

Strategies to Help Your Child Talk: Using Expansions and Extensions

november 9, 2011 by [katie](#) [5 comments](#)

As I explained in my [last post](#), children learn language by hearing it over and over. I explained in that post all about using the strategies of *Self Talk*, *Parallel Talk* and *Descriptions* to help teach your infant, toddler, or young child language. Those strategies can be used with children who have *no spoken words* or *have many spoken words*. Here I am going to explain a few other strategies you can use to help teach and expand your child's receptive and expressive language skills in children who have *at least some spoken words*.



Use expansions as your child tells you about her toys

Expansions: Expansions are when you take the words your child says about what they see and do and repeat them while adding in missing words/grammar. Another way to look at it, is repeating back the “child-like” sentences back to your child using more “adult” language. By doing this, you are *repeating* and *expanding* your child's language without directly “correcting” him/her. For example, if your child sees a red block and says “red” you could say “Yes, it's a red *block*.” If your child says “Car go!” you would say something like “Yes! The car *is going*.” It can be helpful to emphasize the “new” language you are providing by saying those words with a higher inflection/tone in your voice and sometimes you can even repeat those new words a second time.

The simple act of repeating your child's utterances not only confirms to your child that you indeed heard him/her, but also this back-and-forth of repeating lets your child know that what he/she said was “worth repeating” and therefore can encourage your child to

say it yet again (either immediately or later). This provides your child with continuing modeling and practice of language concepts.



Use extensions to provide more information

Extensions/Expansions Plus: These are similar to expansions, but one more step up. In extensions, or otherwise known as expansions plus, you not only are *repeating* and *expanding* your child's language, but you will also be *adding* or extensions new information. For example, if your child says "Car go!" you could say "Yes the car is *going*. The car is going *fast*." If your child says "Red block." you could say "Yes, you have a red block. The red block is shaped like a triangle!" Another example, if your child were to say "yellow doggy" you could say "Yes you see a yellow doggie! The yellow doggie is *big* and *fluffy*."

Repetition: This is for children who are speaking at least in single words, to help provide correct models for articulation. You simply repeat back the word he/she said incorrectly, the correct way. For example if your child says "wabbit" for "rabbit" you would repeat back that word to him, while emphasizing the /r/ sound in the word.

Just like self talk and parallel talk, the use of these strategies may come more naturally for some people than for others. *And that's ok!*

How often should I use these strategies? Again, like I explained in my last post, you don't want to use these strategies with EVERY word your child utters. You need to find a nice balance. I personally find myself using these strategies quite often with my own daughter in a very natural way. If you find that using these strategies is breaking the natural give and take of the conversation, you are probably using them too much.