

The Importance of Language and Communication

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Speech, Language and Communication needs (SLCN)

- Speech, Language and Communication underpin cognitive and social development which are crucial skills for learning and life.
- There is lots of emphasis and it is generally assumed that most of the development of speech and language skills takes place in the early years. **However**, development continues for all throughout school, adolescence and into adulthood.
- Young people with SLCN have been shown to be at greater risk of developing emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, mental health issues, lower academic achievement, and school performance failure. (ICAN issue 10)

Speech, Language and Communication needs (SLCN)

Aspects of language that develop during secondary school:

- Complex verbal reasoning – why, what next?
- Understanding and using figurative language -idioms, multiple meanings, sarcasm, jokes
- More involved story telling
- Increasingly sophisticated social communications – persuasion, negotiation, ability to switch styles.

The teenage years are a time in which there is massive brain development and restructuring where certain language related tasks develop, these include:

- Selective attention control
- Working memory
- Problem solving

The secondary classroom

- Language is a fundamental skill for participation!
- 7% of our communication is to do with *the words we use*
- 38% of our communication is *the way we say things* eg, the volume we use, our tone of voice, how clearly we speak
- 55% of our communication is our *body language*. People form impressions of others in the first 7 seconds of meeting them based on their non-verbal behaviour and body language. (Kelly & Sains, 2009)
- 37% of teacher instructions contain multiple meanings – of which 20% use at least one idiom.

Activity

- Sit in small groups of between 5-6 people
- Close your eyes
- Talk about your weekend in your groups

Reflection

- How did you find the task?
- How did you feel?
- Was it difficult?
- Why was it difficult?

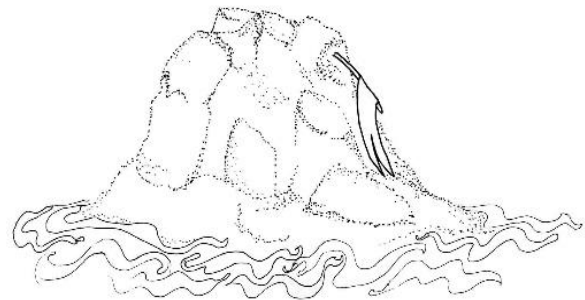
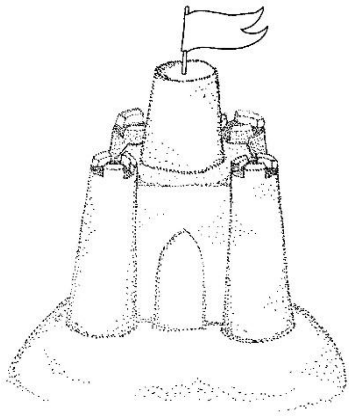
Adult - Student Interaction

Can the quality of the interaction between an adult and student affect how a student develops and uses his/her language and communication skills?

Adult - Student Interaction

The quality of the adult-child interaction can influence a child's opportunities to communicate and can facilitate language development (Fey, 1986)

Are you a communication creator or a communication crumbler?



Stop, Listen, Respond

- 1. Stop – wait 10 seconds



- 2. Listen



- 3. Respond

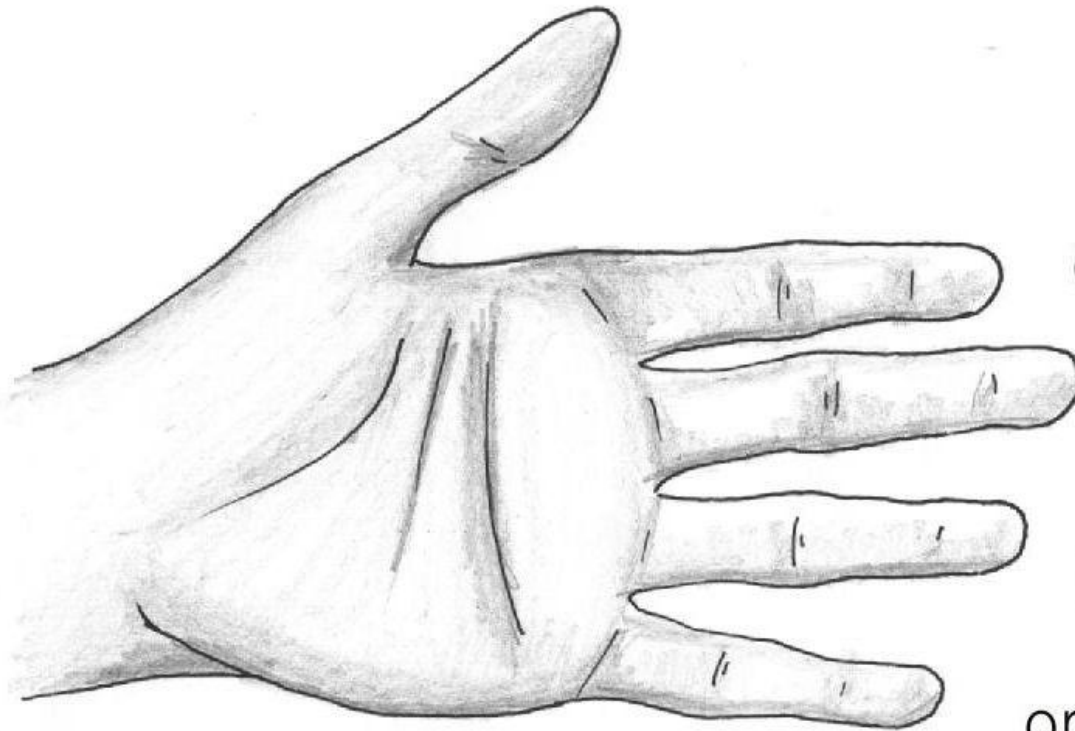
Repeat what was said
but use a correctly
structured sentence

Expand by
adding a short,
simple idea

Ask only a few questions

One question to four...

Remember the hand rule...



Comments

Repetitions

Expansions

or Explanations

Memory and Learning !

In order for us to learn we must retain, in order for us to retain we must attend!

- Listening and concentration has a big impact on a students engagement in interaction and learning
- Being able to listen or attend to one source of information and ignore others is a skill that has to be learned.

Strategies to support listening and attention skills include:

- Focus a child attention before giving instructions
- Use an appropriate level of language ie. short simple sentences, chunking/ rephrasing information.
- Encourage the student to explain what he/she has heard
- Observe the child's response to check that the information has been understood
- Reduce backgrounds noise/ distractions

Short Term Memory (STM)

- Holds information while we process it
- Receives information from our senses
- Filters through information to help us focus on the important parts
- Tries to make sense of incoming information
- Lasts for 20 seconds – once its gone its gone!

Observations that suggest STM difficulties:

- Cannot remember complete directions
- Asks for information to be repeated
- Cannot retain information whilst having to manipulate it, as in mental maths but can do tasks better when they are written down

Strategies to support STM

- Pause between sentences to allow to for processing
- Use visual supports; pictures, gestures etc
- Practice auditory sequential memory activities such as , I went shopping...- this game can be varied to suit any topic ie, I went to a medieval castle and I saw...., sound pairs games, repeating sequences etc (IPAD)
- By secondary it is possible to improve the efficiency of STM but not increase the capacity of the store

Long Term Memory (LTM)

For information to be passed from the STM into the LTM it must be used.

Memory strategies that can enhance retention include:

- Writing it down
- Note taking
- Drawing it
- Mind mapping
- Vocabulary maps
- Explaining information to someone else or discussing it
- Repeating information over and over again!

REMEMBER USE ALL INPUT CHANNELS:

- Associating it with information which sounds similar – **Auditory association**
- Associating it with information which looks similar – **Visual association**
- Associating it with personal information
- Associating it with movement or acting something out.

Sharing information about memory skills will help all students understand how they can retain knowledge and become more independent in their ability to learn effectively.

What strategies can we use to help a student to understand in terms of the amount of information and the sentence length?

1. Ensure that the student is attending before speaking to him
2. Be aware of the complexity of the language used with the student
3. Be aware of the language demands of a whole class activity
4. Use a multi-sensory approach
5. Pause between points to allow thinking time
6. Encourage use of strategies to process information
7. Encourage the child to tell you when he does not understand
8. Use slight stress to emphasise key words and use Non verbal communication
9. Avoid using sarcasm and metaphors.

Chunk ... give bite-sized information



Chill ... wait 10 seconds



Check ... information understood?



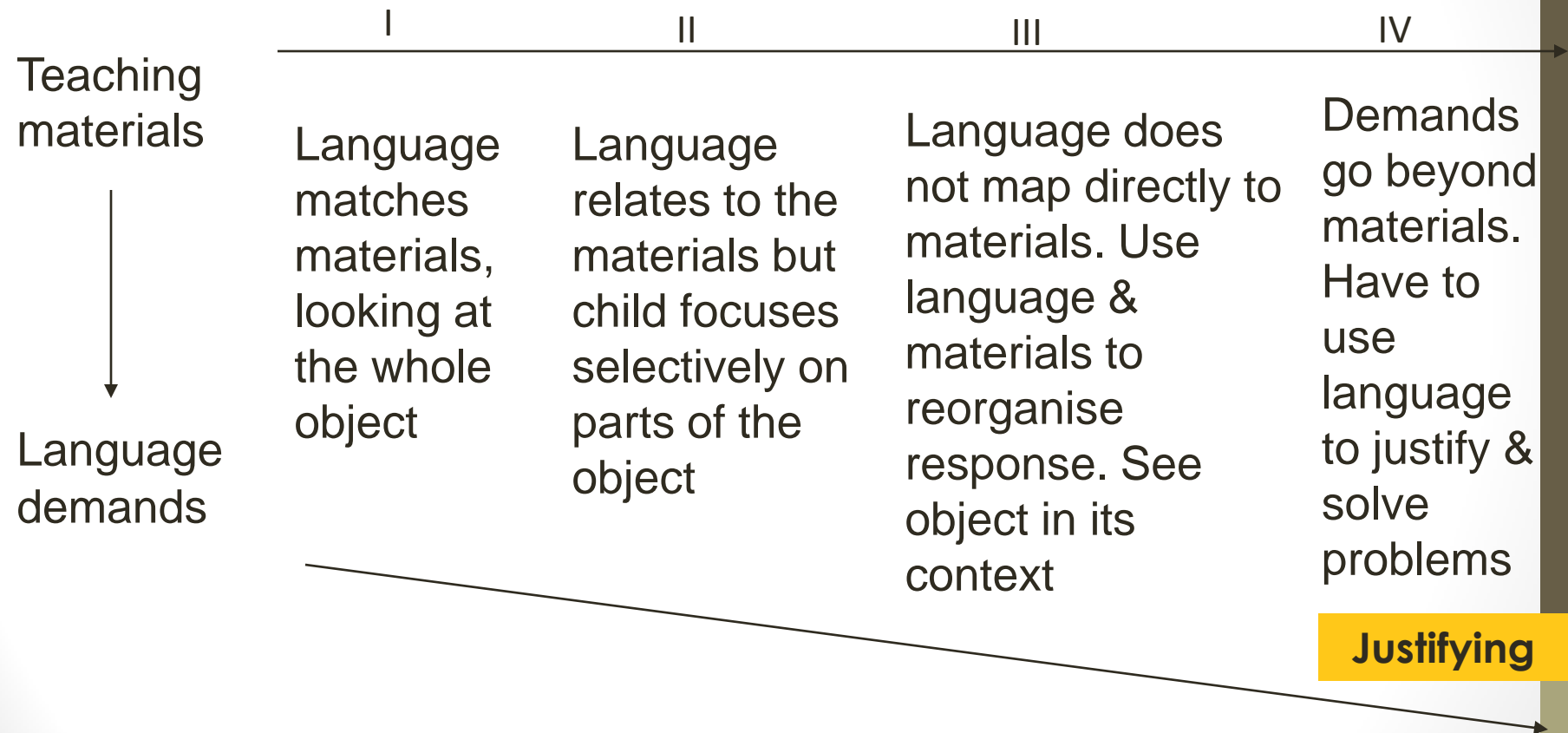
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Elklan
giving help with communication

Asking the right questions at
the right time....supporting
understanding.

How hard can it be?

Language for Learning Model



Blank levels can help us to.....

- Assess the types of question and directions a student understands
- Assess a student's verbal reasoning skills
- Ensure realistic expectations of the student's understanding
- Modify our language to make sure the question is at an appropriate level for the student.
- Develop a student's verbal reasoning skills by working on the next stage
- Support learning across different curriculum areas
- Manage issues of discipline more effectively

Blank is highly flexible and can be used in all situations with all ages

Supporting the development and learning of new vocabulary

Learning new words

Students may have a poor vocabulary due to:

- General learning difficulties
- Limited life experiences
- Specific difficulties learning and remembering new words
- Problems accessing words stored in the memory
- Feeling demotivated or disinterested in the topic or learning process.

Limited vocabulary causes difficulties:

- Understanding the full meaning of what is said
- Extending knowledge through lessons because earlier foundation language and learning has not been understood
- Learning through reading because the vocabulary is a barrier to understanding the text.
- Expressing their ideas clearly
- Writing down their ideas as evidence of improved knowledge. Have the confidence needed to feel they can succeed.

How do students learn words?

Older children/students are expected to learn words through reading and writing

- Books provide opportunities to experience a wider range of words but learning through reading is harder

The student has to:

- Decode the word
- Recognise that the word is not known
- Extract meaning for the sentence which means reading and understanding the other words
- Remember the new information.

All this requires:

- Concentration
- Self-awareness
- Motivation
- Language skills

In conclusion

Reading can support vocabulary development
but many students need additional strategies.

Promoting vocabulary development

1. Being Word Wise

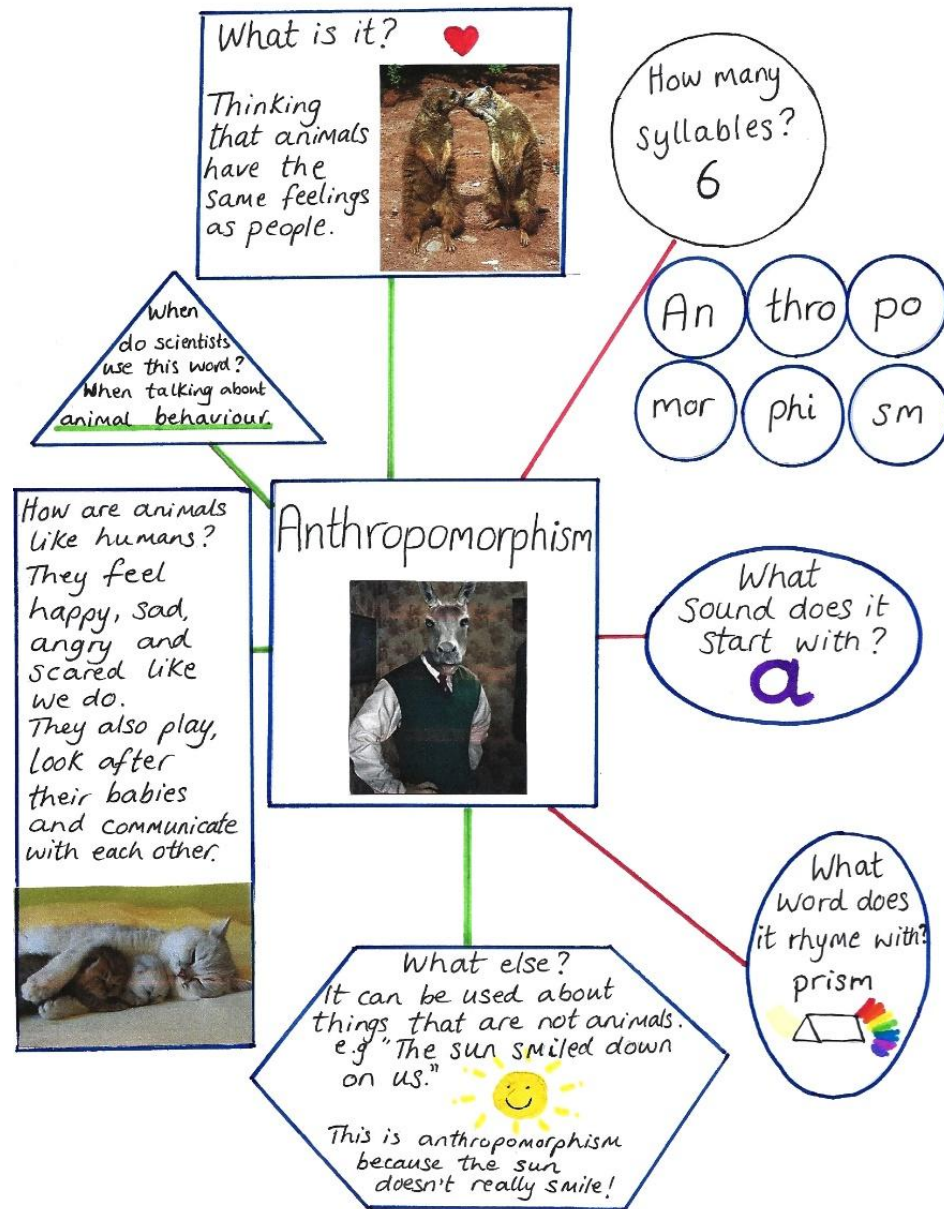
- Strengthen general knowledge about the word (semantic awareness)

‘Think of meaning’

- Heighten knowledge about the structure of words (phonological awareness)

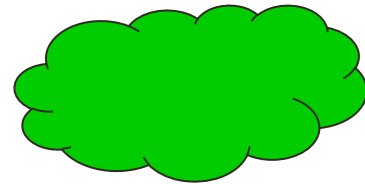
‘Think of sound’

Word Map



Word Wise Quickie

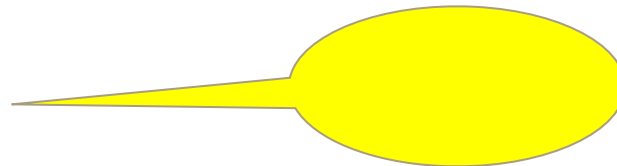
Think of meaning



Think of sound



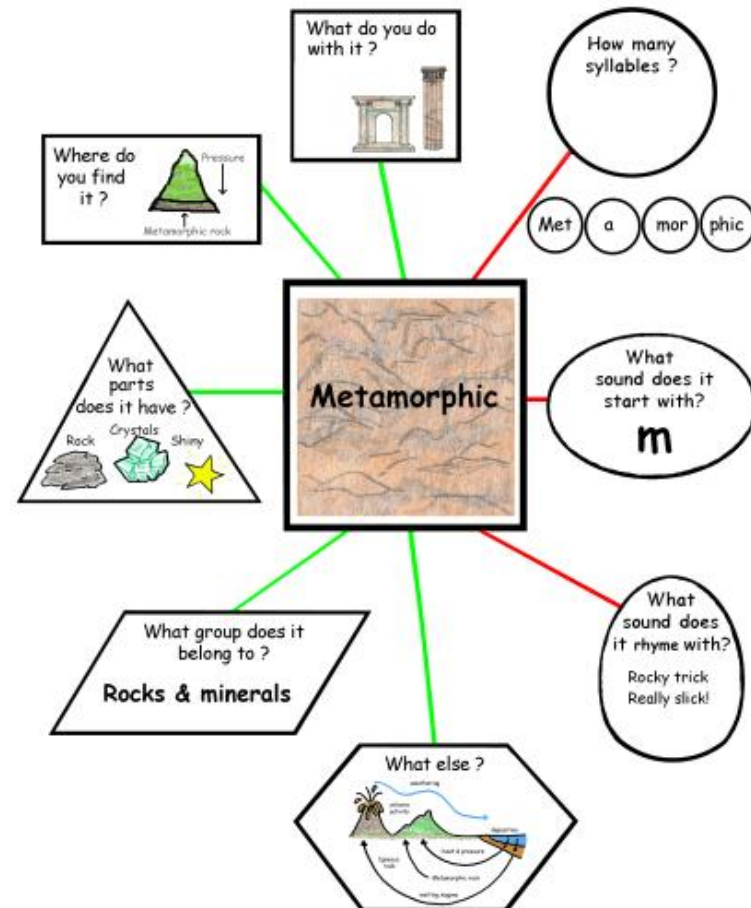
Think of a sentence



Word Investigations

- Word Map

- Word Storm



Using words to express ideas

SO, to use words in spoken language we need to:

- Know the word well
- Recall the word when needed
- Use the word appropriately in a sentence
- Communicate the idea in a variety of contexts
- Be motivated to use the word
- Be given opportunities and encouragement to use the word **over and over again!**
- **Most important is to have a good understanding of the word.**

Social and Emotional Communication

- It is also important to focus on the associated social and emotional aspects of SLCN at secondary school such as friendships and independence.
- For some young people with SLCN who present with good 'surface' language skills this can often be overlooked.
- Children with social communication difficulties often struggle to understand the communication of others and communicate effectively with them. In fact, a child with a social communication difficulty may not see any reason to communicate with other people.
- Children with social communication difficulties have more complex communication challenges than straightforward speech and language difficulties. Characteristically, they can find it hard to interpret social behaviour and imagine another individual's state of mind. Reluctance to interact with the world may be evident in the way they fail to make eye contact, use hand gestures, or understand body language.

Impacts for children with social communication difficulties

- Difficulties understanding friendships and relationships
- Difficulties building and maintaining positive relationships
- Difficulties understanding the emotions of others
- Difficulties reading facial expressions
- Difficulties expressing or regulating their own emotions
- Difficulties understanding the intentions of others
- Difficulties understanding or accepting the thoughts and opinions of others (TOM)
- Difficulties reading and applying appropriate body language
- Sensory challenges

How can we most effectively support children with social communication difficulties.... ?

Comic strip conversations..

- Help children to improve their pragmatic and interaction skills
- Devised by Carol Gray
- Help individuals with social communication difficulties understand what to say in a conversation and to identify thoughts and feelings of others
- Based on the theory that visualisation and visual supports are useful in teaching children with social communication difficulties (Grandin, 1992)
- Help children to identify beliefs and motivations of others
- They emphasise the thoughts and feelings as being as important as the words and actions in an interaction

What are they and how do we use them?

A conversation between two or more people that incorporates simple drawings that are designed to

1. Illustrate ongoing communication
 2. Help children understand conversations better
- Normally the comic strip conversation is about something the child is finding difficult and so it provides him/her with insight and a way forward when he/she finds themselves in a similar situation eg, starting a conversation, making friends, not interrupting.
 - Encourage the child to do the drawing and guide the child by asking some or all of the following questions:

Where are you? Who else is here? What are you doing? What happened? What did you say? What did others say? What did others think when you said that?

Basic principles to remember when using comic strip conversations

- Allow the child to take the lead in the conversation
- The adult role is to guide
- Encourage the child to write/talk/draw most of the time
- Initially the conversation may seem more like an interview with the child talking/drawing in response to the adult. The goal is to move towards a conversation
- Use colours to represent feelings and emotions
- Share the adult's perspective with the child – aim is to reach a balance between finding out what the child thinks at the same time as sharing accurate social information.

Involvement of parents!

- KEY
- Vital source of support socially and emotionally as well as academically.
- Often have different views of young people's communication strengths and needs because of their knowledge of them over time.

Can be difficult to maintain effective relationships but highly important!

Any questions?

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