

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
LINGUISTIC CREATIVENESS OF A CHILD

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(Abstract)

Children often invent languages. Sometimes this linguistic creativeness begins quite early. It is usually explained by a desire to be able to conceal some facts or thoughts within a given group from outsiders. However, observations made on a little boy, A., tend to show, that, besides the element of mystery, linguistic creativeness may also be due to the interest in phonetics and word study, and to a general interest in speech conventions.

The little boy A. showed interest in phonetics in his fortieth month, when he began to compare similarly sounding words of different meaning and when he also spontaneously began to divide words into syllables and sounds and to delight in this "game".

At five years two months he was intensely interested in comparing words on the basis of sound and discovered in several instances the peculiar role some letters play.

His linguistic creativeness asserted itself first at the age of three year and four months, when he invented his Modified English language, consistently changing English words by substituting some one consonant for their initials. He continued this practice, in playful mood, quite long, and was still using his Modified English at the age of five years seven months.

At four he insisted on using signs instead of speech very often and invented many signs, but was greatly discouraged by his parents and directly forbidden to use this means of communication. Yet, he was tempted to use signs even at five years seven months.

At five years four months he invented his "Nonsense language" mere babbling, in which he delighted and which was supposed to be the language of Nonsense City.

List of words invented by A. for his Nonsense language:

1. Quah-quah (yes);
2. Bondee (no);
3. Squeemedy (name of one of his drawings);
4. Buttonbee (imaginary insect);
5. Squanazero (another drawing);
6. Mannedy—again a drawing;
7. Deebuddy (drawing once more);
8. Seventyo (a magic square with a seven in it);
9. Chalkten (a game);
10. Mirrorbird—an imaginary creature;
11. Vee-vee (thank you);
12. Pick-peck (see);
13. Chic'er-chick (come);
14. Prrrr (kitty).