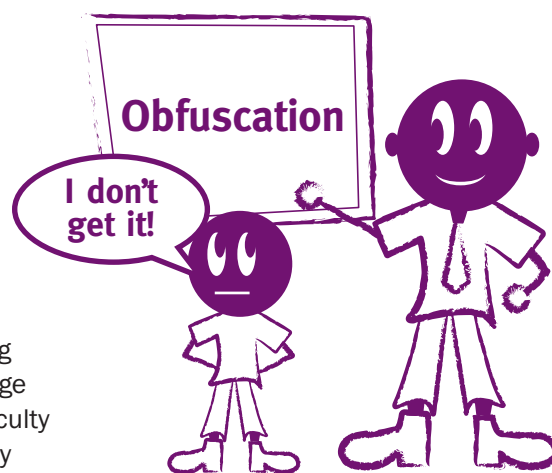


- Students having access to strategies that will help them manage their language difficulties without having to be withdrawn from class
- Facilitating the improvement of oral and written language skills in all students, including those with no language difficulty. (Throneburg et. al., 2000).

The 'language-friendly' secondary classroom: Improving curriculum accessibility for students with LI

The Linking Language with Secondary School Learning Program was developed to address support challenges, and incorporates many of the recommended approaches to ensuring effective inclusionary support of secondary students with LI.

Students with oral and written language difficulty often do not have the skills needed for the proficient understanding and learning of the secondary academic curriculum. They may find new vocabulary and terminology overly complex, and the rate of delivery and amount of information presented at any one time too demanding. They may be challenged with processing and retaining information, also with demonstrating their knowledge through oral and written expression. Students with language difficulty may not even attempt a task if they think they cannot successfully undertake and complete it.



Making the curriculum more accessible to students with additional learning needs such as LI aims to:

- Reduce the likelihood of failure by increasing opportunities for the students' academic achievement
- Increase the students' classroom engagement in all oral and written language-based activities
- Address the impact of disengagement and failure on students' behaviour and mental health.

Secondary school teachers are often wary of adjusting the way they present curriculum content. They may be concerned that they are not fulfilling curricular directives or that they are being unfair to other students with no additional learning needs. However, in this program, increased accessibility to the curriculum is brought about through teachers applying instructional language modification techniques to their regular teaching practices, not by making changes to the curriculum content. Additionally, curriculum accessibility involves having realistic expectations of what each student can achieve, and the amount of support needed for the task, thereby giving the targeted students the right tools to become more able learners.

Most importantly, teachers' use of instructional language modification strategies has been found to improve curriculum access for the benefit of entire classes, not just targeted students (Starling et al., 2012).

During this program phase the SLP and the teachers continue to meet regularly. As teachers start to apply the techniques and observe students' reactions, discussions are increasingly likely to focus on specific teaching and student issues, for instance 'What's working, what's not and what further modifications may help?' 'What tasks are coming up and how might we apply some of these ideas?' As the program progresses, the expectation is that each teacher will be increasingly self-generating instructional language modifications to suit their individual subject, classroom and teaching needs.

The SLP may undertake further classroom observations. This will depend on factors discussed and decided on a case-by-case basis. Some may request a higher level of observation and feedback; some teachers may request the SLP to observe a different class; the SLP and a teacher may decide to trial a specific strategy together as a class-based collaboration.

Summary of the Topic instruction phase

- a) Regular SLP/teacher meetings continue
- b) General introduction of all language technique concepts to all teachers, moving on to specific tailoring of techniques
- c) Program evolves differently for each teacher, dependent on individual needs
- d) SLP may undertake further classroom observations/interactions.

4 Student assessment phase

Students' learning of a curriculum topic is assessed as a standard teaching procedure. There are many ways in which this happens (such as assignments, oral presentations and written tests). As part of the LINK-S Program, the SLP will discuss assessment plans with each teacher ahead of time. One aspect of the program may be to make modifications to the assessment process and/or resources, for example by modifying a written test paper or addressing the ways in which students can present their work.

Vocabulary instruction: the students' knowledge of the selected 'essential vocabulary' items should be re-evaluated at this stage, to assess the growth in students' knowledge and ability to formulate definitions of topic-specific vocabulary (**Post-topic Vocabulary Knowledge, Appendix, page 106**) >>.

Summary of the Student assessment phase

- a) Language modification techniques applied to student assessment tasks
- b) Students complete Post-topic Vocabulary Knowledge sheet.



D. Instructions

Written resources containing instructions for students to undertake and complete their own work are often long (multiple pages), and contain multi-part instructions and complex terminology. They may pose major challenges to students with LI, who struggle to 'unpack' the information, work out what they are expected to produce, and then undertake independent work. **This may lead to negative situations such as the misinterpretation of the instructions, incomplete work or in some cases, complete avoidance.**

ISSUE	MODIFICATION TECHNIQUES
<p>Purpose and method of the assignment is unclear.</p> <p>Student: <i>'I don't know what to do.'</i></p>	<p>Ensure that the instructions and purpose of the assignment/project are explained in direct, accessible language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight/bold/underline the issue to be addressed in relation to the heading, so that students know exactly what it is they are being asked to write about. • Include the main instructions, such as the issue to be written about, early in the text. Students with LI may miss this key information if it is too 'buried' in the text. • Talk through the assignment sheet with the class, and ensure that all students understand all parts of the instructions. Be prepared to clarify important sections for students with LI, remembering that these students are often not good at asking for help. • Include the subject's topic title as a heading. • Use the following headings, and include relevant information under each heading: Topic, Issue, Instructions. (See Appendix, page 117) >> • Include meanings for potentially difficult-to-understand instructional vocabulary.
<p>The assignment is perceived as being too difficult/challenging.</p> <p>Student: <i>'I don't know where to start.'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruct students in ways to initiate ideas, plan and outline their work. • Create planning frameworks such as tables and mind maps. • Assist with research plans and key words for researching. • Assist students in making 3-4 bullet points of ideas, with each idea being expanded into a topic sentence, or statement. (See Appendix, page 118, Step 3) >>. This becomes the first sentence of each new paragraph (i.e. each new point/idea).
<p>Students are unfamiliar with, or unclear about, teachers' expectations of final products.</p> <p>Student: <i>'I don't know what 500 words looks like.'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide models of expected work productions. Use a range of models, not just 'the best work from last year's students' as this may be an unrealistic goal for students with LI. • Clarify terms such as 'two paragraphs', 'a page of writing'. Students with LI are often unsure as to what constitutes a paragraph, and have been known to use very large handwriting to fulfil the length requirement! • Be prepared to repeat and revise work production processes. Some students with LI need many repetitions to fully understand and retain information, and produce work to an expected standard.

Secondary school classroom teachers place a major emphasis on presenting curricular content and instruction through oral language. Teachers use oral language to:

- Explain
- Instruct
- Discuss
- Question
- Recap and summarise
- Explore
- Illustrate
- Embellish and expand
- Reason
- Summarise

As a result, secondary students spend a great deal of time listening to, and processing, teachers' oral presentations. The oral language of secondary classrooms can range from everyday, conversational-type content to highly complex, technical and subject-specific content.

Students with LI may be challenged in this verbal environment due to:

- Auditory processing difficulty, affecting their ability to retain information and follow instructions
- Attention inhibition problems so that they become easily distracted by sounds in the classroom other than the teacher's voice
- Slow auditory processing time, needing extra time to process information and organise their thinking to make a response
- Experiencing tiredness and 'auditory overload' due to having to work extra hard at listening in class
- Multi-modal learning difficulties, such as listening, looking at the board and writing notes simultaneously.

One aspect of the collaboration is to **raise teachers' awareness** of the importance of effective oral delivery in the classroom, and to **explore together each teacher's oral communication style**. This is the most individualised aspect of the program, since we all have a particular oral expressive profile.

If it is felt that a teacher is demonstrating an aspect, or some aspects, of oral language delivery that could be usefully modified, the SLP and the teacher will work together to set realistic goals for bringing about change. SLPs have expertise in oral communication and will use their professional knowledge to create a program of change in each individual instance.

This chapter provides the following resources to assist this aspect of the SLP/teacher collaboration:

- Guidelines for observing and discussing aspects of teachers' oral language practices.
- A teachers' oral language checklist.
- Examples of some specific approaches to modifying teachers' oral language use.
- General oral language techniques useful for all classroom teachers.

STEP

2

Students state the meaning in their own words.

Students now start to put the meanings of the new words “into their own words”. As each new word is re-visited, the students are actively involved in working out an accepted description of the word or term.

This can be approached in various ways:

- A general class discussion
- Small group work, leading to sharing ideas
- Brainstorming, using a word web of related words, concepts, semantic groups etc
- Providing a given definition, or description and selecting words that are familiar or make sense
- Using 2-step definition process to form a new definition
(See Appendix, page 115, ‘Definitely Definitions’) >>
- Stating anything that students think they know about the word (word/world knowledge)
- Finding the word in a variety of sources: textbook, on-line, posters, wall charts, dictionaries.

Once the “class description” has been agreed on, record this as a visible reference e.g. on a Word Wall, a poster, or on the whiteboard for the duration of the topic, and ensure all students record the meaning in their notebooks.

Random Mind Maps

When introducing a new topic, write a key word or term from the title of the topic in the middle of the board. Have students say any word that comes to mind that has to do with the topic. These can be anything from obviously to only vaguely related! Teachers should add words themselves, and may want to ensure that some essential vocabulary is included. Write these in black anywhere on the board.

Once enough words have been added (usually around 20 words), pick one word and circle it in a colour. The class then discusses what other words ‘belong’ to this one (i.e. semantic links), and what category is identified. Carry on until all words are categorized, and a name key is produced. In most cases 3 or 4 categories are identified.

Purpose: Getting students actively engaged in a new topic from the start. Drawing on students’ background knowledge. Identifying sub-topics involved in the main topic. Introducing essential vocabulary early in the new topic, with contextual cues such as links to background information and new ideas.

(See Appendix, page 124 for an example of a Random Mind Map) >>



Step-by-Step Guide to the 5 Paragraph Essay

1

STEP

Read **the question** carefully, and identify the topic, the issues to be addressed and the **instructions**.

- Ask yourself **“What am I being asked to do?”**
- For example, the assignment says, *“Most young people these days own a mobile phone. What do you think may be some of the advantages and disadvantages to owning a mobile phone? Give reasons for your opinion.”* The **topic** is “mobile phones”, the **issue** is “What are the advantages and disadvantages of owning one?”, the **instructions** are to write about both advantages AND disadvantages, with supporting evidence (reasons) for your ideas.
- If unsure, talk it through with someone, get them to explain it in a way that makes more sense to you, have a chat about the “surface” and “deeper” meanings.
- **You need to really understand the question before moving on.**

2

STEP

On a blank sheet of paper, write a brief answer to the question in **ONE SENTENCE**. For example:

“Mobile phones are a fact of life for everyone these days, and the best thing is that you can keep in touch with your friends, but a bad thing is that they cost a lot to run.”

This helps you to form a **statement** of your thinking, which will be useful when you start the actual writing.

3

STEP

PLANNING:

Argument essay: List 3 points that support your argument.

This may be a list of the 3 sources that you are going to use, or 3 points for an argument (e.g. about the effect of mobile phones on the world’s economy). This depends entirely on your essay topic.

Discussion essay: List 2 points supporting the issue, 2 points against.

Explanation essay: List 3 factors related to the topic.

Then write a **“statement” sentence** about each point. These will become the first sentences (topic sentences) of each main paragraph.