

Exemplar 2

Using play to develop cognitive abilities through oral language

The acquisition and use of language plays a primary role in the child's developing intellectual abilities. In the early years of primary school qualitative changes in his/her thought processes can be effected through the mediating function of language.

Language clarifies images and facilitates the cognitive organisation of concepts and ideas. In the infant classes, through language and through the teacher-child relationship, the child constantly constructs and progressively modifies conceptual thought by interpreting experience.

The teacher must structure activities that allow him/her to interact with the children. He/she should support and challenge them through talk that is collaborative in nature and that requires the child to consider people, objects, actions, relationships and ideas, and to talk about them with increasing levels of complexity. This interaction of language and experience assists cognitive development. The following exemplar illustrates the type of language use that can be encouraged through play activity in different curriculum areas.

Activity

Children might be prompted to say

Naming objects

I have a teddy.

Describing objects in terms of their distinguishing

- characteristics properties
- associations, functions
- colour, shape, size, material

This is the elephant that has a trunk and lives in Africa.
This is the bucket for making a sand castle.
This is the small red block. It's square and made of wood.

Describing the relationship of the child to the object

I can climb, wheel, roll, tumble.

Planning and saying how he/she will use materials

I'm going to bounce and kick the ball.
I'm going to make two big sand castles and two small sand castles.
I'm going to climb to the top of the frame.
I'm going to telephone the doctor and say my brother is sick.

Sorting and categorising materials	<p>I'm going to sort the red and blue beads to make a necklace.</p> <p>I'm collecting all the Lego.</p> <p>I'm sorting the blue beads and the red pegs.</p> <p>I'm choosing pairs that look like one another.</p> <p>I'm picking pairs that are the same size.</p> <p>I'm remembering all the nursery rhymes I know.</p> <p>I'm listing all the stories I know.</p>
Matching in one-to-one correspondence	<p>I'm putting each cup with a saucer.</p> <p>I'm choosing a chair for each teddy.</p>
Recalling and describing activities	<p>First I played on the mat, then I tumbled and rolled, then I rode the bicycle and I pretended I was riding down a big hill.</p>
Planning and discussing activities to come	<p>I'm going to build an aeroplane.</p> <p>I think we should use the big blocks because.....</p> <p>We will need three seats because.....</p> <p>If we need more room we can.....</p>
Persuading, explaining and justifying	<p>I'd rather play with the sand because I want to use the new sand bucket.</p> <p>We haven't got enough blocks to make our tower as high as the window.</p> <p>We've already got a traffic warden; will you be the doctor and visit the sick children?</p>
Describing an experience	<p>I've built Rapunzel's tower.</p>
Using language in moving from make-believe play to drama	<p>We're travelling in our spaceship.</p> <p>We're going to discover</p>