



Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)

Children with WS have impaired language abilities, especially their grammatical comprehension abilities. Therefore, although vocabulary abilities keep slightly improving with chronological age, children will always be delayed compared to their peers. In addition, children with WS have problems with visuo-spatial abilities and studies have shown that children with WS have explicit difficulties with understanding of spatial language (preposition, and grammatical constructions that include spatial items and embedded clauses: see research by Phillips et al 2004). Limited grammatical abilities will also impact on reading comprehension and learning in general.

Children with WS also have difficulties with pragmatic language, including expressing themselves emotionally, putting a coherent story together (and thus may not be able to tell what happened to them in school) and misinterpret information. In addition, their limited grammatical abilities but good vocabulary mean that their language abilities are often overestimated.

Most importantly, language comprehension difficulties and limited pragmatic abilities will impact on independence levels and can contribute to anxiety levels (If you were to move to a country where half of the time you don't understand what people are implicitly asking from you and you cannot read people's behaviour one would get anxious)

What should SLT focus on:

Knowledge of prepositions and embedded clauses

Grammatical comprehension

Pragmatic understanding abilities/ conversational training

Emotion vocabulary and understanding

Good language abilities are very important in our daily lives and impaired language abilities impact on children with WS reaching their full potential and leading independent lives.

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