**Defining our terms**

What do we mean when we say ‘the Early Years’? What is a practitioner? What is an L1?

Here are some of the **key terms** we’ll be using throughout the course:

* **Early Years:** the period from birth to 8 years old as defined by [UNESCO](https://en.unesco.org/themes/early-childhood-care-and-education). The Early Years are also referred to as **early childhood**. They both mean the same thing.
* **Child development:** the changes that occur as a child grows and develops.
* **Language acquisition:** according to linguist and educational researcher Stephen Krashen, ‘acquisition’ is what children undergo when they acquire their first language. It requires meaningful interaction and natural communication. It is different from ‘learning’ a language through formal instruction.
* **EAL:** English as an additional language
* **L1:** a person’s first language, home language or mother tongue.
* **L2:** a person’s second language, or a language that is not the mother tongue.
* **Practitioner:** the general term to describe people who work with young children, such as teacher, educator, childminder, nursery manager, classroom assistant, nursery nurse, room leader, assistant nursery nurse, crèche worker, nanny, etc.
* **Carer:** the child’s parent, guardian or another important person in their life such as a grandparent.
* **Setting:** the general term to describe the early years environment, such as nursery, pre-school, crèche, classroom, child-minding facilities.
* **Partnership:** the relationship between education and health and social care teams working together with families to ensure each child’s individual needs are met.
* **Development statements:** different stages of development in early childhood published by the Department of Education (England)

**The terms we have outlined above are to help you understand what we are referring to on the course, so that we are all talking about the same thing.**

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