

# Considerations for children in their early years with English as an Additional Language

## Purpose of this structure

1. To gain **awareness** of child's language input.
2. Tips on **supporting** language appropriate to the different stages of development.
3. Give pointers as to when to be **concerned**.

## This structure supports the Every Child Matters aims

**Be healthy** – mentally and emotionally healthy.

**Stay safe** – safe from bullying and discrimination, safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation.

**Enjoy and achieve** – ready for school, attend and enjoy school, achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school, achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation.

**Make a positive contribution** – develop positive relationships and choose not to bully or discriminate, develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges.

**Achieve economic wellbeing** – eventually!

## We can do this by...

- acknowledging and valuing a child's other language/s and culture;
- openly affirming another language and culture. In doing this we decrease its unfamiliarity and different-ness. Talking about it makes it acceptable, not hidden and gives vocabulary to all children's experience; and
- listening, giving a child respect and encouraging them with their learning to communicate, is one of the most important foundations, equipping them to achieve in the future and to be protected against harm.

Date form completed:

Child's name:    
First name Last name

DOB:  M/F

Start date at nursery:

Is the nursery environment the first experience of English?  
(Please note any other language experience)

Is an interpreter needed to speak with the parents?

Yes  No

Mother's language(s)

Father's language(s)

Carer's language(s)

Language map completed and attached?  Yes  No

What language(s) does the child reply in?

\*Simultaneous/sequential bilingual (delete as appropriate).

Is passive bilingualism happening at home?  Yes  No

From discussion/observations:  
Attention skills:

Personality:

Encourage parents to continue to speak to their child in the language that is most natural to them and not to worry about the child speaking English as this will happen anyway in an English speaking setting.

Six to 12 months	Home language development			
Play and social skills	Listening and understanding	Talking	Bilingual considerations and strategies	
<p><b>Six to eight months</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Exploratory play (mouthing, examining etc).</p> <p><b>Nine to 11 months</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Recognition of objects (child is forming concepts around familiar items eg equates 'cup' with drinking.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Waves goodbye and shows affection to parents.</p>	<p><b>Seven months to one year</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys games like peek-o-boo and pat-a-cake.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Turns and looks in direction of sounds.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Listens when spoken to.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recognises words for common items like cup, shoe, juice.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Begins to respond to requests ("Come here," "Want more?").</p> <p><b>Attention skills</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attends to novel stimulus.</p>	<p><b>Seven months to one year</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Babbling has both long and short groups of sounds such as "ba-ba, na-na, ga-ga."</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uses speech or non-crying sounds to get and keep attention.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Imitates different speech sounds.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Has one or two words (bye-bye, dada, mama) although they may not be clear.</p> <p><b>Vocabulary size</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> One to three words.</p>	<p><b>New to English</b></p> <p>✓ ✗</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use visual cues (facial expression, gesture, signs, symbols, pictures etc) to support your verbal message. This can help support and link languages across home and nursery.</li> <li>• Play – taking turns ie building blocks, peek-a-boo.</li> <li>• Introduce other children who speak the same language.</li> <li>• Ask for a list of five commonly used words at home in their language (write these phonetically to help your pronunciation).</li> <li>• Encourage listening to sounds – not language based (ie environmental, music).</li> <li>• <b>Using a bilingual worker</b> – the child needs to hear familiar words of endearment and songs in their home language together with close physical contact – you can also encourage the parents/carers to do this.</li> </ul>
			<p><b>Emergent bilingual (simultaneous)</b></p> <p>✓ ✗</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sing rhymes and repetitive short stories in English.</li> <li>• Keep your language simple (two or three words in a sentence eg 'drink juice') and context bound. Shorten your instructions and use familiar vocabulary.</li> <li>• <b>Using a bilingual worker</b> – the child needs to hear familiar words of endearment and songs in their home language together with close physical contact – you can also encourage the parents/carers to do this.</li> <li>• Provide plenty of opportunities for repetition to consolidate new language learnt.</li> <li>• Allow time for the child to repeat and respond (observe, wait, listen) without pressure to do so.</li> <li>• Imitate sounds and gestures and clarify what they say ie "boo" "boo, yes shoe" (if they are pointing at a shoe).</li> <li>• Simultaneous bilingualism can be slightly slower as the child is processing two words for things. This is normal.</li> </ul>

One to two years	Home language development			
Play and social skills	Listening and understanding	Talking	Bilingual considerations and strategies	
<p><b>12 to 15 months</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Self pretend (child starts to use objects on themselves eg uses brush on own hair).</li> </ul> <p><b>16 to 24 months</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Differentiated pretend (large doll play eg brushing dolly's hair).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plays alongside other children.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Engages in action rhymes and songs with familiar adults.</li> </ul>	<p><b>One to two years</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Points to a few body parts when asked.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follows simple commands and understands simple questions ("Roll the ball," "Kiss the baby," "Where's your shoe?").</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Listens to simple stories, songs and rhymes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Points to pictures in a book when named.</li> </ul> <p><b>Attention skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attends to own choice of activity, is quite rigid and inflexible and cannot tolerate adult intervention.</li> </ul>	<p><b>One to two years</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Says more words every month and babbles during play.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> By age two starts putting two words together ("more cookie," "no juice," "mummy book").</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reaches to something they want whilst making speech sounds.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Copies gestures and words from adults.</li> </ul> <p><b>Vocabulary size</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ten to 20 words.</li> </ul>	<p><b>New to English</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓ ✗</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children go through a silent period initially – don't force them to speak, but keep talking to them! Make short comments on what they are doing (ie "Mohammed has car, brm, brm").</li> <li>• Use visual cues (facial expression, gesture, signs, symbols, pictures etc) to support your verbal message. This can help support and link languages across home and school.</li> <li>• Play – taking turns ie building blocks, washing dolly's face. Imitate what they do and gently extend.</li> <li>• Introduce other children who speak the same home language. Look for and encourage eye contact by smiling.</li> <li>• Sing rhymes in both languages.</li> <li>• Invite parents in to read/sing in their own language and to continue to speak their home language to the child.</li> <li>• Encourage listening to sounds – not language based (ie environmental, music and animal – note different languages have different animal sounds).</li> <li>• Ask for a list of 10–20 commonly used words at home in their language (write these phonetically to help your pronunciation).</li> <li>• <b>Using a bilingual worker</b> – the child needs to hear familiar words of endearment and songs in their home language together with close physical contact – you can also encourage the parents/carers to do this.</li> </ul>
			<p><b>Developing bilingual</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓ ✗</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simultaneous bilingualism can be slightly slower as the child is processing two words for things. This is normal.</li> <li>• Sing rhymes and read repetitive short stories.</li> <li>• Give opportunity for him/her to speak with other children in their home language.</li> <li>• Use your voice to emphasize important words and information.</li> <li>• Make sure to give time to listening and responding – allowing for him to take longer to put his words together.</li> <li>• Keep your language simple (two to three words ie "more banana, Anil has more banana") and context bound. Make short positive comments on what they are doing. Shorten your instructions and use familiar vocabulary. Repeat to help consolidate learning.</li> <li>• Note different cultures will influence the way in which children's abilities to negotiate and bargain are encouraged.</li> <li>• Praise any verbal response specifically. Imitate any sounds or words and gently expand ie "mummy book" =&gt; "mummy read book?".</li> <li>• <b>Using a bilingual worker</b> – make opportunities for the child to ask questions and express thoughts and feelings in their home.</li> </ul>

Two to three years	Home language development			
Play and social skills	Listening and understanding	Talking	Bilingual considerations and strategies	
<p><b>Two to three years</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pretend play combinations (small doll play and short play sequences, eg brushing dolls hair and putting her to bed).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Interested in other children's play and may join in.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Two to three years</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Understands differences in meaning ("go-stop," "in-on," "big-little," "up-down").</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follows two part requests ("Get the book and put it on the table.").</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Understands a simple story when supported by pictures.</li> </ul> <p><b>Attention skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Two-and-a-half year olds can only attend to one thing at a time. Difficult to incorporate adult instructions. Can attend to adult's choice of activity for increasing periods.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Two to three years</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has an increasing vocabulary for naming everyday items.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Uses two to three word 'sentences' to talk about and ask for things.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Speech is understood by familiar listeners most of the time.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Often asks for or directs attention to objects by naming them.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can hold a conversation but jumps from topic to topic.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Starting to express likes, dislikes and fears using words not just actions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Vocabulary size</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Two years old – 50+ words.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Two-and-a-half year old – 200+ words.</li> </ul>	<p><b>New to English</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓ ✗</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children go through a silent period initially – don't force them to speak, but keep talking to them! Make short comments on what they are doing (ie "Samira you're feeding your doll, yum, yum. She's hungry").</li> <li>• Play – imitate their play and then extend it by adding another action and waiting to see if they copy.</li> <li>• Encourage non-verbal participation ie in rhymes, songs and stories with props and actions.</li> <li>• Praise and encourage with smiles etc any communication however small.</li> <li>• Use visual cues (facial expression, gesture, signs, symbols, pictures etc) to support verbal message. This can help support and link languages across home and school.</li> <li>• Introduce children who speak the same home language.</li> <li>• Invite parents in to read/sing in their own language. Also dressing up advice.</li> <li>• Ask for a list of 20 commonly used words at home in their language (write these phonetically to help your pronunciation).</li> <li>• Keep your language context bound. Shorten your instructions to two to three words in length and use familiar vocabulary.</li> <li>• <b>Using a bilingual worker</b> – allow opportunities for the child to ask questions and express thoughts and feelings in their home language. They need to hear familiar words of endearment, stories and songs in their home language together with close physical contact.</li> <li>• Don't insist on the child talking give them time to hear the new language.</li> </ul>
			<p><b>Developing bilingual</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓ ✗</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simultaneous bilingualism can be slightly slower as the child is processing two words for things. Six months delay is normal.</li> <li>• Sing rhymes and repetitive short stories.</li> <li>• Give opportunity for him/her to speak with other children in their home language.</li> <li>• Make sure to give time to <b>listening and responding</b> – allowing for him/her to take longer to put his words together.</li> <li>• Make short comments on what they are doing (ie "Samira you're feeding your doll, yum, yum. She's hungry").</li> <li>• Note different cultures will influence the way in which children's abilities to negotiate and bargain are encouraged.</li> <li>• As the child is learning new vocabulary in English, ensure that this is being generalised in their home language (give list to parents/carers). This is to avoid any subtractive effect on the home language.</li> <li>• Use play to help development of concepts; understanding of size, in, off, on, under, out of, together, away from, soft, heavy, big, tall, all etc.</li> <li>• Use your voice to emphasize important words and information.</li> <li>• Keep your language context bound. Shorten your instructions to two to three words in length and use familiar vocabulary.</li> <li>• <b>Model</b> and <b>do not correct</b> English 'word order' if a child gets it mixed.</li> <li>• Give parents books to read in their own language.</li> <li>• <b>Using a bilingual worker</b> – allow opportunities for the child to ask questions and express thoughts and feelings in their home language.</li> </ul>

Three to four years	Home language development			
Play and social skills	Listening and understanding	Talking	Bilingual considerations and strategies	
<p><b>Three to four years</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Imaginative play (uses an object or prop as if it were something else eg pretends that a banana is an aeroplane).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys playing with peers and initiates conversation.</p>	<p><b>Three to four years</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hears you when call from another room.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hears television or radio at the same loudness level as other family members.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Understands simple, who, what, where, why questions.</p> <p><b>Attention skills</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Two-and-a-half year olds can only attend to one thing at a time. Difficult to incorporate adult instructions. Can attend to adult's choice of activity for increasing periods.</p>	<p><b>Three to four years</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Talks about activities at school or at friends' homes.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> By three years old the child's speech should be clear and understood by most strangers.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uses a lot of sentences that have four or more words.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Usually talks easily without repeating syllables or words.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Experiments with grammar ie runned.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Some speech sounds may not be developed for example v ,s, z ,l, sh, ch, j, r &amp; th.</p> <p><b>Vocabulary size</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 500 to 1000.</p>	<p><b>New to English</b></p> <p>✓ ✗</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children go through a silent period initially – don't force them to speak, but keep talking to them! Make short comments on what they are doing (ie "Samira you're feeding your doll, yum, yum. She's hungry").</li> <li>• They make contact with other children but may not speak.</li> <li>• Use visual cues (facial expression, gesture, signs, symbols, pictures etc) to support verbal message. This can help support and link languages across home and school.</li> <li>• Introduce other children who speak the same language.</li> <li>• Ask for a list of 20 commonly used words at home in their language (write these phonetically to help your pronunciation).</li> <li>• Keep your language simple and context bound. Shorten your instructions and use familiar vocabulary.</li> <li>• Sing rhymes and repetitive short stories.</li> <li>• Invite parent in to read/sing in their own language.</li> <li>• <b>Using a bilingual worker</b> – allow opportunities for the child to ask questions and express thoughts and feelings in their home language.</li> <li>• Don't insist on the child talking; give them time to hear the new language.</li> </ul>
			<p><b>Developing bilingual</b></p> <p>✓ ✗</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simultaneous bilingualism can be slightly slower as the child is processing two words for things. Six months delay is normal.</li> <li>• Sing rhymes and repetitive short stories.</li> <li>• Regularly observe/record the child's developing use of English, including non-verbal gestures.</li> <li>• Make sure to give time to listening and responding – allowing for him to take longer to put his words together.</li> <li>• Note different cultures will influence the way in which children's abilities to negotiate and bargain are encouraged.</li> <li>• Encourage generalising new vocabulary to their home language so as to avoid any subtractive effect on the home language.</li> <li>• Repeat new words in different contexts and use play to help development of concepts; up, top, apart, toward, hard, same, empty, around, in front, high, back of, next to, light, slow, different, little, full, more, less.</li> <li>• Be aware that their home language may not have the same grammatical structures, eg Turkish does not have pronouns, so they may be difficult to acquire in English.</li> <li>• Model English by repeating what they have said and adding one to two words to extend their language.</li> <li>• The child may start to code switch ie use some English and some home language in the same sentence. Code switching is normal and can express change in intimacy or emphasis.</li> <li>• <b>Using a bilingual worker</b> – encourage and give opportunity for role-play using their home language. Make opportunities for the child to ask questions and express thoughts and feelings in their home language.</li> <li>• Give opportunity for him/her to speak with other children in their home language.</li> <li>• Look for opportunities to praise use of both languages.</li> <li>• Give the child opportunities for interpreting possibly for another child/family.</li> </ul>

<b>Four to five years</b>	<b>Home language development</b>			
<b>Play</b>	<b>Listening and understanding</b>	<b>Talking</b>	<b>Bilingual considerations and strategies</b>	
<p><b>Four to five years</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Co-operative play with other children beginning to occur.</p>	<p><b>Four to five years</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pays attention to a short story and answers simple questions about it.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Can reconstruct a story sequence in their play.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hears and understands most of what is said at home and in school.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Can follow a complex instruction containing a sequence of events ie put on your coat and get the boots from outside.</p> <p><b>Attention skills</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attention is still on one thing at a time but can control own focus and shift from listening to doing.</p>	<p><b>Four to five years</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uses sentences that give lots of details (eg “I like to read my books”).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Tells stories that stick to topic.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Communicates easily with other children and adults.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Says most sounds correctly except a few like l, r, v, z, ch, sh, th. May have a lisp.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uses the same grammar as the rest of the family but may still have some immaturities.</p> <p><b>Vocabulary size over both languages</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1000 to 1500.</p>	<p><b>New to English</b></p> <p>✓ ✗</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children go through a silent period initially – don’t force them to speak, but keep talking to them! Make short comments on what they are doing (ie “Javarn you’re bouncing the ball. You’re bouncing a blue ball”).</li> <li>• Use visual cues (facial expression, gesture, signs, symbols, pictures etc) to support verbal message. This can help support and link languages across home and school.</li> <li>• Recognise that young bilingual learners need time to observe, try out unfamiliar toys, tune into the new language.</li> <li>• Ensure that stories and books have clear illustrations, repeated actions and language patterns; use a variety of visual props.</li> <li>• Emphasize or repeat key words and phrases during practical activities.</li> <li>• Use songs and rhymes with actions and group refrains.</li> <li>• Don’t insist on the child talking give them time to hear the new language.</li> <li>• Using a bilingual worker – encourage and give opportunity for role-play using their home language. Make opportunities for the child to ask questions and express thoughts and feelings in their home language.</li> </ul>
			<p><b>Developing bilingual</b></p> <p>✓ ✗</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sing rhymes and tell/read short stories.</li> <li>• Regularly observe/record the child’s developing use of English, including non-verbal gestures.</li> <li>• Note different cultures will influence the way in which children’s abilities to negotiate and bargain are encouraged.</li> <li>• Ensure the child is placed third or fourth in turn taking games so he/she can rehearse and hear repeated phrases before responding.</li> <li>• Use play to help development of concepts; beside, bottom, backward, forward, between, inside, rough, smooth, fat, down, low.</li> <li>• Ensure tasks are cognitively demanding, eg do not give basic colour/object matching tasks simply because the English vocabulary needs consolidation; match task learning demands to the child’s needs.</li> <li>• Be aware that their home language may not have the same grammatical structures, eg Turkish does not have pronouns, so they may be difficult to acquire in English.</li> <li>• Encourage generalising new vocabulary to their home language so as to avoid any subtractive effect on the home language.</li> <li>• Code switching is normal and can express change in intimacy or emphasis.</li> <li>• Using a bilingual worker – encourage and give opportunity for role-play using their home language. Make opportunities for the child to ask questions and express thoughts and feelings in their home language.</li> <li>• Give opportunity for him/her to speak with other children in their home language.</li> <li>• Look for opportunities to praise use of both languages.</li> <li>• Give the child opportunities for interpreting possibly for another child/family.</li> <li>• After two years exposed to English, a child should be able to communicate functionally in the classroom; after five years they should have enough English for academic work.</li> </ul>

# Considerations for children in their early years with English as an Additional Language

## References

**Sue Griffin** Specialist Speech and Language Therapist, the creator of this document (2006), wishes to thank and acknowledge the following people and organisations input to this work.

This work sought to compliment and makes practical the government strategy *Every Child Matters* in the area of communication development

- Every Child Matters  
[www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/aims/outcomes/outcomescyp/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/aims/outcomes/outcomescyp/)

Developmental norms were sourced from

- ASHA (American Speech-Language Hearing Association)  
[www.asha.org/public/speech/development/chart.htm](http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/chart.htm)
- I-CAN Stages of Speech and Language Development Poster  
[www.ican.org.uk/en/sitecore/content/Home/Resources/SofD%20poster.aspx](http://www.ican.org.uk/en/sitecore/content/Home/Resources/SofD%20poster.aspx)

This document was developed while working with the staff and children at Woodlands Park Nursery (now Children's Centre) in Haringey, with the support of Peter Catling (Head of Centre) and his work on:

- Planning for Progress 2, Pub: Learning Design Ltd., Nov 2000

Further discussion and advice, helping form the considerations and strategies section, was sort from Sunita Shah, Bilingual Specialist working in Brent and chair of the London Bilingual SIG.

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