

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Guidance for Early Years Professionals



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The aim of this booklet is to provide information and advice to Early Years Professionals in Halton who would like to know more about supporting a child's Speech, Language and Communication if their first language is not English.

Background

Bilingualism comes with many advantages in a variety of areas; people who grow up to be bilingual can have a wider access to jobs, friendships, relationships, travel, literature and culture. They can also benefit cognitively with stronger connections in the brain, and there is evidence to suggest that bilingualism provides protection against Alzheimer's disease.

Children have the capacity to process and understand more than one language from birth. You may know a child who has not been in an English speaking environment until they started coming to your setting. This doesn't mean they won't become capable English speakers, or will have a Speech, Language and Communication need.

Children who are learning multiple languages will acquire language at different rates, just as monolingual children do too.

"As bilingualism does not cause communication disorders there is no reason why a bilingual child should be more at risk to communication disorders than a monolingual child"
(Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists).

"Over 1 million pupils in primary schools are recorded as having English as an additional language" (Department for Education, 2020).



Background

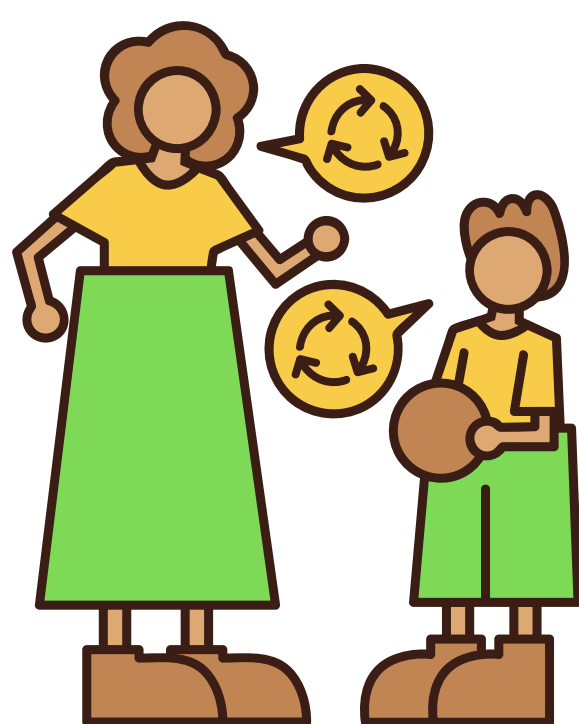
Children need to develop strong foundations in the language that is dominant at home. This does not mean they will not learn English. The skills learnt in the first language are transferable to additional languages.

We know that a child's home language plays an important role in the Early Years, school and later life; acknowledging, supporting and celebrating it is important. Every family is different; some families attach more value to a home language than other families. Exploring this with a family early on gives you a head start on providing them with the information they need to know about language development. This booklet contains resources and ideas of how to support you to build the bridge between home and setting to provide the messages that will support the home language environment.

English is best learned from fluent speakers with a wide vocabulary so that the young learner will hear the correct grammar and sentence structure.

Switching between different languages is a typical and common characteristic of individuals who are learning to speak two or more languages. This is called code switching. Children as young as 2 years old can know which language to speak to whom.

The presence of a home language/bilingualism should not be viewed as an additional 'load'.



Jim Cummins is a Canadian researcher who has contributed the following theories to EAL practice, and more:

The theory

The iceberg analogy

An iceberg has a large percentage hidden beneath the water. The theory states that similar to an iceberg, children have what is called a 'common underlying language proficiency'. So, children's additional languages can develop from this, like the peaks of an iceberg emerging.

Each language will look and sound different, but the child has a central system which supports all language learning.

BICS & CALP

'Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills' (BICS) are the everyday conversations we learn first that are usually paired with lots of visual support and face-to-face interaction, within context. From initial exposure to an additional language, it can take 2 years to be able to develop BICS.

It can take at least 5 years to catch up to native speakers in academic aspects of the additional language involved with higher-level language such as analysis, reasoning and critical thinking. We call this 'Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency' (CALP).

First language surface features

Second language surface features

Common Underlying Proficiency

How do I WellComm screen a child who is learning EAL?

The simple answer is that you would screen a child learning EAL just as you would a child whose first language is English.

Wellcomm can support you to find out how much English a child can understand and use. You can then track their progress through re-screening. Wellcomm can also help you to plan the information you might want to find out from the child's family in relation to their first language(s) development e.g. are they putting two words together.

It would not be unusual to find a child who is new to English to score red or amber on the Wellcomm, and score particularly low on questions involving using words and sentences as opposed to understanding them.

The big book of ideas is a valuable resource for supporting children's language development, and its use with children learning EAL is encouraged.

Due to the nature of languages and their variability in word order and grammar, no language screening tool or formal language assessment can be directly translated into another language.

However, there are certain cases where the Wellcomm can be translated:

Sections 1 -5 can be directly translated into some Asian Languages including Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati and Bengali. After this the language structures in comparison to English are very different and would therefore not be viable.

Sections 1 - 3 can be directly translated into some Eastern European languages including Polish, Latvian and Bulgarian. After this the language structure is very different and would therefore not be viable.

The ways you can support children learning EAL can be looked at in 4 areas:

What can we do to support children learning EAL?

Build the bridge between home and setting

Resources available in the environment

Show and involve

Language strategies

For children who are new to the English language, it is important that they are supported to settle and feel connected. This is supported through effective communication with the family and sharing experiences.

Do you:

Check spelling and pronunciation of names?

Make sure that parents understand the importance of using the first languages used at home?

Know ALL of the languages the children hear or speak, and where?

Take time to get to know the child's interests, personality, experiences and culture?

Share information about local childrens' centres activities?

Tips:

Start a home-setting diary with photos of the child enjoying an activity or interacting to chat to the family with visual support.

Talk to family about some core words in the first language that might support transitions, or words the child is likely to say.

Organise a dual language story or rhyme time with family, or encourage attendance to stay and play sessions.

Always demonstrate that you value the home language

The ways you can support children learning EAL can be looked at in 4 areas:

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The best thing in the environment is always you and how you interact. But there are ways you can set up the physical environment to support a child to understand and feel connected.

Do you:

Have a welcoming entrance to your setting?

Have a variety of visual supports?

Use visual supports on a daily basis?

Have and use dual-language books?

Incorporate items from other cultures in to your setting?

Tips:

Have a 'welcome' sign with a variety of languages, or a world map/globe.

Use visual timetables to support understanding of the routine, always using verbal language alongside.

Label areas of the environment with 'conversation starters'.

Put items of clothing/ food packaging/books/ newspapers in the home corner that reflect a child's own experiences.

Use story sacks to support memory of words from stories.

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Language strategies

Giving all children the time to explore new words and immerse in new concepts through different means will support their learning. Show and involve the children in the new language they're learning.

Do you:

Use a variety of non-verbal communication alongside talking?

Take words or elements from the story you read and embed the learning throughout the setting?

Provide rich definitions of words to support understanding?

Allow all children to explore a project or theme in depth?

Talk to families about what books you're reading and what new words their child is learning?

Tips:

Always use facial expressions, pointing, demonstrating, and voice to support understanding.

Involve the children in the visual timetable, allow them to put an activity in the 'finished pile' and use choice boards.

Define words, give other words that go with it, use the words in different contexts such as role play and relate to real life experiences.

Acknowledge use of first language, and provide the English to go alongside.

**What can we do to
support children learning
EAL?**

**The ways you can support
children learning EAL can
be looked at in 4 areas:**

**Build the bridge
between home
and setting**

**Resources
available in the
environment**

**Show and
involve**

**Language
strategies**

The following strategies are beneficial to all children. Providing a supportive language environment through observing, waiting, listening and responding is best practice.

Do you:

**Give the children 10 seconds to
respond?**

**Follow a child's lead and comment on
what they're interested in rather than
what you want them to know?**

**Provide opportunities for taking turns
and utilise activities to support
interaction with other children that
does not have a verbal-focus?**

**Use consistent language and around
routines?**

**Use the big book of ideas to support
language development?**

Tips:

**Remember that children learning EAL think in
their first language.**

**Use simple language and break down
instructions into manageable chunks.**

**Get down to their level and use their name
first.**

**Repeat, repeat, repeat! Repeat words across
different contexts.**

**Sing songs/nursery rhymes that include
repetition regularly.**

**Narrate the day and activities. When using
questions, scaffold answers using simple
language.**

**Provide fixed choices with visuals to support
requesting and understanding of words.**



What is the silent period?

The 'silent period' is a term used to describe the phase where a child who is new to a language environment might stop talking for a period of time. This period of time is a normal phase of the child's development.

Imagine:

You are in a room and nobody is using the same words as you. Nothing makes sense apart from nodding, pointing and familiar objects. You try out the words you know. But instead of getting the response you're used to, the person looks at you blankly and asks you a question you don't understand.

Would you keep using the words you know?

The silent period is therefore an appropriate response.

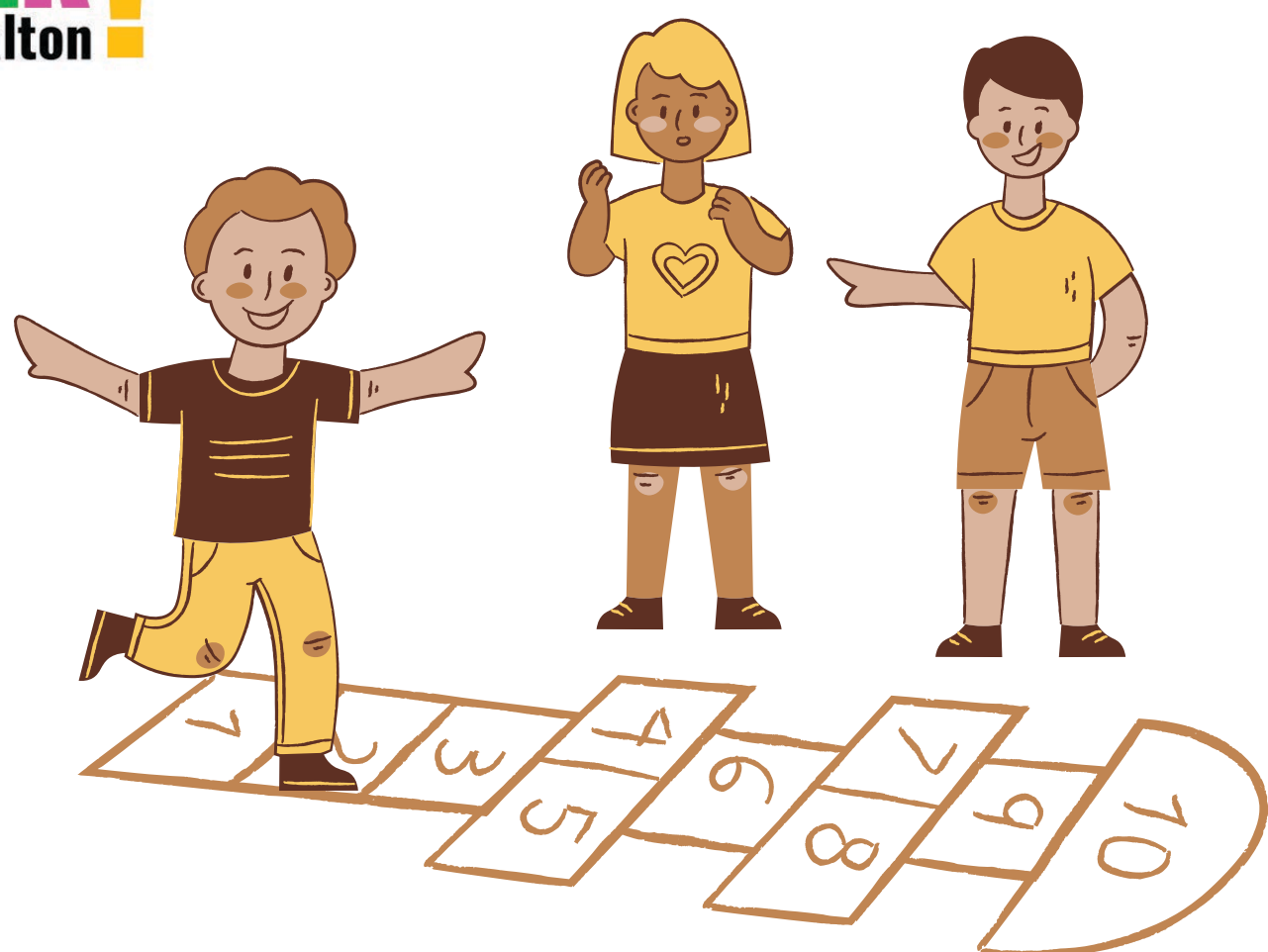
The silent period can typically last up to 6 months. Although the research is mixed, with some suggesting it can last up to one year.

It is important to monitor the silent period if it continues for longer than a month. Research suggests that shyness is a risk factor for entering the silent period.

It is important to remember that the silent period is not a passive stage, and that you should continue to provide a language-rich environment during this period.

The silent period and selective mutism can be confused due to the 'lack of speech' nature that is involved in both.

Selective mutism is an anxiety disorder, which manifests itself as a phobia of speaking in certain situations. It is important to consult a Speech & language Therapist if you have concerns that any child has selective mutism.



How can I support children who are in the silent period?

Accept non-verbal communication

Continue to talk to the child, do not reflect the 'silence'

Continue to expect that the child will respond

Include the child in small group activities

Structure activities to encourage child-to-child interaction

Provide activities which reinforce language practice through role play

Praise minimal efforts

Find out some core words in the first language

Remember that this is not a passive stage

Useful links

Translated support and advice:

Bilingual quick tips for parents in 19 different languages from the National Literacy Trust:

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/early-years/bilingual-quick-tips/>

Time together booklet in multiple languages:

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/time-together-multilingual-families/>

Some key authors and researchers to explore:

Julie Cigman

Karen Nemeth

Fran Pafford

Jim Cummins

Benefits of bilingualism:

Should I speak more than one language to my child?:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/speaking-languages/zn73f4j>

The amazing benefits of being bilingual

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20160811-the-amazing-benefits-of-being-bilingual>

"Why my daughter's language development is an amazing chance for us to learn together"

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/language-development-amazing-chance-together/zjb88xs>

Useful links

Organisations:

The Bell Foundation -
Published an EAL Assessment Framework consisting of a five stage proficiency scale. Although primarily aimed at the school-aged child, the framework can be used in the Early Years within limits of some areas. Free registration needed for access.

<https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/teaching-resources/eal-assessment-framework/>

NALDIC -
The national subject association for EAL.

<https://naldic.org.uk/>

Bilingualism Matters -
Research and news on bilingualism

<https://www.bilingualism-matters.ppls.ed.ac.uk/>

Bilingualism Clinical Excellence Network

<https://www.bilingualismcen.com/top-tips>

Further links:

Ethnologue -
information about the languages of the world

<https://www.ethnologue.com/guides>

All around this world -
Music from around the world

<https://www.allaroundthisworld.com/>

Mantra Lingua -
Dual language resources

https://uk.mantralingua.com/product-type/Bookcombine=&field_language_tid%5B%5D=325

Please contact Halton Libraries for more information about dual language books.

Glossary

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)

Everyday communication or conversation in a language, associated with routine social interaction. Based on early work from researcher Jim Cummins.

Bilingual

Term used to describe a person who uses two or more languages to communicate and has access to more than one language at home and at school. The term does not imply that the person is fully fluent in both/all of the languages.

Biliteracy

Reading or writing in two languages.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

Contrasts with BICS. It is the level of language needed to understand and access complex academic language.

Code Switching

Using more than one language at the same time, within a phrase.

EAL

A term used to describe the learning of English in addition to the learner's first language

Home Language

This term is used to describe the language used most frequently at home

Mother Tongue

This refers to the language an individual identifies with.

Passive bilingualism

Refers to being able to understand another language, but not able to speak it.

Sequential Bilingualism

Becoming bilingual by learning a second/additional language sometime after learning your first language.

Simultaneous Bilingualism

Growing up learning and using two+ languages from birth.



Talk to me at home...

In my first language

**This will influence how
well and quickly I am
able to learn English.**

A photograph of a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, sitting outdoors in a park-like setting. He is holding a young child with blonde curly hair, who is wearing a blue shirt. The man is holding an open book with colorful illustrations and Cyrillic text, and they both appear to be looking at it. The background shows green trees and foliage. The image is partially covered by a white torn-paper effect at the bottom, and there are green polka dots scattered on the right side.

Read to me at home...

In my first language

What are nursery reading this week?

Help me learn the new words from the book by talking to me about it at home in my first language.

Why you should talk to me in my first language(s):

**It will help me to
understand and use
English later on**

**It helps if I hear you
speak confidently
and naturally**

**Some of my family
don't speak English,
and I want to be able
to tell them things
when I'm older**

**Being bilingual is
amazing and puts
me at an
advantage!**



Home Language profile

DATE:

Child's name:

DOB:

Place of birth:

Languages spoken at home and
by who:

How long lived in UK:

Languages spoken to the child:

How long child has
been in current EY
setting:

How old was your child when they said their first words? (in any language)

Under a year

About 12
months

12-18 months

18 months -
2 years

2-3 years



How does your child tell you what they want?

Cries

Looks at you/ it

Points/ reaches

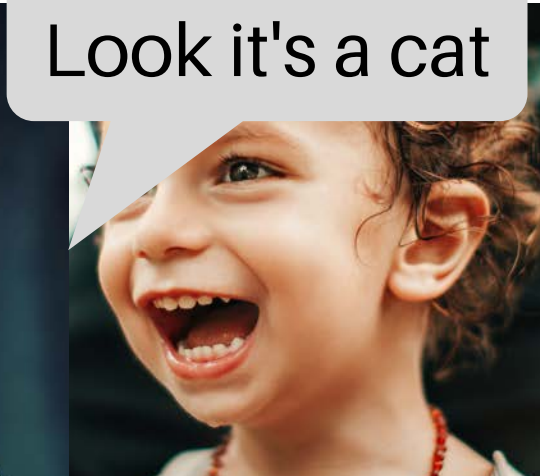
Makes a noise

Says a word
Says a phrase

gah

No / drink

Look it's a cat

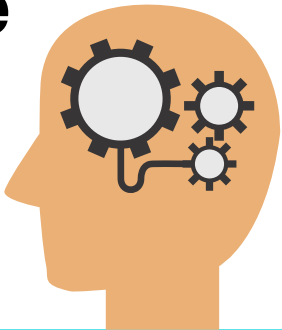


What words or phrases does your child say at home?
(in home language)

e.g. family names, action words, i want __, familiar objects, talking in play, sings



What words do you think your child understands? (in home language)



Non-verbal

You point, they look

Towel means bath time

shake/nod head

Copies actions e.g. clap/wave

Single words

nose, eyes

cup, shoe, bed

Teddy/favourite toy or item

Go, stop, sleep

Simple instructions

Find the ball

Give the cup to teddy

Make dolly jump



How worried/concerned are you about your child's language skills in their home language?



Not worried,
zero concerns

1 2 3 4 5



Very worried,
I have concerns

Home Language Profile Guidance

This form can be used alongside your observations, EYFS tracking and Wellcomm Screening to support you to gather further information about a child's language skills. It is primarily focused on a child's **home language(s)** skills.

A child may be experiencing a speech, language or communication need if they have difficulties in their home language(s), as well as English.

A referral to Speech and Language Therapy may be considered if the child is displaying with a delay in their home language or the parent expresses concerns around their child's home language development.

You should always refer to Speech and Language Therapy if the child is displaying with a stammer or selective mutism.

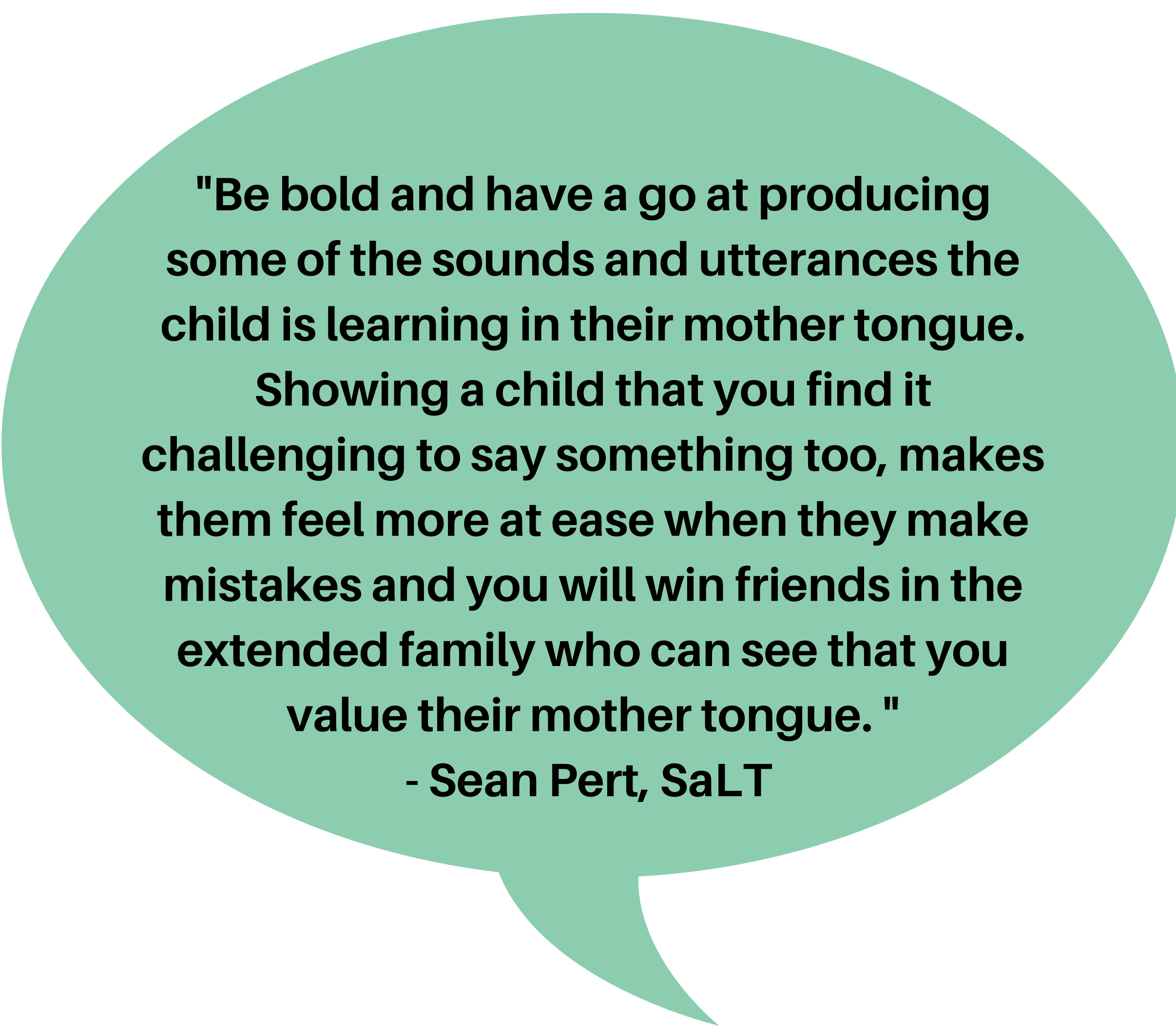
Please see I Can's ages and stages for more information on typical language development:

<https://ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/parents/ages-and-stages/>

If in doubt about whether to refer a bilingual child to Speech and Language Therapy, please contact ChatterBug Speech and Language Therapy or a member of the Talk Halton team.

ChatterBug: 01928 511075

Talk Halton: talk.halton@halton.gov.uk



"Be bold and have a go at producing some of the sounds and utterances the child is learning in their mother tongue.

Showing a child that you find it challenging to say something too, makes them feel more at ease when they make mistakes and you will win friends in the extended family who can see that you value their mother tongue. "

- Sean Pert, SaLT