A Sequence of Communication Development

Level I. Pre-Intentional Behaviour
Behaviour is not under the individual’s own control, but it reflects his general state (such as comfortable, uncomfortable, hungry or sleepy). Caregivers interpret the individual’s state from behaviours such as body movements, facial expressions and sounds...

Level II. Intentional Behaviour
Behaviour is under the individual’s control, but it is not yet used to communicate intentionally. Caregivers interpret the individual’s needs and desires from behaviours such as body movements, facial expressions, vocalizations and eye gaze.

Level III. Unconventional Pre-symbolic Communication
Unconventional pre-symbolic behaviours are used intentionally to communicate. Communicative behaviours are “pre-symbolic” because they do not involve any sort of symbol. Communicative behaviours include body movements, vocalizations, facial expressions and simple gestures (such as tugging on people).

Level IV. Conventional Pre-Symbolic Communication
Conventional pre-symbolic behaviours are used intentionally to communicate. Communicative behaviours are “pre-symbolic” because they do not involve any sort of symbol. We continue to use this type of communication to accompany our language as we mature. The meanings of some gestures may be unique to the culture in which they are used. Communicative behaviours include pointing, nodding or shaking the head, waving, hugging...
Level V. Concrete Symbolic Communication

"Concrete" symbols that physically resemble what they represent, are used to communicate. Concrete symbols look like, feel like, move like or sound like what they represent. Concrete symbols include pictures, objects (such as a shoelace to represent "shoe"), "iconic" gestures (such as patting a chair to say "sit down") and sounds (such as making a buzzing sound to mean "bee").

Level VI. Abstract Symbolic Communication

Abstract symbols such as speech, manual signs, Brailled or printed words are used to communicate. These symbols are “abstract” because they are NOT physically similar to what they represent. They are used one at a time.

Level VII. Language

Symbols (concrete or abstract) are combined into two- or three symbol combinations ("want juice", "me go out"), according to grammatical rules. The individual understands that the meaning of symbol combinations may differ depending upon how the symbols are ordered.

Reference

Communication Matrix (www.communicationmatrix.org
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