





Evidence consistently shows when educators use communication and language approaches, they benefit young children's development. The EEF's Early Years Toolkit estimates that communication and language approaches can, on average, provide seven months of additional progress. Educators are recommended to use the full range of approaches, because using one approach alone is unlikely to secure progress. Activities that expose children to rich vocabulary and language are important but how the adult engages with children during these activities is key.

Effective approaches to support Communication and Language




What is it?

Evidence summary of the approach

Put the approach into action

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 <p>01 Teaching and Modelling Vocabulary</p>	<p>This approach involves educator's intentional use of words to build a child's understanding of, and use of words. This approach can be delivered using explicit or implicit practices, or a combination of both.</p>	<p>There is strong evidence that this approach improves children's communication and language skills. Explicit vocabulary teaching strategies have been shown to be effective, both alone and in combination with implicit vocabulary teaching strategies. Careful selection of vocabulary to focus on can increase children's usage and retention.</p> <p>Studies where children received the same vocabulary support showed those with more advanced language skills progress faster than both those at an earlier stage in development and those from lower-income families. Therefore, those more at risk may need more exposure to this approach to make progress.</p>	<p>Explicit Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naming and labelling • Explaining and showing • Repetition 	<p>Implicit Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imitation • Recasting • Extending • Commenting
 <p>02 Teaching and Modelling Language</p>	<p>This approach involves 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. Story (recounts of true events or imagined) provides a useful context for practising these skills.</p>	<p>There is strong evidence this approach benefits all children, however, research lacks evidence on its specific impact on particular groups of children.</p> <p>Practices that may be effective can be either verbal or physical, and the evidence suggests that combining both kinds has the most impact.</p>	<p>Explicit Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning • Explaining and showing • Repetition • Sequencing • Recapping • Recalling 	<p>Implicit Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imitation • Commenting • Recasting • Narrating

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 <p>03 Interactive Reading</p>	<p>This approach involves considered actions during shared reading where the adult encourages the child to become an active participant in 'reading' the book. Over time the balance of who 'reads' or facilitates discussion about the book passes increasingly to the child.</p>	<p>There is strong evidence this approach benefits all children, however, research lacks evidence on its specific impact on particular groups of children.</p> <p>It is hard to pinpoint which interactive reading practices are the most influential because studies often test several practices at the same time. Successful interventions usually involve spoken interactions between the reader and child that go beyond the text in the book; the more the child participates or responds, the more their oral language skills develop.</p>	<p>Prompt based practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning • Recalling of events or experiences • Completion • Posing suggestions or problems • Imitation <p>Information based practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commenting • Recapping and reminding • Expanding • Extending • Explaining • Repetition
 <p>04 Teaching Through Collaborative Talk</p>	<p>This approach involves the educator using language or activities to stimulate and extend interaction during a cognitively challenging activity. Children are encouraged to hear and use language by sharing ideas, providing reasons, and building on each other's ideas</p>	<p>This emerging approach looks promising, however, this is based on only a few studies and these were not implemented in England.</p> <p>From the evidence that does exist, it is difficult to be sure of which practices are effective; the strategies used to facilitate collaborative talk vary significantly between studies and are often one component of a broader package of support. Successful studies often focused on developing educators' skills through professional development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recapping • Explaining and showing • Posing suggestions or problems • Questioning • Making links • Evaluating • Recall of events or experiences
 <p>05 Teaching and Modelling Social Communication Skills</p>	<p>This approach involves providing opportunities for children to learn the societal rules of verbal and non-verbal communication, so they can adjust their choice of words, volume or body language to best engage with the listener and show them they are listening.</p>	<p>There are very few studies that have looked at the impact of this approach by itself on children's outcomes. However, there are some positive findings for this approach when it was used alongside other approaches, which suggests it could have a promising effect.</p> <p>Due to the limited number of studies in this area, supporting practices are less well-evidenced. However, mirroring, gestures, eye contact, and teaching facial expressions appear in research that reports a positive impact on children's language and communication outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating social rules of communication or adjustments based on context • Waiting • Body positioning • Mirroring • Gesturing • Reminding • Providing opportunities for considering appropriate non-verbal communication • Demonstrating non-verbal communication



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Scan the QR code for detailed examples and videos of the approaches in action.