

5.2.3 United Kingdom: Every Child is a Talker

Introduction

To help encourage early language development, the UK government introduced the initiative of Every Child is a Talker (ECAT) (DCSF, 2008a). The programme is designed to extend children's vocabulary and to develop their confidence and communication skills prior to starting school. The ECAT programme supports early years' practitioners in leading high quality language provision in conjunction with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Other programmes and developments, such as the, Early Language Development Programme "was designed to improve early speech, language and communication development amongst 0-5s (primarily focusing on 0-2 year olds)." (ICAN, 2014) This programme built on the success of the ECAT programme.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014) Prime Area of Learning and Development - Communication and Language have the Aspects of:

- Listening and Attention,
- Understanding and Speaking

This states that early year's practitioners' educational programmes involve the 'Speaking' Aspect of Communication and Language. The Early Learning Goal of the 'Speaking' Aspect is for "children [to] express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events." (DfE, 2014:10).

Children will develop competences through a language rich environment, using words, sounds, rhythm, rhyme, songs and to support the development of verbal and non-verbal communication skills which will enhance their social skills.

Implementation: Using songs and rhymes to support toddlers' language development

Singing time enables the children to make choices and decisions with the songs that they would like to sing, providing them with the opportunity to "express themselves through physical action and sound. Explore by repeating patterns of play" (DCSF, 2008b:108). Toddlers at this age "begin to move to music, listen to or join in rhymes or songs" (DCSF, 2008b:113). Songs and rhymes are often an enjoyable social experience for toddlers where they learn about the skills of listening, recognizing and repeating rhythm, rhyme and actions. The following is an example of a song that can be used for these purposes:

The wheels on the bus

The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round.

The wheels on the bus go round and round all day long.

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish.

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish, all day long.

The bell on the bus goes ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding.

The bell on the bus goes ding, ding, ding all day long.



Toddlers learn from engaging in action songs and rhymes as these provide a good opportunity to join in. Songs and rhymes support the fundamentals of thinking with the rhythm, patterns and intonations of speech. The repetition of songs and rhymes provides predictability for toddlers, which is comforting. This leads to them gaining confidence in their understanding of the patterns and structure of songs and rhymes as they can change the words and create or invent their own. Traditional English nursery rhymes, such as, Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, support the foundations of speech and language development.

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star, How I wonder what you are! Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky! Twinkle, twinkle, little star, How I wonder what you are!



Songs and rhymes can be used throughout the day to support transition and routines, such as the Good-bye Song. These songs can be sung in a number of different languages to include different home languages of the children.

Good-bye Song

Say good-bye GOOD-BYE, say good-bye GOOD-BYE, say good-bye GOOD-BYE, say good-bye GOOD-BYE
Whisper good-bye good-bye, whisper good-bye good-bye, whisper good-bye good-bye, whisper good-bye good-bye



References

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