



# Development of Children's Communication, Literacy and Numeracy Skills

# 2

# Getting to know your unit

## Assessment

You will be assessed through an external task set and marked by Pearson.

Do you remember learning to talk? The chances are that you have no particular memory of it. This is because most children have mastered talking by around the age of 4 years. Being able to communicate and talk with others is an important skill as it leads to children being able to read, write and learn about mathematical concepts. This unit looks at children’s development of communication, early literacy and numeracy skills. You will see how children acquire these important skills and how adults can support children at all stages of their journey.

## How you will be assessed

This unit will be assessed through a task set and marked by Pearson and taken under supervised conditions. The task is worth 68 marks.

You will be provided with a task brief and three related task activities, based around a scenario involving an early years setting. You will have a total of six hours to read, prepare and complete the task activities. You will be able to spend two hours preparing and planning before writing your answers to the task activities. You will also be able to take four sides of A4 notes into the supervised assessment. A task book will be provided, which you will use to answer questions related to the task activities.

Throughout this unit you will find assessment practice opportunities that will help you develop the skills and understanding you will need for the assessment.

You will be assessed on your ability to achieve the following outcomes.

- ▶ **AO1** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the concepts, activities, processes and theories that support the development of communication, language, literacy and numeracy.
- ▶ **AO2** Apply knowledge and understanding of the concepts, key activities, processes and theories that promote development of communication, language, literacy and numeracy.
- ▶ **AO3** Analyse and evaluate information about children and early years demonstrating the ability to interpret the potential impact and influence of activities and approaches on communication, language, literacy and numeracy development.
- ▶ **AO4** Be able to recommend activities and approaches to support development of communication, language, literacy and numeracy in context with appropriate justification, using theory to support arguments.

Table 2.1 shows key terms that will be used consistently by Pearson in its assessments. These terms will not necessarily be used in every paper, and are provided for guidance only.

▶ **Table 2.1:** Key terms used in this unit

Command or term	Definition
Activity	A planned play and learning experience to develop a child’s skills and abilities
Activity plan	A structured breakdown of an experience to develop a child’s skills and abilities
Early years theory	Ideas that underpin early years teaching practices
Resources	Pieces of equipment needed to support children’s activities



## Getting started

Before you start this unit, write a list of practical ways in which learning to communicate and the use of language will support children in the development of their reading, writing and mathematical skills. At the end of the unit, see if you can add to your list.



# A

## Stages of speech, communication and language development and its link to overall domains of development

### A1 The role of speech, communication and language in children's development

#### Verbal and non-verbal communication

Learning to communicate with others is an important part of young children's development. Both verbal and non-verbal skills are important in communication.

#### Non-verbal communication

- ▶ **Eye contact** – eye contact is one of the earliest skills to develop in babies as it is fundamental to most communication. Babies are quickly able to gaze into the eyes of an adult. Eye contact is needed to show that you are listening, to be able to register others' feelings and to assess the impact of communication.
- ▶ **Contact** – babies and young children often use physical contact as a tool to aid communication. They may tap our back to get our attention or hug us to show that they are happy.
- ▶ **Gesture** – one of many skills that babies learn is to use gestures. From around 9 months, babies will often start to point to things in order to draw our attention to them. Babies and children will also clap their hands to show that they are pleased and will learn some early gestures, such as waving to indicate goodbye.
- ▶ **Body language** – babies and children use body language as a key way of expressing how they feel. They may clench their fists when angry, quiver when excited and show us that they want to be picked up by opening their arms.



▶ Eye contact is one of the earliest skills to develop in babies



#### PAUSE POINT

Explain the different ways in which children use non-verbal communication.

Hint

You have looked at four ways.

Extend

For each way, give a practical example.

#### Verbal communication

Very early on, babies start to use their voices to communicate. They use crying, cooing and babbling to help gain attention, but also as a way of communicating with adults. Being able to talk and use verbal communication increasingly helps children express their feelings and develop strong relationships with others.

- ▶ **Active listening** – children are active when they listen. Up to 6 or 7 years old, they are likely to ask questions and blurt out ideas and thoughts when they are listening. This means that listening is quite a 'loud' activity, as children seem to need to talk

### Link

Revisit *Unit 1 Children's Development* to remind yourself of Vygotsky's sociocultural approach to language and communication development.

in order to process information and make new connections with it. This links to Vygotsky's suggestion that up to 6 or 7 years old, children still talk aloud their private thoughts.

### Theory into practice

Observe a group of children aged 3–5 years who are having a story read to them.

- Do any of the children seem to need to talk as they are listening?
- See how many of their comments are related in some way to what they have just heard.
- Why might talking aloud be a positive sign that children are listening?



- Talking aloud can be a positive sign that young children are listening

### Link

You will look at non-verbal and verbal communication skills again in Section A2.

### How adults use non-verbal and verbal communication to support children's development

You have seen the importance of non-verbal and verbal communication in children's acquisition of communication and language. Interestingly, it is these skills that adults use to motivate, bond with and support children's communication and language development.

- **Eye contact** – from the moment a baby is born, their parents will seek to make eye contact with them. Eye contact is a powerful communication device that adults use with children in a variety of ways. It can be used to show a child attention and love, and as a way of showing that they are listening to a child. It can also be used to reprimand a child!
- **Contact** – physical contact including cuddling or sitting on a lap helps babies and young children to feel secure and is often a natural prompt to encourage communication and language.
- **Gesture** – gestures often help babies and young children understand what is being said to them. One of the most important early gestures that adults use is to point to objects.
- **Body language** – our body language and particularly our facial expressions are an important way of communicating with children. Raised eyebrows and mock surprise are particular features of how adults use body language to support communication and language (see Section A2).

- ▶ **Verbal tools** – as you will see in Section A2, the tone of voice, interest and how adults simplify and expand young children's statements all play an important part in helping babies and young children acquire language.
- ▶ **Active listening** – responding to babies and young children by carefully listening and thinking about what they are trying to express is an important part of supporting communication and language.

## Stages of language acquisition

For children to be competent language users they pass through two stages of learning: pre-linguistic and linguistic phases.

### Pre-linguistic phase

The first phase of language learning is known as the **pre-linguistic phase**. This phase begins from birth and continues until children begin to use their first words. For most children this will be at around 12–15 months. In this phase babies are learning the rules of communication, which include turn taking, eye contact and also responding to others. Babies also tune into the sounds of the language that they are hearing. Their babbling increasingly sounds similar to the language or languages that they hear and they also start to work out the meanings of specific words.

### Linguistic phase

The **linguistic phase** starts when children begin to use words that have meaning. Single words are gradually replaced – first by two-word utterances and then simple sentences. Most children will be fairly fluent language users at around 4 years old and be able to hold conversations easily.

## Development of higher order language skills

There are several components of speech that children need to acquire. Once they have mastered these components, they will, in theory, be able to use language to think, predict and explain. These are known as higher order language skills.

### Phonology

Phonology is the study of speech sounds used in a language. Speech sounds are often known as **phonemes**. Some languages have more sounds than others. English has around 44 (this number does vary depending on the way that the language is being analysed). Note that speech sounds can be written in a variety of ways. For example, 'ee' as in feed is the same sound as 'ea' as in bead!

Children have to 'tune in' to the phonemes and then make the phonemes of the language that they are exposed to. Babies begin this process before they are born. From around the 26th week of pregnancy, they are already recognising the speech patterns of their mother. However, producing the sounds is a gradual process and is dependent on the growth and development of teeth and muscles in the mouth, including muscles in the tongue. It is, therefore, normal for many children at 3 years old to say 'dat' rather than 'that'.

### Semantics

Semantics is about understanding the meaning of words. At first babies learn the meaning of words by associating sounds with objects or actions. A parent or carer may say, 'Where's your hat?' and touch the child's hat. After a while the child will associate the sound of the word 'h-a-t' with the object.

#### Key terms

**Pre-linguistic phase** – the early stage of language learning when babies start to understand words and babble, but are not producing intelligible words.

**Linguistic phase** – the second stage of language acquisition when children begin to use words that have meaning.

**Phonemes** – the smallest units of sound in a language that help to distinguish one word from another. In the English language, for example, 'p' and 'b' are separate phonemes because they distinguish words such as 'pit' and 'bit'.

### Key terms

**Receptive language** – the ability to listen to, and understand, what is being communicated.

**Expressive language** – the ability of a child to communicate actively using sounds and, over time, words.

### Syntax

Syntax is about the grammar of a language, or the way that words are put together to make sentences. Children seem to be primed to work out the structure of a language and, although they may simplify a sentence, they rarely get the word order of a sentence wrong.

### Putting it all together – receptive and expressive language

Once children begin to master the components of speech, they are able to understand what others are saying. This is called **receptive language** and it is the first step in learning to use language. Once further progress is made in mastering the components of speech, children can start to express themselves using talk. This is known as **expressive language**.



### PAUSE POINT

Can you explain what the term 'semantics' means?

Hint

You are using semantics to answer this question!

Extend

Explain the link between receptive language and semantics.

### Links with emotional and social development

Communication and language are interlinked with children's emotional and social development, and their behaviour.

### Emotional development

Children who have strong attachments to their parents and to their **key person** in a setting are likely to develop language more easily. This is because there is a strong link between attachment and language. Babies who are held and cuddled start to 'read' their parents and other carers, and this in turn helps them to understand body language in others. Babies and young children who have strong attachments are also motivated to babble and communicate with their parents as they have learned that they will gain a positive response.

When you look at theories of language development, you will see later in the section the link between emotional and communication and language development and the danger of overcorrecting children.



► Early experience of communication will help this baby learn how to read others' body language



### Positive reinforcement

Children are more likely to communicate when they feel happy and comfortable with the adult. They also need to feel that they are listened to and that their communications are valued. Smiling, responding to a child and showing interest are all ways that children's attempts at communication can be positively reinforced.

In Unit 1 you looked at Skinner's theory of operant conditioning and language development in relation to how children learn. Skinner extended this theory to the development of children's language. He suggested that children are encouraged to talk when they are positively reinforced by adults who may praise or make eye contact with them. His theory of language is controversial as he also suggested that parents tended to ignore children's ungrammatical talk. This, he said, encouraged a child to focus on speaking correctly. Research, however, from other theorists would suggest that this is not the case.

### Social development

There is a strong link between language and social development. Children who can read other people's body language and communicate with them are more likely to be accepted by others and engage in playful situations. The acquisition of language also makes a difference to the way that children play together, as language seems to help children interact.

### Behaviour

There is a significant link between children's behaviour and language. This is very noticeable in children between the ages of 2–3 years whose speech is developing well. At 2 years, children are likely to be impulsive, have difficulties in waiting and sharing, and become frustrated. Once children are able to talk in simple sentences, their behaviour changes. They start to become less impulsive, more aware of the needs of others and more cooperative. However, when children's language does not follow the typical pattern of development, they may show behaviour that would not usually be expected for their age.

### Links with cognitive development

Speech, communication and language play an important part in children's cognitive development in a variety of ways.

### Information processing

Language helps children to process information and is linked to recall and memory. As children's language develops, they are more likely to use it to explore new ideas, explain their thinking and solve problems.

### Making the link between spoken sounds and the written symbols

Before children can read and write, they need to become fluent speakers.

In the case of children learning to read, speech is needed in order for them to make the connection between the sounds they hear or make and the written symbols on a page. Children also need to make sense of what they are reading.

Good language skills are also needed in order for children to write. This is because writing is about putting words down on paper or screen. If children do not have words or cannot form sentences, they will have nothing to write.

### Understanding the meaning of words

The vocabulary level of children also helps with their cognitive development. When children have good vocabulary and understand the meanings of words, they perceive things in more detail and can think about them differently. A child who knows the word for 'pigeon' as well as 'cockereel' – rather than simply knowing 'bird' – is able to think about the differences between them.

#### Link

Look back at *Unit 1 Children's Development* to remind yourself of other theorists' research about positive reinforcement and language development.



► These children are talking well; this will help them learn to read later on

### Key terms

**Innate theory** – behaviours/actions that children do instinctively.

**Behaviourist theory** – a theory of learning that states development and behaviour can be conditioned and shaped by the environment.

**Social interactionist theory** – behaviours/actions that children learn as a result of gaining information and feedback during interaction with adults and other children.

**Innate** – inborn. An innate characteristic is one a child is born with.

### Link

Revisit *Unit 1 Children's Development* to look at the key points that the following theorists make in the context of children's communication and language development: Bruner, Chomsky, Vygotsky and Piaget.

## How theories help us to understand speech, communication and language development

There are several theories of how children acquire language. These theories are useful in understanding how best to support children's communication and language development. They can be divided into three categories: **innate theory**, **behaviourist theory** and **social interactionist theory**.

### Bruner's theory of development

In Unit 1, you looked at Bruner's approach to explaining how children learn and think. He suggested that there were three stages (also known as modes) of representation. One of these was the symbolic stage where children began to use language to represent objects and ideas.

Bruner also focused on the role of adults, particularly parents, in supporting young children to learn language. He is famous for using the term Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) to describe the way that a parent or key carer works sensitively with the child to help them understand and break into speech. The baby or child is like an apprentice and the adult helps the child to join in by interacting with them.

### Impact on early years practice

The importance of relationships in language development and also in other areas of development is seen as key in early years practice. It is helpful if children and adults have good relationships, but also if adults modify and use their language to help the child.

### Chomsky's concept of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD)

In Unit 1, you learned that Noam Chomsky thought that children's language development is **innate**. He suggested that a specific structure in the brain, known as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), allows children to break into a language code and use it. His concept suggests that children can pick up more than one language at an early age without being formally taught, although he does speculate that there may be a 'critical period' for language learning. Chomsky's theory is sometimes criticised for not addressing factors in language development such as the role of the parent or key person interacting with the child.

Chomsky's work has helped to explain why all children learn language, regardless of the particular language they are exposed to.



### Impact on early years practice

Many linguists, including Chomsky, wonder whether there might be a period in which babies and children are primed to learn language. Beyond this period, learning a language without studying it becomes difficult. The idea that there is a critical period for language learning means that young children in the early years need a lot of opportunities for interaction with adults.



### PAUSE POINT

In what category does Chomsky's theory of language acquisition fall?

Hint

The three options are: innate, biological and constructivist.

Extend

What are the key differences between Chomsky's and Bruner's approach to language acquisition?

### Vygotsky's constructivist learning theory

In Unit 1 you looked at Vygotsky's learning theory. One of the main aspects of his theory was the role of adults and social interactions in supporting children's learning. Vygotsky believed that through the adult talking, questioning and directing conversations, children's learning could be developed.

Vygotsky also made an important observation about differences in the ways that we use language. He recognised that there was external speech (where we talk outwardly to others) and internal speech (our private thoughts and ideas). He observed that while children from around 3 years old were able to use speech to talk to themselves, they were doing this aloud. It was only from around 6 or 7 years old that children's private speech became internal.

### Impact on early years practice

Vygotsky's work suggests that the quality and style of adult interaction with children will make a difference to children's progress, both in terms of language acquisition and in how they use language to predict, analyse and develop high-level thinking. His observation that children use private speech from 3 years old, but it is not until later that it becomes internal, also means that we would expect children to make comments aloud that adults would keep private.

### Roger Brown's stages of language development

Through his research, Roger Brown (1925–97) outlined five stages of language development in young children (see Table 2.2). He is known for the term 'telegraphic speech'. This is when children use sentences that are stripped back but still grammatically correct, for example, 'Daddy gone'.

Brown used **longitudinal observations** to record children's emerging speech and to classify different types of telegraphic speech. He noted that children often made **virtuous errors** as their language was emerging, for example, 'goed' or 'wented', but that the word order they used was correct. He also noted that the length of children's sentences (**mean length of utterance** or **MLU**) increased as their language developed.

#### Key terms

**Longitudinal observations** – observations of individual children that take place over a number of months or years.

**Virtuous errors** – mistakes in children's expressive language that are logical.

**Mean length of utterance (MLU)** – the length of children's sentences.

Table 2.2 summarises the five stages that Brown identified.

**Table 2.2:** A summary of Roger Brown's five stages

Stage	Mean length of utterance	Age	Examples
1	1.75	15–30 months	Two-word sentences, e.g.: 'No want' 'Go car' 'Teddy sleep'
2	2.25	28–36 months	Use of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'ing': 'Daddy going'</li><li>• 'on': 'Hat on now'</li><li>• 'in': 'Duck in water'</li><li>• regular plurals using 's', e.g. 'sheeps there'</li></ul>
3	2.75	36–42 months	Use of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• some irregular past tenses, e.g. 'Me fell down'</li><li>• possessives, e.g. 'Mummy's hat'</li></ul>
4	3.5	40–46 months	Use of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'a' and 'the': 'I want the book'</li><li>• 'ed' on regular verbs, e.g. 'Charlie chased the squirrel'</li><li>• third-person present tense, e.g. 'He works', 'Daddy likes books'</li></ul>
5	4.0	42–52+ months	Use of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• third person (he, she) irregular, e.g. 'he has' (rather than 'he have')</li></ul>

### Impact on early years practice

Brown's work has been helpful to those studying children's language as he outlined a clear sequence for children learning to use grammar in their speech. Although researchers have questioned whether his model can be applied to all languages, the five stages have helped early years professionals understand the sequence by which children learn English. His work has also helped adults to realise that children are quite logical in their speech from an early age and that they often keep the correct word order.

### Piaget's stages of learning and the importance of observing children's language development

In Unit 1 you looked at Piaget's stages of learning. One of the key features of his theory was the way that children's learning was reflected in their logic and the way that they play. His theory suggests that one of the roles of adults is to observe children's language and its use. By doing this in early years settings, adults are able to plan more effectively for children and provide them with learning experiences that will support their learning.

### The importance of not overcorrecting

There is an important practical point to take away from the different theories of language, which you can apply to your practice with babies and young children.

Assuming that Chomsky's and Brown's work provides an accurate account of how children learn language, there are dangers associated with overcorrecting children. Many of children's 'mistakes' will be because they are attempting to detect underlying grammar.

As English has grown out of many languages, there are several different rules that children will only acquire over time. A good example of this is the different rules that applies to pluralising common words: 'dog' becomes 'dogs' but 'sheep' do not become 'sheeps'. Instead of overtly correcting children, which may reduce their motivation to communicate, the suggested approach is to repeat the sentence back to the child using the correct form. For example, 'so you saw sheep in the field'.



## PAUSE POINT

List three ways that theories of language have had an impact on early years practice.

**Hint**

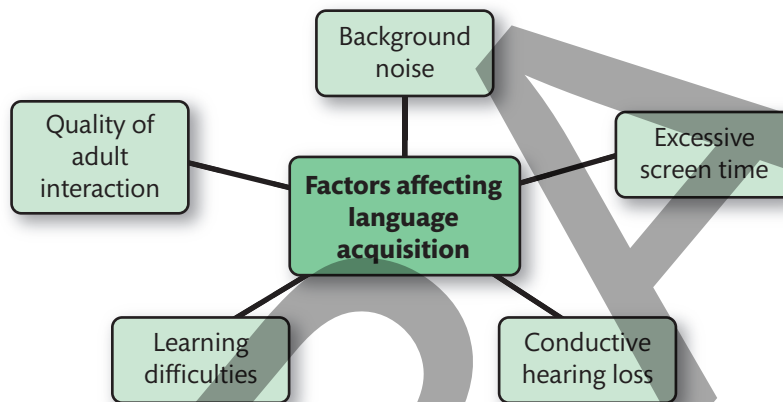
Revisit the 'impact' subsections above.

**Extend**

Evaluate which of the theories has had the most significant impact on early years practice.

## Factors that may affect speech, communication and language development

A range of factors can affect children's acquisition of language (see Figure 2.1). It is important to be aware of these factors when working with children.



► **Figure 2.1:** Factors affecting language acquisition

### Background noise

Background noise affects children's speech. Babies have to 'tune in' during their first year. This process can be disrupted if there is a lot of background noise, especially from the radio and television. This is thought to be because other human voices make it harder for the baby to focus on their parent or key person.

Background noise does not just affect babies. Toddlers and older children are less likely to talk when it is noisy and this includes times when music is being played. When there is noise, there is a reduction in the amount of **vocalisations** that take place.

### Excessive screen time

Watching television and DVDs, or using computers for a number of hours each day, can have an impact on children's speech and language. Some screen time is fine but children who spend too much time looking at a screen, particularly by themselves, are more likely to have a delay in speech and language development. This is because learning language is an active process and requires face-to-face interactions. When children are spending time in front of the screen, they are not getting the same level of interaction.

### Link

Look at Section A2 for ideas for reducing background noise. These should help to provide an environment that encourages communication and language development.

### Key term

**Vocalisations** – sounds that are made by babies either for communication or as a way of exploring. Sounds may include words.



### Discussion

Over the past few years, young children have spent more time watching TV and in front of screens. Some argue that this has contributed to language delay in children. Discuss this with a partner and then answer the questions.

- 1 Does research directly make this link?
- 2 Are parents given sufficient information about the effects of screen time on children's language?
- 3 Would you suggest a screen time limit? If so, what would you set it at?

### Key terms

**Conductive hearing loss** – a hearing loss often caused by glue ear.

**Glue ear** – a condition in which fluid builds up in the auditory (Eustachian) tube in the ear, preventing sounds from being heard properly.

### Conductive hearing loss

**Conductive hearing loss** is very common, particularly between the ages of 2 and 6 years. Conductive hearing loss is usually caused by **glue ear**, which is a build-up of a sticky fluid within the ear, preventing sound from travelling into the inner ear.

Conductive hearing loss affects children's ability to hear sounds clearly. This in turn makes it hard for them to speak clearly or to understand what others are saying. How badly children are affected depends on the severity of the condition. A child might have a conductive hearing loss if they:

- ▶ have muffled speech
- ▶ stare intently at adults' lips
- ▶ have varying levels of responsiveness
- ▶ are slow to react to instructions
- ▶ show a lack of interest in watching television
- ▶ appear withdrawn
- ▶ are aggressive due to frustration.



### PAUSE POINT

What are the practical effects of background noise on children's language development?

Hint

How much do you talk when you are in a noisy place with a friend?

Extend

Consider how settings could reduce background noise.

### Learning difficulties

Some children have difficulty learning and using language because they have particular learning difficulties. Language is abstract and this means that some children with learning difficulties struggle to understand that sounds can have meanings. Other children may find it hard to understand the 'rules' of the language they are being exposed to. Some children who have learning difficulties are supported by systems such as **Makaton**. Makaton uses visual signs to help children make the link between words and their meaning.

### Quality of adult interaction

Language development is closely linked to how much interaction a child has with adults, particularly parents and key carers. Babies and young children who have plenty of opportunities to talk are likely to acquire language quickly. It is also important that adults are good at listening to children and allowing them to respond. As children develop, they need increasing opportunities to talk and also to hear specific words in order to improve their vocabulary, for example, 'sandals' rather than 'shoes'.

## The importance of observation and assessment

One of the key roles of adults working with young children is to observe and assess their speech, communication and language development. This is important because children who are not showing typical language patterns may need additional help or the support of a specialist such as a speech and language therapist.

Early detection of difficulties is important because children with the right support can make significant progress. If you have concerns about a child's communication and language, you should first check their progress against normative development for their age group. You should also talk to parents so that you can find out about the child's language use at home and how they feel about their child's progress.

The importance of early detection is why many local areas have drop-in sessions for parents, as well as online referral processes. Some speech and language teams also produce referral guidelines, which can be helpful if you are not sure whether a referral is needed. Referrals can only be made with parents' consent or by parents themselves directly. Although many referrals are to speech and language teams, some children need to be referred for an **audiology test** to check whether they are fully hearing. This referral is usually done via a health visitor or GP.

### Link

Look ahead to *Unit 9 Observation, Assessment and Planning* to read more about these processes.

### Key terms

**Makaton** – a language programme used to help children with specific difficulties understand the spoken word.

**Audiology test** – a hearing test carried out with a machine called an audiometer.

## Assessment practice 2.1

A01

A02

A03

A children's centre is applying for additional funding to run communication and language groups with parents. They have asked you to prepare information that they can use in support of their application.

- 1 Describe the impact of communication and language on children's development.
- 2 Analyse the factors that might affect children's language acquisition. Which ones would be relevant for parents to know, and why?
- 3 Evaluate which theories of language acquisition could be used as a basis for helping parents to understand how they might support their children's language development.

### Plan

- Where can I find information relevant to this task?
- How long will I need to collate and analyse the information I find?

### Do

- Is the information I have found accurate and concise?
- Am I managing my time effectively?

### Review

- Can I justify why I have decided to approach the task this way?
- Have I evaluated my work and am I confident that it fulfils the task?

## A2 Developing children's speech, communication and language

One of the key roles for adults working with young children is to promote their speech, communication and language. This section looks at ways in which this can happen in early years settings.

### The sequence of language development

It is important for adults working with children to understand that language develops in a certain sequence. By recognising where children are in the sequence of language learning, adults can adapt their language style to support children. Table 2.3 shows the usual pattern by which children develop expressive language.

► **Table 2.3:** The sequence of language development

Stage	Features
Babbling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Associated with babies</li><li>• Changes over time – babbling becomes longer and more tuneful</li></ul>
Single words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Single words often begin at around 12–15 months</li><li>• By 18 months, most children have 15–18 single words</li><li>• Single words may have more than one meaning, i.e. ‘dog’ might refer to any animal</li></ul>
Two words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Joining of two words to make mini sentences begins from 18 months to 2 years</li><li>• Words often contain a verb and a noun, e.g. ‘Daddy go’</li></ul>
Multi-word sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• From 2½ years, most children form simple sentences of three or more words</li><li>• Longer and more complex sentences are seen at 4 years</li></ul>

### Supporting early verbal interactions with babies

In order for babies to ‘tune in’ to the language or languages that they are meant to be learning, it is essential that they spend time with adults who are directly interacting with them. This is because in the pre-linguistic phase babies learn about the sounds and tune of the language, as well as communication techniques such as making eye contact and recognising others’ emotions. There are some important ways that adults can help babies break into what is otherwise a code made from sounds.

#### Holding babies

The starting point and the motivation for babies to break into the ‘code’ is often linked to their need for love and attention. Simply holding a baby and talking to them makes a significant difference. Babies who spend long periods on the floor away from adults or in forward-facing pushchairs will find it hard to connect what they are hearing with any meaning.

#### Eye contact

Making eye contact is a key communication skill. Babies seem to want to make eye contact very early on, as they will often gaze into the adult’s eyes when they are being fed. Making eye contact with a baby when you are with them is key to helping them feel included in the conversation – albeit a one-sided conversation at first.

#### Using gesture

Often, and without realising it, adults who communicate well with babies point things out to them. This is important as it helps babies to focus on an object, person or action. This in turn means that babies are more likely to understand what the accompanying words are about.

#### Using facial expression

Babies can also have their attention drawn to language through our facial expressions. Babies need strong facial expressions to help them be interested in what is happening. Eyebrows and mouths are of particular interest to babies as they help them ‘read’ the human face more easily. If you have a fringe, think about clipping it back so that babies can see your whole face.

#### Running commentary

As well as directly pointing things out to babies, adults need to keep chatting to them, even when they are busy doing other things. This means, for example, that while an adult is setting the table, the baby should still be spoken to. This style is sometimes called ‘running commentary’. Some adults find it difficult to do this as the baby does not reply, but it is essential because it allows the baby to hear direct communication.





- Strong facial expressions seem to encourage young children to communicate more

### Acknowledging babies' vocalisations

Babies are not silent! They cry, moan and also make babbling sounds. It is important to respond to babies' sounds by talking to them, picking them up, or, if necessary, comforting them. This helps babies to practise vocalisations and to help them feel that they are understood.

#### Reflect

Babies need high-quality adult interaction to acquire communication and language.

- Evaluate your interaction style with babies.
- Consider whether you are using sufficient gestures and facial expressions. Are you working in ways that prompt babies to vocalise?
- Ask an experienced adult to provide you with feedback so that you can improve your interactions further.

### The importance of appropriate adult support

There are simple things that adults can do to help children's language development.

#### Time to respond

One of the most important things to remember when working with babies and children is that they need time to respond to what you say. This is because they have to process the information or, in other words, they require thinking time. In recordings of adults talking to children, not giving children time to respond is one of the most common mistakes.

#### Acknowledging attempts to communicate

You have seen that acknowledging vocalisations is important with babies; this remains important throughout early childhood. You can show that you are acknowledging attempts to communicate by making eye contact and getting down to the child's level.

#### Reflecting back

When children start to talk, they are likely to make mistakes. You should not correct children; instead, repeat the word or phrase back correctly, as in the following example.

- Child: 'Look. I'm a mermelaid.'
- Adult: 'A mermaid. How exciting!'

### Sensitively expanding statements

Babies and children need adults to acknowledge what they are saying but also to expand their statements. Expanding a child's statement in a sensitive way helps them make connections to things that they have already experienced. Here are some examples.

- ▶ Baby at 11 months: 'Dadada.'  
Adult: 'Can you hear Daddy coming down the stairs?'
- ▶ 2-year-old child: 'All gone now.'  
Adult: 'Have you finished everything? You were very hungry, weren't you?'
- ▶ 4-year-old child: 'I've got new shoes.'  
Adult: 'They're lovely new shoes. And they've got very smart buckles too.'
- ▶ 6-year-old child: 'We're going on holiday and I am going on a plane!'  
Adult: 'That's exciting. I wonder if you'll fly over France where Josh now lives.'

#### Key terms

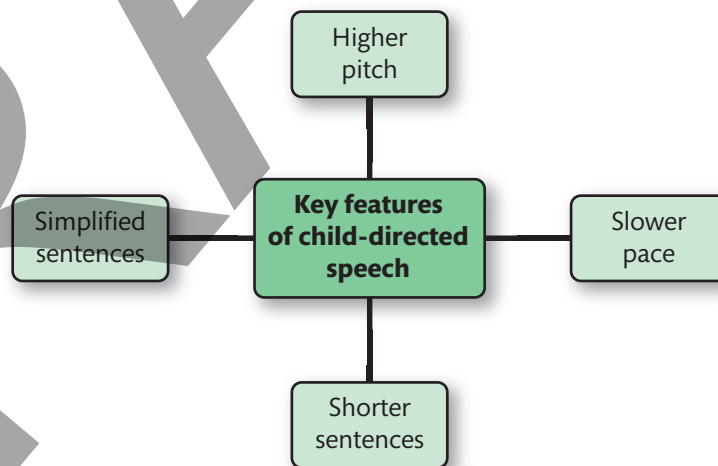
**Parentese** – (originally motherese) the language patterns of parents speaking to their children, which are often simplified and repetitive. The term was originally used to refer to mothers.

**Child-directed speech** (CDS) – speech patterns used by parents speaking to their children, usually involving slow and simplified vocabulary, a high-pitched voice and the use of repetition and questions.

### Features of child-directed speech (motherese)

The term **motherese** was originally used in the 1970s to describe a style of language that was used when mothers spoke to their babies. As fathers and other carers also play a part in children's language development, the terms **parentese** or **child-directed speech** (CDS) are now often used.

There are several features of child-directed speech that adults can use when they are talking to babies and young children (see Figure 2.2). These features seem to help babies and young children understand what is being said and will eventually help them to talk.



▶ **Figure 2.2:** Key features of child-directed speech

- ▶ **Higher-pitched voice** – adults use a higher pitch of voice than usual. This is thought to appeal more to babies and young children, and draw their attention to what is being said.
- ▶ **Slower pace** – adults use a slower pace than usual. This helps babies and young children 'tune in' and distinguish between words.
- ▶ **Shorter sentences** – adults use shorter sentences with fewer words than usual. This helps babies and young children work out what is being said.
- ▶ **Simplified sentences** – adults use simple grammar and vocabulary, such as 'look at the ball'. This helps babies and young children to pick up grammatical constructions.

**Theory into practice**

In your work placement, ask if you can spend ten minutes observing an experienced adult working with a baby or toddler. Make a list of the different features of child-directed speech (motherese) that you notice.

Consider to what extent the adult uses these features when interacting with the baby or toddler.

## **Environments that encourage speech, communication and language development**

Babies, children and adults need things to talk about. This means that the environment we create, including the development of routines and activities, becomes very important. New things seem to attract babies' and children's attention. Although at some level routine is important, the environment needs to be of sufficient interest to encourage communication and speech.

Here are some ideas for creating an environment that promotes language.

### **Small spaces**

Many children enjoy being in small spaces such as tents, dens or role play areas. Small spaces are often places where children sit and enjoy talking. In settings with children over one, it is good practice to create small spaces. Older children might talk to each other but adults working with younger children need to use these small spaces to interact with children or tell a story.

### **Reducing background noise**

Children interact and vocalise less in noisy environments. Noisy environments can also be very distracting for young children who may find it hard to concentrate. In group-care settings, where there might be a large number of children, strategies to cut down background noise are important. They include:

- ▶ changing the layout of the setting to create smaller areas
- ▶ making sure that adults do not call out across the room to children
- ▶ using all available space at all times, including outdoors
- ▶ avoiding the use of continual background music
- ▶ using sound-absorbing materials such as carpets in some areas
- ▶ moving games and activities that might be noisy to other areas
- ▶ modelling quiet talking to children.

### **Activities and objects that excite children's interest**

Here are examples of activities and objects that promote children's language development.

#### **Story sacks**

Story sacks have been very popular in the UK over the past few years. They are usually used with children from around 3 years old. The idea behind a story sack is that children and adults talk and read a story book that is accompanied by props and objects. Most story sacks comprise a well-known story, puppets or objects, and some suggestions for follow-up activities. In many settings parents are encouraged to take story sacks home with their child.





### Key terms

**Alliteration** – words that start with the same sound, e.g. *Maisy's mother*.

**Auditory discrimination** – the ability to hear and pick out particular sounds amid others.

► Story sacks can contribute to a child's lifelong love of books and reading

### Rhyme

Babies and young children benefit from all types of rhyme. The rhythm and **alliteration** in rhymes seem to help children with **auditory discrimination** and this helps them become aware of different sounds. Rhymes also help children with speech production, as they will often be repeating the same sounds during a rhyme.

### Reflect

Nursery rhymes support children's auditory discrimination.

- Think about how many rhymes you know by heart.
- Consider how confident you are at singing or saying nursery rhymes with children.
- Could this be an area of practice that you need to develop further?

### Group size

As you have seen, the amount of interaction a child has with an adult is closely linked to their speech, communication and language development. This means that when children are in group care, you need to think carefully about group size and composition. When children are talking well, they are likely to dominate conversations. This is not their fault and they should not be reprimanded, but it means that a younger child in a group, or a child with delayed speech may not have as many opportunities for interaction. In some situations, a small group may give quieter children more opportunities to speak and might also help children to hear more of what is being said.

### How to promote speech, language and communication development

There are other ways that adults can promote children's language development and also support their cognitive development.

#### Attention to detail

To develop children's language, it is important that adults encourage attention to detail. This helps build children's knowledge of the world around them and gives them descriptive vocabulary. Examples include pointing out the bark or the buds on a tree, or telling a child that their jumper has stripes on it.

#### Accurate naming

Once children have understood and are using general words such as 'shoe' or 'dog', it is important to give them more accurate words such as 'sandal' or 'terrier'. This helps them to develop a more sophisticated vocabulary, which in turn helps them to see and think about the world in more detail. Children who have detailed vocabularies are

more likely to remember what they have done and seen with greater accuracy. Later on, they can draw on their vocabulary to help them write descriptively.

## II PAUSE POINT

What are the benefits of attention to detail and accurate naming for children's cognitive development?

**Hint**

How does knowing the name of something help you remember it?

**Extend**

Name the theorist who stressed the importance of adults in supporting children's cognitive development.

### Active listening

As you saw earlier in this chapter, it is essential to listen carefully to children and use active listening skills. These skills include making good eye contact, showing interest and acknowledging what a child is saying. When interacting with children, the active listening skills you use need to be more exaggerated, for example, your facial expression.

#### Link

To find out more about active listening with adults, look at *Unit 8 Working with Parents and Others in Early Years*.

### Helping children to sequence

When children first start talking, they can find it hard to remember the sequence of things they have done. Adults can help children talk about things that they have done by asking prompting questions such as, 'and what happened next?'

Children can also be helped to sequence through the use of visual prompts such as photographs. A series of photographs taken while out shopping can help the child remember what happened first. Learning how to sequence their talk is an important skill for children to learn, as it is something that links to their later literacy skills.

### Talking about new and interesting things

Children need things to talk about. When children go on outings they often have plenty to say because they are seeing new and interesting things.

As there is a link between the development of communication and language and stimulation, it is important to provide new and exciting things for children to look at. This might mean bringing in new objects that children may not have seen before, such as a star fruit or a small suitcase full of different-sized and coloured socks.

Regular routines for children can become a source of stimulation if small changes are made, for example, by using place mats on one day and tablecloths on another.

## Assessment practice 2.2

A01

A02

A03

A local nursery has asked you to plan a training session for new staff about how adults can support children's speech, communication and language development.

- 1 Describe strategies that adults might use to support a baby's language development.
- 2 Analyse ways in which adults might promote children's language development (for children aged between 2-5 years).
- 3 Evaluate the impact of the adult's role in supporting children's communication and language development.

### Plan

- What information do I have about ways in which adults support children's speech, communication and language development?
- Where can I go to gain additional information?

### Do

- Have I presented the information in a way that will be accessible to the nursery staff?

### Review

- Can I justify why I have decided to approach the task this way?
- Have I evaluated my work and am I confident that it fulfils the task?

# B

## Supporting children's literacy and numeracy skills through speech, communication and language development

### B1 Development of literacy skills

In order for children to develop skills in reading and writing, they need to have developed a sufficient level of language skills. This means that they need to have experience of using language in context through:

- ▶ speaking and listening to others
- ▶ the development of an appropriate level of vocabulary.

Children are then able to recognise the meanings of words and components of language.

### How children develop reading skills

Young children are naturally curious. In a suitable environment they will want to pick up books and look at them with adults. It is important to harness this curiosity and encourage them to develop their interest through valuing books and enjoying reading in a supportive environment.

To be ready to learn to read, children need to have had different experiences so that books and reading have a context, or there is some understanding of where reading fits into their world.

Many young children will have been given or shown books from a very early age; this means they will have started to build up their pre-reading skills. They may also have had experience of nursery rhymes and songs, so they will begin to be able to hear patterns in words and start to be able to predict what comes next.

Children should be read to as much as possible. They should be given plenty of opportunities for speaking and listening through talking about books. Often, young children will be able to recite whole pieces of text from books long before being able to read, and will 'correct' adults if they get anything wrong.

#### Discussion

In two minutes, make a list of all the 'text' you might read in a typical day. Remember to include **all** types of text, including books, signs, text messages, emails, instructions, road signs, etc. Then, with a partner, see if you can come up with your own definition of reading.

Share your findings with the rest of the group.

#### Key term

**Phonic awareness** – being aware of different sounds within words.

By being read to, children start to learn that print carries meaning. It is important that they look at books with adults and learn how to handle them. They will start to learn how to hold a book and turn pages. They will also begin to understand the way we look at print, both from left to right and top to bottom.

Giving children access to interactive computer programs also helps to encourage and reinforce **phonic awareness** by looking at print in another medium.

## How adults support children's skills in reading and writing

To develop children's abilities in reading and writing, they need to practise a number of different skills regularly and in close succession. They should do this through both adult-supported and independent activities so that these skills gradually build up over time. As children like to mimic adults, taught activities will often spill over into their play so that their learning is reinforced.

### Links between spoken sounds, letters and symbols

Children need to be taught that letters represent sounds through focused work on **phonics**. They need to spend some time regularly looking at the shapes of letters with an adult to recognise the different sounds these letters represent. Often, early years settings will follow a scheme that outlines the way in which the sounds are taught. This can be helpful for planning and also where different adults work with the children, as it ensures consistency. Children then start to build words with the sounds they know, at first with simple c-v-c (consonant-vowel-consonant) words so that they can learn to blend the sounds together by saying them slowly.

### Recognising simple words

At the same time as they develop other literacy skills, children will start to recognise simple, common words without needing to sound out and blend each letter. For example, you may notice when children are reading to adults they will be able to say the word straight away. This often happens quite rapidly as children's skills become more proficient. You may point out these words to children as they occur, particularly those that are frequent or more challenging and need to be learned without sounding out, such as 'said' or 'the'.

### Understanding simple sentence structures

As well as learning to decode when reading, it is important that children are able to understand what they have read in context. You should, at all stages, ask them questions about the text and its context to ensure they are not just going through the motions of sounding out each word. Children should show that they are using all cues available to them, for example, pictures and other clues in the text, to help them make sense of what they are reading.

When it comes to writing, provide children with encouragement from the earliest stage of development so that they develop confidence in what they are doing. Many children seek reassurance from adults but they should not be afraid of 'getting it wrong'.

#### Link

To find out about early mark making and writing development, see the start of Section B4.

For children to develop writing and reading skills, they need to be provided with a supportive environment. This means that they should have stimulation and resources available when their skills are developing. These may include:

- ▶ environmental print – for example, displays with captions and information, key words, clearly labelled areas within and outside the setting in all areas of the learning environment
- ▶ dictionaries and topic-based word banks
- ▶ adult role models so that children can see the purpose of writing
- ▶ a variety of clearly labelled materials and writing areas so that children can use them to write for their own purposes.



▶ Looking at print in different media can support phonic awareness

#### Key term

**Phonics** – a method used to teach reading that breaks down different letter patterns into their individual sounds.



### Case study

#### Providing a supportive environment

Ava and Khavarn are 4 years old and are in the reception class. They have just taken part in a large group activity with an adult where they have been practising sounds. You notice that after the two children go off to play, they sit in the corner and Ava tells Khavarn that she is going to test him. She then finds some letter sound cards and holds them up so that he can identify the sounds. As she does this, more children join in and soon there is a large group working together.

- 1 Why is this kind of play valuable in developing reading skills?
- 2 What skills is this kind of play developing, as well as sound recognition?



### PAUSE POINT

How can adults support the development of children's reading and writing skills?

#### Hint

Look at the different methods used in your setting.

#### Extend

What could you do to support children further?

#### Building a language-rich environment

As well as exposing young children to books and language as much as possible to promote their literacy development, you also need to build a language-rich learning environment.

Always label displays so that children's work can be identified and put into context. There should also be other examples of environmental print in the setting. This may be for information, for example, to tell children where to hang their coats or put book bags, or for reference, for example, alphabet or word banks.

You will probably have seen a dedicated reading and/or writing area in your setting, and print used in displays and texts at children's eye level. This is very important so that children are able to read and refer to them, and adults are able to point them out. Children should be encouraged to use writing areas to create their own labels, for example, to use in the role play area, or to label a display such as a model they have made.

Although young children may not always be able to read environmental print, they will be starting to learn that it carries information. It is important that adults build language-rich environments and that they are used as much as possible, so that children are able to develop their literacy skills.

Figure 2.3 summarises how a setting can promote a language-rich environment.

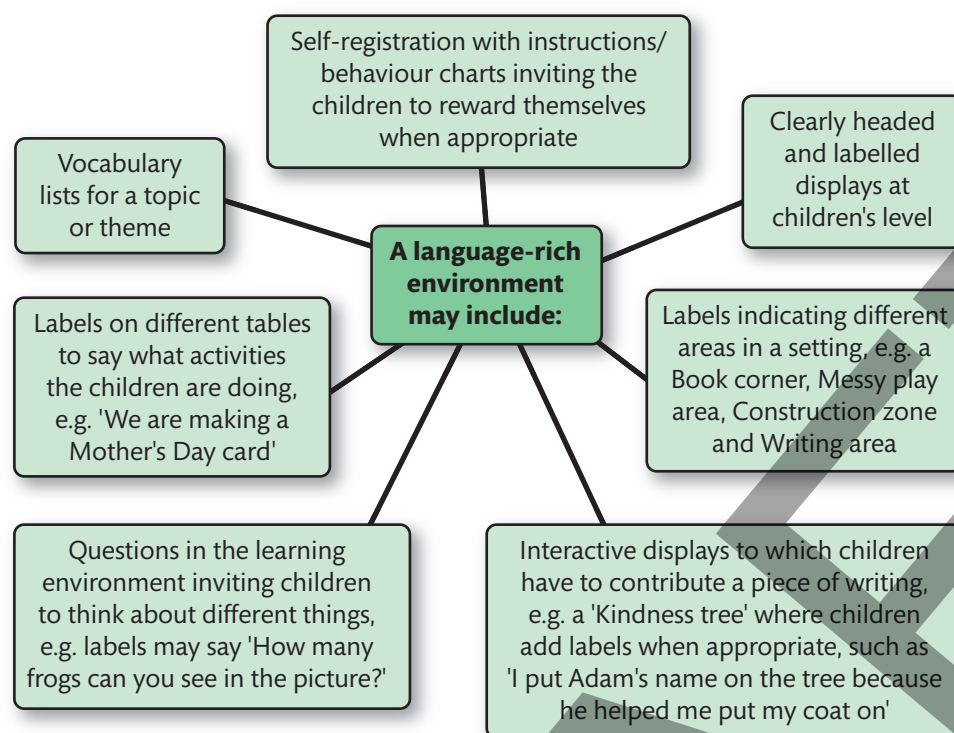
#### Reflect

Look for the different places in your setting that encourage children to:

- be aware of print or develop their mark making or writing skills
- use interactive computer programs that develop their phonic awareness.

What kinds of message are children encouraged to look at in the environment?

How does the setting give them opportunities to try out reading and writing?



► **Figure 2.3:** Examples of how a setting can promote a language-rich environment

## Phonemic awareness in learning to read

As well as looking at books and starting to pick up on different cues, it is important that young children begin to develop **phonemic awareness** as they look at and listen to words. This will happen if adults start to point at words and relate the print on the page to the sounds and words that they are saying.

Children should also be taught to listen for sounds within words as they begin to tune into speech sounds, for example, through being able to hear alliteration (words starting with the same sound). In this way, they start to understand that what they are looking at relates to what they are hearing. This will make it easier for them to relate **graphemes**, or written representations of sounds, to what they are hearing.

### Key terms

**Phonemic awareness** – when children start to hear individual sounds (phonemes) in words.

**Graphemes** – individual written symbols.

## Assessment practice 2.3

A01

A02

A03

A04

You have been asked to write a description for preschool parents of some of the different experiences that support the development of young children's reading and writing skills.

- 1 Outline some of the experiences offered in your setting.
- 2 Discuss and evaluate the role of early reading and writing experiences in children's literacy development.
- 3 Recommend activities that parents could undertake at home to support their child.

### Plan

- What information do I have in my setting about ways in which adults support children's speech, communication and language development?
- Where can I go to gain additional information?

### Do

- Can I question my own learning environment?
- Can I seek others' opinions?

### Review

- Can I justify why I have decided to approach the task this way?
- Can I make informed choices based on reflection?

## B2 Development of numeracy and mathematical skills

### How children learn and develop through early mathematical experiences

Learning provision for mathematics is important for children, as maths is so much part of our everyday lives. From the earliest stages, children should be developing mathematical skills through practical work that introduces them to shape, space, number, measurement, pattern recognition, counting, sorting, and so on. Children need to be exposed to numbers in different contexts in order to explore mathematical language and to think about different ways in which we use measures.

A key aspect of developing skills in mathematics is that children understand its practical purpose and can learn to apply it to real-life situations. You need to have an awareness of the skills that children in your setting are working towards in order to support them fully and help them to access the curriculum.



- Opportunities should be provided for children to develop through hands-on and practical experiences

#### Reflect

In your setting, see what evidence you can find of mathematics in action over the course of one day. This could be displays and information, activities, or adults talking to children using mathematical language.

Why do you think this is useful for children's future mathematical understanding?

### Supporting children's early mathematical skills

The development of early mathematical skills gives children a basis from which to develop their mathematical understanding as they become more familiar with different concepts. Practical exploration is important from the earliest stages of developing mathematical skills because it enables children to have a secure grounding in different aspects of mathematics. Table 2.4 shows basic practical skills that will support children's development of different areas of mathematics.

► **Table 2.4:** Practical skills that will support children's development of different mathematical areas

Skill	Purpose
Matching	Matching numbers and shapes encourages children to look at similarities and differences so that they can start to identify things that go together, or sets
Pattern making	Pattern making is important as it enables children to identify simple repeated ideas. This is a good basis for finding patterns in numbers later on
Sorting	Early sorting activities help children's understanding of numbers. They should have opportunities to sort as many different materials as possible and in as many different ways as they can. This will also support the development of language – why should these items be put together? Which ones do not belong with the others?
Comparing objects	Comparing different objects or groups of objects helps to develop children's language skills
Counting and ordering	Children need to become familiar with the number system. They do this through counting and ordering numbers and groups of numbers with the same criteria. They should also begin to count in 2s, 5s and 10s
Recording	Children will start to record numbers, patterns and what they have found out in simple ways through pictures and simple charts and tallies. This will lead on to being able to express their ideas through symbols
Sharing	Children start to learn how to share items between groups of two and more. This will enable them to gain practical experience of division



## PAUSE POINT

What strategies have you used to support children's mathematical skills?

Hint

Use examples from your current topic.

Extend

Share your ideas with others in your school/college group.

## Strategies for developing early mathematical skills

You need to be able to use different strategies in order to develop mathematical skills in young children. You can do this through focused activities as well as using the learning environment. Here are some examples.

### Counting from 1 to 20 and placing numbers in order

Count with young children as much as possible in different contexts so they are used to hearing numbers in order. Display numbers both indoors and outdoors so that children see them being used. Numbers should also be part of children's play activities or included in class routines. For example, create a 'car park' in the outside play area that contains numbered spaces. Ask children to park numbered toys or bicycles in the correctly numbered spaces.

### Adding and subtracting single digit numbers

As well as working on very simple addition and subtraction activities, use day-to-day problems to develop the concepts of adding and taking away. For example, there are enough skipping ropes for six children – how many more would we need for eight children?

### Describing the shape and size of 2D and 3D shapes

Use a feely bag and ask children to describe what they can feel. Encourage them to think about whether the object (e.g. cube, cuboid, square) has edges and corners, whether it is curved or has straight lines, and whether it is flat (2D) or solid (3D), large or small. The focus in this activity should be on mathematical language.



### Reflect

The *Mathematical Vocabulary Book* supports the development of children's mathematical vocabulary by identifying words and phrases that they need to understand and use to help them make good progress in mathematics. This publication is available as a PDF online; simply search for 'Mathematical Vocabulary Book'.

## Understanding mathematical language

When teaching young children mathematical concepts, remember the importance of language. There are different ways in which failing to understand mathematical vocabulary may come to light, including if children:

- ▶ do not understand instructions – for example, language such as 'find the difference', 'arrange in order' or 'read the table below'
- ▶ are not familiar with the vocabulary – for example, 'pattern', 'in between', 'more/less than', 'greater or larger/smaller than', 'in front of', 'inside' or 'heavier/lighter'
- ▶ do not understand a mathematical term – for example, 'subtract', 'double', 'match' or 'circle'.

It is easy to make assumptions about what children understand, particularly in maths. If you focus on the concept rather than the language, some young children, or those who speak English as an additional language, may have difficulties. Tutors should introduce a new topic, general activity or assessment task by going through mathematical vocabulary to check children's understanding.

Mathematical vocabulary and language should be displayed in the learning environment, particularly any new words that are being used as part of a topic. As children work on practical activities, these displays should be discussed with adults so that children can build up their knowledge of the kind of vocabulary used in mathematics.

### Assessment practice 2.4

A01

A02

A03

A04

Consider the mathematical skills below:

- counting from 1 to 20
- placing numbers in order
- adding and subtracting single-digit numbers
- shape and size of 2D and 3D shapes.

Outline different activities that you could do with children to support these skills. Explain why you have chosen them and how you would support children in understanding mathematical language.

#### Plan

- What existing knowledge do I have about these mathematical skills?
- What aspects of the task will take the most/least time? How will I balance these?

#### Do

- Am I presenting the information accurately and concisely?
- Do I understand my thought process and why I have decided to approach the task in a particular way?

#### Review

- Can I use this experience in future learning experiences to improve my planning and to monitor my own progress?

## B3 Supporting literacy development

### Supporting early reading

When you are working with children in an early years setting, you need to know how to support their early reading development and encourage them to have a love of books. This is one of the most important things that early years professionals can do. Children respond to an adult's enthusiasm, so provide as many opportunities as possible to engage and support children.

Two ways in which you can do this are:

- ▶ using stories and rhymes
- ▶ linking pictures and words to actions that carry meaning.

### Using stories and rhymes that include rhyme recognition and repetition

Many books for young children have text that is repeated. Action or nursery rhymes and stories that include rhythm and repetition support children's early auditory discrimination – that is, they encourage children to start hearing patterns, rhyming and alliteration in words. They also develop children's confidence when using language as they will start to be able to predict what happens next. This involves children in the process, as well as helping them to develop an understanding of how language works because they are able to find patterns in words.

### Linking pictures and words to actions that carry meaning

Looking at pictures at the same time as the text helps children to develop their vocabulary. Making the link to actions will help to engage them in the act of reading.

### Use of activities to support development of literacy skills

Children should have access to a wide range of activities so that they have different opportunities to develop their literacy skills. Although they often do this through play, children are very imaginative and will use these skills to develop further. Engaging the imagination of children is an excellent way to encourage them to learn. The kinds of activities you might use include the following.

- ▶ **Story sacks** – as we saw in Section A2, children enjoy using story sacks that contain different elements of a familiar story. For example, a 'Little Red Riding Hood' story sack might include a red cloak, a small stuffed wolf, a basket of fruit, or a granny's hat. Story sacks encourage discussion and develop children's vocabularies as they talk about the text.
- ▶ **Role play** – all early years settings should have a role play area that changes regularly. This gives children opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills in different contexts, as well as their confidence and imagination.
- ▶ **Puppets** – puppets are a good opportunity for children to 'decentre' and think about things from another point of view. They can also help to develop the confidence of children who are more reticent in some situations.
- ▶ **Circle time** – circle time in small groups with young children encourages them to discuss different topics and listen to one another.



- ▶ Circle time encourages young children to discuss different topics and listen to one another

- ▶ **Storytelling** – young children love stories and they should start to be able to retell their favourite stories in their own words. This will help them to sequence ideas.
- ▶ **Recorded stories and music** – early years settings will usually have a listening corner where children can sit quietly and listen to stories, rhymes and music.
- ▶ **Small-world play** – when children play with small-world toys, such as building blocks, toy towns and other small figures or animals, they are encouraged to use spoken language and their imagination as they ‘act’ stories out.
- ▶ **Imaginative play** – this supports the development of literacy skills through speaking and listening with others and developing different scenarios based on children’s own experiences.



## PAUSE POINT

List four activities that support children’s literacy development. How are they supportive?

### Hint

Think about activities that include speaking and listening, or encourage children to use their imagination.

### Extend

Use your setting to note other activities that support children’s literacy development. How are they supportive?

## Theoretical approaches to helping children learn to read

Children usually begin to learn to read when they start school, between the ages of 4 and 5 years. Different theoretical approaches have emerged relating to how children learn to read, and you should have some understanding of these in order to support children effectively. We already know that before learning to read, it is important that children have been exposed to a language-rich environment and have been able to look at books and share them with adults regularly, as well as taking part in pre-reading activities. This will form a solid basis on which to build their reading skills.

### Phonics and phonemes

The phonics approach is based on the link between graphemes or letters so that children learn to link them with individual sounds or phonemes. The sound system is more complex and inconsistent in English than in other languages as there can be a number of different phonemes to represent the same sound (for example, ‘f’ and ‘ph’). Phonics is, therefore, used as a method of teaching sounds as it helps to look at the different letter patterns together, along with their sounds. As we saw in Section A1, there are around 44 different phonemes in spoken English.

There are two main different phonics methods – synthetic phonics and analytical phonics.

### Synthetic phonics

Synthetic phonics requires the reader to learn individual sounds and blends in a particular order, then put them together to form words. The sounds are taught in a particular way, not to sound like the letters. For example, the sound for ‘t’ would be taught as a short sound and not as ‘tee’ or ‘tuh’. The simpler and most commonly used sounds are the first to be taught, as these are also straightforward (s, a, t, l, p and n). These can then be put together to form many simple three-letter words, which can be sounded out by children from a relatively early stage.

### Link

Look back at Section B1 to find more information about phonics.

### Link

To find out more on the teaching of synthetic phonics, please refer to the end of this section: ‘Understanding systematic synthetic phonics in the teaching of reading’.

### Analytical phonics

In analytical phonics, blends are taught rather than individual letter sounds, for example, 'sh', 'th' and 'ch'. Children are encouraged to learn sets of whole words that have a similar spelling, such as 'cat', 'hat', 'mat', 'fat' and 'bat'. A disadvantage of this system is that many words in English are not written phonetically (for example, 'said', 'know' or 'was') and children still need to learn these words separately.

### Whole language/apprenticeship

Another approach to phonics is the whole-language/apprenticeship approach. This grew from Noam Chomsky's ideas about language acquisition. Chomsky theorised that we all have an innate ability to learn any language and do not learn it by imitating others.

In 1967, Ken Goodman had an idea about reading that he thought was similar to Chomsky's theory. He described a system for reading by which learners have to use four different cues in order to decipher the words.

- ▶ **Graphophonemic** – the shapes of the letters, and their corresponding sounds.
- ▶ **Semantic** – what you would expect the word to be, based on the meaning of the sentence so far.
- ▶ **Syntactic** – what word or phrase would make the most sense, based on the context and grammatical structure of the language – word order, tense and gender.
- ▶ **Pragmatic** – the function of the text.

The whole-language approach is also sometimes called the 'look and say' approach. It encourages the learner to look at, and recognise, whole words when learning to read, rather than breaking them down into sounds. In this way, the child will be introduced to high-frequency words such as 'said', 'because', 'they', 'were' and 'who', which do not fit into regular phonic patterns. Although the child may take longer to learn this way, they are less likely to make errors than a child who has learned synthetic phonics.

#### Theory into practice

Read the text below. Can you answer the questions?

'A frotterpat was losping a ticklepup. A binker wootled. The binker wisped "Frimto" to the frotterpat. The frotterpat mantered bentistly.'

- What was the frotterpat doing?
- What wootled?
- What did the binker wisp?
- How did the frotterpat manter?

This exercise is based on Chomsky's idea that sentences can be grammatical without making sense and that we can produce new sentences without ever having heard them before.

What do you think the implications of this exercise are for supporting children's reading?

### Using phonics and whole language

Most educationalists agree that a combination of phonics and the whole-language approach works best, as different children will approach reading in different ways.

It is likely that in most settings, although there will be a structured environment for the teaching of reading, you will also find that children are, for example, encouraged to learn high-frequency words as well as learn to sound them out using phonics.



### Research

Look carefully at the way in which your setting teaches phonics to children. Give a presentation to your school/college group about the way in which the children respond and analyse their progress.

### Role-model reading books and writing

It is important for young children to make sense of why they are learning to read and write, and be able to put this into context. They should have opportunities to see that adults read books for pleasure and to find out information, and that they write things down to refer to or pass information to others. They are also likely to see adults engaging with print through technology. For this reason, children should have role models who read and write and refer to books and print as a matter of course.

In the setting, there may be limited opportunities for this, but they can still be found, for example, when referring to recipes for cooking activities, or when using books or the internet to find out information for a particular topic. Early years professionals should draw attention to the fact that they need to look at a book to find things out, or make a list so that they remember to do things. They may also refer to books that they are reading at home so that children can relate their own reading to adult experiences.

Remember, children learn all the time from their environment and the adults around them. Praise and encouragement are very strong motivators, as they support the child in gaining confidence. Children should be exposed to good adult role models so they can see reading skills used and the pleasure that can be derived from reading.

### Understanding the usual sequence by which children learn to read

Even allowing for the different methods used to teach reading, the sequence by which children learn to read will follow a similar pattern. If children have had a positive experience at the earliest pre-reading stages, they will have learned that print is significant and be more aware of the conventions of how to handle and use books. They will have started to make a link between the verbal and visual word and be aware that text reads from left to right. They may also have learned to recognise their own name written down, or a few basic letters and sounds. At this stage they will start to develop their use of phonics, which will support their reading skills and enable them to use the letters in context.

There are different schemes and resources available to support the teaching of phonics. Usually these require the child to learn all the letters and sounds quite quickly so that they are able to start to use them. They will then be revised and extended to form blends and whole words, and children will start to build a visual vocabulary of high-frequency words.

As we mentioned at the start of this section, it is important at this stage for children to have as many different cues as possible when reading, for example, pictures that tell the story and word repetition within the text.

When listening to children read, ask them about the text and discuss what they are reading. This may take the form of talking about how a character might be feeling, retelling the story or discussing a point that might be ambiguous within the text. This is vital because decoding the writing, although important, is only part of reading. As they learn to read, children also need to develop comprehension skills and be able to relate the text to their own experience to make sense of it.

Figure 2.4 summarises some of the different ways in which you can support children with reading, while also promoting their independence.



► **Figure 2.4:** Ways to support children's reading while also promoting their independence

### How to choose appropriate books for children

All settings should have a wide variety of books available to children so that different interests and abilities are catered for when learning to read. At the very early stages, books should have simple storylines and vocabulary, and contain some repetition. Some early pre-reading books will simply consist of pictures in a sequence so that the adult and child can discuss what is happening. Many early reading books also contain rhymes, which make it easier for children to predict words as they come up.

Some children will be particularly interested in fictional texts such as picture books and stories, while others may prefer non-fiction and information books. It is important as you get to know children and find out about what interests them that you are able to support them in choosing appropriate books. Many books will display the suitable age or ability level in order to help with this. While some settings will insist on children working through a set reading scheme, others may mix books up so that children experience a variety of different types of text.

### **How adults create stimulating experiences and activities to encourage children's reading skills**

During the Foundation Stage, and before children start more 'formal' reading activities, there should be a range of activities available that support the development of their pre-reading and reading skills. There is room for you to be creative and to present these in different ways, but they may include a mixture of commercial and home-made activities. Examples are letter identification and matching activities, sound snap and sound bingo, as well as other games, small-group story time, story sequencing activities and puzzles. The following techniques can also be used to support and encourage children's reading:

- ▶ using pictures as cues or reminders for word meanings
- ▶ decoding (using sounds or pictures to 'translate' a printed word or part of a word)
- ▶ pointing out common or irregular words and patterns in printed words.

#### **Link**

To find out how stories and rhymes support children's speech production, see Section A2: 'Activities and objects that excite children's interest'.

### **How stories and rhymes support children's speech production**

When you are reading stories and rhymes with very young children it is important to be aware of their significance in relation to the development of language, including auditory discrimination.

### **The importance of adults sharing books to support children's literacy and language development**

Sharing books with children cannot be underestimated as part of the process of literacy and language development. Children gain an enjoyment of books through learning that reading is a pleasurable experience and in this way want to develop their own reading skills. Adults need to choose early books that are fun and enjoyable and which children can relate to their own experience.

### **Understanding systematic synthetic phonics in the teaching of reading**

You will need to have an understanding of systematic synthetic phonics when teaching children to read.

This is a method through which children are taught the sounds or phonemes associated with the letters or graphemes quite rapidly. As we touched on in Section B1, children then learn to segment and blend the phonemes together, firstly through the use of c-v-c (consonant-vowel-consonant) words such as 'hen', 'dog', 'bat', and later more complex sound variations. Children are not taught the alphabet, letter names or high-frequency words until they have a thorough knowledge of the phonemes and have started to learn how to segment and blend them together.

Settings may use different phonics programs to teach children to read but all are likely to teach the phonemes using a similar approach.

The government website ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)) has a useful page entitled 'Phonics: choosing a programme'. This provides helpful evaluation sheets for the various phonics programmes.

## II PAUSE POINT

There are a number of commercial programmes for teaching synthetic phonics. How much do you know about your school's method?

### Hint

Speak to your literacy coordinator or early years manager about the teaching of phonics.

### Extend

Investigate some other teaching methods for phonics, such as Jolly Phonics, Sounds-Write, Read Write Inc. and Letterland. How do they vary and how are they the same?

## Assessment practice 2.5

A01

A02

A03

A04

You have been asked to write a report for someone preparing a reading course for children.

- 1 Outline two different theoretical approaches to helping children learn to read. Discuss the extent to which they may help children.
- 2 What further information can you find out about the different methods?
- 3 How does synthetic phonics help children to read and write?
- 4 Evaluate the role of the early years professional in planning provision to support literacy development in the early years.

### Plan

- What do I already know about the different theoretical approaches?
- Where can I go to gain additional information about them?
- How long will I need to collate and analyse the information required for the task?

### Do

- Am I presenting the information accurately and concisely?
- Can I make connections between what I am researching and the task, and identify important information?

### Review

- Can I describe my thought processes?
- Have I evaluated my work and am I confident that it fulfils the task?

## B4 Supporting writing development

### Early mark making and writing development

When supporting children's early writing, provide them with encouragement from the earliest stage of development so that they develop strength and confidence in what they are doing. As we mentioned earlier, many children seek reassurance from adults. They should not be afraid of making mistakes and lose confidence as a result.

The kinds of activities that support the development of writing skills will be familiar to you from nurseries and preschools, even if they do not immediately appear to be linked to this process. These activities will, among other things, support the development of children's upper body **gross motor skills**. They are very important as they will strengthen the muscles in a child's upper body and arms so that they will have more control when they start mark making and writing. The activities will also support the development of a child's **fine motor skills** as they start to develop hand-eye coordination, as well as control over their arms and hands.

### Key terms

**Gross motor skills** – control of the larger muscles, such as those in the arms and legs, to carry out activities such as running, throwing or kicking a ball.

**Fine motor skills** – control of the smaller muscles, such as those in the fingers, to carry out activities such as threading beads onto a necklace, using a knife and fork, or holding a pencil.



As children develop physically, they will start to become stronger and more skilled in both their fine and gross motor movements, all of which will support the development of their writing skills.

Encourage children when they start to make marks as symbolic representations of their thoughts and experiences. They will begin to understand that words convey meaning and that they are able to communicate not just through speech but through the medium of writing. They may at first use either hand (it can take some time for them to decide on a preferred hand), create marks in any direction and use a number of different materials, such as brushes, large markers, crayons, paint, or make marks in materials such as sand. However they choose to express themselves, encourage children to develop their control as much as possible. Adults should praise them and ask questions about what they are writing so that children learn that they are communicating.

Be aware of the handwriting policy in your setting so that you use the agreed method for the formation of letters and numbers. This means that you and other adults should consistently form letters and numbers in the same way so that children will not be confused by different methods. You should also make this method clear to parents and carers so they are able to work with children in the same way at home, for example, using lower case rather than capital letters.

During the Foundation Stage, provide children with stimulating opportunities to develop their pre-writing and writing skills through activities that encourage them to strengthen their muscle control. Give them a variety of media with which to make marks as they start to experiment. Talk to children about what marks mean so they can start to make links between speech and writing. Experiences may include:

- ▶ making marks in shaving foam, sand, dried rice, or cornflour and water
- ▶ practising using different media such as pens, brushes and water
- ▶ using sponges or playdough to strengthen hand muscles
- ▶ threading, sewing and using tweezers to develop fine motor control.



- ▶ You can use a wide range of activities to help children develop the skills they will need to learn to write

As their control develops, children at this stage should be given opportunities to write for a purpose through play activities – for example, writing appointments in a diary in a role play area that is a doctor's surgery, or keeping shopping lists. Although they may still be mark making, their writing will have a clear purpose and they will be able to tell you about it. They may also start to practise writing their own name.

**Theory into practice**

You are working in a reception class where the current topic is 'People who help us'. The children have decided to make the role play area into an optician's. You have been asked to work with a small group to help them set it up.

- Outline how you would go about this activity.
- In what ways could you include opportunities for children to practise writing for a purpose?

## How activities support the links between learning to write and learning to read

Children need to be provided with a wide range of literacy experiences in order to support their development of both reading and writing skills. These experiences could include the following.

- ▶ **Sand play** – children can use sand to play and experiment with letter sounds in a different context. For example, adults can hide letter shapes in the sand and ask children to find simple words, or put them in different containers and ask children to match up the same sounds.
- ▶ **Role play** – role play areas are ideal for encouraging children's communication and imaginative skills. These can be developed through storytelling if the home corner is themed, for example as 'Goldilocks's house'.
- ▶ **Painting** – painting is a good way of encouraging the development of children's fine motor skills and their hand-eye coordination. For example, you could use different thicknesses of brushes.
- ▶ **Story sacks** – as we have already seen in this unit, story sacks encourage children to think about how a story is constructed through the use of different prompts.
- ▶ **Print making** – print making supports children's handwriting development and coordination.
- ▶ **Patterns** – pattern recognition in rhymes and stories helps children to develop their prediction skills when learning to read.
- ▶ **Storytelling and poetry** – children need a wide repertoire of stories and poetry read to them so that they can identify the key features and themes that run through them, as well as helping them to look at patterns in language.
- ▶ **Music and drama** – as with storytelling and poetry, children are able to recognise patterns and rhythms in music, and develop their confidence when acting out different situations, for example, in the role play area and predicting lyrics in songs and nursery rhymes.
- ▶ **Cutting and sticking** – cutting and sticking activities develop children's fine motor skills and control, which helps them when developing the skills that are necessary to write.

**Reflect**

Carry out a 'writing walk' in your setting.

- What examples does your setting provide of a supportive environment for the development of writing skills?
- Are there any further opportunities that you can think of?

## The development of handwriting and the usual sequence of learning to write

### The development of handwriting

As we discussed at the start of this section, from the earliest stages children begin to develop their handwriting skills through activities that promote hand-eye coordination and strengthen their hand muscles through fine motor movements. Children should also be developing gross motor movements in their upper body so that they have the strength needed in their shoulders to be able to write.

At this stage, see whether the child has developed a preference for using a particular hand to write. Support their development of an efficient pencil grip, although children aged 2–3 years may still be using a **palmar grip**. Chunky pencils and other writing media are available to help with this, as well as pencil grips that fit normal-sized pencils. Although a **tripod grip** is best, with three fingers on the pencil, there may be variations on this, and left-handed children in particular may find different grips easier.

### The sequence by which children learn to write

When learning to write, children usually pass through different stages as they become more skilled at forming letters and developing ideas. In the earliest stages, they may focus on mark making and forming letters. This will develop into being able to talk about what they have written as they ascribe meaning to marks. Then they should gradually word-build through their phoneme and grapheme knowledge, and write longer sentences.

Here is a summary of the sequence by which children usually learn to write.

- 1 In the earliest stages, children start to form strings of letters to represent words.
- 2 Children start to be able to hear and write individual letter sounds within words – this is usually the first and last letter of the word.
- 3 Children start to be able to hear and write several sounds within a word, although letters may not all be correctly formed and spaced out.
- 4 Words become spaced out and letters correctly formed with some punctuation. Children may start to use joins if they have not done so from the start.
- 5 As well as continuing to work on punctuation and presentation, the content of children's work becomes more involved as they start to use more adventurous and descriptive language.

#### Key terms

**Palmar grip** – holding an object with the palm of the hand.

**Tripod grip** – a way of holding a pencil or pen. The pencil is gripped between the thumb and first (index) finger, and rests against the side of the middle finger.

**Cursive script** – form of writing in which the letters are joined together in a flowing manner.

#### II PAUSE POINT

Hint

Extend

Can you remember the stages of handwriting development?

Draw a flow chart to help you memorise the stages in the correct order.

Research different ways of teaching handwriting. Do you think **cursive script** should be taught from the start or that children should learn simple lower case first?

#### Theory into practice

Choose two different children in your setting and identify the stage that they have reached with their writing. Using samples of their work, justify the reasons for your answer.

### Supporting left-handed children

Children who are left-handed may need more support than their right-handed peers. Make sure you are aware of left-handed children and give them additional attention when they start mark making, developing their writing skills or using scissors. When

left-handed children write, they may have a more 'awkward' pencil grip – so when they are starting to write and make marks, encourage them to find a grip that is comfortable, but make sure you support them.

It can be difficult for left-handed children on a practical level, particularly if they are sitting next to a right-handed child who is also trying to write, as they may knock into one another. Resources such as scissors and easy-grip pens are available to support left-handed individuals, and, for older children, rulers that read from right to left.

### Research

Look at the different ways in which your setting supports children who have an awkward pencil grip, whether they are left-handed or just find holding a pencil difficult. Find out how you can help them and give examples of some of the resources that are available.

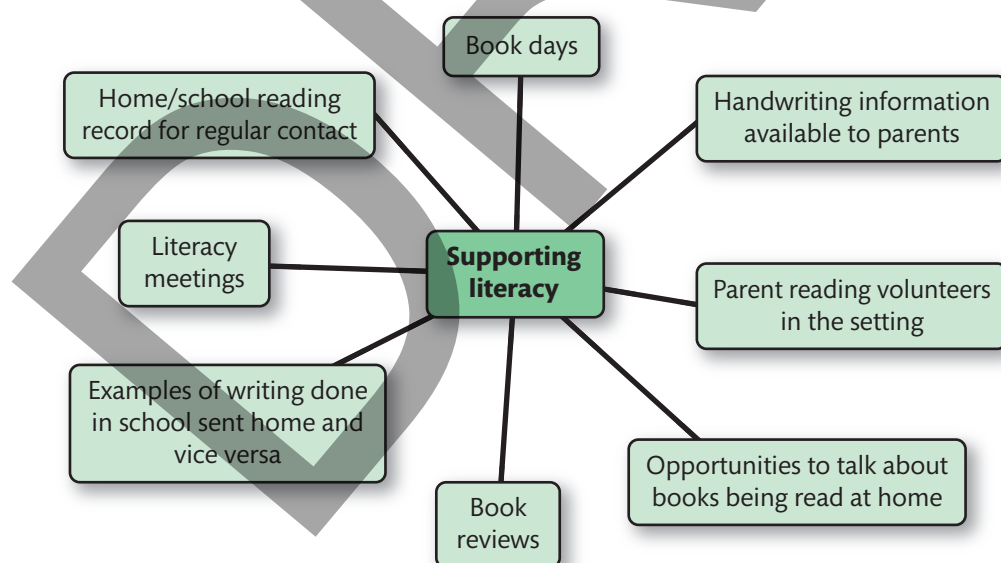
You may find [LeftHandedChildren.org \(www.lefthandedchildren.org/\)](http://www.lefthandedchildren.org/) useful for suggestions and resources.

### Encouraging enjoyment of literacy

Your setting will need to work closely with parents and carers at all stages of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The Statutory Guidance stresses the importance of partnership working between practitioners and parents/carers so that the child is supported in all areas of development.

Parents should feel that they can approach the setting with any questions or queries, but there should also be a range of activities and events that they can be involved in so that they can encourage enjoyment of literacy. These may range from formal meetings so that the school can outline how reading and writing are taught and how they can support their child, to book days where children dress up as characters from their favourite book.

Figure 2.5 shows some of the different ways that your setting and parents/carers can support children's enjoyment of literacy.



► **Figure 2.5:** Ways to support literacy



Write a case study about a child whom you are supporting in learning to read and write.

- What experiences and activities have you provided in order to encourage the child to read and write? Why is it important to understand the links between the two?
- Using examples of the child's writing from the earliest stages, describe the usual sequence of writing development and show how the child has passed through the relevant stages.
- How do you see your own role in providing appropriate experiences and activities to support reading and writing?

### Plan

- I can think about which child I will choose to write about and how I have encouraged them. What aspects of the task do I think will take the most/least time? How will I balance these?
- Do I need to work with anyone else? If so, how will we support each other?

### Do

- Have I spent time planning how I am going to structure the task?
- Am I using all the support available to me?

### Review

- Can I explain what skills I employed and which new ones I have developed?
- Do I know where I have learning gaps and can I resolve them?

## B5 Supporting numeracy development

### Supporting children's early experiences of numeracy

The EYFS emphasises the importance of play during learning activities. As mathematics is sometimes an abstract subject, it is very important that early years professionals support children's early experiences through play, by linking mathematical concepts such as number, measurement, shape, space and pattern recognition to practical activities as much as possible to make them meaningful for children. Ensure that mathematics makes sense to young children so that their experiences provide the basis for understanding these mathematical concepts.

When working with children on mathematical activities, you may need to act as a facilitator for their learning. You may need to support them through talking to them in different ways to encourage them to stay on task. Key methods for doing this include the following.

#### Commentary

Talk to children about what they are doing as they are doing it, in order to reinforce the task. For example, you may say, 'Oh, I see, you are making a pattern with the different coloured pegs'.

#### Questioning

Questioning is an effective method of encouraging and developing children's experiences, as it can help them to think about the task in different ways and extend their learning. Encourage children to talk about what they are doing, particularly during practical tasks, and question them in a way that helps them to think about the task differently. Some examples of questioning are shown in Table 2.5 later in this section.

#### Repetition

Going over or repeating concepts is important with young children, as they need opportunities to practise what they have learned.

### Praise

Use praise wherever possible. It is an excellent motivator and gives children confidence. Praise can be verbal, but you can also give stickers or rewards, or ask the child to show another adult what they have done or describe it to other children.



- Can you see how this practical activity is helping to deliver the mathematics curriculum to a group of reception children?

### Understand how to plan and organise numeracy provision

In the early years, mathematics is usually taught through topic work. This means mathematics is part of wider study around a subject, such as 'Myself' or 'Toys'.

Topics can last from between 2 weeks to half a term. In nurseries and reception classes, the curriculum requires the delivery of mathematics mainly through practical activities and discussion. Children carry out a range of activities, including those based on prediction and problem-solving. Activities should be meaningful and purposeful, and in the context of the topic they are exploring.

Maths should also be brought into children's routines and should be spoken about, for example, by asking questions such as 'How many children are here today?', 'Do we have enough pieces of fruit for everyone?', 'Who is taller?' By hearing mathematical language, children start to develop their own mathematical thinking skills.

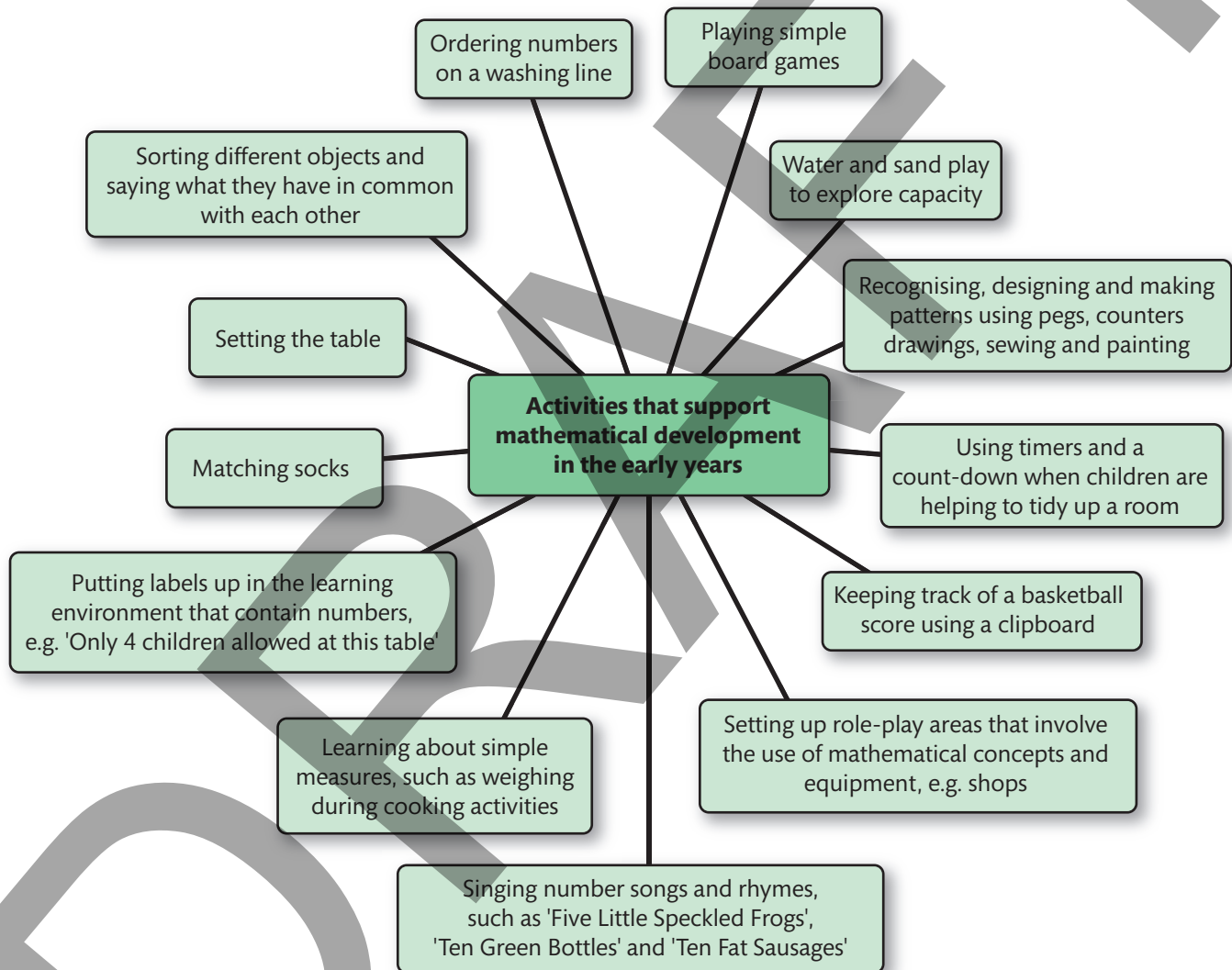
### The process of supporting children to link concepts to experience and why this is important

As we mentioned at the start of this section, mathematics is sometimes an abstract subject, so early years professionals need to link concepts to practical activities to make them meaningful for children. This means, for the youngest children, their introduction to the subject will be mainly through play and exploration.

Encourage children to recognise numbers and patterns in their environment and use them when they can. Examples include selecting coins and counting aloud when making purchases in the role play area, and looking at numbers in different situations such as on number plates or till receipts.

Figure 2.6 shows the kinds of activities that support numeracy development in the early years. As you can see, many of them are examples of how we use mathematics in our day-to-day life. It is important that we are able to show children why mathematics is useful through everyday activities and talk to them about what they are doing.

Children may enjoy being taken on a 'maths walk' in small groups to look at numbers and shapes around the school and outdoor area, or in the local environment. Depending on the amount of adult support available, you may like to give them a series of questions to answer, or simply allow them to find out what they can and report back to others.



► **Figure 2.6:** Activities that support mathematical development in the early years

### Assessing a child's understanding of numeracy

You need to constantly observe children's reactions in mathematical situations, so make sure you direct your questions accordingly. This is because it is easy for children to misunderstand mathematical concepts. It is likely that you will use observation, modelling and questioning regularly as children will need to be refocused or asked specific questions to redirect their thinking.

As we have noted above, it is important that early years professionals model to children how mathematics is used in everyday life and discuss it with them. For example, when:

- ▶ solving problems – are there enough chocolate coins for everyone here to have two each?
- ▶ using money – how many pennies would I need for everyone to have one penny each?
- ▶ thinking about capacity – is there enough orange juice in the jug to fill six cups?
- ▶ counting – count slowly alongside children.

When questioning children, make sure that you ask them in a way that does not 'lead' them to the answer. Questions should be open where possible. For example, 'The answer is 5. What could the question be?' Some further examples are shown in Table 2.5.

▶ **Table 2.5:** Examples of closed and open questions

Closed questions	Open questions
Put these number cards in the right order	How do you know what number comes next?
What is 6 add 2?	Can you add different numbers together to make 8?
Is 6 an even number?	Can you tell me some even numbers between 0 and 10?
What is this shape?	How do you know what shape this is?

## II PAUSE POINT

Outline a **new** mathematical concept that you could present to a group of children. This may relate to number, shape, space or measures. How will you make sure you build children's confidence and encourage them to develop their ideas?

Hint

Speak to your manager and use something that is in your current planning to give you guidance.

Extend

Give examples of the kinds of questions you will ask.

## Supporting and reinforcing use of mathematical language

Always reinforce vocabulary that is being used in the setting, extend children's vocabulary and check their understanding of any terms used. Young children, or children who speak English as an additional language, may need you to explain mathematical terms to them.

Commentary, or talking through with children what they are doing as they are doing it, enables them to become more familiar with the mathematical language they are using and also encourages them to think through the process as they are working.

### Discussion

How do these nursery rhymes and songs relate to mathematical language and/or the development of number?

- One, two, three, four, five, once I caught a fish alive...
- Five currant buns in a baker's shop...
- The grand old Duke of York...
- Five little ducks went swimming one day...
- The wheels on the bus...

Work in a group – can you think of any others?



## Using interactive computer programs to encourage and reinforce mathematical concepts

There are a number of interactive computer programs and websites that encourage and reinforce mathematical concepts – these can be used on different devices such as interactive whiteboards, tablets and PCs. Most children are used to working with computers and these programs can be useful in engaging them.

## Encouraging enjoyment of mathematics

It is very important for schools and early years settings to work alongside parents to encourage their child's enjoyment of mathematics. However, many parents may have had poor experiences while they were at school and find these hard to overcome. The setting can help in different ways: running information evenings, giving talks and providing guidelines or booklets for parents on how to support their child when learning mathematics.

Here are some specific ideas that might help parents and carers support children.

- ▶ Look for shapes and numbers in the environment. Move on to finding odd/even numbers, or numbers higher/lower than.
- ▶ Play card and board games, and complete puzzles with children.
- ▶ Count up small change with children after going 'shopping'.
- ▶ Cook with children to give them experience of weighing ingredients and reading scales. Talk about ingredients being heavier/lighter than others.
- ▶ Try not to put too much emphasis on formal 'sums', particularly with very young children. It is more important that they have plenty of practical experience of mathematics.

### Research

Many schools now use Mathletics ([www.mathletics.co.uk](http://www.mathletics.co.uk)) to encourage children to enjoy mathematics.

The website provides interactive maths activities for schools, and it encourages children to carry out activities at home too. Take a look at the website and the service it offers.

Parents should be encouraged to come into the setting if possible to see maths in action and to carry out games and activities with children. In this way, they will be able to develop their own confidence, as well as gain ideas. There are also plenty of excellent books for parents to support mathematical development.

### Case study

#### Supporting children at home

Andy is the father of twins who are in Year 2. Although both the children are at an age-equivalent level in mathematics, he would like to support them at home and has approached the school for advice. Apart from working on times tables with them, he says that maths is so different from when he was at school, he is worried about 'getting it wrong'.

#### Check your knowledge

- 1 What kinds of suggestions could you give Andy?
- 2 Why is it important to work with Andy and other parents?

## Assessment practice 2.7

A01

A02

A03

A04

Your supervisor has asked you to write a description of three practical activities that you have carried out with children aged 2–5 to support the development of their mathematical skills.

- Explain why you chose the activities and how they support children's mathematical development.
- Evaluate how early years professionals contribute to the mathematical development of children from birth to 5 years.

*Plan*

- Which activities should I use? Do I need clarification around anything?
- Should the activities all be very different? Where can I go to gain additional information?

*Do*

- Am I recording my own observations and thoughts?
- Do I understand my thought process and why I have decided to approach the task in a particular way?

*Review*

- Can I explain how I approached the task and why I chose the activities?
- Can I identify how this learning experience relates to future experiences?

## C

**Approaches to the varied needs of individual children****C1 Supporting the concept of multilingualism**

Today in the UK, many children are learning English alongside another language, or even languages. Many people think this is a recent development, but that is not true. For many centuries, parts of the UK have spoken other languages alongside English, such as Celtic and Welsh. Indeed, English itself is a mixture of several languages! This section looks at the importance of supporting children to acquire another language alongside English, although the principles apply to the support of any combination of languages.

**Supporting children who are multilingual**

There are many ways in which adults can support children who are multilingual. A good starting point is to understand the cognitive benefits and impact on children's self-concept when they have two or more languages.

**Information processing**

As we saw earlier in this unit, in Section A1, language and cognition are linked. Children who are multilingual are able to process information differently as they have access to more than one code. This flexibility is often associated with creativity and problem-solving. It is also thought to help children to acquire further languages more easily. Later on in life, research suggests that speaking more than one language has protective effects on the brain, with fewer bilingual adults having dementia.

**Self-concept**

Most children who are learning more than one language are doing so because they are with one or more family members who speak the language. The languages spoken will have a strong association, either with a religion or another culture. Being able to communicate in these languages allows children to be part of their family's culture or religion. This in turn gives children a strong sense of cultural or religious identity and self-concept. In many cases, having access to their family's language will also mean that children can communicate with extended family, who in some cases may be living in other countries.



▶ Languages spoken at home are part of children's identity and self-concept

### Simultaneous or sequential learning

There are two ways in which children may learn more than one language: simultaneously or sequentially. A simultaneous language learner is exposed to two or three languages from a very young age. A sequential language learner will have an established home language and then go on to pick up another language.

Children who come into a setting and need to learn English sequentially will need significant support. It is therefore helpful to understand that these children will go through four broad stages in the process of picking up English.

- 1 Continued use of home language** – in this stage, children will continue to use their home language. It may take a while for them to realise that this language does not elicit responses from other children and adults. This can be a frustrating time for children because they want to communicate but may not understand why, when they use their home language, it does not seem to 'work'. In this phase, adults need to acknowledge that the child is trying to communicate, and use non-verbal methods including pictures, photographs, gestures and facial expression.
- 2 Non-verbal or silent period** – in this stage, children stop using their home language and begin the process of 'tuning in' to the sounds and words being used in the setting. Adults can help children in this phase by simplifying their language, pointing to objects and naming them, and also creating familiar routines. It is essential that no pressure is put on children to talk in this phase and that every communication that a child attempts to make, such as pointing, is acknowledged. It is important for adults to observe children in this phase to note progress in children's receptive language. For instance, a child might start to respond to phrases such as 'snack time' by going over to a table. Children are likely to need plenty of emotional support during this period and also opportunities to demonstrate their competency in other areas, e.g. putting on their own coat, helping an adult to lay a table.
- 3 Telegraphic and formulaic speech** – in this phase, children start to talk. They are likely to use 'formulaic' phrases such as 'Thank you' or 'That's mine!', which they have picked up and find useful. It is important for adults to recognise though that a child using 'formulaic' phrases has not yet mastered English.

### Case study

#### Learning two languages

Regina is 4 years old. She has been at Cherry Tree nursery for 3 months. Before coming to the nursery she had not heard much English as her parents had moved from Germany.

At first, she tried to talk in German to the other children but quickly gave up. She is now joining in with rhymes and songs, and has several phrases that she uses.

#### Check your knowledge

- 1** What is Regina's stage of language learning in English?
- 2** Why is it important for her to have plenty of adult interaction?
- 3** Explain the strategies that adults need to use to support her English learning.

Alongside formulaic phrases, children are also likely to start making their own mini sentences in a similar way that toddlers do, e.g. 'car down'. In this period, adults need to acknowledge their communications, expand and recast sentences, and involve the child in routines so that they regularly hear the same phrases and expressions.

- 4 Productive language** – during this final phase, children increasingly start to make up their own sentences before eventually becoming fluent. During this stage, children will need additional time to respond and also plenty of adult interaction. They will benefit from sharing simple books and also having opportunities to play simple language games such as picture lotto.

### Understanding the context in which languages are being learned

When you are working with children who may have more than one language, it is important to begin by finding out which languages are spoken and by whom.

The following questions can be used to understand children's language use.

- ▶ What language or languages does your child hear at home?
- ▶ Who speaks these languages?
- ▶ Which language or languages are spoken to your child directly?
- ▶ If you speak more than one language to your child, how do you do this? For example, you might speak one language in the house, another language outside the house.
- ▶ Has your child heard English before? If so, how much?
- ▶ Does your child speak any English?

These questions should help you to establish whether children are learning English alongside another language or whether they are learning English 'from scratch'. It will also help you to know whether children are hearing the languages in a consistent way, which, as you will see, can make a difference to the acquisition of them.

### The impact on a child of being introduced to English with an established home language

When children come into the setting with an established home language, they may feel unsettled at first. This can be quite daunting for them.

When children join the setting, it is important that parents realise the impact that learning English may have on the child's home language or languages. The impact will very much depend on how much time the child spends being exposed to English, and at what age.

A baby in day care, for example, may spend ten hours a day being exposed to English. The same baby may only hear 1–2 hours a day of the parents' language. This lack of exposure to the parents' language may lead to the baby growing up able to understand the parents' language, but not being able to speak it.

On the other hand, a child who is 3 years old and has been immersed in the parents' language for 3 years, with minimum exposure to English, is likely to pick up English quickly but still retain their home language, providing that parents continue to use it.

### Recognising the emotional impact on a child

When children are able to communicate easily in their home language, it is a great shock for them to come to a setting and find that other children and adults do not understand them when they talk. It is also hard for children to understand why, all of a sudden, they no longer understand what is being said to them by other children and adults in that setting.



### Key term

**Regression** – to move backwards developmentally to a previous stage.

For some children, this can be very distressing and can cause **regression**. It is, therefore, important to make sure that the settling-in process is managed carefully and that children have a strong relationship with a key person before being separated from their parents.

There are positive benefits too for children who become bilingual, provided that they are supported. Firstly, having more than one language allows children to maintain contact with their parents' culture. This in turn can enhance a child's self-concept and self-esteem. Children may also take pride in being able to move from one language to another as they grow up.

### Recognising the cognitive impact on a child

If children are emotionally supported during the process of learning more than one language, there are positive cognitive benefits. Children who are able to use more than one language have been shown to be stronger at particular cognitive tasks. This is thought to be due to the need for the brain to remain flexible as it uses more than one code at a time.

More recent research suggests that later on in life there are also cognitive benefits of knowing more than one language. Bilingualism seems to have a protective effect against brain disease such as dementia.

### The importance of a key person

Whether children arrive in a setting with some or no English, the key person has an essential role in settling children in and also establishing a relationship with the child and their parents. Many children will want to stay near the key person at all times to make them feel safe. This relationship will be an important factor in helping the child to acquire language.

The principles of helping children to acquire English when they join a setting at 2 or 3 years old is similar to helping babies to talk. The key person needs to build up a good bond with the child and then use the simplified language that characterises adult speech with babies. This includes facial expressions, gestures and plenty of pointing.

### Language routines

The key person should help children by creating language routines with them. For example, they may go with a child to set beakers out on a snack table. If these tasks are done every day with the same child it means that the child will start to 'break in' to some key words that are used each time. In this example, the key words may include 'beaker' and 'table'.

### The importance of allowing children to tune into the sounds of the setting's language

As we mentioned earlier, when children come into the setting without any English they are likely to spend time 'tuning in'. In some ways this could be compared to a baby's pre-linguistic phase. Although it might take a baby several months to tune in, young children who have already begun to talk in another language will tune in much quicker. As you have seen, when tuning in it is helpful for children if similar phrases are used each time a routine event happens – this way the child begins to tune in more quickly.

As many children need 'tuning in' time before they are ready to talk, it is important not to pressurise them into speaking. Interestingly, children will often be able to join in with songs and rhymes before they start to talk. This is because songs and rhymes are processed differently in the brain.

### Research

Children who are bilingual seem to fare better in tests requiring divided attention. This is the ability to switch from one task to another quickly.

Read more about the benefits of bilingualism at <http://ed.ted.com> – search for the lesson titled 'The benefits of a bilingual brain' by Mia Nacamulli.



## PAUSE POINT

Why is the key person important in supporting children who have another established language?

Hint

Think about emotional support as well as how children learn language.

Extend

Visit [www.naldic.org.uk](http://www.naldic.org.uk) to find out how to support bilingual children in early years settings.

### Working with parents and carers to support the development of language

It is important to work closely with parents and carers to support children who have more than one language. Many parents may have concerns about how well their child will settle in and whether or not they will make sufficient progress before starting school. As we have mentioned, it is therefore vital that the child's key person builds a strong relationship with both the child and the parents/carers. This way, parents can see that their child is happy and settled, and that through quality interactions with the key person, their child is making good progress.

### Valuing the home language

You saw earlier that multilingualism can have some important benefits to children's emotional, social and cognitive development. Sadly, these benefits can be negated when adults working with children and the wider community do not value the home language. Children who feel they are different because they use more than one language, or that there is disapproval of them using a home language, can develop lower levels of confidence and self-esteem, and this in turn can affect their overall development.

As well as being important for children's development, showing parents that you value the language they use with their child will help your relationship with them. It can be hard for parents to feel confident and relaxed in your company if they feel that you disapprove of them using a different language.



► Early years settings need to find ways of valuing children's home languages

### Ensuring consistency in the way languages are used

All children learn language by being exposed to its sounds and structures. Children with more than one language should not necessarily develop a speech delay, but

sometimes this can happen when a baby or young child is being spoken to in a mixture of languages by the same person and their home language is not sufficiently fluent.

You should always advise parents to continue to use their home language with their child rather than switch to English. Where parents each speak a different language at home, it is helpful for each parent to use their own language when they speak directly to their child. This way, the child will have the opportunity to develop three languages.

### Case study

#### Supporting children who have more than one language

Baran's family have moved from Turkey. He is 4 years old and a confident child, although he has never attended an early years setting. Today his mother is visiting a nursery to start the process of settling him in. Baran is quite excited as he has found out that there are some pets at the nursery and he loves animals. His mother is a little worried because he does not know any English, although she is thinking about teaching him some English words.

- 1 Why will it be important for the key person to establish a good relationship with Baran and his family?
- 2 What advice should the nursery give his mother about supporting his language at home?
- 3 Explain how Baran's love of animals might help his key person to support Baran's acquisition of English.

### Assessment practice 2.8

A01

A02

A03

A04

A preschool has noticed that there has been an increase in the number of children who have an established home language. They are keen to find out more about multilingualism and have come to you for information.

- 1 Describe the stages in which children may acquire English sequentially.
- 2 Explain the range of strategies that can be used to support children who have more than one language.
- 3 Analyse the impact of the key person in supporting bilingual children.
- 4 Evaluate the importance of working closely with parents and carers.

#### Plan

- What information do I have about multilingualism?
- Where can I go to gain additional information?

#### Do

- Am I presenting the information accurately and concisely?
- Am I managing my time effectively?

#### Review

- Have I evaluated my work and am I confident that it fulfils the task?

## C2 Understand how adults support children who have additional language needs

Some children need additional support in order to be able to communicate and use language. There are a variety of reasons why a child might need additional support,

including if they have hearing loss, learning difficulties or speech delay. This section looks at some of the principles involved in supporting children with additional communication and language needs.

### Resources for children with hearing loss, language delay or additional language needs

There are a variety of resources that can support children who have additional language needs including hearing loss or language delay.

#### Visual cues and props

Many children who have language and communication needs are helped when visual cues and props are provided in settings. The visual information helps them to understand or process the spoken language more easily. All babies and children benefit from having visual cues and props, but they are particularly helpful for children who find it hard to convert spoken words into meaning.

There are many different ways for you to incorporate a visual element to support children's communication and language.

- ▶ Puppets can help to motivate children to communicate. They can be used to act out actions alongside the words being spoken by adults, so they can help children to understand the meanings of words. They also help children to enjoy communicating.
- ▶ Facial expressions and gestures help children to understand the meaning of what is being said by adults. Children can copy gestures to help them to be understood by others.
- ▶ Pointing to objects or people at the start of a conversation helps children know what is being talked about. Pointing is usually accompanied by a facial expression and also the word 'look!' to help draw children's attention to the object.
- ▶ Photographs and pictures are used in many early years settings. These are key to helping children remember what they have been doing or to help them understand what is being spoken about.
- ▶ Visual timetables are usually photographs or pictures arranged in a way that helps a child to know what is going to be happening throughout a session. This helps them to feel secure.
- ▶ As we mentioned in Section A1, Makaton is used to support children's communication skills. It is not a language and is very different to British Sign Language. Makaton is generally introduced on the advice of a speech and language therapist.

#### Quality interaction

All children benefit from quality interaction with adults, but it is particularly important when working with children who have a speech delay or additional needs.

Here are some key areas that are essential to get right when interacting with children.

#### The environment

- ▶ Avoid distracting environments with a lot of background noise.
- ▶ Make sure that there is something to trigger children's interest and allow you to communicate together.
- ▶ Think about where the child seems to communicate most and where they like spending time.



### **Your relationship**

- ▶ Make sure that your relationship with children is good and positive.
- ▶ Consider whether you are fun to be with.
- ▶ Observe the child's body language when you are with them – is the child relaxed and pleased to be with you?

### **Your communication skills**

- ▶ Speak clearly and moderate your style according to the age/needs of the child.
- ▶ Use high levels of facial expression, gesture and note children's reactions.
- ▶ Give children sufficient time to answer or respond to you. Be patient!
- ▶ Acknowledge their communication positively – smile, show interest and, if appropriate, ask further questions.
- ▶ Expand what they are trying to communicate to you.
- ▶ Use props, photographs or pictures if needed.
- ▶ Do not overtly correct children's speech – rephrase correctly instead.

### **Case study**

#### **The importance of quality interaction**

Chara, a practitioner, is meant to be supporting Jonas's communication and language.

Jonas is happily playing with some building blocks in the corner of the room. Chara goes up to him and tells him to come with her. Jonas is not happy.

Chara takes Jonas to a table in the centre of the busy room and gets out some cards with pictures on them. Jonas does not seem interested. Chara becomes irritated, partly because Jonas is not interested and also because she is frequently interrupted by other children. She is also frustrated because when she asks Jonas a question, he does not seem to respond. After five minutes, she tells Jonas that he can go.

#### **Check your knowledge**

- 1 Where should the interaction have taken place?
- 2 Why might Jonas's responses have been influenced by Chara's style?
- 3 What suggestions could you give to Chara for the future?

### **Professionals who support children's speech, communication and language**

There are a range of professionals who may be involved in supporting children's speech, communication and language. The first port of call is normally the speech and language therapist, but where children have complex needs other professionals may also support the child.

#### **Speech and language therapist (SLT)**

Many children who have additional communication and language needs will be referred to speech and language therapists. Depending on the age and also a child's need, speech and language therapists may work with the child directly and/or they may suggest activities that need to be carried out at home by parents and also in settings.

The type of activities will very much depend on the nature of the child's difficulty. For children who are not producing certain sounds, a therapist may suggest games and rhymes that strengthen the muscles in the mouth and teach the child new mouth movements. If you know that a child is working with a speech and language team, it may be worth asking the parent for permission to contact the team so that you can find out more about the child's programme. Following the advice and programmes suggested by the speech and language therapist is essential because otherwise children are not likely to make progress. In addition, inconsistent or incorrect use of methods such as Makaton can create more problems for the child.

### Educational psychologist

Some children may have difficulties in communication and language because of emotional or other difficulties, including learning difficulties. To understand the full nature of the child's difficulties, an educational psychologist and speech and language therapist may jointly assess a child in order to construct a programme of support.

### Physiotherapist and occupational therapist

Where children have physical difficulties alongside communication and language needs, a physiotherapist or occupational therapist may work together with a speech and language therapist to support the child. A good example of this is where it is thought that a child may benefit from using Makaton, but the child is finding it hard to make the hand signs.

#### Link

Revisit Section A1 to remind yourself about conductive hearing loss.

### Hearing support services

Many young children are likely to have some hearing loss at one time or another. There are different types of hearing loss but the most common type in children is known as conductive hearing loss or 'glue ear'.

The other type of hearing loss is usually permanent and is, fortunately, relatively rare. This type of permanent loss is known as sensorineural loss and is likely to be picked up in the few months after birth. Children with sensorineural loss require hearing aids or, in some cases, a cochlear transplant. It is useful to gain professional advice about how best to support a child with a sensorineural loss. While parents may be able to provide you with some information, it is likely that the child will also be supported by a local team of hearing support professionals. Contacting and following the advice of these professionals, as well as the parent, will help you to work effectively with a child.

### Portage worker

Portage is a home support system for young children who have complex additional needs. A portage worker works alongside parents to help a child maximise their development at home. Parents decide on small goals or steps for their child and the portage worker helps create a programme of activities that will support a skill.

For children with complex needs who also attend a setting, it is worth finding out from parents what activities they are focusing on at home.



## PAUSE POINT

Name two professionals who may support a child with communication and language needs.

#### Hint

One is often abbreviated as SLT.

#### Extend

Find out more about speech and language therapy by visiting [www.rcslt.org](http://www.rcslt.org).

## The importance of working closely with parents and carers to support the development of language

It is always good practice to work closely with parents, but it is essential when you are supporting children who have additional needs with their language development. Some parents may have found particular ways of communicating with their children that are useful for you to know about. You can also share your knowledge with parents about particular ways you may work with their children.

### Gaining information for assessment

As children can behave and communicate differently at home, it can be useful for parents to share information and, if possible, recordings of their child at home. Recordings can be taken on a mobile phone or on a recording device such as an MP3 player. If recordings are kept, of course with parents' permission, you can go back to them at a later date and see if children have made progress.

### Activities that promote language development

When working with children who have additional language needs, it is important to recognise activities that might promote language development. These include imaginative play, puppets and story sacks. It is also vital to use the skills covered in Section A2.

#### Link

Revisit Sections A2, B3 and C2 to remind yourself about imaginative play, puppets and story sacks.

Table 2.6 shows examples of activities that might support language development. Remember, though, that activities always need to be carefully planned according to children's language needs. In some cases, this may mean asking for advice or following the programme that has been put in place by the child's speech and language therapist.

► **Table 2.6:** Activities you could use to support language development

Activity - how it promotes language development	What the task involves
'What's in the bag?' Speaking	The child takes an object from the bag and says what it is
'What's happening?' Speaking	The child is shown a picture of a scene, e.g. a person in the kitchen making cakes, but things are going wrong. The child explains what is happening
'Animals in the tube' Understanding and following instructions	A selection of toy animals are on display. The adult describes an animal and the child drops it down the tube, e.g. the big lion, the small dog
'Can you find Teddy?' Listening	The adult hides a teddy bear. The child has to follow the adult's instructions to find it
'Stop and go' Listening	Children run around (go!) and stop when they hear a shaker
'Follow my leader' Listening	The adult plays a simple rhythm using a shaker. The children play it back

### Understanding children's body language

It is important to find out from parents how their child communicates their feelings if they are not talking. Parents may be able to tell you about their child's body language in certain situations. For example, if a child is nervous they might touch their ear. Being able to interpret a child's body language is particularly important when settling children in.

## Assessment practice 2.9

A01

A02

A03

A04

An opportunity playgroup is running a training session for new volunteers. The playgroup is noted for its outstanding work with children with additional communication and language needs. They have asked you to collate information that might form the basis of the initial training session.

They would like you to:

- identify professionals who may work alongside children and their families with communication needs
- evaluate the range of resources that adults might use to support children's communication and language
- evaluate the importance of information sharing and close working with parents.

**Plan**

- What information do I have about supporting children with additional needs?
- Where can I find additional information?

**Do**

- Is the information I have found accurate and concise?
- Am I managing my time effectively?

**Review**

- Have I evaluated my work and am I confident that it fulfils the task?

**Further reading and resources****Communication, language and literacy****Books**

Brock, A. and Rankin, C. (2008) *Communication, Language and Literacy from Birth to Five*, London: Sage Publications.

Callander, N. and Nahmad-Williams, L. (2010) *Communication, Language and Literacy*, London: Continuum.

Fisher, J. (2009) *Puppets, Language and Learning*, London: Featherstone Education.

Jolliffe, W., Waugh, D. and Carss, A. (2015) *Teaching Systematic Synthetic Phonics in Primary Schools*, 2nd edition, London: Learning Matters.

Lee, W. (2008) *The Communication Cookbook*, London: I Can.

Tassoni, P. (2012) *Penny Tassoni's Practical EYFS Handbook*, 2nd edition, Harlow: Pearson.

The Communication Trust (2011) *Misunderstood: Supporting Children and Young People with Speech, Language and Communication Needs*, 2nd edition, London: The Communication Trust, Early Support.

**Websites**

[www.mrthorne.com](http://www.mrthorne.com) – Mr Thorne Does Phonics: this website has useful ideas and clips for supporting the teaching of synthetic phonics. Many of these are also available on YouTube.

[www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk) – National Literacy Trust: the National Literacy Trust supports the development of early language and communication skills, and provides advice, resources and case studies.

[www.phonicsplay.co.uk/](http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/) – Phonics Play: this is a useful website for teaching phonics but you need to subscribe to use the resources.

[www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk) – Talking point: this website gives the milestones in ages and stages for the development of children's communication. It also provides ideas for supporting children's communication and language development.



### **Apps**

The apps below all have ideas and activities for children who are learning phonics. You need to purchase Pocket Phonics. Twinkl Basic is free although there is a platinum service that you need to subscribe to and you do have to pay for the Phonics Suite.

Twinkl Phonics Suite: [www.twinkl.co.uk/store/product/twinkl-phonics-suite](http://www.twinkl.co.uk/store/product/twinkl-phonics-suite)

Nessy Hairy Letters: [www.nessy.com/hairyletters/](http://www.nessy.com/hairyletters/)

Blending Dragon: [www.ictgames.com/blendingDragon/](http://www.ictgames.com/blendingDragon/)

Pocket Phonics: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/abc-pocketphonics-letter-sounds/id299342927?mt=8>

### **Mathematics**

#### **Books**

Boaler, J. (2010) *The Elephant in the Classroom: Helping Children Learn and Love Maths*, London: Souvenir Press Ltd.

Deboys, M. and Pitt, E. (1980) *Lines of Development in Primary Mathematics*, Belfast: Blackstaff Press Ltd.

Donaldson, M. (1986) *Children's Minds*, London: HarperCollins.

Eastaway, R. and Askew, M. (2010) *Maths for Mums and Dads*, London: Square Peg.

Sani, N. (2010) *How to Do Maths So Your Children Can Too: The Essential Parents' Guide*, London: Vermilion.

#### **Websites**

<http://nrich.maths.org> – NRich: this useful website gives suggestions for a large number of mathematical activities, including problem-solving.

[www.teachfind.com/](http://www.teachfind.com/) – Teachfind: this website provides lots of ideas and resources to support children's mathematical development.

[www.mathletics.co.uk](http://www.mathletics.co.uk) – Mathletics: the Mathletics website has a large number of resources for tutors and exciting activities for children. Your setting will need to subscribe to access the full site.

#### **Apps**

[www.apps4primaryschools.co.uk/apps/maths/](http://www.apps4primaryschools.co.uk/apps/maths/) – Apps 4 Primary Schools: this is a paid-for app with a range of activities from early years upwards.

[www.cowlyowl.com/apps/little-digits](http://www.cowlyowl.com/apps/little-digits) – Little Digits: this paid-for app teaches children about numbers.

# THINK ▶ FUTURE



**Gina Paulsen**  
Nursery worker

Gina has been working in a nursery attached to a school for 4 years. The nursery takes children from 3 years old and many families are bilingual.

One of the main features of her work with the youngest children is to develop their language. She plans the environment and routines to encourage this. Quite often you will find her in the role play area pretending to be a shopkeeper. Gina also spends time helping children who are learning English alongside a home language.

Another focus for Gina's work is to introduce children to the early skills they will need for literacy and numeracy. She does this mainly through play. She encourages the children to sing nursery rhymes, play sound games and to look out for opportunities to count and play games involving numbers. Gina also plans a range of mark making activities so that children can enjoy the process of early writing.

## Focusing your skills

The best way to develop your own skills in supporting children's speech, language, literacy and numeracy is to plan and carry out some simple activities with children. Try some of these practical ideas.

### Supporting speech, communication and language

- Remember to speak clearly.
- Avoid asking question after question.
- Expand children's statements so they have the opportunity to hear a wide range of vocabulary.
- Do not correct children's speech; instead, respond using phrases correctly.

### Using puppets

- Bring the puppet close to you and cross your wrists so that children do not see that you are using your hand. Try to choose a puppet that fits your hand well.
- Make eye contact with your puppet as if it were real.

### Supporting literacy

- When you share books with children, talk to them and develop your relationship.
- Remember that rhymes and songs also support literacy.
- Use props to bring books to life.
- Create writing areas and encourage children to write by giving them specific topics to write about.

### Supporting mathematics and numeracy skills

- Use a range of opportunities to develop children's counting skills and assess their understanding of maths.
- Counting songs, puzzles, noting down scores in sports and talking about shapes are all forms of mathematics.
- Look for mathematics in the environment, for example, patterns in tiles and shapes. Devise activities that encourage children to think about numbers in the environment, for example, 'maths walks'.

## Getting ready for assessment

This section has been written to help you to do your best when you take the external test. Read through it carefully and ask your tutor if there is anything you are not sure about.

### About the test

The externally assessed task for Unit 2 will consist of a paper set and marked by Edexcel. You will have to complete three activities based on two fictional case studies. There are 68 marks available.

Your tutor will give you a task booklet containing the case studies and you should spend approximately two hours planning and preparing on your own before you write up the final task. You will then have a total of six hours during a two-week period to complete the write-up of your activities under supervised conditions. You can take up to four A4 sides of notes from your planning work into the supervised sessions.

### Preparing for your written assessment

The activities are designed to assess your knowledge and understanding of the concepts and theories supporting the development of children's communication, language, literacy and numeracy. You will be assessed on your ability to apply that knowledge to fictional scenarios involving early years settings and one or more children. Your answers should show that you can analyse and evaluate information about children, with reference to the impact of certain activities and theoretical approaches on their communication, language, literacy and numeracy development. You should also show that you can recommend appropriate activities and approaches to support children's development.

Make sure you arrive in good time for the supervised sessions and leave yourself enough time at the end to check through your work. Listen to, and read carefully, any instructions you are given, including the information in the task booklet. Many people lose marks because they do not read instructions properly or misunderstand what they are being asked to do.

The following key terms may appear in your assessment. Understanding these terms will help you to understand what you are being asked to do.

Term	Definition
Activity	A planned play and learning experience to develop a child's skills and abilities
Activity plan	A structured breakdown of an experience to develop a child's skills and abilities
Early years theory	Ideas that underpin early years teaching practice
Resources	Pieces of equipment needed to support children's activities

- ▶ Always plan your answer before you begin writing. Include an introduction and a conclusion and think about the key points you want to mention in your answer. In your plan, think about how much time you have: make sure you have time to cover everything you want to and to write a conclusion.

Make sure your answer focuses on the key points you want to make. If you find your answer drifting away from those main points, refer back to your plan!

- ▶ Make sure you understand what the activity instructions are asking you to do. It might help you to underline or highlight the key terms in the instructions so you can be sure your answer is focused on exactly what you have been asked to do.

Remember, you can take up to four sides of A4 notes from your research into the supervised assessment, so make sure your notes are clear and concise.

## Sample answers

### Set task brief

#### St Andrew's Nursery

St Andrew's pre-school is a nursery of 25 children, attached to a small, one-form entry village primary school. A new housing development has recently been built near the school and St Andrew's is starting to welcome more children who are speakers of other languages and from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. It is likely that the school will grow and the local authority is currently discussing extending both the school and nursery with a view to becoming two-form entry.

The headteacher is aware that the school and nursery will need to review the communication and language aspect of the early years policy as well as the EAL (English as Another Language) policy, and has included this in the school development plan.

#### Activity 1

As nursery manager, you have been asked to work with the literacy coordinator to write a report for the headteacher, recommending ways to support the development of children's language skills in the setting. She has asked you to highlight the impact of language skills on the teaching and learning of mathematics.

You must:

1. make recommendations to the headteacher for the early years curriculum

Underline the key words in the text to check you fully understand what you are being asked to do.

2. describe what will be needed to implement your recommendations

Find some examples of similar schools or nurseries and research how they developed their policies in this area.

3. link your suggestions to early years theory.

Research theories about communication, language and literacy.

#### Answer guidance:

To answer this question, you will need to consider:

- ▶ priorities for the nursery and reception classes in communication, language and literacy
- ▶ the impact of language skills on the mathematics curriculum
- ▶ how you will work with parents and the wider community
- ▶ resources you may need
- ▶ how you will research other schools and nurseries which have developed their policies.

Look at a range of early years policies to see how much is included on the prime area of communication and language, as well as literacy and mathematics. Look for ideas about how you can present information for speakers of other languages.

Give examples of opportunities and activities which will help children to develop their communication and language in all areas, but focus particularly on literacy and mathematics.

Think about how you can support parents as part of the wider community, particularly those who are speakers of other languages. You might wish to organise welcome events and include bilingual speakers or have leaflets available in other languages. You must also make sure the school and nursery websites are accessible to all.

You may begin your answer with an introduction such as:

Communication and language is one of the prime areas of the early years curriculum. As such, it is a crucial aspect of each child's development. Through language and communication with others, young children develop not only language skills, but also social, emotional and cognitive skills. Strong levels of communication and language also support children's progress in other areas of the early years curriculum including mathematics and literacy. In order to highlight what is needed as our school grows and welcomes children from different cultures and backgrounds, it is very important that we recognise some of the theory behind language development. We will also need to look at additional resources we will need to be able to support the children.

When discussing theories of language development, make sure you write about any difficulties to look out for when supporting bilingual children.



**Activity 2**

*Ricky is three years old and has recently started at St Andrew's pre-school. He is brought to the setting by his mother on her way to work and collected by his childminder. Staff at the setting have noticed that he has very limited vocabulary and does not speak to the other children, tending to gesture to them or try to pull them towards him in order to communicate.*

*Ricky has been observed as part of the assessment process and is seen to be playing alongside rather than with the other children. He does not try to initiate conversation and is often seen on his own engaging in solitary play.*

*As you are Ricky's key worker, produce a plan which you can share with other nursery staff and with Ricky's parents and childminder to support his communication development.*

- 1. Suggest an action plan based on what you have observed and discussed with others.*
- 2. Describe the types of resources you may need, including the role of adults and any outside help you may need.*
- 3. Justify your actions with reference to early years theory.*

**Answer guidance:**

You might begin your answer along these lines:

My action plan is based on observations and assessments which I have carried out as Ricky's key worker, and that others have carried out since Ricky came to the nursery six weeks ago. Ricky seems to have limited communication skills and needs to develop these as a priority.

First, before implementing any action plan, I would ask Ricky's parents about his hearing in case there is an underlying cause to his communication difficulties. If his hearing has been checked and is normal, and if he does not have any kind of infection which could be affecting his hearing, I would start to think about activities that would interest him and stimulate his desire to communicate. We might then start to implement the following recommendations...

Your answer should then outline a detailed action plan. Remember to include the names of everyone who will be involved in the implementation of the plan, and include a date for review.

When suggesting activities that can be carried out with children to develop their skills, you do not need to give a lot of examples. Instead, give examples of several different types of activity and explain why they may help Ricky.

Jot down some of the activities you might want to carry out with Ricky and underline the ones that his parents could do at home. You could also have a discussion with Ricky's childminder about activities she could try with him.