

Independent Research Project:

Training Caregivers to Respond to the Cries of Neonates and Language Outcomes

I was first introduced to the idea of a baby language when I was given a DVD titled “The Dunstan Baby Language” by Priscilla Dunstan at my 1st son’s baby shower. I watched the DVD and learned the 5 distinct types of baby cries that were a result of reflexes in the 0-3-month stage. I was able to listen and distinguish my newborn’s cries, making me feel more competent as a mother and cut down on excessive crying (or colic). When I had my second son, I knew right away how to understand his cues, which made parenting a newborn and a toddler at the same time much easier.

I was taught in my child language development course that vocalizations of a newborn are “vegetative” and lack meaning or organization. I asked my professor about the Dunstan Baby Language, but she had never heard of it. That’s when the question arose in my mind: “Is this baby language real or was it another commercial product aimed to relieve exhausted parents?”. I have always enjoyed researching and finding credible sources to find my answers. I discovered Dr. Barry Lester and Dr. Linda Lagasse of Brown University created a research protocol to test the legitimacy of this baby language but had never conducted the research. The only research I found done on the system measured the level of relief parents experienced when learning the system.

My next question was: “If this baby language creates a quality bond between parent and child, what are the language outcomes?”. This is the question I seek to answer with this research project. I would like to understand how being “in-tune” and understanding your babies cries affects the onset and proficiency in language. I reached out to the company, and the CEO granted me free access to their instructor course which I have recently completed. I would like to teach parents this system to measure the long-term development of language in their children. This line of research is a good fit with my interests in Early Intervention and working with children ages 0-5 years as a speech-language pathologist.

List of Readings

Dunstan Baby Language (n.d.) Our Research. Retrieved from:

<http://www.dunstanbaby.com/our-research/>

Dunstan, P. (2012) *Calm the Crying: The Secret Baby Language That Reveals the Hidden*

Meaning Behind an Infant's Cry. New York, Penguin

Lester, B., Boukydis, Z., García-Coll, C. (1995) Developmental outcome as a function of the

goodness of fit between the infant's cry characteristics and the mother's perception of

her infant's cry. *Pediatrics*. 95.4 (Apr. 1995): p516+.