**06 – PIL - Text structure knowledge – introduction**

TRANSCRIPT

Text structure refers to how written text is organised. To be able to understand written text, that is to understand the content of the text they're engaging with, students must be able to recognise relationships between the elements that make up the text. Understanding the different elements of texts and how those elements fit together is important for comprehension.

There are two types of written text. Narrative text and information texts. Narrative knowledge describes a child's spoken and written descriptions of real or fictional events experienced in the past, the present or the future. Over time, young children's narratives move from simple sequences of events or ideas which are not well organised or detailed, to well organised stories that follow a clear order of events. Narratives don't often focus on the here and now. The focus is often on people or characters that are not immediately present or real, or on events that are not currently happening to the reader.

Narratives are like monologues. They are largely uninterrupted streams of language, unlike conversations that are carried by two or more persons. In a conversation, an individual has context clues of the give and take of conversation, as well as a range of nonverbal clues such as facial expressions. In a narrative, the person telling the story is alone responsible for how clearly the story is told.

Narratives are a very important area of language development for young children, as they provide a natural bridge linking spoken and written language. Understanding and producing narratives requires the coordination of a range of language skills, including vocabulary, sentence structure and story structure skills. Narratives are a critical language skill because children use narratives to follow directions, tell others about their experiences, explain how they're feeling about something, share with friends something they learned, engage in creative play with others, and comprehend stories and books.

When reading narrative texts, readers rely on familiar features and structures, including setting, characters, actions, feelings and resolution to understand the narrative. These features are referred to as the macrostructure, or elements of a narrative. Research tells us that narrative macrostructure is highly predictive of reading comprehension skills. By building familiarity with the macrostructure or story elements, we can build background knowledge surrounding the texts students are listening to or reading. Students combine their background knowledge with information that is in the text to understand what the text means.

Students need to develop narrative language skills in a spoken format before they can understand and use them in a more challenging written format when reading and writing stories of their own. Spoken and written narratives are both based on the same underlying knowledge of story element structure. We can teach narratives through shared book reading of high quality literature, the use of icons to represent story elements, story retelling, pictographic planning and story generation from single scene pictures.

In the early years, most of the texts students engage with are narrative texts, texts that tell a story. Beyond the early years, however, information texts become the language of instruction. Information texts contained factual information. Their purpose is to inform the reader. Information texts are difficult to engage with compared to narrative texts. They often have differing structures they can contain unfamiliar or complex concepts and vocabulary, and they they're often based on topics that students may have no personal experience or knowledge about. Information text can also contain graphics designed to communicate information to the reader. The elements specific to narrative and information texts need to be explicitly taught to students so that they can understand and engage with all types of text structures.