

Working with Children who have English as an Additional Language

Most children with EAL already have an established home language with:

- a set of sounds and sound groupings
- intonation patterns
- vocabulary and grammar
- non-verbal signals
- a set of sound-symbol relationships

They will be:

- aware of rules about social use of language
- able to relate to people and express feelings and emotions

They may have to learn:

- a new set of sounds and sound groupings
- new vocabulary
- new grammar
- new non-verbal signals
- to relate to people and express feelings and emotions in a new language
- a new set of sound-symbol relationships

Bilingualism is an advantage and does not cause communication disorders

People who understand and use more than one language can have increased thinking, problem solving and creativity skills. They may perform better academically and have increased memory capacity.

Removing one language will NOT make learning the remaining language easier for a child.

In order to maintain a high number of good models of vocabulary and language structures a family should **NEVER** be advised to speak in just English.

When considering if a child is having difficulties learning language their skills should be considered in home language(s) as well as English. It is important to know which languages are used within the home environment regardless of whether a child uses them.

Remember when a child is just starting to learn English as an additional language it is common for them to go through a 'silent period' which may last 6-9 months. They will be communicating non-verbally but may not speak in either home language or English.

Strategies to support language development

- Build on children's experiences of language at home and in the wider community by providing a range of opportunities to use their home language(s), so that their developing use of English and other languages support one another
- Learn some key words, phrases and gestures in the child's first language(s) including greetings
- Use body language/tone of voice and gestures to support language development
- Develop visual resources e.g. key ring of photo prompts for routines and every day choices of activities
- Model the use of English by providing a running commentary and by talking through children's actions and ideas
- Allow children some time to listen before they respond
- Continue to talk to children even if they don't respond in words. A child may go through a silent phase, which is not a passive stage as learning will be taking place
- Build on all children's responses, interpreting non-verbal actions/gestures as proper turns in conversations, and provide a spoken English translation of these.
- Use daily routines and related language as important opportunities for revisiting and embedding language
- Reduce background noise to help children to be focused and provide activities which help develop listening skills
- Engage in songs and rhymes with plenty of repetition as they are often learnt quickly and are a good source of language
- Model, rephrase and extend children's language rather than focusing on mistakes
- Support children in joining in with the full range of activities including routines e.g. sharing out fruit at snack time. This is particularly important for children in the silent or non-verbal period
- Plan specific opportunities to include children with EAL in small groups with English speaking children who will provide good language models
- Plan opportunities to work on specific language e.g. word endings, tenses, personal pronouns which may not occur in the child's first language