

SPEECH-LANGUAGE LINKS

ISSUE 1

JUNE 2008

*A Newsletter for Resource Teachers of the Deaf in the
Central and Southern Regions of New Zealand*

Hi everyone!

I just want to start off with saying "Phew!" after such a busy first term! **Thanks to all of you for your support so far this year**, while we have been working together with the Laura Lee analysis and also the Annual Achievement Target for language (as well as all the 'usual' stuff!). Both of these things are going really well, and hopefully the Laura Lee analysis now seems a bit less daunting for some of you!

In this issue:

- ∞ some notes from the Laura Lee homework
- ∞ information about this year's AAT and the results of the first round of assessment
- ∞ ideas and activities for how to include semantic skills into your teaching. These ideas are useful for all students, as it's not just those in Years 3 – 6 who need to develop these skills!
- ∞ a couple of cool websites for you to check out, at the end!



Laura Lee notes:

A few points kept cropping up from the Laura Lee homework, so here are some things to keep in mind while completing the analysis:

1. Once you've transcribed the language sample onto the transcription sheet, **correct the student's language in another colour**. It is easy to miss parts unless you do this step. It also gives you an idea of the common mistakes the student is making, before you begin the actual analysis.
2. **Every word (except nouns) gets credit (with a number in a box); any omitted or incorrect word used gets written in a box with a minus sign in front (e.g. "-is")**. Do not write the number of the level with a minus in front (e.g. "-1b"). When you get to the end it is easier to see a whole list of e.g. "-is" down the verbs column, rather than working out what each number referred to.

3. **Where a certain structure is attempted but isn't complete, write the whole structure in the box with a minus sign in front and underline the incorrect / omitted part** (e.g. in the main verbs box, write: "-is not jumping" to show that "is" was omitted from this structure). At the end, this makes it easier to see if different structures have been attempted, than if you just had "-is".
4. When children start to use negatives, they often omit the "is / was" etc. At level 1 negatives on Laura Lee, the "is / was" must be present to be given credit at level 1. **If it is missing, write "-is not" in the negatives column. You will also write this in the main verbs column.**
5. **There can be many parts to a verb 'package' without there being a secondary verb present**. For example, "I should have been shopping" contains 4 parts to the main verb. Don't credit all of these parts individually! **Secondary verbs are generally signalled by the word "to" in front of a verb e.g. "I am going to go now"**. In this example, "am going" is the main verb, and "to go" is the secondary verb. On the Laura Lee chart under secondary verbs at level 2 *only those 6 examples get credited there*. Most other secondary verbs get credited at level 5.
6. **If you credit either a preposition or an adjective, check to see whether that is part of a phrase that can also get credit**. For example, in the phrase "at the shop", you would credit "at" as a level 1 preposition, "the" as a level 1 determiner, and then "at the shop" as a level 2 'prep det noun' in the prepositions column.
7. **When you have an utterance that is so long it gets written over 2 lines on the transcription sheet, the numbers in the boxes should go over 2 lines also**. Don't squash all the numbers onto one line!

Overall, everyone did a fantastic job on an analysis that is difficult to get the hang of! My advice is to **keep doing a few sentences every couple of weeks**, to keep it fresh in your mind.

I am happy to answer any questions – just flick me an email, or post / email / fax me a copy of an analysis you've attempted and I'll check over it for you!



AAT3 - what is it all about?

In a nutshell, AAT3 is about **investigating the semantic skills of deaf students in Years 3 – 6**. Semantic skills are sometimes also referred to as language processing skills.

Teachers often recognise that deaf students have difficulty learning and retaining new vocabulary. **The area of semantics involves a range of skills that are prerequisites to developing a strong vocabulary. Our students often have difficulty learning these skills without explicit teaching, which is why we have chosen to focus on this area. This also explains why it is important for all RTDs to be focussing on these skills, with all of their students.**

[For more information on semantic skills please refer to the **October 2007 Speech-Language Links**. The specific skills are outlined in a chart on the front page, and some ideas of how to work on these skills are included throughout that newsletter. The following newsletters also include activity ideas for semantics / language processing. These can be downloaded from our website.

- ∞ November 2005
- ∞ September 2005
- ∞ June 2003
- ∞ March 2003.]

The results from the first round of assessment for AAT3 showed that our observations are correct: **semantic skills seem to be a main area of difficulty for our students**. The students' scores fell into 2 main groups: those whose semantic knowledge is so poor they scored outside of the norms of the test, and those whose semantic knowledge is between 1 and 3 standard deviations below the average for their age. There were a few students who scored within the 'normal' range for their age,

so they have not been included in either study group. Students in both AAT3 groups need to have a focus on developing semantic skills, although the skills to be focussed on vary slightly.

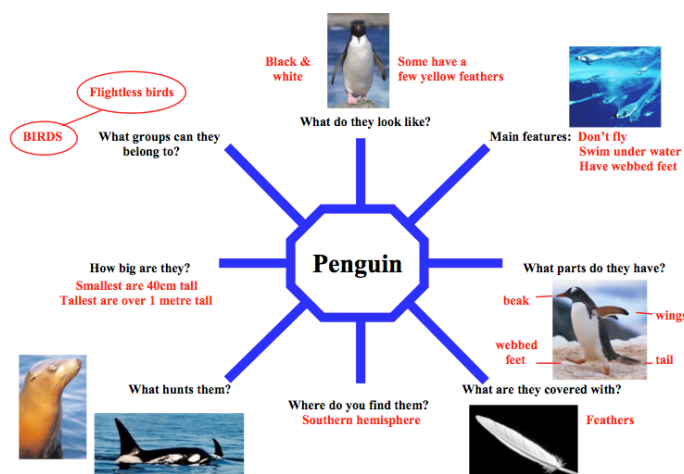
The RTDs directly involved in AAT3 have been sent packs of VADEC resources to use with Group 1 and 2 students. This means that the packs that were already at each base school are still available for everyone else to use as required. At the end of term 4, the resources are all to be returned to the base schools.

Activity ideas

Semantic webs (or word webs)

These are one of the main tools used for incorporating a lot of semantic information quickly and visually. Semantic webs are fantastic, and I could rave about them for a whole newsletter! It is best to keep them all in one exercise book, so that new vocabulary can be revised regularly and before any topic tests. They should only include main points, not details, unless they are distinguishing features between objects in the same category.

Semantic webs can be used:



- ∞ *to teach the student* all the important information about the new word
- ∞ *to help the student identify important points to find out* (where it's found, the category it belongs to, etc); the student adds this information as they learn
- ∞ *as a template to complete for homework*
- ∞ *to plot what the student knows about the word, and to identify 3 - 5 main points to find out before the end of the topic.*

The vocabulary book containing all of these webs can then be used in a number of different games:

Identifying objects from a description

State 3 or 4 points about an object; the student must name the vocabulary word. This can also link to ASP work if required.

Recalling critical elements

Say a vocabulary word; the student rolls a dice and gives you that number of main points about it. Links to ASP also.

Fly swatter game

10 vocabulary words are written on the whiteboard; the student stands with their back to it. You read out a definition, and the student has to spin around and hit the correct word with the fly swatter. Time how long it takes him/her to identify all 10 words. This can be more fun if it is a competition between 2 students, or 2 teams of students.

Hot seats!

This is a good game for a whole class. Divide the class into 2 teams. One student from each team sits at the front facing their team. The teacher gives clues about a topic word and the students race to see who can guess it first. Points are awarded for being the first to guess. Different students then come up the front for the next word. An alternative is to have only one student at the front, from one of the teams. Their team-mates then take turns to give a clue about the word until it is correctly guessed. The number of points awarded *decreases* with the number of clues given. The next team then sends a team member up the front, and give clues.

Mime-it!

Topic words are written on cards and put into a bag. You and the student take turns to draw a card, and mime the word. (The student must think of the main features of the word in order to mime it well!) This could be played as a whole class game instead.



Define it!

Topic words are written on cards and put into a bag. The student draws a card then tries to define the word as closely as possible to the dictionary! (Write the students' definition down before s/he checks the dictionary definition.) Points can be awarded based on the number of similar features

noted. Note: you need to have modelled many times how to give a clear definition using the category, the objects' main function and 1 or 2 identifying features before the student will be able to do this.

All of these ideas use the vocabulary from the semantic webs you have created together!



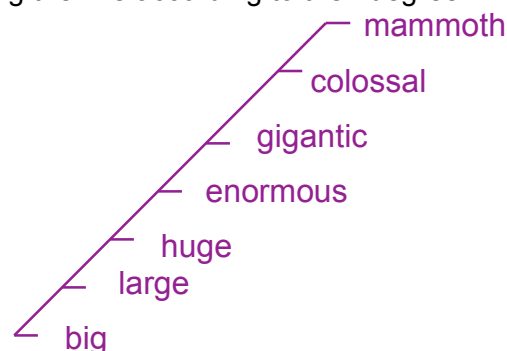
And what's more, the student will have had fun revising the same vocabulary a number of times in different ways, which means they are more likely to retain that knowledge.

Other ideas

Some other ideas for working on semantic skills include the following:

Clines

These are another great way of teaching new vocabulary – especially when the student tends to 'overuse' common words. Draw a diagonal line up the page with several 'rungs' along it. The common word gets entered at the bottom, and **the student has to use a thesaurus** to find other words that have a similar meaning. These words get entered along the line according to their degree.

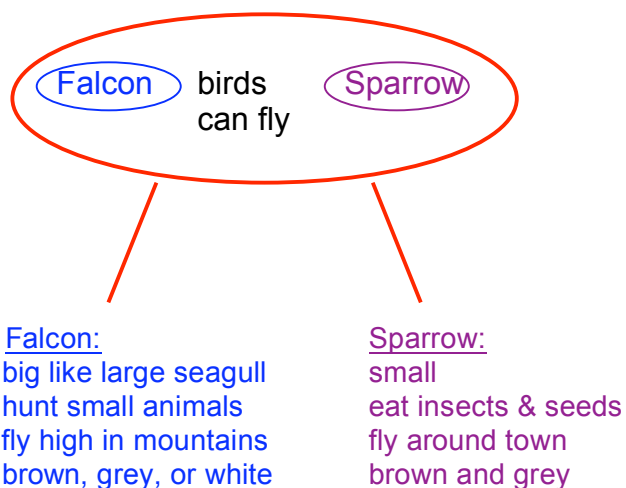


Clines can be kept in the same book as the semantic webs. Talk about how the words are similar / different to each other. What are the nuances of meaning? Are there specific things that can only be referred to using each term (e.g. 'colossal' can be used to refer to statues or buildings, but not animals)? The student can then make up some silly sentences using the new words. For example "The pimple on the horse's knee was *gigantic!*" The sillier they are, the better! The clines can also be used as a reference tool for when the student has to write something.

Thank you to Hazel Dodge (Chch RTD) for sharing the following ideas on ways to integrate semantic skills into classroom lesson times:

Comparison charts

When learning about something new, it is important to link it to what the student already knows. So, for example, if learning about 'falcons', compare these to a more common bird, like a 'sparrow'. Start by putting these 2 things in separate circles in the middle of a page. Then draw a larger circle encompassing both. Make a list of all the similarities between the 2 birds in this larger circle. Next, draw 2 lines out from the main circle, and list the main differences about each bird underneath.



Alternatively, use main features as a way of categorising objects. Start with the main features the student is learning about in the middle of the page, and list objects that have those features beside them. Then list similarities and differences about the features.



How are flippers and wings the same?

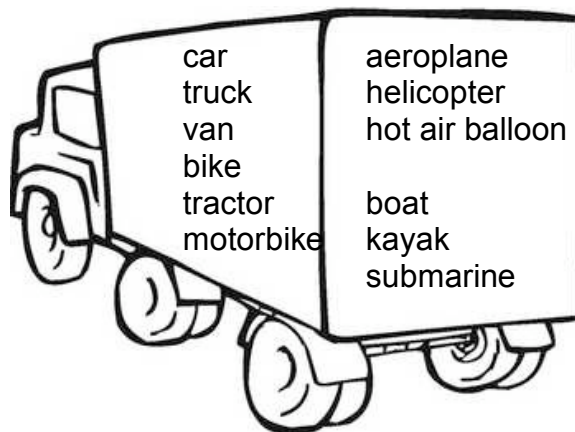
- They are both like arms
- They help the animal to move

How are flippers and wings different?

- Wings are for flying in the air; flippers are for moving in the water.

Create category pages

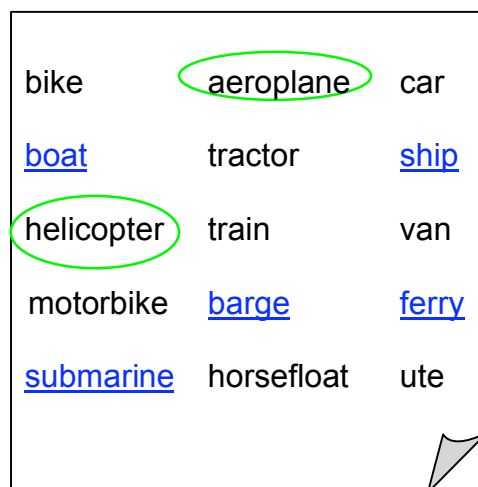
For example, if teaching the word 'vehicles', draw a truck and fill it with the names of different vehicles. List them in subcategories so the student can see that 'vehicles' relates to things that move people or objects on the land / in the water / through the air etc.



'Find the groups' game

This game encourages the student to think about subcategories.

1. Discuss the different subcategories (e.g. air transport vehicles, water transport vehicles, land transport vehicles)
2. The student chooses a different colour pen to use for each subcategory
3. Randomly write the names of different vehicles all over a page
4. The student circles / underlines items from each subcategory in the correct colour.



This reinforces the main category word, but also encourages the student to think about specific features that may be similar / different within each main category. Another spin-off is that it increases the student's vocabulary for similar items (e.g. boat vs. ship vs. kayak).

To make it even more difficult, you could add words that don't fit the category of vehicles. The student could cross the words out, or write the correct category name beside each word.

Thanks Hazel for these wonderful ideas!

Hopefully you all now have at least one or two new ideas of how to incorporate semantic work into your programmes. I'm sure each of you will have other great ideas. Feedback from your cluster meeting last year said that you want more ideas from other Resource Teachers of the Deaf in this newsletter, so **please send me your ideas!** Even if you think your idea is boring or obvious, it might spark some ideas for someone else!

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Cool websites:

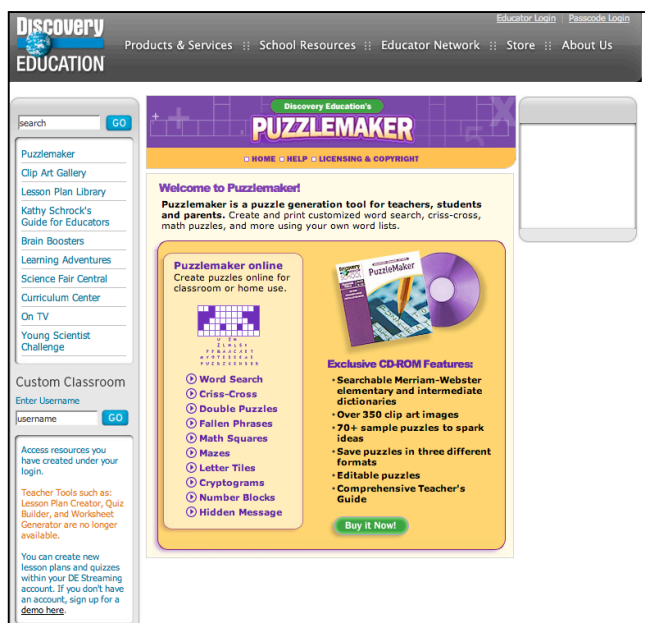
While looking through a previous issue of Speech-Language Links, I came across a website I'd forgotten about. When I looked it up, it had shifted, but has been updated too! It's a site where you can design (and either print or use online) different types of puzzles using relevant topic vocabulary.

Another great activity for revision work!

Check it out at:

<http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com>

I especially like the criss-cross (crossword) puzzles, but there are several different types.



Another awesome website is called Teacher Resource Exchange, at:

<http://tre.ngfl.gov.uk>

This site has so many fantastic resources that have all been developed by teachers, that it really is well worth a look! There are some great resources on everything from pages on idioms through to a whole unit on Antarctica with amazing resources to download / print.

On the initial page, go down to the TRE Viewer, and use the drop-down boxes to select the type of resource you require and the age group you want it for. Then have fun browsing!

Well, that's it for now. I hope you and your students enjoy trying out some of the activities from this issue!



Evette

