

### Question

Does parental reading promote literacy skills of children with autism?

### Application

Funding proposal to an autism society for family book-gifts program

### Literature Search

**ERIC** KW=autis\* and KW=read\* and KW=child\*  
**PsychInfo** KW=autis\* and KW=read\* and KW=child\*  
**Medline** autis\* AND read\* AND child\*

37 articles identified and imported to *RefWorks™*

**SPOTLIGHTS on most relevant articles = 4**

### SUMMARY OF SPOTLIGHTS

The capacity for literacy development of autistic individuals is often underestimated.

Access to print materials and shared reading time are seen to be an important step in encouraging emergent literacy amongst children with autism.

The literacy development of children with autism can be enhanced by the same factors that promote literacy learning in their non-disabled peers.

The aim of improving the literacy skills of children with autism is a worthwhile goal, one for which the proposed book gift program provides the means necessary to attain.

#1. Bellon, M. L., Ogletree, B. T., & Harn, W.E. (2000). Repeated storybook reading as a language intervention for children with autism: A case study on the application of scaffolding. *Focus on Autism & Other Developmental Disabilities*, 15(1), 52-58.

**Abstract** This case study investigated the efficacy of repeated storybook reading (RSR) with adult scaffolding as an intervention for a child with autism. An ABA single-subject design was employed. The results suggested that RSR encouraged spontaneous language use. Guidelines for using RSR with children with autism are provided.

### Relevance Summary

A 1990s theoretical shift brought the “natural training” perspective to the forefront as the language instruction paradigm of choice for many practitioners. Such training aims to provide opportunities for language learning within the context of everyday activities, thus maintaining “a naturalness conducive to generalizable learning” (p. 52). Repeated storybook reading is one natural training technique that shows promise as a language and communication treatment for persons with higher functioning autism.

This case study examined the effect of repeated storybook reading with adult scaffolding on the spontaneous speech utterances of a young boy (age 3 years, 10 months) with autism. Results indicated a positive impact, with an overall decrease in the boy's echoic utterances and an increase in his spontaneous speech. These findings suggest that the parental reading and scaffolding combination may enhance language development, and guidelines for selecting appropriate storybooks are given.

This study presents a number of limitations: the inclusion of only one test participant, the relatively short intervention period, and the use of measurements derived during the actual intervention process. Long-term effects of the intervention were not reported.

### Key Quotes

*“For several reasons, illustrated storybooks provide an ideal context for natural, meaningful interactions conducive to language learning. For example, storybooks can be used to establish, monitor, and maintain joint focus during recurring interactive exchanges. They also provide routines that make the child's actions and vocalizations interpretable and pragmatically effective. Furthermore, storybook interventions narrow the range of possible referents through the use of defined and static stimuli, so the child appropriate language patterns. Defined and static stimuli, such as pictures in a book, have been demonstrated to be effective contexts for language development in typical adult-child dyads. Finally, joint book reading conforms to the turn-taking structure of conversation described by Bruner as crucial to language development. Ninio and Bruner found that turn taking during storybook reading is virtually perfect.”* (p. 52-53)

*“The results of this study suggest that the use of RSR with scaffolding can facilitate the use of spontaneous speech in a young child with high-functioning autism. Therefore, RSR can be considered another natural training option for this population.”* (p. 56)



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