

Working With a Bilingual, Autistic Child

2 3 4 5



One to one support

T is a seven year old autistic child who came with his family from China to live in Scotland. As a bilingual support teacher I began to think how to introduce language to an autistic child. In my work with T as with any child it was of utmost importance to find out what interested and motivated him. Having some understanding of autism, I quickly realised that with T in particular it was of paramount importance to centre the learning on him and his experience of the world. I picked up that what really motivated him was numbers and in fact Maths in general.

Numbers are also a great way to learn language and by using nursery rhymes with numbers in them I found I could really catch his attention. He enjoyed the music and loved hearing the numbers in the rhymes. Through this he was also being introduced to new vocabulary even if he did not understand it at this stage.

My next step was to introduce pictures with the new words e.g. pig, chicken whilst he was listening and enjoying the rhymes. He began to pick up new words through the songs.

Another successful tactic I used was introducing language through Maths games and puzzles. For example he 'successfully' learnt new words for colours when put in the context of shape sorting i.e.: can you put all the yellow triangles together? It has been an exciting challenge for me to work in this way and I can see how this could influence my general practice. I look forward to finding new ways of enriching the learning process for T.

Working in partnership

The school I am working in with T has been very supportive and co-operative in all my dealings with them. They are very keen to provide the best learning environment for T. His one-to-one auxiliary has proved a very important partner, in that she sees him everyday and is able to inform me of previous and current progress. His class teacher, autistic support person and I, have been able to set the long-term targets for the learning, which are shared with all involved in the education of T. His main target is every day communication, with everyone in the

school on board, T can feel encouraged and supported to use his new found language in everyday communication tasks. I feel meetings that were arranged with the learning support teacher, speech and language therapist and the assist team were also very beneficial in building up the wider picture of T and collaborating on tried and tested strategies as well as finding new approaches. Finally and very importantly is the support relationship built up with T's family. Recently it was possible for me to arrange for myself and T's mother to attend a conference on autism together. This proved to be an excellent opportunity to help us to understand autism better and we both came away with many practical ideas on how we could best support T. One of the things we are planning to do is to make a bilingual resource for T marking out the names of places in the school both in his mother tongue (Chinese) and English.

*Nabil Ramzy EAL Teacher
Fife*