# 'Motherese' important for children's language development

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(Medical Xpress) -- Talking to children has always been fundamental to language development, but new research reveals that the way we talk to children is key to building their ability to understand and create

sentences of their own. The exaggerated speech we naturally use with young children is special register – often called 'motherese'.

"We use changes in pitch and rhythm when we talk to children, and we emphasize important words This is what children usually learn and produce first."says Professor Katherine Demuth, Director of the Child Language Laboratory at the Centre for Language Sciences, Linguistics Department

But it's not just mothers: fathers, older siblings and virtually anyone who talks to a young child naturally adopts child-directed speech, or 'motherese'. Studies suggest that this helps children identify where words begin and end, and provides them with the clues needed to help them develop their own language skills.

"A child learning their first language is like an adult learning a second one: you have no idea what's going on and it's just one long speech stream. Child-directed speech helps unpack this for children and gives them the tools to help them identify sounds, syllables and finally words and sentences," says Demuth.

Demuth recommends a simple method for developing language skills: talking and reading to children. "You aren't teaching them language, you are just interacting with them, using words that help them develop their vocabulary sooner."

Provided by Macquarie University

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