DEVELOPMENT OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS AND FORMS OF SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION IN THE YOUNG CHILD: COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY

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Abstract - Cognitive flexibility (CF) is a relatively under-researched component of the Executive Function. In order to illuminate its role in the development of children of senior preschool and early primary age, this research investigates the association of CF (measured with the Dimensional Change Card Sort task) (and two forms of Symbolic Representation (child language and drawing skills). . Participants are typical L1 English children aged between 25 and 75 months. Drawing skill is measured both from drawing realia placed in view and drawing both familiar and unfamiliar subjects from memory, so as to measure figurative representation, drawing flexibility, and visual (vs intellectual) realism, which has been found to exhibit a U-shaped relationship with age (Alruwaili, 2019). Language skill is measured from speech elicited from the child, and parent/caregiver reports, covering mean utterance length (grammatical complexity), vocabulary size, and aspects of English that are known to exhibit a U-shaped relationship with age (irregular verb past tense and noun plural forms). The analysis will reveal how CF relates (linearly, U shaped, or not at all) to separate aspects of symbolic representational skill development, when age and gender are controlled.

Keywords - Cognitive Flexibility, Language, Drawing Skills, Linearly, U Shaped