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Amy Buchanan
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Jennifer Morris
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Shari L. DeVeney
University of Nebraska at Omaha, sdeveney@unomaha.edu

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spoken production of novel words with accompanying picture symbols across language skill proficiencies of young children

amy buchanan, b.s., jennifer morris, b.s., and shari deveney, ph.d.

department of special education and communication disorders

background

late talkers (ltls):
• under age of 3 with language delay
• fewer than 50 words; no/few 2-word phrases
• not secondary to other conditions (e.g., autism, hearing impairment)

typically divided into two subgroups:
• expressively-only (elt) vs. expressively-receptive (rlt)

rapid word-learning skills:
• limited research regarding word-learning skills of ltls even though they may be predictive of future outcomes (ellis weismer & evans, 2002)
• may redefine how late talking is conceptualized; no 'real' elt grouping (see leonard, 2009)
• expressive delay does not occur in isolation; 'something' causing it
• all children fall along a spectrum of underlying language deficits (see rescorla, 2002, 2005, 2009)

picture symbol use:
• used to scaffold vocabulary development (beukelman & miranda, 2013), but not commonly used with ltls (bauman leech & cress, 2011)
• no previous study has systematically explored the use of picture symbols for novel word productions with ltls identified as elt or rlt

aim of current study:
• post-hoc analysis to further investigate types of spoken productions of novel words by group; all previously coded as "spontaneous verbal productions" in original study (deveney, 2012)

research question

what differences, if any, were seen among typically developing children (td), late talkers with expressively-only language delay (elt), and late talkers with expressively and receptive language delay (rlt) in verbally producing novel words while learning to request new items with representational picture symbols?

methods

participants:
• 9 children (7 males, 2 females) ranging in age from 2:0-2:7 (m = 25.67 months; sd = 1.37)
• identified as td, elt, or rlt based on initial assessment results (3 per group)

experimental materials:
• target novel non-words: 8 consonant-vowel-consonant words unfamiliar to children (e.g., "geem", "hep")
• unfamiliar toy referents: each novel word paired with unfamiliar toy (e.g., silver and red spacerman toy was called "koze")

picture symbol: each unfamiliar toy also had a 2½ inch picture symbol associated with it

methods (cont.)

• play scheme contexts: toys likely to be of high interest to 2-year-olds (e.g., fisher-price farm and garage sets) for play interactions involving unfamiliar toys

original study procedures:
• screening visits
• baseline visit
• word-training sessions (n=6-8 sessions)
• follow up session

experimental design:
• single subject design with a baseline and follow up approach

post hoc analysis procedures:
• re-coded all "spontaneous verbal productions" as
  a) unprompted spoken word productions
  b) prompted spoken word productions
  c) direct imitation of spoken word productions
• reached over 90% agreement with faculty advisor on training tapes
• video tapes of entire data set (including baseline, word-training sessions, and follow up) randomly divided among 2 coders; each will re-code 20% of each other's data for inter-observer reliability
• current status: 100% of data re-coded to date; 20% for inter-observer reliability; over 90% agreement between 2 coders

results

conclusions

in original study:
• picture symbols facilitate spoken target novel word productions for elt's. overall, the elt group produced as many different target novel words as the td group. this finding was surprising given the nature of the identified language delay.
• the spoken productions of the td group and the elt group contrasted with the spoken productions of the rlt group.

post hoc analysis:
• elt group performance continued to look similar to td group performance in this analysis
• rlt group demonstrated differences in unprompted spoken productions when compared to the td and elt groups
• elt performance on unprompted and prompted productions lends support to leonard (2009) theory that there is some receptive component to expressive language delay

clinical implications

picture symbols facilitate verbal expression:
• not commonly used for elt's
• have available, not ask for use of specifically
• more research/clinical documentation needed

limitations & future directions

limitations:
• small number of participants
• small, limited sample of words
• limited number of word training sessions
• scheduling differences

future directions:
• group design/replication
• facilitating effect of picture symbols on verbal expression

selected references

elba weismer, s., & evans, j. l. (2002). the role of processing limitations in spoken productions when compared to the td and elt groups.
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