2.0 ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

2.1 ENCOURAGING APPROPRIATE ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION

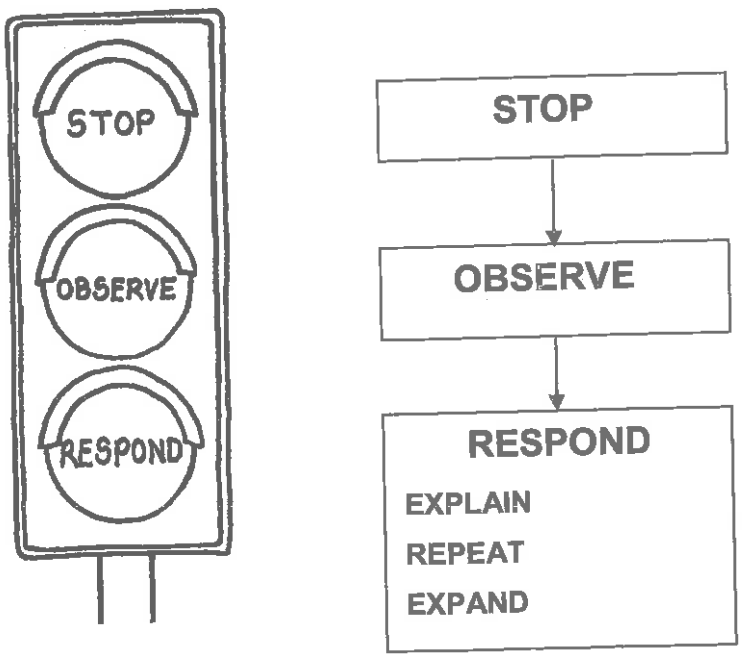
The quality of the adult-child interaction can influence a child's opportunities to communicate and can facilitate language development (Fey, 1986).

Follow the child's lead

Following the child's lead gives a strong signal that you are interested in what the child is doing. It increases the likelihood of your language being focused on the child's point of interest and it helps the child to sustain his concentration.

- Observe the child playing when he has access to a wide range of toys. Watch what he plays with and note his preferences.
- On another occasion, provide a choice of suitable toys using your observation of his preferences.
- Wait for the child to play with <u>his</u> choice. Let the child lead the play. You join in by copying the child or playing as he indicates.
- If the play becomes very repetitive, initially let him lead then model slightly different ways of playing with the toys by playing alongside the child.

While following a child's lead, Stop, Observe and Respond



STOP

Stop encouraging the child to do what you want to do. Instead let the child lead the play and choose what he would like to do.

OBSERVE

Watch and observe the child. This reinforces the idea of letting the child lead. It shows that you are interested in what the child is doing and it will make your responses more relevant and appropriate. While watching, make note of any attempts to communicate. Treat these attempts, however approximate, as meaningful communications and respond accordingly.

RESPOND

Respond by modelling language which is useful for the child. Respond by:

- **Explaining** = describe what the child is doing or looking at using short, simple sentences which are 2 or 3 words longer than the sentences the child would use himself. If the language matches the child's interest, he is more likely to listen and absorb the information.
- **Repeating** = repeat what the child says but use a correctly structured and articulated sentence.
- **Expanding** = repeat what the child says but add 1or 2 words either at the end of the sentence or within the sentence.
- Also see the advice about 'Modelling' on page 66.

MONITOR THE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS AND DIRECTIONS USED

Children with delayed language development often play quietly. As competent speakers we hate silence so we often fill these gaps with questions. Questions are important to develop a child's understanding but we need to be aware of the **quality** and **quantity** of questions. Questions are not always helpful because they may not relate to the child's train of thought, so, depending on his level of attention (see chapter 3), he may not be able to listen to unrelated information. Questions and directions tend to mean that the adult is leading and not the child.

When asking questions:

- Avoid asking question that you know the answer to.
- Avoid asking closed questions e.g. Do you want to play with the cars? or Is the man buying petrol? A closed question usually involves responding with 'yes' or 'no' or giving a one word answer.

- Consider the child's level of understanding. Does the child understand the type of question? (see page 43)
- Is the question too long?
- Don't use multiple questions e.g. 'What are you going to do after pre-school? Are you going home or are you going shopping?' Multiple questions usually arise when the adult realises that the first question was too difficult and quickly tries to rephrase it! The combination of the questions is often more confusing!
- The question should relate to what the child is doing or looking at. This means that the child will still be leading and that the question is more likely to be relevant to the child's train of thought.
- Ask a question and **wait** at least for three seconds and possibly up to ten seconds. Young children need time to decide what to say and plan an answer.
- The desirable ratio of questions and directions to comments which either explain what the child is doing, repeat what the child says or expand the child's utterance by adding a few extra words, is one question to every four comments. The 'hand rule' is useful to remember this; the thumb is your one question to every four fingers of comments, explaining, repeating or expanding.

AL There is evidence to suggest that modifying adult-child interaction can promote communication between adults and children. However this approach is based on western interaction patterns. It is important to be aware of the diversity that exists across cultures with regard to adult-child interaction styles before embarking on this approach. For example, in some cultures adults may dominate the conversation or may use a more directive style of interaction so that turn taking with a child might be unfamiliar. Cultural conventions are likely to influence the interaction between a parent and child but could also affect the interactions of staff and parent helpers within a pre-school setting.

References

Kelman & Schneider, 1994, *Parent child interaction: An alternative approach to the management of children's language difficulties.* Child Language Teaching and Therapy.

Gibbard, D, 1994 *Parental-based intervention with pre-school language delayed children.* European J. of Dis of Comm 29, 2:131-150

Simmons, N and Johnston, 2007, *Cross-cultural differences in beliefs and practices that affect the language spoken to children: mothers with Indian and Western heritage,* Int.J.Lang.Comm. Dis July-August, Vol 42, No 4, 445-465.

2.2 ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION CHECKLIST

The following checklist can be used to reflect on adult-child interaction. If possible, share these observations with colleagues and work together.

Use the checklist in a variety of situations with different children to identify your style of interaction and your strengths and weaknesses.

Look at aspects which are rated 'sometimes'. Choose one of these and try to modify your interaction with one child. Note the changes in the way the child behaves and communicates. Practise these changes for 10 minutes every day until it feels more natural and you are confident about applying the new pattern of interaction with different children in different situations.

Next, try and change other aspects rated 'sometimes' one at a time. After this move on to those rated 'never'! If you change those rated 'sometimes' you will have more confidence in modifying those aspects which you will find harder.

ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION CHECKLIST

Did you.....	Never	Sometimes	Always
1. Let the child choose the toy or activity?			
2. Follow what the child wanted to do?			
3. Wait for the child to talk?			
4. Listen to what the child said?			
5. Talk about what the child was doing?			
6. Use short, simple sentences?			
7. Make your voice sound interesting?			
8. Sit where the child could see your face?			
9. Only ask a few questions? Tick 'always' if you just ask a few questions. Tick 'never' if you ask lots of questions.			
10. Give lots of praise?			

2.3 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non-verbal communication (N.V.C.) is similar to 'body language'. It includes all the body movements – expressions, gestures, positions, and ways of using the voice (intonation, pitch volume and speed) that accompany speech. Objects, pictures and the whole situation also provide non-verbal clues. Over 50% of messages are conveyed through non-verbal communication, so it is important to be able to use and interpret N.V.C. competently.

Young children learn how to communicate through non-verbal communication. Initially, the cries and vocalisations are reflexive. This means that the baby makes sounds in response to his feelings of pleasure, displeasure and hunger. The adult reacts to the baby's cries and gradually the baby learns that if he does X, Y occurs. By around 8 months the baby develops 'communicative intent' whereby he knows that if he cries in a certain way he will probably get something to eat. If he makes another purposeful noise, something else will happen. Communicative intent is vital and is the first indication that the child understands that communication has a purpose and that communication might have important benefits.

From birth, the adult's actions e.g. eye contact, chatter and touching, gradually encourage the infant to move his focus from himself towards a mutual interest in this other person. At about 3 months, the adult and child will gaze at each other and make sounds together. The mutual gaze develops so that the infant can follow the adult and focus on what the adult is looking at. This skill called 'joint referencing', develops around 4 months. Joint reference is important because it is through the child's ability to look at the same thing as the adult and hear the adult name the object in view, that the child gradually learns what it is called.

Young children continue to rely on N.V.C. to help them learn new words. Those who are struggling to comprehend spoken language, often understand the speaker's message by making sense of the situation and interpreting the non-verbal clues. This means that sometimes, a young child may appear to understand more language than he actually does. While this might be a successful strategy at a pre-school level, it becomes harder for a child once he starts school, where he has to use language for learning rather than learning through play and experience.

It is therefore important to be aware of the effect of N.V.C. and be able to identify those who rely on it. These children need help, at an early stage, to understand spoken language and thus prepare them for the linguistic demands of everyday school environments.
AL It is also important to remember that N.V.C. varies with different cultures.

2.4 USING VISUAL STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT UNDERSTANDING

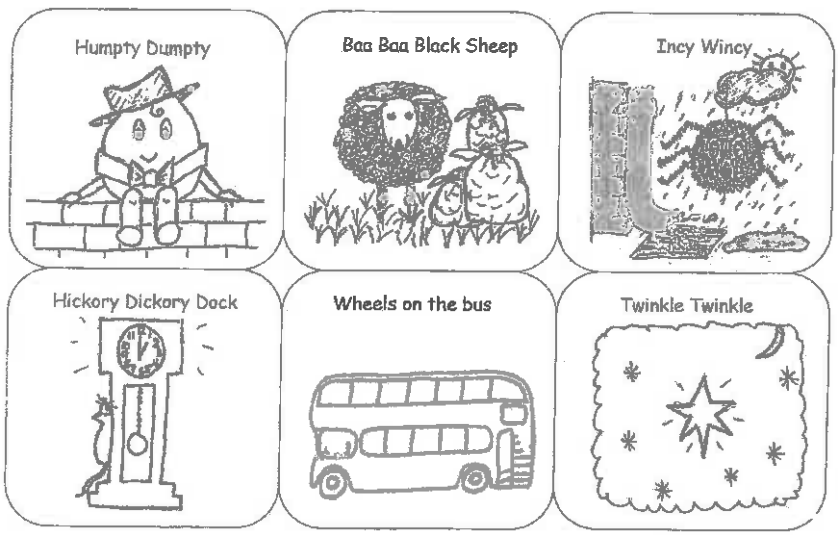
If young children use non-verbal communication to help them to understand spoken language, this strategy can be carefully developed to support those experiencing difficulties. Visual strategies usually use pictures to represent verbal information. They can:

- Help a child understand routines or tasks.
- Support a child during the initial stages when learning an additional language because he can understand what is needed without relying on language.
- Encourage independence because a child can do things for himself.

Examples of visual strategies

1. Choice Board

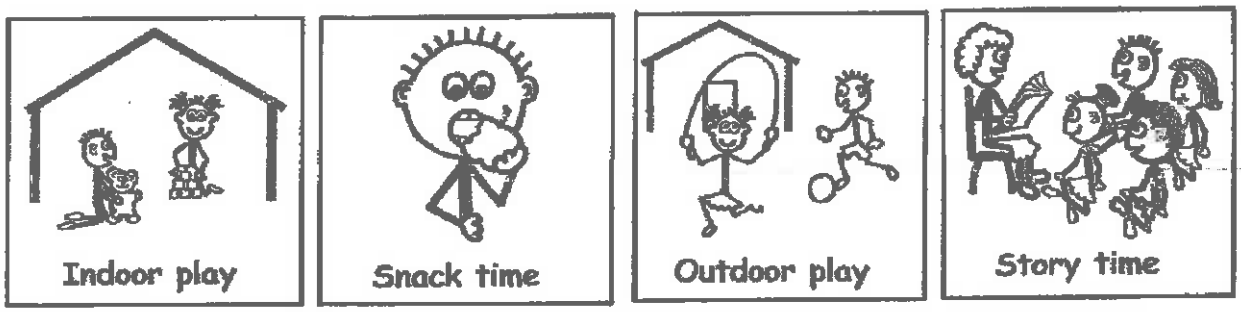
- There are many opportunities for children in pre-school settings to make choices. When a child can see the choice e.g. which book a child wants, he is probably able to point to it or get it for himself. In other words, he can make a choice without using language.
- There are other situations e.g. choosing songs and rhymes where the child has to think of an idea which he cannot see. This is difficult for some children. A child may say nothing or may always request the same thing that he can remember or repeat what another child has said. A choice board reminds the child of the range of possibilities.
- A choice board can enable a child to communicate his choice without having to talk. The adult should model the appropriate language so that, in time, the child will start to verbalise his choice.
- A choice board is a visual representation of the possible choices.
- Choice boards can be used to choose songs or rhymes, play activities, food or snacks etc.



2. Timeline

A child with language problems may find the concept of time very difficult. Using a visual time line can reduce anxiety, enable the child to focus on the task in hand, help him to learn the language of time and help him cope with routines more independently.

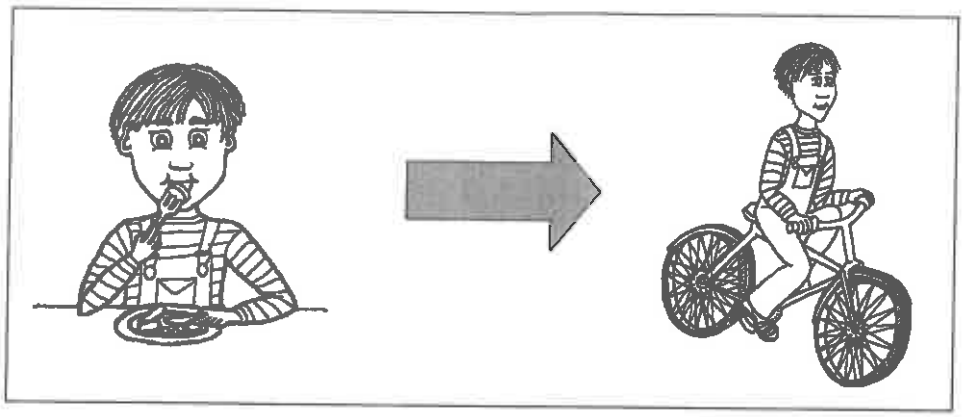
- Prepare pictures or symbols of various activities.
- The choice of picture/photo/symbol will depend on the child's ability to interpret picture or abstract visual information. It is really important to use images that are meaningful to the child. You may need to start with photographs.
- If a child cannot interpret picture materials, the idea can be adapted by using objects e.g. a spade to represent playing in the sandpit, a cup to represent break.
- Before the child arrives, order the pictures in the correct sequence for the activities he is going to do.
- The child looks at the timeline and goes to the activity shown taking the picture with him. When the task is complete, he returns to the timeline, posts the completed picture in a box and looks at the next activity.
- A timeline can be a useful strategy for a whole pre-school.



- **A weekly timeline** can help to teach the days of the week. It is helpful if each day is a different colour and has a picture, for example of a particular activity, to help distinguish one day from another. This can be used regularly to talk about which day it is.
- To help a child to start learning the concept of 'yesterday', a hook can be hung under each day. Use a clear zippy bag and let the child choose something he has done or enjoyed to put in the bag and hang it under the appropriate day. The next day, look in the 'yesterday bag', talk about what's in there and the fact that it was done 'yesterday.'
- If a child has difficulties understanding how many days there are until a special event, the weekly timeline can offer re-assurance. Talking about the number of 'sleeps' is sometimes more helpful than discussing the number of days.

4. First and then

- 'First and then' boards are useful for a child who becomes very distressed when asked to stop doing one thing and move to a different situation.

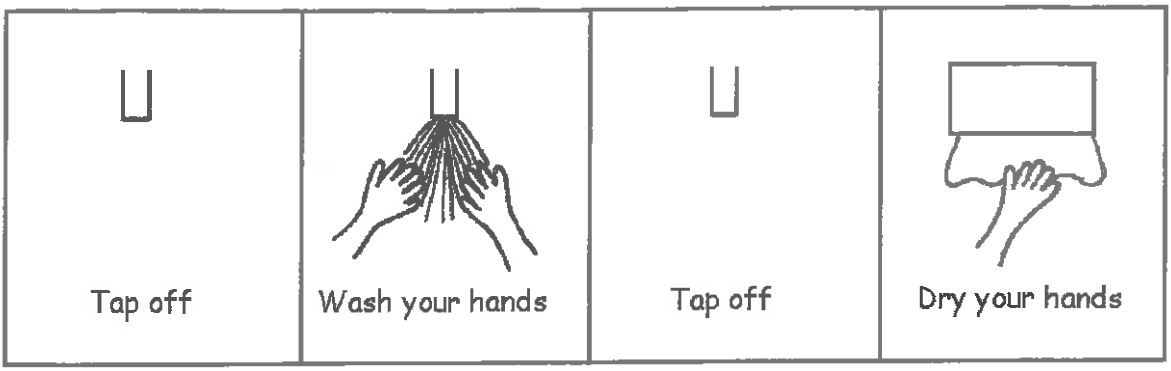


- Use a photo or picture of the activity the child is being asked to do first on the left. Point to this and say 'First.....', point to the arrow and say 'and then' and finally point to the second picture.
- A child may not understand it immediately but consistent use of this strategy means that, in time, the child can be reassured that if he just does this first then he can do what he wants afterwards e.g. 'eat your dinner and then you can ride your bike'.
- Ensure the learners (and the children) understand that this is NOT a choice board! It is a visual way of demonstrating what has to be carried out first and then what happens after that.
- A child using this kind of visual strategy is likely to need a strong motivator for the 'then' or second picture.

4. Picture Instructions

- Use symbols, photographs or drawings to 'write' a simple plan of how to complete a task or follow a routine.
- The pictures are important. Keep the writing to a minimum.
- Use the plan and point to each picture as the task is explained and carried out.
- Keep the language used during any verbal explanation simple.
- Leave the plan where the child can see it to remind him what is expected.
- This will help a child to understand a task e.g. making biscuits or washing hands, and complete it more independently.

An example of some Picture Instructions



Using symbols

Many visual strategies use symbols. A symbol is usually a simple line drawing that represents a word. Each symbol usually has the word written under the picture. Unfortunately there are many symbol systems e.g. P.C.S. (Picture Communication Symbols), Makaton, Rebus etc. The advantage of symbols is that in comparison with a word, a symbol is consistent, lasts longer and there are excellent software packages to help make visual support strategies quickly and easily (e.g. Boardmaker). However, it is crucial to check that the child can interpret the symbols because they can be abstract. If the child cannot understand symbols, start with photographs or even objects. Later, stick the symbol on the photo before phasing out the photograph.

Everyday visual strategies include:

- Using objects during all verbal explanations especially group discussions so that a child can see what you are talking about.
- Demonstrating or showing a child what to do.
- Labelling drawers and boxes with pictures and words so that a child knows where to put things and where to find them.

Useful references:

Cumine, V, Leach, J and Stevenson, G, (1998) *Autism in the Early Years a practical guide.*

Hannah,L, (2001) *Teaching young children with autistic spectrum disorders to learn.*

Division Teacch, wwwteacch.com

3.0 DEVELOPING PLAY, LISTENING AND ATTENTION

3.1 DEVELOPING PLAY FOR LANGUAGE

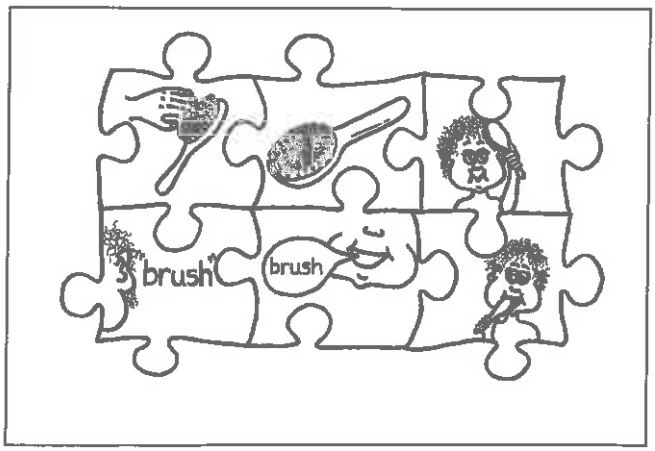
The development of play is closely linked to the development of language. If a child has delayed language, observe and encourage his play skills as this is likely to promote the understanding and use of communication (Cooper, Moodley and Reynell, 1978 and Bochner and Jones, 2003). Developing an understanding of objects, relating objects to play people, understanding miniature toys and playing socially with peers are particularly important.

AL It is important to recognise that different cultures attach different values to play. When working with families from diverse cultural backgrounds, take time to understand what experience the child has had of playing, the role that play has in his home and who his plays partners might be because in some cultures children play with siblings and not with adults.

EXPLORATORY PLAY

Initially the child puts everything in the mouth – he doesn't know what else to do with it. (This also occurs when teething but for different reasons). Through mouthing, handling and observing others, the child learns what to do with different objects. These differentiated actions on objects begin to reveal a child's understanding of the meaning, or concept of objects e.g. using a hair brush on his hair and a toothbrush on his teeth indicates an appreciation that the objects are used for different purposes. This is called 'defining an object by use' and usually begins at 9 months. A concept is an internal awareness of an object or an idea. Each concept has a 'file' of information about the object in the mind. This file will contain an internal picture of the object, information such as what you can and can't do with it, what it is made of, what it is associated with but also, with time, the word.

Being able to play appropriately with real objects is an important step in preparation for learning language. It is like a jigsaw; the first pieces involve knowing what an object is. This creates a framework so that, in time, the child can add other crucial pieces which include how to recognise and understand a word and then how to say the word. Without this vital framework the child has nothing to 'hook' the word onto.



The next stage is looking for an object that has just been hidden in full view of the child. This is called 'object permanence' and this also develops around 9 months. Object permanence provides further evidence that the child has some form of internal picture or representation of the specific object (Cooke and Williams 1985).

Ideas to encourage exploratory play

Pre-School settings usually provide a rich array of exploratory toys and experiences. However, it is also important to provide access to a collection of **everyday objects** as well as 'toys'. This is particularly important for the delayed child who is not ready to play in the home corner and does not use objects appropriately.

- Observe the child playing with the objects and show him how to use them.
- If the child does not demonstrate an understanding of objects by use (normal development 9 months) give the child a matching object in real situations e.g. give a spoon as he feeds, give a spare cup or bottle as he drinks, give a spare shoe as he dresses. Show him how to use the object appropriately.
- Later, hand objects to the child just after the real situation and then widen the time delay between the real situation and the play.
- When the child can demonstrate an understanding of objects by using them appropriately, play hiding games. While the child is looking, hide an object in a box. Encourage him to find it. At the appropriate stage of development, youngsters love this.

IMAGINATIVE PLAY

Involves a developmental sequence including:

- Large Doll and Teddy Play
- Small World Play (Play with miniature toys)
- Play with pictures
- Pretend play (e.g. dressing up)

By 12 months the child will show an understanding of everyday objects by using them appropriately (defining objects by use). He will now have extended this understanding beyond his own personal objects e.g. he will demonstrate the use of a wide range of spoons not just his own plastic one and in a variety of situations not just at mealtimes.

Around 15 months the child begins to recognise dolls and teddies as representing people and begins to relate objects to these dolls and teddies as he acts out everyday events e.g. feeding teddy, putting doll in bed.

At 18 months the child begins to recognise miniature toys. Before this level a child might just stack miniature pieces of furniture as if they were odd shaped bricks. The child should also have a good understanding of picture material.

This imaginative or 'symbolic' stage is important because it suggests that the child understands that one object or picture can symbolise another, just as a word represents an object. This symbolisation is another key stage to being able to incorporate more abstract information in his mind. When a child can play appropriately with teddies, dolls and large doll sized toys it indicates that he is ready to cope with symbolic information. He is also ready for language because language depends on words which are the ultimate, abstract form of symbols.

Ideas to encourage imaginative play

Large doll and teddy play

- Involve a dolly or teddy in everyday situations and provide appropriate matching objects so, for example, the child can feed teddy as he is being fed, the child can wash teddy's face when his face is washed etc.
- If necessary, show the child how to use the objects on teddy.
- Gradually provide these opportunities at other times i.e. not in the real situation.

Miniature or Small World Play

- To encourage the understanding of miniatures, play with the real object and then the miniature e.g. the child pretends to drink from a large cup then hand the child a miniature cup. You may need to model drinking from the miniature.
- Show the child how to relate these miniature objects to dolls and teddies.
- With older children at this level, play matching games matching real sized and miniature objects.

Play with pictures

- If pictures appear to mean little to the child, use photos. Match objects to photos initially in real situations. Children usually respond to coloured pictures first but the child's visual perception skills should be considered.
- Move onto the use of inset puzzles and jigsaws.
- **AL** Be aware that the use of pictures and books is a very Western notion. The use of books may not be associated with the development of language. When working with families from diverse cultural backgrounds, find out what role books have in the home.

LATER STAGES OF PLAY

Development of sequenced play

2 year old children usually start to join two play sequences together e.g. bath doll then put her to bed. Sequenced play is important because it demonstrates a child's understanding of his world. He can start to recreate events he experiences and he probably uses internalised language to organise his play.

Play at 3 years

3 year old children start to enjoy role play by dressing up to be real or imaginary characters. Role play is important because it enables a child to experiment with the roles and feelings of others within a safe environment. Role play also helps a child to learn to empathise with others. This is crucial for his social and emotional development.

Play at 4 years

4 year old children like to engage in all sorts of self-directed play activities and increasingly complex co-operative play with friends. They frequently act out scenarios seen on the TV and this can help to broaden a child's repertoire of play sequences. The increasingly co-operative nature of the play provides opportunities to practise using language for different purposes including arguing, questioning, explaining and directing what others do.

Play at 5 years

5 year old children are often engaged in elaborate make believe play with friends. The rules and roles of those involved can change very quickly. For example, a child may play in role and then revert back to his own persona to discuss or negotiate how the play is to develop. A child with language or social interaction difficulties can find it very difficult to keep up.

Conclusion

The development of play, especially the development of symbolic understanding, is really important for language development. If a child's language skills are delayed, observation of his play can tell us a lot about his general development and his readiness for language. It can also inform us which type of play to target in order to encourage language development.

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL PLAY – refer to the section in chapter 8.

Useful references:

Cooke, E and Williams, D, (1985) *Working with Children's Language.*

Cooper, Moodley and Reynell, (1978) *Helping Language Development.*

Bochner and Jones, (2003) *Child language Development. Learning to Talk.*

3.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF ATTENTION LEVELS

Adapted from Reynell 1977

0-1 year **Fleeting attention**

The child is easily distracted and attention flits from one thing to another.

1-2 years **Rigid attention**

The child can concentrate on a task of his own choice but he cannot tolerate interruption by an adult. He may, therefore, appear wilful or obstinate.

2-3 years **Single channelled attention**

The child cannot cope with doing one thing and listening to an instruction about something else all at the same time. He has to do one or the other. If an adult wants to give an instruction, the child must be asked to stop his activity, listen to the adult and then return to his chosen task.

3-4 years **Focusing attention**

The child is gradually beginning to control his own focus of attention but can still only concentrate on one thing at a time; the task or the unrelated instruction. However, he can now shift his focus of attention from one to the other himself.

4-5 years **Two channelled attention**

Attention is now two channelled, that is, he can do a task and understand an instruction at the same time. His concentration span may still be short but he can be taught in a group.

5-6 years **Integrated attention**

Two channelled attention is now well established across different situations with different people.

Reference

Cooper, Moodley and Reynell, (1978) *Helping Language Development.*

3.3 A CHECK LIST TO IDENTIFY ATTENTION LEVELS

Name ..... Situation/activity..... Date.....

Attention level	Behaviours you may observe Shade the comments which are typical of the child. The box with most shading indicates the level at which the child is functioning but remember attention levels vary and different behaviours may be observed in different situations.		Tick or date
STAGE 1			
Fleeting attention (0-1 year)	• Finds it very difficult to focus on one activity. • Flits from one thing to another quickly. • Finds it difficult to understand directions. • May have little awareness of danger.	• Is easily distracted by things he might see, hear, smell and will move to the new thing that has attracted his attention.	
Rigid attention (1-2 years)	• Will focus on an activity that he chooses - 'Follows his own agenda'. • Can maintain interest for long periods of time. • Not interested in your choice of activity.	• May be interested in a restricted range of activities. • When concentrating, rarely responds to you. • To attract his attention you often have to touch him.	
Single channelled attention (2-3 years)	• Prefers to focus on an activity that he chooses. • When engaged in an activity he often doesn't carry out directions or respond when you talk to him.	• To get him to do something, you have to stop him playing first and then tell him. • You have to call his name before he will do things.	
STAGE 2			
Focusing attention (3-4 years)	• Will join in with an activity that you or another child chooses/suggests. • Is interested in what other people are doing.	• To get him to do something you may have to call his name but he can respond quickly and can easily focus on what you say.	
Two channelled attention (4-5 years)	• Can do two things at once e.g. play with playdough and talk about going to a friend's house after pre-school.	• Can shift his attention to listen to you without you having to call his name first.	
Integrated attention (5-6 years)	• Can do two things at once for long periods of time. • Can do this in different places.	• Can control and focus his attention on what he wants to do or what he is asked to do independently.	

3.4 HELPING CHILDREN WHO ARE FUNCTIONING AT STAGE 1

Fleeting attention to single channelled attention levels

General advice

- Reduce distractions.
- Use suitable play materials.
- Let the child lead the play.
- Use appropriate adult-child interaction (see chapter 2).
- Plan rewards that are part of the task.

Progressing from fleeting attention to rigid attention

Aim: To focus attention on one activity for longer periods of time.

- The activity is the primary focus.
- Choose a range of activities which are highly motivating to the particular child.
- Restrict the number of toys but still provide a choice.
- Reduce distractions and work 1:1.
- Encourage the child to return to the activity once for a few more seconds.
- Reward any return to the activity, however brief, with motivators that are tangible and meaningful to the child.

Progressing from rigid attention to single channelled attention

Aim: For the child to allow the adult to take part in a game of his choosing and to gradually take note of what the adult is saying or doing.

- Choose a range of motivating activities.
- Have two sets of toys and copy what the child is doing without taking anything from him.
- Initially sit beside the child and gradually get closer. Reward any attention to a shared activity or a 'new' toy, however brief, with meaningful motivators.
- Talk about the task in hand. Only comment about what the child is doing. Keep the language simple and use an interesting tone of voice and facial expression.
- Still follow the child's lead and work 1:1
- **To gain the attention of a child at a rigid level of attention**, call his name and perhaps touch him gently. Wait and reward him for his change of focus.
- **To gain the attention of a child at a single channelled level of attention**, call his name, stop him doing the activity and then talk to him.

3.5 HELPING CHILDREN WHO ARE FUNCTIONING AT STAGE 2

Single channelled to two channelled attention levels

General advice

- Reduce distractions and background noise where possible.
- Get equipment ready.
- Work in small groups for short periods of time only.
- Teach good listening skills. That is good sitting, looking and listening.
- Focus the child's attention before giving instructions '*Jack ..listen ...*'.
- Ensure that the child understands the task, so keep the language short and simple and demonstrate what is required.
- When appropriate, define the task i.e. make the end point of the activity visual and obvious e.g. completing one whole puzzle or sticking a shown set of pictures on paper.

Progressing from single channelled attention to focused attention

Aim: For the child to be able to change the focus of his own attention.

- Initially call the child by name, stop him doing an activity and then give the information about something else.
- Teach good listening skills.
- Gradually phase out the need to specifically direct a child to stop an activity; for example by using whole group strategies such as saying 'children stop what you are doing', or raising your hands to gain attention.
- Observe the child and reward the child for changing his own focus of attention.

Progressing from focused attention to two channelled attention

Aim: For the child to be able to attend to two different stimuli simultaneously.

- When a child is playing, give several directions related to the activity.
- Increase the number of children doing the task. Give directions and encourage the child to listen to information given to a group of children.
- When working 1:1, talk about the task in hand but gradually talk about a different topic e.g. whilst playing with sand ask what they like playing with at home.
- Gradually increase the visual and auditory distractions.
- Reinforce good listening skills.

3.6 ACTIVITIES TO ENCOURAGE LISTENING AND ATTENTION

Run and Touch

This is best played outside.

Identify 4 or 5 different things outside e.g. climbing frame, gate, seat, tree.

Say *'Run to the….'*

When the children can do this, add another e.g. *'Run to the tree and then the gate.'*

Silly Stories

Warn the children that you, or a puppet, are going to make mistakes as you read a story and they have to spot them.

Read a familiar story and make errors. How many can the children spot?

Personalised stories

Make up a story about the children and every time you say one of their names they have to stand up.

This is more effective in small groups of 4-6.

Make this harder by suggesting that every time the children hear a boy's name all the boys must stand up and every time they hear any girl's name all the girls must stand up.

Hide and seek

The children hide up to eight objects around the room or outside.

Ask each child to find the one you ask for.

When a child can do this, ask him to find two.

Tick- Tock

Hide a clock or something else that makes a constant sound.

One child has to find it.

Go!

Give instructions but the children must wait until you say 'go'.

Vary the time interval between the directions and 'go'.

Gradually make the instructions harder.

Examples of instructions to start with:

Touch you toes – go!

Put one hand behind your back – go!

Jump up and down 3 times – go!

Clap your hands slowly – go!

Bear Hunt

Explain that you are going to a forest to find bears. Tell the children how many bears they have to find. Start with 2 or 3. For younger children give them a card strip with pictures of 2 or 3 bears on it. Name all sorts of animals you might see in a forest and every time you say 'bear' each child puts a counter on a picture of a bear on their card strip.

The children shout 'found them' when they have the right number of bears to stop the game.

Vary the animal and the place e.g. find 2 or 3 worms in the garden.

Walking through the Jungle

Say the introductory rhyme and add an animal. The children make the associated noise and action.

'Walking through the jungle
What do I see
I see a monkey looking at me'

Picture Skittles

Stick pictures on skittles or plastic bottles.

Name a picture and each child, in turn, tries to try knock down the matching skittle.

To make this harder give a clue rather than naming the object e.g *'Something you use to paint with'.*

Eye Spy

This is best played outside.

It is a variation of the traditional 'I Spy…' but give a clue e.g. *'I spy with my little eye something that grows and has leaves'* (Make sure you don't look at it while you give the clue or the child will work it out by watching you eyes rather than listening!)

One last point….

Remember that children with poor listening, attention and understanding will probably watch the others to see what they do. It can help these children to have opportunities to play the games on their own.