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Parents in culturally and linguistically diverse neighborhoods supporting the vocabulary development of preschoolers in shared book reading

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Young children's vocabulary development is seen as foundational in literacy learning and schooling (e.g., Sperry, Sperry, & Miller, 2018). Word knowledge is predictive of later literacy achievement and success in school (e.g., Storch & Whitehurst, 2005); shared book reading is a potentially rich context for vocabulary development. Thirty parents in diverse neighborhoods, whose children attended English-instruction early childhood education centers, read two narrative and two informational picture books that we provided with their 4 and 5 year old children over two sessions. We video recorded, transcribed and analysed the shared reading sessions. Findings include:

1)parents use various strategies to help children learn unfamiliar vocabulary including verbal explanations, associating words and illustrations, prompting children to use background knowledge and gesture/mime;

2)there was more attention to vocabulary in informational texts than narrative texts and there were also differences within the narrative and informational genres;

3)children asked questions about unfamiliar words;

4)families varied in their attention to vocabulary.

We will address the implications of these results.