

# EAL Toolkit 2022

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## Service Overview

Welcome to the EAL (English as an Additional Language) Toolkit, part of a suite of resources to support Early Year Educators and EAL children and families. The aim of this selection of resources is to provide all Early Years Educators with a range of useful information to help them deliver improved outcomes for learners with EAL and their families. Some of these materials have been sourced and adapted from a variety of publications under the provision of fair use; they are solely meant for educational purposes.

*"I am delighted to introduce the EAL Toolkit developed by the Early Years Alliance for Somerset's EAL Advisory Service. This valuable resource for educators and parents builds on the excellent range of support offered by the team across Somerset and beyond."*  
**Neil Leitch, Chief Executive, Early Years Alliance**

All the work we have done, including this pack, is based on the premise outlined by the National Strategy document 'Supporting Children Learning English as an Additional Language' (DCSF, 2007).

***Give EAL learners plenty of space and time. Your patience and support, thoughtful provision, and acknowledgement of their skills in their home language will give them the confidence to achieve in English. Children are natural linguists; with your support, children learning EAL will have the best foundation for becoming truly bilingual, with all the intellectual and social benefits it carries.***

Other EAL specific professional development materials include:

### Virtual Classroom training sessions

Virtual classroom offers a flexible online approach to learning and has been designed for people working in the early years to ensure providers, staff and volunteers have access to training.

**Supporting children for whom English is an additional language** Do you want to feel confident in supporting children who have English as an additional language?

By attending this interactive Virtual Classroom you will:

- Review the research around how children can be bilingual and multilingual
- Identify how settings can help children to learn effectively in a monolingual environment

### Alliance Spotlights

Alliance Spotlights are bite-size CPD (Continual Professional Development) sessions that offer a unique deep-dive into key aspects of early years topics.

Each week, over the course of an hour we will take a closer, more detailed look at specific areas of interest to you.

### Home Language, the Home Environment and EAL Early Years and EAL, assessment, planning and tracking progress

The Early Years Alliance has a flexible approach to meeting the needs of its members - we do not restrict our support to just members, non- members are happily supported but they pay a higher fee than members for bespoke training and development – please contact to discuss bespoke training and development plans.

## About learning English as an Additional Language



### Key Principles:

- Supporting continued development of first language and promoting the use of first language for learning enables children to access learning opportunities within the EYFS and beyond through their full language repertoire.
- Cognitive challenge can and should be kept appropriately high through the provision of linguistic and contextual support.
- Language acquisition goes hand in hand with cognitive and academic development, with an inclusive curriculum as the context.

Research over the past two decades into the language development of young bilingual learners has resulted in a number of theories and principles about children learning EAL in settings and schools.

Theories that underpin approaches to supporting children learning EAL emphasise:

- the importance of building on their existing knowledge about language;
- the impact of attitudes towards them personally and their culture, language, religion and ethnicity on their learning and their identity.

Some important issues are as follows:

- English should not replace the home language; it will be learned in addition to the language skills already learned and being developed within the language community at home.
- Children may become conversationally fluent in a new language in two or three years but may take five or more years to catch up with monolingual peers in cognitive and academic language.
- Children learning EAL are as able as any other children, and the learning experiences planned for them should be no less challenging.
- Additional visual support is vital for children learning English and using illustration and artefacts will also support and enhance the learning experiences of their monolingual peers.
- Many children go through a 'silent phase' when learning a new language; this may last for several months but is not usually a cause for concern and is not a passive stage as learning will be taking place. Children will usually understand far more than they can say.
- Understanding is always in advance of spoken language and it is important that children do not feel under pressure to speak until they feel confident. It is, however, essential that adults continue to talk to children with the expectation that they will respond.
- Adults and children should respond positively and encouragingly to children's non-verbal communication. As they observe, listen and explore the setting, children will be applying the knowledge they already have in their new context. As they start to echo single words and phrases, joining in with repetitive songs and stories, their attempts should be sensitively encouraged and praised.

Adapted from the Primary National Strategy document  
'Supporting Children Learning English as an Additional Language', DCSF (2007)  
<https://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Teaching%20and%20Learning/ealeyfsguidance.pdf>

## English as an Additional Language: Links to EYFS



All Early Years Educators must currently follow and adhere to the government's statutory Framework called the **Early Years Foundation Stage** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2> This was originally introduced as a framework in 2008 and most recently updated in September 2021.

Within the document, there is some reference to how Early Years Educators must support any children who have English as an Additional language (EAL):

*1.13: For children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home. Providers must also ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS; ensuring children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin year 1. When assessing communication, language and literacy skills, practitioners must assess children's skills in English. If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, practitioners must explore the child's skills in the home language with parents and/or carers, to establish whether there is cause for concern about language delay.*

How does this statement look in practice?

- **For children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home.**  
Reasonable steps will look different in different settings according to the number of different languages spoken in the setting, the number of children who speak each language and whether or not the setting has access to Bilingual or Multilingual staff or support workers. If you have bilingual staff to support the children then this will be a seamless part of everyday life at your setting. If you don't or you have few children who speak the same languages, reasonable steps could be learning a few key words in the home language or making or purchasing resources like a key ring of key words with pronunciation to help you. Another good example of sharing home languages in your setting could be to have a focus language of the month, and encourage all the children to learn a few words like "hello" or "goodbye"
- **Providers must also ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS; ensuring children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin year 1.**  
This should be something that is easily achievable as it should be something that happens all day every day with all the children in your setting. You will find examples of how to support children's development in English language through most activities you do, either planned or child led for example: singing songs and rhymes, talking to the children and modelling good language, sharing books and puzzles, lotto games etc.
- **When assessing communication, language and literacy skills, practitioners must assess children's skills in English**

The guidance here is clear: Two of the areas of learning, **Communication and Language** and **Literacy** MUST be assessed in English, whilst the others don't have to be in English. If you have a member of staff who speaks the same language as a child or children in your setting it may be helpful to assess in their home language. For example, if they observe a child playing in the home corner they may be able to link their play to their Personal Social and Emotional Development. If a child shows empathy in their play in their home language, perhaps role-playing being a doctor, they will still have empathy even if they can't express themselves using English. Likewise, if a child shows they understand Mathematical concepts, like "bigger" "biggest" that concept is understood even if they don't yet have the necessary vocabulary to express themselves in English.

- **If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, practitioners must explore the child's skills in the home language with parents and/or carers, to establish whether there is cause for concern about language delay.**

Establishing good relationships with parents is essential for all families, but even more so for EAL families. If you should have concerns about a child, having a positive and welcoming relationship with parents will help you to discuss your concerns. EAL parents may feel nervous about raising any worries they have about their child. This is often because in other cultures there might not be such an inclusive approach to supporting children who have additional needs. Listen for clues at pick up and drop off time: does the child readily chat away to their parent or carer in their home language? Does it look like the parent understands what their child is saying? Do they respond appropriately? In the setting, even if the child doesn't speak much English, do they show understanding?

It might be useful to ask parents to give you an assessment of their child's home language, perhaps using an ECAT (Every Child A Talker)

[https://foundationyears.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2011/10/ecat\\_guidance\\_for\\_practitioners\\_31.pdf](https://foundationyears.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2011/10/ecat_guidance_for_practitioners_31.pdf)

## Non-Statutory EYFS Supporting Documents



There are currently two supporting documents to assist and give more depth and clarity to the EYFS: **Development Matters and Birth to Five guidance**. Development Matters was produced by the Department for Education and Birth to 5 Matters was produced by representatives of the Early Years sector including Early Years Alliance, National Day Nursery Association and Keeping Early Years Unique, called The Early Years Coalition.

Both documents refer to good practice ideas:

*“Speaking more than one language has lots of advantages for children. It is the norm in many countries around the world. Children will learn English from a strong foundation in their home language. It is important for you to encourage families to use their home language for linguistic as well as cultural reasons. Children learning English will typically go through a quiet phase when they do not say very much and may then use words in both languages in the same sentence. Talk to parents about what language they speak at home, try and learn a few key words and celebrate multilingualism in your setting”.*

Development matters page 22

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2>

*“A child’s first language provides the roots to learn additional languages, and parents should be encouraged to continue to use their home languages to strengthen and support their children’s language proficiency as they join new environments”*

Birth to 5 matters page 44

<https://www.birthto5matters.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Birthto5Matters-download.pdf>

There is also reference to Home Languages and supporting children threaded through many sections of Birth to 5 Matters, including Personal Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language, Understanding The world and Literacy. Whilst it’s recognised that these documents are *supporting documents* only, you will find a wealth of pointers and ideas to enhance your practise, build positive relationships with children, parents and carers and help to create and provide an enabling environment in which all children but especially your EAL children can flourish and develop in the secure and communication rich setting you provide.

## Ofsted and EAL in the Early Years



When an Ofsted inspector is inspecting an Early Years provision, they will usually track a vulnerable child or children in the setting. This could be any children who have SEND needs or a Looked After child or a child where there are or have been safeguarding concerns. EAL children would come into this category of vulnerable children so expect the inspector to ask to see any records for this child including what support measures have been put in place to identify and meet their needs.

In 2019, Ofsted launched a new Early Years Inspection Framework. This included a new approach to how Educators define their curriculum and introduced this concept:

### Intent, Implementation, and Impact

Ofsted's definition of this is:

*"...a framework for setting out the aims of a programme of education, including the knowledge and understanding to be gained at each stage' (**intent**)...for translating that framework over time into a structure and narrative, within an institutional context (**implementation**)...and for evaluating what knowledge and skills children have gained against expectations (**impact/achievement**)"*

Or simply put,

*"The **intent** of the early year's curriculum is the effective delivery of the EYFS. Providers enable frequent learning opportunities that are appropriate to a child's age and stage of development within the framework. Practitioners with a good understanding of child development knowhow to support children as they practise and refine their skills and knowledge in all areas of their learning and development. They support children, using teaching skills and a balance of adult-led and child initiated experiences. Accurate and timely assessment ensures that activities provided suit children's needs, interests and abilities. Practitioners know that individual children have made progress from their starting points. They are confident that the **implementation** of activities and experiences provided have met their intent at each stage of a child's development. They are confident that children have gained the knowledge and skills required for the next stage of their education.*

(Exploring The Education Framework, A guide to achieving a successful Ofsted Grade, Early Years Alliance page 28, 29)

The **impact** is evidenced through the characteristics of effective teaching and learning and is described in the quality of education grade descriptors for outstanding as:

*'The impact of the curriculum on what children know, can remember and do is highly effective. Children demonstrate this through being deeply engaged in their work and play and sustaining high levels of concentration. Children, including those children from disadvantaged backgrounds, do well. Children with SEND achieve the best possible outcomes.'*

(Handbook, Ofsted 2019, para 190)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-eif/early-years-inspection-handbook-for-ofsted-registered-provision-for-september-2021>

This should be helpful to the Early Years Educator when planning a curriculum to meet the needs of any EAL children in your provision.

Ofsted also introduced another concept with this new framework; **Cultural Capital** “

*“The essential knowledge that children need to prepare them for their future success. It is about giving children the best possible start to their early education. As part of making a judgement about the quality of education, inspectors will consider how well leaders use the curriculum to enhance the experience and opportunities available to children, particularly the most disadvantaged... Some children arrive at an early years setting with different experiences from others, in their learning and play. What a setting does, through its EYFS curriculum and interactions with practitioners, potentially makes all the difference for children. It is the role of the setting to help children experience the awe and wonder of the world in which they live, through the seven areas of learning.”*

(Handbook, Ofsted 2019, para186/187 ) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-eif/early-years-inspection-handbook-for-ofsted-registered-provision-for-september-2021>

Clearly, this is an area in which any EAL children will have many experiences to bring to the provision. It should be the role of the Key person or Educators at the setting to develop strong links with the parents of EAL children to encourage them to share aspects of their culture, so that they can be celebrated and valued within the provision.

## A Unique Child

### Key principle

Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

### Commitments

1.1 Child Development: Babies and children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Every area of development – physical, cognitive, linguistic, spiritual, social and emotional – is equally important.

1.2 Inclusive Practice: The diversity of individuals and communities is valued and respected. No child or family is discriminated against.

1.3 Keeping Safe: Young children are vulnerable. They develop resilience when their physical and psychological well-being is protected by adults.

1.4 Health and Well-Being: Children's health is an integral part of their emotional, mental, social, environmental and spiritual well-being and is supported by attention to these aspects.

***Use the Principles into Practice cards for 'A Unique Child' to think about your provision in relation to children learning EAL.***

### Effective practice

All children and their families are unique. Developing effective practice for children learning EAL requires educators to consider circumstances and situations which may be unfamiliar to them. Working to ensure that practice is truly inclusive requires educators to really examine what they do, to ensure that all children and families receive equitable services and have opportunities to participate, to be heard and to feel a sense of belonging within the setting.

Children learn at different rates, in different ways and will vary in their home and family background experiences; great care should be taken not to make any assumptions about them due to their particular linguistic, cultural, social or ethnic background. Working together as a whole staff, and genuinely seeking to improve practice for children and families for whom English is an additional language, requires time and effort in order to examine attitudes and feelings, as well as knowledge about language development and bilingual language development.

Children learning EAL are not an homogenous group; their needs will be individual and, at all ages and stages, it is important to work closely with parents to share information about all aspects of children's development. Personality plays a great part in language development, some children go through an extended period of silence when entering an unfamiliar language environment; others may continue to speak the language they know best, regardless of who can understand them. Each child must be carefully observed so that, when their situation begins to change, parents and educators can support their next steps.

There are specific skills that can be taught effectively through scaffolding, modelling and planned interventions following observations to assess need; there are, however, no 'magic' answers to supporting children learning English. Like all children, those learning EAL thrive and learn best where practice is excellent; key factors include the inclusive attitude and ethos set by leaders and managers and required of all educators in the setting, an understanding that bilingualism is an asset, genuinely reflective practice and an adherence to the belief that every child matters.

## Challenges and dilemmas

*Refer to the Challenges and dilemmas on the Principles into Practice cards for 'A Unique Child' and consider these in light of working with children and families for whom English is an additional language.*

- Access to interpreting and translation services
- Ensuring that all families feel included and are able to participate in their children's care and learning experiences in the setting
- Keeping children safe when they may not understand your verbal instructions.
- Ensuring that all educators in the setting receives training on EAL, and equality and diversity; ensure that it impacts on practice
- Making all staff and children feel comfortable and unselfconscious about hearing and using languages other than English
- Making sure names are correctly pronounced
- Giving children 'time out' from English and space to think their own thoughts
- Understanding that many children will go through a 'silent' period at some stage, sometimes for an extended period; being patient during this time and continuing to expect that children will respond.

## Reflecting on practice

*Refer to the Reflecting on practice notes on the Principles into Practice cards for 'A Unique Child' and consider these in light of working with children and families for whom English is an additional language.*

How would you and your colleagues answer the following questions about your provision? Do you:

- Record detailed language background and home language use, preferences and skills on admission to the setting?
- Check spelling and pronunciation of children's and parent's names?
- Reassure parents that use of home languages in the setting will support their child's overall learning and developing use of language, including English?
- Work effectively with bilingual staff, wherever possible, to provide positive role models; raise self-esteem; raise language awareness of all children and support home-school links?
- Seek religious or cultural advice and support from relevant experts in the community?
- Ensure effective two-way communication of information via interpreters, written translation or utilising online translation apps
- Reflect on your provision for children and families for whom English is an additional language, challenging your own knowledge, skills and understanding?
- Look closely at your practice and find it to be equitable for all families?
- Genuinely welcome all families and children without prejudice?
- Openly and sensitively discuss emotive and difficult subjects such as racism or the effects of religious, cultural or economic intolerance in our community?
- Seek training, advice and support in order to improve your provision for children learning English where necessary?
- Have policies that include provision for working with children and families learning English?

Adapted from the Primary National Strategy document  
 'Supporting Children Learning English as an Additional Language', DCSF (2007)  
<https://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Teaching%20and%20Learning/ealeyfsguidance.pdf>

## Enabling Environments

### Key principle

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.

### Commitments

3.1 Observation, Assessment and Planning: Babies and children are individuals first, each with a unique profile of abilities. Schedules and routines should flow with the child's needs. All planning starts with observing children in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning.

3.2 Supporting Every Child: The environment supports every child's learning through planned experiences and activities that are challenging but achievable.

3.3 The Learning Environment: A rich and varied environment supports children's learning and development. It gives them confidence to explore and learn in secure and safe, yet challenging, indoor and outdoor spaces.

3.4 The Wider Context: Working in partnership with other settings, other professionals and with individuals and groups in the community supports children's development and progress towards the outcomes of *Every Child Matters*: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being.

### Effective practice

Whether or not you share the family's language when you become the key worker for a child learning EAL you will become an important language role model for that child and, perhaps, the family. If you share the family's home language you are uniquely placed to have an overview of the child's bilingual development and you will need to discuss with parents which language will be used, by whom and when. Children need a consistent approach.

If you are caring for a baby you have a fascinating journey to share; those early words will take on a special significance as you and the family observe and discuss developments together, sharing progress at home and in the setting, and carefully planning next steps together.

It is important to find out about a young child's abilities in their home language when they first come to your setting so that you can build on their prior learning. Do you know which language they hear or speak, with whom and in what context? For example, they may hear and/or use their home language or dialect with older relatives, English with siblings or from TV, another formal or standard language for TV and perhaps another for worship.

Understanding young children's daily routines, particularly around meal times, toileting and sleep are essential in order to meet individual needs. Parents are almost always ready to discuss what is best for their children and will therefore appreciate your interest.

The physical learning environment should give all children the opportunity to make independent choices; this will enable you to observe what interests a child has and begin to develop the language which will support those activities.

The physical environment should also include play and learning resources that positively reflect the children's cultural and linguistic identity and experiences; for example books, posters, labels, role-play equipment including community language newspapers and food packets, displaying a variety of scripts to support language awareness.

Opportunities to play outside are often particularly beneficial as most children tend to be less inhibited in their language use in an outdoor environment. Practitioner observations have shown that children commonly make at least five times as many utterances outdoors as they do inside. This has clear implications for ensuring that the potential for outdoor spaces as learning environments is maximised.

## Challenges and dilemmas

*Refer to the Challenges and dilemmas on the Principles into Practice cards for 'Enabling Environments' and consider these in light of working with children and families for whom English is an additional language.*

- Ensuring your setting really does say 'welcome' to one and all
- Building bridges where misunderstandings have arisen because of difficulties in communication
- Having a professional dialogue about the potentially emotive issues surrounding children and families who speak languages other than English at home.
- Ensuring that children learning EAL understand routines and know what they can access independently and when to seek adult support.

## Reflecting on practice

*Refer to the Reflecting on practice notes on the Principles into Practice cards for 'Enabling Environments' and consider these in light of working with children and families for whom English is an additional language.*

- Have we created a learning environment where linguistic and cultural diversity are visibly celebrated?
- Do we record cultural and religious information at admission, including customs, and are we sensitive about diet, festivals, worship, etc.?
- Do we actively seek to inform ourselves about the languages, culture and circumstances of the families we work with?
- Have we thought about what additional support EAL learners may need in order to access routines, activities and equipment?
- Do we have a common understanding about EAL development with our partner agencies, particularly health, including speech and language therapists and health visitors?
- Do we work with partners in adult and family learning to signpost or provide opportunities for parents to learn or improve their English skills? This enables parents to access resources and participate more fully in the wider community as well as their child's learning journey.

Adapted from

Primary National Strategy 'Supporting Children Learning English as an Additional Language', DCSF (2007)

<https://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Teaching%20and%20Learning/ealeyfsguidance.pdf>

## Positive Relationships

### Key principle

Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.

### Commitments

2.1 Respecting Each Other: Every interaction is based on caring professional relationships and respectful acknowledgement of the feelings of children and their families.

2.2 Parents as Partners: Parents are children's first and most enduring educators. When parents and practitioners work together in Early Years settings, the results have a positive impact on children's development and learning.

2.3 Supporting Learning: Warm, trusting relationships with knowledgeable adults support children's learning more effectively than any amount of resources.

2.4 Key Person: A key person has special responsibilities for working with a small number of children, giving them the reassurance to feel safe and cared for and building relationships with their parents.

### Effective practice

From the moment a baby or young child becomes your responsibility you begin to notice their individuality and personality. If you do not share a common language with a baby your speech sounds may be strange initially but babies are able to tune in quickly to other languages. Your gestures, expressions and tone of voice will reassure and comfort.

Likewise, with toddlers and older children who may already have well-developed skills in their home languages, body language, gesture, expressions and tone of voice will convey important messages and be a key part of your shared communications.

Where languages other than English are dominant in a child's home it is important to find out about the language experiences of the child and talk to parents about how you can mutually support the child to develop their language skills at home and in your care. Parents' views must be respected and their decisions made in light of sound information about language development and the benefits of bilingualism.

Very young children, especially babies, may be comforted, particularly at rest or sleep times by songs or stories recorded in their home language by their main carer. It may also be helpful to be able to tune in to the home language at other times during a long day of unfamiliar speech sounds.

Children sharing the same first language should not be discouraged from sharing that language together in play; rather, this should be facilitated where possible, perhaps with the help of parents.

Children new to a setting and new to English can be greatly supported by empathetic peers who can act as a 'buddy' to them even if they do not share their home language. This will be supportive for settling in, forming relationships and learning English from their peers.

If you, or any of the practitioners in your setting, share a child's home language, or if you are able to access bilingual support, children should be helped as soon as possible to understand that they are learning to speak more than one language and that those languages have names. This is an important part of their identity.

## Challenges and dilemmas

*Refer to the Challenges and dilemmas on the Principles into Practice cards for 'Positive Relationships' and consider these in light of working with children and families for whom English is an additional language.*

- Sharing knowledge and understanding about a baby or young child's needs with their parent or carer when you do not share a common language.
- Finding a way to have meaningful contact with parents if older siblings usually bring the child to your setting.
- Finding mutually acceptable solutions when culture or religion conflicts with policy, for example babies are not allowed to wear jewellery in your setting, but a baby wears a talisman around their neck for cultural or religious reasons.
- Approaching parents about toilet training or eating habits, which can be very emotive subjects if you are having difficulties, for example toilet training a child who never wears nappies at home and will not let you put one on at the setting.
- Understanding and responding to culturally diverse child-rearing practices.
- Trying to learn a few phrases of a child's home language to show your respect and interest.

## Reflecting on practice

*Refer to the Reflecting on practice notes on the Principles into Practice cards for 'Positive Relationships' and consider these in light of working with children and families for whom English is an additional language.*

- How do we value, draw on and record parents' knowledge about their child including the full range of language skills and experiences?
- Do we try to find ways to listen to children's voices when we cannot understand what they are saying to us?
- Do we appreciate the level of trust parents must have in us if they cannot always make their day-to-day needs and anxieties known to us?
- Have we considered what our setting must sound like and feel like to young children and their families if they cannot understand much of what is being said?
- Do we appreciate how tiring it is to listen to a language we cannot understand for long periods?
- What do we actively do to make families who do not speak English feel truly welcome?

Adapted from the Primary National Strategy document : 'Supporting Children Learning English as an Additional Language', DCSF (2007)

<https://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Teaching%20and%20Learning/ealeyfsguidance.pdf>

## Learning and Development (Part 1)

### Key principle

Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected.

### Commitments

4.1 Play and Exploration: Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development.

4.2 Active Learning: Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.

4.3 Creativity and Critical Thinking: When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.

4.4 Areas of Learning and Development: The EYFS is made up of seven areas of Learning and Development. All areas of Learning and Development are connected to one another and are equally important. All areas of Learning and Development are underpinned by the Principles of the EYFS.

### Effective practice

A good EYFS setting is the ideal environment for children to learn English as an additional language.

### The role of the practitioner

The expertise of the practitioner is vital to the successful learning of EAL. The positive and welcoming ethos and attitude within the setting are crucial for underpinning success. Educators build on this in their observation, assessment and planning for children's play, active learning and creativity across all seven areas of Learning and Development.

In the EYFS practice guidance you will find specific references to the needs of children learning EAL. The following general points also apply:

- Second language learners will acquire some of their language incidentally through interacting with peers and adults in meaningful contexts.
- Close observations of those interactions and the resulting language used will enable you to decide what aspects of language you might plan to teach in a more structured way. In this way the social language children acquire can be built on and will inform your planning. Knowing something about the different languages the children speak at home can help you to understand some of the typical errors children learning EAL will make. For example, you notice a child either doesn't use he or she, him or her, or mixes them up; this is common for children whose home language contains no personal pronouns. So you could help them by inventing a game or tell a story with puppets in a small group which involve perhaps a Mr and Mrs, or boy and girl. The story could involve a repetitive refrain such as 'She said "yes" but he said "no"' to a list of suggestions or possibilities you or the children put to them. Later you might want to consolidate the idea by sometimes saying 'He said' and sometimes saying 'Yusef said', so the child understands 'He' and 'Yusef' are interchangeable in this context.

- Modelling is important for introducing children to new language structures and vocabulary. Children need to hear language used in a meaningful context before they can rehearse and use it themselves. Much of this is what Educators and parents will do naturally to encourage children's language learning.
- It is important to be encouraging without being demanding and to use modelling to correct mistakes rather than tell children they are wrong – this will only serve to inhibit their attempts and damage self-esteem.
- Questions should be used with great care – avoid using questions such as 'What is this?', or 'What colour is this?' too often. If they know the answer and can express it in English, it may boost self-esteem, but overuse of closed questions limits learning and, if they do not know the answer, it increases the sense of failure. Such questions do not lead to an extended use of language.
- Open ended questions such as 'Why is he crying?' provide opportunity to use language extensively.
- Talking to children as you play alongside them, for example saying 'Can you give me the scissors please?', 'Yes those are what I need', or 'Oh, that's the stapler, I don't need that yet, here are the scissors', is a more effective way of finding out if a child has understood you and supplies children with the information they may not have known.
- Recasting or remodelling language provides a positive way of dealing with errors children make as they try out new language. For example, if a child says 'I goed to the park', the educator acknowledges the successful communication of meaning and models the correct form of language by saying 'You went to the park...did you go with your brothers?'
- Careful enunciation of words and phrases is important, speech should not be exaggerated or amplified but delivered clearly and not too fast, with appropriate gesture and expression.
- Repetition is important, not only in stories, songs and finger plays, etc., but repeating and confirming children's own attempts at speech. By showing your interest in this way you will encourage children to continue in their attempts to speak. By repeating and adding to the child's spoken language you will be scaffolding their language learning, consolidating and adding to their knowledge of language structure.
- Educators may 'self-talk' through activities with which they are engaged, so that they are giving children a commentary on their actions, for example 'I'm putting the banana on the plate, now you can help me cut it', or 'parallel talk' where the practitioner provides a commentary on what the child is doing. Both strategies can be very helpful for short periods but should not be extended to the point where they become intrusive or inhibiting.
- Children need time to think, reflect and quietly absorb language around them. Educators need to be as ready to respond as they are to initiate conversation and interactions, taking their lead from the child's needs or interests.
- Language is always best used in a meaningful context; talk about the sand, the water or the bricks while you are playing with them; talking about what children might have done at home, for instance, out of context can be confusing.
- Remember how tiring it can be to be in an unfamiliar language environment.

**Adapted from the Primary National Strategy document  
'Supporting Children Learning English as an Additional Language', DCSF 2007**

[ealefsguidance.pdf \(naldic.org.uk](http://ealefsguidance.pdf(naldic.org.uk)

## Learning and Development (Part 2)

### Grouping and organisation of learning opportunities

- Young children will learn English from their peers as well as adults and will often be more ready to practise and rehearse language in play and away from the gaze of adults. Interactive activities that encourage child-to-child conversations will support all children's language development.
- Bilingual children should be placed in the appropriate age group. Don't be tempted to place children with very little English with younger children as they are less likely to make friendships and develop age appropriate social skills.
- Likewise, when working on small-group activities, ensure that children learning EAL are placed with children who have developed a good age-appropriate level of English. Children should not be withdrawn to learn English; this is neither necessary nor appropriate and can be counter-productive.
- All areas of learning and development are interrelated and interdependent, and offer rich opportunities for developing children's use of language. Activities in your setting which you plan specifically to support all children's language and communication skills should need little adapting for children learning EAL. Enhancing activities inevitably benefits all children in the setting.

### First-hand experience and daily routines

- First-hand experiences provide the most effective context for learning language. A cooking activity or a trip outside the setting, whether a full-scale excursion or a visit to a local shop, will provide excellent opportunities to introduce or confirm language which children can recreate and rehearse in role-play with a supportive adult. Adults who are able to do so should give further support by supplying relevant vocabulary in home languages.
- Daily routines can be supportive, or they can be a missed opportunity for learning. For example, if you discuss the weather on a daily basis are you sure children learning English know what you are doing?
- Are the weather pictures and symbols adequate? Do children know the words for different types of weather in their home language?
- Illustrated time lines of daily routines and sequences of everyday activities can be used very effectively to support language learning alongside concept development. Opportunities to take copies home to share with families can support language learning and extend home to setting links. Parents can extend the home language learning by supplying verbal or written captions to the pictures. Photographs are particularly effective.

### Games

- Language can be acquired and taught very effectively through playing games; the focus is on participation and enjoyment in a non-threatening and relaxed situation. Because children learning EAL are used to tuning in to different speech sounds they will usually enjoy and succeed at games based on auditory discrimination. These will support their speaking and listening skills and have the potential to enhance self-esteem through providing a vehicle for successful interaction. Games that do not require a verbal response allow less confident children to participate.

- The Phase One guidance of the Letters and Sounds programme offers practitioners a wealth of ideas for planned adult-led and child-initiated small-group activities which will encourage and support children learning EAL.
- Guessing games are important for helping children to practise the skills of formulating questions; varying in complexity, such games can be easily adapted to be age and stage appropriate. Barrier games can be very effective. In these games, children have to listen very carefully, usually in pairs, to instructions varying in complexity to complete a task with pictures or objects to match a task performed or set behind a simple barrier. Once these games are mastered, children often enjoy inventing their own versions, rehearsing and teaching activities to their peers.
- Remember to ensure that children have grasped any rules, have had an opportunity to rehearse any responses necessary and are not asked to respond first in a turn-taking game or group activity so that they are able to watch, listen and learn from the responses of others.

## Music

- Musical activities are particularly valuable for supporting language learning. Simple songs, rhymes and refrains chanted in a rhythmic way are often the vehicle for children's first attempts to articulate an additional language.
- Sharing songs and rhymes in home languages reinforces similarities in patterns of languages and fosters home to setting links. Music is a wonderful medium for sharing cultures, languages and benefits, and enhances language learning. Parents and bilingual staff can help translate favourites such as 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' and 'Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes' as well as sharing traditional rhymes and songs. These are also available via various websites, both LA and commercial.

## Stories and books

- Stories and books constitute a vital part of worldwide cultural and linguistic heritage. The well-planned use of stories, read and told, traditional and new, contributes greatly to children's understanding and developing use of language.
- Stories based on personal experience can be a powerful medium for supporting children's personal, social and emotional development as well as their communicative and linguistic skills.
- Story sessions bring pleasure and enjoyment, develop the imagination and help children to explore a range of ideas and feelings; they help organise their thoughts and link ideas to knowledge.
- Illustrated sequences, photographs, puppetry and wordless picture sequences give children the opportunity to formulate ideas in their home language which can then be translated into English with appropriate support.
- Opportunities to experience story telling in home languages greatly advantage children learning EAL.
- Familiarity with the language and structure of stories is transferable to a second language and prior knowledge of stories greatly enhances and facilitates learning. Dual text stories can be a good resource where home languages have a written text and parents are literate in that language.

- Planned stories can be an excellent medium for language learning. Choose stories with a clear story line, written or told in simple direct language. Those with repetitive texts are particularly useful as they give children the opportunity to hear language sequences they can tune into and rehearse.
- Clear illustrations and other visual support, artefacts and props should be used. Story sacks can be a wonderful resource.
- Homemade books, particularly about familiar settings or objects are a very valuable resource and give hours of pleasure to young children who delight in the familiarity of the pictures, especially where they, and other people they know, are in them.
- Telling – rather than reading – stories, enables practitioners to more closely adapt them to individual needs. 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.
- Careful consideration should be given to the choice of story, particularly in illustrated books, to ensure positive images of diverse cultures and an avoidance of negative stereotyping.

**Adapted from the Primary National Strategy document  
'Supporting Children Learning English as an Additional Language', DCSF (2007)**

[ealeysguidance.pdf \(naldic.org.uk\)](http://ealeysguidance.pdf(naldic.org.uk))

## Practical Help



### I don't speak much English yet, how can you help me?



### Practical ideas to help me now

- Check you know my name and how to pronounce it, check my gender and find out my religion, customs and dietary needs
- Check which languages I speak and how much I understand. Reassure my parents to keep using their home language with me as it helps my learning. Try and learn a few words like "hello" and some key words in my home language
- Understand that I might be silent for a while to observe. Check my body language to see if I am distressed and keep talking to me even if you're not sure I understand yet
- Let other children know how they can help me and pair me with kind, articulate children who can be my friends and my role models. If another child speaks my language, involve them too
- Use lots of visual supports, pictures, real objects and gestures. Use clear, natural repetitive language with lots of expression. If you know simple signing use that alongside talk
- Let me do lots of practical tasks like sharing out snacks, sorting out special items, praise me lots whenever I try to join in
- Encourage visitors from my community, including members of my family. Use items that reflect my culture, like empty food cartons in the home corner, clothing, dual language books, songs and rhymes
- Follow your instincts if it looks like I am having fun, then it is a good sign that things are going well

## Stages of Early Bilingual Learning

These stages describe what may happen for children who are in the early stages of learning English when they enter an Early Years setting.

|                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Continued use of home language</b>                                           | The children may expect that they will be understood in the setting when they use the language(s) they use at home. This stage may not last long, although that is dependent also on what messages they receive about the use of languages other than English – i.e. are they valued positively?                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Silent or non-verbal period</b>                                              | Children may observe and interact non-verbally as they begin to tune into: A) the sounds of English and B) how things work in the new context (i.e. the rules and expectations).<br>They may 'rehearse' English silently to themselves and may try out these utterances when on their own. As they gain confidence they may begin to try out the language with others when then they need to communicate something. |
| <b>Repetition and language play; use of formulae, routines and single words</b> | Children begin to use 'chunks' of language as readymade phrases in routine situations (e.g. 'my turn' or 'Mummy come soon').                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>More complex English or productive language use</b>                          | Children build on and extend the use of single words and chunks of English to produce more complex language. They are beginning to be able to communicate their intent more clearly.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

### Important

- The quality of the enabling environment is of critical importance at all stages.
- Children may not necessarily move from one stage to the next. The stages may well overlap, depending on context and expectations.
- Children may practise the English they have heard in their early years setting at home where they feel more confident and comfortable **before** they do so at the setting.
- Children may feel more confident about using English in some contexts within the setting than in others.
- Children in the early stages of English will often move between their home language(s) and English. This is called 'code-switching' and will decrease over time as children hear English modelled and as they begin to internalise the language structures and vocabulary.
- Educators will need to observe carefully how this varies for each individual child.
- Children's home languages need to be encouraged throughout the whole process so that children and families know their emerging bilingualism or multilingualism is celebrated. A strong first language will lead to children learning English more easily.

Adapted from document of the same name by Rose Drury and Leena Robertson for NALDIC on <http://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Initial%20Teacher%20Education/Documents/Stagesofearlybilinguallearning.pdf>

A more detailed explanation is available on the above web page and in the NALDIC 'Working Paper 4 – Guidelines on Baseline Assessment for Bilingual Children' (1998).

## Working with Bilingual Infants & Toddlers

### How Children Learn More Than One Language

Bilingual language acquisition can take place in one of two ways, and they provide an important distinction where we are thinking about Early Years provision for babies, toddlers and preschoolers and in what kind of setting.

#### Bilingual Acquisition can be either:

1. **Simultaneous Acquisition** occurs when a child is raised bilingually from birth, or when the second language is introduced before the age of three. This is becoming more and more common as families become settled and raise their family in this country. Children learning two languages simultaneously go through the same developmental stages as children learning one language and reach their language milestones at roughly the same age. While bilingual children may start talking slightly later than monolingual children, they still begin talking within the normal range. From the very beginning of language learning, simultaneous bilinguals seem to acquire two separate languages. Early on, they are able to differentiate their two languages and have been shown to switch languages according to their conversation partner, be that mum/dad or whomever is providing care and attention for the child.
2. **Sequential Acquisition** occurs when a second language is introduced after the first language is well-established (generally after the age of three). Children may experience sequential acquisition if they immigrate to a country where a different language is spoken. Sequential learning may also occur if the child exclusively speaks their heritage language at home until they begin school, where instruction is offered in a different language. For more information on sequential acquisition please refer to the rest of the EAL Toolkit.

### Simultaneous Acquisition

**The key distinction is that the child is introduced to another language before the age of three, when we are thinking about Early Years this is meaningful as they might be the only place the second language is being introduced. And if you have a baby room, or take younger aged infants, then they will be developing English and their home language simultaneously.**

Let us think about *typical* bilingual child's language development.

One-year-old children should be able to understand a variety of words and should be using a few single words. By age two, children should have 50 words and a rapidly growing vocabulary and be combining words into two-word phrases.

**Between the ages of three and five, children typically talk in sentences, ask and answer questions, follow longer directions, and can tell stories and talk about how they feel.**

- This is where you will see initial language mixing, followed by a slow separation and increasing awareness of the differences. Language mixing is nothing to worry about and is called "code switching".
- The child will show a preference as to which language is the best for the situation, so at home perhaps it is Polish and in the setting English, for example.

- A child will show avoidance of difficult words and constructions in the weaker language. This might be something that could cause tension in a bi or multilingual household, so something to be aware of.
- There might be rapid shifts in the dominance of either language with environmental shifts. For parents this might mean that there are significant changes when their child enters a childcare setting or school.
- Finally, there will be separation of the phonological and grammatical systems, children can easily and almost intuitively separate the different “rules” for each language. However, there will be an enduring influence of the dominant language in vocabulary and idioms. The rate and manner of development appears to be the same whether the child is monolingual or bilingual. Essentially, simultaneous bilingualism does not differ from the acquisition of a single language.

There are three stages in the simultaneous acquisition of two languages in young children. These will happen in order.

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>First Stage</b>  | There are two separate lexical or verbal systems. Little children will use which one is the most appropriate for the situation. Differentiation of the phonological systems begins between twenty-four to thirty months.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Second Stage</b> | The child has two distinct lexicons but applies the same syntactic rules to both. This might be highlighted when a child appears to “muddle” word order. For example, in Polish it is correct to say “On dobrze mowi po polsku”, and a direct word for word translation is- “well he speaks Polish”- of course in English the syntax and grammar isn’t incorrect and doesn’t sound right, it should be “He speaks Polish well”. You might hear children in your setting speaking like this, and with time and exposure to both languages the correct word order will come.<br>The child learns structures common to both languages first, the simpler constructions before the more complex. So if a construction is trickier one language, it will be learned first in the other language in its simpler form. |
| <b>Third Stage</b>  | The child correctly produces lexical and syntactic structures from each language. Although there is still a great deal of interference, it is mostly confined to the syntactic level. To decrease interference, the child may try to keep the two languages as separate as possible, associating each with a particular person. In your setting you might use some dual language stories, or flashcards to help with communication and have a more inclusive approach. You may find that the child will not respond when you use another language, and this is fine because they do not associate you with that language, this is fine.                                                                                                                                                                         |

**The child becomes truly bilingual and can manage two separate languages at about age seven.**

### **The Parents' Role**

Parents have a huge role to play in the language development of their child. Factors affecting the simultaneous learning of two languages (Rosenberg, 1996)

1. The parents' ability in one or more languages. Some parents speak only one language, the language of the home, and are unable to speak the language of the school and possibly of the community
2. The parents' actual use of language with the child. The parents may have language ability in two or more languages but have decided about which language they speak with the child
3. The language or languages other family members speak with the child, such as the language spoken between siblings or between children and grandparents
4. Language the children use in the wider community

### **What strategies could parents use?**

- One parent, one language. Each parent consistently speaks one language while the other parent speaks another language (usually each on speaking his or her home language to the child and possibly the common language to each other).
- Both parents speak one language in the home and a second language is used at an Early Years setting or school.
- One language is used at home and at school and the second language is used in the community.
- Both parents speak both languages to the child but separate the languages according to speaking situations or alternate days.
- Consistency is the key in early language learning. If languages are mixed in the same conversation, young children experience difficulty separating vocabulary and grammar into the appropriate language. The child may learn the "mixed" language as one hybrid language.

### **Remember, consistency is key**

There is no substitute for the learning a child does with their family in a talk rich homelife. For young children, the best type of interaction is a highly responsive one, in which the adult lets the child decide what to talk about, expands on that topic, works hard to figure out what the child means, suggests new activities, and pays more attention to what the child wants to say than about whether it is being said correctly.

## Is Bilingualism an Advantage?

Researchers have found that bilingual learners in additive bilingual contexts (where their bilingualism is valued and used) consistently outperform their monolingual peers in four key areas of thinking:

### Cognitive flexibility

Bilingual people are more creative and flexible in their thinking. There are two key areas related to cognitive flexibility. One is divergent thinking. This is often measured by providing a person with a starting point for thought and asking them to generate a whole series of permissible solutions (e.g. “Think of a paper clip and tell me all the things you could do with it.”) The other area is convergent thinking, which is measured by tests that provide a number of pieces of information a person must synthesise to arrive at the correct answer. Researchers report that bilingual people are consistently superior to their monolingual counterparts in both divergent and convergent thinking tests.

### Metalinguistic awareness

Bilingual people demonstrate greater awareness of language and how it works. Metalinguistic awareness (MA) is the ability to analyse language, particularly language forms, in terms of how they work and how they are integrated into the wider language system. MA is, in effect, knowledge about language. It can be demonstrated at various levels: Phonological awareness (the understanding of sound units), word awareness, and syntactic (grammatical) awareness. Bilingual students may have greater MA because, in working with more than one language simultaneously, they need to have a greater awareness of how each language works and of how the two languages are both similar and, crucially, different. This, in turn, requires them to think about the language they choose to use.

### Communicative sensitivity

Bilingual people are more sensitive to nuances in communication. Communicative sensitivity relates to participants' level of awareness about what is going on in any particular language interaction. Bilingual people tend to be more communicatively aware because they are used to thinking about which language to use in which situation and to which person. They also have to pick up clues and cues about when to switch languages. The research literature suggests that this may give a bilingual person increased sensitivity to the social nature and communicative functions of language.

### Field independence

Bilingual people are often able to orient themselves and detect hidden patterns and figures more easily. Field independence is the visual ability to see an overall pattern as well as its component parts. As children grow to maturity, they become more field independent. Bilingual students tend to be more field independent at a younger age.

### Other social, cultural and economic advantages of bilingualism:

- Bilingual people can communicate with a wider range of people within families and communities, across generations, and in other social contexts.
- Being able to read and write in more than one language opens up new literatures, traditions, and ideas to bilingual students.
- Being bilingual, and being exposed to two languages and cultures, often fosters greater tolerance for other cultural groups.
- Knowing two languages makes it easier to learn additional languages.
- Knowing two languages provides bilingual people with additional skills in the employment market – skills that are increasingly important in our globalised world.
- When bilingual learners also become biliterate (that is, able to read and write well in two languages), they are known to achieve extremely well in education, often better than their monolingual peers.

## Engaging Parents as Partners in Transitions

| Do we...                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Always | Sometimes | Never |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|-------|
| ... home visit all families starting at the setting and/or when other important transitions occur, making sure the key person is involved in the planning, carrying out and evaluation of the visit?                |        |           |       |
| ... suggest that children bring in a familiar object ('all about me' / 'passport') when they join us or set out an activity using the toys taken on the home visit?                                                 |        |           |       |
| ... ensure that the key person can spend time with parent/caregiver and child on their first visit to the setting and that they are available during formal registration and during the child's settling-in period? |        |           |       |
| ... observe what the child is interested in, who he or she is forming relationships with, what he or she seems to enjoy or find difficult and then share this with colleagues and parents and record?               |        |           |       |
| ... involve parents/caregivers in the decision making with regard to when their child is ready to move to the next room/area within your setting?                                                                   |        |           |       |
| ... involve all partners, especially parents/caregivers, in the decision as to who will be the key person for each child?                                                                                           |        |           |       |
| ... have an agreed transition process with all relevant schools?<br>Is parental engagement clearly outlined in that agreement?                                                                                      |        |           |       |
| ... provide schools with comprehensive transition information for each child? Are parents invited to contribute?                                                                                                    |        |           |       |
| ... organise familiarisation visits in coordination with the school, and be flexible on how many of these might be needed? Are these visits evaluated and actions undertaken as a result?                           |        |           |       |
| ... create opportunities for parents/caregivers to ask questions and ensure that they understand what this process entails, using interpreters or having documents translated if necessary?                         |        |           |       |

## EAL Best Practice Reflective Tool

| Do we...                                                                                         | Always | Sometimes | Never |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|-------|
| ... ensure we have accurate information about families' home language(s) on registration forms?  |        |           |       |
| ... regularly review and update information?                                                     |        |           |       |
| ... make sure we know how to pronounce names?                                                    |        |           |       |
| ... ensure that we know about all of our children's religions, customs and dietary needs?        |        |           |       |
| ... carry out an environmental audit to check that our setting is welcoming to all?              |        |           |       |
| ... know how to access additional support with interpreting and/or translating?                  |        |           |       |
| ... have an awareness of relevant cultural differences/needs of families who attend our setting? |        |           |       |
| ... know where to access information about cultural differences?                                 |        |           |       |
| ... provide suitable resources to enhance EAL learners' experiences?                             |        |           |       |
| ... use resources that are representative of all the cultures present in the setting?            |        |           |       |
| ... use external partners such as translation and interpretation services to access resources?   |        |           |       |
| ... have knowledge of the relevant parts of the Statutory Framework of the EYFS?                 |        |           |       |
| ... feel confident and supported when carrying out Home Visits?                                  |        |           |       |
| ... adapt policies and procedures accordingly when home visiting EAL families?                   |        |           |       |
| ... encourage parents to continue using their home language with children?                       |        |           |       |
| ... understand the different stages of Bilingual Learning?                                       |        |           |       |
| ... identify and consider potential barriers to learning for children with EAL?                  |        |           |       |

## Audit for a Communication Friendly Environment

| <p>This audit can be used to reflect on whether your setting's learning environment effectively supports the development of children's speech, language and communication skills and the educator's role within it. This tool can help identify the strengths and needs of your setting and provide a starting point for discussion and improvement. It can also be used as a self reflective tool or to support peer observations. Based on the observations made, an action plan can be devised to identify strengths and needs (including training gaps), which could be included in the Setting's Improvement Plan.</p> |     |          |        |             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----------|--------|-------------|
| Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Y/N | Comments | Action | Review Date |
| Is the route into the setting clearly signposted and accessible to all users?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     |          |        |             |
| Is the entrance area welcoming, well lit and uncluttered?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |     |          |        |             |
| Are play areas laid out in a way that encourages exploration and interaction?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     |          |        |             |
| Is information on welcome boards easy to read, accessible, relevant and up-to-date?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |     |          |        |             |
| Is key information for parents translated when necessary?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |     |          |        |             |
| Are up-to-date photos, roles and names of staff displayed?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |     |          |        |             |
| Is the overall impression of the setting uncluttered and visually attractive?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     |          |        |             |
| Are all areas well defined by their function? Is the overall layout of the setting easy to 'read' and follow?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     |          |        |             |
| Are all areas and resources clearly labelled with text and/or images at child level (as relevant/appropriate)?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |     |          |        |             |
| Are shapes, letters and numbers effectively displayed/used throughout the setting?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |     |          |        |             |
| Are script samples accessible to children? Are they representative of all languages spoken in the setting?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |     |          |        |             |

| Area                                                                                                        | Y/N | Comments | Action | Review Date |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----------|--------|-------------|
| Are all areas of the setting well lit and ventilated? Do play areas get enough natural light and fresh air? |     |          |        |             |
| Are the acoustics and noise levels in the building favourable for hearing conversations clearly?            |     |          |        |             |
| Are the quiet and active areas well defined, labelled and located away from each other?                     |     |          |        |             |
| Is the book corner accessible, comfortable, well lit and inviting?                                          |     |          |        |             |
| Are books displayed attractively and easily accessible to children?                                         |     |          |        |             |
| Are books considered individually for their relevant ability range, quality, interest, topic and relevance? |     |          |        |             |
| Are books regularly rotated and changed and linked to activities and key themes?                            |     |          |        |             |
| Are different toys provided which represent all children's cultures, experiences and expectations?          |     |          |        |             |
| Are all toys regularly checked to ensure that all parts are present and working?                            |     |          |        |             |
| Are the toys provided considered for their appeal, relevance and developmental value?                       |     |          |        |             |
| Are parents/carers advised about where they can loan books and toys from – particularly bilingual ones?     |     |          |        |             |
| Are educators aware of and sensitive to children's individual needs, likes and personalities?               |     |          |        |             |
| Do they use a range of verbal and nonverbal tools, as well as objects, pictures, etc, to aid communication? |     |          |        |             |
| Are educators mindful of how body language and positioning affect their interactions with children?         |     |          |        |             |
| Do they ensure children are given plenty of thinking time when asked questions and answers listened to?     |     |          |        |             |

## Is it a Language Issue or a Special Educational Need?

Identifying and assessing SEN for young children whose first language is not English requires particular care. Early Years educators should look carefully at all aspects of a child's learning and development to establish whether any delay is related to learning English as an additional language or if it arises from SEN or disability. Difficulties related solely to learning English as an additional language are not SEN. **SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 (DfE, 2015)**  
[SEND Code of Practice January 2015.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/262326/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf)

If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, educators must explore the child's skills in the home language with parents and/or carers to establish whether there is cause for concern about language delay. **EYFS (DfE, 2021)**, [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92626/statutory-framework-for-the-early-years-foundation-stage.pdf)

As with all children and young people, a proportion of those who use English as an additional language will have Special Educational Needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

There are three potential pitfalls:

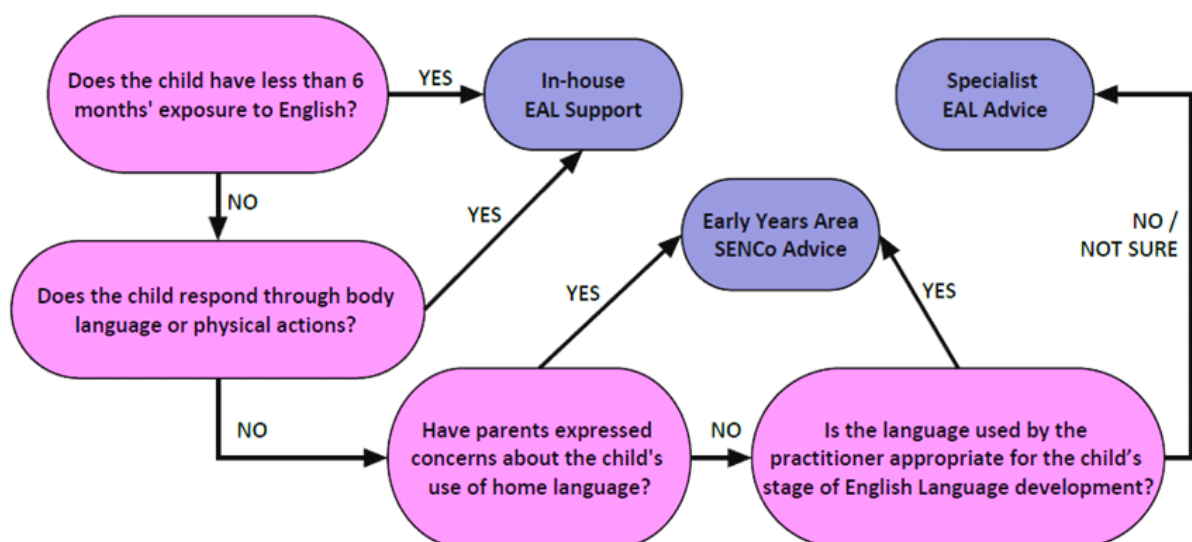
- To assume that a child or young person's lack of progress is due to not having English as a first language and discounting the possibility that there is a particular learning or behavioural difficulty; or
- To assume that a child or young person has learning difficulties when the main reason for lack of progress is that their use of English is not sufficiently advanced to progress in curriculum areas. Because of this, children or young people from ethnic minority groups can be over-represented on SEND

Some children or young people may display behaviour that is not typical.

- Some EAL children may have been through traumatic experiences and may have emotional and behavioural difficulties as a result
- Sometimes this may be due to trauma and sometimes due to culture. This is one area where the setting ENCo must maintain close professional links with all colleagues, including the EY Area SENCo. Both a child's experience and their culture will need to be investigated and understood
- It is quite common for EAL learners to go through a "silent period", in which they may not express what they are processing for some time.

### How do we distinguish between EAL and SEN?

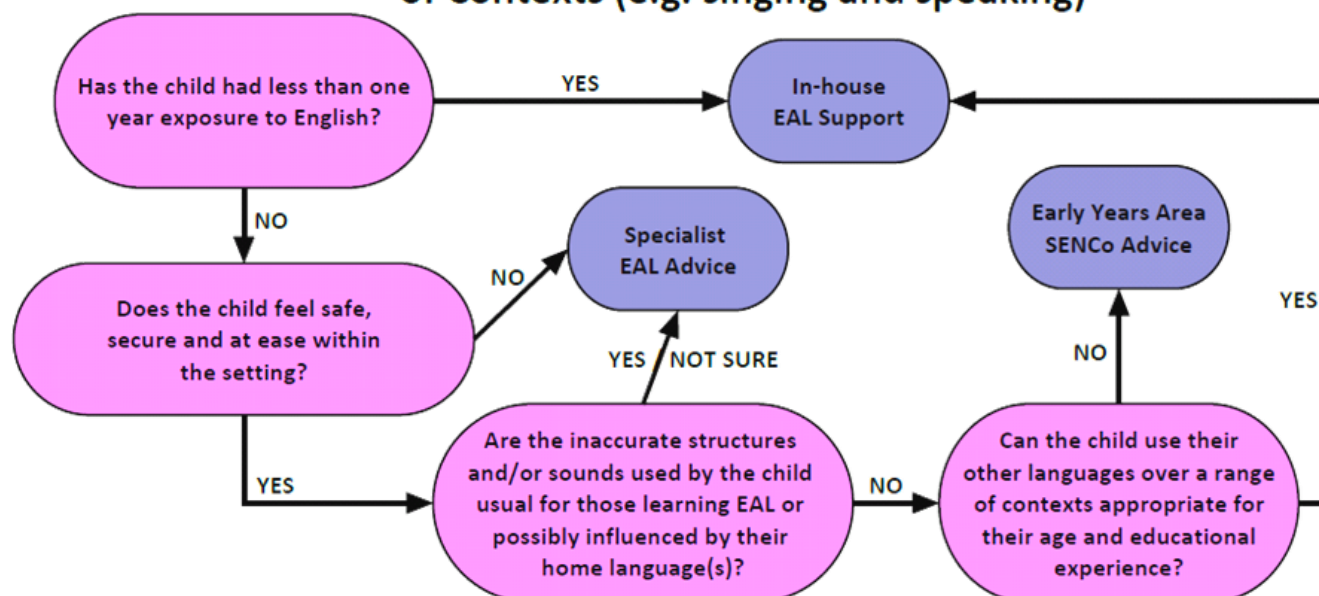
#### Child Shows Limited Response



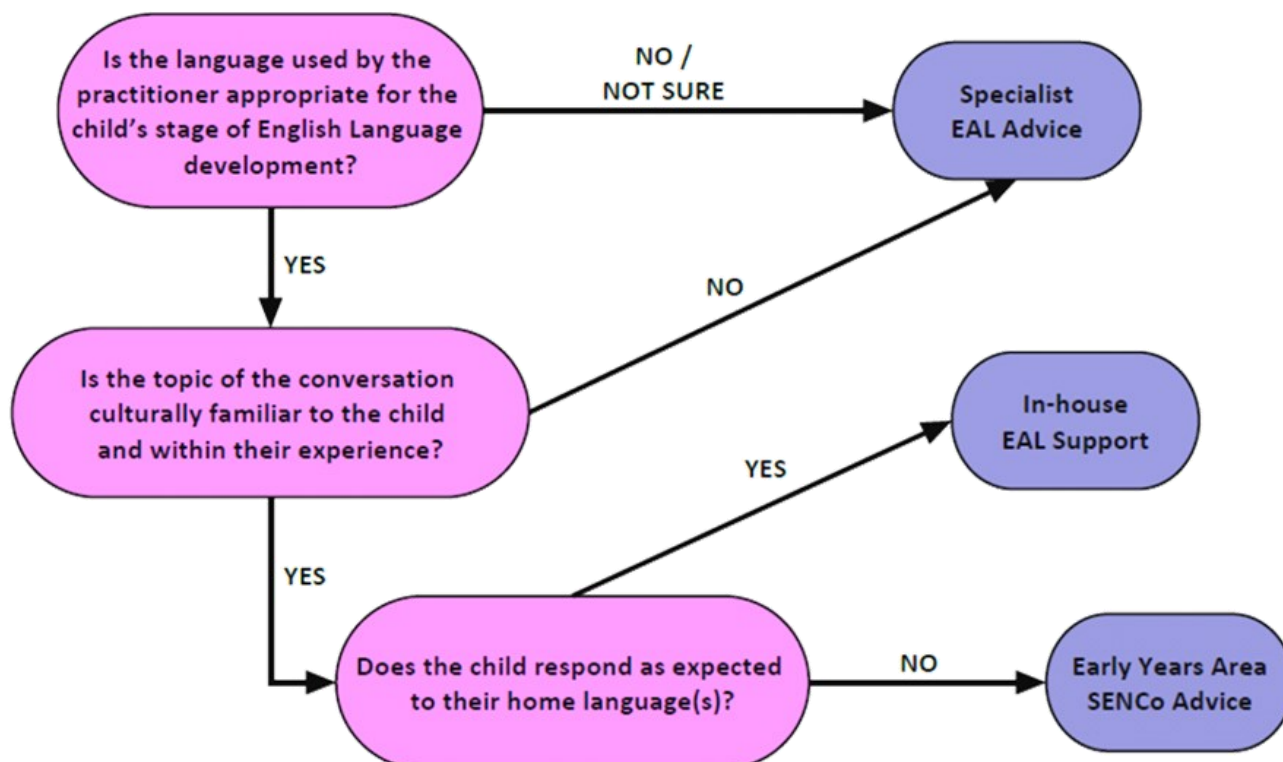
Adapted from 'Give It Time: Guidance for schools for identifying the learning needs of children and young people learning English as an additional language who may have SEN or disabilities' (Somerset CC, 2008).

## How do we distinguish between EAL and SEN? *continued*

### Child Shows Limited Oral Expression in a Range of Contexts (e.g. singing and speaking)



### Child Shows Problems with Listening



Adapted from 'Give It Time: Guidance for schools for identifying the learning needs of children and young people learning English as an additional language who may have SEN or disabilities' (Somerset CC, 2008).