

A conversation with Abdullah



Sabiha Kadia is an Early Years Educator at Sheringham Nursery School. She has worked with children aged 2-4 years at Sheringham since 2009. Sabiha currently is based in the toddler room.

Two-year-old Abdullah is playing in the mud kitchen and placing cases in the cupcake tray. He independently counts 4 cakes. I walk over to him and show that I am interested in what he is doing.

A: "1,2,3,4."

S: "Ooooh, you have 4 cupcakes."

A: "There's missing 5,6,7,8,9,10."

Abdullah looks at the empty spaces in the tray.

S: "Ah yes, there are some empty spaces."

Hana, who has just joined us at the mud kitchen, points to one case under the table. I draw Abdullah's attention to Hana's pointing.

S: "I think Hana might help you."

Abdullah walks to Hana and sees where she is pointing.

A: "It's a blue one!"

S: "You've found a blue cupcake."

Abdullah puts it in the tray.

A: "5! We found it."

S: "You found it. First you had 4, then you added one more. That's 5."

A: "There's still some missing."

S: "There are 7 cupcakes still missing. I wonder if we'll find them."

A: "There's 8 cupcakes missing."

S: "Let's have a look. I can see 4 empty spaces here ... and 3 more here."

I start counting, "1..." and I wait.

Abdullah continues counting "... 2,3,4,5,6,7. Oh yes 7 cupcakes are missing."

S: "Yes, there are 7 missing."

Abdullah points to each empty space. He continues doing this for a while. I wait for him to speak.

A: "Let's look around."

S: "Yes, let's see if we can find any more."

Abdullah is a child who enjoys repetition and all things mathematical. The aim of my conversation with him was to build on his language as well as his understanding of number. I was guided by the 4 strategies of the ShREC approach: an evidence informed practice that helps develop high quality interactions.

- **S**hare attention
- **R**espond
- **E**xpand
- Develop a **C**onversation

Full details of [ShREC](#) are on the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) website. The poster that accompanies the ShREC Approach training can be found [here](#).

So, initially I want to show Abdullah that I am interested in what he is doing. I go over and attentively watch his play. I sit at his level and gently join in with him.

*Here I am using the **Sh** of ShREC: sharing attention.*

I allow Abdullah to lead the conversation, making sure I don't introduce new topics. I use non-verbal language like nodding, looking curious and smiling.

*Here I am using the **R** of ShREC: respond.*

As we speak, I subtly add new vocabulary and extend his words into short phrases and sentences. So, when Abdullah uses number names to count the cases, I extend this by describing exactly what he has. He says "1,2,3,4" and I respond with "Ooooh, you have 4 cupcakes."

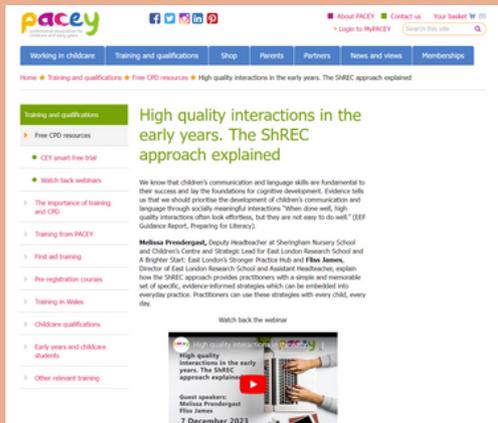
*Here I am using the **E** of ShREC: expand.*

During our conversation I avoid asking questions - this helps to keep our back-and-forth conversation flowing. I also give him time to think and process. So, when he miscounted 8 cupcakes I started to count them very slowly ... and let him continue.

*Here I am using the **C** of ShREC: conversation.*

Further information:

High Quality Interactions in the early years: [The ShREC approach explained](#): PACEY (Professional Association of Children and early years), Dec 2023.



[Short video of ShREC in action](#) at Sheringham Nursery School and Children's Centre.

