

THE “SECRET” LANGUAGE OF TWINS



PSYC 231
Project Forum
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Introduction

- ▣ As a fraternal twin, I have always been fascinated with how multiple birth children differ in development
- ▣ My brother Steven and I were born six minutes apart. Though we both have different physical features, we were very close and even seemed to have our “own language”



Types of Twins



- ▣ Monozygotic (MZ) - *identical twins*
- ▣ 2 or 3 separations create monozygotic quadruplets or octuplets
- ▣ MZ multiples come from the same zygote, they have the same genotype, w/ identical genetic instructions for physical appearance, psychological traits, and vulnerability to diseases

Types of Twins

- ❑ Dizygotic (DZ) -fraternal twins; two separate zygotes created by the fertilization of two ova by two sperm at roughly the same time
- ❑ It is only the mother who has any effect on the chances of having such twins
- ❑ DZ twins varies by ethnicity and age. DZ twins occur about 1 in every 11 births among Yoruba women from Nigeria, 1 in 100 births among British women, and 1 in 700 births among Japanese women
- ❑ Women in their late 30s are 3x as likely to have DZ twins as are women in their early 20s



Photos: Upper Right: Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito in Twins 1998

Lower right: Actresses Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen starred in Full House 1987-1995

Types of Twins

- ▣ Polar twins- two sperm fertilize an ovum
- ▣ Sesquizygotic twins- two sperm fertilize the one ovum, forming a triploid, and then splitting
- ▣ Half-identical or semi-identical twins- are the result of a very rare form of twinning in which the twins inherit exactly the same genes from their mother but different genes from their father
- ▣ Conjoined twins: occur If the division of the zygote occurs later than the 12 days

Language Development in Infants & Toddlers

- ▣ 6-9 months: babble, coo, and cry as main forms of communication
 - ▣ 10 months: understand words and gestures
 - ▣ 1 year: speak their first words
 - ▣ In the first months of the second year- spoken vocabulary increases very gradually (about one new word a week)
- 6- to 15-months: learn meanings rapidly; understand about 10x more words than they can say as many words as 18-month-olds, referred to as the naming explosion



What is Twin Language?



- ▣ Terms used to describe “twin language” include idioglossia, autonomous language or cryptophasia.
- ▣ 40% of twins, generally identical twins, will develop some form of autonomous language, using nicknames, gestures, abbreviations or terminology that they only use with each other

Explanation of Twin Language

- ▣ Parents of multiples, may be less verbally involved with their children (exhausted and stressed by the challenges of caring for two or more babies)
- ▣ Young twins are together nearly all the time- learn to rely on nonverbal or shorthand forms of communication
- ▣ Able to understand each other's gestures, grunts or vocalizations
- ▣ Tend to talk faster, abbreviate words, or leave out consonants as they pronounce words, perhaps in a competitive attempt to talk over their co-twin and grab their parent's attention first
- ▣ Can lead to speech delays may result from cognitive or physical consequences of a premature birth

Explanation of Twin Language

- ▣ **Attributable to young twins mimicking each other's attempts at language, often incorrectly**
- ▣ **All babies babble incoherent sounds- way of practicing vocalization and making the connections in their brain that lead to language development**
- ▣ **Twins may give the appearance that they actually understand each other's babbling thus the perception that they share a "secret language", while they're really just mispronouncing sounds and words**



Example of Twin Language

- ▣ <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/viral-video-twin-babies-secret-language-13247451>
- ▣ As you can see in this video, the twins who are 17 months old appear to be having a conversation and completely understanding each other. If you listen carefully, you can decipher similar sounds, babbling, and gestures mimicked by the other twin

Conclusion



Though my brother and I no longer share a “secret language”, we still share great childhood memories, as well as a special bond as siblings and as fraternal twins

Twin Facts

- 22 % percent of twins are left handed, compared to 10% in singletons.
- Fraternal twin girls have twice the chance of giving birth to twins than singletons
- **While most people are only familiar with identical and fraternal twins, there are actually 7 different types of twins**
They are: identical, fraternal, half-identical, mirror image twins, mixed chromosome twins, superfecundation, and superfetation. Those other than identical and fraternal can be quite rare.
- **Twins do not have to be born on the same date**
In fact, they can be born surprisingly far apart. The longest recorded gap between twin births is 85 days. How does this happen? The simplest explanation comes when one twin is born just before midnight and the other after. In cases where there is a longer gap, it's often because one twin is born early due to complications, while the other is left in the womb to further develop.

Twin Facts

- **Twins do not have to have the same father**

While we often think of twins as having the same mother and father, it's possible for a woman to give birth to two children on the same day who don't share a father. This phenomenon is called heteropaternal superfecundation. It happens when a woman releases multiple eggs, each fertilized by sperm from separate instances of sexual intercourse. It's uncommon, but genetic testing has shown that it is possible.

- **Twins can celebrate their twinning in Twinsberg, Ohio**

If you or your children are twins, you can head to this city in Ohio to celebrate the Twins Days Festival. You'll be amid a sea of look-alikes, with twins, triplets and multiples from all over the nation converging on this town to celebrate being a twin.

Reference List

- ▣ Adamson, Lauren B. & Bakeman, Roger. 2006. Development of displaced speech in early mother-child conversations. *Child Development*.
- ▣ Berger, Kathleen, The First Two Years: Cognitive Development. 2012. *The Developing Person Through the Life Span. 8th Edition* .
- ▣ Twin Babies Secret Language. ABC News 3/29/11.