SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN SECONDARY AGED PUPILS

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• Speech Language Therapy Manager DSI Cork
• Issido Private Practice.
Having left the box, not only had Sheep escaped group think, but she discovered the added bonus of greener grass.
NEW TERMINOLOGY

Language Disorder
(Language disorder likely to endure into middle childhood/beyond, with significant impact on social interactions or educational progress)

Developmental Language Disorder
(Language Disorder with no known associated differentiating condition)

Language Disorder Associated with X
(Language disorder occurring with particular biomedical conditions)

Additional information to be considered:
Areas of Speech, Language and Communication Difficulty
Risk Factors
Co-occurring Disorders

Figure 1. Classification and descriptive labels for Language Disorder, adapted from Bishop, Snowling et al 2017
A MODEL TO MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Description, Referral and Identification:</th>
<th>Provide Comprehensive Assessment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increase public and professional awareness of profile and needs</td>
<td>• Based on bio-psychosocial model: impairment, activity, functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use consistent terminology</td>
<td>• Considering: parent, teacher and child concerns; differentiating conditions, co-occurring needs and risk factors; clinical markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use evidence-based up to date diagnostic criteria</td>
<td>• Incorporating: formal standardised &amp; informal assessment tools; dynamic assessment; onward referral if required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide training for relevant personnel</td>
<td>• Which is: culturally appropriate; multi-disciplinary and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure timely onward referral</td>
<td>• Timely &amp; repeated as required: consider response to intervention; monitor at transitions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide a Continuum of Effective Quality Intervention:</th>
<th>Incorporate Multi-Disciplinary Supports &amp; Collaborate:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Based on bio-psychosocial model: impairment, activity and functioning</td>
<td>• Speech and language therapy to work in partnership with and listen to children, adolescents and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individualised evidence-based care plan</td>
<td>• Evidence-based and supported collaborative work between speech and language therapists and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Access to appropriate care pathways</td>
<td>• Multi-disciplinary supports and interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure delivery at sufficient intensity and frequency</td>
<td>• Specialist services and clinicians to profile and support children with complex needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide intervention across the age-range as required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Comprehensive negotiated goals and monitored outcomes based on achieving functional and meaningful impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support key educational and life transitions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Address the Range of Needs and Strengths of Children and Adolescents with DLD:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Mental Wellness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy &amp; Independence</td>
<td>Academic &amp; Vocational</td>
<td>Mental Wellness</td>
<td>Physical, Motor &amp; Sensory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IRISH ASSOCIATION OF SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPISTS
SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN SECONDARY AGED PUPILS

“For most young people, language continues to develop throughout the school years and into adulthood. … Despite the importance of communication, and the number of young people with SLCN, there is often limited opportunity in secondary schools for pupils to develop spoken communication skills. There is also limited understanding of, and support for, those with SLCN. Without support, poor communication can impact on a young person’s academic success as well as their social and emotional development”

---I CAN Talk Series – Issue 10
This talk outlines the main issues in young people’s language and communication during the secondary phase of education. It discusses key influences and issues, and suggests ways forwards.

• Good communication skills continue to be the foundations of learning, emotional development and socialising throughout a young person’s schooling and onward into the workplace. Young people need effective speech, language and communication skills in order to have a wide range of life choices.

• Without support, poor communication can impact on a young person’s academic success as well as their social and emotional development.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0-2 years</th>
<th>2-6 years</th>
<th>6-12 years</th>
<th>Adolescence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slow to react to speech.</td>
<td>Late emergence of two-word combinations.</td>
<td>Higher-level comprehension difficulty.</td>
<td>Use of circumlocution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need the support of gestures in order to</td>
<td>Difficulties with making sentences and</td>
<td>Potential failure in academic subjects</td>
<td>Persistent difficulties interpreting language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand.</td>
<td>expressing and sequencing ideas.</td>
<td>involving language interpretation and</td>
<td>ambiguities such as deceit and humour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow to acquire first words.</td>
<td>Poor word retrieval and limited vocabulary.</td>
<td>analysis.</td>
<td>Verbosity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No or limited expressive language</td>
<td>Poor phonological awareness.</td>
<td>Behind their peers in prior language knowledge</td>
<td>Experience increased levels of difficulty in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of echolalia.</td>
<td>Speech difficult to understand.</td>
<td>with a restricted range of learning strategies.</td>
<td>language-rich subjects at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little communicative use of gesture and</td>
<td>Difficulty initiating and sustaining</td>
<td>Difficulty understanding concepts, humour and</td>
<td>Difficulties with complex grammar, narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>babble.</td>
<td>conversation.</td>
<td>jokes.</td>
<td>and expository (school-based) texts and with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of drooling and/or problems</td>
<td>Difficulty understanding instructions.</td>
<td>Difficulties in all aspects of literacy</td>
<td>using technology to learn and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chewing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>including reading and spelling.</td>
<td>communicate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited inventory of sounds used.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Possible features of DLD across the age range.
DLD ADOLESCENCE

• circumlocution

• Persistent difficulties interpreting language ambiguities such as deceit and humour.

• Verbosity.

• Experience increased levels of difficulty in language-rich subjects at school.

• Difficulties with complex grammar, narrative and expository (school-based) texts and with using technology to learn and communicate
### Figure 1: Language Development in the secondary years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General trends through secondary school</th>
<th>Understanding and reasoning</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Sentence structure and narration</th>
<th>Social interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understands longer and more complex instructions.</td>
<td>Vocabulary increases. Pupils learn approximately 7-10 words per day. Understands double meanings and ‘learning vocabulary’ as well as subject words.</td>
<td>Gradually sentences get longer. More complex ideas can be explained. Stories and accounts become more interesting and engaging.</td>
<td>Use of sophisticated language skills such as persuasion and negotiation to be successful socially. Can keep up with rapidly changing adolescent talk. Ability to switch language styles according to situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils use language to solve more complex problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understands figurative language, sarcasm and word play for jokes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students develop the ability to reflect on and analyse their language skills e.g. “I’m good at working in groups but I can go on a bit.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A more detailed summary of later language development can be found on I CAN’s website, ‘What’s typical talk at secondary?’
KEY CHARACTERISTICS

• Wide and vociferous reading
• Educational exposure and
• Social experiences.
• Young people who experience difficulties with language often have associated literacy and social difficulties.
• It is hard to develop more sophisticated language without support
LANGUAGE IN TEXT BOOKS AND CURRICULUM

- figurative language
- need to use narrative
- express opinion
- interpret text

• All increasing and more demanding on a student with weak oral skills
• 37% of teacher instructions in secondary schools contain multiple meanings, (eg CM)
• 20% with at least one idiom.
• Students in secondary schools are expected to learn a large amount of new vocabulary: at least 7 words a day (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002).
• As learning becomes more reliant on independent study, language enables pupils:
  * to make contact with others
  * to organise, manage and evaluate ex
  * to influence and inform.
PEER TALK

• Switching between styles or ‘registers’ of language
• Informal style they use with friends (EG GOM)
• Includes slang and jargon, is based on figurative language

→ the ability to use these has been linked to peer acceptance which is central to formation of self and self esteem.
While they are often criticised for their seemingly limited or repetitive language skills, adolescents actually spend more time talking to others than do younger children. (Reed, VA (2005) An Introduction to children with language disorders, 3rd edition Allyn and Bacon/Pearson)

- Telephoning,
- Texting/using social media ...(language skills in informal peer styles are also impaired)
- Organising independent travel
- Creation and maintenance of social groups,
- Negotiating norms, status and trust.
Finally the fourth ape! He is the sum of the first three: He sees nobody, hears nobody and speaks to nobody.
Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

Young people with SLCN may have problems with producing or understanding spoken language – or with using language in social contexts. SLCN in adolescence fall broadly into two groups:

**Some young people have SLCN which are likely to be long term.** Some of these have specific and primary speech and language impairments. Others may have difficulties as part of more generalised learning difficulties or another condition such as hearing impairment or Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

In adolescence, with increasing demands made on communication skills, they are most likely to have difficulty with understanding and using more technical and abstract vocabulary, with taking part in conversations, producing longer stretches of spoken language and using appropriate social interaction.

Approximately 10% of young people will have potentially long term SLCN.

**Some young people have poor or limited language** which is often associated with social disadvantage.

Secondary aged pupils with limited language may have a poor vocabulary, may find it difficult to put their thoughts into words for explanations or to change the style of talking to suit the situation.

Up to 75% of pupils of secondary schools in certain areas of the UK may have limited language.
Figure 2: Characteristics of persistent language difficulties in older children and young people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Difficulty</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Young people may be able to produce long stories but there are still lots of errors(^36), particularly when asked to give specific information e.g. in an explanation, recounting an event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Understanding vocabulary seems to worsen over time(^37).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social communication</td>
<td>Difficulty joining in and keeping up with conversations(^38) or tuning into other’s verbally expressed interests(^39) – symptoms often characteristic of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder(^40). Generally, in older children, difficulties with the meaning and use of language are more pronounced than grammatical aspects – inappropriate interaction stands out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding figurative, non-literal language</td>
<td>Difficulty understanding complex sentences such as reversible sentences(^41) which means that using language for a wider range of purposes such as negotiating, compromise and problem solving can be hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information processing</td>
<td>Working memory capacity and speed of processing(^42) are affected which means that coping with large amounts of frequently new and complex spoken information will be difficult.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4: Vicious circle of support for speech, language and communication needs at secondary

- Illusory recovery at primary: assessments show good progress but difficulties re-emerge or not shown by assessments
- Difficulties 'hidden' either by young person or by other needs
- Complex picture of needs at secondary
- Some difficulties only emerge when at secondary school
- Limited resources and assessment tools to support and identify SLCN in older pupils
- Lack of evidence to support intervention with older pupils, limited research in this area
- Fewer professionals with skill and knowledge to support speech and language at secondary
- Restricted service for SLCN at secondary, which does not reflect level of needs
- Limited awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication at secondary
- Limited understanding of the role of language in secondary curriculum
- A view that language development and early intervention happens in early years

Young person with SLCN does not get the support they need
WE DON’T FIND THE SLCN BECAUSE WE AREN’T LOOKING WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS

• Available assessments often don’t test for the right kinds of difficulties.
• Students with DLD diagnosed in primary school start to have overall scores on the CELF-4 in the 85-90 range (standardised)
• They show retained difficulties in auditory recall but compensate in other areas.
• However
  a) there is a lot of visual support available in SLT tests.;
  b) newer tests such as CELF 5 Metalinguistics show higher level language difficulties.
THE PROFILE OF SLCN CHANGES OVER TIME

- SLCN in adolescents are often described as ‘hidden’.
- Social communication difficulties and language difficulties becoming more complex.
- Associated behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) or literacy difficulties may be most visible and be identified as priorities.
IT MAY NOT LOOK LIKE A LANGUAGE PROBLEM

• Language difficulties can be misinterpreted – a pause for processing can appear as sullenness. (Reed, VA (2005) An Introduction to children with language disorders, 3rd edition Allyn and Bacon/Pearson) (CM)

• Good ‘surface’ language skills or clear speech may make everyday conversation manageable, effectively masking underlying SLCN. (Wetherall, D, Botting, N and Conti-Ramsden, G (2007) Narrative in adolescent specific language impairment (SLI))

• Interestingly, studies based on young people self-report suggest that as they get older they are more likely to purposefully hide their difficulties. Simkin, Z and Conti-Ramsden, G (2009) ‘I went to a language unit’: Adolescents’ views on specialist educational provision and their language difficulties: Child Language Teaching and Therapy Vol 25 (1)
What Student Says

I don't understand the question.

Translation for Teacher

I don't know the answer.
LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

• Shifting from one teacher style to the next,
• understanding technical terminology,
• Students in secondary schools are expected to learn a large amount of new vocabulary: at least 7 words a day (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002).
• making links between different subject areas and
• managing less structured social ‘free’ time
• one survey identified in some lessons that adults talked for up to 90% of the time
• 5-16 year olds spend on average 6 hours in front of a screen.
• Working closely with the curriculum is particularly important given its language demands. This represents a significant shift in approach – *away from remediating language impairment, to supporting access to learning* (Ehren, BJ (2002) Getting into the Adolescent Literacy Game Asha leader)

• An approach where specialists work closely together on aspects of the curriculum has reported benefits for both teacher and pupil. -Collaboration

• Working through *narratives* is a way of doing this, through scaffolding story or report writing, but also (Victoria Joffe)

• Creating a *communication-based curriculum* (Brown, J (2007) Pontville School: a communication based curriculum conference presentation at Edgehill University, ‘Communication: the key to success?)

• **Focused vocabulary teaching.** (Victoria Joffe)
PROGRAMMES

- Elklan: secondary language builders
- Language for Learning
- I CAN Secondary Talk
RESOURCES
• Useful online resources/websites
  • www.nbss.ie National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS)
  • Afasic Youth Info Pack (www.afasicengland.org.uk)
  • www.sentencetrouble.info
  • www.headstrong.ie
  • www.bt.com/talkgym (can download app for phone)
  • www.ican.co.uk (poster for secondary school)
  • www.elsp.ie English Language Support Programme (trinity website/programme – useful resource for curriculum based vocab for secondary school)
  • www.sess.ie
  • http://www.elciss.com/
  • Awareness Campaign for Language Learning Impairments (http://ralliindex.blogspot.ie/ and various YouTube videos)
  • Video made by an Irish boy who has language difficulties http://www.the42.ie/karl-reddy-ballyboden-2578426-Feb2016/
Catalogue of products and services available from
The Communication Trust’s Consortium
Resources for early years, primary and secondary schools, leadership teams, parents and children, young people and post-16.

The Communication Trust
Every child understood
PILLARS OF A COHERENT APPROACH

• 1 Involvement of parents
• 2 Ensuring communication is embedded at a universal level
• 3 Skilled and confident staff
• 4 Close links with the curriculum
• 5 A functional approach
• 6 A strategy-focused approach
• 7 Support at transition times
• 8 Involving young people
• 9 Opportunities for specialist intervention where difficulties are severe and complex
• 10 Continuing beyond the end of statutory education
9 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPECIALIST INTERVENTION WHERE DIFFICULTIES ARE SEVERE AND COMPLEX

• When I googled SLT for images not one was with a secondary age pupil!

• SLTs in schools pilot
10 CONTINUING BEYOND THE END OF STATUTORY EDUCATION

• In some ways better developed than in secondary
• Access goals, life long learning concepts etc
• Organisations: NALA etc
• Secondary schools ……
Parents often have different views of young people’s communication strengths and needs because of their knowledge of them over time. But they also run into other challenges which can leave little energy for the details of later SLCN!
2 ENSURING COMMUNICATION IS EMBEDDED AT A UNIVERSAL LEVEL

- There is increasing evidence to show that a focus on pupils’ spoken language in secondary schools can have an impact on achievement.
- Teachers talk between 70 and 80 percent of class time,” and “teachers’ talking increases as the year level rises and as the class size decreases.”
- Student engagement is higher when teachers talk less, this is especially true for at-risk students.
- Only 5-10 per cent of teacher talk triggers more conversation or dialogue engaging the student.”
- Teacher effectiveness and teacher talk are inversely linked. The research shows that “when highly effective and other teachers were compared, the former had more general class talk and less directive talk.
SECONDARY TALK (ICAN) - WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH - 5 UNIVERSAL STANDARDS

1. Staff awareness of how communication skills vary and the impact on behaviour and learning
2. Young people’s awareness about the importance of good communication for learning
3. Staff adapt their use of language depending on pupils’ levels of understanding (Elklan 2ndry language builders)
4. Designed opportunities for supported peer to peer interaction within the classroom
5. Language and communication is identified as a fundamental characteristic of the school in realising the potential of all learners
PLUS THESE AT ENHANCED LEVEL:

6. Young people’s language skills and understanding are developed to support their behaviour.
7. Students’ understanding and retention of subject content is supported through an explicit focus on teaching vocabulary.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier three</td>
<td>Subject-specific words (e.g. cytoplasm, apparatus, ecosphere, pivot)</td>
<td>Low-frequency words</td>
<td>Often taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier two</td>
<td>Words describing a basic concept in greater detail e.g. agony, tedious, hideous</td>
<td>Very useful for literate language use</td>
<td>Rarely taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Process’ vocabulary used across several or all subjects (e.g. participate, design, constructive)</td>
<td>High frequency words</td>
<td>Rarely taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1</td>
<td>Everyday basic familiar words, used frequently (e.g. clock, happy, school)</td>
<td>High frequency words</td>
<td>No need to teach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is key to be able to know which student really did not understand the question!
4 CLOSE LINKS WITH THE CURRICULUM

• Despite concerns about how it aligns with the content needed for exams, building skills-teaching into the curriculum has been shown to have an impact both on the quality of teaching and on social and academic outcomes for pupils. → narrative, scaffolded story telling, vocabulary.

5 A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

- Important to focus on associated emotional and social aspects such as friendship or independence, prioritised by young people themselves.

Locally relevant

Sociallythinking.com
Michelle Garcia Winner
6 A STRATEGY-FOCUSED APPROACH

• Young people with SLCN can find the skills needed to set goals and to make plans difficult and so also need to have the purpose and impact of what they are asked to do made explicit (Henry, L, Messer, D and Nash, G (2010))._You need to tell them what they need to do and why._
7 SUPPORT AT TRANSITION TIMES

• Primary to secondary  →  School transition groups

• Junior to senior cycle  →  Peer mentoring systems

• School to further education and employment  →  guidance teams, role play opportunities
8 INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

• They have walked the walk → ask them what helps.
• Always ask the students after the first year which teachers they found it easiest to learn from and why?
• “Gives handouts”
• “Bullet points”
• “Seemed to like me”
• “Is okay if I just guess”
• “Makes it interesting”
• “Likes tractors”
WHAT UK LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS SAID ABOUT INTRODUCING SECONDARY TALK PROGRAMME

• The programme was really helpful in developing language and communication skills across the curriculum and I gained lots of ideas and knowledge from taking part. Kate Silby, Literacy coordinator, Dormers Wells High School

• I suddenly realized that many of these previously excluded students have a much better understanding of what the lesson is about just by making simple adjustments to the way I talk. These things take a bit of practice but really help the students understand. Lead Learning Mentor, St Mary Magdalene Academy, Islington
THE CHALLENGE?

1% of children have the most severe and complex SLCN

nearly 2/3 of young offenders have SLCN which existed from child

2.5 million people in the UK have speech, language or communication needs (SLCN)

2 to 3 students in every classroom have significant communication difficulties

1 in 10 children have SLCN that need long-term support
THE SOLUTION?

• Collaboration between Teachers and SLTS on Whole School approaches to SLCN