



**UEL Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the
'Speech Bubbles' Drama Intervention Programme, 2015-17¹
Heather Price and Eric Ansong**

Executive Summary

The 'Speech Bubbles' Effect

- The UEL evaluation of the effectiveness of the "Speech Bubbles" Drama Intervention Programme demonstrates that taking part in 'Speech Bubbles' **makes a positive difference to children's speech, language and communication development**
- 'Speech Bubbles' can have a **statistically significant** impact on children's **spoken language, storytelling and social interaction** abilities, giving children a marked **boost** in these areas. It is therefore a **highly valuable** intervention

Taking Speech, Language and Communication Needs Seriously

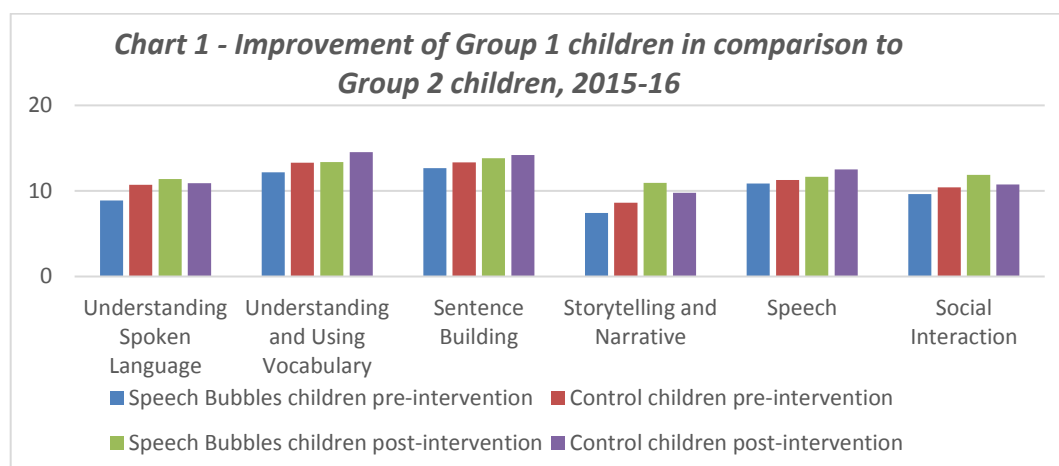
In 2008, the independent cross-governmental review undertaken by John Bercow underlined the severity of the impact of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) on children's confidence, social and emotional development, school progression and mental well-being. Research continues to show that young children from neighbourhoods with high social deprivation have SLCN rates as high as 50%. Speech, language and communication difficulties affect peer relationships and pro-social skills and put children at increased risk of a range of psychosocial problems.

The UEL Study

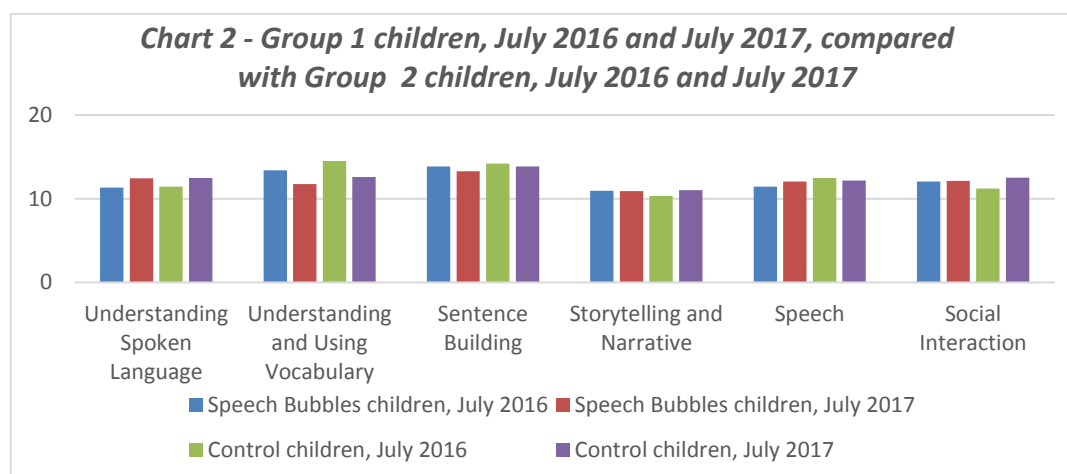
Children with high SLCN from three different inner London schools aged between 5 and 8 years in Key Stages 1 and 2 were allocated to two groups. Group 1 received the intervention in 2015-16, and Group 2, in 2016-17 (n = 89 in 2015-16; n = 75 in 2016-17). Researchers measured each group's SLC development from a baseline and at key points subsequently. They used the Communication Trust's Speech, Language and Communication Progression Tools. The two groups were compared and the researchers conducted statistical analyses of the results.

¹ The full report of the evaluation is available at:
<http://www.londonbubble.org.uk/page/reports-research-writing/>

Results



Children receiving the intervention in 2015-16 made better progress than the 'control' group. The comparatively better progress made was found to be statistically significant in three out of six of the categories tested (understanding spoken language; storytelling and narrative; social interaction).



In July 2017, Group 1 had statistically significantly increased or maintained their gains in four out of six of the test categories (spoken language, storytelling, speech, social interaction). Group 2, receiving the intervention a year later, improved on their scores in spoken language, storytelling and social interaction, without reaching statistical significance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

'Speech Bubbles' seems most effective when taken earlier in Key Stage One, where it has a statistically significant, sustained impact on children's spoken language, storytelling and social interaction capabilities. Repetition of this pilot study would test replicability of the results. A limitation was the use of a non-age-standardised screening tool, partially accounting for less strong scores in year two of the study.