

In Quebec (Canada), preschool children with Specific Language Impairment (SLI) are offered publicly funded treatment for a predetermined number of sessions (typically one or more blocks of 8 to 10 weekly sessions). Little research exists on the effectiveness of such blocks. This study in progress in a Quebec public French-language clinic compares treatment gains of two conditions: regular (12 weekly sessions) and intensive (two sessions per week for 6 weeks). Children meeting the study’s criteria (SLI, age 3 to 5 years) were assigned randomly to the conditions. Research assistants blind to the child’s condition conducted assessments at 4 times: 1) before treatment, 2) at 6 weeks, 3) at 12 weeks, and 4) two months after the end of treatment. Fourteen children have been enrolled to date: 7 in each condition. Pre-treatment scores are summarized in Table 1:

	Regular	Intensive
Age in months	61.0 (7.2)	55.1 (8.0)
Nonverbal cognition (Standard score)	102 (10.8)	110.0 (15.0)
EVIP raw score (French PPVT)	30.0 (9.5)	21.4 (9.7)
EOWPT raw score (French adaptation)	13.9 (3.6)	10.0 (4.8)
Receptive Vocabulary Probe	40.7 (9.7)	32.6 (10.4)
Expressive Vocabulary Probe	17.8 (9.9)	24.6 (16.1)
Nonword repetition (% correct)	66.9 (4.6)	68.0 (15.6)
Sentence imitation (% correct)	30.5 (17.2)	31.8 (9.1)

Intervention was delivered by three Speech-Language Pathologists using a semi-structured intervention method, targeting vocabulary and syntactic goals. Only vocabulary is reported here. Vocabulary targets were selected for each child, based on a pre-treatment probe, from a common list of age-appropriate and functional words. As words were mastered, additional words were selected. The number of presentations of target words per session was preset to control dosage across treatments. Table 2 shows the mean group pre-and post difference scores for each group :

	Regular (12 weeks)	Intensive (6 weeks)
Receptive Vocabulary Probe	15.8 (5.5)	9.4 (15.4)
Expressive Vocabulary Probe	20.3 (7.3)	8.8 (13.4)
EVIP raw score	8.8 (6.5)	4.0 (4.8)
EOW raw score	3.8 (3.3)	7.1 (9.5)

Table 1 reveals that children in the regular treatment were somewhat older and had somewhat higher scores pretreatment. Table 2 suggests that children in the regular group also made larger gains overall. The sample is too small for a statistical comparison. Data from the 2-month follow up are not available yet for all the children, but preliminary data also indicate somewhat better results for the regular group. Individual data revealed that all the children improved on the vocabulary probe measures, with one exception (intensive group). Children in the Intensive group typically improved during their 6 weeks of treatment with overall stable scores thereafter. Roughly half of the children in the regular treatment showed gradual increases in scores over the 12 weeks, whereas half showed greatest improvement during the first six weeks. The results suggest that preschool children are able to benefit from a shorter, more intensive program. However, a longer treatment period appears to give better results overall. The total gains on the standardized tests are fairly modest – suggesting that future research should examine combining greater intensity with greater length.

