

A Blog for Busy Teachers

FREE LANGUAGE-BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES

The most common manifestations of receptive and expressive language difficulties involves word-finding errors.

Typical Word-Finding Errors

Word Level

- Students cannot recall single words, especially in confrontation naming tasks where there is a visual prompt or a person is in front of them.

Sentence Level

- The more difficult it is for students to retrieve words quickly and accurately, the more impaired speech in all forms will be: students who struggle to retrieve single words will also struggle to form sentences.
- Students will use empty, repetitive speech, fillers, or phrasal substitutions which makes it hard to follow their train of thought.

Discourse Level

- Building on the other levels, students will have difficulty keeping up with the pace of typical conversations.
- The less students are able to participate in typical conversations, the less opportunity they will have to develop and hone social language skills.

What can be done?

Below is a list of various strategies teachers can implement in the classroom to help students find the right word.

In the classroom

- always provide a word-box
- provide visual anchors (pictures or words on the board)
- utilize graphic organizers
- play language-games (Taboo, Scattegories, Password, Outburst, Catch Phrase)
- teach language across domains (semantics, morphology, phonology, syntax, pragmatics)
- encourage writing as a way to jog memory
- explicitly teach connections - do not expect incidental learning
- inform students of the purpose for each task
- ask the student to tell you what they are thinking when they try to recall a word
- provide ideas for generalization across curriculum and life in general (i.e., encourage self-cueing)



At home and in the classroom

- Provide phonemic cues
 - “s” for Sunday
 - “sun” for Sunday
 - “sounds like Monday”
- Provide semantic cues
 - antonyms - “it isn’t hot today, it is very _____”
 - synonyms - “you could say freezing, frosty, frigid”
 - situational - “when I am shivering outside I think of this word”
 - associations - “ice cream, snow”
 - category - “this is a temperature word”
 - morpho-syntactic - “this is an adjective, it is a one-syllable word”
 - cloze sentence - “please put on your hat and coat because it is very _____”
 - serial cueing - “January, February, March, _____”
 - encourage visualization
 - encourage visual/morphological awareness (is it a long word, or a short word?)
 - provide the first letter and tap out the number of syllables
 - encourage gestures
 - give a choice between two things
 - encourage self-cueing
 - “give me the opposite and I’ll help you”
 - “what does it start with?”
 - “where have you seen it before?”
 - “tell me what it looks like”
 - “try writing it down”

References

1. German, D.J., (1994) Word-finding difficulties in children and adolescents. In Wallach, G., Butler, K. (Eds.), Language Learning Disabilities in School-age Children and Adolescents: Some Principles and Applications (pp. 323-348). New York: Macmillan College Publishing Co., Inc.
2. German, D.J., (2001) It’s on the Tip of My Tongue. Chicago: Word Finding Materials, Inc.