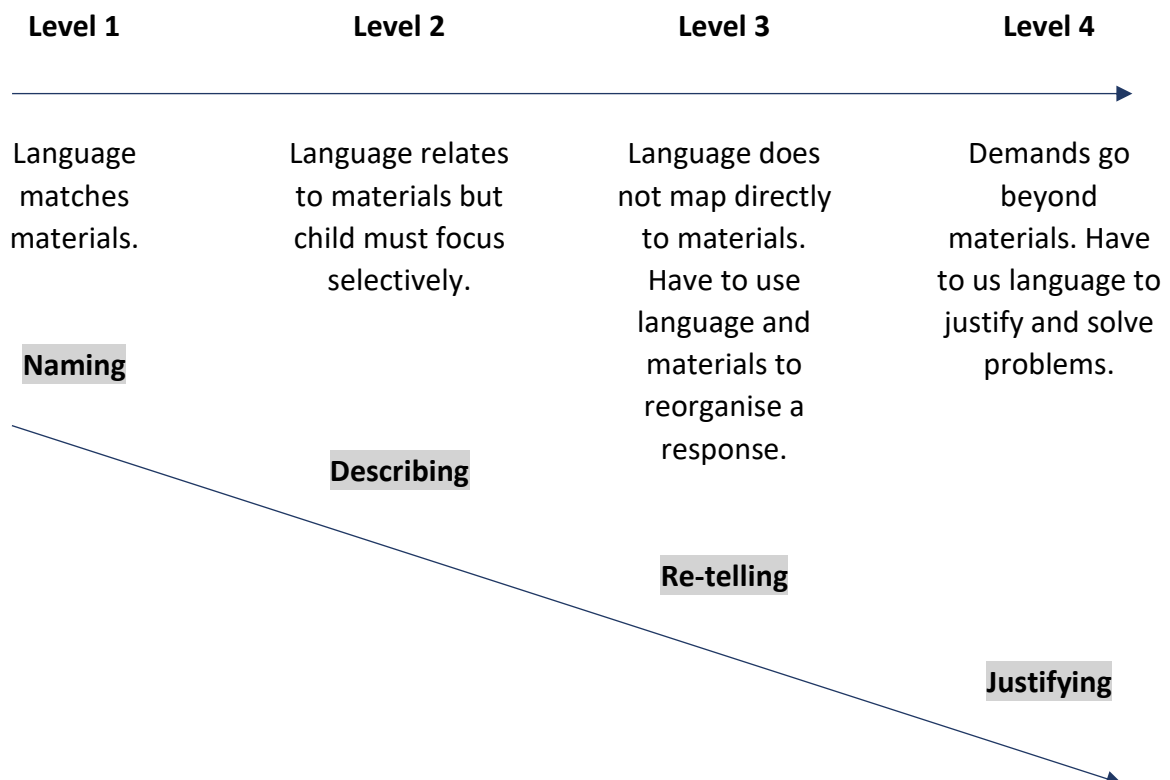




Blank's Language Scheme

The Blank's Language Scheme is a model that encourages the development of verbal reasoning skills and abstract language. The model divides this complex area of language into 4 smaller more achievable steps.



LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

Level 1: Naming

At this level there is a **direct match between the information the student can see, hear, feel, or do and the language.**

Question examples:

- What is this? (pointing to an item)
- Pick up the apple.
- Find one like this (pointing to an item)
- Point to the money.

Language 2: Selective analysis of perception

At this level the student is still required to match the information and the language but they must focus more selectively as **the focus is on part of the object/information.** Concrete and abstract concepts are introduced so the student can describe materials.

Question examples:

- Find an object by an attribute: e.g. "show me something that is hard"
- Find an object by function: e.g. "show me something to cut with"
- Give an example within a category: e.g. "what else can you find that you can eat?"
- Complete a sentence: e.g. "You'd like a drink of ..."
- State which things go together: e.g. "Which go together, a knife and ..."
- Asking who, what and where questions when shown a picture: e.g. 'who is in the picture? What is she doing? Where is the girl? (e.g. child says "she is on the slide" as opposed to pointing).
- Asking who what and where questions when information is given: e.g. comprehension type questions.

Level 3: Re ordering perception

At this level the student can use language to restructure and reorder their perceptions and experiences. They are expected to understand language and are required to use language to explain thoughts. **They are required to make deductions or generalisations about a situation and find common links to group information.**

Question examples:

- Follow a set of directions with multiple steps: e.g. "put the coat on the chair and go to the hall".
- Plan and give a set of directions: "Tell me how to buy a drink in a canteen".
- Find another example of something that fits certain criteria: e.g. "Tell me something else you can drink that is cold".
- Narrative / retelling an event: e.g. arrange a series of pictures in a sequence, take on the role of somebody else, define words, state how a character might feel and summarise a picture sequence.

Level 4: Solve and justify complex and abstract verbal problems.

The student must think about relationships between objects, people and events and reasons as to why things happen. They have to **justify why events have occurred and why they are making predictions**.

Question examples:

- Justify a prediction: e.g. "why will ... happen?"
- Justify a decision: e.g. "why didn't she buy a drink?"
- Identify the cause of an event: e.g. "Why didn't she have any money?"
- Solve a problem: e.g. "What could you do?"
- Solve a problem from another person's perspective: e.g. "what could she do?"
- Make an inference from an observation, e.g. "How can we tell that the girl is frustrated?"
- Explain why something cannot be done: e.g. "Why can't she take the drink?"
- Select the means to a goal: e.g. "How will she get some money?"
- Explain the logic of compound words: e.g. "Why is this called a handbag?"

SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

Developing understanding of level 3 questions.

1. Ensure to ask Level 3 questions to students who are working at this level. Use the strategies outlined in the poster (*Appendix A*) to support them to answer the questions.
2. Children working at this level should be encouraged to make simple predictions.

Activities to support prediction making:

- Provide picture cues of all activities that you will do in a day and ask the child to predict what you will do next. There should be some clues and a familiar routine to support the child to do this,
 - Ask children what is going to happen next to other children, e.g. on a peer's birthday, ask the child to predict what they might do at home. You can provide forced alternatives to support them, e.g. will they get presents or will they play football?
 - Use sequencing cards and leave the last picture out of the sequence. See if the child can predict what might come next.
 - You can use science experiments and ask child to predict the outcome. These science experiments with a big ending work well for Attention Autism activities.
3. Children who are developing understanding of Level 3 questions may find it difficult to assume the role of another person.

Games which can help develop this understanding:

- How do I feel: Act out different emotions using exaggerated facial expressions and body movements. Ask the child to guess how you are feeling and to identify one reason they think this.
 - What could they say: This is a group game where scenarios are written on cards and each student must select a card and say one thing the person could be saying. Use situations such as inviting someone to a party, buying sweets, Mum telling children off. Images on the situation cards can be used to support understanding.
 - What could they do: Act out role play scenes to support children to understand how others might behave. Follow up the role play with a discussion concerning how the various characters are feeling and what they could say or do.
4. Ensure the activities are taught across a range of different contexts to support generalisation.

Developing understanding of level 4 questions.

1. Ensure to ask Level 4 questions to students who are working at this level. Use the strategies outlined in the poster (*Appendix A*) to support them to answer the questions.
2. Children with ASD working at Blanks Level 4 find problem solving difficult. Encourage problem solving from the perspective of others as well as from the students own perspective (when doing this forced choice alternatives may need to be given.)
 - When working on problem solving at Level 4 use role plays to act out different feelings and problem (the same cards can be used for this and the 'What could they say/do' activity for Level 3). After the role play ask each student to identify something that the person could have done and explain how this would have changed the situation.
 - During science experiments ask the children what they can do to make something happen, e.g. what can we do to make the sugar dissolve. Visual supports should be used to support the student.
3. At Level 4 students are developing their ability to justify a prediction. Use the same activities as in level 3 to support making a prediction but extend their learning by asking **why** they think this might happen. Praise any attempt a justification and it may be necessary to give forced alternatives.
4. Making inferences is a key skill which may need to be specifically taught.

Activities to develop inference making skills:

- Use a picture or photograph and ask child questions about how they are feeling and how we know
 - Write and draw what it is that we see that makes us think what we think.
 - Discuss common situations and how people feel then, e.g. birthdays and exam days.
 - Only move on to abstract inferences when student can complete all of the above activities.
5. Ensure the activities are taught across a range of different contexts to support generalisation.

Simplifying questions

Techniques to scaffold understanding.

Fade out gradually to promote independence.

Focus attention: call their name first to gain their attention

Give time: Give them enough time to respond

Repeat: if you need to repeat, repeat in the same way

Focus on the feature: point or gesture to draw attention to relevant information.

Simplify: break the question into simpler, more concrete questions.
E.g. 'The books fell, what should you do now?' → 'Where are the books?' & 'where do they go?'

Give choices: Give student alternatives. E.g. Is he running or jumping?

Sentence completion: Start the answer for the student.
E.g. 'The girl is sad because ...'

Demonstration: show them the answer without saying it.
E.g. what is going to happen if we put water in the broken cup (and then show them).

Ask questions about personal experiences: E.g. instead of 'why do you think chefs wear aprons?', try 'what happened to your clothes when you were cooking?'

Use familiar vocabulary: E.g. instead of 'What is the function of a knife?' Try 'What do you do with a knife?'



Key Word Level Activities

Developing your child's understanding

What are key words?

In every sentence, some words are more important than others. These are called 'Key Words'. To follow an instruction successfully, your child needs to understand each 'Key Word'.

For a word to be a Key Word;

- There must be a **choice to make** – two or more options so that your child must choose between – for example 'a red plate' or a 'blue plate'
- The meaning of the words **must not** be obvious in other ways such as:
 - The **context** – for example asking for the butter when you're holding a piece of toast and a knife
 - **Copying** what others are doing – for example asking your child to jump up and down when everyone is already jumping
 - **Visual clues** like pointing or looking at the object

Sometimes children appear to understand more than they actually do. They can use lots of strategies to compensate for not understanding language such as:

- **Learning routines.** For example, if you always say 'get your coat' before you go out they will start to do this without needing to understand any of the words.
- **Copying other children.** For example, in nursery they will wash their hands because other children are and not because they actually understand 'wash your hands'.
- **Follow non-verbal clues.** People will often point and/or look at the object they are talking about. For example, if there is a cup and a car in front of the child and the adult looks at the car while they ask for it, then the child will almost certainly pick it up whether he understood the word or not just because that was the one the adult seemed interested in!
- **Just do the obvious.** For example, if you put a spoon and a teddy in front of the child they will almost certainly put the spoon to teddy's face to pretend to feed teddy, just because this is the obvious thing to do.

Identifying Key Words helps us to focus on the number of words in an instruction that a child really understands and help them increase this.



Activity Ideas

When children are learning language, they need lots of opportunities to practice!

Here are some ideas of activities you can try at home to help your child with Two Key Words.

Remember to keep practice fun – we know children learn best through play.

<p>1. OBJECTS ACTIVITY (NOUNS)</p> <p>This activity targets ‘nouns’ (names of objects).</p> <p>You will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 or more character toys (e.g. a dolly and a teddy) • 5-10 objects (e.g. toy food, toy furniture) <p><i>You can make this a game by pretending to have a ‘picnic’ or while playing with a doll’s house.</i></p> <p>While you play you can give instructions like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ “Give cake to frog” ✓ “Find table and chair” ✓ “Give dolly the apple” ✓ “Put dolly on the chair” 	<p>2. ACTIONS ACTIVITY (VERBS)</p> <p>This activity targets ‘verbs’ (words that describe actions).</p> <p>You will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character toys <p>Give your child instructions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ “Make teddy dance” ✓ “Make monkey walk” ✓ “Make frog eat” 	<p>3. PLACES ACTIVITY (POSITIONAL CONCEPTS)</p> <p>This activity targets ‘positional concepts’ (words that describe the place or location of objects).</p> <p>You will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A character (e.g. a dolly and a teddy) • A box or bag • A table or chair <p>Give your child instructions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ “Put dolly under the chair” ✓ “Put the dolly in the bag” ✓ “Put the dolly on the box” ✓ “Put dolly behind the box”
<p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the toys/objects – this will help your child learn new words • Take pictures of the instructions when they are completed – this creates a talking point with your child! • Practice in different places: in the garden, in the bath, in the kitchen. • Encourage your child to give you similar instructions – this will help their talking. You could say: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘now it’s your turn – what shall I do?’ • ‘what does teddy want – cake or biscuit?’ • ‘who gets the pizza – monkey or hedgehog?’ • ‘what will lion do – run or jump?’ 		



Levels of Prompting

When prompting children to complete tasks or use their AAC, it is important to consider how much prompting we are giving and how we are supporting our children to develop independence.

The prompting hierarchy shows the varying levels of prompting we can use to support children to complete a task.

When using prompts, we should start with a **least to more approach**, which means following the hierarchy from lowest level of prompting and working up to the level of prompt needed.

By following the hierarchy this way, we are always ensuring we are giving the least amount of prompting required and providing opportunities for our children to develop their independence.

