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Early Childhood Research Quarterly

Volume 10, Issue 3, September 1995, Pages 317-337

Age-related differences in the organization of parent-infant interactions during picture-book reading

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[https://doi.org/10.1016/0885-2006\(95\)90010-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0885-2006(95)90010-1)

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Abstract

These observations indicate how the organization of book reading events differs when middle- to upper-class suburban parents read picture books to preverbal and verbal infants. Twelve parent-infant dyads for each group of 9-, 17-, and 27-month-old infants were videotaped in their homes. On each of three visits, two different books were read. The books either contained sentences describing the illustrations or did not contain any sentences. The quality of parent verbalizations changed with the age of the infant; parents reading to younger infants used more attention-recruiting verbalizations and more elaborations, whereas parents reading to older infants used more questions and more feedback. Analyses of sequential dependencies between categories of behaviors suggest that, across these age groups, parents monitor and attempt to maximize their infants' attention to the book. Parents' verbalizations expand from labeling comments,

to sequences of labeling questions, to dialogues that exercise the growing linguistic competencies of the infant. Finally, interactions with books containing no sentences led to more verbal behaviors by the parent and more vocalizations by the infant.



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† Data collection and analysis were supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada grant to Edward H. Cornell. We thank Wanda Rowat and Joelle Malan for their assistance with data transcription.

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