Language Impairment in the Classroom

Teach Meet: 6th March 2014
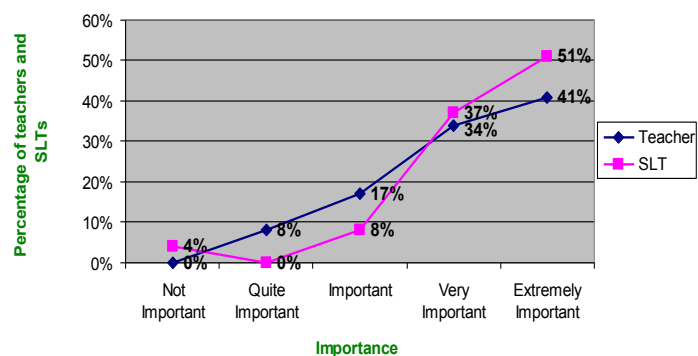
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My research findings: Bilingualism & Language Impairment in Schools-Working with SLTs (2011)

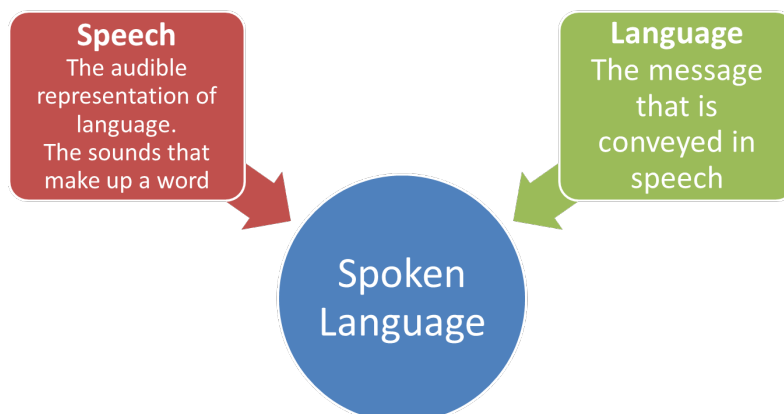**Table 23. Importance of collaboration for SLTs and teachers**
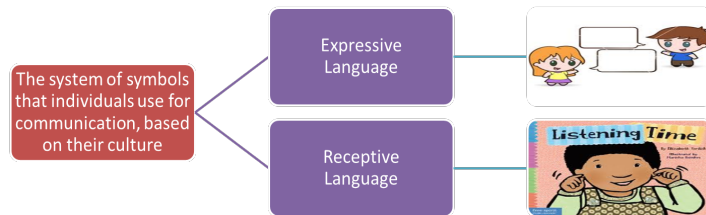
Questions

- **What is a Language Impairment?**
- How can I identify Language Impairment in my classroom?
- Have you any strategies I could use to support a child with language difficulties?
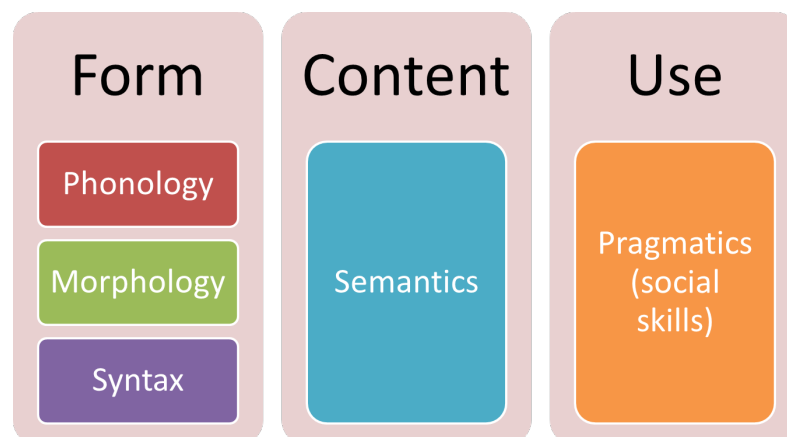- What about children with EAL?

What is language?

Speech
The audible representation of language.
The sounds that make up a word

Language
The message that is conveyed in speech

Spoken Language

What is language?

The system of symbols that individuals use for communication, based on their culture

- Expressive Language
- Receptive Language

What is language?

Form	Content	Use
Phonology	Semantics	Pragmatics (social skills)
Morphology		
Syntax		

What is Specific Language Impairment?

IASLT (2007;1) defines SLI as follows:

…a term currently used to describe children whose skill in understanding and/or expressing themselves…is significantly impaired.

These difficulties occur in the context of normal cognitive abilities and are not primarily attributed to social, emotional, behavioral, educational, physical or sensory difficulties.

Who are these children?

- *Children…who are **unable to communicate effectively** through language or to use language as a basis for learning…*

- They are **handicapped socially, behaviourally**, and as a natural consequence, **emotionally**…

- *Their handicap has been described as an **invisable** one because it is not obvious to the casual observer.* (Adams, Byers-Brown and Edwards, 1997: 1)

How Can I identify SLI in my classroom?

■ Comprehension difficulties:
- These students may be labeled as 'not listening' 'doing the wrong thing' or 'switching off'

- They may incorrectly follow teacher instructions

- Have difficulty taking notes and messages

- Provide off target responses as a result of processing a few key words rather than the entire statement.

How Can I identify SLI in my classroom?

■ Expression difficulties:
- Having difficulty thinking of and using specific words to describe, explain, and/or ask questions.
- Rarely ask questions.
- Avoid/ anxious about oral tasks for example telling 'news'.
- Rarely contribute to classroom discussions.
- When asked questions may give one word answers or long non specific answers.
- Written descriptions may be poorly sequenced or lack important detail.
- May take a long time to write descriptions/ sentences/ stories that require own thoughts.
- Shouldn't have difficulty with spelling and dictation tasks.

How Can I identify SLI in my classroom?

■ Word Retrieval/Vocab difficulties:

- The student appears to participate well in conversation, with well formed sentences, but will tend to provide less specific information than their peers.

- Frequent pauses in speech while the student attempts to retrieve a suitable word from their vocabulary.

- Speech or writing is inefficient, contains a lot of non-specific words (e.g. 'thing'), or appears to 'go around' the target word.

- Frequently asking questions about the meaning of words.

- Difficulty remembering names and new words.

How Can I identify SLI in my classroom?

Social Language Difficulties

1. Makes inappropriate comments
2. Difficulty making maintaining friendships
3. Poor conversation skills:
   1. difficulty with turn-taking
   2. introducing topics
   3. maintaining topics
   4. Shift topics
   5. reiterate others ideas or clarify during conversation
   6. use body language and facial expression to demonstrate (empathic) listening skills
4. Misinterprets/ doesn't detect social cues from facial expression and body language
5. Processes language literally- difficulty interpreting sarcasm, humour, slang..
6. Difficulty manipulating language for varying social situations
7. Unable to defend themselves verbally and may resort to physical aggression

Key Identifiers for Teachers

- The RALLI campaign was created to Raise Awareness of Language Learning Impairments.
- http://www.youtube.com/user/RALLIcampaign
- http://ralliindex.blogspot.co.uk/

Signs of SLI.mp4

What strategies can I use to support these children in my every-day BUSY classroom?

- 1. Language Processing & Understanding
  - Positioning + Attention + Face to Face
  - Chunking
  - **Visual cues**
  - Rehearsal
  - Time
  - Distractions
  - Seaking help + Checking understanding
  - Older children: Identification of key words

What strategies can I use to support these children in my every-day BUSY classroom?

- **2. Word Retrieval & Vocabulary**
  - The 4 S Strategy
    - Say less, stress, go slow, show

  - The 'One Hand approach':
    - 4 statements & 1 question

What strategies can I use to support these children in my every-day BUSY classroom?

- **3. Language Behaviours**
  - Visual instructions/routines

  - Emphasise, repeat

  - Instructional transitions
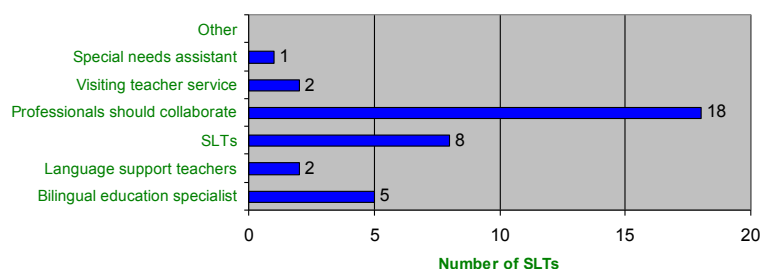
  - Highlight the positives

What strategies can I use to support these children in my every-day BUSY classroom?

■ 4. Social Language

- Training in how to make friends with words eg: what to <u>say</u> to start conversations/ join a game…

- Provide opportunities to practice social skills (e.g. role-play/rehearsal)

- Use class meetings to problem-solve and to explore concepts such as 'fairness'

- Use teamwork for task completion with a range of responsibilities within the student team eg: recorder, designer, store person, encourager, researcher, explainer and speaker

- Offer feedback on interactions

- Monitor self-esteem

What about children with EAL?

Table 22. Who should assess and treat bilingual children?

	Number of SLTs
Other	
Special needs assistant	1
Visiting teacher service	2
Professionals should collaborate	18
SLTs	8
Language support teachers	2
Bilingual education specialist	5

What about children with EAL?

- If a child has SLI, then their capacity to learn language is impaired, and they will have difficulties with any and all languages they speak.
- If they have difficulties with only one language, this is more likely to be due to EAL (English as Additional Language) problems, possibly due to reduced exposure to the 2nd language, causing problems in it, but not in their native language.
- It's important to assess both languages to see if problems occur in both.
- If they do, it's a language learning problem that requires speech and language therapy. If not, it's EAL and requires extra coaching from school or home.
- It takes 2-3 years for surface fluency, but 5-8 years for cognitive academic proficiency (Cummins, 2000).

Any Further Questions?

References & Resources

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