



## **Matter's Influence Child's On the Speech Development in Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

**Mothers have key roles in their children's speech development. Sibling a child true love is an essential step in speech development. Simply talking to a child and getting a conversation going by means of emotional expression, gestures and sounds equally important while doing this, it is necessarily to follow the child's lead signs, expressions, gestures, emotions, praising and appreciating what the child's manages to do and helping him or her to focus on his or her attention, thus sharing the child's experiences. Mothers therefore, play a big role in helping their children to learn rules, limits values and more importantly develop their speech in a natural manner.**

**Key words:** speech, child, mother, vocalization, language development, expression

### **SPEECH DEVELOPMENT**

Language and communication skills are critical to a child's development. Good communication makes them better able to engage in socialization and to learn from their environment and from formal classroom instruction. When we talk about communication we are talking about both speeches which are the verbal means of communication and language which is using shared rules to put words together to express thoughts and feelings as well as to understand the meaning of language through both spoken and written communication. Since parents are child's first teacher, knowledge of language development in children improves their ability to interact with their child to stimulate and guide them in their ability to understand and communicate with their environment.

From birth on, children are programmed to develop speech and language. The first five years are most critical but language development continues throughout early childhood and on into adolescence. During the first five years stimulation of language development is important as the brain is both developing new nerve cells as well as multiple connections between nerve cells to serve the function of language both expressive and receptive. Lack of stimulation during this time could result in a child making slower progress or end up with poor communication skills. Later, we provide some tips for parents on how to help with language development but the basic suggestions are to spend lots of time talking, singing and reading to your child.

In early stages of language development, the brain is programmed to attend to speech sounds and begin to mimic them. Early on babies like to make sounds up on their own. Later they attempt to repeat sounds/words that they are exposed to from their environments.

Children usually say their first words between nine and 18 months old. The first common words are either "mama" or "dada". What's kind of interesting is no matter what language children are raised in, the first words usually reference either mother or farther. By the age of 18 months a child usually has a vocabulary of 50 to 150 words.

By two they can probably use over 300 words and understand about 1,000 words. By about 18 months children begin to put a couple words together to form a sentence sometimes referred to as "telegraphic speech" such as "mommy ball" or "mommy throw ball".

Around three years of age, children begin to use language for all kinds of things. They are not only trying to get things by asking they are talking about past experience and even beginning to use it to pretend. By preschool (4½) they are beginning to understand and use the rules of language to express possession of something, connect thoughts and qualify. Their language is becoming more like that of adults.

In elementary school children continue to expand their use of oral language but are also learning to read and write. As children progress through middle school and high school they continue to expand their vocabulary and refining their grammatical skills and write in more complexities as well as continue to develop reading comprehension skills.

The table below describes specific skill development for each stage of development through age 8. Below the development time line you will find information on how you can stimulate and encourage language development as well as information on how to recognize lagging development and what to do about it.

#### **ATTACHMENT AND ATTUNEMENT.**

A child's journey of language before birth, as babies in the womb hear clearly enough the last few months of pregnancy to distinguish their mother's voice. From the six months of gestation babies become sensitive to the particular qualities of their mother's voice and the rhythm of native language. A study from Germany recorded and analyzed the cries of 60 healthy babies at three to five days of age, recruited half and half from French-speaking and Germany-speaking families. Analysis reveals clear differences in the shape and tone of the babies' cry melodies. As the baby and the mother mutually seek communication, through the process describe the Trevarthan as 'intersubjectivity', the beginnings of the attachment behavior are laid down. Bowlby's influential that attachment is a biological instinct involving the development of a strong nurturing bond between mother and baby formed during early infancy. He contended that the way in which interaction takes place shapes the nature of the attachment and that the internalization of these early interactions provides a prototype for later relationships. Others have considered the possibility of other attachments figures in a child's life and emphasized the dynamic nature of attachment security.

A review of the clinical applications of attachment theory describes the major bio behavioral shifts that normally occur during the first two years. In the first two months the baby has limited ability to discriminate between caregivers though recolonizes the mother's smell and sound. A shift between two and three months occurs with the emergence of increased social interaction including more eye contact, social smiling and responsive cooing. Gradually, during the period 2-7 months, the baby becomes more able to discriminate between caregivers and, while intensely motivated to engage with them, generally doesn't have strong preferences between known caregivers and unknown others. A further shift occurs around 7-9 months with the emergence of separation. Between exploring and seeking comfort and security. A further shift occurs as 18-20 months with the emergence of pretend play language as symbolic representation. From then until the age of three, children increasingly have preferences and their own goals that can conflict with those of others requiring compromise and negotiation. The reciprocal process of turn taking is necessary condition of communication development and, in particular language. Stern describes parent-child communication as a synchronous 'dance' comprising periods of attunement (e.g. Eye contact, smiles) followed by periods of

disruption (e.g. turning away, withdrawal). The 'coming back together' following periods which are not focused or attuned, is significant for the development of secure attachment relationship (Karmiloff, 2001)

Murray and Cooper's research review suggests that when a mother's capacity of attune reduced and periods of disruption increase, for example, and can occur during postnatal depression, this is linked with a range of adverse social and emotional outcomes.

### **CONTINGENCY AND COMMUNICATION**

Young children naturally reach out for interaction through babbling, facial expressions, and gestures. Adults respond with the same kind of vocalizing and gesture back, frequently repeating and extending the baby's communication through commenting on the babies' actions and vocalizations. This back-and-forth process, or 'serve and return' interaction, between children significant adults in their lives serves to shape the architecture of the development brain of a baby. It is known as contingency. Contingency is the extend to which the intended recipient is fully sensitive and responsive towards receiving a form of communication from another person. In a baby-mother communication this means the extend to which they are engaged in reciprocal activity. Research indicates the importance of contingency NCT research overview. Parent-child communication is important from birth research.

Dry Cathy Hammer, policy and community's manage, National Literacy Trust. Research 15 NTC's research overview series provides an evidence base to guide the practice of NTC and other transition to parenthood workers on topics of relevance during pregnancy, birth, parenthood and the care of babies and toddlers aged 0-2 years. Workers must decide how to apply the evidence in their practice but they can feel confident that the research overview provides an up-to date, balanced and reliable summary and interpretation of the relevant research literature.

### **EVIDENCE FROM DETAILED OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES.**

Observational and experimental research with mothers and babies has shown the importance of mutual engagement and responsiveness. For example, in an American study of 62 mother-child dyads in which the families were white, the mother had completed high school and children were developing normally, Donovan et al observed and analyzed their behavior and interaction at intervals, from six to 24 months. A number of tests and observations were carried out: the mother's 'sensory sensitivity' (responsiveness to signals of emotion) was assessed. The mother's and the child's behavior and their emotional responses to each other were observed during free-play sessions and, at 12 months, the child's attachment status were assessed using standardized strange situation procedure. This procedure involves observing the child's behavior in a controlled setting while a/ sequence of planned and timed events occur involving the mother leaving her baby in a room with an unknown person, and then returning after the separation. The findings showed that early maternal behavior was predictive of later maternal behavior. Sensory sensitivity to positive baby expressions at six months predicted the mother's behavior at 24 months, and sensory sensitivity to both positive and negative expressions were associated with the later emotional responses of the mother to her baby. The nature of the baby's attachment predicted his or her temperament and behavior as a toddler, and interaction with the mother at 24 months (Ainsworth, 1976). This study both informs our understanding of early maternal responsiveness and demonstrates the importance of the quality of the mother-baby relationship in shaping later toddler behavior. Other studies have shown how high levels of contingent response by adults to a child (consistent positive responses to the child's action), helps babies gain an understanding of the rules of conversation and a sense of self during the first year of life. Games such as 'peek-a-boo'

promote the learning of 'my turn, your turn,' 12 by the age of 12 months babies are typically able to engage with adults in terms of showing them objectives (Trevathan, 1980)

Investment in engagement has been found to have a positive outcomes for children's language. Join-attention between child and parent at 14-15 months was found to Carpenter et all's study of 24 mother-child dyads, from middle class American families, to result in quicker language acquisition. Also, time spent in a mother-child joint attention when the child was under 18 months was found to predict subsequent vocabulary growth. Parents who frequently produce contingent replies to their baby's early verbalizations have children whose language structure develops more quickly. Thus it is evident that by responding to their baby's lead, and doing so in a positive and generally consistent way, mother promote their child's language skills, (Zeanah, 2011)

### **THE DEVEOPLMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE**

A child's language development is very much an active and interactive process, rather than a passive one, this has been demonstrated by the theories and research evidence discussed already relating to attachment and attunement, communication and contingency. Go Nick colleagues suggest that the brain can be thought of as a 'social brain', one which is developed through social interaction, particularly the relationship between mother and child in "how babies think", they present a synopsis of findings indicating that from birth babies can discriminate human faces and voices from other sensory stimuli and prefer them to other stimuli. Within a few days of birth babies are discriminating familiar people, such as their mother, from others. These kinds of abilities, and having opportunities to develop them, are considered as important part of babies' neurological development, referred to sometimes as 'building babies' brains Recognizing.

### **PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN'S SPEECH DEVELOPMENT**

The following could help the mother in diagnosing children's speech developmental challenges

- Lack for poor eye contact and lack of attention and focus.
- Listen to how they pronounce words. Are they hard to understand?
- Can they understand simple directions?
- Are they having trouble with basic social skills? Does your child not seem to be interested in having you read to them?
- Do they repeat what you say or say the same thing over and over.
- Do they lack empathy for the feelings of others?
- Do they avoid conversations?
- Are they only interested in talking or reading about one subject?
- Is your preschooler not engaging in fantasy play? Do they lack sense of humor?

Gerhardt makes a strong case for the influence of social and emotional interaction. She contends that 'being lovingly held is the greatest spur development, more so even than breast-feeding'. As the baby develops, parents adapts their rhythm, tempos and intensity to the baby's level, with the parent's activity gives meaning and significance to the baby's activity through a reciprocal process of comment, evaluation and reflection back. Thus, the child develops its sense of self. Children begin to acquire language as they construct representations of the sounds they hear. These representations gradually acquire the characteristics of their native language. By three months cooling usually starts and a baby who vocalizes, and then gets a response, will increase the vocalization showing attunement and response to the mother's voice. A few months later, babbling (repeating the sound over and over) begins to emerge in babies' behavior, particularly when they are alone (Murray, 1997)

Children generally use gesture to communicate before they use words, typically starting to produce the first gestures, such as, reaching, clapping and waving 'bye' between nine and 12 months of age. The gestures they produce are predictive of the early stages of spoken language development. The more the child gestures, the earlier they are likely to use language. By 12 months babies are typically able to babble strings of sounds and first words, such as 'ma-ma', 'da-da', emerge. Actions, such as gazing and pointing, are starting to become attached and referenced to the actions of those around them and children typically move on to point to objects, to engage with adults, following their lead and initiating shared attention. As children start to link two words together, gesture continues to precede and to predict positive language outcomes. Interestingly, early gesture has been found to selectively predict later language learning. Rowe and Golden-Meadow's longitudinal observational study of 52 children interacting with their caregivers at home found that the number of different meanings conveyed in gesture at 18 months (such as point at dog, flapping arms to represent flying, shaking the head for 'no') was a strong, positive predictor of scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test at 42 months. In addition, the number of gesture plus speech combinations, particularly those conveying sentences like ideas, produced at 18 months predicted sentence complexity at 42 months (Bowlby, 1988)

As language develops young children map words on to existing concepts. This enables them to organize language and knowledge about familiar objects and events. Through lexically rich and naturally occurring conversations, children's language skills develop. Increasingly, the body of evidence shows that language is most effectively learned when mothers tune into their babies in a responsive and sensitive manner. In all languages, mothers utilize a style of speech with babies known as infant-directed speech, or mothers ('baby talk') characterized by a higher pitched intonation, shortened or simplified vocabulary, shortened sentences and exaggerated vocalizations or expressions. As babies' communicative abilities develop, the complexity and amount of their mothers' speech increases, so extending the child's communication (Thompson, 2000)

During the early months of language development, before 19 months of age, more rapid language development has been observed in children where the mother follows, rather than attempts to redirect the focus of the child's attention. Building on studies carried out in the 1980s and 1990s, more recent longitudinal studies have provided further evidence of this. Markus, for example, followed 21 babies and their parents and found that language at age 18 months, and improved scores in standardized language assessments at 21 and 24 months, was related to observed earlier differences in the frequency, responsiveness and duration of infant-mothers joint attention episodes.

### **THE EMERGING PICTURE**

It is becoming increasingly clear that the more babies experience shared talk and activity, the more effective they become as communicators. This has been understood by practitioners who work with parents and young children for sometime and now research is able to demonstrate this, allowing the process to be understood and the impact of different kinds of interaction to be quantified. A large scale American study of 275 families of children aged 2-48 months recorded continuous periods of language which were then coded for analysis. The analyses presented make a strong case for the importance of mother-child conversational turns that children had with adult mothers was robustly and positively associated with scores on the preschool language scale indicating healthy language development.(stern,1985). Mothers with children of all ages can enhance their children's language by talking about interesting events daily and encouraging children to do the same. An elaborative style(including varying intonation, information about causes and effects, people's

motivations descriptions of objects and actions) is important for language development and for enhancing children's understanding of emotion and mind. Both the amount and type of talk are important. In particular, reminiscing about events is a particularly effective way of helping young children understand, and use, words. This involves a context that is personally meaningful, elaboration by the mother, the use of questions and explanations. Four particular aspects of an effective reminiscing style that can be employed by the mother include;

- Who –questions (who, what, where,)
- Associations (linking the event to the child's prior knowledge)
- Follow-ins (encouraging aspects of the conversation that the child is interested in)
- Evaluation (praise)

Aboutalebi et al (2014) carried out a study in Iran to evaluate the effect of a formal intervention to encourage conscious use of this approach. The intervention, designed for mothers of pre-school children, involved 40 mothers and their children aged 44-64 months. The procedure involved four stages: children's language pretests using the Wechsler preschool and primary scale of intelligence –revised, maternal training using a video describing the elaborative conversational style and event memory pretests for children, mother-child play involving a camping activity and subsequent event memory assessments following delay intervals of one day and three weeks. Compared with a control group of untrained mothers, the trained mothers used more who-questions and positive evaluations but there were no differences in follow-ins.

Mothers can further contribute to their children's speech development in the following additional ways:

### **Early years**

- Verbally responding to the baby's vocalizations
- Talking to the baby around six months used shared attention and sign language (gesture). Point and name things that they see. Uses exaggerated voice when you describe things. Use feeling words.
- Singing to the child from childhood until yet they ask you to stop.
- Have older children make up songs.
- Use songs to communicate things like time to go to bed, time to clean up etc.
- Making of songs that are silly or that communicate affirmations related to their positive qualities.

### **Older toddler and preschooler**

- Initiating conversations with the child related to recent events, what they are doing.
- Making up stories along with the child. Each contributes. This not only stimulates language but thinking, creating and a sense of humor.
- Gradually increasing the complexity of grammar and vocabulary used to communicate.
- Providing children with expanded information about events, things they see and how they feel.
- Reading interactively to engage their participation. Asking question, using dramatic inflections, letting them guess what will happen next, pointing to pictures and describing them, asking children due to do the same.

### **School Age and Beyond**

- Keeping the conversation going.
- Having family meetings.
- Having dinner together at the table and encouraging conversations. You can use “thorns & roses” by each family member sharing one thing that went wrong and one thing that went well during the day.
- After seeing a movie or TV show talk about what happened?
- Encourage reading. When they finish a book get their thoughts and feelings.

### **Chatting with children.**

Chatting with children is a great way to give them lots of examples of how we use words to share ideas and get information. The words mothers and other adults speak to children make up the language “input” that children need to learn new words and ideas. The more input mothers give children, the more opportunities children have to learn how to express themselves and understand what others are saying.

Research shows that more the words the mother speaks to children, the larger children’s vocabulary. When mothers promote back-and-forth conversations with children, children show greater complexity in their speech. Mothers should talk through or comment on routines (e.g. when washing hands, “we are washing hands. We are making lots of bubbles”). They should comment on children’s actions or objects and events. (e.g. “Billy is drawing with a red crayon”). They should also respond to infants’ nonverbal communication with words (e.g. “I see you reaching for the blocks. Would you like to play with the blocks?”). Additionally, mothers should ask questions and pause for answers, provide the answers for preverbal children and expand on children’s words (e.g. “I heard you say, ‘cheese’. Would you like to eat more cheese?”) (Mampe, 2009)

### **Commenting on actions and events**

Commenting on actions or events for children is a great way to give children examples of how to use speech in everyday routines and activities. Commenting involves the mother talking about what she is doing, seeing, or thinking about in the presence of the child. The mother may also describe what children are doing or seeing. This kind of talk provides children with examples of the kind of language that they used in everyday activities. Commenting on actions or events may also help the children learn and understand which words go with which actions.

Researchers’ shows that the more the mothers speak to children, the better language skills children develop. Mothers should therefore give detailed descriptions of what you or the child is seeing or doing, comment on daily routines like hand washing, eating, or diaper changing and model language for children by commenting on objects or events.

### **Varying the use of speech.**

Talking to children is one of the most important ways of adults can help them learn to communicate and develop strong language skills, by talking with them, adults provide children with language “input” that children can then use as models for how to talk. The more types of language input that children receive, the more their language skills can develop and grow over time. When adults “mix it up” by using lots of different types of words and grammar in their speech to children, children benefit by learning to use more complex and varied language.

Research shows that repeated and varied exposure to unfamiliar words, along with meaningful contexts. (E.g. pictures, verbal explanations) helps children learn new words. During playtime or mealtimes, the mother may introduce new vocabulary by using rare or uncommon words

(e.g. "I have a big appetite. I am eating a lot of food today!"). She can also give verbal explanations for the unfamiliar words.

### **Labeling**

Labeling an object or activity is one way of helping children learn the names of objects and actions in their world. When children hear adults use label for objects or actions, they have an opportunity to learn about how words are used and may be more likely to use the same words when trying to communicate with others. Mothers can help children learn the names of objects or activities by focusing on one object or activity at a time. Research shows when a mother labels or comments on an object upon which a child is focused, or focused together on one object, and the mother says the name of the object, children are more likely to learn the word for that object (Stern, 1985)

### **Tuning In**

Children are always curious about the world around them. Mothers can make the most of this natural curiosity by engaging children in conversations about the objects or activities that have captured their attention. By tuning in and talking to children about whatever is holding their attention, mothers have an opportunity to support children's speech and language development by responding to their interests.

Research shows that children whose mothers talk about what the child is focused on have more advanced vocabularies than children whose mothers try to redirect their attention. Notice on what the child is focused and ask open-ended questions like "what...?", "why....?" And "How...?" then pause for a response. Provide the answers for preverbal children. Provide information about the object or activity the child is focused on by commenting or describing the object or activity.

### **Reading with the child**

Sharing picture storybooks with children is one way to help them learn new words. Some of these books will become favorites that children will ask for again and again. Re-reading the same book multiple times helps children to learn new words.

When a mother reads a story to a child for the first time, children are faced with many tasks that may make paying attention to new words difficult. They need to focus on the plot, setting, characters and so forth. The second time a child hears a story they are more familiar with at and can begin to predict what was going to happen. After hearing a story many times, children can pay less attention to the other parts of the story and can focus their attention on the other details, like learning new words.

Research shows that the more often adults read to children, the better children's language skills. One encounter with a new word is not enough to support learning; children often need to hear words many times before learning them.

### **Recognizing problems in children's speech development.**

The following could help the mother in diagnosing children's speech developmental challenges:

- Look for poor eye contact and lack of attention and focus
- Listen to how they pronounce. Are they hard to understand?
- Can they understand simple directions?
- Are they having trouble with basic social skills?
- Does your child not seem to be interested in having you read to them?



- Do they repeat what you say or say the same thing over and over?
- Do they lack empathy for the feelings of others?
- Do they avoid conversations?
- Are they only interested in talking or reading about one subject?
- Is your preschooler not engaging in fantasy play? Do they lack a sense of humor?

### **CONCLUSION**

Evidence is now established and growing every year to show that mothers who are attuned to their baby promote their attachment and communications skills. The home learning environment, and in particular the communication environment, for babies and toddlers during the first 24 months influences their language acquisition and their performances at school entry. This in turn is later associated with their educational attainment. The communication environment is influenced with by the social-economic context of the family, with children in more disadvantaged families having fewer opportunities for language development. Research shows that what parents do with their children before they are three years old plays an important part in their development, having more of an effect, even than social background, on child's readiness for school. It is important that practitioners and parents are aware of the impact of parent-child communication and in particular the influence of the home learning and communication environment in the early years.

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