

## 2021 Spring Lecture Series

### Talk Summary For: Talking to Babies: The Universal Ingredient for Language Learning

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#### Learning to Talk: from Babbles to Words

- Language learning starts in the earliest months of life, well before the first word
- Somewhere around 18 months infants experience the “language explosion” and start to learn words much more rapidly
- Supporting early language development is important because early language is a harbinger of academic outcomes and long-term development

#### Inside the Black Box of Learning to Talk

- Early brain development is both rapid and dynamic
- By 24 months of age the infant brain is 83% the size of an adult brain
- Long before infants talk, their brain is functionally responsive to language the child hears

#### The Universal Ingredient to Language Learning: Caregiver Speech

- 30 years of scientific evidence indicates that quantity and quality of caregiver speech is positively associated with child language skills
- Caregivers can include parents, grandparents, day care staff, nannies, etc.
- Infants and toddlers who hear more speech from caregivers have better language skills
- On average, children from lower socioeconomic status homes tend to hear less caregiver speech when compared to children from higher socioeconomic status homes
- In our own research, we showed that caregiver speech was significantly associated with language skills in infants who went on to have autism

#### Recommendations for Parents

- Families are encouraged to follow the 5 steps to serve and return (see link below for more information)
- Step 1: Notice the serve
- Step 2: Return the serve by supporting and encouraging
- Step 3: Give it a name
- Step 4: Take turns...and wait. Keep the interaction going back and forth.
- Step 5: Practice endings and beginnings
- <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/5-steps-for-brain-building-serve-and-return/>

#### Links Mentioned During the Talk

- <https://labs.utdallas.edu/babybrainlab/information-for-families/>
  - We are currently recruiting infants 0-6 months of age from the DFW area for a research study on early language development
- <https://www.ibis-network.org>
  - If you have a child with autism and are having another baby you may be eligible to participate in a new study

- <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/5-steps-for-brain-building-serve-and-return/>
- <https://firstwordsproject.com/>