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ON LANGUAGE SPECIFIC EFFECTS IN CHILDREN'S VOCALIZATIONS BEFORE AGE TWO

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Abstract

This paper will present data from four groups of five infants raised in different language environments (American English, French, Japanese, Swedish) and recorded bi-weekly by audio and video from age 0;9 until 25 spontaneous words were used within a 30 minute session.

The aim of the project was to determine at what point and in what way language specific effects emerge in the children's vocalizations.

The American English, French and Swedish children were recorded in their home country. The Japanese group was recorded in the Palo Alto area in California, USA. Efforts were made to ensure compatibility between groups on all possible levels (socio-economical, educational etc.)

Four lexical points were selected for analysis. These were defined as the first session where the child spontaneously used 0, 4, 15 and 25 words. The 4, 15 and 25 word-points have been shown to be stable levels in the child's lexical development and were selected for that reason (Vihman, Ferguson & Elbert, 1986). The procedure for determining whether a vocalization should be considered a word or a babble was based on contextual and phonological factors as well as on stability and use over time (cf., in Vihman & McCune, 1988).

The results to be presented are based on auditory and acoustic analysis.

This presentation will specifically deal with the results of the Swedish group in relation to the findings of the French and American English groups. Comparisons will deal with both words and babble. We will also present some data on the development of the Swedish accent II. Further we will present data from the analysis of the mothers' speech and relate their behavior to that of their children.

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References

