



Connecting drama activities to Speech and Language Strategies

Speech, language and communication strategies that should be considered as most relevant are as follows:

- *Teaching, encouraging and reinforcing active listening skills*

How: Explain how to actively listen, model it to students, and notice and provide positive feedback when students demonstrate the skill.

Why: So we can do our best learning and make links to other knowledge that we have.

Relevant activities: all grounding activities and ones which require students to follow instructions (e.g. snail, finger flower, move as if...)

- *Using positive, concise, sequential and well-paced instructions*

How: Tell students what you want them to do using as few words as possible. Give the instructions in sequential order; first, do x, then do y, and lastly do z. Pause between steps to ensure each one is conveyed clearly. Check understanding by asking the students to tell you what they have to do.

Why: To give everyone the best chance of participating fully and to the best of their ability.

Relevant activities: any that require students to follow instructions (e.g. story whoosh, soundscapes, name in a bucket)

- *Repetition of information – supported by visuals and gesture*

How: Repeat key words and use visuals and/or gesture to support the most important aspects of the information you are providing. Consistent use of gesture is more important than knowing the correct sign, so whatever gesture you use for a word/concept, stick with it!

Why: Gestures and visuals are more memorable than spoken words, especially for learners who have a strong visual bias. Repetition of key information is beneficial for supporting understanding and recall.

Relevant activities: any that require students to follow instructions (e.g. story whoosh, soundscapes, name in a bucket). Venga venga is a perfect example of repetition, gesture and visually memorable information coming together!



- *Checking understanding*

How: Ask the student(s) to tell you what they have to do. That way you will be able to identify any areas that require clarification or other support, and also confirm that the student is on the right track.

Why: Students will generally say 'yes' if you ask them if they understand – whether they do or not! By asking them to tell you what they think they have to do, you can provide the most effective support at the earliest opportunity and complete the tasks efficiently, which in turn, builds student self-esteem.

Relevant activities: all

- *Providing positive specific feedback*

How: Highlight exactly what you noticed the student doing that was helpful to their learning and participation e.g. I noticed that you repeated back the instruction/made a note of that word/moved closer to the whiteboard to help you focus on your work. That helped you complete the task quickly – well done! Provide clear corrective feedback when necessary, explaining and modelling the approach that would lead to success.

Why: Positive feedback builds self-esteem. Clear corrective feedback helps to build success.

Relevant activities: all

Andrea Richards is an independent speech and language therapist whose specialism is working with mainstream primary schools, bridging the gap between education and health. She prioritises recommendations from high profile reviews, such as the Bercow Report, where early identification of need, early intervention, and joint working between services are highlighted as essential.