Introduction

Our goal in writing this book was to address a notable gap in the availability of essential resources dedicated to the critical content area of language and literacy. Despite its foundational importance, no existing text offers a focused, in-depth exploration of language and literacy knowledge tailored for pre-service and in-service teachers from foundation to senior secondary education. The 2008 Bradley Review highlighted a deficiency in teachers' language and literacy awareness and proficiency, a concern that was addressed by the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education Students (LANTITE) in 2016. Consequently, initial teacher education programs have initiated courses and support services in English language and literacy to bolster teachers' personal knowledge and skills, enabling them to pass the LANTITE's literacy component.

Considering the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the requirements set down by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), which both call for demonstrable knowledge of language and literacy across all teaching areas, this textbook seeks to fill this crucial void. The Australian Curriculum emphasises the development of literacy skills across various learning areas, highlighting the importance of literacy in enabling students to access, understand and engage with content across all subjects, thereby supporting their overall academic achievement and participation in society (ACARA, n.d.).

The National Literacy Learning Progression developed by ACARA provides a detailed framework for understanding and supporting students' literacy development, helping teachers tailor instruction to meet individual student needs (ACARA, n.d.). Furthermore, the National Roadmap for English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) Education in Schools (ACTA, 2022) stresses the necessity for teachers to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to support EAL/D learners, ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all students.

By addressing these critical areas, this book equips teachers with the foundational tools and strategies needed to become effective and confident educators, capable of fostering language and literacy development in diverse classroom settings. Unlike other texts, which often cover similar topics in less detail, this book narrows its focus to the essential knowledge and metalanguage necessary for teachers to become language- and

literacy-aware. This targeted approach ensures a more accessible resource, ideal for first-year teachers. By situating language and literacy within the social and political imperatives of Australian education, the text provides a comprehensive framework for teachers to develop the essential knowledge and skills needed to address diverse student needs across the Australian Curriculum.[1]

The book is structured into two Parts, each comprising six chapters. Part 1: Language and literacy fundamentals, comprised of Chapters 1–6, lays the groundwork by teaching foundational knowledge and metalanguage required by teachers in order to teach language and literacy effectively across the Australian Curriculum. The sequence of content progresses from the early years to the secondary years, covering phonological, phonemic and morphological awareness, word- and sentence-level grammar, and language use in social contexts. It culminates with a discussion on English language diversity and change.

Part 2: Developing language and literacy, comprised of Chapters 7–12, introduces the metalanguage, content knowledge and teaching methods required to develop students' competence in vocabulary, text types and grammar, oracy, reading, writing, and critical literacy. This Part provides a detailed exploration of how to foster these skills in students, ensuring that teachers are well equipped to meet the demands of modern classrooms in Australia.

Chapter 1 covers phonological awareness, the ability to recognise and manipulate sounds in spoken language. This chapter emphasises the importance of this ability as a foundational skill in language development. Phonological awareness includes identifying syllables, onsets, rhymes, and phonemes, which are crucial for early reading. The chapter discusses strategies like rhyming games, syllable counting and sound blending to enhance students' phonological awareness, laying a strong foundation for their reading and writing skills.

Chapter 2 looks at phonemic awareness, the ability to hear and manipulate individual sounds in words, which is critical for reading success. This chapter begins by explaining the connection between phonological and phonemic awareness, and then provides tools for teachers to support students through activities like phoneme segmentation, deletion and substitution. Developing phonemic awareness is essential for effective phonics instruction, which in turn supports reading fluency and comprehension.

Chapter 3 addresses morphological awareness, which involves understanding morphemes, the smallest units of meaning in language. This chapter explains free and bound morphemes, their types and their role in vocabulary development, spelling, and reading comprehension. It highlights Structured Word Inquiry (SWI) as an effective method for teaching morphology, etymology and phonology to enhance spelling and vocabulary skills. This approach helps students understand the structure and history of words, improving their ability to comprehend and spell words.

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[1] While much of our discussion addresses the Australian Curriculum for Foundation to Year 10, we also cover content in the Australian Curriculum: English, which is taught to Foundation to Year 10 and secondary school students.

Chapter 4 explores traditional and functional grammar approaches in Australian schools. It covers key grammatical concepts necessary for teachers, such as parts of speech, sentence structures and language functions. It emphasises the importance of explicit grammar instruction, and provides strategies for integrating grammar teaching into the broader language and literacy curriculum. Understanding grammar enables teachers to support students in manipulating words, word groups, clauses, sentences and full texts, constructing coherent and cohesive texts, and enhancing their overall reading and writing proficiency.

Chapter 5 covers the social use of language. Understanding the social use of language is essential for effective communication and interaction. This chapter explores how language is used in various contexts to achieve different functions, emphasising the pragmatic aspects of language use. It discusses literal and non-literal language, highlighting the importance of understanding both to navigate social interactions successfully. The chapter also covers the role of linguistic and non-linguistic resources, such as body language and facial expressions, in communication. Special attention is given to the needs of EAL/D students, ensuring that all students can develop the necessary skills to use language effectively in social contexts.

Chapter 6 concludes Part 1 and covers English language diversity and change. Understanding English language diversity and change is crucial for teaching in multicultural contexts. This chapter explores the linguistic and cultural diversity present in Australian classrooms. It reviews the concept of English as a lingua franca (ELF), emphasising effective communication over native-like proficiency. The chapter addresses the challenges posed by 'Standard Australian English' (SAE) and the complexities associated with teaching culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) students. It highlights the importance of intercultural competence (ICC) in educators and outlines strategies to foster inclusive education, supporting students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Part 2 begins with Chapter 7, which covers developing vocabulary. Vocabulary knowledge is essential for language proficiency and academic success. This chapter discusses the significance of vocabulary development and its impact on reading comprehension. It outlines various types of vocabulary (receptive, expressive, tiered) and effective instructional strategies for vocabulary acquisition, such as direct instruction, word maps, semantic gradients and contextual analysis. Building a robust vocabulary helps students understand and engage with complex texts, improving their reading comprehension and writing skills.

Chapter 8 explores teaching text types and grammar. Focusing on genres and text types, this chapter considers the social purposes, structural stages and language features of various text types commonly used in schools, such as factual recounts, information reports, and procedures. It introduces the Teaching and Learning Cycle, a pedagogical model that incorporates explicit instruction, guided practice and independent

application. This model helps teachers scaffold students' learning and develop their ability to write and understand different text types effectively, enhancing their overall literacy skills.

Chapter 9 progresses to oracy development. Oracy, or oral communication skills, is crucial for students' overall language development and academic success. This chapter discusses the components of oracy, including speaking and listening skills, and their role in the classroom. It provides strategies for promoting oracy through discussions, presentations, debates and collaborative activities. The chapter also highlights the importance of creating a classroom environment that encourages active listening and respectful communication, helping students develop their oral language skills in a supportive setting.

Chapter 10 explores developing reading. Reading is a critical skill for learning, understanding new information, and cognitive development. This chapter discusses the stages of reading development, how reading works and strategies for teaching reading. It highlights the importance of understanding both bottom-up and top-down processing models, which involve word recognition, syntactic parsing, and using background knowledge and inference for comprehension. The chapter also covers the simple view of reading, emphasising word recognition and comprehension abilities. Strategies for teaching reading include guided reading, modelling reading strategies, and incorporating technology to support reading development. Special attention is given to the needs of EAL/D students, ensuring that all students can develop strong reading skills.

Chapter 11 explores developing writing. Writing is a crucial skill for academic and professional success. This chapter covers writing demands in schools, the stages of writing development and strategies for teaching writing. It emphasises the importance of modelling writing, providing feedback and using strategies like the Teaching and Learning Cycle to support students' writing development. The chapter also discusses the specific needs of EAL/D students and strategies to support their writing, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to develop strong writing skills.

The final chapter, Chapter 12, addresses critical literacy. Critical literacy is the ability to read texts in an active, reflective manner to understand the power of language in texts to alternatively voice inequality and injustice, or appreciation of diversity and social justice. This chapter explores the importance of teaching critical literacy in schools to help students become aware of how texts can influence and shape perceptions and beliefs. It provides practical examples of strategies for teachers to incorporate critical literacy into their teaching, through questioning techniques, text analysis and encouraging students to consider multiple perspectives.

As we stated at the start of this Introduction, we have been concerned to provide teachers with an essential and accessible resource that supports their understanding of metalanguage and concepts in the critical area of language and literacy education. This book is designed to fill the existing gap by offering an in-depth exploration of essential knowledge and skills, tailored specifically for teachers across all educational levels. We

aim to equip future educators with the tools and strategies necessary to foster language and literacy development in diverse classroom settings, ultimately enhancing students' academic success and overall participation in society.

In conclusion, it is crucial for all teachers to recognise their role as teachers of language and literacy, regardless of their subject area. By embracing this responsibility, teachers can ensure that students develop the foundational skills needed to access, understand and engage with content across the Australian Curriculum. We hope this book inspires and empowers educators to take an active role in supporting language and literacy development, acknowledging the profound impact it has on students' educational journeys and future opportunities.

References

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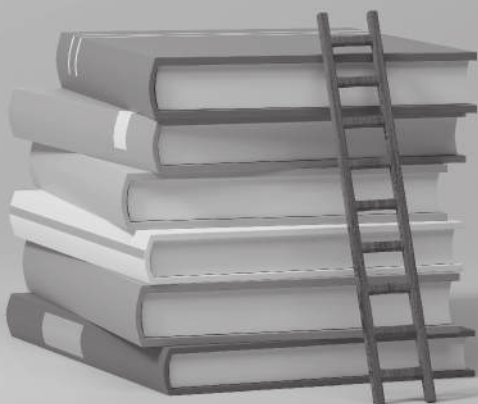
PART 1
LANGUAGE AND LITERACY
FUNDAMENTALS

CHAPTER
1

Phonological awareness

Michael Carey

Introduction

Spoken language consists of a complex system of sounds that infants first learn to perceive and produce through social interaction in their linguistic community. This initial exposure *before* school is critical in preparing them *for* school, where they learn to encode their spoken language into written language. Once children can sufficiently speak and understand most language at around the age of five, it becomes the role of educators and parents/care providers to assist them in the development of their explicit phonological awareness. Phonological awareness, which refers to the broad understanding of the sound structure of language, plays a critical role in the development of reading and writing. For instance, before children can effectively start learning to read, they need to develop an awareness of the sound structure of words, including syllables, rhymes and individual speech sounds called **phonemes**, as well as the ability to segment and blend phonemes.

The aim of this chapter is to provide pre-service and in-service teachers with explicit knowledge of early acquisition of speech and language, and the methods used to develop early learners' phonological awareness, the development precursor to reading and writing. Early on, the chapter introduces the theories of speech and language development. A section on stages of language development and developmental milestones relates language development to other types of physical, social, emotional and cognitive development that occur before school. The relationship between language and motor development, and the associated approaches of teaching language through gesture and movement, are outlined. A further section outlines key knowledge for educators about the phonological unit of the syllable and ways of recognising it as a unit and manipulating it to build students' phonological awareness. The final section of the chapter examines the Early Years Learning Framework, providing a summary of language and literacy development and competencies for children from birth to five years contained within this national curriculum framework.

Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness provides the foundation for understanding 'that words are made [up] of individual sounds and that those sounds can be manipulated' and represented by letters (Burns et al., 2016, n.p.). By developing phonological awareness, children become more attuned to the sounds of language, which prepares them for phonics instruction and reading. Therefore, phonological awareness is the conscious understanding of sound structure at the syllable, word and multiple word level, and it includes an ability to comprehend the grammatical and attitudinal meanings of differentially placing stress on some syllables and using various levels of voice pitch in speech (intonation).

Children's language acquisition journey begins long before school; a baby's speech perception commences in the mother's womb and their speech production and reception facility begins soon after birth. Language acquisition continues with an infant's sponge-like capacity to make connections between speech sounds, gestures, physical objects and social events in their environment and to 'take statistics' on these connections to develop their **pre-lingual** understanding of language and the world around them (Kuhl, 2010). To understand how phonological awareness is developed in the early years of school, it is first important to know what precedes this stage in terms of speech and auditory development and its relationships with **cognitive**, social, emotional and **motor skill** development.

Speech and language development

In the early years, children go through several stages of physical, cognitive, social and emotional development in tandem with their speech production, speech perception and language acquisition. For example, during the first year of life, infants start to produce a range of sounds, such as **cooing** and **babbling**, as they develop the ability to control their vocal cords and mouth muscles and emulate the speech sounds in their environment. This process involves simultaneous neural activity between the multiple connected auditory and motor cortices in the brain that control speech production (Broca's area) and speech perception (Wernicke's area).

The process involves the infant's brain taking statistics on the co-occurrence of speech sounds and how those sounds collocate to form meanings, and then storing them as meaningful language prototypes (Kuhl, 1991). Neurolinguistic studies with babies have demonstrated that infants can discriminate between the speech sounds produced in their first language and incidental exposure to the sounds of a second language (Kuhl, 2010). By the age of two, children typically have a vocabulary of around 200 words and can form short **sentences**. They also develop the ability to perceive and distinguish different sounds, which is important for developing phonological awareness and later reading skills.

Speech and language development are closely linked to other physical, social and emotional development that occurs before school. For example, fine motor skills, such as the ability to grasp objects and manipulate them with precision, are important for developing

the hand-eye coordination needed for writing and drawing. Social and emotional development is also critical for language development, as children need to feel secure and have positive relationships with adults and peers to develop language and communication skills.

Ruqaiya Hasan, a renowned systemic functional linguist, believed that language development in children is intricately connected to their social environment and the contexts in which they interact (Hasan, 2009). She emphasised the importance of functional and communicative aspects of language in children's early language acquisition; language serves as a means for children to interact with others and make sense of the world around them. Hasan highlighted the role of caregivers and the linguistic input they provide in shaping children's language development. She argued that caregivers play a crucial role in **scaffolding** language learning by engaging in meaningful interactions with children and providing appropriate linguistic models. Children learn not only the structural aspects of language but also the social and cultural dimensions embedded within it through these interactions (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Caregivers play a crucial role in scaffolding language learning by engaging in meaningful interactions with children (Hasan, 2009)

Moreover, Hasan emphasised the role of language in the development of children's cognitive and social abilities. She viewed language as a tool that helps children construct meaning, express their thoughts and emotions, and, as we have already suggested, engage in social interactions. Language development, from her perspective, is a multifaceted process that involves not only the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar but also the understanding and appropriate use of language in different contexts. This perspective applies to the acquisition

of both a first language and additional languages. Further discussion on the acquisition and learning of English as an additional language/dialect is provided in Chapter 6.

Overall, Ruqaiya Hasan's perspective on child language development underscores the importance of social interactions, functional language use and the influence of the environment in shaping children's linguistic abilities. Her work emphasises the interconnectedness of language, cognition and social interaction in the development of language skills in children.

By understanding the developmental stages of cognitive, social, emotional and motor skills related to speech production, speech perception and language acquisition, early childhood educators can provide appropriate support and interventions to promote children's language development and overall well-being.

Stages of language development and developmental milestones

Developmental stages were first described by Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, and Noam Chomsky, an American linguist, both of whom have made significant contributions to the study of language acquisition and development in children.

Jean Piaget's (1952) theory of cognitive development suggests that children 'actively construct their own understanding of the world around them' (McLeod, 2024, n.p.) through four stages of cognitive development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational. Piaget's theory emphasises the importance of experience in cognitive development, as 'children learn by actively engaging with their environment' and constructing their own knowledge (McArdle, 2023, n.p.) (see Figure 1.2).

The sensorimotor stage spans from birth to approximately two years of age. 'During this stage, infants [primarily] learn through their senses and motor actions. They develop object permanence or the understanding that objects continue to exist' even when not directly observed and engage in simple problem-solving (McArdle, 2023, n.p.).

The preoperational stage occurs between the ages of two and seven. Children in this stage rapidly begin to use language and symbols to represent objects and events. However, their thinking is characterised by egocentrism, where they struggle to take another person's perspective and to talk about such things as the past, the future, people, feelings and events. They also lack the ability for conservation, the understanding that quantity remains the same despite changes in appearance.

The concrete operational stage takes place from around seven to 11 years of age. Children's language acquisition during this stage indicates a shift in their cognitive development from an immature and illogical state to a more mature and logical one (see Figure 1.3). Their language abilities demonstrate their capacity to 'de-centre' and consider viewpoints beyond their own. This crucial stage marks the beginning of children's language becoming more 'socialised', characterised by the emergence of questioning, answering, criticising and commanding behaviours. They develop the ability for conservation and can understand simple cause-and-effect relationships.