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INTRODUCTION

There is an expanding gap between the language skills of L1 and L2 Dutch speaking children (Hus, 2001; Oomens, 2003; Verhoeven, 2000). An important aim of Early Childhood Education (ECE) is to stimulate early literacy and language development of children in at-risk situations, in order to close the gap between L1 and L2 speakers. 'Language Route' [Taallijn] is designed as a supplement to strengthen ECE programs in their language stimulation. Language Route stimulates young children's vocabulary, verbal linguistic skills, and early literacy skills. This research project investigates whether Language Route can 'mind the gap' between L1 and L2 Dutch speaking children by effectively stimulating the language development in L2 Dutch speaking toddlers and young children.

METHOD

- Two parallel longitudinal studies
- Pretest-Posttest control group design
- Intervention year: 4 themes (Body & senses, Sinterklaas, Living, Spring)
- Teacher skills
- 5 test moments

STUDY 1

Participants:

- 70 preschool groups
- 460 toddlers (238 boys)
- pretest: 2,5 - 3,5 years of age (mean 36 months)

- condition 1: experienced Language Route group
- condition 2: non-experience Language Route group
- condition 3: control group (no Language Route)

Variables:

- vocabulary (receptive and productive)
- verbal linguistic skills
- phonological memory
- phoneme analysis and synthesis
- print knowledge
- early literacy (letter knowledge)

STUDY 2

Participants:

- kindergarten
- +/- 600 children
- pretest: 4 years of age

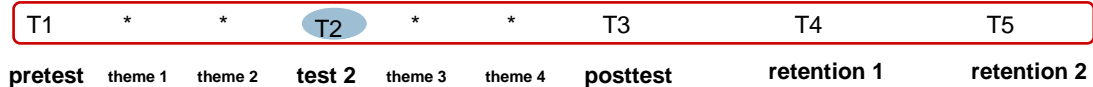
- condition 1: experienced Language Route group
- condition 2: non-experience Language Route group
- condition 3: control group (no Language Route)

Variables:

- vocabulary (receptive and productive)
- verbal linguistic skills
- phonological memory
- phoneme analysis and synthesis
- print knowledge
- early literacy (reading comprehension)

TIMELINE

Study 1: 2010-2013



Study 2: 2011-2014



EXPECTED RESULTS

It is expected that Language Route is effective in stimulating toddlers' and children's language development. This results in an increased vocabulary, verbal linguistic skills, and early literacy skills.

The implementation (through teacher skills) used in this research is expected to positively influence Language Route's effectiveness.

Language Route might be able to help bridge the gap between L1 and L2 Dutch speaking children.

