

The Derbyshire Language Scheme

Introduction

The Derbyshire Language Scheme (DLS) can be used with all pupils for whom building vocabularies and teaching understanding and use of simple sentences, including basic grammar and syntax, are relevant goals.

The DLS was developed by an educational psychologist, a teacher and a speech and language therapist (SLT) specifically for teachers of pupils with severe learning difficulties. The scheme is about thirty years old but still very useful. It consists of three manuals (and some back-up materials) which provide guidance on the use of the scheme and include many suggestions for teaching activities.

Structure of the DLS

The DLS is split into three stages:

1. Early Vocabulary Stage

Aims to teach pupils to understand and use a number of words but not sentences.

2. Simple Sentence Stage

Aims to teach pupils to understand and use a range of sentences of increasing complexity.

3. Grammar and Complex Sentence Stage

Aims to teach pupils more mature ways of expressing themselves and a range of new concepts. There is greater emphasis on producing grammatically correct sentences.

A white manual gives descriptions of the pupils for whom each stage is relevant and details about the assessment procedures.

Two orange manuals explain the principles underlying teaching activities at all three stages and staff should familiarise themselves with these. The orange manuals also give detailed suggestions for teaching activities at the various levels.

Comprehension and Expression

Comprehension skills are developed in the context of games or activities in which the pupil can only be successful if he or she listens carefully to the teacher's instructions.

The DLS manuals show that activities used for teaching comprehension can be used to elicit utterances also.

The DLS manuals provide much guidance and further advice and you should always seek support from a speech and language therapist or a specialist language teacher.

Assessment

A speech and language therapist may use the DLS assessments and recommend relevant objectives and activities from the DLS. However, there is no reason why a teacher cannot conduct their own assessments and plan teaching programmes accordingly.

The DLS provides assessment forms for recording the outcomes of initial and ongoing assessments of pupils' progress.

DLS website

Further details about the scheme and the available teaching and assessment materials can be found at the DLS website (<http://www.derbyshire-language-scheme.co.uk/>).

Reference

Masidlover, M. and Knowles, W. (1982) *The Derbyshire Language Scheme*