

A conversation with Alexei



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Alexei is 3 years old. He has speech delay in Russian, his home language. Alexei has a good understanding of Russian and beginning to understand a little English.

Alexei is playing in the sand pit under the roof on a rainy day. He is digging a hole in the sand using a spade. I join Alexei, sitting in front of him at his level and accompany him in his play by digging alongside him.

Alexei looks at me and smiles.

Alexei: "Dozhd" (meaning rain in Russian) - looking up at the sky.

Tatiana: "Dozhd. Yes rain, it's raining." Tatiana points at the roof/ sky.

Alexei: "Da" (yes)." Alexei goes back to digging.

Tatiana: "You are digging"

Alexei: "Da"

Tatiana: "Da - yes, you are digging with a spade." Tatiana points at the spade.

Alexei: "Da - spade"

Tatiana: "Oh, look, here's a bucket"

Alexei: "Da"

Tatiana fills bucket with sand using the spade.

Alexei joins in and pours sand into Tatiana's bucket.

Tatiana: "Here's more sand." Tatiana pours more sand into the bucket.

Alexei: "More"

Tatiana: "Tap, tap, tap." Tatiana taps the sand inside the bucket.

Alexei: "Tap, tap." Alexei copies Tatiana's actions and words. He laughs.

Tatiana: "Alexei is happy." Tatiana smiles and taps the sand in a silly way.

Alexei: "Tap, tap, tap." Alexei looks at Tatiana, taps and smiles.

Tatiana: "It's funny." Tatiana smiles, taps again then pours the sand into the bucket.

The bucket is now full. Alexei continues adding more sand.

Tatiana: "The bucket is full."

Alexei stops.

Tatiana: "Do you want more sand?" Tatiana signs 'more'.

Alexei "Da, more". He adds more sand. Alexei finds a teacup then empties the bucket over the teacup, covering it with sand. He looks at Tatiana, smiling.

Tatiana: "Where is the teacup?" Tatiana gestures and looks amused.

Alexei laughs: "Da."

Tatiana: "It's gone."

Alexei: "Gone." He laughs.

Tatiana smiles looking at Alexei.

Alexei quickly digs the teacup out using his hands. He laughs, showing it to Tatiana.

Tatiana: "Ah, you've found it!"

Alexei: "Da."

Tatiana: "Da" - Tatiana repeats. He quickly covers it with sand again.

Tatiana: "It's gone again!" She laughs.

Alexei: "Gone ye, ye." Alexei laughs then digs it out again. He finds a stick.

Alexei: "Oh." He shows it to Tatiana.

Tatiana: "A stick- you've found a stick"

Alexei: "Ye." Alexei throws the stick away then goes back to digging.

About our conversation

The aim of this conversation is to support Alexei's communication and language. This includes introducing him to new words in English.

As with all my colleagues at Sheringham, I use the [4 evidence informed strategies of the ShREC approach](#).

Sh (sharing attention): I engage with Alexei, sitting at his level in front of him and joining him in the same activity. This shows that I value him and what he is doing.

R (respond): I show interest in his play and respond to his words with words and short comments pitched just above his level. For example, I say, "Yes, it's raining" in response to Alexei's "Dozhd."

E (expand): I narrate some of his play and add to his speech using extra words and short phrases in English. I emphasise the words I want him to notice (and eventually learn), saying them slowly and clearly. For example, rain and spade.

C (conversation): we have a back-and-forth conversation. I take his lead and leave plenty of time (around 10 seconds) for him to respond.

During our conversation I respect and celebrate his Russian by repeating some words and giving him English equivalents.

To help him feel relaxed and engage with me, I try to make the conversation a bit funny and silly - it seemed to work!

Further information about ShREC:

*The **ShREC approach**: 4 evidence-informed strategies to promote high quality interactions with young children (EEF)*

