

Generalisation of Language

Often a child is able to use new language structures when they are concentrating on them in a specific activity, but it can be harder to remember to use them in conversation. Learning to use them all the time is called “generalising”.

Generalising takes time and requires lots of repetition and practice. Here are some things you can do to help.

Play games to practice using new vocabulary or grammatical features:

- I went shopping and bought...
(items from the target topic e.g. food, home items etc.)

Make up special looks / gestures to help the child remember.
e.g. man/woman signs to prompt the use of pronouns he/she or pointing behind you to indicate past tense.

Offer **choices** when you notice a mistake.

e.g. Child: “I eated an apple”
Adult: “you *eated* it or you *ate it*?”
Child: “I *ate it*”
Adult: “yes, you ate an apple!”

The above is giving them an example to copy. When they no longer need this, it can be helpful to encourage the child to work towards correcting their own errors, by sometimes presenting it as a question e.g. “you eated the apple?”

Pretend to misunderstand when they get things wrong.

Use the target structure regularly in conversations putting emphasis on the target words or phrases. Encourage the child to use these throughout the conversation.

- In the supermarket naming all the fruit and vegetables as you put them in the trolley.
- Talking about your day and emphasising past tense verbs or pronouns e.g. “We **played** football and **sang** songs” or “**He** went shopping and **she** read a book”.
- Ask questions which prompt a response using the target words/structures e.g. to practice prepositions:
Adult: “where is your lego?”
Child: “**in** the box”

It can become frustrating if a child is trying to tell you something but you’re thinking about how they said it! Try not to draw attention to every mistake – choosing a specific time of day e.g. at a meal time or in a specific class activity works really well.

Modelling the target words or phrases at other times e.g. if they say “I drew a house”, you can say “yes, you drew a house”, without correcting or asking for repetition, is still helping them hear the difference.