The LuCiD Research Centre: Language and Communicative Development in the Early Years

Anna Theakston

Professor of Developmental Psychology

University of Manchester

anna.theakston@manchester.ac.uk

Outline

- Why should we care about language and communicative development?
    - The achievement gap
- What are we (researchers) doing to help?
    - The ESRC LuCiD Centre
- Examples
    - LuCiD and the Sefton School Readiness Team
    - LuCiD and the Stockport Early Years Partnership

Why should we care about language and communicative development in the early years?

Poor communication skills impact on...

Educational achievement
- Vocabulary at 5 a powerful predictor of GCSE achievement

Behaviour/vulnerability
2/3 of 7-14 year olds with serious behaviour problems have language impairment

Mental health
40% of 7 to 14 year olds referred to child psychiatric services had a language impairment that had never been suspected

Employability
47% of employers say they can't get recruits with the communication skills they need

Criminality
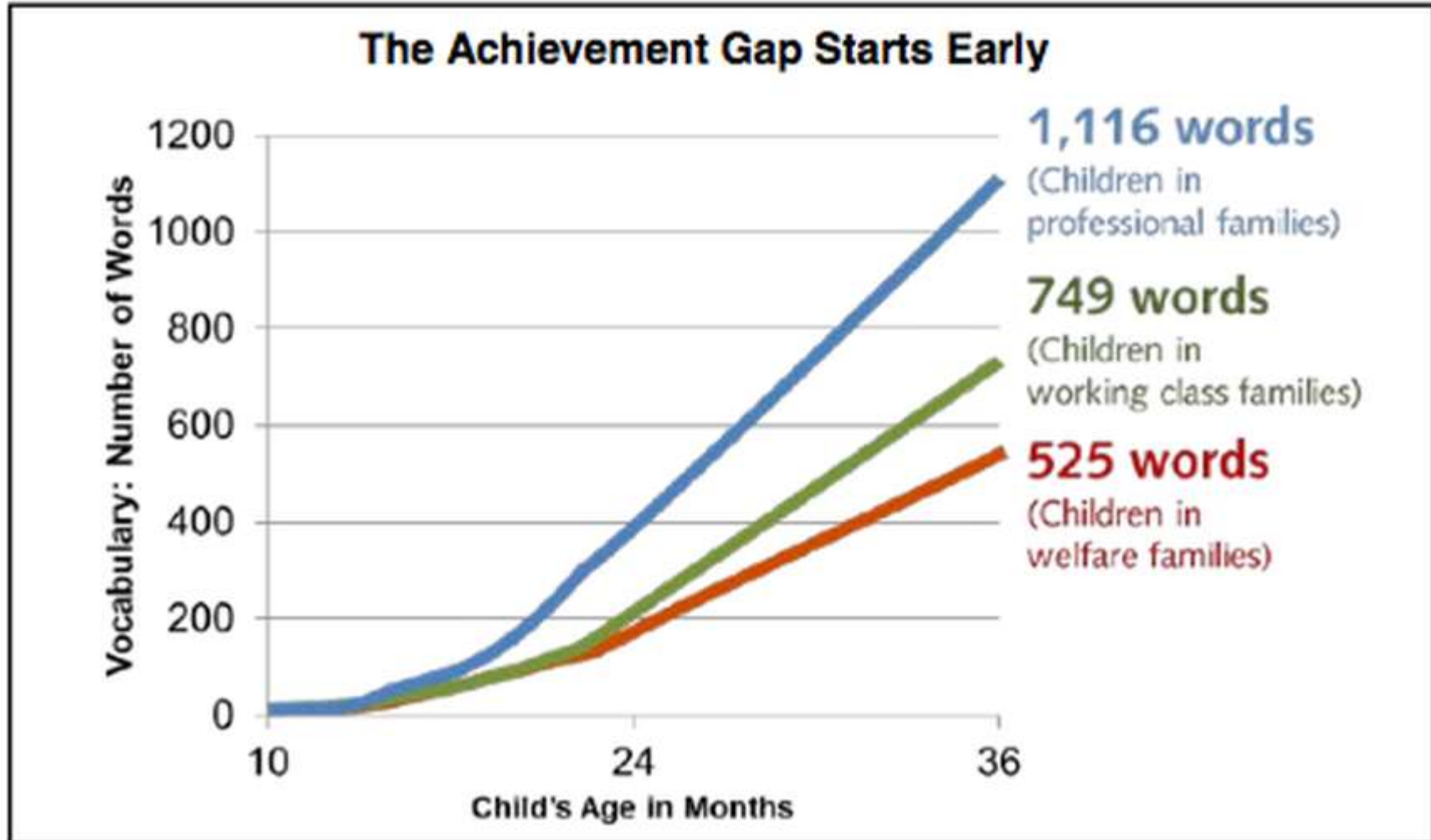65% of young people in young offender institutions have communication difficulties

Disadvantage Cycle
Children from low income families lag behind high income counterparts by sixteen months in vocabulary at school entry

Silde by Jean Gross:
http://abetterstart.org.uk/sites/default/files/Jean%20Gross_ABS%20L%26D%20event_Bradford.pdf
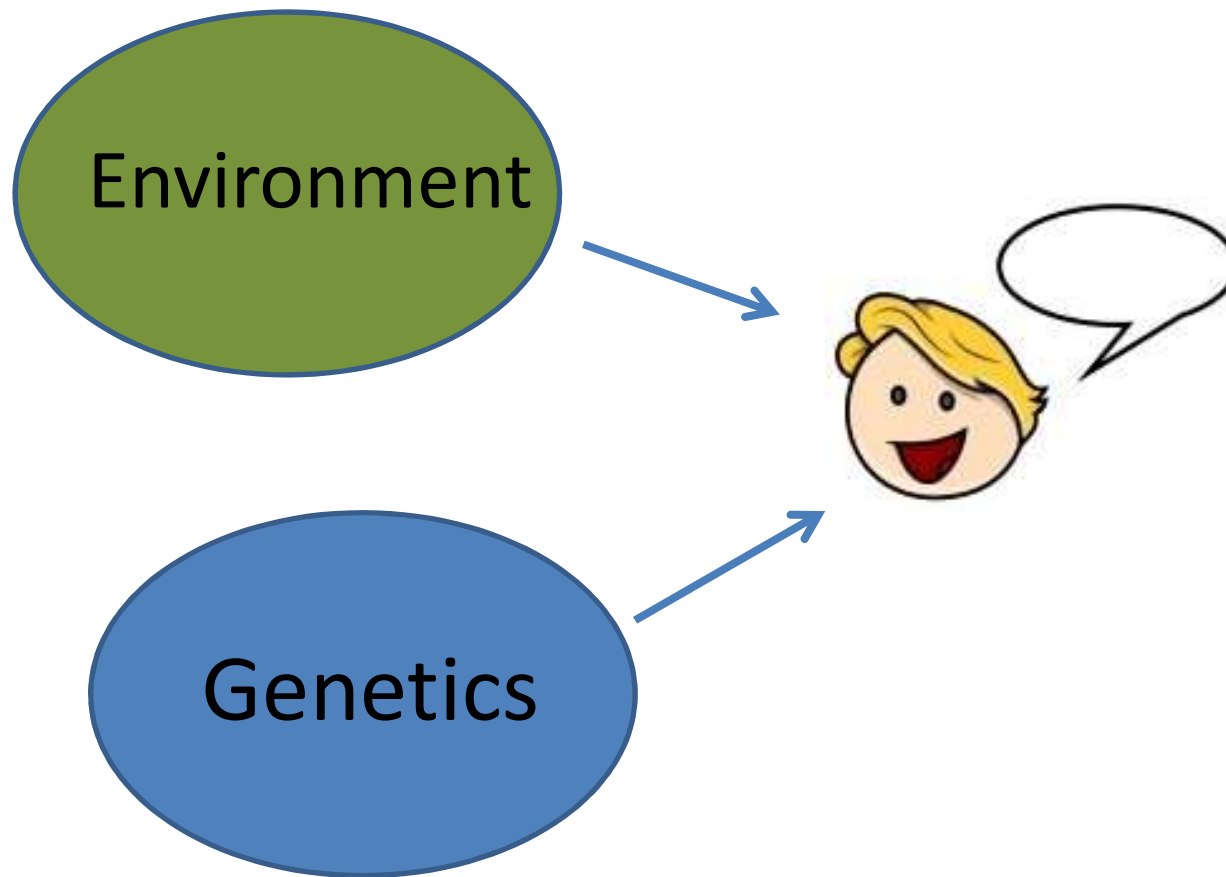
The Achievement Gap

From Hart & Risley, 1995

Can we do anything about the Achievement Gap?

What are we (researchers) doing to try to help?

LuCiD

The ESRC International Centre for Language and Communicative Development

£9.4 million from the ESRC (UK funding body)

E·S·R·C
ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

International multi-disciplinary collaboration

Global network of international partners

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Partnership with key national figures to deliver impact

Cornell

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Australian National University

UNIVERSITAS VARSOVIENSIS

Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics

UNIVERSITAS TURICENSIS

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

The Communication Trust — Every child understood

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPISTS

PEARSON Assessments

Time to Talk

The Unfolding Of Language

THE MANCHESTER MUSEUM

NHS Informatics Merseyside

LCH Liverpool Community Health NHS NHS Trust

Goal of LuCiD

To transform our understanding of how children learn to communicate, and deliver the crucial information needed to design effective interventions in child healthcare, communicative development and early years education.

Research Agenda

Technology Agenda
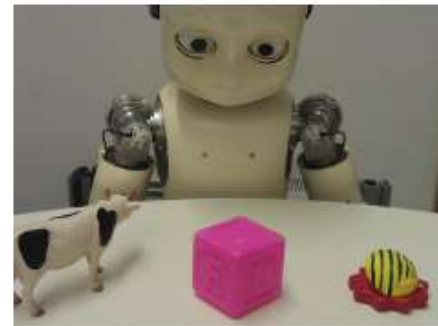
Communications Agenda

Environment

How do children integrate multiple sources of information?

Knowledge

How do children build linguistic representations?

WP2, WP3, WP4

WP7, PhD3

Language 0-5 Project

WP8, WP10

WP12, WP13, WP14, PhD6

Communication

How do children learn to use language structure to communicate effectively?

Variation

How do children adapt to cross-linguistic and socio-cultural variation?

Figure 1: The research programmes

Research & Technology: Discovering how children learn language

- How can we help children learn language more effectively?

- Building technology (e.g. apps) for monitoring language development

- Research to uncover relations between language development, language environment, and child's socio-cognitive & processing skills from birth to school readiness

Communication: Working with the community

Advise government and commissioners on causes of poor language and the best research-led interventions

Disseminate evidence-based information to health and education practitioners

Communicate research and evidence-based advice to families and the wider public

EIF Report: Foundations for Life: What Works to Support Parent Child Interaction in the Early Years

Evidence Briefing: How does shared book-reading help boost child language development in the early years?

Posted by Admin on 29/07/2016 in News

dd Comment

Free family fun day at the Manchester Museum, 7-8 November

kids say the funniest things

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION & LANGUAGE

A formal occasion

On entering Reception, children are exposed to the world of 'formal' language. In the third part of our series on communication, *Dr Anna Theakston* explains what it is and how to support it

# Example 1: LuCiD's work with Sefton School Readiness Team

- Sefton's School Readiness team
  - Train early years practitioners in Speech, Language and Communication (SLC)
  - Language Champion model:
    - Cost effective ... if it works

The Sefton Training Study

- We tested whether the Language Champion model works?

  1. Does it improve the knowledge of practitioners about speech, language and communication

  2. Does it change the practitioners' behaviour; do trained practitioners use more language-boosting behaviour in the nursery?

Training, especially Language Champion training, **improved practitioners' knowledge** about speech, language and communication **significantly**
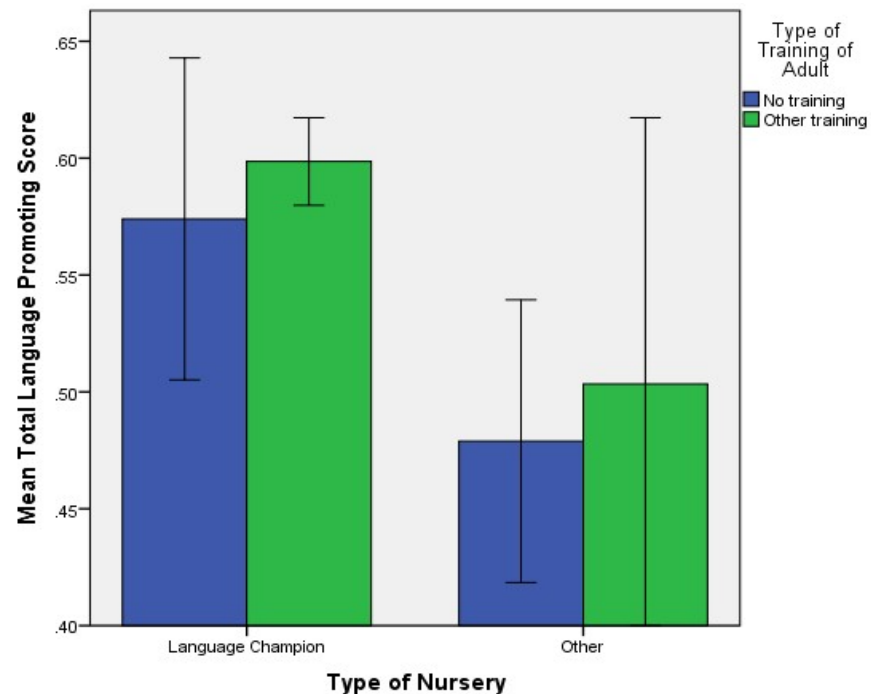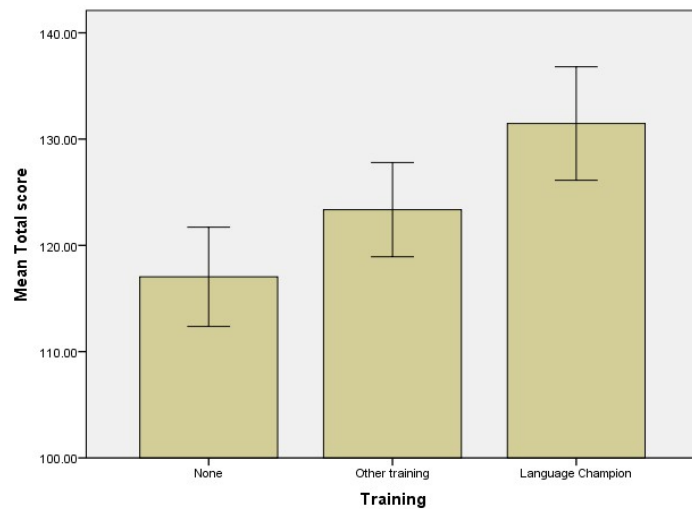
Practitioners in Language Champion nurseries used more language-boosting behaviour, **even when they had not undergone any SLC training themselves!**

Example 2: LuCiD's work with Stockport Early Years

- The amount of 'complex language' caregivers and teachers produce predicts children's abilities to use complex language one year later.

- But, how much complex language is used in our nurseries?

- How does choice of play area influence this? - Ongoing research…

- Input into Stockport Early Years CPD training conferences & workshops

DISCOVER THE SCIENCE BEHIND
HOW CHILDREN LEARN TO TALK

With child language experts from the ESRC International Centre for Language and Communicative Development (LuCiD): www.lucid.ac.uk

STOCKPORT CONSORTIUM OF NURSERY SCHOOLS
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
BREDBURY HALL
Friday 12th February 2016, 9.30 - 15.00

Freshfield Nursery School

STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

STOCKPORT EARLY YEARS IMPROVEMENT TEAM CONFERENCE 2016

What's the Story?

Conclusions

- Studies shows the value of combining a multi-disciplinary team with complementary expertise:
  - Local Authority School Readiness team – provide training and support (includes SLTs)
  - Early years settings - prioritise SLC training / set research questions of interest
  - Academics – provide expertise in language development and evaluation

Sign up for our newsletter at www.lucid.ac.uk