Nation, K., & Snowling, M. (2004). Beyond phonological skills: Broader language skills contribute to the development of reading. *Journal of Research in Reading, 27*, 342-356.

Key Words: instructional models, explicit comprehension instruction

Summary: This paper reports a study that followed the development of reading skills in 72 children from the age of eight and a half through thirteen. Each child took two tests. The first measured their reading, oral language, phonological skills and nonverbal ability; the second measured reading comprehension, word recognition, and nonword decoding.

Assumptions:

- Children who are acquiring reading and spelling skills develop a system of mappings or correspondences between the letters of printed words and the phonemes of spoken words.
- Children who do well on tests of phoneme awareness are at an advantage in learning to read.

Results:

- At the time of the first test, variation in oral language skills accounted for variation in reading comprehension.
- Oral language variations were more influential than age, nonverbal ability, and nonword reading.
- Test results indicate that language skills are also good indicators of word reading.
- Meaning-based knowledge has a direct effect on the development of word recognition.

Conclusions: Children's oral language skills make an important contribution to the development of their sight vocabulary and their reading comprehension. A child who has poor language skills may have more difficulty in establishing rich word recognition than his or her peers with equal phonological decoding skills.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Consider oral language assessments for students who are struggling with reading or spelling.
- Provide opportunities for oral language interactions.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Provide assessment options for struggling readers and spellers.
- Help teachers see how and why to foster oral language interactions in the classroom.