

Talk with Me!

Promoting Early Language Development

Part of the *CIRCLE Infant & Toddler Professional Development Series*

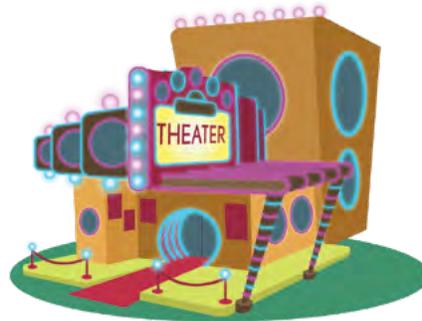
companion workbook

This workbook belongs to:

This workbook will help you review:



instructional strategies viewed in the workshop



early language topics discussed by experts in the theater



theories, child skills, and language outcomes found in the library



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Navigating this Workbook

This companion workbook covers all three parts (i.e., course modules) of the *Talk with Me* series. Each part is organized by the three categories below:



THE WORKSHOP: **Instructional Strategies**

The workshop in the *Talk with Me* course series contains videos filmed with real caregivers that demonstrate the key instructional strategies for supporting infant and toddler language development. There are a total of 14 strategies, spread across the three parts of the series. These strategies are summarized in this workbook. You may find it helpful to review them as you practice implementing strategies in your classroom.



THE THEATER: **Hear from the Experts**

The theater in the course contains interviews with experts on a wide variety of topics related to infant and toddler language development. Each part in the course series contains new expert videos. The key concepts presented in these videos are summarized in this workbook.



THE LIBRARY: **Dive Deeper**

The library provides resources for you to dive deeper in your learning about early childhood development concepts. We've summarized the three sections in the library in this guide:

- Child Skill Development (Part 1)
- Connections to Theory (Part 2)
- Academic and Social Outcomes (Part 3)

Part 1



THE WORKSHOP: Instructional Strategies

1 Label

Labels are names for objects, concepts, and actions. It's best to provide labels for objects when children are actively engaged with that object or in that action. Since they are already paying attention, children easily connect what you are saying to the appropriate object or action.

To help build children's vocabulary, caregivers can label objects, concepts, and actions throughout the day, including during playtime, book reading, and everyday activities like meal time, diaper changing, or potty time.



Tips

- Labeling objects and actions can be as simple as telling a baby what she is holding, or labeling her actions as she plays with a toy.
- Looking at books together is a great opportunity for labeling. Babies learn to love books when they are introduced in flexible and fun ways. Label items in the pictures, and let them touch and turn the pages of the book. Encourage them to point to different things on the page, label what they point to, and show excitement when they seem to understand your words.
- Learning vocabulary is easier in the context of play, and acting out new words helps children understand their meaning. When engaging in activities that have a lot of physical movement, demonstrate and label each action and encourage children to do it too!

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using the labeling strategy in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Labeling

What classroom activities do you have planned for this week? Can you think of some labels that you could use during these activities to enrich the language experience for the children?

2 Describe

Describing is telling how something looks, tastes, sounds, feels, moves, or smells. Examples of these kinds of describing words include: sweet, cold, soft, fast, slow, rough, wet, dry, sticky, fast, slow, blue, small, wiggly, dark, heavy, empty, tall, short, orange, round, delicious, and bumpy. Describing words can also be used to talk about feelings and internal states, such as: happy, sad, tired, hungry, mad, frustrated, sick, shy, or proud. Describing words are part of building a rich vocabulary that children can use to communicate more fully about their experiences and observations.



Tips

- Spending time outdoors is a great opportunity to let babies explore with all of their senses while offering rich language descriptions.
- Describing includes talking about feelings, like *happy*, *sad*, and *mad*. It's normal for babies to fuss, especially when they are hungry, tired, or frustrated. When you respond to them with a comforting voice, describe their feelings, provide gentle cuddling, and solve the problem as soon as you can, babies feel more secure and settle down faster.
- Another way to use describing words is to talk about locations, such as *in* the box, *out* of the car, or *on* the blanket. These are words that often come up when playing with toys.
- Art activities are a great time to use describing words because they often involve new sensory experiences. You can talk about how things feel, smell, and look and use words like *cold*, *smooth*, and *squishy*.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using the describing strategy in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable		Somewhat comfortable		Very comfortable							
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	6

Stop and Reflect: Describing

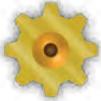
Art is one type of activity that really lends itself to the describing strategy. What other kinds of activities would spur conversations about how things look, taste, sound, feel, move, or smell?

3 Compare

Comparing is telling how items are the same (or not the same). Comparisons may start with “They are both _____”, for example “Your shirt is the same color as this crayon! They are both red.” “See the daisy and the rose? They are both flowers.” Comparisons may also include talking about opposites such as big/small, hot/cold, and wet/dry. Making comparisons between objects that children can see, hear, or touch helps children understand these concepts.

Examples of comparing:

- “These noodles are different lengths. Which one is the longest?”
- “The daddy elephant is big, and the baby elephant is small.”
- “This shape is a triangle. It has three sides. A rectangle has four sides like this block.”



Tips

- Comparing often includes talking about opposites like *in* and *out* or *up* and *down*. When caregivers pair simple comparison words with corresponding actions, like throwing a ball *up* and *down*, even babies can begin to recognize comparisons between two objects or ideas.
- Children need hands-on experiences to understand some concepts and comparisons. Words like *warm* and *cool* are meaningful when they are paired with real life sensations. Of course we need to keep children safe from touching dangerous things, so caregivers need to look for safe opportunities to teach these concepts.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using the comparing strategy in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable Somewhat comfortable Very comfortable

1 2 3 4 5 6

Stop and Reflect: Comparing

What is a common activity for your classroom? What items, qualities, or actions in the activity can you compare for children?

4 Explain

Explaining tells how things work or why we do things. Young children do not always have the experience to know the reasons behind our actions or rules, and the things that happen around them. Giving explanations helps children begin to understand the world and can also increase their cooperation with rules.

Examples of explaining:

- “We are going to walk quietly past Ms. Patty’s room because the babies are sleeping.”
- “We use sponges to clean our dirty spoons, plates, and cups after we eat.”
- “If we run in the house, we might fall and get hurt.”



Tips

- Babies are often carried around without understanding where they are going or why. This may make them feel helpless and confused. Remembering to explain things to young children takes practice, but it is an important way to show sensitivity and care. Explanations also help babies learn to understand new words like *waiting*, *going*, and *moving* when they hear them many times.
- Remember that babies’ brains are starting to process language many months before they begin to talk. By starting to give babies explanations for what is happening, you are helping them learn about the sounds of their language as they transition from one activity to another.
- When children can hear an explanation and see the related actions, it helps them understand connections between cause and effect. Consider a scenario in which a book gets torn up; the teacher’s explanation can help her toddlers understand the connection between how the book got broken and how they can fix it.
- Children understand explanations better when they can see and try things for themselves. Think about an activity in which you’re looking for something with a magnifying glass. If a teacher explains what she’s doing, shows the child how to do it, and lets the child try for herself, this combination of language, demonstration, and practice provides a rich learning experience for the child.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using the explaining strategy in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable Somewhat comfortable Very comfortable

1 2 3 4 5 6

Stop and Reflect: Explaining

Can you think of something that has confused a child in your classroom recently? How could you have better explained what happened?

THE THEATER: Hear from the Experts



WHAT LANGUAGE DOES FOR US

WATCH
FILM

Pragmatic Language Skills

Pragmatic skills are the social aspects of communication, and include receptive and expressive skills. For example, when infants learn how to take turns and coo and babble back and forth, they are learning important conversation skills—taking turns talking and listening, paying attention to facial expressions and tone of voice, and making eye contact.

Pragmatic skills also include adjusting how we talk based on who we're talking to—for example, the difference between talking to a younger child or talking to your parents.

Pragmatic language is learning to communicate in culturally appropriate, sensitive ways.

WATCH
FILM

Receptive Language

Receptive language is what children understand about what they hear. We can look at how much they understand by how they respond nonverbally—for example, do they point to an object when you say the name of the object, and do they follow simple instructions like, “let’s find your shoes!”

Receptive language also includes the ability to understand grammar and sentence structure: For example, do they understand the difference between “The dog chased the cat” and the “The cat chased the dog.” Receptive language starts developing very early in the first year of life, when they are not yet able to talk back to caregivers.

TYPES OF LANGUAGE

WATCH
FILM

Language Relation to Other Areas of Learning

Reading: Children who have strong oral language skill and better vocabulary are likely to go on to become better readers because they already know a lot about words and grammar. Children move from just reading words on a page to really understanding and thinking about what they are reading.

Math: Teaching word concepts such as more / less than, same / different, one / none, first / last are important math vocabulary. The more concept vocabulary children learn, the more prepared they will be to understand more math activities.

Social Emotional Development: When children can use words to express how they are feeling, instead of crying or pushing, then the words they use are supporting behavioral self-control, an important part of social and emotional development.



Components of Language

Four components:

1. Sound (phonetics) – sounds that we make, and combining sounds into syllables
2. Semantics – meaning behind vocabulary words- verbs, concepts words (up, down), descriptive words (fuzzy, warm, round, red) and how words relate to each other (e.g. synonyms)
3. Morphology and syntax – morphology is the smallest unit of meaning that you can add to a word to change its meaning. For example, adding an “s” to make something plural, or adding an “ed” to make a verb past tense. Syntax is how you put words together (grammatical rules). These are different across languages, which sometimes makes it difficult to learn a new language.
4. Pragmatic language – the function of language and the cultural expectations for the ways we communicate.

LANGUAGE AND EARLY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT



Talking to Babies Helps Brain Development

Talking to babies when they do not have language yet is important for their brain development. The brain is naturally attuned to hear language and to want to pay attention to language. Babies begin to develop language by hearing it consistently over time. One-on-one communication also helps build trusting relationships, even when the baby cannot understand the words spoken.



Importance of Language

Language is a fundamental part of children’s development. It is the way we communicate, express feelings and ideas, share and request information, etc. Language also connects to so many areas of development, that if a child does not have functional language skills, the child feels frustrated and socially isolated.



Language and Math and Science

If infant and toddlers receive rich language support and build meaning of their world, understanding what things are called and how they function, then they understand concepts like more and less, bigger or smaller, higher or lower. These early concepts prepare children from more complex science and math activities in preschool and kindergarten.



The Environment and Brain Development

The brain in infancy has as a complex web of connections, called synapses. Some synapses should be strengthened and some should be “pruned,” or lost, because they make the brain less efficient. Rich language input during the first three years of life helps the brain determine which connections to save and which to prune. Without language, this pruning process can result in a brain architecture that isn’t as efficient at taking in input and making meaning of it. Research has shown that children who grow up in environments with little language and a lot of stress process words significantly slower than their peers. This effect on the brain can be seen at 18 months and continues to affect children as they age.

A red, rounded rectangular icon with a white border containing the text "WATCH FILM" in white capital letters.

How Babies Learn to Talk

Babies generally take the whole first year of life to:

- Listen to language around them and try to make sense of it
- Practice language through cooing, babbling, and approximating words
- Understanding that they can communicate with other people, first through gestures or action

Around age one, they put all of these skills together to form their first words.

General strategies to help babies learn to talk include:

- Exposing children to lots of clear talk
- Using lots of different words and repeating them often
- Gesturing to provide an added layer of meaning to words
- Talking about and labeling things they are interested in
- Teaching them the back and forth motion of conversation



THE LIBRARY

Child Skill Development: Language

	RECEPTIVE	EXPRESSIVE
0-3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Startles at loud sounds <input type="checkbox"/> Quiets or smiles when spoken to <input type="checkbox"/> Starts to turn eyes or head toward sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cries; by 3 months will start to make different cries for different needs (hungry, tired) <input type="checkbox"/> Makes pleasure sounds (coos and goos)
3-6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Responds to changes in tone of voice <input type="checkbox"/> Begins to turn in response to name <input type="checkbox"/> Responds to music and singing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Laughs aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Starts to babble with sounds like p, b, m <input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizes to get attention, express displeasure, show eagerness <input type="checkbox"/> Produces raspberries, squeals, trills <input type="checkbox"/> May start to imitate sounds s/he hears <input type="checkbox"/> Takes turns making sounds with others
6-9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Watches your face when you talk <input type="checkbox"/> Understands 3-50 words <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes the sight of spoon, bottle <input type="checkbox"/> Starts to recognize names of family members <input type="checkbox"/> Understands “hi” and “bye” <input type="checkbox"/> Starts to understand “no” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Does reduplicative babbling (e.g., “bababa”, “gagaga”) <input type="checkbox"/> Babbles with inflection and rhythmic patterns <input type="checkbox"/> May start to clap hands and bang purposefully to make noise
9-12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes name <input type="checkbox"/> Participates in language games such as peek-a-boo and patty cake <input type="checkbox"/> Understands name of 1 body part <input type="checkbox"/> recognizes words as symbols for objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> By 12 months, has 1-2 words including sounds with meaning such as “Mama”, “Dada”, “Uh-oh” <input type="checkbox"/> Imitates familiar sounds <input type="checkbox"/> Produces true words during sound play <input type="checkbox"/> Uses several gestures like showing, giving, waving, and pointing <input type="checkbox"/> Babbles with imitation of real speech and with expression
12-18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Understands names of many objects <input type="checkbox"/> points to several body parts <input type="checkbox"/> Follows simple commands with gestures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> shows early pretend play (e.g., uses spoon as telephone) <input type="checkbox"/> Uses 5-50 words, including names <input type="checkbox"/> Points to show something s/he wants <input type="checkbox"/> Shakes head and says “no” <input type="checkbox"/> May start to combine words (e.g., “more cookie”, “car go”)

RECEPTIVE

EXPRESSIVE

<p>18-24 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Begins to understand simple prepositions (e.g., “in” vs. “out”, “up” vs. “down”) <input type="checkbox"/> Points to things or pictures when they are named <input type="checkbox"/> Follows simple instructions without gestures <input type="checkbox"/> Points to objects in a book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> By 24 months should be regularly combining words. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses words like “more” to make wants known <input type="checkbox"/> Makes sounds of familiar animals <input type="checkbox"/> Repeats words overheard <input type="checkbox"/> Produces 25-200 words <input type="checkbox"/> Uses 1 pronoun (e.g., “me”, “mine”) <input type="checkbox"/> Can name objects common to surroundings <input type="checkbox"/> Uses at least 2 prepositions (e.g., “up”, “in”)
<p>2-3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Matches 3-4 colors <input type="checkbox"/> Understands “big” and “little” <input type="checkbox"/> Likes to hear same story repeated <input type="checkbox"/> Follows instructions with 2 steps <input type="checkbox"/> Understands words like “in,” “on,” and “under” <input type="checkbox"/> Begins to understand “what” and “where” questions <input type="checkbox"/> Understands simple questions dealing with his/her environment and activities <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies objects by function (e.g., “Show me what we eat with”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Names body parts <input type="checkbox"/> Can say ~200-900 words <input type="checkbox"/> Uses short sentences <input type="checkbox"/> Asks questions like “What’s that?” or “Where’s my ___?” <input type="checkbox"/> Uses quantitative words (e.g., “some”, “one”, “more”) <input type="checkbox"/> Says first name, age, and sex <input type="checkbox"/> Says words like “I,” “me,” “we,” and “you” and some plurals (cars, dogs, cats)^{2,3,4} <input type="checkbox"/> Carries on a conversation using 2 to 3 sentences <input type="checkbox"/> May carry on pretend conversation between self and dolls/stuffed animals <input type="checkbox"/> Uses 2 word negative phrases such as “no want” <input type="checkbox"/> Talks to other children as well as adults <input type="checkbox"/> Speech is understood by most listeners most of the time
<p>3-4 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Understands up to 1500 words by age 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Can group objects according to category <input type="checkbox"/> Can follow commands with modifiers (e.g., “Walk slowly to the car”) <input type="checkbox"/> Understands names of different kinds of animals <input type="checkbox"/> Understands 4 different prepositions. <input type="checkbox"/> Understands one or more colors <input type="checkbox"/> Understands concepts such as “longer” (vs. “shorter”) and “larger”(vs. “smaller”) when the contrast is presented <input type="checkbox"/> Follows simple instructions even when stimulus objects are not present (e.g., “Go to the kitchen and get your shoes”) <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning to understand time concepts (last night, tomorrow, yesterday, summer) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Can tell a story and relate events and experiences. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses sentences of 4-5 words. <input type="checkbox"/> Says 1000 words <input type="checkbox"/> Answers simple who, what, where, why questions <input type="checkbox"/> Sings a song or says a poem from memory such as the “Itsy Bitsy Spider” or the “Wheels on the Bus”³ <input type="checkbox"/> Can say first and last name when asked. <input type="checkbox"/> Speech is 90% intelligible with context <input type="checkbox"/> Uses language for imaginative play <input type="checkbox"/> Asks questions, makes requests, <input type="checkbox"/> Can repeat words with 4 syllables <input type="checkbox"/> Has most vowels and diphthongs and consonants p, b, m, w, n well established <input type="checkbox"/> Names at least 1 or more colors correctly.

Part 2



THE WORKSHOP:

Instructional Strategies

5 Link

Linking is making a connection between new objects, ideas, or concepts and something the child already knows or has experienced. When we make these connections, children build understanding and are able to access the knowledge they are gaining.

Examples of linking:

- “The apron your mom is wearing looks like the smock you wear when you paint in the Art center.”
- “You are pointing to a giraffe in your book. Do you remember we saw a giraffe at the zoo last week? He was eating leaves from the tall tree.”
- “That cat is black just like the one we saw when we were playing on the playground near grandma’s house.”



Tips

- Linking classroom activities with children’s personal experiences outside of school is a great way to stimulate children’s memory as well as encouraging conversational skills.
- If you don’t know much about a child’s home life or family, ask parents or guardians so you will have information! The more you know about their lives outside of the classroom, the more information you have to make links between classroom activities and babies’ personal experiences. For example, you could ask:
 - the names of brothers, sisters, and grandparents
 - the kind of transportation the family uses
 - if the family has pets at home
 - what the baby’s favorite activities and toys are
 - what the family did last weekend
- Links don’t always have to be about home and family. You can make links between activities and what the child did yesterday, or earlier that day on the playground. You can also talk about what might happen later that day, or during an upcoming vacation. What’s important is making a connection between what is happening now and other experiences the child can remember or anticipate.
- Looking at pictures and books can remind teachers and children of past experiences to talk about. Making links to children’s personal experiences helps words and ideas feel more meaningful. It also may call up other memories that children want to talk about, which encourages rich conversation.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using the linking strategy in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Linking

Think about one child in your classroom. Try to remember the last time the child was very excited. What was he or she excited about? How might future activities be related to that child's experience, and how can you link the two?

6 Narrate

Narrating is stating what a child is doing, or what you observe happening. Narrating often uses other strategies like labeling, describing, and explaining. Narrating is particularly important for infants and young children who have limited language skills themselves, as you are modeling rich language and giving them the words for what they are doing. Narrating also conveys your interest in the child's activities, and invites the child to participate in conversation without needing to use "quiz questions."

Examples of narrating:

- As the baby is eating, you might say "Ava is eating green peas today....Here they come on the spoon.... You open your mouth so wide the spoon goes right in.... You must like peas....Here comes another big bite."
- As a toddler pushes a toy train along a track, you might say "I see the train coming!... You made a long winding track for it to ride on.... There's the engine, and the coal car, and the red caboose at the end.... Oh, now it's at the end of the line. It must be pulling in to the station...."



Tips

- Sometimes toddlers are exploring activities without a clear purpose, such as drawing something you cannot recognize. This is okay! They are just learning how to hold a crayon or marker and make lines, squiggles, and circles. By narrating what they are doing, you are helping children put words to their actions, and showing them that their efforts are important.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using the narrating strategy in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Narrating

If you are new to narrating, it might be easiest to start practicing the strategy with experiences that are common to every day, such as diaper changing or meal times. How would you narrate these common experiences?

7 Think Aloud

Thinking aloud is saying your own thoughts out loud. This strategy is often used around younger children to expose them to more language and vocabulary.

Example of thinking aloud:

- The teacher is reading a book to toddlers about different kinds of fruit. The teacher can begin with...
“My favorite fruit is bananas. I hope there will be a banana in this story.”
- While helping the child put a jacket on, the teacher says “I think it’s cold outside. I need to get my jacket on too.”

When you think aloud, you are sharing your own thoughts with children. This helps them understand what you are doing, and why. It provides a model for solving problems and allows children to hear more complete sentences than they themselves can say. Thinking aloud is similar to narrating, but you are telling children about your thoughts and actions instead of theirs. It exposes them to more vocabulary and connects words with actions.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using the think aloud strategy in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Thinking Aloud

Try focusing the thinking aloud strategy for an activity that has more than one step—what is happening now and what will happen next. What kinds of step-by-step activities do you like for your classroom?

8 Rephrase

Repeating back a word or phrase said by the child, using correct grammar, pronunciation, or adding words to make it into a complete sentence. Teachers often use this strategy to help children hear the correct pronunciation of a word or to show children how to use their word(s) in a complete sentence.

Examples of rephrasing:

- Child says “milk” and teacher responds “You would like milk.”
- Child says “I want pollypop” and teacher responds “You want a lollipop.”
- Child points to dog and says “look dog” and teacher responds “Oh, you see the dog.”



Tips

- One kind of rephrasing is giving a child a word to use instead of whining or screaming. Toddlers need help learning to use words to express their needs, especially during conflicts. Sharing space is hard for toddlers, and when they are upset, they are more likely to hit or push. Giving them specific, simple words to use to express themselves will help them learn to communicate with each other in safe, respectful ways.
- Sometimes toddlers can say only one word at a time, but they are conveying a whole thought. For example, a child might say “ball” and mean “I want that ball.” By rephrasing what the child has said, you are letting him know you understand, and modeling how to say a more grammatically complete phrase or sentence.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using the rephrasing strategy in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Rephrasing

Think about what words your toddlers know and what they are often trying to communicate by saying them. How can you rephrase these words for them?

9 Extend

Responding to what a child says by building on the child's interest, adding new content or ideas to broaden the child's understanding and vocabulary about the topic.

Examples of extending:

- Child points to a plane in the sky and says “plane” and a teacher responds, “Oh you see the plane flying way up in the sky. I wonder where it is going.”
- Child says “want cookies” and the teacher responds “You want chocolate chip cookies. They are yummy.”

Extending goes a step beyond rephrasing. Extending creates a more complete sentence from the child's utterance, and it adds a new idea or more information about the same topic. Extending is a responsive caregiving strategy—it supports children's language development and lets the child know that you heard her and you care about what she is trying to say. Even if you are not completely sure the child is saying a real word, when you treat toddlers' utterances as meaningful, you are responding to their intent to communicate. This encourages them to talk more.

Rate Yourself!

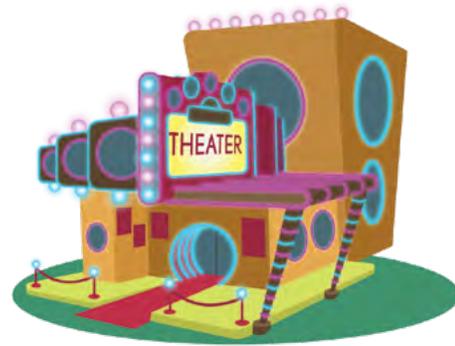
How comfortable do you feel with using the extending strategy in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Extending

Think back to the previous section and how you practiced rephrasing. Now that you have rephrased, what could you do to extend the child's communication?

THE THEATER: Hear from the Experts



THEMES FROM THEORIES

WATCH
FILM

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory helps understand that, beginning in the first hours of life, the infant needs sensitive, responsive nurturance (e.g., holding, comforting, swaddling, rocking, motherese). This nurturance allows the infant to develop trust in the caregiver that gets stronger and stronger. Through that trust, the infant begins to want to signal their needs (hunger, excitement, etc.) to the caregiver. When the caregiver responds, the infant knows that trust is respected. Infants tune in and engage with their trusted caregivers, which allows them to be ready to receive language and start to process it.

WATCH
FILM

Lev Vygotsky: Zone of Proximal Development

Caregiver's sensitive, responsive input, whether through language, gestures, or actions, can allow children to learn and develop at a higher "zone" of development. Lower zones represent what the child is able to do in the absence of caregiver assistance.

WATCH
FILM

Connection to Theories

Most developmental theories stress the importance of social relationships, especially the relationship between primary caregivers and children. There is also a focus on the settings in which children learn—children develop optimally within a setting that provides safe, stimulating exploration of the world.

WATCH
FILM

Urie Bronfenbrenner: Bioecological Systems Theory

There are many ecological systems in a child's life that influence how a child develops. Bronfenbrenner wants us to look at community, organizational, political, and other types of influences that affect the language experiences of children in their early years.

WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T

WATCH
FILM

Being Responsive

It is important to be responsive with infants' actions and other signals. Treat these as their turn in the conversation, and get the back and forth going on early on. Communicate with infants by commenting, pointing, labeling, repeating words, and using gestures. Follow their attention for opportunities to communicate.



Voice Tone and Motherese

Baby talk is not helpful when you are not saying the word in its appropriate form. For example, “baba” for bottle. This does not help the infant hear the real word, process it, and remember it.

Motherese, however, is very powerful. It is what caregivers almost instinctively do with their intonation and pitch. Babies respond to this, they listen more carefully, and it calms them. It helps to make sentences short and simple when talking to infants so that they can better make sense of it.



Labeling

It is important to first label the whole object, as babies have a tendency to associate the label with the whole. For instance, begin with the label “bunny” when looking at a stuffed rabbit. After the child understands this label for the whole object, then start labeling different parts like its tail or qualities like its color.



Asking Toddlers Questions

At the toddler age, make sure you are asking a lot of questions. Different types of questions include:

- *Where* questions, to which child can respond with a point
- *What* questions that elicit a label from the child, giving them an opportunity to practice language.
- *How* and *why* questions, that you can start asking at about 30 months, allowing them to practice giving explanations.

Be patient when children ask “why why why.” Give them answers. This helps children understand more about the world and keeps them curious—and also practicing language.



Using Sophisticated Words

Talking about complex concepts like energy or outer space, without puzzles or objects that make it meaningful, isn’t helpful for young children. Language that is meaningful to the child’s life is easier to understand, and it is during these conversations that more complex language should be introduced first.

Books can help bring up sophisticated words that children might not otherwise hear; try to link these words back to children’s experiences.



Make Conversations with Toddlers

Key points:

- Encourage toddlers to have discussions about past, present, and future experiences.
- Build on conversations and make conversations more complex as toddlers develop.
- Conversations are helpful for social and emotional development as well as language development.
- For toddlers, more complex conversations help children think abstractly, beyond the here and now. Books are helpful for this—a plot point in a story can remind you of a real experience you shared with the child. Stopping and talking about this connection is a great conversation strategy.

WATCH
FILM

Exposure to Print

“Environmental print” is different from books because it shows the different ways print is used. Expose children to daily use of print—opening the mail, writing your name on a check, reading a package, etc.

WATCH
FILM

Music and Singing

Music and singing:

- develops bond between caregiver and infant.
- captures and holds their attention and motivates them to learn
- promotes phonological awareness and auditory memory because it activates different parts of the brain
- improves child’s ability to listen and hear when other noise is around

Use music as a learning tool, not as background sound. Using it all the time diminishes its unique qualities for learning and makes children have to work harder to filter out noise when they could be focusing on language interactions.

WATCH
FILM

Benefits and side effects of using a pacifier

Pacifiers can help calm young infants down and help them fall asleep. However, experts recommend to limit pacifier time, because we know that children are less likely to babble and play with sounds when they have pacifiers in their mouths. Some studies show that children who heavily use pacifiers have ongoing ear infections, and this buildup of fluid can prevent them from hearing sounds clearly. This has a negative impact on their language development. Pacifiers can also affect the formation of children’s teeth, which affects their ability to make certain sounds. Speech pathologists recommend discontinuing pacifier use after 10 months of age.

WATCH
FILM

Baby Videos and Flashcards

Research suggests that the best thing is to expose children to rich language through play.

Language is a very social process. Children will learn more from you in social interactions than from media.

WATCH
FILM

Correcting Pronunciation

If a child mispronounces a word, it’s not helpful to stop and correct him or her. Pointing out poor pronunciation can make a child feel self-conscious and less willing to talk. Allow him or her to express his or her idea freely. Then, model, or repeat back the word correctly, in an encouraging way.

For example:

Child: “I like puff-ghetti.”

Teacher: “I really like spaghetti too!”

WATCH
FILM

Signing with Babies

Baby signing can be fun and engaging, but there is no evidence that baby signing helps children to talk sooner. A concern with baby signing is that the sign can be over-generalized: if a baby does the hand sign for “more,” that could mean more milk, more hugs, more reading, etc. Using labels and describing words help children practice language. However, using any kind of gesture can help children who do have language delays communicate more effectively.

TYPES AND CAUSES OF DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

WATCH
FILM

Chronic Stress

Toxic stress occurs when children are exposed to stressful environments and relationships. It can be caused by screaming, insensitivity, anger and aggression, isolation, and an emphasis on punitive discipline. High stress levels make it difficult for the infant brain to process language.

WATCH
FILM

Infants on Track

There are a lot of free resources to help track your child's development. Download the Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines at www.littletextans.org, and check out the Skill Development portion of this course.

WATCH
FILM

Late Talkers

70-80% of late talkers will catch up with their peers by the time they are in preschool, but only if it is an expressive language delay and they are developing in language comprehension and social communication skills. Most caregivers aren't sure if the child is simply a late talker or if there is another learning or language delay. Therefore it's important to have late talkers evaluated by speech professionals.

WATCH
FILM

Delays in Twins

Twins are at greater risk for having language difficulties, typically about 6-8 months behind their peers. There is not a clear reason why, but with rich language interactions, these delays usually correct themselves by middle childhood.

WATCH
FILM

Warning Signs

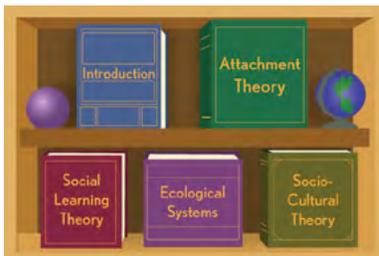
Speech professionals often look at how children interact with their parents or caregivers. Do they make eye contact, do they play games like peekaboo, do they imitate facial expressions, etc. If the child is uninterested in participating in communication, they should be evaluated by an early intervention professional.



THE LIBRARY

Connections to Theory

Between birth and five years of age, children go from cooing and babbling to knowing more than 5,000 words. How exactly does that happen?



To some, it may seem like magic, but over the years researchers and theorists have closely studied the way children develop language.

Understanding the research supported theories from developmental science and social science helps us understand the complex, exciting process that goes on in children's brains.

Relationships and interactions are at the heart of language development.

A child's world is full of intricate connections between family, school, culture, and the rest of the world around them.

All of these elements directly and indirectly influence the way children grow.

When caregivers understand the essential ideas from developmental theories, they can make connections between big ideas and practical skills.

ATTACHMENT THEORY

Relationships are central to language development.

Attachment theory helps us understand the important qualities of a relationships between a child and a caregiver. Caregivers can include parents, teachers, or any other significant individual in a child's life.

In order to grow and develop in healthy ways, children must develop a secure, trusting relationship with at least one consistent, nurturing caregiver during the first years of life.

Secure attachment relationships develop over time. Babies signal their feelings by crying, smiling, making eye contact, and vocalizing to request attention.

What does secure attachment look like?



Secure Attachment

When a familiar caregiver typically responds in a warm, loving manner each time the baby signals, the baby learns that she is safe and valued, and that her needs will be met. The baby also learns that communicating with caregivers is a positive and rewarding experience. This consistent, positive relationship between the baby and her caregiver is known as a “secure attachment.”

Securely attached children feel comfortable asking caregivers for help and information, pointing out objects in their world, and communicating their thoughts and feelings.

Research shows that securely attached children are more likely to be successful in other relationships. They also tend to do better in school as well as later in adulthood.

Insecure Attachment

If a baby communicates her needs but is not responded to in a warm and consistent way, she will learn over time that adults cannot be trusted to take care of her and respond to her signals.

She may withdraw from social interaction, become fearful or anxious, or behave in negative ways to seek attention and express distress. This kind of relationship pattern reflects insecure attachment. Insecurely attached children may communicate less clearly and may have difficulty regulating their behavior during learning activities.

It is important to know that young children become attached to their teachers as well as their parents.

A secure attachment to a warm, responsive teacher helps children learn language and other skills better. This is especially true for children from bilingual households who are learning two languages. Taking the time to build trusting relationships with young children can have a lasting impact on their language development.



SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Children learn by interacting with the world, but they also learn by observing others interact.

Albert Bandura's "Social Learning Theory" is about the learning that happens when children watch and listen to others. This means children not only learn when caregivers talk to them, but they also learn by watching caregivers talk to other children, and by watching children talk to each other.



In addition to learning from their caregivers, children learn language and communication skills from each other. You've probably seen situations where one child asks for something, and then other children say "Me too!" and make their own requests. This is social learning, and it's powerful!

You may also have wondered where a child learned a new word, perhaps even a word you did not want her to say.

Children look and listen and imitate what they see and hear, including from TV and video games. That's why it's important to monitor what children are watching and playing, and to recognize that imitation, even of bad behavior, is a normal part of development.

Bioecological Systems Theory

Interaction plays a critical role in language development. Children interact directly with their parents, teachers, and friends, but they also interact with the larger environment they live in. This is the basic idea behind the Bioecological or PPCT (Person-Process-Context-Time) Theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner.

The child's world can be thought of as a set of circles, one inside the other, with the child in the center. Systems have direct affects and indirect influences.

Bioecological Systems

- Created by Urie Bronfenbrenner
- Represents the interactions between the child and the world around her
- Systems have direct effects and indirect influences

Macrosystem

- Outermost circle
- Broad categories of influence
- Example: Economic patterns may affect parents' jobs which may affect the child through home life

Exosystem

- Does not directly affect the child's life
- Does influence the child's life
- Example: School board decisions will affect school which will then affect the child

Mesosystem

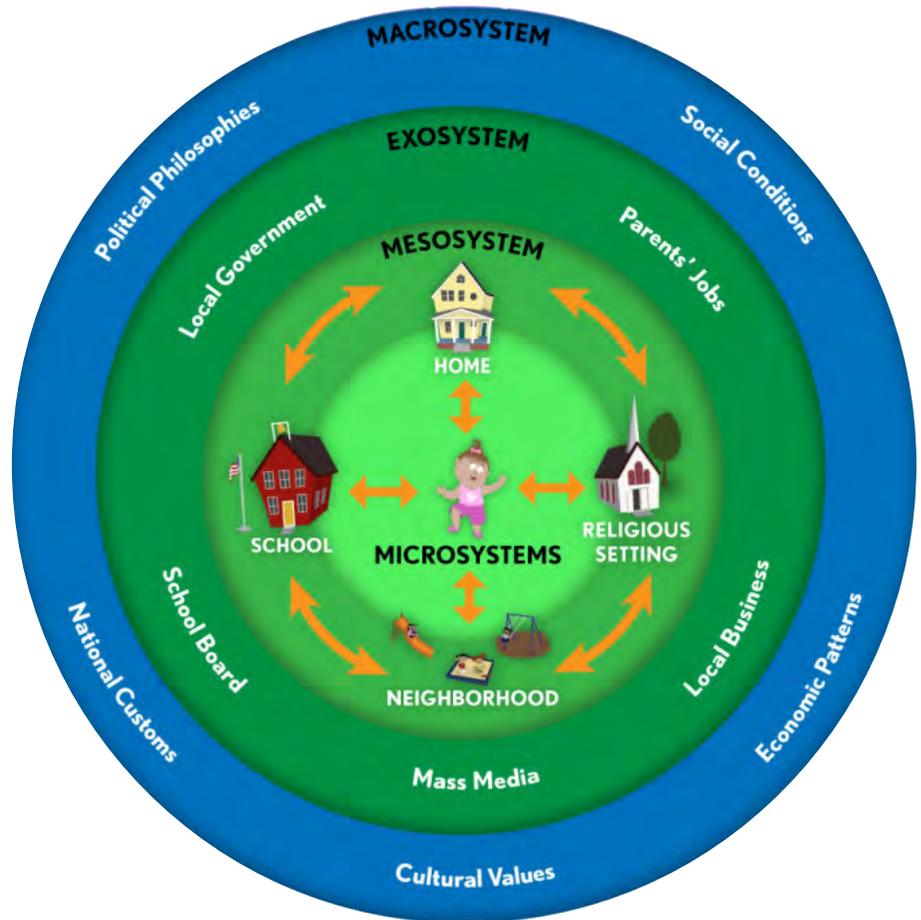
- Interaction between Microsystems
- Between home and school
- Between religious setting and home or neighborhood

Microsystems

- People and places that the child interacts with directly
- Family members, teachers, doctors, religious institutions, and schools

Chronosystem

- Events and experiences that occur during a child's life that change their development and relationships
- Example: parental divorce, winning the lottery, birth of a sibling



Microsystem

The innermost circle is called the Microsystem.

This circle includes people and places that the child interacts with directly, such as family members, teachers, doctors, religious institutions, and schools. This layer is likely to have the most impact on children's language development.

The words and explanations that caregivers give to children form the foundation for their vocabulary development.



Reading books, singing songs, and having back-and-forth conversations are the most direct ways that caregivers impact children's language development.

Mesosystem

The Mesosystem is made of links between Microsystems.

Think of the link between the home and school (parents talking to teachers about their child, teachers talking to kids about their home, and parents talking to kids about their school day). These relationships and interactions reinforce the language skills learned at home and at school.

Exosystem

Situations and events don't have to directly impact children in order to influence their lives. The Exosystem is made of contexts that indirectly affect the child's life.

School board decisions will affect school which will then affect the child. Things that affect parents have an impact on children. Stress for parents means stress for children. If parents have to work longer hours or study for classes when they are home, they may be distracted or less available to engage in conversations or read books with their children. Finances also affect children indirectly. Do parents have money available to take children to interesting places to learn new words and ideas, like a museum or a zoo? Is the child's neighborhood safe for playing outdoors? What economic opportunities are there for parents? Are new laws or public policies being passed that apply to the child's family?

While these influences can be considered indirect, they matter a great deal in the span of a child's life.

Caregivers with positive experiences and resources in the outside world are more relaxed and available to provide children with engaging language interactions.

Macrosystem



The Macrosystem is the outermost circle. It includes factors such as the culture and values of the child's ethnic group or country, environmental situations such as war, weather/climate, and urban vs. rural settings. Economic patterns may affect parent's jobs which may affect the child through home life.

These outer contexts may either limit or enhance the child's access to experiences, activities, and materials and thereby impact the words and ideas that children learn.

Values and expectations about children also affect language development. For example, some families or cultures may believe that "children should be seen and not heard." This belief does not

encourage children to express themselves, ask questions, and share their thoughts and ideas with others.

Other families or cultures may have a strong oral tradition where verbal sharing and storytelling are modeled and encouraged. Thinking about the "big picture" helps us understand the many factors that contribute to each child's language-learning experience.

Chronosystem

The Chronosystem adds the dimension of time and the idea that events or experiences in a child's life may trigger changes in that child's relationships and development. The events that can cause changes to the child's relationships and development could be within the child's environment, such as the birth of a sibling, divorce, starting school, or winning the lottery. Experiences that happen within the child, like puberty or severe illness or injury, can also cause the child's development to be altered.

Let's look at the example of how the birth of a younger sibling might impact a child's environment, his relationships with his parents, and ultimately his development. Before his new baby brother was born, mom and dad spent lots of time with Abe. They both read him books at bed time and took him places like

the park and out to eat. Then mom got pregnant and didn't feeling well most days. She slept a lot and was a little cranky when she was with Abe. When the baby was born, Abe spent several days at his grandparents, the first time he ever spent the night away from home. He felt sad and a little mad that he couldn't be with his parents.

After his brother comes home from the hospital, everything seems to change for little Abe. He was no longer the center of attention. Everyone wanted to see and be with the baby. Abe noticed that they weren't going out to many places like before. He wanted his family back the way it was before his brother came home.

Over time, his parents get back into their routines taking them places and reading to both boys at night. Because his mom needed to tend to the baby, Abe spent a lot more time just with his dad and their bond grew even stronger than before.

Although the brothers fought sometimes, they played lots of fun games together and sometimes competed with each other in sports and at school. Even now, at age 25, Abe still remembers how jealous he was of his little brother at first, but is happy to have had his little brother as a playmate and friend growing up.

Do you think the birth of Abe's brother was an event that changed the way he grew up and his relationships with his parents? Do you think he would be the same person at 25 if he hadn't had this experience?

SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY

According to Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, language develops not just in individual verbal exchanges, but within a variety of social contexts.

On the surface, this may seem obvious, but it has deep implications for children and caregivers.

Meaning is "socially constructed." What this means is that words, phrases, and ideas mean different things to different people in different cultures.



Each culture and society has its own ideas, values, and beliefs, all of which are expressed through language. Different cultures have different rules about the roles we play and how we interact within our roles.

When we develop cultural perspective, we can better respond to children's unique backgrounds and needs.

Another important idea is that language and cognitive skills are not separate. Language is a vessel for thought, and language development helps children grow cognitive skills. Children go through predictable steps of speech development. Learning about the stages of speech development can help caregivers be more aware of what goes on in their children's developing brains.

Zone of Proximal Development

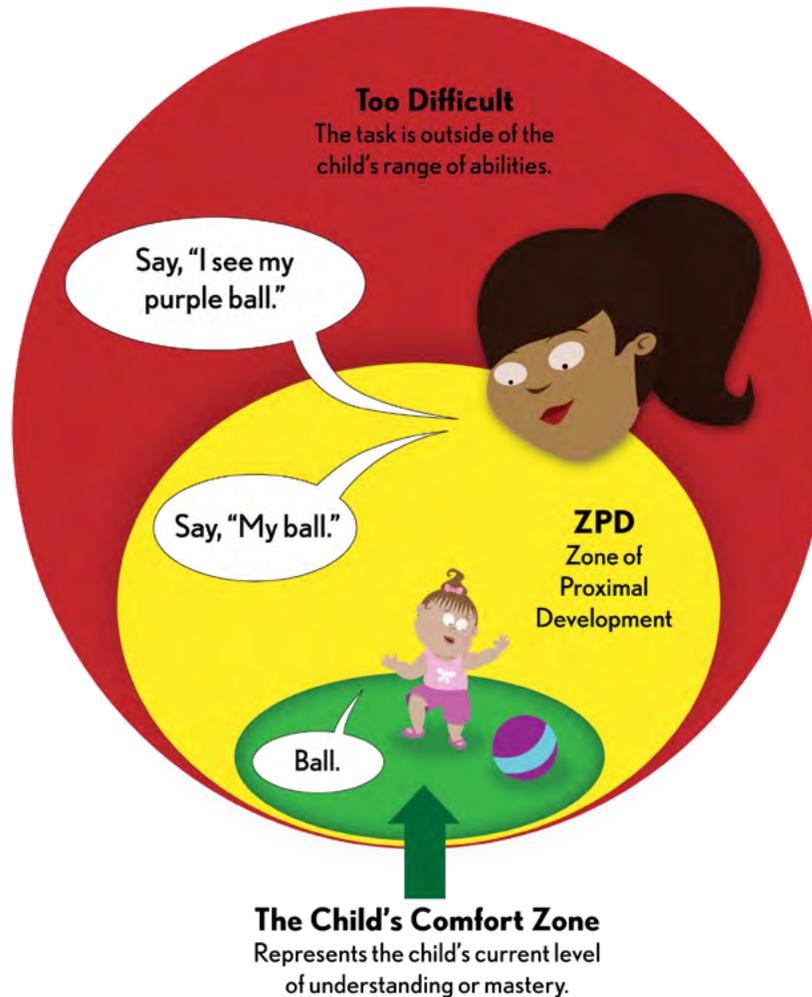
The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is an important concept for caregivers. The ZPD encompasses the knowledge or skills a child cannot yet perform on their own, but are capable of learning with guidance or help. This guidance and help can come from a caregiver or from a child's peers.

Caregivers can be sensitive to a child's ZPD by modeling the next level of complexity in speech.

A child says, "Ball!" The caregiver can scaffold the response by saying, "Yes! big ball!"

A child says, "Cookie!" The caregiver can say, "Do you want a cookie? Say, 'I want a cookie.'"

Responsive caregivers use the ZPD and scaffolding to extend children's language without saying something too advanced for the child to understand.



Forms of Language

Vygotsky differentiates three forms of language: social speech, private speech and inner speech. Social speech is external verbal communication. Children older than two years talk to their parents, teachers, and friends to communicate their thoughts, wants, and feelings.

Private speech is when children talk or narrate to themselves. If a child is solving a difficult puzzle, they may say the steps aloud to themselves in order to make sense of the challenge at hand. In a way, they are collaborating with themselves, just like a caregiver would collaborate with them, when working on something. Private speech peaks at three to four years and gradually becomes internalized into inner speech.

Inner speech is the silent version of private speech. We all know our own inner monologue. Children around the age of seven develop this type of thinking. Keep in mind children move through these stages gradually, and can move fluidly between them.

Part 3



THE WORKSHOP:

Instructional Strategies

10 Ask Questions

Asking questions is a way to elicit language and invite a child to provide more information about a topic or idea. Questions can be “closed-ended” or “open-ended.”

Closed-ended questions can typically be answered with one word or phrase, and there is a specific answer you are looking for. Examples:

- Teacher asks “Do you want more water?” (“yes” or “no” is expected).
- Teacher asks “What color is your shirt?” (correct color name is expected.)
- Teacher says “How many crackers do you have?” (correct number is expected.)

Open-ended questions, which sometimes start with why, how, or where, encourage the child to provide a longer answer and express their own ideas. Examples:

- Child is building with train tracks and putting toy train on the track. Teacher asks “Where is your train going?”
- Child is getting ready to draw with crayons. Teacher asks: “What kind of picture are you going to make?”
- Children are watching a spider crawl on the sidewalk. Teacher asks “What you do think that spider is doing?”
- Child is returning to school after the weekend. Teacher asks “How was your trip to Grandpa’s yesterday?.....What did you do there?”

Prompts such as “Tell me about...” or “I wonder...” are other effective ways to invite children to have a conversation with you. They are not questions, but they elicit language in much the same way as open ended questions. Examples:

- “Tell me about your painting.”
- “Tell me about your birthday party.”
- “I wonder what we’re going to have for lunch today.”
- Child is playing with toy farm animals. Teacher says: “I wonder what those cows are doing.”

Questions sound different from other kinds of sentences. As babies hear these variations in tone of voice, pitch, and emphasis, their brains are preparing to understand the social meaning of the words and phrases they hear.

Infants won’t be able to answer your questions with words yet, but asking them questions does two important things for their language development. First, it helps them learn about the voice tones and variations, or the “prosody” of the language they are hearing. For example, a question sounds different than a statement. As early as the first six months of life, infants begin to pay attention to these auditory

features of language, and their brains prepare to understand the social meaning of spoken words. Asking babies questions also introduces them to back and forth turn-taking in conversations, especially if you pause after a question and wait for a baby's response.



Tips

- Teachers sometimes use questions to quiz children and see if they know the right answer. But there are many other ways to use questions! Open-ended questions, for which there are no right answers, encourage children to think, make choices, and express their own ideas. Asking open-ended questions, and allowing children plenty of time to think and respond, helps children become scientific thinkers and problem-solvers.
- Asking *either/or* questions helps toddlers learn to make choices and express their ideas with words.
- One important purpose of asking questions is to help children more fully express what they are thinking or wanting. When you take the time to listen to children's requests, and encourage them to use more words to tell you what they want or think, you are reinforcing their communication skills. As children have repeated experiences of being listened to and understood, they develop confidence in using their words.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using the asking questions strategy in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
		<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Asking Questions

Think about a yes/no question you find yourself asking a lot, like "Are you sleepy?" Practice turning that question into an either/or question (e.g., "Are you a little sleepy or a lot sleepy?") or an open-ended question (e.g., "How sleepy are you?"). Can you think another example? Write the three different questions below.

11 Pace

Pacing refers to how fast or slow you talk or move when you are interacting with children. Pacing of conversations and activities can be too fast, too slow, or just right for the children you are with. Teachers need to be aware that their speaking rate, “wait time,” and attentiveness to the response from infants and toddlers are very important in supporting language development. When talking with infants and toddlers, teachers should pause in their conversation and allow time for a response, even if the child is too young to talk. A child may respond by vocalizing, showing a facial expression, responding with an action related to what you said, or just listening attentively. Allowing for brief “wait times” as you talk with children helps prepare them for turn taking in later conversations, allows them time to process what was said, and helps you see whether they are understanding your words.



Tips

Book reading is an important time to think about pacing. Young children may have their own ideas about which pages to look at and how fast or slow to look through the book. If you rush through from start to finish, you miss opportunities for children to enjoy and participate in the process. When teachers allow children to take their time and share some of the control, toddlers are encouraged to participate and learn.

- Slow down and invite children to say more about what they see on each page
- Wait to turn each page until children show they are ready
- Talk more about the book plot or the book’s characters
- Ask about the children’s personal experiences that relate to the book’s theme

Remember that pacing does not need to be the same for every activity. How quickly or slowly you read, talk, or move depends on the activity, the number of children in the group, and the children’s attention span and interest. Watch for children’s signals so you recognize whether to slow down, speed up, or give children more opportunities to participate.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using the pacing strategy in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Pacing

Think of two children in your classroom. How would you adjust your pacing based each child’s language skills?

12 Encourage Conversation

Conversation is a two-way interaction, even if it may not feel that way when talking with infants. Children need many opportunities to initiate and respond to conversational topics, taking turns as a speaker and a listener. When using rich language to label, describe, compare, and explain things to children, teachers can invite children to communicate back by pausing, making eye contact, and asking them questions.



Tips

Meal time is a great time to encourage conversation. Toddlers need practice to learn how to have back and forth conversations.

- Ask children a variety of questions
- Listen attentively and respond to their answers
- Offer more information that extends upon their answers
- Encourage children to continue making observations

All of these behaviors extend the conversation and encouraged more language from the children.

Other behaviors that support conversations:

- Positioning – Stay down at the children’s level and close to them.
- Tone of voice – Sound interested and animated when having a conversation.
- Eye contact – Focus on children and objects they are talking about.
- Gestures – Use gestures like pointing to objects and nodding your head to help children understand the language you are using.

Remember that young children love to talk about themselves and their experiences. When teachers listen and respond in ways that encourage more language, children’s conversational skills get stronger.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using the encouraging conversation strategy in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable		Somewhat comfortable		Very comfortable	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	6

Stop and Reflect: Encouraging Conversation

Remember you can encourage conversation even with children who don't yet have language by making eye contact, asking a question, and pausing to model response time. What are some fun things you could talk about with the babies in your care?

13 Scaffold

Scaffolding means “giving an extra boost” to a child to help them up to the next level of language or skill. Scaffolding is often needed when a child cannot respond to a question you ask, or a direction you give. There are several ways to scaffold to make a task easier for the child. For example, when you ask a question, sometimes children cannot remember or say the answer by themselves, but they may recognize or remember it with some clues. You can:

- a) *Simplify the Question* by changing it from open-ended (e.g., “What is that?”) to either-or (e.g., “Is it a cow or a pig?”).
- b) *Start the Word or Phrase* and let the child finish it (e.g., “It’s a sssss ____” [snake]; “No more monkeys jumping on the ____?” [bed]).
- c) *Prompt for Imitation*. If the child still doesn’t know the word, you can say the answer and then ask the child to imitate (e.g., “It’s a cow. Say ‘cow’”).

These scaffolding strategies are important and effective because they help the child learn from the interaction and experience success, rather than giving up as the teacher moves on to another child who knows the answer.



Tips

- Older babies are just learning to understand simple questions, like “Do you want more?” They may respond with gestures, vocalizations, or actions. If you pay attention to their signals, offer simple choices, and follow up if they don’t respond, babies will get better and better at communicating.
- Prompting for imitation encourages children to practice saying words they may not be able to remember on their own. When trying to imitate, children may not always be able to say the word or phrase perfectly, but remember, they are doing the best they can—so make sure to praise and

encourage their efforts. This strategy works especially well when children are motivated to request something they want.

- Sometimes children have difficulty remembering the right word when answering questions. Giving them clues or hints like the first sound of a word can help them remember.
- *Simplifying the question* is a scaffolding strategy that can be used when a child cannot answer a more open-ended question correctly. For example, if you ask a child “What is this?” and the child does not respond, you can simplify the question by turning it into an either/or question, such as “Is it a fork or a spoon?” Sometimes hearing the vocabulary words will remind the child of the correct answer. Remember to give children time to think of a response, and watch for their signals before you change the question. For example, if a child is starting to say something or gesture, wait and see what he is going to say or do. Signals from the child that tell you it’s time to simplify the question may include a long pause without any response, looking down, or giving a response that is unclear.
- As you get to know the children in your class, try to individualize your questions to the level appropriate for that child’s language skills. This means simplifying for children who have very limited language, and asking more challenging questions to children who have more language.

Rate Yourself!

How comfortable do you feel with using scaffolding strategies in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Stop and Reflect: Scaffolding

Scaffolding takes time and patience, but it is a powerful skill-building strategy. Think about a child in your classroom who is behind the others in language. How would you approach scaffolding that child in your next interaction?

14 Invite Verbal and Nonverbal Participation in Groups

Infants and toddlers communicate both verbally (crying, vocalizing, and saying words) and nonverbally (using facial expressions, gestures, and actions). Both types of communication are equally important. When planning group activities, it is important to provide opportunities that are well matched to children's comprehension level and that invite children to participate in both verbal and nonverbal ways.



Tips

- During circle time and other whole group activities, you can support children's language skills by inviting them to respond to questions and share what they already know. Remember that whole group time should include a balance of activities where children have times to listen and times to talk.
- Good morning songs are a nice way to welcome children to school, recognize each child as an individual, and encourage verbal responses.
- When you gather toddlers together in a group, it is important to hold their attention and interest by giving them ways to participate actively. Do not expect young children to sit still and be quiet for long periods of time. Playing games or singing songs that ask children to do things with their bodies also helps children learn to understand and follow directions. These kinds of opportunities for nonverbal participation are especially important when children are not yet saying many words. When you give simple directions in a warm, enthusiastic voice, and praise children's efforts, they are more likely to stay interested and learn what you are trying to teach.

Rate Yourself!

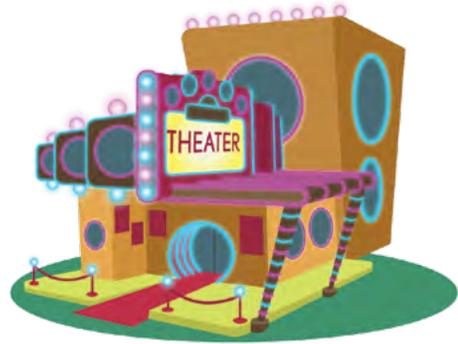
How comfortable do you feel with using participation strategies in your classroom?

Not at all comfortable		Somewhat comfortable		Very comfortable	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	6

Stop and Reflect: Participation

Do the activities you commonly do in your classroom invite participation in *both* verbal and nonverbal ways? List some examples.

THE THEATER: Hear from the Experts



LEARNING MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

WATCH
FILM

The Value of Bilingualism

Many adults wonder if bilingualism is a source of confusion for children—there is not evidence to support this. There are many examples around the world of children learning to be bilingual successfully. In fact, in some ways children are biologically primed to be bilingual: they are born to discriminate the sounds (phonemes) across all natural languages. This ability changes over time, based on the language input they receive. Therefore the language experiences we give them during infancy and toddlerhood can take advantage of this natural ability in early childhood.

WATCH
FILM

Language Delay Intervention

It is difficult to determine if dual language learners are demonstrating low language because of a language delay or simply because they are learning a new language. Experts recommend that you intervene as soon as you notice a problem: don't wait for an official diagnosis. Provide that child with more instructional attention and use how that child responds to the instruction to guide what you do next.

WATCH
FILM

English Speakers Exposed to Other Languages

For children who speak English in the home but are in classrooms where another language is spoken, small delays in language acquisition can be expected. However, these delays will be made up for over time, and these children will have the added benefit of another language with which to communicate. Bilingualism has many advantages, including the ability to communicate with a greater number of people, learn more about another culture, and access more opportunities in the workforce as an adult.

WATCH
FILM

The Link Between Culture and Language

There is a very strong link between language and culture. You do not acquire one without the other; they are strongly intermingled. The classroom environment for English language learners should communicate a sense of acceptance and a valuing of their language and culture. If you limit children's language, you limit their expression of their culture and who they are.



The Parents' Role in Helping Children Learn a Second Language

The best thing for parents to do is to speak to children in the language they feel most comfortable in, so that their children are receiving the richest use of language for extended periods of time. Forcing English can lead to a silencing in the home, limiting language input to the child. Language is the window into all learning; if you interrupt language, you interrupt learning entirely.

Parents supporting bilingual children should seek out authentic environments in which the new language is being used. Research tells us that the number of native speakers the child is exposed to predicts how well they will learn that language. Additionally, parents can support bilingualism by arranging opportunities for children to play with peers who are native speakers.

SUPPORTING DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS



Teaching Strategies for English Language Learners in the Classroom

Dr. Carlo of the Children's Learning Institute recommends three key strategies for supporting English language learners:

1. Effective group management: language is made more understandable if routines are predictable.
2. Efficient exposure: provide opportunities to hear rich language with a layered approach that builds meaning using visual aids and motions. Think: how else can I make this word more clear and more memorable for the child?
3. Planning ahead for the language demand in any activity: think about ways the activity can be differentiated so that everyone can participate, regardless of language fluency. Provide ways of interacting in the activity that are predictable. Help move children from initial passive participation to active participation that uses language.



Optimal Language of Instruction for English Language Learners

There are multiple instructional styles that can be successful when supporting English Language learners—it largely depends on the program's goal. If the goal is to build bilingual proficiency, instruction should be planned in both languages. Immersion programs can be successful for children learning English, but we know from research that children who are submerged in a new language and left to fend for themselves do not grow linguistically or academically. There needs to be a program in place to address their second language needs. Being deliberate about teaching English as a second language includes targeting basic and academic vocabulary. Use child friendly definitions and lots of exposure to words; more repetition of words is necessary than for native English speakers.

THE EFFECTS OF POVERTY



The Effects of Poverty

Poverty is strongly associated with language development. The language gap between children from poor families and wealthier families is apparent at the beginning of kindergarten. Poverty risk factors include higher risk of exposure to toxins, less access to healthcare and nutrition, and less exposure to experiences that facilitate rich language. Poverty takes a toll on parenting, as poor parents are more likely to be stressed or suffer depression. Poverty is also associated with families who are English language learners.

WATCH
FILM

Nature vs. Nurture

Children in poverty have less language exposure at home and are more likely to have less quality child care during the day. Quantity and quality of talk are the most important for language development.

ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES

WATCH
FILM

Oral Language Predicts Later Reading Success

Children's oral language skills, particularly vocabulary, are the strongest predictor of reading comprehension skills in fourth grade. If you are a strong reader in fourth grade, you have a strong chance of succeeding academically later in school. The foundation for these skills is laid in early childhood.

WATCH
FILM

Differences Between Boys and Girls

Boys typically start using their first words later than girls. Girls tend to have more expressive vocabulary and speak more clearly at first. This does not mean boys are delayed. The area of the brain that stores memory and processes language is larger in girls and develops faster, whereas the area of the brain that processes spatial reasoning develops more quickly in boys. Of course all children develop differently, and any serious language delays should be evaluated by a speech professional.

WATCH
FILM

Toddlers Speaking in Full Sentences

Toddlers should be able to speak in phrases around age two. Full sentences should come around age three. A good rule of thumb is that, on average, the number of words in a sentence children are able to say will be close to the number of their age (age three, about three words per sentence).



THE LIBRARY

Academic & Social Outcomes



How do we know early experiences matter so much? In this part of the course, we take a look at how we can trace the “inputs” of the early years—or the caregiving style, language interactions, and the home and school environments—to the student outcomes that we strive for—academic success, high school graduation, and adult well-being.

This section takes you through two common trajectories: The “on track” student, who receives the positive inputs that research has shown lead to optimal language development, and the “at risk” student, who receives the negative inputs that most often lead to language delays.

Because this is a course on language development, this section focuses is on how early language skills affect academic and career success. We want to emphasize that there are many other aspects of a child’s development, well-being, and environment that can foster or hinder academic growth (for example, emotional and physical health; a safe community). However, language is a powerful predictor of later skills, and it is an area in which you, as a caregiver, can have tremendous impact.

We know that, among other important inputs, early language experiences set the stage for later literacy and academic success. As caregivers of children in their most vulnerable years, you have tremendous ability to help set the children in your care on a path to strong, healthy development of language and literacy skills. We hope this course supports you in your work, and we thank you for all you do.

The following page summarizes the inputs and milestones for at-risk and on-track students.

Tracking Child Outcomes

	BIRTH TO KINDERGARTEN	ELEMENTARY	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL & ADULTHOOD
ON TRACK BEHAVIORS	<p>Vocabulary development by age 3 has been found to predict reading achievement by third grade.</p> <p>Infancy: uses gestures and responds to caregivers' tone, begins cooing and babbling</p> <p>Toddlerhood: moves from babbling to saying words and simple sentences; understands many words</p> <p>End of pre-K: recognizes letters and book reading concepts, speaks in more complex sentences, knows about 4,000 words</p>	<p>Achieving literacy by the third grade is correlated with reading and English language arts proficiency in middle school.</p> <p>learning to read at grade level in early elementary, shows interest in reading</p> <p>using strong reading skills to gain critical thinking skills and learn new academic concepts in later elementary</p>	<p>Students with strong English and math skills at middle school graduation are more likely to pass assessments in high school and go to college.</p> <p>meeting benchmarks for state assessments;</p> <p>possibly enrolling in honors and accelerated courses</p>	<p>Students who graduate high school have an annual income twice that of dropouts</p> <p>attending school regularly;</p> <p>engaging in school-related activities;</p> <p>beginning college preparatory activity</p> <p>high school and college degrees provide support upon entering the workforce</p>
AT RISK BEHAVIORS	<p>isn't very vocal;</p> <p>has trouble following commands;</p> <p>struggles to identify letters,</p> <p>has difficulty communicating which can lead to stress and behavior issues</p> <p>At-risk children are typically 12-14 months below national norms in language and pre-reading skills upon entering kindergarten.</p>	<p>has poor vocabulary and struggling to read at grade level;</p> <p>becomes disinterested in reading</p> <p>continues to struggle with reading comprehension; poor reading skill causes student to fall behind in other subjects</p> <p>By third grade, students with the lowest vocabulary are at risk for continued academic decline. 3/4 of poor readers in 3rd grade remain poor readers in high school.</p>	<p>strong deterioration in academic performance and attendance;</p> <p>exhibiting behaviors that demonstrate a disengagement with school</p> <p>Academic achievement by the end of middle school has a strong impact on college trajectory, even more so than high school.</p>	<p>dropouts typically have fewer skills to gain access to workforce;</p> <p>research shows high school dropouts are more likely to become unemployed, engage in criminal activity, and be imprisoned</p> <p>Drop out or graduate? Research has found that struggling academically is the most significant factor in dropout decisions</p>

POTENTIAL INPUTS FROM BIRTH TO 3 YEARS

POSITIVE

- prenatal nutrition / healthy birthweight
- responsive caregiving
- low stress
- rich language environment at home, including shared book reading
- quality preschool program with rich language activities
- hears lots of rare words
- encouraged to engage in conversation

NEGATIVE

- low birthweight
- exposure to toxins
- very little language input
- unresponsive caregiving
- significant amounts of TV and media
- neglect and high stress
- poor quality or no preschool program

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CHILD SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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