

# Observation Guide 2: The child's stage of language development

This Observation Guide will help you identify:

- ♦ the child's stage of language development based on how and why s/he communicates (expressive language) and what s/he understands (receptive language), and
- ♦ her/his ability to engage in social interactions.

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age at time of this observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's first language: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's ability to speak English (if child is verbal): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## For Discoverers and Communicators (before language develops)

### A. How often and for what reasons the child communicates

Observe the child in many different situations over a period of days to see **how often** s/he communicates for the reasons listed below. Remember – Discoverers do not yet communicate intentionally. Caregivers have to **interpret** why they are communicating.

WHY ▼	HOW OFTEN ►	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
To protest					
To request an object or action					
To request a social routine					
To call for attention					
To respond to you when you talk to her/him					
To request comfort					
To show off or draw attention to self					
To draw attention to people, things, or events (comment)					
To label (says a word, use a picture or sign)					
To request information (by using questioning intonation)					

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## B. The child's stage of language development

When the child communicates, note **how** s/he sends her/his message and **why** s/he is communicating – then check the column where the HOW and WHY intersect.

<b>WHY</b> <hr/> <b>HOW</b>	To protest	To request an object or action	To request a social routine	To call for attention	To respond to you when you talk to her/him	To request comfort	To show off or draw attention to self	To draw attention to people, things (comment)	To label (uses a word, picture, or sign)	To request information (by using questioning intonation)
<b>Discoverer *</b> Cries, fusses Looks Smiles Makes vowel-like sounds or a variety of consonant and vowel sounds Changes pitch/loudness of voice Makes body movements Changes facial expressions Laughs Reaches/moves towards <b>Communicator</b> Looks at person to make eye contact Points Gestures (e.g., waves, shakes head) Pantomimes (acts out what s/he wants to say) Combines pointing, eye contact, and making sounds Makes sounds that have special meaning Uses single words										

\* Remember – you need to interpret for the Discoverer.

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Chapter 2 – The Stages of Language Development: Talking Takes Time

### **C. How the child interacts**

- makes sounds to take turns back and forth
- has a definite interest in getting your attention
- is easily engaged when you play games like Peek-a-Boo
- initiates games like Peek-a-Boo and Pat-a-Cake
- draws attention to her/himself and to things in the environment
- can share your focus and get you to attend to what s/he's interested in by using eye contact, sounds, gestures, and actions and by pointing
- interacts with you during play with toys

### **Summary of observations for Discoverers and Communicators**

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**a) Child is a:**

- Discoverer
- Communicator

**b) Her/his ability to communicate and take turns seems to be:**

- above age level
- at age level
- slightly below age level
- well below age level

**Comments:**

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## **For First Words Users, Combiners, and Early and Later Sentence Users (after language develops)**

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### **A. How the child communicates (expressive language)**

**The child speaks using:**

- single words
- two-word sentences
- three-plus-word sentences
- long, complex sentences

**The child's grammar seems to be:**

- at age level
- a little below her/his age level
- quite delayed

**The child uses the following kinds of questions:**

- statements with a rising intonation (e.g., "I have some?")
- Where, What, and Who questions
- Why questions
- When, How questions
- no questions heard

### **B. Why the child communicates**

**The child uses language to:**

- make requests
- talk about the here-and-now
- talk about the here-and-now, as well as past and future events
- think, plan, negotiate, and imagine
- tell stories

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## **C. What the child understands (receptive language)**

### **The child can understand:**

- a few words that label familiar people and objects
- a fairly large number of words and simple directions (without any gestures or clues)
- many different ideas and concepts, two-part directions, and short stories
- abstract concepts, complex questions, stories with a plot

## **D. How the child interacts**

### **Your conversations with the child:**

- are difficult to keep going and rarely last for more than one or two turns
- last longer when the child initiates them
- are very short, but s/he will respond to your comments/questions
- last for about three or four turns each, and longer if s/he initiated the conversation
- can go on for quite a long time

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## Summary of observations for First Words Users, Combiners, and Early and Later Sentence Users

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**a) Child is a:**

- First Words User
- Combiner
- Early Sentence User
- Later Sentence User

**b) How the child communicates (expressive language) seems to be:**

- above age level
- at age level
- slightly below age level
- well below age level

**c) Understanding (receptive language) seems to be:**

- above age level
- at age level
- slightly below age level
- well below age level

**d) Social interaction seems to be:**

- above age level
- at age level
- slightly below age level
- well below age level

**Comments:**

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