



BabyTalks: Babbling Babies – Early Language Development

Below are recommended stopping points and suggested questions to use in your group's discussion. Please feel free to follow your group's lead and discuss topics and questions that are of greatest value to the group! If you're working with a larger group, you may find it useful to discuss these questions in smaller groups and then reunite to summarize.

Learning objectives

At the end of this presentation, you should be able to:

1. Describe why back and forth social interactions support language growth.
2. Identify the ingredients of everyday interactions that help language development and later literacy.
3. Understand some key stages in language development and how to support them.
4. Incorporate at least one new social interaction into daily language activities with children.

Presentation Overview

Language and the Brain: How the brain begins to learn language through experience

The Language Development Journey (Slide 4)

Language Learning Begins Early (Slides 5-6)

Experience Shapes Language (Slides 7-9)

Language Regions in the Brain Activate Early (Slide 10)

From Research to Practice (Slide 11)

☪ Recommended stopping point: After Slide 11

- The experiences that we have with language as young children shape how our brain responds to language sounds for the rest of our lives. Were you surprised that some of the sounds in the 'same or different' activity were actually different? What did you take away from this activity?
- Language learning begins early – developing babies begin to learn the sounds of language while they are still in the womb. And language regions in the brain begin to form connections and coordinate activity long before children speak their first word. What are some ways to support language development during a child's first year of life?

From Research to Practice (Slide 11): Children's brains are primed to learn language, and they often appear to be natural language learners. We can help children by making sure that they have plenty of rich language experience to help support their learning.

- One excellent way to support language development is by reading. Even very young babies benefit from being read to. As a group, brainstorm as many benefits as you can

think of that a baby might gain from being read to. How might these very early experiences set the foundation for later literacy?

Early Interactions: How social interactions during everyday activities support children's language development

Children Learn from Others (Slides 12-14)

Early Interactions Interactions Drive language Growth (Slides 15-19)

Factors that Affect Language Growth (Slides 20-22)

From Research to Practice (Slide 23)

◉ **Recommended stopping point: After Slide 23**

- Young children learn language best through back and forth, social interactions. Why do you think children learn so much and so quickly during live interactions with people? Other than the sounds of our voice, what other cues might young children be learning from?
- Using “parentese,” imitation, gestures and eye gaze, especially during times of joint or shared attention can help boost children’s language learning. Can you think of examples of when you have used these elements in your interactions with children? Or can you think of times during the day where you could incorporate these elements in to your conversations with children?
- Children from low SES families often have fewer opportunities to build their language skills. How would you support a parent from a low SES family who is concerned about their child’s language development?

From Research to Practice (Slide 23): Language learning can happen anywhere and at anytime. When are some times during the day that you don’t typically think of as ‘instructional time’ that could be transformed in to rich language learning moments? How would you turn these routine, or everyday moments into a language learning opportunity?

Steps Along the Way: How to identify and support language development during several key stages

Steps in the Language Development Journey (Slide 24)

Supporting Language: Learning Sounds (Slides 25-26)

Supporting Language: Early Conversationalists (Slides 27- 28)

Supporting Language: Learning Grammar (Slide 29)

Supporting Language: Bilingualism (Slides 30-31)

From Research to Practice (Slide 32)

◉ **Recommended stopping point: After Slide 32**

- Whether it is responding to a baby’s coos and babbles, the question of a toddler, or the story a 4-year-old tells you, these interactions help support children in their language learning. Have you had an experience where a child looked to you for more information? What was happening? How did you respond?
- Children who are learning more than one language meet all the same language development milestones as children who are learning only one language. Being bilingual also comes with cognitive advantages, like improved flexible thinking and problem



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solving skills. Share a bit about your work with bilingual children? What programs, policies or curriculums do you use to help support dual language learners?

From Research to Practice: Whether children are learning one language or more than one language, there are many ways to help foster language development in young children. After this session, what if any, new interaction elements or activities will you incorporate into your work with children to help support them in their language-learning journey?