Supporting early years practitioners to facilitate children’s language and communication: An independent study evaluating the effectiveness of the Elklan Talking Matters Programme

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Elkan, UK http://www.elklan.co.uk/
Today

- Background
- Evaluation and Findings
- Challenges
- Moving forward
Evidence Base for Practitioner Training

• Practitioner training is an everyday intervention
• What are/should be the outcomes of practitioner training?
• Evidence base is very limited
• Studies to date
• Challenges
Speech, language and communication in 2 to 3 year olds….
Evaluation of a Practitioner Training programme

• Training programme aimed at staff who work with pre-school children in early years settings

• Content and delivery of the Elklan Talking Matters (TM) programme

• Training delivered to Key Communication Practitioners (KCPs) and/or Lead Communication Practitioners (LCPs)

• KCPs are staff within the setting and LCPs are staff who work across settings and cascade training
Evaluation Design

• A collaborative design with Elklan
• A pragmatic evaluation
• Overall aim:
To determine the impact of the TM programme on the receptive and expressive language abilities of pre-school children
Evaluation of TM

- Repeated measures
- Children from a range of early years settings across four LAs
- Inclusion/exclusion criteria
- Age from 1:06 to 2:06 years
- Each setting: a KCP setting, a LCP setting and one control setting
- Over recruitment of 126 children at time 1 (43 children in the KCP group; 40 children in the LCP group; 43 children in the control group)
Settings

4 control settings
5 KCP settings
4 LCP settings
Evaluation of TM

- Pre-school Language Scales 5th Edition (PLS-5) (Zimmerman et al., 2014)
- Baseline assessment/Time 1: n=126 children completed the PLS-5
- TM implemented in KCP and LCP settings and not control settings
- Post-intervention assessment/Time 2; n=87 children completed the PLS-5
- Approximately 6 months between Time 1 and 2
## Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control (N=37)</th>
<th>KCP (n=32)</th>
<th>LCP (n=18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>95.30</td>
<td>91.76 (-3.54)</td>
<td>89.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>11.08</td>
<td>26.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>57-127</td>
<td>73-113</td>
<td>66-133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1** Comparison of T1 and T2 receptive standardised language scores for the control KCP and LCP groups (+/- change from T1 to T2 score)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Control (N=37)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>92.43</td>
<td>93.30 (+0.87)</td>
<td>93.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
<td>16.94</td>
<td>11.59</td>
<td>13.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>61-126</td>
<td>71-116</td>
<td>66-125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2** Comparison of T1 and T2 expressive standardised scores for the control, KCP and LCP groups (+/- change from T1 to T2 score)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Control (N=37)</th>
<th>KCP (n=32)</th>
<th>LCP (n=18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>60.97</td>
<td>68.76 (+7.79)</td>
<td>55.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
<td>10.48</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>12.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>34-81</td>
<td>52-92</td>
<td>33-79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3** Comparison of T1 and T2 total language raw scores for the control, KCP and LCP groups (+/- change from T1 to T2 score)
Analyses

• KCP vs control vs LCP
• KCP/LCP combined vs control
• KCP vs control
Analyses
Findings: KCP vs Control

• For **receptive language**, there was no significant interaction between group and time (F(1,67) = 3.19, p=.079, partial eta squared = .045). There was a significant main effect of time (F1, 67) = 183.862, p<0.001, partial eta squared = .733). The main effect of group was significant (F(1,67) = 16.88, \textbf{p<0.01}. partial eta squared = .08). The children in the KCP settings made more progress in receptive language than the children in the control settings.

• For **expressive language**, there was no significant interaction between group and time (F(1,67) = 1.921, p=.170, partial eta squared = .028). There was a significant main effect of time (F1, 67) = 134.171, p<0.001, partial eta squared = .667). The main effect of group was significant (F(1,67) = 12.42, \textbf{p<0.03}. partial eta squared = .03). The children in the KCP settings made more progress in expressive language than the children in the control settings.

• For the **total PLS-5** score, there was no significant interaction between group and time (F(1,67) = 4.176, p=.065, partial eta squared = .02). There was a significant main effect of time (F1, 67) = 221.867, p<0.001, partial eta squared = .768). The main effect of group was significant (F(1,67) = 15.37, \textbf{p<0.04}. partial eta squared = .091). The children in the KCP settings made more progress in total language scores than the children in the control settings.
## Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chronological age at T1</th>
<th>Chronological age at T2</th>
<th>Language age equivalent score at T1</th>
<th>Language age equivalent score at T2</th>
<th>Difference in age equivalent score from T1 to T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
<td>2 years and 3 months</td>
<td>2 years and 9 months</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>2 years and 2 months</td>
<td>2 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KCP/LCP</strong></td>
<td>2 years and 2 months</td>
<td>2 years and 8 months</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>2 years and 7 months</td>
<td>5 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 T1 and T2 mean chronological and language age equivalent scores for control and KCP/LCP children
In summary

- Children in LCP and KCP settings made more progress than control settings
- Children in KCP settings made the most progress
- Evidence in support of TM/Practitioner Training being effective in facilitating children’s language development
Limitations and Challenges

- Variation
- Differing levels of intervention/training
- Matching/control measures
- Attrition
- Design
- Timing
Moving Forward

• Much more evaluation of practitioner training needed
• Outcomes to be measured
• Careful delivery and design
• Full report available:
  https://elklantraining.worldsecuresystems.com/reviews/talking-matters