



Language Disorders Associated With Perceptual Impairment

By

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Background Information:

There are many children in our schools classified with “Perceptual Impairment” (PI). This classification refers to a specific learning disability manifested by a severe discrepancy between the pupil’s current achievement and their IQ. Many perceptually impaired children have difficulties with one or more of the following: reading, comprehension, oral expression, listening, math, and written expression.

Perceptually impaired children often score low on vocabulary tests, standardized grammar tests, and listening tests when assessed by a Speech Pathologist. Listening skills and processing are almost always paired with PI students.

The challenge in the classroom often arises when the teacher notices delayed vocabulary, poor attention and/or difficulty following directions. Tests in all areas are often affected due to the inability to process the directions or make logical conclusions.

The language areas often affected are:

1. **cause and effect**
2. **verbal problem solving/written math problems**
3. **sequencing**
4. **sentence order and construction**
5. **expressing ideas in a clear manner**
6. **grade/age level vocabulary**
7. **understanding jokes/rhymes/riddles**
8. **multiple meaning words**
9. **synonyms and antonyms**
10. **homonyms**



Perceptually impaired children are often afraid to take “language risks” and try new words. You may find that these children have a very concrete vocabulary pattern, or use the same words over and over again. PI students often do not enjoy “creative writing” or journal writing because it is too abstract, and involves using a

large expressive vocabulary.

Test modifications and simplistic directions are usually needed for successful testing of PI students. It is important that the classroom teacher understands that the language impairments associated with PI directly effect all academic areas including Math. (Math often requires sequencing skills.)

If you have a PI student in your classroom, take special note of the following:

- 1. Are the directions given to the child clear and concise?**
- 2. Is the vocabulary given on the student's age level?**
- 3. Can the student write his/her thoughts but cannot verbalize them?**
- 4. What is the student's strongest modality of learning? (visual/tactile/auditory)**
- 5. Can the student organize his/her own desk, book bag, assignments?**
- 6. Can the student express their difficulties so that you can understand them?**
- 7. Does the student interact effectively in peer/social situations?**
- 8. Does the student volunteer to answer questions?**

The majority of answers to the above questions are probably "no." These are the skills that many PI children work on in speech therapy, in addition to general grade level vocabulary.

