

GENDER INFLUENCES IN THE COMMUNICATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF MALAY INFANTS

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This study is designed to look at gender influences and to develop a preliminary normative data that can be used to assess early communicative development in Malaysian children of Malay origin. This study was conducted on 62 Malay children aged 12 and 18 months residing in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and the state of Selangor. The assessments were made by parental reports using the *Senarai Perkembangan Komunikasi* MacArthur, an adapted Malay version of the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventories using a cross-sectional design. Gender-based norms for understanding of phrases, vocabulary comprehension, vocabulary production and use of actions and gestures were described at the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th and 90th percentile levels. No significant gender differences were found when a statistical analysis was done on the different age groups. However, individual items in vocabulary comprehension and gestures recorded significant differences between genders, with males scoring higher than females. Composition of semantic categories and early lexical composition were also discussed. The results for the semantic categories revealed that by age 18 months, children started to produce more words in more semantic categories than the 12-months old. The results of the early lexical composition showed that 'sound effect and animal sounds' had the highest mean score in vocabulary comprehension for both male and female 12-months old children. 'Verbs' were found to be acquired first before 'nouns' or 'sound effects' in the vocabulary comprehension of 18 months old children. In vocabulary production however, the first semantic category to be acquired was the 'sound effect and animal sounds' category for both age groups.

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