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Abstract. *Speech is making the sounds that become words—the physical act of talking. Language is our system of using words to communicate. It includes using words and gestures to say what we mean, and understanding what others say.*

Key words. *Children, speech, activity, language skills, situations, play.*

What this means in practice

Children create strong language skills when they are involved in playful, language-rich situations with opening to learn new words. Hands-on experiences encourage learning and provide a context for new words to be explored. For example, it's easier for children to learn vegetable names when they are touching or tasting them. Songs and rhymes offer fun ways to investigate the sounds and designs of words. Poems with actions and repetition help children tune in the structure of spoken language and explore new words. Reading stories aloud and sharing books supports children to develop language and understand new concepts. Empowering children to take note pictures and understand words, will strengthen their language skills and widen their vocabulary. Non-fiction and high-quality texts such as story books, empower children to make sense of the world around them using language. Encouraging talk when sharing books is an excellent way to support communication and language. Children extend language with pretend play and acting out stories. By offering props and ideas you can develop the learning. This may include imaginative play with small world resources such as dolls houses, farms or carports, open finished materials (those which can be utilized in more than one way) such as pieces or free parts. You can empower language development through creativity and problem solving during activities like:

Painting, exploring, observing nature, music

Suggested activities . Story scribing Children are born communicators and regularly practice their developing language skills by engaging in story-telling, through role play, little world and made-up games. You can empower and support this exploration of early language by scaffolding children's learning and writing down exactly what children say, in the form of story books, for them to enjoy over and over again. Young children love repetition and this type of activity will offer critical openings for them to feel their voice has been heard. For younger children story scribing may include making picture books of recent experiences, such as trips to the park or birthday parties, with key individuals and phrases included. These can be created using pre-made photo albums or simply by

stringing together printed photographs. Regularly these can be contributed to by parents or carers and allow practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of a child's home learning environment, including key vocabulary. For older children, you can transcribe more expand and creative experiences such as children's own interpretations of familiar stories, superhero play adventures or the 'rules' of a game the children have created. Once more, these can be made into a paper story book or displayed as storyboards for children to return to and follow. Often children enjoy re-enacting these stories with practitioners and their peers, so a basic checked out 'performance area' or cardboard box 'theatre' may support children to share and enjoy these 'stories' further. How the activity links to the other areas of learning. This activity links to children's personal, social and emotional development literacy, as they share stories and interact with others. It also provides opportunities for children to engage in expressive arts and design sensitively describing children's play. Children study language when it is introduced to them sensitively, at a time it is relevant to them, in manageable amounts, and with plenty of time to process. One way of encouraging children's understanding, and later use, of verbal language is to offer examples to them as they play. Narrating children's play in these ways: Commenting, or describing what children are doing, as they are doing it. Using simple, repetitive phrases and pausing in between. This is particularly helpful for complex concepts, for example things you cannot hold, like 'red', 'bigger' or 'tomorrow' and should never feel like you are overpowering the child with words without meaning. For example, during block play: "your tower is getting taller and taller".

Improving on what children say as you answer, including one or 2 words. This shows children you are interested and supports them to begin linking words and ideas in play. It can also be helpful to remember that, if you ask a child one question and they are unable to reply, you may demonstrate responding by offering 4 comments. For example, 'what have you got?' (question) Pause 'It's a car', 'It's a red car', 'It's a red, fast car', 'It goes vrrrooom!' (comments). Recasting, or modelling, back what the child says, in the right shape, but without openly correcting them. For example, in the role play area, if a child said 'the baby slept in the bed' you might say 'oh, shhh, the baby's sleeping in the bed' to support the understanding of the complex relationships between language structure and vocabulary. Pausing, allowing children extra time to respond, before speaking again. This supports language use as children's brains develop and fine-tune those important connections which enable them to receive and understand messages, before forming and expressing their response. For example, when talking to a child about their play, say something but then wait several seconds (count to 7 in your head) and keep looking at them so that they know you are interested and listening for their response. Be flexible and responsive to different learning situations and interact in an authentic way having been invited into a child's play. This will help to make sure that thinking is not disturbed and there is a sense of equality between you and the child.

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