

ILSA Conference 9<sup>th</sup> Sept 2011  
Enhancing Learning:  
Practical and Positive Strategies



*Teaching Language and Literacy  
Within and Through History*

Ann Marie Farrell  
Special Education Department  
St Patrick's College,  
Drumcondra  
Dublin 9



*Celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
of the  
Graduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs  
St Patrick's College*

***Please note: I have included the references to the books/resources mentioned in the session on Friday 9<sup>th</sup>...***

Cassidy, A. and Kiely, B. (2001) *Between the lines: Literacy at junior cycle*, Dublin: Curriculum Development Unit.

NCCA (2007) Curriculum guidelines for teachers of pupils with GLD - [http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum\\_and\\_Assessment/Inclusion/](http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Inclusion/)

Westwood, P. (2011). *Commonsense methods for children with special educational needs* 6<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: RoutledgeFalmer

**Also, there is a new publication that may be very useful for those of you teaching in post-primary schools:**

McPhillips, T. (2011) *Supporting Teaching and Learning at second level*, Dublin: Blackrock Education Centre.

## *Outline of Presentation*

- History: issues to consider
- Nature of language and literacy
- Strategies for addressing language and literacy needs *within* history
- Strategies for addressing language and literacy needs *through* history



**“History encompasses two inseparable aspects:**

**the *interpretation* of what are considered to be significant human activities in the past**

**and**

**the *process* by which these activities are selected, investigated and analysed”**

Ireland (1999). Primary School Curriculum: History, Teacher Guidelines.  
Dublin: Government Stationery Office

# *Particular considerations for teaching students with learning difficulties*

- **Deciding on language of time**
- **Working from the present to the past**
- **Primary sources / interpreting artefacts**
- **Linking / exploiting other curricular areas**
- **Empathy through stories**
- **Reality and make believe**
- **Expectation of right and wrong answers**
- **Accessing historical language and therefore historical concepts**



## *Skills development: working as a historian*

- Time and chronology
- Change and continuity
- Cause and effect
- Using evidence
- Synthesis and communication
- Empathy



# *Language and Communication*

## Facets of Language

- Form
- Content
- Use
- Listener/Speaker relationship



*Note – the next three slides are adapted from the work of my late colleague, Bríd Laffan.*

# Form

- Linguistic structure
- To do with sentences, phrases, tenses, word endings etc.
- Phonology – the range of sounds in language and how small sounds can change meaning
- Grammar
  - Morphology – small modifiers that change meaning e.g. word endings ‘s’ / ‘ing’
  - Syntax – how words are ordered in sentences in an accepted form e.g. ‘the big, blue car’ not ‘the blue, big car’

## **Possible difficulties with form**

- Difficulties with sound production and articulation; sounds may be distorted, omitted, substituted
- Difficulties distinguishing words that rhyme and words that are phonologically similar
- Word endings may present difficulties e.g. –ing, -ed, plurals and possessives
- Difficulties in understanding complex sentence structures
- May be producing short utterances with very simple structures and with more nouns than adjectives and adverbs
- May mix up the order of words in sentences

# Content

- To do with meaning or semantics
- Semantics refers to the meaning of words in sentences
- Here we look at the ability to talk on a topic, the availability of suitable vocabulary, being able to convey meaning, being able to make oneself understood by the listener

## **Possible difficulties with content**

- Small vocabulary with which to expand on his/her topic
- Talk confined to topics concerning themselves only, or related only to the 'here and now'
- May repeat the same topic over and over
- Then meaning of what is being said may be unclear to the listener
- May rely on general terms e.g. 'thing'

# Use

- Pragmatics - refers to the use of language in real situations. It includes being aware of the conventions and appropriate use of language in different contexts.
- How successful is the pupil in using language for different functions – explain, predict, recount, inform, argue

## **Possible difficulties with Use**

- Difficulty in initiating conversation
- Difficulty in interpreting facial expressions, or the listener's emotional state
- Difficulty maintaining topic, extending topic, repairing communication breakdowns
- Lack of appreciation of the listener's needs
- Difficulty generalising language uses learned in specific contexts
- General lack of competence within the listener/speaker relationship

# *Listener / Speaker Relationship*

- This facet of language cuts across the previous three
- It refers to appreciation of other people's needs when engaged in conversation
- It includes appropriate turn-taking, eye contact, appropriate use of language, body language, assessing what information the listener needs to understand etc.

# Literacy



## • Reading

- **Word identification**  
(sight words, word attack, contextual analysis)
- **Comprehension**  
(identifying the main idea, explaining a concept, answering literal and inferential questions based on text)
- **Fluency** (pace, clarity, tone, modulation)

## • Writing

- Spelling
- Constructing sentences
- Punctuation
- Flow of thought
- Handwriting
- Amount
- Context (responding to question, follow up to practical work, follow up to discussion...)
- Genre
  - Explanation
  - Description
  - Sequence / Instruction
  - Creative.....

# *Link between Language and Literacy*

## **Oral Language and Communication:**

- ***Expressive*** (talking - explaining, describing etc)
- ***Receptive*** (listening - following instructions , sequence etc)

## **Literacy:**

- ***Expressive*** (writing - explaining, describing, spelling)
- ***Receptive*** (reading - comprehension, word attack strategies etc)

## *Two levels of differentiation*

1. Differentiating to meet the needs of all pupils in any given lesson so that the pupils can access the content of that lesson.
2. Differentiating within a lesson to meet specified IEP targets. In this instance, you may be differentiating to meet IEP targets in core curricular areas by teaching *through* a subject.



# Learning Targets

addressing core areas within the subject in order to access the learning within the subject itself

- **History**
  - Using the artefacts, formulate the teacher's timeline
- **Language and Communication**
  - Describe the following objects – clothes, doll
  - Explain the rationale for their choices in the timeline
- **Literacy**
  - Write a paragraph about one item describing at least three attributes

# *Learning Targets*

addressing core areas through the subject

- An entire language lesson could be based on this activity i.e. you are not teaching history at all – total focus is on language. Incidental learning may take place in relation to historical concepts

*OR*

- IEP – specific targets in core areas could be addressed for an individual through a history lesson



# Example: Differentiating objectives in a lesson to meet one of John's IEP targets...

- John will
  - retell/recall orally a topic or an event using 4/5 sentences.

*This is a language and communication target, identified as a priority in John's IEP. It could be addressed through history. In this instance your focus is on language and communication rather than history per se i.e. the core area of L&C is being addressed through history.*



# *Individual Education Plans*

- Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004
- Policy guidelines – *Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process* (NCSE, 2006)
  - Additional and extra
  - Strengths / needs / priorities model



Ann Marie Farrell,  
Special Education Department, SPD

# *Teaching / Learning Cycle*

- Presentation
  - Operation
  - Response
- *NB – Do you know what your objectives are for all students /some students /individual students?*



Ann Marie Farrell,  
Special Education Department, SPD

# *Presentation*

- Provide overview of lesson
- Elicit prior knowledge
- Pre-teach keywords
- Avoid over-reliance on text at this stage
- Use a variety of materials
- Provide visual cues
- Vary the pace of your own talk; simplify your language



# *Presentation*

- Vary the amount of content
- **Model** the desired behaviour yourself
- Direct questions / comments at individual children as well as whole group
- Provide points of reference which can be used at later stages in the lesson(s)
- Provide additional presentation
- If possible, ensure other staff are listening during the presentation stage of the lesson(s)

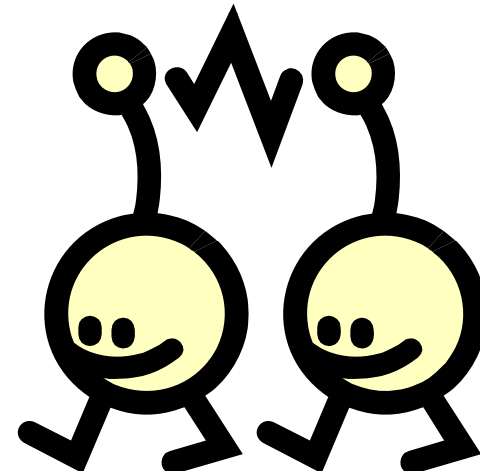
# *Operation - Nature of task*

- Change task characteristics for particular pupils/groups of pupils
- Provide extra teacher assistance
- Reduce extraneous material
- Provide additional materials
- Provide points of reference
- Adapt text – book/worksheet



# *Operation - Structure of task*

- Working individually
- Peer-tutoring
- Working in pairs
- Roll the pairs into groups of 4
- Co-operative groups
- Jig saw groups



# *Response*

- ***Closely linked to the objectives set***
- Amount
- Type
- Format
- Criteria for success
- Time
- Grading

# Please note

- This presentation was prepared for the ILSA Conference 2011 and should not be used in any other forum without prior permission