Understanding speech, language and communication needs (SLC)

Effective language skills are essential for students to access the curriculum. Language development is critical to cognitive development and learning.

Definition

Speech, language, and communication needs (SLC) are different for every student.

Speech refers to:	Language refers to:	Communication refers to how we interact with others:
- speaking with a clear voice, in a way that makes speech meaningful and interesting - speaking without hesitating too much or repeating words or sounds - making sounds like "k" and "t" clearly, so that people can understand what is being said.	- talking and understanding - joining words together to create sentences, stories, and conversation - knowing and choosing the right words to explain what you mean - making sense of what people say.	- using language or gestures to have a conversation or give directions - being able to consider other people's points of view - using and understanding body language and facial expressions.

Indications of SLC

Although every situation and every student is different, and challenges will vary from student to student. Possible indicators may include:

Primary students indicators	Secondary student indicators
You often need to tell them several times or show them before they understand what you mean.	Students seem to ignore what you've asked them to do or they do the wrong things because they've misunderstood what you meant.
People who don't know them well can't follow or understand what they are saying.	Students struggle to learn and remember new words.
They might not want to take part in activities that involve talking.	Students might try to explain a word they are trying to say for example, for "tripod" they might say, "That science thing with three legs, it's metal."
They might get angry or show frustration when they don't understand.	Students might be fine in a conversation with one other person but in a group they appear very quiet, may not respond and struggle to keep up.
They may give no response to questions or may repeat back part of what you've said because they don't understand.	Students find it hard to produce written work and what they manage is very basic.

Adapted from the Communication Trust's *Misunderstood: Supporting children and young people with speech, language and communication needs*.

In older students it can be more difficult to recognise difficulties with speech, language, and communication.
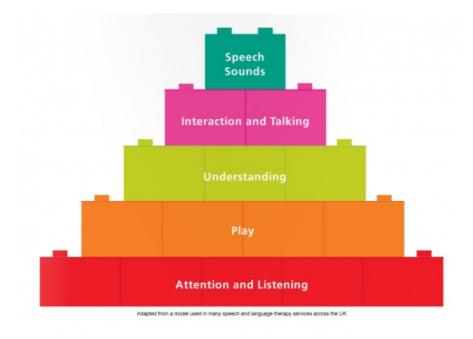
Influence on learning

Students with speech, language, and communication needs will experience their own set of challenges dependent on the situation, individual circumstances, age, and personality.

Within learning contexts students may find it challenging to:

- produce individual speech sounds or sequences of sounds in words when talking
- understand complex or lengthy verbal instructions
- find the right words used in a variety of contexts and in social situations
- stay on topic, ask and answer questions, or follow the rules of conversation
- regulate the volume, pitch, resonance, intonation, and overall quality of their voice
- speak fluently.

The communication development pyramid

Speech, language, and communication develop gradually based on good attention, listening, and play skills.

Source:
The Communication Trust
https://ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/professionals/tct-resources/

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Useful resources

SLI & reading: 1. Decoding (phonics)

Professor Snowling explains the causes of reading difficulties in specific language impairment (SLI) and how they link to dyslexia and spoken language problems. This video focuses on the decoding aspect of reading.

Publisher: RADLD

Visit website

Junior oral language screening tool

Read time: 5 min

JOST is a screening tool that gives teachers information about building a class programme to support students, grouping students for language support, or making decisions about referral to a speech-language therapist.

Download **PDF (802 KB)**

Signs of specific language impairment

This video describes possible signs of SLI in the classroom and is supported by a slideshow at: http://www.slideshare.net/RALLICampaign/signs-of-sli-in-the-classroom

Publisher: RADLD

Visit website