

# **How to have conversations with children which enhance, rather than inhibit, their communication and language development**

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# Play Partners

*"The responsive partner listens to what the child has to say, hands conversation back to the child and allows time for reply. A topic of conversation is sustained by relating each utterance to the child's previous turn and to the context. However, limited the child's contribution, a good partner may expand, clarify and paraphrase the child's intended meaning."*

**Webster, A (1992) Enabling language acquisition: the developmental evidence.**

High quality interactions are REWARDING for both adults and children and are:

<b>R</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>G</b>
Respectful	Enriching	Warm	Attuned	Responsive	Developmentally Appropriate	Inspiring	Nurturing of the Imagination	Genuine

The CHALLENGE for adults when supporting children's language is to:

<b>C</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>E</b>
Converse on an equal level	Help children with next steps	Allow time for playful extended interactions	Learn to understand each child through observations	Listen actively and respond thoughtfully	Extend or adapt language according to the needs of the child	Notice and build upon children's passions	Give exciting and creative stimuli for talk	Engage fully and authentically in conversations

Children need opportunities to PRACTISE using language for:

<b>P</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>E</b>
Persuading and negotiating	Reflecting and recounting	Asking and answering	Conversing and socialising	Thinking critically and creatively	Imagining and taking on roles	Storytelling	Explaining and giving opinions

# Talk Rainbow Early Years

**Sometimes when we say  
less, children will say more.**

Try doing more waiting and  
seeing

## Adult Interaction into Play

### **Level 1**

### **SOUL**

#### **Silence**

remain silent until you know what children are doing

#### **Observation**

observe as children play, to understand their actions

#### **Understanding**

think about what you see children doing to fully understand what is happening

#### **Listening**

listen to what children are saying so that you know what is important to them

# Adult Interaction into Play

## Level 2 Entering the play

In order that we can enter the play sensitively and unobtrusively we need to take things stage by stage. A helpful rule of thumb is to try not to speak until you are spoken to.

- play alongside
- follow the child's cues and use the materials in a way similar to the way the child is using them.
- engage in self talk which is likely to lead to parallel talk

# Adult Interaction into Play

## Level 3 Extending the play

- We are now in a position to facilitate the children's learning and extend their thinking by:
- continuing to play with the materials following the child's leads and ideas
- looking for an opportunity for conversation. When one arises, converse using comments, observations, and acknowledgments (rather than too many questions).

# Children with Speech, Language or Communication difficulties

- For some children, language is the only difficulty they have, everything else is OK.
- For other children, their speech, language and communication needs are part of another condition
- There are overlaps between speech, language and communication needs and other conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder



# Following the child's lead

*The child who leads often  
gets what he needs*

# Following the child's lead

- **A child pays more attention things they choose than things you choose. Doesn't have to shift focus of attention (especially hard for some children)**
- **Easier to have shared focus when they lead. Can start to pay attention to both you and the activity more easily when they have chosen.**
- **Good for a child to learn to make choices themselves**
- **Child often more relaxed when engaged in activities of own choice.**

# Imitate to extend

- Try playing copycat. This helps the child get involved in two way interactions.
- Copy what the child is doing - eg if banging bricks then you bang bricks. This gets the child's attention and can make them feel powerful.
- Then pause and wait. Hopefully the child will imitate you back.
- Then add something new.

# The Hanen Approach

[www.hanen.org](http://www.hanen.org)

- Canadian charitable organisation with global reach
- In 1975 started moving away from a model of 'speech therapy' once a week in a separate room, out of context from their everyday life
- Based on premise that children learn best in their natural environments where they are motivated to communicate with the important adults in their lives
- Building capacity for those adults to all take a primary role in helping children develop improved communication skills

# Supporting Children with English as an Additional Language

## True or False?

1. Children learning another language tend to be able to say more than they can understand
2. When in a setting, it is best that children hear only English and are encouraged to speak English as much as possible.
3. Songs, rhymes and stories are a key way of supporting the learning of an additional language.
4. Each learning experience planned should be clearly differentiated to meet the needs of those learning a new language.

Understanding is always in advance of spoken language and it is important that children do not feel under pressure to speak until they feel confident. It is, however, essential that adults continue to talk to children with the expectation that they will respond.

Many children go through a 'silent phase' when learning a new language; this may last for several months but is not usually a cause for concern and is not a passive stage as learning will be taking place. Children will usually be observing carefully.



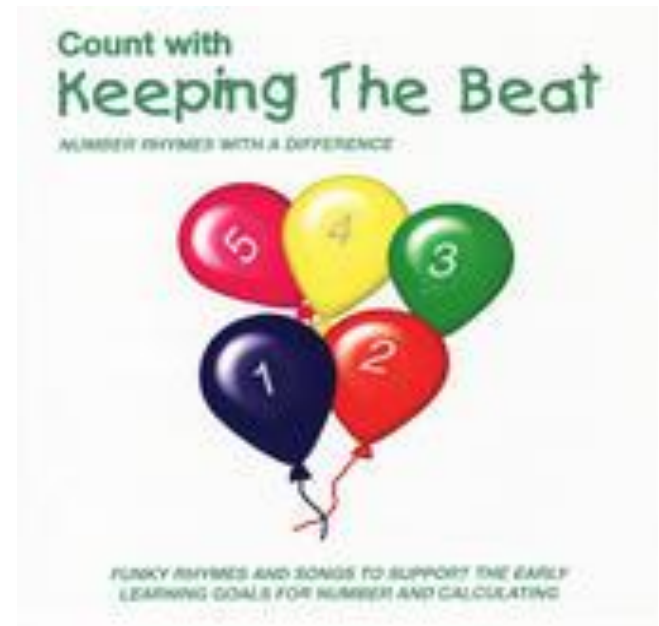
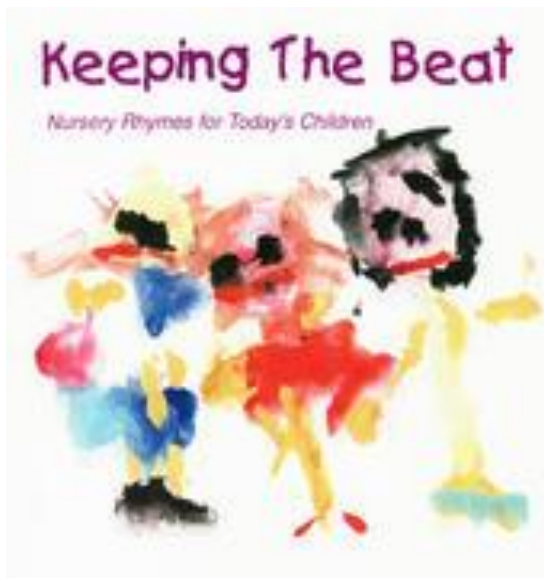
Often children will learn more playing alongside another child than they will being directly taught English by an adult.

Give children 'time out' from English and space to think their own thoughts, especially after a long day of unfamiliar speech sounds. Very young children, especially babies, may be comforted, particularly at rest times by songs or stories recorded in their home language by their main carer.

Encourage parents not to give up using their home language. Children need to develop strong foundations in one language, and hear a fluent model of it, in order to strengthen their general understanding of language use. This knowledge is then transferable to new languages.

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High quality play based and practical learning experiences, should need little adapting for children learning EAL. The principles of good practice for children learning English are the principles of good practice for all children.

## **Question:**

**What really makes the difference for children eligible for EYPP, those with EAL/SLC difficulties etc?**

## **Answer:**

### **The same thing that makes good quality teaching!**

- Good parental relationships
- Knowing children's interests and potential next steps and planning for these
- Engaging them in experiences that really matter to them
- A learning environment that inspires them and allows them to be active, independent learners
- High quality adult conversations