

# SHAPE CODING AND DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER (DLD)

A method that combines visual, written, and aural language to teach complex syntax to children with DLD

## WHAT IS SHAPE CODING?

An explicit way to teach grammatical rules in the areas of:

argument structure

syntax

morphology

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

- Uses shapes and colors to explicitly teach grammatical rules
- The **Shape Coding system** underlines individual parts of speech with the basic colors of the **Color Pattern Scheme**

**Red**

Nouns/  
Pronouns

**Orange**

Subordinating  
Conjunction

**Yellow**

Verbs

**Pink**

Det/  
Possessive  
Pronouns

**Purple**

Coordinating  
Conjunction

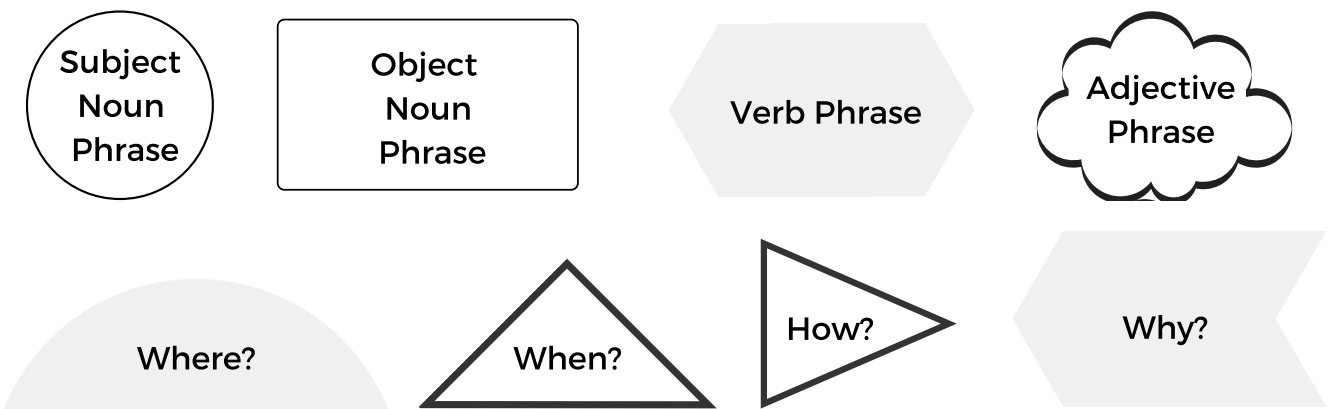
**Blue**

Preposition

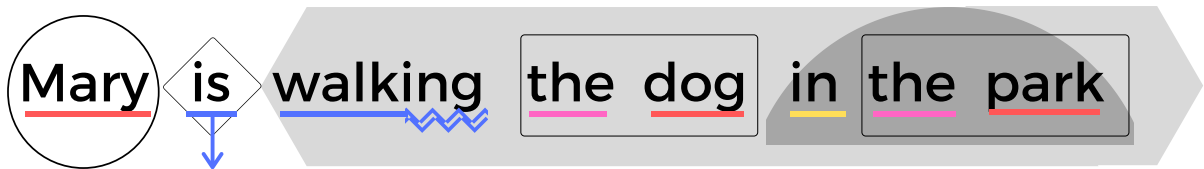
**Green**

Adjectives

- **Arrows** are added to the underlines to denote past, present, or future tense
- **Shapes** are used to differentiate subjects from objects within the sentence
- Shapes can also be used to show the type of sentence (What, How, When, Where), clauses, and phrases



Example:



## WHO NEEDS IT?

Individuals with  
DLD

## WHY?

- Difficulty with **implicit** learning
  - Deficits in expressive and receptive grammar skills
- Respond well to **EXPLICIT** learning

## IS IT EFFECTIVE?

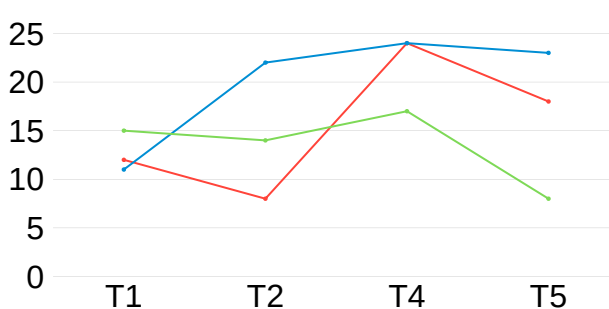
Below is a participant with DLD's progress using Shape Coding from a study done by Calder et al, 2018

KEY

3RD PERSON SINGULAR

REGULAR PAST TENSE

POSSESSIVES



T1 & T2  
BEFORE SHAPE CODING

T4 & T5  
AFTER SHAPE CODING

## HOW CAN I USE IT?

- For more information about Shape Coding, research Susan Ebbels, the creator and researcher behind the efficacy of the system.
- Download the Shape Coding app to use in therapy by scanning **this QR code**



GET THE APP

BY: VERONICA DEJESUS, SARAH DOMBROSKI, AND SIERRAH HARRIS  
IN PART WITH CSCD 713  
RESOURCES

Calder, S. D., Claessen, M., & Leitão, S. (2018). Combining implicit and explicit intervention approaches to target grammar in young children with Developmental Language Disorder. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 34(2), 171-189.  
Ebbels, S. (2014). Effectiveness of intervention for grammar in school-aged children with primary language impairments: A review of the evidence. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 30(1), 7-40.

