

An early intervention raised knowledge and inspired to increase language stimulating activities

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The benefits of early shared reading and interaction with caregivers in supporting children’s early language and literacy skill are well known. Studies show that interventions promoting early shared reading positively affects parents’ attitudes towards reading, as well as children’s home literacy environment and language skills. The Swedish early intervention *Språkstart Halland* enhances shared reading but also supports early language stimulating activities like descriptive talk, responsive communication and Key Word Signs. The intervention targets children aged 0–3 years. The present study considers intervention points at 6 and 11 months. During home-visits at these ages, library staff deliver gift-packs containing books, toys, songs, and rhymes to promote early language stimulation. Parents are encouraged to engage in ‘talk, play, sing, read’ activities to support language development. Interactive demonstrations of language-stimulating strategies are provided. To explore parents’ experiences of the 6- and 11-month visits and develop an understanding of their thoughts regarding the impact of the intervention, fifteen parents were interviewed. Four semi-structured focus-group interviews were performed, and due to attrition also two single subject interviews. Interviews were carried out at a local library and online. Data was analysed using qualitative content analysis.

Findings show that the intervention changed parents’ mindset and increased their knowledge regarding early language stimulation. Tools and strategies benefitting the parent-child interaction were gained. Motivation to continue performing the activities was generated by a positive experience during the intervention as well as an increased understanding regarding the activities’ supportive effect on children’s further language development. The relationship formed to the library staff was described to be important. Social gains were described from the intervention and the guidance towards library activities. For parents who had previous knowledge, awareness regarding early language stimulation increased. To conclude, parents reported enhanced knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours regarding early language stimulation as a result of the intervention. This suggests a promising contribution to the enrichment of children's home language and literacy environment. Findings are coherent with previous studies and implies usefulness of the intervention in supporting children’s language development.