



Language of silence : an ethnographic case study of the expressive language skills of preschool Native American girls  
by Arlene Marie Hett

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education  
Montana State University  
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**Abstract:**

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to describe the expressive language characteristics of the preschool Native American girl. Additionally, the study investigated whether (a) these characteristics are specific to this population as compared to the Anglo children in the Head Start program, (b) these characteristics are gender specific, and (c) these characteristics handicap the preschool Native American girl when she enters a formal education program.

The study was conducted in the Head Start programs in Great Falls, Montana, and Havre, Montana. An ethnographic case study method was combined with quantitative test scores. Data were gathered through observation and interview as well as through analysis of test scores. The Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test was administered to 179 children at the two sites. The research was developed and carried out during the fall and winter of 1991-1992. There were 51 Native American children in the study with 21 being female Native Americans.

The findings revealed that there are distinct language patterns of female Native American speakers. The observations indicated that Native American girls speak less than the other groups of children. The interviews revealed that the Native American mothers described their daughters as "shy." The test scores showed a significant difference between the scores of Native American students and Anglo students, between Native American girls and Anglo boys, and, most significantly, between Native American girls and Anglo girls.

LANGUAGE OF SILENCE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY  
OF THE EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE SKILLS OF  
PRESCHOOL NATIVE AMERICAN GIRLS

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Education

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This thesis has been read by each member of the author's committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to describe the expressive language characteristics of the preschool Native American girl. Additionally, the study investigated whether (a) these characteristics are specific to this population as compared to the Anglo children in the Head Start program, (b) these characteristics are gender specific, and (c) these characteristics handicap the preschool Native American girl when she enters a formal education program.

The study was conducted in the Head Start programs in Great Falls, Montana, and Havre, Montana. An ethnographic case study method was combined with quantitative test scores. Data were gathered through observation and interview as well as through analysis of test scores. The Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test was administered to 179 children at the two sites. The research was developed and carried out during the fall and winter of 1991-1992. There were 51 Native American children in the study with 21 being female Native Americans.

The findings revealed that there are distinct language patterns of female Native American speakers. The observations indicated that Native American girls speak less than the other groups of children. The interviews revealed that the Native American mothers described their daughters as "shy." The test scores showed a significant difference between the scores of Native American students and Anglo students, between Native American girls and Anglo boys, and, most significantly, between Native American girls and Anglo girls.

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

In 1990, the Secretary of Education, Dr. Cavazos, stated at the first meeting of the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force that "of all the ethnic groups in the country, Native American students have the highest dropout rate" (Indian Nations at Risk, 1991). The dropout rate in 1989 was 36 percent for Native American students (National Center for Education Statistics, 1989). According to Dr. Cavazos, the work of the task force was part of the national education restructuring strategy. As such, he hoped that members of the task force would review the national education goals jointly with the President and the governors of the states as a guide for their efforts. The first two goals were that by the year 2000 (a) every child will start school ready to learn and (b) the graduation rate will increase to 90 percent nationally (Governor's Conference, 1990).

Educational leaders in our increasingly pluralistic society realized that those two goals would be difficult to achieve. With minorities expected to compose 40 percent of the public school population by the end of 1990 (Nelson-Barber, 1990), the failure of many school districts

to educate poor and minority students was a major concern. To increase the graduation rate in the nation, students from diverse backgrounds and cultures would all need to be studied.

One of the serious problems confronting Native American leaders is that Native Americans as a whole have achieved one of the lowest educational levels among all ethnic groups and are not doing well while attending school. This educational problem has in the past attracted little academic analysis, and, therefore, ethnic and racial stereotypings are often used as theoretical explanations of the problem (Lin, 1985).

School Administrators have been faced with the problem of how to keep Native American students in school. The growing number of potential dropouts in schools near Indian reservations had these administrators and teachers searching to discover culturally relevant teaching techniques (Indian Nations at Risk, 1990).

Several studies focused on language skills of Native American children. Susan Phillips's study on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation (1974) looked at communication in classroom and community with a major portion of her work comparing Native American and Anglo communication behavior in classroom interaction. In Alaska, James Connelly (1985) studied receptive and expressive vocabularies of young Native American children. His major premise was that

Native American children tended to attain relatively low scores on tests which assessed verbal skills and attained at least average scores on tests which assessed nonverbal skills.

Native American children demonstrated unique patterns of interpersonal communication (Phillips, 1983).

In the white culture where the children are punished by their parents, who love their children and are loved by them, the children eventually internalize the moral voices of their parents and are controlled by this internal voice of conscience. In other tribes (Zuni, Navajo) the children are warned, when they are naughty, that people will talk about them. Or they are warned of punishment by supernatural beings. They may be threatened or even whipped by a stranger who is asked to do this. Thus much of the children's experience of punishment comes from outside the home and comes from persons whom they do not love. Morally controlling forces remain in the outside world, as far as these children are concerned, and they grow up without much inner moral control. This may result in their being excessively bashful as children and exceedingly subject to the pressure of public opinion (Havighurst & Neugarten, 1955, pp. 78-79).

Havighurst and Neugarten (1955) went on to say that community members play a greater part in producing both pleasant and unpleasant emotions in Native American children. This indicated that people in the Native American community outside the family had greater power to influence the emotions of the children as compared to the Anglo family where disapproval and discipline are accomplished within the family.

There appeared to be patterns which were also gender specific to females. It has been posited that these female communication patterns have been passed on from one generation to the next through both formal and informal activities (Cazden, 1972).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to describe the expressive language characteristics of the preschool Native American girl. This population was selected because the Native American dropout rate, 36 percent, was the highest in our nation (National Center for Education Statistics, 1989). Additionally, the study investigated whether (a) these characteristics are specific to this population as compared to the Anglo children in the Head Start program, (b) these characteristics are gender specific, and (c) these characteristics handicap the preschool Native American girl when she enters a formal education program. These language characteristics were studied using both qualitative and quantitative measures. By using the triangulation process, both descriptive and explanatory data were gathered. Triangulation is the combination of two or more different research strategies in the study of the same empirical units (Wiersma, 1986).

The researcher's experiences as an early childhood teacher and reading specialist have provided her with many

opportunities to work with Native American girls. It was the researcher's observation that many teachers were unaware of the unique characteristics of the Native American girl's language skills. An educational need existed for early childhood teachers to have this information. To meet this need, an educator's monograph was developed to assist Head Start teachers and others working in early childhood settings.

#### Research Questions

Research questions addressed by this study were:

1. What are the expressive language characteristics of the preschool Native American girl?
2. Are these characteristics specific to this population as compared to the Anglo children in the Head Start program?
3. Are these characteristics gender specific?
4. Do these characteristics handicap the preschool Native American girl when she enters a formal education program?

#### Significance of the Study

Although the body of Native American research continues to grow, there continues to be a dearth of research concerning the expressive language skills of preschool Native American girls. These girls must be included in the nation's educational goals if the dropout

rate for all children is to be seriously examined. Because Native American students have the highest dropout rate in the United States (36 percent), a closer look must be taken to understand what causes this statistic (National Center for Education Statistics, 1989). This study provides an important contribution to Native American research as well as to the body of research which focuses on expressive language.

Many school districts compete for state and federal funds for bilingual programs for their students who exhibit language problems. This study may assist those districts with a large Native American population should they decide to start a bilingual program. Considering the flow of research in the area of language and compensatory programs during the past several decades, educators must evaluate and revamp these programs (Indian Nations at Risk, 1991). This study provided more information concerning Native American girls' eligibility for bilingual classes. In a state with twelve Native American tribes, whose members represented about 6 percent of the state population, bilingual programs made sense, and yet few such programs existed (Dodd, 1989).

The ways in which language is passed down from one generation to the next varies from culture to culture. This study may provide educators with additional knowledge concerning how preschool Native American girls are expected

to use language. Through interviews with preschool teachers, these teacher expectations may be revealed. This study may lead to new teaching methods for educators who work with preschool Native American girls. Methods could be explored to develop verbal skills and increase participation among Native American students, such as accepting short or non-verbal responses, presenting multiple choice tasks, and giving visual clues.

In the area of assessment, educators searched for new ways to measure children's school success. Educational practice dictated that a large proportion of assessment of preschool children is based on their communicative skills (Cicourel, 1974). This study combines both qualitative and quantitative information concerning the children in the study. It may serve as a model for educators searching for new ways to assess children's development.

Most importantly, this study may have significance for Native American students who have been failing in school and have been dropping out at a 36 percent rate. This study may provide educators with new insights concerning how Native American children can succeed in schools.

#### Definitions

The following definitions were used throughout the study and represent terms used by practitioners in the

field of language and terms associated with educational administration as it pertained to bilingual programs.

**Basal:** On language tests this is the point at which the tester determines that there is no need to go to a lower level on specific test material because the child has a general understanding of the material on that level or lower (Bennett-Kastor, 1988).

**Bilingual:** The ability to understand and speak more than one language (Philips, 1983).

**Ceiling:** On language tests this is the point at which the tester determines that there is no need to go to a higher level on specific test material because the child has reached a frustration level (Bennett-Kastor, 1988).

**Communication:** The exchange of meanings (Philips, 1983).

**Early Childhood:** Children between the ages of 0-8 (Nadelman, 1982).

**Expressive Language:** Language used to express ideas or thoughts (Bennett-Kastor, 1988).

**Language:** Refers to the system of signs and sounds through which we represent and convey our meaning (Philips, 1983).

**Receptive Language:** The way language is processed from outside to inside (Connelly, 1985).

**Speech:** The activities of articulating and ordering sounds to produce words (Wells, 1986).

**Talk:** The use of language to express ideas by means of speech (Philips, 1983).

**Triangulation:** Qualitative cross-validation conducted among different data sources or different data collection methods. It is a search for convergence of the information on a common finding or concept (Wiersma, 1986, p. 246).

**Words:** Labels for objects, actions and events (Philips 1983).

#### Assumptions

The major assumption of the study was based on theoretical constructs regarding the association of expressive language skills and school success. It was assumed that teacher expectation of a child with poor expressive language skills would be lower than for a child with average or above average expressive skills. This has been documented in the Teacher Expectation and Student Achievement (TESA) material.

Another assumption was that the video camera would not serve as an obstacle for the children. The teachers at each of the sites reassured the investigator that the children were accustomed to the camera and that its appearance would not disrupt the children.

Limitations

The study was conducted in the Great Falls Head Start Program, Great Falls, Montana, and in the Head Start Program in Havre, Montana. These two sites were selected because their close proximity to reservations gave them a high population of Native American students. Twenty-eight percent of the students in the study were Native American. The use of only two locations may limit the generalization of the study's quantitative findings.

The interviewing of the Native American mothers by an Anglo investigator may be a limitation of the study. The investigator had worked extensively with the Great Falls community. This reduced the limitations because the investigator had an established rapport with some of the Head Start parents which soon spread to other participants. At the Havre site the investigator was new to the community.

The Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test was selected as the testing instrument because it is used in many early childhood programs in the area. This instrument provided a basal estimate of each child's verbal intelligence based on the child's acquired one-word expressive picture vocabulary. The test was designed for children from 2 years to 12 years, and consisted of 110 line drawings. It has certain limitations as mentioned in

the Mental Measurements Yearbook, 1985. For example, the child who supplies the response "locomotive" instead of "train" receives no credit for that response (Burrows, 1985).

Inferences from this study are appropriate as long as the limitations and exploratory nature of the study are considered. With these constraints, the study was expected to yield meaningful information which contributes to the body of knowledge and provides a foundation for future research efforts in the area of expressive language.

## CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of the study was to describe the expressive language characteristics of the preschool Native American girl. This chapter provides the theoretical basis for the study, synthesizes major issues related to the research, and provides evidence of the need for and limited research in this area to date.

The following major areas of investigation were reviewed: (a) the characteristics of expressive language, (b) the Native American student, (c) comparisons of receptive and expressive language, (d) gender differences in language usage, and (e) language testing in early childhood programs. Computer searches were conducted from sources noted in the areas of Education (ERIC, 1970-1990) and Psychological Review (1981-1987). Descriptors used were "language," "expressive language," "Native American," "minority," "early childhood education," "bilingual education," and "gender."

Expressive Language

Expressive language is the component of language which is used to express an idea or thought (Bennett-Kastor,

1988). It can be thought of as that language which starts on the inside and moves outward. In comparison, receptive language would be language which originates on the outside and moves inward. Receptive language skills deal directly with how people process language when someone else is speaking.

A study of expressive language skills for young children (Bennett-Kastor, 1988) brings forth questions such as the following:

1. Is the child willing to participate in expressive language activities?

2. Can the child express ideas clearly?

3. Does the child use standard English?

4. Does the child have an adequate vocabulary to allow for the expression of ideas?

5. Does the child use the basic sentence patterns of English?

6. Does the child respect the rights of other participants in an oral language situation? (p. 23)

There are several bodies of knowledge concerning language and learning and how they relate to each other. Piaget and his associates believed that children's first-hand experiences form the basis of their learning and understanding (Nadelman, 1982). His work in the area of learning influenced the current division of educators who believe in concrete, hands-on learning as opposed to

educators who believe in a lecture style of teaching. Language, according to Piaget, is important because it may increase the powers of thought in range and rapidity.

Vygotsky (1962) helped explain the way in which children use their experiences in combination with their social exchanges with people involving language. As the child hears and uses words, the child begins to order and classify his experiences. Later, words come to represent generalized notions, abstracted from many experiences. Many concepts cannot be developed from direct experiences only, and language helps children understand these abstract relationships.

In Vygotsky's view, language plays an essential part in conceptual development while Piaget emphasized the concept that the child's thought arises from his own actions, which builds inner frames of reference, which are the basis of meaning. Piaget's work reflected the concept that the meanings the child can communicate through language are dependent on the level of development of nonverbal frames of reference. Luria and Yudrovich (1971) used their case study of twin boys to support their view that children are learning to think as they are learning to use language.

Bernstein (1971) suggested that in many homes children are deprived of language experiences because they have not learned to use language in the ways that are valued by

teachers. Others have challenged this theory, claiming that these children can think and express their ideas using non-standard forms of language. Labor (1971) contended that these children cannot be regarded as having a deficiency in language simply because they use a different form.

"Storying" was a term used by Gordon Wells in his book, The Meaning Makers: Children Learning Language and Using Language to Learn (1986), to refer to the perceptual and cognitive processes through which all experiences make sense. Wells claimed that in the beginning this inner storying is not a conscious and deliberate activity but is the way in which the mind itself works. His research stressed the importance of storying as a prerequisite of school success.

#### Native American Students

The National Education Association's Human Civil Rights Specialist, Ron Houston, presented public testimony to the national Indian Nations at Risk Committee (1990). His testimony was based on a 1987 National Education Association study on American Indian/Alaskan Native Concerns. This committee held regional hearings and visited schools to gain their information. The major issues facing Native American students were inadequate funding, student mobility, and institutional rigidity

according to their findings. Institutional rigidity resulted in schools that could not address the needs of mobile students or potential dropouts and had no capacity for utilizing culturally relevant teaching techniques.

Other speakers at the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force meeting in May, 1990, were Mr. Joseph H. Ely and Dr. Robert Swan. Mr. Ely, a Tribal Chairman, stressed that education is imperative for the survival of their society.

We have to recognize that Indian people will not assimilate. Without this recognition, school teaches one thing and home teaches another regarding who Indian people are and what their goals are. What we have, in reality, are two different societies. They can be compatible, and education must work towards that end. Education must teach pride in culture and ways to cooperate and survive in the dominant culture (Indian Nations at Risk, 1990, 5).

At the same meeting, Dr. Robert Swan from the Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana discussed the important role the Head Start program had on their dropout rate. Whereas the national dropout rate was at 36 percent, Dr. Swan claimed that the dropout rate on the Rocky Boy Reservation had been reduced to 20 percent. In Montana 50 percent of Indian adults have been high school dropouts.

Dr. Alan Ginsburg, Executive Director of the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force, stressed three areas of concern for Native American children in the area of school readiness: (a) the importance of understanding linguistic development and culturally appropriate strategies, (b) the

need for Head Start to be expanded to reflect what is known in these areas, and (c) the importance of language development in preparing a child to develop the cognitive skills necessary to succeed in school.

Estele Fuchs and Robert Havighurst (1983), in their book, To Live on This Earth: American Indian Education, explained the reasons for family background being a handicap in relation to the school achievement of many Native American pupils in American schools.

The first reason is that the great majority of Native American pupils are reared in poverty-stricken families, and poverty is generally a disadvantage for school achievement. Also, with the exception of a growing minority of Native Americans, most Native American families have very little formal education, and, therefore, Native American children are far more dependent upon the school for academic instruction than children whose families are in a position to assist them in this area (p. 128).

The formal education level of Native American families has gradually increased. Enrollment at tribal colleges has increased steadily since 1981. Unfortunately, the scores on the ACT college entrance exam are remaining lower than other minority groups (Indian Nations at Risk, 1991).

Approximately 18 percent of an age cohort were entering college from the Native American population in 1970, while 40 percent of the age group of all American youth were enrolling in college. Only 4 percent of the Native American students graduated from a four year

college, compared with 22 percent of the total American age cohort (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1983).

Members of the Task Force expressed concerns for tests which were used for promotion, college entrance, and placement in special programs in terms of Native American student performance (Indian Nations at Risk, 1990). As a result of these tests, 25 percent of Native American children in public schools were in special education, and in some urban areas it was as high as one-third. Educators labeled children as learning disabled when actually they simply did not understand the subtleties of school language.

In a study of 75 Oglala Sioux children aged four to ten, the same experiments and questions were used that Dr. Piaget had used with Swiss children to produce his theories of cognitive development in human children. The findings show that

the cognitive stages as well as their succession are found in both populations, and at approximately the same time. It means that the inferiorities shown by IQ tests among Native American children are dependent upon the nature of these tests, in particular their cultural content since these inferiorities are not found when one analyzes the development of more fundamental concepts (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1983, p. 121).

Testing is not the only label-producing barrier for these children. Cultural language differences may actually be a larger barrier for them.

Scollon and Scollon's lengthy analyses of interethnic conversations among Athabaskan Native Americans and Anglos in Alaska revealed that something as simple as a shift in rhythm between speakers led to personal judgments of a speaker's capabilities. For example, an Anglo speaker often will ask a question, then pause, waiting for the Native American speaker to reply; then, when it appears the listener has nothing to say, the white speaker will speak again. The Native American, who wishes to reply, but is accustomed to longer pauses between speakers, is not given an adequate opportunity to speak. On the other hand, when Native American speakers do have the floor, they are interrupted frequently because they take what are perceived by Anglos to be "lengthy" pauses between thoughts. As an Athabaskan woman said, "While you're thinking about what you're going to say, they're already talking." Hence, Native American speakers often say very little and Anglo speakers seem to do all the talking (Nelson-Barber & Meier, 1990, 35).

What implications does this hold for the Native American/Anglo classroom? If an Anglo teacher does not make a conscious shift in the language pattern being used, there will be little opportunity for the Native American child to speak. It is important that these students do not feel as outsiders in their own classrooms simply because they may be out of sync with the interactive style used by the teacher.

In The Invisible Culture (1983, p. 4), Susan Philips argues that "the children of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation are enculturated in their preschool years into modes of organizing the transmission of verbal messages that are culturally different from those of Anglo middle-class children." She goes on to state that "this

difference makes it more difficult for them to then comprehend verbal messages conveyed through the American school's Anglo middle-class modes of organizing classroom interaction."

#### Comparison of Expressive and Receptive Language

Children learn their language through imitation of others in their environment. As the "mother tongue" is learned, certain kinds of discriminations and experiences which are important to that culture are also learned. For example, a child from a rural area might learn to distinguish varied types of plants and know the word symbols for the growth stages of the plant, while an urban child could distinguish brand-name products advertised on billboards and street signs. Naming, defining, generalizing will all necessarily be done within whatever limits exist in the vocabularies of the child's contacts (Luria and Yudrovich, 1971).

It becomes apparent that the culture of a child is greatly reflected in the child's expressive language. Both the verbal and the nonverbal behavior in communication reflects the culture of the person. It appears that preschool aged children have become so enculturated into modes of transmitting verbal messages that their form of communication is cultural specific.

Our educational system assumes that children enter school with a shared developmental sequence of expressive language skills; however, that developmental sequence may be very diverse (Indian Nations at Risk, 1991). Educators, who are working with diverse cultures in their schools, may need to look at curriculum policies and also at teacher training to insure that students from culturally different families are also taught within their dominant form of communication. This is much more complex than simply dealing with children who speak a language which differs from the dominant language. It deals with the "hidden" handicap of speaking the same language but with a completely different delivery system (Indian Nations at Risk, 1990).

James B. Connelly (1985) studied expressive and receptive language skills of young Indian children. His study consisted of all the students in grades one through three from four schools in rural southeastern Alaska. Two schools were primarily white and the other two were primarily Native American with 200 students in the population. The purpose of his research was to compare expressive language test scores to the receptive language test scores of the same students. His results show that "Indian children tend to attain relatively low scores on tests which assess verbal skills and attain at least

average scores on tests which assess nonverbal skills" (Connelly, 1985, 9).

### Gender Differences in Language Usage

In Gender Voices, David Graddol and Joan Swann (1989) not only provided a survey of the way women and men differ in their habits but also an exploration of the links between language and the structure of society. They proposed that how women and men speak ultimately affects their position in society, their economic and political achievements, and even their personalities and perceived identities. Certain kinds of speech may be regarded as socially appropriate for a particular sex and may be learned by children just as they learn other kinds of gender appropriate behavior. Language is culturally specific as are other social behaviors.

The classic case of the Carib Indians has been used in many accounts of sex differences in language use. The French writer, Rochefort, in 1665 described the language of the West Indies Indians as having two separate languages, one language being used only by the men and the other only by the women even though they understood the language of the opposite sex. While this is an extreme example of language differences based on gender, every language has been found to contain sex differences (Graddol and Swann, 1989).

The Native American mother is much more closely involved in her daughter's personal happiness than Anglo mothers and their daughters (Havighurst & Neugarten, 1955, p. 72). Hence, the gender differences which have existed will be passed on to the girls of preschool age. The Native American culture may have gender differences in the area of language which are "taught" to preschool girls. The Sioux, for example, have different ways of expression for males and females. Although both sexes speak the same language, their language contains specific words which are male words and other words which are used only by female speakers. The end of words may be different for male and female speakers as well (Clarke, 1991).

In the Blackfeet tribe, aunts often are considered to be mothers, uncles are called fathers, and cousins are brothers and sisters of the immediate family. Even clan members are considered relatives; so Indian cultures consider many more individuals to be relatives than do non-Indians (McLaughlin, 1969).

In Chippewa Customs (1979, p. 58), Frances Densmore describes the child rearing practices of the Chippewa.

The Chippewa gave much attention to the training of their children. In summer the children could play out of doors, but in winter they had to be amused indoors. It was hard to keep the little children quiet in the evenings so they would not disturb the older people. The mother often said, "Keep still or the owl will get you." If they did not keep still she went to the door of the wigwam, held back the blanket, and said, "Come

in, owl; come and get these children who won't keep still."

Chippewa girls were taught to live a quiet life and to be kind to all. "If a Chippewa girl was well brought up and was capable she usually got a good husband. Her reputation often went to other villages and a young man would seek her out because he had heard that she was quiet and industrious" (Densmore, 1979).

Sue Stoner and Boyd Spencer (1983) investigated sex differences in the expressive vocabulary of Head Start children. The Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test was administered to 100 Head Start children. Their conclusions did not give empirical support to sex differences in the verbal abilities of preschool children nor did their findings support the generalization of females' superiority on verbal tasks.

#### Language Testing in Early Childhood Programs

Language has been used by parents, grandparents and pediatricians to assess development in children. Child development charts reassure parents that if the child produces specific sounds within a certain age range the child's development is progressing normally. Educators have long used language to assess the development of the students in their classrooms. The child who responded with

different patterns of communication was often labeled as language delayed.

Many of the forms of assessment using language in the schools have been based on informal teacher judgement. However, during the past several decades, researchers have begun to standardize more formal assessments of children's use of language. These tests have been categorized as expressive or receptive measurements. Expressive tests measure the child's ability to express thoughts and ideas, and receptive tests assess the child's ability to understand what others are expressing (Cazden, 1972).

The Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test measures expressive vocabulary for children ages 2-12 and takes approximately 15 minutes to administer. The test consists of 110 line drawings. The examinee's task is to give a one-word description of the objects pictured in each test plate. A basal is established by eight consecutive correct responses while a ceiling is obtained when the child fails six consecutive items.

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test is an example of a test which measures receptive language skills. Each page of the test manual has four drawings in boxes labeled 1-4. The examiner shows the child the page and says one word. The child either points to the correct box or states the number of the box.

In Language Use and School Performance, author Aaron Cicourel (1974) discussed the contrast between the official version of the meaning of test materials and the child's interpretation of these materials. His research showed that what could be called 'errors' in responding to standardized curricula and tests may be the result of misunderstandings on the part of teachers, testers, and children which are created by the interactional activities they are engaged in. Problems of attention, memory, dialect difference and incorrect guesses emerge in educational interaction but are not addressed as central ingredients of learning and evaluation that take place in the classroom.

## CHAPTER 3

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this descriptive study was to describe expressive language characteristics of the preschool Native American girl. This chapter addresses the following topics related to the conduct of the study: (a) general procedures, (b) population description and setting for the study, (c) method of collecting data, and (d) methods of analyzing the data. The components of the data collection process include the observation form, the interview form, videotape, and test results. The components of the analysis method include both qualitative and quantitative measures because the topic required both description and explanation. Triangulation was accomplished through observation, interview, and analysis of test scores of the preschool Native American girls. The final step was the development of an educator's monograph on the topic.

General Procedures

The procedures utilized in this study were to:

1. Conduct a comprehensive review of literature related to the expressive language skills of preschool Native American girls.

2. Gain permission from the Head Start administrators in Great Falls and Havre to conduct this study in their programs.

3. Meet with the teachers of the classes to explain the nature of the study. The explanation included a discussion of the interview process, observation, videotaping, testing, data to be collected, and the means of analysis.

4. Identify the Native American students in the classes by tribal groups and age levels.

5. Interview the teachers concerning the Native American girls' language usage in school.

6. Interview the mothers of the Native American girls concerning child rearing practices.

7. Conduct observations and videotape in the Head Start classes.

8. Administer the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test to all the students in the classes.

9. Develop conclusions and recommendations from analysis of the data.

10. Create a monograph on the topic of Expressive Language Skills of Preschool Native American Girls.

#### Population and Setting

The selected population for this study were Head Start children in two locations. The Head Start model is to have

20 children in each classroom with a lead teacher and an assistant. Parents are also encouraged to participate in the classroom. In Great Falls there were 38 Native American children in the program with 15 of those being girls. In Havre there were 13 Native American children in the program with 6 of those being girls. The mean age of the children was four years and nine months.

The settings selected for this study were the Head Start class in Great Falls, Montana, and the Head Start class in Havre, Montana. These locations were selected because of their close proximity to reservations which gave each of these classes a high proportion of Native American children. At the Great Falls site 32 percent of the children were Native American, and at the Havre site 21 percent were Native American.

#### Method of Collecting Data

An ethnographic case study method was selected for this study because it provided a means of gaining the necessary information (Dixon, 1987; Merriam, 1988). Ethnographic case studies concentrate attention on the way particular groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation (Merriam, 1988). Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people. "The ethnographer observes behavior, but goes

beyond it to inquire about the meaning of that behavior" (Spradley, 1979, 87).

In 1922 Malinowski said, "The goal in ethnography is to grasp the native's point of view" (Spradley, 1979, 85). Today ethnography is no longer relegated to exotic cultures in far off places. It has come home to become a fundamental tool for understanding ourselves and the multicultural societies of the modern world.

The ethnographic case study was combined with the quantitative test scores to provide a better foundation of data for the case study.

We have at least three major research strategies available to us: (1) we can study exclusively what an organism can do...test for all his abilities, competencies by intervening into his life by various artificial means...as has been done in psychometric and experimental work, or (2) we can study exclusively what an organism actually does do without any kind of, or a minimum amount of, intervention on our part...as has been done in the naturalistic observational studies of human behavior that now exist, or (3) we can study him both ways back and forth. If we did the latter, we would be able to generate a foundation of data that would both produce a comprehensive and coherent picture of the phenomena as well as have maximum applicability and impact on areas dealing with social problems (Nadelman, 1982, 42).

Most ethnographic case studies are a combination of description and interpretation, or description and evaluation. The researcher uses the data to analyze, interpret, or theorize about the phenomenon. Finally, many case studies are evaluative in that they are undertaken to

assess the merit of a particular practice or program (Merriam, 1988).

Ethnographic case study or naturalistic inquiry recognizes that the reality manifold is constantly changing in terms of time, people, episodes, settings, and circumstances. One should expect "reality" to be different at different times, recognizing the difference will depend on the situation and not necessarily or merely on a lack of reliability in methodology. The naturalistic inquirer seeks a multiple reality (Guba, 1978).

The use of multimethods can also lead to a synthesis or integration of theories. Finally, triangulation may also serve as a critical test, by virtue of its comprehensiveness, for competing theories (Denzin, 1978).

In this study, one form of triangulation involved multiple data sources. Those sources were the student, the teacher, and the mother or caregiver. Another form of triangulation involved multiple data collection procedures. Those forms of collection were observation, interviewing, and quantitatively assessing test results.

#### Operational Procedures

The research was developed and carried out during the fall and winter of 1991-1992, during the months of September 1991 through February 1992. Videotaping was used as a mechanical check and extension to document the

observation process, and the classrooms were videotaped each week during the data gathering period.

The main student data gathering technique used was participant observation. This field research technique is considered by some authorities to be the best suited for studying the face-to-face interaction between teacher and student (Spradley, 1979). It also provided critical evidence for this topic while at the same time creating the least disruption of the normal flow of activities in the classrooms. The videotapes were studied to determine number of interactions between the teacher and the Native American girls, types of interactions, quality of interactions, and time lapses between speakers.

Participant observation refers to those forms of research in which the researcher devotes time to attaining some form of membership in the group which is to be studied (Nachmias, 1976). In this study the researcher interacted with the students, mothers, and teachers. Observational research of this type allowed the participants to become familiar with the researcher.

#### Data Collection as Participant Observer

As a participant observer the investigator observed and recorded descriptive data and direct quotes, utilized interviews, recorded interaction data, and analyzed video recordings of classroom interactions. Observation forms

were utilized to provide a method of collecting the data. An observation form is in Appendix A.

The videotapes were analyzed for quality, frequency, and types of conversation. The researcher used the observation form for evaluating the tapes in the same style that the daily visitations were evaluated. Informal conversations were also noted and recorded on the observation forms.

The investigator observed and tested at the Havre site for 48 hours during December 1991, January 1992 and February 1992. The children at the Great Falls site were observed and tested for 102 hours during the same months. An equal number of hours was utilized to evaluate the videotapes.

The teachers in the classrooms were informally interviewed to gather information about what was happening between the class and the teacher from the teacher's perspective. Mothers of the girls were interviewed to discover ways in which they train and discipline their children and also to discover ways their behavior is similar to and different from their daughter's behavior. This information about child rearing practices provided additional information about the girls' language usage. The interview form was recommended by Leedy (1989) as a method for gathering and organizing the available information. The interview form is found in Appendix B.

To complete the triangulation process, the children were tested on the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (Gardner, 1979). This expressive language test is discussed in the 9th edition of the Mental Measurements Yearbook. The reliability coefficients ranged from .87 to .96. The corresponding standard error of measurement ranged from 3.38 to 5.41. The Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT) has been used in providing a consistent estimate of a child's expressive vocabulary. A total of 1,249 children were examined in order to obtain raw data for the development of the EOWPVT, and 1,607 children were tested for the gathering of final data. The testing was done by graduate students, and the children tested were enrolled in private schools, parochial schools, and public schools in the San Francisco Bay area. Some children were not in any school program because they were too young (Gardner, 1979). This test was selected because it is used in many early childhood programs in the area. A copy of this instrument's Introduction and Administration are found in Appendix C.

#### Method of Organizing and Analyzing Data

The method of organizing the data from the observations and the interviews was proposed by Monette (1990). The responses from the observation and interview

forms were assembled and tallied. The tallied results were analyzed to find common categories.

The major portion of the data for this study was gathered through descriptive research methods. Additional data was gathered through the administration of the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test. This data was analyzed through a simple  $t$ -test to determine if there were differences in the test scores of Native American girls as compared to Native American boys, Anglo girls, and Anglo boys. The statistic to be tested was the difference between the two means (Wiersma, 1986). The significance level was set at .05. Testing provided another piece of information to help explain the situation.

The quantitative data collected with this instrument was compared with data collected by the researcher as participant observer and interviewer. This triangulation method provided the researcher with a greater data base. Triangulation is basically a comparison of this data base to determine whether or not there is corroboration. This process assesses the sufficiency of the data (Wiersma, 1986). The researcher felt that the accuracy of her judgments was improved by collecting different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon.

Development of an Educator's Monograph

The specific end product was a monograph on the topic of "Expressive Language Characteristics of Preschool Native American Girls." The content of that monograph was taken from the observations and interviews of the research project. In addition, relevant information from the review of literature was included.

The five major subdivisions in the monograph dealt with Native American Girls, Language, Language of Silence Research, Language Characteristics of Native American Girls, and Recommendations. Each subdivision included a discussion of the topic and highlights from the research to illustrate that topic.

The researcher used a personal writing style rather than a formal style to create a reader-friendly document. A professional illustrator, Debra Norman, was contracted to enhance the final publication. The monograph is located in Appendix E and the illustrations are in Appendix F.

## CHAPTER 4

## FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to describe the expressive language characteristics of the preschool Native American girl. This chapter describes the findings from the classroom observations and the interviews with Native American mothers. Additionally this chapter provides analyses of the results of the "Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test."

Participants

This study was conducted at two sites, the Head Start program in Great Falls, Montana, and the Head Start program in Havre, Montana. There were 120 children in the Head Start program at Great Falls. Children who were either Native American or Anglo were included in the study. They included 117. Three children were of other races and were not included in this study. The Anglo population total was 79 with 43 females and 36 males. There were 38 Native American children; of these 15 were females and 23 were males. Their tribal affiliation included Chippewa-Cree, Little Shell, and Blackfeet.

The Havre site had 62 Native American and Anglo children. The Anglo population included 49 children, 27 females and 22 males. The Native American population included 13 children, 6 females and 7 males. Their tribal affiliation included Blackfeet, Chippewa-Cree, Gros Ventre, Hidatsa, Assiniboine/Sioux, and Salish/Kootenai.

The total study involved 179 children. Of these, 91 were females and 88 were males. There was a total of 58 Anglo males and 70 Anglo females. Additionally there was a total of 30 Native American males and 21 Native American females. The mean age of the total group was four years and nine months.

#### Classroom Observations

The main technique used to gather data in the classroom was through participant observation. By devoting time to the classrooms the observer was able to become familiar with the routine of each classroom, gain an understanding of the teacher's style, and become so familiar in the classroom that the children began to accept the observer as another teacher in the classroom. The time this took varied from classroom to classroom. Classrooms where parents were frequent volunteers took the shortest amount of time for students to accept the observer because they were accustomed to having new adults in the classroom.

The observation form (Appendix A) was utilized to collect the data on interaction between the children and the teacher. The observer watched to see which students answered or asked questions, made comments either negative or positive, were involved in listening, and finally actually initiated conversation. An observational log was also written and videotape was recorded as an extension to aid the observer.

A typical observation day involved discussion with the teacher and interaction with the students at learning centers and during the lunch period. The lunch period was designed to enhance vocabulary development and both teachers and assistants worked to help all students communicate during this period. The teachers asked questions such as the following to stimulate conversation, "What did you do last night?" "Did you watch TV?" "What kind of vegetables are we having today?" "Did anyone read a book last night?"

After lunch the children were involved in clean-up, and then they brushed their teeth, worked a puzzle and had an activity period where they were free to select activities from many centers in the room. The activity period was very full of conversations and children interacting with each other as well as interacting with the other adults in the room. During the 150 hours of observation, the investigator observed a wide variety of

activities at centers. The environment was stimulating and well supplied with materials appropriate for preschoolers.

Some students were eager to share some personal information about themselves. Brian, for example, when asked how old he was said, "I am four now but my mom says that I am the man of the house now that Dad is gone. I sweep the porch, cook, and watch Charity and Sam." Charity and Sam were his younger siblings. "How do you know my name?" asked Paul. The observer explained that his name was on his headband so it could be read. He asked the observer if she knew his brother. When the observer said, "No", Paul said, "He's dead." Later the teacher explained that Paul's twin brother had died in the crib when they were infants and Paul always wants to discuss it with new people in the classroom.

The 179 children in the study were eager for conversations with adults and wanted to sit near the observer and have the observer's undivided attention. The observer's role was one without teaching responsibility, so it was easy to give them attention without interfering with the observation process.

In several classrooms the children were curious about the video camera so time was spent on showing the camera, filming the children, and then showing them the tape. If the camera caused problems for either the children or the teachers, it was not used.

The data from the observation form indicated that Native American girls were similar to Anglo girls in that there was a very wide range of performance. Both groups contained students who talked often and initiated conversations, and both groups contained students who were very quiet and never initiated conversation with anyone. As a total group, the Native American girls talked less than the Anglo girls, the Anglo boys, or the Native American boys. Native American girls appear to talk when prompted.

Table 1. Data from Observation Form.

Group	Number in Group	Language Count	Language Count Per Child
Native American Girls	21	103	5
Native American Boys	30	241	8
Anglo Boys	58	409	7
Anglo Girls	70	620	9

One characteristic which was not observed in the Native American girl population was that of "self-talk." The Anglo girls were observed talking to themselves as they performed activities. They did not direct their conversations to anyone directly but rather just played

with the language as they worked. For example, Nicole, an Anglo student, was drawing some cars and airplanes for a new mural in the classroom and as she worked she discussed what she was doing, "Cars can be red, or they can be blue or yellow or white. I like white cars the best. My uncle has a white pick-up. Pick-up, pick-up, pick-up. Pick-ups aren't cars." This made her laugh as if she had made up a joke. She worked intently and quietly for a few minutes and then continued, "I flew in an airplane at Christmas time. Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way. What color is an airplane? I think it was blue." She left this center to go to the doll area where she asked her friends what color airplanes were.

The Native American girls were observed to have a longer wait time in responding to conversation. It appeared that they were just listening more thoughtfully. On several occasions, however, the person with whom they were speaking would leave the conversation before the Native American girl responded. For example, Gabrielle (Anglo) asked her friend Nancy (Native American) if she wanted to make snowmen or stars with the cookie cutters. Nancy was thinking it over when Gabrielle handed her the star cutter as if to say, "I'll decide for you."

During the testing, a similar characteristic was observed when the examiner was administering the test. The examiner said, "What is this called?" she waited a

reasonable time for the child to answer and then went on to the next page. Again the examiner said, "What is this called?" After the child had seen several pages the Anglo child usually answered upon the turning of the page without the examiner saying, "What is this called?" However, with the Native American girls the examiner usually had to ask the question each time the page was turned.

The observation log from this study reflects many positive conversations between the students and the teachers. Many of the teachers are skilled at encouraging children to engage in conversations. The lunch period and the activity period are designed to allow for free conversation between students and teachers.

In December, one activity planned for the students was making sugar cookies with a cookie press. The assistant teacher had a constant flow of language concerning the event. "What is this called?" she asked. "What could we call this?" "Could you make up a name for this tool?" "Let me show you what you can do with this." The children were crowding around the table to watch and also to help put the dough into the tube, so the teacher asked them to line up by the table so everyone could have a turn making a cookie.

John's eyes lit up when he saw what he had helped create. "Wow," he exclaimed, "look what I did!" John is one of several Native American boys in this classroom. In

contrast, when a Native American girl, Lydia, had a turn to make a cookie, she smiled and went to the end of the line so she could make another cookie. She appeared to like the activity but did not use language to express her pleasure. When Lydia made her second cookie, the assistant teacher said, "Look what you did!" and again Lydia just smiled and went to the end of the line.

The videotape confirmed the findings of the investigator's observations. The advantage of having the tape is that it could be looked at again and again to make sure the observations were accurate. The video was used in the classrooms only and was not used during the testing procedure nor in the interviewing.

#### Interviews

To describe the language characteristics of the Native American girls, the mothers of these girls were interviewed. At the Havre site, five mothers were interviewed for the six Native American girls. At the Great Falls site, ten of the fifteen mothers were interviewed, six in person and four by telephone. At the Great Falls site, the mothers of the four girls who ranked highest on the expressive language test were the first to come to Head Start to be interviewed. At the Havre site the one mother who did not come in to be interviewed was the mother of a girl who ranked in the middle of the other

Native American girls at that site. Three Native American girls ranked higher than her daughter and two ranked lower.

The interview form (Appendix B) was followed and the interviews lasted from a half hour to an hour. The mothers exhibited some of the same language characteristics as their daughters. Some of the mothers talked freely, and others simply answered the questions. The interview was started with a brief explanation of the study and a look at the test being used to measure expressive language. Next the questions from the interview form were asked. The final step was to summarize their responses.

The information gained from the interview forms is listed on the following pages. The question or category is underlined and followed by a summary of the information. Additionally, comments have been included to demonstrate the types of responses given.

Date: All the interviews were completed in January and February, 1992, as mothers came to the Head Start program.

Time: The times of the interviews varied from 9:00 to 2:00, which were the hours the children were in school.

Location: The interviews were all completed at the Havre Head Start Building or the Great Falls Head Start Building.

Student's Age: This item varied from 3 years 10 months to 5 years 11 months. At the Havre site the mean

age was 4 years 6 months with students ranging from 3 years 10 months to 5 years 2 months. At the Great Falls site the mean age was 4 years 11 months with students ranging from 4 years 5 months to 5 years 11 months. The mean age for the total group of Native American girls was 4 years 9 months.

Birth Weight: The mothers reported a normal birth weight and could not remember the exact weight of the children.

Siblings: In the families interviewed there were 22 siblings or step-siblings with 15 of those siblings living in the same household as the Head Start student. The seven not living in the same home were older or living with their fathers. Four of the girls are the only child in the family. Four are the oldest child in the family with one or two younger siblings, and the rest are in the middle with both younger and older siblings. The number of cousins was often mentioned.

Comments:

"She doesn't have any brothers or sisters, but she sees her cousins a couple of times each month."

"She has one younger brother. He is a real baby for his age."

"She has two half brothers, 14 and 13. The 13 year old lives with us."

"She is an only child but she sees her aunts every day. They are 9, 12, and 14 years old."

"She has a brother who is 19. He doesn't live with us anymore. She has two sisters, 1 and 2 years old."

"She has two brothers, 11 and 3 years old, and one sister who is 2. She has a lot of cousins and she sees them daily."

"She has one brother who is 2 years old. Her cousins are 1 and 4 and she spends an hour or so with them every day until I get home from work."

"She has one brother who is 1 year old. She has a sister who is three but she lives with her dad. Her cousins are always around. They are 3, 6, and 5 years old. Her 6 year old cousin is so lazy."

"She lives in foster care, has since she was 1 year old. I always come to the school to see her on special days. I have one other baby and she lives with me."

"She has 7 brothers and 2 sisters. The girls all live with me but only 4 of the boys live with me. Their names are not the same and some of them live with their dads but they're not all living in the same house."

"She is an only child, but my boyfriend's daughter has been living with us for the last six months."

Tribal Group: Most of the mothers interviewed belong to the Blackfeet Tribe or the Chippewa-Cree Tribe. At the Havre site two mothers were Blackfeet, two mothers were Chippewa-Cree, and one mother was Gros Ventre. At the Great Falls site five mothers were Blackfeet, four were Chippewa-Cree, and one was Little Shell. They were all urban Native Americans with only four reporting that they had spent time with relatives on the reservation.

Language Spoken in the Home: English was the only language spoken in the homes of the mothers who were

interviewed. However, some of the girls had spent time with their grandparents who spoke another language such as Cree, Blackfeet, or German.

Comments:

"She spends some time with my mom in North Dakota and she speaks a little German. Mostly English but a little German now and then. We go over to see my dad about three times a week. He is Cree but he speaks only English."

"My mother was Crow and white and my father is white and he lives in Havre so we see him often. I'm divorced so she seldom sees her grandparents on that side. They live in Browning and are both Blackfeet and speak both English and Blackfeet. When she is with them they usually try to speak only English. They love Mary because she is so cute and Mary will say to her grandpa, 'Speak some Indian for me.'"

"We are both Blackfeet and speak English. All of her grandparents live in Browning and speak both English and Blackfeet. We see them on the week-ends and during the summer."

"I am Polish and Norwegian and she spends quite a bit of time with my mother in Monarch. She doesn't know her dad. We're divorced. He is Blackfeet and his parents lived here in town. Her grandfather is dead now and we don't see too much of her grandmother on that side. She's gotten real weird."

"She has a grandfather and uncles and aunts in Browning and we go up to visit them. We never stay over, we only go one day at a time."

"She sees her great-grandmother about once a week and she can speak Blackfeet, but she seldom does."

Literacy: How often do you read together? The mothers reported reading to their daughters frequently or seldom. The majority said that they have been reading to their daughters since they were born.

## Comments:

"She gets read to about every other day. Usually my mother or grandmother reads to her."

"We read every night and go to the library every other week."

"We read once in a while, about three times a month. Her older brother reads to her all the time."

"Mostly her dad reads to her. I would say they read about twice a month."

"We read together, about three books a week. I use it as a punishment. If she doesn't listen, then I don't read to her."

"We read whenever we get a chance. Usually we read at night."

"Not as much now, we used to read to her a lot when she was little. Now she is independent and likes to play by herself."

"I don't like to read myself."

What do you read? The mothers reported a variety of materials for reading, but the most frequently read were the current popular movie theme books, such as The Little Mermaid. None of the mothers reported reading magazines or newspapers.

## Comments:

"We read little kids books."

"We read The Little Mermaid and popular Christmas books."

"She likes Mother Goose Rhymes."

"Her uncle likes to read to her and they change the story a lot."

"We go to the library and just get a stack of kids books, mostly picture books."

How much TV do you watch per day? All the mothers reported that their daughters watched TV every day. There was a variety of times reported with cartoons being the most popular form of show.

Comments:

"She watches a lot of TV. In the morning she watches cartoons before school and then in the afternoon and evening that is about all she does. We have a VCR so she likes to watch movies like 'All Good Dogs Go To Heaven.'"

"She watches TV but not too much. She likes more active stuff."

"She watches mysteries with me."

"She always watches cartoons in the afternoons."

"She likes cartoons in the mornings and we usually watch a movie on the VCR in the evenings."

"She's a real couch potato. She likes to cuddle up with her pillow and suck her fingers while she watches TV. She never watches in the mornings before school because we never have time."

"She doesn't watch too much. She likes stuff like the Cosby Show, Full House, and Who's the Boss."

"She watches cartoons in the morning while I fix her hair. She watches about an hour in the evenings. The TV is always on but in the evenings I like to watch my shows."

"She doesn't watch much. Maybe two hours every day."

"She likes movies and cartoons. She watches every day but not very long at a time."

"She loves TV. She watches cartoons all morning and then watches Nickelodeon at night."

Other Findings

How do you discipline your daughter? The mothers reported similar methods of discipline. The most common form was to talk to the child and to remove her from the situation when that was necessary. Some mothers reported spanking but only as a last resort for something serious. Several mothers talked about how their sisters or their sisters' children had no discipline.

Comments:

"I talk to her, raise my voice, and if I have to I swat her on the leg."

"I yell at her."

"I take away a privilege."

"I give her a time out. She cries easily and is kind of a whiner."

"She is pretty good, but acts up around her grandparents. She throws a fit to get her way. I send her to her bedroom and take away her favorite toys. Once in a while I spank her."

"I think I am stricter with the girls. Her young aunts have no discipline. I have a lot of patience so she usually doesn't get into trouble."

"She is real good. She knows what she can get away with. When she's good, she is perfect."

"Discipline varies. Usually I just talk to her. But if it is serious like walking in the road, I spank her."

Strengths: All of the mothers could report a strength for their daughter. Several mothers said that their

daughters were smart, and several mentioned athletic abilities.

Comments:

"She learns quickly. She learned how to write her name in a week. She's learning her numbers."

"She is athletic, likes basketball, dancing, jumping. She goes to the gym with her dad."

"She is smart. She knows colors besides just the primary ones. She is athletic. She is generous. Her younger aunt is kind of stingy. She expresses herself well and is not shy."

"She likes to clean the house, and she is really good at it."

"She is good at comforting other kids. She's sympathetic."

"She is very artistic and likes to paint and draw."

"She can ride a 20 inch bike without the training wheels."

"She is a good singer."

"She does real well considering she had open heart surgery last year and has a pacemaker now. She also has some problems with her kidneys. I think she is real strong the way she handles it."

Weaknesses: Several of the mothers had a difficult time thinking of a weakness for their daughter. However, when their comments were analyzed, shyness was a major theme. Shyness in public situations or around strangers was mentioned by several mothers.

Comments:

"She is deaf in her left ear."

"She wants to play with other kids from her class but she is too shy."

"She sucks her fingers."

"Her weakness is minding. She doesn't mind her dad or grandparents. She is the oldest grandchild and should be raised by her grandparents but they are just too old. Her cousins are all jealous of her because she is the favorite granddaughter. She is cute and the old folks really flip over her."

"She is very shy. Her dad was like that."

"She doesn't eat and she doesn't clean her room. She talks a lot."

"She talks at home, but she never talks to her teacher."

"I can't think of a weakness."

"She's pretty good, just shy."

"She is shy in public."

"She wants a lot of one-on-one attention."

Other Findings: One mother reported that she did some drinking when she was pregnant and that now she is afraid that her daughters problems are because of her drinking. Several of the mothers are college students and believe that they are helping their daughters by getting a better education. Several mothers in the study were a combination of Native American and Anglo heritage. They made comments about their daughters not being raised in the Native American culture.

Comments:

"She may spend a few weekends with her grandparents who are Native American, but

basically she has not been raised in the general extended Native American family."

"Her dad is Native American, but he lives in Texas. We never see him and about the only reminders we have about him are some Indian paintings."

Table 2. Data from Interview Form.

Siblings	Only Child	1 Sibling	2 Siblings	3 or More Siblings
	4	3	2	6
Tribal Group	Little Shell	Blackfeet	Chippewa-Cree	Gros Ventre
	1	7	6	1
Discipline	Talk	Separation	Spank	Rewards
	6	4	2	3
Strength	Smart	Athletic	Artistic	Cute
	5	3	3	2
Weakness	No Weakness	Shyness	Others	
	5	6	4	

### Test Results

Data was gathered through the administration of the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test. This data was analyzed through a simple  $t$ -test to determine if there were differences in the test scores of Native American girls as compared to Native American boys, Anglo boys, and Anglo

girls. The statistic to be tested was the difference between the two means. The significance level was set at .05. Testing provided another piece of information to help describe the characteristics of the preschool Native American girl. The  $t$ -test was used as a tool to help understand the test results.

The Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT) was administered to 179 Head Start students in Great Falls, Montana, and Havre, Montana. The raw scores were converted to a Language Standard Score (LSS) which indicated the extent to which a child's EOWPVT performance deviated from the average performance of children at that designated age level. Tables for language standard scores corresponding to raw scores were provided for each age level.

The mean LSS was 90.57 for the total group. The mean LSS for the Great Falls population was 88.56, and the mean LSS for the Havre population was 94.27. There was a significant difference at the two sites ( $t=2.61$ ,  $df=177$ ,  $p=.01$ ). The scores ranged from a low of 55 to a high of 121 at both sites (Figure 1).

Because there was a significant difference in the two sites, the LSS means of the Native American students at the two sites were compared. There were no significant differences between the LSS means for the Native American students at the two sites ( $t=1.43$ ,  $df=49$ ,  $p=.16$ ). The LSS

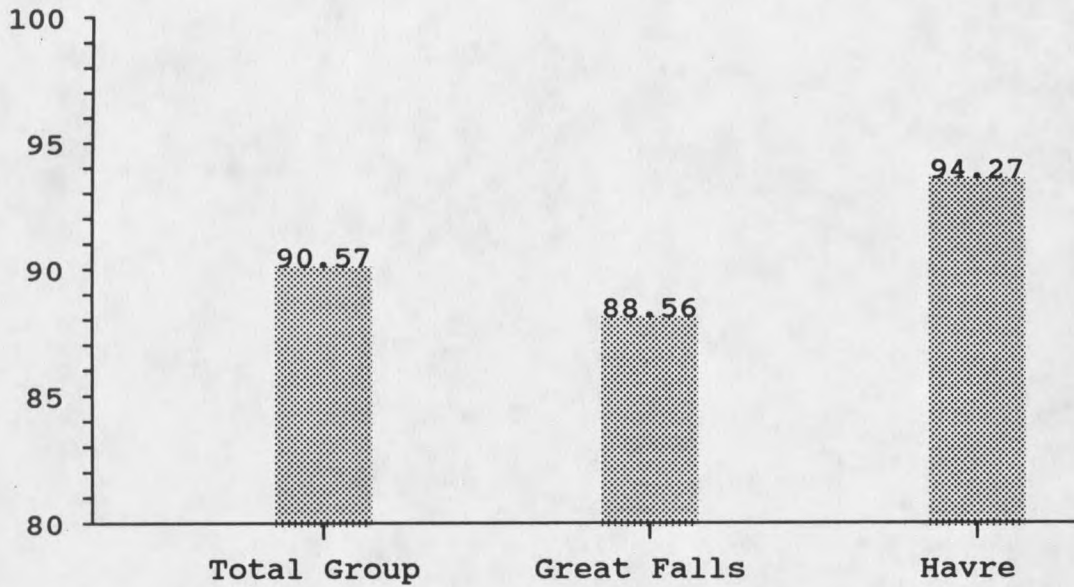


Figure 1. Data from the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test comparing the means of the Language Standard Scores.

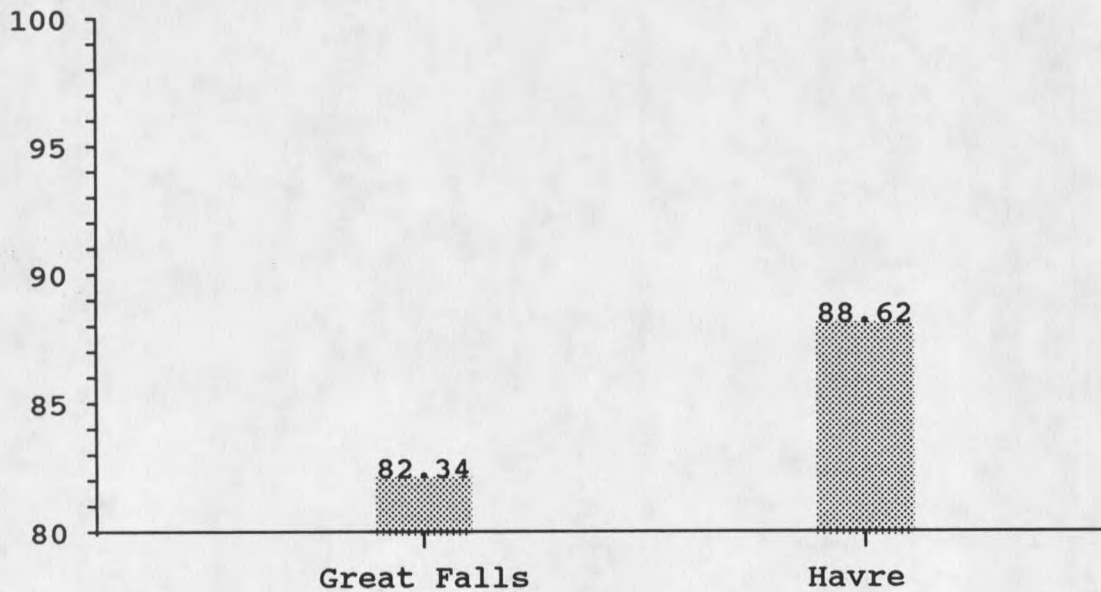


Figure 2. Data from the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test comparing means for the Native American students.

mean at the Great Falls site was 82.34, and at Havre the mean was 88.62 (Figure 2).

The mean LSS for the Anglo population was 93.16, and the mean LSS for the Native American population was 83.94. There was a significant difference between the two populations ( $t=4.03$ ,  $df=85$ ,  $p=.000$ ). The LSS for the Anglo population was significantly higher than the LSS for the Native American population (Figure 3).

When the Native American girls were compared to the Native American boys, the girls scored lower; however, there were no significant differences ( $t=.90$ ,  $df=49$ ,  $p=.37$ ). The mean LSS for the Native American girls was 81.86, and for the Native American boys it was 85.40 (Figure 4). Although there were no significant differences on the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test between the Native American girls and boys, the observations lead to a different conclusion.

There was a significant difference when the Native American girls were compared to the Anglo boys. The mean LSS for the Native American girls was 81.86, and for the Anglo boys the mean LSS was 89.93 ( $t=2.25$ ,  $df=77$ ,  $p=.027$ ) (Figure 5).

Anglo girls' LSS were then compared to Anglo boys' LSS. There was a significant difference ( $t=2.61$ ,  $df=177$ ,  $p=.010$ ). The mean LSS for the Anglo girls was 95.84, and for the Anglo boys the mean LSS was 89.93 (Figure 6).

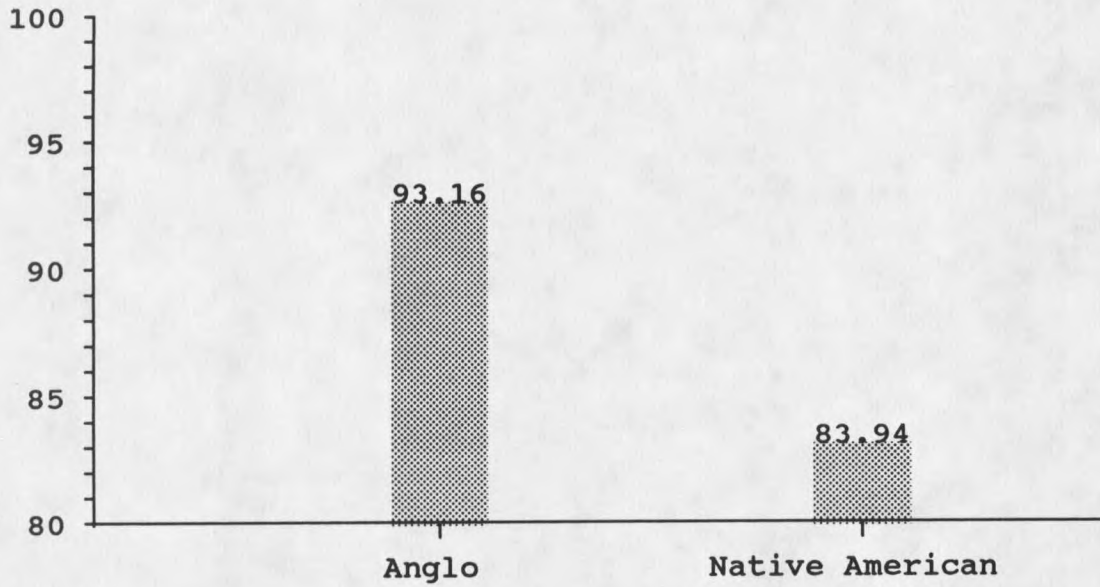


Figure 3. Data from the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test comparing means for the Anglo and Native American students.

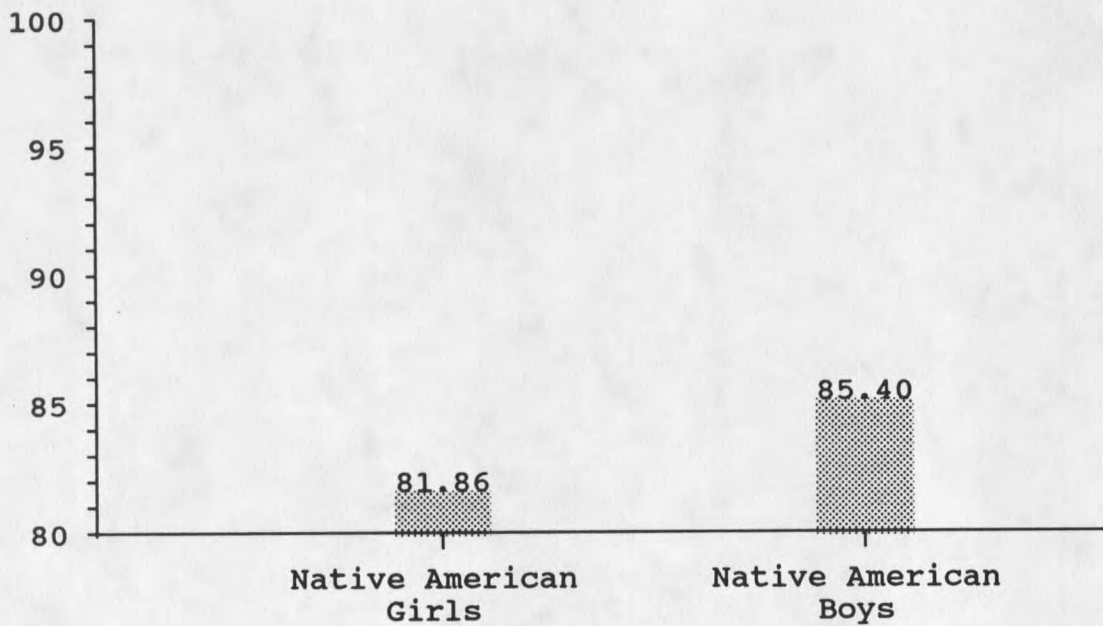


Figure 4. Data from the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test comparing means for the Native American girls and the Native American boys.

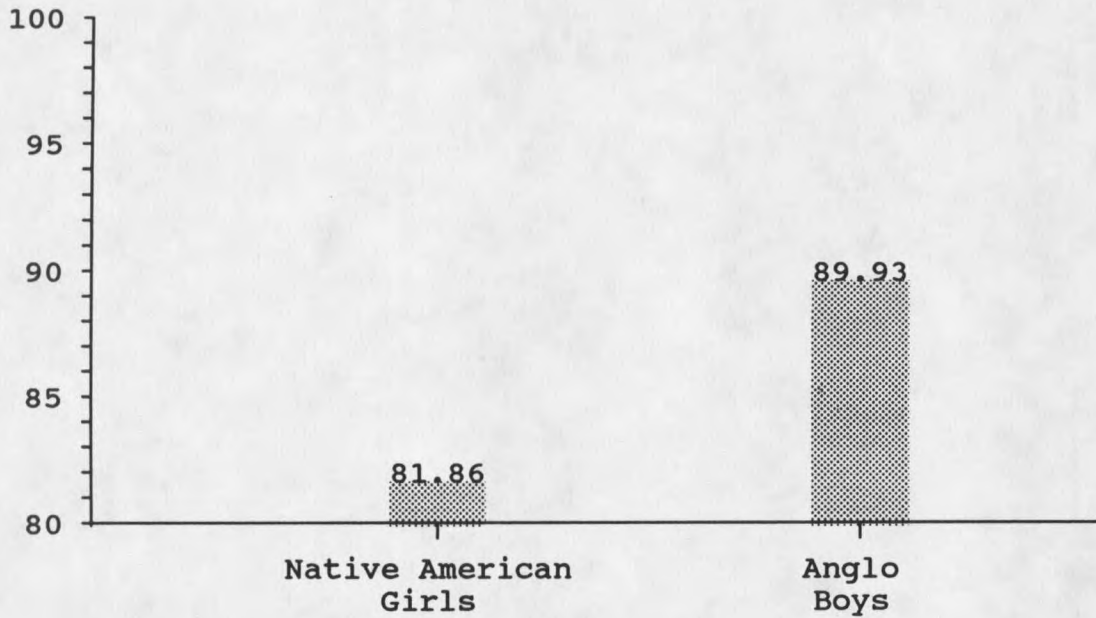


Figure 5. Data from the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test comparing means for the Native American girls and the Anglo boys.

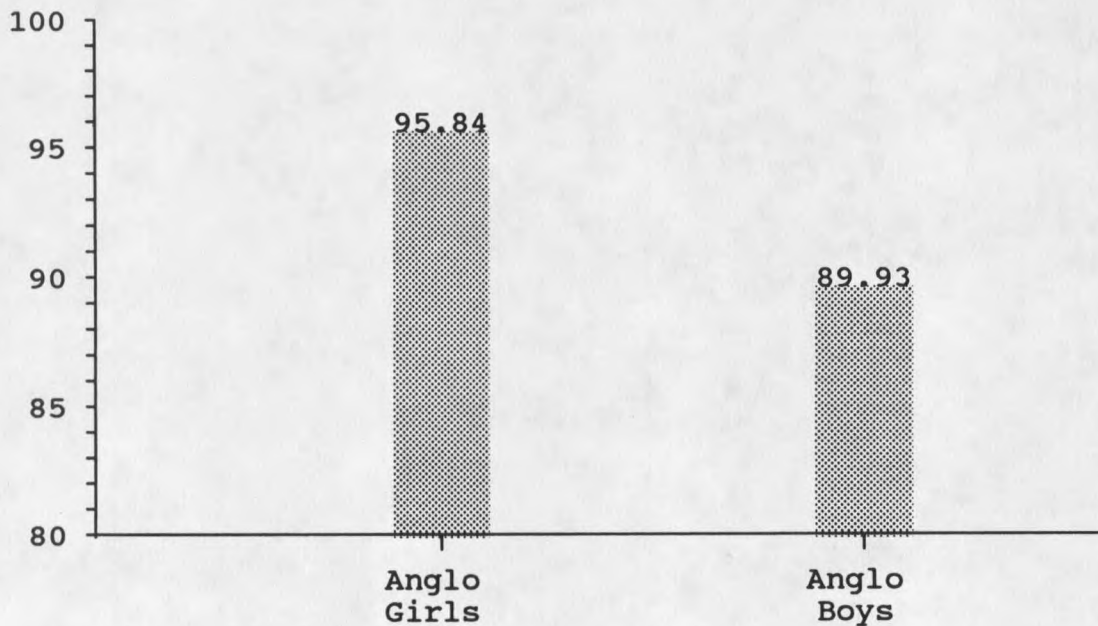


Figure 6. Data from the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test comparing means for the Anglo girls and the Anglo boys.

The highest difference was between the Native American girls and the Anglo girls. The mean LSS for the Native American girls was 81.86, and the mean LSS for the Anglo girls was 95.84. This was a significant difference ( $t=4.31$ ,  $df=89$ ,  $p=.001$ ) (Figure 7).

The LSS means were also compared by age categories. The group of children whose age was lower than 60 months had a mean LSS of 91.77. The children who were 60 months and above had a mean score of 87.82. There were no significant differences by age ( $t=1.74$ ,  $df=177$ ,  $p=.08$ ) (Figure 8).

#### Summary

The findings in this chapter describe the characteristics of the Native American girl as having the lowest Language Standard Score on the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test. Additionally, the mothers of these girls described them as shy, athletic, smart and cute. During observations they were found to converse less than the Anglo girls in their classes, used a longer "wait period" in conversations, and did not engage in self-talk. These findings and their implications will be discussed in Chapter 5.

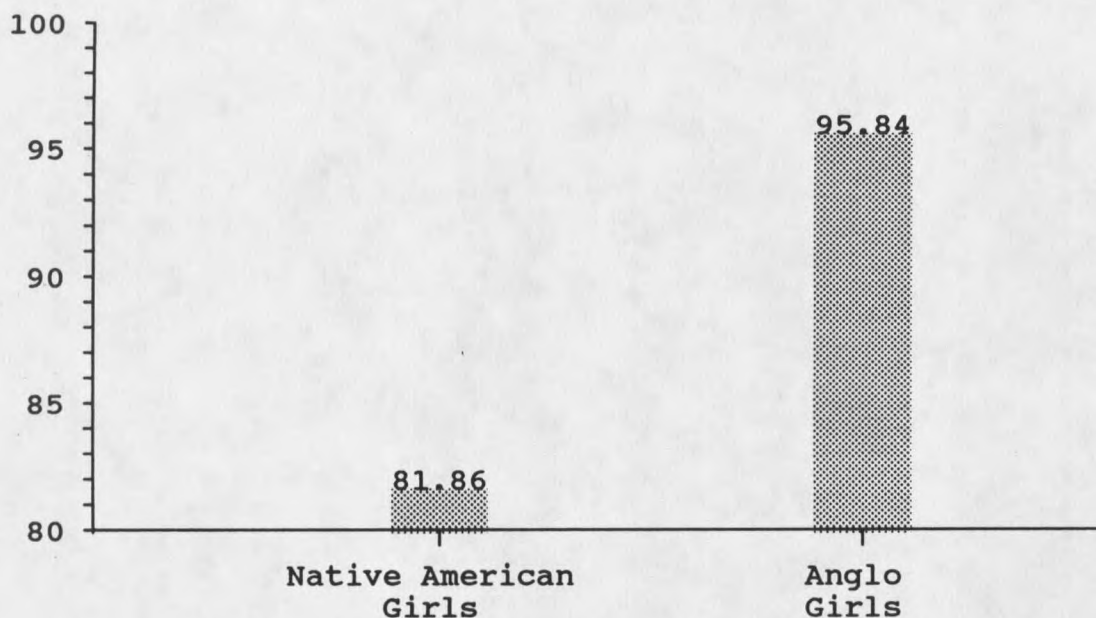


Figure 7. Data from the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test comparing means for the Native American girls and the Anglo girls.

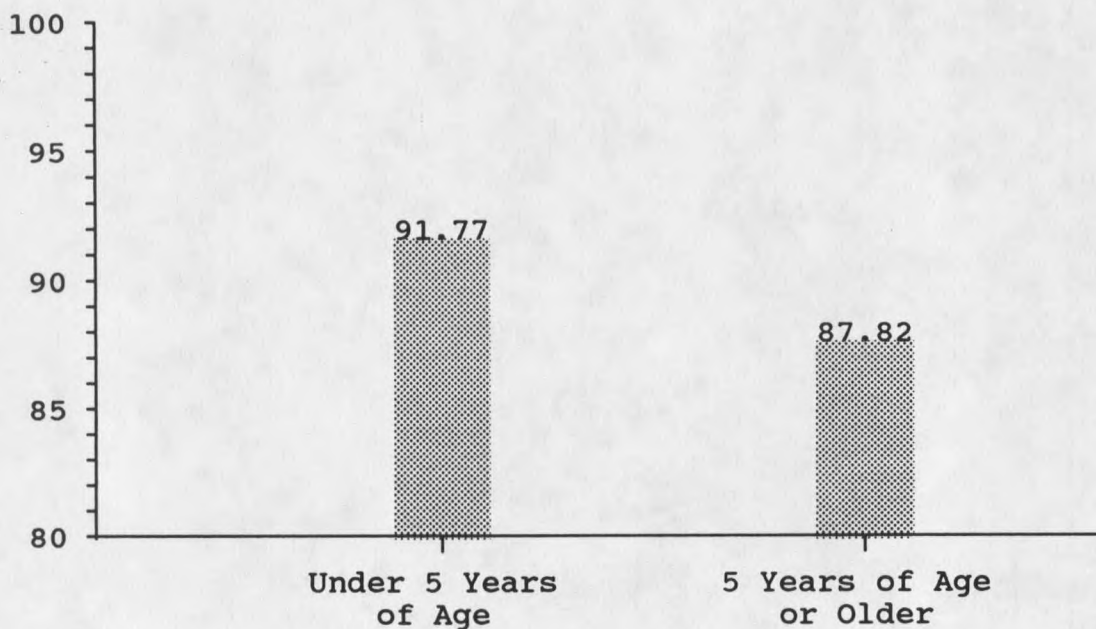


Figure 8. Data from the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test comparing means for two age categories.

## CHAPTER 5

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the expressive language characteristics of the preschool Native American girl. Additionally, the study investigates whether (a) these characteristics are specific to this population, as compared to the other children in the Head Start program, (b) these characteristics are gender specific, and (c) these characteristics handicap the preschool Native American girl when she enters a formal education program.

The review of the literature focused on expressive language, comparison of expressive and receptive language, Native American students, gender differences in language usage, and language testing in early childhood programs. Although the body of Native American research is extensive, there continues to be a dearth of research concerning the expressive language skills of Native American girls.

An ethnographic case study method was selected for this study to describe the expressive language characteristics of the Native American girl. The methods

of gathering the data included the use of an observation form and an interview form, videotape analysis, and analysis of test results. The Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test was used to collect language standard scores. The components of the analysis method included both qualitative and quantitative measures because the topic required both description and explanation.

During the observation period of 150 hours, the Native American girls were observed to converse less than Anglo girls, use a longer "wait period" during conversations, and did not engage in self-talk. In general they were quieter than any of the other groups, Native American boys, Anglo boys, and Anglo girls.

The mothers of the Native American girls were interviewed to gain insights into child rearing practices. They displayed a variety of parenting skills, much as might be found in any culture. In discussing discipline, most of the mothers responded that they usually talked to their daughters or gave them time out. Several mentioned spanking for extreme behavior. If the children were present during the interview, they were on their mother's lap or near her. The mothers also reported a wide variance in family structure with grandparents, cousins, step-children, live-in boyfriends, and uncles and aunts living in the same household. The mothers described their daughters as being shy, athletic, smart and cute.

The testing was done during a three-month period with all 179 children being tested with The Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test. This test measures expressive vocabulary for children ages 2-12 and takes about 15 minutes to administer. The child's raw score was then applied to the test charts to compute a Language Standard Score (LSS) which is based on the child's age as well as the raw score. The means of the LSS were then analyzed through a simple t-test to determine if there were differences in the test scores of Native American girls as compared to Native American boys, Anglo girls, and Anglo boys. The Native American girls scored significantly lower than the Anglo boys and the Anglo girls.

#### Conclusions

The findings revealed that there are distinct language patterns of female Native American speakers. The findings from the observations, interviews, and testing described the expressive language characteristics of the 21 Native American girls at these two sites. The categories explored with the observation form repeatedly led to the same conclusions: (a) Native American girls engage in conversation less than Native American boys, Anglo boys, and Anglo girls, (b) Native American girls use a longer "wait period" in conversations, and (c) Native American girls did not engage in self-talk. A recurrent theme

during the mothers' interviews was that they described their daughters as being shy. Several mothers said, "She is just shy around strangers," or "She wants to play with the children at school but she is too shy," or "She talks at home but she never talks to her teacher." The third part of the data collection was the expressive language testing. In that testing there was a significant difference in Language Standard Scores between the Native American girls and the Anglo girls, between the Anglo students and the Native American students, and between the Native American girls and the Anglo boys.

Additionally these characteristics appear to be specific to Native American girls, as compared to the other Native American and Anglo children in the Head Start program. These characteristics appear to be gender specific to the Native American girls. Although the Language Standard Scores from the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test did not show a significant difference in scores between Native American girls and Native American boys, the observations did lead to a different conclusion. The observation form tally revealed a language count of 5 per Native American girl and 8 per Native American boy.

To find out if these language characteristics handicap the preschool Native American girl when she enters a formal education program, the teachers were informally interviewed

each week concerning the Native American girls in their classrooms. The teachers consistently stated that the girls should talk more, that they were too quiet and shy, with a few exceptions, and that they seemed younger than they actually were. These recurring statements led to the conclusion that these expressive language characteristics do handicap the preschool Native American girl.

### Recommendations

This study served to describe the expressive language characteristics of the preschool Native American girl. The recommendations are directed toward the teachers of Native American girls and the schools that serve those girls. With minorities expected to compose 40 percent of the public school population, the failure of school districts to educate poor and minority students is a major concern. With the number of potential dropouts growing in schools near Native American reservations, administrators and teachers are searching to discover culturally relevant techniques. Assessment, curriculum policy, teaching methods, and teacher training and inservice must all be addressed.

If Native American children tend to attain relatively low scores on tests which assess verbal skills and attain at least average scores on tests which assess nonverbal skills, one major educational concern is to assess how we

test Native American children. A method of assessment which would be beneficial to Native American children may also be better for other children as well. Assessment must be based on more than language scores. It must include a multitude of assessments for each child. These could include a portfolio, observation, and interview, as well as testing.

Assessment must be based on more than language scores. It must include a multitude of assessments for each child. These could include a portfolio, observation, and interviews, as well as testing. This could give us a more complete way to measure children's placement and success in school.

**Portfolio:** The portfolio should contain samples of the child's work over a period of time. This gives the teacher a better understanding of the progress the child has already made.

**Observation:** Although teachers seldom have the time to make observations other than informally in the classroom, observations should become a part of every assessment. By using an observation form such as the one used in the Language of Silence research, the teacher can gain important information by focusing on the language characteristics of one child at a time.

**Interviews:** When we conduct parent-teacher conferences we are usually busy telling the parents what is happening

at school. We should think of these conferences as an interview rather than as a reporting period. Parents know the child better than anyone else and can provide insights which may be extremely important to the education of the student.

**Testing:** While testing will still be a necessary part of education for statistical purposes, educators can minimize its effects by making it only one part of the total assessment picture. Also the teachers can check the test to make sure that it tests what it reports to be testing. This is extremely important in language tests because young children have all had differing life experiences and therefore view material in a variety of ways. Educators must begin to value informal testing procedures in the classroom by asking questions concerning each child's expressive language skills. For example:

1. Is the child willing to participate in expressive language activities?
2. Can the child express ideas clearly?
3. Does the child use standard English?
4. Does the child have an adequate vocabulary to allow for the expression of ideas?
5. Does the child use the basic sentence patterns of English?

6. Does the child respect the rights of other participants in an oral language situation?

Because Native American girls have distinct language characteristics, the major curriculum policy changes needed are in the area of language arts. The language arts curriculum policy should reflect the assessment policy. When the language arts curriculum policy and the assessment policy mirror each other, teachers are able to provide for individual differences and eliminate the need for standardizing the curriculum for all children.

When teachers have Native American girls in their classrooms, they can provide appropriate teaching methods for those students and at the same time meet the needs of the other children in the class. Native American girls may not succeed in a highly verbal classroom. Other children in the classroom may also be more successful in a more visual classroom. The goal must be to increase participation among Native American girls by accepting short or non-verbal responses, present multiple choice tasks, give visual clues, and by creating a classroom atmosphere where all responses are considered with respect.

1. Explore new techniques to develop verbal skills.

While many classrooms still center around the teacher, other classrooms are distributing the power by dividing the children into small cooperative work groups. By reducing competition

we can create classrooms which encourage discussion.

2. Accept short or non-verbal responses. Educators can eliminate the idea of "one right answer" and thereby reduce the risk for children in answering a question. Nonverbal activities may serve teachers and Native American girls equally well. These girls may prefer to answer questions through a visual project such as a chart or picture. Teachers can learn to value these answers as highly as oral answers.
3. Present multiple choice tasks. If we know that Native American girls have a longer "wait period," then we can supply several answers to the question so the girls may skip the process of remembering which words fit with which particular answer. By skipping that "name producing step" the Native American girl may be able to reduce the "wait time."
4. Give visual clues. All students may benefit from this teaching technique. If we simply talk about a subject, some of the students will understand. However, if we combine speech with visual clues, we have a greater opportunity to reach the highest number of students.

5. Create a classroom environment where all responses are considered with respect. It seems difficult to believe that classrooms still exist which are not nurturing. If the classroom is designed so students trust the teacher to accept all appropriate answers, then all students dare to take a risk by suggesting an answer which may not be appropriate.
6. Teach through each child's strengths. While this is important for all children, it is imperative for Native American girls. These girls may have been raised to be quiet daughters. They may be shy around their teachers. Teaching through the child's strengths provides the teacher with the opportunity to understand the child and to develop appropriate activities specifically for that child.

While current teacher preparation programs require at least one course in multicultural education, the majority of inservice teachers received their training years ago and may not have had a course in multicultural education. A recommendation of this study is that school districts provide a yearly inservice training program in multicultural education which focuses on language.

Further study may be necessary to determine if the distinct language characteristics of Native American

preschool girls are related to the dropout rate of Native American girls.

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**APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A  
OBSERVATION FORM



## LANGUAGE OF SILENCE - OBSERVATION FORM

## Definitions of Language Behaviors (Monette, 1990)

- Questions - Verbal behavior that demands or suggests a response from one or more group members.
- Statements - Verbal behavior that gives information and does not call for a response from group members.
- Positive Comments - Verbal behavior that followed the behavior of one or more group members and relates to this behavior to encourage similar responses. Suggests recognition, approval, or praise.
- Negative Comments - Verbal behavior that followed the behavior of one or more group members and relates to this behavior to discourage similar responses. Suggests disapproval or displeasure.
- Listening - Silence on the part of the group member either while another member verbalizes or while waiting for another member to verbalize.

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW FORM

LANGUAGE OF SILENCE - INTERVIEW FORM

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Concerning: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Being Interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Siblings: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tribal Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Urban \_\_\_\_\_

Reservation \_\_\_\_\_

Language Spoken in Home:

English \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Literacy:

How often do you read together? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you read?

Books \_\_\_\_\_ Magazines \_\_\_\_\_ Newspapers \_\_\_\_\_

How much TV do you watch per day? \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C

EXPRESSIVE ONE-WORD PICTURE VOCABULARY TEST

## Introduction and Administration

The *Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT)* was contemplated by the author for many years, and after more than one and one-half years of gathering data, the development of the test was completed. The author believed this type of test—an *expressive* one-word picture vocabulary test—was needed to fill a gap in the instruments available to professionals who wish to determine a child's overall language development. Several *receptive* picture vocabulary tests are available, and while some tests contain expressive one-word picture vocabularies, these tests are restricted to children of specific age groups. The author hopes that the EOWPVT will make a unique contribution to the total language testing of a child, both expressive and receptive.

The need for this test was based on the demand by professionals for an estimate of what a child had learned from his environment and from formal education. The author believes that a simple test of a child's acquired vocabulary not only gives this important information, but also provides valuable information about the following:

1. Speech defects
2. Possible learning disorders, for example: hearing loss, imperceptions of auditory modality (discrimination of sounds and auditory memory)
3. A bilingual child's fluency in English
4. Auditory processing, i.e., translating processed auditory matter verbally
5. Auditory-visual association ability

In addition, the EOWPVT may also be used as an instrument for determining a child's readiness for kindergarten, for grouping children in nursery school programs (those with low scores, for example, may need to be placed in a group for language stimulation), and as an excellent instrument for pediatricians to use to determine a child's expressive language functioning based on formal testing.

The EOWPVT was developed to assist professionals in obtaining a quick and

valid estimate of a child's expressive verbal intelligence. The test can be administered and scored quickly by teachers, physicians, speech therapists (as a diagnostic tool), psychologists, social workers, learning specialists, counselors, and other professionals.

The test was designed for children from 2 years to 12 years.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this test is to obtain a basal estimate of a child's verbal intelligence by means of his acquired one-word expressive picture vocabulary, i.e., the quality and quantity of a child's vocabulary based on what he has acquired from home and from formal education. It also indicates how well he is able to articulate verbally what he has learned. The quantity and quality of a child's vocabulary are determined by the ability of a child to express in words what he has learned from his environment and from formal education. The extent of a child's vocabulary is reflected in how well he is able to process language—what he has learned from what he visually perceives and auditorily perceives—so that he can make verbal identification of pictures. Expressive language, i.e., verbal expression of language, is thought to be a complicated mental process.

The EOWPVT can be of great value in obtaining a valid estimate of a child's verbal intelligence through the child's ability to form an idea or concept of a picture or an object. As C. W. Waddle wrote in the *Introduction to Child Psychology*: "The size of a child's vocabulary in relationship to others of the same age is a prominent means of judging a child's intelligence" (Brigance 1934).

### RESEARCH

Many writers on language development agree that a child understands the spoken word before he can actually use words himself. It has been reported that children have demonstrated comprehension of language as early as seven months of age. D. McCarthy (1954), in reviewing eight major infant studies, found that at the end of the first year, children usually begin to show objective evidence through their overt behavior of comprehension of the speech of others. At about the same time, children may begin to utter their first words.

Studies by W. G. Bateman (1917) and C. Bühler (1971) showed that first words were expressed at age eight months. In both studies, the earliest age for the use of the first word was eight months, with the mode being ten months of age.

Many parents confirmed to this author that their children understood what was said to them before they could verbally express the ideas themselves. The author's poll of 435 parents by means of a questionnaire about the development of their children's expressive language, showed that six months was the youngest age at which some children could express language verbally. Most of the children, according to the parents' reporting, showed a greater fluency of words between 12 and 15 months, with a great increase in the use of individual words between 18 and 20

months. Some of the single words the parents reported their children as saying are, of course, "mama," "dada," "bye-bye," and so on. It should be noted that some of the words that the parents reported their children saying at an earlier age were sounds which were parts of words.

Several studies have focused on sex differences in the acquisition of language. While there is some evidence that girls begin to speak sooner than boys, the difference appears to be small (McCarthy 1954).

Naming of objects in pictures is a more advanced stage of language development and appears several months later than the child's first words. The naming stage already involves a rather complex mental process of associating an object or picture with a particular name, plus comprehensible vocalization of that name. The studies by N. Bayley (1933), M. M. Shirley (1933), A. Gesell and H. Thompson (1934), C. Bühler and H. Hetzer (1935), and those from the 1960 revision of the *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale* give summaries of the beginning of the naming stage.

Regarding the content of pictures, Shirley (1933) reports that children in the second year favor pictures of animals and human beings to pictures of inanimate objects, except for the automobile. Among Shirley's 25 subjects, the picture of the car elicited the highest number of relevant responses in a series of ten pictures. The picture of a man, a girl, and a dog were next in rank. Shirley found that these four pictures, along with that of a bird, were named twice as often as those of a cup, a cat, a house, and a horse.

The measurement of vocabulary and language of young children through formal testing has raised questions relating to methods and results. For example, McCarthy (1954) reviewed several studies which were concerned with whether a child "knows" and "understands" the meaning of the words spoken. Different criteria were used by different authors for determining the child's understanding of the words, so no definite conclusions could be drawn from their findings.

Another difficulty in testing a child's language is the frequent incomprehensibility of early speech. Shirley (1933) observed that incomprehensible vocalizations reached their highest frequency in the period between 12 and 18 months; after 20 months it reached a low level, remaining around ten percent at the age of two years. McCarthy (1930) reports 26 percent of the responses of her eighteen-month-old subjects were comprehensible; at two years of age, 57 percent of the responses were comprehensible; 89 percent at two and one-half years; 93 percent at three years; and practically all responses at three and one-half years were comprehensible.

Similar issues are raised regarding articulation of speech of young children. In a very detailed study of 204 preschool children, B. L. Wellman and others (1931) found that at two and one-half years of age, approximately 32 percent of the total number of sounds were given correctly; at three years, 63 percent; at four years, 77 percent; at five years, 88 percent; and at six years, 89 percent. The authors observed the most marked increase in accuracy of articulation of all types of sounds

between two and three years of age.

Vocabulary tests have been developed over a number of years. M. E. Smith (1926) made the first serious attempt to develop vocabulary tests for young children. As mentioned earlier, the age of his subjects ranged from eight months to six years. He selected 203 words through a systematic sampling of Thorndike's list of 10,000 words. The words were also checked against the vocabularies of a large number of children to eliminate words which these young children were almost certain not to know. Smith was mainly interested in *expressive* vocabulary, which he tried to elicit by means of pictures taken from magazines and similar sources.

H. M. Williams and M. L. McFarland (1937) attempted a revision of Smith's test. They considerably reduced the administration time by including only 42 words (two equivalent forms), yet reported a reliability of .96. The materials are available in standard forms. The authors point out, however, that the revised tests are only relative measures and do not yield absolute measures on total vocabulary. Normative data are limited, and no comparisons are made with Smith's findings. Most currently used vocabulary tests for preschool children avoid the complexity of testing and scoring active language by focusing on "passive" or on "understood" vocabulary. They generally involve a series of ten ink drawings with several items on one card. The child is asked to identify a particular item by pointing. These tests are easy to administer, require little time (15 to 20 minutes), are simple to score, and are adaptable to group administration. The most commonly used picture vocabulary tests are the *Van Alstyne Picture Vocabulary Test* (1961 revision), *Full-Range Picture Vocabulary Test* (Ammons and Ammons 1948), and the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (Dunn 1965).

In conclusion, picture vocabulary tests that give an estimate of a child's receptive vocabulary are easy to administer and to score, and are economical in both materials and time. Yet one argument against such tests is raised by E. Piers (1965) who writes, "One might question the author's assumption that recognition vocabulary measures verbal intelligence in the same way verbal definition vocabulary tests are said to measure it and that the demonstrated predicted value for school success of the latter is thus automatically transferred to a picture vocabulary test." Piers believes that it is generally unwise to judge intelligence from a restricted sample of behavior as it is represented by picture vocabulary tests. She suggests, however, that these scales can serve as substitutes for the standard individual intelligence tests whenever verbal and performance responses cannot be obtained.

### TEST DEVELOPMENT

In developing the EOWPVT, much time and effort was given to obtaining a list of common words that children learn and use at early ages. In order to obtain such a list, 435 letters were sent to parents of children ranging in age from 18 months to 2 years. The letters asked the parents to report, via a questionnaire, their

children's words and at what ages these words were used. The parents were also asked to report new words acquired and spoken by the children at different ages up to two years. On the basis of this information submitted by parents, words were selected for the preliminary form of the EOWPVT. Words used at various age levels were chosen according to the frequency of use.

Other words chosen for the EOWPVT are those that are common within the home and those that are usually learned through formal education. As much as possible, cultural biases, racial biases, anachronisms, sex biases, and bilingual idiosyncracies were avoided. An attempt was made also to include words from all geographic areas of the United States and, to some extent, from other countries and from various, but common, occupations with which a child would be familiar. No slang words were considered.

A total of 1,249 children were examined in order to obtain raw data for the development of the EOWPVT, and 1,607 children were tested for the gathering of final data. The testing was done by graduate students, and the children tested were enrolled in private schools, parochial schools, and public schools. Some children were not in any school program because they were too young.

The items (pictures) included in this test fall within the following four categories of language:

1. General concepts (common characteristics)
2. Groupings (plurals)
3. Abstract concepts (a single characteristic of a number of items or objects)
4. Descriptive concepts (only one or two items on this test were identified by a participle; for example, "cutting tools")

The EOWPVT was developed as a measure of how a child thinks, since the child must identify a single object or a group of objects on the basis of a single concept. The ability to identify a single object or group of objects according to an abstract concept usually indicates that a child's intellectual functioning is developing appropriately. This type of thinking usually develops around nine or ten years of age. Children of this age who have difficulty identifying a single concept among a number of objects may be functioning below normal intellectually.

Although the EOWPVT was normed on children whose primary language was English, the test can be administered to bilingual children for the purpose of determining the extent of their English vocabulary.

While low functioning on this test may be related to mental retardation (low intellectual functioning), poor performance could also be related to educational retardation, bilingualism, a nonstimulating home environment, cultural differences, and so on.

The test was developed to provide norms that would include language ages, language standard scores, percentiles, and stanines.

## ADMINISTRATION OF TEST

### Testing Time

The EOWPVT requires approximately 10 to 15 minutes to administer and even less time to score. It should be remembered, however, that this is not a timed test, but a power test. A child should have ample time to determine the correct identification of the objects in the pictures and ample time to express verbally the name of each object.

### Testing Environment

The test should be administered in an environment that is conducive to testing: quiet and free of auditory and visual distractions. The test should be administered at a time when the child is not fatigued or excited from having participated in stimulating activities. The examiner should be in control of the test situation.

### Preparation for Testing

Prior to the testing, the examiner should record the child's date of birth (verification of date of birth is important), and should determine the child's chronological age in years and months by the usual method of computation (provision for computing the child's age has been made on the individual recording form). Knowing the child's age, the examiner can determine at what age level the testing should begin.

### Preparing the Child

The child should be comfortable and at ease. The examiner should be friendly and should try to develop a warm rapport with the child. The examiner should introduce the test to the child by saying, "I want you to look at some pictures, and I want you to tell me the names of the things in these pictures."

If the child shows reluctance, resistance, or negative behavior, the test should not be administered at that time. It may be, however, that by offering the child encouragement and praise and introducing some of the sample pictures with which he can experience success, the examiner may interest the child and motivate him to perform the test. While it is well to offer the child encouragement and praise, it should not be so excessive that it becomes meaningless to the child. The examiner should not offer praise unless it is realistic. If the child is not doing well, simply say that no child is expected to name all of the pictures correctly. Explain that this test is also for older children and, as a result, he may not be able to name some objects in the pictures as well as older children. If a child demands to know if an answer is incorrect or correct, it is wise to tell him the truth. If an answer is incorrect, tell the child that it was a wrong answer, but remind him that he has correctly named many other objects.

### General Directions

Since this is not a timed test, it is advisable to proceed slowly, turning the pages of the flip book at a moderate rate, and giving the child ample time to look at the picture and to process what he visually perceives so that he can identify the object from memory and verbally express the word that identifies the object. In a warm, soft voice the examiner should point to the picture and ask, "What is this called?"

If the child gives more than one response, explain to him that all children are allowed only one response (name of object).

Begin the testing at the child's appropriate age level. If the child does not identify eight consecutive pictures correctly, return to the child's appropriate age level and go backwards until the child has eight consecutive successes. The test ends when the child makes six consecutive incorrect responses.

The examiner should allow the child to learn how to take the test by giving him two examples. This is particularly beneficial for the very young child who has not had experience in taking tests. If the child fails to identify one of the sample objects in the pictures, give him the answer in a soft, articulate voice, then present the other example to determine if he has learned the method needed to perform this test.

### Recording Child's Responses

As already indicated, the examiner should turn the pages of the booklet at a reasonable speed and should record the child's response in the space provided on the individual recording form. It is important to record all of the child's answers, right or wrong, so that he will not be able to determine his failure or success by the method of recording his responses. If the examiner does not follow this procedure of recording answers, the child may lose his motivation and interest in performing the test. Furthermore, the examiner is urged to record any responses that may be of diagnostic value. During the development of the test the author found that a child's responses to some of the objects in the pictures revealed diagnostic patterns that could be used in helping a child improve his vocabulary, and so on. The examiner should record exactly any incorrect word pronunciations. These should also be underlined so that the examiner, at a later time, can analyze the responses for any possible speech or language distortions.

### Child's Behavior

The child's behavior during the administration of this test should be noted. Hyperactivity, distractibility, poor attention, or difficulty in concentrating, along with mannerisms suggesting lack of self-confidence, fear of failure, and so on, should all be recorded. These notations will be of benefit in determining the accuracy of the test results.

### Examiners

The EOWPVT may be administered by physicians, psychologists, teachers, counselors, social workers, learning specialists and speech therapists. No specific qualifications are required, but the examiners should be familiar with psychological and/or educational tests and this test in particular.

### Specific Advantages of the EOWPVT

Since the EOWPVT test plates present only one object on a page, the child is not bombarded by stimuli or confused by several pictures on a page. Furthermore, the flip book does not have pictures on the reverse side of each plate. Another advantage is the fact that the EOWPVT is not a multiple-choice type test. A child is not confused by various answers, only one of which is correct. All these factors eliminate guessing to a great extent, reduce a child's confusion in taking the test, and may increase the child's proficiency.

### BASAL AND CEILING

The basal response level is eight consecutive correct responses. To establish the basal level, determine the child's chronological age and begin the testing with the plate appropriate for the child's chronological age group as indicated in Table 1 or as shown on the Individual Test Form. It may be wise to begin the testing of a child below his chronological age level if it is known to the examiner that the child is a slow learner, lacks self-confidence, etc.

TABLE 1

Chronological Age Level	Plate Number	Chronological Age Level	Plate Number
2-0 to 2-11	1	6-0 to 6-11	40
3-0 to 3-5	11	7-0 to 7-11	50
3-6 to 4-5	20	8-0 to 9-11	60
4-6 to 5-11	30	10-0 to 11-11	70

If a child does not establish eight consecutive correct responses at his appropriate age group (or at a lower age group), return to the first correct response and work backwards until the child establishes a basal level of eight consecutive correct responses (see Figure 1). After the child establishes his basal level, continue presenting the plates in a forward direction, beginning with the plate that indicated the necessity for working backward.

Continue presenting the plates in ascending order until the child makes six consecutive errors. The child's ceiling will be the last item of the six consecutive incorrect responses (see Figure 1).

If no basal can be established because of the child's age or for other reasons, count the number of correct answers and use this number to compute the child's test scores, but note this situation in the interpretation of the child's test scores.

If the child establishes two or more ceilings as a result of having to work backward to establish a basal level, use the lowest ceiling in computing the raw score.

Conversely, if the child establishes two or more basal levels, the one closest to the ceiling will be used in computing the raw score (raw score is the number of correct responses obtained in accordance with the criteria established in this section on determining the basal and ceiling response levels).

### SCORING

The child's raw score is the number of correct responses, counting all responses below the basal level as correct and adding this number to the number of correct responses between the basal and ceiling levels. As noted above, if the child establishes two or more basals, the one closest to the ceiling is used in computing the raw score. If the child establishes two or more ceilings, the lowest ceiling is used in computing the raw score. Thus, under normal conditions, the score is established as follows: Since the last item number of the six incorrect responses is the number from which the errors will be subtracted, if a child's last failed item is number 57 and he failed 16 items (including the six consecutive errors), his raw score will be 41. See Figure 1 for another example of correct scoring.

In order to assure accurate scoring, it is recommended that, after completing the administration of the test, a slanted line be drawn through the numbers of the incorrect items.

### DIRECTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATION TO SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN

The EOWPVT can be administered to children who speak English and Spanish or to children who speak only Spanish to assess their English and/or Spanish vocabulary. It can also be used to assess their intelligence based on the language in which they are most fluent.

The administration and scoring procedures for the Spanish version of the EOWPVT are the same as those presented above for the English version. The Spanish version, however, should be administered only by a person who is fluent in the Spanish language. When administering the test to children who speak Spanish only, the directions should be presented in Spanish.

In scoring responses, the examiner needs to bear in mind that some Spanish word sounds vary according to the linguistic variations of different geographic areas.

FIGURE 1

Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test  
 Morrison F. Gardner  
 INDIVIDUAL TEST FORM

Name: Flynn Susan B.  
Last First Middle

School: Parkwood

Grade: Kindergarten (KDEE)

Sex: F Examiner: J.W. Baker

Date of Test: 79 10 9  
Year Month Day

Date of Birth: 73 ? 18  
Year Month Day

Chronological Age: 5 7 21  
Year Month Day\*

\*If the number of days exceeds 15, consider as a full month and increase the months by one.

Test Results:

Raw Score ..... 54  
 Language Age ..... 5-5  
 Language Standard Score .. 96  
 Percentile ..... 40  
 Stanine ..... 5

Comments about child's behavior as it affects the validity of the test results:

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FIGURE 1 Continued

Basal: Established by 8 consecutive correct verbal responses.

Ceiling: Established by 6 consecutive errors.

Begin with plate at child's chronological age. If basal is not established beginning at child's chronological age, work backwards until child makes 8 consecutive correct responses.

Record in writing in space after word all responses whether right or wrong. This will avoid having the child make his own analysis of his or her successes or failures.

	3-6/4-5	6-0/6-11	58 insects _____
	20 train _____	40 sock <u>sock</u>	bugs <u>bugs</u>
	21 glasses _____	41 fireplace <u>fire</u>	59 jewelry <u>jewelry</u>
	22 cup _____	42 footprints <u>footprints</u>	jewels _____
	23 duck _____	43 dentist <u>dentist</u>	
	24 knife _____	44 money <u>money</u>	
	25 umbrella _____	45 penguin <u>bird</u>	8-0/9-11
	26 hammer _____	46 goat <u>goat</u>	60 bench <u>park</u>
③	27 scissors <u>scissors</u>	47 rocket <u>rocket</u>	61 ruler <u>ruler</u>
	28 wagon <u>wagon</u>	48 suitcases _____	62 children _____
	29 kite <u>kite</u>	baggage <u>baggage</u>	kids <u>kids</u>
		luggage _____	63 wall <u>bricks</u>
		49 clothing <u>dresses</u>	64 instruments <u>DK</u>
		clothes _____	65 cloud(s) <u>smoke</u>
			66 Eskimo <u>man</u>
			67 vegetables <u>DK</u>
	4-6/5-11	7-0/7-11	④ 68 furniture <u>chairs</u>
①	30 chicken <u>chicken</u>	50 smoke <u>smoke</u>	69 saddle _____
	31 tiger <u>tiger</u>	51 tractor <u>tractor</u>	
	32 triangle <u>triangle</u>	52 helicopters <u>helicopters</u>	
	33 square <u>square</u>	53 fruit <u>apples</u>	
	34 ear <u>ear</u>	54 animals <u>animals</u>	
②	35 wheel <u>tire</u>	mammals _____	
	36 leaf <u>leaf</u>		
	37 typewriter <u>typewriter</u>	55 stool <u>sit on</u>	
	38 nail <u>nail</u>	56 peanut <u>peanut</u>	
	39 stove <u>stove</u>	57 statues <u>DK</u>	

Note to Examiner: After completing the administration of the test, draw a slanted line through the numbers of the items that are incorrect. This will reduce the number of scoring errors. Underline any of the responses that indicate a speech distortion.

① Begin here at chronological age level.

② First error. Go back to No. 30 and work backwards to establish basal.

③ No. 27 is basal.

④ Ceiling established—6 consecutive errors.

## USE AND INTERPRETATION OF DERIVED SCORES

### Using Derived Scores

A raw score by itself provides little information about a child's level of performance. When the raw score is compared to some standard, it then becomes meaningful. Derived scores are provided to the user of the EOWPVT so that a child's performance may be compared to a defined norms group. When a raw score is obtained and the child's chronological age computed, four types of derived scores are available:

1. Language Age
2. Language Standard Score
3. Stanine
4. Percentile rank

Derived scores may be found in Tables 9 through 11. These derived scores should be entered in the appropriate space provided on the Individual Test Form. The procedure for converting raw scores to derived scores is as follows:

1. A language age may be obtained by turning to Table 9 and locating the language age which corresponds to the raw score.
2. To determine the language standard score, turn to Table 10 and locate the column which represents the appropriate chronological age level and the row corresponding to the raw score. The language standard score is located where the row and column intersect.
3. Since language standard scores are distributed normally, a single table is provided for determining stanines and percentile ranks for all age levels. Turn to Table 11 from which the stanine and percentile rank corresponding to a language standard score may be obtained.

For example, if a child whose chronological age is 9 years 3 months obtains a raw score of 81, the corresponding derived scores are: language age: 9 years 1 month; language standard score: 98; stanine: 5; and percentile rank: 45.

### Interpreting Derived Scores

It is important that the user of the EOWPVT understand the meaning of the various derived scores. Before discussing the score characteristics, a few issues essential to the interpretation of EOWPVT scores should be mentioned. First, it is important to remember that the behavior measured by the EOWPVT is *expressive vocabulary*. Inferences concerning general ability should be made with caution. Second, derived scores provide a means of comparing a child's performance to a defined norms group. Such comparisons are of meaning only when we are interested in a child's performance relative to a population which closely resembles that of the standardization sample. It is important that interpretations are made within this

context. Finally, the user of the EOWPVT or any other educational or psychological test should be aware that obtained scores may reflect errors of measurement. It is therefore important that the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) be considered when interpreting the various EOWPVT scores.

To gain an understanding of the meaning and interrelationships of the various derived scores the user should refer to Table 2.

*Standard error of measurement.* Since a degree of imprecision may be associated with any measurement, an obtained score may differ slightly from a child's "true" score. An obtained score should therefore be considered as representing a probable range of scores rather than a precise measurement. The SEM provides an estimate of this imprecision. Table 6 presents the SEM for raw scores and deviation IQs for each age level. Generally the following values should apply: SEM raw score, 3; SEM deviation IQ, 4.

When interpreting a particular score, if  $\pm 1$  SEM is added to the score we may be confident that the child's "true" score is likely to fall within this range. In fact the probability is about 68 percent that the "true" score lies within this interval. If  $\pm 2$  SEM is added to the score, the associated probability is 95 percent. It should be clear to the user of the EOWPVT that small differences between scores may represent errors of measurement rather than actual differences in ability. Small differences between scores, therefore, should not be considered significant, since errors of measurement within the magnitude specified by the SEM may be frequent.

*Language age.* A language age is a familiar and convenient index of a child's EOWPVT performance. Language age provides information about a child's relative standing in reference to the entire norms group. For example, if a child, regardless of chronological age, obtains a raw score of 51, Table 9 shows that the child's language age is at the five-year level. This indicates that EOWPVT performance was the same as that of the average five-year old in the norms group.

While language age is a familiar and convenient index, it should be noted that since development is quite rapid at early ages and levels off during adolescence, equal intervals of language age do not correspond to equal intervals of ability.

*Language standard score.* A language standard score indicates the extent to which a child's EOWPVT performance deviates from the average performance of children at that designated age level. Tables for language standard scores corresponding to raw scores are provided for each of the 14 age levels. The distribution of language standard scores for each level was assigned a mean of 100, representing average performance and a standard deviation of 15. This means that if a child's rank relative to others remains constant from year to year, his language standard score will also remain constant. Language standard scores represent equal units of measurement and are comparable with standard scores from other tests provided that a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15 is also used and that the norm groups for each test are similar. Thus, language standard scores provide a unit of measurement for comparing behavior across chronological age levels and across various behavioral domains.

**TABLE 2**  
**Comparison of the Interrelationships of Derived Scores**

Verbal Description	Range of Standard Scores	Range of Percentile Ranks	Stanines
Superior 4%	126 and above	96 and above	9
Above Average 19%	118-125	89-95	8
	111-117	77-88	7
Average 54%	104-110	60-76	6
	96-103	40-59	5
	89-95	23-39	4
Below Average 19%	82-88	11-22	3
	73-81	4-10	2
Low 4%	72 and below	Below 4	1

*Stanines.* Stanines are standard scores that may be interpreted similarly to language standard scores. Stanines have a mean of five, which represents average performance for a particular age level and a standard deviation of about two. Stanines range from a low of one to a high of nine. Although stanines represent a course unit of measurement as compared with language standard scores, problems due to errors of measurement are avoided. Stanines provide a simple and convenient way of reporting EOWPVT performance.

*Percentile ranks.* Percentile ranks provide an index of a child's relative standing in reference to other children at that age level. A percentile rank of 50 represents average performance. If we consider a group of 100 children, a percentile rank of 45 would mean that 45 children scored below and 55 children scored above that child. Due to the familiarity of percentile ranks they are frequently used for reporting test results; however, there is a problem associated with their interpretation. Unlike standard scores, percentile ranks do *not* represent equal units of measurement. The difference in ability between the 45th and the 50th percentile rank, for example, is minute compared with the difference between the 5th and the 10th percentile rank. Nevertheless, when an index of rank or relative standing within an age level is required, percentile ranks are appropriate.

APPENDIX D  
LETTERS FROM HEAD START PROGRAMS

DISTRICT  HRDC NORTHERN MONTANA HEADSTART

---

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

District 4 HRDC  
College Park Plaza  
P.O. Box 1509  
Havre, Montana 59501  
Phone (406) 265-6743

SCHOOL

Head Start  
1360 Lincoln Avenue  
P.O. Box 1369  
Havre, Montana 59501  
Phone (406) 265-6794

November 19, 1991

Arlene Hett  
3433 15th Ave. South  
Great Falls, Montana 59405

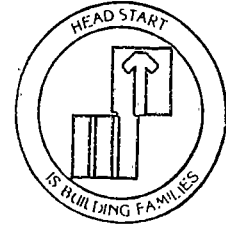
Dear Arlene;

I approve of your use of our Head Start Program to collect the necessary data for your research. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

*Frank Witter*  
Frank Witter, Director  
Northern Montana Head Start

**HEADSTART**  
A Child and Family Services Program



AN AGENCY OF OPPORTUNITIES, INC.

TELEPHONE  
(406) 453-5415

P. O. BOX 2289, 309 - 12th STREET SOUTH  
GREAT FALLS, MONTANA 59403

December 3, 1991

Arlene Hett  
3433 15 Ave. So.  
Great Falls, MT. 59405

Dear Arlene:

We would be happy to allow you to do your research on pre-school Native American Girls at our Head Start Center in December, 1991 and January, 1992.

Please let me know when you wish to start. We will be closed December 24 thru Jan. 3, 1992 for the Christmas and New Year Holidays.

Sincerely,

*Karen Stanley*

Karen Stanley  
Head Start Director

**APPENDIX E**  
**EDUCATOR'S MONOGRAPH**

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LANGUAGE OF SILENCE: EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE  
CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIVE AMERICAN GIRLS

INTRODUCTION

Speech is civilization itself. The word, even the most contradictory word, preserves contact-- it is silence which isolates.

Thomas Mann, The Magic Mountain

After a half-hour interview with Jessie's mother, the interviewer asked the final question, "Is there anything unique about your daughter? Anything else you would like to tell me about Jessie?" The interviewer didn't really expect any new information about Jessie because they had been discussing Jessie's strengths and weaknesses in depth for a half hour.

"Well," said the young Native American mother, "I think she does pretty well considering all she has been through."

"What do you mean by 'all she's been through'?" asked the interviewer expecting a story of abuse or family problems.

"She had open heart surgery last year and now she has some problems with her kidneys. She may have to have surgery again. She's deaf in her left ear."

"Does her teacher know about this?"

The mother looked down at her hands. "No, she's never asked."

\*\*\*\*\*

"What is this called?" "Good, and what is this called?"

The teacher who was administering a language test to the preschoolers in her classroom was doing just as the test manual had dictated.

Turn the pages of the flip book at a moderate rate and give the child ample time to look at the picture and to process what he/she visually perceives so that he/she can identify the object. The examiner should turn the pages of the booklet at a reasonable speed and should record the child's response in the space provided on the individual recording form.

Mrs. Young had already tested ten of the Anglo children in her class and she had discovered that after saying "What is this?" for two or three of the pictures, she simply had to turn the page to the next picture and the children would respond without the cue. Now it was Leila's turn. After explaining the test and doing several sample pictures, Mrs. Young simply turned the page and waited for Leila's response. Nothing! She waited for almost a minute, but Leila just sat still and looked at the picture. "What is this?"

"A stove," responded Leila.

Mrs. Young was curious as to how long Leila would wait before simply answering when the pages of the booklet were flipped. What Mrs. Young discovered was that Leila, like the other Native American girls in the class, did not simply respond to the next picture until the teacher asked the question, "What is this?"

\*\*\*\*\*

"Don't call me Manners! My name is Marie, not Manners!"

This was the most Rose had said during the Head Start lunch period. Rose was extremely quiet while a visitor talked about names with a group of eight children who were seated at the lunch table. Finally she said her name was Rose and that her middle name was Marie. A few minutes later the visitor said, "I really like Rose's manners."

Rose quickly corrected the visitor, "My second name is Marie, not Manners!"

#### NATIVE AMERICAN GIRLS

Native American students represent about one percent of the total student population in the United States and, because of their small numbers, are often lost in reports about educational achievement and progress. The 1990 Task Force on Indian Nations at Risk was charged with the task of describing the current situation of Native American students and then to develop an educational plan for the

future of programs in the United States which provide services to Native American children. They completed their task in October, 1991 with the publication of their final report, Indian Nations at Risk: An Educational Strategy for Action. The report claims that "our schools have failed to nurture the intellectual development and academic performance of many Native children, as is evident from their high dropout rates and negative attitudes toward school."

Language and language usage are common topics in the Indian Nations at Risk report. For example the report's first recommendation for parents of Native children is to "take responsibility for being your children's first and most important teacher, especially in the development of their language base." One of their findings was that "students must establish language competence in order to develop their academic and intellectual skills. Learning standard English is essential for school success."

Finally the report states that Native American students have the highest high school dropout rate in the nation with 36 percent of their students dropping out before high school graduation. Native American children must overcome a number of barriers according to the report:

- (1) limited opportunities to enrich their language and developmental skills during their preschool years, and
- (2) an unfriendly school climate that fails to promote

appropriate academic, social, cultural, and spiritual development among many Native American students.

Concern has also been expressed by Native American educators who feel that the tests which are used for promotion, college entrance, and placement in special programs are biased against Native Americans. As a result of these tests, 25 percent of Native American children in public schools are in special education programs. Educators labeled children as "learning disabled" when actually they simply did not understand "school language." Cultural language differences between the teacher and the student may present barriers for the children which are difficult to break through.

One study completed in Alaska was based on observations of conversations between Native American and Anglo speakers. This researcher found that an Anglo speaker often will ask a question, then pause, waiting for the Native American speaker to reply; then, when it appears the listener has nothing to say, the white speaker will speak again. The Native American, who wishes to reply but is accustomed to longer pauses between speakers, is not given an adequate opportunity to speak. On the other hand, when Native American speakers did have the floor, they were interrupted frequently because they took what were perceived by Anglos to be "lengthy" pauses between thoughts. As a Native American woman said, "While you're

thinking about what you're going to say, they're already talking." Hence, Native American speakers often say very little and Anglo speakers seem to do all the talking.

What implications does this hold for the Native American/ Anglo classroom? If an Anglo teacher does not make a shift in the language pattern being used, there will be little opportunity for the Native American child to speak. It is important that these students do not feel as outsiders in their own classrooms simply because they may be out of sync with the style used by the teacher.

## LANGUAGE

### Expressive Language

Expressive Language is that language which starts on the inside and moves outward. It is the component of language which is used to express an idea or thought and therefore it is original and creative. Just as an infant uses his cries to express needs, the preschool child learns how to manipulate language to express those needs more clearly.

Many researchers have conducted research on language and learning to produce theories which describe the characteristics of expressive language and how people learn through language use. For example, Piaget and his associates concluded that children's first-hand experiences

form the basis of their learning and understanding. It is through concrete, hands-on activities that children are able to develop an understanding of the world around them and the language associated with their world. Piaget emphasized the concept that the child's thoughts arise from his/her own actions. This action builds inner frames of reference which are the basis of meaning for each child.

Another theorist, Vygotsky, helped explain the way in which children use their experiences in combination with their social interactions with people involving language. As the child hears and uses words, the child begins to order and classify his experiences. Later, words come to represent activities, experiences and thoughts. In Vygotsky's view language plays an essential part in conceptual development for the child. Children learn to think as they are learning to use language.

Dr. Gordon Wells uses a term he calls "storying" to describe how the mind itself works. He claims that this "inner storying" is not a deliberate activity but is the way the mind works to learn new information. His research stresses the importance of storying as a prerequisite of school success.

### Receptive Language

Receptive language is that language which starts on the outside and moves inward. It deals with how people process language when someone else is speaking.

Children learn their language through imitation of others in their environment. As the "mother tongue" is learned, experiences which are important to that culture are also learned. For example, a child from a rural area might learn to distinguish varied types of plants and know the word symbols for the growth stages of the plant, while a child raised in the city could distinguish brand-name products advertised on billboards and street signs. It is apparent that the culture of a child is greatly reflected in the child's expressive language. Children, like adults, talk about their environment and their experiences in that environment.

Educators who are working with diverse cultures in their schools may need to look at curriculum policies to insure that students from culturally different families are also taught within their dominant form of communication. This is much more complex than simply dealing with children who speak a language which differs from the dominant language. It deals with the "hidden" handicap of speaking the same language but with a completely different delivery system. One of the most important policies schools can

approve is to insure teacher training to all teachers who may be working with culturally different children. Native American children tend to score low on tests which test verbal skills, but score at least average on tests which assess nonverbal skills.

#### Gender and Language

The historical case of the Carib Indians has been used in many accounts of sex differences in language use. These West Indies Indians have been described as having two separate languages, one language being used only by the men and the other only by the women even though they understood the language of the opposite sex. Some Sioux tribes have a similar language system with one used only by the men and the other used by the women. To use the wrong language would be considered a grave social mistake. Certain kinds of speech may be regarded as socially appropriate for a particular sex and may be learned by children just as they learn other kinds of gender appropriate behavior.

Language is culturally specific as are other social behaviors. How men and women speak may ultimately affect their position in society, their economic and political achievements, and even their personalities and perceived identities. In the predominant white culture found in most schools, there is one language spoken by both men and women. However, we are all aware of differences in

language usage between men and women, differences such as pitch, volume, speed, and tone.

#### Language Testing in Early Childhood Programs

Language has been used by parents, grandparents and pediatricians to assess development in children. Child development charts reassure parents that if the child produces specific sounds within a certain age range the child's development is progressing normally. Educators have long used language to assess the development of the students in their classrooms. The child who responds differently than expected may be quickly labeled as language delayed.

Many of the forms of assessment using language in schools have been based on informal teacher judgement. However, during the past several decades, researchers have begun to standardize more formal assessments of children's use of language. The language tests have been categorized as expressive or receptive tests. Expressive tests measure the child's ability to express thoughts and ideas, and receptive tests assess the child's ability to understand what others are expressing.

#### The Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test

measures expressive vocabulary for children ages 2-12 and takes approximately 15 minutes to administer. The test consists of 110 line drawings. The child is asked to give

a one-word description of the objects pictured in each test plate.

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test is an example of a test which measures receptive language skills. Each page of the test manual has four drawings in boxes labeled 1-4. The child is shown one page and the examiner says one word. The child may either point to the correct box or state the number of the box.

In both the expressive language tests and the receptive language tests the child has the opportunity to communicate the language system he/she has learned. The examiner has the responsibility to assess the child's language on the test results. One test score alone should never be used to evaluate a child. The score may be better understood after the examiner has observed the child in the classroom and in other informal settings such as the playground.

#### LANGUAGE OF SILENCE RESEARCH

In the Language of Silence research, which was completed in 1992, I set out to describe the expressive language characteristics of the preschool Native American girl. I accomplished this through observation, interviews and testing. I selected two Head Start sites which are close to reservations but not located on reservations. There were 51 Native American children in the study with 21

girls and 30 boys. The total population was 179 children, and of that population 28 percent were Native American. The average age was 4 years and 9 months.

The observation took place during the months of December, 1991 and January and February, 1992. I also used the video camera in the classrooms so that I could check my perceptions again at a later date. I found that Native American girls and Anglo girls are as varied as any group of children. Some of the Native American girls initiate conversation just as the Anglo girls did and some of the Anglo girls were extremely quiet and only spoke when it was necessary. So the difference did not seem to be in the area of who initiates the conversation.

One difference I did observe was in the area of "self talk." Many of the Anglo girls engaged in a chatter all by themselves, whereas I did not observe this characteristic in the Native American girls. One Anglo girl, for example, was drawing and coloring some cars and airplanes for a new wall mural. Her conversation went like this, "Cars can be red, or they can be blue or yellow or white. I like white cars the best. My uncle has a white pick-up. Pick-up. Pick-up. Pick-up. Pick-ups aren't cars." This made her laugh as if she had made up a joke. She worked intently and quietly for a few minutes and then said, "I flew in an airplane at Christmas time. Jingle Bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way. What color is an airplane? I think it

was blue." Perhaps this "self talk" gives Anglo girls practice in their language.

The interviewing was done with the mothers of the Native American girls at both sites. The majority of the mothers came into the center for the interviews and were very helpful, but a few of the mothers were unable to come into the school and did not have a working telephone number. Again I found a variety of parenting skills as you might expect in any culture. In the area of discipline most of the mothers use the method of talking to their child and perhaps giving them some "time-out" for discipline. When I interviewed the mothers while the child was in the same room the child was usually on the mother's lap or very close. Although the child-rearing practices appeared to be very similar in the areas of discipline and attention, there was a wide variety of family structure reported as well as a variety in who lives in the household. For example, there were several families with live-in boyfriends and their children, several with a grandparent living in the house, and a variety of reports about where other children from the same family were living. While this is representative of the state of families in our country at the present time, I believe the Native American family reflects a wider variety in lifestyles than the Anglo culture.

One of the frequent comments from mothers was that their daughters were shy. It did seem strange to me that so many of the mothers would describe their daughters as being shy. When I asked them to explain what they meant by that, the usual response was that the girl would cling to their mothers around strangers and never speak to newcomers. Upon further discussion they would say that this was usually with white people and not with other Native Americans. This would definitely have implications for the Native American girls in a classroom with an Anglo teacher.

The testing was done during a three-month period with all 179 children being tested with The Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test. This test measures expressive vocabulary for children ages 2-12 and takes about 15 minutes to administer. The test consists of 110 line drawings. The child must give a one-word description of the objects pictured in each test plate. The raw score is then applied to the test charts to compute a Language Standard Score which is based on the child's age as well as the raw score.

The Native American girls' scores were then compared to the Anglo girls, the Native American boys, and to the Anglo boys. The Language Standard Score for the Native American girls was lower than the other three groups. The average Language Standard Score for this group of children

was 90.54 and the average score for the Native American girls was 81.86. The Native American boys scored 85.40, the Anglo boys scored 89.93, and the Anglo girls scored at the top with 95.84. It is easy to see that the widest difference in test results was between the Native American girls and the Anglo girls. This may explain some of the causes for the problems of the expressive language skills of Native American girls in predominately Anglo schools.

As preschool teachers, we expect high achievement from the girls we work with and often this high expectation is based on the expressive language of these little girls. I believe we transfer this expectation to the Native American girls in our classes. When they do not perform as the Anglo girls do in the area of language, we suspect that something is wrong with this particular girl and often refer them for further testing and help in Chapter I or in the Special Education program in our school districts. Instead, we must begin to understand their patterns of communication so that we can give them the education they deserve.

#### LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIVE AMERICAN GIRLS

What are the expressive language characteristics which may be unique to the preschool Native American girl? During the Language of Silence research I found that Native American girls converse less than Anglo girls, use a longer

"wait period" during conversations, and they do not engage in "self talk." In general the Native American groups were more quiet than any of the other girls, Native American boys, Anglo boys or Anglo girls. The mothers of these girls frequently described their daughters as shy. "She talks all the time at home, but she never talks to her teacher. She's shy."

Native American girls generally use a longer "wait period" during conversations. During the activity period in the Head Start program two girls were observed as they worked with Play Dough and cookie cutters. Gabrielle (Anglo) asked her friend Nancy (Native American) if she wanted to make snowmen or stars with the cookie cutters. Nancy was thinking it over when Gabrielle handed her the star cutter as if to say, "I'll decide for you."

One of the main characteristics observed in the Anglo girls was the habit of "self talk." While the Anglo girls played they ran a constant stream of language with each other or by themselves. This practice was not observed in the Native American girls. Perhaps the Native American girls fall behind in their expressive language skills by not having this method of practice.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Association of Governors, at their Governor's Conference in 1990, developed national education

goals as a guide for our country's educational efforts. The first two goals are that by the year 2000 (a) every child will start school ready to learn and (b) the graduation rate will increase to 90 percent nationally. With minorities expected to compose forty percent of the public school population, the failure of school districts to educate poor and minority students is a major concern. With the number of potential dropouts growing in schools near Indian reservations, administrators and teachers are searching to discover culturally relevant teaching techniques. We must look at the areas of assessment, curriculum policy, teaching methods, and teacher training and inservice.

#### Assessment

If we know that Native American children tend to attain relatively low scores on tests which assess verbal skills and attain at least average scores on tests which assess nonverbal skills, it seems that one major educational concern is to assess how we test Native American children. A method of assessment which would be better for Native American children may also be beneficial for other children as well. In early childhood programs language testing, combined with teacher expectation, has played an important role in determining student placement. This effects the student's later success in school.

Assessment must be based on more than language scores. It must include a multitude of assessments for each child. These could include a portfolio, observation, and interviews, as well as testing. This could give us a more complete way to measure children's placement and success in school.

**Portfolio:** The portfolio should contain samples of the child's work over a period of time. This gives the teacher a better understanding of the progress the child has already made.

**Observation:** Although teachers seldom have the time to make observations other than informally in the classroom, observations should become a part of every assessment. By using an observation form such as the one used in the Language of Silence research, the teacher can gain important information by focusing on the language characteristics of one child at a time.

**Interviews:** When we conduct parent-teacher conferences we are usually busy telling the parents what is happening at school. We should think of these conferences as an interview rather than as a reporting period. Parents know the child better than anyone else and can provide insights which may be extremely important to the education of the student.

**Testing:** While testing will still be a necessary part of education for statistical purposes, educators can

minimize its effects by making it only one part of the total assessment picture. Also the teachers can check the test to make sure that it tests what it reports to be testing. This is extremely important in language tests because young children have all had differing life experiences and therefore view material in a variety of ways. Educators must begin to value informal testing procedures in the classroom by asking questions concerning each child's expressive language skills. For example:

1. Is the child willing to participate in expressive language activities?
2. Can the child express ideas clearly?
3. Does the child use standard English?
4. Does the child have an adequate vocabulary to allow for the expression of ideas?
5. Does the child use the basic sentence patterns of English?
6. Does the child respect the rights of other participants in an oral language situation?

#### Curriculum Policy

Curriculum policy is set by a variety of groups including state agencies, local district curriculum personnel, and curriculum committees composed of teachers, administrators, and others. In the beginning it seems like

an impossible task to change policy. However, if we remember that all of the decision makers in this group should have children's best interest at heart, then we can understand how we, as educators, can make a major difference in setting policy.

The major policy changes we need to make are in the area of language arts. We want our curriculum policy to reflect the assessment policy and perhaps provide for more decision making to be done by the individual teachers. If your district is using workbooks with young children, for example, this can be a beginning point. Not all children will respond and learn through a workbook and the teacher who is working with the child should be the one to make that decision. We need to provide for individual differences and not have a policy where one size fits all.

#### Teaching Methods

Educators have seen many professional articles in the last decade concerning teaching methods. Terms such as "developmentally appropriate curriculum" reflect what good teachers have been doing for years. When teachers have Native American students in their classrooms they must also provide appropriate teaching methods for these students. What do these students need? How can we provide the methods they need while meeting the needs of the rest of the class? Again, perhaps what will fit for the Native

American student may be a better method for other students as well. Many Native American girls will not succeed in a highly verbal classroom, they may become better students in a more visual classroom. The emphasis in teaching methods for Native American children will be to increase participation among Native American girls. What can we do to actively involve them in their classroom discussions?

1. Explore new techniques to develop verbal skills. While many classrooms still center around the teacher, other classrooms are distributing the power by dividing the children into small cooperative work groups. By reducing competition we can create classrooms which encourage discussion.
2. Accept short or non-verbal responses. Educators can eliminate the idea of "one right answer" and thereby reduce the risk for children in answering a question. Nonverbal activities may serve teachers and Native American girls equally well. These girls may prefer to answer questions through a visual project such as a chart or picture. Teachers can learn to value these answers as highly as oral answers.
3. Present multiple choice tasks. If we know that Native American girls have a longer "wait period," then we can supply several answers to the question

so the girls may skip the process of remembering which words fit with which particular answer. By skipping that "name producing step" the Native American girl may be able to reduce the "wait time."

4. Give visual clues. All students may benefit from this teaching technique. If we simply talk about a subject, some of the students will understand. However, if we combine speech with visual clues, we have a greater opportunity to reach the highest number of students.
5. Create a classroom environment where all responses are considered with respect. It seems difficult to believe that classrooms still exist which are not nurturing. If the classroom is designed so students trust the teacher to accept all appropriate answers, then all students dare to take a risk by suggesting an answer which may not be appropriate.
6. Teach through each child's strengths. While this is important for all children, it is imperative for Native American girls. These girls may have been raised to be quiet daughters. They may be shy around their teachers. Teaching through the child's strengths provides the teacher with the opportunity to understand the child and to develop

appropriate activities specifically for that child.

### Teacher Training and Inservice

Most teacher preparation programs today require at least one course in multicultural education. This is a beginning step, but it doesn't help those teachers who are already practicing. Each area of the country must provide training for the teachers to deal with the minorities of that area. In Montana that minority would be Native Americans. Remember that the national enrollment of Native American students is only one percent. However, in Montana cities near reservations that population jumps to 25-30 percent at some schools. Certainly it is important to meet the needs of these students. Additionally, gender training must become a part of teacher training programs so that future educators will become aware of problems which may be unique to Native American girls.

We can encourage our colleges and universities to provide training for our newest teachers in the area of teaching to minority students. One way to do this is through the Office of Public Instruction.

School districts have money which is specifically allocated for teacher inservice. If a district has teachers who have been teaching for a number of years and these teachers have not had a course in multicultural

education, it would be a good investment for these districts to provide one inservice each year on this topic. The inservice should provide the theoretical base for multicultural education and then progress to the specifics of assessment, teaching methods and curriculum policy.

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APPENDIX F  
ILLUSTRATIONS



Illustration to be used on the cover of the Educator's Monograph.



Illustration to be used in the Native American Girls section.



Illustration to be used in the Language Characteristics of Native American girls.



Illustration to be used in the Language of Silence Research section pertaining to interviews with mothers.



Illustration to be used in the Recommendations section.

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