

Two-Way Communication: Learning the Infant's Language as the Infant Learns Ours

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WestEd

How Language Develops in the Brain

Video of Patricia Kuhl

Purpose of Language

From the infant's perspective, the purpose of language is to communicate—to express interests and needs and to make and share meaning with us.

Early Language Development: Key Considerations

- **Infants and toddlers as active learners of language.** We are not teaching them language.
- **Infants and toddlers thrive when provide with rich experiences with language.** Children need us to bathe them in language.
- **individual and social-cultural differences.** Language development varies from individual to individual and from social-cultural context to social-cultural context.
- **Communication with language is a natural part of relationships with infants and toddlers.** Children learn language in the context of human relationships. Experience with language typically occurs during everyday routines/activities.

The Impact of Daily Interactions

Early development is directly influenced by the social emotional tenor of babies interactions with their caregivers. The emotional quality of what happens to babies during day-to-day care is of prime importance to future functioning.

Reflection

Think about your earliest experience that you can remember with language.

Show Video

Early Messages: Facilitating
Language Development and
Communication

Introduction and First Five Strategies

Activity

Small groups of four to five people will talk about ways to use one of the five strategies shown in "Early Messages" in their care of infants and toddlers.

Strategies from Video “Early Messages”

- Be responsive when children initiate communication
- Engage in nonverbal communication
- Use child-directed language
- Use self talk and parallel talk
- Help children expand language

Closing Thought

Caregivers who engage in responsive, rich exchanges with infants make communication and language magical.