

Strategies to support students with language needs in the classroom

General Understanding

- Give one instruction at a time (bullet points) and use pictures/symbols/words/gestures for each point
- Always check understanding and create an environment where it is acceptable for the student to say that they don't understand what has been said or to ask for repetition.
- Speak slowly and allow plenty of time for them to process and understand what you've said.
- Recap on the main points covered in discussions.
- Alternate listening tasks with 'doing' tasks, refocus their attention when required;
- Review what has been learned/discussed and allow regular 'learning breaks' to help maintain concentration span.
- Reduce background noise when possible
- Use simple, clear sentences – avoid complex grammar and explain idioms/non literal language.

Memory

- Reduce the amount of information given in one go;
- Support spoken information with visual information –, drawing, writing, schedules, pictures, signs.
- Encourage note taking via words and pictures by helping the student identify the main words;
- Emphasise the main words in the sentence;
- Repeat yourself if necessary, emphasising the main, important words;
- Encourage memory techniques – repeating to self, visualisation, note-taking with words and pictures, mind maps.

Organisation

- Provide guidance in identifying the steps involved in a task and have a visual reminder present as necessary e.g. story planner, visual note taking.
- Encourage the use of a daily diary to aid personal organisation – make sure necessary information is in the planner; use colour coding
- Encourage the use of a homework diary or a checklist to record anything they need to plan for.

Developing Vocabulary Knowledge

- Do not assume knowledge of words (especially extended vocabulary, such as "glimpse", "precious", "cautious") as there may be many 'gaps' in vocabulary knowledge. These words will need to be taught if unknown: build a definition together, use the word yourself and encourage students to do so in sentences,

- Give concrete experience of new vocabulary – act it out; have props etc.
- Teach new words specifically, particularly specialist, subject-specific words.
- Give clear definitions of words to practise – use word webs to show the main ideas
- Use visual cues such as pictures, diagrams, photos, symbols or signs to add meaning to a word.
- Make clear links to prior knowledge
- Support them in understanding how the word relates to other words, concepts and ideas – use mind maps to show these links.
- Review their understanding of new vocabulary regularly.

Expressive Language

- Give the student time to process what you've said and to organise what they want to say
- Model good language
- Limit the number of questions you ask and wait, using a general "Mm?" to elicit more information
- Provide visual structure with templates for organising information for narrative, explanations etc

Word Finding

If the student can't think of a word that they do know encourage them to use these strategies:

- Describe what the word means: what sort of thing/word is it; what does it look like, is there a similar word you know etc.;
- Think about the sounds in the word or what it starts with; is it a long word?
- Think about where/when they've used the word before;
- Try and say the word in a sentence;
- Think of associated words.

Ann Forrester, Speech and Language Therapy – July 2016