

# Jargon Buster -SEN terms and phrases

Specific language impairment arising during a child or adult's life as a result of brain damage.

**Aphasia:** absence of function

**Dysphasia:** impaired function

**Aphasia/dysphasia** - developmental

Specific language impairment affecting the normal development of language in children.

Aphasia: absence of function

Dysphasia: impaired function

## **Articulation**

Movement of tongue, teeth, lips, jaws and soft palate to produce speech.

## **Articulatory/verbal dyspraxia**

Difficulty controlling and co-ordinating the precise movements required for speech.

Occurs in association with poor sensory feedback, (awareness of tongue position) and poor phonological awareness (ability to analyse sound sequences).

## **Asperger's Syndrome**

An autistic spectrum disorder (not mild autism) occurring in more able children with relatively well-developed language skills and a tendency towards motor inco-ordination or clumsiness.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Problems establishing and maintaining attention with a consequent impact on learning and behaviour. Language development is generally delayed, and performance fluctuates greatly depending on attention levels.

## **Autism**

An inability to make sense of the world and separate one's own mental state from that of other people. This leads to difficulties in three main areas:

- social awareness and interaction
- verbal and non-verbal communication
- imagination and flexibility

## **Autistic continuum**

### **Autistic spectrum**

The very broad range of disorders covered by the term 'autism'. The three main features of autism may present from mild to severe; in children whose overall ability may range from severe learning difficulties to above average.

### **Cocktail Party Syndrome**

Use of learned phrases, particularly the relatively inconsequential language of social interaction, without true understanding. Creates the impression of a better grasp of language than the child actually possesses.

May be associated with specific learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties.

### **Developmental language delay**

A specific delay in the understanding and/or use of language where other areas of the child's development appear to be relatively appropriate. Language is late to develop but then follows the usual pattern of language acquisition.

### **Developmental language disorder**

An umbrella term for any specific language difficulty where:-

- a) other areas of the child's development appear to be relatively well-developed or appropriate,
- b) certain language-learning skills are affected more than others, resulting in an uneven pattern of language acquisition and the presence of unusual features.

### **Dysarthria**

Slurred speech due to weak or imprecise movements of the speech articulators. Speech movements may be poorly co-ordinated with voicing and breathing.

### **Dyslexia**

Specific learning difficulty affecting the acquisition of reading and spelling. Not caused by lack of opportunity/exposure or generalised learning difficulties.

### **Dyspraxia**

Difficulty developing voluntary control and 'motor-memory' for sequences of movement. A problem with the organisation of movement at the 'planning' stage, rather than muscular weakness or lack of nerve supply.

### **Echolalia**

Repetition of words and phrases without true understanding.

### **Expressive language difficulty**

Problems with pronunciation, vocabulary-development or combining of words to produce phrases and sentences which are meaningful, appropriate and intelligible (can be readily understood). May be delayed or disordered.

### **Landau Kleffner Syndrome**

A rare form of childhood epilepsy resulting in a severe receptive and expressive language disorder. Onset is generally between 2 and 6 years of age.

### **Language delay**

Language is late to develop but follows the usual pattern of acquisition once it emerges. May be caused by lack of learning opportunities in the early years (environmental delay); genetic programming (developmental delay); or associated with a general learning difficulty (global delay).

## **MEMORY FUNCTIONS**

### **Short term memory**

Retention of information for a brief period of time for immediate use (e.g. imitation) or for processing (e.g. understanding a request).

### **Auditory sequential memory**

Short-term memory span for retaining a number of items of information in the correct order.

Children with expressive language disorders and dyslexia typically have a limited auditory sequential memory span.

### **Working memory**

Keeping information in short-term memory so that it can be used - the ability to remember and hold information for long enough to understand and act on it.

e.g. solving a riddle, delivering a message.

This requires strategies such as rehearsal, visualisation, and linking.

### **Long-term memory**

Storage of information for retrieval/use at a later date.

e.g. vocabulary learning.

### **Verbal memory**

Memory for language e.g. instructions or explanations. Dependent on child's ability to:

- a) retain sequential information (short-term memory span)
- b) process information efficiently (language comprehension)

### **Rote memory**

Memorising and recalling information verbatim i.e. without understanding or reasoning, so that information cannot be used creatively. Requires a good memory span, but may be associated with very poor verbal memory.

### **Experiential memory**

Memory for day to day events - the total 'experience' provided by all the senses, sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell etc.

**Mild, moderate or severe learning difficulties**

All or most areas of the child's development are slower to develop than in other children. Child is typically socially immature with delayed language development, and is slow to grasp new tasks and concepts.

**Phonological awareness**

Ability to identify the individual sounds and patterns of sounds within words in order to appreciate how words are alike (pin, pig, pat) and different (cat, hat, mat). An essential skill for the development of literacy. Starts with recognition of word and syllable boundaries.

**Phonological awareness**

Difficulty acquiring the sound system of a particular language. Child has problems producing sounds and sound-patterns, but essentially follows the usual sequence of sound acquisition at a slower rate than is usual.

**Phonological delay**

Difficulty acquiring the sound system of a particular language. Child has problems discriminating, recognising and producing sounds and sound-patterns. They make inconsistent errors and do not follow the usual sequence sound acquisition.

**Phonology**

The sound-system of a language. The individual sounds we use, and the sequences in which they occur.

**Pragmatic disorder**

Specific difficulty using the social/linguistic context of language (information from non-verbal communication, previous knowledge etc.) to support the development of understanding and expression. Functional (appropriate/purposeful) use of language is affected, including conversational rules such as turn-taking and topic-closure, rather than knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

**Receptive language difficulty**

Problems understanding language. For some children this is confined to understanding the spoken word - they can learn and communicate through the written word or sign-language. For children with semantic disorders the problem is at a conceptual rather than acoustic level affecting all mediums.

**Selective mutism**

A psychological problem where children avoid speaking in certain situations as a result of extreme anxiety. There is generally no problem speaking at home with close family members.

**Semantic disorder**

Specific difficulty understanding the meaning of language as conveyed by words, phrases, word-order, word-endings and sentences. This in turn affects expressive language - particularly use of abstract concepts and organisation.

**Sensory Integration Dysfunction**

An inability to effectively receive, integrate and act on incoming sensory information.

**Social-communication disorder**

An umbrella term which would include (and is less alarmist than) Autistic Spectrum Disorders. The development and appropriacy of both verbal and non-verbal communication are impaired. Difficulty interpreting and making reliable judgements about social behaviour/purpose of language.

- the rules governing word-order and word-structure.