



Language and Literacy Support

For Busy Mainstream Classes

I-Can Conference, 21st November 2006

Elsbeth McCartney, Sue Ellis, James Boyle

University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

Introduction

- We are reporting on the construction of materials for teachers, teaching children who:
 - are aged **6 -11** years
 - are in UK **mainstream** schools
 - have been diagnosed by a speech and language therapist (SLT) as having **language impairment** with no known cause
 - **do not require** the specialist skills of an SLT: e.g. they have no speech, stammering, swallowing, or hearing difficulties or need for alternative communication).

Introduction contd.

- We will consider the contexts in which support for such children's language and literacy skills takes place in terms of:
 - known links between **language and literacy** difficulties
 - current **co-working practices** of SLTs and teachers
 - **our research** studies on outcomes of language teaching approaches for such children.

- We will then outline a qualitative study developing a **language support model** and materials for teachers.

Contextual factors: literacy and language difficulties

- Literacy skills are related to language skills.
- In particular, word decoding is related to general skills in phonological processing, especially **phonological awareness**.
- Reading comprehension is related to **oral** verbal comprehension abilities.
- Children with **language impairment** often have literacy problems, and vice versa.
- Other speakers at this conference develop these themes in depth.

Contextual factors: co-working practices

- Teachers and SLTs work together to support children.
- The main model is ‘**consultancy**’, where SLTs give advice and support to teachers (Gascoigne 2006).
- SLT **case loads** tend to be very large, and mainstream teachers have **many children** to consider.
- The children in focus are a **large group** (c. 6%?).
- Every one is very busy.
- Opportunities for team building and building inter-professional trust in mainstream schools are **limited**.

Contextual factors: our intervention research

- Two studies had been undertaken with similar children.
- A randomised controlled trial (**RCT**) had shown that SLTs or SLT assistants delivering language interventions to children either individually or in groups were equally effective in developing expressive language (Boyle et al. in press).
- The children undertaking research intervention made greater **gains in expressive language** than a control group receiving therapy from their local SLT services.
- A **therapy manual** had been developed for this study (McCartney et al. 2004).

Contextual factors: research

contd.

- A **cohort** study was then carried out using the same child selection criteria and therapy manual as the RCT, but with delivery via school staff (McCartney et al. 2004).
- These children were also receiving learning support for **literacy** difficulties.
- This represented the **consultancy** model, the model most commonly used in the UK.
- 42 children undertook intervention, with results for 40.
- The language results **did not** reach the significance found in the earlier RCT.
- Their reading test results **did not shift** significantly.

Contextual factors: research

contd.

- There was considerable difference in the **amount** of language teaching between the RCT and cohort studies.
- In the RCT children undertook research language teaching activities **three times per week for 15 weeks**, in 30 - 40 minute sessions, within the child's school or in another school for some grouped children.
- The average number of sessions achieved was 38, or about 22 hours of teaching.
- Activities were from the **therapy manual**.

Contextual factors: research

contd.

- The cohort study also provided games and activities selected from the **therapy manual** by the research SLT, and tailored to individual children.
- Teachers and **school staff** carried out language intervention.
- They were asked to offer a **similar amount of intervention** to the RCT, and progress was assessed after approximately 16 weeks.
- **Materials** for teachers were also produced.

Contextual factors: research

contd.

- Teachers were asked to '**log**' language activities as they were carried out.
- Logs were maintained throughout the intervention period for only **29 of the 42** children receiving intervention (69%).
- Logs for the others were **incomplete or not returned**.
- Of the 29 complete logs, the number of language learning sessions recorded **ranged from 8 - 70**.

Contextual factors: research

contd.

- Other language teaching could have been carried out **within class time** (in fact in both studies).
- It is not therefore possible to be certain **how much time in total** was devoted to language teaching, or to links with literacy.
- However, it seems likely that **more time** and more **consistent delivery** was devoted to language learning activities in the RCT.
- This could relate to the the **better results?**

The qualitative study

- It seemed there was a need to **talk in depth to teachers** about working in a consultative model with SLTs for children with language difficulties.
- There are **few studies** that take the opinions of mainstream classroom teachers into account when devising language support packages.
- A qualitative study was therefore undertaken, to seek the **views of teachers** who had participated in the cohort study, and teachers of similar children who had not (McCartney et al. 2005).

Participants

- This was a **small-scale study** using participatory evaluation.
- 4 - 5 mainstream **teachers who had participated** in the cohort study and the cohort study **research SLT** met as a group on three occasions to review their experiences.
- 15 mainstream teachers and 2 - 3 community SLTs who worked in schools in three other (L)EAs and were **new to the research studies** then met as a group three times.

Group activities

- The teachers and research SLT who had undertaken the cohort study reflected upon their experiences, **further developed** the language support materials for teachers developed in that study, and commented upon extracts from the RCT therapy manual.
- The teachers and SLTs new to the research then **critiqued these versions** of materials as potential users, added their own improvements, and commented upon extracts from the RCT therapy manual.

The language support model

- The experienced user group developed a **language support model** intended to be used by teachers:
 - in a **consultancy** model with SLT support
 - with **minimal training**
 - with **maximum flexibility**
 - with consistent, planned **delivery**
 - with language activities from the therapy manual **carried out** by teachers and teaching assistants.

The language support model

contd.

- This reflected the **realities** of classroom life, with limited time, limited access to expertise and limited planning and preparation opportunities.
- These **features were retained** after discussion with the group of potential user teachers, who edited and improved the support model documents.

The documents

• **Eight** documents from this research are now available, and may be downloaded from:

www.strath.ac.uk/eps/courses/slt/lms.html

- They give details for teachers on how to:
 - **schedule** language learning activities.
 - create a **communication - friendly** classroom.
 - encourage children to **monitor their comprehension**.
 - develop **vocabulary, grammar** and **narrative**.
- Vocabulary and narrative development have particular links to literacy learning.

Introduction document

- **INTRODUCTION**

- This gives a general introduction; references to the research reports and the aims of the language support model.
- It lists the contents of each document.

Document one

- **INTRODUCTION TO THE LANGUAGE SUPPORT MODEL**

- This is a key document that:
 - charts the activities that school and SLT staff should carry out to plan for consistent **delivery** of language learning activities
 - gives a simple way of **recording** such activities, and
 - suggests ways for schools to **find time** for language activities.



Document one: delivery - Week one

<u>Meetings and Monitoring</u> Week 1	<u>Purpose and Decisions</u>	<u>Documentation</u>
<p>Meeting 1 - Setting up the Support Model</p> <p><u>People involved</u> HT/DHT, CT, SLT, LST*</p>	<p>1 Understand the model.</p> <p>2 Exchange contact information - email, phone, addresses. Decide upon main school contact i.e. CT or Assistant. Update by the relevant service if any changes take place.</p> <p>3 Decide upon weekly time-table for delivering support, to ensure a regular, predictable time plan for the intervention, and who will undertake it.</p> <p>4 Discuss how to obtain language materials. CT/HT - Contact the IT technician re. setting up CDs if needed. CT/HT - Contact school libraries services re. supplying materials</p>	<p>1 Document 1. Introduction to the Language Support Model.</p> <p>2 Contact information: SLT, class/school contacts.</p> <p>3 Document 2. Principles of the 'Communication Friendly' Classroom. Document 3. Principles of Comprehension Monitoring.</p> <p>4 Any relevant schools libraries or IT service leaflets.</p>

Document one: target record

Language Targets Set

Child _____ Dates _____ to _____

Language targets	Teaching timetable	Staff involved	Methods/ tasks/ resources required	Evaluation
				Date achieved

Document one: activity record

Language Activities Record Sheet

Child _____ Dates _____ to _____

Support model weeks _____ to _____

Date	Activities	Notes, comments	Signed

Document one: finding time examples

- A class teacher, learning support teacher and assistant **sharing the workload**. In some cases working on one language target each, in others on same target in different ways with different games and activities.
- Class teachers using the language activities as **group activities** within a class work programme.
- A child who had been coming into school 10 minutes late to avoid the bustle of the cloakroom coming in 10 minutes **early** instead, allowing him to get organised for the day and to fit in language activities.

Document one: finding time examples contd.

- Learning support teachers breaking down language activities into **daily tasks** for assistants to carry out.
- A class teacher carrying out the activities, directing the assistant to carry out other tasks **with the rest** of the class.

Document one aims

- This approach aims to clearly establish ‘**who will do what when**’ early in the language teaching process.
- It aims to **avoid the very large variation** in the amount of language learning activity seen in the cohort study.
- It aims to **record activity** systematically.
- There is a built in **email** to ask the school to confirm all is going to plan.
- There is a **built in trigger** for school and SLT contact, when things are not going to plan.

Document two

• **CREATING A COMMUNICATION FRIENDLY CLASSROOM**

- This gives general reminders to teachers about **good communicative practice**.
- It also allows the SLT to highlight **additional suggestions** related to individual children and their particular difficulties.
- The aim is to create a **facilitative milieu** for language learning in the primary classroom.
- **Whole-class** approaches are possible.

Document three

• MONITORING COMPREHENSION

- This highlights the **social difficulty** children may have in indicating that they have not understood.
- It gives activities and suggestions to encourage whole-class '**no fault**' ways of discussing and dealing with the need to seek further information.
- It aims to make children confident that a request for further clarification or information will be **welcomed** and **responded to** in the classroom.
- **Whole-class** approaches are possible.

Document four

• PRINCIPLES OF VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

- This document outlines ways of teaching vocabulary, including useful **topic** words, vocabulary needed for understanding **maths and reading**, and words for **concepts** such as *either, if, unless*.
- Teaching **meaning links** with other words is stressed (same and opposite words, categories and related words etc.) together with the **phonological form** of the word (*first and last sounds, rhymes, words-within-words* etc.)

Document four contd.

- Teaching the meaning and phonological form of a vocabulary item can be linked to the **written** form, as met in reading texts, and to the child's **writing**.
- Building **phonological awareness** in this way fits well into reading development for many children.
- **Pre-teaching** new vocabulary items encountered in reading texts can become routine classroom practice.
- However, children with language impairment may need more support or **different vocabulary items** than other children?

Document five

• PRINCIPLES OF GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT

- This document gives advice about **modelling** grammar markers when a child has problems, **prompting** the child to use the marker, and **repeating the correct version** if the child makes an error (recasting).
- Examples of such grammar markers will occur in reading texts, but children with language impairment may need **more specific activities** than other children to develop production ?

Document six

- **PRINCIPLES OF ORAL NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

- This gives information on **story episode structures**, to develop oral narratives, but also fits in to class discussions of narratives found in reading texts.
- It is also a helpful way to develop visual support for children's **story writing**.

Document seven

- **DEVELOPMENT OF THE LANGUAGE SUPPORT MODEL**

- This gives background information on the research and developmental work that gave rise to the **language support model**, for those who want to follow up the developmental process.
- It also gives a list of **published games and worksheets** for children's use, that can be used for the language learning activities in the therapy manual.
- It discusses the role of **parents**.

Contextual factors: curriculum

- The Scottish 5 - 14 Curriculum is **non-statutory**, and does not use prescribed programmes.
- There is no **national** literacy strategy.
- Literacy and oracy is allocated **20% of the timetable**, and schools may also draw from 20% flexibility time.
- Teachers and schools have a **statutory duty** to cater for the needs of all pupils.
- Classroom assistants work under **teacher direction**, not directly from centralised published programmes.

Linking into the curriculum

- Vocabulary and narrative **links with literacy** have been mentioned.
- Experienced user teachers also fitted activities into English Language 5 - 14 '**Listening**' and '**Talking**', strands.
- They **adapted the model** to ensure that 'Talking in Groups' was covered, and also 'Audience Awareness' via Comprehension Monitoring.

Linking into the curriculum contd.

- Experienced teachers also reported that the model fitted well with children's **Personal Learning Plans (PLPs)**.
- Potential user teachers also saw links with **maths**, **drama** and **health** for some activities.
- They also reported understanding better the **role of the SLT**.

Changes for teachers

- Some participating teachers in the studies reported **gaining insight** into children's needs.
- They reported changing their own **communication styles** to support children.
- They reported **checking** on children's understanding in class, and adapting input.
- They gained **useful materials** and useful ideas for language teaching, for individuals, groups and classes.
- Teacher and head-teacher comments indicated a range of **developing understandings** about links between oral language and literacy issues.

Next steps?

- Although the language support model was evaluated as useful by teachers and SLTs, it has **not been tried** out in this format.
- The communication friendly classroom, comprehension monitoring, vocabulary and narrative development were seen by many teachers as **strengthening class teaching** and good practice.
- However, potential user teachers in particular remained concerned about the **difficulties of finding time** to carry out additional, individual language learning activities for children with language impairment.

Next steps contd.?

- There is a need for **further evaluative studies** of how well the language support model can be used in consultation with SLTs.
- There is a need for **further studies** of the model's effectiveness in enhancing language and literacy learning for children with diagnosed language impairments.
- There is a need for **further studies** of how the model impacts on teachers' understandings of the use of talk in the classroom, the relationship between language and literacy, language and learning, and on their ability to act to effect change.

Conclusions

- The language support model, together with the therapy manual and selected published materials, forms a language support package for teachers that can be used 'off the shelf' to **meet the needs of many children** with language impairment in mainstream schools.
- It provides a way of schools and SLTs working together and **quickly establishing** language intervention activities, and monitoring their use, in a consultancy model of SLT service delivery.

Conclusions contd.

- The model has been evaluated positively by classroom teachers and SLTs.
- We now need to try it out!

References

- BOYLE, J., MCCARTNEY, E., O'HARE, A., FORBES, J. (In press). *An RCT and Economic Evaluation of Direct versus Indirect and Individual versus Group Modes of Speech and Language Therapy for Children with Primary Language Impairment*. Final Report to the National Co-ordinating Centre for Health Technology Assessment.
- GASCOIGNE, M. (2006) *Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs within integrated children's services*. RCSLT Position paper, RCSLT: London

References

- McCARTNEY, E., BOYLE, J., BANNATYNE, S., JESSIMAN, E., CAMPBELL, C., KELSEY, C., SMITH, J., O'HARE, A. (2004) *Becoming a Manual Occupation? The Construction of a Therapy Manual for Use with Language Impaired Children in Mainstream Primary Schools. International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, 39, 135–148.*
- McCARTNEY, E., BOYLE, J., ELLIS, S., TURNBULL, M., BANNATYNE, S. (2004b) *A Survey and Cohort Intervention Using Indirect Speech and Language Therapy for Children with Primary Language Impairment in Mainstream Schools. Final Report to the WoSRaD Partnership. July 2004. From E. McCartney, Strathclyde University, Glasgow G13 1PP.*

References contd.

- MCCARTNEY, E., ELLIS, S., BOYLE, J., TURNBULL, M., KERR, J. (2005) *The Development and Validation of Materials for Use by Classroom Teachers Working with Children with Primary Language Impairment*. Final Report to the West of Scotland Research and Development Partnership. November 2005. Available from E. McCartney, SLT Division, Strathclyde University, Glasgow G13 1PP, UK.

Disclaimer and thanks

- The views expressed here are those of the presenters, and are not necessarily those of the funding bodies, to whom thanks are offered.