Semantics Scenes and Questioning
Set 2

A school-based or home-based program.

✓ Designed by speech pathologists for teachers and parents.
✓ Packed with activities that develop semantic knowledge.
✓ Colour thematic picture scenes include: the zoo, transport, at home, food, school, toys, Australian animals, clothes, under the sea and birthday party.
✓ Specific semantic questioning is outlined for each picture scene.
✓ Examples of appropriate and inadequate responses for 5 year old children
✓ Techniques and strategies are outlined when a child provides an inadequate answer.

A Learning Resource for Key Area: Oral Language

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This book is designed to equip teachers and parents of 5 year old children with activities that will develop semantic knowledge. A good grasp of semantics broadens a child’s understanding of the meaning of words, which then helps them to understand what they hear or read and also helps them to express exactly what they want to say.

A child who is struggling with semantics will be the child who:

- Can’t stay on the topic of simple story or news telling, but goes off on unrelated tangents.
- Takes a long time to think of particular words they want to use in conversation.
- Uses non specific vocabulary such as ‘that’ ‘there’ ‘this one’.
- Has difficulty sorting items into groups, describing them, and finding differences and similarities.
- Has difficulty understanding instructions that include time vocabulary such as ‘before’ ‘after’ ‘first’ etc.

‘Semantics’ refers to the meaning of sentences and words and how words relate to one another. That is, whether words belong in groups or categories together (e.g. Apples and oranges and pears are all fruit), whether they are similar to each other, or different and the features they have e.g. Size, shape and colour.

Another way to think of semantics is like a network or web. Each word we speak or read has a place in this web. Each word has other words linked to it, some closely related and some distantly related. Each word belongs to several groups, some big and some small and each word has a definition that sets it apart from other words that are similar. Some words are related by the fact that they are actually opposites! All this information surrounding words is what we aim to teach young children about the vocabulary that is appropriate to their stage of development and life experience.

Semantics is one facet of oral language. Given that oral language is not only a strong predictor of academic and social success, but also a necessary requirement for good mental health, it is important that parents and teachers have the skills and resources needed to facilitate the development of oral language in young children.

The aim of this program is to train parents and teachers to structure and facilitate developmentally appropriate semantic activities for 4 to 5 year old children. This program provides:

- Semantic activities and accompanying picture resources.
- Examples of appropriate and inadequate responses for 5 year old children.
- Techniques and strategies to implement when a child provides an inadequate answer.

Best wishes with the program.

Diana Rigg and Rebecca Robbie
Guidelines For Use As A Small Group Activity

To be led by a teacher, education assistant (EA) or parent helper.

Arrange children so they are sitting in a close group in front of the adult who is holding up a semantic scene. OR Arrange children so they are sitting in a circle with the adult who has the semantic scene or objects.

Aims of Small Group Activity

• To provide children more opportunities to practice answering semantic instructions and questions in a smaller, less daunting setting.
• To give the adult more understanding of, and an opportunity to work with, children who are not able to answer semantic questions or to follow semantic instructions at an age appropriate level.
• To illustrate how to support children to answer semantic questions.
• For the adult to understand how different types of instructions and questions have varying levels of difficulty for children.

Delivery Instructions

• Tell the children you are going to look at a picture and ask them questions about it.
• Choose a child with well developed language skills to answer some of the harder questions first, then ask a child who has weaker language skills the same question. That child has then heard an appropriate response and can copy it, building their language skills and confidence.
• If you have a group of children who all have weak language skills, then ask the question or give the instruction, provide the answer, then ask the question again. A child can repeat your answer and receive positive feedback for their response.
• Use the other ideas on the ‘Tips for Teaching Semantics to Children’ sheets associated with each semantic scene to help children respond appropriately to the questions and instructions.
• Give children multiple opportunities to answer particular questions or follow instructions so they can build on their skills each time.

TIP: Children learn semantic relationships in relation to themselves first e.g. ‘I am bigger than him’, then in relation to objects e.g. ‘The table is bigger than the box’, then in 2 dimensional pictures. For children who are having difficulty learning to answer semantic questions, try teaching the concepts with whole objects first, then go on to using the semantic picture scenes.
Guidelines For Use As An Individual Activity

To be done with an education assistant (EA) or parent.

Adult and child sit opposite each other at a desk or on the floor. Whole objects relating to the semantic theme are next to the adult. OR Child sits on a parent’s lap at home. Parent holds the semantic scene in front. Place the question card next to the parent, on the floor.

Aims of Individual Activity

• To give the adult more understanding of, and an opportunity to work with, children who are not able to answer semantic questions or to follow semantic instructions at an age appropriate level.
• To increase the intensity and frequency of modeling for children who are having difficulty responding to semantic questions and instructions.
• To give the child more opportunities to practice responding to semantic instructions and questions in a smaller, less daunting setting.
• To raise parent awareness about semantics and increase parent understanding of how to teach their children semantic concepts within everyday activities.

Delivery Instructions

• Tell the child you are going to look at a picture and ask them questions about it.
• If the child is having difficulty responding to particular instructions or questions, then ask the question or give the instruction, provide the answer, then ask again. A child can repeat your answer and receive positive feedback for their response.
• Use the other ideas on the ‘Tips for Teaching Semantics to Children’ sheets associated with each semantic scene to help children respond appropriately to the questions and instructions.
• Give children multiple opportunities to answer particular questions or follow instructions so they can build on their skills each time.
Tips On Administering Pre And Post Tests

The aim of the Pre and Post Tests is for teachers or parents to gain an understanding of the children’s semantic abilities without support. In order to do this, it is important to be aware of how much support we provide. Ideally, the pre and post tests should be administered without any support, but if support is provided, it needs to be noted.

There are various ways that support can be provided:

1. **Repeating all or part of an instruction or question.**
   Repetition allows a child extra processing time and a second attempt at processing the same information.

2. **Simplifying an instruction or question, by saying it in a different way.**
   For example, changing ‘Tell me 3 things are toys’, to ‘3 things that you can play with’ makes the question easier to answer, as the child does not have to know the name of the ‘toy’ category.

3. **Gestures**
   We often add gestures to our instructions and questions without consciously thinking about it. For example asking the question “Bread goes with ....?” (butter), while pretending to spread butter on an open hand.
Semantic 5 Year Old Pre-Test

You will need:
- A round blue block
- A long paintbrush
- A square yellow block
- A fat crayon
- Semantic Pre-Test for 5 year olds picture sheet.

1. Sort items into common closely related groups
   a) Adult: Point to the row of toys in the Semantic Pre-Test picture sheet. These things are all mixed up. Point to the toys that belong outside. If the child does not point to all 3 outside toys at first, wait 5 seconds, then ask ‘Are there any more?’.

      | Tick | Child’s response: |
      |------|-------------------|
      | Adequate response | Points to the scooter, paddle pool and bucket and spade. |
      | Inadequate response | Points to the puzzle, blocks or colouring book; Points to only 1 or 2 of the outside toys; Says “I don’t know”; No response. |

   b) Adult: Point to the row of toys in the Semantic Pre-Test picture sheet. Now point to the toys that belong inside. If the child does not point to all 3 inside toys at first, wait 5 seconds, then ask Are there any more?.

      | Tick | Child’s response: |
      |------|-------------------|
      | Adequate response | Points to the puzzle, blocks and colouring book. |
      | Inadequate response | Points to the scooter, paddle pool or bucket and spade; Points to only 1 or 2 of the inside toys; No response. |

2. Name function of common objects
   Adult: A pencil is for drawing with. What is a paintbrush used for?

      | Tick | Child’s response: |
      |------|-------------------|
      | Adequate response | Painting; Making a painting; Painting a picture; Doing a painting; Putting colours on your painting; You have to dip it in the paints and put it on the paper. |
      | Inadequate response | Brushing; Doing that; This (child uses gestures). |

3. Name less common categories
   Adult: Turn the Semantic Pre-Test picture sheet over. We’re going to talk about groups of things. I’ll show you what I mean. Puzzles, blocks and dolls are all… toys. Now it’s your turn. Elbow, arm and leg are all…?

      | Tick | Child’s response: |
      |------|-------------------|
      | Adequate response | Body parts; Parts of your body. |
      | Inadequate response | Here; Pointy; Bendy; Child points to parts on own body. |

4. Name 5 items that belong in this group
   Adult: Turn the Semantic Pre-Test picture sheet over. Tell me 5 things that you can eat.

      | Tick | Child’s response: |
      |------|-------------------|
      | Adequate response | Names any 5 food items e.g. Cheese, chocolate, ice-cream, oranges, biscuits, pizza, rice. |
      | Inadequate response | Names less than 5 food items; Names any items that are not food; I like to eat it; Yummy; At the table; Hungry. |

5. Description by 3 elements
   Adult: Turn the Semantic Pre-Test picture sheet over. Tell me everything you know about an apple.

      | Tick | Child’s response: |
      |------|-------------------|
      | Adequate response | (Child describes the item, including category fruit or food PLUS 2 other elements): It’s fruit; It’s food; Round; Crunchy; Juicy; You can eat it; It’s for play lunch; It grows on a tree; You buy it at the shop; It’s red; It’s green. |
      | Inadequate response | Child describes by less than 3 elements; I like it; Apple; Oranges; I don’t know; Child doesn’t include the category. |
**INSTRUCTIONS:** Start with the Transport Scene Image face down on the table in front of you, so the child cannot see the picture.

1. **Adult:** We’re talking about transport (things that go) today. Name 5 things that are transport.
   - **Adequate response:** Any 5 transport items e.g., Car, truck, fire engine, helicopter, boat, motorbike, aeroplane, train, bus, van, taxi, rocket ship.
   - **Inadequate response:** Less than 5 different transport items.

2. **INSTRUCTIONS:** Turn the transport scene over and show the child the picture.
   - **Adult:** What is a boat for?
     - **Adequate response:** To take people over the water; To go over the water on; To float on the water.
     - **Inadequate response:** For going on; For taking you somewhere; For the water.

3. **Adult:** I’m going to describe something in this picture, try to guess what it is!
   - **NOTE:** Your description gives the child a model of how they could describe an item.
   - **Adult:** It is transport, it has 2 wheels and you can ride it on the road. (Motor bike) Now it’s your turn. Tell me everything you know about a bus. If the child doesn’t provide enough information on their first description, ask an open question like ‘What else can you tell me?’
     - **Adequate response:** Child describes the item by giving the category PLUS 2 more elements: It’s transport/Something that goes; It is big; It carries lots of people; It takes school kids to school; It has windows and a door and wheels; It can be green or orange.
     - **Inadequate response:** Describing the item by less than 3 elements; Describing only by visual elements e.g. It’s blue (basic description without elaboration); Not giving the category.

4. **Adult:** Find all the transport in the picture that has only two wheels.
   - **Adequate response:** Child points to or names the scooter, motorbike and bicycle.
   - **Inadequate response:** Child points to or names car, bus, train; Child points to or names less than 3 of the correct items.

5. **Adult:** Find all the transport in the picture that have 4 wheels.
   - **Adequate response:** Child points to or names both the car and taxi.
   - **Inadequate response:** Child points to or names scooter, motorbike, bus, train or bicycle; Child points to or names only 1 of the correct items.

6. **Adult:** The boat, bus, car and helicopter are all in which group?
   - **Adequate response:** Transport; Things that go; Things you can drive.
   - **Inadequate response:** There; In the picture; Driving.

7. **Adult:** What is different about the helicopter and the motorbike?
   - **Adequate response:** One has a propeller and one doesn’t; The motorbike has wheels, but the helicopter doesn’t; The helicopter goes in the sky, but the motorbike goes on the road.
   - **Inadequate response:** They’re different; This one has that thingy; That one goes there; This one is yellow and that one is red (child gives basic differences without further elaboration).

8. **Adult:** What is the same about the helicopter and the motorbike?
   - **Adequate response:** They are both transport/things that go; They take people places; There is only one person in the helicopter and on the motorbike.
   - **Inadequate response:** It has wheels; That one goes in the sky; The motorbike is loud.

9. **Adult:** Point to the car after you point to the bus.
   - **Adequate response:** Child points to the bus, then the car.
   - **Inadequate response:** Child points to the bus then the bus; Child points to the bus only; Child points to the car only.

10. **Adult:** Some things go together, like bus and bus driver. Try this one train and… ?
    - **Adequate response:** Train track; Carriages.
    - **Inadequate response:** Train; Bus; Car; No response.

11. **Adult:** What does speeding mean?
    - **Adequate response:** It’s when someone is driving too fast; Going too fast; Going faster than you are allowed.
    - **Inadequate response:** Really fast; Like a police car; Running; Don’t know.
Additional Activities Using Real Objects For Transport Scene.

You’ll need:
- Toy transport items with 2 wheels e.g. Bicycle, motorbike.
- Toy transport items with 4 wheels e.g. Car, taxi, skateboard.

Adult: Let’s put these things into groups. One group for transport with 4 wheels. The other group for transport with 2 wheels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adequate response</th>
<th>Child sorts items into the appropriate groups e.g. Bicycle, motorbike into 2 wheels group and car, taxi and skateboard into 4 wheel group.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate response</td>
<td>Child points to or names objects; Child incorrectly groups objects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips For Teaching Semantics To Children.

It is important to teach children what each semantic concept means and how you want them to respond to a question or instruction. If a child has difficulty understanding a semantic concept, doesn’t give enough detail or uses incorrect grammar or vocabulary in their answer, you can:

1. Repeat the question or instruction using visual cues to support (e.g. Gestures, or pointing to pictures on the semantic scene).
2. Rephrase the question or instruction or ask it in a different way.
3. Give the child clues (e.g. Describing an item or telling the child the first sound of an item).
4. Begin a sentence for the child to complete with the answer (e.g. “You wash the dishes in…?” - The sink).
5. Give two alternatives for the child to choose between. If they are unsure, children will usually choose the last option, so say the correct alternative last.
6. Model the correct answer for the child to copy.

The following is an example to show how you might assist a child who has given an inappropriate or inadequate answer.

Example: Transport Scene

Adult: Tell me everything you know about a bus.
Child: It’s got wheels.
Adult: That’s right. (Provides clues) How many people can go on it?
Child: Lots.
Adult: Great. (Gives two alternatives) Is it food or transport?
Child: Transport.
Adult: Yes, a bus has wheels, lots of people can go on it and it is transport.
**INSTRUCTIONS:** Start with the Clothes Scene Image face down on the table in front of you, so the child cannot see the picture.

| 1 | **Adult:** We’re talking about clothes today. Name 5 pieces of clothing.  
**Adequate response** | Any 5 items of clothing e.g. jumper, hat, t-shirt, shorts, knickers, undies, bathers, dress, skirt, shoes, socks, tracksuit, jeans, jacket, shirt, scarf, beanie.  
**Inadequate response** | Less than 5 items of clothing; Child says: Clothes; You can wear it; This one. |

| 2 | **Adult:** What is a jacket for?  
**Adequate response** | To keep you warm; To put over your other clothes; To keep the rain off; For wearing.  
**Inadequate response** | It’s red; In my bag; That one. |

| 3 | **Adult:** I’m going to describe something in this picture, try to guess what it is!  
**NOTE:** Your description gives the child a model of how they could describe an item.  
**Adult:** It’s a piece of clothing. You wear it on your head. It keeps the sun off your face. (Hat)  
**Now it’s your turn. Tell me everything you know about this shirt.** If the child doesn’t provide enough information on their first description, ask an open question like ‘What else can you tell me?’  
**Adequate response** | Child describes the item by giving the category PLUS 2 more elements: It’s clothes; It’s clothing; It’s something you wear; It’s got buttons, a collar, sleeves; You wear it on the top of your body; It’s yellow; You keep it in your wardrobe.  
**Inadequate response** | Describing the item by less than 3 elements; Describing only by visual elements (e.g. It’s yellow); Not giving the category. |

| 4 | **Adult:** Point to all the clothes that you usually wear on hot days. If the child does not name all these items on the first try, ask, ‘Are there any more?’  
**Adequate response** | Child points to or names bathers, shorts, t-shirt, hat, dress.  
**Inadequate response** | Child points to or names the jacket, scarf, gumboots; Child points to or names less than 5 of the correct items. |

| 5 | **Adult:** Point to all the clothes that you usually wear on cold days.  
**Adequate response** | Child names the bathers, swimsuit; shorts; t-shirt; hat; dress. Child points to or names less than 6 of the correct items.  
**Inadequate response** | Child names the bathers, swimsuit; shorts; t-shirt; hat; dress; Child points to or names less than 6 of the correct items. |

| 6 | **Adult:** The bathers, shorts, t-shirt, hat and dress are all in which group?  
**Adequate response** | Clothes for hot days; Summer clothes; Hot day clothes.  
**Inadequate response** | There; In the picture; I can see them; That one. |

| 7 | **Adult:** What is different about the shorts and this jacket? (Point to the shorts and the jacket at the left of the page)  
**Adequate response** | The shorts are for hot days and the jacket is for cold days; The shorts are for summer and the jacket is for winter; The shorts go on your legs and the jacket goes on the top of your body; The jacket has a zip and the shorts don’t.  
**Inadequate response** | They’re different; They’re for wearing; That and that. |

| 8 | **Adult:** What is the same about the shorts and the jacket?  
**Adequate response** | They’re for wearing; You can wear them; You buy them at a shop; They both have pockets; They both have a string on them.  
**Inadequate response** | They have red on them (child gives basic similarities without further elaboration). |

| 9 | **Adult:** Point to the jacket that is near the sign.  
**Adequate response** | Child points to the jacket near the sign.  
**Inadequate response** | Child points to any of the other clothes; Child points to the jacket near the edge of the picture. |

| 10 | **Adult:** Point to a jacket that is far from the sign.  
**Adequate response** | Child points to the jacket that is far from the sign.  
**Inadequate response** | Child points to the jacket that is near the sign; Child points to any of the other clothes. |

| 11 | **Adult:** Some things go together, like shoes and socks. Try this one, raincoat and …?  
**Adequate response** | Gumboots; Rainboots; Wellies; Umbrella.  
**Inadequate response** | Jacket; When it’s raining; No response. |

| 12 | **Adult:** What does ‘tight’ mean?  
**Adequate response** | When your clothes are too small; Too small; It doesn’t fit properly.  
**Inadequate response** | I don’t know; Be warm; You’re getting bigger. |
Additional Activities Using Real Objects For Clothes Scene.

**You’ll need:** The clothes you and the child are wearing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Adult:</strong> We’re talking about clothes today. Name 5 things you are wearing today.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adequate response</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inadequate response</strong></td>
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It is important to teach children what each semantic concept means and how you want them to respond to a question or instruction. If a child has difficulty understanding a semantic concept, doesn’t give enough detail or uses incorrect grammar or vocabulary in their answer, you can:

1. Repeat the question or instruction using visual cues to support (e.g. Gestures, or pointing to pictures on the semantic scene).
2. Rephrase the question or instruction or ask it in a different way.
3. Give the child clues (e.g. Describing an item or telling the child the first sound of an item).
4. Begin a sentence for the child to complete with the answer (e.g. “You wash the dishes in...?” - The sink).
5. Give two alternatives for the child to choose between. If they are unsure, children will usually choose the last option, so say the correct alternative last.
6. Model the correct answer for the child to copy.

The following is an example to show how you might assist a child who has given an inappropriate or inadequate answer.

**Example: Clothes Scene**

**Adult:** Point to the jacket that is near the sign.

**Child:** (Points to the jacket near the edge of the picture)

**Adult:** *(Repeats instruction while pointing to the sign)* Point to the jacket that is near this sign.

**Child:** (points to the jacket that is near the sign) This one?

**Adult:** Yes, that is the jacket that is near the sign.
Transport Scene