



Baby Steps Into A First Language

1

Narrate actions and name objects

WITH NEWBORNS AND BABIES, NARRATING EVERY ACTION IS THE EASIEST WAY TO INTRODUCE LANGUAGE IN A NON-ARTIFICIAL WAY.

FOCUS ON PRONOUNCING EVERY NOUN CLEARLY AND IN ISOLATION, RATHER THAN IN A LONG SENTENCE. IF THE INPUT IS CLEAR, IT OFTEN ONLY TAKES ONE OR TWO REPETITIONS FOR THEM TO MEMORIZE IT.

2

The tone of voice

IT CAN BE TRICKY AT FIRST, BUT SPEAKING WITH A LOW AND CALM TONE OF VOICE ENHANCES THE CHILD'S FOCUS AND CREATES THE IDEAL COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR ACQUISITION. IT'S ALSO CALMING FOR BOTH PARENT/CAREGIVER AND CHILD. IT'S PROBABLY A GOOD IDEA TO LIMIT THE USE OF BABY-VOICES AND FALSETTO: EVERYTHING IS INPUT AND EVERY PIECE OF INPUT MATTERS.

3

When they can't get it right

THE PERIOD IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE LINGUISTIC EXPLOSION, AROUND 24 MONTHS, IS A PERIOD OF GREAT FRUSTRATION FOR THE CHILD BECAUSE HIS THOUGHT IS NOW PRECISE, THE LINGUISTIC PRODUCTION...UM, NOT SO MUCH.

IF YOU UNDERSTOOD THE WORD OR SENTENCE THEY ARE TRYING TO SAY, TRY REPEATING IT SLOWLY AND LET THEM READ YOUR LIPS.

4

A simple sentence structure

IF THE INPUT IS TOO LONG OR TOO COMPLEX, IT CAN RESULT CONFUSING AND THAT'S OFTEN THE REASON WHY CHILDREN STOP PAYING ATTENTION AND WILL NOT DO WHAT THEY'RE ASKED TO. ESPECIALLY WITH DIRECTIVES, BUT WITH EVERYTHING, FAVOR SHORT CLEAR SENTENCES.

5

Avoid Corrections

CHOOSE TO REPEAT THE PROPER WORD OR SENTENCE INSTEAD OF CORRECTING THE CHILD. CORRECTIONS ARE QUITE USELESS IN THIS CONTEXT: IN FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, NOTHING REALLY HAPPENS VIA NEGATION, IT'S ONLY THE CORRECT INPUT THAT WILL EVENTUALLY YIELD A CORRECT OUTPUT. IN THIS SPIRIT, REPEATING A WRONG EXPRESSION WILL SLOW THE PROCESS DOWN. (WE KNOW IT'S IRRESISTIBLE SOMETIMES: MISPRONOUNCED WORDS CAN BE SO CUTE!)