



Title Coaching Caregivers of Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Authors Aleah S Brock and Sandie M Bass-Ringdahl

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Main Points

- Caregivers of d/hh children aged 14-27 months trained to use one1, specifically selected, facilitative language technique (FLT) whilst at home with their children, as research from the LENA project suggests hearing mothers are more directive and less responsive to their d/hh children resulting in lower language levels.
- There is an impact on the development of a child's pragmatic skills when caregivers do not respond contingently to their children or socially reinforce their communicative attempts.
- FLT's categorised as lower level – facilitating language development in pre lingual children (e.g. commenting, linguistic mapping, and imitation) or higher level – facilitating more complex utterances from children already producing words (e.g. parallel talk, open ended questions)
- Caregivers of CYP who continue to use lower level FLT's when their child has started to use words may compromise language development. Caregivers may not automatically recognise the need to move to the higher-level techniques.
- Caregiver imitative strategies used predominantly before intervention, therefore responsive FLT's targeted.
- Child linguistic output benefitted from caregiver training - the relationship between caregiver response and child vocalisations 'highly likely' to be bidirectional i.e. both encourage the other.
- The interventions resulted in a higher number of conversational turns between child and caregiver.
- All participants experienced an increase in developmentally appropriate vocalisations.

Considerations:

- Four dyads chosen, only three completed the study.
- Only one FLT per dyad was targeted throughout the study.
- Teach-model-coach-review approach used.
- Use of FLT's did not continue beyond the intervention into the natural communication environment, possibly because the length of intervention was short (three months) i.e. caregivers were not naturally responding to their child's vocalisations/communication attempts by using the strategy HOWEVER the quality of a caregiver's response post intervention was seen to be of higher linguistic quality.
- Within all dyads, mothers were the participants, not fathers, and of the four mothers three had a Master's degree or higher.
- All families were already enrolled in an AVT programme and had received coaching prior to the study.

Research into Practice

- Consider the number of FLT's we ask parents to focus on at any one time. Targeting too many would potentially be overwhelming but too few would limit the range of linguistic techniques used during interactions.
- Maintain support - evidence to suggest caregiver responses reduce after a period of time.
- Maintain support – required to support the move from lower to higher level FLT use
- Time needed with support to ensure FLT strategies are embedded beyond the immediate.
- Families would benefit from interventions, which support effective interactions and therefore facilitate pragmatic skill development.