

Using Core vocabulary to communicate first messages

Most children will start off using their symbol based communication system to make requests, as this is usually the most motivating thing for them and easiest to teach as the child can be immediately rewarded for their communication by getting the thing they want.

However it is important to use their system to model as many different types of message as possible and create opportunities for the child to use these in order to develop their communicative competence.

The core vocabulary within their system provides a means to communicate a range of 'first' messages (as described in Charlotte Child's First Messages Framework, 2006) as shown below:

First Messages	Corresponding symbols
Appeared /existence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'I know what that is' 	Look
Disappeared <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telling you about something that has disappeared or is disappearing. Requesting for someone/ something to disappear 	All gone / no/ bye-bye
Stopped <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telling you about something that has stopped Requesting for it to continue 	All gone / finished /more /again
Gone missing / non-existence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telling you that something or someone is missing from its normal place Asking 'where?' something is 	All gone / where's?
Where things are / location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telling you where something or someone is Requesting that something is put in that place or moved in that direction 	Look/up/down/ in/ on /under/there
Whose is whose/ possession <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating ownership 	My /Mine /your
Rejection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating that something is not wanted Requesting the current activity to stop Telling you that something is wrong 	'no' 'stop' 'I don't want' 'finish'
Be in charge of something <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating that they want to do something themselves 	Me / I want My turn
Be on the receiving end of an action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating they want something to be done to them 	me/ I want / my turn/ help
Commenting on an activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telling you what is going on 	Up/down/ uh-oh/ go/ wow

Commenting on something

- Telling about what something is like

Yucky /nice/ yummy/ wow

The child needs to have the underlying concept e.g. understanding that something has disappeared before he/she can intentionally communicate this. If they do not seem to have these concepts yet, then they may more time and opportunities to develop these through everyday activities and play.

Planning opportunities for a child to use different types of messages:

- Use a situation the child is familiar with and enjoys
- Plan how you can create the opportunity to use a particular type of message in this situation
- Model how to use the core board to communicate the message when the opportunity arises
- Repeat or plan further opportunities for the child to use this type of message
- Wait and to give the child the chance to point to the symbol. If they do not respond or communicate the message in another way e.g. physical behaviour then model by pointing to the symbol and using the word for them again.

For example:

Activity – Blowing up balloons with a balloon pump and letting them go

- Show the child the balloon '**look** (appearance)
- Put it on the pump '**on**' (where things are)
- Child tries to put it on the pump '**help**' (be on the receiving end of an action)
- Pump it up '**my turn/ your turn**' (be in charge of something)
- Decide when it is big enough '**stop**' (rejection/ be in charge of something)
- Let it go '**go**' '**wow**' (commenting on an activity) '**up**' '**down**' (where things are)
- The balloon disappears out of sight '**gone**' '**where**' (disappeared / gone missing)
- The balloon is found '**look**' (appeared)
- If the child seems to have enjoyed it and wants to do it again '**more**' '**again**' (stopped)
- If the child didn't enjoy it or has lost interest '**finish**' '**stop**' (rejection)

Try to provide a range of different opportunities for each type of message. For example: a child who doesn't reject things appropriately.

Situations could be

- Offering the wrong thing – a sock instead of a piece of a puzzle and model '**no**'
- Keeping going with an activity for longer than usual (noticing non-verbal signs the child has had enough and then modelling '**stop**' or '**finished**' or '**no more**'
- Offering a food the child doesn't like (with a food they do like close to hand to avoid them getting upset) then modelling '**no want**' '**no**'