The Influence of Communication Partner Familiarity on the Language of Pre-School Aged Children

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Research Question:
Do trained unfamiliar communication partners elicit language samples that differ from familiar communication partners?

Supporting Research:
- Parent-based intervention is considered an effective alternative to traditional clinic based intervention (Schooling et al., 2010).
- Studies comparing mother-child and clinician-child interactions have been inconclusive (Retherford, 2007).
- Other studies that have found significant differences between communications partners have been attributed to research design (Retherford, 2007).

Methodology:
Participants:
- 5 children, ages 2 years; 8 months to 3 years; 7 months.
Procedures:
- Children were brought to the Center for Communication Disorders at UW-Eau Claire by a parent/guardian.
- A graduate student administered the Test of Early Language Development – 3.
- Language Samples were collected during two consecutive free-play sessions. During the first 15-20 minute session the child interacted with either the parent or the student clinician, and then for the second 15-20 minute session the communication partners swapped while the child stayed in the therapy room.
- Language samples were transcribed after the session from audio recordings.

Materials:

Analysis:
Parent and clinician transcripts were compared for:
- Mean Length Utterance (MLU)
- Number of Different Words (NDW)
- Total Number of Words (TNW)

Paired Samples T-Test:
- Used to determine significant difference between parent and clinician variables.

Results:

Mean Length of Utterance

Number of Different Words

Total Number of Words

Conclusion:
- In general, mean length of utterance, number of different words, and total number of words were found to be higher when elicited from a clinician.
- Not surprisingly with such a small sample, significant differences between parent and clinician elicited language samples were not found.

Discussion:
- The clinician elicited more complex language while the parent elicited more representative language.
- Both representative and complex language samples are crucial for dynamic assessment because both reveal language abilities.

Implications:
- Both parent and clinician elicited language samples should be considered a part of dynamic assessment if time and resources allow.

Future research:
- Gain larger participant pool.
- Narrow participant age range to obtain more age-specific data.
- Further explore how familiarity impacts language sampling.

Acknowledgements
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