

# Communication and Language

## INSET

Teaching and modelling *language* in early years



A short INSET template to use with your team which will support professional development to improve practice and outcomes for children.

### Pre-meeting preparation

- Have the language teaching *practices* and the *definitions* from Appendix A separated out in preparation for Exercise 1 where educators will be matching them up.
- Ensure the facilitator is familiar with the practices for teaching and modelling language.
- Follow this link to the EEF's Early Years Evidence Store to develop a secure knowledge and understanding of this approach: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store/communication-and-language?approach=teaching-modelling-language>.
- The spotlight videos here can be used as examples throughout this INSET.
- Have access to Appendix B to record notes during Exercise 2.

### Aim for the session

- Share the session aim:

For staff to feel confident in the approach of teaching and modelling language and have a secure knowledge and understanding of the practices to support children's development in this area of learning.

### Overview

- Consider what you know about teaching *language* versus *vocabulary* in early years and consider why this area of learning is important for children's development.
- Summarise discussions and read the following paragraph:

The word **language** is a broad term which refers to a whole system of communication, including words, grammar, and symbols. Language can be spoken, it can be written, it can be signed. Whereas **vocabulary** is specifically about the individual words that are used within that system. Vocabulary refers to all the words in a language that are understood by a particular person. This can be an 'active' or expressive vocabulary: the words an individual understands and uses regularly in speech and writing; and 'passive' or receptive vocabulary:

words an individual understands but does not typically use in everyday communication. When we are teaching and modelling **vocabulary**, this approach involves our intentional use of words to build a child's understanding of, and use of words. When our focus is teaching and modelling **language**, we are intentionally using language to show how words are used together to form sentences and providing opportunities for children to apply it in their own speech. Through this INSET we are going to look in more detail at the different strategies you can use to teach and model language and think about how story (recounts of true events or imagined) and songs provide a useful context for practising these skills.

- Discuss current practice in relation to teaching and modelling **language**, strengths and areas for development.

## What does the evidence say?

- [The Education Endowment Foundation](#) says there is strong evidence that this approach can be effective for all children, including evidence of effectiveness in interventions focused on children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Staff working in the early years could use story to teach and model language, for example through interactive reading, or recounting and discussing experiences. As well as talk, physical prompts can further support language development such as acting out a narrative, props, and pictures.
- Practices that may be effective can be either verbal or physical, and the evidence suggests that combining both kinds has the most impact. Verbal strategies include asking open questions about stories, prompting children to sequence stories, retelling stories, giving children corrective feedback, eliciting imitation, and relating stories to children's own experience. Physical strategies include story acting and using props and pictures.

## Exercise 1: Taking a closer look at the practices

In Appendix A you will find the explicit and implicit practices which have been found to be effective in teaching and modelling language.

- Share each of the practices from Appendix A with staff. Match the practices with the definitions.
- Spend time discussing each practice. Record examples of how you would embed each practice within your own setting. You may want to consider examples of how you would link the practices with your curriculum.

## Exercise 2: Linking with the statutory guidance

Share the following paragraph from the Communication and Language Educational Programme which can be found in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework:

*Through conversation, storytelling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.*

- Story (both recounts of true events and imagined) and song provide a useful context for teaching and modelling language.
- How does your current practice use story, song, pretend play and role play to both expose children to language, and provide them with opportunities to *apply* language?
- Use the table in Appendix B to support your discussion and record notes.



You can return to either of these exercises in future meetings if you would like to explore them further.

## Reflections and next steps

- Review key takeaways from your thoughts or discussions.
- Commit to at least two actions for how the strategies can be embedded into practice.
- Decide on a date for a review of this approach and next steps to support development and sustainability.



## Inspired to learn more?

### [The Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub](#)

provides advice, shares good practice and offers evidence-based professional development for early years practitioners. You can find more information on the website [here](#). This is where you can also find links to a short recorded CPD session on Communication and Language and other resources.

### [The Education Endowment Foundation](#)

Learn more about early years communication and language in the **EEF Evidence Store**, where there is a specific section focusing on the approach of teaching and modelling vocabulary. Follow [this link](#) to show how the approach may be implemented including short 'spotlight' films and written examples.

### [Ofsted](#)

Ofsted's 'Best start in life: a research review for early years' is a three-part subject-based curriculum research review focused on early years education. In part 2 of this report, specific reference is made to the teaching and modelling of vocabulary as a way of effectively developing children's communication and language skills. You can read this document [here](#).

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# Appendices

Appendix A - from the [Education Endowment Foundation Early Years Evidence Store](#)

<b><u>Explicit Practices</u></b>	
Questioning	The adult uses different levels of questioning to elicit a response from the child and provide opportunity for them to use language. This could include asking questions that encourage children to use past or future tenses (e.g. what happened when we? what do you think will happen this time?).
Explaining and showing	The adult provides information to support the child's understanding of the world around them whilst modelling the use of language. This could be through words, visuals, gestures, use of objects or a combination of these.
Repetition	Intentionally reinforcing the use of a specific key word, throughout the day, week, or month, both in a planned and non-planned way. This can be done through a variety of different contexts.
Sequencing	Using language to summarise an event or experience into simple ordered steps. An adult can model the language of sequencing such as use of the past or future tense and time-related vocabulary (e.g. yesterday, first, next, later). Through asking questions (e.g. Can you remember what happened first? What do you think we should do next?) as part of activities, an adult can encourage children to sequence and apply their thinking and language skills.
Recapping	Using language to summarise or drawing attention to the main points of a familiar past event or experience. An adult can model the process and language for children. Through questioning (e.g. What else happened when...? ), adults can encourage and scaffold children to recap and apply their thinking and language skills.
Recalling	Using language to note or discuss a past experience. An adult can model recalling and provide children with the exposure to the language of talking in the past tense. Through questioning (e.g. Do you remember when...? Who was..? How did...?), adults can encourage children to recall and share memorable moments in stories, events, and experiences.

## Implicit Practices

Imitation	The adult repeats a phrase after a child has used it modelling how grammar varies.
Commenting	Providing a sentence to articulate an observation.
Recasting	The adult repeats the phrase the child used but using correct grammar that the child used incorrectly.
Narrating	Providing a rich or extended articulation of an observation that almost provides a running commentary of a child's activity.

Appendix B -

<b>Exposure to language through story or song</b>	<b>Opportunities to apply language through story or songs</b>	<b>Opportunities to pretend or role play</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● The adult or another child shares a song or story through reading a book, orally telling a story, or acting out a story</li><li>● Children are also given opportunities to apply language through song, story, pretend play or role play.</li></ul>		
<p>E.g. the children found a spider outdoor and the educator started to sing 'Incy Wincy Spider'.</p>	<p>E.g. a child notices a familiar story which has been left out with a bag of props. He begins to use the bag of props to retell the story and an educator joins him to support his retelling.</p>	<p>E.g. The children create their own performance space. Using the box of story props available, they retell familiar tales with their friends and invent new ones. As they engage in role-play, they narrate their actions, express their ideas to others, and take on a variety of roles and characters.</p>