

---

# Supporting children for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL) in the Early Years

---

## Speaking and Listening in the Early Years Foundation Stage

All young children learn language by hearing and then using it in meaningful contexts. Children's language skills develop over a number of years and it can take up to 10 years for a young child whose first language is not English to develop the language necessary to access the full curriculum on an equal footing with their peers.

The Early Years Foundation stage environment can provide opportunities for:

- planning good quality speaking and listening activities
- modelling correct use of English in meaningful, accessible contexts
- building children's confidence so they feel comfortable about taking risks and trying out the new language (English)
- planned use of first language eg asking parents in for dual-language story-telling so all children can access and enjoy the same story.

Children learning English as an additional language may be silent for several months. This is a common phase for EAL learners. Continue to involve the child in all activities and continue to offer opportunities for them to engage in conversations, even when they are in their 'silent period'.

Be aware that it can be very tiring - and for some children stressful – to have to function in another language. Children's responses may include:

- falling asleep
- silent period
- appearing fearful
- being tearful
- difficulties separating from parents/carers
- frustration/being physical with others in the setting



## EAL Support Strategies for Early Years

### Observations

### Strategies

Appears to speak no English.  
Appears to understand no English.  
Speaks in home language to adults and peers.  
Watches others.

Self talk and parallel talk.  
Visual timetables, picture books.  
Play games with repetitive language  
Action rhymes, songs, poems and stories.  
Practical activities.  
Try to learn some simple words in the child's language eg "Hello".  
Involve parents.

Understanding more English than able to use.  
Communicating by gesture and facial expression.  
Responding to instructions accompanied with gestures.  
Joins in with repeated phrases in songs and action rhymes.

Continue to involve the child in activities and use the above strategies  
Use real objects and pictures to provide extra visual support  
Lotto games, bingo games  
Praise both verbal and non-verbal responses.

Using single words or phrases to communicate e.g. "Toilet" or "drink"  
Uses gesture to extend/support talk.  
Echoing words/phrases "tidy up time" "sit down"

Extend the child's speech. "Cars." "Would you like to play with the cars? I've got a yellow car. I'm driving it down the road."  
Stories with repetitive language and clear pictures.

Generating own words and short phrases  
EAL "errors" such as word order or mixing languages are still very common.

Continue to extend child's speech and model correct grammatical structures: "I goed outside."  
You went outside? What did you play with outside?"  
Encourage pupil to respond by asking closed questions, either/or questions and one word answer questions.

