

# 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)

# Language difficulties impacting young people:

- Using the right words to express themselves
- Using the right words and sentences to tell a story
- Making themselves understood
- Being able to listen to large amounts of language in the classroom, and understand what it means
- Being able to follow long instructions, often containing 3 or more key elements
- Being able to process language meaningfully from different sources e.g. Visual/auditory/written/spoken
- Adapt their own use of language in a range of different situations
- Complex verbal reasoning – why, what next?
- Understanding and using figurative language -idioms, multiple meanings, sarcasm, jokes

# Impacts for young people 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.... ?**

# 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?

# The secondary classroom

- Language is a fundamental skill for participation!
- 7% of our communication is to do with *the words we use* (*Verbal language*)
- 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.

# Adult - Student Interaction

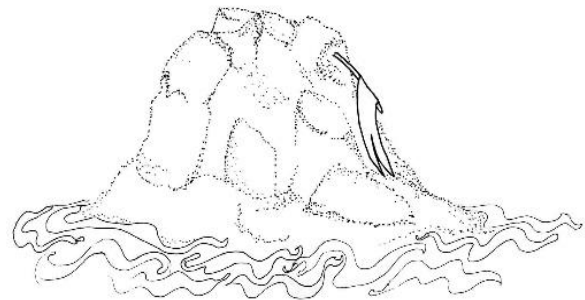
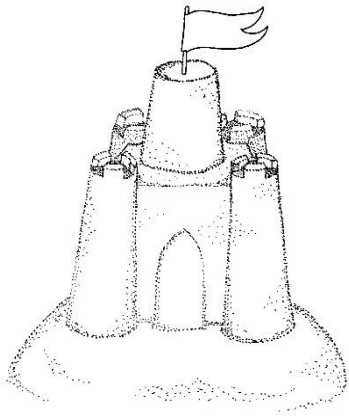
Can the quality of the interaction between an adult and student affect how a student develops and uses language and communication skills?



# 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

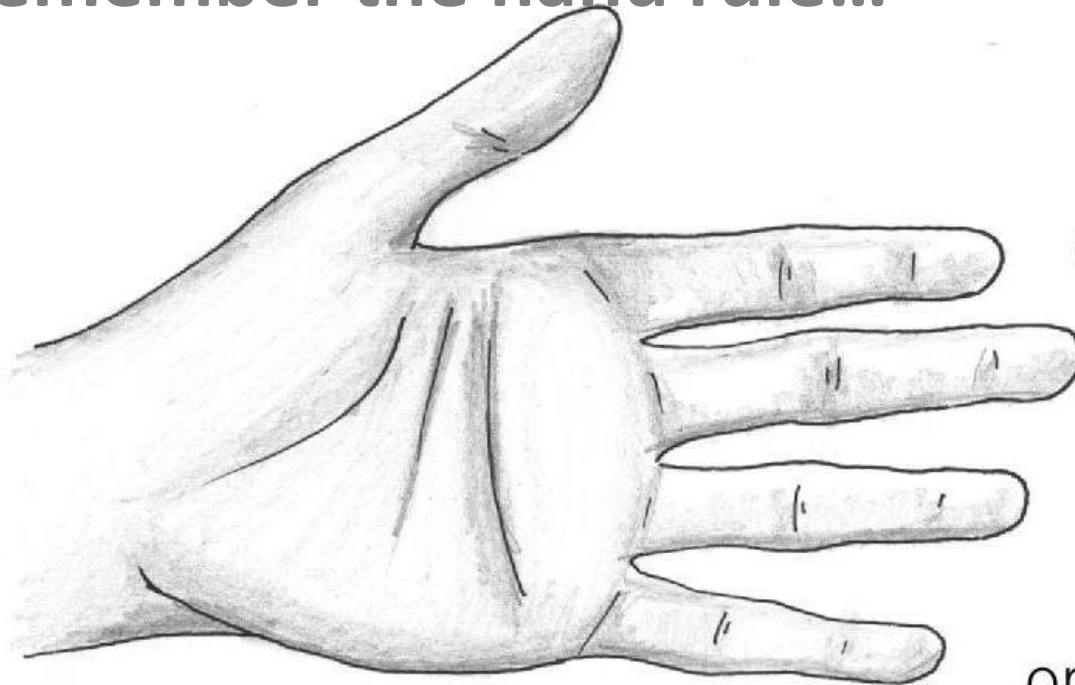
Repeat what was said  
but use a correctly  
structured sentence

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

# 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.

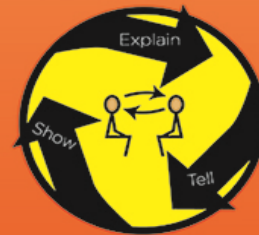
Chunk ... give bite-sized information



Chill ... wait 10 seconds



Check ... information understood?



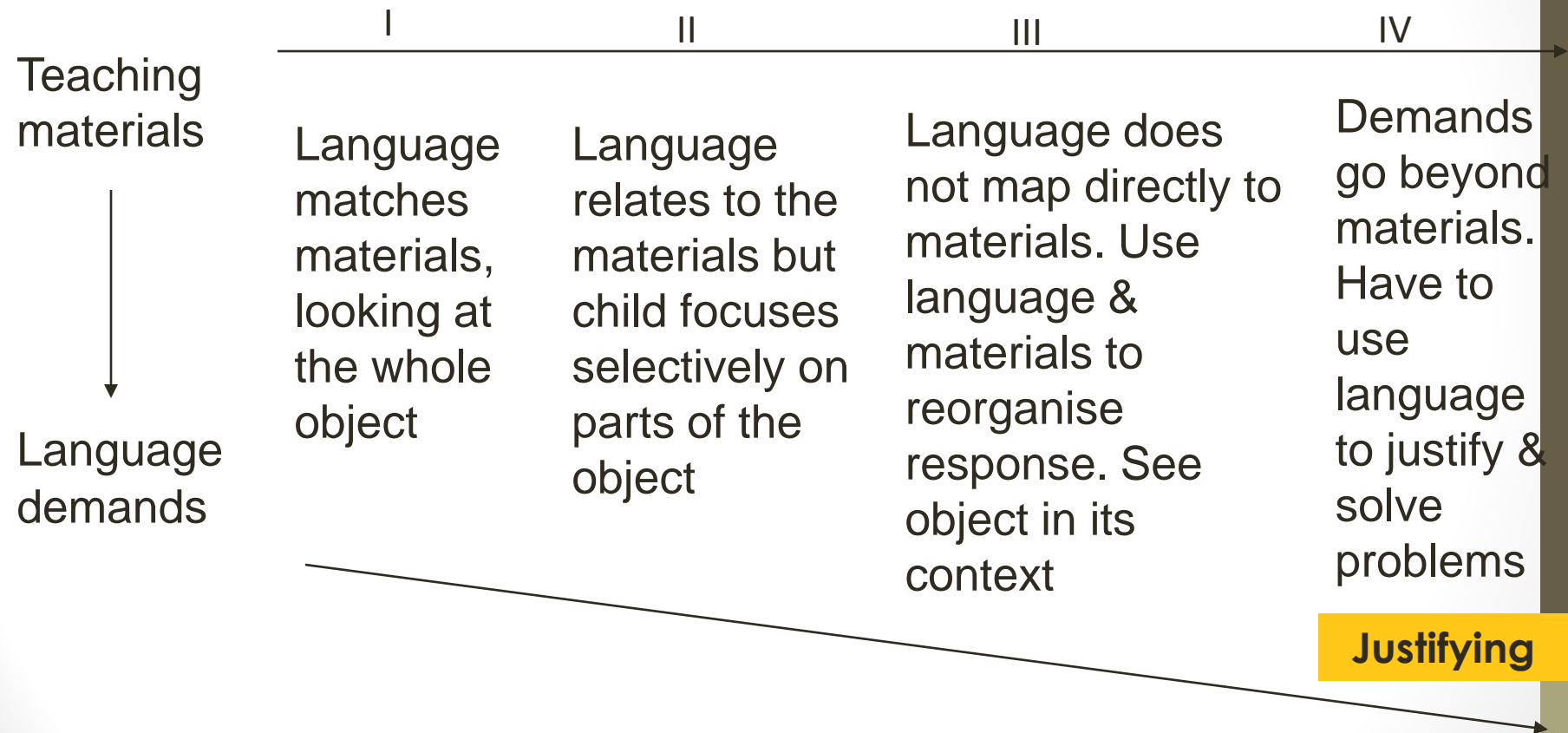
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Eiklan  
along with communication

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**



# 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 e.g. 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.

# Any questions?

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