Comparing the Language Development of Native and Foreign Born Children

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Research Questions
• What are the differences and/or similarities in the development of semantics for native and foreign born toddlers?
• What are the differences and similarities in the development of syntax for native and foreign born toddlers?
• What are the differences and/or similarities in the development of pragmatics for native and foreign born toddlers?

Participants
Ivy: Born to English speaking parents
• Lives with mother and father
Luke: Born to English speaking parents
• Lives with mother and father
Evan: Adopted from Ethiopia at 22 months
• No exposure to English pre-adoption
• Started speech therapy at 29 months
• Lives with mother, father, & older sister

Methods
• Pre-tested at 26 months
• Post-tested at 36 months
  • The Rossetti Infant-Toddler Language Scale
  • MacArthur-Bates Communicative Inventories
• Language samples collected at 27.5, 29, 32, 33, 35, 36.5 months of age
  • Semantics
    • TTR and semantic roles
  • Syntax
    • Mean Length of Utterance
  • Pragmatics
    • Primitive and Conversational Acts

Pre- and Post-Testing

Type Token Ratio

Pragmatics
Developmental data is limited and contingent on contextual variables such as people and toys in the environment.
• Ivy: consistent use of pragmatic acts
• Luke: consistent use of pragmatic acts with an increase in initiations
• Evan: expanded use of a greater variety of pragmatic acts

Conclusions
• Although delayed compared to Ivy and Luke, Evan’s semantic and syntactic development increased at a similar rate.
• Ivy and Luke explored a variety of pragmatic speech acts early on, while Evan increased his variety of pragmatic acts with age.