

Including Children with English as an Additional Language

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Children from non English speaking homes, attending Early Education and Care Services have to cope with an extensive variety of social and linguistic demands that the children from English speaking homes do not. They are at a starting point of new developmental skills in an additional language.

The first language of a child, learned in the home is extremely important as it not only forms the foundation for all later language development but attributes to a child's cultural identity, self esteem and learning.

Maintaining a child's first language assists in developing family ties, the bonding between parents and children, the growth of trust and affection, and the overall communication with extended family. It also assists in the continuance of intellectual development and the development of the additional language.

Within the childcare setting, staff supporting the maintenance of the first language acknowledges respect for the family and the diversity of our community. However, educators cannot be expected to speak a multitude of languages to meet all the first language needs of children attending their service. What staff need to do is be good role models using their own first language. Staff can utilise resources and the variety of communication methods to support the inclusion of the child.

Suggested Strategies

- Service provides a relaxed and safe environment for children to develop English as their additional language however it is important that staff encourage parents to keep using the first language at home.
- Gain as much information as possible from the parents regarding specific words especially "family" words.
- Utilise bilingual staff within the service if available.
- Provide bilingual books, picture dictionaries and survival words to support communication with the child.
- Use other forms of communication such as pictures or showing the child what you are saying and doing.
- Sing songs and finger plays in the specific language and/or English to support the ongoing language development.
- Although the child may not understand continue to talk about what you are doing and what is going to happen.
- Make sure that children can see your face when you talk to them.
- Use plenty of repetition and imitation.
- Keep the conversation simple.
- Provide language activities that include all children e.g. use survival words with pictures to show how we say a word in different languages.

- Be aware that children from non English speaking homes come into care with many emotions and feelings, apart from not being able to understand what is being said. Speak quietly and gently making sure that you have lots of physical contact.
- Be aware that children may initially have a silent period, as to listen to and build understanding of the new language.
- Modelling good language is crucial. Correcting a child's attempts at spoken English can cause more harm than good.

Language Activities

- Show the concept of differences e.g. housing, clothing, foods of different cultures as well as focusing on the similarities through conversation and pictures. Encourage children to bring photos and books from home.
- Use children's books in a variety of languages e.g. showing children that the storybook "The Rainbow Fish" is written in lots of languages. This shows that children, all over the world, are reading the same books.
- Reinforce vocabulary with words and phrases about other cultures e.g. when telling stories or during routine times and other activities such as cooking. For example, talk about what foods you like and what foods Houg from Vietnam likes or Maria from Italy.

Music & Movement

- Use children's songs that are either sung in different languages or have the same music e.g. "Where is Thumbkin" in English is also "The Butterfly Song" in Vietnamese.
- Movement can be used to show differences and similarities of dance in culture e.g. some Filipino dances use bamboo poles.

Crafts

- Provide on your craft table a variety of materials to make and explore that are used by different cultures e.g. leaves and sticks as well as brushes for painting.
- Use differing colours of paint. Talk about how different cultures use lots of bright colours or differing shades of one colour e.g. Filipinos use bright reds and yellows whereas other cultures may use rich earth colours such as ochre and brown.
- Utilise the types of crafts from other cultures to incorporate into your craft activities e.g. Make a Parol (Christmas Lantern) from the Philippines.

Outdoor Play

- Provide physical play talking about what children in other cultures do when playing outside e.g. Tommy living on a farm may swim in the creek while Anne, living in the city may swim at the swimming pool.

- Climbing activities can take on a world of their own incorporating dramatic play e.g. we are climbing the mountains in Nepal or climbing over the Great Dividing Range.
- Use the sand pit to describe what the country side is like in different cultures e.g. the deserts in Africa compared to the warm tropical area of Asia.

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