

Word Retrieval and Its Impact on Learning

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Expected Outcomes

Participants will:

- Gain an understanding of what word retrieval is and what it is not
- Describe the characteristics of WFD and how it impacts students academically, socially and emotionally
- Develop a better understanding of the strategies used to help children with WFD
- Gain insight regarding the role of the Speech-Language Pathologist in assessment and remediation
- Come away with strategies, materials and handouts for helping children at home

Definition

- Students who have word finding difficulty have trouble retrieving words that they comprehend well.
- Word Finding difficulty may occur in single word contexts (i.e. answering questions with specific facts) and / or in discourse (i.e. relating experiences or events).

Word Retrieval Difficulty

Should not be
confused with

- Occasional episodes of word finding
- Disfluency or stuttering
- Substitutions resulting from a phonological disorder
- Limited vocabulary due to linguistic deprivation or limited exposure
- Learning a second language

Quotes.....

“When I can’t find words it feels like I have scrambled eggs in my brain. My brain just tells my mouth the wrong thing to say.”

– *Eric, third grade*

“I know it, I know it, it’s a.....(ornament)”

- *Brian, second grade*

Additional example:

- *Tara, fourth grade*

Facts about WFD

- WFD may be part of a larger problem with language (i.e. language processing) or it can occur in isolation.
- For the vast majority of children, the cause is unknown.

- Each of us has had a “**tip of the tongue**” experience where we know a word but just cannot retrieve it when we need it.
- Children with WFD have this trouble on a **frequent** basis.
- There may be **breakdowns in communication**, where children become frustrated by the effort of finding words.

Characteristics

Each child presents with unique characteristics of WFD. Some of the more common characteristics might include:

- Word and phrase repetitions
- Word reformulations / revisions
- Target word substitutions (related meaning, similar sounding, visually related)
- Talking around the word (circumlocutions)
- Frequent use of nonspecific nouns and pronouns
- Empty words/Insertions

More Characteristics

- Time Fillers
- Silent Delays
- Miming/Gestures
- Extra Verbalizations

Classroom Behaviors

Displayed in Oral Questioning

- Slow and Inaccurate Retrievers
- Fast and Inaccurate Retrievers
- Slow and Accurate Retrievers

Classroom Behaviors

Displayed in Class Discussion, Cooperative Groups, Conversation, Reading and/or Writing

- Produces many repetitions or substitutions
- Exhibits long delays in the middle of sentences
- Uses lots of time fillers
- Describes the referent of the word
- Says “Wait, I will think of it.” in the middle of an explanation
- Produces brief narratives

Referral Process

RTI to IST

- 1) First contact is with the **classroom teacher** who implements classroom strategies.
- 2) If child does not respond to strategies, next step is **grade level meeting** where additional classroom strategies and modifications are developed so they can be implemented in the classroom.
- 3) At a **follow-up grade level meeting**, data is shared regarding the student's response to intervention.

4) If the data indicates insufficient improvement, a referral is made to the **Instructional Support Team** which is composed of:

- * Administrators
- * Teachers (classroom, general education representative and special education)
- * Psychologist
- * Support Staff (reading specialist)
- * Speech-Language Pathologist
- * Occupational Therapist (as needed)

Word Finding Assessment

- **Formal Assessment** using measures that are specifically designed to assess word finding at the single word and discourse levels.
- **Assessment of Word Knowledge** since some students have difficulty learning word meanings.
- **Informal Assessment Procedures** including observations throughout the day in school and at home.

Impact of Word Finding Difficulty

Some children are aware that they come up with wrong words; others are not. In either case, WFD interrupts the flow of conversations and can discourage the desire to communicate. It is common for children to experience breakdowns in Communication. Word finding problems can impede learning and fluent expression in oral and written language. Other experiences might include:

- Frustration
- Anxiety
- Avoidance

Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist

- As Speech Language Pathologists (SLP's), it is our role to identify and remediate those points of disruption that underlie a student's word finding difficulties. The goal is to reduce the number of occasions when they occur and diminish some of their less social behaviors.
- Intervention offers an opportunity to support students' overall learning and the ability to express themselves through speaking and writing.

Intervention for WFD

A Comprehensive program consists of three parts.

- **Retrieval Strategy Instruction** focuses on improving students' recall of words they have used before.
- **Self Advocacy Instruction** teaches learners to advocate for themselves with regard to their retrieval skills.
- **Word Finding Accommodation** considers modification of oral and written demands on academic work.

Word Retrieval Strategies

Provide student with a variety of cues:

- **Phonemic Cues** use sounds to retrieve words
 - * 1st vowel / consonant (“t-t-t”) to elicit “table”
 - * first syllable (“tay” to elicit “table”)
 - * rhyming (“fable” rhymes with _____)

- **Semantic Cues** use meaning to retrieve words
 - * category (“It’s furniture”)
 - * function cue (“It’s a flat surface for placing objects.”)

- Cloze exercise / sentence completion (“I sit at the _____.”)
- Antonyms
- Synonyms
- Descriptions (“It has 4 legs, it can be made of wood, plastic, glass or metal, it comes in different shapes and sizes.”)
- Associated words (“_____ and chair”)
- Semantic Webs

➤ **Additional Cues:**

*Visualizing (“things you see in a kitchen”)

*Sequencing (“first we set it, then we eat at it, then we clean it off”)

* Written cues (“it begins with the letter “t”)

* Gestures (motion to sit down)

Self Advocacy Instruction

- Helping learners become aware of their strengths and weaknesses in oral retrieval
- Taking responsibility for improving their retrieval skills
- Becoming aware of the word finding accommodations that they need

Word Finding Accommodations

- Using resource notebooks or cue cards during exams
- Using open book or take home exams
- Offering multiple choice and true false formats
- Providing various topics for conversation
- Encouraging voluntary participation in oral classroom work
- Presenting multiple choice during oral questioning in the class
- Providing preparatory sets (purpose for listening)

How You Can Help Your Child Improve Word Finding

- Increase knowledge of words
 - * sort words by categories
 - * describe word meanings
 - * practice rhymes and word play
 - * read with your child
 - * make booklets of important words

– Cue Word Finding:

- *Provide initial sounds

- *Give a sentence completion

- *Supply a synonym

(SEE: Retrieval Strategies)

Reduce the Stress Associated with Word Finding

- *Provide child ample time to think
- *Help your child rehearse for verbally demanding activities
- *Praise successful attempts at recalling words
- *Play games to practice word finding

Commercial

Games / Activities

That promote
word knowledge
and word retrieval
skills

- ✓ Outburst Junior
- ✓ Boggle
- ✓ Scrabble
- ✓ Password
- ✓ Headbanz
- ✓ Guess Who?
- ✓ Taboo
- ✓ Scattergories
- ✓ Kids on Stage
- ✓ Secret Square
- ✓ “In My Grandmother’s Trunk”
- ✓ Geography

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