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## Promoting Word Learning through Caregiver Contingent talk:

### Findings from two home-based interventions

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## This session will

- Review factors that impact on early **word learning** including caregiver **contingent talk**
- Present findings from two **randomised control trials**, promoting contingent talk using **Oral Language** and **Picture Books**
- Discuss what we can do to make the greatest difference in child outcomes

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## Early variance in Vocabulary

- Early vocabulary predicts later language ability
- Language ability predicts academic success, employment opportunities and social wellbeing

Fenson *et al.*, 1994

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## What underlies variance in early vocabulary?

Fenson *et al.*, 1994

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## Vocabulary, SES & Intervention

- Socio-economic Status (SES) is a composite measure based on factors such as family income, caregiver education and occupation/employment
- SES has a large role in explaining individual differences in vocabulary development (social gradient emerges by 18m)
- Poor language skills now considered a public health problem with drive towards intervention in the early years
- Parenting interventions have tended to focus on a range of behaviours and developmental outcomes
- Hard to identify 'active ingredients' in effective interventions

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## Contingent Talk

- Meta-analyses suggest largest training effects for caregiver responsiveness (Roberts & Kaiser, 2011)
- Longitudinal evidence of association between caregiver responsiveness and language development – in particular **contingent talk**
- Child Directed speech that is contingent on the infant's focus of attention**
- UK social gradient in contingent talk evident in infancy

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## Study 1 – Oral Language

142 caregivers and their **11-month-olds** (from diverse SES backgrounds) randomised to either:

**Contingent Talk Intervention    Dental Health Intervention**



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## Oral Language Intervention

Caregivers shown a 10 minute video describing contingent talk as a two-step process:

- 1) **“TUNE IN”** - notice what your child is attending to  
examples of object manipulation, pointing or vocalising
- 2) **“TALK”** - talk to them about it  
clips of caregivers engaging in contingent talk with their 11-month-olds across a range of naturalistic contexts

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## Oral Language Intervention

- Caregivers were asked to set aside **15 minutes** a day for the next month to practice talking about what their child was focusing on, in any context
- Given a summary leaflet & intervention diary
- Researcher follow-up by telephone after 2 weeks

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## RESULTS: Oral Language

- Caregivers who had the intervention engaged in more contingent talk with their infants at 12 months
  - **Low intensity intervention (10-minute video) can change the way caregivers talk**
- This had an impact on lower SES children's vocabulary development at 15 and 18 months but not 24 months
  - **Effect of low intensity intervention is short lived**

**How to improve?**

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## Shared Book Reading

- Shared book reading (**SBR**) tends to generate high rates of quality talk with infants
- Provides a tangible activity to engage in contingent talk
- Correlational research to suggest associations with SBR and language outcomes
- Global adoption of book-gifting programs many targeting children growing up in disadvantage e.g. *Bookstart*, *Imagination Library*
- However, not all groups engage in/ have same benefit from SBR
- Lack of RCTs in infancy focusing on language outcomes

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## Study 2 – Book Reading

156 caregivers and their **11-month-olds**, from diverse SES backgrounds, randomised to a **Book gifting intervention** (c.f. *Imagination Library*)



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## Study 2 – Book Reading

Or a Contingent Talk & Book Gifting intervention

**Tune In**

LOOK TOUCH BABBLE

**Talk**

What's that? What's that? What's that?

+

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## Book Reading Intervention

- Caregivers shown a 5 minute video illustrating "TUNE IN and TALK" during SBR
- Caregivers **10 minutes** a day for the next 4 months to practice contingent talk while looking at picture books with their infant
- Given 7 books, summary leaflet & intervention diary
- Researcher follow-up by text weekly between 11 and 12months and monthly thereafter

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## RESULTS: Book Reading

- No effect of condition on expressive vocabulary or language processing at 15m
- No difference in amount of reported SBR between interventions
- Longitudinal data collection still ongoing at 18m, 21m & 24m

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## Challenges around SBR in Infancy

*"Difficult to do it everyday due to boredom / distracted by other things. I would have liked a change of material"*

*"What have I gained from taking part? **Patience!**"*

*"Child **not wanting to read books** sometimes it annoyed him even suggesting to look at the books"*

*"**I have never been one for reading**"*

*"I would not think of buying these **kinds of books** as she might be **too young** for them and wouldn't appreciate them"*

*"keeping for best"*

*"it's a lot of **money** to spend on books"*

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## Oral Language vs. Book Reading

Intervention	Expressive Vocabulary at 15months
Contingent talk	~30
Contingent talk + SBR	~22
SBR	~21
Dental health	~21

Intervention

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## Summary

- Preliminary findings (before analyses of longer term outcomes) would suggest that **prior to 15-months promoting oral language** may be most powerful way to impact on child vocabulary
- Longer term outcomes may reveal 'sleeper effects', i.e., building a culture of book reading
- Growing evidence base to demonstrate what is effective – need to build on this with high quality studies
- Importance of long-term post intervention assessment
- Interventions can work but it will take a lot to really make a difference (Dosage/Intensity)



## Summary

- Need for Cascading/repeated developmentally appropriate evidence-based interventions to be effective long term
- Economic & Practical implications for intervention in the early years
- Early years settings have the potential to make that difference for many children
- To target resources most effectively we need to be very clear about what we want to change and why



## Making the greatest difference?

**Who** to intervene with?

- *Caregivers (parent, early years professionals), Child...*

**What** do we want to change and **Why**?

**When** is the best time to intervene?

- *Infancy, pre-school, later?*

**Where**?

- *In the home, the in community, in pre-school or school?*

**How** to intervene (in a culturally appropriate) manner?

- *Issues of delivery, intensity, dosage*



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