

SymPaper#1: Tender Shoots: Narrative outcomes in the first year of school

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Biography:

This paper follows a collaborative project involving researchers and research students in the Department of Psychology and whānau of children attending participating kindergartens and education and care centres in the community. Elaine Reese's area of specialty is developmental psychology, with particular expertise in children's oral language development. Ashleigh Barrett-Young and Laura Gilkison are post-graduate students in the Department of Psychology who assisted with transcribing and coding of narrative measures as part of their undergraduate research experience. Jessica Riordan and Shika Das assisted with development, implementation, and evaluation of project activities as part of their PhD research in the Department of Psychology. Jane Carroll is a registered speech-language therapist and registered teacher, and Elizabeth Schaughency is a registered clinical psychologist, with expertise in child clinical psychology, contributing a multi-disciplinary perspective to designing, carrying out, and evaluating Tender Shoots.

Abstract:

OBJECTIVES/PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

We evaluated benefits of a shared reading and oral language preventive intervention with parents and preschool children for children's narrative outcomes one year after participation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK/EVIDENCE BASE

Narrative skills (story comprehension and production) are an aspect of oral language that is critical for young children's communication and later reading. Shared reading and conversations with adults about personal experiences (reminiscing) both contribute to young children's narrative development.

METHODOLOGY/RESEARCH DESIGN

Parents of 3 ½ to 4 ½ year-old-children ($n = 70$) were recruited through early childhood centres and randomly assigned to one of three conditions:

1. shared reading emphasizing story understanding and post-reading reminiscing (Rich Reading and Reminiscing);
2. shared reading emphasizing sound awareness and post-reading sound play (Strengthening Sound Sensitivity);
or
3. non-reading activities (e.g., crafts; Activity Based Control).

All three conditions were implemented for six weeks, with measures of children's story comprehension and story retell at pre-test, immediate post-test, and a long-term follow-up when children ($n = 62$) were 5 to 6 years old.

RESULTS/OUTCOMES

Analyses, controlling for age and pre-test narrative scores, indicated benefits of participation in Rich Reading and Reminiscing for children's narrative production skills in the form of a story retell compared to participation in either of the other two conditions.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Findings support benefits of Rich Reading and Reminiscing for children's narrative skills. Future work could examine ways to implement on a larger scale with parents of pre-schoolers and with early childhood educators, after first replicating these results with families from diverse cultural backgrounds and children with expressive language difficulties.