

POSTER n. 28

OUTCOMES OF *INTERACT* INTERVENTION IN LATE TALKERS

Bonifacio S., Hvastja Stefani L.*, Montico M.+

+Institute for Maternal and Child Health - IRCCS "Burlo Garofolo" – Trieste, Italy
(logopedia@burlo.trieste.it)

* Psychology Department - University of Trieste, Italy (hvastja@univ.trieste.it)

Introduction

Late Talkers (LT) develop language slower and later, between 24 and 36 months (Rescorla, 1989). These children don't show important clinical deficits in auditory, cognitive and relational areas.

DEFINITION OF LT

- 1) expressive vocabulary of less than 50 words and/or no words combination at 24 months of age
- 2) expressive vocabulary size at age 2 scoring below the 5th percentile in MacArthur-Bates CDI (49 words in Italian version "Primo Vocabolario del Bambino" PVB: Caselli, Pasqualetti, Stefanini, 2007)

LTs children have weaker linguistic skills than typical peers even in later ages: 17% to 26 % of the Late Talkers have persistent SLI at 4-6 years (Zubrick, Taylor, Rice, Slegers, 2007). Many data suggest that 40% to 75% of children with linguistic difficulties at preschool age show persistent difficulties in language skills also later.

The early intervention program *INTERACT*: Interactive, Naturalistic, Tutorial, Empathic, Reciprocal, Active, Communicative, Tuning (Bonifacio & Hvastja Stefani, 2004)

This clinical program adheres to social-interactionist theories of language acquisition. The *INTERACT* program is a parent focused intervention model for LTs between 24 and 30 months of age:

- It is an indirect clinical model in which speech therapist proposes to LTs parents, in a clinical setting, a set of strategies programmed to promote linguistic acquisition in naturalistic contexts
- It matches the approach of naturalistic interventions which profit by child's everyday activities as learning contexts
- The activities which profit by child's interest facilitate more than the activities proposed/directed by parents/adults, because they help the child to construe relations among objects, actions, events, words
- Parents learn to follow the child's interest and to model their language according to theoretical assumptions of the child's "*zone of proximal development*" of Vygotskij
- Parents learn to assume a "*scaffolder*" role (Bruner, 1983) in social-communicative contexts respecting communicative style of the child.

INTERACT involves 18 sessions during 6 months. Each session is 45 minutes long; 3 session per month during the same week.

The intervention program includes 24 strategies divided in 4 different groups: **Focused on the child; Promoting interactions; Modelling language; Promoting the emergence of discourse.**

Aims of the study

- Analyze the differences in lexical development of two groups of Late Talkers
- Assess the differences in their improvement.

Participants

25 Late Talkers and their parents participated to the *INTERACT* program. Children age ranged between 24-36 months.

To take into account difference in age, sample was divided into two groups based on median age:

- **LTA** 12 children (8 M e 4 F) aged \leq 26 months. 3/12 mothers with less than 13 years of education;
- **LTB** 13 children (12 M e 1 F) aged $>$ 26 months. 6/13 mothers with less than 13 years of education.

Methods

Data were collected before intervention (T1), after three months (T2) and at the end of intervention (T3).

Quantitative measure considered:

- **Size** of expressive vocabulary
- **Lexical Quotient (LQ):** (ELA#/LT age) X100

#Equivalent Lexical Age = median age of children in normative sample with the same number of words of LT.

Qualitative measure considered:

Number and increase of *nouns, predicates (verbs and adjectives), function words* and *social words*.

Material:

“Il Primo Vocabolario del Bambino” (PVB: Caselli et. al., 2007) Italian version of MacArthur-Bates (CDI: Fenson et al., 1993).

Results and conclusions

The present study provides a set of interesting data about clinical pathways of two Late Talkers groups:

- Children with the same vocabulary size at the beginning of clinical intervention show **different outcomes** in relation to the age.
- The **vocabulary size** at T1 is not a good predictor of intervention outcomes
- **Lexical Quotient** seems to be the best predictive factor of intervention outcomes among the considered measures.

References

- Bonifacio S., Hvastja Stefani L.** (2004). *Modelli di intervento precoce per il bambino parlatore tardivo: il modello INTERACT*. Tirrenia (Pisa): Edizioni del Cerro.
- Bruner J. S.** (1983). *Child's talk: learning to use language*. New York: Norton.
- Caselli M.C., Pasqualetti P., Stefanini S.** (2007). *Parole e frasi nel “Primo Vocabolario del Bambino”*. Nuovi dati normativi fra i 18 e i 36 mesi e forma breve del questionario. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Rescorla L.** (1989). *The Language Development Survey: a screening tool for delayed language in toddlers*. Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders, 54, 587-599.
- Fenson L., Dale P., Reznick S., Thal D., Bates E., Hartling, J., Pethick S. & Reilly J.** (1993). *MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventory* (San Diego: Singular Publishing Group).
- Zubrick S.R., Taylor C.L., Rice M.L., Slegers D.W.** (2007). *Late language emergence at 24 months: an epidemiological study of prevalence, predictors and covariates*. Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research, 50, 1562-159.