

EDSP 250 CONTEXT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION
Spring 2009
Language Development, Differences, and Disabilities

Name xxxxxxxxx

Date 3/31/09

Case Study #2: Receptive and Expressive Language

The second case study focuses on general aspects of receptive language and expressive language that may typically be associated with students with language/learning disabilities and communication disorders. Complete the four sections of the analysis as preparation for holding a Child Study Meeting. Then write notes for a script for your child study meeting using the guidelines attached. We will be using the format that we used earlier in the semester

Developmental Analysis

This section demonstrates your ability to distinguish between receptive and expressive language as well as the components of language including the form (phonology, morphology, syntax), the meaning (semantics), the function (pragmatics), and the fluency (discourse). Your analysis should show that you understand the distinction between speech articulation and other more complex language differences.

Phonology (receptive and expressive)

Phonology is the study of sounds in language. Individual sounds within language are called phonemes, of which there are forty-four within the English language. Receptive language, when it comes to phonology, involves being able to distinguish between different sounds and also being able to comprehend the combined sounds as whole words. Expressive language, when it comes to phonology, involves the ability to articulate words and sounds together to communicate effectively. According to this case study, Allie is a young girl who has difficulty articulating certain letter sounds such as “th” and “r” because of a history of frequent ear infections and a procedure involving tubes placed in her ears. However, when she is reading and encounters long words, she can successfully sound the word out part by part.

Morphology (receptive and expressive)

Morphology is the study of morphemes, or word parts, that make up a whole word. A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning within our language-sometimes one syllable words-that can change the meaning or tense of a word when added or taken away. Morphology is utilized in the understanding of tenses, suffixes, prefixes, plurals, and compound words. As explained in the case study, Allie is very good at sounding out long words but it is questionable as to whether or not she comprehends the word she is reading. Just because she is able to distinguish between the parts of the word does not mean she understands what she is reading.

Syntax (receptive and expressive)

Syntax involves grammar and word order within sentences. Without proper understanding of syntax, students may have difficulties with receptive language because they might not understand why something is worded a certain way. According to this case study, Allie has recently been getting confused by word problems in math class, tends to ask the teacher to repeat questions that she is asked to answer, and finds long explanations confusing. This suggests that Allie may be having trouble with the word order of the sentence and is unable to understand what she is really being asked or told. On the other hand, students may have difficulties with expressive language because they have not yet grasped the rules of grammar in their writing or speech. When this problem occurs, the students will come across obstacles in expressing what they mean and they will not be completely understood by the listener or reader. The case study says that Allie is very short and non-descriptive with her oral answers and sometimes seems to forget what she was going to say. This could be a sign that she is having trouble putting her thoughts into comprehensible sentences and words.

Semantics (receptive and expressive)

Semantics is vocabulary, or word meaning. It has been found that children have a tendency to understand vocabulary more easily and quickly than they are to express it, meaning they may understand certain words but may be unable to explain what they mean. When semantics is first taught to children, it is contextualized, meaning it is concrete, and later becomes more and more decontextualized, or abstract. According to the case study, Allie has very good decoding skills, meaning she can decode the meaning of words using the context. The fact that Allie is confused by word problems and does not seem to understand questions being asked of her could mean that she does not understand the words being used. If a student does not understand the meaning of one or two words, the meaning of the entire sentence could be entirely different than he or she thinks. In addition, because Allie's answers to questions tend to be completely off, this could mean that she is getting thrown off by words that are used in the question.

Pragmatics (receptive and expressive)

Pragmatics is the purpose, goal, and intent of communication. Pragmatics regarding expressive language entails asking questions, expressing wants and needs, using persuasion, and teaching information. On the other hand, pragmatics regarding receptive language involves understanding what sort of answers questions are looking for, learning new information, and being able to make connections between information. When it comes to Allie's academic performance, she has started to become bored in the classroom, finds long explanations confusing, cannot often explain what she has read and often needs questions to be repeated. The meaning behind all of this could be that she is having difficulties understanding what is being said to her, what she has read, or what is asked of her. If she does not understand the intent or purpose of what she is being told or asked, then providing an answer will not be easy. This could be a reason why her answers to questions tend to be wrong at times and also why she becomes confused when reading word problems in math class. When she is reading from a text, she may not completely understand what she is reading so she cannot explain what she has read.

Discourse & Fluency (receptive and expressive)

Discourse involves the way in which sentences are organized into paragraphs, stories, ideas, and other bodies of written information. As mentioned before, Allie gets confused in math class when reading word problems. Although she may understand the individual words or even sentences, the confusion could lie in the way the sentences are organized. Fluency involves the ability to effectively express and communicate ideas and information verbally to others. Allie seems to be having difficulties in fluency because she is unable to clearly articulate her thoughts verbally and is unable to completely understand what is being communicated to her by the teacher and other students. If Allie does in fact understand what she is reading from a text, then the problem may be that she is just unable to verbalize what she has learned from the reading. Similarly, she may know the information when she raises her hand in class to answer a question but then has trouble forming comprehensible sentences as an answer.

Cultural or Experiential Factors

The impact of cultural or experiential factors can be complex and subject to personal bias and interpretation. The section emphasizes the importance of posing questions and hypotheses that lead you to culturally sensitive responses as an instructional planner.

It is important for teachers to keep in mind that not all of their students are going to come into the classroom with all necessary prior knowledge for their grade level. Similarly, it is also safe to say that some of the students-maybe even a majority depending on the location of the school- will come from homes and families that are below or near the poverty line. Some families do not have the funds to provide their children with books and other reading materials or educational games that help them enrich their minds. In other cases, parents or guardians are forced to work all hours of the day and/or night so that they are not able to spend time with their children reading or assisting with homework. Some families may also be sending their students to school to learn English as a second language and the children may not be receiving help from family members at home.

These situations all depend on the family and can differ from case to case. It is not to say that children from more affluent families will definitely perform better academically than children from poorer families. The opposite case is just as likely. All children are unique and learn in different ways. It is important for the teacher to get to know his or her students and to ask oneself, "How can I better his/her education?" or "In which subject is this student having difficulties?" or even "How should I approach this student's family to discuss the child's progress/difficulties in the classroom?" Never should a teacher assume that because a student comes from an ethnically diverse background that he or she will need special attention or assistance. Hypotheses about the student's performance should be based solely on the student.

Impact on Learning

Learning differences or disabilities in receptive and expressive language can impact academic and social/emotional development. In this section, you should make inferences based on your readings of the texts and journal articles. Academic areas can include reading, writing, mathematics, or other language based subject areas. Social/emotional development can include interactions with peers, teachers, and family members. It can also impact the ability of a student with exceptional learning needs to express one's needs and feelings and thus influence his/her behavior.

When a student has difficulties with expressive and receptive language, all aspects of education can be affected. This means that their academic performance, social and emotional development, and behavior within the classroom. If a student is having trouble remembering or understanding information being expressed to them or that they are reading, he or she can become frustrated or embarrassed. Sometimes, a student's metacognition skills are poor so the student does not realize that he or she is misunderstanding or misinterpreting the information. These difficulties can occur in virtually any classroom because all courses are based in language. For instance, students such as Allie may have trouble in mathematics because they are unable to determine patterns or to remember strategies for solving problems.

In some unfortunate cases, peers can be particularly unhelpful when one of their classmates is obviously having a difficult time reading aloud or answering questions. It is important that the student having difficulties feels safe within the environment of the classroom and feels supported by peers and the teacher. For example, Allie tends to willingly speak up with she is in a small group, especially with her close friends. However, she tends to hesitate to speak in class in front of the large group which is most likely due to the fact that she is embarrassed and worried about making a mistake. This is especially true for students with exceptional learning needs who may have trouble expressing themselves verbally. It is possible for students with and without exceptional learning needs to become so frustrated or embarrassed that they feel the need to act out. It is important for the teacher to distinguish between this type of acting out and simply inappropriate behavior.

Strategies for Intervention

In this section, you should specify strategies that teachers, other professionals, paraprofessionals, and family members can use to strengthen language development through direct instruction or support the student through the use of accommodations/modifications that can enhance language abilities.

When teachers are dealing with students who need to work on strengthening their language development, there are many strategies that they can consider in order to help. At the same time, it is also important for teachers to have a good relationship with family members so that they know what they can do to help their child develop stronger language skills at home. For example, at home, parents and guardians can support their children by having them read aloud as a bedtime ritual or the guardians can read along with the child and ask comprehension questions. In the classroom, teachers can take the anxiety of reading aloud out of the situation for students by giving them their passages ahead of time so that they can practice and become comfortable with the reading before having to read aloud in class. Similarly, if a student is going to be asked questions in class, they can also be given these questions ahead of time so that they can prepare

and practice their responses. Students who are known to hesitate when answering questions in class should also be given time to form an answer instead of being put on the spot or under pressure to answer quickly (allkindsofminds.org). When it comes to reading comprehension, students like Allie should be given comprehension questions to answer as they read so that the information in the passage is not forgotten or confused. This strategy helps the student “consolidate that information into memory,” (allkindsofminds.org).

Format of Written Script of Child Study Meetings

1. The teacher shares the name of the student and the background information about the student’s family. Remind the team that all the information is confidential and only those staff members who have a “need to know” should have this privileged information.
 - Allie, age 8, grade 3
 - Lives with both parents, only child
 - Tubes put in ears during grade 1
 - History of frequent ear infections
 - All information is confidential, “need to know” basis
2. The teacher describes the student’s strengths, interests, and ways in which the student is “smart” so that the other teachers understand how best to find an entry point for the student’s learning. The teacher shares cultural and experiential background that is relevant to the child’s progress in the classroom.
 - Affluent family that is very involved in their daughter’s education
 - Strengths: phonological processing (sounding out words she may not be familiar with), decoding word meanings, understanding of basic mathematical processes and facts, organization skills
 - Interests: drawing, painting, collecting items (postcards)
 - Reading and articulation skills have improved since meeting with specialists
3. The teacher describes the most important characteristics of the student’s exceptional learning needs at this time.
 - Trouble paying attention in class, while reading and during discussions
 - Often asks for questions to be repeated
 - Tends to have great difficulty with reading comprehension, answers tend to be way off
 - Confused by word problems and strategies for reading and solving problems (division)
4. The teacher describes the impact of the learning difference on learning in the general curriculum.
 - Allie is becoming increasingly anxious in class and complains about being “bored”

- Reading comprehension skills are needed in daily activities for various subjects
 - Teachers often ask questions in class about what they are reading and participation is a significant part of the students' grade
 - Allie's daydreaming is occurring during all subjects and may continue to hurt her grades
5. The teacher shares research *4-5 strategies* based on research that teachers can use in their classrooms to enhance the learning of the student and include the student in the general curriculum. Include two more ideas on ideas that the teacher might suggest that the family uses at home (seven all together).
- Give Allie reading comprehension questions to look at/answer while reading
 - Allow Allie ample time to formulate a verbal response to a question
 - Supply Allie with discussion questions that will be asked orally ahead of time
 - Ask Allie to explain her understanding of a math problem orally and written
 - Ask Allie's parents to read along with her at home and ask her comprehension questions
 - Ask Allie's parents to work with her on word problems by having her read the question aloud and take notes on what is being asked
6. The teacher invites discussion from other team members and ensures that everyone participates in the discussion. [We will role play this in class.]
- What ideas do you have regarding Allie? Please discuss with group
7. The teacher summarizes the decisions, concludes the meeting, and thanks everyone for participating. [We will role play this part in class.]
- Summary of what was decided regarding Allie, conclude meeting, thank all participants for attending meeting