



Helping Children with Language Disorders: Phonemic and Semantic Cues

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Background Information:

There are many students in our schools receiving Speech Language Pathology (SLP) services; however, not all these children have articulation disorders. SLPs also work with children who have difficulty learning language skills. Language disorders often accompany difficulties such as attention deficit disorder, learning disabilities, and mental retardation. Children who have sustained a physical injury, such as a closed head injury, or have perceptual difficulties, such as hearing impairment, may also have difficulties learning language.

Language disorders fall into one of two areas: receptive or expressive or both. Receptive language disorders include difficulty following directions, difficulty with reading comprehension, difficulty understanding written/spoken language, difficulty with auditory processing, difficulty with sequencing events, and difficulty with visual relationships. Receptive language disorders can affect performance in reading as well as math and contribute to disruptive classroom behavior.

Expressive language disorders include delayed vocabulary, inability to initiate conversation, weak grammar skills, poor writing skills, inability to categorize objects, difficulty defining word meaning, word finding difficulty, and inability to complete sentences. Some educators may misinterpret expressive language disorders as “shyness,” or poor study habits.

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide the classroom teacher with cueing strategies to help a language impaired student within the classroom setting.

PHONEMIC CUES:

Children with language disorders may have difficulty labeling an object or remembering a name. This is similar to the feeling of “having it on the tip of your tongue.” A phonemic cue helps the child produce the word quicker! Simply give the child the first sound of the word:

Math Example: $2 + 2 =$ (cue “four” by saying the sound “f”)

History Example: Columbus came to America in...(cue “1492” by saying “f”)

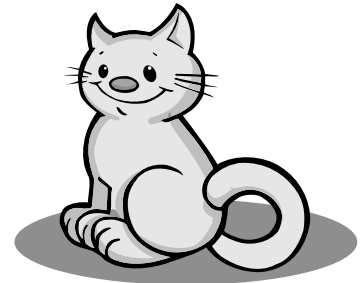
Science Example: The gas which humans need is...(cue by saying “ah” for “oxygen”)

SEMANTIC CUES:

Semantic cueing is a technique that allows the therapist/teacher to give a student additional clues to arrive at an answer. For example, you are doing a brainstorming activity to name as many words as possible that relate to Christmas. The children name things like: "stockings," "Santa," and "candy canes." You could prompt a student by saying... "What about the thing that we decorate. It's green, it has pine needles, it's a _____." Teachers use semantic cueing daily!

Here are a few ways to give a semantic cue:

1. Sentence Completion:
"You put juice in a _____." (cup)
"The day before Thursday is _____." (Wednesday)
2. Providing attributes:
"It's red, it's a fruit, it grows on a tree." (apple)
"You sit at it, it has 4 legs, you eat meals at it." (table)
3. Opposites:
"Not up, but..." (down)
"The opposite of new is..." (old)
4. Combined with phonemic cues:
"It's up in the sky, it's hot and yellow. The 's.'" (sun)



Use these cues for the entire class; however, they are especially helpful when there is a child who needs additional help due to a language disorder. Phonemic and semantic cues replace giving the child the answers. Use these cues in written form to help with homework.

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