




Overview and language learning principles

1. A UNIQUE CHILD: WHICH ORAL LANGUAGE SKILLS DO CHILDREN NEED?

	Social communication and narrative skills	Words and their meanings	Syntax and morphology
SUMMARY	<p>Social communication involves learning how to use language in an increasingly wide range of social contexts and knowing the 'rules' of conversation. These are essential skills for building relationships and for engaging in social interactions, and form the foundation of later literacy and learning. Social communication begins before children can speak, with intentional communication from 9-10 months. Conversation skills begin at around 18 months with an understanding of the need to respond to others' communication. Over time, children become more capable of responding in different ways, and more skilled at initiating and sustaining conversation.</p> <p>Narrative skills involve being able to describe things, to tell events in order, and to retell stories. They begin with the single-phrase two-word communications of toddlers and end with complex multi-episodic stories, which knit sentences together into a coherent whole. Children need narrative skills to communicate socially with others, and to discuss and organise their lives into meaningful episodes. Narratives can be personal (i.e. describing real-life events) or fictional (i.e. stories) and children need experience of – and practice at – both kinds of narrative.</p> <p>Adults have a key role to play in modelling and scaffolding conversation, thinking and narrative to help children develop their skills, for example through turn-taking, commenting and questioning.</p>	<p>Semantics includes both words and their meanings. Vocabulary knowledge is central to children's ability to understand and use <i>language</i>, which underpins their ability to understand <i>ideas and concepts</i> within the wider world. It sets the foundation for literacy, learning and thinking. Given the right conditions, vocabulary increases dramatically during the early years (7-10 words per day) but the developmental range is great. By the age of two, word production can range from 0 to over 500 words!</p> <p>To take on a word as part of their own vocabulary, children need to develop high-quality meaning-based representations of that word. This involves hearing and using the word in a range of meaningful contexts, to process it deeply and actively. Adults play a key role in modelling new words and in helping children to understand their meaning through explicit definitions and clues to meaning (e.g. gestures).</p>	<p>Children also need to understand the <i>systems</i> and <i>structures</i> of language. By this we mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • syntax: the rules governing how words and phrases are combined into sentences • morphology: the structure of words (e.g. word stems and endings) <p>Children begin by putting two words together (e.g. "Daddy shirt"), moving on to combine three and more words into short sentences and to add function words, prefixes and suffixes (e.g. "Daddy putting shirt on"). As they gradually master the grammar of their language, children can produce increasingly long sentences, including multiple clauses. This allows them to <i>think</i>, as well as to <i>talk</i>, in more complex ways.</p> <p>Adults play a key role in modelling language to help children to learn. Giving meaningful feedback is also important to help children develop their grammatical skills.</p>
EXAMPLES FROM DEVELOPMENT MATTERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses languages as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings, experiences and thoughts • Holds a conversation, jumping from topic to topic • Uses gestures, sometimes with limited talk e.g. reaches for toy saying, 'I have it' • Confident to talk to other children when playing, and will communicate freely about own home and community. • Can retell a simple past event in correct order • Describes the main story settings, events and principal characters • Listens/responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion • Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events • Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learns new words very rapidly and is able to use them in communicating • Can express their own feelings such as sad, happy, cross, scared, worried • Builds up vocabulary that reflects the breadth of their experiences • Begins to use the language of size • Beginning to use mathematical names for 'solid' 3D shapes and 'flat' 2D shapes, and mathematical terms to describe shapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses simple sentences • Begins to use word endings e.g. going, cats • Beginning to understand 'why' and 'how' questions • Beginning to use more complex sentences to link thoughts e.g. using and, because • Uses a range of tenses e.g. play, playing, will play, played • Shows understanding of prepositions such as 'under' 'on top' 'behind' by carrying out an action or selecting correct picture
TROLL ITEMS	<p>1. starting/continuing conversation</p> <p>2. communicating personal experiences</p> <p>3. asking questions</p> <p>4. use of talk while pretending</p> <p>8. expressing curiosity</p> <p>12. remember storyline/characters</p>	<p>6. use of varied vocabulary/ trying out new words</p>	<p>3. asking questions</p>
HANEN	<p>Conversational styles (social child, reluctant communicator etc)</p>		






















2. POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS: HOW CAN ADULTS SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT?

<p>Be a magnet for communication</p> 	<p>Be a language radiator</p> 	<p>Be a conversationalist</p> 
<p>Children learn language best when they <i>use</i> language: so the first step is to get them communicating with you and with others. Strong and positive relationships with children are at the heart of effective practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make children feel noticed and valued: just like adults, children talk most when they feel comfortable confident and competent, and that the person listening wants to hear what they have to say. Encourage children to initiate conversation by showing that you are relaxed and 'open for business'. When children do communicate, show interest by using body language, using their name and getting down to their level. Know and enjoy your children as individuals and let this show; give each child individual attention. Use specific praise and encouragement; • be an active listener and a responsive language partner: remember that young children are still developing their processing abilities, so need time and space to respond when communicating. Observe, wait and listen before speaking, to allow the child space and time to think and respond (1 ½ -2 times your usual waiting time). Let children know that you have understood them by confirming, repeating and extending their communication. Encourage them to talk more by responding with interest, asking genuine, open questions and praising both verbal and non-verbal communication. <p>CONT....</p>	<p>Adults play a vital role in modelling language and thought for children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • model rich language and thinking: hearing rich language is associated with faster language learning and later literacy. Children need to experience language that they cannot yet produce. Talk with children often in different contexts. Use a rich and varied vocabulary, including unusual words as well as everyday ones, and using complex sentences. Use opportunities provided by resources and activities to introduce new words and plan for introducing words in play, topics and books. During play, activities and routines, use techniques such as commenting and narration to model the language for what children and adults are doing, experiencing and thinking. • use language in context: children learn language best when it is meaningful. Words are not simply labels, but represent concepts, ideas and knowledge. The best way to develop language is to provide rich and interesting experiences (i.e. <i>something to talk about</i>) and then give children the <i>language</i> they need to talk about and share those experiences. • help children to understand word meanings: adults play an important role in defining and explaining new words to help children learn them. Offering explicit, child-friendly definitions of new words during conversation, book-reading and activities increases word learning. Adults can also give clues to meaning by labelling objects, actions and abstract concepts, and by using concrete clues such as gestures, props, pictures and signing. This is particularly important for children with limited vocabularies or language delays. Discussing the meaning of any new words before starting a topic or book (e.g. using props) helps prevent them forming a barrier to understanding. • model language for every child: through interactions and conversations with <i>all</i> your children, make sure to model language and thinking for your reluctant communicators, children with delayed language and those learning to speak English, as well your confident communicators. Adapt your language to the child, modelling just above their current level. • provide repeated opportunities for children to bump into and use new words: research suggests that at least 20 exposures to a new word are needed for a child to 'own' it and start using it as part of their own spoken vocabulary. Reinforce new words by providing opportunities for children to 'bump into' and use them repeatedly. Model them in a range of different contexts, re-read books and provide play resources which... 	<p>Engaging in dialogue with a more experienced conversation partner is one of the most powerful ways in which children develop their language and thinking skills. It supports all aspects of language development and is particularly important for promoting narrative skills (e.g. retelling events or stories), which children need to communicate socially and to mentally organise their lives into meaningful episodes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make your class/room a place for conversation: discuss a wide range of subjects with children and deepen topics over multiple turns. Talk about the here-and-now but also about events in the past or future: talking about things that are not right in front of them helps children to develop abstract thought. Have genuine conversations with children, about things that both they and you are interested in. • scaffold conversation, narrative and thinking: support turn-taking and use a range of techniques for keeping discussions and conversations going, including commenting, explaining, questioning, speculating, and adding information and ideas to what children say. • read, enjoy and discuss books with children daily: books provide a powerful context for conversation. Techniques such as interactive shared book reading and dialogic reading have a particularly strong evidence-base. Re-read books to develop discussion in later readings, as children become familiar with the words and ideas. • support all children to engage in conversation, remembering that some will need more help if they do not have experience of conversations at home. Think about group times and whether all children are actively involved (remember, children learn language best when they <i>use</i> language). Small groups tend to support interaction and communication more effectively than large groups. Support children with limited language by using concrete gestures, props and pictures. <p>CONT....</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • put children in charge: children are most confident and motivated to talk about things they have experience of, are interested in and which are meaningful to them. Build on children's interests and existing knowledge to harness their enthusiasm to communicate. • engage with all children: as well as talking with sociable children, make sure to interact and communicate with your reluctant communicators, children with language delay and children in the early stages of learning English. These children may not 'ask' for your attention directly but it is they who most need your language-supporting interactions. 	<p>.....relate to the new words, including props/puppets so that children can act out a new story themselves. Plan follow-up activities and link learning across a range of meaningful and connected experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read, enjoy and discuss books with children daily: books help us to be great language radiators. The language in books is much richer than in everyday conversation, and when adults share and talk about books with children, <i>their</i> language is also richer. Shared book reading has a significant positive impact on children's oral language skills. • give children timely and positive feedback on their use of language to help them improve their skills. Imitating what a child says lets them know that they have been heard and understood. When a child uses incorrect words or grammar, research shows that repeating back a correct and extended version supports language development. It allows children to directly compare their own language with a similar, but correct and more complex, version. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actively scaffold peer communication and conversation: shared play provides a rich context for children to practice language, social and self-regulation skills with peers in a meaningful context. Techniques such as descriptive commenting help children to notice each other, and draw them into peer conversation. Encourage children to talk with and listen to each other. Support social skills and self-regulation, so that children can successfully engage in peer interactions and learn from them. Praise peer communication, interaction and listening. Plan for small-group discussions supported by an adult; and during whole-group times, use talk-partner techniques to make sure that children have a chance to practice their conversation skills and share ideas.
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ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE ITEMS WHICH WILL HELP YOU PUT THESE THREE PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

Environment Rating Scale	Item	Language Principle		
ECERS-3 	12 Helping children expand vocabulary			
	13 Encouraging children to use language			
	30 Staff-child interactions			
ECERS-E 	3 Adults reading with children*			
	6 Talking and listening			
SSTEW 	5 Encouraging children to talk with others			
	6 Staff actively listening to children and encourage children to listen			
	7 Staff support children's language use			
	8 Sensitive responsiveness			
	10 Encouraging sustained shared thinking through storytelling, books, singing, rhymes			

* There is a similar item in the ECERS-3 (Item 14 Staff use of books with children). We chose the ECERS-E Item for this list because it is stronger on the adult role but you may find both useful.

3. ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS: HOW CAN YOU CREATE A LANGUAGE-SUPPORTING CLASS/ROOM?

 Provide meaningful and irresistible contexts for communication	 Make time for talk	 Get the whole team involved	P Plan for language	 Support language at home
<p>Children are most confident and motivated to talk about things they have experience of, things they are interested in and things which are meaningful to them. The best way to develop language is to provide rich <i>experiences</i> and then give children the language they need to <i>talk</i> about those experiences. Provide rich and varied resources and experiences to promote communication. Build on children's interests and existing knowledge to harness their enthusiasm to communicate and learn. Are your resources and activities meaningful and irresistible for all your children, including reluctant communicators? Make sure children have the experience and words they need to access any new topics confidently.</p> <p>Play, exploration and investigation offer highly meaningful contexts for language learning because they harness children's interests and allow them to practice language, social and self-regulation skills with peers.</p> <p>Group resources together so that they are meaningful: this enables children to learn the words related to these resources more quickly. Use concrete props, pictures and real experiences during activities and when reading books, particularly for children with poor language or those learning English.</p> <p>Provide repeated opportunities for children to 'bump into' and use new language e.g. follow-up activities so they can practice new language/ideas in concrete contexts (e.g. puppets to act out a story). Offer meaningful experiences over time by developing and deepening themes rather than jumping from one topic to another.</p>	<p>Create time and space for communication within your class/room.</p> <p>The ingredients of an effective language-supporting day include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • daily shared reading • small-group opportunities for talk • language through play • incidental and informal chat • conversation during routines • individual conversations <p>Make sure that any whole-group times are rich opportunities for children to <i>use</i> as well as to <i>hear</i> language.</p>	<p>For real change to happen for children, the whole team will need to be involved.</p> <p>If you are attending the training workshops, it will be your responsibility to lead the approach within your class/room. Allow time for cascading learning and involving others in the approach. Build time in to staff meetings and planning sessions.</p> <p>Make sure that senior leaders are on-board and understand the importance of the work you are doing to support children's language skills for lifelong learning.</p>	<p>Intentional teachers plan for supporting language development. Think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • selecting and organising resources and continuous provision to create opportunities for children to learn/ use new language; • planning for language within all activities • planning for language across the week, term and year • making sure your observations and assessments inform your language planning 	<p>Parents and the home environment are the most significant influence on children's language development. Let parents know how important their role is, and how they can help children to develop their language. Support parents in playing and talking with children at home, e.g. by sending books and resources home and giving ideas for how they might use them with their children. Include parents in themes or activities you have going on and give ideas about how they might talk with their children about these. Create opportunities to model effective interactions, for example by inviting parents in for workshops or to spend time in the class/room.</p> <p>Ask parents to help you understand their child's interest and experience. What will they be keen to talk about? Share your assessments and understandings about children's language development with parents, and ask parents to help <i>you</i> in gaining an accurate picture of their child's language abilities and progress. This is particularly important for children with language delay or learning English.</p>
 15. Encouraging children's use of books 17-27. Learning activities 34. Free Play		All items	34. Free Play 35. Whole group Adult role items (see p.3)	
 2. Books and literacy areas 7-12. Maths/Science		All items		
 2. Encouraging choices and independent play 9. Supporting curiosity and problem solving 10. Enc. SST through storytelling, books, singing, rhymes 11 Enc. SST in investigation and exploration		All items	2. Encouraging choices and independent play	14. Assessing language development

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