

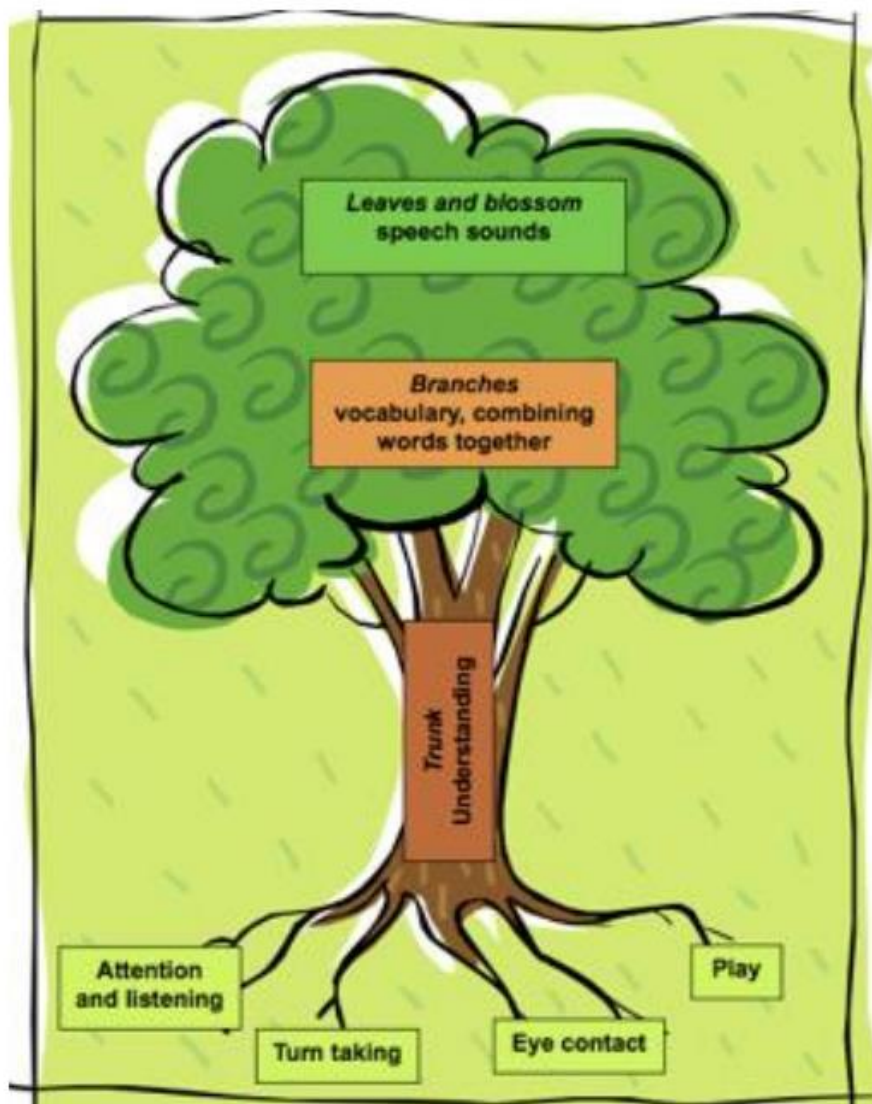
Every Child a Talker (ECaT)

Every Child a Talker (ECaT) is a national initiative designed to help early years practitioners create a developmentally appropriate, supportive and stimulating environment in which children can enjoy experimenting with and learning language.

It can be implemented whether children are in Early Years settings, with a childminder or at home with their parents. Through every day, fun and interesting activities which reflect children's interests, ECaT will encourage early language development right from the outset, extending children's vocabulary and helping them build sentences so that before they start school, children are confident and skilled communicators. Providing lots of opportunities for language learning in the home is vital – it makes the biggest difference to how well a child goes on to achieve.

Language is important because it forms the foundations for interacting with other people – for communicating our needs, our thoughts and our experiences. From the moment of birth, babies are ready to communicate: they listen to and look at people and things in their environment, and respond to what they hear and see (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008).

The diagram of the tree below can be used to represent how communication develops from the foundations of language (roots of the tree) to the use of clear speech sounds (leaves at the top of the tree).



Through ECaT meetings and training, practitioners gain further knowledge and experience of how to support children's communication and language development. We also explore tools and activities to use at pre-school in small groups or in a 1:1 situation.

ECaT increases practitioners confidence and understanding of how children learn language and how to promote this to parents/carers and gain their involvement too so that children can benefit from a consistent approach.

As part of the ECaT initiative we also complete an audit of children's language skills – **a child monitoring tool**.

This enables practitioners to assess the developmental level of children's speech, language and communication. This will inform whether a child is reaching the Listening, Attention, Understanding Milestones and the Speaking Milestones and establish whether they are 'on track' or 'not on track'.

This is a very powerful and informative tool and is used on a regular basis to provide support and encourage language development across our provision. The results of the audit are submitted to Southampton City Council – as per our privacy notice – so that SCC can gather statistics across the city and compare them nationally.

If you would like to know more about ECaT please speak to a member of Rainbow staff.