

# **FACTORS AFFECTING LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION**

# Emergent literacy

Emergent literacy is the knowledge and understanding that children acquire before they receive any formal teaching of reading and writing.

It involves a variety of skills including early reading and writing behaviours and is acquired gradually through interaction with others in daily life.

# Emergent literacy skills

The skills acquired as part of emergent literacy include:

- Understanding what writing looks like and what it is used for
- Understanding the link between written words and spoken words
- Understanding that words are made up of sounds and being able to distinguish between sounds

# A complex process

Developing language and communication skills is a complex process and therefore there are a number of factors that can affect how this development progresses.

Some of these factors are physical, some are environmental, and some are social.

# Developmental factors

We have already seen that literacy is affected by communication difficulties. It could, therefore, be argued that a child with a hearing impairment who finds it difficult to join in conversations, hear instructions, or misses the subtle cues about communication, may experience difficulties in developing literacy skills.

That is not to say they cannot develop good literacy skills, but they may need additional support to do so.

# Other developmental factors

Other aspects of physical development can have an on emergent literacy

- Speech difficulties
- Sight impairment
- Learning disabilities



# Environmental factors

Children need to be able to see and hear clearly if they are to be able to distinguish sounds and writing.

Children's development can be supported by ensuring background noise is kept low and that lighting is adequate.

# Social factors

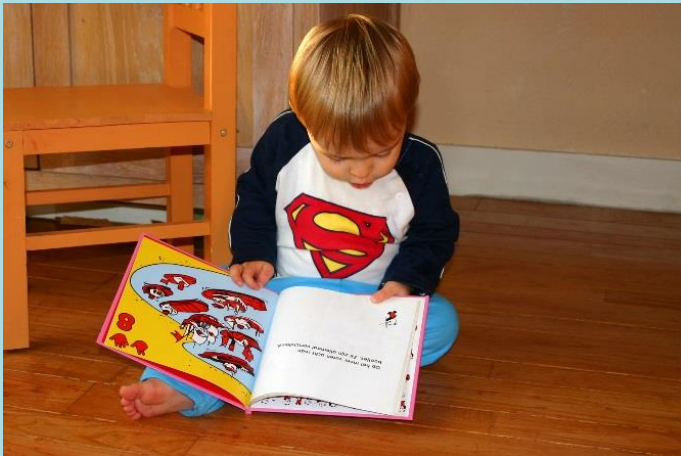
Research has shown social factors can affect a child's emergent literacy development, such as:

- Having a parent with a reading difficulty
- Speaking a language or dialect different to the one used within the setting
- Coming from a household where the child has few opportunities to experience spoken or written language



# Long-term effects

Research in 1988 showed that the level of a child's emergent literacy skills provide the foundation for future literacy development.



It was shown that children who are slow to develop their literacy skills are rarely able to catch up with their peers.

# Activity

Carry out some research at your local library, on the internet, or by talking to your colleagues to create a summary sheet showing the various professionals who could be involved in supporting children's emergent literacy, in partnership with your setting.