



Department
for Education

Speech, language and communication

Evidence summary

Primary and Secondary schools

Document explainer

Purpose: This evidence summary is designed to provide an overview of what teachers and support staff need to know about speech, language and communication (SLC) development and needs. It outlines inclusive teaching strategies that staff can use to support all pupils, especially those with SLC difficulties.

Audience: Staff in primary and secondary schools.

How to use this document:

- > This evidence summary has been designed to follow on from the 'Introduction to speech, language and communication' session.
- > The document can be used in full or in parts. This will depend on the context of your setting and the structure of your planned professional development time.
- > Engaging with the introductory session prior to reading this document is advised but not essential.
- > As you read, it may be useful to make note of your responses to the reflection questions.
- > Many of the teaching practices and strategies described will already be familiar. The purpose of the document is not to introduce entirely new strategies but to aid understanding of how familiar practices can support speech, language and communication development.
- > This evidence summary can be used flexibly. For example, as a self-study tool for individual reflection or as a shared reading activity in small groups.
- > There are further opportunities to explore the themes in this evidence summary in the 'Speech, language and communication sense-making session'.

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What do teachers and teaching assistants need to know about SLC development?

What do we mean by speech, language and communication?

- > Speech is our physical ability to make verbal sounds and words; speech difficulties involve problems with perceiving, producing or representing speech, or issues with voice quality. Language includes both verbal and non-verbal communication, with receptive and expressive language key to understanding how pupils process language. Communication is the social use of language, including using and interpreting language appropriately in conversations; difficulties here relate to challenges with this social aspect.
- > How children communicate their ideas with others is known as expressive language.
- > How children process and make meaning from language is known as receptive language.
- > Expressive and receptive language capabilities can differ within the same child.
- > Speech, language and communication needs is an umbrella term encompassing a broad range of needs that affect a pupil's ability to communicate effectively.

How might speech, language and communication (SLC) impact learning?

- > Speech, language and communication are foundational to learning and development (Department for Education, 2023). These skills act as a gateway to pupils' wider development, particularly literacy and access to curriculum content.
- > Without support, pupils who experience SLC challenges are at greater risk of literacy difficulties and academic underachievement (Bishop & Snowling, 2004; Conti-Ramsden, 2008; Dockrell, et al., 2011; Snow et al., 1998).
- > When pupils understand the language used in lessons they are better able to follow explanations, respond to questions, participate in lessons (including routines and instructions) and make sense of new concepts.
- > When pupils can express themselves, they are better able to build on their understanding, rehearse ideas, ask for help and demonstrate what they know.

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- > Language develops through repeated, purposeful practice (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021). Opportunities to listen, speak, discuss, explain, question and use new vocabulary can influence the speed and depth of pupils' language development.
- > SLC development may look different at each stage of education. Understanding this progression helps teachers and teaching assistants recognise when pupils may need additional support and adapt teaching accordingly (Dockrell et al., 2012).

What factors should teachers consider when supporting speech, language and communication development?

Scenario

A teacher notices that one of her pupils often asks the pupil who sits next to them to repeat the class instructions. They do this quietly, as if they do not want to draw attention to their uncertainty.



Reflection:

Think of a pupil you teach or recently taught who exhibited a pattern of behaviours similar to the pupil in the scenario.

- > How did you respond?
- > How might a better understanding of this pupil's needs have helped you support them?
- > How might the SLC barriers they face be impacting their learning and experience of school?

What barriers to learning might pupils face?

Classrooms are communication-rich environments, and everyday teaching routines can place significant cognitive and social demands on pupils' SLC skills. This is especially true when teachers and teaching assistants:

- > ask questions
- > give multi-step instructions
- > introduce new concepts and ideas at pace without explicit instruction or modelling
- > learn or infer new information from context only (spoken or written language)

Effective practice in these areas is central to inclusive teaching. To learn successfully, pupils need to understand behavioural expectations and curriculum content as well as engaging with assessment activities. For pupils with SLC needs, these moments may create barriers to participation and understanding. For example:

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- > Pupils may find it difficult to follow lessons when they are required to process a lot of spoken information at once. This can affect their receptive language, making it harder for them to understand explanations, questions, or instructions as they are given.
- > Some pupils may struggle to hold spoken information in mind long enough to act on it. Even when they understand individual words or phrases, demands on working memory can make it difficult to remember the full instruction, follow a sequence of steps, or connect new information to what has already been taught.

Recognising these barriers helps teachers and teaching assistants adapt classroom communication so that pupils can access routines and learning, while also benefiting from high-quality language and purposeful opportunities to practise.

What might it look like if pupils are experiencing challenges with their speech, language and communication?

It can be difficult to know when pupils' SLC skills might be presenting a barrier to accessing learning. It may be that you notice patterns in a pupil's behaviour and responses in the classroom that give you an indication that they are struggling to understand questions, explanations, or instructions. For example:

- > During whole-class discussion, a pupil finds it difficult to keep track of what has been said and what they are expected to do next. Different pupils may respond in a range of ways when they struggle to keep track of the lesson. For example, some may appear withdrawn, while others might show frustration or call out for clarification. These behaviours can interrupt the pace of the lesson and affect the pupils' concentration, as well as that of their peers.
- > Pupils may struggle to remember the sequence of steps in familiar routines, such as preparing for independent work, transitioning between activities, or knowing what to do when they finish a task.
- > A pupil may show strong understanding when working with shapes, patterns, or visual representations, but find it harder to follow the language and steps involved in written or verbal problems.
- > When pupils are finding it hard to process spoken language, they may lose focus, copy others without understanding, or become unsettled. This can be mistaken for not listening.
- > Pupils may sometimes react very strongly to behaviour corrections or minor misunderstandings of instructions. This emotional response can stem from frustration that has built up over time, especially if they have repeatedly struggled to understand or follow classroom instructions.



Reflection:

1. Are any of these scenarios familiar in your classroom?
2. How have you supported these pupils or those with similar challenges in your classroom?

What are the nuances and caveats when thinking about identifying and supporting SLC difficulties in the classroom?

It can be challenging to understand whether a pupil's behaviour is linked to a SLC need, another underlying need, or whether it is primarily a behaviour concern. There is strong evidence of an association between SLC needs and behavioural challenges. For example, 81% of children with emotional and behavioural disorders have significant language difficulties, often unidentified (Hollo et al., 2014). Some studies have found that between 40% and 54% of children with spoken language difficulties also have behaviour challenges (van Daal et al., 2007; Maggio et al., 2014). However, these findings are based on small sample sizes, so the actual proportion may vary.

While not all behavioural concerns are related to SLC needs, it is worth being curious about whether SLC difficulties might be contributing, especially when behaviour is unexpected or persistent. Exploring this possibility can help teachers identify patterns, assess pupils' needs and consider whether further support or specialist input may be helpful. It can sometimes be challenging to ascertain the reason for a pupil's behaviour or actions and teachers and support staff should be cautious about assuming that a pupil is deliberately choosing not to listen, follow instructions, or engage with learning. Inclusive teaching practices can help create the conditions in which teachers are better able to interpret what may be contributing to a pupil's behaviour. For example, when teachers use universal approaches such as carefully sequencing learning, clearly teaching and consistently upholding routines, and giving concise instructions, it becomes easier for pupils to meet expectations. This can consequently give teachers and teaching assistants a better insight into why pupils might respond to different stimuli in the classroom in a particular way. Similarly, when assessment is used regularly to check understanding and respond to misconceptions or gaps in knowledge, teachers may have a clearer picture of whether pupils have understood and can access learning.

High-quality teaching practices like these do not remove the need for professional judgement, wider information, or specialist support where appropriate. However, these high-quality teaching practices help to make learning more accessible for all pupils. By reducing ambiguity about what is expected in the classroom and clarifying

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curriculum content, these universal approaches can provide pupils with the support they need to succeed. This clarity benefits teachers and teaching assistants as well. When expectations and content are made explicit, it becomes easier to identify when a pupil is struggling for reasons beyond classroom routines or instructions. As a result, teachers are better placed to make informed, responsive decisions about when to seek further information or specialist support. While these practices are valuable, they do not replace the need for professional judgement or additional support where it is needed.



Reflection:

1. What is your main takeaway from this section?
2. What is one insight that you will investigate further?

How can inclusive teaching support pupils' SLC development?

Why start with inclusive teaching?

High-quality, evidence-informed teaching is the most effective way to support all pupils, particularly those with additional needs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds (EEF, 2026). Strengthening universal classroom practices benefits all learners and is especially important for pupils who face barriers to learning.

Inclusive teaching recognises the importance of strengthening and sustaining universal approaches (such as scaffolding) while also considering whether it's appropriate to make effective adaptations for some pupils.

Universal approaches are already an important tool to support all pupils to understand our questions, instructions and explanations and reduce the pressure that these moments may put on our pupils' receptive language processing.

Importantly, many of these strategies will already be familiar to teachers and teaching assistants as part of effective classroom practice. The value of considering them through a speech, language and communication lens is not necessarily that they are new, but that it can deepen understanding of when, why and for which pupils they may be particularly important. This can help teachers make more deliberate decisions about adapting and combining strategies to support pupils' access to learning and long-term language development.

Inclusive teaching practices are needed because speech, language and communication shape pupils' access to learning and future language development. Teachers might consider the different ways that these practices can be used in order to make decisions about which ones are most likely to be effective in a given circumstance:

1. **Reduce barriers:** some teaching practices and strategies reduce immediate barriers, for example by providing visual supports such as diagrams or picture cues. These help pupils access learning when speech, language and communication difficulties might otherwise make it challenging to understand the content.

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2. **Long-term development:** some teaching practices and strategies can be used across the curriculum to deliberately develop pupils' speech, language and communication over time (Antalek et al., 2025).

These two purposes are equally important, but teachers may need to prioritise one over the other depending on the pupil, the task, and the demands of the moment.

Which inclusive teaching practices support all pupils, especially those with SLC difficulties?

There are several teaching practices that are particularly effective in supporting all pupils' SLC development (universal approaches):

- > model and scaffold high-quality conversations: feedback, explanations and questioning
- > use visual cues
- > develop speech and language across the curriculum
- > create opportunities for oracy development

(Gilbride & Jackson, 2026).

Each practice can be implemented using a variety of classroom strategies depending on the age of pupils, the curriculum content and the specific challenge being addressed. These strategies, especially when combined, can help pupils access classroom content, such as curriculum knowledge and instructions, while also developing speech, language and communication over time. Using one strategy alone is often not enough to address barriers to learning for pupils with SLC difficulties.

Model and scaffold high-quality conversations: feedback, explanations and questioning

Adjusting language to match pupils' receptive language skills makes it more likely that pupils will understand (Gilbride & Jackson, 2026). This inclusive teaching practice can be implemented through a range of strategies, including:

- > using clear and unambiguous language
- > balancing simple and developmental language
- > considering sentence structure
- > moving from simple to complex and concrete to abstract

These strategies can be particularly effective for pupils with SLC difficulties because greater linguistic complexity can make it harder for pupils to process language (Nation et al., 1999; Bishop & Snowling, 2004). Using appropriately pitched language helps pupils understand key information and access the curriculum without lowering expectations for the vocabulary and sentence structures they encounter.

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Feedback is a universal approach that can support all pupils, and it can be particularly important for pupils with speech, language and communication (SLC) difficulties. Effective feedback helps pupils understand the gap between their current performance and the intended learning goal, and it gives them clear, manageable next steps for improvement. For all pupils, including those with SLC difficulties, feedback is most useful when it is specific, concise, timely and delivered using language that pupils can process and act on (Collin & Quigley, 2021). Strategies that can support high-quality feedback include:

- > making success criteria explicit so pupils know what they are aiming for
- > identifying whether the issue is an error that needs teaching or modelling, or a mistake that can be corrected with a brief prompt
- > giving one or two focused next steps, rather than lengthy written comments.
- > using whole-class feedback, modelling and examples to address common misconceptions
- > providing time in lessons for pupils to process, practise and respond to feedback
- > checking understanding by asking pupils to explain the feedback or next step in their own words

Example: secondary (PE)

A teacher might carefully plan questions that match pupils' stage of learning, to encourage them to think hard about the key content. For example, when a PE teacher is teaching Year 8 striking and fielding, they will carefully consider the way they word their question to ensure it is accessible to all pupils:

- > Example: "When I'm fielding in rounders, why do I want to throw the ball so that it travels in a straight line towards my bowler and not in a high, loopy line?"
- > Non-example: "When I'm fielding in rounders, why do I want to ensure the ball travels in a level, horizontal trajectory towards my bowler and not a high arching trajectory?"

The example question still ensures pupils are thinking hard about the throwing technique they use when fielding to produce the most efficient performance.

In this example the teacher used the following strategy:

Clear and unambiguous language when describing the trajectory of the ball as the focus of the learning is that pupils understand how they should throw the ball and why, as opposed to learning specialist language to describe their throw.

Example: primary (KS2)

A teacher might script a concise definition that matches pupils' stage of learning. This helps pupils process and remember new vocabulary. For example, when a teacher is teaching Year 6 plant science, they will carefully consider the way they word their definition of 'photosynthesis':

- > Example: 'Photosynthesis is when plants use sunlight, water and carbon dioxide to make oxygen and sugar.'
- > Non-example: 'Photosynthesis is the process by which plants use sunlight to convert carbon dioxide and water into oxygen and sugar.'

In this example the teacher used the following strategy:

Balancing simple and developmental language so that the definition is easier to understand. By retaining the subject-specific vocabulary of 'carbon dioxide' and 'oxygen' but removing more complex terms such as 'process' and 'convert' and using simpler language (e.g. 'change') pupils are better able to access the definition while it still accurately represents the concept at age-appropriate level.

Example: primary (KS1)

A teacher might script a concise definition that matches pupils' stage of learning. This helps pupils process and remember new vocabulary. For Year 1, "A habitat is the place where an animal or plant lives. It gives them everything they need to grow and stay safe" uses age-appropriate language but still represents the key knowledge pupils need at this point in the curriculum.

In this example the teacher used the following strategy:

Clear and unambiguous language that balances simple and developmental language. The definition of 'habitat' is accessible and precise, helping pupils understand the concept and connect it to their everyday experiences.



Reflection:

1. What is the teacher doing well in these examples?
2. Can you think of an example of where you have done this effectively in your own practice?

Use visual cues

A visual cue is an aid that helps people understand verbal information by providing something they can see, such as pictures, symbols, gestures or objects (Gilbride & Jackson, 2026). This inclusive teaching practice can be implemented through a range of strategies, including:

- > using visuals to scaffold learning
- > offering reminders using visual timetables
- > using non-verbal cues to reinforce speech

Working memory is essential for thinking and learning, as it allows us to temporarily hold and actively process information (Miyake & Shah, 1999; Baddeley, 2003).

However, its capacity is limited and can be affected by factors such as task complexity and the language demands of a lesson (Atkinson & Shrifin, 1968; Baddeley, 1992; Miller et al., 2017; Weinstein, 2017). For pupils with speech, language and communication needs, these limits can make it particularly challenging to process and retain information during complex or language-heavy tasks, increasing cognitive load.

Research suggests that working memory has partially independent systems for processing auditory/verbal and visual information. Therefore, presenting verbal explanations alongside relevant visual information may support learning by distributing information across auditory and visual modes (Low & Sweller, 2005), potentially making more efficient use of limited working-memory resources (Liu et al., 2019; Harskamp et al., 2007). Visual cues can help learners understand speech and language (Goldin-Meadow, 1999; Zhang et al., 2021; Evans et al., 2001) by improving access to language and learning, and contributing to language development (Bochner & Jones, 2003).

To be effective, visual aids should be age appropriate and carefully matched to pupils' developmental stage and be appropriate for the curriculum content and purpose that they are being used for. Equally, visual aids can be less effective if they are unnecessarily complex for the content they are being used to support or are poorly matched to the activity or explanation that they are paired with. Therefore, visual cues should be carefully selected to complement and clarify the verbal

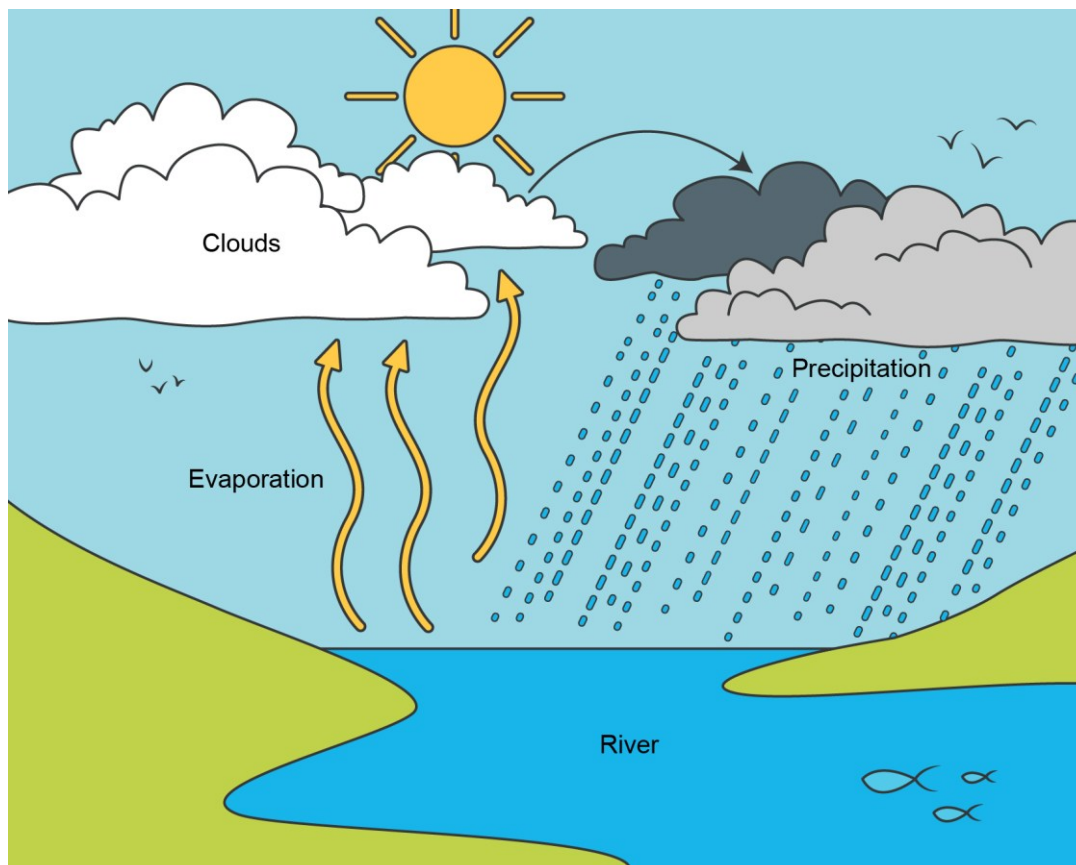
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information being presented. For example, a teacher might use simple images of block colours when teaching this vocabulary in a new language but take care that these images only show each of the colours as opposed to an object in that colour to avoid confusion or misconceptions. Visual aids should be directly relevant and instructive, helping to explain or illustrate the concept or process, rather than simply being generic or loosely related.

It is important to recognise that visuals are not simply about making learning 'easier'. Some diagrams and images can present significant challenges, depending on their complexity and the concepts they illustrate. Teachers need to think carefully about the purpose of each visual aid, considering whether it will support understanding or introduce new demands. Thoughtful selection helps ensure that visuals are both accessible and effective for all pupils.

Example: secondary (geography)

A geography teacher who wants pupils to learn the process by which water changes form, alongside new vocabulary such as 'evaporation', might use a diagram of the water cycle alongside their spoken explanation. Pupils may then use the diagram when writing independent explanations of the water cycle, and this visual cue will help them connect each part of the diagram with the relevant language.



In this example the teacher used the following strategies:

- > a diagram as a visual reminder to scaffold learning and support an independent task
- > non-verbal cues (pointing) to direct attention to areas of a diagram to reinforce an explanation

Example: secondary (PE)

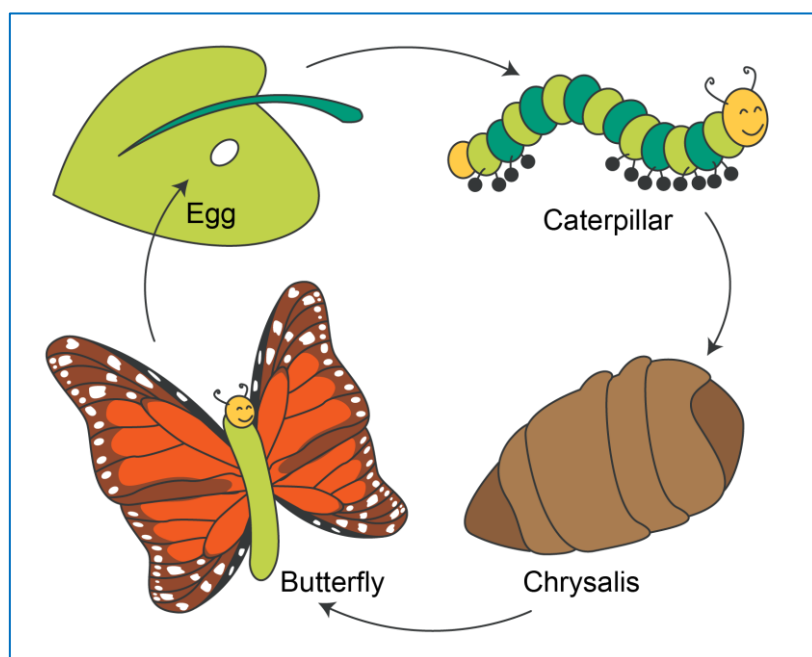
A PE teacher might use a specific gesture during a netball lesson to bring pupils together after a practical activity. The teacher verbally instructs pupils to jog over to the goal circle and to stand on the goal circle line. As a visual to reinforce the meaning of the spoken instruction, the teacher points along the length of the goal circle line repeatedly.

In this example the teacher used the following strategies:

- > offering reminders using gestures
- > non-verbal cues to reinforce speech

Example: primary

A teacher might use a diagram of a butterfly life cycle at different stages of a lesson. The teacher pairs a verbal explanation with the diagram, clearly indicating which part is being discussed and deliberately articulating key terminology. Pupils may then use the diagram when writing independent explanations of a butterfly life cycle, and this visual cue will help them connect each part of the diagram with the relevant language.



In this example the teacher used the following strategies:

- > a diagram as a visual reminder to scaffold learning and support an independent task
- > non-verbal cues (pointing) to direct attention to areas of a diagram to reinforce an explanation



Reflection:

1. What is the teacher doing well in these examples?
2. Can you think of an example of where you have done this effectively in your own practice?

Develop speech and language across the curriculum

A well-planned curriculum supports language development by providing opportunities for pupils to develop their SLC in a range of ways including:

- > learning and practising vocabulary (McGregor et al., 2021; Lowe et al., 2018; Elleman et al., 2019)
- > working with complex subject-specific words (Owen Van Horne, 2023; Riccomini et al., 2015)
- > analysing language, inferring meaning and developing narratives (Meaux & Norris, 2018; Owen Van Horne et al., 2024; Balthazar & Scott, 2024)
- > expanding vocabulary and sentence structures through literature (Nation et al., 2022; Wasik et al., 2016; Dobinson & Dockrell, 2021)

This is because explicit teaching and modelling help pupils build the language skills needed for learning across the curriculum, particularly given that written language exposes pupils to more complex sentences and vocabulary than spoken language (Nation et al., 2022; Montgomery et al., 2023; Gilbride & Jackson, 2026). This inclusive teaching practice can be implemented through a range of strategies which depend on curriculum planning over time, including:

- > pre-teaching specialist vocabulary and give opportunities to practise using it
- > checking understanding and model strategies for resolving misunderstandings/uncertainties
- > developing reading to learn
- > building language acquisition by extending what children say and repeating key concepts

Example: secondary (English)

For example, an English teacher might pre-teach vocabulary when reading a novel with a class, choosing critical words which significantly impact meaning in key parts of the text. By also teaching pupils to identify verbs and pronouns in sentences, the class might also find it easier to follow longer, more complex sentences in the story.

Additionally, by explicitly teaching high-utility (or Tier 2) vocabulary which is most pertinent for analysing the characters, themes and meaning of a text, pupils can be supported to develop the sophistication of their own analysis. This helps them avoid falling back on simpler or less nuanced language that may not enable them to convey a deeper understanding of what they have read.

In this example the teacher used the following strategies:

- > building language acquisition and focus on expressive language and specialist terminology by explicitly teaching high-utility vocabulary
- > considering receptive language particularly regarding complexity of sentences in the story
- > developing reading to learn by supporting pupils to derive meaning from the text by identifying and explaining critical words which could significantly impact comprehension

Example: secondary (PE)

A PE teacher wants pupils to give each other feedback on their performances in gymnastics. Before pupils begin, the teacher models the language pupils can use to provide a balanced critique while putting the emphasis on the parts of the sentences that pupils can use as a speaking frame.

“I really liked how you used a combination of rolls and balances, **it could be even better if** you hold each balance for at least 3 seconds next time”.

In this example the teacher used the following strategy:

Scaffold expressive language by providing a structure for pupils to use to ensure they provide a balanced critique as well as providing an example of what this might look like.

Example: primary

While planning a KS2 history lesson, a teacher has identified several tier 2 words that pupils need to know in order to access and understand the historical source they will be using in the lesson. The teacher shares these words in advance with the teaching assistant, so they can support pupils' understanding and reinforce the vocabulary during activities.

These words include: 'evacuate', 'ration' and 'blackout'. The teacher shows three pictures alongside each new word and explicitly defines all three terms. The teacher uses choral response to help the pupils to practise this new vocabulary and sentence stems to help pupils incorporate the new terminology into their spoken language.

In this example the teacher used the following strategies:

- > pre-teaching specialist vocabulary and give opportunities to practise using it
- > building language acquisition and focuses on expressive language and specialist terminology by explicitly teaching new vocabulary
- > considering receptive and expressive language by using choral responses to practice pronunciation and create familiarity with new vocabulary



Reflection:

1. What is the teacher doing well in these examples?
2. Can you think of an example of where you have done this effectively in your own practice?

Create opportunities for oracy development

Structured classroom talk gives pupils repeated chances to practise expressive and receptive language, supporting both subject learning and meaningful speech development (Gilbride & Jackson, 2026). Examples of strategies that help create opportunities for oracy development include:

- > scaffolding questions and responses
- > promoting meaningful talk for a range of purposes
- > focusing on expressive language and specialist terminology
- > modelling strategies for checking understanding and asking for clarification

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Engaging in language-rich activities strengthens these skills (Bercow, 2008). Frequent, purposeful talk builds the language skills pupils need for learning and social interaction. When pupils communicate clearly, take turns and listen actively, they learn to share ideas and respond thoughtfully (Weisleder & Fernald, 2013; Hoff, 2006; Perry et al., 2018). Asking questions to clarify meaning also deepens understanding (Mercer, 2008; Howe & Abedin, 2013).

Example: secondary (geography)

Pupils might discuss whether a city should invest in flood defences by using sentence stems such as “One advantage is...” and “I disagree because...”. This gives pupils a structured opportunity to use subject vocabulary, listen to alternative viewpoints, and explain their reasoning.

In this example the teacher used the following strategy:

Scaffold pupils’ responses by providing a structure which will help support their verbal reasoning.

Example: secondary (PE)

A PE teacher wants pupils to analyse a sprinters’ technique. Before they ask pupils to do this, they explain that to analyse something means to examine something in detail to understand it better. They then apply ‘analyse’ to a subject specific context. For example, “analyse the technique used in the sprint start, focusing on the stride pattern and arm movements of the sprinter”.

In this example the teacher used the following strategy:

Focus on specialist terminology by identifying critical vocabulary that pupils will need now and in future contexts and spending time explicitly teaching its meaning and how it might be used in context.

Example: primary

A KS1 teacher might create an opportunity for structured classroom talk after reading the story ‘Goldilocks and the three bears’. The teacher asks: ‘Was Goldilocks right to eat the porridge and sleep in the bears’ bed?’. The teacher uses talk partners and asks pupils to share if they agree or disagree and why. This gives the pupils time to actively listen to others, take turns and share their own ideas. Then they discuss the question as a class and record some key words on the board that pupils have used to explain why Goldilocks was right/wrong. By providing pupils with a model of how

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to respond to the question, it offers opportunities for pupils to hear language modelled, develop vocabulary, and practise communication in a structured environment.

In this example the teacher used the following strategies:

- > Scaffold questions and responses by posing a question, using talk partners to provide pupils with processing time and low-stakes practice opportunity before contributing to wider classroom discussion.
- > Focus on expressive language to support pupils to understand how respond to the question through engaging with modelled high-quality talk as well as offering key words on the board to support with use of more developed language.



Reflection:

1. What is the teacher doing well in these examples?
2. Can you think of an example of where you have done this effectively in your own practice?

How can teachers use these strategies to support pupils' learning and SLC development?

- > **Start by reducing barriers to learning.** Teachers and teaching assistants can use visual cues, concise explanations, clear instructions and carefully constructed questions to reduce the pressure on pupils' receptive language. This helps pupils to access learning in the moment and makes it easier to identify when further support may be needed.
- > **Model and scaffold the language pupils need to use.** Pupils benefit when teachers explicitly model vocabulary, sentence structures and talk routines before expecting them to use these independently. Scaffolds such as examples, sentence stems and success criteria can support pupils to organise their thinking and express ideas with increasing precision.
- > **Plan for language development across subjects.** SLC development should not be separated from curriculum content. Teachers and teaching assistants can deliberately teach subject-specific vocabulary, revisit key words and structures over time, and create opportunities for pupils to practise language in meaningful curriculum contexts.

> **Balance supporting access to learning with long-term development.**

Inclusive practices support pupils most effectively when they both help pupils learn now and develop SLC skills they will need in future. Teachers may need to adapt the level of support depending on the task, the pupil and the demands of the moment, while maintaining high expectations for all pupils.



Reflection:

1. What challenges do you face when supporting pupils' SLC development?
2. Which of the strategies described are already embedded in your practice? How has reading about them through an SLC lens changed your thinking about when, why or how you use them?
3. How do you maintain high expectations and provide appropriate challenge, while also meeting the needs of pupils who require additional support?

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