



“Talk to Me” Strategies

Module: III
Topic: Culture, Language, and Cognition
Type: Brainstorm and Role Play
Group Size: Small Groups
Time: 30 minutes or more

Purpose:

Through role play and discussion, to help participants identify and implement strategies that support the language development of mobile infants.

What you will need:

Participant Materials	Trainer Materials	Equipment
<p>The following handouts: :: “Supporting Language Development of Mobile Infants: Specific Things Caregivers Can Do”</p>	<p>:: Handout: “Supporting Language Development of Mobile Infants: Specific Things Caregivers Can Do” :: 6 index cards, each with a different strategy from the handout (Multiple sets can be made for large groups.)</p>	

Directions:

Before the training event:

1. Using a copy of the PITC handout, “Supporting Language Development of Mobile Infants: Specific Things Caregivers Can Do,” cut apart the six strategies.
2. Glue each strategy on a separate 5x7” index card creating a set of 6 cards.
3. Make multiple sets if working with a large number of participants.

At the training event:

1. Divide participants into small groups.
2. Give each group one strategy. (If working with a small number of participants, groups can be given more than one strategy.)
3. Ask each group to brainstorm multiple examples of using the strategy on the card. If participants are from varying cultures and use different approaches, encourage them to include this in their discussion.
4. Have each group select one or more examples of the strategy to demonstrate or role play for the whole group. (If groups have more than one strategy card, they will brainstorm and role play for each strategy.)
5. After each role play, invite the whole group to discuss and share additional ideas for implementing the strategy. Discuss cultural differences, as applicable.

Variations:

Links to Head Start Program Performance Standards:

:: 1304.21(a)(3)(i)(E) *“supporting and respecting the home language”*

:: 1304.21(a)(4)(iii) *“Promoting interaction and language use”*

Activity Developed by:

Cheri Longaker, PITC Certified Trainer

Source Material:

WestEd. (1995). *The Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers' Trainer's manual, Module III: Learning and Development*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

SUPPORTING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF MOBILE INFANTS SPECIFIC THINGS CAREGIVERS CAN DO

Caregivers can support language in this stage by treating all gestures and vocalizations as beginning conversations and responding to the infant's communication with respectful conversational turn taking. One way this is done is by accepting and delighting in the infant's invented words, typical at this age and an important signal that the infant is developing as a communicator.

Here are specific things caregivers can do:

1. Respond to gestures and sounds.

When children engage you with communicative gestures (such as holding out an empty bottle to indicate "I want more!") and sounds (such as "rumm, rumm" if they want the toy car, don't attempt to correct or ignore them just because the child isn't using words. Keep the conversation going by saying, "Would you like more juice?" or "Sorry, I don't have your car."

2. Give names to objects and actions.

If a child is intently looking at something such as a wooden spoon, label the object by saying, "That's a wooden spoon. I use it to cook." Point out the names of object ("diaper," "bowl," or "water") as the two of you are using them. Identify actions as they happen, such as "Your brother is running" or "Susie is laughing."

3. Make language a part of playtime.

Even a simple game such as peek-a-boo demonstrates the link between language and social interaction. Singing songs together ("Row, Row, Row Your Boat" is a perfect example) provides you with a wonderful opportunity to share language. Read plenty of picture books together, and keep the child in the dialogue; let the child interrupt to point to objects and say their names or make other sounds. Don't insist that a story be listened to quietly.

4. Ask the child questions.

Even if you know that the child can't answer such questions as "What's your name?", "Have you seen your brother?", and "Are you hungry?", ask them anyway. Questions can stimulate both words and gestures.

5. Talk about what you are doing ("self talk").

When you are doing something such as changing a child's diaper, describe your own actions in simple terms. This is called, "Self talk." "I'm picking you up now and putting you down on the diaper table. I'm going to take off your diaper." When you do this slowly and with sensitivity to the child's cues, allowing time for the child's response, you won't "over-talk" or overwhelm the child.

6. Talk about what the child is doing ("parallel talk").

Using simple words, describe the child's action. "You're putting that block in your mouth. Now you're putting it on the floor." Do this when the child is showing interest in interacting with you by looking at you, gesturing, or making sounds which attempt to communicate. When the child is engrossed in play, it's preferable not to interrupt the child's concentration.