

**Learning and development**

‘Children develop and learn in different ways. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early year’s provision.’

This section includes:

* + Speaking and listening.
  + Using songs, stories and games to increase children’s understanding and use of English.
  + Further reading and useful websites.

# Speaking and listening

Many children go through a silent period when they first enter an unfamiliar early years setting. This period can last for six months or longer. This is not a passive stage. During this time children will be watching, listening, and exploring their new environment to understand new experiences and develop new meanings. They will be trying to relate previous knowledge to new contexts.

It is important that children should not feel pressurised to speak until they feel confident enough to do so. However, it is essential that adults continue to talk to the children, pick up their non-verbal responses, support their understanding of meaning and involve them in activities. These strategies will help children to internalise the language they hear and develop a sense of the patterns, meanings and range of language functions in their new environment.

Children can take up to two years to develop basic interpersonal communication skills (playground/street survival language) but it takes from five to seven years to acquire the full range of cognitive and academic language required to cope with the demands of the curriculum.

As a child begins to become familiar with the English language they will:

* Have a growing confidence in acquiring and using English.
* Begin to use extended phrases and simple sentences and develop more control in their use of functional language. There are likely to be developmental errors in the use of plurals, tenses, personal pronouns (he/she), function words, articles (a/the) and word endings. These grammatical errors may continue for some time. This is particularly true for children whose first language is very different in terms of grammatical structures, for example Chinese or Bengali.
* Begin to initiate social conversation about a familiar topic such as family or home.
* Start to use more complex forms of questions. Initially they may inflect single words, then they will begin to use single ‘wh’ words - ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘who’ and then ‘when’ and ‘how’.
* Remember and use story, song, or rhyme forms, for example to be able to retell a familiar story using props.
* Be able to give simple instructions or convey a simple message.
* Have a widening, but still limited, vocabulary for naming objects and events.
* Use many non-standard features in their spoken English.
* Begin to use simple phrases that are combined or expanded to communicate new ideas.
* Begin to use descriptive language such as colour, size or quantity.

If supported to construct sentences in meaningful ways, then the child will pay attention to the way parts of the sentences change as the meaning changes. For example, changing singular to plural, present to past tense, and changing verb endings.

## At the stage of experimenting with more complex uses of language, children will often make mistakes. It is important not to correct children but instead to model the correct constructions and expand their vocabulary whilst encouraging the child to continue the conversation.

Young children learn the functions of negation very early but it takes them some time to learn the grammar rules that enable them to express the variety of negative functions (to deny, reject, refuse something and disagree with others). Initially children may use ‘no’ or ‘not’, ‘don’t’ and ‘I can’t’.

# Using songs, stories, and games to increase children’s understanding and use of English

**Songs and Rhymes:**

Songs and rhymes can be obtained from a variety of sources, for example, books, or CDs, as well as from parents or other children and have many uses:

* To introduce vocabulary or concepts relevant to a particular theme. Many early childhood programmes introduce concepts and vocabulary in songs such as those which relate to parts of the body, for example, ‘Heads and shoulders, knees and toes’, ‘Put your finger on your nose’, ‘My hands are clapping’, ‘Open, shut them’ and ‘Hokey, cokey.’
* To practice the sounds of the language in a non-formal and enjoyable way. The natural rhythms and intonation patterns of language are often emphasised in songs and rhymes. These occur naturally and are therefore useful as models of language for children. Many rhymes and songs can be used to practice pronunciation of different sounds.
* To provide opportunities for expressing feelings. Songs such as ‘If you’re happy and know it’ provide natural opportunities to introduce a range of emotions and feelings.
* To practice language structures in an enjoyable, non-threatening environment. Many well-known songs and rhymes provide opportunities for children to practice language, which is useful for communicative purposes. Songs with natural repetition give lots of opportunities to practice language, for example, ‘Old MacDonald had a farm’.
* To develop listening skills and develop memory. Regularly sung simple rhymes and songs provide opportunities for children to begin to imitate sounds and words and to begin to attach meaning. `
* To encourage children to participate in an activity without using spoken language. A selection of songs using the children’s names is very helpful for children leaning English. These songs help involve the children and offer opportunities for practising communicative skills.

**Stories and Books**

Stories and books are an important element of worldwide cultural and linguistic heritage. Careful consideration should be given to the choice of book, particularly illustrated books, in order to ensure that both text and pictures are representative but not tokenistic.

* Choose stories with a clear story line, written or told in simple direct language. Planned stories can be an excellent medium for developing communicative and linguistic skills. They help children organise their thoughts and link ideas to knowledge.
* Use stories with repetitive or predictable story line/refrains. These give children the opportunity to hear language sequences they can tune into and rehearse.
* Ensure your book area contains dual language books.
* Choose books which relate to children’s experiences and which provide positive images of cultural diversity. These can be a powerful medium for helping children explore a range of ideas and feelings.
* Choose some books with very little text but with clear photographs or illustrations. These give children the opportunity to formulate ideas in their home language which can then be translated into English with appropriate support.
* Aim to provide opportunities for children to experience story telling in their home language. Familiarity with the language and structure of stories is transferable to a second language and prior knowledge of stories greatly enhances and facilitates learning.
* Use CD stories in other languages so children are able to hear the story in a familiar language. It is possible to make your own with the help of parents.
* Ensure that you provide books with clear illustrations and use plenty of other visual support. Story sacks, artefacts, puppets and props are ideal as supplementary resources.
* Try to **tell** stories, as well as read books as this enables them to be more easily adapted to children’s individual needs and experiences. Persona Dolls make a particularly powerful story-telling medium which can be a vehicle for learning on many levels, and can be particularly effective for supporting cultural identity.
* Evaluate your story sessions to ensure they are pleasurable and enjoyable for the children.

# Games

# Games can be used to introduce new vocabulary and concepts which are relevant to particular themes. Interactive games enable a child to practice the sounds of a new language in a non-threatening environment. Games are an enjoyable way to support the development of social language listening skills and developing memory. Many of the games sugested below will be well known to you and illustrate how language learning opportunities can be found among the resources already available to you in your setting.

* **Kim’s game**. A small group of children sit with an adult on the floor and a tray of 5-6 objects is shown to them, for example, apple, scissors, car, key and cup. The adult names each object – ‘*This is an apple’*. A cloth is placed over the tray of objects. One object is removed without the children seeing. The children then take turns to guess what has been taken. The adult playing has the opportunity to model the sentences and extend and elaborate the language, for example, ‘*I think it is something to unlock the door’.*
* **Memory Pairs**. Prepare picture cards in pairs of associated subjects, for example, f*ruit - apple/pear, animals - dog/cat, people - boy/girl.* The cards are shuffled and laid face down in rows. The first player turns over two cards from anywhere. The object is to find a pair of cards. If the cards are the same the child retains the cards. If the cards are not the same they are turned down again. The game ends when there are no cards remaining. As the children turn over the cards they should be encouraged to say, ‘*This is a … and this is the same/different’.*
* **Lotto and Sound and Picture Match-ups**. Provide a series of cards with pictures of things that make sounds. Ask questions such as ‘*Find me the card that makes this noise… miaow’, ‘What animal is it?’,* or *‘Can you make the noise for me?’*
* **Name Rolling**. Children sit on the floor in a circle with a medium sized ball. One child says another child’s name and rolls out the ball to that child. This child who now has the ball says another child’s name and rolls the ball to him/her. This is a good game to play early in the year when children are learning the names of the children in their group.
* **Pass the object**. A small group of children sit in a circle with an adult. A familiar object such as a cup, crayon, scissors, toy or block is passed round the group. The passing of the object stops when the adult taps on a drum. The adult says, ‘*What do you have?*’ The child names the object if they can.
* **Going shopping**. Prepare card pictures of fruit, clothing, toys, vegetables, sweets, meat, and so on. Children sit in a circle. The adult begins by saying, ‘*Yesterday I went shopping and I bought…’.* The adult picks up a picture card to show the children and names the object. Then each child in turn repeats the sentence and picks up another picture. If children don’t know the name of the object they have picked up, other children or the adult can help by naming it. This game can be played bilingually with parents, who can help children by saying the name in their first language. Other children or an adult can then say the name in English.
* **Treasure Box/What’s in the Bag?** Small, familiar objects are placed inside a bag or a box with a hole cut into the top. Each child takes it in turns to select an object. The other children try to guess what the object is by asking questions such as *‘Is it a toy?*’,’ *Can you eat it?*’. The child who selected the object feels it and tries to answer ‘*yes*’ or ‘*no*’. If another child guesses correctly, the children change places. After naming all the objects the lid is raised and the objects are named by the adult and other children. The adult has the opportunity of modelling the correct name and expanding information. For example;

Child: ‘*A spoon*.’

Adult: ‘*Do you think it’s a spoon? What sort of spoon? Is it a teaspoon?’*

**Further reading and useful websites**

**Publications:**

* EYFS 2017 -

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/596629/EYFS\_STATUTORY\_FRAMEWORK\_2017.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596629/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf)

* Promoting Race Equality in the Early Years -

[www.suffolklearning.co.uk/suffolklearning\_images/users/Early\_Years\_Team\_CYP//eycguidanceforpromotingequality.pdf](http://www.suffolklearning.co.uk/suffolklearning_images/users/Early_Years_Team_CYP//eycguidanceforpromotingequality.pdf)

* Supporting children learning English as an additional Language -

[www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Supporting\_Children\_English\_2nd\_Language.pdf](http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Supporting_Children_English_2nd_Language.pdf)

* Building futures believing in children, a focus on provision for black children in the EYFS -

[www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Believing\_in\_Children.pdf](http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Believing_in_Children.pdf)

**Resource catalogues:**

* Letterbox Library (resources book) - [www.letterboxlibrary.com](http://www.letterboxlibrary.com)
* Mantra Lingua Catalogue - [www.mantralingua.com](http://www.mantralingua.com)
* Barefoot Books catalogue - [www.barefootbooks.com](http://www.barefootbooks.com)
* The Willesden Bookshop - [www.willesdenbookshop.co.uk](http://www.willesdenbookshop.co.uk)

**Further reading:**

* Penny Tassoni (2016) *Reducing Educational Disadvantage, A Strategic Approach in the Early Years*, chapter 7 ‘Supporting bilingual children’ Featherstone Education.
* National Literacy Trust - Talk to Your Baby resources -

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/talk_to_your_baby/resources/308_bilingualism_faq>

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/talk_to_your_baby/resources/418_q>

* Supporting cultural diversity -

<http://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/articles/cultural-diversity-in-the-early-years>

* Language and Identity in EY Multicultural Settings (online) - [www.naldic.org.uk](http://www.naldic.org.uk)
* Refugee children -

<http://www.naldic.org.uk/eal-teaching-and-learning/outline-guidance/ealrefugee/refey/>

**Online Course:**

* British Council’s English teaching expertise -

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/english-in-early-childhood>.