

# Talking matters but who is listening? Beliefs, expectations and interactions of adult caregivers with infants and toddlers during story time

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### ABOUT AMANDA WHITE

Amanda White is a doctoral student in the School of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Auckland. She is honoured to have the opportunity to study with the Marie Clay Research Centre in partnership with Talking Matters and affiliated agencies involved in early oral language research.

Amanda holds a BA (Hons) in Education and BSLT (Hons) from the University of Canterbury. She has extensive experience as a speech-language therapist, having worked for over 20 years with children of all ages in the early childhood, school and health sectors in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Amanda's research interests focus on the communication and language development of infants and toddlers; the links between oral language and literacy acquisition; and the influence of parents, whanau and educators within cultural, social and educational contexts on shaping adult-child interaction, reciprocity and responsiveness.

Amanda recently presented an oral paper at the New Zealand Speech Therapy Association (NZSTA) conference (2016): *Let's get the Village Talking-Improving Access to Communication Support*, which highlighted initial findings from her involvement in a Ministry of Education project, reinforcing the need to work in close partnership with parents, educators and local communities in supporting the language and communication needs of young children in areas identified with high social and economic need.

Adult-child interactions are known to be critical to early oral language learning and development. Responsive and reciprocal relationships, as well as the quantity and quality of talk used by adults, have been identified as important factors in supporting the development of communicative competence in infants and toddlers. International research has strongly and consistently linked oral language development in the first 3 years of life with later social, emotional and literacy skills. Relatively little local research, however, has explored the nature of early adult-child interactions within cultural and social contexts of Aotearoa-New Zealand. The aim of this doctoral thesis is to investigate the beliefs and expectations of adult caregivers that underpin their interactions with infants and toddlers during shared story-time contexts. A qualitative research approach and case-study design are proposed to gather rich, in-depth data from a group of parents and educators of children aged 0- 3 years who attend a family services centre within a community that has a high proportion of Māori and Pasifika families and significant levels of identified socio-economic need. The findings of this study will contribute to our understanding of how parents and educators interact with their infants and toddlers. In addition it will shed light on ways to encourage partnership and dialogue around ways to nurture early oral language development through daily routine contexts involving talking and reading.