

***The role of speech, language and
communication development within
the educational context***

(Addressing Learning Outcome 1)

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Introduction

The development of good speech, language and communication (SLC) skills has been increasingly recognised as fundamental to success within and beyond education (Bercow, 2008; Lee, 2013; Gascoigne & Gross 2017). For most children, language learning is straightforward (Law et al, 2017); because SLC are universal skills, however, they are ones that are perhaps commonly taken for granted, until difficulties occur (TCT, 2015).

In order to discuss the role of SLC development within the educational context, I will begin by defining speech, language and communication and briefly outline theoretical perspectives and stages of expected development. I will then consider why good development is important within education, before looking at prevalence and types of speech, language and communication need (SLCN) and risk factors associated with these. I will discuss the impact that these needs might have on the individual child in the classroom and upon their wider experience of school and finally outline policy and practice which can be employed to reduce the impact of SLCN and support the good development of skills at an individual child, whole school and a community level.

What are Speech, Language and Communication?

Speech, language and communication are closely connected and inter-related, but each term nevertheless relates to a distinct skill set; see figure 1 below.

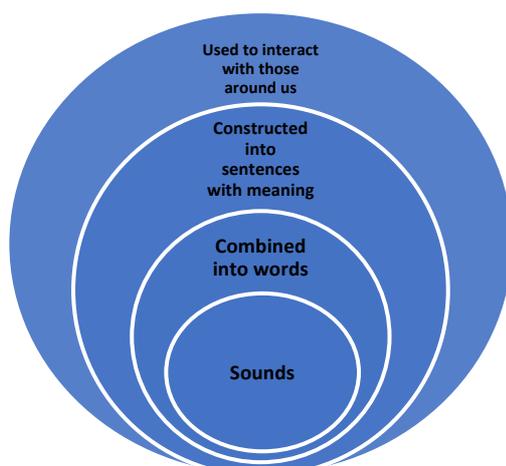
Figure 1 Speech, Language and Communication Definitions

Term	Definition
Speech	The sounds and sound combinations that are put together to make up words. Fluency. Expression and clarity; using pitch, volume and intonation to support meaning.
Language	<u>Expressive language (Talking)</u> Using words and sentences to convey meaning. Building sentences into narratives. Following rules of grammar.
	<u>Receptive Language</u> Making sense of what people say. Understanding and comprehension.
Communication	Interacting and connecting with others using spoken language and gestures. Using language in different ways; questioning, clarifying, describing, discussing. The ability to take other people's perspectives into account.

(TCT, date unknown)

In some respects, communication is the most sophisticated skill of the three, since it incorporates elements of both speech and language, utilising these functional skills within social interaction (see figure 2). Yet, without the foundation of language, communication cannot develop securely (Lee, 2013).

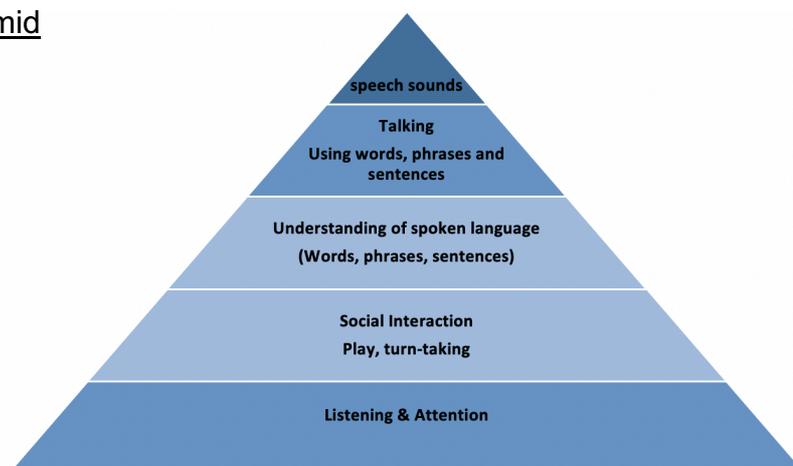
Figure 2 Communication development



(Based on Lee, 2013)

However, the communication pyramid (Figure 3 below) illustrates how initial social aspects of communication are fundamental to the development of good language and speech skills. While they can be defined separately, the three are inextricably related; this has important implications when difficulties emerge in any area and when considering strategies to support good development; themes which will be explored at a later stage.

Figure 3 Communication Pyramid



(adapted from Hounslow Council, 2010)

Theories of Development

The impact of hereditary versus environmental factors (or Nature vs Nurture) has been argued in relation to SLC development in particular as well as child development more widely. Within current dialogue, the two factors are unlikely to be considered mutually exclusive; development is not one-sided but an interplay between the two influences which continues throughout life, though the degree of impact remains debatable (www.simplypsychology.org). There do seem to be some genetic components to speech and language acquisition and development (as Chomsky suggests, in Williamson, 2014); the anatomical ability to produce and manipulate speech sounds, the rapid speed of language learning, the cognitive ability to use language meaningfully and, perhaps, driving these processes, a social need to communicate.

Twin and adoption studies also highlight the role of genetic inheritance in the acquisition of early language, but alongside this, underline the importance of the environment, attributing early language delay to inexperienced modelling and reduced individual attention (Chapman, 2000). Familial transmission of speech and language difficulties (Chapman, 2000) could likewise be due to inherited characteristics or to cultural transmission. While most children neither receive nor require explicit instruction to develop SLC skills (Chandrasekar, 2008), the importance of good language modelling is illustrated in studies such as Hart and Risley's (1995). Environmental and genetic factors will be considered in more detail when discussing risk factors below, but it appears that good language-supporting environments exert a powerful impact at every stage of development (Harrison & McLeod, 2010).

Stages of Development

All children develop uniquely as individuals, but most follow expected patterns (for stages of development see appendix I). This is an ongoing process from birth to adulthood; from gurgling, turning to watch others and making noises to gain attention in the early months, to the secondary age child who interprets complex information, uses language to solve problems and explain ideas, speaks confidently and appropriately in a range of contexts, negotiates with peers and expresses ideas and emotions in a sophisticated manner. Notwithstanding any hereditary elements underlying this progress, The Communication Trust insist, “It doesn’t happen by accident!” (TCT, 2015). Lee (2013) further highlights the importance of understanding age-related stages of development to ensure that, at each stage, children and young people are provided with the support required to develop the skills they need to move forwards.

Why are speech, language and communication skills important within education?

Research (such as Hartshorne, 2009 i) underlines what is evident when observing in any classroom (at least in my personal experience) that nearly all aspects of learning and socialising involve language. Good SLC skills can therefore be regarded as crucial in several ways; in how they support access to the curriculum and the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills, their importance in cognitive development and their significance in social relationships and the development of emotional literacy and regulation. “Language is the vehicle by which children communicate their

needs and ideas, develop and maintain relationships, and solidify their understanding of essential concepts (Law et al, 2017, p.12).

It would appear true that, “Learning floats on a sea of talk” (Barnes, 1976 in Simpson et al, 2010). Lessons are largely delivered through teacher talk; children need good receptive language skills to be able to understand this; to interpret the information they hear, so they can go on to make connections to prior knowledge and apply learning to lesson tasks. They also need, as Simpson et al (2010) point out, to be able to engage in talk themselves (expressive language) in order to be an active learner; to frame oral responses to questions and to work collaboratively with their peers, to talk through ideas in order to construct personal meaning, to reason and problem-solve. Hart and Risley (1995) highlight the importance of vocabulary knowledge for access to the curriculum and wider cognitive development.

Competency in oral language skills is also an essential precursor to the development of early literacy skills. (Bishop & Adams, 1990 in Hartshorne, 2009 i). Interplay between orthographic, phonologic and semantic mapping systems impacts on the development of reading skills; in order to decode and comprehend text, a good language foundation is vital. Reading skills, in turn, impact on all other areas of learning; children who struggle to read also struggle to access word problems in maths for example, or retrieve factual information to build scientific or historic knowledge.

Analysing a lesson plan from my own school illustrates the range of SLC skills needed to access learning in a single English lesson; the ability to listen and maintain attention during carpet teaching and partner talk and the receptive

language skills to understand what is being said, particularly if this involves more 'specialist' vocabulary. Children need vocabulary knowledge, to be able to formulate their ideas into sentences, they need to make the right speech sounds to articulate their words intelligibly. They need communication skills such as turn-taking on the carpet and during partner activities. These are in addition to reading and writing task requirements, which demand phonological skills.

Moreover, education is wider than the learning that takes place in the classroom alone. SLC skills underpin the development of social relationships and peer interactions (Howe & Mercer, 2007); from the ability to engage meaningfully in play with other children in the role play area in the Early Years (I CAN, 2013), to negotiating friendship disputes in Key Stage 2. SLC skills are also fundamental to emotional development and regulation; being able to talk through feelings, discuss difficulties and understand others' perspectives (www.spectrumspeech)

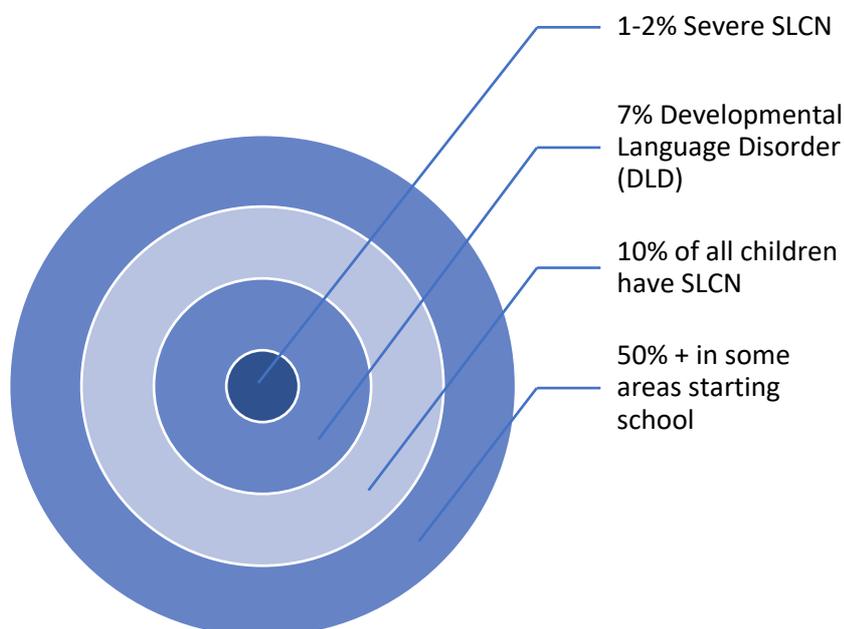
The importance of the development of good SLC skills is perhaps best understood by considering the impact of poor development; through outlining what we mean by SLCN and the effects that this might have on children, using examples from my own school to illustrate research findings.

Speech, Language and Communication Need (SLCN)

Prevalence of Need

It is estimated that over 1 million children in the UK have some degree of SLCN (TCT 2011); depicted proportionally in the diagram (figure 4 below).

Figure 4 Children in the UK with SLCN



(Cross 2011)

These numbers indicate that on average, three children in every classroom experience some form of SLCN. But the simplicity of the diagram perhaps belies the true picture. Agencies across health and education lack a common definition of SLCN (Law et al, 2017; Lee, 2013), most children with any special educational need (SEN) have some degree of SLCN (Lee, 2013) and many children experience SLCN comorbid to another primary need (such as moderate learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder, dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; Cross & Hartshorne, 2011). However, there is not always an obvious reason for a SLCN to develop; for 7% of children, expressive and/or receptive language skills are significantly less well-developed than skills in other areas; Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), is diagnosed in these cases (Cross, 2011). Furthermore, need can be attributed to other factors (such as literacy

difficulties and particularly social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)) as children grow older (DfE, 2011; Lee, 2013). Needs can also remain unidentified due to norm-shifting or lack of practitioner knowledge (The Communication Council, 2015). It is likely that the figures are much higher, particularly in areas of social deprivation, where upwards of 50% of children are likely to experience need (Cross & Hartshorne, 2011). “Some will lag behind their peers on account of social or environmental factors” (Bercow, 2008). This ‘transitory need’ will be discussed below when considering risk factors.

Risk factors

While any child may experience difficulties at any point in their SLC development, some groups have a higher statistical propensity. Risk factors can be discussed with regard to the ‘Nature/Nurture’ debate; and again illustrate the danger of adopting a one-sided perspective. Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological framework highlights the need to consider, “complex interrelationships that exist between biological, individual and societal factors that influence child functioning” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005 in Harrison & McLeod, 2010, p509).

Being born male increases the risk of developing SLCN, in line with a wider national correlation between identification of special educational needs (SEN) and gender (which is reflected in my own school; 64% of children on the SEN record are boys) Some genetic conditions such as autoimmune difficulties, neurodevelopmental differences and hearing loss increase risk, as do being born in a multiple birth. Non-English speakers growing up within an English speaking society may be at increased

risk (Reilly et al, 2007 in Harrison & McLeod, 2010). Speaking English as an additional language (EAL) does not itself constitute a SLCN (TCT, 2015) but it can lead to delayed acquisition of language skills or make it more difficult to identify difficulties and provide appropriate intervention (Cross & Hartshorne, 2011; Law et al, 2017).

Alongside biological factors, the child's socio-economic background is fundamental; Law et al describe the 'social gradient' for language (Law et al, 2013 in Gascoigne & Gross, 2017, p. 23); children eligible for free school meals and living in deprived neighbourhoods are 2-3 times more likely to be identified as having SLCN (The Communication Council, 2015). Further risk factors such as parental mental health (Weindrich et al, 2000 in Harrison & McLeod, 2010), increased number of children (Choudhury & Benasich, 2003 in Harrison & McLeod, 2010) and maternal educational level could also be associated with socio-economic status.

While Hart & Risley (1995) have been accused of 'pathologizing the poor' (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009) and their methodology has been criticised (Purpura, 2019), it would be disingenuous to deny the existence of a word gap. My school lies in the bottom 2% of deprived areas nationally; 85% of children started nursery this year with language levels below age-related expectations (as assessed through Wellcomm; Hurd & McQueen, 2010). Nationally, by age 5, 75% of children who experience early persistent poverty are below average in language development (Gascoigne & Gross, 2017).

The link between social disadvantage and impoverished language is not a straightforward one; direct factors include health and access to resources, indirect issues pertain to parent-child interactions, expectations, external pressures, the quality of local Early Years provision and inter-generational cycles of need (The Communication Council, 2015). Ultimately, it appears that the quality of the home learning environment is the crucial factor influencing the development of the skills required for school readiness (Law et al, 2017); it is not *who* parents are, but *what* they do which is important; this has implications for practice and policy which will be considered below.

Nature of Need

As outlined in figure 1 and appendix I, speech, language and communication are distinct elements, each with their own (inter-related) developmental trajectories. When difficulties arise, this may be in one particular area, in more than one, or in all (see table 5 for examples), with varying degree of severity and impact, rendering SLCN an extremely heterogeneous category. Children may experience delay (following expected patterns of development but late meeting milestones) or disorder (patterns of development are not normal), or both. DLD affects the way that children understand and use language.

Figure 5 Examples of need in each area.

Area	Types of difficulty
Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discriminating between speech sounds • Making speech sounds • Stammering • Unusual voice quality • Tone/intonation
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immature sentence structure • Problems linking sentences • Sequencing • Learning new words • Word finding difficulties • Lack of emotional vocabulary • Difficulty understanding complex sentences • Problems with idioms
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eye contact • Turn-taking • Conversation • Responding to feedback from a listener • Staying on topic in a conversation • Using language to negotiate

(Cross & Hartshorne, 2011)

Every child with SLCN will have an individual profile and their needs will impact on their development in different ways. (This is illustrated further in appendix II)

Impact of Need

“To be able to communicate is a precious commodity. To be unable to do so can be a profoundly damaging disability” (Bercow, 2008 p.3). For children with the types of difficulty outlined above, particularly DLD and severe SLCN, the impact can be significant and long-term in each of the areas identified above for which good SLC skills underpin good development (See Case Study 1 in appendix II).

Learning

If the successful development of literacy depends on language skills (Hartshorne, 2009 i) it is understandable that, 'An impoverished vocabulary and limited understanding of language make it difficult for children to make sense of what they read' (Hartshorne, 2009 i, p.1). Law et al (2017) suggest that almost all children with SLCN experience literacy difficulties. Speech sound difficulties render segmenting, blending and manipulating sounds to read an issue. Language problems may have a greater impact; writing can be poorly organised, comprised of shorter sentences, containing limited vocabulary and weak spelling. In 2016, only 12% of pupils with SLCN as their primary need achieved at least expected levels in reading, writing and maths by the end of year 1, compared to 53% of all pupils. In the longer-term, children with poor vocabulary aged 5 are more than twice as likely to be unemployed at age 34 as children with similar non-verbal abilities but good vocabulary.

Social, emotional and mental health

Beitchman et al (2001 in Hartas, 2011) explore the link between receptive language difficulties and behavioural ones. It is understandable that children who cannot access the taught curriculum may either withdraw, or become disruptive in response. My own observations in school (see case study 2, appendix II) also suggest that difficulties at unstructured times may stem from receptive language, rather than 'behavioural' causes. SLCN can result in difficulties forming or sustaining social relationships (Hartshorne, 2009 ii and appendix II) further damaging emotional wellbeing and self-esteem, which may already be poor due to an inability to understand or be understood (Cross, 2011).

If difficulties are recognised, schools can make reasonable adjustments to classroom practice so that children are not disadvantaged by their SLCN, they can implement intervention programmes to support children to make progress. If need is not recognised, however, it will inevitably remain unmet; research highlighting the number of prison inmates with unidentified SLCN (Hartshorne, 2009 ii) shows the potential ramifications of this.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The breadth of need and depth of impact described above have huge implications for schools. Reassuringly, Lee (2013) suggests that supporting good SLC development is often, “a ‘tweak’ to good practice, meshed with basic understanding of language development” (Lee, 2013 p.5) while Gascoigne & Gross (2017) maintain, “It is entirely possible to break the link between language difficulties and disadvantage, with the right support at home, in early education and in school”. This ‘good practice’ and ‘right support’, which aim to reduce the impact of difficulties alongside developing language abilities to their full potential can be depicted within Bercow’s (2008) three tier approach (figure 6).

Figure 6 Three tier approach within and beyond school.



At the universal level, Quality First Teaching (QFT) in the classroom can incorporate the good questioning, space for exploratory talk, comprehension checking, hands-on activity and discussion highlighted by Simpson et al (2010). Teachers can design and provide activities where children collaborate to achieve joint goals or explain and express different points of view (Howe & Mercer, 2007). They can balance 'authoritative' talk and dialogue and explicitly teach children how to work together (Scott, 2007 in Simpson et al, 2010), create language-rich environments with daily conversation, songs and stories, (Test et al, 2010) model thinking and reasoning, highlight and revisit key vocabulary and make expectations clear (Lee, 2013). "Teachers need to be able to create an environment which supports both literacy and communication development of all children across the phases of education (Hartshorne, 2009 i. p.5).

As Lee (2013) points out, teachers need to know the language levels of their pupils and they need to know what 'tweaks' they should make (for example Appendix III). Lack of practitioner training and poor teacher confidence have been highlighted as issues (Bercow, 2008); remedying these through ongoing professional development appears fundamental to improving outcomes. 'Top level' support for communication development; prioritisation by the Head Teacher is necessary to realise this (Lee, 2013). Within my school, a programme of training devised by The Communication Trust (www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk) was cascaded to all staff then 'The Communication Supporting Classrooms Observation Tool' (Dockrell et al, 2012) was adapted to audit and profile practice and highlight areas for development; fusing evidence-based practice with the needs of our particular school context.

Developing QFT with a focus on communication should improve outcomes for all children. Some will need more targeted, in school support; using screening and assessment tools more consistently and systematically, and training staff to deliver evidence-based interventions based on individual profiles of need. ‘Talk Boost’ is one such programme utilised within our Early Years; our results mirror the “significantly positive outcomes for children with delayed language” found by Law et al (2012 p.137). At a specialist level, the need for collaborative working between education and health, particularly for those children with persistent DLD or more complex needs is highlighted by Bercow (2008) and Lee (2013).

Arguably the most important partnerships, however, are those which involve professionals from education and health working with parents, particularly in areas of deprivation, to ensure that every child spends their early years in a home-learning environment which supports the development of the good SLC skills that children need before they start school.

Conclusions

Speech, language and communication development plays a pivotal role within the educational context. SLC are crucial skills underpinning learning and social and emotional development, but they are a skill which many children (particularly in areas of socio-economic deprivation) have not developed according to age-related expectations. They are skills needed *for* school, but which also need to be developed *by* school. There is clearly a need for school staff to respond by understanding what is ‘normal’ and identifying those who are experiencing difficulties, understanding how

to ensure that children reach (wherever possible) their milestones, and what to put in place, at different levels, for those with delayed skills or additional needs. If, “The ability to communicate is an essential life skill for all children and young people” (Bercow, 2008), the challenge for schools is to work in partnership with parents and external services to ensure that all children and young people are able to develop this skill.

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Appendices

Appendix I Stages of Development

Expected Speech, Language and Communication Milestones				
Age	Listening & Attention	Understanding	Speech Sounds and Talk	Social Skills
Up to 3 months	Startled by loud noises Turns towards a familiar sound	Recognises parent's voice Usually calmed by familiar, friendly voice	Often cries particularly when uncomfortable/unhappy Makes cooing/gurgling noises	Gazes at faces. Copies facial movements Makes eye contact
3-6 months	Watches face when someone talks	Shows excitement at sound of approaching voices – kicks, waves arms, makes noises	Makes vocal noises to get attention Responds to talk by making sounds back Laughs during play Babbles to self	Can sense different emotions in parent's voice and may respond differently Cries in different ways according to need Smiles back
6-12 months	Locates source of voice with accuracy Focuses on different sounds (eg telephone)	Understands frequently used words e.g. 'bye-bye', 'no' Stops and looks on hearing own name Understands simple instructions supported by gestures and context	Babbles to communicate with others 'ba ba', 'no no' Stops babbling when hears familiar adult voice Uses gestures like waving and pointing Starts to use single words (around 12 months) e.g. 'dada', 'mum mum'	Enjoys action rhymes and songs Tries to copy adult speech and lip movements Uses babble to take turns in conversation
12-15 months	Attends to music and singing Enjoys sound-making toys/objects	Understands single words in context e.g. cup, when the object is there Understands more words than they can say Understands simple instructions e.g. 'kiss daddy'	Says around 10 single words (may not be clear) Reaches or points to something wanted while making speech sounds	Likes being with familiar adults Likes watching adults for short periods of time
15-18 months	Listens and responds to simple information/instructions	Understands wide range of single words and some two-words phrases Recognises and points to objects and pictures in books if asked Gives named familiar objects to adult	Uses at least 20 single words correctly (may not be clear) Says words in a baby way but usually consistently in how they sound Copies gestures and words from adults Constant babbling and single words used during play Uses intonation, pitch and volume changes when 'talking'	Simple pretend play e.g. talking on the phone Plays alone but likes to be near familiar adult More independent but happiest when near familiar adult Enjoys games like peek a boo
18 months to 2 years	Focuses on activity of own choice. Finds adult direction difficult Use of name help them to attend to adult directives	Understands 200-500 single words – rapid growth of knowledge Understands more simple instructions	Uses up to 50 words Begins to put 2-3 words together e.g. 'more juice' Frequently asks questions (towards 2); 'what that?' Uses speech sounds p, b, m, w	Development of pretend play Becomes frustrated when unable to make self understood - tantrums Follows adult body language including pointing, gesture and facial expressions
2-3 years	Begins to listen to talk but easily distracted. Listens to talk addressed to her/himself.	Developing understanding of concepts like big/little, in/on/under. Understands short phrases and instructions like 'put teddy in the box'. Understands simple 'who', 'what' and 'where' questions. Understands a simple story when supported by pictures.	Uses 300 words. Links 4-5 words together. May stumble over words or stammer when thinking what to say. Able to use pronouns (me, him, she), plurals & prepositions (In, on, under). Problems with some speech sounds (l/r/w/y, f/th, s/sh/ch/dz/j). Sings songs.	Holds a conversation but jumps from topic to topic. Will show interest in other's play and join in. Sharing is difficult. Expresses emotions towards adults and peers using words, not just actions.

M07A Speech, Language and Communication Needs – Skills & Knowledge
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3-4 years	Enjoys Listening to stories. Finds it difficult to pay attention to more than one thing at a time.	Understands questions or instructions with two parts. Understands 'why' questions. Aware of time concepts; yesterday, today, tomorrow ... Likes simple jokes	Uses sentences of 4-6 words. Uses future and past tense. May have problems with irregular verbs e.g. 'runned' instead of ran. Can remember long stories and songs. Uses colour and number related words Problems saying, r, j, th, ch, sh.	Understands turn-taking and sharing. Games are more planned Initiates conversations. Enjoys playing with peers. Able to argue with adults or peers if they disagree.
4-5 years	More flexible attention – can understand spoken instructions related to a task without stopping to look at the speaker	Can follow a simple story without pictures Understands instructions containing sequencing words Understands adjectives Aware of more complex humour	Uses well-formed sentences (may still be grammatical errors) Easily understood by adults and peers. Few immaturities in speech sounds e.g. th, r, and three consonant combinations Asks meaning of unfamiliar words and may use them randomly	Chooses own friends Usually co-operates with peers Can plan construction and make believe activities Takes turns in longer conversations Uses language to gain information, discuss feelings/ideas and give opinions
5-7 years	Starts to ignore unimportant information.	Is aware when a message is unclear and comments or asks for explanation. Understands complex 2 to 3 part instructions:	Compares words by the way they look or sound Can guess a word from clues, or give others clues using shape, size, function, etc. Uses newly learnt words in a specific and appropriate way: Speech is clear with occasional errors such as consonant blends Has good knowledge of sounds in words Asks lots of questions to find out specific information 'How' and 'Why' Uses different ways to join phrases to help explain or justify an event Tells stories that set the scene have a basic plot and a sequence of events Begins to be aware of what the listener already knows and checks Accurately predicts what will happen in a story	Takes turns to talk, listen, and respond in two-way conversations and groups. Keeps to a topic but easily prompted to move on if it takes over. Copies others' language and begins to be aware of current peer language: Uses and experiments with different styles of talking with different people.
7-9 years	Listens to key information and makes relevant, related comments	Identifies clearly when they haven't understood: Able to infer meaning, reason and predict	Uses a range of words related to time and measurement Uses a wide range of verbs to express thoughts, or about cause and effect: Joins in discussions about an activity using topic vocabulary: Speech is clear, uses words with 3 sounds together or with lots of syllables: Uses regular and unusual word endings Uses complex grammar and sentences to clarify, summarise, explain and plan Stories have a good structure with a distinct plot, an exciting event, clear resolution and conclusion: Uses intonation to make storytelling and reports exciting and interesting. Adds detail or leaves information out according to how much is already known by the listener.	Uses formal language when appropriate in some familiar situations Understands conversational rules Uses tone of voice, stress on words and gestures naturally to add meaning. Uses language for full range of different reasons
9-11 years	Sustains active listening to both what is said and the way it is said.	Follows longer instructions that are not familiar Understands different question types: <i>e.g. open, closed, rhetorical.</i> Understands simple jokes and simple idioms, but can't	Makes choices from a wide and varied vocabulary: Uses sophisticated words but the meaning might not always be accurate: Knows that words can have two meanings and uses them appropriately though can't always explain how they are linked:	Uses different language depending on where they are, who they are with and what they are doing: Communicates successfully; shares ideas and information, gives and receives advice, and offers and takes notice of opinions.

		really explain why they are funny or what they mean:	<p>Uses long and complex sentence structures: Uses questions to help conversations flow. Sentences average about 7 to 10 words - longer in stories than in conversation. Knows when a sentence is not grammatically correct and can explain rules of grammar. Tells elaborate entertaining stories which are full of detailed descriptions. Everyday language is detailed and not always about their immediate experience. Incorporates a subplot in telling stories and recalling events, before resolving the main storyline.</p>	Realises when people don't fully understand and tries to help them.
By 14 years old	Sustains active listening, ignoring extraneous distractions and prioritising information	<p>Understands instructions which don't follow the word order of the sentence. Still challenged by some instruction words e.g. modify, generate, consider Can build an argument to persuade and respond to views different to own Separates fact from opinion when reading Makes inferences, working out information that isn't explicitly written or spoken. Understands less obvious 'sayings', Confident in noticing and understanding sarcasm with clues</p>	<p>Uses patterns in words like -able, -esque, un-, dis- Uses 'academic words' when prompted Can confidently explain the meaning of subject words and words with multiple meanings Links sentences using more difficult joining words Produces well-planned, complex stories with complete sections and plenty of detail Gives clear and detailed explanations of rules, or breaks down steps in more complex sequences Average length of spoken sentences is 7-12 + words</p>	<p>Understands and uses slang terms with peers; keeps up with latest 'street talk' Can keep a topic of conversation going even if the person they are talking to finds this skill harder Fully understands the difference between talking with peers to speaking in the classroom:</p>
By 18 years old	Able to multi-task	<p>No difficulty following complex directions Knows when and why they don't understand; asks for help in a specific way More skilled in using a range of arguments to persuade others Reads and understands a wide variety of topics Fully understands sarcasm and is able to use it well Knows what these instruction words are asking them to do: evaluate, find themes, compile</p>	<p>Uses a good range of descriptive words and expressions: swaggered, noxious, meandered Is able to use difficult joining words to make complex sentences Can tell long and complex narratives ensuring the listener understands the thread of the story throughout Average length of spoken sentences is 9-13+ words</p>	<p>Able to stay on one topic of conversation for long periods and move sensibly from one topic to another Able to switch easily between informal and formal styles of talking depending on the audience:</p>

Appendix II Reflective analysis of experiences of individual learners in my school.

Three Case Study Examples

Case Study 1. “Harry”. The impact of a DLD on all areas of development

“Harry” (not his real name) has a DLD and is currently on a placement in a speech and language specialist resource base (SRB). He spends four days a week in this setting and one day with us. Harry is in year 2 and has been in our school since nursery. His speech and language have always been poor. He used to talk very little and what he did say was unintelligible. His mum was proactive in seeking help; she met regularly with nursery staff and would try everything at home, but Harry would become frustrated at his inability to make the sounds that he needed to. Assessments in school (Wellcomm) showed that Harry’s understanding was good. He could follow instructions and routines in nursery, and he could show his understanding of areas of the curriculum in ways that did not involve talking (e.g. matching numerals to sets or phonemes to graphemes). He was on track against all areas of the EYFS, except communication.

Harry was referred to Speech and Language Therapy, his difficulties diagnosed, and he completed blocks of therapy. There were small steps of improvement, but only small ones and the impact of his difficulties became increasingly evident. Parents reported that behaviour at home was poor. Harry would lash out when he couldn’t make himself understood, he was increasingly frustrated and would refuse to complete learning tasks. In school, Harry had few friends, just one other child. The other children couldn’t make out what he was saying, and he would sometimes hit them if they didn’t understand. Fewer friends meant fewer opportunities to build his social skills, impacting further on language development. A learning gap with his peers developed; the class were learning phonics and Harry couldn’t make the sounds he needed to. He stopped listening on the carpet because he knew that he wouldn’t always be able to answer questions even when he knew the answers. Class staff used sign-a-long and tried to find opportunities for him to show his learning in different ways, but he didn’t want to be different. He just wanted to talk like the others.

Harry is receiving the right support at the present time and he is making noticeable progress with his oral language skills. It is possible to understand what he is saying, though not all of the time. His behaviour at home is more settled. However, he is working well below age-related expectations across the curriculum; his attainment is what we would expect of a child with cognitive difficulties. He will need further interventions to close this gap in the future. He has continued to struggle with peer relationships and has presented as quite withdrawn in the classroom.

Harry will continue to make progress, but we anticipate that DLD will have a lifelong impact on his learning, his emotional wellbeing and his future life chances.

Case Study 2. “Ron”. The impact of receptive language difficulties on behaviour

“Ron” (not his real name) was always in trouble on the playground; every time he went out, he would get involved in rough playing and fights. Staff would speak to him afterwards, but he wouldn’t really be able to explain what had happened. He would say sorry, then do the same thing again the next day. He stopped being allowed out because there were so many complaints. Ron had been known to SALT when he was younger but had been discharged as communicatively competent.

We commissioned a specialist teacher for a block of work on behavioural regulation. She highlighted some (undiagnosed) issues with receptive language and used stories to help build his understanding about what to do when things go wrong. By observing him and recreating some of his difficulties with small world figures, she helped him to problem-solve and create scripts to use in similar situations. This approach has really helped him in his social relationships. However, I anticipate that he will find high school difficult. His pragmatic language skills also seem quite poor, so he can come across as quite rude when he talks to adults. Ron will need a carefully planned transition to high school. If staff don’t understand his difficulties, he could easily be seen as ‘defiant’ and ‘difficult’. He is a child who could end up being excluded for poor behaviour if he is misunderstood and unsupported.

Case Study 3. “Percy”. The impact of Social Communication needs

“Percy” (not his real name) now has a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). His speech is clear, his sentences are sophisticated, and his vocabulary (generally) is good. Percy has no difficulties making himself understood, but he has real difficulties in understanding interpersonal communication. He will talk at length on topics that interest him, without regard to the listener. He will get very close to other people and intrude on their personal space. He does not understand the non-verbal cues that might support him to know that others are uncomfortable or bored. Percy says what is in his head without understanding how it might impact on others; because “it’s true.”

Percy is beginning to be able to name his feelings and develop some strategies to regulate them, but this is an ongoing area of challenge.

Percy’s family hope that he will be supported in a specialist school placement when he leaves our school.

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Expected Speech, Language and Communication Milestones for Nursery Children				
Age	Listening & Attention	Understanding	Speech Sounds and Talk	Social Skills
2-3 years	Begins to listen to talk but easily distracted. Listens to talk addressed to her/himself.	Developing understanding of concepts like big/little, in/on/under. Understands short phrases and instructions like 'put teddy in the box'. Understands simple 'who', 'what' and 'where' questions. Understands a simple story when supported by pictures.	Uses 300 words. Links 4-5 words together. May stumble over words or stammer when thinking what to say. Able to use pronouns (me, him, she), plurals & prepositions (In, on, under). Problems with some speech sounds (l/r/w/y, f/th, s/sh/ch/dz/j). Sings songs.	Holds a conversation but jumps from topic to topic. Will show interest in other's play and join in. Sharing is difficult. Expresses emotions towards adults and peers using words, not just actions.
3-4 years	Enjoys Listening to stories. Finds it difficult to pay attention to more than one thing at a time.	Understands questions or instructions with two parts. Understands 'why' questions. Aware of time concepts; yesterday, today, tomorrow ...	Uses sentences of 4-6 words. Uses future and past tense. May have problems with irregular verbs e.g. 'runned' instead of ran. Can remember long stories and songs. Problems saying, r, j, th, ch, sh.	Understands turn-taking and sharing. Games are more planned Initiates conversations. Enjoys playing with peers. Able to argue with adults or peers if they disagree.

