

*The term EAL is widely used, but is it just a label we attach to a child or a box we tick on an induction form? What does the term really mean to a child or a practitioner? The Thrive Together EY Stronger Practice Hub is supporting providers in exploring this question.*

Often, bilingual children experience a silent phase—a period of development that can leave practitioners feeling helpless, frustrated, rejected, or worried about how long this reluctance to speak might last. We may focus on explicitly teaching English or rely on time for children to absorb the English they hear around them. However, research suggests that this is the time to focus on the child's personal, social, and emotional (PSE) development, including self-regulation and executive function.

- Teaching and modelling social communication
- Promoting physical activity
- Navigating challenges
- Creating a community of collaborative learners





*Learning  
resources  
chosen to  
stimulate peer  
to peer  
cooperation.*

Through these approaches, practitioners learn to use key strategies such as suggesting, coordinating, reminding, participating, and mirroring to support bilingual learners.

In Early Years, we already have—and can further enhance—a toolkit of supportive approaches and strategies that are effective in teaching bilingual children alongside their peers across the pedagogical continuum. Within the Evidence Store's themes of Communication & Language and Literacy, additional strategies such as teaching and modelling vocabulary and interactive reading are demonstrated in videos, showcasing key teaching strategies in action. Techniques such as commenting, naming, explaining, and extending are highlighted as particularly effective.

The Thrive Together Stronger Practice Hub is continuing to explore these key concepts with providers across our region, focusing on how we can evolve into 'language-aware practitioners'—curating evidence-informed learning environments that enable bilingual children to thrive. Our focus is on increasing children's exposure to a language-rich environment, creating opportunities for peer interactions, and providing meaningful contexts for learning within a broad and balanced curriculum.



**What might be  
happening in these  
photos?**

