

# Early Intervention Techniques for Toddlers with Language Delays: A review of Literature

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## **Abstract:**

*Speech and Language development is a very useful indicator of child's overall development and cognitive ability. Early language delay is common in toddlers with special needs. Language delay in toddlers is related to reading difficulties, persistent communication problems and lately poor academic outcomes. It is found that few early interventions techniques for toddlers with early language delays yield positive receptive and expressive language results. This study aimed to target on those manifold Early Intervention techniques for toddlers with language delays. This study a literature reviews of varied researches exhausted this area.*

**Key words:** Early intervention Techniques, Language Delays.

## **I. Introduction:**

Children grow and develop at their own rate. Although some children talk and walk in early years, others may be delayed in learning certain skills. Speech-language and hearing delays and other disorders in children can cause communication, socialization and learning problems that may go through into adulthood stage. Language is a very important skill that allows persons to communicate with each other. Development of the language starts even before a child use words. This can be seen as baby cries and explains her/his urges. It may cause frustration in child when she/he does not able communicate at all. This can be a result of language delay.

Early intervention is for children ages birth to 3 and their families. Early intervention is different for each child and family depending on the child's needs and the family's priorities. The most important step is to start early. Families and other professionals, including speech-language pathologists and audiologists, are part of an early intervention team. They help children develop skills such as

- cognitive skills (thinking, learning, problem-solving);
- communication skills (gesturing, talking, listening, understanding);
- physical and sensory skills (crawling, walking, climbing, seeing, hearing);
- social-emotional skills (playing, understanding feelings, making friends); and

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- adaptive or self-help skills (eating, bathing, dressing).

Roberts & Kaiser (2015) examined the early intervention for toddlers with language delays in a randomized control trial. The study sample consists of 97 children with the age between 24 to 42 months. These children randomly assigned to the caregiver implemented intervention and a usual care control group. The children and caregiver participated in 28 sessions in which caregivers were taught to implement the intervention. Results revealed that children who received intervention significantly better receptive language skills but not board expressive language skills.

Wards (2009) investigated the effectiveness of an early intervention method for delayed language development in young children. The study sample consists of 122 children detected language delayed in their first year, the mean age group was 10.6 (8-21) months. These children were divided in two groups, experimental and control. The experimental group received intervention until the children were 3 years of age. Results showed that at the age 3 years, 85% of the children in control group were language delayed while only 5% of the experimental group were language delayed.

Trevino-Zimmerman (2008) compared and analyzed the impact of early intervention programs on young children with speech and language delay. The sample of the study was children with mild and severe language delays from 18 to 36 months of age. Researcher compared the methods used at Center for Speech, Language, and Occupational Therapy in Fremount, California, US to those utilized by other programs. Domains which are considered for comparisons was curricula, program structure, philosophy, manners of measuring progress, age range of the children, ratio, diagnosis, period of treatment and parent participation. Results revealed that early intervention is found effective regardless various methods. (Trevino-Zimmerman, 2008)rt

## **II. Importance of early language development**

1. Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, Ph.D. conducted longitudinal study and analyzed parent child talk. In their study they have cited,

- The variation in children's IQs and language abilities is relatively to the amount of parents talk to their children.
- Child's academic success at the age nine and ten are attributed to the amount of talk they hear from birth to age three.
- They also concluded that parents of advanced children talk significantly more to their children than parents of children who are not as advanced. There data revealed that most important aspects of children's language experience is its amount.
- Feinstein & Duckworth (2006) cited that children who start school with more advanced oral language skills better come to learn to read successfully. When the child moves through the school, vocabulary at age five years is a very strong predictor of the qualifications achieved at school leaving age and beyond.

○ While the importance developing language early is widely acknowledged, children from low-income backgrounds lag behind their high-income counterparts on vocabulary skills by up to 16 months on entry into the school system. (Waldfoegel and Washbrook)

○ Language is the foundation for all social interactions. With developed language children tend to have more friendly and confident. Without proper language development children face problems to communicate and that can cause frustration both for you as a parent, but more importantly for your child.

○ Language Development also affects other developments. It affects brain and cognitive development. Many studies have shown that having a large vocabulary increases child's creativity and helps to come up with new constructive ideas.

### III. Early Identification screening of language delays/disorders

Language difficulties linked with other wider problems. Speech-language and hearing delays and disorders in children can lead to learning, communication, socialization, emotional problems that may persist into adulthood. Language is comprised of the words that we use to share thoughts and get what we need. Language incorporates understanding, speaking, reading and writing. A child with a language disorder issue may experience difficulty with at least one of these abilities.

Some early signs of language problems may include:

Birth–3 months	Not smiling or playing with others
4–7 months	Not babbling
7–12 months	Making only a few sounds. Not using gestures, like waving or pointing.
7 months–2 years	Not understanding what others say
12–18 months	Saying only a few words
1½–2 years	Not putting two words together
2 years	Saying fewer than 50 words

2–3 years	Having trouble playing and talking with other children
2½–3 years	Having problems with early reading and writing. For example, your child may not like to draw or look at books.

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Strategies of expand language skills are

- Imitating: At the age of 4 child start to babble, but for language delayed children it may be delayed, so you can babble speaking words like, mama for mother, nana for banana etc. Imitating children's sounds and words shows them that they are being heard and approved. It promotes and encourages them to speak.
- Listening: Before talking comes listening. It is very crucial part. Therefore, we have to be patient while listening to the child and responding to what your child says. Such as, ask some toys to bring to you, ask child what he wants? Engage children in listening exercises as much as you can.
- Speaking: Language is receptive and expressive both. It is therefore listening carefully, receiving accurate information and processing in the form of speaking is vital. Therefore, we can't ignore speaking skills such as, simpler words and shorter sentences. Vocal production (volume, clarity and variety) should also be taken care of. Using facial expressions and eye contact for nonverbal communication to be develop.
- Interpreter: Children with language delayed at first few years may unable to communicate, for every small effort of yours will be a very big milestone in child's later language development period. So, when a child gestures or point out whatever he/she wants you can interpret it by using it in whole sentence, for eg. Childs point out a toy and you can interpret it by saying, oh, my son (name of the son) wants toy. You can also take it further, what my son (name of the son) wants to play with this toy today?
- Commenting and describing: As we have already discussed that listening comes first than speaking. Therefore, doing commentary and describing what child is doing is also very important.
- Contingent responses: Respond immediately to all the attempts to communicate. Contingent responses bring child to understand how much communication is important.
- Label things: Even when children aren't ready to use words yet, you can prepare and label things which are in their environment. Such as, for snack time you can label it with child's favorite snack item.
- Plays: Play has always been called 'the work of the children' because of play that children learn to how to interact with environment. At this time only they discover their interests, acquire speech – language, motor, cognitive and social-emotional skills. (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2007). Play helps a develop social skills, language and communication, build confidence and self-esteem, develop physical skills, learn about caring for others and the environment. Connect and refine pathways in their brain, it provides strong foundation for learning, supports in social and emotion development etc. We can introduce various games such as I Spy (Hide something and tell child, I Spy car/teddy bear), talk to me (use any model like phone).

- Expanding and recasting: Be a model and expander. If Child takes name of something: eg. “Car”, you expand it, “Yes, it’s a car”, next time child says “car”, you expand “Go, car, go!” or “It goes fast” take this conversation to as far as possible.

- Talking: Talking to children with language delay is very important part. Greeting child by saying ‘hello and goodbye, take care’; informing him by saying ‘I am going to get a cookie’; demanding by saying ‘give me that book’; promising by saying ‘I am going get you a cookie’; requesting by saying ‘I want a that toy, please’ will do the magic. Don’t use difficult words, use simple sentences. Use longer sentences as the child gets older. Slowly you can use different words then difficult words.

- Reading together: Reading a story book can help for children with language delay. Grandma’s/Bed time story fascinating for every child. Reading half story and asking child to guess what happened next can be done to develop language skills.

- Socializing: Allowing your child to play with other children. Playing with peer group brings acceptance, confidence, builds trust, mutual respect, physical health and development in other crucial domains, such as cognitive, emotional etc.

- Singing: Singing a favorite song of your child or singing poems, nursery rhymes helps child to croon along with you.

- Create opportunities: Engaging children in listening and then responding will take a lot of effort. Therefore, it is suggested to create lots of opportunities for children to explore new words, understand their meaning. This can be explored through reading story books, playing, letting them socializing with peer group.

- Patience: All applying and still not finding any results will make you and child frustrated. Therefore, it is recommended to have immense patience along with applying all the activities.

- Praise and Reinforcements: Praise makes miracles happen. So, keep praising even the small effort of your child. Every small recognition can make child to try for more.

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#### **IV. Conclusion:**

The focus of this paper was to unfold the various early intervention techniques for toddlers with language delays. Based on the above cited research, it appears that Speech and language is very crucial for various developmental domains such as cognitive, emotional, social and adaptive or self-help. Some of the common causes of speech and language delay includes Intellectual Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Hearing Disability and Sensory Integration Disorder. In order to promote initial speech and language acquisition and minimize the delays associated with such disorders, early intervention is thus strongly recommended.

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