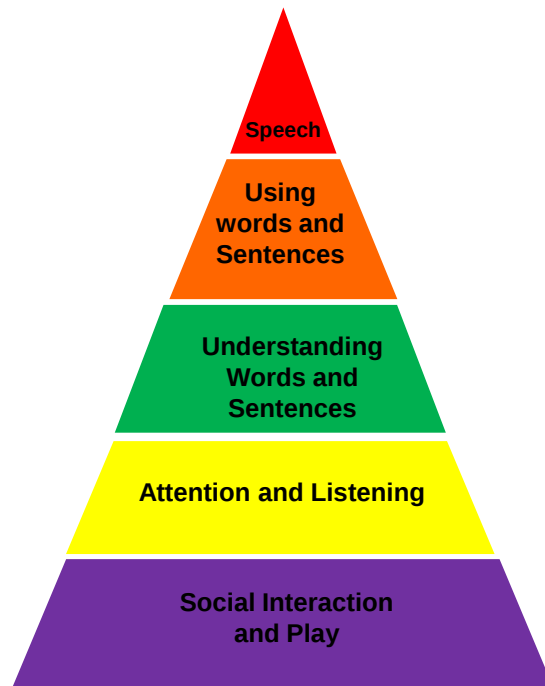


Introduction

Speech and Language Therapist, Claire MacLean, will be giving us lots of helpful tips for supporting communication...some for nursery, some for school age. See the pyramid for some areas we will be chatting about.



Matching your child's language levels

When children are still at school their language is still developing therefore it can be helpful to speak to children in short sentences that *match their level of understanding*. For example, instead of saying 'OK, let's go out now. I need you to find your jumper and your shoes and then we can go to the shop. Can you remember where your shoes are?', you might say 'We're going to the park now – shoes, please'. Using language in this way helps children to focus on the important information.

Sequencing

Children need to understand routines and know that events occur in a certain order before they can start to tell stories and understand the concept of time. Both of these skills are really important for a child at school. There are lots of strategies you can use to support your child's sequencing skills:

- Label and emphasise steps in routines as they are happening e.g. **first**, get your pyjamas on, **next**, brush your teeth, **then**, get your story book, **last**, get in to bed (remember your

language levels when talking about routines – your child may need this to be broken down so they can understand each step).

- Help your child to explain a sequence while they can see what is happening e.g. making a sandwich.
- When they are familiar with the vocabulary for sequences e.g. first, next, last, encourage them to use these when telling you a story.

Early communication

Remember, communication is much more than just words. Look for your child using pointing, facial expression, crying, making sounds, looking and reaching to tell you what they want. Respond to all your child's attempts to communicate with you. When you know what your child wants, help them communicate more by waiting a moment or two before you respond. You may be surprised at what they can do/show you. e.g. offer a little then wait – instead of giving your child several grapes/snacks, give them only one so they need to ask/show you that they want more.

Recalling Information

Some children have difficulty remembering information long enough to use it – for example, listening to an instruction and acting on it or answering questions about information presented orally. These difficulties can have a huge impact in the classroom.

- Keep instructions short – break longer instructions into chunks
- Repeat instructions using the same wording (changing the words gives more to process and remember)
- Ask the pupil to repeat the instruction back to you to show they have listened / remembered

Questions

Try not to ask too many questions as this does not help your child to learn more words.

It is more helpful if you make comments and name things for your child e.g. instead of saying "What's that?" you might say "Look, there's a duck".

Speech

If you find your child's speech difficult to understand, try to figure out what is meant by asking your child to show you, or ask questions (where is it, what does it do?). If you cannot figure out your child's message find a way to end the conversation helpfully e.g. 'maybe we'll work it out later'.

If your child has speech sound difficulties, let them hear clear adult models of words with no pressure to copy these i.e. don't ask them to correct say it again after you. Listen to what your child says rather than how they are saying the sounds.

Play

The best way for your child to develop language is through play –make time each day to play with your child. When playing with your child, keep your own language simple. This will be much easier for them to copy. Name the items your child is looking at or interested in e.g. when looking at a plane in the sky – say "plane!" or "look, plane!"

Questions! We all ask them. When you ask a question it can put pressure on a child especially if they don't understand it or don't have the words to respond. Often we ask children questions we already know the answer to. So think about the questions you are asking today.

- At 3-4 years children start to understand 'who, what and where' questions.
- At 4-5 years children will start to understand 'why' questions
- At age 6, children will begin to understand 'how' and 'when' questions

If your child is having difficulty answering questions, try to keep your questions in the here and now so you can prompt the answer. Avoid asking too many questions and only ask questions you need to know the answer to!

Try not to ask too many questions as this does not help your child to learn more words. It is more helpful if you make comments and name things for your child e.g. instead of saying "What's that?" you might say "Look, there's a **duck**".