Title: Eliciting the impact of continuous professional development training in speech and language development, on the knowledge, skills and practice of Early Years practitioners.

Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology

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Aoife Jenkinson

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Abstract

Oral language skills of children entering nursery aged 3 years, have been identified as delayed in up to 50% of the population in deprived, urban areas. However, a wealth of research evidence indicates that language skills can be augmented by specific practices, activities and environmental resources provided by staff in nursery and childcare settings. With the aim of introducing evidence-based research into Early Years settings, the *Every Child a Talker* programme was delivered in ten training days over six months to volunteer settings in the United Kingdom. This mixed-methods research study sought to examine the impact of the programme on the language-supporting practices and knowledge of staff in Early Years settings.

The sample consisted of two groups: nine Nursery settings where at least one staff member had received *Every Child a Talker* Training, and nine matched settings where no staff member had completed such lengthy professional development training in supporting language skills. Settings in both groups were matched based on similar characteristics of their pupil populations: socioeconomic needs, percentages of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language, and percentages with Special Educational and Language needs.

A mixed-methods approach was used, with the first phase of the research design generating quantitative data. The *Communication supporting Classrooms Observation Tool* was used to create a "snap shot" of the practices, activities and environmental resources used to support language development in each setting. Concurrently, a questionnaire elicited data regarding staff's self-reported measures of confidence and knowledge in how to support oral language skill development. Observation and questionnaire data were first analysed separately and then together using non-parametric tests, the Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests.

Following completion of this first phase, the second phase of the project aimed to identify facilitating factors and/or barriers to implementing practices known to support children's oral language development. Interviews were carried out with participants from eight settings, and qualitative data collected and analysed using a Thematic Analysis approach.

Results of this project indicated that increased training in oral language skill development resulted in greater levels of self-reported confidence for Nursery staff. Completing the *Every Child a Talker* programme did not result in significantly greater observed use of effective techniques to support oral language development. Factors facilitating the implementation of new practice included the support of management to disseminate training to colleagues, and to fund continuous professional development for staff. A barrier was the lack of external, professional support to address the needs of children with English as an Additional Language. The findings reported are likely to benefit both Early Years settings and those bodies delivering continuous professional development training.

Keywords: continuous professional development; oral language skills; mixed-methods design; Early Years.

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1.0 Introduction

This literature review provides a political and research background to the current curriculum demands and training provision of practitioners in the U.K., in regards to young children's language development. Theoretical explanations of language development are introduced, and relevant studies in the impact of language delay on children are presented. Findings from evaluations of early intervention and continuous professional development are explored. Government response to research findings, and evaluations of recent changes in curriculum and policy of early years funding and structure, are then outlined. For the purposes of this review, the selection of studies was made using a number of criteria. Studies were selected from electronic databases including ERIC and Psycharticles, as well as a number of journals related to speech and language disorders and development. Peer-reviewed journals were used to support the identification of relevant studies reflecting evidence for oral language practices promoted, as was the What Works Clearinghouse database (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, updated 2005). Systematic reviews by U.K. and U.S. researchers were used to identify early intervention programme evaluation studies, which were carried out to rigorous standards.

1.1 Theories of Language Development

In the last three decades, research has led practitioners to a greater understanding of how language develops in young children, from pre-verbal skills such as making eye-contact and reciprocal smiling, to the verbal fluency displayed by a majority of children when they enter school at five years of age. A consistent trajectory of language development has been proposed to exist, across cultures and in different languages (Chomsky, 1965, 1980). Noam Chomsky hypothesised that all children possessed a universal, genetic "language acquisition device", capable of internalising and then generalising the rules of grammar and syntax, to produce novel and accurate phrases (Chomsky, 1965). It was felt that children were capable of producing very accurate language, despite being exposed to flawed, or grammatically incorrect, examples of everyday speech in their environment. This nativist theory of language development paid little attention to the role of other speakers in actively helping the child to learn a language, suggesting instead that language learning was an innate skill, which children without physical or medical barriers to speech, would acquire.

Given typical oro-motor and cognitive maturation, the child's communicative ability is expected to progress from simple verbal and gestural form, to explicit linguistic communication. Vocabulary gradually expands, building up in words of longer syllable size. Children become aware of syntax, the organisation of words in a sentence to give coherent meaning. Thus, they develop the ability to apply appropriate grammar to modify their expressions, becoming more aware of the precise meaning, or semantics, of words in their growing vocabulary (Pinker, 1987). This awareness of pragmatics, the adaptation of language for communicative purposes, becomes gradually more honed (Messer, 1994). Eventually, children are able to combine individual words to create phrases of growing length and complexity. Between birth and five years, children will understand and use up to 10,000 words (Childers & Tomosello, 2002).

The role of speakers in the development of thought and language was emphasised in a contrasting theory of language development, one with roots in Vygotsky's social-constructivist model of development. In his explanation of the drive to communicate, Jerome Bruner proposed "that much of the cognitive processing going on in infancy appears to operate in support of goal-directed activity." (Bruner, 1983, p. 24). Communicative intent came from the toddler's wish to fulfil his needs, as achieved through the response of the human adult or provider. Thus, communicative acts achieved meaning, simply by being attributed a meaning by the recipient of the gesture. The first words used by an infant were given meaning by the listeners surrounding him, and so the cognitive link between linguistic expression and meaning was supported through the response of speakers in the child's world (Vygotsky, 1978). Drawing on the early impact of the respondent in a baby's communicative attempts, proponents of the social-constructionist model envisaged the role of the adult as a mentor for a child's language. Their role was essential to the growth and sophistication of children's language. This social-constructionist model of language development emphasised the role of those speakers in a child's world, as they model and refine spoken language.

Using observations of adult-child interactions, researchers have recorded instances of the subtle modelling carried out by carers, which support a child's gradual learning of language and communication. Catherine Snow and her colleagues investigated the role of speakers surrounding a child, and the relevance of language "models" in a child's environment. Their studies suggest that language learning occurs primarily thanks to "finely-tuned" input from speakers around the child (Bohannon,

MacWhinney, & Snow, 1990; Snow, 1995). A rich feedback system is described, in response to children's attempts at communication; the infant's sounds are attributed meaning, and re-cast into words; errors are modelled by listeners, for example, a child who says, "I goed there", is gently corrected by the clarifying phrase, "you went there?". The role of fluent speakers as demonstrators and teachers of language is emphasised in these studies. Thus, both research and child development theory supports a more interactionist perspective of language learning; the child is being "scaffolded" or gently guided, in the purpose and method of language use in context (Chapman, 2000).

Though the typical development of language reflects a common or universal pattern, the impairment or delay of language skills does not. Children with syndromes such as Autism Spectrum Disorder may present with difficulties using language in the correct context, yet can express themselves clearly (Loveland, Landry, Hughes, Hall, & McEvoy, 1988). Some children present with a very different profile of impairment, such as difficulty pronouncing words (a speech impairment), in understanding or retrieving words, or organising words correctly in a sentence (language and communication impairments). The range of impairments in speech, language and communication domains indicates that language-learning is a complex, multi-faceted skill, reliant on both cognitive and physical development. Language development reflects a complexity and breadth of skills, requiring practice and opportunity, in tandem with an individual child's cognitive and physical skills, in order to develop (Bruner, 1990; Chapman, 2000).

Currently in the U.K., an estimated 7% of the population experience persistent difficulties in learning to speak, understand, or accurately use language for communication, as a result of impairment, as a secondary feature of primary syndromes, or due to a neural and physical disability (Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2008a). These children will likely require specialist support from Speech and Language therapists or similar practitioners, throughout their school lives. However, a greater percentage of children will start school with delayed speech and language skills, which are not due to a disability or syndrome. The Bercow report was commissioned in response to anecdotal and research-based concern, that many children were starting their school lives with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) (Bercow, 2008). The Bercow report defined SLCN as "significantly" delayed development, when compared to peers, in fluency of speech and the understanding and functional use of language for

communication purposes. The evidence base from which the report drew its findings, outlined particular barriers preventing many children from developing age-appropriate language skills upon entry to school at the age of five.

Given the social nature of language development, it appeared that children's home environments would be of primary importance in the development of their communication and oral language skills. In regards to children with SLCN, investigations into the language environment of children in the U.S.A. indicated a trend in those displaying delayed skills (Hart & Risley, 1992). This study highlighted the broad range in quality of language interactions of parents with their children, and identified a link between families of socio-economic disadvantage, and reduced oral language skills in young children. Anecdotal reports from early years practitioners in the U.K. led to similar concerns around the language skills of children in less wealthy neighbourhoods, brought to national awareness in a recent government report into the role of language in young children's learning (Tickell, 2011).

In attempting to establish whether socio-economic background was a risk factor in delayed language skills, children from backgrounds considered to be of socioeconomic disadvantage in a U.K. Local Authority were compared to the "norm" on standardised tests of language, and cognitive ability (Locke, Ginsborg, & Peers, 2002). The children were assessed in the academic year in which they turned 5 years of age. When comparing the average verbal skills with the standardised norm in the autumn term, "the vast majority of children (*were*) performing well below the level expected for their chronological age." (Locke et al., 2002, p.9). Both language scores and verbal ability scores were below the expected levels based on assessments of the child's cognitive ability. This risk factor has been acknowledged in the recent government document "The Foundation Years: Preventing poor children becoming poor adults" (Field, 2010).

1.2 The impact of poor language skills

With estimates of children reaching school with delayed language skills in the region of 40% in some socio-economically deprived areas, there was a need to identify the impact this was having, and the ways in which this trend could be reversed (DCSF, 2008a). Evidence suggested that children with delayed language skills when starting school, generally experienced poorer academic and social outcomes later in their school lives (Glagowska, Roulstone, Peters, & Enderby, 2006; Silva, Williams, & McGee, 1987). In their study of children repeatedly referred

to a Speech and Language Therapy service, Glagowska and colleagues examined social skills outcomes for these children at the end of their infant school lives, at average age of 7 years 10 months. When compared to a control group of non-referred children, and a comparison group of children with less severe language needs, the frequently-referred children were reported to have significantly weaker social skills. In explaining this link, the authors drew from a previous study in a similar field, which suggested that children experiencing language impairment suffer social problems as a result of their reduced communication skills (Whitehurst & Fischel, 1994).

In addition to the negative impact on social skills, there is strong evidence to link the development of oral language skills with later literacy ability in children, suggesting that strong oral language skills are necessary in combination with knowledge of print techniques and phonics, in order to develop reading skills (Muter, Hulme, Snowling, & Stevenson, 2004; Oakhill, Cain, & Bryant, 2003; Pullen & Justice, 2003; Scarborough, 1990). A child's vocabulary skills as they begin their first year in school, has been found to be a good predictor of their reading ability at the end of their third year in school (Senechal, Lefevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998).

In their comparison of readers with weak and strong comprehension skills, Nation and Snowling (1998) examined both phonetic decoding skills and children's ability to read irregular, less frequent words. Though both groups of children had good ability to decode regularly phonetic words, accuracy when asked to read non-phonetic or low-frequency words was far lower for children with poor comprehension skills. The authors suggested that the second set of words required children to draw on their semantic knowledge (understanding of word meaning). Those children with weak comprehension skills appeared to have a limited store of easily-accessed vocabulary, with which to determine text based on context or visual recall. These studies highlighted the importance of language to later ability to read fluently and competently. Given that many children in the U.K. spent their preschool years in the care of practitioners in daycare and nursery settings, the role of universal services appeared to be critical in ensuring successful social and academic prospects later in children's lives.

1.3 Effectiveness of Early Intervention Programmes

Early intervention programmes have been identified as a possible way to address the differential outcomes for children who are in particular risk of delay in

attainment, namely those from low-income backgrounds (Allen, 2011; Brooks-Gunn, 2003). An investigation into the effectiveness of early intervention programmes was commissioned by the U.K. Department for Education, in an effort to determine the reliability of the evidence base being used to contribute to knowledge around best practice for children in Early Years settings. In his recent review, Graham Allen identified particular examples of evidence-based programmes already in place for children aged 0 to 3 years. The Allen review cited the gap in language skills and "school readiness" of children in the poorest 20% of households in the U.K. (Allen, 2011).

Research evidence supported this observation, and has shown how early intervention programmes have led to improvements in outcomes for children, by focusing training on parents (Ryan, Fauth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006). The mental health of mothers facing low income and other challenging life factors has been significantly improved following specialist-led programmes and classes (Booth, Mitchell, Barnard, & Spieker, 1989; Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, & McCormick, 2001; Sweet & Appelbaum, 2004). Following evaluation of the Early Head Start programme for families on low-income in the United States, more positive interactions were observed between parent and child in home-care, video-taped situations (Love et al., 2002). Increased and broadened language was also observed in these child-parent interactions, despite this not being a direct goal of the programme. The positive results elicited by these programmes suggested that training parents would result in changes in interaction skills and the home environment. Having created these changes, researchers would be required to evaluate the consequent impact on children's success when entering school aged 3 years.

Amending policy based on the successful Early Head Start programme, the New Labour government announced the development of a community-based, multi-disciplinary programme of support for children and families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage (Glass, 1999). The Sure Start programme was rolled out following the 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review, which acknowledged the pervasive, life-long negative impact of infant poverty on later life achievements (HM Treasury, 1998). The centres would eventually reach over 1000 in number throughout the U.K., each with the aim of improving educational attainment and countering the broad negative effects of poverty on later life.

The Sure Start Programme differed in its nature to those community-based programmes delivered in the United States. Rather than direct staff to implement specific programmes, each centre's managing board was directed to develop and adapt practices to meet the needs of their own community. This led to great variation in provision of services across all Sure Start centres (Melhuish, Belsky, Anning, Ball, Barnes, Romaniuk and Leyland, 2007). Each centre was directed to provided five core services, including: outreach and home visiting; support for families and parents; good quality play, learning and childcare; primary and community health care; support for parents of children with special needs (Belsky, Barnes, Leyland and Romaniuk, 2006). Identifying specific successful and unsuccessful practices was a challenge to researchers, given these variations in provision.

An interim evaluation of the Sure Start programme was carried out in 2005 using a quasi-experimental, cross-sectional model of evaluation, relying partly on user feedback regarding services (*National Evaluation of Sure Start*, 2005). The evaluation sample consisted of 254 Sure Start centres and 50 comparison communities. Findings suggested an unexpected pattern of impact. Firstly, within the Sure Start population, beneficial effects on the parenting skills of the *least* socially deprived parents were reported, with no significant benefit noted for more socially deprived parents. Secondly, children of teenage mothers were compared with those of older parents attending the settings; the former group presented with poorer social functioning compared to same-aged children with older parents. Thirdly, the verbal ability of children attending Sure Start Centres and those in non-Sure Start provision was also compared. Despite attending the Sure Start centre, those children of the most disadvantaged families were identified as having lower verbal ability than those of similarly disadvantaged families in non-Sure Start communities. In a later evaluation by the same team of researchers (*National Evaluation of Sure Start*, 2010) a positive impact was noted on the well-being of mothers and families, but a large number of non-effects were also recorded at the child level.

Academic reviews critiqued the research design model used to evaluate the Sure Start programmes. Nigel Lloyd and colleagues recorded strong positive results of the programme through evaluation of specific outcomes at a local level in a number of London Boroughs (see Lloyd and Rafferty, 2006; Moran and Harrington, 2006). These researchers have suggested that the failure to incorporate local evidence of

impact into the national evaluation studies resulted in minimal and non-representative overall outcomes for the Sure Start programme (Lloyd and Harrington, 2012). Furthermore, Michael Rutter posits that the decision not to use a Randomised Controlled Trial model of evaluation may have contributed to the minimal effects observed nationally (Rutter 2006, 2007). Evaluating the impact of the centres had proved challenging to the quasi-experimental model, as differences in provision, and the ability to achieve an objective measure of improvement in relation to uptake of service provision, were unlikely to be assessed accurately through a "user feedback" manner of data collection (Rutter, 2006).

It appeared that identifying those programmes which have been proven to achieve positive outcomes, using evidence-based methods, was a challenge to Local Authorities and government departments. "Rigorous" evaluative methods as considered by Graham Allen's research team, included only those studies employing a randomised controlled trial (RCT) design or a quasi-experimental design (QED). Where a QED design was used, a programme could be considered effectively evaluated only if two or more QED studies had been carried out. Very few of the 53 programmes evaluated to this standard and included in the review were based in the U.K. Confirming the observations of the Sure Start evaluations, this review suggested that the challenge to select evidence-based, successful programmes for early intervention was largely a result of inadequately rigorous evaluative methods by practitioner-researchers in the U.K.

The concern expressed was that early intervention programmes were not being prioritised or invested in. The report described a situation nationwide where,

> "Budgets are largely allocated on a historic basis, not by reference to what would achieve the best outcomes. Systems are designed to deliver services, not to change outcomes."
>
> Allen, 2011, p.32

In response to Graham Allen and Dame Tickell's reports, the current government committed to extending the funding for free childcare to two-year olds from "disadvantaged" backgrounds, beginning in 2013 (Department for Education (DfE), 2011). This 2011 policy document refrained from explicitly stating the programmes which would receive funding. However, there was a stated commitment to the role of training and skills development for professionals in the Early Years sector. In

order to identify the best use of funding, effective evaluation of "best practice" within Early Years settings has continued to be a government priority (DfE, 2011). On-going evaluation of practices, following implementation of training by specialists, has therefore been identified as necessary to ensuring effective outcomes following training.

1.4 Enhancing children's oral language skills

Recent research has measured the probable impact of socioeconomic background on children's cognitive ability scores at age 5 years. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) identified a significant effect of parenting techniques on children's readiness for school, including their oral language skills. The EPPE project (Effective Provision of Pre-school Education), also suggested that family relationships and experiences predicted school achievement, more than innate ability, pre-school provision and material circumstances (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004).

In an attempt to quantify this impact, Waldfogal and Washbrook (2008) examined data from a cohort of British children born in 2001, identified by the Millennium Cohort Study. At age 3 years, the vocabulary of children of the poorest 20% of parents was significantly lower than that of children with wealthier parents. This lowest 20% presented with a vocabulary reflective of the 35th percentile, compared to same-aged peers (Waldfogal and Washbrook, 2008). This ability score, measured using a cognitive test standardised on a U.K. population, had not ameliorated at age 5. The influence of parents on their child's language development was calculated to be equivalent to 8.6 percentile points, when comparing the poorest fifth and wealthiest fifth of parents. Reviews of home learning environments suggest that educational activities provided by parents to pre-school children strongly predict learning and reading outcomes later in school life (Melhuish et al., 2008). Techniques used by mothers in extending and modelling children's language, particularly in low-income neighbourhoods, were shown to be instrumental in the level of oral language skills later presented by children on-entry to school at age 5 years (Hart and Risley, 1992). These studies reflect a need for early intervention programmes to target the language development knowledge and skills of not just practitioners, but of parents, if they are to expect improved outcomes in oral language skills of pre-school children.

Through experiments in early years settings, researchers have extended training in

oral language support techniques beyond the home setting. Laura Justice focused on the capacity of practitioners to provide a "language-rich environment," where young children's oral language skills can be promoted in multiple ways (Justice, 2004). She described this environment as:

"...one in which children are exposed deliberately and recurrently to high quality verbal input among peers and adults and in which adult-child verbal interactions are characterised by high levels of adult responsiveness"

Justice, 2004, p.37

Rather than expecting children to be "exposed" to these experiences accidentally, the author suggested that planned and deliberate opportunities to hear a range of language are planned for. Thus, a child hears language for a range of purposes, both directed towards her and incidentally.

The quality of the language used in interactions of adults and children is another area which must be examined and improved if language skills are to be extended. In an effort to assess the effect of caregivers' interactions on children's language development, the degree of "responsiveness" of caregivers with children aged 17 to 53 months was examined (Girolametto & Weitzman, 2002). An earlier study suggested that caregivers of young pre-school children (less than 5 years of age), did not always respond to children by using language which was at, or just beyond, their capacity to understand and respond to (Roberts, Bailey, & Nychka, 1991). "Responsiveness" in the Girolametto study, was reflected by interactions leading children to give longer answers and take part in conversation turn-taking (such as open-ended questions); comments, in language which the child could understand, on what children were doing or planning; and extending children's utterances by repeating what a child has said and adding to it. Sessions were recorded using videotapes of activities in class, and the "Teacher Interaction and Language Rating Scale" was used to categorise and record teachers' interactions with children (Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2000). The study suggested that children were more inclined to use a range of words and talk for longer, when caregivers engaged them in interactions characterised by commenting and labelling, extending of utterances, and questioning in language within the comprehension levels of the child (Girolametto and Weitzman, 2002).

A second finding in their study related to the two activities in which observation took

place; a play dough activity and a session where an adult read a book to a group of children. The authors pointed out that the play dough activity led to increased use of child-oriented strategies by caregivers, as they waited for the child to respond to questions, followed the child's lead in the ensuing conversation, and also extended the child's utterances on more occasions. This study suggested that book reading with children, with little effort to engage their participation, may lead to fewer opportunities for interactions with children where their oral language skills are extended and practised. These skills include use and understanding of vocabulary, accurate syntax, grammar and use of language in context, as well as fluency and clarity of speech.

Mary Bond and Barbara Wasik promoted and trialled the use of "conversation stations" in Early Years classrooms in the U.S. (Bond & Wasik, 2009). The rationale for their intervention lay in the observation that classrooms are busy environments, and teachers' interactions with children may often be instructive and directed toward groups, rather than one-to-one interactions and exchanges between teacher and child. The authors observed the impact of "conversation stations", areas of the classroom where objects and props are provided to support discussion, and the use of language to act-out imaginary roles. Their observations suggested that having these environmental supports enhanced children's language development, and increased opportunities for staff to engage in child-appropriate conversations with pupils.

Complementing the influence of adult activities and interactions on children's language and learning skills, researchers also attributed the learning environment to the cultivation of motivation and interest in learning (Fisher, Bell, & Baum, 1984; Loughlin & Suina, 1982). Components of the classroom "environment" could include the room and building structure, and the physical resources within it (Dowhower & Beagle, 1998). Given the importance of interactions in children's language learning, and the role of objects to support conversation and discussion, it became clear that the classroom content and structure influences the language-learning which occurs there (Bond & Wasik, 2009; Dowhower & Beagle, 1998; Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, 2002). Children's understanding of language, vocabulary and its link to the printed word, was extended by displays of both students' and staff's markings and visual work on the walls, with invitations to comment if appropriate (Gambrell & Morrow, 1995; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998; Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2006); open access to literacy materials such as

books, posters, pencils and paper (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Gambrell, 1996) and an assigned area where children could spend time with the written word (Dowhower & Beagle, 1998). In their evaluation of classrooms, the latter authors identified decreased motivation and interest in reading where environments lacked these three elements.

This "print-rich environment" (Sulzby & Barnhart, 1992) as described above, has been found to be complemented by adult-guided discussions of storybooks, in the form of interactive reading with children. A large scale study reviewed a national book promotion, the Bradford Book Flood, in schools in England (Ingham, 1981). This suggested that simply having more books in the classroom would not necessarily motivate children to engage with them. It appeared that practitioners must bring out the stories to children. Studies in methods to enhance the oral language focus of book reading with children have been carried out by a number of researchers. By involving children in answering questions about target words, children's use and understanding of those words has been shown to increase (Senechal, Thomas, & Monker, 1995). In further refining of book-reading techniques the method of "Dialogic Book-reading" was proposed (Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan, Fischel et al., 1988). In this study, mothers were trained to read in a dialogic manner with their children, and measures of expressive vocabulary were taken before and after the four-week study. The principles used in dialogic reading include using "wh" questions to encourage participation ("Where are the children?"; "What do you think they're doing?"); giving feedback in the form of extending or recasting what children have said; and adapting reading style to the children's growing language ability, challenging their language skills appropriately (Whitehurst et al., 1988). At the end of four weeks, the children experiencing dialogic reading sessions had significantly improved expressive vocabulary scores, based on their ability to identify pictures using single words. A drawback of this study was identified by the authors, in that the post-tests were different to the pre-tests which were used to establish a baseline of expressive vocabulary in participants. The results from each could therefore not be compared with confidence, as they may not have measured identical constructs, and their standardised scores were developed on different populations.

A later study by some of the same authors addressed this weakness, using identical pre- and post- test formats and a randomised controlled trial design. It was found that in home reading contexts, the dialogic shared reading approach led to statistically significant improvements in expressive language scores for children

(Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). Hargrave and Senechal (2000) extended the evidence base for this approach, illustrating its effectiveness in day care and educational settings, again supported by home use, when the ratio of children to adults was 8 to 1 in the setting.

A further example of supportive environments proposed an awareness of the maximum levels of noise, both from students' and adults' "babble" or talk, and external, environmental sources. Shield and Dockrell (2004), measured the impact of environmental noise on children's performance in verbal tasks. Speed of completion was significantly impaired as environmental noise levels grew. Their work contributes to a body of evidence which suggests that environmental noise, over a sustained period of time, resulted in reduced working memory and reading, and poorer motivation in primary school children (Clark et al., 2006; S. Cohen, Evans, Krantz, & Stokols, 1980; Haines, Stansfeld, Head, & Job, 2002). Classrooms with high levels of noise would therefore create extra challenges to children's listening and hearing skills. As reading was reflective of a child's oral language and phonological skills, these studies suggested that the impact of excessive noise would diminish children's ability in these domains, leading to low reading skills at the end of primary school education. A summary of effective practices and provision for enhancing oral language skills is contained in Table 1.0 on the following page.

Table 1.0

Effective techniques and provisions which support oral language development in young children

Technique/Provision	**Original Supporting Study**
Asking open-ended questions	Girolametto and Weitzman, 2002
Commenting on a child's actions.	Girolametto and Weitzman, 2002
Labelling (naming) objects	Girolametto and Weitzman, 2002
The use of language within comprehension level of the child	Girolametto and Weitzman, 2002
Extending an utterance by repeating it, and adding more to it.	Hart and Risley, 1992
Modelling correct language	Hart and Risley 1992
Targeted teaching of vocabulary	Boyer-Crane et al., 2008
Opportunities to implement new language	Boyer-Crane et al., 2008/ Dockrell et al., 2010
Teaching of narrative and listening skills	Dockrell et al., 2010
Teaching of listening skills	Dockrell et al., 2010
Shared book-reading	Whitehurst et al., 1988 /
Dialogic book-reading at home / in educational settings	Hargrave and Senechal 2000
"Conversation Stations"	Bond and Wasik 2009

Classroom displays with invitations to comment	Gambrell and Morrow 1995
Access to text and writing materials	Anderson et al., 1985
Assigned space for reading and/or writing	Dowhower and Beagle 1998

1.5 Previous Evaluation of Early Years Practitioners' Speech and Language Knowledge

In a review of early years' practitioners' confidence and knowledge of speech and language difficulties and development in under-5's, Maria Mroz and colleagues examined the impact of both initial training in early years practice, and further, specific training in childhood language development and support (Mroz, 2006; Mroz et al., 2002). Their studies developed in response to the lack of confidence reported by teachers in regards to supporting speech and language difficulties (Dockrell and Lindsay, 2001). Specific programmes undertaken by practitioners included a range of independent, patented programmes, such as programmes from the Hanen Centre©, Makaton sign-language training© and Living Language (Locke, 1985), and Local Authority-supported staff development courses and in-service in language disorder (Mroz et al., 2002). The initial study sent 772 questionnaires, completed by 307 early years settings, to assess the extent of language training received by practitioners, and their knowledge of speech and language development. A five point Likert scale was used for the majority of questions, and tick boxes made out for the remainder. Questionnaires were followed up by structured interviews of 46 practitioners, to clarify quantitative information with further details about training and their view of their roles in their work with children.

Practitioners reported on their level of confidence in six areas of language development and instruction. These areas were identified and labelled by the authors following their review of the curricula of Initial Teacher Training courses, and National Vocational Qualification (level 3 or above) courses. They consisted of:

"comprehension", "attention and listening skills", "the relationship between play and language development" , "speech sound development", expressive language", and "use of language in social contexts". Confidence in each area of the skills was reflective of the degree to which that area had been covered in initial training programmes. The authors noted that those practitioners most confident in speech and language teaching and assessing had received training in the previous 3 years. Only 22.8% of practitioners had received CPD in language development. Unfortunately, the researchers did not analyse differences in levels of confidence between those who received "sustained and collaborative" CPD (Cordingley et al., 2003) and those receiving shorter, in-service type training.

The authors wished to explore practitioners' ability to assess children's speech and language skills at a range of ages. Three short cases were described of children aged 2:6 years, 3:6 and 4:6, and respondents were asked to consider whether they would need to refer the child to a speech and language therapist. The most accurate responses came from those practitioners who had received speech and language training recently; however, the majority of respondents was correct when assessing children who were part of the age group with which they worked. This suggests that this form of case study, with a simplistic "yes/no" style answer, may not reflect the strengths of practitioners sufficiently to identify those most knowledgeable in speech and language development. A further point by the authors in relation to assessment was the very low (29%) number of participants who used a specific measure of speech and language needs. The authors suggest that this may contribute to practitioners having less confidence in their ability to identify children with speech and language needs.

Findings from follow-up interviews of 25 practitioners suggested that 24 of them continued to feel in need of support when assessing nursery and reception children's language skills (Mroz, 2006). Of these, 13 had received language-based CPD in the previous three years. Of the 25 interviewees, 8 felt they could not identify a child with speech and language difficulties, and 14 wished for external guidance from a speech and language therapist, when assessing and meeting the needs of children with speech and language difficulties. A collaborative forum of practitioners, combined with "face-to-face" time with speech and language therapists, were reported to be valued most by practitioners. Where a collaborative forum and time with a speech and language therapist were made possible, either through organisational structures and/or personal motivation, it appeared that

practitioners' confidence in responding to speech and language development needs in students were higher.

These studies suggested that staff in universal services, such as daycare, nursery and early years school settings, did not feel sufficiently trained to address the needs of children who were entering formal schooling with delayed oral language skills, and yet lacked the severity of difficulty required to receive specialist intervention (Mroz, 2006; Mroz & Hall, 2003; Mroz et al., 2002). In response to inconsistent training and diverse qualifications of staff working in childcare and Early Years settings, government funding was made available to enhance the skillset of those working with young children (DfES, 2006a, 2006b). Barriers to developing professional skills in this area appeared significant; managers reported that there was a lack of training available for staff in techniques which have been shown to support the development of early language learning (Mroz, 2006; Mroz and Hall, 2003). Sourcing adequate finance, and the time to release staff, was also considered a practical barrier to developing professional knowledge and awareness of SLCN.

1.6 Early Intervention in Settings

Having identified the techniques which could support oral language skill development in a controlled environment, researchers faced the challenge of incorporating these into programmes, to be used by practitioners in real life settings. This approach would gradually allow the effectiveness of such interventions to be assessed, and if successful, the possibility of extending the evidence-based practice to educational settings. The aim of the following evaluative studies, therefore, was to share practices with practitioners, and monitor and evaluate the effects on oral language outcomes for pupils.

In the U.S., Laura Justice has carried out a number of trials examining the impact of various teaching practices on literacy skills (Justice, Mashburn, Hamre, & Pianta, 2008; Justice, McGinty, Piasta, Kaderavek, & Fan, 2010; Pullen & Justice, 2003). In the 2003 study, researchers trained staff to emphasise one of three different areas of skills, in order to examine their effects on reading ability of children (Pullen and Justice, 2003). Each promoted specific practices which had been shown to improve either phonological awareness, oral language skills, or reading awareness in children. Results suggested that a focus on oral language skills resulted in improved comprehension in reading, and a focus on phonological awareness, enhanced word

decoding skills. "Oral language skills" in these studies, reflected an ability to use and understand vocabulary, and present this in phrases with accurate syntax and grammar, as appropriate to the context (Justice et al., 2008; Justice et al., 2010).

In the U.K., similar studies have taken place to examine the role of oral language skills in children's academic and literacy achievement. In their evaluative study of an oral language programme, Julie Dockrell and her colleagues used a pre-post testing design, comparing children in either an experimental, comparison or control group (Dockrell, Stuart, & King, 2010). The "Talking Time" programme targeted vocabulary development, understanding and use of language, as well as listening, comprehension and narrative (ability to retell a story) skills. Their results found that their intervention led to a differential increase in the oral language skills of children learning English as an Additional Language, as measured by changes in single-word knowledge, ability to recall sentences, and ability to retell a story. A prior study had evaluated a similar oral language intervention, using a random control trial (RCT) design, but without a control group (Bowyer-Crane et al., 2008). This programme targeted similar language skills, through taught lessons on vocabulary and grammatical constructions using a story or narrative. Independent speaking was encouraged in all sessions, and modelling of correct forms of grammar was provided by staff when errors occurred. This form of "direct instruction" also resulted in improved oral language skills as measured by children's accuracy in grammar, ability to retell a story, their single-word knowledge and understanding of oral information ("listening comprehension").

Their emphasis on direct instruction of specific language skills to improve overall oral language also yielded positive results when compared to a comparison group undergoing a phonological awareness programme. Both of these studies suggest that teacher practice, when supported with professional training, can greatly ameliorate delayed language skills in children with SLCN.

In the U.S., Carollee Howes and her colleagues aimed to evaluate whether gains in academic and social skills could be attributed to dimensions of classroom quality, structural factors, or variations in family circumstances (Howes et al., 2008). Data were collected from 3000 pre-school children in a trans-state study. "Classroom quality" was determined to be reflected in those practices which have been shown to support children's learning, such as interaction styles, the environment and activities provided, and were observed using the Early Childhood Environmental

Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) (Harms, Clifford and Cryer, 1998) and Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta, La Paro, and Hamre, 2004). "Structural" factors included the education level of the teacher, ratio of staff to pupils, and length of the programme delivery daily (either a half-day or full day session). Questionnaires and self-report forms were gathered from teachers in each setting to respond to these aspects.

In their results, reflecting the work of Julie Dockrell and Laura Justice and their colleagues, it was found that greater time spent on specific oral language activities related to "modestly" greater gains in language and literacy outcomes (Howes et al., 2008). Similarly, a focus on phonological activities resulted in greater gains in a Naming Letters test. There was no link between the level of education of the teacher or the adult: child ratio, and gains in academic and social outcomes. The researchers found that effect sizes, and the size of gains in scores between Autumn and Spring, were generally small. They suggested that this may be a reflection of the low quality of provision which they observed. A recommendation for future evaluation was to ensure there is comparison made between settings where differences in teaching practices are measurably greater, thus linking practices with improved outcomes. Furthermore, the authors found that when evaluating the value of certain aspects of classroom processes for children's learning, observations of direct experiences were "more powerful predictors than either teacher reports or structural features of the classroom" (p. 46). This suggested that systematic observation of classroom procedures by the researcher was likely to produce a more valid reflection of the learning experience of children than post-hoc reports by the practitioner involved in classroom practice.

Ensuring consistent implementation of intervention practices by non-research staff in real world settings was a challenge to researchers, but necessary to support claims of causation between practice and outcomes. Prior studies have shown the impact of factors other than staff intervention on language skills; the quality of language used with children at home (Girolametto et al., 2002), and the phonological awareness of the child (Stanovich, 1998). Establishing the link between specific practice and outcome, researchers in the "Talking Time" study incorporated close monitoring of intervention sessions (Dockrell et al., 2010). In order to ensure that staff were implementing the activities according to prescribed practices, researchers observed each 15 minute session, twice weekly over 15 weeks. In monitoring accurate use of the new practices, and providing feedback

where staff deviated from prescribed methods, staff provided sessions conforming to 80% of the observation points used by researchers. This high result suggests that prior to evaluating the impact of any language intervention programme in education settings, frequent observation by the professionals providing the training would be necessary to ensure its successful, accurate implementation.

1.7 The Early Years Foundation Stage and Language

As understanding of practices to support oral language skills grew within the field of educational research, practice in early years settings was changing rapidly. In the U.K., the Foundation Stage Curriculum for nursery and reception classes was introduced (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 2000). This brought about a focus on learning through child-centred play, and challenging the view of Reception class as a preparatory stage for Key Stage 1 (Evangelou, Sylva, Kyriacou, Wild, & Glenny, 2009). Following this, guidance for practitioners on the care of 0 to 3 year olds was published, "Birth to Three Matters" (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2003). These schemes were replaced soon after the publication of Every Child Matters, a government agenda which aimed to promote joined-up working of health professionals, whose responsibility focused on under 3's, and educational professionals, who were concerned primarily with 3 to 5 year olds (DfES, 2003) . The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum provided statutory guidance for practitioners in the care and teaching of children and babies aged 0 to 5 years of age (DfES, 2007).

In forming curriculum-based assessment of children from 0 to 5 years, practitioners in early years settings used the Early Years Foundation Stage descriptive indicators, the six Early Learning Goals (DfES, 2007). A profile of a child's attainment was formed, following their completion of the Early Years Foundation Stage at the end of Reception year. This profile reflected progress in attainment in the six Early Learning Goals since the child entered the care or pre-school setting. The non-statutory practice guidelines from the Department for Children, Skills and Families (DCSF, 2008c), helpfully broke down the Communication, Language and Literacy goal further. Six distinct areas of development were outlined: language for communication, language for thinking, linking sounds and letters, reading, writing and handwriting. Examples of language skills, and the age range a child would typically be expected to achieve this, were also provided. Unfortunately, the statutory framework gave far less detail than the practice guidelines when assessing

language skills (DCSF, 2007). As one "strand" of thirteen within the Early Learning Goals, "Language for Communication and Thinking" reflected a less pervasive role in the curriculum, considering the impact it has been shown to have on children's lives and learning.

Dame Tickell's review of the curriculum (Tickell, 2011), led to a revised Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum and Attainment Profile which became mandatory in September 2012 (DfE, 2012b). The new curriculum rectified the minimal role of language, by making *Communication and Language,* one of three *Prime Areas* of learning and development. Four *Specific Areas*, topical in nature rather than skills-based, were also included as target areas for planning and attainment. In the accompanying assessment resource, Development Matters (DfE, 2012a), clarification as to the role of the adult in supporting specific oral language skill development was given (see Appendix 1). Evidence-based techniques for practitioners were described, similar to those outlined in this Introduction chapter. However, little elaboration or example of the techniques as part of an activity was provided. Neither has a programme of nationwide training, with the aim of teaching new practices, been announced. Similarly, no programme of evaluation has yet been unveiled, to assess the outcomes of this change in guidance.

The purpose of any curriculum-based assessment, according to Cohen and Spenciner (2003), is to form a baseline of attainment for a child, against which future assessment of learning may be made. The usefulness of this lies in the ability to compare children to a national expected level of attainment; to compare within a class or group; and to use the information to identify delay or difficulty in the areas being assessed. Gullo (2006) points out that curriculum-based assessment can positively affect learning, where a circular process takes place: identification of difficulty or delay, is followed by a modification of the curriculum and/or teaching approach. Repetition of the assessment then takes place, and the cycle begins again (Gullo, 2006). However, where the curriculum assessment is not sensitive to the intricate steps in attainment of a skill, it is possible that difficulties may not be identified. Critics of the EYFS profile suggested that the examples provided for language development were too vague, lacking criteria at which a child can be said to have attained a scale point (Brooker, Rogers, Ellis, Hallet, & Roberts-Holmes, 2010; Tickell, 2011). It is likely that the new Development Matters guidance should resolve this flaw (DfE, 2012a). However, a further drawback of the profile lay in a lack of an explicit link, between degree of attainment of a skill, and a consequent

need for referral for a speech and language difficulty. Therefore, practitioners could use the tool to track achievement, but without expertise in speech and language development, it would be difficult for a practitioner to decide if a child requires referral for specific difficulties. Practitioners in early years settings reported struggling to identify children with speech and language difficulties, particularly when they had not received specific language training further to initial training (Mroz & Hall, 2003; Mroz, Hall, Santer, & Letts, 2002). This suggests that practitioners may benefit from more detailed, standardised checklists to support their identification of delayed speech and language skills in their pupils. The new document has not made clear where the cut-off point for a normal trajectory lies, and indeed the age-related expectations span an age gap of 20 months, with description of skills given for a child aged "30 to 50 months". This suggests that practitioners may be more challenged than ever, to decide if a child is significantly delayed in speech skills development.

In a series of observations reported by Ofsted last year, very few activities planned by staff in early years settings were specifically designed to enhance language skills (Ofsted, 2011). Limited planned activities occurred in settings where externally-led, targeted language training had not taken place. The report went on to suggest that staff would benefit from training which supported them to provide "opportunities to encourage children to explain and extend their thinking" (Ofsted, 2011, p.28). Clearly, the EYFS curriculum has been insufficient, in itself, to support practitioners to develop children's speech and language skills where these are not following a typical trajectory of development.

1.8 The Every Child a Talker *Programme*

In response to the recommendations in the Bercow Report, published the same year as the EYFS curriculum, the Government published the Better Communication action plan on 17 December 2008, with an outline for change in how children with SLCN, their families and teachers were supported (DCSF, 2008b). One of a number of initiatives arising from this plan, the *Every Child a Talker* (DCSF, 2008c) programme was launched to support educational providers in developing early language and communication skills of children aged 5 years and under. Training was provided, over a sustained period, by Speech and Language Therapists, and/or professionals with broad experience of child development in young children. The aims of the programme were to bring about transition towards

practice which ameliorates and prevents delays in oral language skills in early education settings. The programme consisted of guidelines on practice in Early Years settings, that is, in daycare and children's centres, nurseries and Reception classes for children aged 0 to 5 years. 51 Local Authorities (LAs) in the U.K. implemented this programme in February 2008, a further 47 in April 2009, with the programme rolling out nationally by April 2010. It was intended that the skills and practices imparted through the training would continue to be disseminated by staff in each LA in the foreseeable future.

The principles of *Every Child a Talker* addressed educator practice through four distinct themes. Firstly, guidelines and examples of teaching practice were given, with suggestions for how to alter staff interactions and pedagogy in order to enhance opportunities for high quality language interactions. Specific activities to elicit discussion from children were suggested, including targeted activities in small groups, to elicit narrative talk and descriptive language from children. Research has shown that activities designed specifically to improve oral language skills, are necessary if children are to close the gap in language fluency with same-aged peers (Dockrell et al., 2010; Justice et al., 2008). Secondly, the quality and frequency of adult-child interactions was addressed, and training provided to illustrate practices which promote children's verbal expressions. Waiting for a response, imitating what a child has just said, and "modelling" language phrases which are just beyond their current level of development, were among those techniques promoted, as was the use of open questions (Whitehurst et al., 1988; Girolametto and Weitzman, 2002).

Relationships between staff, parents and carers constituted the second theme, where a graduated process of inclusion and training was outlined, in order to support parents in undertaking similar "language rich" interactions with their children (Whitehurst et al., 1988; Senechal et al., 1995). Parents were identified as "children's first and most enduring educators" (DCSF, 2008b, p. 95). The initial level of involvement proposed access for parents to the setting, and demonstrations of good language support practice. The next level reflected a parent's input into the child and the classroom, with photographs and evidence from home reflecting current communication ability, and the sharing of culturally-appropriate language resources, either provided or suggested by parents. Examples included the use of dual-language books, or storybooks reflective of children's life and home experiences (Sneddon, 2008).

Thirdly, the *Every Child a Talker* programme provided an environmental audit, facilitating the assessment and further enhancement of opportunities which encouraged the use of language for communication purposes. For example, "conversation stations" were promoted, areas of the classroom where objects and props are provided to support discussion (Bond and Wasik, 2009). Awareness of noise levels was suggested, in order to ensure that children with and without sensory difficulties have access to the incidental, high-quality language provided in the setting (Clark, Martin, VanKempen, L'Alfred et al, 2006). Finally, approaches to planning for language learning within the daily curriculum were outlined. Suggested activities included a dialogic approach to book reading between adult and child (Whitehurst et al., 1988; Hargrave and Senechal, 2000). The practices throughout the *Every Child a Talker* programme, served to inform practitioners about children's language development and described activities and practices which would promote children's oral language skills. The programme reflected a body of evidence-based theory and practices, which were expected to lead to "language-rich" and "print-rich" environments in Early Years settings.

The final theme of the programme addressed the needs of children learning English as an additional language. Guidance regarding progression in English was given, clarifying when concern may be appropriate in regards to a possible delay in speech and language development. Suggestions for activities and ways of interaction to enhance the learning for children with very little English are described, including the use of non-verbal signs for communication and explicit teaching of English vocabulary. Many of the suggestions for activities were acknowledged as similar to those in the first strand.

"Activities in your setting which you plan specifically to support all children's language and communication skills should need little adapting for children learning EAL. Enhancing activities inevitably benefits all children in the setting."

(Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008c, p.57)

The Talking Time study had identified effective approaches to teaching vocabulary, and suggested that different methods would yield varying levels of impact on children's language skills. The *Every Child a Talker* programme was less directive in its guidance for practitioners, and did not specify a teaching method for teaching vocabulary to children with English as an Additional Language. The emergence of a successful programme would therefore be reliant upon individual practitioners' skills.

In tandem with the *Every Child a Talker* intervention, a programme of research seeking evidence of effective practice in language support for the Early Years was funded. Formed through guidance from the Better Communication Action Plan, the Better Communication Research Programme (BCRP) was funded until March 2012, directed by four leading educational researchers in the U.K. (DCSF, 2008a). The first aim of the programme was to investigate and ascertain the effectiveness of SLCN-supportive programmes, introduced into a range of Early Years and Key Stage One settings. Secondly, the project aimed to identify "best practice" in settings supporting SLCN, and provide recommendations for future practice and policy. Within this remit, was the formation of an evidence-based checklist, a tool to be used to identify effective oral language provision by setting practitioners in Early Years and Key Stage One settings (Dockrell, Bakopoulou, Law, Spencer et al., 2012). This could then be used to effectively compare practice in settings, with "best practice" as outlined following review of findings from research on oral language support. The checklist is intended to provide a tool for practitioners to identify their own practice strengths and requirements for future training. Both research evidence and setting practice could be brought together through the use of the tool to establish and maintain best practice in support of children's oral language development.

1.9 Continuing Professional Development

Policy-makers in schools realised that children's learning was reliant, to a large extent, on the teaching skills of practitioners in a school. With this in mind, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has become part of teachers' and early years practitioners' working year, building on training provided prior to qualification in early years teaching. Definitions used in the research in education settings in the U.K. draws largely on a base of research from the United States. The definition by Chris Day is used in systematic reviews of CPD by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI Centre) in the U.K.:

> Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their

> commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives.
>
> (Day, 1999, p. 4)

This definition focuses on the practitioner's wish to implement change, and Day's work highlights the strong motivation experienced by teachers when they engage in CPD, with the aim of enhancing their "professional thinking, planning and practice". For those providing and designing the programmes, the aim is to "alter the professional practices, beliefs, and understanding of school persons toward an articulated end" (Griffin, 1983, cited in Guskey, 2002). Michael Fullan and his colleagues have identified that, for the majority of teachers, this "end" or motivation is the improvement in learning outcomes for students (Fullan, 1999; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). In the initial recruitment of participants to the Every Child a Talker programme, Local Authority settings were invited to join of their own accord; no expectation or reward was linked to participation in the programme. This suggests that those attending the Every Child a Talker course would have been interested and motivated to learn about speech and language development in children's early years.

Improved learning outcomes of students is a motivating factor for practitioners. Research has shown that continued implementation of new practices is more likely when these can be linked to enhanced student outcomes (Guskey, 2000, 2002). The flow diagram shown below, Figure 1.0, is based on evidence that it is the improvement in learning that will result in a change in teachers' beliefs and continued use of new practices.

Professional Development	→	Change in: Teachers' Classroom Practices	→	Change in: Student Learning Outcomes	→	Change in: Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes

Figure 1.0 T.R. Guskey's Model of Successful CPD Implementation (2002).

For continued implementation of new practices to occur, teachers would firstly make changes to their practice, and then review the outcomes of these changes. Thomas Guskey's model therefore suggested that it is the opportunity for planning, implementing and reviewing which would drive change following CPD.

1.10 Sustained Collaborative CPD Programmes

Evaluations of professional development programmes for school practitioners suggest that there is extensive evidence to support this theory of change. Systematic reviews of evaluations of school CPD programmes were conducted by the EPPI Centre (Cordingley, Bell, Rundell and Evans, 2003; Cordingley, Bell, Evans and Firth, 2005). Studies evaluating one-off sessions, or programmes of less than 12 weeks' duration, were excluded from the review, as these were considered too brief to create lasting change in teachers' knowledge and practice.

Of the 15 studies of CPD programmes evaluated in 2003, 14 were reported to have produced significant positive changes in both teacher practices and student learning as reflected in assessed outcomes (ibid, 2003). Each study was evaluated for common aspects believed to have resulted in this successful implementation. The positive effect of collaborating with colleagues was acknowledged. This "collaborative training" was described as "teachers working together on a sustained basis and/or teachers working with LEA or HEI or other professional colleagues" (Cordingley et al., 2003, p.2). Studies evaluating collaborative CPD suggested that a "critical friendship" group of peers was essential to supporting the transition of new practice and knowledge from the training site to the classroom.

The structure of delivery for the *Every Child a Talker* programme was an example of a sustained and collaborative CPD training programme. Practitioners benefitted from access to a forum of colleagues to share their experiences and outcomes with following implementation of new practices. The ten, day-long training sessions were provided over two terms, equivalent to seven months, suggesting sufficient time for practitioners to implement and measure the impact of any changes to their classroom practice.

The work of Cordingley and colleagues, and an earlier systematic review in the U.S., have identified the cycle of implementation, observation and feedback with colleagues and training staff, to be a common element in successful CPD programmes (Joyce & Showers, 1988). More specifically identified in the U.S.

review, was the value of observation and feedback by training staff, in the classroom. Though the *Every Child a Talker* programme did not provide opportunities for training staff to observe practitioners in the classroom, one session of the two-term programme did give feedback on video footage of practitioners implementing suggested practice. This may be a weakness in the programme, as the single opportunity to receive professional guidance did not provide the cycle of observation and feedback shown by research to lead to successful, enduring change to practice.

Practitioners in classrooms and schools face novel and often unpredicted barriers to implementing new practices, such as difficulties combining curriculum demands with new practices, or allocating new activities within already-tight daily timetables (Guskey, 2000). Teacher isolation in the face of these barriers has been prevented where coaching support continues beyond the end of the training course, and where forums of colleagues have been available to provide ideas and solutions in practice (Cordingley et al., 2005; Joyce & Showers, 1988; Lydon & King, 2009; Polly & Hannafin, 2011). In their review of teachers who failed to implement change following a "Learner-Centred" CPD programme, Polly and Hanafin (2011) identified a lack of support as one of three inhibiting factors. In the transition from off-site training to independent on-site (in the classroom) practice, teachers found themselves isolated and lacking in confidence, when attempting to implement new practices. Despite a CPD programme of 48 hours contact over one year, teachers required extended and sustained support, if they were to implement change without the support of the coaches and other colleagues.

Lydon and King (2009) reported a more successful CPD programme which trained a whole department of science staff, rather than individual class teachers. In explaining their success, the participants reported that having the time and opportunity to discuss unexpected difficulties with colleagues who had shared the training allowed them implement change successfully. Thus, the impact of teachers feeling isolated as agents of change resulted in well-planned CPD programmes failing at the implementation stage.

Following its completion, there was no continued forum or expert support for teachers in their implementation of the *Every Child a Talker* principles. Furthermore, only one practitioner from each setting received the training, with the expectation that new practices and knowledge would be disseminated to the

remaining staff. This suggests that maintenance of the programme may have been uneven, with some practitioners struggling to continue with new practices, or feeling unable to disseminate practices sufficiently to colleagues.

Further aspects common to successfully-implemented CPD include demonstration by coaching staff; the use of evidence-based theory and practice (Adey, 2004; Cordingley et al., 2005; Joyce & Showers, 1988); management support and structural changes which ensure the maintenance of changes (Adey, 2004; Guskey, 2000); and motivation of participants through self-selection or an "alignment" of pedagogical beliefs with their own (Polly & Hannafin, 2011). However, this last point contradicts the theory of Guskey (2002), who argued that even reluctant participants may re-order their beliefs upon observation of improved student outcomes, following the implementation of proposed practices. Consequently, the critical aspect to be investigated when evaluating a programme may be whether the practices were implemented to any degree in the classroom following CPD. This perspective suggests that gathering the views of participants immediately following a CPD programme will not reflect the successful implementation of change in classroom practice. Evaluations of change will therefore require later investigation and targeted observation of classroom practice.

In reviewing the structure of the Every Child a Talker programme, many aspects of its delivery reflected those expected of effective CPD courses. Delivered by specialists in speech and language over the course of two terms (c. seven months), the Every Child a Talker programme met the criterion of "sustained delivery" outlined by the EPPE authors. Government funding ensured that participants were released from teaching duties in order to attend the ten training days. However, there was no prescribed additional time, nor were settings directed in regards to reducing other workload demands on the practitioners. Each setting volunteered to attend the course, suggesting that the principles of the programme were similarly aligned with the management and policies of the settings at the beginning of the programme, in September 2009. The practices presented were evidence-based, and co-planning of activities and lessons occurred with the Early Language specialist, and colleagues.

In contrast to the effective CPD programme reported by Lydon and King (2009), the *Every Child a Talker* programme did not provide modelled lessons in participants' settings. However, there was an opportunity for participants to video themselves

implementing new practices and knowledge, and have this reviewed by the specialists and colleagues. During the *Every Child a Talker* programme, practitioners received training and feedback from both colleagues and speech and language therapists. Early Years practitioners have previously reported the value of links to, and spending "face-to-face" time with, speech and language therapists (Mroz, 2006; Mroz et al., 2002). This support was considered a contributory factor in the degree to which participants implemented changes to their practice. Through feedback following observation, and the shared planning of lessons, there was an increased likelihood that practitioners would implement change, and overcome difficulties encountered following the introduction of change in the classroom. The framework of the *Every Child a Talker* programme benefitted practitioners in two ways; firstly, through receiving guidance from speech and language therapists, above those of non-language specialists, and secondly, by having expert feedback over a sustained period of time.

The *Every Child a Talker* programme combined the research evidence and practices in oral language development, which practitioners had reported as lacking in initial training courses (Mroz & Hall, 2003). However, the challenge for programme providers was to ensure that practices and knowledge became embedded into classroom practice. The content of the programmes would need to be supported by a number of structural characteristics, common to all successful professional development programmes, if the provision was to realise successful translation to the nurseries, childcare centres and classrooms of practitioners.

1.11 Structuring the Evaluation of CPD programmes

In evaluating CPD programmes, Guskey proposes that "evidence" of a programme's effectiveness must be sought through a range of descriptors and indicators (Guskey, 2000). In an adaptation of his Five-Level Model, Muijs and colleagues outline the domains where evidence of effectiveness may be collected (Muijs, Day, Harris, & Lindsay, 2004). As a programme of professional development must be effective in delivering expected content in an accessible format to teachers, this is the first level of the CPD to be evaluated. Reflecting similar domains from earlier frameworks of evaluation, the relevance of the programme content and its basis on theory, as well as the adequacy of teaching and location, may be evaluated initially (Hammond, 1973; Kirkpatrick, 1977, 1978). Questionnaires distributed at the end of a final session for example, will collect the

reactions of the participants, and inform this lower level domain of evaluation. Guskey suggests that this evidence can support future planning of location and format of CPD programmes, but often fails to predict sustained or actual change in practices of the participant.

The second level of enquiry can also take place at the time of completion of the programme. Knowledge attained through teaching is assessed at this level; it may be practical, relating to knowing which props or tools to use, or knowledge which is deeper, relating to the principles behind practices (Knight, 2002). Evidence for different levels of understanding may require different tools of enquiry, as deeper knowledge may not be accessed through incidental enquiry or observation.

A third level of evaluation focuses on organisational support and changes, which are deemed necessary to support a practitioner in implementing and maintaining changes. These include the impact of school management, which may prioritise other programmes or aims above that presented in the CPD programme. Providing sufficient resources to maintain change, through staffing issues, sufficient time and funds, will also impact on the continued dissemination of programme practice. These aspects will require sensitive exploration in schools, and caution on the part of an enquirer in regards to the "reported reality" gleaned from perspectives of individuals (Guskey, 2000).

The fourth level of evaluation investigates participants' use of their new knowledge and skills. This questions whether practices have been maintained following training, an evaluation which must take place a reasonable amount of time after the end of training. In evaluating this, the researcher clearly defines the critical indicators being investigated. A description of the expected practice ought to be clarified with details of frequency and degree of use expected. These should reflect the planned and actual teaching provided on the programme.

The fifth and final level of evaluation is considered by the authors to be essential in attesting to the efficacy of a CPD school programme; that is, student outcomes. Cognitive outcomes, possibly measured by attainment, and non-cognitive outcomes, ought to be measured using standardised tests (Muijs et al., 2004). This requires measurement before, during and after the programme delivery.

The Five-Level Model is comprehensive in its approach to evaluation; however, it is demanding of time and resources for researchers. Level one and two can be

completed immediately following training. These reflect the subjective experience of a practitioner and the explicit knowledge taken from training. The remaining approaches to evaluation require a distance of time between completion of training and implementation.

This research project was designed to review impact of the *Every Child a Talker* programme retrospectively, between one and two years after the training had taken place. Thus, the three methods which could possibly be used to investigate efficacy were levels three, four and five. All three approaches aim to measure applied practices and the impact resulting from any consequent changes in practice.

Evaluation at level three seeks to identify the organisational factors which have been shown to facilitate a programme's successful implementation. The next level of evaluation aims to confirm success of a programme when practices are not only known as theory, but implemented into practice. This level of evaluation can be most informative if knowledge is considered along a continuum. Hall and Hord (1987) clarify the degree of use of knowledge by educational practitioners, from non-use, to routine or procedural use, through to the level of critical thinker with embedded knowledge. When exploring routine use, the authors suggest that patterns of working will be observed which reflect a variety of use of both practices and knowledge. The "critical thinker" will be able to co-ordinate with colleagues, and will have reflected on their knowledge and practice. They will implement changes, following evaluation of student outcomes, in order to improve overall impact on students (Hall and Hord, 1987). In exploring the degree of knowledge held by a practitioner, approaches include observation of behavioural indicators as well as enquiry of deeper knowledge, through direct questioning and gathering of material evidence (Guskey, 2000).

1.12 The Current Study

This study aimed to evaluate the impact, if any, of the *Every Child a Talker* programme on teaching practices in the urban nursery settings which participated in the training in 2009-2010. A comparison group was identified from those settings where staff had not received sustained, collaborative CPD training in speech and language development. For the purpose of the study, the definition of "sustained" was identical to that used by Cordingley et al. (2003), reflecting CPD which gives opportunities for practitioners to apply taught practice, monitor changes, and receive expert feedback between teaching sessions. Practitioners in the comparison

settings had received either short sessions, without opportunities for feedback from professionals, or had completed no training at all in speech and language development. This contrasted with the sample group of settings, where at least one practitioner had completed the ten-day *Every Child a Talker* programme over six months.

In examining differences and similarities, the research design reflected the evaluative approaches described at levels three and four of Guskey's *Five-Level Model* (Guskey, 2000; Muijs et al., 2004). These were completed in two consecutive phases. The first phase sought to identify the extent of implementation of taught practices by practitioners in their workplace, and to determine the impact of the training programme on practitioner knowledge and confidence. This reflected evaluation at level four of the *Five-Level Model*, where the researcher seeks to determine the extent of knowledge learned during training, and whether techniques have been implemented over time (Muijs et al., 2004). The second phase focused on seeking practitioners' beliefs as to the organisational factors which facilitated or impeded practitioners from implementing new practices. This reflected level three evaluation, which identifies the system-wide factors resulting in successful transfer of new practices to the workplace.

Three research questions were developed to address the target areas of evaluation sought, and which built upon research already completed and reviewed in the Introduction chapter:

i) What language support practices are taking place to meet speech and language needs for children under five years, in those settings whose staff have received *Every Child a Talker* training, and in similar settings without this training?

ii) What knowledge and confidence do staff report, regarding the support and assessment of children's speech and language development and needs?

iii) According to staff, what factors have been instrumental in facilitating or impeding practices which specifically support speech and language-development?

In selecting the first group of settings, voluntary participation was sought from nurseries in the borough which had received *Every Child a Talker* training. Once

this group was formed, a second group of settings without *Every Child a Talker* training was formed to create a comparison group. To ensure that the two groups contained settings with similar levels of language development needs within their pupil populations, relevant characteristics of the pupils of each *Every Child a Talker*-trained setting were collected. This allowed a matching setting with a similar profile of pupils to be identified and included in the comparison group. Criteria used to match settings included the proportion of children with formally identified Special Educational Needs, Speech and Language difficulties, English as an Additional Language, and eligibility for Free School Meals.

Two phases of data collection took place over a six month period. A sequential mixed-methods approach was used, generating both quantitative and qualitative data. During the first phase, practitioners' practices were observed and recorded in one observation session using a systematic observation tool. The tool chosen focused the observer's attention on evidence-based techniques shown to develop children's oral language skills, particularly those practices endorsed in the *Every Child a Talker* programme. The *Communication supporting Classrooms Observation Tool* was completed in 2011, in time for the data collection stage of this study (Dockrell, Bakopoulou, Law, Spencer and Lindsay, 2012) (see Appendix 2).

In an effort to complement observed findings with staff's background training information, all practitioners in an observed setting were asked to complete a short questionnaire. This was a slightly amended, shortened version of that given to practitioners in the study by Mroz, Hall, Santer and Letts (2002). This recorded levels of training received and confidence experienced in assessing and identifying children's speech and language skills. Scenarios were used to determine staff's knowledge of typical speech and language development at three different ages.

In order to answer the first research question, quantitative data was analysed from the single, hour-long observation in each of the 18 settings. Data from the staff questionnaires were collected on the day of the observation or shortly afterwards, and analysed in order to address the second research question. Statistical analyses combining both sets of quantitative data were also completed, in order to identify possible links between self-reported information and observed practices.

In the second phase of the study, a focus group and interviews were used to address the final research question. All settings were invited to participate in this phase, and practitioners from eight settings volunteered. Questions focused on

eliciting staff views of those system-wide factors supporting or impeding implementation of new practices supporting language development. Data from this phase were qualitative in nature, and analysed using Thematic Analysis.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The first section of this chapter reviews the research questions to be addressed and describes the research design of the study. The process of identifying participants and forming inclusion and exclusion criteria are then outlined. The *Data Collection* section describes the two measurement tools used, formation of interview questions, and the procedures employed to complete each phase of the data collection. Following description of the Pilot Study, the *Data Analysis* section provides descriptions and rationale for data analysis and interpretation methods used. Finally, the ethical considerations of the research are outlined.

2.2 Research Questions

Each research question was addressed using one or more methods of data collection. The first research question explored oral language support practices of staff in nursery settings. Observable practices were recorded using systematic observations with an evidence-based monitoring tool. Following this, a small sample of the participants agreed to be interviewed. These staff were asked to provide further descriptions of observable and unobservable practices which they believed they used to support oral language development of children.

The second research question sought information about practitioners' knowledge of how to support oral language skills development of children aged 3 to 4 years. The degree of confidence in specific areas of language support was also investigated. A self-report questionnaire sought information in relation to knowledge of oral language developmental milestones; previous training and CPD in speech and language development, and current need for further training; and the use of tools for speech and language development. This questionnaire, in conjunction with interviews, also addressed the question of confidence of staff in identifying and supporting oral language skill development of children.

The final research question prompted exploration of the facilitating factors, and the barriers to, implementing oral language support practices. Interviews with participants sought to elicit details about their experience of CPD, effective elements of this, and the circumstances which supported them to implement change following CPD training.

2.3 Theoretical and methodological perspective

The researcher adopted a pragmatic perspective when considering the methodological and epistemological issues in this research (see Guba and Lincoln, 1994, 2005 for review). Therefore, the research questions have been allowed to direct the choice of measuring tools. The first research question sought to identify observable practices, and make a comparison between the practices of two separate populations. The aim was to seek confirmation, which required a quantitative approach to the data collection and analysis (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010). Similarly, the second research question sought to measure the extent of knowledge and confidence experienced by staff. Again, a comparison was sought between the two populations, and a quantitative approach to data collection was taken. The data collection and analysis addressing these two questions took place concurrently in all settings, and comprised the first phase of the research design.

The second phase of the research addressed the final research question. This question sought to investigate staff's beliefs around facilitating and impeding factors to implementing practices. This question was exploratory in nature and would yield data which was varied and extremely subjective. The qualitative approach of interviews was chosen to allow the least-biased collection of data, with researcher interpretation occurring after collection had been completed.

Due to the different types of data required to address all three research questions, a mixed methods research design was used.

2.4 Research Design

An explanatory, concurrent research design was used for this study involving two distinct phases (Cresswell and Plano-Clark, 2007). In the first phase of the study, data collected were quantitative in nature. Systematic observations were carried out using a checklist of clearly defined practices. These provided a measure of practitioners' observable practices in supporting oral language skill development, data which addressed the first research question exploring the impact of training on teachers' practices. Each observation was brief, lasting one hour only, presenting a single "snapshot" of practices and observable knowledge of staff.

In addition to this, a self-report questionnaire was used to collect data about staff knowledge, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training in speech and language, and staff self-reported levels of confidence. The questionnaire data

would address the second research question, focusing on the knowledge and confidence experienced by staff in all settings.

In order to extend the findings from the first phase of quantitative data-collection, a second phase of qualitative data-collection was completed. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a small sample of participants. In one setting, a focus group was formed which answered the same questions. The interview schedule sought information which addressed the third research question, regarding facilitating and impeding factors in the implementation of language-supporting practices. Upon completion of both data-collection phases, results from each phase were analysed and reported in separate sections of the *Results* Chapter.

2.5 Participants

One aim of this research was to examine the oral language support practices of settings where the CPD programme, Every Child a Talker, was delivered. Selection of this sample group was therefore purposive, and was taken from the 34 settings which had received Every Child a Talker training in the borough. Of these, 14 were nursery classes located in state-maintained Primary Schools. An Independent Primary School nursery class was also included. Nursery Schools, with a pupil population of only 3- to 4-year old children, not linked to any Primary School, comprised two in number. The remaining 17 settings were private, voluntary or independent daycare providers.

The first research question explored what might be different in those settings which have received Every Child a Talker training, compared to those which have not. In order to accomplish this, the sample of participants consisted of two groups: a selection from the *Every Child a Talker*-trained settings, and a matching group of *non-Every Child a Talker*-trained settings.

2.5.1 Criteria for Inclusion

The first group of the sample was drawn from the 34 *Every Child a Talker-trained* settings. The second group consisted of matched settings, chosen according to pupil population criteria (see Section 2.5.2 *Description of Matched Pairs*). Inclusion in the sample was based on two criteria. The first criterion sought settings which provided staff with similar levels of professional qualifications. The 17 private, voluntary and independent daycare settings with *Every Child a Talker* training were first considered for inclusion. The variation in background training of

the leader of the setting was significant across different settings, with many daycare settings using a manager with a childcare qualification, rather than a teacher qualification. This difference may impact on the manner in which the curriculum was provided, and choice of learning activities provided between settings. The inconsistencies in practitioner qualification level would result in difficulties matching an *Every Child a Talker*-trained setting with a similar *Non-Every Child a Talker* trained setting.

A second criterion sought consistency between settings in the type and quality of indoor and outdoor environments and learning resources provided. Upon inspection of the premises, it was noted that the private nurseries included in the *Every Child a Talker* training had smaller populations and smaller premises than the equivalent provision in school nursery classes and Nursery Schools. These settings also failed to meet the second criterion, as variations in funding sources across the group may have impacted on the learning environment and quality of resources offered. Therefore these 17 settings were not included in the sample for the research project.

The independent primary school, two nursery schools and 14 state-maintained primary schools passed the two criteria. Each setting was directed by a teacher, and provide indoor and outdoor provisions which could be easily matched in the next stage of sample selection. As a result, the first group of the sample was drawn from these 17 *Every Child a Talker*-trained settings.

2.5.2 Description of the Criteria for Matched Pairs

Following the identification of these 17 *Every Child a Talker*-trained settings, 17 similar settings were sought which had not received *Every Child a Talker* training. In order to allow comparison between a setting with *Every Child a Talker* training, and similar settings without any sustained collaborative speech and language training, criteria were devised to match schools according to demographic characteristics of the nursery pupil population.

The first criterion was the proportion of pupils already referred to the Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) service. This was considered relevant as attendance by the SaLT service in the school would be higher for those settings with such referrals. This may lead to opportunities for staff to access informal training and support from the SaLT service. A second criterion for matching schools was the

proportion of learners from multilingual backgrounds, learning English as an Additional Language. A higher proportion of these learners may impact on the provision of oral language skill activities due to a higher and more explicit need to be taught English. This, in turn, could affect the level of training in speech and language development sought by staff. A third criterion was the proportion of children with formal Special Educational Needs, including communication difficulties such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder. All three criteria may result in staff developing increased awareness and skills in oral language development techniques, and so schools were closely matched on these criteria. A fourth criterion was the socioeconomic background of the class population, represented by the percentage of children qualifying for Free School Meals. These data are collected annually from schools through the Pupil Level Annual School Census carried out by Local Authorities in the United Kingdom (source: Local Authority Statistics, 2011). It was accessed by the researcher by permission of the Local Authority of the Borough where the study was completed.

Following the identification of these two groups, 17 *Every Child a Talker*-trained settings and 17 similar Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings, each were contacted and their participation in the project requested.

Of the *Every Child a Talker*-trained settings invited to participate, six state-maintained primary schools, one independent primary school, and two nursery schools agreed to participate. These formed a sample group of nine *Every Child a Talker*-trained settings. From the 17 Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings invited to participate, seven state-maintained primary schools, one independent primary school, and one nursery school agreed to participate. The sample consisted of 18 settings (See Table 2.0 below). Of these, 16 formed matched pairs for the purpose of analysing results from the observation of oral language support practices.

Table 2.0

Profile of participants in the sample group

Participant	*Setting Type*	*Number of Nursery Pupils*
	Every Child a Talker *trained settings* (n = 9)	
A	Primary school	50
B	Primary school	17
C	Primary school	25
D	Primary school	50
E	Primary school	25
F	Primary school	30
G	Primary school [a]	34
H	Nursery school	60
I	Nursery school	53
	Non-Every Child a Talker *trained settings* (n = 9)	
J	Primary school	20
K	Primary school	24
L	Primary school	18
M	Primary school	26

N	Primary school	25
O	Primary school	26
P	Primary school	13
Q	Primary school [a]	22
R	Nursery school	64

[a] *This school is not state-maintained, but privately funded.*

2.5.3 The Socioeconomic Status, Language and Learning Needs of Pupil Populations

Data were recorded reflecting the pupil population characteristics of each setting, in order to ensure that settings from the two *Every Child a Talker* groups were similar in the language and learning needs of their pupil populations. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 (Appendices 4a and 4b) display the percentage of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), Speech and Language (S&L) needs, English as an Additional Language (EAL) status and eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) attending each setting.

The three Nursery Schools H, I and R reported high proportions of pupils with each characteristic. Nursery School R, a Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained setting, reported the highest percentage of pupils with eligibility for Free School Meals (64%) and Speech and Language needs (20%). The *Every Child a Talker-trained* setting Primary School I reported the highest proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs (25%), while Primary School A, also an *Every Child a Talker-Trained* setting, reported highest proportion of children speaking English as an Additional Language.

The two Independent Primary Schools reported the lowest scores across each characteristic. In these settings, no pupils were registered as experiencing Special Educational Needs or Speech and Language Needs, nor were any pupils eligible to receive Free School Meals. All other settings reported a minimum of 15% of their population as eligible for Free School Meals.

2.5.3.1 Comparison of the Profile of Every Child a Talker *and Non-*Every Child a Talker *settings*

In order to establish the degree of similarity between each matched pair, a comparison was carried out within each pupil population characteristic using a Wilcoxen Signed Rank Test of Matched Pairs. Table 2.3 shows the scores, probability and mean percentage and standard deviations of the pupil populations of both *Every Child a Talker-* and Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained groups.

Table 2.3

Comparison of Pupil Population Characteristics Across Matched Pairs of Every Child a Talker- *and Non-*Every Child a Talker *trained Groups using a Wilcoxen Signed Rank Test of Matched Pairs.*

Pupil Population Demographics	*Every Child a Talker-trained M (SD) %*	*Non-Every Child a Talker trained M (SD) %*	*Wilcoxen Matched Pairs Z (p)*
Pupils with Speech and Language Needs	9.11 (6.15)	6.89 (6.72)	-1.05 (0.30)
Pupils registered as having Special Educational Needs	7.44 (7.97)	6.11 (6.31)	-0.17 (0.87)
Pupils with English as an Additional Language	60.89 (26.30)	61.11 (24.46)	-0.35 (0.72)
Pupils Eligible to Receive Free School Meals	33.78 (17.76)	40.67 (16.93)	-1.86 (0.06)

Data from the table suggest that there was no significant difference between the matched pairs of settings across the four pupil population characteristics. The greatest difference between matched pairs was found in the percentage of pupils reported as eligible for Free School Meals, with far greater numbers reported in Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings (M=40.67%, SD =16.93) than in *Every Child a Talker*-trained settings (M=33.78%, SD =40.67). However this difference did not quite reach a significant level when tested across each matched pair (Z =-1.86, p =0.06). The remaining scores from the Wilcoxen Test reflect equivalence of the

two groups on the three population characteristics, Speech and Language needs, Special Educational needs, and English as an Additional Language status.

Every Child a Talker-trained settings reported higher percentages of pupils with Special Educational Needs (M =7.44%, SD =7.97) than Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings (M =6.11%, SD =6.31), and even higher numbers with Speech and Language diagnosed needs (M =9.11%, SD =6.15) than non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings (M =6.89%, SD =6.72). However, the Non-*Every Child a Talker* settings reported a higher percentage of children eligible for Free School meals, suggesting their population contained slightly more children from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

In both groups, the settings with the two highest percentages of children on the Speech and Language (SaLT) Register also had the greatest percentage of children registered at Early Years (EY) Action Plus or with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN).

2.6 Data Collection

2.6.1 Introduction

The Data Collection section is divided into three separate sections. First, the tool used to carry out the systematic observation of oral language practice is described, including the reliability of the Tool as published by the designing research team. This is followed by description of the inter-rater reliability process carried out by the author for the current study. Finally, the procedure used to complete each observation is outlined.

Next, the rationale behind the questionnaire is presented, and its original source cited. The procedure used to disseminate and collect the questionnaires follows this. Finally, the interview schedule is described, and the method of completing this stage is given.

2.6.2 Research Information Sheet and Consent Form

Following informal agreement to participate in the study by the school Nursery Teacher, an electronic copy of the Research Information Sheet and Consent Letter was emailed to the setting (Appendix 5). All staff in the nursery class were invited to complete this in the presence of the researcher on the day of the observation. That way, questions could be answered to ensure participants

understood the terms fully before signing the forms. The process of gathering informed consent from all participating staff members was carried out according to ethical guidelines as published by The British Psychological Society (2009).

2.6.3 Procedure for Selection of the Observation Tool

The tool used to observe adult practice was selected following evaluation by the researcher of a number of classroom schedules for observation in school settings. Two scales which have been standardised using a U.S.-based sample were initially considered for this study. The Caregiver Interaction Scale (Arnett, 1989), and the Individualized Classroom Assessment Scoring System (Downer, Borren, Lima and Luckner et al, 2010), were reviewed. However, both were rejected due to a lack of consideration for environmental aspects of the classroom, and an extensive number of criteria relating to child interaction skills rather than those of the practitioner. The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) was then considered. This uses seven scales to record Early Years practice and provision, including Space and Furnishings; Language-Reasoning of the child; Activities and Interaction by staff with children and parents (Harms, Clifford and Cryer, 1998). This scale was successfully used in research in Early Years settings in the United Kingdom (Melhuish, 1994; Sylva et al., 1999).

The research team designing the *ECERS-R* measured inter-rater reliability in two stages (see Sylva et al., 1999). In the first stage, two observers used the tool in a sample of 45 classrooms. Following low inter-rater agreement in this stage, revisions were made and a second series of observations were completed by both observers in 21 settings. An inter-rater reliability analysis was then repeated, examining percentage agreement across all indicators as well as internal consistency between subscales. No item had an indicator agreement level below 70%, and there was 86.1% agreement across all 470 indicators. Kappa co-efficients ranged from 0.28 to 0.90 across indicators. Internal consistency was assessed at this stage across the seven subscales. A Cronbach Alpha test was completed, and internal consistency found to lie between 0.71 and 0.88 (Harms, Clifford and Cryer, 1998).

This scale had a greater focus on children's behaviour than practitioner practices. In order to reflect the range of practitioner practices espoused in the Every Child a Talker programme, a second scale would have been required. For this reason, the ECERS was thought to be unsuitable as an observation tool.

A recently developed self-audit tool for Early Years and Key Stage One settings became available for use before the researcher in this project began the data collection phase. Through a review of recent research evidence on classroom-based practices supporting children's oral language development, an auditing tool for use in Early Years and Key Stage One settings was developed and completed in November 2011 by the Better Communication Research Programme (Dockrell et al., 2012). The *Communication Supporting Classroom (CsC) Observation Tool* was devised following a wide review of recently published research studies. The tool was also closely linked to the original research evidence used to develop the *Every Child a Talker* programme (DCFS, 2008).

The *CsC Observation Tool* consisted of three distinct dimensions of measurement, reflecting oral language-supportive resources, activities and adult-child interaction techniques. The first dimension was labelled the *Language Learning Environment*. This contained 19 points which described aspects of the physical environment and outdoor learning area. The second dimension referred to *Language Learning Opportunities*. This is a five-point scale, reflecting different types of opportunities which may be presented to children by adults, and which have been shown to support the development of children's oral language skills. The third dimension was labelled *Language Learning Interactions*. This 20-point scale identified different techniques used in spoken exchanges with children, which have been shown to enhance their oral language skills.

A pilot study was completed by the designing research team, consisting of 13 classroom observations across nine settings. The inter-rater reliability on the first dimension, *Language Learning Environment*, was consistently high across all observations. There was 83% agreement between the two raters in 12 of the 13 settings. The inter-rater reliability score from the thirteenth setting was not reported. The inter-rater reliability of the *Language Learning Opportunities* dimension was lower, with 71% agreement for 11 of the 13 observations completed. Again, no information was available as to the inter-rater reliability in the two omitted observation settings. The final dimension *Language Learning Interactions* reflected the quality and type of interactions between practitioners and children. This dimension achieved inter-rater reliability above 84% in 12 of the 13 settings observed, with no information available as to the reliability score from the final setting.

Following repeated observations by the research team, it was noted that very few new practices were observed in the second hour (Dockrell et al., 2012). The duration of the observation using the *CsC Observation Tool* was therefore set at one hour, with 20 minutes prior to this recommended to allow familiarisation with the classroom setting and resources.

Given its high inter-rater reliability, and similarity to the research evidence used to develop the *Every Child a Talker* programme, this tool was chosen to measure the oral language support practices of staff in this London borough.

2.6.3.1 Pilot Study to Develop Researcher Inter-Rater Reliability of the Communication supporting Classrooms Observation Tool

In order to become familiar with the correct use of the *CsC Observation Tool*, the author completed a pilot study in three primary school classes. Three observations were completed by the author and a member of the designing research team. In order to ensure that each observer recorded the observed resources, opportunities and interactions consistently, both observers stood near each other, and wrote down snippets of conversation and interactions which they then shared and coded together.

Following each observation, scores of inter-rater reliability were calculated between the two observers. The number of occurrences of each type of *Language Learning Environment*, *Language Learning Observation*, and *Language Learning Interaction* was calculated by each observer. In the *Language Learning Environment* dimension, 19 separate resources and environmental aspects were listed. For 16 of these, the resource was recorded as either present or absent, and scored as 1 or 0 respectively. For the final three elements, one point was given if the resource was present, such as the availability of musical instruments for children to use. A second point was awarded if children were observed using the resource during the hour-long observation. This resulted in a maximum score of 22 points on the *Language Learning Environment* dimension.

In the *Language Learning Observation* dimension, five types of opportunities could be observed. Each type was recorded up to five times. This resulted in a maximum overall score of 25 points on this dimension.

When scoring the *Language Learning Interaction* dimension, 20 separate elements were listed, and a maximum of five occurrences of each was recorded. This resulted in a maximum score of 100 in this dimension.

When calculating inter-rater reliability, each occurrence and absence of the element was included in the calculations. For example, for the element "confirming", a total of five instances can be recorded. If Observer One observes three, she will confirm three as "present", and mark the final two instances as "absent". Observer Two may only note two instances of "confirming". She will mark two as "present", three as "absent". Thus, agreement occurred as follows: of five instances, observer one rated four similarly to observer two, and one dissimilarly. Therefore, of a potential of five recordable instances, agreement occurred in four, equivalent to 80% inter-rater reliability.

Comparing scores from the third observation completed by the researcher and a member of the research team, agreement occurred in 18 of the 19 elements in the *Language Learning Environment* dimension. As three of the elements were credited one point each for presence and for observed use, the total given by the first observer was 21 points, and by the second, was 22 points. The lack of agreement occurred in the recording of the presence of "an appropriate range of books". The first observer noted a lack of dual-language books, causing her to accurately record this element as *absent*. (See Appendix 3 for further details of examples for each element). Out of a total of 22 observable elements, consistency in observations occurred in 21 of the elements. When calculating the inter-rater reliability score, the number of agreed elements was divided by the number which could possibly have been recorded. Thus, 21 was divided by 22, resulting in an inter-rater reliability score of 95% in the *Language Learning Environment* dimension.

Of the five types of *Language Learning Opportunities* listed, observers agreed that no interactive book-reading with an adult was observed. The remaining four opportunities could have been observed up to five times each, giving a maximum of 20 instances upon which the two observers must agree. Both observers recorded the same nine instances and 11 absences across these 20 opportunities, reflecting 100% inter-rater reliability in the *Language Learning Opportunities* dimension.

There was far less consistency between observers when recording observations of the 20 elements within the *Language Learning Interactions* dimension. This dimension provides a maximum of five recordable instances of the 20 elements, 100

recordable instances in total. Full agreement across all five instances occurred in 16 of the 20 elements. Of these 15 elements, both observers agreed they had seen no example of two of the elements, but similar numbers of instances across the remaining 13 elements. The observers therefore agreed on the 75 recordable instances across these 15 elements.

Disagreement between observers arose across five elements, in a total of nine instances. On one occasion, the observers were clearly not focused on the same adult, as two adults were working with the same group of children. Consequently, two extra points were awarded for the "Use of Natural Gesture" element by one observer, but not the second observer. This resulted in agreement in three out of five recordable instances for this element. Instances of "Scripting" were recorded four times by the observer from the research design team, in line with the description in the guidelines (see Appendix 3). These instances, where the teacher gave children the beginning of an answer, were not recognised as "Scripting" by the second observer, leading to inconsistency on four instances of this element. This led to agreement in only one out of five recordable instances.

There was also disagreement around the coding of three particular techniques. This occurred when a teacher repeated what a child had said, but corrected it slightly to give clarity, refine pronunciation or add meaning. This practice was identified as "Extending" "Modelling" or "Imitating" by the two observers, depending on their subjective interpretations. Disagreement across these three elements occurred in four instances, resulting in agreement in 11 out of a maximum of 15 recordable instances. Later in this research, these three elements would occasionally appear too similar for the author to code them with confidence. The author therefore made note of ambiguous examples, which were shared with a member of the designing research team before final coding. From a maximum of 100 observable instances, the two observers achieved agreement in 91, resulting in an inter-rater reliability score of 91%.

2.6.3.2. Procedure of the Observation Phase

Observations took place only in the morning, starting at either 9am or 10.20am. Each setting was observed on one occasion only, by the researcher alone. Informal questioning in some schools suggested that children were grouped together according to their dates of birth, with the older children brought in for

morning sessions. Consistency in the time of observation suggested that children across the settings would be of similar ages.

The researcher endeavoured to move between adult-child dyads in order to observe each staff member for equal amounts of time. As four settings were equivalent to the size of two standard nursery classes, the researcher focused the observation on a maximum of five practitioners in one hour. In order to make a fair comparison between the settings, she ensured that only one teacher (or Deputy Headteacher) in each setting was included in the observation. Thus, the practices observed came from staff with similar levels of qualifications across all settings.

The researcher moved around the room with the aim of observing all the activities where adults and children interacted. Following several minutes observing one adult-child dyad, the researcher moved to another dyad in the classroom. A maximum of five minutes was spent observing one adult before moving to another. Some practitioners were not interacting with children but observing them. This reduced the number of adults available for observation.

Throughout the three Pilot Study observations, it had been noted that a single *Language-Learning Interaction* technique may be repeated in the same adult-child dyad. For example, an adult was observed labelling many different objects in one conversation with a particular child. Following discussion with two members of the designing research team, it was agreed that any technique repeated by an adult with the same child should not be credited more than once on the record form. If that adult was later observed to use the technique with a different child, this *would* be credited on the record form. This ensured that the Observation tool did not over-represent the impact of one staff member's expertise on all the children in the setting.

Notes were taken recording examples of many items observed or absent, and the first three samples of completed *CsC Observation Tools* were shared with the designing researchers. Most of the Language Learning Interaction practices could have been open to subjective observer interpretation, such as "modelling", "imitating" and "extending". Therefore, descriptions of these specific observations were recorded in detail, to allow subsequent comparison with the *Guidelines for the Completion of the CsC Observation Tool* (see Appendix 3). Final coding of examples often took place following confirmation of the interpretation with the designing researchers.

2.6.4 Questionnaire

All practitioners in observed settings were asked to complete a questionnaire of 18 questions. Of these, 17 questions used a tick-box form of response (see Appendix 6 for questionnaire). This questionnaire was a shorter version of the questionnaire used by Maria Mroz and colleagues (Mroz, Bell, Santer and Letts, 2002). The first page of the questionnaire collected information on the date and type of initial teacher training received by each practitioner, using Likert scales and tick-box questions. In addition to identifying their job title, respondents ticked the qualifications which were completed. This was necessary in order to ensure that those identifying themselves understood the title. Teaching Assistants currently are not required to have completed any academic qualifications or to have passed GCSE subjects in their time in secondary school education (DCSF, 2010). In the case of Early Years Educators, there is a specific National Vocational Qualification Level 3 training course which they are expected to have completed in order to receive the title "Early Years Educator" (ibid. 2010). Those who received their initial training before January 2000 were grouped together, as their training occurred before the Foundation Stage Curriculum for nursery and reception classes was introduced (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2000). A second grouping included those trained in the last 1 to 3 years, following publication of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum (Department for Education and Skills, 2007), the first statutory document to guide teaching practice in the Nursery and Reception classes. Practitioners trained in the last year were considered to be in a "newly qualified" position, and were categorised in a separate grouping. The final grouping were those trained before statutory guidance, but after the introduction of the Foundation Stage (4 – 11 years ago). Duration of training was categorised as under 1 year, 1 – 2 years or 3 years+, reflecting the range presented by most practitioners.

The second set of questions recorded the duration and type of training received following initial training. Duration was combined with the duration of training in initial training courses, to get a total of hours and days of speech and language training. Levels of coverage in specific speech and language areas were covered on the following page, and practitioners asked to rate their self-confidence in both identifying and supporting 4 to 6 areas of speech and language skills. Information on types of assessment tools used was gathered using tick boxes, and further areas of speech and language CPD training were listed to allow practitioners choose

those which they believed would be most beneficial to themselves and colleagues. Finally, the three scenarios were presented, and practitioners asked to consider whether a referral to the Speech and Language Therapy Service may be required.

2.6.4.1 Pilot Study of Questionnaires

Questionnaires were given to staff in the two pilot primary classes. The author met with ten staff members who had completed the questionnaires in order to record their experience of reading, understanding and responding to each question. Following this feedback, the questionnaire was shortened by one question. Clarification was added to Question 9, by specifying how "duration" was to be measured, by citing days, weeks or months. The scenarios were not altered from those as presented in the questionnaires used in the study by Maria Mroz and colleagues (Mroz, et al., 2002).

2.6.4.2 Procedure of the Questionnaire Phase

Questionnaires were attached to emails and sent to the contact person in each setting between five and seven days prior to the observation taking place. The researcher also brought three copies of the questionnaires with her to each observation session, to supply to participants who had not received the email version. The Class Teacher or Co-ordinator of Special Educational Needs were requested to offer each practitioner working in the setting a questionnaire to complete. The number of questionnaires requested by each setting was recorded, and copies left with schools to be collected by the researcher on the date stated at the end of each copy. The researcher collected questionnaires from each setting over a period of several weeks after the observation stage was finished. Settings which took a longer time to complete questionnaires were given the option of returning their completed questionnaires by post.

2.6.5. Interviews

A focus group was held in one setting to refine the areas of questioning relevant to practitioners and the research study. Semi-structured interviews were then carried out to identify factors leading to successful implementation of training in oral language practice. These were carried out after the observations had been completed, but before all questionnaires had been collected from settings.

2.6.5.1. Creating the Interview Schedule

Five questions were created, each with prompts for gaining more specific information, which were identified following the focus group. These were organised from simple, closed-ended "what" questions, filtering down to more open questions in a "funnel" style of interviewing (Kvale, 2007) (See Appendix 8).

In the first question, the interviewee was given the opportunity to speak about the practices of their staff and setting, which they believed supported oral language development. This was an open question, which prompted staff to consider any and all activities undertaken by staff. This was intended to make the person feel comfortable, as no specific expertise was demanded. Where a given answer was restricted to only one area of provision, such as interaction strategies between adult and child, prompts were given to encourage the interviewee to consider another, such as managing the classroom environment. This information complemented the profile of oral language provision already observed during hour-long observations with the *CsC Observation Tool*.

The second question required the interviewee to focus on the ways in which staff plan activities and the classroom environment, in order to specifically support children's oral language skills development. The interviewer wished to identify all sources of knowledge used by staff, including national curriculum support and professional expertise, in addition to any continuous professional development. As the questionnaire had addressed participants' self-reported levels of confidence, this question was designed to identify the possible sources of confidence for staff when planning for oral language activities.

The third question was similar in its purpose, but focused the interviewee's attention on sources of knowledge used when assessing children's oral language skills. Prompts were given to elicit the type of resource, or level of experience, which may have led practitioners to report higher or lower confidence levels.

An important purpose of the interview was to explore the experiences of staff who had received training in *Every Child a Talker*, or another form of continuous professional development (CPD). Each interviewee was therefore asked to consider the most useful aspects of any CPD training they had received. The duration and format of the CPD training has been shown to affect the later implementation of new knowledge in the classroom (Cordingley et al., 2003, 2005;

Joyce and Showers, 1988). Therefore, interviewees were prompted to consider the frequency and duration of their CPD courses, and how this may have impacted on their learning. Responses were intended to reflect practitioner opinion on the manner in which CPD had been provided, and ways in which it might be improved.

A final question addressed the possible barriers or facilitating factors to implementing CPD in a setting. Interviewees were asked to imagine an "ideal" setting which would support oral language development of children. In answering this, interviewees were prompted to describe the circumstances required to achieve this ideal. Specific prompts by the interviewer related to time allowance, finances and the presence of similarly-trained colleagues, shown by previous research to support implementation of CPD-learned knowledge (Adey, 2004; Polly and Hanafin, 2011). Responses reflected possible reasons for a lack of implementation of CPD, as well as barriers to accessing effective CPD.

2.6.5.2. Pilot Study of the Interview Schedule

Questions were amended following a Pilot Study carried out with two teachers in Nursery class settings not involved in the research project. These interviews lasted 24 and 29 minutes each. Answers from the teachers resulted in follow-up prompts being added to Question Two and Five, in order to elicit as much information as possible relating to the third research question. There were no difficult terms or unknown words reported by the interviewees during the Pilot Study.

2.6.5.3 Procedure of the Interview Phase

Practitioners were contacted by email and phone, and the purpose of the interview explained. In each setting, a single member of the teaching staff was invited to participate in an interview, with the exception of one setting where four practitioners wished to be interviewed together, forming a focus group. In settings where a member of staff had received *Every Child a Talker* training, this person specifically was asked to participate in the interview. In *non-Every Child a Talker trained* settings, any member of the teaching staff was welcome to answer interview questions. The option of completing an interview over the phone, rather than face-to-face, was given to participants.

Upon agreement to complete an interview, a digital copy of the interview questions were emailed to interviewees several days in advance of the interview date. Each interview was completed in the setting, face-to-face with the researcher. Before

beginning the interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the interview. Permission was sought to record the session using a digital voice recorder. The duration of interviews lay between 34 and 48 minutes. All recordings were later transcribed by the researcher.

In one setting, four practitioners wished to participate in a "group interview". This took the format of focus group. Each practitioner had received the four questions around which discussion would take place. The focus group took place in the setting, following the school day. Permission to use a digital voice recorder was received, and a guiding time limit of 30 minutes proposed. The purpose of the study was explained prior to starting the discussion. The researcher read questions, and intervened only to provide prompts to maintain the focus of the discussion, or extend relevant answers.

2.7 Data Analysis

2.7.1 Scoring and Interpreting the CsC Observation Tool

Each setting was given a score in the three dimensions observed. The *Language Learning Environment* dimension contained 19 elements. The final three elements had two ways in which they could be scored, simply by being "present", but also by being "used" during the observation. Settings could score two points when they achieved each of these two aspects of the element. This gave a maximum possible score of 22 points for the *Language Learning Environment* dimension.

Language Learning Opportunities dimension consisted of 5 elements. A maximum of five separate observations of each element were recorded, giving a total possible score of 25. The *Language Learning Interactions* dimension consisted of 20 elements, each of which could be recorded a maximum of five times. This resulted in a maximum score of 100 for this dimension.

Subtotals for each dimension were calculated for each setting. In order to allow comparison between the dimension scores, each subtotal was recalculated as a proportion score. This score lay between 0.0, reflecting absence of any items in the dimension, and 1.0 reflecting attainment of the maximum recordable items on the dimension. The data derived from the sample were not expected to follow a normal distribution; therefore non-parametric statistical tests were used. Scores were ranked, and differences between *Every Child a Talker-* and *non-Every Child a*

Talker trained groups found, using the Mann-Whitney *U*-test for two independent samples.

In order to establish the possible influence of the ratio of adults to children on observed Language Learning Opportunities (LLO) and Language Learning Interactions (LLI), the number of staff and children present during the observation were recorded. Each setting was then rated as having an "average" ratio (two adults supervising every 20 - 26 children), "high" (two adults supervising less than 20 children) or "low" ratio (two adults supervising more than 26 children). The data were later analysed using the Mann-Whitney *U*-test, to identify any impact that higher or lower ratios may have on the number of opportunities to develop oral language skills (LLO), or the range of interaction techniques (LLI) provided by adults.

2.7.2 Scoring of the Questionnaires

Data from the questionnaire were attributed numerical values and entered into a SPSS database for analysis (see Appendix 7 for Master Scoring Sheet). Demographic details of respondents were presented in chart, text and table form. As participant scores did not follow a normal distribution as would be expected from a larger, random sample of the population, non-parametric tests of significance were carried out.

A subtotal of confidence for each participant was calculated by adding scores from questions 11 and 12, to give a total out of 20. Similarly, the total hours of CPD and initial training in speech and language skills were calculated by converting all reported training time into hours, and combining answers from questions 8 and 9.

A Kruskal-Wallis test of unrelated scores from independent samples was used to identify the impact of training hours on self-reported confidence level and practitioners' accuracy of response to the Scenario question. The Mann-Whitney U test of unrelated scores for two independent samples was also used, to identify the significance of *Every Child a Talker* training to the pattern of scores.

The type of CPD training received by practitioners was identified, and percentage of respondents receiving each form was reported. Reported use of speech and language checklists or other tools by settings was also calculated and presented in table form.

The training hours received by each respondent were split into three groups, *Low*, *Middle* and *High*. The latter group consisted of those respondents with 28 hours of training or more, and included all *Every Child a Talker-trained* respondents. The remaining respondents were split into nearly even *Low* (N=14) and *Medium* (N =15) groups. The *Low* group of respondents had received fewer than 12 hours of CPD training in Speech and Language development, equivalent to 11 weeks of one-hour training, or three half-days. Those receiving more than this time, but less than 28 hours, were placed in the *Medium* group.

The data were analysed in order to identify patterns between the characteristics of the pupil population, and proportion scores derived from the observation using the *CsC Observation Tool.* Data was collected from questionnaires and Local Authority statistics regarding the percentage of children in each setting with reported Special Educational Needs (SEN), Speech and Language (S&L) needs, English as an Additional Language (EAL) status and eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM).

The 18 settings were grouped with other settings which had similar percentages of children with SEN, S&L needs, EAL status and FSM eligibility. Three groups, of six settings each, reflected the *Top*, *Middle* and *Bottom* thirds of each type of characteristic. Using a Kruskal Wallis test, the *Language Learning Opportunities (LLO)* scores for the settings were compared between the three groups, *top*, *middle* and *bottom.* This test was then repeated in order to compare *Language Learning Interactions* (LLI) proportion scores between the *top*, *middle* and *bottom* groups.

2.7.3. Analysis of the Interviews

Thematic Analysis was selected as the most appropriate form of analysis for interview data. An alternative approach used in studies aiming to develop theory from data, is that of Grounded Theory (see Glaser, 1992). This approach utilises "open" coding of all forms of data, both qualitative and quantitative. When using the grounded theory approach, the researcher avoids using current theory in an effort to understand phenomena. This approach is contrary to the purpose of this research project, which aims to apply research evidence to develop an understanding of phenomena in the field. The Grounded Theory approach to data analysis was therefore rejected.

A similar approach is that of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (see Smith and Osborn, 2003). This approach "is concerned with an individual's

personal perception...as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself." (Smith and Osborn, 2003, p.53). Extensive immersion in the lived experience of the interviewee is required when employing this technique. A further alternative method used to gain understanding of individuals' experiences, is that of Narrative Analysis (see Murray, 2000). This approach also seeks to limit the role of the researcher in applying theoretical knowledge to derive meaning from interviewee's words. The aim of this study was to elicit specific information, based on extensive previous research in the field of oral language techniques and CPD training. While the latter two methods would yield information reflective of practitioners' experiences, without the application of theory, this information would not address the research questions and aims of the study.

Thematic Analysis methods were therefore chosen by the researcher in order to interpret information from interview transcripts. The approach to the data was theory-driven. That is, codes were drawn from the interview transcript, but phrased using theoretical concepts outlined in the Literature Review. This method "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question," (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.82). When developing themes, the researcher combines codes and sub-themes based on previous theoretical knowledge of the subject area. The purposive application of theory in order to develop an understanding of reported information leaves the interpretation system open to the bias of the researcher. Thus, the meaning of the participants may be compromised by the expectations of the researcher. Lucy Yardley (2000) cautions that this stage of the process must be explicitly reported, to ensure clarity and rigour in the process. The strength of this method for research purposes lies in the flexibility of the researcher to organise information in themes and categories which allow established research questions to be addressed.

2.7.3.1 Coding of the Transcripts

All transcripts were reviewed, in order to develop codes in the first step of Thematic Analysis of the transcripts (see Braun and Clark, 2006). The prevalence of specific phrases, such as names of professionals, resource names and language-learning techniques, were noted across the eight transcripts. Where similar vocabulary or topics were mentioned, these instances were underlined. This resulted in 49 separate *codes,* or groups of phrases, being identified from the eight transcripts (see Appendix 14, *Table of Codes*).

The researcher was aware of previous data and relevant theory when reading over the transcripts. As a result, some prevalent phrases which were not considered relevant to the aims of the research project were omitted from initial coding of the transcripts.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Letters describing the purpose and procedure of the study were shared with each participant, and agreement to participate collected in writing through email or letter. Participants were offered the option to opt-out of the study at any stage, as directed by *British Psychological Society* guidelines.

Permission to record the interview was sought prior to beginning each one. Staff were given an opportunity to ask questions or share concerns following each stage of the study, after the observation, questionnaire and interview stages. Information was shared without compromising the identity of participating schools and staff. All information from the study was kept with the researcher or in locked storage, for the duration of the study period. After acceptance of the study report, participants were assured that the original data would be destroyed.

3.0 Results

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the three sets of results from the quantitative and qualitative stages of data collection. The first section, *3.2 Communication Supporting Classrooms Observation Tool*, reports the results from observations of the 18 settings. In *3.3 Questionnaires*, results of the analysis of data collected from questionnaires are given. Finally, findings from the interviews with staff are reported in *3.4 Interviews*, following thematic analysis of the interview transcripts.

3.2 Communication Supporting Classrooms Observation Tool

3.2.1 Introduction

This section reports findings following observation of 18 settings using the *CsC Observation Tool*. Comparison between scores on the *Language Learning Environment* (LLE) of the *Every Child a Talker-trained* and *non-Every Child a Talker trained* settings is made. Following this, differences in the performance of settings on each item of the final two dimensions, *Language Learning Opportunities* (LLO) and *Language Learning Interactions* (LLI), are described and analysed to identify any significant differences between the two groups. Matched pairs of settings with comparable pupil populations are compared. Finally, the impact of adult-child ratio and class size was analysed and reported.

3.2.2. Patterns of Normal Distribution within the Data Set

The data were analysed to establish whether the scores from the *CsC Observation Tool* followed a pattern of Normal Distribution. Each set of scores from the three dimensions, LLE, LLO and LLI, was analysed to determine whether the distribution of scores reflected a normal, bell-curve shape. The Shapiro-Wilk test of normality, and a test of skewness, were carried out for each dimension (see Table 3.0, Appendix 9). The second and third dimension scores, LLO and LLI, conformed to tests of normality. However, a significant result for the *Every Child a Talker-trained* sample suggested that the LLE scores did not follow a pattern of Normal Distribution ($r = 0.85$, $df = 9$, $p = <0.01$). Therefore, non-parametric tests of statistical analysis were used to identify any significant differences between sets of scores.

3.2.3. *Comparison between* Every Child a Talker *and non*-Every Child a Talker *Settings*

In order to allow comparison between the three dimensions of the *CsC Observation Tool,* an equivalent, proportion score between 0.0 and 1.0 was calculated for each setting's scores on the three dimensions. See Table 3.1 (Appendix 10) which displays the observed proportion scores of each setting on each dimension of the *CsC Observation Tool.* Proportion scores from the three dimensions were compared between the *Every Child a Talker-trained* group of settings, and the *Non-Every Child a Talker trained* group. Mean scores and standards deviations are presented in Table 3.2 below. The significance of the difference between each group's observed scores on the *CsC Observation Tool* was calculated using the Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric test of differences between ranked mean scores. The confidence levels following these tests are reported in the final column of the table.

Table 3.2

Mean proportion score and comparison between Every Child a Talker-*trained and Non-*Every Child a Talker *trained groups across three dimensions of the CsC Observation Tool*

Dimension of the CsC Observation tool	*Every Child a Talker-trained M (SD)*	*Non-Every Child a Talker trained M(SD)*	*Mann Whitney U*	*Significance*
Language Learning Environment	0.91 (0.02)	0.93 (0.03)	31.00	p =0.37
Language Learning Opportunities	0.46 (0.20)	0.35 (0.16)	28.00	p =0.27
Language Learning Interactions	0.48 (0.11)	0.46 (0.11)	33.50	p =0.54

Table 3.2 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of the *Every Child a Talker-trained* and Non-*Every Child a Talker trained* groups of settings. The *Every Child a Talker-trained* group scored higher proportion scores in two dimensions, *Language Learning Opportunities* (LLO) and *Language Learning Interactions* (LLI), and slightly lower score in the *Language Learning Environment* (LLE) dimension. There was no significant difference found between the *Every Child a Talker-trained* and Non-*Every Child a Talker trained* groups on any dimension of the *CsC Observation Tool* when scores were analysed using the Mann-Whitney U test.

Within the LLO and LLI dimensions, the distance of proportion scores from the mean varied greatly within each group, *Every Child a Talker-* and Non-*Every Child a Talker trained.* See figure 2.0 (Appendix 11) displaying the boxplots reflecting the proportion scores for each group.

3.2.3.1 Profiles of Performances across Language Learning Environment, Opportunities and Interactions

Patterns of performance on the three dimensions of the observation tool are described below. Settings presented with similarly high scores on the *Language Learning Environment* dimension. *Language Learning Opportunities* and *Language Learning Interactions* dimensions differed considerably between settings, though not between *Every Child a Talker* groups. These patterns are described below.

3.2.3.1.1 *Language Learning Environment*

Of the 19 categories of environmental support identified in the *CsC Observation Tool*, the lowest-scoring setting attained a score for 15 categories, the highest settings, a score on 19 categories. Those categories least frequently present in a setting's environment included the use of interactive displays (n=8) and provision of routines or cues to facilitate transition between activities (n=15).

3.2.3.1.2 Language Learning Opportunities

A pattern emerged across the five items detailed in the *Language Learning Opportunity* (LLO). Table 3.3 displays the mean proportion scores in the LLO dimension in both *Every Child a Talker-* and *Non-Every Child a Talker trained* groups.

Table 3.3

Mean Proportion Score and Standard Deviations of Items from the Language Learning Opportunities Scale, across Every Child a Talker- *and Non-*Every Child a Talker *trained Groups.*

Language Learning Opportunity	*Number of Settings Providing Opportunity*	
	Every Child a Talker- *trained (N=9)* *M(SD)*	*Non-*Every Child a Talker *trained (N=9)* *M(SD)*
Adult Facilitated Small Groups	0.82 (0.35)	0.62 (0.31)
Ensuring Children Participate in Groups	0.62 (0.34)	0.44 (0.24)
Structured Adult Conversations	0.62 (0.27)	0.40 (0.26)
Interactive Book-Reading	0.24 (0.31)	0.24 (0.19)
Structured Peer Conversations	0.00 (0.00)	0.44 (0.24)

Every setting made use of the first three types of LLO, at least once; a small group of children carrying out an activity with an adult; an adult assigning or engaging a child in an activity to ensure learning occurs; an adult holding a conversation with a child, related to a specific topic or perhaps during a Show and Tell session. The use of Interactive Book-Reading during the hour-long observation was observed in both *Every Child a Talker-* and *Non-Every Child a Talker trained* settings. The least-observed opportunity was that of an adult facilitating a conversation between two nursery children, around a specific topic or activity. Only two settings were observed providing this, on one occasion each.

3.2.3.1.3 Language Learning Interactions

The number of different LLI techniques recorded during observations varied greatly between settings. Of the 20 items described which staff might use, staff in the highest-scoring setting were observed using 18 techniques; the lowest-scoring

setting was observed using only 10 techniques. Table 3.4 displays the means and standard deviations for each of the 20 items on the LLI dimension.

Table 3.4

Mean Proportion Score and Standard Deviations of Items from the Language Learning Interactions Scale

Language Learning Interactions	*Number of Settings Providing Opportunity*	
	Every Child a Talker-trained (N=9)	*Every Child a Talker-trained (N=9)*
	M(SD)	*M(SD)*
Adult uses child's name	0.96 (0.13)	1.00 (0.00)
Adult confirms communication	1.00 (0.00)	0.78 (0.44)
Adult uses a slow pace	0.91 (0.18)	0.80 (0.17)
Adult gets down to child's level	0.87 (0.17)	0.82 (0.16)
Adult uses props or pictures to support language	0.67 (0.30)	0.84 (0.17)
Adult pauses expectantly for response	0.76 (0.33)	0.76 (0.22)
Adult imitates and repeats	0.76 (0.30)	0.69 (0.35)
Adult uses gestures or sign-language	0.60 (0.35)	0.76 (0.22)
Adult provides labels for items	0.67 (0.28)	0.69 (0.35)
Adult comments on child's activities	0.56 (0.46)	0.38 (0.31)
Adult asks open-questions	0.58 (0.38)	0.31 (0.33)
Adult highlights syntax/lexical structures	0.36 (0.24)	0.20 (0.26)
Adult extends what child says	0.20 (0.14)	0.29 (0.25)

Adult praises turn-taking	0.18 (0.16)	0.22 (0.21)
Adult provides choices	0.20 (0.14)	0.18 (0.25)
Adult provides scripts	0.13 (0.20)	0.22 (0.25)
Adult encourages child to use new words	0.09 (0.11)	0.09 (0.15)
Adult models new language structures	0.02 (0.07)	0.04 (0.09)
Adult praises listening skills	0.04 (0.13)	0.02 (0.07)
Adult praises non-verbal communication	0.00 (0.00)	0.02 (0.07)

Only three different settings were observed using the two least-frequent items on the LLI dimension; praising children for non-verbal behaviours and for listening to each other. Other infrequent techniques included modelling new language and encouraging children to use new words. These were used by staff in eight different settings, with both *Every Child a Talker*- and Non-*Every Child a Talker trained* staff. Only two settings were observed using both these techniques during one observation. The highest scoring setting displayed 18 of the 20 techniques listed in the LLI dimension.

3.2.4 Impact of the Adult-Child Ratio and Class Size on Proportion Scores from Observations

The Adult-Child ratio was calculated for each setting using the pupil total recorded on questionnaires, and information from class teachers as to the number of adults working in the setting. Higher ratios of adults to children may have resulted in an increase in the number of opportunities for adult-facilitated conversation and activities. Therefore, proportion scores in the *Language Learning Opportunities* and *Language Learning Interactions* dimensions were analysed for significance based on the adult-child ratio. Of the 18 settings observed, 13 settings provided an average adult:child ratio of between 2:20 and 2:26. Five settings had a higher ratio of staff to children, at 2:<20. These included three primary schools, one

private primary school, and a nursery school. A Mann-Whitney *U*-test between the two groups of settings found no significant difference in LLO scores between high and average ratio settings (U = 31.0, N_1 = 13, N_2 = 5, p = 0.88). Similarly, differences between the scores on the Language Learning Interactions dimension were not significantly different between the high and average ratio settings (U = 29.0, N_1 = 13, N_2 = 5, p = 0.73).

Similarly, the proportion scores were analysed in order to identify whether the number of children in a class impacted on the amount of language-learning opportunities they received. As more staff and children were present, it was hypothesised that more opportunities for language-learning would be observed. Settings were separated into three categories of class size: those with less than 21 pupils were labelled *Small*, between 21 and 49 pupils, were labelled *Mid-sized,* and above 50, were labelled *Large.* A Kruskal-Wallis test across each *Language Learning Opportunity* found that a significant difference existed between the three groups in the number of observations of adult-facilitated groups (H =5.83, *df* =16, two tailed p =0.05), and interactive book-reading (H=7.15, *df* =16, two tailed p =0.03), with *Large* settings recording significantly higher observed instances of each. No significant difference was found between the three groups in the number of structured adult conversations (H=3.74, *df* =16, two tailed p =0.15), structured peer conversations (H =0.85, *df* =16, two tailed p =0.65), or inclusion of children in groups (H =0.34, *df* =16, two tailed p =0.84).

3.2.6 *The Impact of Pupil Population Characteristics on Proportion Scores from Observations*

Analysis of the observation data was carried out to identify whether the degree of learning and language needs of a pupil cohort was linked to the number of observed opportunities and interaction techniques used to support language development. The 18 settings were ranked according to the percentage of each characteristic, SEN, S&L needs, EAL status and FSM eligibility, within their pupil populations. The six settings with lowest percentages of children with each characteristic formed the *Bottom* group; the next six settings, the *Middle* group, and those six settings with the highest percentages of a characteristic formed the *Top* group. The distribution of *Every Child a Talker*- and Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings across the three groups was nearly even. The ratio of *Every Child a*

Talker-trained settings to Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings was even in the *Bottom* group; four to two in the *Middle* group; and two to four in the *Top* group.

A Kruskal-Wallis test was carried out, comparing the proportion scores from the *Language Learning Opportunities (LLO)* and *Language Learning Interactions* (LLI) dimensions of the *CsC Observation Tool* across the *Top, Middle* and *Bottom* groups of each of the four pupil characteristics (see Table 3.5, Appendix 12). The percentages of pupils with SEN, SALT referrals, EAL or FSM eligibility were not found to link significantly with the proportion scores of the settings in either the *Language Learning Opportunities* or *Language Learning Interactions* dimensions.

3.2.7 Summary of Results from Observations of Settings

There was no significant difference between the observed practices and provision of the *Every Child a Talker*-trained and Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained groups of settings following hour-long observations using the *CsC Observation Tool.* The *Language Learning Opportunity* (LLO) least frequently observed was *structured conversation between children.* Most *Language Learning Interactions* (LLI) were observed in the majority of settings. LLIs such as "Modelling" or "Practicing New Words" were infrequently observed. Larger settings were observed providing more *LLO*s, reflecting the greater number of staff and children.

Having a higher adult-child ratio did not lead to children receiving a greater number of *Language Learning Opportunities* than children in lower ratio settings. Neither did the ratio impact on the range of *Language Learning Interactions* seen during observation. The proportion of children with Special Educational Needs, Speech and Language Needs, English as an Additional Language or eligibility for Free School Meals, was not significantly related to settings' observed provision of LLOs or LLIs. Proportions of children registered as experiencing these characteristics were similar across the *Every Child a Talker*- and Non-*Every Child a Talker trained* settings.

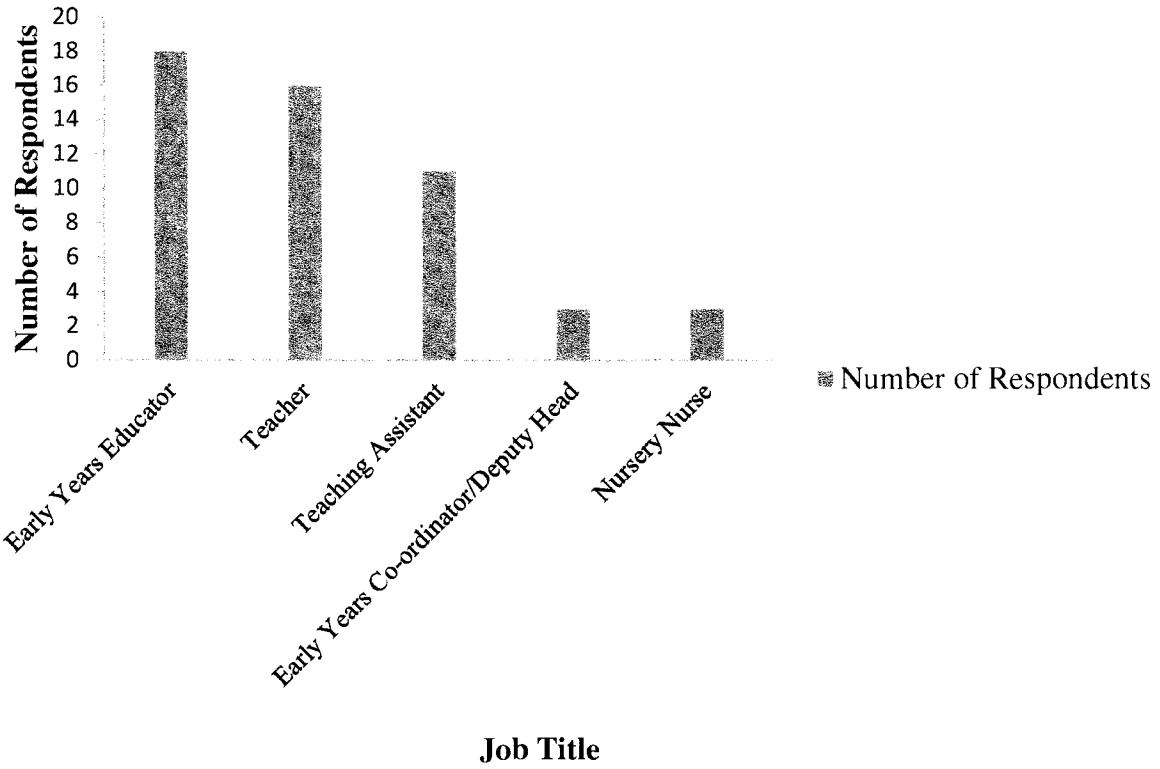
3.3 Questionnaires

3.3.1 Introduction

Questionnaires were received from 58 staff in the 18 settings which underwent observation using the *CsC Observation Tool.* Of these, 52 answered all or most questions on each page, and were included in the final sample of questionnaires used for analysis. Six of the questionnaires had one or more blank pages, and were considered too incomplete to include in the sample. The distribution of job titles among all but one respondent is shown in Figure 3.0 on the following page. The response rate of staff in settings varied considerably. The three Nursery Schools had the highest response rate. Two returned the six questionnaires disseminated, and one made copies of the original and returned eight completed questionnaires. Four primary schools, three of which had no *Every Child a Talker*-trained practitioner, returned only one of the three questionnaires given to them by the researcher. One primary school returned two of the three questionnaires received. The response rate was high, at 84%.

Figure 3.0

Job Title of Questionnaire Respondents (N = 52)



3.3.2 Continuous Professional Development and Initial Training in Speech and Language Development

The number of hours CPD combined with initial training time spent on speech and language development are shown in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6:

Mean Hours of Training and CPD Received by Respondents (N=52)

Job Title	M (SD)	*N*
Early Years Co-Ordinator/ Deputy Head	34.00 (29.46)	3
Early Years Educator	22.63 (19.58)	19
Teaching Assistant	16.10 (16.31)	10
Teacher	15.00 (19.61)	17
Nursery Nurse	6.33 (7.57)	3

Total training time differed greatly between individuals working within the same job role. The greatest difference arose between the three Early Years Co-ordinators (*M* =34.00, *SD* =29.46, N =3). The Co-ordinator from Nursery School R had received only eight hours CPD training in Speech and Language development, while the Co-ordinator of Nursery School I had completed 66 hours.

Early Years Educators (EYE) had received the second-highest number of CPD training hours, followed by Teaching Assistants (TA). Most Class Teachers had completed low levels of CPD training; only three Teachers had completed, or been registered on, an *Every Child a Talker* course out of a total of 12. The remaining *Every Child a Talker-trained* practitioners consisted of Early Years Educators (N =6) and Teaching Assistants (N =3).

3.3.2.1 Type of Continuous Professional Development Courses Completed

Table 3.7 (Appendix 13) displays the percentages of practitioners from each setting and the professional development courses in speech and language training which they have completed. Of the 52 respondents, 27% (n =14) reported receiving

no CPD training in Speech and Language whatsoever. In four Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings, all staff members reported having completed no speech and language training (n =11).

Of the remaining 73% (n=38) of respondents, many had received more than one type of CPD training. The most popular training courses, Makaton© sign language and INSET training, were completed by four times as many practitioners from *Every Child a Talker* settings (n =24) than from Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings (n =6). Only practitioners from *Every Child a Talker-Trained* settings had attended the three, least popular CPD courses. These were the Hanen programme (n =1), Portage training (n =4) and specific Speech and Language CPD course (n =5).

Incomplete data was received for three settings. A single staff member returned a valid questionnaire from one *Every Child a Talker*-trained setting and from two Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings.

3.3.3 Self-reported Levels of Confidence

Levels of Confidence were calculated by combining the two questions related to confidence, Questions 11 and 12, to create a maximum possible score of 20. Table 3.8 displays the mean values of self-reported confidence by practitioners, according to job title.

Table 3.8:

Means of Practitioner's Self-Reported Confidence Levels (N = 39)

Job Title	*M (SD) (Max.=20)*	*N*
Early Years Co-ordinator	18.00 (1.41)	2
Teaching Assistant	12.75 (4.37)	8
Early Years Educator	10.94 (4.78)	16
Teacher	10.64 (4.65)	11
Nursery Nurse*	-	2

Levels of confidence were distinctly highest among the two Early Years Co-ordinators who completed this section of the questionnaire. Teaching Assistants reported a higher confidence level (*M* =12.75, *SD* =4.37, N =8) than Early Years Educators (*M* = 10.94, *SD* =4.85, N= 29). The confidence levels for nine of the eleven Teachers lay very close to the mean reported level (*M* =10.64). However, two teachers, each from an *Every Child a Talker*-trained school, reported much higher levels of confidence, of 19 and 20 each. Thus, the mean and standard deviation for the remaining nine teachers is greatly reduced when these two outlying scores are removed (*M* =8.67, *SD* =1.73, N =9). Neither Nursery Nurses completed this section of the questionnaire.

3.3.3.1 Self-Reported Confidence Levels Between Every Child a Talker- *and Non*-Every Child a Talker *trained Settings*

Mean self-reported confidence levels were calculated for three groups of respondents: those who had received *Every Child a Talker* training; those who worked in a setting where *Every Child a Talker* training was received by a colleague; and those who had not received *Every Child a Talker* training, and did not work with other staff were *Every Child a Talker* - trained. Table 3.9 shows the means and standard deviations for each group. Of the total of 52 respondents, 12 did not complete questions rating their confidence level, resulting in a response group of 40.

Table 3.9:

Reported Self Confidence Levels of Every Child a Talker and non-Every Child a Talker trained Groups (Total N = 40)

Every Child a Talker Staff Group	*Reported Self Confidence M (SD) (Max =20)*	*N*
Every Child a Talker Trained staff	15.45 (4.30)	11
Non-Every Child a Talker trained Staff in *Every Child a Talker* settings	11.24 (4.07)	17
Non-Every Child a Talker trained Staff in non- *Every Child a Talker* settings	8.67 (3.42)	12

The 11 respondents who had received *Every Child a Talker* training reported highest levels of confidence when assessing and supporting children's speech and language development (*M* =15.45, *SD* =4.30, N= 11). Those practitioners whose colleagues received *Every Child a Talker* training reported higher levels of confidence (*M* = 11.24, *SD* =4.07, N=17), than practitioners in settings without *Every Child a Talker-trained* colleagues (*M* =8.67, *SD* =3.42, N=12). A Kruskal-Wallis test carried out across each *Every Child a Talker* staff group found that the reported confidence levels differed significantly between groups (X^2 =12.36, *df* =38, two tailed *p* = <0.01). A Mann-Whitney *U*-test found that the *Every Child a Talker* Trained Staff group reported significantly higher levels of confidence than both Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained Staff in Non-*Every Child a Talker* settings (*U* = 14.00, N_1 =11, N_2 =12, *p* <0.01) and their colleagues, *Non-Every Child a Talker* trained staff in an *Every Child a Talker* setting (*U* = 41.00, N_1 =11, N_2 =17, *p* =0.01). This latter group had received more hours of training in speech and language development than those practitioners in Non- *Every Child a Talker* trained settings.

3.3.3.2 *Comparison Between CPD Training and Reported Confidence Levels*

Duration of time spent in initial training and post-qualification CPD courses in Speech and Language development, was compared with levels of confidence in order to identify a possible relationship between the variables. A scattergram was carried out which suggested the presence of a positive linear relationship between the two variables. An analysis of the correlation between the two variables was carried out using a Pearson Product Motion correlation test. A significant positive association (r =0.69, N =40, p =0.01) was identified between the number of hours of CPD training completed, and levels of self-reported confidence in speech and language development. The high correlation value suggests there is a strong relationship between the two variables.

3.3.4 Scenarios for Referral

In questions 16 to 18, respondents were asked to judge the need for referral for three hypothetical children aged 2 years 6 months, 3 years 6 months and 4 years 6 months. Only 43 of the total 52 respondents completed these questions.

In each training group, *Every Child a Talker-trained*, *Non-Every Child a Talker trained*, and Practitioners in an *Every Child a Talker* setting, respondents scored 3 out of 3 correctly. Only within the *Every Child a Talker-trained* group did no practitioner score less than 2 out of 3 correct responses. Of those assessing all scenarios correctly (N=11), five were *Non-Every Child a Talker trained* practitioners, three *Every Child a Talker-trained* practitioners, and three *Non-Every Child a Talker trained* practitioners in an *Every Child a Talker* setting. The median number correctly assessed within each group was 2.

3.3.4.1 Accuracy of Response and Every Child a Talker *Training/Training Hours Received*

The Kruskal-Wallis test found that there was no significant difference across the three *Every Child a Talker* groups in the Scenario test (X^2 =1.37, *df* =41, two tailed p = 0.50). Respondents were again split into the three groups of *High, Medium* and *Low* training hours, and their responses to the Scenario were tested again for significant differences. The mean scores in the Scenario test were similar for those respondents who had received Low levels of training hours (M =2.00, *SD* =0.59, N =24) and those receiving Medium levels (M =2.00, *SD* =0.78, N =11).

Respondents with High levels of training hours attained two or three out of three more often than either the Low or Medium groups (M =2.38, SD =0.52, N =8). However, a Kruskal-Wallis test found no significant differences in Scenario test scores between High, Medium and Low levels of training received by respondents (χ^2 = 2.26, df =41, two tailed p = 0.32). A Mann Whitney U –test similarly found no significant differences between the Low and High groups (U =66.00, N_1 =8, N_2 =24, p =0.12) or the Medium and High groups (U = 32.00, N_1 =8, N_2 =11, p =0.27).

3.3.4.2 Accuracy of Scenario Responses and Confidence

Respondents were grouped according to the number of Scenario questions answered correctly, and their mean and standard deviation scores displayed in Table 3.10 below. Of those 45 respondents who completed the Scenario questions, only 33 had also completed the confidence questions.

Table 3.10:

Confidence Levels of Respondents Scoring 1, 2 or 3 in the Scenario Test (N =33)

Scenario Accuracy	*Self-reported Confidence Level*	*N*
	M (SD)	
Score of 1	9.00 (4.24)	4
Score of 2	12.10 (3.75)	20
Score of 3	11.56 (5.32)	9

There was little variation between the three mean levels of confidence reported by practitioners. Highest confidence levels were reported by those practitioners who answered 2 out 3 scenarios correctly (M =12.10, SD =3.75, N =20). This group accounted for the majority of respondents. Lowest confidence levels were reported by the four practitioners who identified only one correct option (M =9.00, SD =4.24, N =4). The large standard deviations within each group reflect a broad range of confidence levels between practitioners in the same Accuracy group. Not unexpectedly, a Kruskal-Wallis test across the three groups of respondents found no significant difference between the levels of confidence and the score in the Scenario test (χ^2 = 4.22, df =31, two tailed p = 0.12).

3.3.5 Use of Checklists and Resources

Settings which used specific tools to identify or support children's oral language development were rare. Of the 52 respondents who completed this section of the questionnaire, 44 used either the techniques of observing children and/or using peer comparison to identify possible delayed in speech and language development. Only one setting, a *non-Every Child a Talker trained* setting Primary O, reported using no techniques or tools to support identification of oral language development.

Seven settings reported using a checklist of developmental milestones to assess speech and language delay. Six of these settings were *Every Child a Talker-trained*, and the seventh was a Nursery School, Nursery R. Only Primary A, an *Every Child a Talker-trained* setting, reported the use of a specific speech and language scheme to develop activities to address speech and language needs.

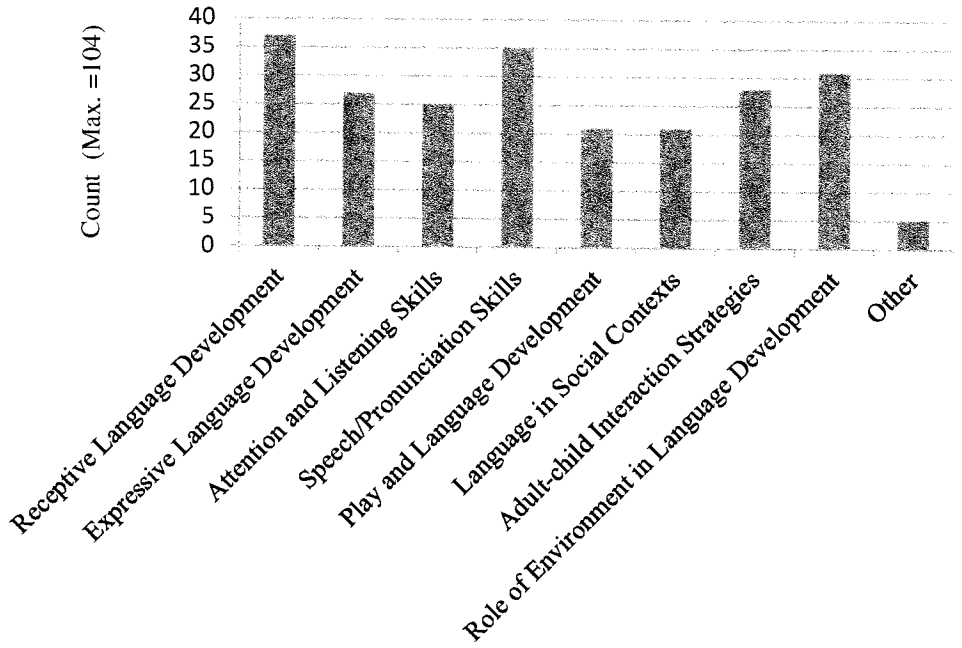
3.3.6 Additional CPD Sought

Respondents were requested to tick a box of those areas of language development in which they would like additional CPD training. A selection of eight areas was provided, each of which had already been listed in questions 10, 11 and 12 of the questionnaire. A non-specified area, labelled "Other" was also provided for respondents to complete. Five respondents completed this. One requested training in "language development for children with Dyspraxia"; three requested support when judging whether children with English as an Additional Language, may also experience speech delay. The fifth requested training to support her work with children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Respondents were then asked to underline up to two of these areas which they considered most important. This resulted in each of the nine areas being assigned a value between 0 and 2 in each completed questionnaire. If left unticked, the area was given a value of 0; if ticked, a value of 1; and if ticked and also underlined, a value of 2. As all respondents returning the questionnaire were considered to have completed this section, the total value which any area could receive was 104, double that of the number of respondents (N=52). Figure 4.0 displays these results.

Figure 4.0

Additional Training Needs Identified by Questionnaire Respondents (N = 52)



Training in *Receptive Language Development* was the most requested form of CPD, with a value of 37 out of a maximum of 104. Learning about how speech develops, *Speech/Pronunciation Skills*, was the next most valued (35), followed by the *Role of Environment in Language* (31). *Adult-child Interaction Strategies* were next (N=28), then *Expressive Language Development* (N=27). *Attention and Listening Skills* followed (N=25). *Play and Language* (21) and *Language Use in Social Contexts* (21) were ranked second from the bottom. Requested least, was *Other* forms of CPD (5).

3.3.7 Summary of Results from questionnaires

Those practitioners with highest levels of CPD training in speech and language development included more Early Years Educators than classroom teachers. Teaching Assistants recorded higher self-confidence measures than teachers or Early Years Educators, although they had received fewer CPD training hours. Self-reported confidence levels and CPD training hours have a strong positive relationship.

Staff who received *Every Child a Talker* training reported significantly higher self-confidence levels compared to those levels reported by their colleagues and staff in non-*Every Child a Talker* Trained settings. Though the difference between groups was not significant, practitioners with higher training hours tended to assess the Scenarios for Referral with greater accuracy than their colleagues.

Staff in Every Child a Talker Trained settings had completed far more training courses than those in non-Every Child a Talker settings. This may have led to differences in ratings of self-confidence between these two groups. However, no significant difference was found in the proportion scores between the settings following observation using the *CsC Observation Tool.*

Observation of children or peer comparison were the predominant methods of assessing children's oral language skill development. Of the seven settings using a milestone development checklist, six of these employed *Every Child a Talker*-trained staff. The two CPD training gaps most often cited included *Receptive Language Development* and *Speech/Pronunciation Skills. Play in Language*, and *Use of Language in Social context,* were least frequently cited as a training gap.

3.4 *Interview Findings*

3.4.1 Introduction

Data following analysis of the eight interview transcripts were presented in this section. Interviewee profiles were described first, followed by the system of Thematic Analysis used to analyse the interview transcripts. The final four categories of data, each one related to one or more research questions, were then reported in the section *Categories of Interview Findings*.

3.4.2 Interviewees

Practitioners from eight of the 18 settings which participated in the first phase of the study agreed to be interviewed. In one setting, Primary D, a group of four staff members including the two Class Teachers, the Early Years Educators and the Teaching Assistant, created a focus group. Following this, seven interviews were conducted between one member of staff and the researcher in a face-to-face manner. Data regarding the 11 interviewees and their eight settings are displayed in Table 3.11 below:

Table 3.11:

Reported confidence, training and CPD levels of interviewees (N=7)

Setting	*Job Title*	*Every Child a Talker-trained setting*	*CPD + Training Hours**	*LLO score (Max. 1.0)*	*LLI score (Max. 1.0)*
Primary B	Teacher	Yes	15	0.64	0.62
Primary C	Teacher	Yes	28	0.12	0.24
Primary D[1]	Teacher/Early Years Educator/Teaching Assistant	Yes	1-32	0.52	0.54
Primary G	Teacher	Yes	6	0.60	0.48
Nursery H	Teaching Assistant	Yes	58	0.48	0.49
Primary J	Teacher	No	1	0.24	0.38
Primary L	Teacher	No	10	0.24	0.40
Primary M	Teacher	No	9	0.44	0.53

* Those practitioners with more than 28 hours training have received *Every Child a Talker* training.

[1] Four members of staff participated in this focus group. The Early Years Educator was *Every Child a Talker* trained.

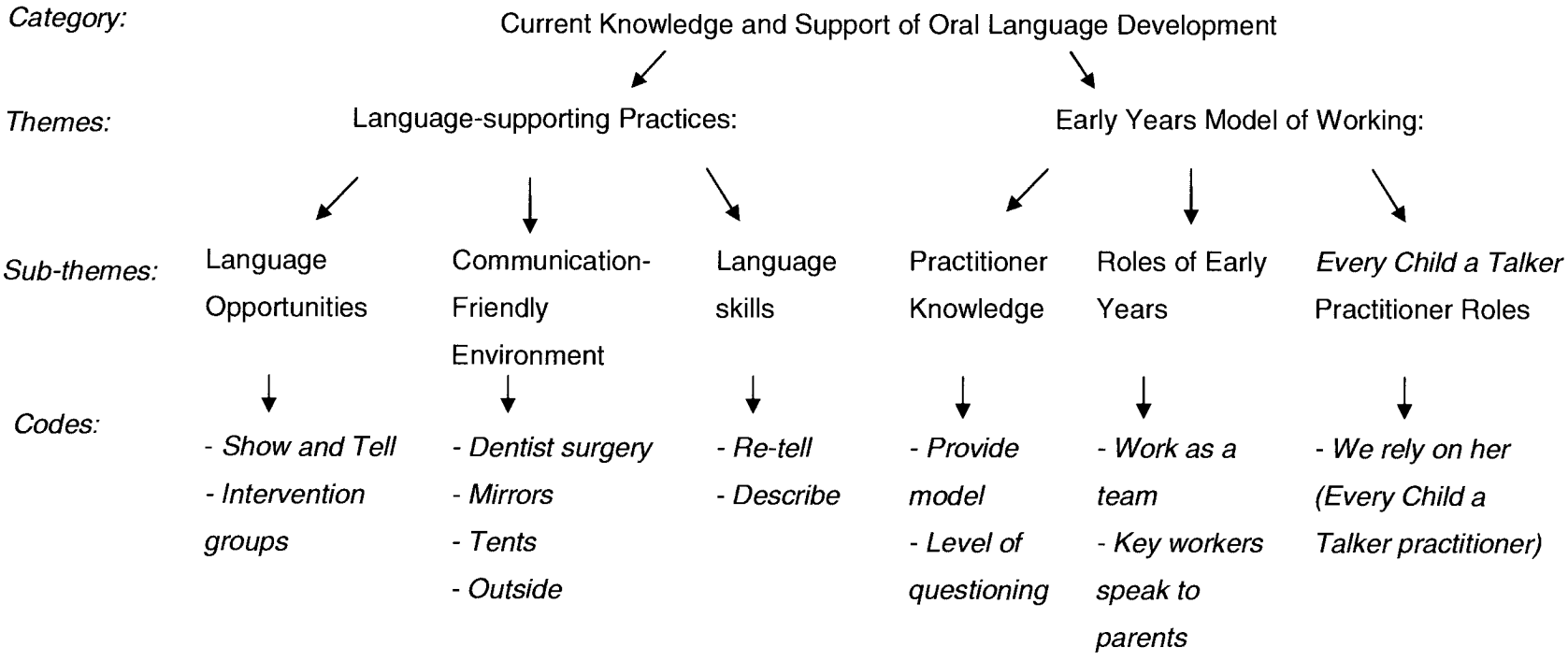
Interviewees from three settings, C, D and H, had participated in *Every Child a Talker* training. The two interviewees from settings B and G were teachers who had not received *Every Child a Talker*-training, but who worked with *Every Child a Talker-trained* staff. The final three teachers to be interviewed were *Non-Every Child a Talker trained*, and had received 10 or fewer hours CPD training in speech and language development. Each setting's scores on the *CsC Observation Tool* dimensions Language Learning Opportunities and Language Learning Interactions are also reported.

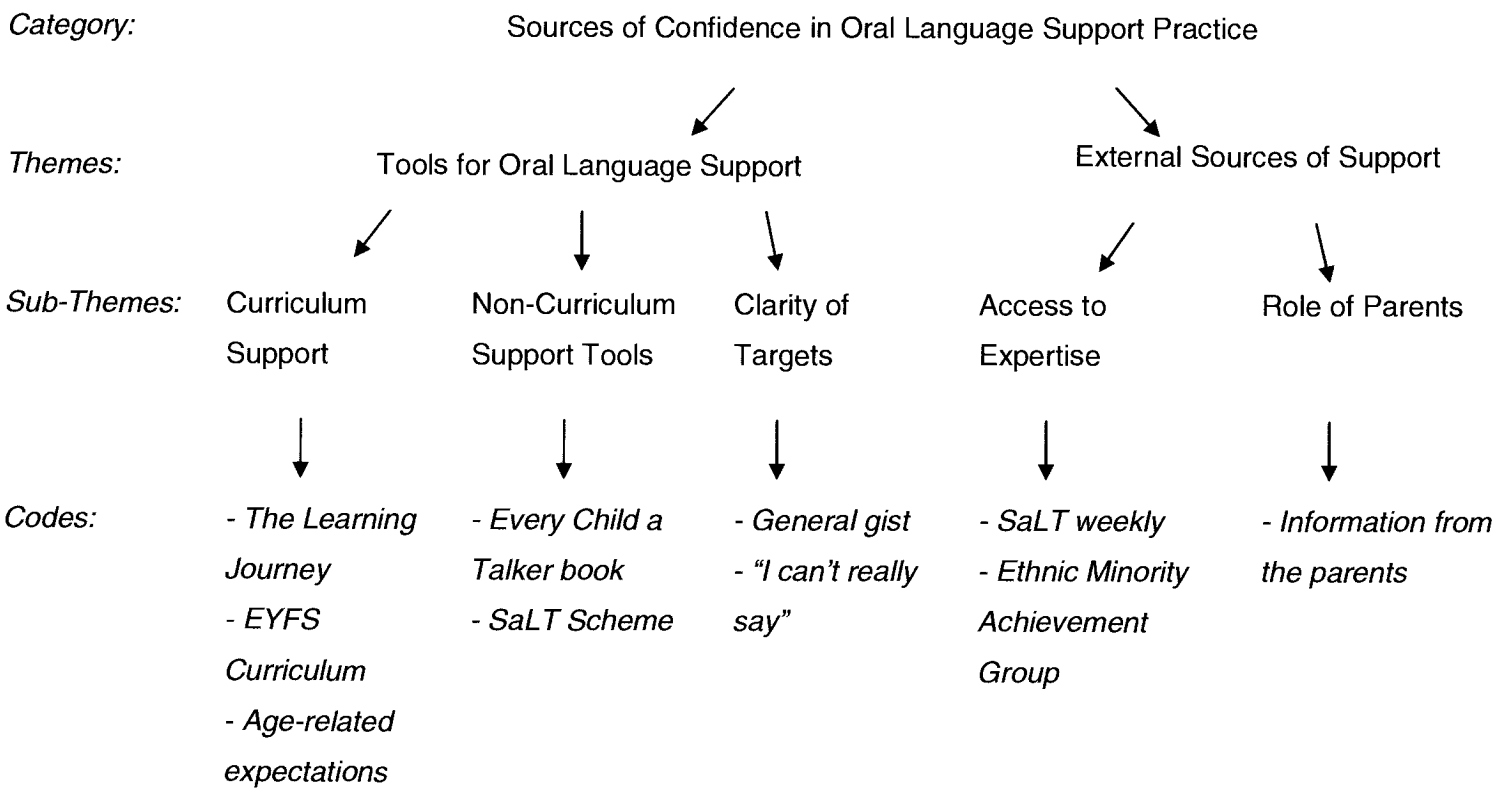
3.4.3 Interview Categories, Themes, Sub-themes and Codes

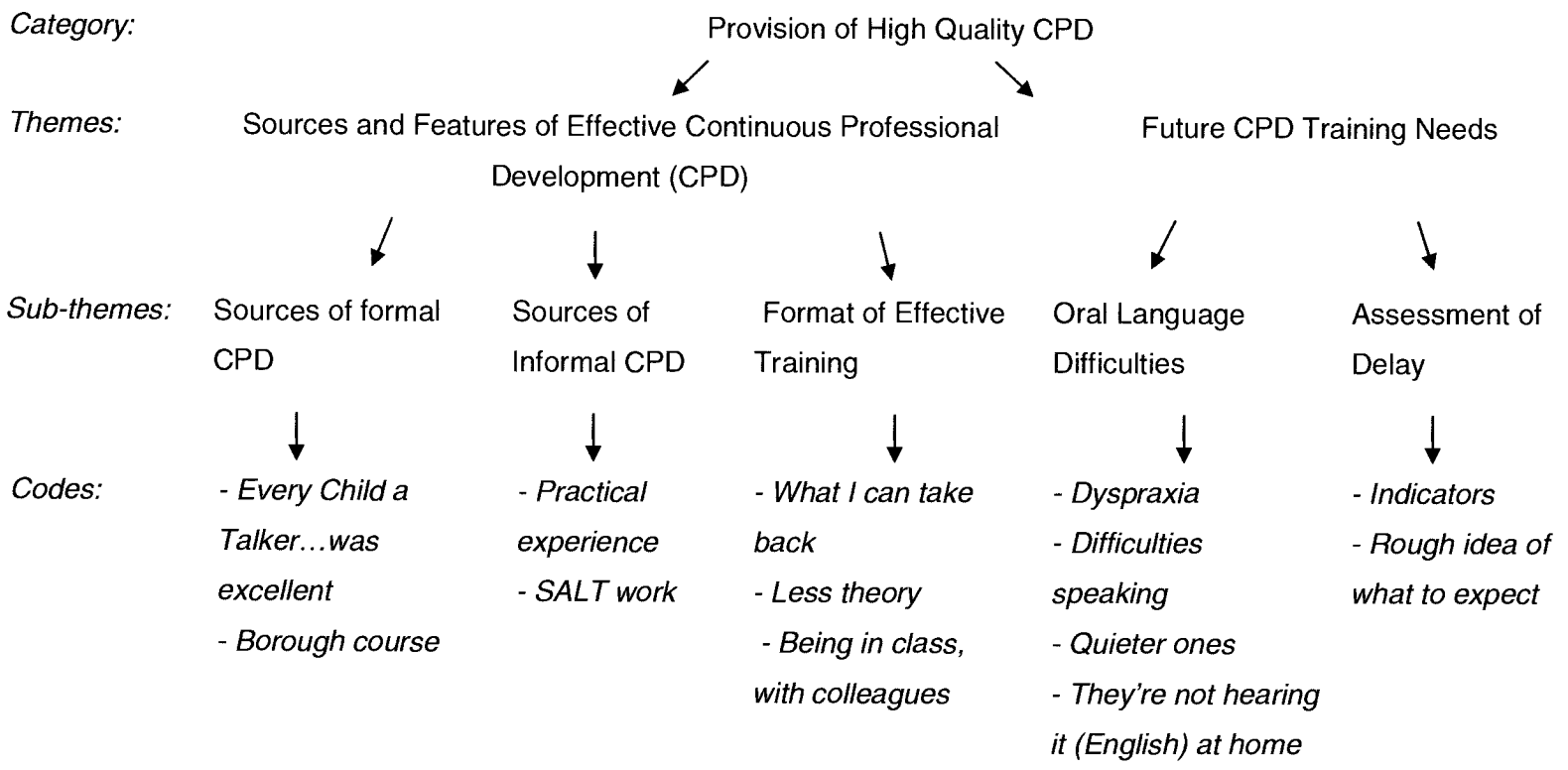
Table 3.12 on the next page displays examples of the codes, the sub-themes, themes and categories which the researcher compiled following examination of all transcripts.

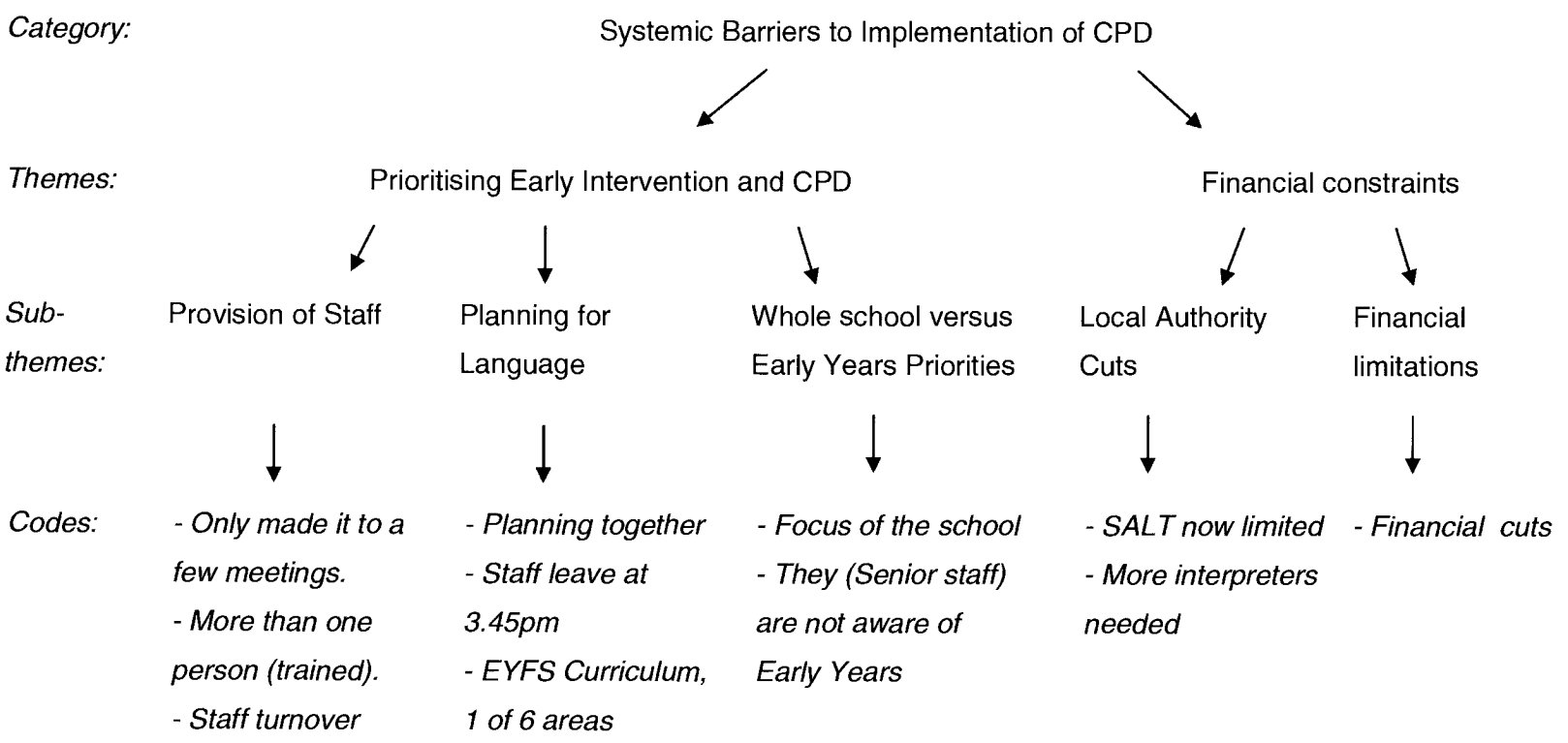
Table 3:12:

Categories, themes, sub-themes, and codes following Thematic Analysis




Category:
Sources of Confidence in Oral Language Support Practice
Themes:
Tools for Oral Language Support
External Sources of Support
Sub-Themes:
Curriculum Support
Non-Curriculum Support Tools
Clarity of Targets
Access to Expertise
Role of Parents
Codes:
- The Learning Journey
- EYFS Curriculum
- Age-related expectations
- Every Child a Talker book
- SaLT Scheme
- General gist
- "I can't really say"
- SaLT weekly
- Ethnic Minority Achievement Group
- Information from the parents


Category:
Provision of High Quality CPD
Themes:
Sources and Features of Effective Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
Future CPD Training Needs
Sub-themes:
Sources of formal CPD
Sources of Informal CPD
Format of Effective Training
Oral Language Difficulties
Assessment of Delay
Codes:
- Every Child a Talker…was excellent
- Borough course
- Practical experience
- SALT work
- What I can take back
- Less theory
- Being in class, with colleagues
- Dyspraxia
- Difficulties speaking
- Quieter ones
- They're not hearing it (English) at home
- Indicators
- Rough idea of what to expect


Category:
Systemic Barriers to Implementation of CPD
Themes:
Prioritising Early Intervention and CPD
Financial constraints
Sub-themes:
Provision of Staff
Planning for Language
Whole school versus Early Years Priorities
Local Authority Cuts
Financial limitations
Codes:
- Only made it to a few meetings.
- More than one person (trained).
- Staff turnover
- Planning together
- Staff leave at 3.45pm
- EYFS Curriculum, 1 of 6 areas
- Focus of the school
- They (Senior staff) are not aware of Early Years
- SALT now limited
- More interpreters needed
- Financial cuts

3.4.3.1 Creation of Sub-themes, Themes and Categories

Derived from the 49 sets of codes, 18 sub-themes emerged, based on similarity of content between codes. These were labelled using terms found in the initial Literature Review of research evidence. The language and concepts used in the interview questions were applied in order to group these sub-themes together. From these 18, nine themes were created.

The first three questions on the Interview Schedule were designed to elicit information about practitioner practice in supporting oral language development. This information addressed the first research question, which aimed to identify practitioner knowledge and skills when supporting oral language development in the classroom. Therefore, all sub-themes relating to practice in class were grouped together under the theme *Language-supporting Practices;* all references to the knowledge of staff were placed under *Individual Practitioner Expertise.* These formed the first category, *Current Knowledge and Support of Oral Language Development.* Throughout this category, the expertise of, and the role played by, the *Every Child a Talker-trained* practitioner is described.

Adding to information from questionnaires regarding levels of reported confidence, the second and third questions queried the sources of confidence experienced by staff. Sub-themes relating to *Tools for Oral Language Support* were grouped together, both those areas which were found to be helpful, and those which could be improved upon. Sources of further language support for staff were then grouped under the theme *External Sources of Language Support Practices.* These themes combined to form the category, *Sources of Confidence in Oral Language Support Practice.* This information addressed the second research question, which sought information regarding the confidence of practitioners in supporting oral language development.

Further information was sought regarding practitioners' experience of CPD training. Where an interviewee had received little speech and language CPD training, they were asked to describe their view of beneficial future training for themselves and their staff. Answers to this question resulted in three themes. *Sources of Continuous Professional Development (CPD)* reflected the experiences of staff in regards to CPD training. The second theme, *Features of High Quality CPD,*

consisted of aspects of courses which were found to be essential or preferable. Feedback from both *Every Child a Talker-* and non-*Every Child a Talker* training is reported. The theme *Future CPD Training Needs* reflected specific areas of SLCN for which teachers believed themselves under-prepared to support. This category, *Provision of High Quality CPD*, outlines the current and future role of CPD training in supporting staff's oral language support practices.

The final question resulted in responses which fell into two distinct themes: *Prioritising Early Intervention and CPD* and *Financial Constraints.* The latter theme emerged from references by many respondents, who described impact of the reduction of both school-based and Local Authority funding in recent years. The former theme reflects the impact of personnel and policy within a school, on funding of Early Years staff and Early Intervention generally. This fourth category, *Factors Leading to Effective Implementation of CPD*, responds to the final research question regarding systemic barriers to implementing CPD training.

3.4.4 Categories of Interview Findings

3.4.4.1 Current Knowledge and Support of Oral Language Development

3.4.4.1.1 Language-Supporting Practices

In response to the first question of the interview, all interviewees were able to describe simple techniques and activities provided by themselves and colleagues to encourage oral language development in children. In 3 settings with high scores on the Language Learning Opportunities (LLO) dimension of the *CsC Observation tool* (Nursery H, and Primary B and M) detailed accounts of the language-specific purpose of activities were provided. In the following example, an *Every Child a Talker-trained* practitioner describes an activity which uses *labelling*, *extending* of the child's language and *scripting* techniques,

"I'd say..."You need to turn the handle, put the watering can under the tap," so you've got all that language they're going to understand and you're going to extend their language. 'You're going to carry the watering can; you have to be careful going around the path. What do we need to say?'"

(Nursery H, Lines 56-60; see Appendix 15)

One practitioner who had not received *Every Child a Talker* training, but had completed a short INSET on the use of oral language in play, described the *labelling* technique,

"We narrate their play...they've got the context there, so you give them the vocabulary"

(Primary M; lines 14-16)

Two interviewees used the term "modelling", but without specifying how this would differ from simply talking with children. Both settings which omitted practical examples, Primary C and L, were recorded as having *low* levels of CPD training.

"Also to just talk a lot...always model language"

(Primary C, lines 186, 187; see Appendix 16)

3.4.4.1.2 The Early Years Model of Working

The importance of the different teaching roles found in the nursery was a strong theme throughout each interview. The Primary B teacher praised the Early Years Educator in her setting, noting her skill in providing interactive reading for pupils. Primary C reported using the Key Worker system to observe and assess children's progress. In this system, used by each nursery, every adult in the setting is assigned responsibility to record observations of specific children, in order to support weekly and termly assessments of progress.

"...it's so important to have the key worker system; can you imagine if I was doing 52 of those (daily observations)?"

(Primary C, lines 91, 92; Appendix 16)

Each interviewee reported weekly meetings of all nursery staff to plan activities and review the progress of children's learning.

Two settings used their *Every Child a Talker-trained* practitioner to provide a specialised intervention group for children with oral language difficulties. Nursery H ran a parent and child nursery rhyme group. The *Every Child a Talker* practitioner reported using the *Every Child a Talker* handbook to support some of her ideas for the group. The Early Years Educator in Primary D also consulted the handbook in her support of twins with Dyspraxia, and in running two weekly language groups;

one for children with EAL needs, the second for those with poor oral language skills. Primary C also carried out a speech and language intervention group, though this wasn't run by the *Every Child a Talker-trained* practitioner. This interviewee reported not feeling confident in supporting speech and language, as she had only "managed to get to a few meetings" as part of her *Every Child a Talker* training. Primary G did not have any children with speech and language referrals, and only 6% of children were classified as EAL. This setting therefore did not carry out intervention groups.

Where specific cases of oral language inability were described by two interviewees - Elective Mutism and Dyspraxia - the *Every Child a Talker* practitioners in each setting were assigned the programme of care and education of these children. Both practitioners reported successful outcomes for their pupils.

"I thought maybe if we whisper it won't be as bad as a big voice. And then I suppose we just raised the bar...and use (d) a big voice."

(Primary C, lines 223; 256,257: Appendix 16)

3.4.4.2 Sources of Confidence in Oral Language Support Practice

3.4.4.2.1 Tools for Oral Language Support

Primary G, K and J believed the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum to be flexible as regards what they planned. When planning a single session of learning, interviewees believed they could incorporate activities to develop more than one Learning Area at once. Primary B, P and O believed the curriculum diminished the importance of language, as it was "only 1 (strand) in Communication, Language and Literacy", out of 13 strands altogether. The vagueness of a target, such as "listens and responds" (Primary G) was reported as unhelpful, however practitioners felt they were given "the general gist" of what to expect from children (Primary M). Other text-based resources used to inform planning included the Department for Education publications *Development Matters, The Learning Journey* and the *Every Child a Talker* book.

A lack of assessment tools, or development checklists with "age-related expectations" was reported by all primaries. Only Primary M had developed a speech and language test of comprehension, in co-ordination with their Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT). It is their intention to create another for speech and

language skills in time. The Nursery H *Every Child a Talker* practitioner believed her experience and high number of training hours were significant in making her confident when identifying children's speech, language and communication needs. However, this interviewee had completed a far higher number of CPD hours (58), than the other interviewees (*M* =12.7, N=10).

3.4.4.2.2 External Sources of Support

Professionals reported as supportive in Early Years nurseries included the Speech and Language Therapist; the provider of Forest Schools, a play-based structure of learning promoted in the borough; the SALT practitioner providing *Every Child a Talker* training; the Ethnic Minority Advisory Group (no longer funded by the borough); SENCos in primary and nursery schools. Though staff all reported this input as useful, the Primary D teacher suggested that it was not the solution to assessment difficulties:

"Where as if you have a professional next door, it's useful but you're not really ever going to build up your own confidence in the area because you can always say, "Refer ... we'll just check,"

(Primary D, lines 554-556)

3.4.4.3 Provision of High Quality Continuous Professional Development

3.4.4.3.1 Sources and Features of Effective CPD

The benefit of learning through observation of colleagues' practice was mentioned by three teachers who work with *Every Child a Talker-trained* colleagues. One particular interviewee (Primary G) qualified last year and had received little CPD training in Speech and Language skills. However, her colleagues include an *Every Child a Talker-trained* Teaching Assistant, and another Teacher with 17 hours Speech and Language CPD. This interviewee cited observation of colleagues, and the opportunity to plan the week's activities with them, as a valuable source of learning for her. Sharing expertise between colleagues in this informal or incidental manner was seen as valuable. However, the teacher from primary D felt the staff were over-reliant on their *Every Child a Talker* colleague for advice,

"I think there's a tendency...that things (CPD) don't get shared. Then it's Shona's thing, any issues, go to Shona[1]. But it would be nice for everyone to be skilled."

(Primary D, lines 516-519)

Primary M and Nursery H reported more formal "workshop" sessions in their settings, where staff who had received recent CPD training were expected to share their learning with colleagues. The attendance of more than one staff member at training was considered "essential" by management in these two settings. The main reason given was to avoid loss of valuable information in the transition from trainee to trainer. Nursery H was the only setting to send two practitioners to the *Every Child a Talker* training.

"If I missed something, the other person picks it up so you've got somebody else there as a back up."

(Nursery H, lines 342-344; Appendix 15)

The teacher from Primary M also suggested that having one person alone try to "get the team on board" to implement change, was difficult. Having another person be inspired by a training course, and understand the principles, appeared to be necessary for change to occur.

Informal learning from experts was also reported by staff in Primary D, B and C. The teacher in Primary D described how the work of the Speech and Language Therapist had supported her to become more confident when judging the speech and language development skills of children. These weekly visits had been reduced to once-termly visits this year, due to cutbacks in the funding for the service.

The role of the SaLT, both Local Authority-employed and independent, was mentioned seven of the eight interviewees. The Primary M interviewee spoke of radical changes to their environment recently, following a 2-hour session with the Speech and Language Therapy team. This course focused on the role of play in language learning and was completed by the teacher and a Teaching Assistant from the setting. As a result of this session, this teacher changed her classroom environment and the activities she provided. She described her setting as a

[1] Name changed from original to retain anonymity

"communication-friendly environment", which had "covered sections" for "safe" talking. This primary school were alone in employing an independent SaLT one day per week, with whom they were consulting to provide a scheme of activities and a checklist for nursery children's oral language skills.

The only setting whose interviewee did not refer to the role of the SaLT was Primary G, the independent school. This school reported the lowest levels of children learning English as an Additional Language, and pupils with speech and language difficulties (6% and 0% respectively). This contrasted with the distinct language needs described by the remaining settings.

3.4.4.3.2 Future CPD Training Needs

Interviewees in all settings believed that themselves and their staff would benefit from further training in specific areas of oral language development. The teacher in Primary L noted the case of a child in her setting whom she believed experienced Elective Mutism. Has her staff and herself been more familiar with language development, and "strategies to use" to help the child, she believes that more progress could have been made by the girl in that academic year. The teacher in Primary J believed that simply "knowing what's appropriate for their age" was an aspect of developmental knowledge missing from initial teacher training. For those practitioners without *Every Child a Talker* or Speech and Language Service training, knowledge of typical milestones of speech and language development appeared to be the greatest future training need.

3.4.4.4 Systemic Barriers to Implementation of CPD

3.4.4.4.1 Prioritising Early Intervention and CPD

Interviewees in Primary D and Primary L described their view of the Early Years setting, appearing as distinct from the rest of the primary school. Both felt that the needs of the children to focus on language development were not "prioritised" (primary D) or "understood" (primary L) by the senior management of their schools. The direction of the School Development Plan was cited as a difficulty when this was not in line with Nursery children's needs. Primary D teachers described barriers to implementing new strategies due to "different school priority", and the fact that they would need "evidence" to support speech and language becoming a school priority. This difficulty was not reported by the Early Years Co-ordinator interviewed from Primary C, who is a member of the Senior

Management team. In contrast, Primary D teachers are class teachers, and work under line management from the Early Years Co-ordinator who is the Reception teacher. The interviewee in Nursery H, a setting with children aged 3 and 4 years only, reported no difficulties accessing finance from management for resources or training.

Primary B and L described their difficulty accessing appropriate Speech and language training in the borough, due to a lack of awareness of courses. Priorities of Senior Management were reported as leading to limited time off for training. The formal sharing of training with colleagues did not occur in Primary L.

"They (Senior Management) don't really think that's important...we're not given time for it".

(Primary L, lines 141, 412)

Finally, the turnover of staff was cited as a barrier to retaining knowledge from training. Finding time to train new staff was cited as an ongoing challenge. One primary school noted that none of the *Every Child a Talker* training had been passed on to current teaching staff, despite having only been completed less than two years ago.

3.4.4.4.2 Financial Constraints

All primary settings cited limitations to improved practice due to financial and budgetary restrictions. Among the resources sought, were more staff to free others to observe interactions and take notes; staff who could stay longer to contribute to planning; and staff with specific skills, such as Polish First Language speaking adults. External professionals were also cited as helpful. In all interviews the SaLT was frequently sought, and involved in training and provision improvements (one setting) and casework (remaining settings). The service by these professionals had diminished in two settings in the last year due to financial restrictions in the borough.

3.4.5. Summary of Interview Findings

Some interviewees, particularly those with CPD training in expressive language development and *Every Child a Talker* training, gave explicit examples of their interaction techniques to improve children's oral language skills. As a team, all settings found time to share children's progress on a weekly basis. However, the

planning of activities was primarily completed by class teachers. Many teachers expressed low confidence in their ability to assess children, and the EYFS was not commended as a useful reference for establishing delayed attainment in language and communication skills.

A loss in Local Authority funding of the Speech and Language Therapy Service, and low prioritisation of the Early Years by primary school management, has led to reduced training opportunities and professional support for staff. Nursery schools, and one primary school, were the exceptions; staff were given time to attend training, and to cascade new practices to colleagues.

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This final chapter considers the results of the research in the context of previous relevant research and theory, described in the Literature Review. Each research question will be addressed in order. Initially, the differences in the oral language provision of both settings, those with and those without relevant comprehensive CPD training, will be explored. Next, staff's reported confidence in and apparent knowledge of children's developing oral language skills will be reviewed, with reference to previous findings of studies and sources of support for practitioners. Following this, reported barriers and facilitating factors to the uptake and implementation of CPD training will be reviewed. Within each section, an evaluation of the research tools used will be presented. The chapter is completed by two final sections, *Limitations of the Study* and *Implications for Professional Practice and Further Research*.

4.2 Provision of Every Child a Talker- *and Non*-Every Child a Talker *trained Settings*

4.2.1 Language Learning Environments

Research studies and reports from intervention programmes aiming to support the development of children's oral language skills were collated and transformed into the CPD training programme, *Every Child a Talker* (DCSF, 2008). Those settings whose staff had received this training, between 2009 and 2010, were compared to similar settings where staff had not received this training. Using the *CsC Observation Tool,* observations focused on three dimensions, the first being resources and environmental structures in place to support oral language development. All settings scored highly, and little difference was recorded between settings. The observed consistency between Early Years environments is possibly reflective of schools' adherence to the Department for Education practice guidelines relating to the structure and resources of an Early Years classroom (DCSF, 2008a). These are identical to many of the recommendations proposed in the *Every Child a Talker* training programme. Within the government document, *Early Years Foundation Stage: Practice Guidelines*, clear examples are given regarding resources to enable children to meet specific learning development goals (DCSF, 2008a). These include role play areas, puppets and small-world toys. The presence of these resources in

Early Years guidelines reflects the successful implementation of research into effective strategy in young children's learning.

4.2.2 Language Learning Opportunities

Every Child a Talker-trained settings offered only slightly more language-learning opportunities than the mean, compared to non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings. Despite the difference in CPD hours received by staff, there was no significant difference observed between the two groups during the hour-long observation. This suggests that language-learning opportunities provided in settings were taking up a similar fraction of teaching time across all Nursery classes. It is possible that the minor role of language within the curriculum, predicted the frequency of these opportunities over other targeted areas of learning.

The language-learning opportunity least-observed was the support of peers to speak with each other, for a purpose. It is of concern that where staff have received *Every Child a Talker* training, this opportunity was not once observed in the daily provision. The practice of sharing information and learning with peers has been promoted in upper stages of the primary school, as a method of enhancing reasoning and problem-solving skills (Mercer, Wegeriff and Dawes, 1999). However, it appears that nursery children are not being exposed to this practice. The importance of role play as a learning opportunity has been embraced by all nursery settings, with 100% of settings providing at least one dressing-up role play area. However, speaking for a purpose, outside of a play activity, seems to be missing in the provision of learning opportunities by educators. This could include telling others about one's weekend, or the activities which they had completed during the day. The challenge of listening to a peer, given three year olds' short attention spans, may be a possible reason for the lack of popularity of this technique. In the absence of such structured opportunities, it is difficult to identify how skills of retelling and using new vocabulary can be developed (Dockrell, et al., 2010).

It is possible that the lack of any significant difference between groups of settings in the Language Learning Opportunities dimension stems from the role of the ECaT-Trained practitioner in most of the settings. Of the eleven practitioners who completed Every Child a Talker training, the majority (nine) were Teaching Assistants. When planning the activities for the week, the Class Teacher traditionally makes a final decision regarding the format of provision needed, in order to meet relevant Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum targets. In settings where the

Every Child a Talker-trained Teaching Assistant plays a limited role in planning, their knowledge and expertise may not influence the number and type of Language Learning Opportunities being incorporated into the curriculum.

4.2.3 Language Learning Interactions

The work of Carollee Howes and colleagues (Howes, et al., 2008), has suggested that time spent on providing language learning opportunities will result in gains in oral language abilities of young children. In addition to this, interventions in the U.K. have shown that differential gains in children's language ability, only occur where staff use techniques specifically intended to increase oral language skills. The "Talking Time" programme demonstrated that children's speaking skills would experience a significant differential increase compared to peers, when exposed to explicit instruction using techniques which modelled and promoted the use of new vocabulary and language in context (Dockrell, et al., 2010). Therefore, though frequency of language learning opportunities is necessary for oral language skill development, the quality of interaction between child and adult is critical to improvements in pupils' use of language.

Both language-specific intervention programmes of "direct instruction", developed in the U.K., demonstrated significant achievements in oral language skills of grammar, vocabulary knowledge and ability to retell a story (Bowyer-Crane, et al., 2008; Dockrell, et al., 2010). Techniques taught to practitioners focused on specific language teaching objectives, and were similar to several of those observed in nursery settings using the *CsC Observation Tool.* Techniques to support children to learn new vocabulary, and then to immediately use it in a given context, were observed in only four settings of *Every Child a Talker*- and three settings of non-*Every Child a Talker* training.

Further effective techniques included the explicit teaching of new words for objects and concepts (*labelling*); and using choices and contrasts to illustrate comparable characteristics. These two practices effectively convey new vocabulary and its meaning to children (Dockrell, et al., 2010; Girolametto and Weitzman, 2002). These techniques were observed in eight of the nine *Every Child a Talker*-trained settings, but only two non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings, suggesting that the *Every Child a Talker* programme was successful in imparting these particular sets of skills to practitioners. The ease with which staff incorporated these particular skills into daily practice, and colleagues perhaps imitated, suggests that these techniques were not

complex or anti-intuitive to natural practices. In contrast, setting up an opportunity for children to apply their newly-learned vocabulary may be a technique which requires more conscious planning, implementation and practice, before becoming a natural part of a repertoire of interaction skills.

Similarly, the modelling or scripting of language, for a child to use in order to meet a current communication need, will also ensure new vocabulary is attributed meaning, while an opportunity is concurrently given for applying it in context. Settings utilising these two explicit teaching techniques included four *Every Child a Talker*- and five non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings. These techniques are essential in order to provide an opportunity for children to use new vocabulary in the relevant context; the moderate incidence of observed use of these techniques suggest that staff may remember to label objects that they talk about, but fail to provide children with the opportunity to use the language themselves in context. The need for future reinforcement of learning, following completion of CPD courses, has been highlighted by Polly and Hanafin (2011), particularly in settings where only one staff member has participated in the programme. It is possible that a "refresher" type course, where principles are reviewed by the professional and recalled by practitioners, would enhance the duration of implementation in the school context.

Those four settings recording either none or only one of these techniques consisted of three Non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings, with a maximum of 8 hours CPD training per staff member, and one *Every Child a Talker*-trained setting where the practitioner was unable to complete the *Every Child a Talker* programme. Though having low hours of CPD did not predict a narrow range of language learning interaction techniques being observed, the skills described above appear to be most likely to be missing in a setting which has not received, or fully-attended, a sustained CPD training course. It is apparent that those techniques required in order to increase children's language skills, will most likely be implemented if modelled and specifically taught to staff.

The lack of a significant difference between the two groups of settings following observation using the *CsC Observation Tool* is difficult to interpret. Perhaps limiting observations to those practitioners trained in the *Every Child a Talker* programme, and excluding their colleagues, would have produced a greater contrast when compared with practitioners in non-*Every Child a Talker* trained settings. This comparison would have resulted in a more accurate reflection of the impact of the

training programme on individual practitioners' practice, rather than any impact on the setting as a whole.

4.2.4 Profiles of Every Child a Talker *and Non-*Every Child a Talker *Settings*

Settings with and without *Every Child a Talker* training reported a broad range in the proportions of pupils identified as having Speech and Language and Special Educational needs. No significant statistical difference was found between the two groups of settings. This result would initially suggest that the use of practitioner skills in supporting oral language development is therefore not dependent on the needs of the population, rather on the awareness and skill-level of the individual practitioners.

An alternative interpretation of the lack of difference in response to children's language needs may lie in the patterns of referrals. A lack of practitioner awareness of typical age-related development milestones may have led to an artificially low proportion of referrals in some settings. In contrast to the official guidelines regarding registration of children with English as an Additional Language status or Eligibility for Free School Meals, the referral of children to external professionals is a subjective judgement made by staff in a setting. Practitioners are first required to understand the development of language and learning skills, in order to identify the need for a referral of specific children. Furthermore, when a Speech and Language Therapist is on site to attend to the case of one or two children, they may be more available to help staff identify other children which are causing concern. Where the proportion of children with Speech and Language needs was low, settings without *Every Child a Talker* training did not score above the mean in either the *Language Learning Opportunities* (LLO) or *Language Learning Interactions* (LLI) dimensions. It is possible that without sustained training in speech and language development, the extent of the Speech and Language needs of the pupil population may not be fully understood. Staff are therefore less likely to plan activities or use techniques aimed specifically at improving oral language skills.

Settings with higher speech and language needs were more likely to have received *Every Child a Talker* training. This suggests that offering settings the choice to participate in CPD may have led to uptake by settings where pupils' language development delay was identified as significant or of priority. Responding to identified need is considered a strong motivating factor in seeking CPD, and later implementing change (Guskey, 2002; Adey, 2004). Continued implementation of new practice is

dependent on practitioners noticing a positive impact on children's learning (Guskey, 2002). Those settings with low language learning needs may not have noticed sufficient improvement in children's language skills to sustain motivation to continue with new practices.

Where the pupil population's language needs were reported as low, observed interaction techniques were less frequent than in high–need pupil populations. This pattern suggests that staff will implement strategies which have a positive impact on the learning of their pupils. When a positive impact is not noticed, it is unlikely that staff will continue to implement the CPD techniques which have been taught to them. However, as the speech and language needs of children in some settings may not be recognised due to lack of staff knowledge, it is also possible that improvement in language skills following intervention is unfortunately not being monitored or noticed.

4.3 CPD Training Received

In a pattern which appears inverse to the results of the teacher study by Mroz and colleagues (Mroz, Hall, Santer and Letts, 2002), nearly three quarters of the 52 respondents had received CPD training in some form of speech and language support practice. The most popular course was Makaton training, which appeared to be delivered over two days. In this sample of settings, most with a high percentage of EAL pupils, the choice of this course may well be to provide a communication system of simple gestures and non-verbal communication to ensure young, non-English speakers have their basic needs met. In observations of practice, staff were recorded using between 1 and over 5 instances of gesture to communicate meaning. The tool did not however, record instances of a specific form of communication system, which would reflect a consistent non-verbal language being used by all staff.

4.4 Use of a Checklist of Speech and Language Development

Of the nine *Every Child a Talker-trained* settings, six reported using a checklist of developmental milestones in their assessment of children's oral language abilities. One of the non-*Every Child a Talker* settings also reported using such a checklist. Interviews with staff suggest that the Learning Goals of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum were not clear enough to support identification of delay in oral language skills. An alternative checklist was sought by many practitioners. One setting appears to have addressed this difficulty by working with a speech and language therapist to compile a "bespoke" assessment battery for nursery-aged children. This setting, despite not participating in the *Every Child a Talker*

programme, is led by an Early Years Co-ordinator who has ensured team-wide workshops where all CPD training is cascaded to staff. Furthermore, this primary school has commissioned a speech and language therapist to be in the school one day per week; this contrasts with the difficulties reported by other primary school interviewees, who specifically cited a lack of funding, both for training and accessing the Speech and Language Therapy service, as a barrier to implementing effective language assessment. It appears that priority of the whole school impacts critically on the resources and training opportunities of staff; this is also discussed later in the chapter.

4.5 Knowledge and Confidence of Practitioners

Cumulative hours of CPD training only impacted on reported confidence levels when the CPD training hours were *high*, for the purposes of this study, above 27 hours. Each of these practitioners had either received *Every Child a Talker* training, or a combination of many forms of speech and language-linked CPD. This pattern reflects the results of evaluative studies on sustained CPD, suggesting that longer CPD programmes are most effective in imparting knowledge and practice to staff (Cordingley et al., 2003).

Self-reported levels of confidence did not predict practitioner ability in the setting, as observed using the CsC Observation Tool. Generally, levels of self-reported confidence varied greatly between practitioners, and appeared to fluctuate in line with hours of CPD training received, rather than to observed skill. Those interviewees who reported low self-confidence in the questionnaire phase appeared aware of gaps in their training during interviews. However in observations, they *had* provided good opportunities and used effective techniques to support language learning.

Confidence levels and CPD training hours of most teachers were much lower than their colleagues, both Early Years Educators and Teaching Assistants. As time was cited as a barrier to implementing further training, it is possible that many schools, or practitioners themselves, were unwilling to commit to a sustained programme of CPD such as the *Every Child a Talker* programme. As increased training appeared to correlate with increased confidence, settings may benefit from creating "release time" for their teachers more often. Another option to attending CPD directly, has been taken on by settings in an approach to "cascading" the training to colleagues. Two ways of sharing the learning from CPD programmes appear to have been implemented effectively. Firstly, support staff who had completed CPD training, were

asked to present their own workshop to inform and "feedback" to colleagues. This activity served to reinforce and remind the trainees of the content and skills they had taken away from the training. Secondly, some settings reported shared planning sessions, where activities for the week's teaching are formulated by all teaching staff, not just the teachers. These two approaches appear to have supported teachers who had not been trained in oral language support techniques, to learn and implement the skills and knowledge of their colleagues who had completed such training.

4.6 The Role of Parents

In order to tackle the attainment gap which presents in young children with poor socioeconomic backgrounds, government reports and Early Years guidelines strongly recommend integration of, and focused support for, parents (Field, 2011; DCSF, 2008a). The *Every Child a Talker* programme addressed this area by providing a framework of steps to involve and then offer training, to parents of children with English as an Additional Language and/or economic or learning difficulties (DCSF, 2008c). In this research sample, three Nursery Schools reported offering a weekly session to enhance parent-child interaction skills; no primary school reported carrying out a similar service. In contrast, one non-*Every Child a Talker* trained interviewee described her personal difficulties in communicating with parents with EAL status. It appears that the daily timetable of the Nursery School incorporates time for parents to access practitioners, and stay with their child in the school setting; this contrasts with the more closed policy of primary schools. Though the policy of the upper primary school may promote a "hands-off" approach in regards to parents, development of children's Literacy skills has been shown to suffer when parents are not involved in the instruction of their young child (Whitehurst et al., 1988). Learning outcomes generally are also more likely to increase following the involvement and training of parents (Senechal et al., 1995; Sneddon, 2008). A change in policy regarding parental involvement and training would likely improve the relationships between staff and parents, particularly those with English as an Additional Language, while also improving children's learning generally.

4.7. The Communication supporting Classrooms Observation Tool

The *CsC Observation Tool,* designed as an audit to be used by staff in settings, was selected as it appeared to match the objectives of the *Every Child a Talker* intervention most closely. Compared to alternative observation tools, this tool focused more specifically on oral language support techniques and in greater detail.

The range of scores achieved by different settings in the *Language Learning Opportunities* and *Language Learning Interactions* dimensions reflected a pattern similar to a normal distribution, with a range of settings scoring on both sides of the mean. Despite the small sample size, a mean close to 0.50 was identified for both the *Language Learning Opportunities* and *Language Learning Interactions* dimensions. The scores of different settings were broad, yielding substantial differences which were sufficient for analysis for statistical significance, suggesting the tool is sensitive to small differences in practitioner interaction techniques, and the provision of learning opportunities. Had the researcher targeted only professionals with *Every Child a Talker* training in comparison with those without this training, it is possible that the observations may have generated a greater number of significant findings.

The similarity in scores in the *Language Learning Environment* dimension appeared to suggest that settings did not differ greatly in the resources and layout provided for children to develop oral language skills. However, physical aspects of the large, well-equipped Nursery Schools appeared to provide greater opportunities through their environment; one setting had a sensory garden, with picture and printed label of insects, plants and animals a child might find there. Another Nursery School provided a sheltered area with a cushioned, curved bench, where planned interactive-reading took place, and writing utensils, books and props such as puppets, were available for children to use independently. Only one point on the *Language Learning Environment* dimension rewarded settings for bringing reading materials outside the Book Area, and no point was available for planned interactive reading unless it was observed. It is possible that provision of such facilities could be recognised through a further point on the dimension, regarding the range of outdoor provision as distinct from that offered indoors. This may be particularly relevant in central city settings, where neighbourhoods of families with low socioeconomic status, have led to less playing time spent in natural environments, participating in games in open spaces.

4.7.1 *Limitations and Challenges to the* Communication supporting Classrooms Observation Tool

The ability of the Tool to estimate practices taking place in the setting is curtailed by the number of observers completing the observation at one time. In order to accurately reflect the practices of all staff, one observer per practitioner would be required for the duration of the hour-long observation. Requiring several researchers to attend each setting at the same time represents a demand on

resources which few research teams could organise and sustain. However, an alternative method would be to carry out repeated observations of each practitioner over an interval of time, such as a two-hour morning session. For example, in a setting where four practitioners are working, each would be observed for 10 minutes, every 40 minutes, resulting in three, ten minute observations of each practitioner.

The disadvantage of using more than one observer is reflected in the difficulties of the author to establish consistency of interpretation across many elements in the Language Learning Interactions dimension. Concepts such as "imitating", "modelling" and "extending" appear to lend themselves towards subjective interpretation. This suggests that as the number of observers increase, so the consistency in interpretation of observed interactions will decrease.

An alternative to using many observers, might be to use cameras with good-quality audio capability. Perhaps those practitioners who are extremely keen to improve their practice would even agree to wearing a head camera! A disadvantage of using video recordings is the extra time required to view footage at the staggered pace necessary to "code" instances accurately on the Observation Tool. A strong advantage to this method is the permanent, re-viewable record of conversations which can be shared repeatedly with other. This is an effective way to establish consistency in the interpretation of the language-learning interactions observed. For the purposes of feedback and training, viewing one's own and others' techniques in practice is a powerful teaching tool. This may be a future recommendation for practitioners using the Tool in order to promote new practices in their setting.

Gaining a fair picture of different settings is also a challenge when using any observation schedule. The *CsC Observation Tool* aims to record five different types of opportunities. As the schedule of group work, Registration and assembly times may differ between settings, it may be advisable to direct staff as to the type of activity which may be sought. Unfortunately this would compromise the validity of the observation data, due to pre-knowledge by staff of the researcher's expectations. It may be preferable to have some standard advanced warning however, rather than none. This would need to be trialled by the research design team before being introduced to the official guidelines of the *CsC Observation Tool*, and could possibly occur in a future revision or extension of the Tool.

4.8 Facilitating Factors and Barriers to Implementation of CPD

4.8.1. Management Priorities and Resources

With the introduction of the last Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Curriculum, settings were required to monitor and assess children's progress in relation to specific learning goals (DCSF, 2008a). The recent report by Dame Tickell critically highlights the minor role of oral language skills in this curriculum. Where primary school management adhered to the priorities of this EYFS, and used these learning goals as their guide to success in children's learning, there is a possibility that instances delayed oral language skills were missed. The priority of practitioners may have fallen to the other strands in the *Communication, Language and Literacy* area, prioritising assessment of pre-reading skills other than verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

The restraints on Early Years staff, where language skills were not the priority of management, was reported as a preventive barrier to accessing specific CPD training for Early Years staff (Mroz et al., 2002). In contrast, Nursery Schools had the undivided priority and funding of their management directed on the Early Years. Primary school interviewees reported experiencing limited access to training due to other priorities of their management teams, and funding demands of the remaining key stages in the school. It is clear that this need not be the case, where language skills are prioritised throughout the primary school; however, only one primary of the seven interviewed, reported having senior management support. The new EYFS framework has placed significant demands on staff, by clarifying and enhancing the expressive and receptive language targets for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2012a). This change in expectation has not been supported by central funding for training of Nursery staff in primary schools in supporting achievement of these new goals. However, should school management individually prioritise enhanced staff knowledge and skills, then funding for SALT and/or language specialists may be located to address this skills gap.

4.8.2. Specific CPD Training

In her intervention with Early Years settings to implement a language-rich environment, Laura Justice reports the need for a clear, operationalised philosophy of language (Justice, 2004). This ought to include a definition of language, its range of purposes and a belief in why language is so important. Interviews with settings with lower *CsC Observation Tool* scores suggest that the staff knowledge of oral language

skills is narrow and undefined. Limited mention of the characteristics and purposes of language was made, suggesting that consideration as to the role of language skills in accessing the Early Years curriculum has been minimal. In contrast, interviewees from settings with high scores, who had received specific oral language training, used a range of verbs to describe the functions of language, and many specific interaction techniques which they knew would enhance language learning in children. It is apparent that this knowledge is not come upon incidentally through staff experiences, and must be conveyed to the practitioner through CPD training or effective cascading of this training.

4.8.3. Collegial Support

When implementing new practice, the continued use of new techniques is dependent on the support of practitioner's colleagues (Guskey, 2002; Adey, 2004). Where staff members are supported by colleagues with similar training or knowledge, CPD has been shown to be effective in creating change (Lydon and King, 2010). In eight of the nine *Every Child a Talker* settings in this study, only one setting sent two practitioners to attend the programme. However, six of these settings appear to have maintained practices. In interviews with three settings, knowledge gained by the *Every Child a Talker* practitioner was quickly, and successfully, cascaded to remaining staff in the setting. It is possible that this early sharing of knowledge and practice following implementation helped keep all staff focused on the importance of oral language objectives, and the methods of implementing effective practice.

4.9 The Every Child a Talker *CPD Programme*

In their work with Early Years caregivers in the U.S., Girolametto and Weitzman (2003) created effective change in interaction techniques through a cyclical system of teaching, observation and feedback. The programme ran over 14 weeks, using video-taped footage of the techniques being implemented in classrooms. The "Talking Time" intervention used a similar technique, which resulted in 80% fidelity by staff to the taught techniques (Dockrell, Stuart and King, 2010). This use of in-class observation and feedback, was implemented only once over the ten sessions of the *Every Child a Talker* programme. The limited ability of practitioners to identify errors in their interpretation of the teaching on the programme was therefore minimal. It is possible that continued implementation of less simple techniques, such as modelling new language and providing opportunities for its use, required consistent

reinforcement through a cycle of observation and feedback which was limited in this provision of the programme.

The programme appeared to have been successful in its goal of reaching more practitioners in a setting than simply the programme participant. Where staff worked with a colleague with *Every Child a Talker* training, they were more likely to experience higher confidence in their practice; more staff members were also observed providing a range of language-learning interaction techniques. The success of two settings in cascading training to colleagues, in a formal manner, appears to result in improved practice of staff across the setting.

4.10 Conclusions

Where settings are challenged by significant language delay within their pupil population, the staff are aware of the need to improve their knowledge and skills in order to address the delay in development. However, certain factors impact on their autonomy and ability to access sufficient, long-term CPD training. Barriers to achieving this training include management priorities, and an ability of the staff to commit time to attending and sharing training. Results of a lack of sustained training include low levels of self-confidence, and limited involvement of parents as both a resource and as secondary language educators of their child. The *Every Child a Talker* programme was not successful in long-term implementation of some language-learning techniques across all practitioners' practice in a setting. However, two trained practitioners had supported systemic changes in Nursery Schools' practice and provision through their planning and delivery of speech and language-focused group sessions. This suggests that individual practitioners were able to implement learned practices; however, management priorities regarding time for staff development and cascading of training, are the key ingredients to successful, long-term implementation of systemic change in a setting.

It appears that incidental learning of language has been a common approach to supporting oral language development, through role-play and the provision of "free-play" with puppets and small-world toys. The central tenet of the *Every Child a Talker* programme, to explicitly teach and plan opportunities to use new language, is not yet instilled in many Early Years settings. The lack of significant difference in observed practice between settings suggests that the *Every Child a Talker* programme lacked a core component in ensuring practitioners take their learning "on-site". This is likely due to the absence of onsite observations and feedback opportunities by course

providers. Creating lasting change in practitioners' techniques and learning opportunities is challenging; only observation and re-modelling of the new skills will result in accurate use and the positive outcomes in learning needed to ensure long-term implementation.

4.11 Limitations of the Study

The National Audit Office commentary on research in Early Years practice in the U.K. highlights the drawback that many interventions have not been evaluated using a randomised control trial design (National Audit Office, 2004). Instead, a quasi-experimental design is used, where allocation of groups is not randomised, and often small numbers are involved in a case-study design. This study attempted to broaden the sample from that of case-study, to a larger sample from which conclusions for other Early Years settings with similar pupil populations may be drawn, and guidelines for practice generalised. Given the low uptake from *Every Child a Talker* settings, and limited time to carry out interviews, the sample was not as large as ideal for the purposes of drawing generalisable conclusions. With a longer timescale for completion, the project would have produced larger datasets, which may have yielded more significant results.

The use of a purposive sample does increase the likelihood that a background factor, which has not been accounted for, may significantly influence the results of the research. The researcher believes however, that this possibility may be a realistic reflection of "real-life" interventions, and thus can be generalised to further, similar contexts.

The use of a questionnaire proved an efficient way to access a large sample of data, with less input by the researcher when compared to the use of interviews. However, the length of the questionnaire appeared to be a barrier to information collection, as a portion of respondents failed to complete the final page. The pilot study of the Scenario questions may have used a particularly well-trained group of practitioners, which resulted in an inaccurate measure of knowledge of milestones. Alternatively, the location of the Scenarios on the final page may have discouraged some respondents from completing them due to time pressures.

4.12 Implications for Professional Practice

Attending Continuous Professional Development training courses is not a guarantee that practices in a setting will improve. This may be due to individual

enthusiasm for particular courses and resulting commitment by staff to making changes once training is completed. Similarly, some staff without any professional training seem willing to adapt their practice and to use techniques which have been shown to them while working "on the job". It may be that encouraging staff to identify the areas of their profession they themselves wish to develop may be an effective starting point to creating observable change in practice. Helping them to monitor changes, and identify effective practice, will also provide motivation to continue implementing new practice.

The provision of short, one-off CPD training programmes has been shown to yield inconsistent success in education (Cordingley et al., 2003). However, where the input is targeted, and the CPD identified as being in response to a specific school training need, the impact it can have remains potentially strong. When being commissioned to run workshops or Inset-training, the Educational Psychologist will more likely be successful if they initially elicit as much detail as possible from the participants in regards to their desired outcomes. Ensuring management support the training will also increase the chance of continued implementation.

If possible, training should be carried out with more than one practitioner, to reduce the chances of "teacher isolation", thus increasing chances of continued implementation over time (Lydon and King, 2010; Polly and Hanafin, 2011). Frequent observation and feedback, in a collaborative forum, will be most likely to ensure the correct practice is implemented. Supporting practitioners with tools to measure their pupils' progress is more likely to support long-term change.

The new EYFS curriculum has presented practitioners with a challenge to change implicit learning of language, to explicit teaching, with little in the way of training to support this. As Local Authority funding is limited, it is the school-based funds which will be required to enable training to be put in place. Where the SALT and Educational Psychology service are currently operating a "traded service", there is a strong argument for using part of the time provided to ensure appropriate training is made available to clusters of schools with both Nursery and Reception classes. Such training could include the use of standardised assessment with cohorts of children, to establish the impact of the training in an action-research model of working. Such evidence would contribute to the case for the cost-effectiveness of training by Local Authority Educational Psychology and Speech and Language services.

4.13 Future Research Recommendations

Researchers continue to establish the validity and reliability of the *CsC Observation Tool* within settings, but upon publication, this auditing tool would provide a strong tool in the evaluation of speech and language CPD programmes. Its use would provide a detailed measure of pre-CPD performance for settings wishing to address gaps in staff and setting provision for the language development of pupils. This tool could be used both pre- and post- any speech and language intervention, to support the measurement of implementation of new practices, both immediately following CPD and in the long-term.

The role of pupil population needs in the selection of CPD training and management priorities appears to be strongly linked. In Nursery School settings where the Early Years cohort and their learning is the sole objective of staff, CPD training appears more available. Primary schools, without similar focus on Early Years, have failed to provide similar levels of CPD, nor provided training for parents of pupils in the cohort. Future research which monitors the impact of CPD and training for parents on the learning outcomes of children may yield sufficient evidence to support change in the priorities and funding of senior management with regard to their Early Years provision.

In regards to this specific study, follow-up training on supporting staff to implement the evidence based language-learning techniques has been put in place. The impact of the training on children's language development could be the focus of a future Doctoral research project, which would aim to assess the pre- and post-intervention outcomes of such CPD training. A borough-wide, longitudinal project following specific cohorts of children, would greatly contribute to knowledge of the impact of both the new EYFS curriculum and the training provided by the Educational Psychology service.

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Appendix 1

Development matters (DfE, 2012). Target Outcomes linked to Oral Language Skills

Playing and Exploring, Active Learning, and Creating and Thinking Critically support children's learning across all areas

	A Unique Child: observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: what adults could do	[illegible]
 22-36 months	• Interested in others' play and starting to join in. • Seeks out others to share experiences. • Shows affection and concern for people who are special to them. • May form a special friendship with another child.	• Ensure that children have opportunities to join in. • Help them to recognise and understand the rules for being together with others, such as waiting for a turn. • Continue to talk about feelings such as sadness, happiness, or feeling cross. • Model ways of noticing how others are feeling and comforting helping them.	• Make time for children to be with their key person, individually, and in their key group. • Create areas in which children can sit and chat with friends, such as a snug den and cosy spaces. • Provide resources that promote cooperation between two children such as a big ball to roll or throw to each other.
 30-50 months	• Can play in a group, extending and elaborating play ideas, e.g. building up a role-play activity with other children. • Initiates play, offering cues to peers to join them. • Keeps play going by responding to what others are saying or doing. • Demonstrates friendly behaviour, initiating conversations and forming good relationships with peers and familiar adults.	• Support children in developing positive relationships by challenging negative comments and actions towards either peers or adults. • Encourage children to choose to play with a variety of friends from all backgrounds, so that everybody in the group experiences being included. • Help children understand the feelings of others by labelling emotions such as sadness, happiness, feeling cross, lonely, scared or worried. • Plan support for children who have not yet made friends.	• Plan activities that require collaboration, such as parachute activities and ring games. • Provide stability in staffing, key person relationships and in grouping of the children. • Provide time, space and materials for children to collaborate with one another in different ways, for example, building constructions. • Provide a role-play area resourced with materials reflecting children's family lives and communities. Consider including resources reflecting lives that are unfamiliar, to broaden children's knowledge and reflect an inclusive ethos. • Choose books, puppets and dolls that help children explore their ideas about friends and friendship and to talk about feelings, e.g. someone saying 'You can't play'.
 40-60+ months	• Initiates conversations, attends to and takes account of what others say. • Explains own knowledge and understanding, and asks appropriate questions of others. • Takes steps to resolve conflicts with other children, e.g. finding a compromise. Early Learning Goal Children play co-operatively, taking turns with others. They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity. They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children.	• Support children in asking openly and confidently with others, e.g. to seek help or check information. • Model being a considerate and responsive partner in interactions. • Ensure that children and adults make opportunities to listen to each other and explain their actions. • Be aware of and respond to particular needs of children who are learning English as an additional language.	• Ensure that children have opportunities over time to get to know everyone in the group, not just their special friends. • Ensure children have opportunities to relate to their key person, individually and in small groups. • Provide activities that involve turn-taking and sharing in small groups.

Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements and their order should not be taken as necessary steps for individual children. They should not be used as checklists. The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development.

Playing and Exploring, Active Learning, and Creating and Thinking Critically support children's learning across all areas

	A Unique Child children's learning and development	Positive Relationships: what adults could do	
 30-50 months	• Listens to others one to one or in small groups, when conversation interests them. • Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall. • Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories. • Focusing attention – can listen to do, but can't shift own attention. • Is able to follow directions (if not distracted), related to own choice of activity.	• Model being a listener by listening to children and taking account of what they say in your responses to them. • Cue children, particularly those with communication difficulties, into a change of conversation, e.g. "Now we are going to talk about ..." • For those children who find it difficult to listen and do, say their name before giving an instruction or asking a question. • Share rhymes, books and stories from many cultures and those using languages other than English, particularly where children are learning English as an additional language. Children often all hear a range of languages and models as the skill needed to speak more than one. • Introduce rhyme time bags containing books to take home and involve parents in rhymes and singing games. • Ask parents to record regional variations of songs and rhymes. • Play games which involve listening for a signal, such as 'Simon Says', and use 'noisy/quiet' signs. • Use opportunities to stop and listen carefully for environmental sounds, and talk about sounds you can hear such as 'ssh, listen, I can hear ...'. • Explain why it is important to pay attention when others are speaking. • Give children opportunities both to speak and to listen, ensuring that the needs of children learning English as an additional language are met, so that they can participate fully.	• When making up alliterative jingles, draw attention to the similarities in sounds at the beginning of words and emphasise the initial sound, e.g. "mmmmummy", "shshshshadow", "b-b-b-bubbly". • Plan activities listening carefully to different speech sounds, e.g. a sound chain copying the voice sound around the circle or identifying other children's voices on tape. • Help children be aware of different voice sounds by using a mirror to see what their mouth and tongue do as they make different sounds. • When singing or saying rhymes, talk about the similarities in the rhyming words. Make up alternative endings and encourage children to suggest the last word of the second line, e.g. "Hickory Dickory Dock. The mouse ran down the ..." • Set up a listening area where children can enjoy rhymes and stories. • Choose stories with repeated refrains, songs and action songs involving cooking and parting, and songs that require replies and turn-taking such as 'Tommy Thumb'. • Plan regular short periods when individuals listen to others, such as singing a short song, sharing an experience or discussing something they have seen or done. • Use sand timers to help extend concentration for children who find it difficult to focus their attention or sit still.
 40-60+ months	• Maintains attention, concentrates and sits quietly during appropriate activity. • Two-way turn-taking in conversation – can listen and wait for other to speak. **Early Learning Goal** **Children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity**		

Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements and their order should not be taken as necessary steps for individual children. They should not be used as checklists. The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development.

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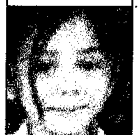
	A Unique Child: observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: what adults could do	[illegible]
 30-50 months	• Understands use of objects (e.g. "What do we use to cut things?") • Shows understanding of prepositions such as 'under', 'on top', 'behind' by carrying out an action or selecting correct picture. • Responds to simple instructions, e.g. to get or put away an object. • Beginning to understand 'why' and 'how' questions.	• Prompt children's thinking and discussion through involvement in their play. • Talk to children about what they have been doing and help them to reflect upon and explain events, e.g. "You told me this model was going to be a tractor. What's this lever for?" • Give children clear directions and help them to deal with those involving more than one action, e.g. "Put the cars away, please, then come and wash your hands and get ready for lunch". • When introducing a new activity, use mime and gesture to support language development. • Showing children a photograph of an activity such as hand washing helps to reinforce understanding. • Be aware that some children may watch another child in order to know what to do, rather than understanding it themselves.	• Set up shared experiences that children can reflect upon, e.g. visits, cooking, or stories that can be re-enacted. • Help children to predict and order events coherently, by providing props and materials that encourage children to re-enact, using talk and action. • Find out from parents how children make themselves understood at home; confirm which their preferred language is. • Provide practical experiences that encourage children to ask and respond to questions, e.g. explaining pulleys or wet and dry sand. • Introduce, alongside books, story props, such as pictures, puppets and objects, to encourage children to retell stories and to think about how the characters feel.
 40-60+ months	• Responds to instructions involving a two-part sequence. Understands humour, e.g. nonsense rhymes, jokes. • Able to follow a story without pictures or props. • Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion. **Early Learning Goal** **Children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events**	• Ask children to think in advance about how they will accomplish a task. Talk through and sequence the stages together. • Use stories from books to focus children's attention on predictions and explanations, e.g. "Why did the boat tip over?" • Help children to: • identify patterns, e.g. what generally happens to 'good' and 'wicked' characters at the end of stories • draw conclusions: 'The sky has gone dark. It must be going to rain' • explain effect: '*It sank because it was too heavy*' • predict: 'It might not grow in there if it is too dark' • speculate: '*What if the bridge falls down?*'	• Set up displays that remind children of what they have experienced, using objects, artifacts, photographs and books. • Provide for, initiate and join in imaginative play and role-play, encouraging children to talk about what is happening and to act out the scenarios in character.

Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements and their order should not be taken as necessary steps for individual children. They should not be used as checklists. The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development.

	A Unique Child: observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: what adults could do	
 22-36 months	• Uses language as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings, experiences and thoughts. • Holds a conversation, jumping from topic to topic. • Learns new words very rapidly and is able to use them in communicating. • Uses gestures, sometimes with limited talk, e.g. reaches toward toy, saying 'I have it'. • Uses a variety of questions (e.g. what, where, who). • Uses simple sentences (e.g. 'Mummy gonna work.') • Beginning to use word endings (e.g. going, cats).	• Wait and allow the child time to start the conversation. • Follow the child's lead to talk about what they are interested in. • Give children 'thinking time'. Wait for them to think about what they want to say and put their thoughts into words, without jumping in too soon to say something yourself. • For children learning English as an additional language, value non-verbal communications and those offered in home languages. • Add words to what children say, e.g. child says 'Brush dolly hair', you say 'Yes, Lucy is brushing dolly's hair.' • Talk with children to make links between their body language and words, e.g. 'Your face does look cross. Has something upset you?' • Introduce new words in the context of play and activities. • Use a lot of statements and fewer questions. When you do ask a question, use an open question with many possible answers. • Show interest in the words children use to communicate and describe their experiences. • Help children expand on what they say, introducing and reinforcing the use of more complex sentences.	• Display pictures and photographs showing familiar events, objects and activities and talk about them with the children. • Provide activities which help children to learn to distinguish differences in sounds, word patterns and rhythms. • Plan to encourage correct use of language by telling repetitive stories, and playing games which involve repetition of words or phrases. • Provide opportunities for children whose home language is other than English, to use that language. • Help children to build their vocabulary by extending the range of their experiences. • Ensure that all practitioners use correct grammar. • Foster children's enjoyment of spoken and written language by providing interesting and stimulating play opportunities.
 30-50 months	• Beginning to use more complex sentences to link thoughts (e.g. using and, because). • Can retell a simple past event in correct order (e.g. went down slide, hurt finger). • Uses talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next, recall and relive past experiences. • Questions why things happen and gives explanations. Asks e.g. who, what, when, how. • Uses a range of tenses (e.g. play, playing, will play, played). • Uses intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make the meaning clear to others. • Uses vocabulary focused on objects and people that are of particular importance to them. • Builds up vocabulary that reflects the breadth of their experiences. • Uses talk in pretending that objects stand for something else in play, e.g. 'This box is my castle.'		

Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements and their order should not be taken as necessary steps for individual children. They should not be used as checklists. The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development.

Playing and Exploring, Active Learning, and Creating and Thinking Critically support children's learning across all areas

	A Unique Child	Positive Relationships: what adults could do	Enabling Environments
 40–60+ months	• Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words. • Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations. • Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention. • Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events. • Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play. **Early Learning Goal** **Children 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.**	• Supports children's growing ability to express a wide range of feelings orally and talk about their own experiences. • Encourages conversation with others and demonstrates appropriate conventions: turn-taking, waiting until someone else has finished, listening to others and using expressions such as "please", "thank you" and "sorry". At the same time, respond sensitively to social conventions used at home. • Shows children how to use language for negotiating, by saying "May I ...?", "Would it be all right if ...?", "How many ...?" and "Will you ...?" in your interactions with them. • Models language accommodations for different audiences, for example, a visitor. • Encourages children to predict possible endings to stories and events. • Encourages children to experiment with words and sounds, e.g. in nonsense rhymes. • Encourages children to develop narratives in their play, using words such as first, last, next, before, after, at most, some, each, every. • Encourages language play, e.g. through stories such as Goldilocks and the Three Bears and action songs that include information. • Values children's contributions and uses them to inform and shape the direction of discussions.	• Give time for children to initiate discussions from shared experiences and have conversations with each other. • Give thinking time for children to decide what they want to say and how they will say it. • Set up collaborative tasks for example, construction, food activities or story making through role-play. • Help children to talk about and plan how they will begin, what parts each will play and what materials they will need. • Decide on the key vocabulary linked to activities, and ensure that all staff regularly model its use in a range of contexts. • Provide opportunities for talking for a wide range of purposes, e.g. to present ideas to others as descriptions, explanations, instructions or justifications, and to discuss and plan individual or shared activities. • Provide opportunities for children to participate in meaningful speaking and listening activities. For example, children can take models that they have made to show children in another group or class and explain how they were made.

Communication Supporting Classrooms Observation Tool

NOVEMBER 2011

BETTER COMMUNICATION RESEARCH PROGRAMME

COMMUNICATION SUPPORTING CLASSROOMS OBSERVATION TOOL

- The observation tool below is designed to be used in an observation of a classroom or a learning space.
- The observation tool can be used in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classrooms and learning spaces.
- The average length of time necessary to collect a representative sample of behaviour is one hour. The recording of the first dimension (Language Learning Environment) can be done during break time or school assembly.
- It is recommended that the observation takes place during a regular classroom session (usually a morning session starting with the class register).
- The language learning dimensions are recorded as either present or absent during the observation. For some items, there is a record of a Language Learning Opportunity being 'Present' and being 'Used during the Observation'.
- For the dimensions of 'Language Learning Opportunities' and 'Language Learning Interactions', each different occurrence is recorded up to a maximum of 5 times during the observation period. Each recorded observation is a new/different occurrence of the behaviour/activity.

OBSERVATION TOOL

DIMENSIONS		Not Seen	Observed		COMMENTS
LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	*This dimension involves the physical environment and learning context.*				
The classroom is organised to emphasise open space.					
Learning areas are clearly defined throughout the classroom.					
Learning areas are clearly labelled with pictures/words throughout the classroom.					
There is space for privacy or quiet areas where children can retreat to have 'down time' or engage in smaller group activities. These areas are less visually distracting.					
Children's own work is displayed and labelled appropriately.					
Some classroom displays include items that invite comments from children.					
Book specific areas are available.					
Literacy specific areas are available.					
Background noise levels are managed consistently throughout the observation, and children and adults are able to hear one another with ease.					
Transition times are managed effectively, so that noise levels are not excessive and children know what to expect next.					
There is good light.					
The majority of learning resources and materials are labelled with pictures/words.					
Resources that are available for free play are easily reached by the children or easily within their line of vision.					
An appropriate range of books is available in the book area (for example, traditional stories, bilingual/dual language books and a variety of genres and books related to children's own experiences).					
Non-fiction books, books on specific topics or interests of the children are also available in other learning areas.					
Outdoor play (if available) includes imaginative role play.					
Good quality toys, small world objects and real / natural resources are available.			**Present:**	**Used:**	
Musical instruments and noise makers are available.			**Present:**	**Used:**	

Role play area is available			Present:	Used:	
DIMENSIONS		Not Seen	Observed (5 times)		COMMENTS
LANGUAGE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES	*This dimension involves the structure opportunities that are present in the setting to support language development.*				
	Small group work facilitated by an adult takes place				
	Children have opportunities to engage in interactive book reading facilitated by an adult (for example: asking predictive questions, joining in with repetitions, story packs etc.).				
	Children have opportunities to engage in structured conversations with teachers and other adults.				
	Children have opportunities to engage in structured conversations with peers (Talking partners).				
	Attempts are made to actively include all children in small group activities.				

DIMENSIONS		Not Seen	Observed					Observed By All Staff in Classroom	COMMENTS
LANGUAGE LEARNING INTERACTIONS	*This dimension involves the ways in which adults in the setting talk **with** children.*								
	Adults use children's names to draw attention of children.								
	Adults get down to the child's level when interacting with them.								
	Natural gestures and some key word signing are used in interactions with children.								
	Adults use symbols, pictures and props (real objects) to reinforce language.								
	Pacing: Adult uses a slow pace during conversation, give children plenty of time to respond and take turns in interacting with them.								
	Pausing: Adult pauses expectantly and frequently during interactions with children to encourage their turn-taking and active participation.								
	Confirming: Adult responds to the majority of child utterances by confirming understanding of the child's intentions. Adult does not ignore child's communicative bids.								
	Imitating: Adult imitates and repeats what child says more or less exactly.								

	Commenting: Adult comments on what is happening or what children are doing at that time								
	Extending: Adult repeats what child says and adds a small amount of syntactic or semantic information.								
	Labelling: Adult provides the labels for familiar and unfamiliar actions, objects, or abstractions (e.g. feelings).								
	Adult encourages children to use new words in their own talking.								
	Open questioning: Adult asks open-ended questions that extend children's thinking (what, where, when, how & why questions).								
	Scripting: Adult provides a routine to the child for representing an activity (e.g. First, you go up to the counter. Then you say 'I want milk...') and engages the child in known routines (e.g. 'Now it is time for circle time. What do we do first?').								
	Adult provides children with choices (for example: 'Would you like to read a story or play on the computer?')								
	Adult uses contrasts that highlight differences in lexical items and/or syntactic structures.								
	Adult models language that the children are not producing yet.								
	Turn-taking is encouraged.								
	Children's listening skills are praised.								
	Children's non-verbal communication is praised								

Appendix 3

Guidance to Completing the Communication supporting Classroom Observation Tool

November 2011

BETTER COMMUNICATION RESEARCH PROGRAMME

GUIDANCE ON COMPLETING COMMUNICATION SUPPORTING CLASSROOMS OBSERVATION TOOL

- The observation tool below is designed to be used in an observation of a classroom or a learning space.
- The observation tool can be used in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classrooms and learning spaces.
- The average length of time necessary to collect a representative sample of behaviour is one hour. The recording of the first dimension (Language Learning Environment) can be done during break time or school assembly.
- It is recommended that the observation takes place during a regular classroom session (usually a morning session starting with the class register).
- The language learning dimensions are recorded as either present or absent during the observation. For some items, there is a record of a Language Learning Opportunity being 'Present' and being 'Used during the Observation'.
- For the dimensions of 'Language Learning Opportunities' and 'Language Learning Interactions', each different occurrence is recorded up to a maximum of 5 times during the observation period. Each recorded observation is a new/different occurrence of the behaviour/activity.

OBSERVATION TOOL

DIMENSIONS	EXAMPLES	NOTES
LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	*This dimension involves the physical environment and learning context.*	
The classroom is organised to emphasise open space. [1,4,6]		
Learning areas are clearly defined throughout the classroom. [1,2,4,5,6,7,8,11]	Different learning areas, such as small world play, reading corner, maths area, construction, topic table, computer area are available within the classroom.	
Learning areas are clearly labelled with pictures/words throughout the classroom. [1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,11]	Symbols and pictures are used to label different areas, such as the kitchen and book areas.	
There is space for privacy or quiet areas where children can retreat to have 'down time' or engage in smaller group activities. These areas are less visually distracting. [1,2,4,5,7,8]	There is a big tent for children to go into with a book. A corner of the classroom has an entrance like a castle.	This item is specifically for quiet spaces. Classrooms may have spaces such as a house corner, hospital area, or growing station. While these are interesting learning areas, they do not get a score for this item.
Children's own work is displayed and labelled appropriately. [5,6,7,8]	Self-portraits with labels and descriptions. Children's drawings, potato prints.	
Some classroom displays include items that invite comments from children. [5,6,7,8]	Can you order your numbers here? How much did you enjoy our trip to the zoo? Children are encouraged to rate the trip using stars.	This item refers to displays which have space for children to contribute.
Book specific areas are available. [1,3,4,5,6,7,8]	Book displays, shelves within easy reach.	
Literacy specific areas are available. [1,3,4,5,6,7,8]	Desks with paper, whiteboards, pens and books to practise spelling, handwriting or reading.	Literacy specific areas may include materials for writing or practicing handwriting.
Background noise levels are managed consistently throughout the observation, and children and adults are able to hear one another with ease. [4,5,6,10]	Noise levels are managed well throughout the observation. Soft music playing in the background during free play.	
Transition times are managed effectively, so that noise levels are not excessive and children know what to expect next. [4,5,7,9,10]	The adult rings a bell and all children stop and put both hands in the air and wait for instructions. Adult warns the children they have five more minutes before assembly. A tambourine is used to signal the children have to wait and listen for the next instruction.	
There is good light. [4,5,6,8,11]		
The majority of learning resources and materials are labelled with pictures/words. [4,5,6,7,11]		
Resources that are available for free play are easily reached by the children or easily within their line of vision. [4,5,6,7,8]	Blocks, play dough, toy animals, number lines within easy reach.	

An appropriate range of books is available in the book area (for example, traditional stories, bilingual/dual language books and a variety of genres and books related to children's own experiences). [15]		
Non-fiction books, books on specific topics or interests of the children are also available in other learning areas. [15]	Books on dinosaurs. Books on transportation Space and the universe books and props	
Outdoor play (if available) includes imaginative role play. [1,8,15]	Children dressed up as construction workers (hi vis jackets and hard hats) for break outside. Home corner available outdoors.	
Good quality toys, small world objects and real / natural resources are available. [1,2,4,6,8,15,16,17]	Zoo toys, shells, pebbles, seeds. Castle set and toys related to topic.	
Musical instruments and noise makers are available [1,2,4,6,8,15,16,17]	Adult uses the tambourine to get children's attention. Adult plays the guitar during story time. Children take turns to use the wooden flutes while the adult reads a story. Concept of pitch is explored using bells.	
Role play area is available. [1,2,4,6,8,15,16,17]	Kitchen area. Puppets and soft animals used for imaginary play. In the kitchen area there are different outfits for children to wear. Castle costumes in the class (e.g. knight and princess).	

DIMENSIONS	EXAMPLES	NOTES
LANGUAGE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES	*This dimension involves the structure opportunities that are present in the setting to support language development.*	
Small group work facilitated by an adult takes place.[14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21]	Phonics groups (children grouped by ability). Letter-sound matching activity within small groups. Counting practice group Children complete spelling tasks, sitting on different tables according to ability (labelled by different animal names) with adult support.	
Children have opportunities to engage in interactive book reading facilitated by an adult (for example, asking predictive questions, joining in with repetitions, story packs etc.).[14,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30]	Teacher reads two books brought in by a child from home. During the reading she asks two questions ("Why would Mr Stick be scared of a dog?" "What are baby butterflies?")	
Children have opportunities to engage in structured conversations with teachers and other adults.[31,32,33,34]	Adult sits at the free play tables and answer children's questions, comments on their activities, asks questions and follows up conversation. Children approach adult with news about family, adult asks questions and comments, relating to background knowledge of prior events. Show and Tell carpet time includes questions that require from the child to provide more information on the object.	Conversations are structured by following the child's lead, attending to the child and talking about what the child is doing or is interested in with an emphasis on taking turns.
Children have opportunities to engage in structured conversations with peers (Talking partners).[35]	Children discuss a topic with the child sitting next to them during carpet time and give a joint answer to the whole-group. Children work in pairs – one describes a geographical shape while the other guesses which shape they are thinking of.	Children are given prompts and support by adults to engage in a specific conversation about the current topic.
Attempts are made to actively include all children in small group activities.[36]	Less talkative children are identified by adults, who invite them to sit on their knee to have a conversation. Additional modification of language is used by adults to include less-talkative children in whole-class discussions.	

DIMENSIONS	EXAMPLES	NOTES
LANGUAGE LEARNING INTERACTIONS	*This dimension involves the ways in which adults in the setting talk **with** children.*	
Adults use children's name, draw attention of children.[34,39]	Adult says the name of each child before giving them a counting task (e.g. Sarah – 3+4!) During greetings at the start of the day. Adult uses the child's name to get their attention *before* asking them a specific question during 'show and tell' session	If an adult does this repetitively during one activity (e.g. a counting task), but does not use this strategy during the rest of the session, you may wish to count the incidence as 'once' (rather than counting the individual occurrences within the one task).
Adults get down to the child's level when interacting with them.[37,39,40]	Adult sits on the carpet with the children to complete maths activity. Adult sits on small chairs designed for children during free activity time.	
Natural gestures and some key word signing are used in interactions with children.[40-42,47]	Thumbs up. Use a gesture for 'big' (tower). Use the 'where' Makaton sign. Gestured when saying 'I can see a long way'. Fingers to signal 3 hats. Five minutes (hand gesture for 5). Knock it over (gesture for knock). When instructing in an ICT lesson, teachers use gestures for up/down/left/right/high/low. Iconic gestures are used, e.g. gesture for 'cliff' (in discussion of what an edge is in maths lesson)	
Adults use symbols, pictures and props (real objects) to reinforce language.[1]	Visual timetable displayed, with a focus on a child who has recently moved to the area from abroad and a child with ASD. Pointing at pictures when reading a story. Holding a wooden train toy and referring to it when talking about transportation.	
Pacing: Adults use a slow pace during conversation; give children plenty of time to respond and take turns in interacting with them.[1,37,43,44,45,46]	When explaining how to log on to the computers, the adult takes lots of pauses and talks slowly.	
Pausing: Adults pause expectantly and frequently during interactions with children to encourage their turn-taking and active participation.[1,37,43,44,45,46]	Counting activity '– 2, 4, 6 ……!' A: 'How do we call this? It's a…… pancake!' A: 'What day is it today, do you know?…. It was Monday yesterday so it's…. …. Today is - Tuesday!'	
Confirming: Adults respond to the majority of child utterances by confirming understanding of the child's intentions. Adults do not ignore child's communicative bids.[1,37,43,44,45,46]	Adult confirms if answer to counting was correct? Child: 'My grandmother has rabbits in her garden'. Adult: 'That sounds interesting, tell me about the rabbits later' Child: 'Look Miss!' Adult: 'Oh look what you've done! He's made a	

	car!' Child ' Miss, look at my star.' Adult: 'Oh wow. .this is a big bright star!'	
Imitating: Adults imitate and repeat what child says more or less exactly.	Child: 'It is my sister's birthday on Saturday'. Adult: 'Is it really her birthday? How exciting'. Child: 'Miss look at my tower'. Adult: 'Oh wow...look at your tower!'	
Commenting: Adults comment on what is happening or what children are doing at that time.	Adult: 'Charlie, that's a great design'. Adult: 'A spider! Your favourite animal.' Adult: 'I like the way Alfie and Tiana put all the blocks together to build a really tall tower.' Adult: 'I can see what you're doing, you're trying to copy.'	In order to be scored, the adult's comment should be directed at the child(ren) and be about the immediate situation
Extending: Adults repeat what child says and add a small amount of syntactic or semantic information.	Child: 'Because Cinderella was scared of her sisters'. Adult: 'That's right. Cinderella was scared of her two horrible sisters'. Child: 'My mummy brought me here'. Adult: 'Your mummy's brought you here has she? She's seen you to the gate. Here she is!' Child: 'Chimney house'. Adult: 'Chimney that's like the one we saw when we went on our walk'. Child: 'Look at my dress'. Adult: 'It's a very beautiful summer dress'.	
Labelling: Adults provide the labels for familiar and unfamiliar actions, objects, or abstractions (e.g. feelings).	Child: 'I need to be careful.' Adult: 'That's right. You need to be precise'. Adult: 'What's another word for punch? (Pause) Starts with 'h'. Adult: 'When someone doesn't feel excited in a nice way, we say they feel ..(pause) upset'. The adult describes the word octagon in relation to an octopus. Introduces the words pentagon, cylinder, cuboids, and cone.	
Adults encourage children to use new words in their own talking.	What's another word for that...? Submarine (what did we call that one again?) Child: 'They rhyme'. Adult: 'That's right. We learnt about rhyming in the morning'.	
Open questioning: Adults ask open-ended questions that extend children's thinking (what, where, when, how & why questions).	How does it change from one to another? What did you like about the way Tiara read the story? What do you know about a giant's house? Why do you think they might be hot? How's it different to a square? And what's this book about?	
Scripting: Adults provide a verbal routine to the child for representing an activity (e.g. First, you go up to the counter. Then you say 'I want milk..') and engage the child in known routines (e.g. 'Now it is time for circle time. What do we do first?').	When we do a book review, we say 'I gave Cinderella three stars because...'	Scripts provide children with accurate verbal information about those situations or activities they may encounter. The situation or activity is described in detail providing the child with a script of what to say or do, what might be expected of him them and why. This item should not be scored if the adult just gives directions (e.g. Adult: 'Now go to your tables and start the task').

Adults provide children with choices (for example: 'Would you like to read a story or play on the computer?'). [1]	Do you want to go outside or go on the computer? Do you want to show us a magic trick or tell us about last night (in Show and Tell)?	
Adults use contrasts that highlight differences in lexical items and in syntactic structures. [57,58]	Amphibian crafts versus hovercrafts! Smaller v smallest That's not just a car, it's like a minibus! Hammer doesn't start with d, that would be dammer The adult explains to the children the meaning of the words content and index. Face versus Side Sophia versus spear versus sphere! Discusses a face of a circle versus a face of a 2d shape in maths.	
Adults model language that the children are not producing yet. [57,58]	What are the properties of the shape?	Adults may use a word or sentence structure which you would not expect of a child in key stage 1. In order to score on this item, consider if the adult is using language which is within the child's zone of proximal development – e.g. is the language use helping develop children's language skills? Or is it too complex to be accessed by children of this age range (in which case, do not score a point)?
Turn-taking is encouraged. [62]	Adult: 'We are working as a team - doing it all together. Now it's my turn, then it's Amber's turn.' Adult: 'Let's take it in turns to think of a word to describe the monster.'	
Children's listening skills are praised. [63]	Adult: 'That's very good listening.' Adult: 'I can tell you are listening to me by the way you all look at me when I explain the task. Great listening!'	This item is scored if listening is explicitly praised. It does not include praise for being quiet (e.g. 'this class is really quiet – good work' would not be scored) or discipline for poor listening (e.g. 'I wish there was more listening going on in here today!'). You may wish to note any positive strategies that the adults use to encourage good listening.
Children's non-verbal communication is praised. [63]	Adults: 'I like the way you look at me when I explain the exercise. It makes me think you are really listening at me'	

Appendix 4a

Table 3.5

The Pupil Population Profiles of Matched Pairs of ECaT and Non-ECaT Trained Settings

Participating School	*CPD Training*	*Number of pupils*	*% S&L*[2] *referrals*	*% SEN*[3]	*% EAL*[4]	*% FSM*[5]
A	ECaT	50	12	8	96	54
J	Non-ECaT	20	10	5	95	51
B	ECaT	17	6	0	65	39
K	Non-ECaT	24	4	0	50	37
C	ECaT	25	8	8	36	15
L	Non-ECaT	18	0	6	72	36
D	ECaT	50	6	6	66	22
M	Non-ECaT	26	12	15	62	47
E	ECaT	25	12	0	60	41
N	Non-ECaT	25	8	8	60	50
F	ECaT	30	3	7	80	29
O	Non-ECaT	26	0	4	27	33
G	ECaT	34	0	0	6	0
Q	Non-ECaT	22	0	0	23	0
H	ECaT	64	16	13	77	56
R	Non-ECaT	60	20	17	84	64

[2] The percentage of children attending the nursery who are registered with the Speech and Language Therapy Service.
[3] The percentage of children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs, or registered on the school Early Years Action Plus list.

[4] The percentage of children learning English as an Additional Language.

[5] The percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals.

Appendix 4b

Table 3.6

The Pupil Population Profiles of Unmatched ECaT and non-ECaT Trained Settings

Participating School	*CPD Training*	*Number of pupils*	*% S&L*[7] *referrals*	*% SEN*[8]	*% EAL*[9]	*% FSM*[10]
I	ECaT	53	19	25	62	48
P	Non-ECaT	13	8	0	77	48

[7] The percentage of children attending the nursery who are registered with the Speech and Language Therapy Service.

[8] The percentage of children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs, or registered on the school Early Years Action Plus list.

[9] The percentage of children learning English as an Additional Language.

[10] The percentage of children eligible to receive Free School Meals

Appendix 5

Research Information Sheet and Consent Form

Research Information Sheet

Date: 17th October 2011

Name of researcher(s): Aoife Jenkinson, Institute of Education, London.

Name of supervisor/s (for student research): Prof. Julie Dockrell, Institute of Education, London.

Course: Doctorate of Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology.

Project Title: Eliciting the impact of continuous professional development training in speech and language development, on the knowledge, skills and practice of Early Years practitioners.

Purpose: This research aims to identify the resources, activities and techniques used by Nursery staff to support children to develop their oral language skills. It also examines what impact, if any, speech and language training has had on staff knowledge and self-confidence in this area. Finally, it seeks to identify any barriers or helpful factors which staff have come across when trying to put new practices into place in their Nursery setting.

Methodology: In the initial stage of the research, an hour-long observation will be carried out once by the researcher, beginning at Registration on an agreed morning. A Checklist will be used to record any language-supporting resources, activities and staff techniques which are used or provided during that hour. A questionnaire will be given to staff to complete before the observation. This will record demographic data of the respondent and the pupil population they work in, as well as their training, knowledge and self-confidence in how to support children's language development.
In a later stage of the research, any participants who wish to will take part in an interview with the researcher. This will explore barriers and helpful factors experienced when trying to bring new practices into the classroom.

Participants: Staff in 30 Primary School Nursery classes and 4 Nursery Schools in the borough have been invited to participate in the research.

Project Dates: Observations and questionnaires will be carried out and completed between October and December 2011. Interviews will be completed in January 2012.

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: Eliciting the impact of continuous professional development training in speech and language development, on the knowledge, skills and practice of Early Years practitioners.

Name of Researcher: Aoife Jenkinson, Institute of Education, London.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 17th October 2011 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

3. I agree for the data to be recorded digitally and transcribed verbatim.

4. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential and stored securely in both their digital and transcript forms. This is in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

5. I give permission for my anonymised responses to be used for analysis. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

6. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research

7. I agree to take part in the above research project

.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Researcher	Date	Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:
Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form will be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location at all times.

Appendix 6

Speech and Language Training and Practice Questionnaire

Speech and Language Training and Practice Questionnaire

All responses to this questionnaire will be treated as confidential. Your answer will not be used in any way which could identify you or your setting. Please complete answers as fully as possible.

Section 1: Personal Details
This section asks for details about your background and training. Please answer all the questions as factors such as your age and the date of training are important for the research.

1. **Job title**: _____

2. **Full time** ☐ **Part time** ☐ % of full-time hours _____

3. **How long have you worked here, in your current role?** _____ (years)

4. **Your age** ☐ 16-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 55+

5. **Your Qualification**

   DCE / NNEB ☐ BTEC ☐ STA ☐ Cert Education ☐

   PGCE ☐ BEd ☐ EY Professional Status ☐

   None ☐ (If you have ticked "none", please go to section 6)

   NVQ / GNVQ (Please state subject and level) _____

   Other (Pease specify) _____

6. a) **Date of qualification** (month/year) _____ b) **Length of Training** _____ years (If your training was part-time, please write how long it would have taken as a full-time course).

7. **Setting Information - to be completed by the Nursery Class Teacher in relation to the *Morning* Cohort of Nursery Children.**

   How many Nursery children attend the setting in the morning? _____ *children*

   How many Nursery children have a diagnosed Speech and Language delay or disorder as identified by the SaLT (Speech and Language Therapy) service? _____ *children*

   How many Nursery children are registered as Early Years Action Plus or have a Statement of SEN? _____ *children*

   How many Nursery children are considered to speak English as an Additional Language? _____ *children*

All Staff **to answer the remaining questions.**

Section 2 – Children's Speech and Language Development
This section relates to training you have had, both for your initial qualification and since qualifying. Please answer all the questions to the best of your recollection, as I am interested in identifying the elements of training which have made an impression on you.

8. **During my *initial* training, I received instruction in normal child language development which lasted (approximately)**

0-1 hour	2-4 hours	5-7 hours	8+ hours
☐	☐	☐	☐

9. **Since my initial training I have taken part in these courses related to child language development**

		Duration (days,weeks,mths)
Makaton / Signalong	☐	_____
Hanen Programme	☐	_____
Portage	☐	_____
Every Child a Talker	☐	_____
ELKLAN	☐	_____
Language course delivered by SaLT	☐	_____
Professional development course in language	☐	_____
Staff Inset on language development	☐	_____
Other (please specify, for example, training to work with a child with Autism, or further qualification with a language element)	☐	_____

I have not had **any** additional training related to child speech and language skills ☐

10. **In the above training, the following areas were covered**

	in depth	briefly	not at all
Understanding of language / Receptive Language	☐	☐	☐
Attention and listening skills	☐	☐	☐
Expressive language development	☐	☐	☐
Development of speech/pronunciation skills	☐	☐	☐
Relationship between play and language development	☐	☐	☐
Use of language in social contexts	☐	☐	☐
The role of adult-child interactions in language development	☐	☐	☐
The role of the learning environment in language development	☐	☐	☐

11. **How confident has your training made you feel when *identifying* children's typical speech and language development?**

	confident	quite confident	not confident
Understanding of language / Receptive Language	☐	☐	☐
Attention and listening skills	☐	☐	☐
Expressive language development	☐	☐	☐
Development of speech/pronunciation skills	☐	☐	☐
Relationship between play and language development	☐	☐	☐
Use of language in social contexts	☐	☐	☐

12. **How confident has your training made you feel in *supporting* children's speech and language skills?**

	confident	quite confident	not confident
When speaking with children	☐	☐	☐
When planning activities	☐	☐	☐
When carrying out activities	☐	☐	☐
When planning the classroom environment	☐	☐	☐

13. **Do you use any particular strategies to identify and assess speech and langauge development?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

14. **If yes, what measure do *you* use to assess speech and language development?**

Please tick *all* those which apply.

i) comparison with other children in the group ☐

ii) your own observation / monitoring of the children ☐

iii) a setting/LA-devised checklist (please give details) ☐

_____

iv) a published scheme (please name) ☐

_____

v) other (please give details) ☐

_____

15. **I feel that I need additional training in the areas related to speech and language development.** (Please tick all that apply)

	Need training
Understanding of language / Receptive Language	☐
Attention and listening skills	☐
Expressive language development	☐
Development of speech / pronunciation skills	☐
Relationship between play and language development	☐
Use of language in social contexts	☐
Adult-child interaction strategies	☐
Role of environment in supporting language development	☐
Other (please specify)	☐

_____

15.b **Please underline the 2 most important training areas from those selected.**

This last section gives examples of children's language at different ages. Imagine a child has just joined your setting. You have made these observations over a period of a few weeks. I would like you to say simply whether you think the child should be referred for assessment by a speech and language therapist, or whether you feel the child is developing normally.

16. Child 1 (age 2 years 6 months)

This child has a spoken vocabulary of 20 words. She uses one word sentences e.g. "bike" (meaning I want the bike / that is my bike). She understands simple instructions even when no visual cues are given (e.g. pointing/looking) such as "where are teddy's ears?" (given the choice of teddy and dolly) and "point to the doll with no hat" (given a choice between two dolls one with and one without a hat). She pronounces the following words in the following way:
Car (tar), bat (ba), sea (tea)

I think this child should be referred ☐ I do not think this child should be referred ☐

17. Child 2 (age 3 years 6 months)

This child has a spoken vocabulary of 500 words.
He uses quite long utterances such as "I'm finishing now 'cos mummy's here," and, "I'll go and get my cars".
He can respond to instructions such as "Give the cup to teddy" when given the choice of a cup and spoon and a choice of a teddy or a dog. He can distinguish between *big* and *little* and between *in, on* and *under,* but **not** *in front of* and *behind.*
He is intelligible to most people but says "geen" for green and "fing" for thing.

I think this child should be referred ☐ I do not think this child should be referred ☐

18. Child 3 (age 4 years 6 months)

This child is very quiet, both with you and with other children. If you give instructions to a group of children he will try to comply, but if you talk to him individually you may need to repeat your instruction a few times. His speech is intelligible when he does talk, but you have never heard him say anything longer than 3-4 words.

I think this child should be referred ☐ I do not think this child should be referred ☐

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will contribute to research on the training needs of Lambeth Early Years staff, in speech and language development, and the effectiveness of prior training in this area. All data remains anonymous.

Questionnaires will be collected on: *the day of the observation*

Many thanks for your time and thoughts.

Aoife Jenkinson
Educational Psychologist in Doctoral Training
DEdPsy Institute of Education / Lambeth Educational Psychology Service

Original form of questionnaire found in:

Mroz, M., Hall, E., Santer, J. and Letts, C. (2002). *Children's Speech and Language Development: An investigation of the knowledge, skills and understanding of early years*

professionals. Report to the Nuffield Foundation. Newcastle upon Tyne, University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Appendix 7

Master Scoring Sheet for Speech and Language Training and Practice Questionnaire.

Speech and Language Training and Practice Questionnaire

All responses to this questionnaire will be treated as confidential. Your answer will not be used in any way which could identify you or your setting. Please complete answers as fully as possible.

Section 1: Personal Details
This section asks for details about your background and training. Please answer all the questions as factors such as your age and the date of training are important for the research.

1. **Job title**: _____

   1. Teacher
   2. Nursery Nurse
   3. Teaching Assistant
   4. Early Years Co-ordinator/Deputy Headteacher
   5. Early Years Educator

2. **Full time** ☐ **Part time** ☐ % of full-time hours _____

   1. Full time
   2. Part time

   If <50%, check self-reported job role. Don't include if respondent is not trained to NVQ Level 1 / 2.

3. **How long have you worked here, in your current role?** _____ (years)

   1. 0 -11 months; 2. 1-3 years 3. 4 years+

4. **Your age**

16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55+
1	2	3	4	5

5. **Your Qualification**

   1. DCE / NNEB ☐ 2. BTEC ☐ 3. STA ☐ 4. Cert Education ☐
   5. PGCE ☐ 6. BEd ☐ 7. EY Professional Status ☐
   8. None ☐ (If you have ticked "none", please go to section 6)

   NVQ / GNVQ (Please state subject and level) _____

   9. Other (Pease specify) _____

6. a) **Date of qualification** (month/year) _____ b) **Length of Training** _____ years
   (If your training was part-time, please write how long it would have taken as a full-time

course).

Qualification: 1. Before 2000 2. 2000 – 2008 3. 2008-2011 4.2012

7. **Setting Information - to be completed by the Nursery Class Teacher in relation to the *Morning* Cohort of Nursery Children.**

   How many Nursery children attend the setting in the morning? _____ *children*

   How many Nursery children have a diagnosed Speech and Language delay or disorder as identified by the SaLT (Speech and Language Therapy) service? _____ *children*

   How many Nursery children are registered as Early Years Action Plus or have a Statement of SEN? _____ *children*

   How many Nursery children are considered to speak English as an Additional Language? _____ *children*

Total Pupils	**S & L**	**SEN**	**EAL**
1. 0 – 15 2. 16-24 3. 25-36 4. 37 – 45 5. 46 +	1. 0-3% 2. 5-10% 3. 11-20%	1. 0-3% 2. 4-10% 3. 11-20%	1. 0-30% 2. 31-60% 3. 61-96%

Section 2 – Children's Speech and Language Development
This section relates to training you have had, both for your initial qualification and since qualifying. Please answer all the questions to the best of your recollection, as I am interested in identifying the elements of training which have made an impression on you.

8. **During my *initial* training, I received instruction in normal child language development which lasted (approximately)**

0-1 hour	2-4 hours	5-7 hours	8+ hours
1	2	3	4

9. **Since my initial training I have taken part in these courses related to child language development** (please tick all that apply and state their duration over days, weeks or months)

Tick = 1 None= 0	Duration
9a. Makaton / Signalong	*1 day = 6 hours* 1. 0 – 12 hours 2. 13 – 27 hours 3. 28 hours +
9b. Hanen Programme	
9c. Portage	
9d. Every Child a Talker	
9e. ELKLAN	
9f. Language course delivered by SaLT	
9g. Professional development course in language	
9h. Staff Inset on language development	
9i. Other (please specify, for example, training to work with a child with Autism, or further qualification with a language element)	

9j. I have not had **any** additional training related to child speech and language skills (***go to question 10***) ☐

10. **In the above training, the following areas were covered**

	2 in depth	1 briefly	0 not at all
Understanding of language / Receptive Language	☐	☐	☐
Attention and listening skills	☐	☐	☐
Expressive language development	☐	☐	☐
Development of speech/pronunciation skills	☐	☐	☐
Relationship between play and language development	☐	☐	☐
Use of language in social contexts	☐	☐	☐
The role of adult-child interactions in language development	☐	☐	☐
The role of the learning environment in language development	☐	☐	☐

11. **How confident has your training made you feel when *identifying* children's typical speech and language development?**

	2 confident	1 quite confident	0 not confident
Understanding of language / Receptive Language	☐	☐	☐
Attention and listening skills	☐	☐	☐
Expressive language development	☐	☐	☐
Development of speech/pronunciation skills	☐	☐	☐
Relationship between play and language development	☐	☐	☐
Use of language in social contexts	☐	☐	☐

12. **How confident has your training made you feel in *supporting* children's speech and language skills?**

	2 confident	1 quite confident	0 not confident
When speaking with children	☐	☐	☐
When planning activities	☐	☐	☐
When carrying out activities	☐	☐	☐
When planning the classroom	☐	☐	☐

environment

13. **Do you use any particular strategies to identify and assess speech and langauge development?**

Yes [1] No [0]

14. **If yes, what measure do *you* use to assess speech and language development?**

Please tick *all* those which apply.

Tick = 1 None= 0

ith other children in the group ☐

14b. ii) your own observation / monitoring of the children ☐

14c. iii) a setting/LA-devised checklist (please give details) ☐

_____

14d. iv) a published scheme (please name) ☐

_____

14e. v) other (please give details) ☐

_____

15. **I feel that I need additional training in the areas related to speech and language development.** (Please tick all that apply)

Tick = 1 None= 0

	Need training
g of language / Receptive Language	☐
15b. Attention and listening skills	☐
15c. Expressive language development	☐
15d. Development of speech / pronunciation skills	☐
15e. Relationship between play and language development	☐
15f. Use of language in social contexts	☐
15g. Adult-child interaction strategies	☐
15h. Role of environment in supporting language development	☐
15i. Other (please specify)	☐

_____

15.b **Please underline the 2 most important training areas from those selected.**

Add 1 point for an extra tick

This last section gives examples of children's language at different ages. Imagine a child has just joined your setting. You have made these observations over a period of a few weeks. I would like you to say simply whether you think the child should be referred for assessment by a speech and language therapist, or whether you feel the child is developing normally.

16. Child 1 (age 2 years 6 months)

This child has a spoken vocabulary of 20 words. She uses one word sentences e.g. "bike" (meaning I want the bike / that is my bike). She understands simple instructions even when no visual cues are given (e.g. pointing/looking) such as "where are teddy's ears?" (given the choice of teddy and dolly) and "point to the doll with no hat" (given a choice between two dolls one with and one without a hat). She pronounces the following words in the following way:
Car (tar), bat (ba), sea (tea)

I think this child should be referred [1] I do not think this child should be referred [0]

17. Child 2 (age 3 years 6 months)

This child has a spoken vocabulary of 500 words.
He uses quite long utterances such as "I'm finishing now 'cos mummy's here," and, "I'll go and get my cars".
He can respond to instructions such as "Give the cup to teddy" when given the choice of a cup and spoon and a choice of a teddy or a dog. He can distinguish between *big* and *little* and between *in, on* and *under,* but **not** *in front of* and *behind.*
He is intelligible to most people but says "geen" for green and "fing" for thing.

I think this child should be referred [0] I do not think this child should be referred [1]

18. Child 3 (age 4 years 6 months)

This child is very quiet, both with you and with other children. If you give instructions to a group of children he will try to comply, but if you talk to him individually you may need to repeat your instruction a few times. His speech is intelligible when he does talk, but you have never heard him say anything longer than 3-4 words.

I think this child should be referred [1] I do not think this child should be referred [0]

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will contribute to research on the training needs of Lambeth Early Years staff, in speech and language development, and the effectiveness of prior training in this area. All data remains anonymous.

Questionnaires will be collected on _____

Many thanks for your time and thoughts.

Aoife Jenkinson
Educational Psychologist in Doctoral Training

Original form of questionnaire found in:
Mroz, M., Hall, E., Santer, J. and Letts, C. (2002). *Children's Speech and Language Development: An investigation of the knowledge, skills and understanding of early years professionals. Report to the Nuffield Foundation.* Newcastle upon Tyne, University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Appendix 8

Interview Schedule

Interview Questions for the Nursery Oral language Skills Project

1. In what ways do staff in your setting support language development?

2. How do you go about planning activities to develop language skills?
   Do any particular resources help you?
   Does the environment play a role in supporting language?

3. What helps you assess children's language skills?
   What would make you feel more confident when assessing language skills?

4. How have you developed your knowledge about promoting language skills?
   Have other professionals contributed to your knowledge?
   Have any CPD courses been of use?

5. Imagine a setting where children's oral language skills are the most important focus of teaching; what would you expect to see happening in this setting?
   Consider all aspects – environment, staff interactions, activities, assessment
   What might you wish for in your setting, to make a further difference to children's oral language?
   What might prevent these being put into place?

Appendix 9

Table 3.0:

Tests of Skewness and Normality in each dimension of the CsC Observation Tool for Every Child a Talker-*Trained subsample (n=9) and Non-* Every Child a Talker *Trained subsample (n=9)*

Dimension	*Subsample*	*Skewness*[11]	*Shapiro-Wilk (p)*
Language Learning Environment	Non-ECaT	-1.26	.85 (<.01)
	ECaT	-1.14	.69 (.08)
Language Learning Opportunities	Non-ECaT	.88	.84 (.06)
	ECaT	-.69	.94 (.54)
Language Learning Interactions	Non-ECaT	.62	.90 (.23)
	ECaT	-1.03	.93 (.50)

[11] A skewness statistic of 1.96 or more is considered significantly outside the Normal Distribution curve, at the 95% confidence level.

Appendix 10

Table 3.1:

Proportion Scores of Matched and Unmatched Pairs on the Three Dimensions of the CsC Observation Tool

Participating School	*CPD Training*	*LLE*[12]	*LLO*[13]	*LLI*[14]
A	ECaT	.95	.40	.38
J	Non-ECaT	.95	.24	.38
B	ECaT	.95	.64	.62
K	Non-ECaT	.95	.24	.40
C	ECaT	.81	.12	.24
L	Non-ECaT	1.00	.24	.32
D	ECaT	.86	.52	.54
M	Non-ECaT	.77	.44	.53
E	ECaT	.95	.20	.45
N	Non-ECaT	1.00	.52	.62
F	ECaT	.95	.48	.50
O	Non-ECaT	.90	.20	.36
G	ECaT	.86	.60	.48
Q	Non-ECaT	1.00	.40	.41
H	ECaT	.95	.48	.49
R	Non-ECaT	.86	.64	.62

[12] The proportion score, between 0.0 and 1.0, achieved in the Language Learning Environment dimension of the CsC Observation Tool.

[13] The proportion score, between 0.0 and 1.0, achieved in the Language Learning Opportunities dimension of the CsC Observation Tool.

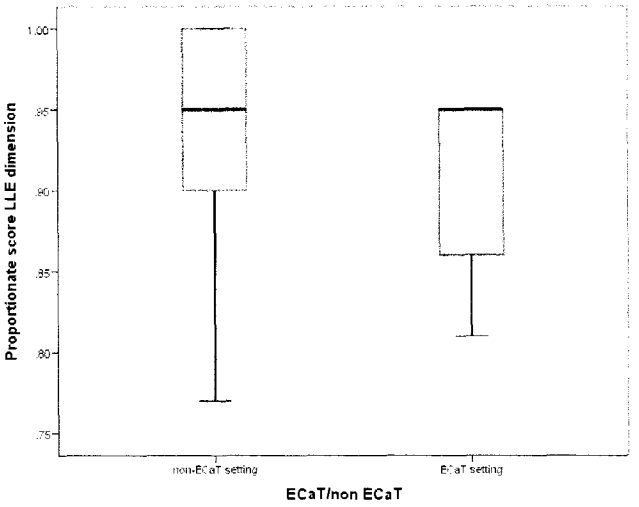
[14] The proportion score, between 0.0 and 1.0, achieved in the Language Learning Interactions dimension of the CsC Observation Tool.

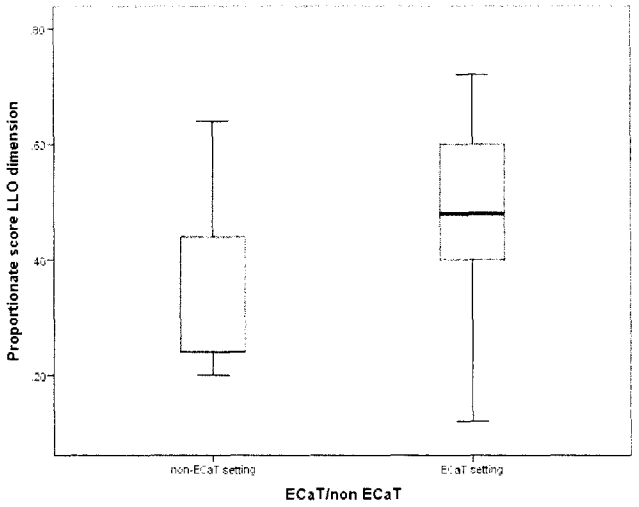
I	ECaT	.95	.72	.59
P	Non-ECaT	.95	.24	.46

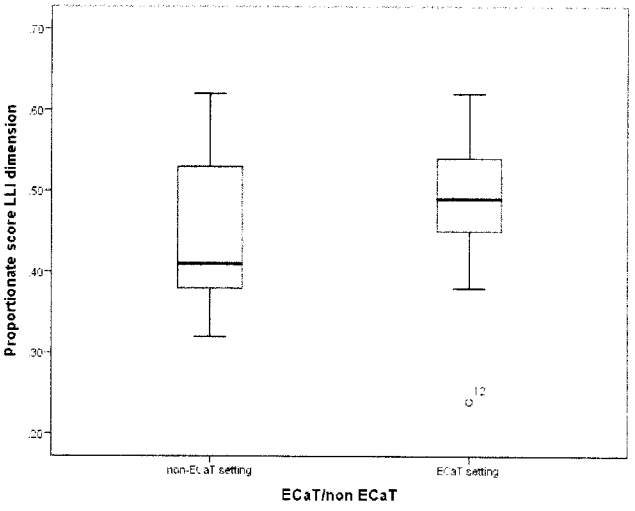
Appendix 11

Figure 2.0

Boxplots reflecting distribution of proportion scores in ECaT- and Non-ECaT Trained Settings, for the LLE, LLO and LLI dimensions of the CSC Observation Tool






Proportionate score LLI dimension
.70
.60
.50
.40
.30
.20
12
non-ECaT setting
ECaT setting
ECaT/non ECaT

Appendix 12

Table 3.5

Comparison of Proportionate Scores in the Language Learning Opportunities and Language Learning Interactions Dimensions Between Settings with Similar Percentages of Pupils with SEN, SaLT referrals, EAL Status or Eligibility for Free School Meals (N=18)

Pupil Characteristic	*Category*	*Kruskal-Wallis H (p)*
Special Educational Needs[15]	LLO	3.90 (.14)
	LLI	4.29 (.12)
Speech and Language	LLO	.91 (.63)
Referrals[16]	LLI	1.26 (.53)
English as an Additional	LLO	.32 (.85)
Language[17]	LLI	1.59 (.45)
Eligibility for Free School Meals[18]	LLO	.23 (.89)
	LLI	.97 (.64)

[15] Lowest third of settings =0-3% of pupil population; Middle third =4-10%; Top third =11-25%

[16] Lowest third =0-3% of pupil population; Middle third =5-10%; Top third =11-20%

[17] Lowest third =0-30% of population; Middle third =31-60%; Top third =96%

[18] Lowest third =0-33% of population; Middle third =34-48%; Top third =49-64%

Appendix 13

Table 3.7

Percentage of Practitioners Completing Continuous Professional Development Training other than the Every Child A Talker *Programme.*

Continuous Professional Development Training	*All Practitioners (N=52)*	*ECaT-trained Practitioners (N=12)*	*Non-ECaT Trained Practitioners in an ECaT Setting (N=21)*	*Non-ECaT Trained Practitioners in a Non-ECaT Setting (N=19)*
Makaton/ Sign Language	44	58	57	21
Inset Training	40	67	48	16
None	27	0	6	21
Other Speech and Language Training	23	17	33	16
Speech and Language Therapy Course	20	25	29	5
Professional Development Course	10	17	14	0
Portage	8	8	14	0
ELKLAN	6	17	0	5
Hanen	2	0	5	0

Appendix 14

Codes from interview transcripts following Thematic Analysis; clustered into sub-themes

Rhyming games
Bingo
Sound walks
Focused activity
Role play
Picture books
An activity
Computer programme

<u>Activities 2</u>
Doctor's surgery x2
Dentist's
Role play area
Experience (chn's)
A town

<u>Language Objects</u>
Something to talk about
Objects
Interesting things
Wasp's nest
Spontaneous things
Snow
Tactile
Bright
Noisy
Mirrors
Lights
Sensory
Traditional tales
Visual prompts
Captions
Pictures to emphasise
Familiar objects
A town
Comfortable with
Brand new

<u>Language Environment</u>
Outside area
Outside practice
Communication – friendly environment
Tents
Dens

<u>Language context</u>
Wide variety of purposes
(language use)
Outside running ("run,run as fast as you can)
Context (meaning)
Facebook with calculators

<u>Language + emotions</u>
Confidence
Confidence...not so much of a problem.
Quieter ones
Confidence
Things that others say
Comfortable with
Safe
Willing to communicate

<u>Child motivation</u>
Experience (chn's)
Get a lot from them (chn)
Things that grab them
They love it
Want to talk
They're interested
Wonderful
Not normal
Couldn't help but talk
Children get to know that and repeat it
Enjoy the stories

<u>Total= 67 quotes</u>

Adult Interaction

Adults do:
Develop
Encourage
An appreciation
Stimulate
Value them (speech skills)
Encourage
Engage
Interaction with (chn)
Promote
Provide (the starter)

Adults do 2:
Talking to them
discuss
Sitting with them
Question children
Add Describing words
Add Exciting words
Adjectives

Adult role:
Teach
Model
Rephrase
Remodel
Talking about what they're doing
Provide (the starter)
Model the initial bit
"You're showing me..."
Narrating
Commenting
Name objects
Model into a sentence
Correcting (not)
Describe their work
Model
Show

Adult input:
Adult input
Not really what I had in mind
Need the adult
Show them how to...
Not interfering
Require your input
Work with quieter ones on their own.
Adult-led times
Follow children's interest
An adult in the area
Model the initial bit
Tune in
Time to talk back...not jump in
Let them talk first
Not talk for them
Not always ask
Stand back
Listen
Be clear
Wait
All directed at the child
Comment 4 times, question (hand)
Not just drilling language
Let them think

Child-led
Follow children's interest
Follow their interest

Further adult provision:
Captions
Reframes
Starters
Visual prompts
Specific sentences

Questioning Techniques:
What
Open-ended questions
Struggle with open-ended q.s
Asking some closed-ended ones.
Questions
Give (only) one answer back
Open-ended questions
"what are you doing?"
Level of questioning
Level within their thinking (child's)
Not asking many q.s

Ofsted criticism

Total = 76 quotes

Order of the words

Specific provision:
Group
Group work
Intervention groups
Specific sounds
Exercises using their mouths and throat
I say "stirring" as I stir
They'll stir and say "I'm stirring"
S & L
Letters and sounds
ECAT book
"I bounce it, say "bounce, bounce"
One to one

Inclusion:
Keep them within the provision (inclusion issue)
3 waiting for statements

Ability of child
Easy to talk
Dominate the group
Struggle with open-ended q.s
Quieter ones
Imagination
Awareness of sound
They (usually) wouldn't start until Reception (phonics)
Come in with little language
Delayed
Vulnerable
Not hearing it at home
Lower starting point
English wasn't that good
English wasn't perfect
Difficulties with specific S&L
Excel
Fall short
Might not choose to speak
Pronunciation
Letters...difficult to say
Difficult to understand
Dyspraxia (effected speech)

Language difficulties
Will get better in time
Just settling in
Looking a bit deeper
Hearing issues

Total = 46 quotes

Observation/Assessment

Language of child
Listening out(chn)
Focus on
Hear questions
Develop their thinking
Communicate
Express themselves
Attention and listening
Answer questions
Just use words
Expressing
Describing
Sequencing
Re-enact
Retell
Evaluate
Describe

Language elements:
Speech production
Language development
Vocabulary strings
Language to do with possession
Vocabulary
Attention and listening
Social skills
Understanding
Words they use
Pronunciation
Grammatically correct
Emphasise initial sounds
New vocab and phrases
Specific sounds
Voice patterns

Other language
Non-verbal communication
Hand gestures
Signalong
Signing
Signing

EAL
EAL
Interpreters

Barriers (language)
Own language
First language

EAL assessment:
It might be crossing over (EAL and SLCN)
How do you know? (comm communicate)
identify the problem

Total = 57 quotes

Planning

Time – planning
Opportunity to talk
Playing freely
Give them a chance
Practise them (speaking)
Even if a focused activity isn't planned...
Opportunities
Activites
A language focus
Just use words

Planning:
Saving time (planning)
After school
We're all clear
Type of language
A balance (between language structures promoted)
Medium term plan
Link to umbrella topic
Learning objectives
Target tracker
Weekly basis
Evaluate the whole
Progress made

Planning
Plan with S & L in mind
Sowed on how it went, we plan for Tuesday
All staff know what to do
A language focus for the role play

Curriculum planning:
Freedom to do that, it's not set in stone.
Adaptable
All staff know what to do
Something to follow
Change next year anyway (curriculum)

Planning resources:
Read Write Inc.
Letters and sounds

Resource book
Website, Twinkle (linked in with our borough)
"A minute of Listening"
Traditional tales
Games /stories (ECAT book)

Total = 40 quotes

Assessment techniques:
Folders to assess
Keep track
Write notes
Don't want to be ...writing notes.
Write notes while somebody else is leading
Observe
Highlight objectives
Different bands
Records to across to Reception
Target trackers
Decide whether S&L therapy
Listen

Assessment 2:
Screen
Flag up
Group
Monitor
Refer
Assess against
A norm

Assessmt methods:
Photographs
Post-its
Write notes
Knowing your children really well
Video the child

Drawback of Curriculum assessmt tool
Goals..quite vague
Covers so many things
More specific goals
"listens and responds" (EYFS goal)
Can cross reference (goals)
Cl... not all language, it's also reading and writing.
Targets
Hard to use the info.
You can't really say
Can't really position a child
A bit of a muddle
Didn't feel the most competent
Each area ... is given the same weighting
Mark-making v. language
Benchmark
It might be crossing over (EAL and SLCN)
Specific SALT targets
Assessment withSALT
Not specific (EY goals)
General gist

Assessment measures:
Emerging
Completely attained
Not linear (lang. devt.)
30-50 months
40-60; 22-36
Different bands

Gaps re. assessment:
More knowledge
My own knowledge
The tools
Rough idea of what to expect
Develop at different stages
Each point you're assessing against
Examples...would be useful
Standardise everyone's marking
Indicators
What's appropriate for their age
Just know the targets for that child

Total = 61 quotes

Knowledge source:
Give me ideas
Things you pick up on
Working with other people
Experience
Practitioners with a strength in S & L
We rely on experts
Informal chat
Initial concerns
Worksheets
Worked with SALT weekly

Professionals:
Professionals
Speech and language Therapist
SENCo
Interpreters
Borough professional
EYFS manager
SALT
Children's Centre
A professional next door
SALT once weekly
We pay the SALT

CPD:
Courses (neg.)
Teacher training (neg.)
General one
ECAT
Buddying
Forest school
Borough run course

Effective CPD:
Talked about what others did
Different language strategies
With colleagues - being in class that's the best support
someone who has implemented it (already)
Made us play like a child

Benefits of CPD:
Just being aware of it (s and l)
A lightning moment!
Needs in a specific area
Just one strand
It gives you perspective
You hold back (on q.s)

Cascading CPD:
I gave a brief inset on it
Things don't get shared
Nice for everyone to be skilled
Sharing strategies
Transfer the skills
We brought it back (workshop) and did it again.

Barriers to CPD benefits:
Turnover of staff
Knowledge goes with them
3 of us on training
If you miss something/can't remember
2 people wanting it (change)

Course Contents:
What I can take back
Give you examples
Really simple things
I don't feel it's been relevant
I don't think it's been the training (post qual) at all.
Can very experienced (ECAT leader)
Very useful
I did get a lot of help from ECAT
I go from the ECAT book
Really interesting

Course drawbacks:
Awareness and knowledge is all very well, but...
I only made it to a few due to meetings due to other things

Barriers to S&L :
Focus of the school
Priorities of the phase leader
Never had a specific focus
School development plan
Having evidence
Priortise S&L
Need more help
They're not aware...it needs a special person (EY)

Financial Barriers:
Unlimited money
If there was money there
More interpreters
SALT more limited now
Cuts
More computers

Total = 87 quotes

Parents

Grandparents (wasp nest)

Key worker has an allotment

Speak to parents (key workers)

Not hearing it at home

Cause offence

Parents say ..fine at home..and then there's real problems.

Parents' evening

Their concerns..help

Help a parent

Staffing

Key workers

Value the key worker system

Imagine if I was doing 5? of those?

Staff

We work together

All of early years (planning together)

They finish at 3.45pm

Total = 16 quotes

Appendix 15

Interview Nursery H

I.: Today is 6th March at 1.50 pm in X Nursery School and the interview today is with Margaret; what's your role in the nursery?

R.: Here I am a teaching assistant.

I.: Ok, so teaching assistant in X. Nursery School. So as I was saying, the interview is a follow-up to the questionnaires that you and some of your colleagues filled out for me and the observation that I carried out quite a while ago now, just on observing staff and their interactions with the children.

R.: Was I here then? I'm not sure if I was here then when you were doing that.

I.: No, I'm not sure either but I think the follow-up really is following up on the questionnaires and what people put down in those. I was wondering, so putting aside what you put in the questionnaire or maybe adding to that, what do you think staff do to support oral language skills?

R.: Oral language skills here I think are supported really well by staff. We've lots of modelling, we've lots of coming down to the children's level, making eye contact which are the very basics of communication but that's where you start at. You've got coming down to child's level, making good eye contact, using the child's name and then explaining themselves, making themselves very clear and using age appropriate language for the particular charge.

For SEN children, we have an IEP and then we'll start doing focusing on multi-skills type things, like we've got blowing bubbles and we've got playing football with the straws, specific things, whatever they need for their oral motor skills. Lots of singing, not only singing using words, we've got the new sounds like la-la-la and maybe humming, so you've got words and maybe sounds as well. I think we cover that really well at X. school, I really think we do and we do it every day.

We do it inside, we do it outside. We've got the environment outside, listening in the outside play area, if there's a plane flying over. What's that, what sound is it making, where do you think it's going. So it could be expressive language, all languages coming out. It's in the classroom, you've got story time, we have sign, rhythm and rhyme we do on a Tuesday morning here, so we support children with sign as well. We've got singing, sign and the parents come to that as well so we're forging relationships, improving relationships and communication with parents and children. We also have Forest School on a Thursday morning.

I.: What's Forest School?

R.: Forest School; we're doing our pond area round the corner which I can show you before you leave. It's teaching children to their schemas, it's targeting their schemas and then teaching them through that. So if you've got a transporter child who likes transporting water, transporting something, we've got the water butt outside. They'll get the watering can, fill it up so you're talking about, "You need to turn the handle, put the watering can under the tap," so you've got all that language they're going to understand and you're going to extend their language. "You're going to carry the watering can, you have to be careful going around the path. What do we need to say? Remember to say excuse me and wait for the child to move before you walk past again," keeping themselves safe.

And then they pour the water into the muddy puddle and splash in the muddy puddle and then we're going on a bear hunt, so we've got all that aspect. And there's so much more to forest school. You've got the self-help skills where they have to wear their waterproofs, so "You push one leg in, now the other leg. Can you stand up, can you pull the trousers up?" So you've got all these ...

I.: So there's talking about doing.

R.: Absolutely, loads of talking about doing. It's self-help skills, they've got to do it themselves and if they need help, it's giving them the language how to ask for help and also making them persevere as well. "I can't do it." "Why don't you try? Oh, it's a little zip. I'll just start here and maybe you can pull it up." It's your voice, it's your intonation, it's all this and it's never making them feel they can't do it. It's an "I can" attitude and have a go, it's a positive attitude, it's their well-being as well, just really giving them a lot of confidence.

So things they've never experienced before, we use equipment like tools or hacksaws and they saw things and make things, they wear safety equipment. It's teaching them they can use this equipment but they have to use the safety equipment first. We make a fire with hot chocolate. Again, you talk about aspects of fire with them, how do you make fire, matches and the safety around matches. So there's lots and lots involved with forest school.

So we've got forest school as well and then we go for a trip to the park. They might have a block of about four or five weeks with the children and at the end of that, we go to the park with their families. So again, it's incorporating their families and any strategies we have at school, pass it on to the families as well. We find what works well with the children, pass it on to the families, "I find this really works with him. He likes this train," so we'll go over to the trains area, talk about you can sing the song, any song with trains, 'choo-choo' the train's going to stop. "Where's the train going to stop? It's going to go under the bridge and then it's going to stop," so you've got all these aspects of language that the parents can use with their children.

So I think we focus really well on that and put attention on those.

I.: You've mentioned parents a few times now so that sounds like it might be planned for?

R.: It is. We really value parents' input here, it's first and foremost. When we go to a home visit, we value the parents' input. All the information we get comes from parents, the majority of information, unless there's specific needs for the child but the majority of the information comes from parents. So first of all, we've got the home visit, we have all the information from the parents. The parents will come here, have a visit. If we feel there's any particular needs that we need to query further, we'll ask them, "What do you think about this? Do you need support with anything? Do you need support with the toileting?"

I think it's the way of phrasing things as well, as opposed to going up to say, "Are they toilet trained yet?" That puts a lot of pressure on parents. So we say, "Do they need support with anything? Do they need support with their toileting?" and that makes them feel a bit more open to express themselves and say, "Yes, actually sometimes they might have a few accidents during the day. This is what we find works well." And we say, "Yeah, that's great, we'll take that on board. That's brilliant, we'll work together. Anything you've found works, please tell us and vice versa." We work really well in partnership with parents.

I.: It sounds really open and it seems to be working.

R.: It works very well.

I.: The parents are receptive because of that initial interaction you've set up with them.

R.: Absolutely, it works really, really well. We've had some really good feedback from parents and their comments on their children's forms, it's been very helpful.

I.: And the 'wriggle and play'?

R.: Sign, wriggle and rhyme, Tuesday morning in the Cottage.

I.: Who comes to that?

R.: It's delivered by myself using Makaton and the other lady we do it with is Kate, who's a music therapist. Between the two of us, we've chosen a group of children who have additional needs and they can range from children who are on the autistic spectrum to children with Down's Syndrome, learning difficulties, communication difficulties, whatever support they need. They come with their parents, that's the one stipulation that we do, so they come with their parents and it's to support their parents to be communicating with their children. I teach them new signs, if they ever need any new signs, we sing and I sign. We do lots of

choosing activities, "Let's choose a song," got a feely bag. They might have the bag and give it out, "Oh, what did you get? You got the mouse," we have Old McDonald had a farmyard, sing together.

Lots of music and they're free, it's not just sitting down. They're free to stand up, roam around, it's like a therapy session but a group therapy session. And it runs really well, we've had some really good feedback from other parents. This is our second group now that we've had and we've had some really good feedback from the first set of grandparents we've had and they're all very positive about it. I do sign, wriggle and rhyme on a Tuesday. Our group who need additional support, I do that on a Friday and I incorporate the sign, wriggle and rhyme into our little group on Friday mornings as well.

So they benefit from twice because sometimes we go to a new area, children might be a bit put off. It's a new area, it's in the Cottage outside, it's not their classroom and they react differently. Their parents are there so they're going to react differently. So when they're here having their story, I incorporate a lot of things, like scarves which might be very sensitive. They might be hyper sensitive to some things, they don't like being covered. So here they've got a nice safe environment they come to every morning and then we're going to play with the scarves. And then when they go to sign, wriggle and rhyme they think, "Oh, I know that, we've had that before, I know that song." They're more confident and they have it. It's really supportive, so they have it here and then they have it over at the Cottage.

I.: It sounds great. And I noticed in the observation, there are an awful lot of opportunities given to children. Obviously you have to plan to get those in so what informs the planning?

R.: That would be again the parents who inform the planning. Obviously we've got families who support the planning, we've got observations from our children, all the observations that we'll take from our children. All their key workers, they'll inform on planning. Professionals from outside, they'll come in and then if their child needs support and they've got other professionals involved, they will be inputting and say if they don't like high climbing or they need a bit a bit of extra support. So we feed that in with the planning as well. So we've got a lot of information.

I.: You've got lots of sources of information and then they're tied together. Where do you find the time for this?

R.: Well, that'll be the key workers, they plan every day and the planning follows the child's interests. So if there were children outside and they are focused on transport, all of a sudden it's transport everyone's into. We write that in observation, we'll come back in and everyone will have a group meeting and they'll say, "This group of children were playing outside and they were doing lots of talking about travelling and they were going on a bus," so the next day, we'll set up a travel agency and then we'll have a bus outside. And then that is fed from the children's interests, so it all

follows the children's interests.

We do have the festivals which we usually do, like Chinese New Year, that's all fed in. Pancake Day we'll make pancakes, but usually our planning is following the children's interests, wherever that goes.

I.: So you're putting it together, you're saying this is the topical area that we want to develop and when you're thinking about skills, what informs your aim?

R.: We take the child's age into account. We really focus highly on observations. All here would take observations not only of our own children but of all the children in the nursery, so we've got observations and it's back from the age of the child and information from the parents. So we see and take observations that a child's holding a pen or avoiding an area. They might avoid an area sometimes and we'll take a note of that, feed it back to the key worker saying this child is avoiding or hadn't noticed this child at this area. We target children and we have an area where we put their name card down and say right, today we're going to target these five children. They're going to come to this activity, only these five children, we'll be making Playdough. So they're going to be making Playdough this morning, we can talk about how would you make Playdough, what do we need, got the mix in store and all that.

I.: So I can see you have a massive bank of knowledge that you're implementing always and what I'm wondering is you have very clear expectations of where you think the child should be and what you think is missing from their skills set. How did you develop this really clear expectation of what is appropriate to expect from the child?

R.: I'm not quite sure I understand, I'm sorry.

I.: I think you are extremely competent and you have moved to the point where you're applying what you know. And you are talking about practice that is based on a massive bag of learned knowledge about development, about skills. You haven't once mentioned the Early Years curriculum. You've gone past that because you're moving from where the child is at and incorporating information, observations.

But observations can only be useful depending on the level of knowledge of the person who's observing. So you know what to look out for, you know that ... hang on a second, that child is at the stage where they should be in that area doing this. And instead, they're doing something different or instead, they're in that area and actually that's a skill that I haven't seen them do.

So your observations are invaluable because you know what to look out for and I'm wondering, if you think of what you know about oral language skills, what has led to this bank of knowledge?

R.: Well, me as a teaching assistant here, we've all been on courses so we're NVQ trained and then I myself have gone on the ECAT course. So that has been of value for me. I brought it back to the nursery here and we've implemented some of the little things that ... we fine-tune little things, like one of the things is not asking children too many questions. That was one thing I took from that particular course, not asking children too many questions. They come up to you with a piece of work, make statements about the work as opposed to going, "Oh, what did you make? What colour is it?" Immediately you're onto them with questions.

So first of all, you make a statement about that piece of work they've given you and then you make another statement and then you may be putting a question and then they might actually come back with a bit more language. They're feeding you but you're showing an interest in their work and then they're feeding you some more information about their work. So you're not pumping them straight away full of questions. I think that was very supportive, that helped us as well so we're not immediately questioning them.

So there was that particular course. I think on the wide variety of courses, a lot of the staff here have been on various courses. We've been on PECS courses. We've been on Makaton courses and one particular member of our staff has just become a Makaton tutor, so that's been supportive. I think all of us in our own way really support each other as well. One person might pick out something and we support each other and we've key workers saying, "I've seen them do this, I'm not sure if I've seen them do this before. How about you, have you seen them do this? Have you seen them do it differently?" that particular thing. Or again, if they're avoiding an area like the workbench or something like that, how have you seen them use that skill, that saw, have you seen them use that before?

So I think it's feeding off each other and with the knowledge we all have, the courses we've been on, I think we support each other. I'm not sure I'm answering your question.

I.: So you've mentioned training and you feel that all the staff have something to contribute.

R.: Yeah, we all are valued and we all have something to contribute.

I.: So they've all brought their training with them, they've all brought their training back to this setting.

R.: Yes.

I.: What is it about this setting that you think is allowing the training to be brought back?

R.: We're sent on training, one person will go, preferably two because it supports the person on training but one usually, and then we come back and then we have ... it could be at the staff meeting on

a Tuesday or it could be on an INSET day, that person feeds back that training to the entire nursery. So for me, it was doing the Makaton, it was doing the ECAT one and I did it with another lady called Jane who's unfortunately left. So she fed that back into the nursery, so it's not just a case of one member of staff going on a course and then learning all they need to know and coming back and then the learning's there, they'll just keep it to themselves. It's shared. The learning is shared. So someone goes on a course, they come back and they share it with other members of the staff and like I say, for an INSET day or something like that.

I.: So there's time set aside to share training.

R.: Yes, it could be an INSET day or it could be after our meetings on a Tuesday, the staff meetings.

I.: What was your experience of doing training with another person, as you did in the ECAT?

R.: I really, really enjoyed it. With the ECAT, I really enjoyed it. It supported me, I could bounce ideas off the other person. It supported me in the nursery, I wasn't the only one coming back in and facing everybody. Even though I know them very well, it's twenty seven people I'd have to be facing and I'm not one to stand up there and do an INSET day or hour, so it supported me. When I was doing my Makaton, you have somebody beside you to support you, to bounce ideas off. And not only that, but if I'd missed something, the other person picks it up so you've got somebody else there as a back-up. And it's all ideas, backing the person up and supporting you back in your setting as well. I think it's always support, support, support, always.

I.: And you've mentioned one example quite clearly of how not to push children, and comment on what they're doing or comment on a picture rather than asking questions. Did you feel there was anything else that was particularly useful with the ECAT training?

R.: I really enjoyed the tick sheets and the observation sheets they had. I thought they were very clear set, very well set out and useful. And we use them in our small groups, I do a small language group on a Wednesday and it supports me in planning that language group, in assessing that language group so that was the tick sheets.

Some new ideas as well and the reason behind things, how to observe children, why we put them forward for support, why we need a speech therapist to come in. So when they're assessing this child, why do we need a speech therapist to come in? Because of this, this, this. We can explain clearly why we need that speech therapist to come in as opposed to just saying 'difficulties with speech.' We can clearly say this child has oral difficulties, difficulties with the "a" letter sound; it just widened the area of language to me.

I.: Opened the doors really. So it sounds like they managed to give

you very clear knowledge of development in the areas of speech and language and oral motor skills. They seem to have broken it down.

R.: Yeah. It was very clear cut. I think it was about twelve weeks and each week, it was definitely intense but very clear.

I.: Was it contained?

R.: It was contained, yeah, very contained. It was a really good course. I'd recommend anybody to go on it, it was a very good course.

I.: It's a shame the funding has gone. So definitely having somebody else there with you. As you say, it was intense, what they did they do that you felt made it useful?

R.: I liked the way we got homework as well. I liked that. We could put things into practice straight away. So we got the homework, we'd come home but it wasn't homework that would take all day. It was a ten minute homework in the classroom which was really useful. Again, it'd be observing a child, it could be behaviour, how they play and you're just observing are they playing one to one with a child, are they playing alongside a child, did they initiate the play, all these little things. And it just refreshes a lot of things. A lot of the things we did in NVQ used to ... it just refreshed a few things which was really useful again. It made me awake and wanting to learn more, it was really useful.

I.: That was C.G., was it?

R.: I think it was, yeah.

I.: She's moved out of that area now unfortunately. I must feed back to her all the positives, if you don't mind.

R.: Not at all, absolutely brilliant course. Like we said, a shame the funding's not there.

I.: So would you say, it sounds to me like what's going on in this nursery is in some way informed by that course, would you say?

R.: I think it's informed by numerous courses because we have a lot of people who've gone on other courses to do with behaviour and have all come back. We've talked about the courses and what you thought about them and what we got out of it. And then we put some strategies into place, so I think it's not just that particular course but numerous courses that other people have been on. But that one supported me and the nursery because I'm the one doing the language groups, I'm doing sign, wriggle and rhyme so I'm looking out for other ways of communicating.

I fed back to everybody at the nursery and I've put some of the ideas into plan, like "the big hand" - you would ask four statements and a question. So I photocopied that and we put that into folders

and everyone can observe it and go back, just refresh themselves when they're planning. Just refreshing and remind yourself all the time.

I.: If you think about the nursery staff as a whole, this is a final question, we've talked about how courses have really informed their practice. Is there anyone else or anything else that is informing the practice at the moment? I'm thinking of maybe professionals or documents or ...

R.: Again, I think we all support each other. The SENCo is invaluable because anything new that comes up, she obviously will pass onto us.

I.: External professionals, mentors?

R.: Yeah, a bit. Speech and language therapists, they'll come in. Depending what support the child will need, we've had occupational therapists in here, speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and music therapy. She comes in on a Tuesday morning so if there's a particular area in a child's development that we have concerns with, we'll obviously refer them to the appropriate agency, see what professional can come in and support us and the parent and the child. So they'll be supported by the agencies we've put them forward to. I'm trying to think of anything else, can't think.

I.: That's great, I think you're right, it sounds like a very well oiled machine.

R.: I'm sure there's lots more that goes on! There usually is but because I finish at three o'clock, loads and loads of the work goes on behind and before I even get here. So there's loads of work gone on before I even get here and after I leave. I think teamwork is essential here. You have to work as a team. You have to trust in who your colleagues are and I do, so I think it works really well.

I.: Brilliant. I suppose there's no point asking you, could anything be better?

R.: Another ECAT course would be brilliant and even if you've been on one, you could always go back for another one. They're addictive, they're so good, absolutely brilliant. And we were given the ECAT booklet and even to this day, I still read it. I haven't brought it with me.

I.: Oh, I've seen it, the green book.

R.: To this day, I still refer back to that because there's some scenarios, games and suggestions and strategies, if a child has poor attention and listening. To this day, I still refer back to that, it's like my bible of the language course. Absolutely brilliant book.

I.: That's great. It seems you have wonderful resources here...

R: We do. We're very lucky. If we say a child needs something, you can always go to management and they'll find the money for it, somewhere. I don't know how they do it. The child always comes first, whatever they need. If I see a really good game or in training they tell us about a new idea, they'll support us and let us get the resources in. I don't have much to do with the finances, but they are all very supportive.

I: Thank you so much, that's been really helpful M.

[End of recorded material]

Appendix 16

Interview Primary C

I: It's the 29th of February in IA school. I'm talking to teachers and nurseries, to get an idea of what might be happening that I haven't seen in observations, and what staff might be doing in schools to support speech and language skill development.

R: I think when we plan, we plan with speech and language opportunities in mind. A lot of the children come in with little language. A lot of what we do is to encourage talking, engage the children in conversation. We do some group work with those children and play small games where they have to use language with each other. We do use the ECAT model. We model language and use it for a wide variety of purposes.

I: It sounds like you plan together a lot. How do you manage that?

R: We talk about the planning a lot and then we plan a bank of activities for the week. But we only plan for Monday and based on how that went we plan for Tuesday and the rest of the week. And all of early years come together after school and we plan for the outside area. We flag up all the children that need something, we follow their interests. So we're very strategic in that way, we work together. We really value the key worker system. We've got 52 children, it would be very hard to know all those children really well. So my two keyworkers they have 14 children each, so they really know those children and speak to the parents. We can think of activities that are like speech and language or , em, yeah I think it's knowing your children very well.

I: Yes. Already you've mentioned about assessment. So you've got the key worker system, and you have the ECAT checklist?

R: Last year or the year before I had a speech and language therapist from the borough. It was Every Child a Talker but our borough's version. So now we screen the children that we think are vulnerable and flag up the area where they're delayed and group those children altogether and try to plan activities to meet their need, so speech or language, or attention. It's not easy, people are taken out to do other things. Even if we can't take them out, we do an activity with them, and try to engage them that way in the nursery.

I: So it sounds like you have speech and language in mind always?

R: I think it's crucial in nursery, it's a foundation for their learning. If they can't communicate, if they can't express themselves, they can't learn. I'm not saying we all have good answers, but we have a very good SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) that we use to get answers from.

I: So you 're planning your activities, and opportunities for speaking. In general practice you're modelling language for the children. Is there anything else you're quite aware of that you tailor towards supporting

speech and language?

R: On the attention and listening side of it, the school's really trying "A minute of listening". It's a computer programme, they listen for 1 minute with their eyes closed. Then they answer these questions, I think it's an old man with a seal, then they're shown the picture. Things like that that really grab them. They love it.

I: Oh right, so listening for a purpose.

R: Yeah, and attention and listening activities where they're exciting. Things that are tactile and bright or noisy, they do sit and attend to it because they find it rewarding. And just following their interests really. They want to talk about it because they're more interested in it.

I: That sounds like going from where they are, and building language.

R: That's why we might plan on a Monday, and then build it on their interests. We've got the freedom to do that, it's not set in stone daily.

I: Yes. I was going to ask when you have the Early Years curriculum and Early Years learning goals to meet, do you find that that restricts you, or is it quite open?

R: I like the curriculum I don't find it restrictive at all. I think it's very adaptable. I like the fact that there are so many links, the objectives can be covered a million different ways. You can do something for attention, but you still cover language, and personal and social in turn-taking. If you have a really good activity you can cross-reference (goals). I think it's good for all the staff to know what to do, to have something to follow.

I: Hmm, for all the staff to understand what you're looking for. When it comes to assessing language, you mentioned the ECAT checklist you use. Are there any other resources you use?

R: Not in addition to the language and communication strand (of the EY curriculum). I'll show you (Takes assessment folder of post-its relating to one child). We've got the 6 areas split up, we highlight the objectives the children achieve in, with evidence from observations and photographs. So when you get to CLL, there's not all evidence of language, it's also reading and writing, but that's how we record-keep on language development. It's not linear, but you know their next steps, what you have to work on next with the individual child. So that's why it's so important to have the key worker, can you imagine if I was doing 52 of those? I mean, I look out and see Milly out there, and I know we have to plan for her, she needs to have oral language to do with possession, so you'll lead her in that direction.

I: J. what do you feel has made you confident in terms of language progression, and modelling?

R: I haven't had much training, I did a PGCE initial training. I think it's just working with other people, you gain experience. I've worked with practitioners who have had a strength in speech and language and who have led me. And F. in here, she does the speech and language groups,

she's got a wealth of experience. I don't feel it's been external. I've been on a few courses where they've mentioned speech and language, but I don't think it's been the training at all.

I: Yes. Could you tell me about the ECAT training and how that was given?

R: Yeah, I used to have a lady come here. She came to school and explained it all. We did an action plan. I only made it to a few network cluster meetings, due to other things. But yeah, we talked about what other people did and different language strategies to support speech and language difficulties. But it was just being aware of it as well, actually seeing I need to move these children to here. And needs in a specific area, not just knowing that it's speech and language but which particular area it was to focus on. They might be fine in others, but it's just that one strand (they're weak in).

I: You mean, Understanding or…

R: Yes, so vocabulary, attention and listening, social skills, understanding, and the words they use and the pronunciation. So rather than just labelling speech and language.

I: That led to awareness. Did you pick up any practical strategies?

R: Yes C. (the ECAT Leader) is very experienced, and the information that she passed on was very useful. I did "buddying", you know Thelma M?

I: I don't.

R: She's from the borough. I used to have buddying meetings when I first started here. It was linked to the Forest School, I did it when I first got here. You know you can go on a million courses, but when you're actually with colleagues and being in class, that's the best help and support you can get from each other. I did get a lot of help from the ECAT and meeting with colleagues. Sometimes you're being told by a professional, but actually hearing from someone who has implemented it in class, and how they managed it in the time, that's what you need to know. In theory, its great all these things but how you can fit it in the school day, with staff.

I: So having other practitioners use it and trial it was really helpful?

R: Yes, and knowing you don't have to always find the time to withdraw a child, you can do it in class with the other children, just know the targets for that child. That was, a lightning moment! You can actually just do it as part of your daily routine.

I: So as you say there's been a combination of working with practitioners in the classroom setting, and then having some input from professionals but also having colleagues to discuss it. Was there anything else you found useful from ECAT? You used the checklist.

R: Yes, it was just using the strands. Sometimes it's just one area you have to tweak to get them to age-related expectations.

I: Final question. Could you describe your ideal environment, what would be happening in it, if speech and language was the sole focus of the setting?

R: I guess if I had unlimited money, a really sensory, bright stimulating environment that encouraged language, anywhere the children went. I'd love to have a room with mirrors, and lights. I used to work in another borough and a nursery there had a wonderful sensory room. It had, I'm not saying it's necessary, but a room where you couldn't help but talk, it encouraged more from both adults and children. The language wouldn't be normal because the room wasn't normal. It was just bright, and stimulated talk.

I: So you would have an environment that would bring out language and talking opportunities between adults and children. Do you think that's important, the adult-child interaction?

R: Oh definitely, at this age, yeah, very important. Peer interaction is obviously crucial. But especially a lot of these children, they're looking at us to model because they're not hearing it at home. So you're more crucial than ever. When I think of my nephew, he went to school with all the language already, that a lot of these children don't have, and he just built on that. We're peeling back the layers, to a lower starting point and giving them the language that a lot of children already have. Some children are so articulate and have a huge vocabulary, other children can't ask for the toilet, and that's not EAL (English as an Additional Language), that's just, em, yeah we're crucial. Also to just talk a lot, always model language.

I: Anything else that you would have in your ideal world?

R: It's not speech and language, well I suppose it is. The distinction between EAL children and children with language needs. Some children they talk in their own language and you know they're going to be fine as soon as they learn English. But some children, we've got a few Polish children, they don't even talk to each other in their first language, I don't know. After a while, after a few months I wouldn't assume that an English child was just shy; I find it hard to know whether it's confidence, or there is a problem in their first language. I find that a hard judgement.

I: What would help teachers be more confident in making that judgement?

R: To be a first language speaking teacher, I don't know! In an ideal world, you would have interpreters. Sometimes you talk to parents and they don't understand you and you cause offence. So someone to break down those barriers, and just ask, you know, how do they communicate at home? I worked in Reception last year, that was 67 children, and almost 60% had EAL. Some of them didn't seem to have any language. Then you talk to the parents and they say they speak at home, they're fine. Now they're in Year 1 and there are real problems, you know?

I: So having first language speakers is helpful?

R: Yeah, not necessarily the teacher, but have someone who can communicate in the first language who can identify the problem. Or

speak to the parents without causing offence because of a language barrier. Ideally speaking, if there was money there!

I: Well thank you for your time, that's been really helpful.