

# Vocabulary & Structure

(with examples based on NEL K1 English Language Big Book –  
Train Station Cats)

Target vocabulary are the content words that form a child's knowledge base. In class, children learn to identify target vocabulary. These are words found in the big book and pupils remember these words through repeated reading and the help of illustrations in the big books.

Through oral interaction promoted through the Shared Book Approach, teachers ask children questions to stimulate thought and understanding. The lessons build on teacher-student conversation to provide opportunities for children to listen and respond to. In this way, teachers build on children's responses by rephrasing or clarifying so that children pick up new vocabulary. These conversations take place in a safe and non-threatening environment. Children's responses can help to feed forward in teaching, teachers can pitch their conversations/ questions at a level that is comfortable to the children. Constant interaction will expose children to a wide repertoire of words and build up their vocabulary.

During daily lessons, teachers also ask appropriately-pitched questions to help children check their understanding of the target vocabulary words. This can be done by directing the children's attention to specific concepts or illustrations, or providing language modelling for the children.

A wide vocabulary will enable a child to become a more effective communicator, reader and writer.

## Language structures

By crating follow-up activities that target language structure practice from big books, teachers revise with children and provide opportunities for them to practise using new language structures. The children revise language structures by forming their own sentences using similar structures that teachers introduce. Over time, children internalise the language structures and learn to use them in different contexts that the ones they encountered in lessons.

Try using these follow-up activities after you have conducted reading activities with the children, for the NEL K1 English Language Big Book:

### **Train Station Cats**

Speaking Vocabulary: *bookstore, [cat], cats, coffee, flat/[home], train station, [mother]*  
(special word): *kopi-o*

Prepare pictures and word cards for the above speaking vocabulary words.

- Show the children the picture cards and have them talk about what they see in the pictures. Place each card on the board once the children have talked about it. Read the word cards together with the children. Get them to take turns sticking the word cards below the corresponding picture cards.

For a more challenging task:

- Instead of reading the word cards with the children, get them to name the card and place them below the corresponding picture cards on their own. Then get the children to make as many

sentences as they can with the words they have learnt. Write these sentences on the board. Read aloud the sentences and get the children to read along with you.

#### Group activity

- Group children into groups of 3. Provide a set of picture cards and word cards to each group. Children will spread the picture cards and word cards on their group's table. Then, they will take turns to take one picture card, name it and match it with its corresponding word card. If time permits, get children to take turns making sentences with the card that they have chosen.

Speaking Structure(s): (Proper noun), will you take the (noun)? I will take the (noun).

Example: Susan, will you take the cookie? I will take the cookie.

- Seat children in a circle. Put some common objects in a bag. Draw an object from the bag, e.g., a sweet. Ask the children to name the object you have picked. Offer the object to a child and model the target structure by asking: (Name), will you take the sweet? Get the child to respond to you using the target structure: I will take the sweet.
- (\*)Write the target structure on the board:  
Person A says: (Name), will you take the \_\_\_\_\_?  
Person B says: I will take the \_\_\_\_\_.
- Tell children that one child will draw an item from the bag and name it. They will then use the target structure to ask a classmate to take the item. The classmate will take the item and respond by using the target structure. Repeat this step until all the children in the circle have spoken.

#### For a more challenging task:

- After writing the target structure on the board (\*), group children in pairs. Get them to use items in their own pencil cases or bags for this activity. Children will take turns drawing an item from their pencil case/bag to give to their partner. They must use the target structure when they give/take an item from their partner.
- Get each pair to present to the class the sentences they had formed when they took an item from their partner.

#### Group Activity

- Prepare an activity sheet with pictures of various familiar items (e.g., teddy bear, ball, cap, pencil, book, apple, etc.).
- Group children into groups of 4 or 5. Write the target structure on the board:  
Person A says: (Name), will you take the \_\_\_\_\_?  
Person B says: I will take the \_\_\_\_\_.
- Provide each group with the activity sheet. Children will take turns to point to a picture on the sheet and ask a group member to take the item. The person making the request should use the target structure. The group member that was called should also respond using the target structure.
- Each child will take turns to do this until the group has gone through all the pictures on the sheet.

Remember:

Depending on your children's needs, you may need to use pictures or prepare additional pictures to suit the children's interest and level of understanding.