

General Suggestions for Improving Use of Language in the School-Age Child

A child develops language best when he successfully understands others or expresses himself. The importance of as natural a setting as possible for language learning activities can not be over-emphasized. Plans should be made to allow the student to hear and use language to the greatest possible extent at home, in play, or in other social and educational situations.

At School and Play

Language treatment will help. As the student learns more, he will use more. What he needs is the opportunity to put these newly learned language skills into his everyday communicative life.

Helping:

DO:

1. Describe experiences that you have had; movies, TV programs, books you have seen or read; and stories and experience others have shared with you.
2. Enter into conversations at any opportunity. Share as much of yourself as possible -- your opinions, hopes, wishes, fears, dreams, etc. Share experiences you had as a child.
3. Try to interpret what the child says to you, although it may be grammatically incorrect or confused. Help them along with guiding questions (e.g., "Who was there on Saturday?", "What stuff did you have in your hands?") and paraphrases of what you thought the child meant (e.g., "Do you mean that your teacher was being unfair?", "Oh, so you just felt that you would be a good arbitrator -- that you could help explain how each person felt.")

DO NOT:

1. Correct errors by directly telling the child "No, that's wrong" and telling him what he did wrong. Be gentle in your corrections. (See also Natural Language Intervention Techniques)
2. Discuss the speech problem of the child in the presence of others.

3. Show frustration or anger at his incorrect speech attempts or make him feel that because he does not speak well he is less acceptable to you.
4. Place the child in a communication situation which is beyond his capabilities and may punish his speaking attempts. You may even "coach" the child for difficult situations you know are coming up.

Source: **GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE** by Dr. Genese Warr-Leeper, Western University, Ontario