

Oral Language Observations

Observe the targeted child carefully. Record examples of language use that fits the categories described.

Phase 2 Key Indicators	Observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses own grammar style, an approximation of adult grammar (<i>goed</i> for <i>went</i>).• developing awareness of listener needs and provides feedback• gives simple descriptions of past events• shows an interest in explanations of how and why	
Phase 3 Key Indicators	Observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• has grasped most grammatical rules, but still may overgeneralize• contributes appropriately to class interactions, showing when something is not understood• adapts language for social control• includes when, who, where, what in recounts• uses language to explain, inquire and compare	
Other Observations	

Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young Children

By Todd Risley

In our first book Betty Hart and I reported what parents actually do in American homes. We had collected data-with reliable and repeated samples of daily life-on sufficient numbers of families who were sufficiently representative to estimate average amounts of parent talk received by American infants and toddlers from their parents.

We found:

1. How much talk actually goes on between parent and child in everyday life.

When they are awake and with their parents, 1 and 2 year old American children hear an average of:

- 340 Utterances per hour,
- 1440 Words per hour,
- 90 Questions per hour,
- 17 Affirmations per hour, and
- 7 Prohibitions per hour addressed to them by their parents

2. There are large differences between families.

The amount of parent talk differs greatly between families: Some parents address fewer than 500 words to their child in an hour of family life, while others address over 3,000 words. Some parents express approval and encouragement more than 40 times in an hour of family life and other parents less than 4 times an hour.

3. Those differences mount up.

For each family, the amount a parent talks to their children is consistent across time. If we extrapolate the parent talk we observed across the waking hours of a child's life we estimate that by the time they are four years old some children have heard over 50 million words addressed to them by their parents, while others have heard only 10 million words. And some four-year-old children have heard over 800 thousand affirmative statements from their parents while others have heard less than 80 thousand.

4. Extra talk is more complex and positive.

Both talkative and taciturn parents use similar numbers of initiations, imperatives, and prohibitions per hour to govern their children. While taciturn parents say little else, the talkative parents' 'extra' talk is mostly conversation about other things. The extra talk of talkative parents contains more of the varied vocabulary, complex ideas, subtle guidance, and positive reinforcement thought to be important to intellectual development.

5. Amount of family talk is a characteristic of low and high social class.

The amount that parents talk to their infants and toddlers is generally correlated with the parents' social and economic status, with welfare parents being taciturn and professionals being talkative, while working-class parents vary greatly from the most talkative to the most taciturn.

6. The amount of family talk accounts for child outcomes.

The amount of parent talk that infants and toddlers receive – particularly the amount of 'extra' talk above and beyond that needed to govern their behavior – is powerfully related to their later vocabulary size and to other measures of their later verbal sophistication. Parent talkativeness accounts for all the correlation between SES (and/or race) and the verbal intellectual accomplishments of these young children. The relationship is so strong that, presumably, shared biological temperament as well as cultural factors contribute to talkativeness.

In our second book “The Social World of Children Learning to Talk,” we described how children actually began to talk in their daily lives and how the pattern of interaction – the social dance between parent and child – changed as the child learned to talk.

We found:

- 7. Children’s talkativeness stops growing when it matches the level of their parents.**
Parents talk to their infants at the frequency per hour that is typical of their family. As they begin talking, children’s utterances containing recognizable words accelerate until the frequency of their utterances match their parent’s frequency of talking to them. At this point children’s growth in talking levels off, and a child’s frequency of talking stabilizes at whatever level is typical within his or her family.
- 8. Expressive language experience is linked to receptive language experience.**
At three, children of average families express themselves in language about 400 times an hour, children of the most talkative families express themselves over 600 times an hour, while children of the most taciturn families express themselves in language less than 200 times an hour.
- 9. Before school and reading age there are already vast differences between American children in language experience.**
If we combine the expressive and receptive language experience we observed, and extrapolate across the waking hours of the child’s life, we estimate that by the time they are four years old average American children will have accumulated 45 million words of receptive and expressive language experience. Children of the most talkative families will have accumulated over 70 million words, while children of the most taciturn families will have accumulated fewer than 18 million words of receptive and expressive language experience.
- 10. From these findings we hypothesize:**
 - I. The accumulation of language experience is the major determiner of vocabulary growth and verbal intellectual development.
 - II. The amount of social language interaction between parents and children in the first years of life is the primary source of early language experience and a major determiner of later language experience.
 - III. The amount of social language interaction between parents and children in the first years of life, although influenced by shared biological temperament, is largely a function of the children’s accommodation to the family micro-culture set by the parents’ own childhood experience. A family micro-culture can be changed.

Hart, B. & Risley T.R. (1995) *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing Company. (800, 638-3775)

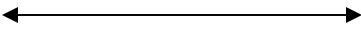
Hart, B. & Risley T.R. (1999) *The Social World of Children Learning to Talk*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing Company. (Fax 410, 337-8539)

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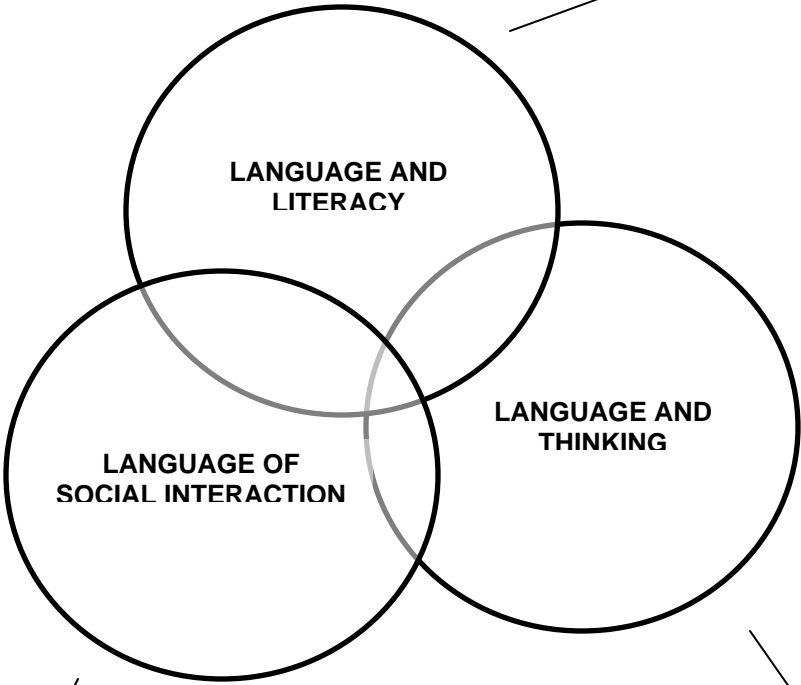
What is Oral Language?

SPEAKING



LISTENING

SPEAKING THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE



GETTING ALONG WITH OTHER PEOPLE

TALK AS A MEANS OF LEARNING