

Cognitive Strategies Used by Child and Teaching Tips to Match these Strategies

Preschool English Learners are very resourceful when finding themselves in an unfamiliar environment, especially in one where the language being spoken is foreign to them. For this reason, they may make sure of the following cognitive strategies in order to participate to the greatest extent possible in this new language context.

Cognitive Strategies Used by Child	Teaching Tips to Match these Strategies
<p><i>Assume that what people are saying is directly relevant to the situation at hand or to what they or you are experiencing.</i></p>	<p><i>Make sure that your speech matches what you are referring to.</i></p> <p>If the teacher holds up a paper pumpkin but talks about Thanksgiving, the child may think the label for the pumpkin is Thanksgiving.</p>
<p><i>Learn and use some expressions you understand.</i></p> <p>I want _____. (juice, toy, play) _____ please.</p>	<p><i>Use speech and phrases that are predictable and repetitive.</i></p> <p>“Let’s _____. (read, play, clean up) “It’s time to _____. (eat, sleep, go home)</p>
<p><i>Make the most of the language you have.</i></p> <p>A child may learn the word ‘dog’ and use that as a general label until he learns more refined descriptive words such as ‘puppy,’ ‘Terrier,’ or ‘Spot.’</p>	<p><i>Accept the label the child uses and model the new descriptor for him or her.</i></p> <p>“I see the dog too. His name is Spot.”</p>
<p><i>Work on the big things; save the details for later. Many preschool English Learners will leave out articles, adjectives, and even verbs as they are mastering English.</i></p> <p>Yes/No _____. (“Yes book” for “I’d like to read.” “No food” for “I’m not hungry.”)</p>	<p><i>Serve as a total language model. Refrain from correcting the child in his attempts to communicate in his new language since such corrections might cause him embarrassment.</i></p> <p>Child: “I no want chip potato.” Teacher: “Alright, you are done with your potato chips.”</p>

Adapted from:

Wong Fillmore, L. (1990). Language and cultural issues in the early education of language minority children. In S.L. Kagan (Ed.), *The care and education of America’s young children*.

Tabors, P. (1997). *One child, two languages: A guide for preschool educators of children learning English as a second language*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.