

HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

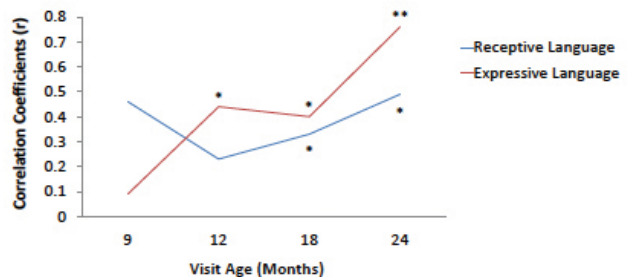
Agreement Between Parent Questionnaires and Examiner Observations of Toddler Language Skills

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Parent-report questionnaires index child development. However, it is unclear if parent reports capture the same information gleaned from examiner observations. This study investigated the correlations between parent reports and examiner observations when infants/toddlers were 9, 12, 18, and 24 months of age. Data from 48 families were utilized for this exploratory study. The examiners observed child receptive and expressive language using the Mullen Scales of Early Learning (MSEL) and parents answered a series of questions about their child's language skills on the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Questionnaire (VABS). Examiner and parent scores were converted into age-equivalent scores to provide comparable scaling. Using bivariate correlations our results indicate that for expressive language, parents and examiners are not capturing comparable developmental information at 9 months of age, but at 12, 18, and 24 months of age parent reports and examiner observations become more closely aligned. For receptive language, parent reports and examiner observations follow a similar pattern. Parent-examiner agreement grew significantly from 9 to 24 months ($z = 1.91, p < .05$) when assessing expressive language, but this growth in agreement was not apparent for receptive language. With replication, this exploratory study provides support for the use of parent-report

indices when children are older (18 or 24 months of age). The lack of consensus between parents and examiners could reflect several factors, including differences in test content, reporter knowledge of early language skills, and contextual differences in child behavior. Additional research is warranted to elucidate the mechanisms behind these differences.

Research advisor A. J. Schwichtenberg writes, "Clinical assessments of children often include a standardized developmental assessment and a parent-report of adaptive functioning. Agreement between these information sources varies across child development. Macaela's research project illuminated these developmental differences and provides the ground work for further moderation testing."



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Correlations between parent reports and examiner observations at 9, 12, 18, and 24 months of age.

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