




**“He just doesn't get it!”
Supporting Language
Comprehension in the Classroom.**

KTTA Professional Development Day
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Outline for Today

- Introduction and some definitions
- Components of receptive language to consider in the classroom setting
- Strategies for improving comprehension across academic areas



LUNCH!

- Language enriched academic lesson demonstration
- Creating your own language enriched academic lesson plan




What is Language?

- How is it different than communication?
 - Language allows us to communicate thoughts that are not immediately related to the present situation
 - Language is generative (there are an infinite amount of combinations of words)
 - Language is symbolic (you cannot discern the meaning unless you know the language)



Why is language so important in schools?


- Quite simply:
 - It is the most efficient means to communicate knowledge about things that are not in the immediate environment!
 - We can augment language to make the message easier to understand

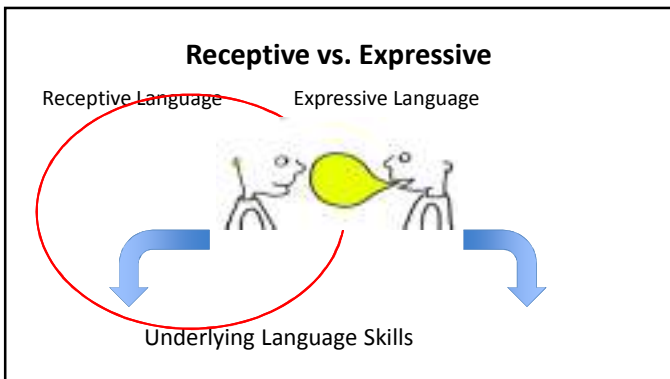


What makes up language?

- Sounds
- Morphemes (parts of words that add meaning)
- Words and their meanings
- Syntax (word combinations)
- Discourse (sentence combinations)


All of these are essential to good overall language skills!





What causes comprehension difficulties?


- Poor nutrition
- Poor sleep
- Poor attention
- Underlying social-emotional issues
- Hearing impairment
- Auditory processing
- Language delay or disorder
- Etc.

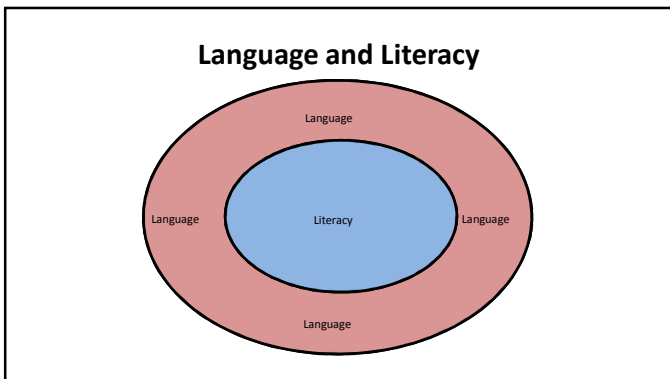


Prevalence of Language Delays and Disorders

- Overall prevalence rate of *specific language impairment* is approximately 6%-9% of the total population
- This does not include children with other diagnoses that affect cognition (e.g. FASD, ASD, Down's syndrome, etc.)
- Gender ratios vary from being equal to males having twice the rate of language impairment compared to females

Source: Tomblin, J.B. et al. (1997). Prevalence of specific language impairment in kindergarten children. *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research*, 40 (6).





Language and Literacy

- Of children identified as having a language or phonological processing issue in kindergarten, over 70% were identified as being 'poor readers' in second grade
 - 14.3% had deficits only in phonological abilities
 - 21.9% had deficits only in oral language
 - 37.2% had deficits in both
 - 26.6% had deficits in neither



Source: Catts, H.W. et al. (2000). Language basis of reading and reading disabilities: Evidence from a longitudinal investigation. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 2 (4).




Red Flags for Comprehension Difficulties

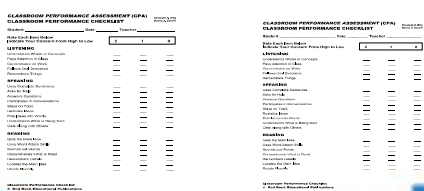
- Unable to follow instructions outside of normal routine
- Instructions often need to be repeated
- Inattention or appears not to be listening
- Increased difficulty concentrating in verbal (vs. non verbal) environments
- Poor responses to questions
- Above symptoms are worse in noisier environments

Sources: http://www.cdi.org/resource-library/articles/red_flags.php
<http://www.ccnap.com/forms/Red%20Flags%20for%20Speech%20and%20Language%20and%20Communication.pdf>



Classroom Performance Assessment

- Simple tool to help you identify students' areas of need



The screenshot shows two versions of the Classroom Performance Assessment (CPA) checklist. The left version is for 'LEVEL 1' and the right version is for 'LEVEL 2'. Both checklists have columns for 'Observed', 'Not Observed', and 'Not Applicable'. The categories include:

- LEVEL 1:**
 - LISTENING:** Responds to directions, Responds to questions, Responds to requests, Responds to instructions, Responds to verbal cues.
 - ATTENDING:** Responds to directions, Responds to questions, Responds to requests, Responds to instructions, Responds to verbal cues.
 - READING:** Responds to directions, Responds to questions, Responds to requests, Responds to instructions, Responds to verbal cues.
- LEVEL 2:**
 - LISTENING:** Responds to directions, Responds to questions, Responds to requests, Responds to instructions, Responds to verbal cues.
 - ATTENDING:** Responds to directions, Responds to questions, Responds to requests, Responds to instructions, Responds to verbal cues.
 - READING:** Responds to directions, Responds to questions, Responds to requests, Responds to instructions, Responds to verbal cues.

CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CPA) Elisabeth H. Wiley
Wayne A. Secord
CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE CHECKLIST


Student _____ Date _____ Teacher _____

Rate Each Item Below
 Indicate Your Concern From High to Low

	2	1	0
LISTENING			
Understands Words or Concepts	___	___	___
Pays Attention in Class	___	___	___
Concentrates on Work	___	___	___
Follows Oral Directions	___	___	___
Remembers Things	___	___	___
SPEAKING			
Uses Complete Sentences	___	___	___
Asks for Help	___	___	___
Answers Questions	___	___	___
Participates in Conversations	___	___	___
Stays on Topic	___	___	___
Restates Ideas	___	___	___
Puts Ideas into Words	___	___	___
Understands What is Being Said	___	___	___
Gets Along with Others	___	___	___


Components of Weak Language Comprehension

- Sounds (i.e. phonemes)
- Word Structure (i.e. morphemes)
- Word Meanings (i.e. semantics)
- Sentence Structure (i.e. syntax)
- Discourse



The Sounds in Words


- Words consist of sounds called phonemes (around 44 in English)
- Students can differ in the extent that they can discern subtle differences between the phonemes.
- For some students, speech sounds can sound blurry (e.g. boot vs. boat)
- Some of these kids are said to have diminished phonological awareness as well as phonemic awareness.



Case Example: 13 Year Old


- “When I was little, too many words sounded the same to me. So I had to listen real carefully when somebody was talking. Sometimes I had to guess what a word was from the words around it. And sometimes it was hard. Like if someone said ‘During that game he had a good team,’ it might sound almost like ‘During that game he had a good time.’ So I’d have to try to figure out which one was right. But then I didn’t have enough time because the person just kept on talking. So my listening had a lot of guessing in it.”

Source: Levine, M. (2002) A Mind at a Time, pg. 130




Word Structure

- The smallest bits of words that carry meaning are called morphemes.
- For example, root words, prefixes, suffixes, and grammatical inflections (e.g., -s, -ed, -ly, un-, pre-) are all morphemes which can be added or taken away from a word to alter its meaning.
- Morphological awareness is the ability to recognize the parts of words and word segments that convey meaning.
- By 10 years of age, knowledge about the structure of words is a better predictor of decoding ability than is phonological awareness (Mann & Singson, 2003).
- With strong morphological skills, students can approach a novel multisyllabic word and break it into parts in order to predict the meaning.




Morphological Awareness Examples

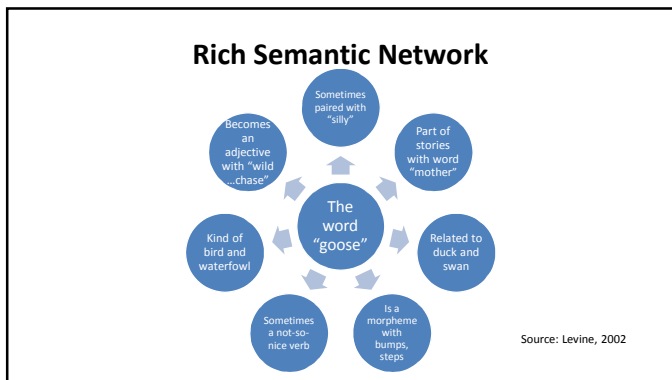
- unfixable
- indeterminate
- oceanaut
- shoed
- yellowing
- antiestablishmentarianism

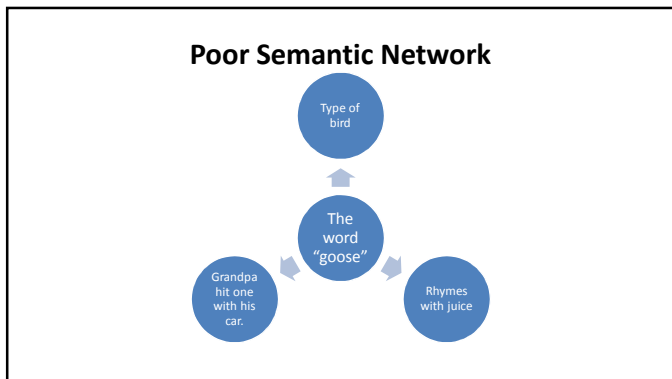


Word Meanings (Semantics)

- Semantics is the knowledge of word meanings.
- This not only includes vocabulary and word meanings but also how words are related to each other.
- Academically successful students have a clear knowledge of word meanings and how words are connected to other words and their meanings (i.e. semantic networks)
- Synonyms, antonyms, categories, subcategories, shades of meanings, etc.
- Dysfunction looks like failure to incorporate new words when talking, poor vocabulary test results, and a refusal to study words.








Sentence Structure

- Sentence structure refers to how we put words together to make sentences (i.e. syntax).
- There is a major difference between “That boy who shoved Mary went tumbling down the stairs” and “Mary who was shoved by that boy, went tumbling down the stairs”.
- As students progress through school, sentences gain length and complexity by adding more and more confusing but-meaning loaded variations in word-order (SVO is basic structure).
- Some students find these variations in sentence-structure confusing.




Examples of Challenging Sentences

Challenge	Examples
The first noun in a sentence need not be the one that acts	The Great Dane was chased by the Appaloosa.
The order of actions presented in a sentence need not match the order conveyed	Call your friends when your homework is completed.
A noun may be the object of both clauses	The teacher knew the boy who was punished by the principal.
A pronoun may be remote from the word it stands for	Sandra was told to look for a crayon in her wooden box and then take it to her desk.
The meaning of questions depends a lot on the first word.	Why is he visiting? Whom is he visiting? Where is he visiting? When will he be visiting? Where will he visit?
Sentences can be figurative	She went out on a limb for him.
The noun closest to a verb does not have to be the one acting on that verb	The man driving next to my sister skidded into the tree.

Discourse

- Discourse is the interpretation of meaning that goes beyond the boundaries of sentences (e.g. narrative, exposition)
- Textbooks, paragraphs, magazine articles, novels, word-problems, conversation
- Incorporates all other levels of language.
- Cohesion (storing the gist of one sentence while processing subsequent sentences and drawing the appropriate inferences) is crucial.
- The recognition of structure in understanding discourse information is important (e.g. narrative, exposition, opinion, etc.) for students.
- Students who can process discourse well recognize the structure of what they are listening to (i.e. aids cohesion); improves flow of ideas.



Example: Cell phones in school

In the **first paragraph** we **present the topic** and state our opinion clearly.

Present our **first viewpoint** and give reasons/examples.

Present our **second viewpoint** and give reasons/examples.

In the **fourth paragraph** we present the opposing viewpoint and give examples/reasons.

In the **last paragraph** we **restate our opinion** using different words.

Other Underlying Factors



- Slow data processing- some students have a hard time comprehending information fast enough while they listen, read, and observe.
- Working memory- some students can only hold a small amount of information in their minds while thinking about something else (mental multi-tasking).

Group Time!

1. Break into groups.
2. Pick a subject: math, language arts, art, social studies, science, P.E.
3. Pick a language level: sounds, word structure, word meanings, sentence structure, discourse.
4. Describe possible ways that language comprehension might break down for some students in your subject area.

Example

- Subject area: mathematics
- Language area: word meanings
- Students might struggle understanding the key words of word problems
- Table of Mathematical Operations and Key Words



Multiplication a area multiplied by of per product of rate times triple twice	Addition add(ed) to all together both combined in all increase by more than perimeter plus total
Subtraction decreased by difference fewer than how many more left less less than minus remaining take away	Division divided half how many each out of percent quarter quotient of percent

<http://www.visualthesaurus.com/cm/lessons/using-key-words-to-unlock-math-word-problems/>

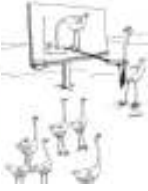
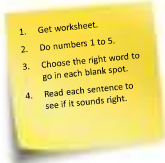
Strategies!

Ideas for improving comprehension
in the classroom

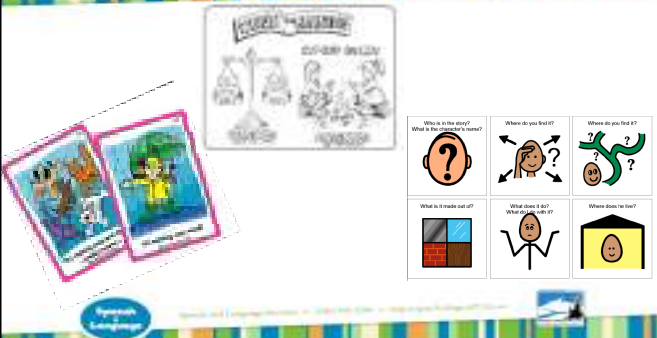


VISUAL INFORMATION is a powerful tool

- Draw it out
- Write it out
- Demonstrate task
- Use gestures
- Provide pictures



Spanish Learning




Who is in the story? What is the main character's name?	When do you feel it?	Where do you live it?
What is it made out of?	What does it do? What do you use it for?	Where does he live?

Spanish Learning

Prepare the student to listen:

- Cue to listen
- Highlight important information
- Number of items
- Type of information



Spanish Learning

Reduce the Length, Rate and Complexity of Your Own Language

Look at the book that is sitting on the floor while the others are finishing.

- Speak clearly and slowly
- Emphasize important words
- Pause between ideas or steps
- Chunk information
- Give instructions one step at a time
- Reduce the number of concepts in a direction

Don't you think you need a coat?

- Keep sentences short and simple
- Using direct versus indirect requests
- Avoid negatives when giving directions
- Restate information in a different way
- Be aware of vocabulary and basic concepts



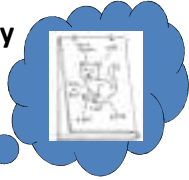
Repetition Repetition Repetition

Meet me at Unit # 853 at 1496 Tranquille Rd at 5:15 on the 24th.



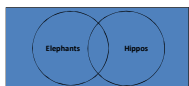
- Repeat instructions; some children need to hear information three or four times
- Repeat instructions
- Repeat important information
- Use the vocabulary items that are important over and over
- Provide multiple examples of what you want them to learn.

Improving Vocabulary

- Pre-teach new vocabulary terms before using them in classroom discussions
- Introduce new words in related clusters/themes
- Use word webs: talk about where you find it, what it looks like, what it's used for, etc.



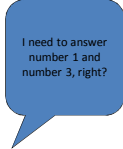


- Link new words to associated words (synonyms, antonyms, homophones, other meanings, words that rhyme, etc.)
- Provide more than definitions
- Discuss the physical form of the word
- Make connections to previous material and real life
- Repeat exposure to new words in a variety of contexts



Comprehension Checks

- Ask children to restate the instruction in their own words
- Ask the class what is the first step, the second step and the last step
- Check in throughout the task



Teach Students to Use Comprehension Strategies



- Encourage students to put up their hands and ask questions if they don't understand
- Encourage the children to check with a friend in the classroom
- Encourage students to look at the pictures and/words on the board to see what to do next.

I better check what's next.



Let's see...Jacob and Liam are filling in the math sheet.



- Encourage the children to look around the classroom to see what others are doing
- Ask the children what they will do if they forget the instructions
- Provide positive reinforcement to students when they use these strategies






Environment Adaptations

- Seat children who have difficulties understanding language at the front of the classroom, away from visual distractions, in a place where they can see your face and be most likely to hear you
- Seat students away from the door, hallway noise, fans, computers or other classroom sounds

Look, there's Brandon in the hallway picking up attendance books!



- Pair children who have comprehension difficulties with stronger students
- Set the expectation that children will put their hands up to ask for help instead of calling out
- Set the expectation that students will walk up to people and speak to them instead of calling across the classroom




Teacher handouts and resources are available at:

<http://speech.blogs.sd73.bc.ca>

We hope to regularly provide you with new materials. Please let us know other resources you would like us to include.







LUNCH TIME!



Afternoon Outline

- Complete a survey
- Participate in a language enriched classroom lesson
- Identify strategies used within the language lesson
- Door prizes!!!
- Generate ideas on how to make language lesson plans that you have brought in more language enriched to support comprehension of information





**Sample of a Language Enriched Classroom Lesson
Designed to Increase Comprehension in the Classroom**

- Social Studies Unit: Learning About the Inuit Culture
- Learning Objective: Students will determine what they believe to be correct information about the Inuit.



Step One

- Generate what we think the lives of the Inuit are like
- Using web with visuals to stimulate ideas on different topics related to the Inuit
- Brain storming ideas
- Utilize category cards/visuals
- Reread parts of the story and show pictures from books to assist in filling in the web



Step Two

- Listen to an Inuit story.
- Listen for specific information related to questions about the lives of the Inuit and Inuksuk.
- Identify other ideas that the students now have regarding the lives of the Inuit and what has changed on the web.
- Use visualization techniques to assist the students in listening
- Provide them with questions that they must answer from the information in the story



Step Three

- Discuss what an Inuksuk is and why it is important to the Inuit
- Use a web with visuals to generate a definition of an Inuksuk
- Reread parts of the story and show pictures from books to assist in filling in the web



Resources for Classroom Support

- Teacher handouts on the web page (<http://speech.blogs.sd73.bc.ca>)
- Packages of visuals available upon request from your SLP
- Henry Grube Education Centre Library (e.g. RTI in Action: Oral Language Activities for K-2 Classrooms)
- Consultation from your SLP
- Whole class demonstrations on language lessons from your SLP

