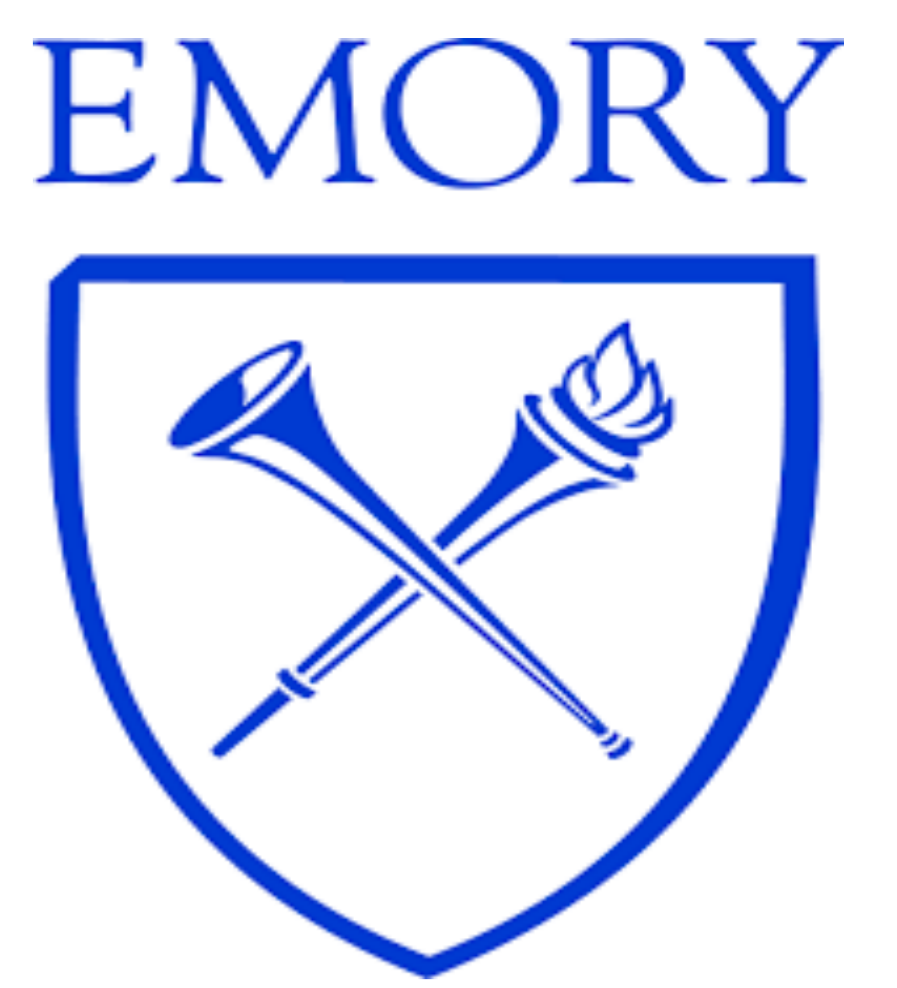




Promoting Equity in Language Input Through Talk With Me Baby: An Interdisciplinary Perspective



Lama K. Farran, PhD, CCC-SLP¹, Susan N. Brasher, PhD, RN, CPNP, FAAN², & Jennifer L. Stapel-Wax, PsyD^{3, 4}

¹Communication Sciences and Disorders, University of West Georgia; ²Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, Emory University; ³Emory University School of Medicine; ⁴Marcus Autism Center

Introduction

- Early language exposure impacts children’s cognition, school performance and overall developmental trajectory (Hirsh-Pasek, et al., 2015; Masek et al., 2022; Weiss et al., 2022).
- In the state of Georgia, data shows 66% of 3rd graders are not reading on grade level, suggesting insufficient early language exposure, especially in families who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and rural areas.
- Programs that enrich language nutrition, (i.e., the quality and quantity of words a young child receives), are needed to support the wellbeing of young children.
- Talk With Me Baby (TWMB) is a language nutrition coaching initiative that trains professionals, who interact with families, to talk with their babies to create a language-rich environment that supports healthy early brain development.
- While advancements have been made in the dissemination of TWMB in preservice nursing settings, little has been done to expand the delivery of training to other disciplines.
- Using implementation science, this study aims to replicate the success of TWMB in preservice nursing settings and extend implementation to a rural setting.

Purpose

- Examine the impact of Talk With Me Baby (TWMB) training on the preparation of preservice professionals (e.g., preservice speech-language pathology, early education) thereby maximizing access to equitable language nutrition.
- Address service disparities and increase engagement of underserved populations from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Examine variables that impact feasibility, acceptability, adoption, and sustainability of TWMB in rural communities through speech-language pathology and education programs.

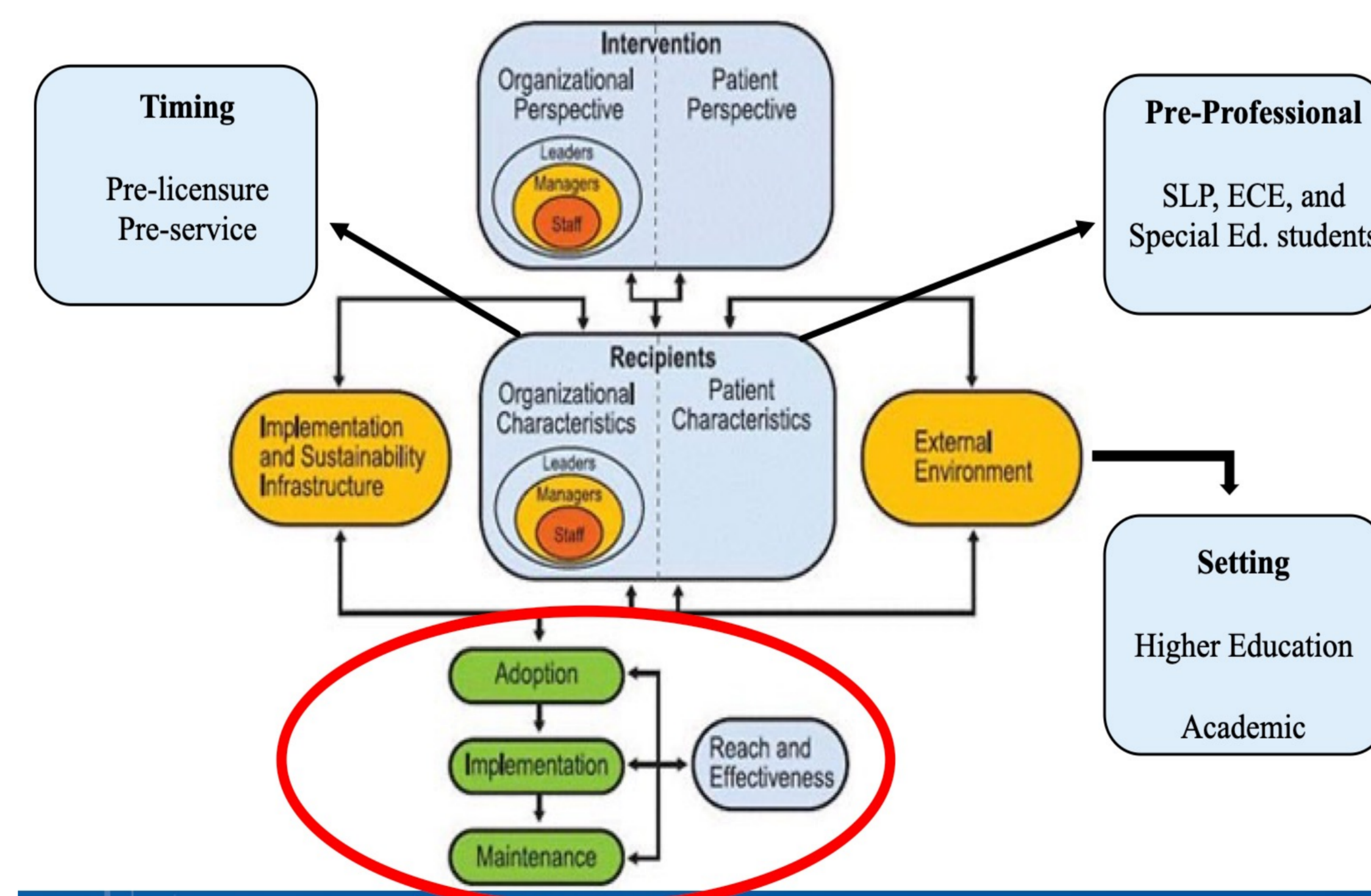
RQ1: What cultural, societal, and ecological adaptations make TWMB feasible for implementation in higher education programs at the University of West Georgia (UWG)?

RQ2: To what extent does the TWMB training impact the knowledge, attitude, skills, and beliefs of pre-service students on ways to coach parents on the importance of early language exposure?

RQ3: What are the perceived acceptability, adoption, and sustainability of training pre-service students of TWMB?

Method

- Using PRISM (Feldstein & Glasgow, 2008), we relied on multiple sources of information, including stakeholder input and institutional leadership, to determine facilitators and barriers to TWMB implementation.
- Participants included 43 preservice students in speech language pathology (n=17), special education (n=8), and early childhood education (n=18) at UWG. Most participants were White (74.29%), followed by Black (21.43%).
- A pre- and post-survey using Qualtrics elicited input on knowledge and importance of early language input.
- Survey items consisted of 7-point Likert scale and open-ended questions.
- Students engaged in an online flipped classroom followed by the adapted TWMB training delivered synchronously.
- Focus groups were conducted immediately after training sessions to elicit feedback on TWMB modifications and perceived acceptability, adoption, and sustainability.
- Qualitative interviews with UWG leadership explored system-level barriers and facilitators to TWMB incorporation into curriculum.



Results

- Interviews with members of the UWG leadership revealed corroborating results regarding the value of training preservice students on TWMB as it has the potential to reach diverse learners across disciplines.
- Interviewees identified barriers as faculty burnout and additional workload associated with TWMB integration into existing curricula.
- Results of the post-survey (n=43) revealed an overwhelming support of TWMB training, with high perceived acceptability, adoption, and sustainability.
- Mean scores of the 8-item survey ranged from 6.05-6.7 on a 7-point Likert scale indicating strong agreement on the importance of:
 - Talking with young children to enhance literacy skills, as well as language, cognitive, social-emotional, and academic development;
 - Embedding TWMB into curriculum and therapy sessions; and
 - Connecting with children’s diverse learning styles and as a gateway to their cultural backgrounds.
- Analysis of open-ended survey items revealed a similar pattern whereby over 95% of participants indicated high satisfaction and likelihood of adopting TWMB in future careers. Themes included:
 - The need for hands-on training and exposure to real-life scenarios prior to working with parents.
 - It is never too early to start talking with infants.
 - Importance of educating parents/caregivers.
 - Appreciation for the scientific basis of language intervention.

Discussion

- Implementation science bridges the gap between research and practice.
- The TWMB initiative was extended from urban to rural settings with target disciplines, permitting adaptation and implementation tailored to their unique needs.
- Results indicate the importance of training diverse disciplines who will exit their respective programs to impact the lives of diverse and vulnerable populations.
- This is the first study targeting a diverse group of pre-service higher education students.
- Both quantitative and qualitative results reflect high acceptability and adoptability, thus paving the way for future efforts.
- Given the impact early language exposure has on young children, parents can be powerful change agents.
- Building caregiver capacity through TWMB training across disciplines is the first step in promoting change by building a strong language foundation.
- Research should be focused on best practices in training future workforces to promote equity in children’s early language experiences.

Acknowledgement

This study was supported by a grant from the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy.