



# NSW Speech Pathology Evidence Based Practice Interest Group

## Critically Appraised Paper (CAP)

### **CLINICAL BOTTOM LINE:**

Training parents from a lower socio-economic background to use narrative elicitation techniques is effective in improving children's vocabulary and narrative skills.

### **Clinical Question [patient/problem, intervention, (comparison), outcome]:**

Does the use of books and narratives increase the expressive language in 2 – 4 year old children?

**Citation:** Peterson, C, Jesso, B, McCabe, A. (1999) Encouraging Narratives in Preschoolers: an intervention study. *Journal of Child Language*, 26, 49-67.

### **Design/Method:**

Randomised controlled study. The experimenter was blind to group membership. Measurements were taken prior to intervention (pre-test), at the end of intervention (post-test) and 12 months post intervention (follow up test).

### **Participants:**

Twenty economically disadvantaged preschool aged children and their mothers participated in the study. There were 10 girls and 10 boys. The mean age of the children was 3.7years. 14 children participated in the follow up testing (7 girls and 7 boys).

### **Experimental Group:**

5 girls and 5 boys were randomly assigned to an intervention group. Participant's language skills were assessed using the PPVT and narrative samples pre and post intervention and 12 months after intervention had been completed. Mothers of children in the intervention group were informed that research was being conducted to learn more about how children develop narratives. Mothers were trained in ways to foster their child's narrative development. Narrative transcripts and audio recordings were shown to the mothers and discussed. Role play was conducted to help mothers learn taught strategies. Parents were visited by the researcher every other month and received interim phone calls during the intervention period to remind and encourage them to use the taught narrative strategies.

### **Control Group:**

5 girls and 5 boys were randomly assigned to the control group. Mothers of children involved were informed that research was being conducted to learn more about how children develop narratives. Participant's language skills were assessed using the PPVT and narrative samples pre and post intervention and 12 months after intervention had been completed.

**Results:**

- The mothers of the intervention group changed their verbal behaviours when eliciting narratives. The mothers of the control group did not.
- There was an improvement in the vocabulary scores for the intervention group after intervention had been received and no changes in the vocabulary scores in the control group.
- The intervention group made more narrative gains than the control group.
- There was little change in children's narrative skills between the pre and post tests, the changes were seen in the follow up testing.
- It takes time for parents to adopt taught narrative elicitation techniques.
- Verbal interactions around everyday conversational topics can facilitate language development.
- Changes in the verbal interactions of lower class mothers can result in improvements in a child's language skills.

**Comments:****Strengths:**

- Very descriptive article - could be easily replicated.
- Good design
- The interviewers did not know the children in the study and were blind to the experimental condition of the children.
- The authors commented on their skewed data.

**Weaknesses:**

- Small sample size ( less powerful design)
- There was a shy child in the sample who produced limited narratives.
- 2 outliers in the data set which skewed the results.
- High standard deviations in the data.
- High variability in results and low subject numbers make it difficult to generalise conclusions.

**Level of Evidence (NH&MRC):**

Level II [randomised control trial]

**Appraised By:** Paediatric Language Group  
**Clinical Group:****Date:** August 2006