

Planting the seeds of Language Learning : Uprooting the Weeds of Disability

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Abstract

Language-based learning disability (LBLD) refers to an array of complexities related to the understanding and implementation of spoken and written language. LBLD is a common root of a students' academic hardships because weak language skills hinder comprehension and communication, which are the basis for most school activities. Like every other form of learning disability, LBLD results from a combination of neurobiological anomalies (differences in the way an individual's brain works) as well as environmental factors (e.g., the learning setting, the type of instruction). The key to helping students with LBLD is by knowing how to modify instruction and curriculum to make sure they develop proficient language and literacy expertise. Most individuals with LBLD need instructions that are explicit, multisensory, structured, and specialized, as well as ongoing, guided practice aimed at repairing their particular areas of weakness. While working on this topic, we have observed that people with learning disabilities are of average or above average intelligence. There often appears to be a large gap between the individual's true potential and his/her actual achievement. Which is why learning disabilities are also referred as "hidden disabilities": i.e. the person looks absolutely "normal" and seems to be a very bright and intelligent person yet may be incompetent to display the skill level expected from someone of a similar age. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to make sure that communication shall never act as a hindrance to the potentials possessed by any differently abled person and to minimize the linguistic obstacles faced by the differently abled community on a regular basis.

Keywords: LBLD, language, disabilities, communication

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Purpose & Motive

- To make sure that communication shall never act as a hindrance to the potentials possessed by any differently abled person.
- To minimize the linguistic obstacles faced by the differently abled community on a daily basis.
- To create a convenient world for everyone.

Problem

- Language-based learning disability (LBLD) refers to an array of complexities related to the understanding and implementation of spoken and written language. LBLD is a common root of a students' academic hardships because weak language skills hinder comprehension and communication, which are the basis for most school activities.
- Like every other form of learning disability, LBLD results from a combination of neurobiological anomalies (differences in the way an individual's brain works) as well as environmental factors (e.g., the learning setting, the type of instruction).
- People with learning disabilities are of average or above average intelligence. There often appears to be a large gap between the individual's true potential and his/her actual achievement. Which is why learning disabilities are also referred as "hidden disabilities": i.e. the person looks absolutely "normal" and seems to be a very bright and intelligent person yet may be incompetent to display the skill level expected from someone of a similar age.

Types of learning disabilities

- Auditory Processing Disorder (APD)

Also known as Central Auditory Processing Disorder, this is a condition that terribly affects how sound that travels unrestricted through the ear is processed or interpreted by our brain.

- Language Processing Disorder (LPD)

This is a distinct type of Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) where there is a problem while attaching meaning to sound groups that form words, sentences and stories. While an APD affects the interpretation of all sounds coming into the brain, the LPD relates only to the processing of language. LPD can affect expressive language and/or receptive language.

- Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a unique learning defect which affects reading and associated language-based processing skills. The extent of severity may vary for each individual but can affect decoding, recall, spelling, reading fluency, writing, reading comprehension, and sometimes speech and can also exist along with other related disorders. Dyslexia is sometimes referred as LBLD i.e. Language-Based Learning Disability.

Educational Approaches

- The primary key to assisting students with LBLD is by knowing how to organize instructions and syllabus to ensure their advancement in language and literacy skills. Most individuals with LBLD need instruction that is explicit, structured, specialized, and multisensory, as well as guided, ongoing practice aimed at curing their specific

areas of weakness.

- “Makaton” is a highly effective tool for teaching language to students with LBLD. This language program is built using symbols and signs to help people to communicate. Makaton is designed to support spoken language where the signs and symbols are used with speech, in spoken word order.
- For optimal engagement, learning, and retention, every lesson should make use of a combination of auditory, visual, and tactile/kinesthetic instruction.
- "Hands-on" processes should be implemented such as notetaking or drawing. For example, kinaesthetic can include bouncing a ball and walking around the room as the student recites vocabulary words and their definitions.

Behavioural Approaches

- We should talk to persons with disabilities in the same manner and with a normal tone of voice (not shouting) as we would talk to anyone else.
- We must anticipate that only thirty percent of lip reading (speech reading) will be understood because of its level of difficulty; and be prepared to repeat the information or questions. It is highly crucial to ask the person for feedback or to repeat what we have said to assess proper understanding.
- We must not pretend to understand if we do not. In that case, we need to ask the person to repeat what was said. Being patient and supportive is absolutely crucial.

Learning models

Makaton

- The Makaton Language Programme uses a multimodal approach to teach language and literacy skills, through a combination of signs, speech, and graphic symbols used concurrently, or, only with speech with graphic symbols required for the student's needs.
- Makaton consists of a Core Vocabulary of roughly 450 concepts which are taught in a specified order, consisting of eight different stages. For example, stage one involves instructing vocabulary for basic needs, like 'eat' and 'drink'. Later stages may contain more complex and conceptual vocabulary such as emotions and timing.
- Once the basic aspects of communication have been established, the student can progress in their language application, using whatever modes he/she finds appropriate. Also, although the programme is organised in stages, it can be tailored and customized to the individual's requirements.
- In addition to the Core Vocabulary, there is a Makaton Resource Vocabulary of over 7,000 concepts which are illustrated with signs and graphic symbols.

British Sign Language (BSL)

- In common with other languages, whether spoken or signed, BSL has its own grammar which governs how phrases are signed. BSL has a particular syntax. One important component of BSL is its use of proforms. A proform is "...any form that stands in the place of, or does the job of, some other form."
- Sentences are composed of two parts, in order: the subject and the predicate. The

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subject is the topic of the sentence, while the predicate is the commentary about the subject.

- BSL uses a topic–comment structure. Topic-comment means that the topic of the signed conversation is first established, followed by an elaboration of the topic, being the ‘comment’ component.

Results

- Visual and auditory methods have proven to acquire a greater attention and learning interest from students.
- Although initially we had a hypothesis that differently abled students need to be dealt with extra care and concern,
- But in reality, we see that differently abled students have felt more comfortable around teachers & peers who treat them no differently than others. Because an extra-sensitive gesture towards them often alienates and discriminates them.
- The popularity and positive feedback on Makaton has exceeded our expectations, as it is being widely adopted across several countries around the world.

Conclusion

- It has been observed that people with learning disabilities are of average or above average intelligence. There often appears to be a gap between the individual’s potential and actual achievement. This is why learning disabilities are referred to as “hidden disabilities”: the person looks perfectly “normal” and seems to be a very bright and intelligent person, yet may be unable to demonstrate the skill level

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expected from someone of a similar age.

- People often share a notion that the term “differently abled” is synonymous to weakness and liabilities. It’s time we prove these notions wrong and do what’s necessary for a better future for everyone.



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