toy whispering in the adult's ear. To add to the activity, as the toy whispers the adult repeats the sounds, looks puzzled and then says the word straight afterwards. For example: 'What would Charlie like for tea today?' The toy speaks silently in the adult's ear and the adult repeats 'ch-ee-se' looking puzzled and then, says with relief 'cheese!' Now invite the children to see if they can speak like the toy: 'Do you think you could try to toy talk?' Say ch-ee-se: (the children repeat 'ch-ee-se'). Ask the toy again, 'What else would you like?' Be careful to think of items with names of only single syllables (e.g. fish, cake, pie, soup). Use different scenarios: What does the toy like to do in the playground? (hop, skip, jump, run, etc.). As the children become more confident and make some errors (for example, blend skim for skip), ask them to catch you out by giving the correct blend. Encourage the children to ask the toy questions with yes/no answers (e.g. Can you sing? Y-e-s/N-o). Or ask the toy the colour of his bike, his bedroom walls, his jumper, etc. and the toy will answer r-e-d, b-l-ue, g-r-ee-n, m-au-ve.

Assessment Prompts - Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- blend phonemes and recognise the whole word;
- say the word and identify the object;
- blend words that begin with the same initial phoneme.

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Clapping Sounds

Tuning into Sounds -To develop oral blending and segmenting of sounds in words.

Think of words using the letters 's, a, t, p, i, n' (e.g. sat, pin, nip, pat, tap, pit, pip) and sound them out, clapping each phoneme with the children in unison, then blend the phonemes to make the whole word orally.

As children's confidence develops, ask individuals to demonstrate this activity to others.

Assessment Prompts - Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- blend phonemes and recognise the whole word;
- say the word and identify the object;
- blend words that begin with the same initial phoneme.

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Which One?

Tuning into Sounds -To develop oral blending and segmenting of sounds in words.

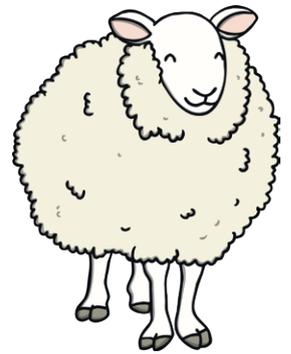
Lay out a selection of familiar objects with names that contain three phonemes (e.g. leaf, sheep, soap, fish, sock, bus). Check that all the children can recognise each object. Bring out the sound-talking toy and ask the children to listen carefully while it says the names of one of the objects in sound-talk so they can help it to put the sounds together and say the word.

The toy then sound-talks the word, leaving a short gap between each sound. Encourage the children to say the word and identify the object. All the children can then repeat the sounds and blend them together - it is important that they do this and don't simply listen to the adult doing so.

Assessment Prompts - Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- blend phonemes and recognise the whole word;
- say the word and identify the object;
- blend words that begin with the same initial phoneme.



Cross the River

Tuning into Sounds -To develop oral blending and segmenting of sounds in words.

Choose a selection of objects with two or three phonemes. There can be more than one of the same object. Make a river across the floor or ground outside with chalk or ropes. Give each child or pair of children an object and check that all the children know the names of the objects. The toy calls out the name of an object in sound-talk (e.g. p-e-g). The children who have that object blend the sounds to make the word and cross the river.

Assessment Prompts - Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- blend phonemes and recognise the whole word;
- say the word and identify the object;
- blend words that begin with the same initial phoneme.



I Spy

Tuning into Sounds -To develop oral blending and segmenting of sounds in words.

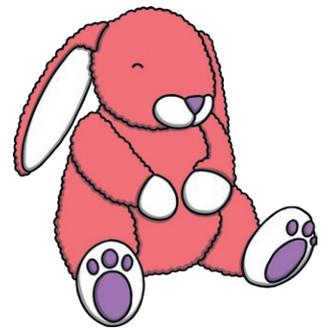
Place on the floor or on a table a selection of objects with names containing two or three phonemes (e.g. zip, hat, comb, cup, chain, boat, tap, ball). Check that all the children know the names of the objects. The toy says I spy with my little eye a z-i-p. Then invite a child to say the name of the object and hold it up. All the children can then say the individual phonemes and blend them together 'z-i-p, zip'.

When the children have become familiar with this game use objects with names that start with the same initial phoneme (e.g. cat, cap, cup, cot, comb, kite). This will really encourage the children to listen and then blend right through the word, rather than relying on the initial sound.

Assessment Prompts - Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- blend phonemes and recognise the whole word;
- say the word and identify the object;
- blend words that begin with the same initial phoneme.



Segmenting

Listening and Remembering Sounds -To listen to phonemes within words and to remember them in the order in which they occur.

Invite a small group of children to come and talk to the toy in sound-talk, for example just before dinner time: "Let's tell the toy what we eat our dinner with." Discuss with the children and agree that we use a knife and fork. Then tell the toy in sound-talk which the children repeat. Continue with: "Let's tell the toy what we drink out of." Confer and agree on 'cup'. Repeat in sound-talk for the toy to listen and then invite the children to do the same.

Ask the children to think of other scenarios which they could tell the toy or let them give him instructions. Then model the sound-talk for the children to repeat. This is teaching the children to segment words into their separate sounds or phonemes and is the reverse of blending. The children will soon begin to start the segmenting themselves.

Leave the sound-talk toy freely available to the children for them to practise and experiment with sound-talk. On special occasions, weekends or holidays, the toy may go on adventures or go to stay at the children's homes. When he returns he will have lots to tell the children about his escapades - in sound-talk.

Assessment Prompts - Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- segment words into phonemes.



Sounds

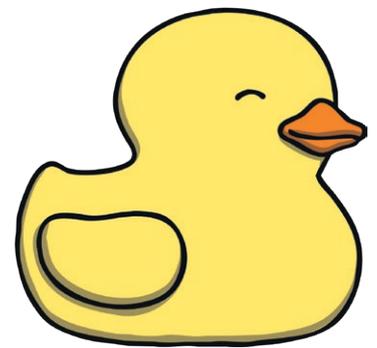
Listening and Remembering Sounds -To listen to phonemes within words and to remember them in the order in which they occur.

When the children are used to hearing the toy say words in sound-talk and blending the individual sounds to make words, you may be able to ask some children to see whether they can speak in sound-talk. Choose some objects with three-phoneme names that you are sure the children know and hide them in a box or bag. Allow one of the children to see an object, and then ask them to try to say the separate sounds in the name of the object, just like the toy does (e.g. d-u-ck). The other children then blend the sounds together to make the word. The child can then reveal the object to show whether the other children are right.

Assessment Prompts - Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- segment words into phonemes.



Counting Phonemes

Talking About Sounds -To talk about the different phonemes that make up words.

When children are used to oral blending, and can readily blend two and three phonemes to make words, introduce the idea of counting how many phonemes they can hear. For example: p-i-g, pig. If we say the phonemes in that word one by one, how many phonemes can we hear? Let's use our fingers to help us: p-i-g, one, two, three phonemes.

Assessment Prompts - Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- identify the number of phonemes that make up a given word.



Considerations for Practitioners

- During Phase One, there is no expectation that children are introduced to letters (graphemes). Of course some children may bring knowledge of letters from home, and be interested in letters they see around them on signs, displays and in books. Practitioners and teachers should certainly respond to children's comments and queries about letters and words in print.
- Children who can hear phonemes in words and sound them out accurately are generally well placed to make a good start in reading and writing.
- Children learning EAL generally learn to hear sounds in words very easily.
- Children need to hear the sounds in the word spoken in sound-talk immediately followed by the whole word. Avoid being tempted to ask any questions in between such as I wonder what that word can be? or Do you know what that word is? The purpose is to model oral blending and immediately give the whole word.
- It is important only to segment and blend the last word in a sentence or phrase and not words that occur at the beginning or middle of the sentence. Over time and with lots of repetition, the children will get to know the routine and as they gain confidence they will provide the blended word before the adult.



Considerations for Practitioners – continued

- Using a toy is preferable to a puppet because it is important that children watch the adult's face and mouth to see the sounds being articulated clearly, rather than focusing on the imitated movements of the puppet.
- It is very important to enunciate the phonemes very clearly and not to add an 'uh' to some (e.g. 'sssssss' and not 'suh', 'mmmmmmmm' and not 'muh').
- Avoid using words with adjacent consonants (e.g. 'sp' as in 'spoon') as these will probably be too difficult for children at the early stages of practising blending and segmenting.
- Once children have been introduced to blending and segmenting, they should be practised hand in hand as they are reversible processes.