



**words first**

Speech. Language. Literacy.

# Language Development Pyramid

**Social**

**Talking/AAC**

**Understanding**

**Play**

**Attention and Listening**



# Words First Language Development Pyramid

This pyramid shows the building blocks of speech, language and social communication development.

**ATTENTION and LISTENING:** Attention forms the basis from which learning language can occur. There are different stages of attention, which develop over time and with age. Some include fleeting attention, single channeled attention and most importantly, joint attention. Without joint attention, speech and language development is likely to be delayed.

**PLAY:** Just like attention has different stages, so does play! Play, particularly symbolic play, is a significant step in the development of language. This means that by understanding that the toy car represents the real car, a child starts to understand that the word 'car' also represent the real car.

**UNDERSTANDING:** This refers to understanding of language or 'receptive language'. Children usually learn to understand words before they can say them. Children will store words in categories so that they can be easily recalled for speaking. With a stable and solid foundation in attention and listening as well as play skills children learn to understand follow sentences and then conversations.

**TALKING/AAC:** Children learn how to express themselves by either exploring individual repetitive sounds (babbling) which are shapes into words and sentences or by using their hands/a communication device. At this stage children learn to get their message across in many different ways (verbal and non-verbal).

**SOCIAL USE OF LANGUAGE:** As children master communication, they also begin to understand the impact of their communication on those around them. Through trial and error as well as feedback from loved ones, they realise that their communication can change their environment. Children also learn the socially accepted norms for their culture, including non-verbal communication skills, as they begin to refine their social awareness.