

THE QUALITY OF TEACHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH PARENT REPORTED LANGUAGE CONCERNS.

Kirstine Hand, Donna Berthelsen, Sue Walker, Jan Nicholson

Research Problem



- Overall aim was to gain greater understanding of the quality of teacher-child relationships for young children with parent reported language concerns across early school transitions.

- Link to previous research:
 - Transition to school can be difficult as it requires major adjustment (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000).
 - Teacher-child relationships enable children to overcome risk factors (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Mashburn & Pianta, 2006).
 - Children with language difficulties may also have difficulty in social interactions (Hill & Coufal, 2005; McCabe, 2005).
 - Teacher perceptions of children have been found to differ based on language ability (Rudasill, Rimm-Kaufman, Justice & Pence, 2006).

Research Objectives



Objective 1 (Study 1)

- To identify differences between the quality of the teacher-child relationships between young children with parent reported language concerns and their peers, taking account of child sex, age, cultural and linguistic differences and socio-economic positioning.

Objective 2 (Study 2)

- To determine if the quality of teacher-child relationships for young children with parent reported language concerns varies over time, through the period of the transition to school, as children move from early education settings (e.g., preschools and long day care) to formal schooling.

Method Instruments

- LSAC data used to extract variables for the following constructs:
 - Child, Family and Teacher Characteristics
- Key measurements used:
 - Student-Teacher Relationships Scale (short form) (STRS, Pianta, 2001)
 - Measure of teacher-child relationship quality - 5 point scale
 - Two subscales of Closeness and Conflict
 - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1999)
 - Measure of child behaviour rated by parents - 3 point scale
 - Five subscales – four added for Total Difficulties score
 - Parents Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS, Glascoe, 2000)
 - Measure for Receptive & Expressive language - 3 point scale
 - Used in sample selection

Study 1 Objective



- To identify differences between the quality of the teacher-child relationships between young children with parent reported language concerns and their peers, taking account of child sex, age, cultural and linguistic differences (CALD) and socio-economic positioning (SEP).

Study 1 Sample

Study 1 Target Group Selection	Number of Cases
LSAC Kindergarten Cohort	4983
Cases with teacher data	3258
Cases with teacher data and PEDS 'Yes'	212
Cases with sufficient data on key variables	210*

* Final Target group sample for Study 1

Study 1 Final Sample Selection	
Target Group (n = 210)	Control Group (n = 210)
2 x PEDS language concerns.	Matched on Age, Sex, CALD, SEP. Randomly selected.
Mean Age: 4.7years (SD = .23); Sex: 66.2% male (n139)	

Study 1 Data Analysis

- Student-Teacher Relationship Scale Short Form (STRS, Pianta, 2001)

- Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to identify teacher-child relationship differences between the target group (language concerns) and control group (peers).
- Differences between both groups on two dependent measures – the Wave 1 STRS Closeness and Conflict scales.

Study 1 Results

- Statistically significant differences were found between the target group (language concerns) and the control group (peers) with MANOVA.
- The target group had lower levels of STRS Closeness and higher levels of STRS Conflict.

Measure	Target Group Mean (S.D.)	Control Group Mean	Significance
STRS Closeness	3.96 (.81)	4.33 (.61)	p = .000
STRS Conflict Wave	1.81 (.61)	1.47 (.61)	p = .000

Study 2 Objective



- To determine if the quality of the teacher-child relationships for young children with parent reported language concerns varies over time, through the period of the transition to school, as children move from early education settings (e.g., preschools and long day care) to formal schooling.

Study 2 Sample

Study 2 Sample Selection	No. of cases missing data	Remaining Cases
Target group from Study 1	-	210
Attrition from Wave 1 to Wave 2	26	184
Missing Wave 2 teacher data	38	146
Case with insufficient Wave 2 STRS	1	145*

*Final sample size for Study 2

Wave 1 (2004)	Wave 2 (2006)
Mean Age: 4.7 (SD = .23)	Mean Age: 6.8 (SD = .24)
Sex: 64.8% (n94)	Sex: 64.8% (n94)

Study 2 Data Analysis and Results

- Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS, Pianta, 2001)
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1999)

□ Multiple Regression Predictor Models

- ▣ Predicting teacher-child relationship quality (STRS) at Wave 2 in

No	Outcome (D.V.)	Predictors (I.V.)	Significant
1	Wave 2 STRS Closeness	Child sex, age, LOTE, ATSI, SDQ Total Difficulties	Yes (p = .004)
2	Wave 2 STRS Closeness	<u>As above plus:</u> Wave 1 STRS Closeness &	Yes but higher (p
3	Wave 2 STRS Conflict	Child sex, age, LOTE, ATSI, SDQ Total Difficulties	No (p = .104)
4	Wave 2 STRS Conflict	<u>As above plus:</u> Wave 1 STRS Closeness & Conflict	Yes (p < .0005)

Summary of Results



□ Study 1

- Differences in teacher-child relationship quality in Early Childhood settings were found between children who had parent reported receptive and expressive language concerns and their peers. Children with language concerns experienced relationships marked by less closeness and more conflict than peers.

□ Study 2

- Early teacher-child relationship quality experienced by children with parent reported language concerns was found to contribute to the prediction of future teacher-child relationship quality outcomes after the transition into formal schooling.

Implications of Results



- Confirms previous studies which found:
 - that child attributes can impact teacher-child relationships (Colwell & Lindsey, 2003; Kesner, 2000)
 - that early teacher-child relationship quality contributes to future relationship quality (Howes, Phillipsen, & Peisner-Feinberg, 2000; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004).
- Suggests teachers need to have appropriate training in evaluating and facilitating positive teacher-child interactions; should also be reflected in educational policies and guidelines.
- Suggests that early teacher-child relationships are a critical point for establishing positive relationship patterns in teacher-child interactions.
- This is especially important given that positive teacher-child relationships may help adjustment to formal school settings.

Conclusion



This research provides valuable insight into the nature of teacher-child relationships for young children with parent reported language concerns.

Given the multiple risk factors faced by children with language difficulties, the importance of developing quality teacher-child relationships with these children at an early age, should not be overlooked.