

Helsinki

CATCH!

## Supporting the development of children's language and speech

Helsinki

City of Helsinki  
Social and Health Services Department  
Child Health Care and Family Work  
[www.otakoppi-ohjelma.fi](http://www.otakoppi-ohjelma.fi)





A child's mother tongue is his or her most important language. It is the language the child shares with his or her parents, and the path to one's own culture and history.

Good skills in one's mother tongue form the basis for all learning, also for learning the Finnish language. It is good for parents to always speak to their child in their own mother tongue, rather than teaching Finnish. The child will learn Finnish at day care and in school.

It is important to provide consistent support for the mother tongue at home in all everyday situations. If the parents have different mother tongues, each one should speak his or her mother tongue to the child. Even if the child does not actively use the language spoken by the parent, comprehension of the language will develop, and the child will also begin to succeed in speaking it.

## When the child is an infant

it is good to keep your baby close and in your lap

show your baby that you are happy about him/her

talk to your baby a lot and look him/her in the eye

when caring for your baby, e.g. putting on clothes, tell him/her what you are doing at the same time

name the things, objects and people in your surroundings

## When the child is a toddler

in everyday situations, talk to your child about things he/she is interested in; this way he/she will best learn new words. Listen to how the child answers.

when caring for your child, tell him/her what you are doing, e.g. "let's put your socks on". Give things a name, also activities and feelings: "mummy knows you are upset, because..."

ask your child about familiar things, e.g. "where is the car?" or "do you want milk or water?"

sing, babble and play with your child in your mother tongue. Playing is important for the child's development and learning.

do not correct your child's speech; instead, give him/her a good example of how to speak. The child says "boo", and the adult says "yes, soon we're going to read a new book"

your child learns new words when you look at a book together. Tell the child about the pictures in the book and tell stories about your own childhood and home, for example.

the child's comprehension will develop when you give him/her small tasks, like "give me the hat" or "show me where the shoe is"

simply watching TV, videos and DVDs or playing computer games are not enough to develop the child's language skills!

## When the child is learning Finnish e.g. In day care

answer the child in your mother tongue, even if the child uses Finnish when speaking.

if the child does not know a word and says it in Finnish, the parent repeats the word in his/her mother tongue.