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# Session 2.1

## Attention and Listening and Understanding of Language



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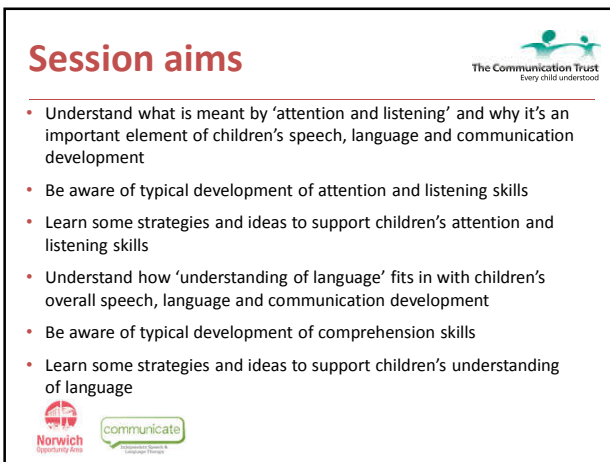
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## Session aims

- Understand what is meant by 'attention and listening' and why it's an important element of children's speech, language and communication development
- Be aware of typical development of attention and listening skills
- Learn some strategies and ideas to support children's attention and listening skills
- Understand how 'understanding of language' fits in with children's overall speech, language and communication development
- Be aware of typical development of comprehension skills
- Learn some strategies and ideas to support children's understanding of language



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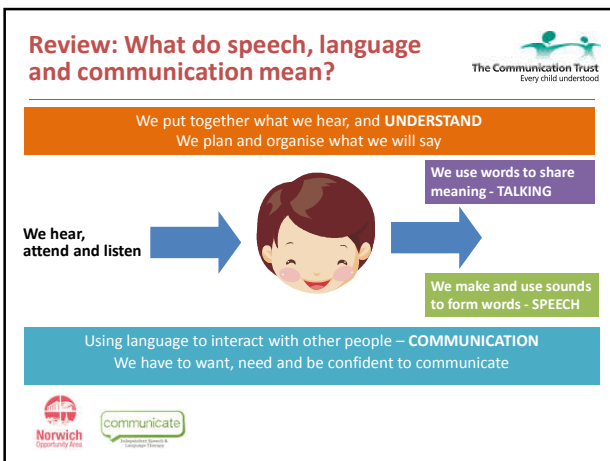
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## Review: What do speech, language and communication mean?


We put together what we hear, and **UNDERSTAND**  
We plan and organise what we will say

We hear, attend and listen →  →

We use words to share meaning - **TALKING**

We make and use sounds to form words - **SPEECH**

Using language to interact with other people – **COMMUNICATION**  
We have to want, need and be confident to communicate



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## Review: What do speech, language and communication mean?

Adapted from a model used in many speech and language therapy services across the UK

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## Attention and Listening

**What does it mean?**

- It's the ability to be able to focus and concentrate
- It's very important for speech, language and communication development
- It develops in stages, just like other communication skills

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## Stages of Attention and Listening development

Level (Age)	What to expect
Level 1 (up to 12 months)	- Easily distracted - Attention will flit from one thing to another
Level 2 (12 months - 2 years)	- Better concentration on a self chosen task - Single channelled attention
Level 3 (2-3 years)	- Still single channelled attention, but can shift attention from their task to the adult who is speaking with some help
Level 4 (3-4 years)	- Able to independently shift attention from an adult's instruction to their task
Level 5 (4-5 years)	- Dual channelled attention - Child able to follow instructions without having to shift their attention - May require adult support to re-focus on a task
Level 6 (5+ years)	- Attention skills are well established

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### Attention and Listening - Activity



- In groups of 3:
  - **1 speaker** – explain your morning routine/route to work on a typical day
  - **1 listener** – listen to the speaker
  - **1 distracter** – explain to the listener how to make the perfect cup of tea...



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### How do you support attention and listening?



What are some of the ways that we already support children's attention and listening skills in our setting?  
Think about:

- Targeted groups?
- Everyday strategies?
- Listening activities?



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### Ways to support attention and listening



- Peekaboo games
- Ready, steady, go games (wait for go!)
- Action songs
- Turn taking games
- Hide the toy
- Simon Says
- Stop/go games
- Matching sounds and objects
- Listening to increasingly complex instructions/directions
- Listening out for key words/actions in a story
- Memory games



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## Listen Up!

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**Listen Up**  
Being able to communicate is not just about talking.  
Being able to listen, understand, interact, play and understand what's being said are the communication skills that help children understand.

**Listening - what is it?**  
What is it? It's when we listen to the speaker and understand what they are saying and are able to respond to what they say.

**Listening - listening message box**  
A box of things that make a noise, such as:  
Clapping paper  
A drum  
A bell  
A tin can  
A tin can telephone  
A tin can with a string

**Listen the machine**  
Using a machine to help listen.  
The machine can help you hear things that you can't hear with your ears.

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## General strategies to support attention and listening

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- Say the child's name to get their attention
- Use visual timetables/now & next boards to help children understand how long they are expected to focus for
- Use stopwatches/egg timers/countdown timers
- Use specific praise when you see good attention and listening skills ('good looking!', 'excellent listening!')
- Stop and listen to everyday noises and sounds throughout the day
- Listen to children when they speak to you – model good listening
- Be aware of distractions in your setting (e.g. music in the background, other activities going on...)
- Use visual reminders of what good listening is (e.g. Visual supports showing 'good looking', 'good sitting', 'good listening', etc)

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## Review: What do speech, language and communication mean?

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## Understanding/Comprehension/ Receptive language



### What does it mean?

- This is about how we are able to understand what another person is saying to us
- Understanding/receptive language/comprehension are all terms that are used interchangeably
- This is a crucial aspect of children's language development
- In typical language development, children need to understand a word before they will be able to use it. **Understanding precedes use.**



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## Activity



In small groups, listen to and have a look at the information on the following slide and the question which follows it. (Don't worry, it's meant to be complicated!) Then think about the five questions below:

- How easy is it to understand?
- What makes this the case?
- Could you answer the question?
- How 'good' was this question?
- How did you feel about the activity?



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## Activity



Epistemology is generally characterised by a division of two competing schools of thought: rationalism and empiricism. The rationalists sought to reconstruct critically the total of human knowledge by the employment of such 'pure' reasoning from indubitable axioms. The empiricists took direct acquaintance with the 'impressions' of sense-experience as their bedrock of infallible knowledge

Question: Was rationalism one of the schools of thought?



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**Adapting your language to support children's understanding**

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**Key Words**

Also known as 'information carrying words' (ICWs)

This is about how many words a child is required to understand, not the number of words in a sentence

Examples:

Give mummy the car (0 ICW, 1 ICW, 2 ICW)

Give mummy the red car (0 ICW, 1 ICW, 2 ICW, 3 ICW)

Give mummy the big red car (0 ICW, 1 ICW, 2ICW, 3 ICW, 4 ICW)

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**Key words activity**

In pairs, think of some of the toys/games/activities you have in your setting

Write down some 1, 2, 3 and 4 key word instructions

Also write down which people and objects would need to be available to the child in order for the child to demonstrate they understand (i.e. where there is a choice for the child to make)

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## Blank Level Questions



Blank's Levels of questioning

- 4 levels of questions ranging from basic to more complex
- **Level 1** = Concrete questions – the answer is in front of you! *Who's that?, What's this?, What's he doing?, Can you find one that's the same as this?*
- **Level 2** = The answer is there, but you need to look more closely.... *What's happening? Who's behind the door? What colour is the bag? Can you show me something you eat? Show me what we use for cutting/eating/drawing*
- **Level 3** = The answer isn't necessarily there, you need to think a bit more... *Show me something you sit on, what do you think might happen next? Find something we can't take to school, how are these the same/different? How are these the same?*
- **Level 4** = More abstract, the child needs to use verbal reasoning skills... *why is she doing that? How could he make the girl feel better? What might happen next? Why did you choose that? Why did you do that?*


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## Development of Understanding



Age	What to expect
12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand words like 'bye-bye' and 'up' – especially if supported with a gesture</li> <li>- Recognise the names of familiar, everyday objects such as 'cup', 'teddy', 'daddy'</li> </ul>
18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand everyday words and some simple, frequently used phrases e.g. 'shoes on' 'in your buggy'</li> <li>- Be able to point to familiar objects when asked</li> </ul>
2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand between 200 and 500 words</li> <li>- Understand simple questions/instructions such as 'where's baby?' 'mummy's turn'</li> </ul>
3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand simple 'who' 'what' and 'where' questions</li> <li>- Understand longer instructions e.g. 'put your coat on and get your bag'</li> </ul>
4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be able to answer questions as to why something has happened</li> <li>- Answer questions about a story they have just heard</li> <li>- Understand colour, number and time related words</li> </ul>
5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand more complicated language such as 'first' 'last' 'might' 'above' 'in between'</li> <li>- Understand words that describe sequences e.g. 'first we'll buy a picnic, then we'll go to the park'</li> </ul>


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## How do you support children's understanding of language?



**What are some of the ways that we already support children's understanding in our setting?**

**Think about:**

- Targeted groups?
- Everyday strategies?
- Specific activities?


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### Strategies to support the development of understanding



- Help children to look at you when you're speaking – be clear that this is what you want them to do (*NB: beware of asking children with ASD to do this, or children for whom eye contact is difficult*)
- Use children's names before you give an instruction
- Simplify the language you use – be aware of the complexity/length of your sentences and instructions
- 'Chunk' your language – give instructions one at a time
- Use positive language – say what you want the child to do rather than what you don't want
- Be careful with sarcasm, idioms, abstract language
- Use visual supports to aid understanding of vocabulary, routines and instructions



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### Reflections and actions



- How do you support "attention and listening" and "understanding of language" already?
- Is there anything you could do more of?
- What might you do differently as a result of what we have covered today?



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