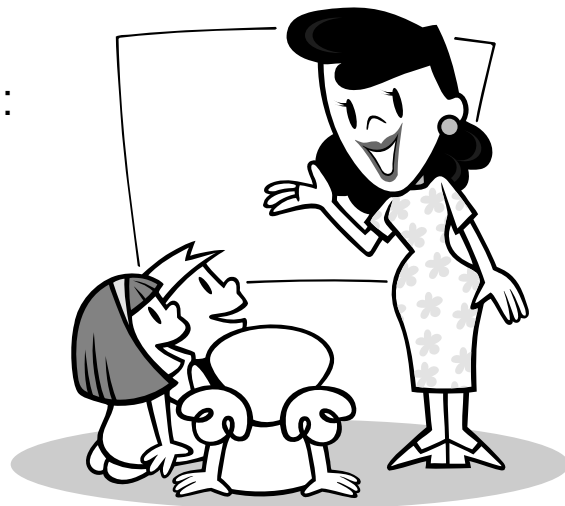


Helping Children with Language Disorders:

Phonemic & Semantic Cues

by Robyn Merkel-Piccini, M.A., CCC-SLP



Background Information:

There are many students in our school classified as ESLs; however, not all ESL children have articulation disorders. Some children have a disorder known as a “language disorder.” Language disorders accompany many learning problems, physical injury, and attention disorders such as: ADD, ADHD, perceptual disorder, neurological disorder, hearing impairment, mental retardation, closed head injury, cerebral vascular accident (stroke), and comprehension deficits.

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 reading and math as well as classroom behavior.

Expressive language disorders in children 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:

A child with a language disorder 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 consonant 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 have named things like stocking, 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 _____." Teacher's use semantic cueing daily!

There are a few ways to give a semantic cue:

1. Carrier phrases:

"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 four legs. You eat meals at it." (table)

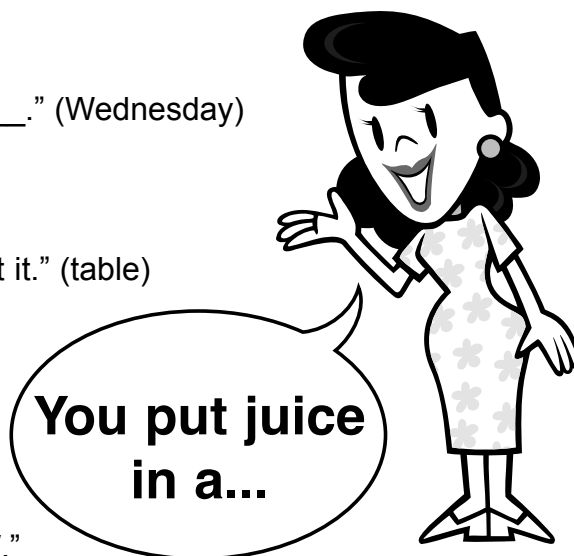
3. Opposites:

"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 orange. The /sss/."



These cues can be used for the entire class; however, they are especially helpful when there is a child who needs a greater time to respond, or teacher input. Phonemic and semantic cues replace giving the child the answers. These cues can also be used in the written form to help with homework.

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