

## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the verbal interactions directed to toddlers within child care settings. The primary purpose of the study was to determine the quality of verbal interactions available to toddlers during natural, daily routines while attending child care; more specifically, to determine if a difference existed for toddlers developing typically versus those developing atypically. The participants included 36 toddlers (26 typical and 10 atypical) and 23 child care providers in four child care settings. Coded observations similar to those originally developed by Girolametto, Hoaken, Weitzman and Van Lieshout (2000a) in their work investigating patterns of adult-child interactions were utilized to gather the data. Data were gathered in naturally occurring daily routines such as free play, book sharing/reading, and gross motor/outdoor time.

Data were organized into three broad categories – directives, interaction-promoting, and language modeling – based upon contribution to language development. These three dependent variables were analyzed using a negative binomial regression model. Results indicated no significant group differences of quality of verbal interactions used by care providers with toddlers developing typically versus toddlers developing atypically. The predominant form of verbal interaction available to all toddlers was directive in nature, contributing very little to language development. Interaction-promoting forms of verbal interaction which contribute most to language production occurred the least. Supplemental analysis was completed regarding providers' degrees and years of experience related to utterance types used.

This research, although based on a small sample size, supports a concern for quality of verbal interactions and language stimulation available to toddlers in child care settings and has implications for school readiness and academic success.