

## **The Power of Engagement on the Language of Children with Developmental Disabilities and Varying Access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication**

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Children with developmental disabilities who are minimally speaking have improved communicative outcomes after exposure to language intervention using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). Furthermore, it is known that children acquire language through consistent and active engagement with language, typically measured through conversational turns. This study evaluated the growth trajectory of total conversational turns for parent-child dyads (N=62) and assessed whether the change in turns predicted vocabulary at the end of the intervention. Parent-child dyads were randomly assigned to participate in augmented-input, augmented-output, or spoken interventions for 24 weeks. The growth curve analysis indicates that on average pairs in all conditions exhibited a quadratic growth trend in conversational turns. However, the growth in conversational turns from baseline to session 24 was only predictive of vocabulary size in those exposed to AAC. These results imply that children exposed to spoken interventions are not receiving the linguistic benefits from increased engagement seen in their peers who are typically developing or those who have access to AAC. The data are sourced an archival study funded by the National Institute of Health Grant DC-03799.