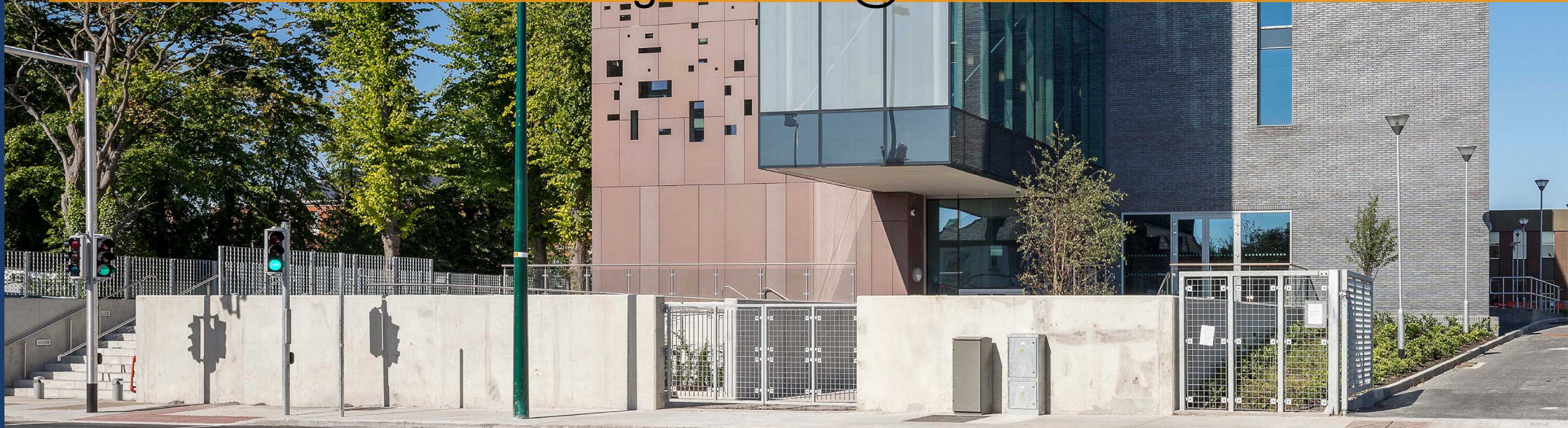


Supporting children's language development through reflexive interaction during planned pretend play

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Heterogenous group

- 94 participants
- Mean age: 47.60 months (*sd* 5.11)
- Mixed gender
- Mixed Early Years settings
- SES Low-High
- Majority had English as first language –
 - but 26.8% of treatment group and 10.8% of control group did not have English as their first language (N=78)
- Mixed gender in sample
- Normally distributed scores on BPVS, Bus Story Test
MLU, TNR, RDVT at pre- and post-test



Language and Planned Pretend Play

- Allows for practice of decontextualised language (McKeown & Beck, 2009)
- Character-appropriate speech in different grammatical tenses (Harris, 2000)
- Emergence of pretense in play coincides with the development of language (Whitebread, 2012)



However...

- Work-play dichotomies exist with policy in UK advocating play but little guidance for practitioners (EU, 2014): children are left to play in non-interactive ways as play not seen as underpinning learning
- Adults approach play – they can receive unwelcome reaction from children (Baldock *et al.*, 2013)
- But several studies (Howard, 2010, Whitebread & O'Sullivan, 2012) found children have broad perception of play, which included the teacher

Reflexive Practice and the Role of the Adult

- Teacher-in-Role (Heathcote, 1980; Dickinson & Neelands, 2006)
- Smilansky's Model (1968)
- Dramatic Devices (Heathcote, 1980)
- Motivation acted as signifiers of the learning opportunities taken by the children (Dweck, 2000)

Findings

Measure	Treatment Group Mean (sd)	Control Group Mean (sd)	F	Effect Size partial η^2
<i>British Picture Vocabulary Scales</i>	93.53 (10.20)	89.53 (12.87)	5.90* (1, 89)	.06
<i>Researcher Designed Vocabulary Test</i>	9.65 (2.76)	8.37 (2.71)	7.04* (1, 89)	.07
<i>Mean Length Utterance (Bus Story Test)</i>	7.00 (2.59)	5.89 (2.40)	4.04* 1, 89)	.04

*p<.05

- Scores on the non-verbal outcomes of *Block Building* and *Picture Similarities* at post-test were not different for the treatment and control groups

Some Concluding Remarks

- A universal programme with small groups can have impact on individual children's language development
- Children respond positively to adult involvement in their play
- Practitioners have a role to play in facilitating and partaking in pretend play with young children
- Modelling of language and reflexive interaction with young children can support heterogenous groups' language development
- Pretend Play should be a blending of child-initiated and adult-initiated (Weisberg *et al.*, 2013)



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Thank-you!

Any questions?



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