Oral Language Practice Activities

Have students practice using new vocabulary and applying new concepts by participating in one of the following activities[1].

Beginning-Early Intermediate Activities

See It and Say It (Picture and Pattern)

This activity gives students practice with target nouns and English syntax. It can be used with almost any academic topic students are learning.

- Identify a topic students are learning about (e.g., wild animals) and the target nouns for the topic (e.g., lion, zebra, elephant). Find pictures or realia to demonstrate the target nouns.
- Show a picture of a lion and say: "I see a lion."
- Write a sentence frame on the board of this oral statement: *I see a lion*.
- Read the statement and ask students to repeat after you. Use your finger to draw a line under each word. Tell students they can use this sentence to help them make new sentences.
- Show a picture of a different animal and call on a volunteer to make a statement using the sentence frame for support. Example: *I see a camel*. Continue in this way until all students have had a chance to make a statement.

LITERACY LINK. *Ask each student to draw a picture of one of the target nouns and then write a sentence about the picture using the sentence frame for support. Have students show their picture and read their sentence to a partner. If desired, students can create entire pattern books with pictures and sentences using the sentence pattern. They can read their book to a partner or within small groups.*

Either/Or/ and More (Choice and Extension)

This activity gives students practice with target verbs and English syntax. It can be used with pictures or with classroom situations the teacher creates.

- Call a volunteer to the front of the class and whisper a command to the student. For example, tell the student to sit down and look at a book.
- Ask the other students to tell you what the volunteer is doing by offering them a choice for a response. For example: "Is the boy standing up or sitting down?" Use pantomime actions to ensure that students understand the question. If students respond with one or two word (sitting; sitting down), affirm good work and encourage elaboration. "Yes, the boy is sitting down." Write the sentence on the board and have students repeat it after you.
- Expand the practice by giving students another choice. For example, "What else is the boy doing? Is the boy looking at a book or writing?" Again, use pantomime actions as needed. If

[1] From Williams, C., Stathis, R., & Gotsch, P. (2009). *Managing student talk in the English language development classroom.* Ruidoso, NM: Teacher Writing Center.

students respond with one word (looking), affirm good work and encourage elaboration. "Yes, the boy is looking at a book." Write the sentence on the board and have students repeat it after you.

- Read the two sentences aloud: "The boy is sitting down. The boy is looking at a book." Write the sentences on the board and have students repeat them after you.

LITERACY LINK. *Have students copy the sentences on a piece of paper and then draw a picture to illustrate them. Have students show their picture and read their sentences to a partner.*

Sequence of Events (TPR)

This activity gives students practice with target nouns and verbs as well as sequence of events. It can be used with pictures, with classroom situations the teacher creates, or with classroom routines students need to learn.

- Identify a situation (e.g., going to a museum on a school bus) in which a series of actions logically occurs in a particular sequence. Write out the actions on the board. Point to and read the actions as you act out the six-line sequence.

    Going to a Museum on a School Bus
    Get on the bus.
    Look for a seat.
    Sit down.
    Ride to the museum.
    Get off of the bus.
    Pay your money at the museum entrance.

- Act out and read each action again. Call on volunteers to act out the action as you say it. Then call on other volunteers to give the commands to the other students.

LITERACY LINK. *Ask students to make a mini-book of the sequence of events. They can copy the sequenced statements you wrote on the board and then draw a picture to illustrate each statement.*

<div align="center">

Get on the bus.

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Students can read their stories to a partner or within small groups.

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Follow the Pattern (Structured Talk)
This activity can be used to practice verb tenses, adjective placement, plurals, or other grammatical forms.
- Organize students into small groups. Give students a pattern to follow. For example, have each student say three sentences that include an adjective before a noun. Model this for students first: *I have a black cat. I live in a small house. I like sweet foods.*
- Have each student in the group practice the pattern by creating three original sentences. Then change the pattern. For example, have students say a sentence in the past tense and then a sentence in the future tense: *Yesterday I walked to school. Tomorrow I am going to ride to school.*
- Continue with other patterns. As an extension, have a student in the group create a pattern and have other group members try to figure out what the pattern is by following it. For example, the student creating the pattern may say: *I have a pen. You have two pens. I have a book. You have two books. I have a watch. You have two watches.* The student who figures out the pattern continues: *I have a sister. You have two sisters. …* and so forth.

LITERACY LINK. *After oral practice, have students write the sentences they created with help as needed.*

Intermediate-Advanced Activities

Relay Talk (One-on-One Communication)
This activity gives students practice expressing themselves orally in unstructured discourse. It can be used with any academic topic or with classroom situations the teacher creates.
- Organize students into two equal lines with each student facing a partner.
- Designate one line as the moving line while the other line is the non-moving line.
- Explain to students that you will ask a question and give them two minutes to discuss it with the person immediately across from them in the other line. Example: *Talk to your partner about the relationship between the colonists and the American Indians living in North America.*
- Tell students when you say "time is up," the first person in the "moving line" will go to the end of the line while everyone in that line will move one space to the left or right and face a new partner and a new question. Example: *Talk to your partner about why some of the American colonists wanted independence from Great Britain.*
- Have students discuss each question with two partners. Repeat the process with 3-4 questions.

LITERACY LINK. *Engage the entire class in a discussion of one of the questions students discussed. For example, ask them to create a chart listing the reasons for independence from*

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Great Britain. Have students write a paragraph or short essay about the topic. Call on students to read excerpts of their writing.

3-2-1 GO! (Structured Questioning)
This activity gives students practice expressing themselves orally in structured discourse. It can be used with any academic topic or with classroom situations the teacher creates.
- Write on the board three open-ended questions about a topic, following this pattern: *Share three examples of habitats. Talk about two ways that an animal adapts to its habitat. Discuss one way that human beings adversely affect animals' habitats.*
- Review the questions and ask students to listen carefully as you say: *3, 2, 1, GO!*
- Organize students into small groups. Ask each group to take about five minutes to answer the questions.
- Call on groups to share one statement for each of the questions.

LITERACY LINK. *Ask students to write a paragraph about the third question and then to share their paragraph with the other members of their small group.*

Data Hunt (Structured Questioning)
This activity gives students practice expressing themselves orally in structured discourse. It can be used with any academic topic and/or as a way to encourage social language (as in the example below).
- Ask students to divide a piece of paper into three columns.
- Write column headings on the board for all three columns and the tasks for columns one and two. See the example. Have students copy the headings and tasks (columns one and two) on their paper. They will interact with their classmates to come up with responses for column three.

| Find someone who …	Ask the person …	The person I talked to said …
knows how to ride a bicycle: _____ (student's name)	the benefits of riding a bicycle rather than driving in a car	*riding a bicycle is good for the environment and good exercise*
takes the bus to school: _____ (student's name)	what kinds of things people do on the school bus	*on the bus people talk to friends, do homework, and look out the window*
…and so forth		

- Give students a set amount of time to find and interact with a different person to complete each row.
- Then call on students to tell what they learned, using complete sentences. Example: _____ *knows how to ride a bicycle. I asked him/her to talk about the benefits of riding a bicycle rather than driving in a car. He/she said riding a bicycle is good for the environment and good exercise.*

LITERACY LINK. *Ask students to write a complete sentence in response to one (or more) of the questions.*

What Is It? (Oral Description)

This activity gives students practice describing people, places, and things.

- Have each student draw a picture of a person, place or thing. Alternatively, students can print clip art or cut a picture from a magazine.
- Organize students in pairs. Students should not let their partner see their picture. Have students take turns describing their picture to their partner. Example: *There are four different types of fruit in a bowl. There are three bananas. There is one apple.* And so forth. The partner should draw what he/she hears being described.
- When both students have finished describing their pictures, have them compare the original picture with the picture that was drawn and discuss any discrepancies.
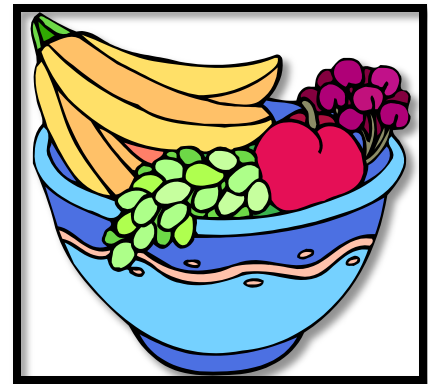
LITERACY LINK. *Have students write a paragraph describing one of the pictures and attach the picture to the paragraph.*