The Link

ISSUE 7 2017

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Editor's Letter

Welcome to you all in 2017. For many of us, it is a relief to wave goodbye to 2016. However, life in school carries on regardless and we are here again with articles by speech and language specialists to keep you and your team up to date with the latest SLCN best practice.

We post this magazine FREE to all UK primary schools to provide SENCos and school staff with specialist support for SLCN in the classroom. Please share this copy with your colleagues in the staff room. A digital copy of *The Link* magazine is available online, where you will also find extended articles to support the magazine pieces, interviews with the authors, regular blogs on speech and language issues and upcoming local training sessions. Extra print copies can also be ordered at www.speechlink.info

In this Issue 7, Anna Branagan and Stephen Parsons share their advice on teaching vocabulary in the early years. Beverley Walters encourages us to use the online world to save time and improve learning. Penny Anne O'Donnell explains how to support a pupil in your classroom with auditory processing difficulties. Scot Greathead shares with us his experience of considering and including the views of SLCN pupils. Our regular feature, the SLCN Glossary, explains the link between vocabulary skills and semantic skills. Previous glossary descriptions are on the website to provide a handy reference, should you need to swot up before seeing your local speech and language therapist.

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- Language For Assessment

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Teaching Vocabulary
– getting started

By Anna Branagan and Stephen Parsons

At a recent Language Link Training session, a year 1 teacher commented, "I know part of my role is to develop vocabulary but how do I choose the right words to work on?" Here we ask 'Word Aware' authors Anna Branagan and Stephen Parsons to explain how to use the STAR process to teach new vocabulary effectively.

Communication and language are the best predictors of later attainment, not only in literacy but also in maths (Better Communication Research Programme, 2011). This makes sense: a good talker is an effective learner.

Vocabulary is particularly powerful because of its links with literacy and other curriculum areas. Research shows that orally tested vocabulary at the end of first school year is a significant predictor of reading comprehension 10 years later (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1997).

The good news is that there are lots of quick and easy ways to promote vocabulary learning. In this article, we outline the STAR process - a particularly effective way to teach vocabulary.

STAR stands for:

**SELECT
TEACH
ACTIVATE
REVIEW**

(Adapted from Blachowicz & Fisher, 2010)

It can be used across any year group and is a good approach for all students including those with SLCN and EAL.

SELECTING VOCABULARY

Selecting the right level of words to teach is an important first step. Words should be new to most of the children, but common enough to be encountered again. Start by making a list of words that are important to the topic or lesson then divide them into the following broad categories. We are using minibeasts as an example topic.

ANCHOR WORDS

Children have a thorough understanding of these words.

Everyday spoken language for a child of this age.

Used at home and in daily interactions.

spider, wiggle, look, careful, caterpillar

GOLDILOCKS WORDS

Really useful words likely to be encountered again.

Average older child has a good level of knowledge of the word.

Words that are very topic specific but core to the topic.

dragonfly, centipede, squirm, search, delicate

STEP ON WORDS

Less likely to be encountered again.

Average older child does not have much knowledge of the word.

Words that are particularly topic-specific and not core to the topic.

Tarantula, scuttle, monstrous

Focus on 'Goldilocks' words, as these are 'not too easy, not too hard, but just right' (Stahl & Nagy, 2005).

References
Blachowicz C & Fisher P (2010) Teaching Vocabulary in All Classrooms, 4th ed, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA. Cunningham A & Stanovich K (1997) 'Early reading acquisition and its relation to reading experience and ability 10 years later', Developmental Psychology, 33, 934–45.
Parsons S & Branagan A (2016) Word Aware 2, Speechmark, London. Stahl S & Nagy W (2005) Teaching Word Meanings, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/better-communication-research-project-language-and-literacy-attainment-of-pupils-during-early-years-and-through-key-stage-2

TEACHING VOCABULARY

Work on each Goldilocks word using a range of multi-sensory strategies.

SYMBOL

- Draw or find a symbol or picture that represents the target word.

SPEECH SOUNDS

- Clap out the syllables of the word.
- Say the word to a partner.

MEANING

Add meaning in a variety of ways:

- Use sensory experiences that make an impact to convey the meaning. For example, when teaching *squirm*, get the children to wriggle / squirm on the spot!
- Use simple vocabulary to define the new word.
- Link the word to other words with similar meanings.
- Tell a story which highlights the meaning of a word. For example, when teaching *squirm* make up a story about a mouse escaping from a cat by squirming.

ACTION

Where possible use an action, sign or gesture to represent the word.

WORD AWARE SONGS

Use songs to reinforce the new words. Google 'You Tube Word Aware songs'.

WORD WALL

- Put up the picture or symbol on the wall to remind adults to use it, so that the children hear it again.
- Use string to link different words together on the word wall e.g. *squirm* and *wiggle*, *delicate* and *careful*

ACTIVATE NEW WORDS

Children need to hear new words lots of times to strengthen the links needed to store and recall them. Words grow as children encounter them throughout the day.

- Adults need to use words in interactions with children. Have the words up around the room to remind practitioners.
- Adults use comments not questions. Use the word to describe a child's actions rather than quizzing them about the meaning of a word e.g. I can see your handling that very delicately.
- Involve children in small group work: encourage children to sort objects into delicate things and things that are not delicate.
- Provide play-based opportunities: act out new verbs, go on treasure hunts looking for things that squirm or are delicate.

Read our interview with Anna at The Link Online.

## REVIEW

The final stage in the STAR process is 'review.' Reviewing words prevents them being forgotten.

- Find objects that represent each word and place them in a 'word bag'. Use this as a prompt to talk about at carpet time.
- Encourage parents to use the new words at home.

There are lots more ideas in our book: Word Aware 2: teaching vocabulary in the Early Years and also at pinterest.com/wordaware/

Find out more from Anna Branagan & Stephen Parsons at www.thinkingtalking.co.uk
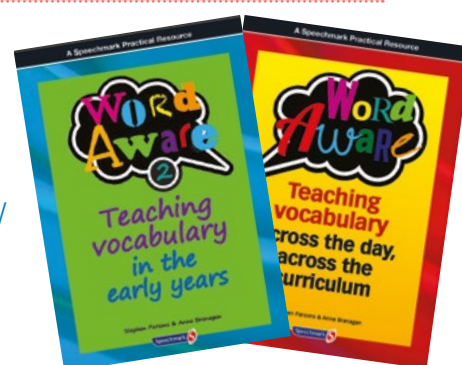
SLCN Glossary

By Heather Stevens, Speech and Language Therapist

Vocabulary Skills and Semantic Skills

We are all familiar with the term vocabulary and know that this refers to the words at our disposal. It is important to remember that this not only describes the words that we are able to use when talking and writing but also to the words that we understand. You might be familiar with the terms expressive vocabulary…the words that we use, and receptive vocabulary….the words that we understand. As a child's language develops, so their vocabulary grows but they are able to understand many more words than they use in their own speech. This remains the case throughout our lives and even as adults our receptive vocabulary is bigger than our expressive vocabulary. We are able to understand many words that we have heard or read but may never have any reason to use ourselves.

Teachers are under considerable pressure to ensure that they teach children the words necessary to access curriculum topics. As speech and language therapists we are often asked how to support children with language difficulties to learn and retain new vocabulary.

In order to learn new words we need to fully understand them and be able to store them efficiently. Semantics is the study of word meanings. When we talk about "semantic skills" we are referring to the ability to attribute meaning to words. In order to do this we need to make links and associations between new words and words that we already have in our vocabulary store. Making these semantic links allows us to fully appreciate the meaning of words and to store them so that we can find them again when we need them.

Stephen Parsons and Anna Brannigan who have written an article for this issue of the Link are the authors of Word Aware. Their books are full of activities that teachers can use to encourage children to make semantic links. They also advise on how to select the vocabulary to teach and techniques for teaching it.

Go to The Link Online for a full bank of definitions

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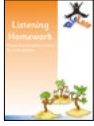**Pocket Pack-Syllables**
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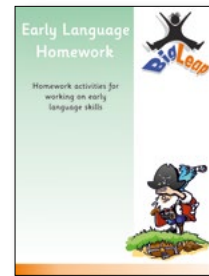
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- Sound Homework
- Early Language Homework

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Time to Dust off your PC and Embrace Online Learning

By Beverley Walters, independent training event manager and former professional development manager at nasen.

Busy teachers, especially those working alongside children and young people with SEND, have precious little time to research or develop online resources and less time still to build them into the curriculum (or so it would seem).

Most education professionals began their own professional learning experience at college or university in a traditional classroom or lecture theatre, as part of the 'chalk and talk' model of teaching and learning. Online learning, whilst being nothing new, to some (including me) can feel a bit unfamiliar, uncomfortable, alien. Something that will take time that we don't have, to get to grips with.

However, children and young people often have no such problem. For them, online or multimedia learning is the norm as, on a day to day basis children and young people receive information and stimulus from a number of different, exhilarating and interactive media, which they take in their stride. As practitioners, it can therefore be a battle to stay relevant and up-to-date enough to access the tools to keep children and young people engaged and learning, that is, unless you take advantage of online resources.

Many of today's online resources take into account the needs of the curriculum and busy teaching staff, and build in support features such as rewards, quizzes and game time for pupils, all of which use familiar stimuli for learners. While the learner is learning, the software behind the resource is busy gathering valuable information on pupil comprehension, progress made, strengths and areas for development. Gone are the days when using online resources meant finding and printing free resources to save reinventing the wheel. Good online resources can, when used appropriately, produce rigorous measured outcomes to inform person centred planning.

Therefore it would appear that rather than eating into valuable lesson planning time, online resources can actually save time and effort in the classroom but what are some of the other **benefits of good online resources?**

- **A stimulating learning environment** - online teaching and learning resources can make it easy to access and personalise support for learners with SEND.

- **Develops independent learning skills** - independent learning can be encouraged, supported and rewarded easily, allowing learners to recognise their achievements to motivate them further.

- **Accessible tools to suit the learner** - effective resource providers supply learners with range of online resources as part of training as well as links to additional information, which means greater access to relevant resources, quickly and easily.

- **Less intimidating than other pedagogical methods** - some learners may be intimidated in traditional learning environments and lack confidence to interact. Online learning can be a less intimidating environment and therefore improve the quality and quantity of interaction.

- **Develops of online skills** - by using resources online the learner develops skills, knowledge and understanding of the media and the internet as a whole without realising it.

- **Improves knowledge of information and resources available** - online learning encourages teaching staff and learners to search for information and resources online, and to discern good sources of information.

- **Consistency of delivery** - online resources deliver information consistently to learners, whilst responding to individual needs. The provision of consistent information allows resources to be accessed repeatedly as required and the progress of cohorts of learners to be observed over time.

Of course, online learning has its drawbacks as well as benefits and may not suit everyone. However, in a world where educationalists are time poor, online resources can be a valuable resource to help manage time. More importantly, that illusive teacher work-life balance.

Read our interview with Beverley at The Link online.

"If Speaking is Silver, Then **Listening is Gold**." (Turkish Proverb)

By Penny Anne O'Donnell, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist

Indicators of an auditory processing difficulty in a child are varied and not specific. Many issues, such as inability to sit still or sing in tune, thriving on an individual basis but getting lost in the crowd, even daydreaming, these are often attributed to hearing problems but interestingly the children referred for auditory processing assessment have all passed a hearing test.

Hearing is a sense, it is the physical ability of the ear to receive sound. Hearing is the only sense that is fully functional before we are born and is believed to be the last sense to go before we die.

Listening is a learnt behaviour. It is paying attention to sound. Listening enables our brains to interpret the sounds we hear so that we can understand.

I first became interested in APD through the work of Specialist Speech and Language Therapists, Diana Crewsden and Camilla Leslie. They talk about listening being an active process whilst hearing is more passive.

Auditory processing is the clinical term for Listening. It refers to the detection and understanding of the sounds we hear. Auditory processing is an essential aspect of understanding speech and language and it has many interactions with spatial awareness, attention, language processing, movement and balance, vision, emotion, cerebral dominance and memory.

Difficulties can occur when there are inherited differences including NDD, SLI Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, ASD and ADD.

Pre-natal genetic or neurological disorders:

Downs Syndrome or Cerebral Palsy

Post-natal events such as:

Emotional or language deprivation, persistent glue ear.

Glue Ear, once treated it can take up to 6 weeks for the developing brain to notice sound once the hearing returns to normal.

According to the British Audiological society in 2011:

"Auditory Processing Disorder is characterised by poor perception of sounds, has its origins in impaired neural function, and impacts on everyday life primarily through a reduced ability to listen, and so respond appropriately to sounds"

Many children may have a level of auditory processing difficulties rather than true disorder. Such difficulties might manifest in a number of ways, including:

- **auditory sensitivity** - Inability to ignore background noises, problematic in unstructured classrooms with high noise levels
- **auditory decoding deficit** – Difficulty following commands and decoding words
- **organisational deficit** – Difficulty in organising information efficiently to decode the meaning; drawing inference may be problematic. Socialising can be challenging
- **prosodic deficit** – Speaking in a monotone voice
- **auditory memory problems**

Accommodating a child with auditory processing difficulties in the mainstream classroom

Approximately two thirds of a child's day is spent listening, checking the efficiency of auditory processing skills is surely key to helping them achieve their full potential?

The following suggestions are a good starting point for most children with APD based on the work of Elizabeth Smith.

DO

Seat the child near where most of the verbal instructions are given (usually the front of the classroom).

Seat away from external noise sources, windows and doors, white board, equipment fan, fidgeting or chatty peer.

Check for understanding, ask the child to retell the instruction.

Gain the child's attention pre-instruction.

Provide a buddy system to make sure the child has recorded homework tasks and interpreted homework instructions correctly.

Consider using ear defenders for individual work times to minimise distractions.

Allow extra time for class, homework assignments and examinations.

Teach visual strategies as visual mnemonics, mind-mapping and the use of highlighters to identify key words in questions and colourful semantics.

Pre-teach new vocabulary and concepts before starting a new topic.

Devise a code system so children can indicate when they feel confused or frustrated or require further help.

If their "auditory load" is full a simple distractor task such as a "tangle fiddle toy" or "time out zone" in the class room where they move to would help.

Be aware they may need to fidget to listen and process. Wobble cushions are a useful aid.

Allow longer for the child to respond.

DON'T

APD can be isolating and often they have low self-esteem so avoid singling them out.

Avoid standing in front of the window when talking to the class as the sunlight distorts the visual signal of mouth shape cues which are key for listening.

Go to The Link Online to read Penny Anne's interview

ENJOY BETTER LISTENING

- Cope with background noise
- Enjoy conversation
- Learn new words
- Follow instructions
- Notice hints
- Listen and do
- Sing in tune
- Read and spell more easily
- Stay focused
- Be sociable
- Pick up jokes
- Notice how people feel
- Remember what you hear

www.johansenias.com

Penny Anne O'Donnell is a Specialist Speech and Language Therapist with a special interest in Auditory Processing Disorder. She runs Bespoke In-House Staff training on this and many topics. To find out more or to be placed on her mailing list please email her

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Follow her on Twitter @relax_therapy

No Decision about Me, without Me: increasing participation in the classroom for pupils with SLCN

by Scot Greathead, Consultant Speech and Language Therapist

"I was asked to spend some time with Edwyn, a year 4 pupil, who was being assessed for ADHD", an Educational Psychologist colleague told me. *"I had observed him in class and he had been disruptive, so I sat down and asked if he knew why I was meeting him. He replied that he was naughty. When I asked him to explain what that meant, he said that 'things turned bad' after his previous teaching assistant left because she was 'the only one who liked to spend time with me'. We chatted some more and he told me that his grandfather had also died over the summer holidays."* In talking to Edwyn about his life, my colleague had discovered that he had experienced two huge losses within two months. Edwyn's difficulties engaging within the classroom were because he was struggling to manage emotions associated with loss rather than challenges related to ADHD.

The 2014 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms issued a statutory duty for teaching teams to spend more time understanding the lives of the children that they support and to ensure they fully appreciate:

1. Children's wishes, feelings, views and aspirations

2. The life goals children feel are important to them

3. The type of support they need to achieve these

"No decision about me, without me"

Involving Edwyn in discussions about his life had given his team essential information which enabled adults to provide the most appropriate support for him. Instead of initiating referrals to explore the use of medication, Edwyn's team were instead able to reassure him that there were supportive adults in his life in the absence of his grandfather and his previous teaching assistant. Edwyn used visual friendship circles to facilitate the sharing of his views, but for the 10% of children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) in schools, it can

be much more of a challenge in enabling them to contribute to important decisions that impact on their lives.

If your New Year's resolution was to increase children's participation in your classroom then **The Communication Trust's Participation Toolkit** is a good place to start. (http://tinyurl.com/involvecyp). There are resources

My circle of friends and family

and strategies for children at 3 different stages of language and communication development so that no child should be excluded from shaping their lives because of communication challenges:

Stage 1: Pre-Intentional Communicators

There is a growing body of research which shows that these children clearly respond to and influence those around them. Teams can increase the frequency that children participate by ensuring there are *ongoing, real time* opportunities for children to respond to, shape and interact with their worlds whilst

WHAT DID YOU THINK ABOUT THE LESSON?

THE WORK WAS...			THE PEOPLE WERE...	
Interesting	Challenging		Proud	Respectful
Exciting	Fun		Kind	Helpful
Easy	Frustrating		OK	Friendly
Boring	Confusing		Annoying	Unhelpful
Difficult	Pointless		Angry	Patronising

making sure any communicative behaviours are acknowledged and acted upon by the adults supporting them. These interactions can be documented and used as an individualised, child-centred evidence base which informs the planning of future learning experiences for children. The SCERTS framework (www.scerts.com) has been shown to do this effectively.

Stage 2: Children With Minimal Language

Children with emerging language benefit from opportunities to broaden the range of ways they contribute to shaping their lives, allowing them to learn new vocabulary and practise creative sentence types. Helping children to use adjectives and verbs to describe their day through symbols boards, such as Talking Mats (www.talkingmats.com), will support both language development and participation.

Stage 3: Children With Lots Of Spoken Language

Although these children are often very chatty, there may be difficulties

in using spoken language for recall, reflection, reasoning and planning... all critical skills if children are going to develop autonomy and self efficacy. It is therefore still important to maintain the use of visual supports which help them to gain more insight into, and share information about, their lives. Visual journals like the 'What was my lesson like?' tool can help build a picture of a child's week and clarify where their challenges and strengths might lie.

Finally...

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that all children have the right to shape the decisions that influence their lives, yet this is one of the provisions most widely disregarded in almost every sphere of children's lives. There are very real challenges for children with SLCN to play meaningful and active roles in their lives so adults must work hard to create opportunities, empower children and implement their views and ideas. In doing this children will develop the language and communication skills to become confident influencers of their lives.

Some names and identifying features have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

5 Top Tips to increase children's participation

1 Ensure children have many **'real time' opportunities** to shape learning throughout the day.

2 **Symbols** can help children understand and use new vocabulary they might not yet be confident in using.

3 Recognise each child's **strengths and interests** and ensure that these form the foundations of any goals that are set.

4 Make sure children see that their ideas and views are **acted upon**... "What *you* said... what *we* did..." displays are great ways of giving feedback to children.

5 **Make it social!** Using The Communication Trust's whole school planning tools will mean that pupil participation becomes a whole school event.

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