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Preterm children`s language abilities at different ages and their relations with other factors

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During the last few years the number of studies of language development in preterm children (PR) has had an surprising increment. Over time, the results of longitudinal studies carried out with PR children have offered interesting information on which factors play a determinant role in language acquisition. However, the panorama of studies is not without controversy. There have been differences in the research findings among investigations, probably due to differences in the characteristics of the samples studied.

The present symposium tries to go more deeply into the knowledge of oral and written language development of PR children and those factors which affect it.

The papers focus on children with different characteristics in terms of degree of prematurity, and age of assessment. In some cases, the data come from longitudinal studies which are still in progress.

The papers represent complementary and differing perspectives. The aim of the symposium is to stimulate discussion on the topic.

Presenters:

1. Bosch, L., Teixidó, M., Solé, J. (University of Barcelona)

2. Astra Schults & Tiia Tulviste (University of Tartu)

3. Miguel Pérez-Pereira (University of Santiago de Compostela), Manuel Peralbo & Alberto Veleiro (University of A Coruña)

4. Annalisa Guarini, Paola Bonifacci, Valentina Tobia, Mariangela D'Antuono, Nicole Trambagioli, Felicia Roga, Margherita Barbieri, Alessandra Sansavini (University of Bolonia)

1. Early word segmentation and mapping in preterm infants: data from an audiovisual task

Bosch, L., Teixidó, M., Solé, J.

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Typically-developing Spanish- and Catalan-learning infants can extract two simple (monosyllabic) word-forms from fluent speech by six months of age. However, when infants born preterm were tested with the same paradigm it was not until eleven months of age (corrected for gestation) that this auditory-only task could reliably be solved. At that age, preterm participants were eventually showing the expected novelty preference at test, the preference pattern found in younger full term infants (8-month-olds). Because an early ability to segment speech and extract possible words to be linked to referents is fundamental in the process of building a first lexicon, we decided to further analyze these segmentation and mapping abilities in a population of healthy preterm infants. Results from a sample of moderate preterm infants (33.8 mean gestation weeks) will be reported, as performance on the auditory-only task by a previously tested moderate preterm group had revealed clear gains in segmentation between 8 and 11 months of age. An audiovisual task was designed using natural language utterances in infant-directed speech, containing repetitions of two different words, and simple geometrical shapes as referents for these words. Critically, during familiarization the