# Communication Development During Infancy

# Lauren B. Adamson

Georgia State University



# CONTENTS

### Preface xi

# 1 The Communicating Infant: An Historical Introduction 1

The Confused Infant 2
The Competent Infant 3
Methodological Contributions 4
Heuristic Theories 5
Piaget's Sensorimotor Infant 6
Expanding the Piagetian Sphere 8
The Communicating Infant 10
The Empirical Study of Early Communication Development 13
About This Book 13

# 2 Theoretical Foundations for the Study of Communication Development 15

Definitions of Development 16
Development as a Predictable Sequence 16
Development as a Systematic Pattern of Change 19
Images of Communication 21
Communication as Communion 22
Communication as Transmission 25
Communication as Education 28
A Schematic View of Early Communication Development 31
Four Phases of Early Communication Development 32
Themes and Variations 35

3	A Scientific Stance toward Infants 38
	Adopting a Scientific Stance 38
	Ways of Observing 42
	Naturalistic Observation 43
	Systematic Observation 44
	Experimental Manipulation 46
	The Interplay between Observation and Experimentation 48
4	Shared Attentiveness 52
	Newborns as Expressive Communicators 53
	Newborns' Expressions within the Matrix of States 54
	Adults' Contributions to Newborns' Expressions 54
	Expressions of Distress 56
	Expressions of Availability 63
	Summary: The Newborn as an Expressive
	Communicator 65
	Newborns as Receptive Communicators 65
	Social Preadaptation 66
	Infant-modified Adult Expressions 69
	Preference for Familiar Social Events 71
	Amodal Perceptual Experiences 74
	Summary: The Newborn as a Recentive Communicator 77

The Communicative Channel between Newborns and Others 77

Establishing the Communicative Channel 78
Complementary Contributions to
Communicative Contact 79

Summary: The Communicative Channel 82

Theme and Variation: Attention and Prematurity 82
The Priority of Biology 83

Preparation Past and Future 85

# 5 Interpersonal Engagement 86

Changes in Infants' Communicative Competence 87
Infants' New Communicative Expressions 88
Infants' Emerging Receptive Competence 92
Caregivers as Communicative Partners 100
The Flowering of Infant-Modified Acts 101
Explaining Adult Modifications 104
Summary: Infant-Modified Communicative Acts 105

Within Episodes of Interpersonal Engagement 105
Infants' Attention Modulation 105
Reciprocity and Synchrony 108
Summary: Studies of Interpersonal Engagement 116
Theme and Variation: Affect and Maternal Depression 116
The Sharing of Affect 117
Turning Outward toward Objects 119

## 6 Joint Object Involvement 121

Infants' Object-focused Messages Coordinating Attention between People and Objects Coordinating Affective Expressions and Object Involvement 127 From Acts on Objects to Gestures about Objects 132 Summary: Developing Ways to Communicate about Objects 142 Adults' Contributions to Joint Object Involvement Aspects of Adults' Assistance A Broader View of Adults' Contributions Summary: Supporting Shared Interest in Objects 149 Structuring Object-focused Communication Managing Communication about Objects Explaining the Onset of Joint Object Involvement Summary: Arranging Object-focused Communication Theme and Variation: Object Interest and Developmental Disorders 157 The Centrality of Infants' Interests A Source for the Communicative Code

# 7 The Emergence of the Symbolic Code 161

Infants' Approach to Language 162
Toward the Production of Words 162
Toward the Comprehension of Words 174
Alternative Views 179
Adults' Presentation of the Code 184
Adults' Speech to Infants 185
The Effect of Adults' Adjustments 186
Symbolic Communication as a Collective Activity 190
Continuities with Presymbolic Communication 190
Patterns for Dialogues 191

Theme and Variation: Symbolic Codes and Deafness 195
Communication and Conventions 195
Toward Community and Conversations 199

References 201

Index 233