Understanding Abstract Language at Blank Level 1

Language and how it is structured is complex. To try and make it simpler, **Blank, Rose and Berlin (1978)** created the Blanks levels of questioning. This is a framework which helps us to think about how some types of questions and sentences are more difficult to understand than others.

The Blanks levels split language into **concrete** and **abstract concepts**. Concrete language is usually easier to understand than abstract language.

> **Concrete language:** This includes simple naming words (nouns), action words (verbs) and describing words (adjectives).
>
> **Abstract language:** These are words that you can't see such as 'imagination', 'thinking', 'how' and 'why'.

At **Blanks Level 1**, the child applies language to what he/she sees in the everyday world. The information needed is directly in front of them or recently removed. Responses are short or can be done without speaking (e.g. pointing).

For example, if playing with Farm animals;

Scanning for a matching object	Find one like this (adult holding up a pig)
Identifying an object by sound	Moo! Show me what makes that noise
Identifying an object by touch	Show me what you touched
Naming an object heard	Quack Quack! What did you hear? Did you hear a cow or a duck?
Naming an object touched	What did you touch/feel?
Naming an object seen	What is this? (adult holds up a duck)
Imitating a simple sentence	Say this…Oink!
Remembering pictured objects	What did you see? (adult had been holding up a tractor)
Remembering incidental information	What did you see in the barn?

Cueing techniques

If your child does not understand you, there are different ways you can help. These techniques help to scaffold your child's understanding and should be gradually dropped as your child's understanding improves. Try the following suggestions:

- **Give time** – make sure you have given your child enough time to respond.
- **Delay** – make sure your child has waited until you have finished your request.
- **Focus attention** – make sure your child is looking at you and listening to your request.
- **Repeat** – repeat the request again.
- **Forced alternatives** – give your child two alternatives for example "Is it a crayon or a pencil?"
- **Sound/syllable cues** – give the first sound or syllable of the answer.
- **Gesture** – use gesture to help your child understand or to cue them in to the answer.
- **Rephrase** – repeat the question in a different way.
- **Sentence completion** – give the answer sentence for your child to complete. For example "What is it? It's a ….."

Based on the Information by Marion Blank