A teacher’s attitude toward child growth in language should be one of optimism; provide the best learning environment and realize the child will grow and learn new language skills when he is ready. Early childhood centers plan for as much growth as possible in language abilities with teachers who model, provide, and interact during activities.

Sheldon (1990) urges teachers to thoughtfully use comments and conversation free of sexist, male-oriented attitudes. If a teacher is talking about a stuffed teddy bear or the school’s pet guinea pig (whose sex is yet to be discovered), “it,” rather than “he” or “she,” is recommended.

Giving children the opportunity to re-express what they have discovered, felt, or learned with classroom art materials, building blocks, dramatic play props, and so on is another way to promote their language growth and further expression of ideas.

**Summary**

Teachers function as models, providers of opportunities for language growth, collaborators, and interactors. Children copy behaviors and attitudes of both adults and peers. Teacher skills include extending and expanding child conversations. Conversations are a key factor in the child’s growing language competence. Extending means adding new information, and expanding means completing a child’s statement so that it is grammatically complete.

Words are symbols for objects, ideas, actions, and situations. The teacher can increase the learning of new words and ideas by helping children recognize links between the past and present.

Teachers observe and listen closely so that teacher comments are pertinent and timely. An atmosphere of adult-child trust and acceptance of child ideas, whether valid or incorrect, is recommended.

The three teacher roles discussed in this chapter are model, provider, and interactor. A delicate balance exists in teaching functions. Decisions are made that affect children’s learning opportunities.

**Additional Resources**

**Readings**


**Helpful Web Sites**

Child and Family—Canada  
http://www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/  
Select “literacy” to find library readings.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Education  
http://www.ericcece.org  
Information and resources are provided.

Iowa State University Extension  
http://www.exnet.iastate.edu  
Nurturing language skills can be found by searching publications.

National Association for the Education of Young Children  
http://www.naeyc.org  
Articles, publications, and information are available.
STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. Observe a teacher interacting with a preschool child. Note the type of teacher speech and behavior that makes the child feel that what he says is important.

2. Pretend you are having a conversation about a teacher’s car that the children observed being towed away for repair. You are attempting to extend the topic of conversation, wringing as much out of the experience as possible while monitoring child interest and knowledge. Create possible teacher conversational comments in b to g after reading the example in a.
   a. Recap what you noticed and promote children’s remembrance.
      Example: “I saw a tow truck driver climb out of the tow truck cab.”
   b. Explain some aspect of the situation by giving reasons.
   c. Describe a cause-and-effect feature of the situation.
   d. Compare this situation with another.
   e. Talk about what might happen to the teacher’s car.
   f. Comment about what the teacher could do in this situation besides calling a tow truck.
   g. Ask how the children would feel if it were their parent’s car.
   h. List six other aspects of the situation that could be discussed.

Compare your answers with those of a group of classmates. Now discuss further teacher-planned activities that could increase and expand children’s comments, questions, or understanding. Share with the entire group.

3. Listen intently to three adults. (Take notes.) How would you evaluate them as speech models (good, average, poor)? State the reasons for your decisions.

4. Record a conversation with another classmate. Have the recording analyzed for Standard English speech usage.

5. Tape record or videotape your interaction with a group of young children for a period of 15 minutes. Analyze your listening, questioning, sentence structure, extending ability, and pronunciation.

6. In groups of four or five, develop a listing (on a wall chart or chalkboard) of language-stimulating classroom visitors. Prepare a one-page visitor information sheet to help the visitor understand how to structure the visit to offer a literacy-rich classroom experience. Choose two members of the group to role-play a situation in which the head teacher or director and a guest visitor discuss the visitor information sheet.