TALK: A pre-kindergarten readiness program for non-mainstream English dialect users

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**Rationale**

Children who speak non-mainstream American English (NMAE) are at increased risk for academic failure, relative to children who speak MAE.

- **Dialect mismatch** between home language and language of instruction.
- NMAE-speakers are at an immediate disadvantage relative to classmates who receive instruction in their primary dialect.
- **Dialect interference** (e.g., orthographic transparency)
- NMAE-speakers have more difficulty than MAE-speaking children in learning to read and spell.

Regardless of the explanation NMAE-speakers perform more poorly in school, especially with respect to literacy (Patton-Terry and Connor, 2012; , Patton-Terry et al., 2012).

Increasing linguistic awareness/flexibility may benefit NMAE speakers (Patton-Terry et al., 2012).

**TALK: Talking and Learning for Kindergarten**

**Purpose**

To develop an effective curricular supplement to teach pre-kindergarten children about the differences between MAE and NMAE in the context of an emergent literacy curriculum.

**Activity**

- Weekly Themes
  - Vocabulary
- **Talk Time**
  - Shared Book Reading
  - Dramatics
- **Rhyme Time**
  - Phonological Awareness
  - Music & Movement

**Strategies**

- Direct Instruction
- Focused stimulation
- Multiple modality input
- Recasting
- Comment/Expansion
- Scripts
- Binary choice
- Scaffolding

**Examples: Talk Target**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonology</th>
<th>Morpho-Syntax</th>
<th>Pragmatic</th>
<th>Metalinguistic</th>
<th>Phonological Awareness</th>
<th>Early Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word-final cluster deletion</td>
<td>Absent copula obligatory plural marking</td>
<td>Indirect requests</td>
<td>Code switching greetings languages</td>
<td>Sound/syllable/word Rhyme continuum Blending Segmenting</td>
<td>Alphabetic principle Vocabulary Narration Complex sentences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Talk Evaluation**

**Summer 2011**

13 children in TALK; 8 children in Control classroom
Pre & post testing for TALK participants showed:
- Significant increase in comprehension of MAE
- Significant increase in phonological awareness
- Positive responses from parent questionnaires

**Summer 2012**

12 children in TALK; 12 in Control classroom
Pre & Post testing completed for both groups
- Data analysis not yet complete
- Positive responses from teacher & parent questionnaires for TALK

Edwards, Rosin, Manning, Schneeberg, & Kesin Richmond (2012)

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