Communication at Home and School for Peruvian Students with Different Abilities  
Student Investigator: Kelly Lawlor  
Mentor: Nancy Brady  

**Purpose:** This project assessed the amount and types of communication input at home and school for students in classrooms at a school in Lima, Peru (CASP) for students with different abilities.  

**Methods:** I used a systematic observation procedure to evaluate CASP’s 11 classrooms. Each classroom contained a range of ages between 3-29 years. The classrooms were observed three times, on three separate days, for approximately 30 minutes using an interval recording system. During each interval, I recorded the first instance of a “Communication Opportunity,” if any occurred. Communication Opportunities were specifically defined interactions initiated by a teacher. Communication Opportunities included Opportunities for Requesting, Naming/Commenting, Communicating Answer, and Imitation/Echoic. Intervals were defined classified by the ongoing activity. Student Responses were recorded as Prompted, Appropriate, Inappropriate, or No Response. Input at home was recorded with a LENA recording device.  

**Results:** Communication Opportunities varied widely between classrooms and activities, ranging from 15% - 56% across classrooms. Conduct activities such as transitions between activities and lunch time presented the most opportunities, and Self-Care presented the least. 44% of Student Responses were prompted, 35% were Appropriate, 12% were Inappropriate, and 9% had No Response. Recordings at home showed that the children received mostly “distant noise” input at school, with increased vocalizations, conversational turns, and adult words in after-school hours, as well as more electronic noise exposure.  

**Conclusion:** Differences in opportunities appeared to be associated with different classroom activities. In general, the rates of opportunities observed at CASP were higher than previous observations in US special education classrooms. However, strategies can be implemented at CASP and elsewhere to improve the amount of Communication Opportunities. The LENA analysis indicated that even though students are exposed to lots of language at school, the more individualized language exposure at home facilitated language output.