

**NEWS RELEASE:**

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**Talk Early, Talk Often to Boost Toddler Language Skills**

**November 19, 2009, Boulder, CO** – University of Kansas researchers Betty Hart, Ph.D., and Todd R. Risley, Ph.D., toiled for years with old-fashioned tape recorders and manual transcription methods to gather the data they needed to show a correlation between the amount of language a child is exposed to before age three and increased IQ and academic success in later years. These technological constraints limited their data gathering ability to an in-house observer recording one hour of language per month from children 10 months of age or older.

However, leading researchers in language development have transcended these limitations with the new LENA System from the not-for-profit LENA Foundation. "The LENA System enabled us to expand on Hart and Risley's seminal work," says Judy K. Montgomery, Ph.D., who is co-presenting "Infants Around More Adult Talk Become Toddlers with Better Language Skills" on November 19 at the 2009 ASHA Convention. "This study validates their original claims and suggests that—amazingly—what you say to children before they are even talking can make a significant impact on their development."

The LENA System features the LENA Digital Language Processor (DLP), a small, lightweight recording device worn at a child's chest level to facilitate the acquisition of up to 16 hours of high-quality data from a child's natural language environment. Empowered with this technology, the LENA Foundation undertook a three-year longitudinal study. From this study, researchers took a subset of full-day recordings of 26 children from the 2-6 month period through to the 24-34 month period. The PLS-4, a commonly used SLP-administered assessment focusing on receptive and expressive language skills, was administered at each of these two phases.

The results showed that the average adult world counts that a child was exposed to during the 2-6 month period correlated strongly with considerable increases in scores on the PLS-4 at the 24-34 month period.

Not only do these results help validate the claims of Drs. Hart and Risley, they also emphasize the important role that early language screening and intervention should play in optimizing early childhood language development.

"We're very excited with these findings," says co-presenter Jill Gilkerson, Ph.D. "We believe that the more language children are exposed to early in life, the better off they will be cognitively, socially, and emotionally."

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## **About LENA Foundation**

The LENA Foundation develops advanced technology for the early screening, research, and treatment of language delays and disorders in young children. Philanthropists Terrance "Terry" Paul and Judith "Judi" Paul formed the not-for-profit organization through a multimillion-dollar gift. Over a five-year period, the foundation created the LENA (Language ENvironment Analysis) System, the world's first automatic language collection and analysis tool and the foundation's principal technology. The foundation employs a team of scientists and engineers skilled in computerized speech and speaker recognition, microelectronics, statistical research, and children's language acquisition and development; they are dedicated to helping the foundation enhance language development worldwide.