TO OVERCOME LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES FOR THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: This research investigates language difficulties based on primary school pupils and how to overcome this language barriers. Most children come across with language difficulties (delay or disorder), and these difficulties can present and affect language in different ways. Below are some commonly language problems are described. These might be known by a variety of different names and many children will have a combination of these difficulties. Expressive language disorder – this is a pupil's ability to express ideas and information. It reflects primary education pupil`s ability to produce language, and their use of vocabulary and grammar.

Children with language difficulties may have problems with expressive language (spoken words, articulation, word-finding, vocabulary, semantic confusions etc.) or with receptive language (understanding, recall etc.) or both. Pupils with language disorders may have trouble understanding or being understood through all forms of communication — verbal, nonverbal, and written. There are different types of language disorders:

- Receptive language disorder – this refers to a child's ability to comprehend incoming auditory information. These skills are required for effective listening, processing and understanding of spoken information.

- Specific Language Impairment (SLI) – this describes a language difficulty that is not related to hearing difficulties, autism, or low IQ, although child may have other co-occurring problems such as delayed speech or literacy skills

- Word Finding Difficulties – this describes a child that may have a good vocabulary knowledge but is slow and/or inaccurate at retrieving words during conversation or when asked questions

It is important that children are seated in places where it is easy for them to attend, away from distractions such as doors and windows and close to the teacher. Sitting alongside others who attend and participate well provides positive peer pressure and role models. Using individual children's names encourages

concentration and participation. As children with language problems often have poor attention and listening skills, it is essential to double-check their grasp of important class instructions. Information may need to be summarized, simplified or paraphrased. Directions should be broken down into steps and their understanding of key words/phrases should be reviewed. When new class topics are introduced, children with language difficulties may need particular help with key vocabulary - in both spoken and written forms. Where possible, try to use pictures and concrete materials to explain new words and ideas. New vocabulary and concepts should be reviewed frequently and shared with parents for reinforcement at home, as appropriate. Understanding and remembering what is read can be problematic for children with language difficulties, even when they are skilled at de-coding text. They should be encouraged to look back over text to support their comprehension and should be taught to identify and underline key-words. Encouraging children to put into their own words, what has been said, taught or read develops their understanding and auditory memory. It can also extend their utterances. Children with language difficulties have problems with time concepts and sequences. Today, yesterday, tomorrow, days of the week, months and seasons may be difficult to grasp and recall. Sequencing activities will be especially useful to them. They may have difficulty remembering the days and times of particular lessons/activities and will consequently often appear unprepared or confused. They should be encouraged to use class timetables and personal checklists to improve their planning and organization skills. Children need to know that it is alright to ask for help, even if they are not sure how to phrase their questions. They should be encouraged to give a visual signal to let the teacher know if they are confused.

Strategies to Help Children who have Difficulties with Receptive Language (understanding)

• Words such as "before, after, if, except", may be very difficult for the child to understand. Demonstrate the meaning of these words in a simple fashion e.g. "We have lunch after our breakfast", "We all go swimming except Mammy".

• Following instructions: Before a child can comprehend an instruction such as "If you have not finished question 4 before the time the bells rings, you can finish it after the break", he/she must first understand the concept of "before/after".

• Check that the child can understand and follow simple instructions involving concepts such as 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc. left/right/ all, one of /except etc.

• Memory games: Ask the child to gather up some items from a different room, "Bring me a biscuit, a can of coke and a pen" and follow directions such as "Touch your nose, clap your hands and count to ten".

• Passive sentences: Check if the child understands sentences such as "John was beaten by Peter" (who was beaten?), "The rat was caught by the mouse" (who was caught?)

Strategies to help Children who have Difficulties with Expressive Language

1. Some children need help to learn to adapt their speech to suit different situations. Drama sessions, circle-time, role play and social skills groups help to develop this skill. Involve the child in tasks with others where negotiation and co-operation skills are required. Practice turn-taking and conversational skills.

2. Encourage the re-telling of stories or events. Spend specific time asking them to re-tell a sequence of events. If they find this hard, talk it through with them first, perhaps with picture cues, and then ask them to tell someone else.

3. Stop half-way through a story and encourage them to predict what might happen next. Discuss the characters and the relationships "Who does he remind you of?" "What do you think he looks like?" etc.

4. Young children often need to develop their confidence in using language. Using a friendly puppet or familiar toy can help them make a start. They can be encouraged to tell the toy to carry out actions, perhaps with a lot of prompting at first. For example, "Where will I put the clown? On the bed or on the table?" "Will the train go under or over the bridge?" A game where something is hidden from the puppet/toy and the child has to give directions to find it, is also useful. Once confidence is gained, this game can be played with a small group of children directing one-another to find the "treasure".

5. Books with pictures and photographs of familiar objects and activities from home give children confidence and remind them of things to talk about.

6. Play picture lotto or snap games in small groups where children take turns to call out the names of the cards.

7. As the child gains confidence, you can set up situations where the child needs to ask for something to carry out an activity e.g. organizing a painting activity but not giving out paint brushes.

8. Taking messages to other classrooms/teachers/pupils builds up confidence and gives children opportunities to use their spoken language outside the classroom.

9. Story plans are useful for children who have difficulty composing essays and using an extended vocabulary. A format should be used that prompts children to think about who, what, where; beginning, middle and end and helps them to organize thoughts and words.

Conclusion:

This study revealed that the main language difficulties encountered by primary students are linguistic difficulties, mother tongue use, and inhibition. Children come across lots of difficulties in English because they lack of the necessary vocabulary items and grammar structures, articulation, word-finding, semantic confusions. They also lack of sentence formation skills, which result in using the mother tongue. Students also think of making mistakes in speaking in front of their classmates very embarrassing, which results in preferring not to speak to avoid such situations. The teaching strategies that are used by the teachers emphasize teaching the form of the language, which is indicated by focusing on teaching grammar rules and vocabulary items. Students are required to produce short accurate sentences while the communicative use of the language is almost neglected. In addition, teachers think it is very important to use L1 in order to give the meaning of some words and explain the grammar rules. They believe that using L1 is very necessary to make sure that the students understand the meaning and get the point. Besides, it was found that primary textbooks do not provide students with frequency of opportunities to use English communicatively, and they do not include sufficient tasks that are particularly designed for speaking. Moreover, the classroom is the only place where most students are exposed to English. Extracurricular activities that aim to improve students all skill are very rare and limited to the English assembly, which is conducted once a week. Because especially speaking skill is the only skill that is not included in the exams, it is given less teaching emphasis. The focus is mainly on teaching reading and writing besides grammar and vocabulary. In conclusion, for improving all language skills teacher should include them during the class with the help of different interactive methods and approaches.

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