

#6 BOOK-SHARING HAS AN ESPECIALLY LARGE BENEFIT FOR CHILDREN WITH THE LOWEST LANGUAGE AND ATTENTION SKILLS

Several important findings emerged from the dialogic book-sharing study conducted in Khayelitsha (Vally et al, 2015*). This infographic summarises the study's findings on the emotional awareness of children (Murray et al, 2016**).

To understand how the study was setup, see Infographic #1 of this series.

What was the context to the research?



South Africa is considered to be a 'lower middle income country'. According to the World Bank, it is one of the most unequal countries in the world. Further, the country's predicted GDP growth leaves little room to reduce poverty. It is well established that the insecurity brought about by poverty and associated violence has a negative impact on the relationship between children and their carers, and that this in turn compromises child development. This is now a global interest - early parenting programmes aim to overcome the adverse impact of poverty on parent-child relationships and improve child development.

What set of analyses does this infographic look at?

Of the children whose carers attended book-sharing training, we wanted to find out whether some children benefitted more than others.

We know that the improvement in language and attention from the first to the second assessment was much greater in the children whose carers had received the book-sharing training, compared to the children in the control group (see Infographics #3 and #4).

The question addressed in this infographic is whether the improvement in the children whose carers received the book-sharing training was related to carer characteristics (i.e., age, education level, economic status) and/or child factors (i.e., gender, level of language and attention performance at the first assessment).



*The original article is: *The impact of dialogic book-sharing training on infant language and attention: A randomized controlled trial in a deprived South African community* by Zahir Vally, Lynne Murray, Mark Tomlinson and Peter Cooper. It was published in 2015, in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*.

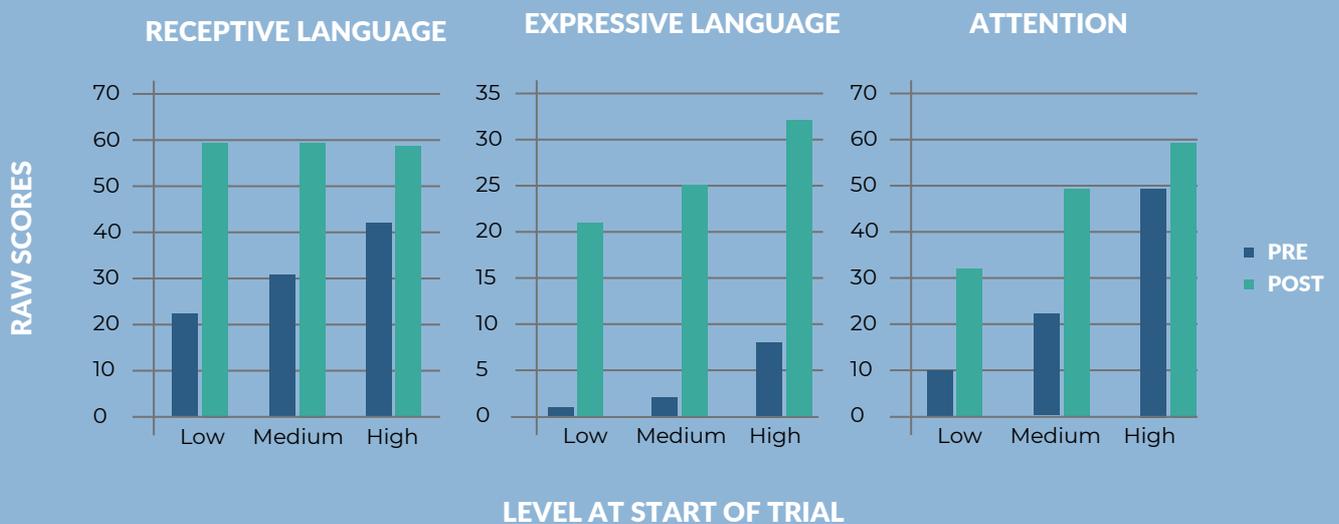
**The original article is: *Randomized controlled trial of a book-sharing intervention in a deprived South African community: Effects on carer-infant interactions, and their relation to infant cognitive and socioemotional outcome* by Murray, L., De Pascalis, L., Tomlinson, M., Vally, Z., Dadomo, H., MacLachlan, B., Woodward, C. and Cooper, P.J., 2016. It was also published in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*.

What did the research find?

The study measured language and attention skills in one-year old children before book-sharing training was provided to their parents, and then again after their parents had received an eight week book-sharing course.

The study found that those children whose language and attention abilities were the lowest before the training benefited the most. This is shown in the figure below.

The children whose carers received the training were divided into three groups based on their pre-training language and attention abilities: the lowest-performing third, the middle third and the best-performing third. It is clear from the figure, that for both language and attention, all three groups improved, but the group that improved the most were those who had the lowest ability pre-training.



How was the children's improvement in language and attention measured?



This research measured children's language and attention abilities before and after the book-sharing training. To measure child language abilities, the 'MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventory' was used. The carers were asked whether children understood and could say certain words.

To measure attention span, the researchers used the 'Early Childhood Vigilance Task'. On a computer screen, the child sees moving cartoon shapes with animal figures that come and go. The child's 'sustained attention' is measured by the number of seconds the child attends to the screen over a seven minute period.

Conclusion

Of particular significance was that those with the poorest baseline performance in language and attention benefited the most from the book-sharing intervention. This suggests that dialogic book-sharing could be a major force towards educational equity. Of special importance is that the book-sharing training programme could be relatively inexpensively scaled up.

**Dialogic book-sharing
could be a major force
towards educational
equity.**

About this series

The 'Making Sense at Mikhulu' infographic series includes a summary of the following research findings:

- #1** How we gathered data for our first major research project on book-sharing in South Africa
- #2** Book-sharing improves children's language skills
- #3** Book-sharing improves children's attention span
- #4** Book-sharing improves carer-child relationships
- #5** Book-sharing makes children more emotionally aware
- #6** Book-sharing has an especially large benefit for children with the lowest language and attention skills
- #7** Could book-sharing contribute to the challenge of reducing levels of violence?



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