Development of language in the early school years:
evaluating a teacher intervention to enhance language and communication
supporting classroom environments

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Title
Development of language in the early school years: evaluating a teacher intervention to enhance language and communication supporting classroom environments.

Background
Well-developed language and communication skills are crucial for academic success. Many students have weak language and communication skills due to developmental disabilities, socio-economic factors, and second language learning. Teachers often lack systematic training in evidence-based techniques that support language and communication development.

Aims
Investigate how formal schooling and demographic factors such as level of parental education affect vocabulary development in the early school years. Evaluate effects on teachers and their students of a speech-language therapist (SLT)-led teacher in-service training.

Methods
The intervention was delivered to teachers (n = 25) serving children in grade one and two (n = 224; age 6-9 years; 52.7% monolinguals, 47.3% bilinguals) and consisted of 11 weekly 90-min sessions based on collaborative learning principles. SLTs introduced hands-on strategies to enhance language learning opportunities and interactions with students. Between sessions teachers implemented strategies, filmed each other during lessons and evaluated the perceived effect. Both teachers and their students were assessed pre, post and at three months follow up after the intervention.

Preliminary results
P1: Development of semantic verbal fluency is affected positively by formal schooling and negatively by summer vacation. Variation in development cannot be explained by level of parental education, bilingualism, general language ability, or non-verbal IQ. (Published)

P2: The monolingual group performed higher than the bilingual group on a word definition task. Bilingualism, SES-related factors, and general language ability together accounted for 53.6% of the variance in word definition total score and general language ability uniquely explained 33.2% of the variation. (Manuscript)
**P3:** Intervention was well received and appreciated by the teachers. No significant effect (pre versus post-intervention) was seen when comparing the teachers in the intervention track with the waiting control track. With all teachers collapsed into one group a significant effect on self-assessments of activities and interactions in the classroom, but not on teacher’s sense of self-efficacy of classroom management was seen. (Manuscript)

**P4:** Effect of intervention on vocabulary development: Planned.

**Significance**
Demographic factors, school absence as well as teaching can affect language development in different ways. The collaborative intervention offered teachers strategies to support learning processes in children independent of background.

**Published articles**


**Other published articles**