

**Title**

The efficacy of the Hanen program Target Word for late talkers

Auteurs

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Background

The prevalence of late language emergence at 24 months is about 15%. These toddlers appear to be typically developing, except for their language development: they fail to speak or make word combinations. Late language emergence is a risk indicator for specific language impairment. Parent-programs have been shown to have positive effects on children's receptive and expressive language skills (Roberts & Kaiser, 2011), although long term effectiveness has rarely been investigated. Less is also known about which strategies in parent-programs can be effectively learned by parents and positively affect the child's language development.

Aim

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the long term effectiveness of Target Word (The Hanen Centre, Toronto) in a sample of late talkers with an expressive language delay, and to investigate which strategies taught during the program, parents learn to use in interaction with their child.

Method & procedure

This study included 24 months old toddlers, indicated with a standardized screening at Youth Health Care Center as being at risk for language impairment. After the pretest was conducted, parents of children in the Target Word group received the training. In Target Word parents learn the importance of adapting their communication to the interests and needs of the child, and they learn how to use daily routines, children's play and songs in order to accomplish this (Girolametto, Weitzman, & Earle, 2013). Parents of children in the Control group only had access to the usual care. One and two years after the pretest, follow-up tests were administered. In total, 60 children and their parents participated: 30 in the Target Word group and 30 in the Control group.

Results

It was found that Target Word accelerated the growth of expressive vocabulary in late talkers in the first year. Children in the Control group did catch up in the second year. Parents in the Target Word group, in contrast to parents in the Control group, had changed some of their communicative behaviors and reduced communicative pressure. Reduction of parental communicative pressure was associated with improvements in children's expressive vocabulary and grammar.

Conclusion and implications

With Target Word late talkers vocabulary increases quicker. At this moment implementation of Target Word in the Netherlands is being explored.