

Verbal Behavior Teaching with low intensity Suggestions from 2 case reports.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Several studies showed effectiveness of early and intensive ABA treatment in autistic children¹⁻³. However, intensive ABA treatment may have unbearable costs for the families. It is unknown if a good and controlled parental collaboration play a role in influencing treatment intensity. We describe two autistic children whose social-communicative and cognitive skills improved following early VB Teaching delivered at low intensity by therapists in collaboration with trained parents.

2. METHODS

Subject A: a 28-month-old child with: highly frequent motor stereotypies, inappropriate object use, no eye contact, no response to name, vocalizations without communicative function.

Subject B: a 34-month-old child, with: rigid daily routines, good functional play, repetitive speech without communicative function, collaborative behavior

Setting

The treatment sessions were conducted at the "Associazione Prometeo" Autism Services Centre as well as at home.

At the centre: each children received an individual therapy by two ABA therapists. Subject A: 8 hours/week (3 days/week); subject B: 6 hours/week (3 days/week)

At home: parents were trained by the therapists and they applied ABA procedures in natural environment. Parents' interventions were video-recorded and periodically examined by the therapists to encourage and suggest new strategies.

Procedure

Pre-intervention assessment and goal setting.

The initial assessment was conducted using Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP)⁴ and Psycho-Educational Profile 3 (PEP3).

The goal setting was based on the base-line results from the probe and multi probe data sheets.

The goals for each participant were: motor imitation, functional play, matching, echoic, mand, tact, listener, frequency decrease of stereotypies.

ABA intervention

Preference assessment and pairing sessions have been conducted to obtain the instructional control at the Centre. The ABA procedures have been applied to promote children's learning of the different VB-MAPP abilities. The therapists recorded data every treatment day to monitor the children's improvement.

Parent training program included: teaching of ABA principles and procedures; learning by direct observation of therapeutic interventions at the centre; implementation at home of the acquired procedures.

4. CONCLUSIONS

These findings suggest that early VBT at low-intensity intervention may be effective when combined with good and controlled parental training.

Further studies are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of low-intensity treatments, in collaboration with trained parents, in order to reduce costs and increase bearableness for the families.

5. REFERENCES

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- 2: Guralnick MJ. Effectiveness of early intervention for vulnerable children: a developmental perspective. Am J Ment Retard. 1998; 102:319-45.
- 3: Ramey CT, Ramey SL. Prevention of intellectual disabilities: early interventions to improve cognitive development. Prev Med. 1998; 27:224-32.
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3. RESULTS

Subject A

After 1 year: increase of mand, tact, listener, echoic and vocal imitation abilities and independent play; increase of developmental age in the expressive language (fig. 1-3, fig. 6). After 2 years: development of intraverbal behavior (fig 4). After 3 years: increase of CVP (fig 5).

Fig.1 Number of mands after 1 years

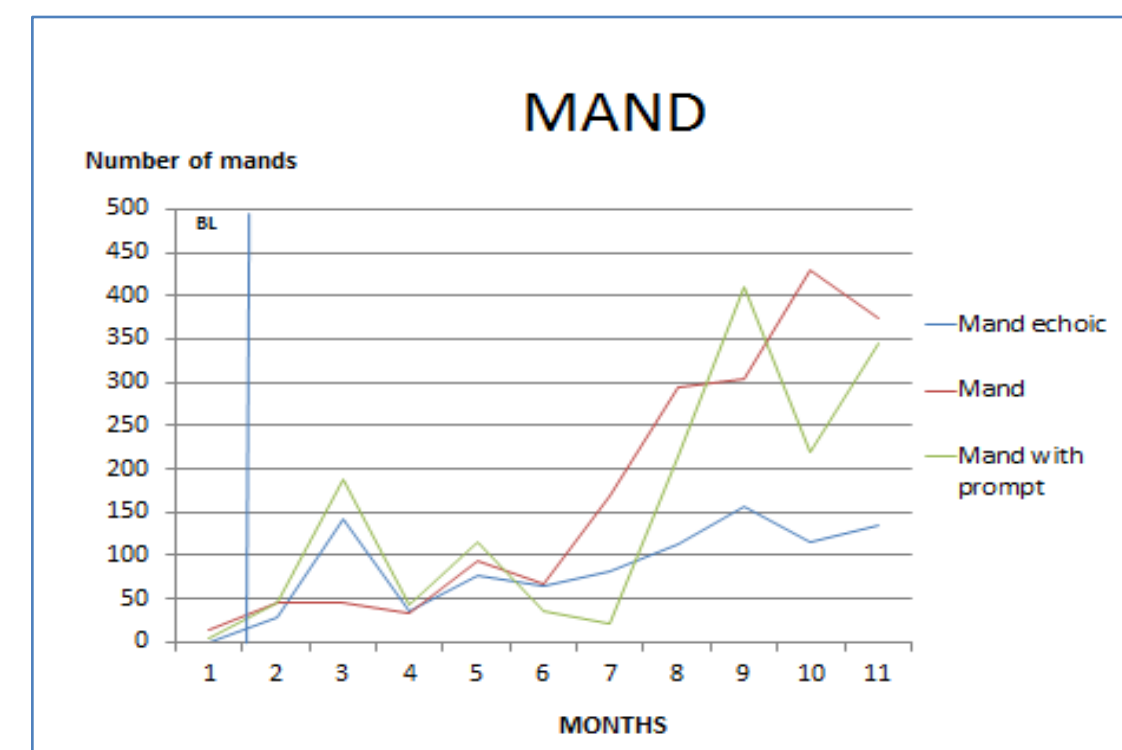


Fig.2 Number of tacts after 1 years

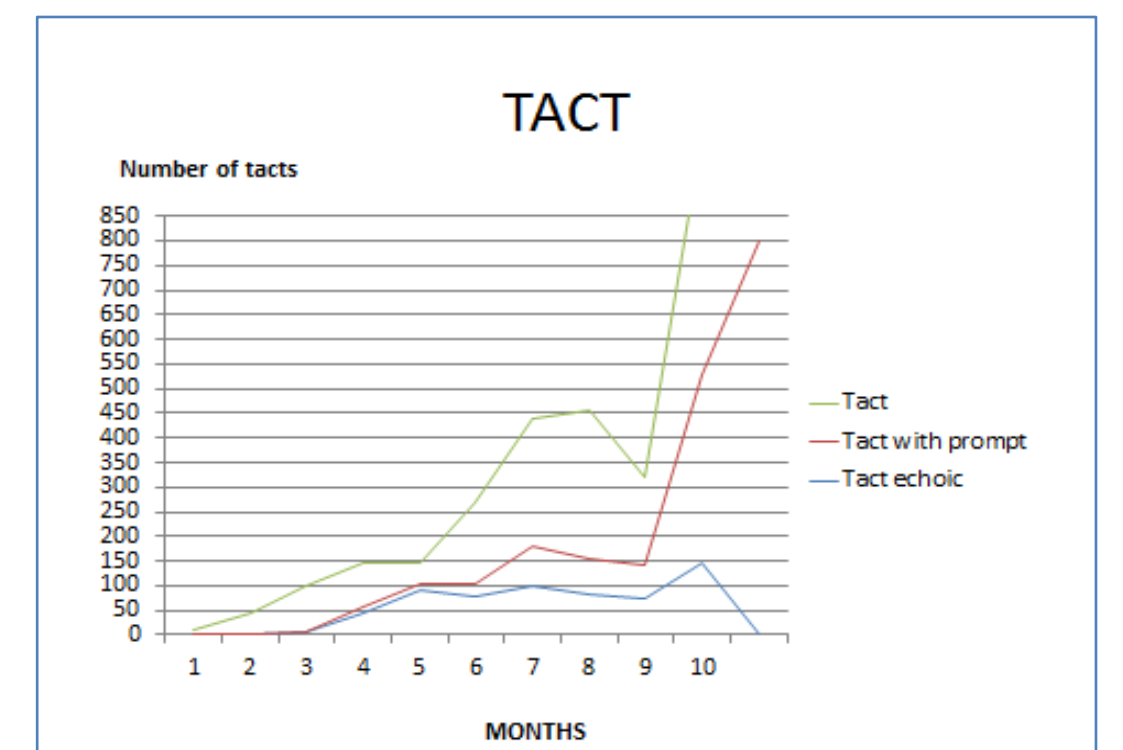


Fig.3 Correct responses at VB-MAPP after 1yr

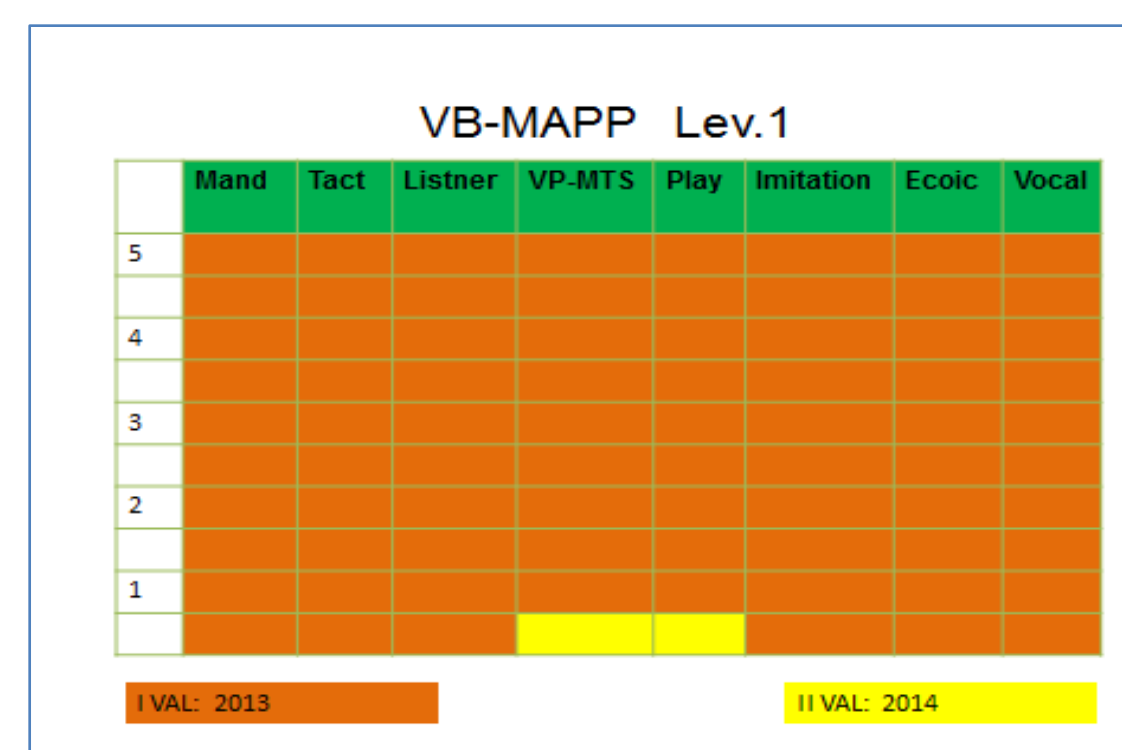


Fig.4 Correct responses at VB-MAPP after 2 yrs

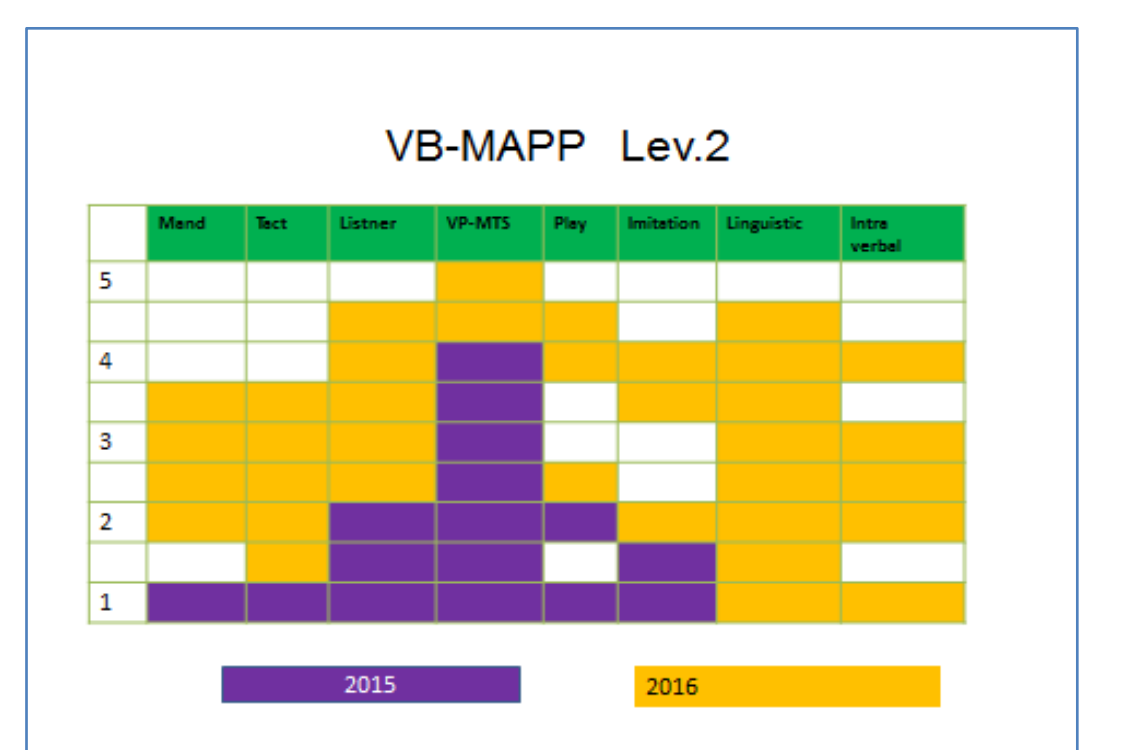


Fig.5 Developmental age in verbal/preverbal cognitive

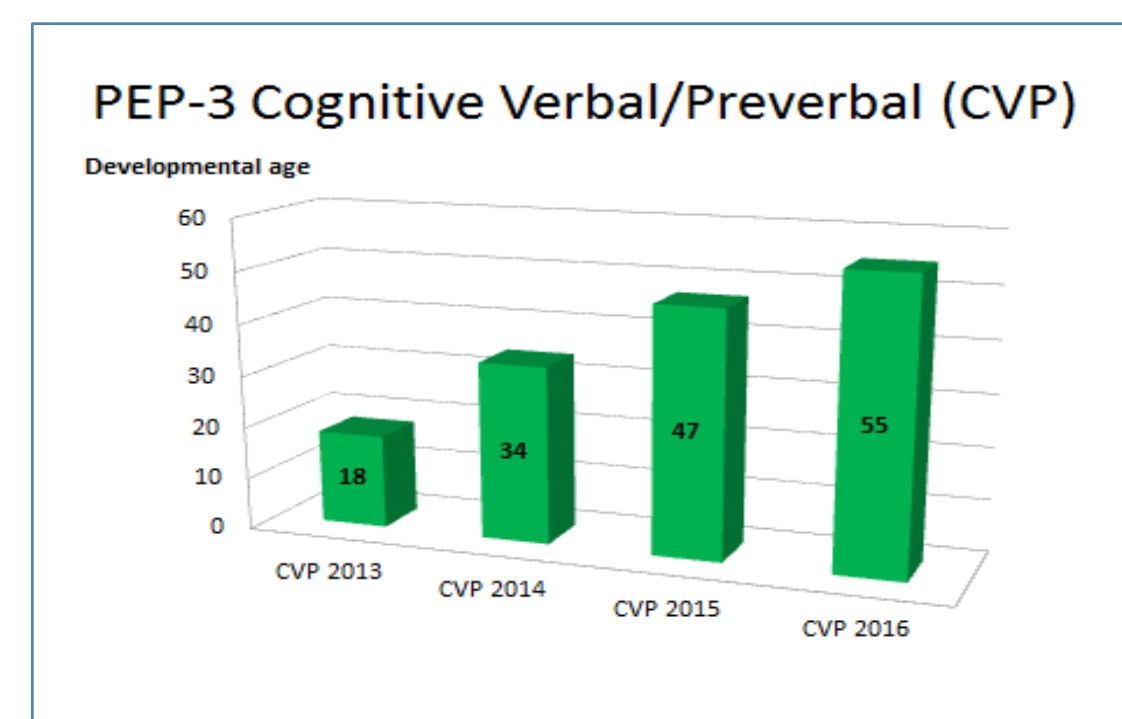
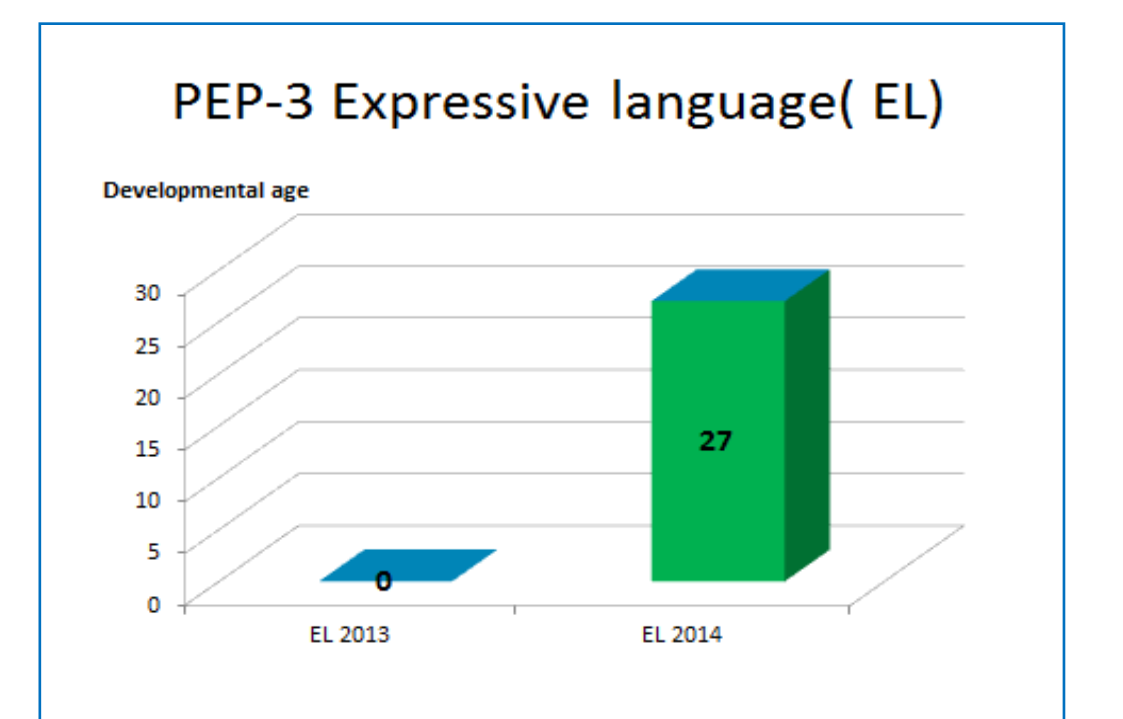


Fig.6 Developmental age in expressive language



Subject B

After 1 year: increase of mand, tact, listener, echoic, imitation abilities and independent play (fig.7). After 2 years: unexpected, spontaneous development of the intraverbal behavior (fig 8). After 3 years: increase of CVP, EL and RL. (fig 9).

Fig.7 Correct responses at VB-MAPP after 1yr

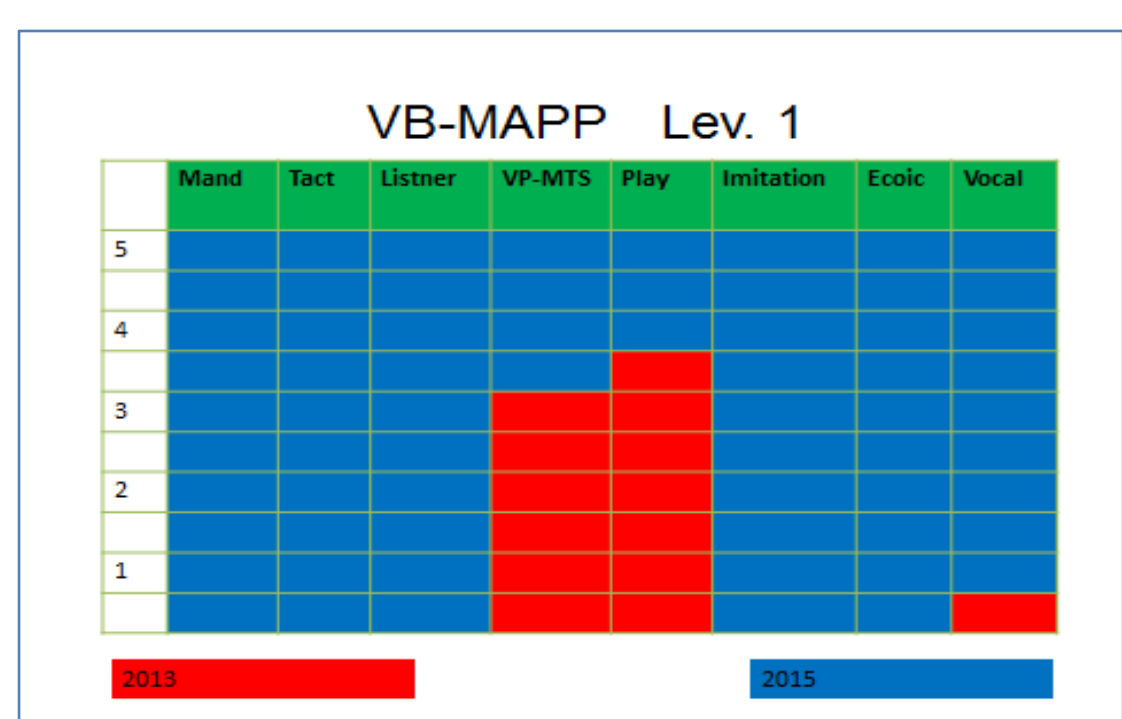


Fig.8 Correct responses at VB-MAPP after 1yr

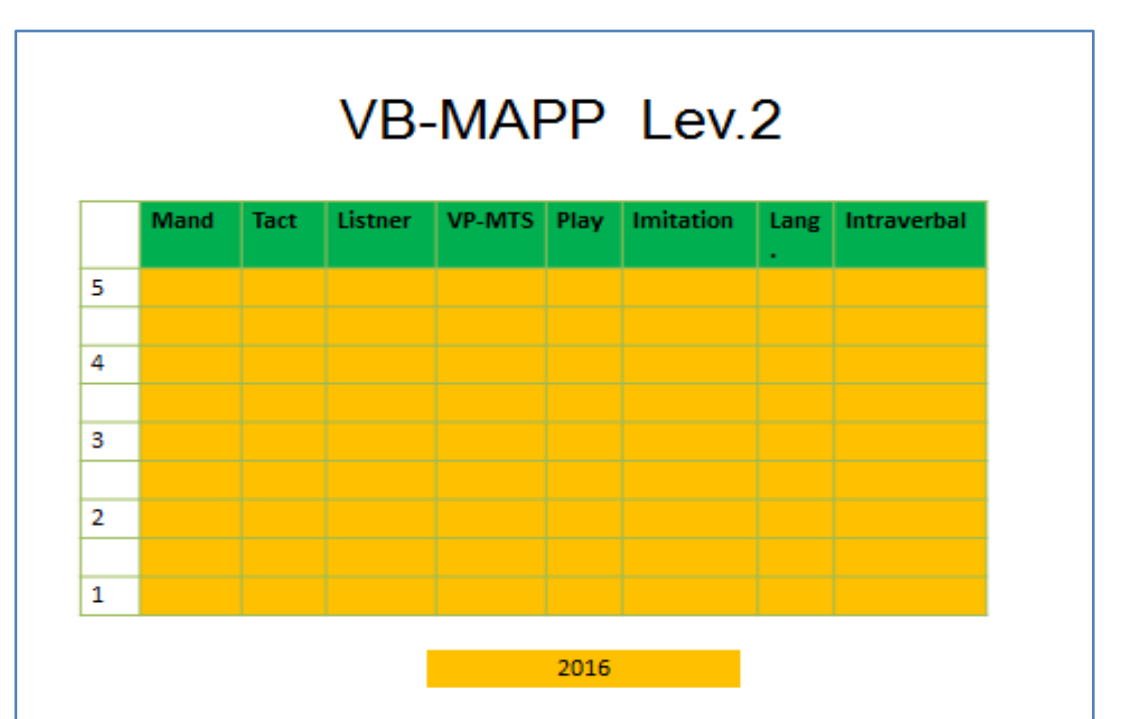
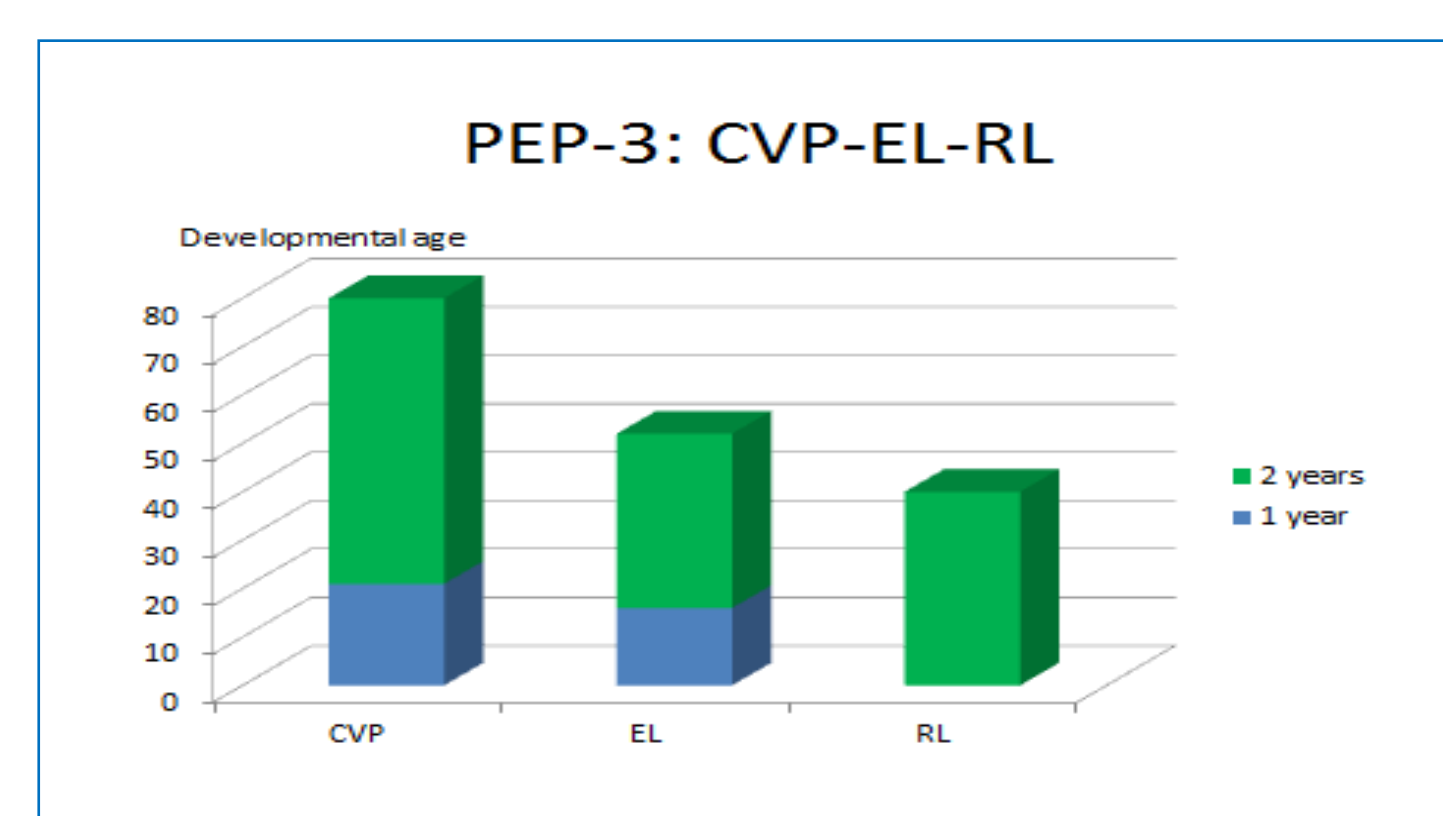


Fig.9 Developmental age (Cognitive Verbal/Preverbal: CVP, Expressive Language: EL, Receptive Language: RL)



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