

6b. Dyslexia, and speech and language difficulties

Learners with speech and language difficulties

Many of the issues that children with speech and language difficulties experience in learning are not immediately obvious. This makes it particularly important to get to know the child's strengths and identify where they might need support.

Some girls may have **expressive** language difficulties. This affects their ability to make certain speech sounds, which makes it hard for you and others to understand them. This can have a detrimental effect on their ability to put words in the correct order, and they may jumble up sentences and the sequence of events when they are explaining themselves. This can make it difficult for them to join in with Hub activities. **Receptive** language difficulties are harder to spot, as they affect the learner's language comprehension. Children with receptive language difficulties may exhibit problems in:

- following instructions
- understanding abstract concepts
- concentration
- understanding stories, both written and spoken
- understanding metaphorical language
- making friends
- listening to others.

The following points are helpful in supporting girls with speech and language difficulties.

Social

- Take time to get to know the girl's ways of communicating and how she speaks.
- If her speech is difficult to understand, sit her with someone who understands and likes her.
- The use of carefully planned groups can be beneficial. Consider who will work well together as a group. Can this group be selected to support positive social interactions? A girl with an expressive speech difficulty will need a supportive social space if she is to begin to engage fully with Hub activities.

Activities

- Some children with physical impairments will need extra time to speak and become involved in activities. Check that your planned activities and ground rules allow this to happen.
 - When asking questions try to build in time for them to construct their responses. You can do this by alerting them to what you are going to ask, before asking it. For example, saying 'in a minute I'm going to ask you all to share your story with the girl next to you', Use their name at the *start* of an introduction. E.g. 'Aneni, can you tell us about the drawing that you have done?'.
 - Check that you can be heard. Is the pace and clarity of your speech accessible for the girl? Try not to talk to her, or present information to the group, when turned away from them.
 - Use body language and expression to highlight points within your speech.
 - Consider visual timetables and symbols to support their understanding of what you expect them to do, and when.
 - Allow time for them to think and respond. They may need time to sequence their thoughts. Planned turn taking is very helpful in supporting successful group work.
 - When giving instructions, opt for clear manageable 'chunks' of information.
 - Give explanations of unfamiliar words and metaphors
 - Make sure that the girl is able to ask for clarification. Your Learning Assistant may be helpful here in supporting explanations in a busy environment.
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References

Adapted from: UNESCO (2015), *Teaching Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings*, Bangkok: UNESCO

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001829/182975e.pdf>

British Council article by Sally Farley, Speech and Language impairment

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/speech-language-impairment>

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<https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/course/view.php?id=2579>

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