

LAB EXERCISE #6

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Before beginning this lab, review the chapter on language development. Pay particular attention to the developmental sequences on language development.

Children's language skills develop in the same sequence although the timing can vary greatly. Some children refine their language skills at a very young age while other children may take longer. However, there are some general guidelines that we use to judge the "normality" of development.

Children's speech begins with hearing language. Recent studies have even shown that babies can hear in utero. After birth, babies respond more quickly to their mother's voice and to stories read to them in the womb. Experts recommend speaking to babies and reading stories to increase a child's exposure to language.

Children's speech begins with vocalizations or those cute baby noises that are so attractive to adults. They also use crying as a means of communication. They then progress to single syllabi, single words, two word sentences and ultimately to adult-like sentences. Most children say their first recognizable word by 9/10 months (e.g. dada) and by 18 months most are using two word sentences (e.g. baby bath). They recognize more speech than they can manufacture and their communication incorporates gestures.

In the second and third years of life, language development is rapid. If you know any children of that age, you will recall that they seem to learn new words by the minute. They almost do. A typical six-year-old knows 14000 words by some studies. That

means that between the ages of 18 months and 6 years, a child learns nine new words a day!

For some children it is very easy to understand their speech early on. For others, it is difficult for someone other than parents to understand what is said. Differences in development of spoken language are great. Some children do not master the basic sounds until age 6. "R" is a particular problem for many and the "r" sound may not be mastered until age 8. There have even been case studies of children who do not speak until age 3 but who have no discernible problems that would contribute to the not speaking.

In this activity, you will explore age differences in language development. The purpose of the activity is to examine the range of language development. If your center has children in a range of ages, you will easily be able to accomplish this activity. If your center has children primarily of one age, see me for some modifications.

(FN: For centers with primarily one-age children, students can focus on observing 4 children of each age, two of each gender. They should record children's vocalizations in depth. They can also do the second part with additional subjects.)

Find children of the following ages (or as close as possible): 9 months, 12 months, 15, months, 18 months, 24 months, 3 years, 4 years and older. For each you are to listen to the child for 2-3 minutes. The child can be interacting with others or can be alone.

(Children often speak to themselves). Record exactly what you hear the child saying.

Make note of the children's ages and gender.

LANGUAGE OBSERVATION

9 Months _____

12 Months _____

15 Months _____

18 Months _____

24 Months _____

3 Years _____

For the 2 older children, also examine their listening skills and verbal interactions.

A. Listening - Child A

Give the children some simple directions (include those here) and note how well they can follow the directions.

Directions: _____

24 Months _____

3 Years _____

B. Verbal Interactions Child A

Set up a situation in which you will have a dialogue with the 2 older children.
Note how good the communication was. What did you learn about
communicating with the child? Notice both verbal and nonverbal communication.

24 Months _____

3 Years _____

C. Listening - Child B

Give the children some simple directions (include those here) and note how well they can follow the directions.

Directions: _____

24 Months _____

3 Years _____

D. Verbal Interactions Child B

Set up a situation in which you will have a dialogue with the 2 older children. Note how good the communication was. What did you learn about communicating with the child? Notice both verbal and nonverbal communication.

24 Months _____

3 Years _____

LAB REPORT
PART B QUESTIONS

Answer the following:

1. What patterns of language development did you notice?
2. Did you notice any gender differences? If yes, why do you think so?
3. Create an activity that would help a young child develop their language skills.
4. If your center has a range of ages (infant through 6 years), discuss the developmental patterns that you see. If the center does not have a range of ages, discuss what developmental patterns you would typically find.