



Scoring the TALC and an Overview of Blanks Levels

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30 September 2024

Aims

01.
Blanks Levels

02.
**Assessing Functional
Understanding of
Language Skills**

03.
Scoring the TALC

04.
**Using the TALC and
LEG Together**

05.
Next Steps



Blanks Levels

- Language model developed by Blank, Rose and Berlin (1978).
- Studies into interactions between teachers and children in classrooms.
- Question types organised into four levels according to complexity.
- Children's **understanding** of these questions follows developmental pattern.



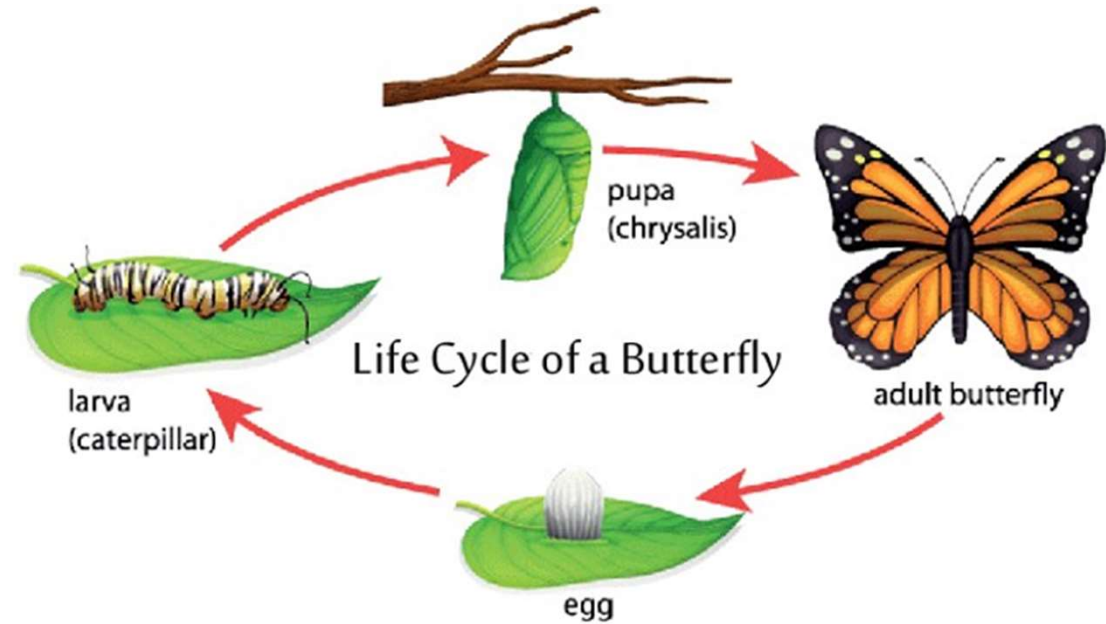
- Concrete “here and now” questions.
- Abstract “how and why” questions.
- Ability to understand what is said to them in conversation.
- Verbal reasoning skills.

Blanks Levels

Look at the four questions.

Can you rank these in complexity from 1-4?

(1 being the easiest,
4 being the most complex)



Why does the caterpillar need to shed its skin?

Tell me the name of another insect...

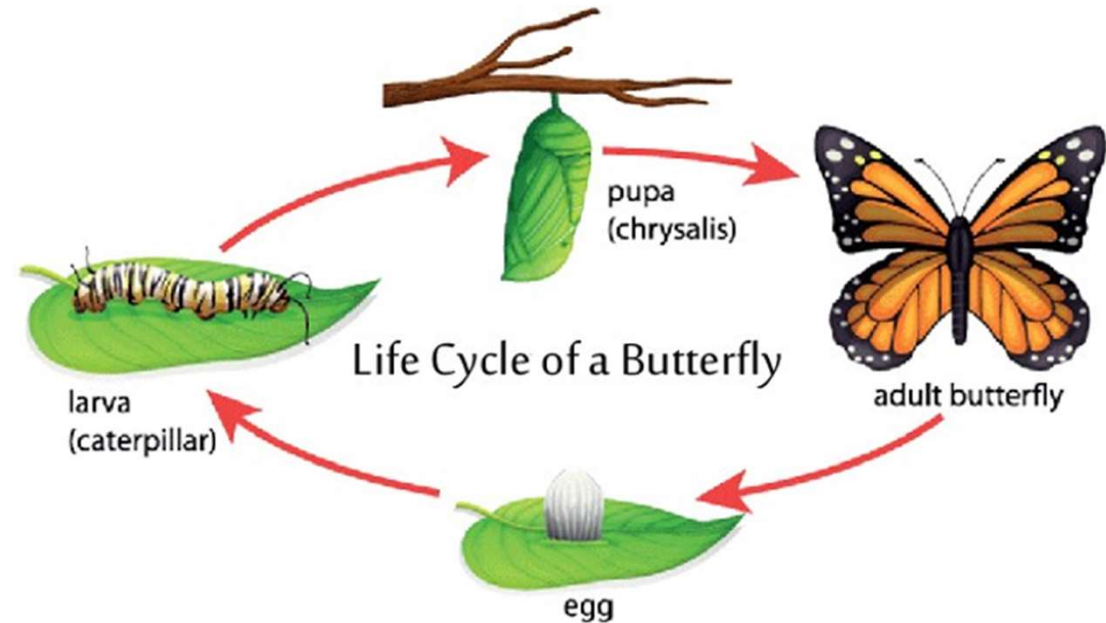
Where's the butterfly?

What happens after the caterpillar comes out of the egg?

Blanks Levels

Can you rank these in complexity from 1-4?

<https://childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk/resources/blanks-levels-training-for-school-age-children/>



1. Where's the butterfly?
2. Tell me the name of another insect...
3. What happens after the caterpillar comes out of the egg?
4. Why does the caterpillar need to shed its skin?

Blanks Levels

Blanks Level 1: Naming 3 years of age

- Point to the ball.
- Show me who's climbing.
- Find your pencil. Find another one.

Blanks Level 4: Re-telling 4.5 years of age

- Point to the boy on the slide then the girl on the roundabout.
- What might happen next.
- What does X mean?

Blanks Level 2: Describing 4 years of age

- How many are there?
- How are these different?
- Who/what/where are they?

Blanks Level 4: Justifying 6 years of age

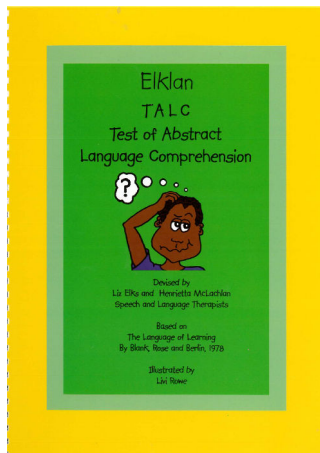
- What could she do?
- How do you know it is raining?
- Name two things that make you feel warm.

Assessing Functional Understanding of Language Skills

Test of Abstract Language Comprehension (TALC)

<https://s3.elklan.co.uk/>

Paper and Digital versions



TALC Picture Assessment Score Sheet

Elklan

Child's name.....Date of birth.....

Date of assessment I.....
Date of assessment II.....
Date of assessment III.....

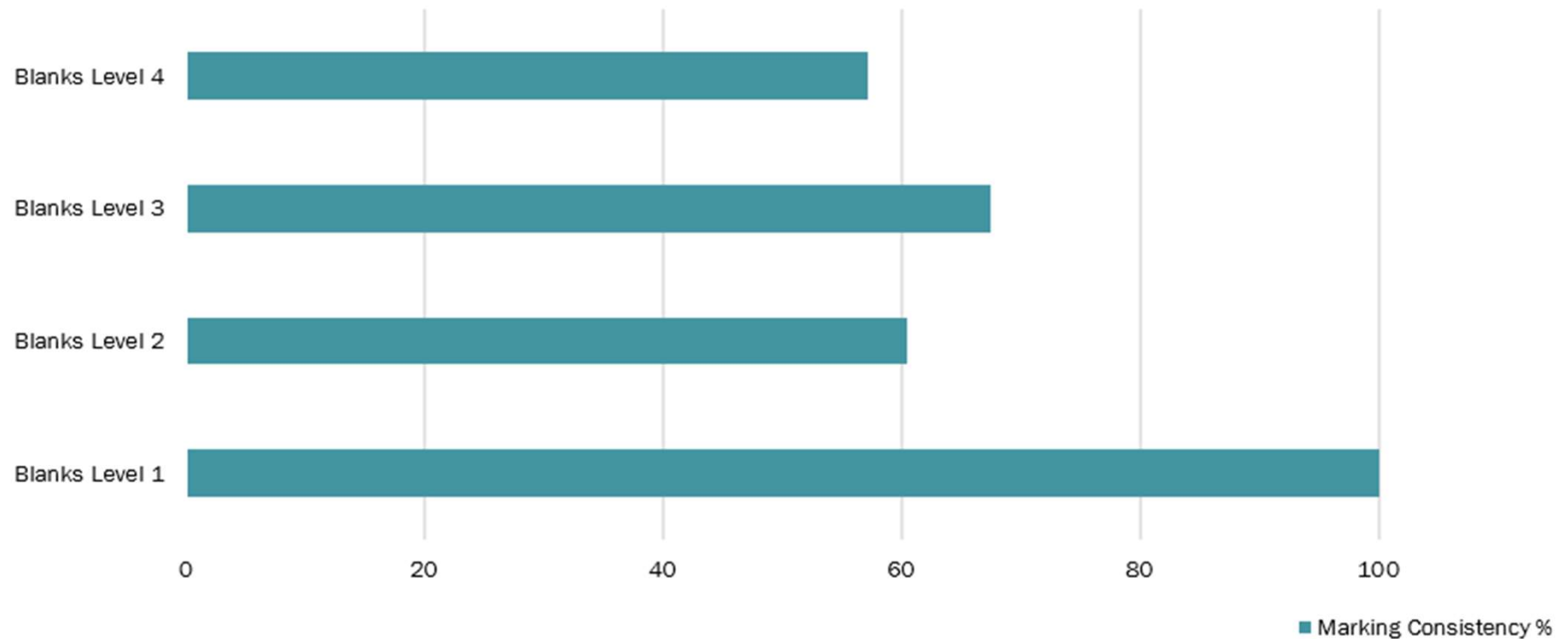
1. Colouring

Blank Level		Question	Child's response	I	II	III	Sub Total		
							I	II	III
1	1	Point to the book							
Sub Total									Level 1
2	2	Show me a big flower							
	3	What are the girls doing?							
	4	(Point to the girl on the right) This girl is using a felt pen. What else can they colour with?							
	5	What could they use to paint with?							
Sub Total									Level 2
3	6	Which girl is not wearing trousers?							
	7	How do the girls feel?							
	8	What are they saying to each other?							
Sub Total									Level 3
4	9	How do you know they are friends?							
	10	Why should the girl put the lids on her felt pens?							
Sub Total									Level 4

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Assessing Functional Understanding of Language Skills



Scoring the TALC



	Acceptable Answers	Unacceptable Answers	Answers to Discuss
Blanks Level 2	2 Pointing to ONE big flower		Pointing to ALL big flowers
	3 Colouring (flowers/in a book)	Flowers	Drawing, painting, making (flowers)
	4 Paint(s), crayon(s), pencil(s)	Names of colours	
	5 Paintbrush, paper, paint		Water
Blanks Level 3	6 Pointing to/describing the girl in the dress		
	7 Happy		Sad
	8 Any acceptable direct speech	Don't know They aren't saying anything	They are talking about...
Blanks Level 4	9 Because they're painting WITH each other	Because they like colouring/drawing/painting	Colouring NEXT TO each other
		Because she said they are friends	Because they're talking with each other
			Because they like each other
	10 Because they might dry out Because they might get dried Because if they don't put them on, the pens will dry out	Because they musn't leave the lids off	Because they might get gone off

TALC Mark Scheme

The TALC manual states: "The TALC is a test of receptive language, therefore if the child gives some indication of understanding the question, the answer is correct." Do not deduct marks or award half marks if grammar is incorrect or sentence is incomplete, e.g. a score of 1 would still be awarded if a child answered 'dry out' for question 10 below. You are able to repeat or rephrase a question but the score should only be given for the child's first answer.



1. Colouring

Blank Level		Answer
1	1	Accept a point to any book shown in the picture or the assessment book <i>Rationale: Child must show understanding of word 'book'</i>
2	2	Point to ONE big flower Pointing to one big flower <i>Do not accept: pointing to more than one big flower</i> <i>Rationale: Child must show understanding of number and size concept</i>
	3	Colouring, drawing, painting, can also accept making/doing with an appropriate noun (e.g. doing drawing/making flowers) <i>Do not accept: 'making' or 'doing' by themselves</i> <i>Rationale: Child must show understanding of 'what doing' but answer does not discriminate child's expressive language ability by limiting acceptable verbs</i>
	4	One or more of the following: pencil, paint, crayons, water, paper <i>Do not accept: pens or a colour</i> <i>Rationale: Child must show understanding of 'what else' therefore item must be different to one used in the question</i>
	5	One or more of the following: paint, paintbrush, water <i>Do not accept: paper</i> <i>Rationale: Child must show understanding of 'painting with' as opposed to 'painting on'</i>

3	6	
	7	Any neutral or positive emotion (e.g. happy, good, pleased, fine, ok) <i>Do not accept: a sensation that is not indicated in the picture, e.g. hot or cold</i> <i>Do not accept: sad, unhappy,</i> <i>Rationale: Child must show understanding of link between feeling and facial expression and link between asking how someone is feeling and responding with an emotion</i>
	8	Any logical direct speech (e.g. hello, I like your drawing) <i>Do not accept: A description of what the girls might be talking about (e.g. they are talking about colouring/flowers)</i> <i>If child says 'they aren't talking' or similar response, rephrase question: 'What could the girls be saying to each other?'</i> <i>Rationale: Child needs to assume the role of another person</i>
4	9	One or more of the following: they're playing/colouring together/with each other; because they're smiling at each other; because they are talking to each other <i>Do not accept: they're sitting next to each other; they're looking at each other; they're playing/colouring [without 'together/each other']; they're smiling [without 'at each other'], because they like each other, because she said they are friends</i> <i>Rationale: Answer needs to show cooperative element</i>
	10	One or more of the following: <u>so</u> they don't get lost; so they don't run out/dry out/go off; so the ink doesn't go on the floor <i>Do not accept: Because they mustn't leave the lids off</i> <i>Rationale: Child must show understanding of cause for putting lids back on</i>



Using the TALC and LEG Together

Blanks Levels 1-4 tie in with LEG Level 1-4 (EYFS-KS1).

LEG Level 5-6 step beyond Blanks Levels (KS2).

LEG Level 1	LEG Level 2	LEG Level 3	LEG Level 4
- Follow instructions containing 1 key word. - Name familiar items and join.	- Sort into basic categories. - Identify and describe pictures and objects. - Follow 1-3 word instructions. - Answer simple 'wh' questions.	- Follow multi-step instructions and answer simple questions. - Develop sequencing and prediction skills.	- Make predictions about what could happen next. - Understanding of time concepts. - Answer 'why' questions and develop ability to inference.

Adults can use the Blanks Level Programmes to support understanding of language skills outside of LEG groups and generalise into classroom and other interactions throughout the day.

Be mindful of language/questions being used with children in LEG groups.

Next Steps

Blanks Levels Language Programmes

Designed to be used in the classroom and throughout the day but can also be used for monitoring in 1:1 or small group work.

TALC Assessment and Mark Scheme

<https://s3.elklan.co.uk/>

Copy of mark scheme available to download from this meeting.

Referring in

1+ year below and/or persisting difficulty and minimal progress despite consistent support.

Include copies of the assessment forms and programmes.

Discuss on Advice Line if unsure.

Blanks Levels Language Training

<https://childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk/resources/blanks-levels-training-for-school-age-children/>

Example questions for each level and behaviour advice available alongside training

Behaviour advice

Identifying a child's functional understanding of language level can have important implications for the way we manage and talk about behaviour/challenging situations. It also ensures we have realistic expectations of a child's understanding.

Children with low language levels are often asked complex questions – which are above their level of understanding e.g.

- Why did you do that?
- What should you have done?

Children are then at risk of:

- Not understanding what they have been asked
- Not being able to answer the questions effectively (if at all)
- Getting into more trouble for not responding appropriately
- As a result, the situation/behaviour may escalate/deteriorate

It is therefore important to:

- Adapt/modify the language we use to account for the child's language level.
- Remember, if a child is upset or angry; their ability to understand may reduce further.
- Remember, if the questions are too difficult or the explanations given are too complex the child will not learn from the situation/experience and may become more upset and/or frustrated.

Behaviour Advice

Blank Level	Say/Ask...	Avoid	If it is too hard
Level 2	- Tell the child directly and clearly - What happened - How their behaviour has affected others - Describe appropriate behaviours using short, simple sentences	- Asking <u>why</u> questions - Negative statements such as 'don't run' ... try walk please' instead	Remember, if a child is upset or angry; their ability to understand may reduce. If the child does not understand or is unable to give a clear answer: - Repeat the question and model the answer - Or, simplify the question by using a question/statement at a lower level of the blanks model
Level 3	- Ask the child to describe - What happened, - What people said - How others felt State the justification for the child i.e. <i>say why</i> they shouldn't have done something	- Asking the child to justify their behaviour (<u>why</u> questions) - Negative statements such as 'don't run' ... try walk please' instead	
Level 4	- Ask level 4 questions e.g. - Why did you do that? - What made you do that? - What should you have done? - Why shouldn't we?	Putting pressure of the child to answer	

Adapted from: Language Builders – Henrietta McLachlan and Liz Elks (2012)



Thank you

Any questions?

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