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CONVERSATIONAL PATTERNS OF A MOTHER AND HER TWINS

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Research shows that triadic conversations offer unique opportunities for infants to learn language. Children were able to monitor language in conversations, join into an ongoing conversation and be a part of a conversation that involved more than one person. It was thought that the influence of an older sibling might be responsible. This research was done to see what the outcome would be if the triad was made up of a mother and twins as opposed to a mother-infant-sibling. A set of opposite sex twins was observed in free play with their mother. These observations began when the twins were age 18 months and continued at three-month intervals until age 2 years 6 months. At age 2 years 3 months, the mother and Twin 1 were the dominant conversational partners. They had a balanced number of utterances in their conversations compared to the mother and Twin 2. Twin 1 also would successfully shift a conversation from the mother and Twin 2, thereby taking over the topic. Observations at age 30 months provided interesting contrasts. The twins were more even in the number of conversational turns taken. This time they were equal in the number of times they entered into a conversation involving the other twin. The mother was more aware of Twin 1's desire to turn the conversation to him so he was less successful in shifting the conversation. Also, the mother directs more questions to Twin 2 to facilitate conversation. The dominant factor in the differences between the two observations was the role of the mother in the triadic conversations.