

Birmingham Nursery Schools TSA Conference 14.09.18

Learning Language: it's more than words!



Helen Moylett

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Aims

- To look in more depth at the four strands of language and how we might identify children at risk of language delay
- To explore effective interaction strategies
- To celebrate existing practice and think about areas for development

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Four strands of communication and language development

Listening and attention

- Underpins the development of language
- Enhanced by adults supporting children to focus attention

Understanding

- Supported by adults who use gesture and provide links to known words

Speaking

- Supported by adults who help children use talk to develop their language and thinking

Social interaction

- Supported by adults who model good relationships and 'serve and return' conversation

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Language delay

- Communication skills are developing in line with skills in other areas.
- Communication skills are delayed compared to other skills but are still developing according to the normal pattern of development.

Language disorder

- Communication skills are not developing according to the normal pattern of development.
- There is a patchy profile between different strands of language and communication.

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Studies of teacher – child conversations in pre-schools and schools

Most adult talk is:

- providing children with assistance in obtaining items
- managing behaviour
- supporting children in peer relationships
- praising children for appropriate behaviour
- providing instructions to children
- in book reading -- organisation of the reading task, simple feedback and naming activities

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

‘When teachers do engage young children in conversation, the quality of such verbal interactions is found not optimal for language learning.’

Chen & de Groot Kim 2014

Language strategies:

- Face-to- face used most frequently
- Mostly one-directional – adult talking, children giving limited, one-word responses
- **Not engaging in cognitively challenging conversations – learning about child’s ideas; sustaining, expanding and extending**

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

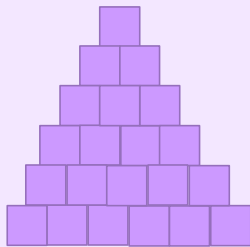
Talking – and listening – with young children in ways which encourage language development

- **Responding sensitively** to children’s communication
- **Observing and commenting** on child’s current interest, following the child’s lead
- **Talking to children** in language they are likely to understand
- **Taking time** for children to respond

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Build a pyramid:

How important do you think these strategies are?



These interactions have been shown to support language learning and as such should be considered the backbone of teaching and learning throughout the day.

Dockrell et al (2012)

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Observing and commenting on the child’s current interest, following the child’s lead


- Joint attention
- Observe and comment



Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

wise
O W L s


Observe
Wait
Listen



Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

wait, watch, wonder

- What might the play or activity be about?
- What is the child's purpose?
- Is there a role for me?
- What could I add?
- How can I join in?




Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Questions.....and

What's that?

Oooooo....
(social oil)

I can see...
(describe)



What colour is it ?

I think...
(share ideas)

What noise does it make?

So you think that...
(clarify)

Let's think what to try...
(discuss strategies)

He might...
(speculate)

I'd really like to know about this...
(be a learner)

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

5-finger rule



Limit questions, and use comments

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Talking to children

In language they are likely to understand

- Supporting just one step beyond their current language development
- Using techniques to build vocabulary, longer statements, and more complex sentences
 - Models of language
 - Expansions
 - Recasts
 - Open-ended questions

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Expansions

Context	Child	Typical adult response	Much better if.....
3-year-old building a train track	My track's very long		
5-year-old looking at book about sea creatures	Look at that whale		

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Taking time



Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Learning to Talk



Talking to Learn

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Sustained shared thinking

Siraj and Sylva (2004) investigated developmental outcomes for children in UK preschools.

Best developmental outcomes in those where there were frequent communicative interactions that showed 'sustained shared thinking' :

- 'working together in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept or evaluate activities. It requires all participants to contribute to the thinking and that the thinking must be extended'

This was found in only 15% of settings

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Quality of teachers' interactive conversations

Child-centred strategies

- Wait and listen
- Follow the children's lead
- Join in and play
- Be face to face



Sensitive

Interaction-promoting strategies

- Use a variety of questions
- Encourage turn-taking
- Scan
- Imitate



Supportive

Language Modelling Strategies

- Use a variety of labels
- Expand
- Extend



Stimulating

Chen and de Groot Kim, *Early Years* 2014, Vol 34, No 3, 271-288

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Remember the Characteristics !

Positive Relationships what adults could do

- Use the language of thinking and learning: *think, know, remember, forget, idea, makes sense, plan, learn, find out, confused, figure out, trying to do.*
- Model being a thinker, showing that you don't always know, are curious and sometimes puzzled, and can think and find out.
- Encourage open-ended thinking by not settling on the first ideas: *What else is possible?*
- Always respect children's efforts and ideas, so they feel safe to take a risk with a new idea.
- Talking aloud helps children to think and control what they do. Model self-talk, describing your actions in play.
- Give children time to talk and think.
- Value questions, talk, and many possible responses, without rushing toward answers too quickly.
- Support children's interests over time, reminding them of previous approaches and encouraging them to make connections between their experiences.
- Model the creative process, showing your thinking about some of the many possible ways forward.
- Sustained shared thinking helps children to explore ideas and make links. Follow children's lead in conversation, and think about things together.
- Encourage children to describe problems they encounter, and to suggest ways to solve the problem.
- Show and talk about strategies – how to do things – including problem-solving, thinking and learning.
- Give feedback and help children to review their own progress and learning. Talk with children about what they are doing, how they plan to do it, what worked well and what they would change next time.
- Model the plan-do-review process yourself.

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Once upon a time....



Children tell many different kinds of stories.

Three main types are:

- retellings of traditional stories or stories from printed / media sources
- original imaginative stories made up by children
- recounts of everyday experiences

Children may weave elements of all three together.

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Make your setting rich with storytelling

- Have regular dramatic readings of stories in children's books.
- Constantly model by telling your own stories to the children.
- Encourage children to listen to each others' stories.
- Notice and welcome any attempts by children to tell a story.

Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support

Jack and the Beanstalk



Early Learning Consultancy
tailored early years training and support
