

Real First Words:

Public Perception, Current Data, and Clinical
Application for Early Intervention

Session MS164

Annual Conference of the California Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Thursday, March 24, 2022

4:00-5:30 PM

Welcome!

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Disclosure Statement

Jennifer Adams Oppenheimer

Relevant financial relationship, no relevant nonfinancial relationship

Financial Relationship

I have the following relevant *financial relationship* in the products or services described, reviewed, evaluated or compared in this presentation.

SpeakJoy Center for Development

CEO and Founder

We provide tools for clinician training.

Non-Financial Relationship

I have no relevant *nonfinancial relationships* to disclose.

Hannah Oppenheimer

No relevant financial relationship, no relevant nonfinancial relationship

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Learner Outcomes

Objective 1

- As a result of this presentation, the participant will be able to describe broad public perception of early language learning, based on commercially available resources.

Objective 2

- As a result of this presentation, the participant will be able to summarize current available research regarding lexicons for infants and toddlers.

Objective 3

- As a result of this presentation, the participant will be able to illustrate ways to implement practical strategies when coaching parents regarding early language development.

Today's Agenda



Research Review on Early
Lexicons



First Words

Review and analysis of
“First Words” books

Survey and analysis of real
first words



Clinical
Application

Using “First Words”
books with families

Focusing on real first
words

Housekeeping

www.speakjoycenter.com/csha2022



Research Review: Early Lexicons



“Composition of early vocabularies is less a function of conceptual biases and more attributable to structural **features of the language** and **characteristics of child- directed speech.**”

Tardif et al. (2008)

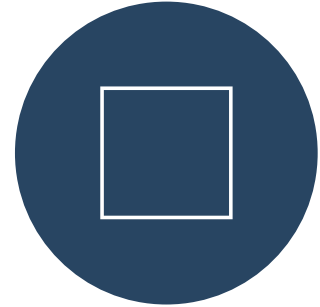
What do all first words have in common?



HIGH
IMAGEABILITY



HIGH
FREQUENCY



LOW
COMPLEXITY

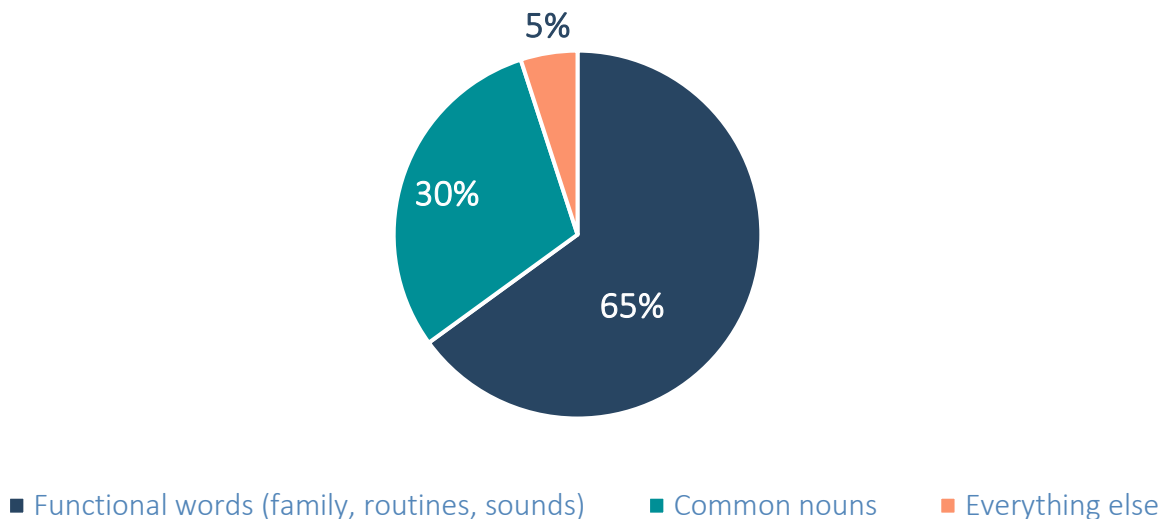
Hao et al. (2015)



**What kind of words do we expect
in early lexicons?**

What type of words do we expect in early lexicons?

Word Type/Class



Caselli et al. (1995)

What type of words do we expect in early lexicons?

Common First Words

Mommy

No

Oh

Up

Baby

Ball

Down

Juice

More

Bloom et al. (1993)

Daddy

Mommy

Bye

Hi

Uh-oh

Caselli et al. (1995)

Top 20 Early Words

for children with 1-10 words, assessed by the *CDI: Words and Gestures*

Prevalence of each word (percentages in parentheses)

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Daddy (54%) | 8. Bottle (13%) | 15. Ball (10%) |
| 2. Mommy (50%) | 9. YumYum (13%) | 16. Baby (7%) |
| 3. BaaBaa (33%) | 10. Dog (12%) | 17. Duck (6%) |
| 4. Bye (25%) | 11. No (12%) | 18. Cat (5%) |
| 5. Hi (24%) | 12. WoofWoof (11%) | 19. Ouch (5%) |
| 6. UhOh (20%) | 13. Vroom (11%) | 20. Banana (3%) |
| 7. Grr (16%) | 14. Kitty (10%) | |

Tardif et al. (2008)

Top 20 Early Words

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Family = 3
Nouns = 7
Non-nouns,
non-verbs = 10

Tardif et al. (2008)



“If we restrict our attention entirely to the first 5 to 10 words in each language, we find a preponderance of sound effects, routines, and names for people, with a few common nouns scattered in. These are the very items that are hardest to classify in adult part-of-speech categories. **In other words, the very first words produced by children are neither nouns or verbs.**”

Tardif et al. (2008)

Caselli et al. (1995)

Early Lexicons Across Languages

Surprisingly, few differences were noted in the initial 10 words acquired by infants across these languages:

English

Italian

Spanish

Dutch

French

Hebrew

Italian

Korean

Mandarin

Cantonese

Tardif et al. (2008)

Early Lexicons Across Languages



“There were strong similarities in the types of words that appeared. Thus, although one cannot make generalities at the level of word class (e.g., children learn nouns or verbs), one can make generalities within word classes—children learn terms to describe people (whether kinship terms or individual names), concrete, manipulable object nouns, action verbs, and so on.”

Tardif et al. (2008)

Summary of What the Research Says . . .

Children's very first words are highly functional

Directly
pertain to daily
routines

Assist in daily
routines

Salient

Linguistically
simple

Frequently
heard

Mostly non-
nouns and
non-verbs

But what info is available to the public?

Review of “First Words” Books

Availability of First Words Books

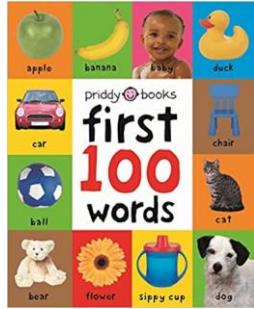
There are hundreds
of first word books

40+ different first
word books
available on
target.com

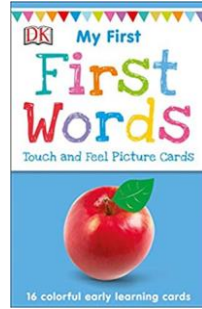
Amazon search
yields over 3,000
results

Best Selling Word Books for Children (from Amazon)

#5



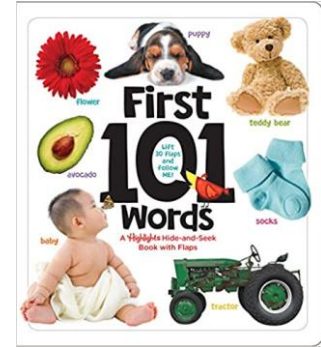
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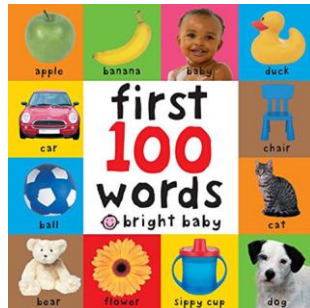
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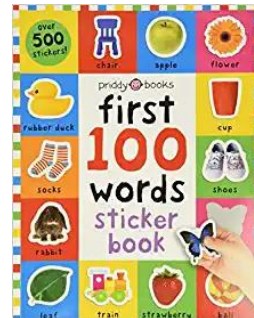
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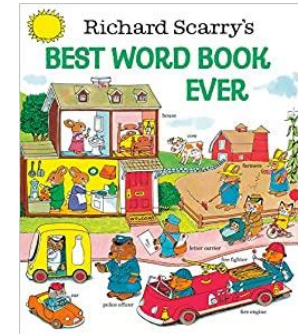
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#24



#25



Sources of Books We Reviewed

Personal
professional
libraries

Multiple public
libraries

Personal libraries
of friends and
families

Therapy library of
a speech/language
clinic

YouTube reading
videos

The Result?

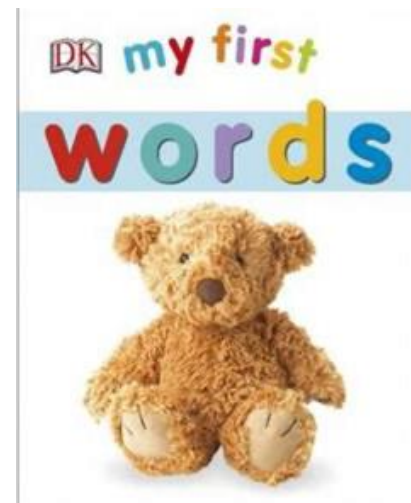
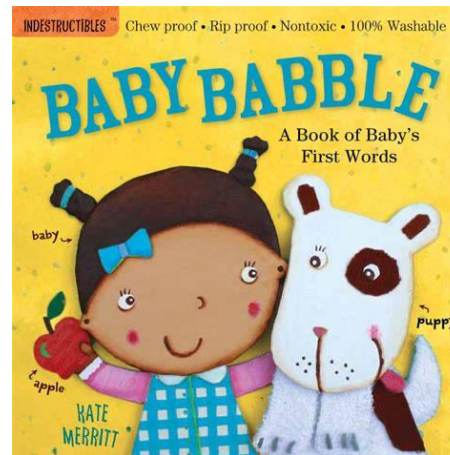
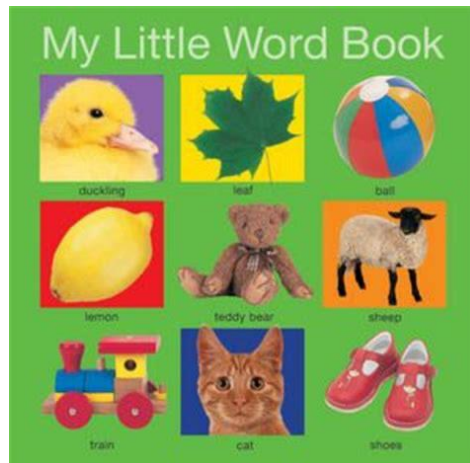
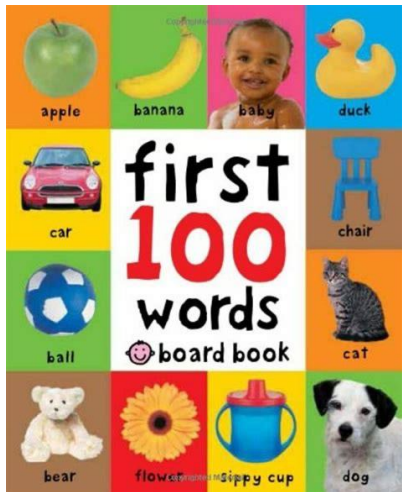
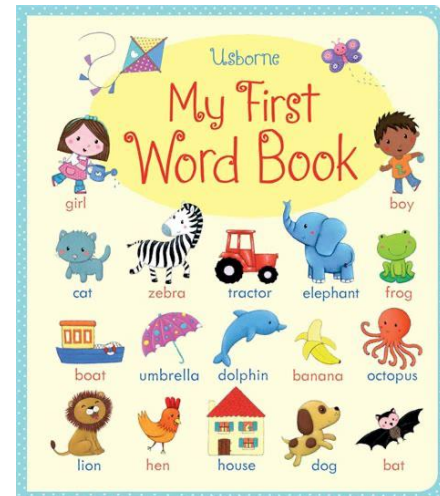
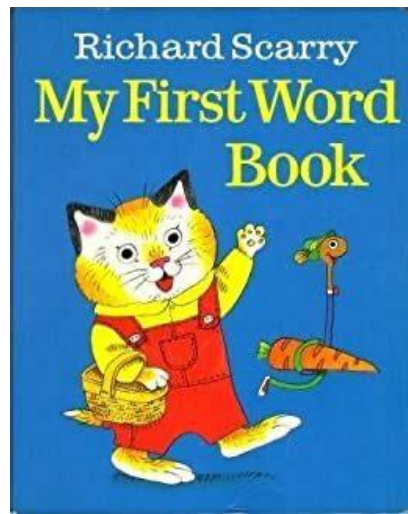
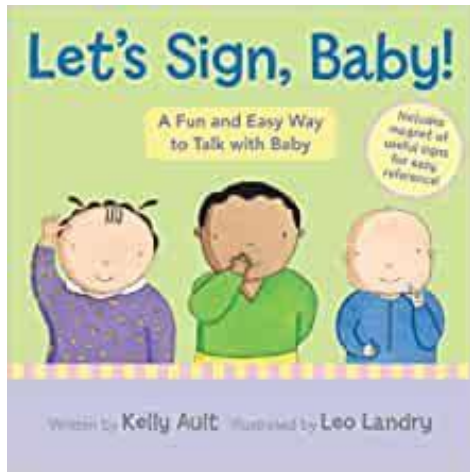
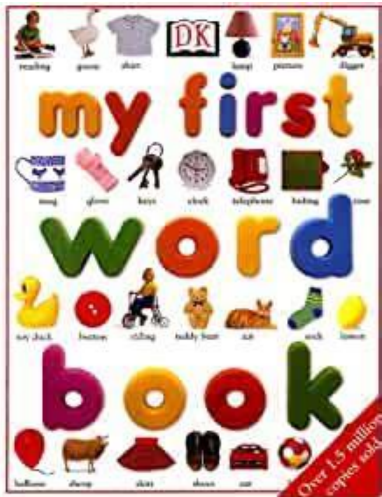
36 Books
were included
in our research

We reviewed
5,000 words
and phrases!

Exclusion Factors

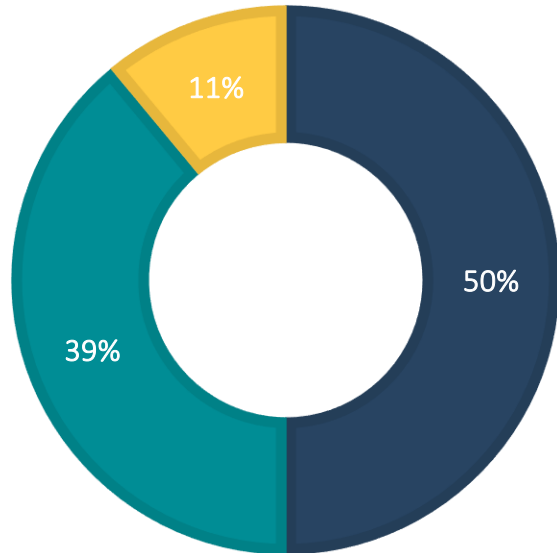
Books were excluded on the following factors:

- Not written in English
- Functioned as dictionaries or encyclopedias
- Functioned as a method to teach a second language
- Focused on a specific place or theme (ex. only animals)



Appearance and Formatting

■ Illustrations ■ Photographs ■ Combo



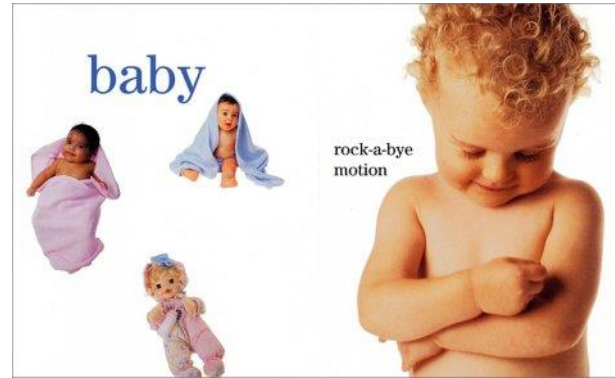
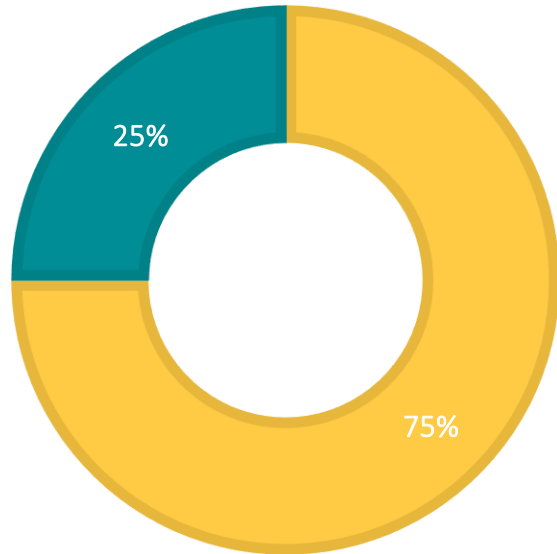
Illustrations



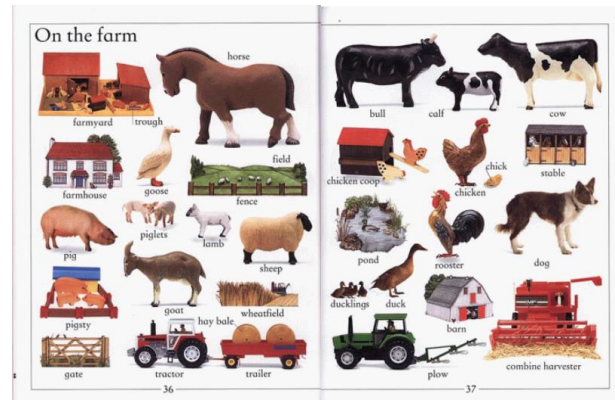
Photographs

Appearance and Formatting

■ 1-4 concepts ■ 5+ concepts



1-4 concepts



5+ concepts

Analysis of “First Words” Books

Overview



36 Books



Analyzed for

- ✓ Single words vs phrases
- ✓ Word class
- ✓ Morphemes
- ✓ Syllables
- ✓ Word category (animal, food, etc.)

Details

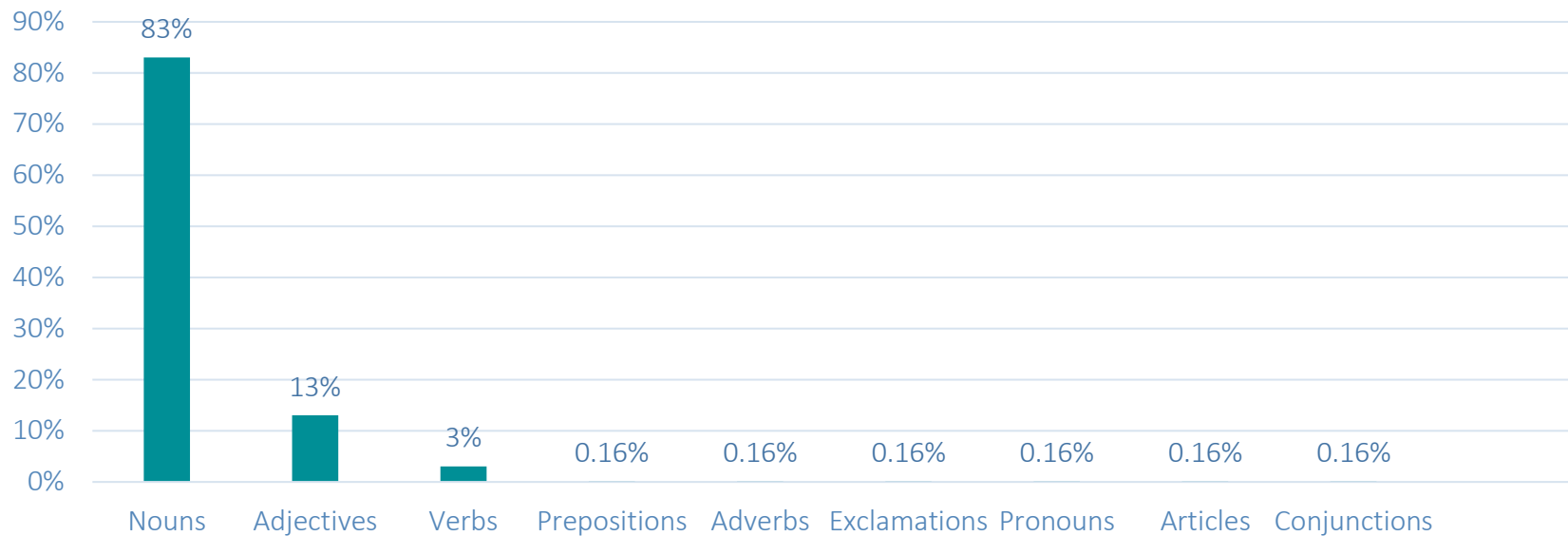
Single Words vs. Phrases

4,604
single
words

769
phrases

Details

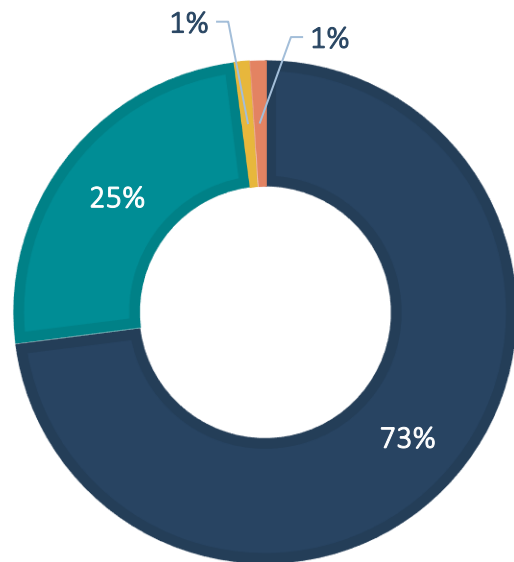
Word Class



Details

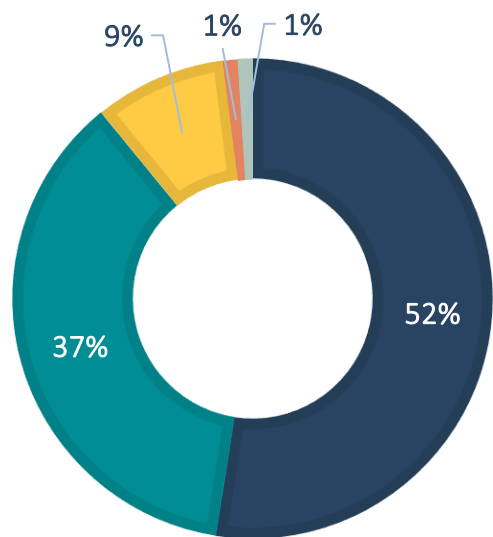
Morphemes

■ 1 morpheme ■ 2 morphemes ■ 3 morphemes ■ 4 morphemes



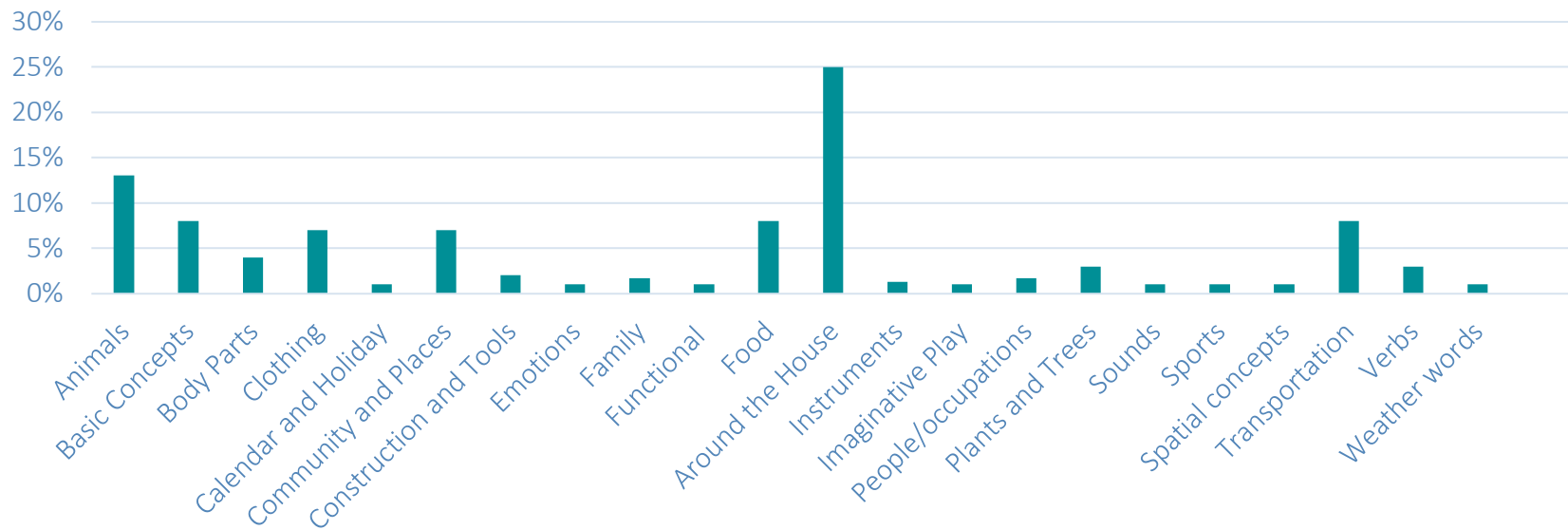
Details Syllables

■ 1 syllables ■ 2 syllables ■ 3 syllables ■ 4 syllables ■ 5 syllables



Details

Word Category



Rank-Ordered Top 20 Words

found in “First Words” Books

Prevalence of each word (number of books in parentheses)

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Ball (30) | 8. Boat (20) | 15. Socks (18) |
| 2. Dog (25) | 9. Cow (20) | 16. Airplane (17) |
| 3. Shoes (24) | 10. Orange (19) | 17. Cheese (17) |
| 4. Train (23) | 11. Teddy Bear (19) | 18. Clock (17) |
| 5. Car (22) | 12. Tree (19) | 19. Doll (17) |
| 6. Book (21) | 13. Truck (19) | 20. Fish (17) |
| 7. Cat (21) | 14. Duck (18) | |

Tardif et al. (2008)

Rank-Ordered Top 20 Words

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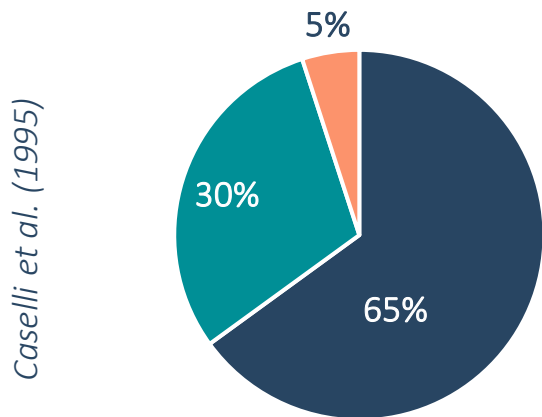
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| 7. Cat (21) | 14. Duck (18) | |

Family = 0
Nouns = 20
Non-nouns,
non-verbs = 0

Tardif et al. (2008)

So ... how do the books compare to the research?

RESEARCH HAS FOUND

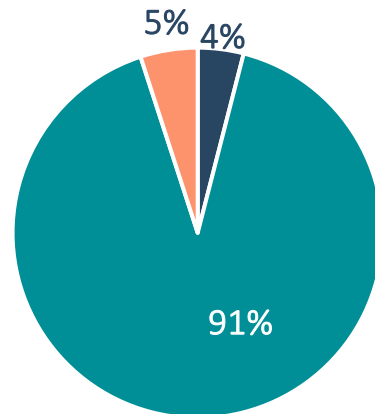


■ Functional words (family, routines, sounds)

■ Common nouns

■ Everything else

“FIRST WORD” BOOKS HAVE



■ Functional words (family, routines, sounds)

■ Common nouns

■ Everything else

Real Life Comparison

Results of Parent Survey

Survey Details

Asked parents for their children's first five words

47 children included

total of 183 first words reported

18 responses contained five words

Remaining 29 responses contained 1 to 4 words

Rank-Ordered Top 20 Words

Gathered from Parent Surveys

Prevalence of each word (number of children in parentheses)

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Mama (45) | 8. More (6) | 15. Bye-Bye (2) |
| 2. Dada (40) | 9. Grandma (5) | 16. That (2) |
| 3. No (15) | 10. Hi (5) | 17. Uh-oh (2) |
| 4. Person's name (9) | 11. Duck (4) | 18. Baby (1) |
| 5. Ball (8) | 12. Grandpa (4) | 19. Wow (1) |
| 6. Up (8) | 13. Milk/bottle (4) | 20. Ta-da! (1) |
| 7. Dog (7) | 14. Baba (3) | |

Rank-Ordered Top 20 Words

Gathered from Parent Surveys

Prevalence of each word (number of children in parentheses)

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| 1. Mama (45) | 8. More (6) | 15. Bye-Bye (2) |
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| 5. Ball (8) | 12. Grandpa (4) | 19. Wow (1) |
| 6. Up (8) | 13. Milk/bottle (4) | 20. Ta-da! (1) |
| 7. Dog (7) | 14. Baba (3) | |

Family = 6
Nouns = 6
Non-nouns,
non-verbs = 8

Summary of Our Findings

Our Combined Data | All Top 10 Words

“First Words” Books

1. Ball
2. Dog
3. Shoes
4. Train
5. Car
6. Book
7. Cat
8. Boat
9. Cow
10. Orange

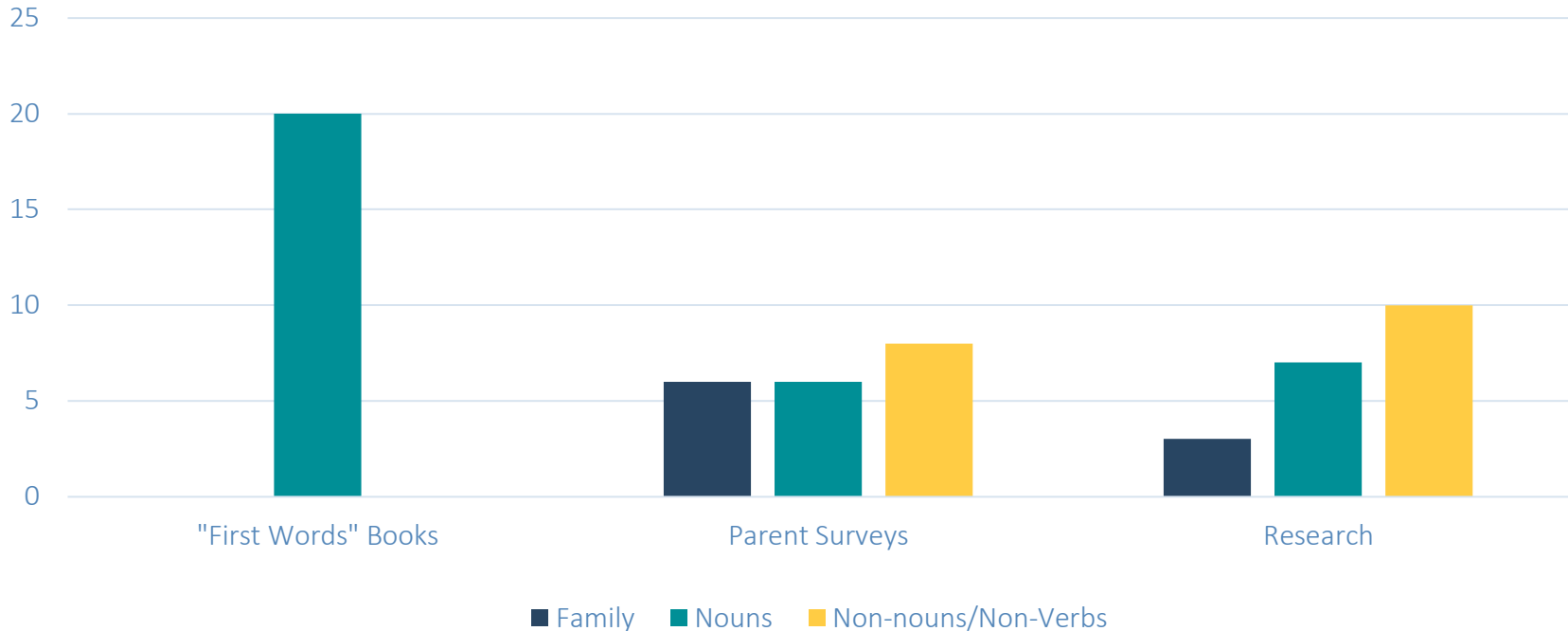
Parent Surveys

1. Mama
2. Dada
3. No
4. Person’s name
5. Ball
6. Up
7. Dog
8. More
9. Grandma
10. Hi

Research

1. Daddy
2. Mommy
3. Baabaa
4. Bye
5. Hi
6. Uh oh
7. Grrr
8. Bottle
9. Yum yum
10. Dog

Our Combined Data | All Top 20 Words



The Takeaways from our Findings

“First Words” books are widely available, frequently purchased

“First Words” books feature mostly nouns

Actual “First Words” are mostly family names and non-nouns/non-verbs

“First Words” books are NOT reflective of children’s real first words

Why Does This Matter?

Clinical Application

Why Do Early Lexicons Matter?

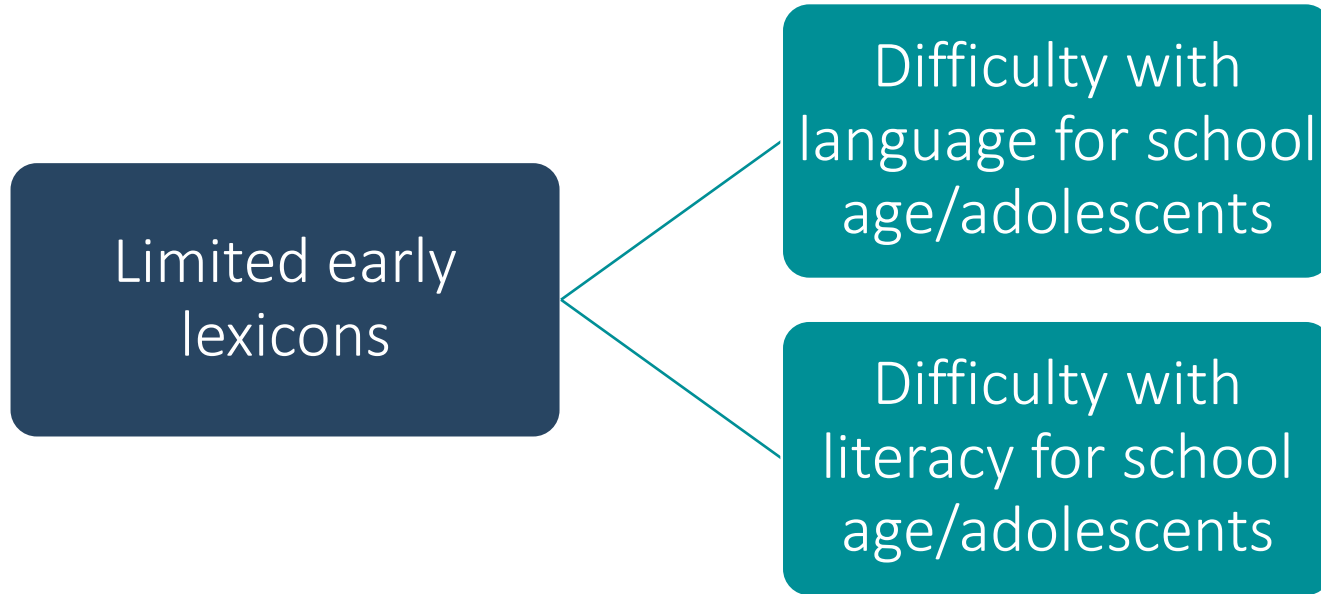
Early receptive and expressive lexical skills at 1;6 and 2;0 years



Language and pre-literacy skills at 5;0 years

Vehkavuori et al. (2021)

Why Do Early Lexicons Matter?



Vehkavuori & Stolt, (2019)

Big Picture | Clinical Application



Teach parents HOW
to support their
child's early lexical
development

We will, in turn,
support the child's
later language
development and
outcomes.

Clinical Application

WHAT TO TEACH

Basic Principles of
Joint Book Reading

Basic Principles of
Embedded Language
Stimulation within
Daily Routines

HOW TO TEACH

Principles of
Parent
Coaching

What to Teach

Joint Book Reading

Principles of Joint Book Reading

1



Let your child lead.

2



Take time to wander.

3



Talk about it.

4



Make a connection.

5



Be positive.

6



Grow their words.

Let your child lead



You don't have to read, or even look at, every page.

Encourage your child to turn the pages of the book.

Its OK if your child skips pages forward or backward.

If your child loses interest before the end of the book, just move on to another book!

Trivette, et al. (2010)

Take time to
wander



Research has found that when parents don't just read the text of a book straight through from beginning to end, it helps to encourage the development of language for your child.

So . . .
talk about the
pictures!

Whitehurst, et al. (1988)

Talk about it



Talk about what is happening in the story .

Describe the pictures and the action.

Avoid the temptation to ask your child questions and name the items in the pictures.

By talking about what is happening, you can help support your child's language development.

Reese, et al. (1991); Trivette, et al. (2010)

Make a
connection



Relate the book to
your child's own
experiences.

When you connect something from
the story to things that are familiar
to your child, you can support your
child's development of vocabulary,
understanding of the story, and
preliteracy skills.

DeTemple, & Snow (2003); Trivette, et al. (2010)

Be positive



As you read and interact with your child while reading, provide enthusiastic, positive feedback.

Try to avoid reprimanding or scolding your child while reading.

This helps your child connect reading with feeling good, helping prepare her for a lifetime of positive learning.

Trivette, et al. (2010)

Grow their words



Expand on your child's actions or attempts to communicate.

When you expand on what your child does or says, you go beyond naming items or just commenting on actions. You provide more information that is connected to what your child just did or said.

Trivette, et all. (2010)

Principles of Joint Book Reading

1



Let your child lead.

2



Take time to wander.

3



Talk about it.

4



Make a connection.

5



Be positive.

6



Grow their words.

What to Teach

Language Stimulation in Routines

Indirect Language Stimulation

Natural interactions

Embedded into daily routines

Unstructured

Responsive to the child

The POWER of Language Stimulation

Provides experience with communication that
CANNOT be simulated

- Attaches meaning to events
- Connects language to meaning
- Provides motivation for communication



Bricker (1986); Norris & Hoffman (1990)

Responsivity

What?

- Respond to what the child does, says, and sees.

How?

- Watch.
- Listen.
- Observe.
- Respond.

Clinical Application



Video

Low-Pressure Play Time

Bee (2017)

Strategies of Indirect Language Stimulation

Parallel Talk

Describe the child's actions.

*Push the car.
You are playing with sand.
Drinking juice.*

Description

Describe objects the
child sees.

House.

It's a blue truck.

That's a big brush.

Oh no! Broken!

Cold water.

Self-Talk

Describe your
actions.

I am scooping ice.

Eating apple.

I'm folding the blue shirt.

Expansion

Expand the child's utterances.

Juice.

We are pouring the juice.

Doggy run.

Yes, the dog is running.

Expansion Plus

Add additional
information.

Big car.

*You have the big car.
The big car is red.*

My horse.

*Yes, you have the horse.
The horse has a tail.*

Clinical Application



Video

Language Stimulation | Pre-verbal

Conklin, et al. (2006)

Clinical Application



Video

Language Stimulation | 2-3 word

Conklin, et al. (2006)

Routines | the secret weapon of development

Daily Routines

Family Guided Routines Based Intervention (FG-RBI)

- Supports families in the natural environment
- Teaches families to use their everyday routines as the foundation for therapeutic learning
- Activity-based and play-based, based on the child's interests



Clinical Application



Internet Resource

Family-Guided, Routines-Based Intervention

<http://fgrbi.com/>

Common Daily Routines

Getting
dressed

Focused play
time

Mealtime

Bathing

Independent
play time

Household
chores

Leaving the
house

Outdoor play

Common Daily Routines

Getting dressed

Focused play time

Mealtime

Bathing

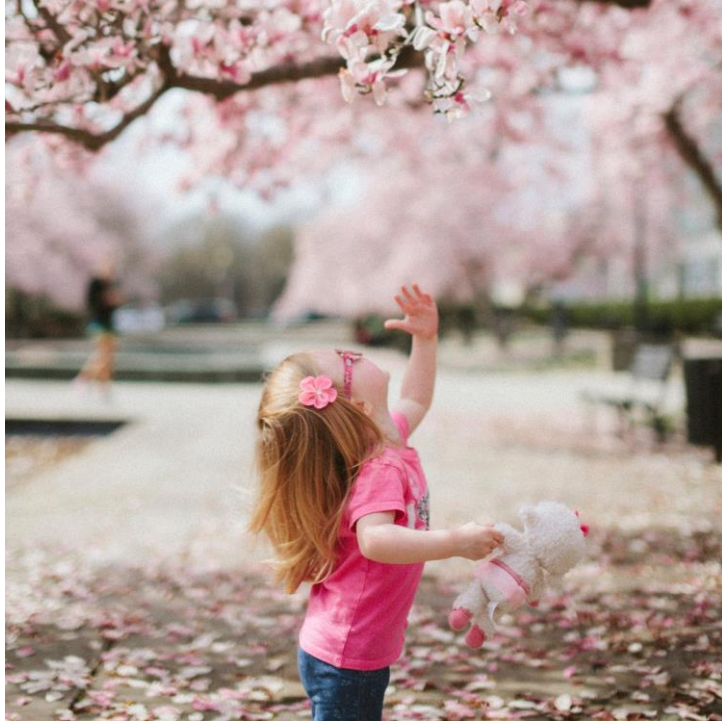
Independent play time

Household chores

Leaving the house

Outdoor play

Language Stimulation and Routines



Getting dressed

*“Shirt! I like this shirt. Big shirt.
Over your head. There you are!
One arm . . . Two arms! Ready?
Let’s go!”*

Language Stimulation and Routines



Leaving the house

*“Shoes! Two shoes! On your feet.
Your shoes are on your feet.
Coat! Yellow coat. Ziiiiiiip! Zip up
your coat.”*

Language Stimulation and Routines



Bathing

“Splash water! Splash! Big bubbles! Pop the big bubbles. Pop! Pop! Pop! Tummy! Wash tummy! Clean tummy.”

How to Teach

Principles of Parent Coaching

Coaching Caregivers

1



Establish a working relationship

2



Set up the session for success

3



Clarify targets for the session

4



Observe and practice

5



Reflect on the session

Establish a working relationship



Invite caregivers to
participate with you

“I would like to provide coaching
for you to improve your
relationship with your child and
to help your child get more from
our therapy sessions. Would you
be open to accept coaching from
me?”

Set up the session for success



What to do

- Put the parent at ease
- Review the previous session
- Ask about successes and challenges since the last session

How to do it

- Take a few minutes at the start of the session
- Allow the child time for exploratory play during your discussion

Clarify targets for
the session



Identify
goals
for the
child
for the
session

Identify
goals
for the
parent
for the
session

Observe and practice



Observe

- Caregiver observes clinician
- Clinician observes caregiver

Practice

- Demonstrate/practice cycle
- Test out new skills

Reflect on the session



Reflect

“What did you observe today?”

“What were three things that you discovered today?”

Summarize

“Today we discovered Josie is able to follow one-step commands with gestural cues.”






“Today we noticed if we pause and wait, Ben responds with spontaneous spoken language.”

Give an Assignment

“This week, we want to try turning a question into a statement.”

“Today we learned that pausing and waiting works well with Christa. How could pausing and waiting look during mealtime?”

Coaching Caregivers

-  1 Establish a working relationship
-  2 Set up the session for success
-  3 Clarify targets for the session
-  4 Observe and practice
-  5 Reflect on the session

Summary

1

“First Words” books
overwhelmingly
feature nouns

2

Real First Words are
mostly non-nouns

3

Coach caregivers in
learning how to read
“First Words” books
and other books

4

Coach caregivers in
learning how to model
language embedded
in daily routines

Learn More

Resources to Learn More



Videos

Examples Using Language Stimulation

www.tinyurl.com/languagestimulation1

www.tinyurl.com/languagestimulation3

www.tinyurl.com/morelanguagestim

A Home Visit with Brandon

www.tinyurl.com/brandonhomevisit



Articles/PDFs

The Effectiveness of Language Facilitation

<https://tinyurl.com/languagefacilitation>

Strategies for Language Stimulation

www.tinyurl.com/languagestim

Family Guided Routines for Early Intervention

www.tinyurl.com/tipsforroutines

Let's Keep Talking



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Housekeeping

www.speakjoycenter.com/csha2022





Thank you!

Questions?



Appendix

Top Words Across Domains (extended)

“First Words” Books (# of occurrences)

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. ball (30) | 14. duck (18) |
| 2. dog (25) | 15. socks (18) |
| 3. shoes (24) | 16. airplane (17) |
| 4. train (23) | 17. cheese (17) |
| 5. car (22) | 18. clock (17) |
| 6. book (21) | 19. doll (17) |
| 7. cat (21) | 20. fish (17) |
| 8. boat (20) | 21. horse (17) |
| 9. cow (20) | 22. rabbit (17) |
| 10. orange (19) | 23. sheep (17) |
| 11. teddy bear (19) | 24. tractor (17) |
| 12. tree (19) | |
| 13. truck (19) | |

Parent Surveys (# of occurrences in 47 children’s 1st five words)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. mama (45) | 14. baba (3) |
| 2. dada (40) | 15. bye-bye (2) |
| 3. no (15) | 16. that (2) |
| 4. Name (9) | 17. uh-oh (2) |
| 5. ball (8) | 18. baby (1) |
| 6. up (8) | 19. banana (1) |
| 7. dog (7) | 20. wow (1) |
| 8. more (6) | 21. yes (1) |
| 9. grandma (5) | 22. ta da! (1) |
| 10. hi (5) | 23. woof woof (1) |
| 11. duck (4) | 24. mine (1) |
| 12. grandpa (4) | |
| 13. milk, bottle,
boobies etc. (4) | |

Research (# of occurrences in 1st word books)

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. daddy (6) | 14. kitty (1) |
| 2. mommy (6) | 15. ball (30) |
| 3. baabaa (1) | 16. baby (12) |
| 4. bye (1) | 17. duck (18) |
| 5. hi (1) | 18. cat (21) |
| 6. uh-oh (1) | 19. ouch (0) |
| 7. grrr (0) | 20. banana (12) |
| 8. bottle (5) | 21. up (3) |
| 9. yum yum (1) | 22. down (3) |
| 10. dog (25) | 23. juice (10) |
| 11. no (1) | 24. more (5) |
| 12. woof woof (1) | |
| 13. vroom (1) | |

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“First Words” Books

Link

Photo Directory of “First Word” Books

<https://tinyurl.com/firstwordbooks>

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