

“Talk is cheap” is an old saying, but in child development, it has enormous payoffs... School success correlates far more positively with early language experiences than with socioeconomic status.

—Alice Sterling Honig, 1996

Introduction

- This film seeks to underscore the important responsibility adults have to nourish the language needs of young children.
- **Language**—a communication system that empowers humans to talk with, for, and to others about any topic or experience.
- According to the cognitive developmental theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, development of language and thought become more and more closely connected throughout early childhood.

Aspects of Language: The Vocabulary of Language Study

- **Phonology**—the study of the sounds of a language
 - Phonemes: sounds humans produce
 - Until about six months of age, babies spontaneously produce all the sounds possible. After that, they produce only the sounds of the language to which they are exposed. This film discusses multi-language issues.
 - Most children have correct articulation by age five, though some sounds in English are difficult for young children ("r," "th").
- **Morphology**—the study of the letters groups that together have a meaning.
 - Unbound Morphemes: usually called "words" (red, sing, amigo).
 - Bound Morphemes: letter groups (prefixes and suffixes) like "-ing" or "un-" that change a word's meaning, but cannot stand alone (singing, unhappy).
- **Syntax**—the study of grammar; rules and norms for putting words together correctly.
 - Syntax varies from language to language (e.g., double negatives).
 - Grammar is constructed as children use the language. Early errors are expected, or even useful.
- **Semantics**—the study of how to convey meaning. Children can be difficult to understand, but caregivers must persist and encourage self-expression.
- **Pragmatics**—the study of how language varies from one social situation to another (toilet humor, terms of etiquette).

Language Acquisition: The Normal Progression

- **Productive Language**
 - 3 months Produce cooing sounds.
 - 3–4 months Develop consonant sounds.
 - 6–8 months Develop doubled consonants.
 - 12–18 months Produce first "words."
 - Holophrasic language: child talks in one-word utterances, usually the name of a person or action.
 - 18–24 months Rapid increase in language acquisition.
 - Telegraphic language: two- or three-word phrases used by toddlers.

- 36-48 months Refinements of grammar, vocabulary, and meaning.
- ***Receptive Language***
 - Receptive language ability is always much more advanced than productive language.
 - Children always understand more of what is being said to them than what they can produce on their own.
- ***Strategies***—Nourishing Language Development
 - Language has to be interactive: practice and encourage **turn-taking talk**.
 - ***Motherese***: adults talk in a higher pitch and more slowly with babies.
 - ***Self-talk***: tell the child what you are doing.
 - ***Parallel talk***: tell the child what he or she is experiencing.
 - Build on young children's utterances by expanding and responding to them.
 - Use songs and cadence to help children develop language.
 - Hook children on books from a very early age to increase vocabulary acquisition.

Related Films Also Available From Davidson Films

This is one of seven films in Davidson Films' "Early Childhood" series. The other titles are:

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| • <i>Building Literacy Competencies in Early Childhood</i> | (2000) | 30 Minutes |
| • <i>Growing Minds: Cognitive Development in Early Childhood</i> | (1996) | 25 Minutes |
| • <i>How Children Learn</i> | (1997) | 23 Minutes |
| • <i>Play: A Vygotskian Approach</i> | (1996) | 26 Minutes |
| • <i>Maria Montessori: Her Life And Legacy</i> | (2004) | 35 Minutes |
| • <i>Performance Assessment: A Teacher's Way Of Knowing</i> | (1993) | 21 Minutes |

Other related films are:

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| • <i>Human Brain Development: Nature and Nurture</i> | (2007) | 27 Minutes |
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