



What is Parentese?

Parentese, also known as infant directed speech or motherese, is a special way of talking that is more interesting to infants and children than listening to regular adult speech. It is universally spoken by most caregivers in every culture, regardless of gender.

This distinctive style of speech uses exaggerated tones, inflection and prosody. We often refer to it as using a sing song voice. Some features include speaking in a manner that is

- Higher-pitched
- Hyper-articulated
- Repetitive
- Rhythmic
- Melodic
- Slower in speed (tempo)
- Elongates vowels
- Exaggerates intensity (Estabrooks, Macler-Lux & Rhoades, 2016)

Speaking in parentese is important because it has inherent acoustic cues that stimulate the young child's developing auditory system. A child who hears parentese frequently becomes more efficient in understanding spoken language and have larger vocabularies as they mature.

Initially when babies first to listen to sounds around them, they focus on the melodies and expression in your voice. What they are hearing is.. blah blah BLAH blah blah BLAH blah BLAH BLAH! We as parents do this inherently because we want to capture our child's attention, so we adjust our speech to the child's developmental level.

Children eventually learn that each exaggerated tone has meaning. From an early age, children learn that a short firm tone usually is negative (NO! STOP!), and a high pitched longer sound means the carer is happy and wanting to engage.

Not only is this way of talking important for developing listening skills, it also facilitates both social interaction (knowing different tones used for emotion) and language acquisition. Talking in this manner is important to the development of speech, language and social skills.