

## **TRANSCRIPT: Developing language**

[Woman]

“Probably the most important influence on young children when they begin to acquire their language is the interaction that they have with the adult caregivers around them. So, if we watch a young baby, for example, sitting on mother’s lap we can see the pleasure that both of them gain from this interaction. The eye contact between them; the baby will gurgle, for example, the mother probably copies those gurgles or maybe copies the mouth shapes and the expression on the baby’s face. They even begin, in a very rudimentary way, to take turns.”

[Narrator]

Turn taking games like ‘peek-a-boo’ are widely found in Western culture. They’re thought to give children valuable experience of being involved in an exchange which has many of the characteristics of conversation. Each person’s turn depends on the preceding turn, and there’s a shared understanding of the direction and purpose of the game.”

[Elena Lieven, Developmental Psychologist, University of Manchester]

“Children have to be able to work out from the world around them, what’s going on. And so anything that contributes to regularities of meaning, anything that helps them to say ‘ooh, I’ve seen that event before and it had this word associated with it’ is tremendously important; and of course that’s the case in the huge variety of contexts in which children grow up. There’s a tremendous amount of, sort of, structuring of their environment. I mean in the kinds of societies we tend to be used to, it’ll be things like give-and-take games with the mother, where the mother says ‘peepo’ and pops up. And the child starts to learn that it too can say ‘peepo’ and get into a kind of rhythmic pattern so it starts to attach the word. But it’s not just games. I’m sure that most parents say exactly the same thing every morning when they go in to say good morning to their babies; ‘hello’ or ‘hiya beautiful’ or something, and often you see children starting to do that back. They don’t necessarily know that it’s a greeting, or this particular part of language, but they know that that’s what you say in that situation. And that’s a big start.”