

Communication, Language and Literacy

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Isabel and Jack in the little log cabin

Isabel and Jack are playing in the little log cabin in the nursery garden. The cabin is a simple log structure with two window openings and a door-less door opening and can possibly accommodate six to eight children. However, today it already contains two bikes and Isabel and Jack are also manoeuvring – very skilfully – their ‘beds’ into the cabin. The ‘beds’ are low flat wooden trucks and as they struggle to push and pull them into place they tell other curious children, ‘This is our house.’ As they notice me they tell me that the bikes are in there, ‘so that no one will take them’, and then proceed to lie down on their beds. I hear Jack say to Isabel, ‘My bed’s bigger than yours’ (this was actually correct). Now a few other children noisily attempt to get into the cabin and Isabel and Jack shout, ‘What’s that noise?’ Another child intruder asks, ‘What are you talking about?’ and Isabel replies, ‘We’re talking about ourselves.’

Jack jumps up from his ‘bed’ and announces: ‘We’ve got to go on our bikes now. Every single person move their bed!’

The two children leave the cabin after much careful moving out of trucks and bikes, and other children enter through the windows and take over the play space.

Reflective questions

- 1.** Think about the snippets of child language in this episode. How do they create and sustain the imaginary scenario?
- 2.** How do the children’s experiences and observations of real-life events and activities feed into the imaginative play?
- 3.** Think about Jack’s final command and speculate on where he might have heard such language forms. Can you identify the influence of some literary models on the children’s language? Think Sendak!
- 4.** Admire the mathematical and spatial awareness shown by these just-4-year-olds and reflect on the stimulating role of simple, solid, traditional provision in the outdoor learning environment.