

'Speech Bubbles' Drama Intervention Programme

University of East London Pilot Evaluation, September 2015 – September 2017



Dr Heather Price and Dr Eric Ansong, Social Sciences, UEL

Speech, Language and Communication Needs and children's mental health and wellbeing



Bercow: Ten Years On
www.bercow10yearson.com

Nearly 1 in 10 children and young people in England can experience difficulties communicating, creating barriers to learning and to participating in school community and even family life

Children with additional SLCN are at much greater risk of mental health problems

49% of SB pupils are eligible for a pupil premium

31% had either an Education, Health and Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs

60% had English as an Additional Language

60% were boys

'Speech Bubbles'

A schools-based therapeutic drama intervention



<https://www.londonbubble.org.uk/video/speech-bubbles/>

“Once ... there lived a king and a princess but the queen did not come back until it was December or November. The queen did come from Africa and her grandmother died that's why she's gone to Africa. And the queen had forgotten a thing that was really important, she had forgotten her phone.”

'Speech Bubbles' is distinctive in working with the whole body, putting children's own narrated stories at the centre of the workshops, and building young children's confidence without immediate pressure to speak

What problems do 'Speech Bubbles' sessions address?

Speech Bubbles
Evaluation of the
2013-14 Extended
Programme funded
by the Shine Trust

Barnes, 2015
Sidney de Hann
Research Centre for
Arts and Health,

Christchurch
Canterbury
University



- ...low confidence in communicating (including those with English as an additional language)
 - a language delay
 - difficulty in organising thoughts and communicating them
 - poor listening and poor attention skills
 - poor relationships with others
- (Barnes, 2014: 6)

X is a bright child. He has the potential to do well. He is very quiet. His voice is rarely heard in class.

Lacks confidence and clarity when attempting to communicate. Does not speak in full sentences. Does not always understand instructions. Suspected EAL but parents say they speak English at home. Struggles to make links.

Brand new to English

Feedback about the effectiveness of 'Speech Bubbles' sessions



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Has really come out of her shell. Although still very quiet in class and when sharing her ideas, she has become a lot more confident one-to-one and in small groups. Sometimes she is really loud especially on trips. She also seems to play with others a lot more.

Is now great at sharing his ideas and joining in on the carpet. He has become much better at getting on with his work and participating in all classroom activities. He has lots of friends and only gets himself in trouble when he chooses the wrong games.

Communicates well with peers and staff. English has improved significantly. Much more imaginative with written work.

What answers did Jonathan Barnes obtain?

The evidence suggests that whilst the project does not appear to significantly increase language scores on a formal assessment, (narrative content and grammar), with this particular client group there continue to be measurable gains recorded with students' attention and listening, turn-taking and ability to be in a group. Teachers have also reported an increase in students' confidence and their ability to speak and respond to different people. They have also made progress in their ability to resolve basic verbal reasoning problems." (p. 37)



Increased confidence, greater participation, better listening, increased enjoyment, improved relationships, motivation and ability to speak out, improved speaking skills, enhanced language skills. (p. 39)



What did the Barnes report recommend for further study?



“Future evaluations should include randomised control trials in several SB schools.”
(Barnes, 2015: 47)

Sept 2015		July 2016		Sept 2016		July 2017
Speech Bubbles ('SB') Children N = 51 Pre-test (5-6 yrs)		Speech Bubbles ('SB') Children N = 51 Post-test (5-6 yrs)		Speech Bubbles ('SB') Children N = 46	No Speech Bubbles	Speech Bubbles ('SB') Children N = 46 2 nd Post-test (7-8 yrs)
Control ('C') Children N= 38 Pre-test (5-6 yrs)	No Speech Bubbles	Control ('C') Children N = 38 Post-test (5-6 yrs)		Control ('C') Children N = 27		Control ('C') Children N = 27 2 nd Post-test (7-8 yrs)

Children in the Study: Demographics

(Average age at start: SB group, 6.19 yrs; C group, 5.98 yrs)

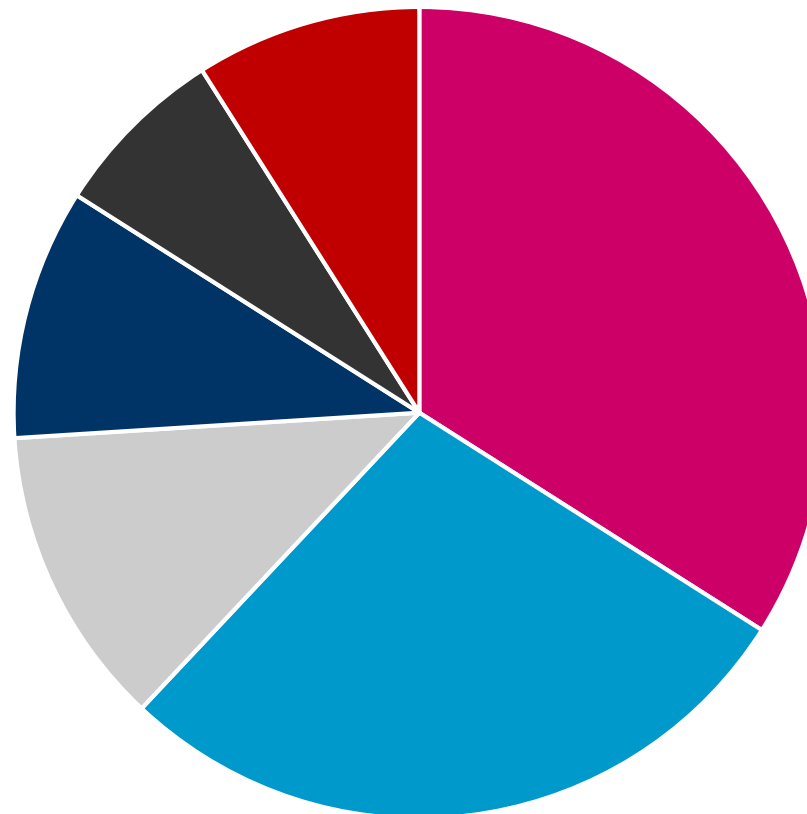
Gender: 41.2% girls and 58.8% boys)

Ethnicity

Pink = 34% Black Caribbean
Light Blue = 28% Black African
Grey = 12% White UK
Dark Blue = 10% Asian
Black = 7% East European
Brown = 9% Other

Home Language

English: 69%
Other: 31%



Speech, Language and Communication Progression Tool, 5/6

Understanding Spoken Language

Eg. Why did Cinderella do all the cleaning?

Understanding and Using Vocabulary

Eg. 5 different animals / can you guess?

Sentences

Eg. You're eg. cold...what could you do next?

Storytelling and Narrative

Eg. Slimy Green Alien lands...

Speech

Eg. initial letter sound

Social Interaction

Eg. 3 things you like about school

Speech, Language and Communication Progression Tool, 7/8

Understanding Spoken Language

Eg. Stamp feet; hands behind back; point to blue

Understanding and Using Vocabulary

Eg. Tell me 2 things about an aeroplane

Sentences

Eg. How do you make a sandwich?

Storytelling and Narrative

Eg. Sally ventures onto thin ice...

Speech

Eg. complex rhyming words

Social Interaction

Eg. How to keep fit and healthy?

Measuring the children's speech, language and communication abilities: The Communication Trust's Progression Tool

Screening 'test' scoring children on:

Understanding spoken language;
Understanding and using vocabulary; Sentences
Storytelling and narrative;
Speech; Social interaction

Scoring runs from 3 (needs specialised help) through 5,7,9,11 (needs additional support) to 13, 15 (expected level)



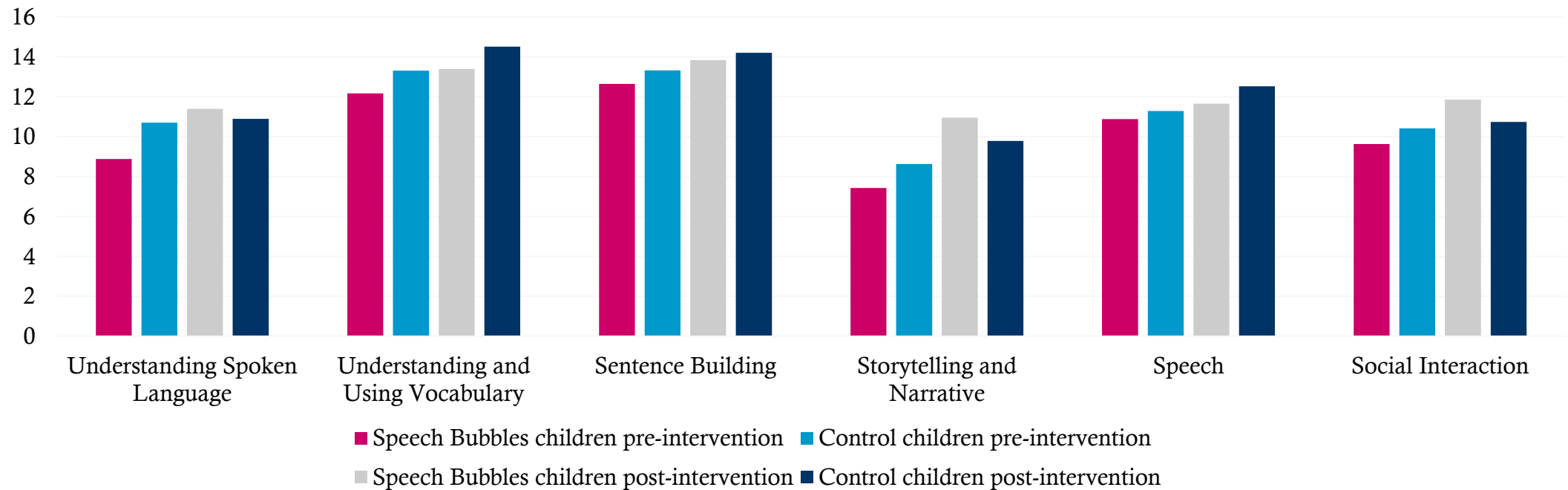
Storytelling and narrative

“Let's see if we can make up a story together. I will start us off...Once upon a time there was a green, slimy alien who landed on earth. He was hungry so...”

Children awarded a score of 3 through to 15 depending on factors such as the range of characters, descriptions and events

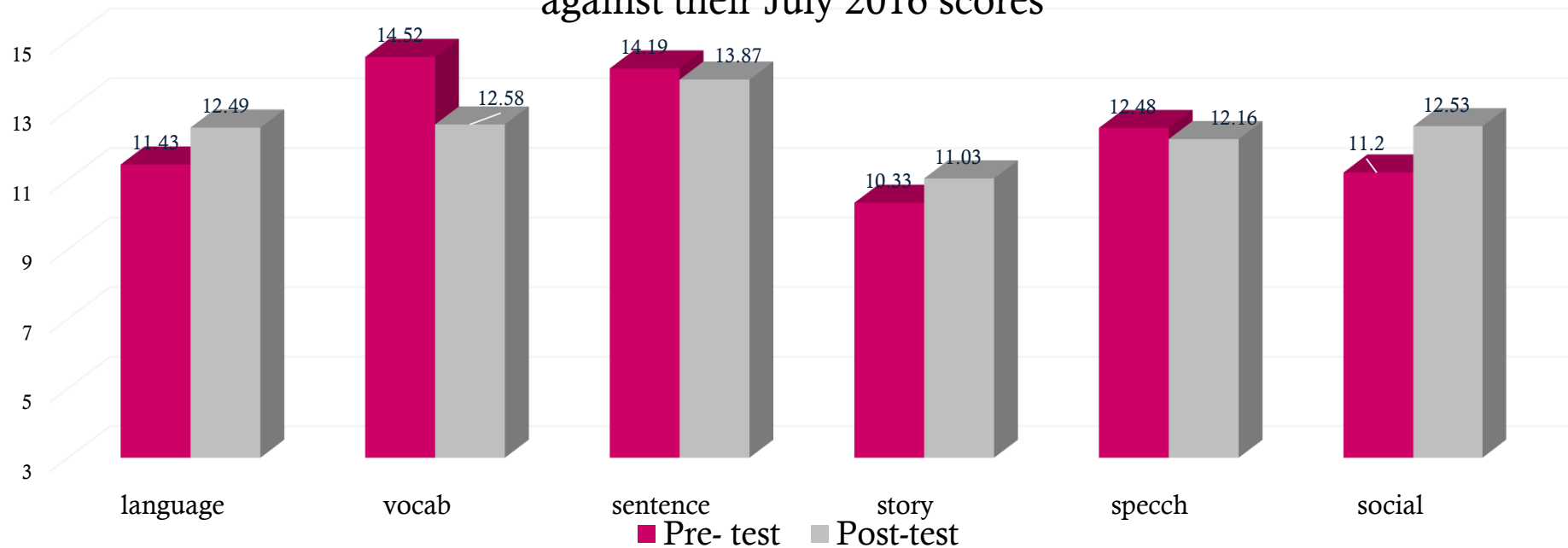
Results: 2015-16

*Chart 1 –
Improvement of ‘Speech Bubbles’ children in comparison to ‘control’ children*



Results for 'Control' Children: 2016-17

Chart 2: Performance of 'Control' children in July 2017
against their July 2016 scores



Control children's scores: Understanding Spoken Language: **+1.06**; Understanding and Using Vocabulary: **- 1.94**; Sentence Building: **- 0.32**; Storytelling and Narrative: **+0.7**;

Speech: **- 0.32**; Social Interaction: **+1.33**

Results for 'Speech Bubbles' Children: 2016-17

Chart 2:

Performance of 'Speech Bubbles' Children in July 2017 against their July 2016 scores



Speech Bubbles' children's scores: Understanding Spoken Language: +1.11;
 Understanding and Using Vocabulary: - 1.64; Sentence Building: - 0.57; Storytelling
 and Narrative: + 0.03; Speech: + 0.58; Social Interaction: + 0.08

Comments

- Screening and scoring were reasonably unbiased
- The children's scores are improved but the SLCPT only codes scores of 13-15 as 'green'
- Many of the children remain in the 'amber' zone (5 – 11), although on the top bar (11), on the weakest performing category (SB children post intervention on Storytelling)
- Children therefore may continue to have mild difficulties but there were no children in the 'red' zones after the intervention

This research only approximates to a randomised controlled trial

We can claim that the SB programme positively impacts on children's SLC development in Understanding Spoken Language, Storytelling and Narrative, and Social Interaction

Speech Bubbles Research 2 Years On

Our report is available at: https://www.londonbubble.org.uk/parent_project/speech-bubbles/reportsresearch-writing/

The study presented here has acted as a pilot for a much larger two-armed randomized control trial of 'Speech Bubbles', involving 40 pupils at Key Stage 1 in each of 25 participating schools. This study was recently commissioned by the Educational Endowment Fund and the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. It is led by researchers from UCL Institute of Education and The Behavioural Insights Team:

Details available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-andevaluation/projects/speech-bubbles/>

There is a recent summary of the qualitative and quantitative findings relating to research on Speech Bubbles in Barnes, Jacqueline (2018) Speech Bubbles: A Case Study in England, in C. Aguiar & C.S.

Silva (2018) (Eds.) Case studies on curriculum, pedagogy and school ISOTIS Horizon 2020