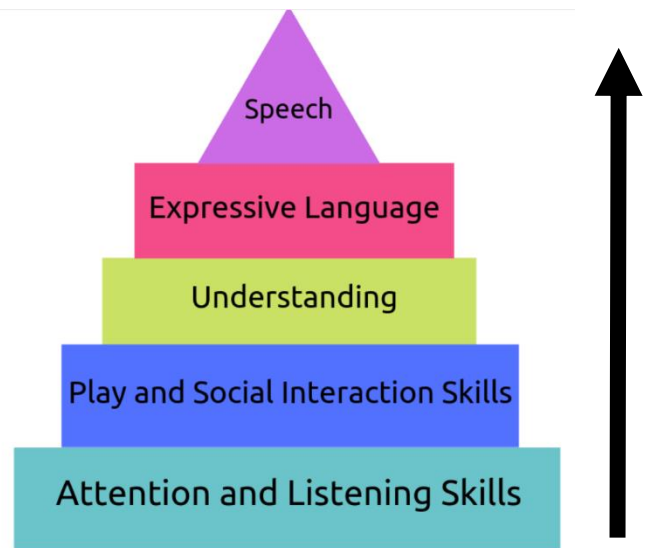


Why is attention so important to language and how can we promote its development?

Why is building attention important for gaining skills in language and speech?

The chart opposite shows how a child's development of speech and language builds. It is important that the child has learnt skills in the lower section before they are able to move up the pyramid.

The development of attention and listening continues to develop from birth until around 6 years of age (see below).



Fleeting attention (0-12 months) The baby is easily distracted and will turn towards stimulus (noise, light etc)

Rigid attention (8-20 months) The toddler can now focus on a task of their choice, resisting other distractions. Finds it hard to focus on an adult led task.

Single channelled attention (22-36 months) The child will need to shift their attention to the speaker in order to receive instructions and is unable to listen and do at the same time.

Focusing attention (30-50 months) The child is becoming more able to stop their activity and pay attention to others but may need adult help to listen and attend fully.

Two-channelled attention (40-60 months) The child can now attend to an activity and listen to an instruction. However, attention span is still quite short.

Integrated attention (60 months +) The child can now choose what to focus on and can establish and move their focus at will.

Early attention building activity – **Attention Bucket**

Resources: non transparent bucket, 3 interesting items

Aim: to make the adult the focus of attention

The adult holds the bucket with the items in and they focus their attention on the bucket. The adult sings "I've got something in my bucket, in my bucket, in my bucket, I've got something in my bucket what will it be". The adult then takes the item from the bucket and animates it, without giving it to the child or saying anything. The adult names the item and what it is doing and returns it to the bucket.

The focus is to create a motivating and fun experience for everyone. There should be minimal distractions and the most attention-grabbing aspect should be the lead adult and what they are sharing. Language should be minimal, repetitive, motivating and focused on the item or activity. The aim being creating an irresistible invitation to share and learn using visually exciting objects or activities.