



Elklan has put together these pages to help you with completing the Early Years Mandatory Pathway Unit 5 which is part of the Diploma for the Children & Young People's Workforce.

The information is taken from one of our publications, Early Language Builders which has been written to support those working in early Years settings. The book forms the core reading material for the Elklan course Speech and Language Support for Under 5s but it also acts as a standalone resource.

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Good luck with the course!

Liz and Henrietta.

ACTIVITIES TO ENCOURAGE LISTENING AND ATTENTION

Run and Touch

This is best played outside.

Identify 4 or 5 different things outside e.g. climbing frame, gate, seat, tree.

Say *'Run to the....'*

When the children can do this add another e.g. *'Run to the tree and then the gate.'*

Silly Stories

Warn the children that you, or a puppet, are going to make mistakes as you read a story and they have to spot them.

Read a familiar story and make errors. How many can the children spot?

Personalised stories

Make up a story about the children and every time you say one of their names they have to stand up.

This is more effective in small groups of 4-6.

Make this harder by suggesting that every time the children hear a boy's name all the boys must stand up and every time they hear any girl's name all the girls must stand up.

Hide and seek

The children hide up to eight objects around the room or outside.

Ask each child to find the one you ask for.

When a child can do this, ask him to find two.

Tick- Tock

Hide a clock or something else that makes a constant sound.

One child has to find it.

Go!

Give instructions but the children must wait until you say 'go'.

Vary the time interval between the directions and 'go'.

Gradually make the instructions harder.

Examples of instructions to start with:

Touch your toes – go!

Jump up and down 3 times – go!

Put one hand behind your back – go!

Clap your hands slowly – go!

PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOCABULARY

LEARNING NEW WORDS

- Templin¹ (1957) estimated that by 6 children have a vocabulary of 14,000 words.
- Carey¹ (1978) suggested that, based on these numbers, children between 18 months and 6 years old would have to learn 8 new words a day.
- How can we promote the vocabulary development of all children?
- How can we promote the vocabulary development of children who are struggling to learn new words?
- Many of the strategies below are appropriate for a wide range of children including those who are learning more than one language.

1. Introduce the simple vocabulary first

Use simple versions of words first e.g. talk about 'trousers' then add 'jeans, dungarees, jogging bottoms' etc. Ensure that all carers are consistent about the vocabulary they use.

Reinforce the words that would be useful for the child to learn. The child will probably need to hear the names of objects or parts of objects many times.

Ensure that the range of vocabulary represents the diverse cultural backgrounds of the children in the setting.

EYBIC, published by Elklan, gives useful check lists of vocabulary, pictures and activities to support vocabulary learning. Early vocabulary is divided into two levels to ensure that simple vocabulary is introduced first. Topics include: clothes, toys, food, farm and zoo animals, vehicles.

2. Talk about what the child is doing or looking at

This will ensure that your language matches his focus of attention. He is more likely to listen and learn if the adult follows his lead. See page

3. Give the child time to think and respond

This is particularly important for those who know a word but cannot always find the word quickly enough when it is needed.

4. Model the words

Give the child time to think and then, if he still does not respond, say the word so that he hears clear examples.

5. Use a variety of multi-sensory activities

Allowing a child to explore objects through a wide range of senses e.g. hearing the word, seeing, feeling, using and sometimes smelling and tasting the objects, helps because children learn in different ways. Exploring objects in a variety of ways also provides more information which can be stored in the mind. It is thought that clear and accurate information can help a child to store, find and use a word when it is needed (Chiat 2000). Multi-sensory learning opportunities include: real life situations, playing, painting, making models, sharing books. Talk about what the child is doing or looking at.

6. Topic work and frequent exposure to the same set of words

Topic based work can provide exciting and different opportunities to explore objects and language that might not necessarily be given the same focus during self-directed free play. Topic based work is valuable for children with delayed language because they can be made aware of how the objects and words are linked. This, in turn, supports the storage, retrieval and use of information (Chiat 2000).

7. Involve parents so that the vocabulary is reinforced at home too

Where possible, ensure that a child who is learning additional languages learns new words in his home language too. Topic based work facilitates this because it is possible to prepare a sheet of pictures of key words which are written in English but with space to add other languages. Parents can be given a copy of this.

Other useful sheets might include:

- Range of foods offered for snack or mealtimes.
- Play equipment that is available outside.
- Play equipment or activities available inside that is none to be of interest to a particular child but not always in view so he has to ask for it.

Where possible, encourage parents to join in with sessions in the setting and share with them the benefits of learning names for things in more than one language.

8. Sort and classify objects

This strengthens the links between words. It also provides an opportunity to learn category names e.g. 'fruit', 'clothes'. Name every item as it is sorted. Initially sort categories that are very different e.g. clothes and vehicles. Later sort items into more similar groups such as farm and zoo animals.

If a child finds sorting difficult, use real situations e.g. put cutlery in the draw and cups in the cupboard. Tidying up time can be very useful!

9. Aim to improve the child's understanding of the word and other words associated with it.

Whilst talking and playing include the following:

- Describe objects
- Discuss where an object might be used
- Talk about how it might be used
- Think of other items associated with it

If the child can't think of the word:

- Give the initial sound as a prompt e.g. 'It's a h.....'
- Give the child a sentence to complete e.g. 'Bob the Builder bangs with a
- Give a forced alternative. 'Do you bang nails with a saw or a hammer?'

References:

¹ Seen in Bishop (1997), Uncommon Understanding. Development and Disorders of Language Comprehension in Children.

Lewis, S and Papier, T, (1995) Talking Semantics.

Chiat, S (2000), Understanding Children with Language Problems.

HELPING CHILDREN UNDERSTAND SPOKEN LANGUAGE

1. **Gain the child's attention before speaking to him**

Call the child by name *'Louis.....'*

2. **Be aware of the complexity of the language you use with the child**

The language used can be complex in terms of the length of the sentence, the structure (grammar) or the vocabulary used. If a child does not understand, try to reflect on the language used and consider simplifying the length, structure and/or vocabulary.

3. **Pause between sentences**

Pause between each sentence to allow the child time to process the information.

4. **Some children do not understand that a group direction includes them**

Before giving a direction to a group, focus the attention of these children first.

5. **Consider the language used when asking children not to do something**

The ability to understand the language 'not' as in *'do not run'* or *'you can't go outside today'* usually develops around 16 months. However, some children, with delayed or disordered development, do not understand the meaning of negatives. This is particularly true if they are feeling upset. In this situation it is harder for them to listen and concentrate on the language. Instead, turn the statement into a positive one, *'Walk please'* or *'It's raining outside. It's all wet.'*

6. **Use a multi-sensory approach i.e. visual information, pictures, objects and real life experiences to reinforce information the child has to listen to**

7. **Encourage the child to tell you when they do not understand**

9. **At times it can be helpful to emphasise key words by using slight stress and appropriate non-verbal communication**

10. **Avoid using sarcasm and metaphors because these styles can be difficult for some children to understand especially if they are under 6 years old.**

HELPING ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE CHILDREN TO UNDERSTAND SPOKEN LANGUAGE

Develop the home language

- It is important that the child continues to develop his home language as well as the new language. Continued proficiency in the home language supports academic achievement (Maggie Gravelle 2005).
- To help maintain the home language it is important to value all aspects of the child's home culture. This can be done by:
 - Encouraging the child to share pictures, objects, food, clothes, festivals and words that are used at home.
 - Using culturally appropriate resources in the pre-school setting.
- Where possible, encourage parents to join in with sessions. Reassure them that it is O.K. to talk to their child in what ever language they feel most comfortable with. This can provide useful opportunities for a parent to teach their child words and phrases in the home language for resources and or activities that the child may not have at home.

General strategies

- Use visual support tools e.g. symbols to help the child understand routines and know where to go and how to find things in the pre-school setting.
- Consider using a time line to reinforce the daily routine.
- Encourage the child to tell you when he has not understood something.
- Ensure that the child succeeds in non-language based in order to improve his self confidence and social standing within the group.

More specific strategies to develop an understanding of English

- Be aware that the child learning more than one language may understand the underlying concept or idea, if it is within his experience, but he will have to learn the label in the new language.
- Model appropriate vocabulary and sentences.
- Encourage the family to reinforce new concepts learnt in the home language by sending home pictures or word lists of target words.

DEVELOPING EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE SKILLS

1. WAIT! Give the child plenty of time to organise his thoughts and talk

If the child does not use words:

- Act on any attempts to communicate i.e. any gesture, eye pointing or vocalisation.
- Say the word, or a short sentence the child might have used so that he hears good examples. See information about modelling.

2. Reflect on the style of adult-child interaction

- Avoid asking closed questions e.g. 'Have you painted your house?' Instead, ask open questions e.g. 'What have you painted?' or say 'Tell me about your picture'.
- Consider the level of any questions used. A child may not answer because he does not understand the question.

3. Provide opportunities to communicate

How many opportunities are there for the children to talk? In a well structured pre-school setting, children might have all they need or the adults may anticipate everything. What opportunities do they have to ask for things? Object to doing something? Tell you what they have done? Predict what will happen next or solve problems by sharing ideas?

A child may be busy with self-directed play but may not be talking. Situations may need to be manipulated to create reasons for children to request, reject, report, predict or problem solve. A useful reference is '*Functional Language in the Classroom*', Johnson.

4. A young child will find it easier to talk about something he is looking at or doing

5. Don't correct mistakes in grammar or word order

Model back to the child the correct way of saying the sentence.

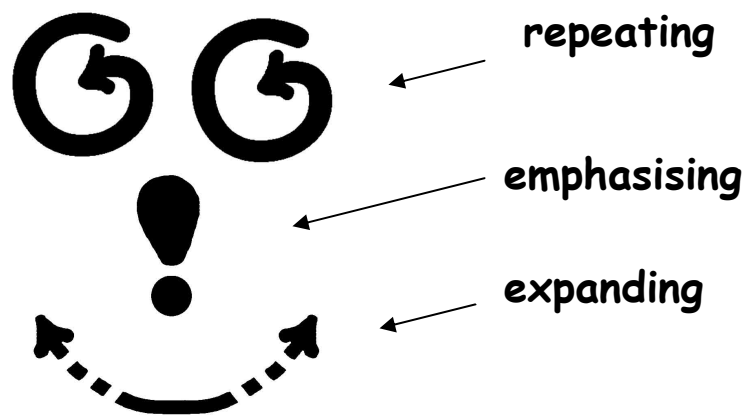
6. Consider the child's development of vocabulary especially his use of verbs

7. A child with delayed expressive language may have a limited understanding of spoken language.

If you are concerned, talk to your local speech and language therapist.

MODELLING TO HELP CHILDREN WITH EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

Modelling is useful when working with young children with limited expressive language. If a child makes a mistake with the grammar or word order don't correct it. Instead repeat the sentence correctly so that the child hears appropriate examples of language. Modelling can involve:



a) Repeating and affirming what the child said.

Child: 'I had a train and a car, and a boat for my birthday.'

Adult: 'You had a train, and a car, and a boat for your birthday. Wow!'

b) Emphasising certain words that you want the child to notice, for example:

Child: 'I've got mouses at home.'

Adult: 'You've got **mice** at home'

c) Expanding, by adding 2 or 3 words either at the end or in the middle of the sentence.

Child: 'I go to Granny's.'

Adult: 'Yes, you're going to Granny's **after pre-school**'

Child: 'I got a bus'

Adult: 'Yes, you've got a **red** bus.'

There are a few additional points that should be noted:

1. Use of 'me'

A child with immature speech may still be using 'me' as in '**Me** got new shoes'. In this instance, and this instance ONLY, the model could be prefaced with 'You say.....**I've** got new shoes'. Alternatively, modelling 'Yes, and **I've** got old shoes' may help to maintain the natural flow of the conversation. The important point is to try and model the use of 'I'.

2. Model back part of the sentence

If the child uses a long sentence, model just part of it to highlight your correct example. If the whole sentence is modelled, the changes might be obscured. For instance, if the child said '*My Mum left the hutch open and Rabbit runned into the garden*', it would be more helpful to model '*he **ran** into the garden*' or even just say '*he **ran***'. This gives more focus to the target.

3. Only model if it feels natural to do so. Don't interrupt the flow of a conversation.

4. Don't ask a child to repeat your model

5. Think about the use of 'tag' questions

Sometimes it is tempting to make the 'model' into a question ; '*You went swimming did you?*' The problem here is that a question is being modelled when the modelling of a statement is required. It is important to be aware of our modelling style because it would **not** be appropriate to say '*.....did you?*' all the time!

6. Circle time

Circle time, preferably in small groups, can be adapted to model specific structures for children. Place the child with difficulties towards the 'end' of the circle so that he hears the correct model from the other children before he is expected to say it himself.

Reference: Fey, M, (1986) Language Intervention with Young children.

GENERAL STRATEGIES TO HELP A CHILD WITH UNCLEAR SPEECH

1. React to what the child says; not how clearly he speaks

Children often do not realise that they are mispronouncing words so correcting them can be confusing. For example, child says '*fis*'adult says '*Did you say fis?*' the child looks puzzled and replies '*No, I said fis not FIS*' !!

2. Repeat what the child says but give a correct speech model

If the child says '*I like torys*'. You say '*Yes, stories are fun.*' This way you are saying 'Yes I know what you mean but this is how you say it.' You may want to give just the **slightest** emphasis to the sound(s) the child mispronounced.

3. Don't make the child repeat the words

Children need to feel relaxed and confident in order to experiment with sounds and **so change** their speech patterns. Drawing too much attention to mispronunciations and making children repeat words is not helpful.

4. Build self esteem

If part of the child's conversation is understood, repeat it back. This shows him that he has been partially successful and may encourage him to tell you more. Use strategies to help anticipate what the child might say. For example, a home-school book in which the parents can record events or weekend activities, or use books, pictures, models etc. These can help if the speech is very unclear because you have some idea of what the child might be trying to communicate. Give praise for other things the child does well.

5. Don't pretend to understand

Encourage the use of gesture and mime and ask the child to show you things. Sometimes you just have to admit that you can't understand. Be as reassuring as possible. Change the subject and focus on something positive.

6. Children may be able to articulate a sound but not use it in words

This is quite normal. A child may articulate '*s*' but say '*tock*' for '*sock*'. The child has to understand how to use the sound. This usually develops naturally. The best way to help is to repeat the words correctly so he hears good models. Sometimes speech and language therapy is needed.