Multisensory Structured Language Approaches

**CONTENT: What Is Taught**

- Phonology and Phonological Awareness: Phonology is the study of sounds and how they work within their environment. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a given language that can be recognized as being distinct from other sounds. Phonological awareness is the understanding of the internal linguistic structure of words. An important aspect of phonological awareness is phonemic awareness, or the ability to segment words into their component sounds.

- Sound-Symbol Association: This is the knowledge of the various sounds in the English language and their correspondence to the letters and combinations of letters which represent those sounds. Sound-symbol association must be taught (and mastered) in two directions: visual-to-auditory and auditory-to-visual. Additionally, students must master the blending of sounds and letters into words, as well as the segmenting of whole words into their individual sounds.

- Syllable Instruction: A syllable is a unit of oral or written language with one vowel sound. Instruction must include teaching the six basic syllable types in the English language: closed, vowel-consonant-e, open, consonant-le, r-controlled, and diphthong. Syllable division rules must be directly taught in relation to word structure.

- Morphology: Morphology is the study of how morphemes are combined to form words. A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in the language. The curriculum must include the study of base words, roots, prefixes, and suffixes.

- Syntax: Syntax is the set of principles that dictate the sequence and function of words in a sentence in order to convey meaning. This includes grammar, sentence variation, and the mechanics of language.

- Semantics: Semantics is that aspect of language concerned with meaning. From the beginning, the curriculum must include instruction in the comprehension of written language.

**PRINCIPLES OF INSTRUCTION: How It’s Taught**

- Simultaneous, Multisensory (VAKT): Teaching is done using all learning pathways in the brain (Visual/Auditory, Kinesthetic-Tactile) simultaneously in order to enhance memory and learning.

- Systematic and Cumulative: Multisensory language instruction requires that the organization of material follows the logical order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest and most basic elements and progress methodically to more difficult material. Each step must also be based on elements already learned. Concepts taught must be systematically reviewed to strengthen memory.

- Direct Instruction: The inferential learning of any concept cannot be taken for granted. Multisensory language instruction requires the direct teaching of all concepts with continuous student-teacher interaction.

- Diagnostic Teaching: The teacher must be adept at diagnostic, prescriptive, or individualized teaching. The teaching plan is based on careful and continuous assessment of an individual’s needs. The content presented must be mastered to a high degree of automaticity.

- Synthetic and Analytic Instruction: Multisensory, structured language programs include both synthetic and analytic instruction. Synthetic instruction presents the parts of the language and then teaches how the parts work together to form a whole. Analytic instruction presents the whole and teaches how this can be broken down into its component parts.

**Credits**


The principles of instruction and content of a multisensory structured language program are essential for effective teaching methodologies. The International Dyslexia Association actively promotes effective teaching approaches and related clinical educational intervention strategies for dyslexics. It is not the International Dyslexia Association’s policy to recommend or endorse any specific program, product, speaker, exhibitor, institution, company, or instructional material, noting that there are a number of such which present the critical components of instruction as defined by IDA.

Orton-Gillingham-Based and/or Multisensory Structured Language Approaches. (Fact Sheet #68, 05/02). Note that the title of this article was changed from the original title. See http://www.interdys.org/fact%20sheets/MSMethods%20FS%20N.pdf