SEMANTIC ORGANISATION

DEFINITION
What is Semantics?
Semantics refers to the "meaning" of language. That is, the ability to express and understand the meanings of words and concepts used in our language.

It is the link between our language and a child's knowledge and experiences of the world (how they understand the world to be).

Semantics is the link between the words used and heard and the concepts or objects that they represent.

Semantic organisation refers to the way in which a person organises their knowledge and makes sense of their world.

It is how they organise everything they hear, see, say, touch, and smell etc in their brain in order to make sense of it. It refers to how they use this organisation of knowledge to build on what they know by adding new knowledge and understanding. They then use this information to expand and refine their knowledge of the world. This is why sometimes semantics is referred to as “world knowledge”.

Semantic organisation refers to how children make sense of their world.

HOW DOES IT WORK?
Semantic organisation is a vital part of learning language. When we learn something new, we have to store it in our memory. It needs to be stored in a way that it can be accessed when we need it. If information is stored in an organised way, it will be easy to access. The way our brain copes with the vast amount of information it has to process, is by organising information into groups/categories, with a vast array of links/associations between words/concepts.

The task facing a child who is developing language is therefore to begin to see patterns and groupings, so that they can begin to organise their learning. Children whose language is developing normally will begin to notice similarities and talk about them. For example “Hey, that car is the same as daddy’s” or “I’ve got a jumper like that- a red one!”
SEMANTIC SKILL DEVELOPMENT
Semantic skills develop from simple to more complex skills based on their age and development levels.

By the end of Kindergarten children should be able to:-
♦ Label – Name things
♦ Identify Functions – what items do or are used for
♦ Identify Attributes – simple describing of what items look like, what parts they’ve got, colour, shape, size etc.
♦ Identify Associations – how two words go together (eg toothpaste and toothbrush)

By the end of Pre-primary children should be able to:-
♦ Identify Locations – where items are found or where they belong
♦ Identify similarities (same) and differences
♦ Identify Categories – which items belong together or which group they belong to

More complex semantic organisation skills follow the above basic skills, namely:
♦ The ability to describe and report
♦ Understanding and use of synonyms and antonyms
♦ The ability to provide definitions and explain word meanings
♦ Understanding of multiple meanings of words
♦ Understanding of word relationships, base words etc
♦ Understanding of semantic absurdities and the ability to explain why something does/ doesn’t make sense
♦ Understanding of figurative language and implied meaning