

Social 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. In order to “fit in” with peers and to be considered as a valuable play partner, they may employ the following social strategies.

Social Strategies Used by Child	Teaching Tips to Match these Strategies
<p><i>Join a group and act as though you understand what is going on, even if you do not.</i></p> <p>The child may nod as a way to participate in the conversation or repeat a word a peer said.</p>	<p><i>When children are engaged in cooperative learning or play, serve as an interpreter for both the fluent English speaker and the child learning English.</i></p> <p>“Sara is building a tunnel. You like to play with Sara. You pushed your car through the tunnel.”</p>
<p><i>Give the impression, with a few well-chosen words, that you can speak the language.</i></p> <p>Some kids pick up on a popular character, fast food chain, or theme and refer to that as a way to make friends.</p>	<p><i>Acknowledge the child’s attempt to join a conversation and model more advanced language by extending his one or two words into complete sentences.</i></p> <p>“Yes, SuperBurgers sells hamburgers. We’re eating hamburgers for lunch.”</p>
<p><i>Count on your friends for help.</i></p> <p>Young English learners will sit next to or play by a peer who is accepting of the way they talk or stay quiet, and who includes them in the activity in natural ways.</p>	<p><i>Strategically pair children with helpful peers who can serve as good language and interactive models.</i></p> <p>Acknowledge the peer’s friendly actions and responses.</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.