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**DECLARATIVE LANGUAGE**

**HOME AND PRESCHOOL SOCIAL  
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES**

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# DECLARATIVE LANGUAGE



## What is Declarative Language?

Declarative language is neutral language that does not require a verbal response, but invites one.

For example, 'I love the colour green', 'I hope you find a great book', 'Lets play a DVD'.

By using declarative language with children with language and social communication difficulties, parents and caregivers can expand the child's language while reducing pressure on the child to respond, resulting in increased intentional communication, and building on genuine social engagement.

This type of language does not make demands either in the form of instructions, or questions, and in fact it makes up 80% of communication in most typical conversations. Declarative language is an effective way of highlighting context and social relevance; with declarative language we can make the implicit become explicit.

## How the use of declarative language can benefit children with ASD and/or language, social communication difficulties:

- Children with ASD and/or language, social communication difficulties can find intentional communication difficult, however there is a positive correlation between use of declarative language and the development of language.
- Development of 'self-talk' and self-regulation and problem solving: many children with ASD and/or language, social communication difficulties do not develop an inner voice ('self-talk') to regulate their thoughts, actions and emotions. Similarly, they can struggle to reflect on the past, anticipate the future or think through a difficult problem. Use of declarative language, or 'thinking out loud', can help to develop this because when we do these things, we tend to use self-directed declaratives.
- Young children with ASD and/or language, social communication difficulties can find it difficult to be part of the social world, and to develop social communication skills. Using declarative language during the early school years can be used as a classroom wide strategy and can benefit all children.
- Language modelling strategies (including interpreting actions, highlighting important words, using visual aids, and repeating) all result in "significant gains" in a child's communication, and it generalised and maintained after intervention."
- Children with ASD do understand indirect commands. In one study, even better than neurotypical children.
- Children with ASD often have an interest in communicating, but may not know how.

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The following are examples of declarative language:

**Invitations:** *Let's play a video*

**Predictions:** *I hope there's a green car because green is my favourite colour*

**Comments:** *I really like playing angry birds*

**Declamations:** *I'm tired of drawing*

**Self-narratives:** *I'm walking over to the table to get some colouring stuff*

**Celebrations:** *We're awesome!*

**Reflections:** *It was fun figuring that out with you*

**Support:** *I hope you find a great book*

**Declarative questions:** *I wonder what will happen if these two blocks fall?*

**Perspective sharing:** *I don't really like the 7-train*

**Indirect prompt:** *Now is the time to decide your superhero name*

**Use of prosody:** *(intonation, stress, volume rate)*

Use of non-verbal gestures

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- i Harbison, McDaniel & Yoder, 2017
  - ii Sussman, 2012
  - iii Kissine, et al., 2015
  - iv Kissine, De Brabanter, Leybaert, 2012
  - vii Wallace, Silvers, Martin & Kenworthy, 2009
  - viii Franchini et al., 2017