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**Trafford Local
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TIP 4: FOCUS ATTENTION AND LISTENING

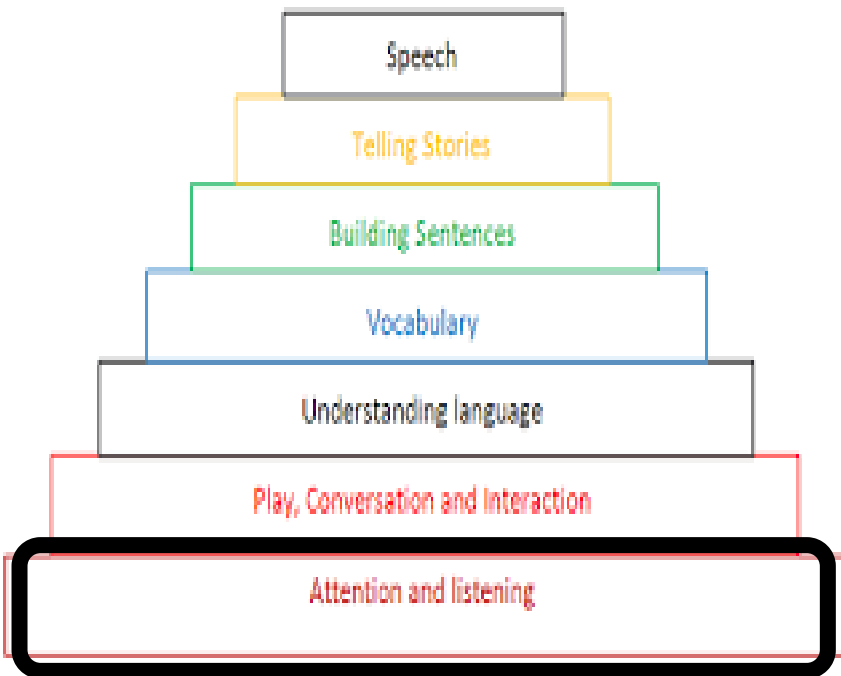
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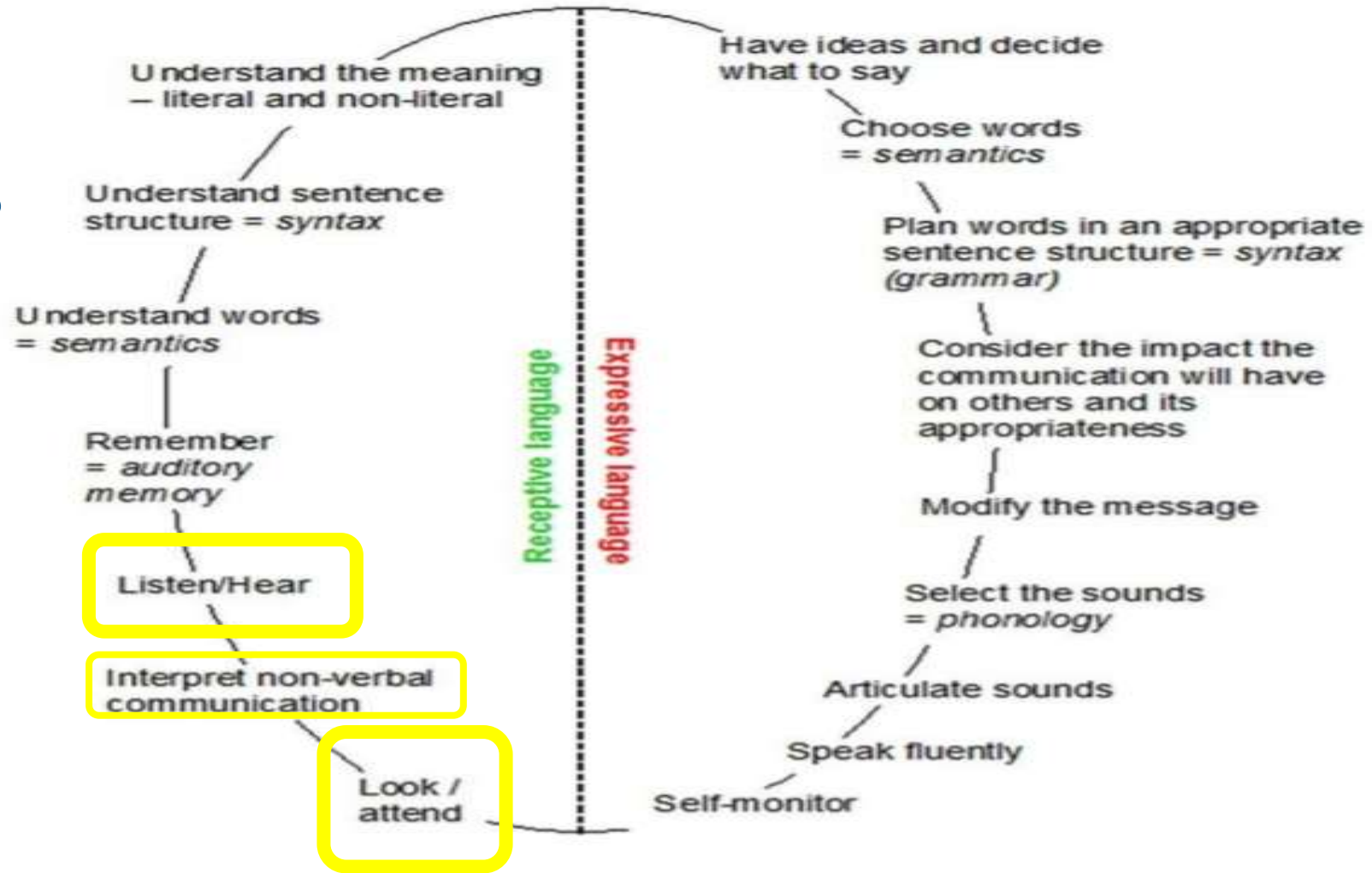
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A FOUNDATION FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT...



How do attention and listening difficulties impact on communication?

THE COMMUNICATION CHAIN



“GOOD LISTENING” IN THE CLASSROOM =

- Can you hear my voice?
- Can you listen to the words I’m saying?
- Can you look at me or the object?
- Can you filter out background noise of other people talking or environmental sounds?
- Can you clearly see the visual stimuli?
- Can you break down my sentences and understand their meaning?
- Can you sustain all of these at the same time for a reasonable length of time?

ESTABLISH THE CHILD'S LEVEL OF ATTENTION DEVELOPMENT

- **Consider which level best suits the child's attention development based on where they are at *most of the time*.**
 - Attention levels fluctuate for us all so it's about establishing the most predominant level.
- **Develop a strong understanding of the home learning environment in relation to listening opportunities, routines and distractions.**
 - Discuss the child's attention level with parents/carers, highlighting typical behaviours expected at that particular stage to provide context and insight.
 - How does what you have observed compared to at home?
 - What's working well?
 - What are the challenges?

Attention level	Observable behaviours at each level
Fleeting attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically acquired during the first year of life • Is easily distracted by things they might see, hear, smell and will move to the new thing that has attracted their attention. • 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
Rigid attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically acquired between 1-2 years • Will focus on an activity that they choose - 'Follows their 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 – could be interpreted as wilful • To attract their attention you often have to touch them
Single channelled attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically acquired between 2-3 years • Prefers to focus on an activity that they choose. • When engaged in an activity they often don't carry out directions or respond when you talk to them. • Adult support required to move to another activity • To get them to do something, you have to stop them playing first and then tell them. • You have to call their name before they will do things.

Attention level	Observable behaviours at each level
Focusing attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically acquired 3-4 years • Is interested in what other people are doing. • Will join in with an activity that you or another child chooses/suggests. • To get them to do something you may have to call their name but they can respond quickly and can easily focus on what you say.
Two channelled attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically acquired 4-5 years • Possible for relatively simple activities • 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 their attention to listen to you without you having to call their name first.
Integrated attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically acquired 5-6 years • Possible now for more complex tasks • Can do two things at once for long periods of time. • Can do this in different places. • Can control and focus their attention on what they want to do or what they are asked to do independently • Don't be surprised if children in year 1 aren't yet at this stage!

WHAT DO WE OBSERVE IN THE CLASSROOM WHEN A CHILD HAS ATTENTION AND LISTENING DIFFICULTIES?

- Appears uninterested
- Highly distractible
- Fidgety
- Easily frustrated
- Requires instructions repeating as forgets what to do – impacts on understanding
- Follows what their peers are doing, appearing 'one step behind' the other children
- Takes in only bits and pieces of the information as they tune in and out of focus
- Daydreams
- Anxious
- Behaves in a way to create distraction
- Struggles to contribute during carpet time and with following instructions when carpet time has finished and they have moved on to the task.

HOW CAN WE FOCUS ATTENTION AND LISTENING IN YEAR 1?

- ✓ **Opportunities for practice**
- ✓ **Encouragement**
- ✓ **Motivation**
- ✓ **Fun**

GENERAL SUPPORT STRATEGIES

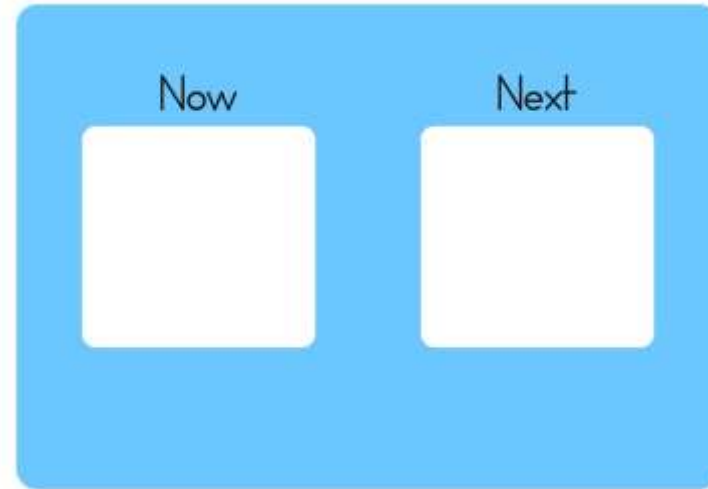
- Ensure you have gained the child's attention before giving a verbal instruction
Call the child's name – touch them on the hand or shoulder if required – encourage them to look at/towards you.
- Present information in simple steps or chunks, using short, simple sentences with lots of pauses
- Slow your rate of speech and use a clear, animated voice
- Stress the key parts of an instruction
- Be mindful of the child's mood, how tired they are *etc* so your activity and expectations can adjust in response to this
- Know what really motivates and interests the child as a route to engaging their focus

HOW CAN WE FOCUS LISTENING AND ATTENTION?

- ❑ Encourage 'whole body listening'
- ❑ Share listening 'rules' and refer to them frequently - good looking, listening, sitting, waiting.
- ❑ Consider fidget toys

MAKE IT VISUAL

- Natural gestures and/or signing
- Visual timetable
- Now/Next or First/Then board
- Working for... board
- Keywords on a separate board
- Colour coding to help group ideas
- Zones of Regulation



The **ZONES** of Regulation®

BLUE ZONE Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly	GREEN ZONE Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	YELLOW ZONE Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	RED ZONE Mad/Angry Mean Terrified Yelling/Hitting Out of Control

STRATEGIES TO FOCUS ATTENTION AND LISTENING IN YEAR 1

Incorporate purposeful movement activities into all learning tasks

- Travelling to collect a word/letter/card and posting it into a post box
- Lifting or dragging items from one place to another e.g. during shape work in Maths
- Carrying out instructions, e.g. “Go and get two big triangles and put them under the box”. The child has to lift up the box to do it.
- Using highly motivating games within a task e.g. marble run. Place the target pictures/letters/shapes being worked on in the lesson on top of the marble run box and the child carries out the task after they have rolled a marble.

Include a multisensory element to tasks

- Drawing letters/shapes in shaving foam in a tray
- Forming shapes in playdough/kinetic sand

STRATEGIES TO FOCUS ATTENTION AND LISTENING IN YEAR 1

- When listening to stories allocate characters in the story to named children in the group. When that character name comes up, the child has to jump up or make another agreed signal.
- Listening sticks. Have the children's names written onto lolly sticks. Place the sticks into a jar, with the names pointing downwards so they are hidden. Ask a question about the learning focus and pull out a stick from the jar. The child whose name is on the stick has to answer the question.
- Encourage children to ask for repetition when they haven't heard/understood an instruction
- Encourage verbal rehearsal of instructions - '*putting it in my head*' - when issuing instructions to the group/during circle time

STRATEGIES TO FOCUS ATTENTION AND LISTENING IN YEAR 1

- **‘Movement breaks’** that tie in with routine of the school day – e.g. playtime, opportunities for outside learning, 5 a day fitness, the daily mile.
- **Positioning at carpet time.** Carpet spots for children to sit on. Where a child requires additional support to tune in, position them in the middle, falling under your gaze, so you can easily remind the child to listen.
- **Play listening, attention and memory games at circle time/in small groups.**
 - Variations of *‘I went to the market’* - “I looked on the number square and I saw the number 2”. The next child has to recall what their friend said and add their own number and you go round adding one on each time. Adapt to suit any learning aim/topic vocabulary.
 - ‘The brain game’ – children recall items in a category (could be topic vocab/names of shapes) and then point to the brain of the child next to them, gently touching them on the side of the head to signal their turn.

RESOURCES

- **Elkan** – evidence-informed, accredited training courses (lots of e-learning options now available) <https://www.elklan.co.uk/>
- **WellComm** – <https://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/products/wellcomm/>
Big Book of Ideas (Early Years) – Attention and Listening section pgs. 184 – 203
- **The National Literacy Trust** - <https://literacyapps.literacytrust.org.uk/category/listening-attention/>
- **Tiny Happy People** - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/activities>
- **Social Thinking – ‘Whole Body Listening’** resources
<https://www.socialthinking.com/Articles?name=whole-body-listening-its-a-tool-not-a-rule>
- **The Communication Trust – ‘Listen Up’** resources
<https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources/resources/resources-for-parents/listen-up/>
- **Active Listening for Active Learning** - Carolyn Player and Maggie Johnson
- **Teaching Children to Listen** – Liz Spooner and Jacqui Woodcock