

Promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s language learning using the Continua

This resource was developed in collaboration with Denise Cedric (Indigenous pre-prep teacher, Yarrabah State School) and Di Hoy (Indigenous support teacher). It builds on to the related resource, *Supporting Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children who speak languages other than English*. (Available at: www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/12974.html > Professional Topics > Inclusion & Diversity.)

It provides examples of how a teacher can use the QKLG Learning and development areas to identify significant learnings that are most relevant to the children in their kindergarten group and community context. It also shows how a teacher can add to the advice in the guideline by identifying family and community priorities for children’s learning.

Key messages

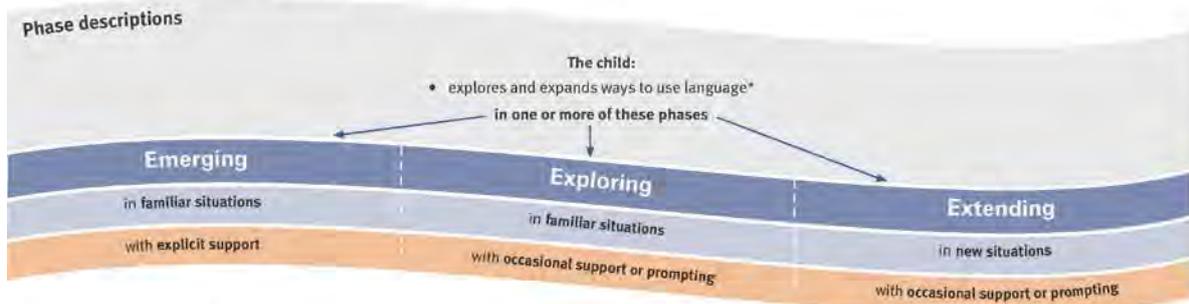
1. It is important to value Aboriginal children’s and Torres Strait Islander children’s first languages while also building their skills for using Standard Australian English (SAE).
2. Teachers need to understand the features of language so they can intentionally support children to extend language skills.
3. Language learning is linked to children’s social and cultural experiences and provides a starting point for building new learning.

Using the Continua to expand children’s language learning

The Continua of learning and development is a companion document to the Queensland kindergarten learning guideline. It supports teachers to make informed judgments about a child’s learning and development. It also provides collections of descriptions of learning behaviours to help teachers make judgments about learning that are consistent with those of other teachers. The descriptions were contributed by teachers as examples, and teachers are encouraged to add their own examples (Continua, p.3).

This resource illustrates how a teacher may add examples of descriptions of learning that are specific to their local context, to the “Communicating: Language” continuum (see Figure 1). These additional observable behaviours are used with the examples published in the Continua when making judgments about a child’s learning progress.

Continuum of learning and development — Identity



Making consistent judgments

Use the following teacher-contributed examples of observable behaviours to help make consistent judgments. The examples of observable behaviours most relevant to Amrita's learning are marked with the symbol (→).

Emerging **Exploring** **Extending**

Exploring and expanding ways to use language — examples

The child:

- attends to the object or action that an adult is communicating about (verbally and/or nonverbally) in a one-to-one situation
- attempts to communicate with others using familiar words, signed or AAC devices, e.g. uses a consistent gesture and sound to mean "more", says, "Mummy?" to mean "Where's Mum?"
- uses a small range of spoken words to describe or name what they see, hear, taste, smell, touch and feel, e.g. labels all colours as "green", a loud noise as "big", says "ticket" to mean a "receipt" or "money"
- uses first language* (verbal and nonverbal elements) to communicate with familiar first language speakers, e.g. "I bin do mine", raises eyebrows for "yes"
- mostly uses nonverbal language to communicate with SAE speakers, e.g. answers a question by pointing
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The child:

- combines spoken and nonverbal elements of language to help make their meaning clear to familiar people, e.g. "See, all finished," and shows empty meal plate, touches an adult and points to a friend and says, "Come, get him down."
- clearly articulates developmentally appropriate sounds from words in SAE and/or their first language, e.g. short and long vowel sounds and the consonants p, b, m, w, n, d, t, n, g, k, f, y (in SAE)
- communicates[†] ideas, needs and feelings to familiar people using signed language or appropriate speech patterns, vocabulary and sentence structures, e.g. in SAE, "My Daddy went to work. He drove in my car"; in first language, "I painted all dem colour. Blue an' green an' red."
- uses more accurate vocabulary to describe what they see, hear, taste, smell, touch and feel, e.g. describes an object as blue, hard, cold and smelly, a person as "like a cousin brother"
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The child:

- uses first language and some familiar SAE appropriately in everyday situations (code switching[‡]), e.g. uses SAE to greet a teacher, modelled SAE to pretend to be a doctor, first language to explain a game to a friend
- attends to a variety of language elements to help comprehend meaning, e.g. body language/voice and words when listening to a story
- clearly articulates all vowels and most consonants
- confidently communicates* ideas, needs and feelings to first language and supportive SAE speakers, using a variety of simple sentences, some compound and complex sentences, e.g. links ideas using "and", "then", "when" or "after"
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Notes

* Note: Children may have delays in first language and listening skills due to conductive hearing loss, e.g. as a result of otitis media. They may also use personal listening devices or sound amplification systems.

† Children are encouraged to communicate in first language, signed (alternative) or alternative augmentative communication (AAC) and Standard Australian English (SAE) as/when appropriate. Nonverbal children may substitute alternative or AAC for words.

‡ Note: Code switching involves choosing the language appropriate to the situation.

Emerging **Exploring** **Extending**

Exploring and expanding ways to use language — examples (continued)

The child:

- with explicit support, learns (echoes) some SAE words in meaningful contexts, e.g. learning a song or echoing an adult-modelled phrase, e.g. "My turn"
- with explicit support, tries to articulate words clearly, e.g. copies an adult's model to try to say a sound/word more clearly
- uses familiar words/phrases and/or nonverbal communication for a small range of purposes, e.g. to seek a turn or get help
- with explicit support, attempts to take turns to talk and listen in familiar interactions
- with support, interacts in short communication exchanges, e.g. answers a question about a topic of personal interest
- follows simple instructions broken into steps and/or when picture or nonverbal cues are provided
- Add points relevant to your context.*

The child:

- uses first language and SAE approximations for a variety of purposes, e.g. greetings, sharing ideas, playing games and pretending
- with occasional prompts, answers a question and attempts to take turns to talk and listen in interactions with others
- looks at the speaker and listens to and follows simple directions
- sometimes needs prompts to attend to all important elements of language when trying to comprehend a message, e.g. to watch where the person giving a direction is pointing
- Add points relevant to your context.*

The child:

- seeks help to learn and use new words/phrases, e.g. describes an image as glittery and like a rainbow, compares heights using "giant" and "tiny"
- uses language for a wide range of purposes, e.g. to enter a game, negotiate a turn, explain, tell a story, imagine, investigate, predict, hypothesise
- listens and takes turns to talk in conversations and in play and group situations
- attempts to adjust communication to meet the needs of the listener, e.g. adds or simplifies language or uses gestures
- gives instructions using first language, SAE and/or SAE approximations that others can follow
- Add points relevant to your context.*

Space is provided for teachers to add examples of observable behaviours in each phase of learning.

Additional examples of descriptions of learning

The following examples of observable behaviours would assist a teacher to make judgments about a child's learning progress in relation to exploring and expanding ways to use their first language/s and Standard Australian English as an additional language.

Emerging	Exploring	Extending
Exploring and expanding ways to use language— (teacher added examples)		
<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> relies heavily on adults to interpret the intent of their communications answers questions by pointing or using non-verbal gestures, e.g. points to the area where they want to play; nods/shakes head to say yes or no attempts to repeat an SAE word provided by an adult, e.g. "yes/no", "playdough", "draw", "paint". when encouraged, occasionally participates in fingerplays, songs and rhymes using gestures and body movements watches others carefully and imitates their actions and interactions with materials or people . . . 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses familiar vocabulary in first language (verbal and non-verbal language) to describe what they see, hear, taste, smell, touch and feel uses first language in play and real-life situations to communicate with other first language speakers attempts to use SAE in particular play situations, with support, e.g. when playing shops, talking on a telephone or playing the game "What's the time, Mr Wolf?" takes turns to talk and listen within a conversation with supportive people who speak their first language attempts to use familiar SAE language with supportive SAE speakers in familiar situations, e.g. singing a song or answering familiar questions 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> switches between first language and SAE when communicating, e.g. uses SAE to label familiar actions and objects but first language connectors to link ideas, such as "an", "den", "cause" uses familiar SAE words and phrases and switches to first language in order to express more complex ideas or use more complex vocabulary listens to and follows directions in SAE or first language attempts to accommodate for their listener by switching language, e.g. when an SAE speaker does not respond to a statement made using their first language, they try to use some SAE words to communicate