ACSI | ECD

Skills Needed to Thrive at School

RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE

Strengthening Christian Schools
Equipping Christian Educators
Inspiring Students

Skills Needed to Thrive at School

Receptive Language

What is Receptive Language? Receptive language refers to our **ability to understand spoken language**. Communication starts at birth. Babies can communicate their needs for food, sleep or comfort by crying. They will quickly **pick up** on, and **add meaning to**, facial expressions, body language, voice tone, touch and eye contact. However, **spoken language is our main form of communication** and by the age of 6 to 9 months, babies begin to make the link between sound and meaning.

Our understanding of language used around us depends on our receptive language skills. Spoken language needs to be understood before children can use language to express themselves. Most activities require a good understanding of language. Children who have understanding difficulties may **battle to follow instructions and may not respond appropriately** to questions and instructions.

What is needed to develop receptive Language? Children need to be able to concentrate and **pay attention** for long enough to complete an activity.

They also need to be able to manage with pre-language skills such as **facial expressions, eye contact and to use physical gestures.** Children also need to be able to engage socially, either verbally or non-verbally.

There is no standard set of symptoms that indicate receptive language disorder, as it varies from one child to another. However, symptoms may include:

- Not seeming to listen and pay attention when they are spoken to
- Appear to lack interest when stories are been read

- Difficulty understanding the meaning of words and sentences
- Giving inappropriate answers to questions being asked
- Frequently needs questions repeated or askes for clarification of instructions
- Poor literacy, planning and sequencing skills

Sunward Christian School

FOOTPRINTS IN ECD - SKILLS NEEDED TO THRIVE AT SCHOOL

- CATHY MOORE
ECD Co-ordinator
ACSI Southern Africa

Receptive Language

How can we help children with receptive language difficulties?

- As teachers, we need to make sure that we have eye contact with these children when giving instructions.
- Give minimal instructions in simple language on a level that they can understand.
- Once instructions have been given, get the child to repeat what is expected of them. It is a good idea to also order instructions. Use this concept to help the child understand in which order they need to complete an instruction: first do 'this' and then do 'that'.
- Children who battle with retaining language rely on visual clues.

Teachers need to physically show children what to do. Signs and pictures can also be used to facilitate and support children's understanding.

- For younger children it is important to engage in play. Teachers need to follow the child's lead and talk about what they are doing with the toys.
- Reduce background noise when engaging with the child so that they do not become distracted .
- Look at books which interest the child. Talk about the pictures and get the child to predict what might happen.

Activities to help improve receptive language skills in the classroom.

- Make lessons as practical as possible.
- Ask questions on different levels. Some questions may require a one word answer and others may require an opinion.
- Play games like 'Simon says'. Start with simple instructions and then gradually increase the level of instructions.
- Create a story with your class starting with a simple concept. Let the children expand on it while you draw pictures to depict where the story is going.

- Have a 'feely' bag into which objects are placed inside. The children then choose an object and explain what they are feeling without using the actual word.
- Give the children a simple picture and have them report back on what they can see in the picture.

If a child continues to battle with their understanding of the spoken language and parents and teacher have tried to intervene to no avail, please consider sending the child to a speech therapist for a full evaluation.