

Section 9.9

Making inferences using idioms

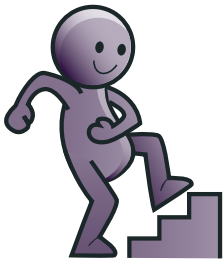


Why is this important?

Inferencing is a key strand in the development of language understanding. Idioms are a more advanced form of non-literal abstract language processing. Linking them together increases the complexity of linguistic understanding required. However, without understanding this level of language complexity, children find it difficult to get beyond the literal interpretation.

What to do

- On an individual basis or in pairs, act out a little story from pictures (e.g. missing the bus, dropping the eggs out of the shopping basket – how do people feel?).
- Use a picture which includes inference and idiom (e.g. ‘Farida is in bed – how does she feel?’, ‘Farida has a frog in her throat. Is it true that Farida has a frog in her throat?’).
- If the child says ‘yes’ discuss what the idiom actually means.
- If the child says ‘no’, ask ‘So why is Farida saying this?’



Step up

- Use inference and idiom in a story with no pictures.
- Use idioms in the picture inferences.
- Use available material to encourage the child to describe what is happening, identify the problem/s and explain some possible solutions.
- Suggest what might happen.

Step down

- Take away the idioms and encourage inference from a story told without pictures.
- Use puppets for inferencing only.
- Use pictures to support both inference and the use of idioms (e.g. one picture showing ‘family eating at the dinner table’, next picture shows ‘one child left at dinner table and everyone’s gone outside to play’. Mum says ‘You’re eating at a snail’s pace’ – use the pictures to work out what is meant).
- Slow down the rate of delivery to facilitate processing.

