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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY</th>
<th>HOW OFTEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To protest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To request an object or action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To request a social routine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To call for attention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To respond to you when you talk to her/him</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To request comfort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show off or draw attention to self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To draw attention to people, things, or events (comment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To label (says a word, use a picture or sign)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To request information (by using questioning intonation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note: All Observation Guide pages may be photocopied.

© Hanen Early Language Program, 2011. All rights reserved.
Learning Language and Loving It
**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cries, fusses</td>
<td>To protest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiles</td>
<td>To request an object or action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes vowel-like sounds or a variety of consonant and vowel sounds</td>
<td>To request a social routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes pitch/loudness of voice</td>
<td>To call for attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes body movements</td>
<td>To respond when you talk to her/him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughs</td>
<td>To show off or draw attention to self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaches/moves towards</td>
<td>To show off or draw attention to people, things (comment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks at person to make eye contact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestures (e.g., waves, shakes, head)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantomimes (acts out what s/he wants to say)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combines pointing, eye contact, and making sounds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes sounds that have special meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses single words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Please note: All Observation Guide pages may be photocopied.

© Hanen Early Language Program, 2011. All rights reserved.

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

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

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

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: