



Reach Out and Read related research

Hart, B. & Risley, T. (1995). Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing

OVERVIEW STUDY

- Longitudinal and intensive study on child language acquisition
- 42 families (13 professional, 10 middle class, 13 lower class, 3 welfare families) with newborns in Kansas City in 1980's
- Families visited monthly for 3 years (starting when the child was 10 months old), and all interactions between parent and child were recorded
- Data transcribed, coded and analyzed for child language development and parental communication style

RESULTS

OVERALL FINDINGS:

- All children started talking at approximately same time and developed good use of language
- Vast differences in vocabulary growth according to social class
- Size of each child's vocabulary correlated to number of words spoken by parents to child
- Differences between social classes in how language was used (e.g., professional families used more words of encouragement, praise and approval)

DIFFERENCES IN VOCABULARY BY SOCIAL CLASS:

- At age 3, children had vocabulary of:
 - 1,100 words in professional families
 - 750 words in working class families
 - 500 words in welfare families
- At age 3, children heard:
 - 30 million words in professional families
 - 20 million words in working class families
 - 10 million words in welfare families

DIFFERENCES IN VOCABULARY BY SOCIAL CLASS:

- Strong relationship found between children's IQ and their vocabularies
- Average IQ of children at age 3:
 - Professional families: 117
 - Working class families: 107
 - Welfare families: 79
- For 29 children observed when they were 1-2 years old, rate of vocabulary growth at age 3 was strongly related to receptive vocabulary and productive language scores at age 9-10

For more information, contact the Reach Out and Read National Center by phone at 617-455-0600, email at info@reachoutandread.org, or by writing to us at 56 Roland Street, Suite 100D, Boston, MA 02129-1243.

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