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Language in formation: Parental knowledge of evidence-based information about early language development

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INTRODUCTION

- Children begin developing language from their earliest years through interaction, communication, and their environment. Parents play a central role as primary language models, shaping children's language experiences in everyday life (Suskind et al., 2017).
- In today's world, where information about language development is widely accessible, especially through social media, it can be difficult for parents to distinguish reliable, evidence-based guidance from misinformation (Kim, Davies, & Rattanasone, 2023).
- This study explores mothers' knowledge of children's language acquisition, language development, and language environment. The findings were used to develop an educational film script aimed at providing clear, accessible, and evidence-based information for parents and those working with young children.





OBJECTIVE AND METHODS

Objective

The aim of this study was to explore mothers' knowledge of children's language acquisition, language development, and language environment. The findings were used to develop a script for an educational film providing accessible, evidence-based information for parents and professionals.

Methods

- Participants: 10 mothers, each with one child under the age of five
- Data collection: Semi-structured interviews (10–20 minutes), conducted in participants' homes
- Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis
- A script for an educational documentary was developed based on the findings
- A follow-up survey was conducted to evaluate the content and educational value of the script



RESULTS

- Mothers demonstrated basic knowledge of key aspects of language acquisition and development, such as communication, imitation, and responsive interaction, and understood the importance of interaction.
- However, there was notable variation in understanding, particularly regarding when language acquisition begins and the relationship between language development and literacy.
- Reading and active engagement were commonly viewed as effective strategies to support language development. Most mothers also expressed concerns that increased screen use may negatively impact interaction and, consequently, language development.
- Additionally, mothers reported a lack of practical guidance and clear developmental milestones. Their knowledge was largely based on personal experience and informal sources, highlighting the need for accessible, evidence-based information for parents.
- Based on these results, a script for an educational film was prepared and sent to the participants for reviewing. The findings of the follow-up survey indicated that the participants viewed the script highly educational and informative ($M=4.85/5$) and suggested the film should be maximum of 40 min. in length, with shorter extracts for parents to view on social media platforms.



CONCLUSIONS

- Mothers showed general awareness of key aspects of language development, particularly the importance of interaction.
- However, gaps and inconsistencies were evident, especially regarding developmental milestones and the link between language and literacy.
- The findings highlight a clear need for accessible, reliable, and evidence-based information for parents. Educational materials that provide practical guidance and support informed decision-making are essential.
- The developed film script represents a promising tool to bridge this gap by translating research into clear and usable knowledge for parents and professionals working with young children.
- The findings of the follow-up survey (following the participant's review of the film script) further support this, indicating that the educational material is well-received and effective, reinforcing its potential as a practical tool for translating research into accessible knowledge for parents.



REFERENCES

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