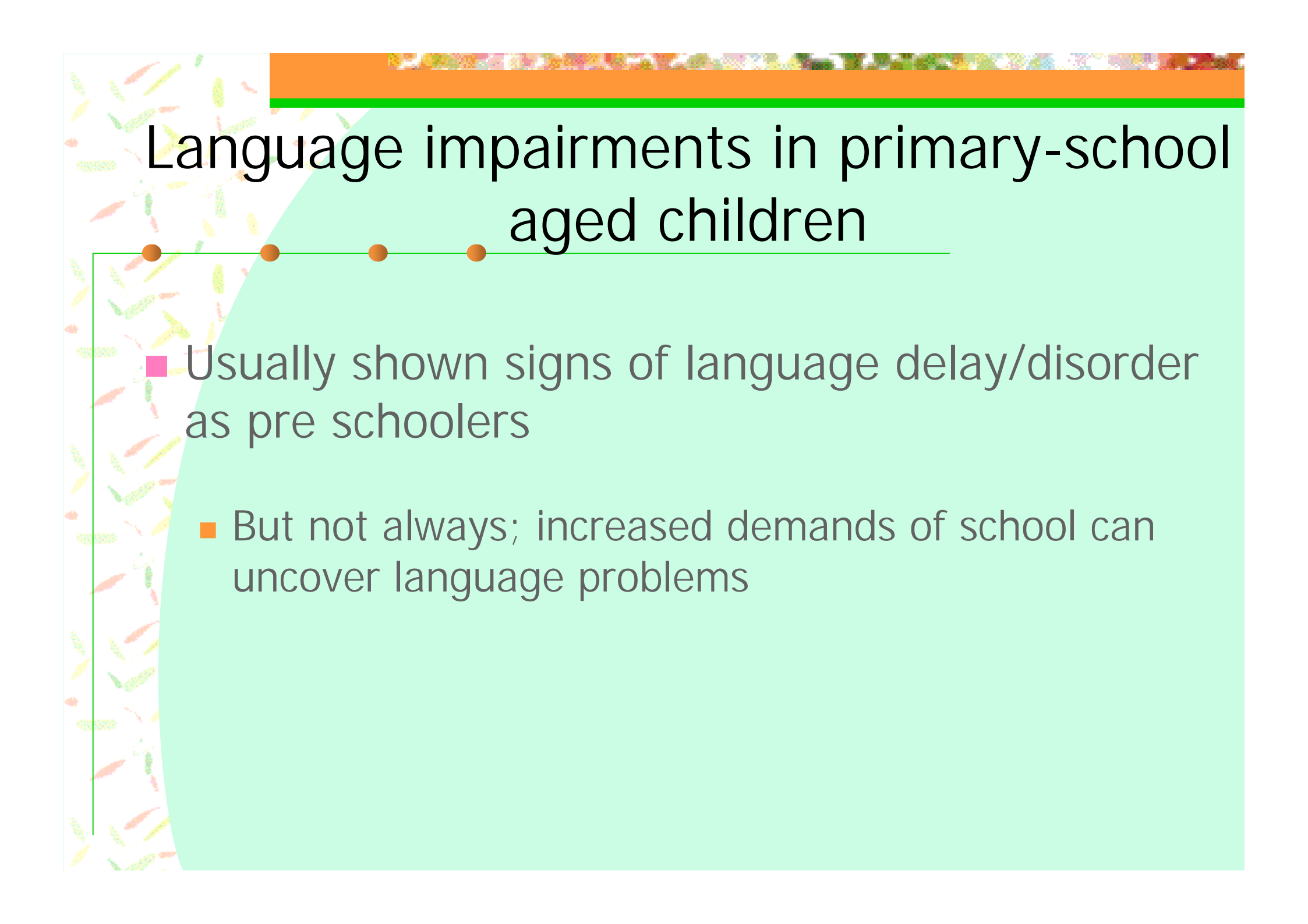


"Language difficulties in upper primary-school children; those 'difficult' 8-12 year olds"

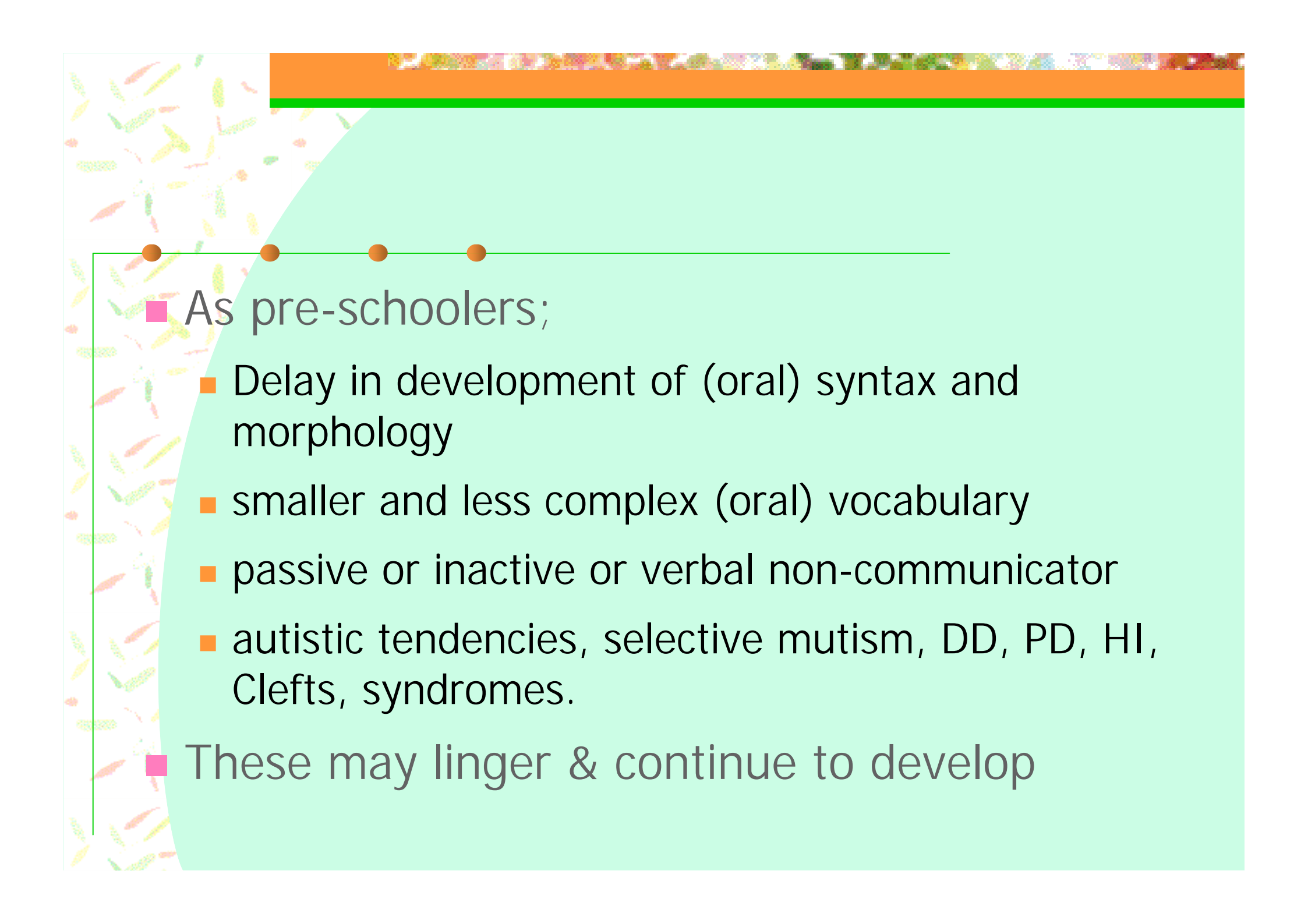
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Language impairments in primary-school aged children

- Usually shown signs of language delay/disorder as pre schoolers
 - But not always; increased demands of school can uncover language problems



- As pre-schoolers;

- Delay in development of (oral) syntax and morphology
- smaller and less complex (oral) vocabulary
- passive or inactive or verbal non-communicator
- autistic tendencies, selective mutism, DD, PD, HI, Clefts, syndromes.

- These may linger & continue to develop

School-aged language characteristics

- Enormous change in social and cognitive development across this time (6-12 years)
- Need to develop literacy – specific language mode and uses, not oral language written down or only code deciphered
- Development of oral language as a consequence of literacy
- The school as a cultural language environment

School-aged language impairment characteristics

■ Syntax

- Usually no overt errors in expressive syntax;
 - possible exceptions - comparatives and super-latives, derivational terms (eg, *unreliable* vs *dis-*).
- More common expressive syntax problem - *mazes* - ie, get lost in expressive clause complexes

(contd) Syntax

- there may be problems with comprehension and use of complex syntax; eg
 - conditional clauses (*if-then; before do X, do Y*),
 - complexity of verb phrases (*modality, participles, postmodifying infinitives*),
 - postmodification (clauses and phrases),
 - adverbs



■ Semantics

- vocabulary tends to be simpler and less complex than peers – increasing gap over time
 - acquisition of new vocabulary tends to be from literary sources from this age on
- fewer cognitive verbs; markers of literate language, possibly metalinguistic?
- may have problems following complex and multiple directions

(contd.) Semantics

- *word finding difficulty* (WFD) is common;
 - noted by searching, circumlocutions, substitution, 'empty' terms (*thing, stuff, sort of, ya know, kinda*)
- School aged LIC tend to have problems with
 - multiple meanings,
 - ambiguous meanings,
 - figurative meanings,
 - slang, metaphor and humour.

(contd.) Semantics

- problems with some 'concept' vocabulary;
 - time,
 - relative dimensions,
 - early maths concepts such as *same/different*,
 - fine distinctions of prepositional usages ("*in the box, in the cupboard, in time*")
- tendency to remain concrete for longer. Poorer at dealing with decontextualised language and abstract matters



■ Pragmatics/ Communicative Uses of Language

- often seen to be less 'imaginative' -
 - less exploration using language,
 - less elaborated symbolic play
 - (interacting with gender features - 3-4:1 male).
- may be poor at providing sufficient presuppositional information
- fail to pick up the cues for the need to repair; poor at reading the nonverbal cues, including facial expression

(*contd.*) Pragmatics/Communicative Uses

- May not adequately repair when needed;
 - difficulties working out what is needed
 - difficulties rephrasing
 - difficulties finding alternative words
 - difficulties with explanation
- may not extend topics of conversation
 - tend not to provide comments, or elaborate from personal experience - relate one event to another

(contd.) Pragmatics

- often not good at variations (in codes and registers) and the emotional and relationship content of talk; big peer-group consequences
 - Likely to appear rude, tactless, hostile, or passive (eg, using wrong register to teacher or other authority figures)
 - appear to provide minimal talk when more is needed
 - the complex social world of the 'popular kids at school' is therefore difficult to manage

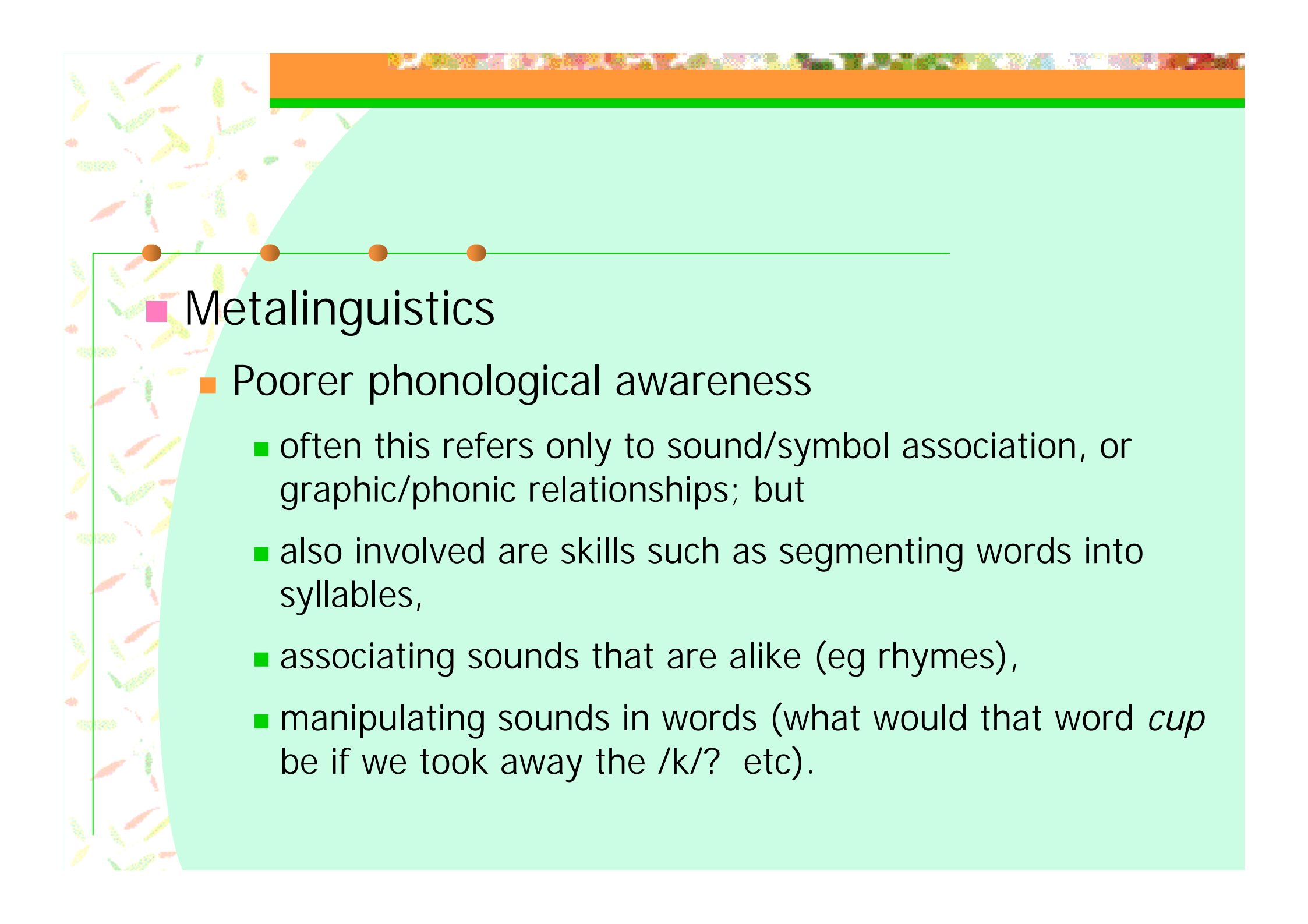


■ Text levels

- narratives and recounts tend to be less complex; problems with forms and linguistic resources used.
- poorer at drawing inferences between utterances or items
- problems using explanatory language and
- the language of reasoning

(contd.) Text levels

- slower processing time, especially for multiple tasks. May use lots of contextual cues to get by.
- problems with (mental?) organisation.
 - Hence sequencing, ordering, and the logical flow of talk can be problematic.
 - Often cannot remember routines or stick to them, and especially variations (eg different rules in different classrooms).



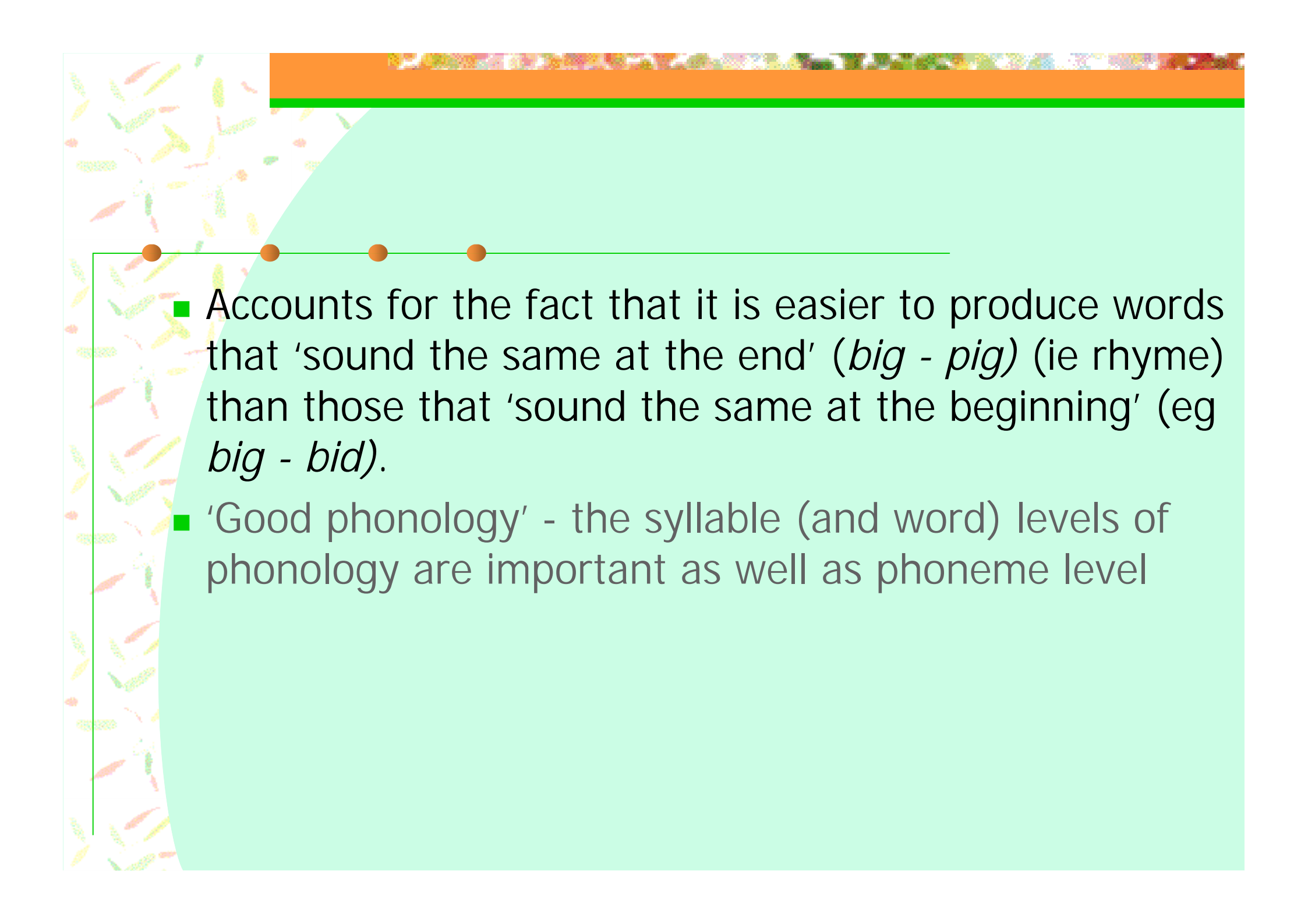
■ Metalinguistics

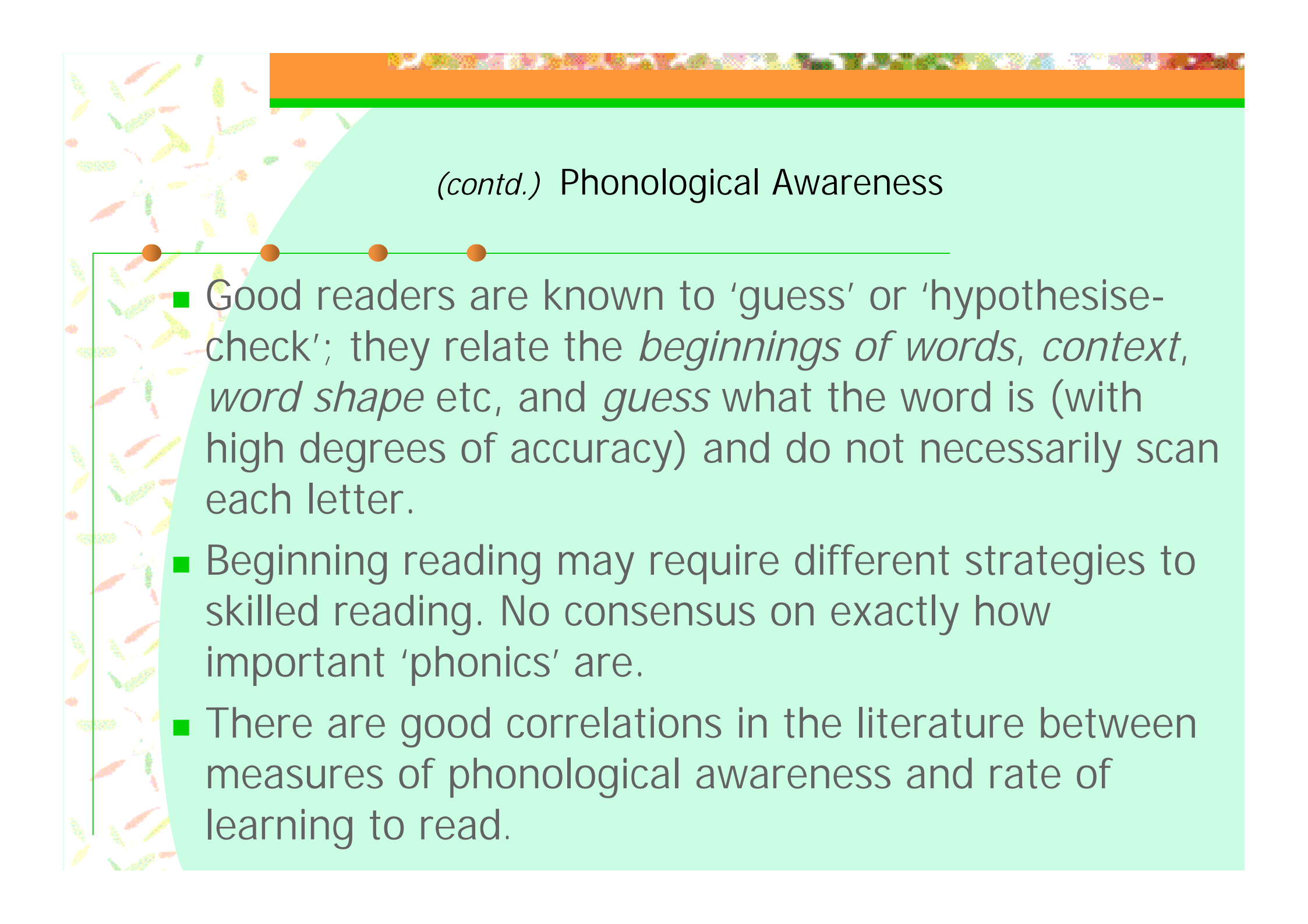
■ Poorer phonological awareness

- often this refers only to sound/symbol association, or graphic/phonic relationships; but
- also involved are skills such as segmenting words into syllables,
- associating sounds that are alike (eg rhymes),
- manipulating sounds in words (what would that word *cup* be if we took away the /k/? etc).

(contd.) Phonological Awareness

- Some confounding – metalinguistic skills may partly *result* from experiences with reading/ writing (“good readers have good m-l measures” *because* of their experience with written language - opportunity to observe sound-symbol matches, etc).
- Also, the assumption that children read by using sound-symbol (grapheme-phoneme) matching can be questioned
 - Goswami - children don't read by treating each phoneme as equal; rather they use *onset-rime*; whereby words are treated as “*the beginning + the rest*”.

- 
- Accounts for the fact that it is easier to produce words that 'sound the same at the end' (*big - pig*) (ie rhyme) than those that 'sound the same at the beginning' (eg *big - bid*).
 - 'Good phonology' - the syllable (and word) levels of phonology are important as well as phoneme level



(contd.) Phonological Awareness

- Good readers are known to 'guess' or 'hypothesise-check'; they relate the *beginnings of words, context, word shape* etc, and *guess* what the word is (with high degrees of accuracy) and do not necessarily scan each letter.
- Beginning reading may require different strategies to skilled reading. No consensus on exactly how important 'phonics' are.
- There are good correlations in the literature between measures of phonological awareness and rate of learning to read.

(contd.) Phonological Awareness

- There is not such good evidence that improving phonological awareness alone leads directly to better reading. Some evidence that it does, and this may be increasing.
- There is better evidence that work on phonological awareness *along with* reading and other aspects of literacy (eg., oral language from the more literate end) improves literacy.
- This is related to the fact that the LI and the LD populations overlap; poorer oral language skills tend to co-occur with poorer literacy. Note: this is *not necessarily causal*.

(contd.) Metalinguistics

- Less awareness of the nature of word meanings and sound relationships - hence puns and ambiguity are not understood
- Less ability to explain *how* or *why* things are said the way they are.
- Extends to awareness of how they do things - metacognitive skills (which are often verbally mediated)

Consequences; social and behavioural

- Major problems with self-esteem and behaviour often appear. Not so common in 5-6 year olds, very common in 8-12s.
- Some may stem from internal factors; LD children may have problems with impulsivity, attention (ADD, ADHD), poor self-monitoring, low tolerance for failure, inability to inhibit.
- nb; girls are more likely to be withdrawn; boys to act out. Easier to overlook girls.
- Incidence of LI in 8-12 year olds is 4:1 boys:girls

(contd.) Consequences; social and behavioural

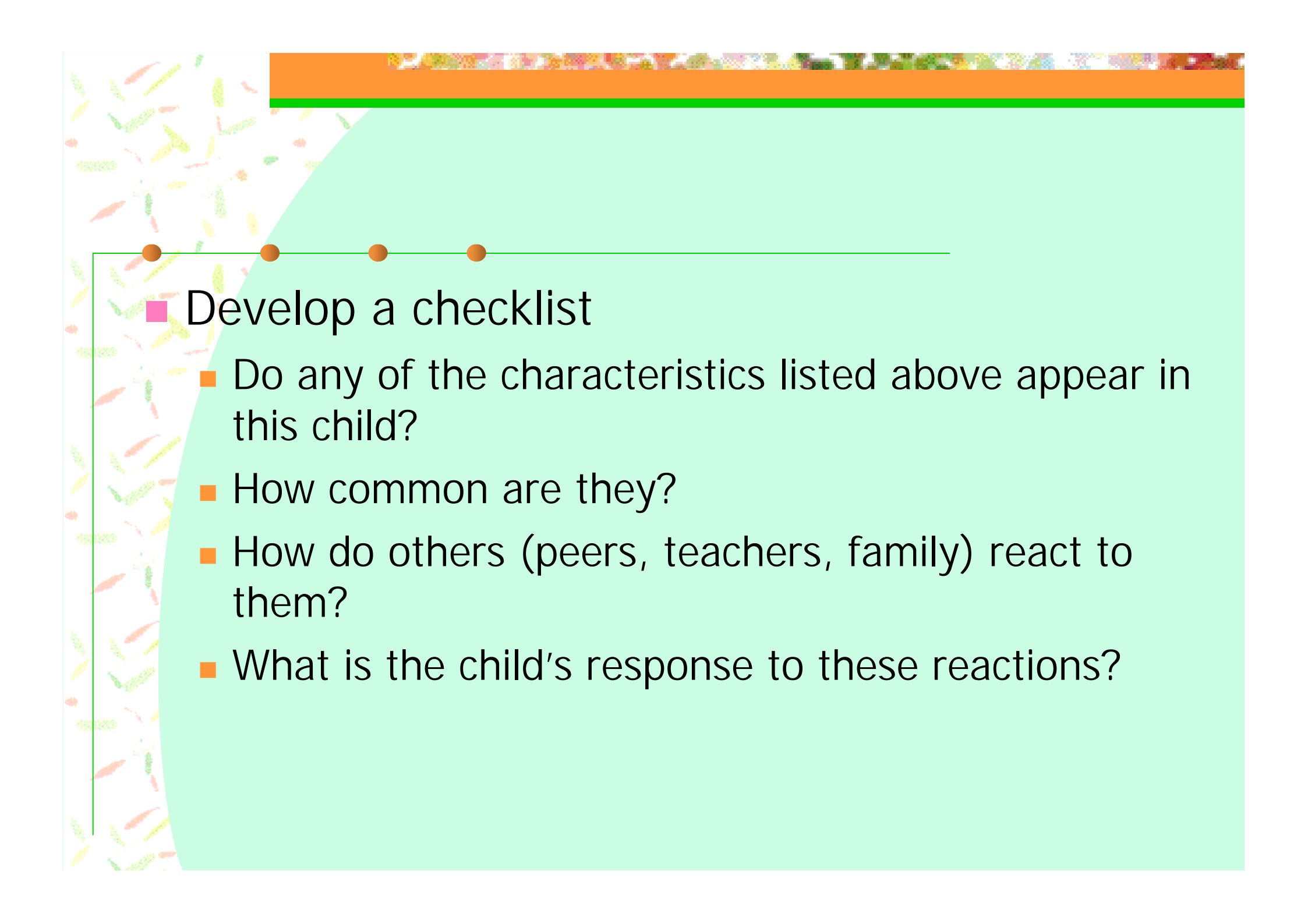
- Many LI kids also are experiencing a lot of failure and frustration as a consequence of the LI which lowers their confidence and leads to poorer behaviour.
- May be labelled disobedient, deaf or stupid because of their comprehension or organisation and sequencing difficulties.

(contd.) Consequences; social and behavioural

- May have difficulty making and keeping friends.
 - may not understand jokes,
 - fail to pick up subtleties of meaning, the social-emotional meanings in talk, of the need for repair etc.
 - may also be clumsy and poor at things the peer group values, such as games and sports; - although some are very good at these things.

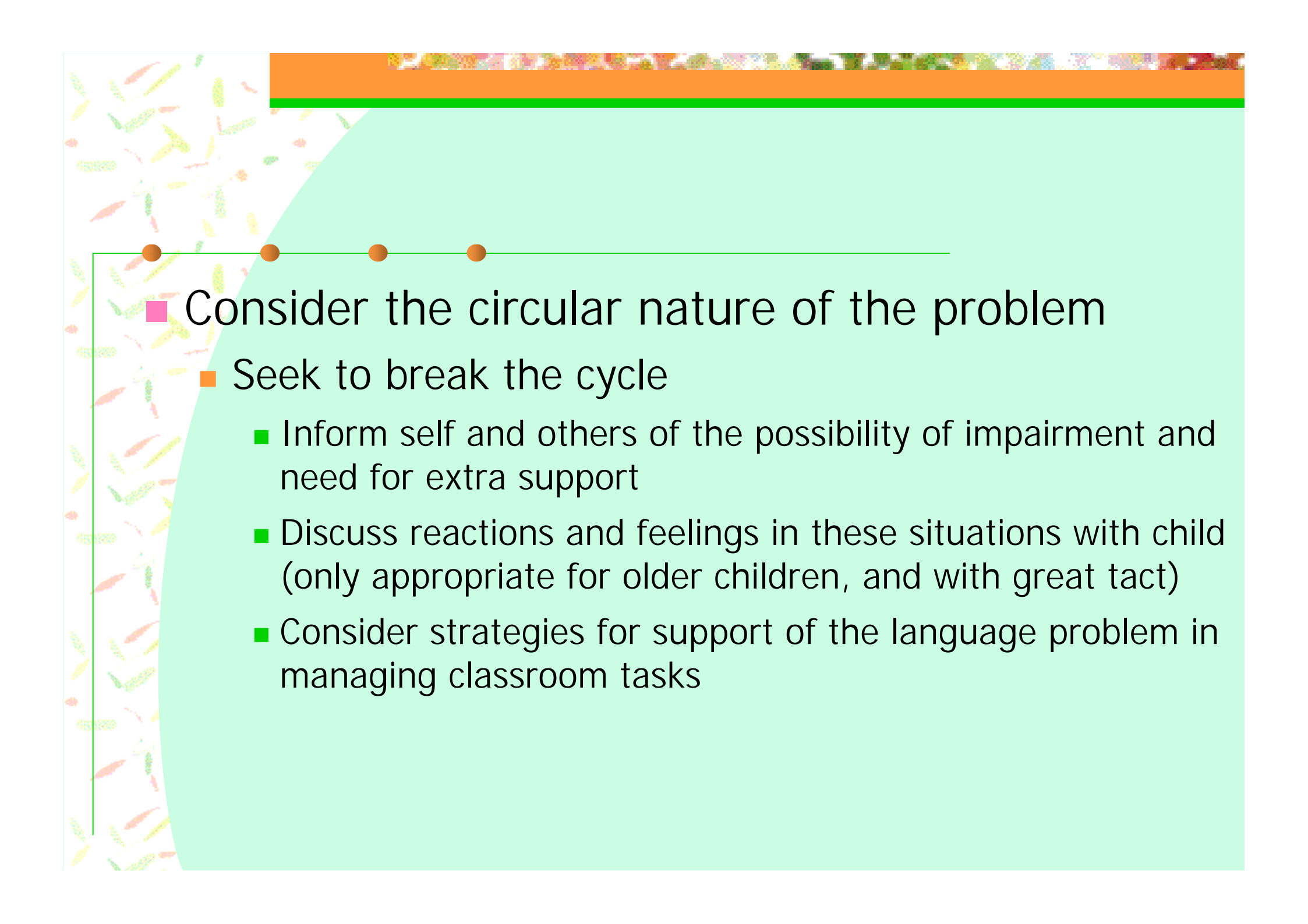
What can be done to help?

- Where possible – enlist the aid of a speech pathologist
 - Collaborative efforts
- Consider the possibility that those behaviourally disordered, really annoying, or non-contributing children have (oral) language processing and expression problems
- Language is not only for school. The child's uses of communication for the purposes of peer interaction, sibling interaction, family operations, and life in the wider world, all must be considered. These are often neglected.



■ Develop a checklist

- Do any of the characteristics listed above appear in this child?
- How common are they?
- How do others (peers, teachers, family) react to them?
- What is the child's response to these reactions?



- Consider the circular nature of the problem

- Seek to break the cycle

- Inform self and others of the possibility of impairment and need for extra support
- Discuss reactions and feelings in these situations with child (only appropriate for older children, and with great tact)
- Consider strategies for support of the language problem in managing classroom tasks



- Consider possible strengths in unusual places

- Clowning
- Acting (out)
- Drawing/schematising
- Oral stories (eg from home)
- But don't necessarily expect any

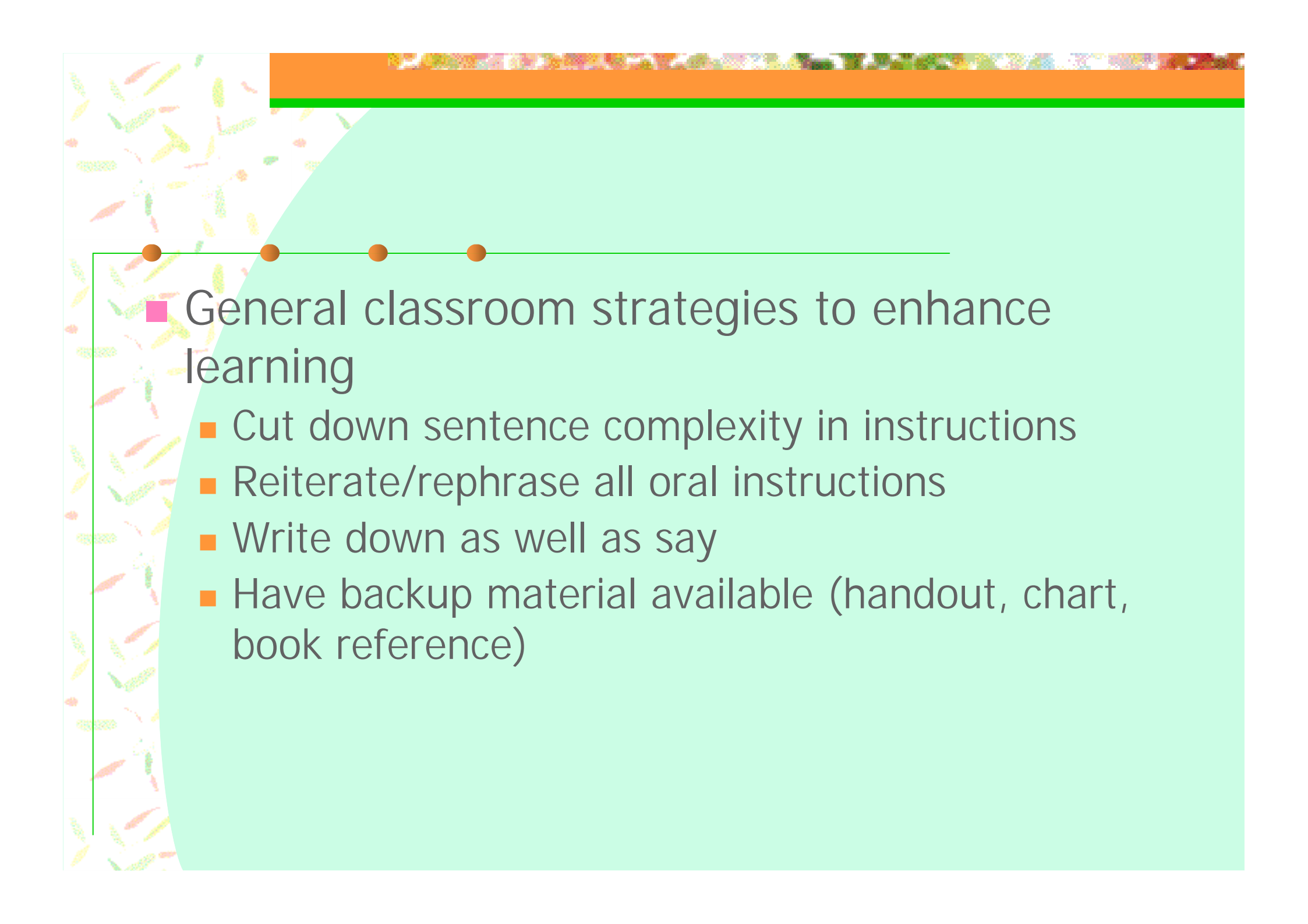
- Consider/observe child's coping strategies

- Watching others
- 'Buddy'
- Copying
- Tolerance of frustration/ alternative activities



- Consider the communicative demands of the classroom

- Degree of abstract talk
- Length of utterances/instructions
- Complexity of utterances/instructions
- Degree of relevance to child's own life
- Amount of contextual support
 - Gesture, explicit reference, pre-supposition
- Amount of redundancy
 - What is said is also written
 - What is communicated is re-iterated



■ General classroom strategies to enhance learning

- Cut down sentence complexity in instructions
- Reiterate/rephrase all oral instructions
- Write down as well as say
- Have backup material available (handout, chart, book reference)



- Making things explicit

- Often (usually?) presume students draw connections for themselves
- Often assume that one (or two) exposures is enough
- Don't take into account organising and memory difficulties

- Build in redundancy

- Scaffolding tasks – small steps, levels of difficulty

- Use visual and other aids



- Guide attention (non-punishment)

- Highlighter

- Pointer

- intonation

- Pre-tell which words to look out for

- Pre-tell strategy – guess

- Prime for success

- Preview tomorrow's lesson – advantage over classmates



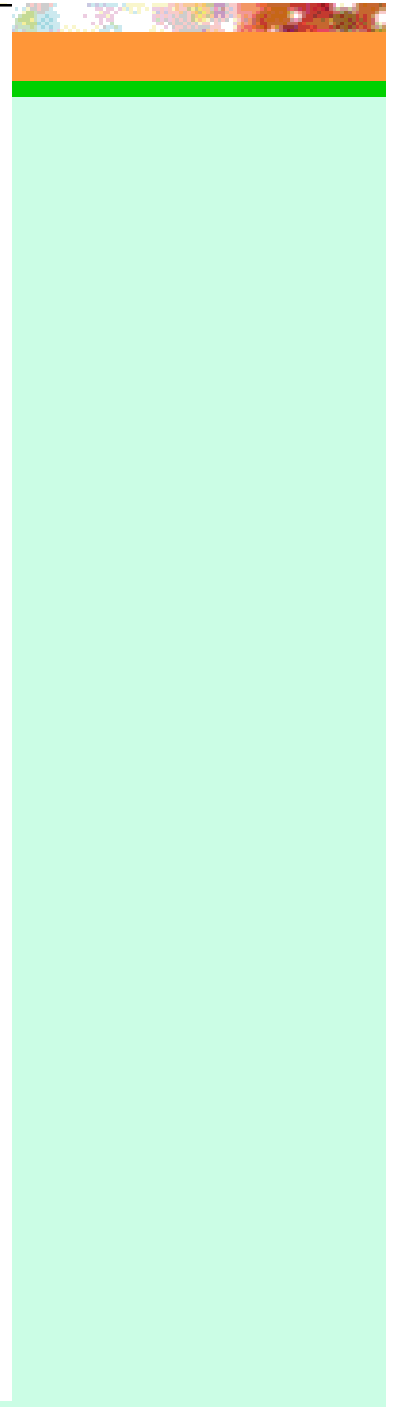
- Specific instruction on purposes

- Tell ch what strategy is being used, why it is important, and how it will be taught and applied
- Think out loud while modelling
- Ch to think out loud; note answers, take actions needed.

(Marshall (91) & Silliman (87) – *Cognitive Behaviour Modification*.)

Specific Interventions

- Specific strategies for working with the language difficulties
 - Involving the student – eg questionnaire



Breaking down levels of difficulty

Book Report Sequence

BOOK REPORT 1

1. Write the title and author of the book.
2. Draw a picture of your favorite part of the story.

BOOK REPORT 2

1. Write the title and author of the book.
2. List the major characters.
3. Tell the first thing that happened in the story.
4. Tell how the story ends.

BOOK REPORT 3

1. Write the title and author of the book.
2. List the major characters.
3. Tell three things, in sequence, that happened in the story.
4. Retell the story with pictures.

BOOK REPORT 4

1. Write the title and author of the book.
2. Tell why a character did something in the story.
3. Relate three things, in sequence, that happened in the story.
4. Retell the story, using pictures.

BOOK REPORT 5

1. Write the title and author of the book.
2. Tell how one of the characters in the story felt.
3. Tell how you know the character felt that way.
4. Retell the story, using pictures.

BOOK REPORT 6

1. Write the title and author of the book.
2. Tell how one of the characters in the story felt.
3. Tell why the character felt that way.
4. Retell the story in your own words.

BOOK REPORT 7

1. Write the title and author of the book.
2. Tell what the problem is in the story.
3. Tell how the characters solved the problem.
4. Retell the story in your own words.

Adding visuals

Title: _____

Author: _____

Characters: _____



Three things that happened:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Retell the story with pictures:

Four empty rounded rectangular boxes arranged horizontally, intended for drawing pictures to retell the story.

Sample book report form for Book Report

Areas of Intervention; vocabulary, complex clauses, word finding etc.

- Vocab: Utilising existing knowledge

A Knowledge Rating Checklist for Words that Do and Do Not Pertain to the Topic "Solar System"

How much do we know about these words?

	CAN DEFINE	HAVE SEEN/HEARD	BEATS ME!
Asteroid		X	
Orbit	X		
Nebula			X
Lunar		X	
Interstellar		X	
Volcanic	X		
Axis		X	
Rotation		X	
Magma			X

Adapted from Blanchowicz, C. (1986). Making connections: Alternatives to the vocabulary notebook. *Journal of Reading*, 29, 643-649.

Predicting vocabulary

- Predict in what part of the story the author will use these words: *boa, butler, disappear, elegant, gazebo, shocked, snickering, wizard*

The setting	The character	The problem	The action	The resolution
<i>elegant</i>	<i>butler</i> <i>wizard</i>	<i>boa</i>	<i>shocked</i> <i>snickering</i>	<i>disappear</i>

Word finding/retrieval



Visual map for the “visiting the post office” script used in working on word retrieval in primary grades. (Adapted from Yoshingaga-Itano, C., and Downey, D. [1986]. A hearing-impaired child’s acquisition of schemata: Something’s missing. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 7, 45-57; Wallach, G., and Miller, L. [1988]. *Language intervention and academic success*. Boston, MA: College Hill.)

Organise words – sounds. Cloze tasks

blatant, blunder, blush, blue, black, blast

When I talk out of turn in class, the teacher gives me a dirty look and I _____.

When someone gives the wrong answer, it's _____ly obvious because the teacher says, "Any other ideas?"

Talking without raising your hand is a _____.

Other phonological cues

Here are pictures of five people in our school. I'm thinking of one whose job has four syllables. (secretary)

Here are pictures of six foods. I'm thinking of one that rhymes with *seen*. (bean)

Here are maps of three countries we've studied. I'm thinking of one that starts with /s/. (Spain)

Working with inferencing

Specific focus on inferencing in stories

1. The fox went out on a chilly night.

What season of the year was it?

2. Then old mother Giggle-gaggle jumped out of bed.

What was she doing before she heard the fox?

3. She cried, "John, John, the gray goose is gone and the fox is on the town."

Who is John?

4. There were the little ones 8-9-10. They said, "Daddy, better go back there again, 'cuz it must be a wonderful town."

Who are the little ones? Have they ever been to town before?

Inferencing on classroom themes

Señora Rodriguez got out her cornmeal. She mixed it carefully with a small amount of water, then rolled the dough into a very thin circle. She filled it with some beans she'd fried, then put it in the oven. What was she doing?

Inferencing between sentences- why does 2 follow 1?

Sam and Dave looked up at the dark and cloudy summer sky.
They decided to listen to the game on the radio.

It looked as if it would rain

*They didn't want to drive all the way into the game
and sit in the wet all afternoon*

It would be more fun to be warm & dry at home

Syntax

- Transferring active into passive
 - Discussing the impact
- Integrating simple into complex

Wilbur climbed up on top of the manure pile.
Wilbur was full of energy and hope.
The rat and the spider were watching Wilbur climb.

- Picture sequences & clause order

Fern held Wilbur before she fed him.
Fern held Wilbur after she fed him.
After she fed Wilbur, Fern held him.
Before she fed Wilbur, Fern held him.

- Paraphrasing – or 'say it a different way'; - *what difference does it make? what if you said it to ... (friend, mother, principal, etc)*

Charlotte wove some words in the web.
Some words were woven in the web by Charlotte.

- Adverbs, auxiliary & modal verb usages
 - Given sentences, choose adverb
 - Change auxiliary/modals – discuss effects, put into different sentences or texts

Conclusions

- There are many general and specific things to do in classrooms to support the language impaired child
- Most of these improve learning for the language normal child as well
- Minimising the negative effects and the cycle of failure
- Teaching strategies to best learn.