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## Recent Findings

*Did you recently participate in an eye-tracking project with your 10-month-old? We have the results of those studies!*



- 10-month-olds were found to focus more on the mouths of speaking faces regardless of the type of message viewed/heard. This is consistent with current research literature showing that toward the end of the first year, infants begin focusing on mouths of speaking faces. This timing coincides with the production of early speech-specific sounds.
- 10-month-olds also focused more on the mouth than eyes while viewing silent moving and non-moving emotional expressions. Infants did not alter their scanning of emotional expressions based on whether the stimuli were moving or non-moving. Previous work suggests that different scanning patterns for these stimuli may have emerged if a speech component was present.

"Like" the Infant Learning Project on Facebook to receive weekly information about infant research, child development and parenting!



- [facebook.com/infantlearningproject](https://www.facebook.com/infantlearningproject)
- [bbs.utdallas.edu/ilp](http://bbs.utdallas.edu/ilp)

## Multi-Language Infant-Directed Speech Study

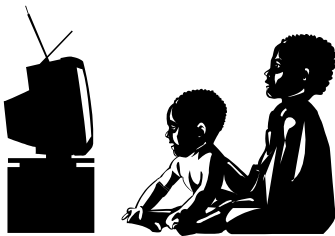
5.5—6.5-month-olds (beginning Fall 2016)

- ◆ Infants will listen to samples of women speaking to babies in two non-native languages to examine whether they are able to recognize approving and comforting speech intent when presented in an unfamiliar language.
- ◆ Requirements: Infants who hear English most of the time and are exposed to other languages less than 50% of their waking time.
- ◆ Interested in participating? Please contact us via phone or email!

## How Co-viewing Television Affects Parent-Child Communication

*Priscilla Jacob*

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) first provided guidance on media use for children in 1999. In their statement, the AAP discouraged television viewing and exposure to other entertainment media for children under the age of two. The digital world has greatly expanded over the last seventeen years, leaving screens and media of all types in the hands of little ones. Countless businesses have capitalized on this demographic by marketing “educational” infant-directed programs. However, research has consistently found that these programs often lack the claimed educational benefits for children, and in many cases actually prevent learning. Experimental research has shown that cognitive processes central to language development mature through real-world interactions and not by audiovisual media. An important aspect to study when considering the

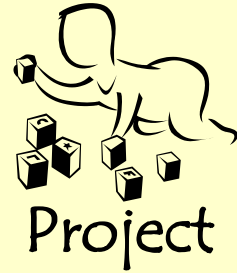


effects of watching television is how it affects parents’ language toward a child. If watching television significantly reduces the quality and quantity of interactions between parents and children, co-viewing “educational” media may not be as meaningful as some may assume.

To address these questions, Lavigne, Hanson, & Anderson (2015) examined the quantity and quality of parent language as parents watched infant-directed programs with their 1-year-olds (“co-viewing”) compared to while engaged in a free play situation with no television. First, the parent-child dyads were either assigned one of two videos to co-view at home: *Baby Einstein* or *Sesame Beginnings*. Parents were asked to watch their assigned video with their child at least eight times per week before the first lab session so that the researchers could later test whether familiarity of videos impacts parents’ language while watching the same videos at the lab. Additionally, parents were asked to keep a diary of their infants’ exposure to television over the 14 days. After two weeks of home viewing, the dyads visited the lab twice. The first visit to the lab was a 30-minute free play session in a room resembling a typical family room. Although the room had a television, it was turned off during this session. The second visit was approximately one week later during which dyads would co-view an episode from their assigned or unassigned video series in the lab’s “family room.” This viewing session was immediately followed by a 15-minute free play session with the television turned off. For all three sessions, parents’ vocalizations were recorded from a microphone that was placed in the room.

*Continued on page 3...*

## Infant Learning



## Project

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## The Infant Learning Project went to



Projects completed by students Mariah Fowler, Priscilla Jacob, and Lab Director, Dr. Melanie Spence, were presented at the **International Conference of Infant Studies in New Orleans, LA this May!**

*Thank You*

**We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the parents of the infant participants in our studies. Without you, our research would not be possible!**

### **...co-viewing television continued.**

The study found that when co-viewing baby videos, 94% of parents reduced the number of words per minute to their children, 86% reduced the number of *new* words per minute to the children, and 70% of parents reduced the average length of their utterance to children. On the other hand, 91% of parents *increased* the total number of new words per utterance when the television was turned on. Additionally, analyses of the home diaries suggested that home television co-viewing predicted lower quality of parent language directed at toddlers during the first free-play session in the lab. Taken together, these findings provide evidence for both sides of the controversy. On one hand, co-viewing substantially reduced words per minute, new words per minute, and average length of utterances. On the other hand, co-viewing baby videos increased the number of *new* words per utterance that parents directed at their children both during and after viewing, suggesting that these videos may offer parents novel topics to discuss with their children. *However*, an analysis of the home diaries revealed that as the amount of television viewing at home increases, the number of unique words spoken by parents decreases. This seems to indicate that even though parents may use richer vocabulary immediately after the session, the baby videos likely do not produce benefits that extend beyond immediately after co-viewing.

Based on their findings, the researchers provided some astounding calculations regarding how co-viewing television affects parent-child interactions over time. If the comparisons in the study are representative of parent language at home, while co-viewing: the average child would experience 13,245 fewer words from their parent over a week and about 688,759 fewer words over a year. The overall message of the body of research concerning media usage is not to forbid baby videos. Developmental professionals acknowledge it is unrealistic to outright avoid media and suggest it is more practical to conduct studies in an attempt to uncover the best ways for parents to structure media usage. Current research suggests that parents need not invest in programs that advertise money-back-guarantees for failing to create baby masterminds; rather, the presence and communication of parents are always what is best for children. The AAP has also discussed plans to release the first update to their recommendations in 2016 to emphasize the importance of parent-child interactions as it relates to media usage.

Source: Lavigne, H. J., Hanson, K. G., & Anderson, D. R. (2015). The influence of television co-viewing on parent language directed at toddlers. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 26*, 1-10.



Dr. Kate Shepard earned her masters and doctoral degrees at the University of Texas at Dallas and conducted research at the Infant Learning Project. She is a speech-language pathologist and developmental psychologist who now owns a private practice in which she provides speech-language services to children in the North Dallas Area.

*For more information, visit:*

[shadowmespeechtherapy.com](http://shadowmespeechtherapy.com)

## Say What? Asking Questions After Story Time Can Improve Comprehension AND Production?

*Nina Alton*

Time and time again, reading to children has been shown to improve the development of early literacy skills such as understanding and production of new words. In an effort to explore how to maximize these benefits, Walsh and Blewitt (2006) investigated the effects of different questioning styles on 3-year-olds' comprehension and production of new words after a storybook was read to them.

The 3-year-olds were randomly assigned to one of three experimental groups. Children in the first group were asked vocabulary-eliciting questions about the story. The answers to these questions required novel target words from the story. For instance, the investigator would point at a "sloop" (an obscure and relatively uncommon word that refers to a particular type of sailboat) and ask "What is this?" In the absence of a correct reply, the reader answered correctly. Children in the second group were asked non-eliciting questions that did not require novel target words in the answers (e.g. "What color is the sloop?"). The third group of children were not asked any questions.

Three storybooks, created to be purposefully unfamiliar to children, were used in this study. There were 9 target novel words which had been proven to be unfamiliar to 3-year-olds used in the study. Each word appeared once in two of the books. Each book contained several of the target novel words and was read multiple times to the children. Before they were read the books, all participants completed a pretest that measured general vocabulary comprehension.

The intervention sessions took place in a quiet place in their preschool and covered a 6-week time span. Two of the three books were read each session and children in each questioning condition were asked 6 questions per storybook. The storybook order and presentation was arranged so that all children had an equal number of exposures to each target word. After the third reading session, children were administered a test that measured their ability to *produce* the 9 target novel words (they were shown a picture of it and asked to label it), and one that determined their ability to *comprehend* the target words (the word was said out loud and they had to correctly choose one out of four pictures shown that matched it). The tests were administered in that order, with production first then comprehension, so that the comprehension test would not affect the results of the production test.

*Continued on page 5...*



**...Reading to Children continued.**

Children in the non-eliciting questions group had significantly higher scores on the production and comprehension tests than those in the group that was not asked questions. However, there were no differences in scores between children in the non-eliciting questions vs. eliciting questions groups. This means asking eliciting questions had no identifiable advantage on production or comprehension scores.

Ultimately, reading is extremely beneficial for children. The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages parents to read to their children every day, starting as early as infancy. However, this study suggests parents can do more to elevate their children’s early literacy development. By asking questions and elaborating on the content, parents can help their children take advantage of all the benefits reading together has to offer.

Source: Walsh, Bridge A., & Blewitt, P. (2006). The Effect of Questioning during Storybook Reading on Novel Vocabulary Acquisition of Preschoolers. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33(4), 273-278.

# More research opportunities at UTD!

## SHARED BOOK READING

Current study examines 3 and 5 year old children’s looking patterns while reading a book.

- The study is recruiting children with hearing loss.
- Children will share 3 short books with a reader and complete a picture vocabulary test. Clinicians will provide feedback regarding language development based on their performance on the vocabulary assessment.
- We will be running the study at both Callier Richardson and Callier Dallas.
- *If interested please contact Dr. Emily Touchstone: ETouchstone@utdallas.edu*



Dr. Jackie Nelson and the Family Research Lab students at UTD study emotional aspects of family relationships and children’s development.

- **Currently inviting two-parent families with a 3- to 5-year-old child to participate** in projects on emotional responses and mealtime interactions.
- Parents will receive gift cards as thanks for their participation, and children will receive a prize.

For more information, please contact: [familyresearchlab@gmail.com](mailto:familyresearchlab@gmail.com) or (972) 883-4122



The Think Lab at UTD, headed by Dr. Candice Mills, studies how children and adults think about and learn from the world around them.

### Recruiting families with children between the ages of 4-10-years-old!

- Current projects examine how preschool- and elementary school-aged children think about what others are likely to know, and how this influences their learning.
- Parents will receive gift cards as thanks for their participation, and children receive a prize.

For more information, visit: [www.utdallas.edu/research/thinklab](http://www.utdallas.edu/research/thinklab)

Contact: [utdthinklab@yahoo.com](mailto:utdthinklab@yahoo.com) or (972) 883-6075

## CRECE CONMIGO

*Crece Conmigo* (Grow with Me), formerly the *Infant Development Program*, is a free resource for the identification and prevention of developmental disorders in children ages birth - 5. The program offers thorough developmental screenings and parent support in both English and Spanish at various locations across DFW.

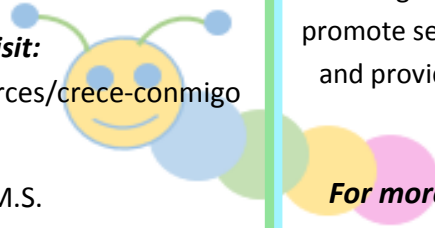
**To learn more, visit:**

[ccf.utdallas.edu/programs-resources/crece-conmigo](http://ccf.utdallas.edu/programs-resources/crece-conmigo)

**Or contact:**

Cecilia Lazcano, M.S.

(972) 883-4503 or [cecilia.lazcano@utdallas.edu](mailto:cecilia.lazcano@utdallas.edu)



## JUEGA CONMIGO

*Juega Conmigo* (Play with Me), is a program of weekly, free, drop-in, parent-child playtimes for children ages 0- 3. *Juega Conmigo* is designed to foster strong parent-child relationships and children's growth through semi-structured play sessions. In this informal environment, bilingual developmental specialists facilitate play and learning activities using toys, music, and movement to promote sensitive, stimulating parent-child interactions and provide important supports for school readiness.

**For more information, contact:** (972) 400-0286

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

We would like to congratulate graduate student, **Mariah Fowler**, on her acceptance to the Psychological Sciences PhD program here at UTD!



Mariah also welcomed a baby boy into her family this May!

Roman Alexzander Fowler

was born on May 10, 2016 and is enjoying life with his proud new parents!



## Spring 2016 Infant Learning Project Team

Faculty Lab Director:

Melanie J. Spence, Ph.D.

Graduate Research Assistants:

Mariah Fowler, B.S.

Priscilla Jacob, B.S.

Hannah Pourchot, M.S., CCC-SLP

Undergraduate Research Assistants:

Nina Alton

Kimberly Truong

