Elklan

T A L C

Test of Abstract Language Comprehension

Devised by
Liz Elks and Henrietta McLachlan
Speech and Language Therapists

Based on
The Language of Learning
By Blank, Rose and Berlin, 1978

Illustrated by
Livi Rowe

TALC

Test of Abstract Language Comprehension

The TALC is based on the Language of Learning Model proposed by Blank, Rose and Berlin (1978). The Language of Learning Model is popular in Australia where it is referred to as 'Blanks' or 'The Blank Language Scheme.'

Blank, Rose and Berlin present a model which facilitates the classification of abstract questions and directions into four levels. They were influenced by the ideas of James Moffett (1968) and they used their own observations of the interaction between children and teachers in American schools and a research project using an assessment based on their model.

The four levels within the model are defined in terms of the perceived distance between the language and the materials available to the listener. The authors identified a variety of different types of questions and directions at each level. While the structure of the different questions etc within each level remain constant, the content and vocabulary change. This means that the model is highly flexible and can be applied in different communication settings across a multitude of topics and curriculum areas.

The four levels follow a developmental sequence so the model can be used to ascertain the level of abstract language a child can understand. The language used to interact with the child can therefore be modified to ensure that the child understands the linguistic demands. This will in turn improve the child's confidence and encourage the development of the child's abstract reasoning skills within his level of ability.

As the model is developmentally based, it can be used to increase the awareness of the subsequent types of questions and directions the child might be expected to understand. The model can therefore be implemented to extend a child's

understanding of abstract language and can be used to set individual, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) targets.

Finally, the Language of Learning Model can be used to measure change.

'Blank' or 'The Language of Learning Model' is a valuable, flexible assessment and management tool which can be used to promote the abstract reasoning skills of all children but especially those with receptive language delays. Knowledge of the model would benefit everyone who communicates with children both at school and at home.

The Language of Learning Model Levels

Level one

Matching perception

The child is required to match his immediate perceptions to language, and so responds to simple commands which involve matching what he is seeing to what he is hearing.

- *'Where's the lorry?'*
- *'What is this?'*
- *'Pick up the bus'*
- *'Find a car like this.'*
- *'Give me the tractor'*
- *'Show me the train'*

Level two

Selective analysis of perception

The child is still required to match language on to his immediate perceptions, however he must focus more **selectively** on the material by responding to and identifying its attributes, qualities etc.

The child is encouraged to focus on objects and situations in more detail. The child is introduced to concepts both concrete and abstract which facilitates the description of objects. This descriptive language helps a child to understand simple stories or describe pictures. At this level the child is involved in the sorting and classification of objects.

At this level the child is expected to be able to:

- Find an object by function (what it does) e.g. *'Which one do you cut with?'*
- Complete a sentence e.g. *'You can throw a ……….'*
- Listen to two pieces of information – e.g. *'Find a **big yellow** pencil.'*
- Give another example e.g. *'What else can you eat?'*
- Identify differences e.g. *'What is different about these two pictures?'*
- Cite another example within a category e.g. *'Name something that is a food.'*
- Put pictures of related objects together e.g. *knife and fork*
- Recall items named in a statement e.g. *'What things flew?'*
- Recall information from a statement e.g. *'Who? What? Where?'*
- Describe a simple scene e.g. *'What is happening in the picture?'*
- Describe what someone is doing e.g. *'What is the boy doing?'*

Level three

Re ordering perception

At this level the child can use language to re-structure and re-order his perceptions and experiences. The child is expected to have an understanding of language itself and will be required to use language to talk about language. The child is expected to make deductions or generalisations about a situation and to be able to make a common link in order to group information together.

At this level the child is expected to be able to:

- Follow a set of directions e.g. *'Do this and then do that.'*
- Plan and give a set of directions e.g. *'Tell me how to get to the shops.'*
- Arrange a number of pictures in to a sequence.
- Formulate a story which links all the pictures.
- Summarise the picture sequence into one sentence.
- Describe events subsequent to a scene – prediction e.g. *'What might happen next?'*
- Assume the role of another person e.g. *'What could he say?'*
- Make simple word definitions e.g. *'What does .... mean?'*
- Give another example of something but listen to extra conditions e.g. *'Find me something else you can wear but not made of wool.'*
- Identify similarities e.g. *'How are these the same?'*

Level four

This level requires the child to solve complex and abstract verbal problems

The child has to think about the relationships between objects, people and events and give reasons as to why things happen.

He has to justify why events have occurred and why a particular prediction is made.

Level four skills develop between four and a half and six years of age.

By level four the child should be able to:

- Justify a prediction e.g. *'Why will it happen?'*
- Justify a decision e.g. *'Why didn't you come home?'*
- Identify the cause of an event e.g. *'What made it happen?'*
- Solve a problem e.g. *'What could you do?'*
- Solve a problem from another persons perspective e.g. *'What could she do?'*
- Make an inference from an observation e.g. *'How can we tell that the boy is sad?'*
- Explain why something cannot be done e.g. *'Why can't we go swimming today?'*
- Select the means to a goal e.g. *'Why should we use a raincoat to keep us dry?'*
- Explain the logic of compound words e.g. *'Why is this computer called a laptop?'*

References

Blank, Rose and Berlin (1978). **The Language of Learning**: The pre-school Years. New York: Grune and Stratton Inc.

Schaerf, L, **Communication in the Classroom.** Published by South Kent Community Healthcare NHS Trust.