

What do educators know about language development and language support practices in toddler classrooms ?

Rochana Mroué^{1,2}, Caroline Masson¹, Christelle Maillart²

¹Sorbonne Nouvelle University, EA 7345 CLESTHIA, France

²University of Liège, Research Unit for a life-course perspective on health & education (RUCHE), Belgium

Introduction

Language development during the early years is influenced by the quality of educator-child interactions [1].

Educators play an essential role in fostering early development. However, educators lack specific knowledge of language development and evidence-based strategies, limiting their ability to support children's language development effectively [2; 3].

These knowledge gaps are problematic for identifying and preventing communication challenges in at-risk children [4].

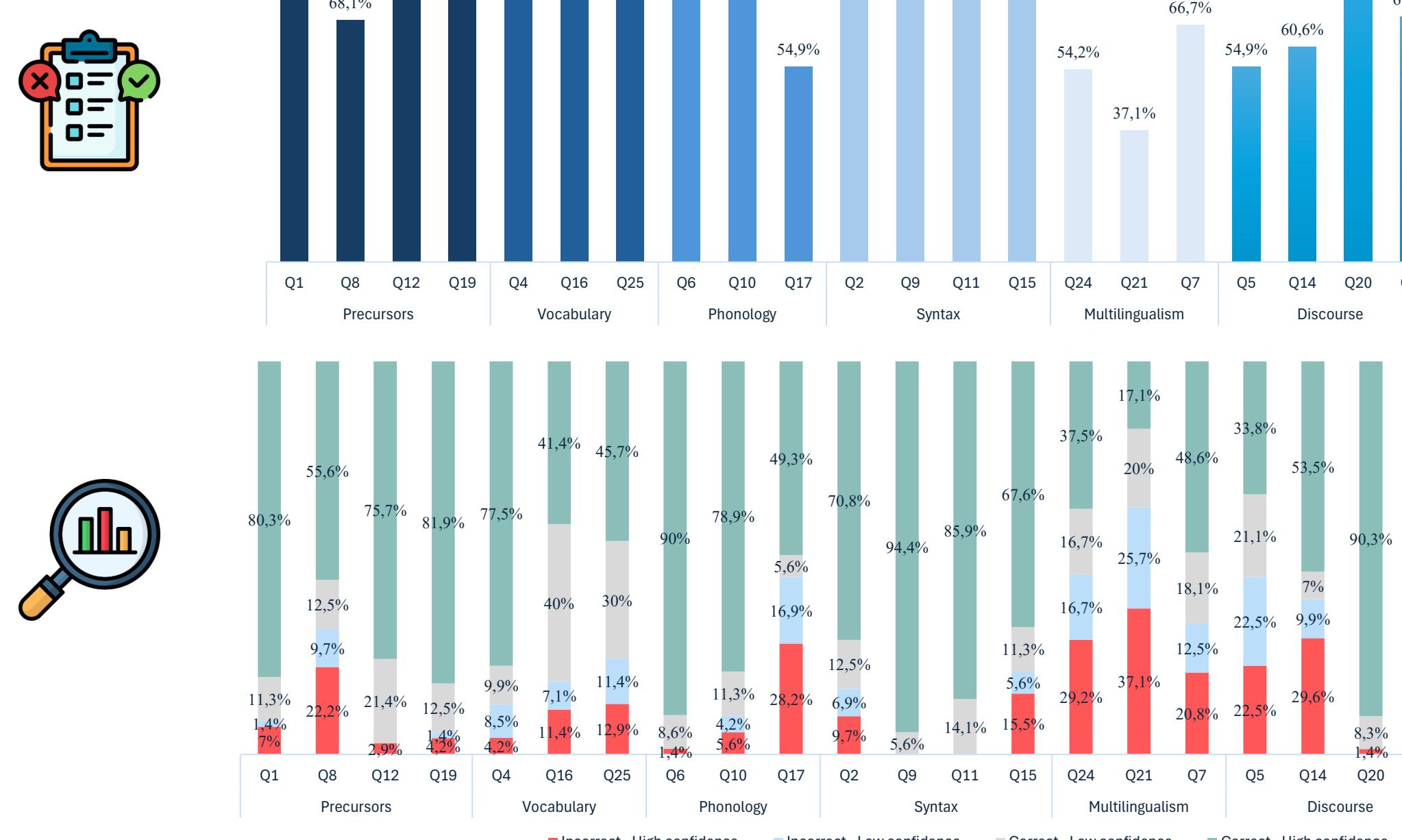
Despite the critical role of educators [5], little data exists on their knowledge in toddler classrooms.

Objectives

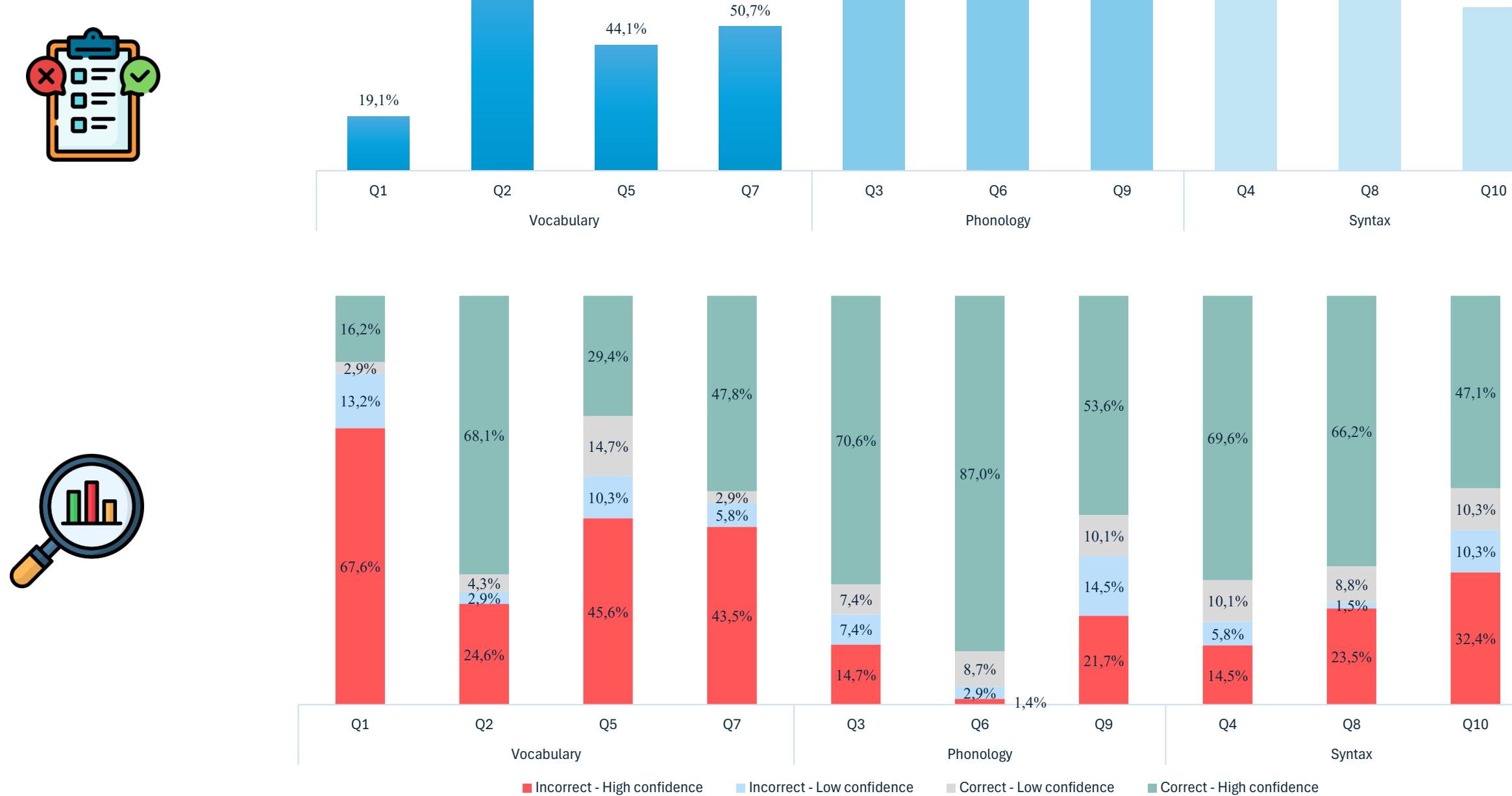
- 1 Assess educators' knowledge of language development by domain (e.g., phonology, lexicon) and language support practices (e.g., recasts, expansions).
- 2 Examines the relationship between their knowledge and confidence in applying these practices.

Results

Language development



Language support practices



Interpretation

Language development

- Strengths: precursors, vocabulary, phonology, syntax
- Areas of variability: discourse
- More challenging areas: multilingualism, pragmatics

- Incorrect/High confidence: mainly multilingualism (e.g., Q21: Bilingual children produce their first words later than monolingual children)

- Correct/Low confidence: less stable knowledge in vocabulary, multilingualism, and discourse

Language support practices

- Strengths: phonology, syntax
- More challenging area: vocabulary

- Incorrect/High confidence: mainly vocabulary (e.g., Q1: Your colleague comes across the word "crib" during book reading and isn't sure whether the children understand it. What's the best way to support their vocabulary development?)

Practical implications

- Consolidate knowledge on vocabulary, discourse and multilingualism
- Address misconceptions (multilingualism, pragmatics, vocabulary)
- Include specific modules in pre-service training

1. Anderson, N. J., Graham, S. A., Prime, H., Jenkins, J. M., & Madigan, S. (2021). Linking quality and quantity of parental linguistic input to child language skills: A meta-analysis. *Child Development*, 92(2), 484-501.
2. Cash, A. H., Cabello, S. Q., Hamre, B. K., DeCoster, J., & Pianta, R. C. (2015). Relating prekindergarten teacher beliefs and knowledge to children's language and literacy development. *Teaching and teacher education*, 48, 97-105.
3. Degotardi, S., & Gill, A. (2019). Infant educators' beliefs about infant language development in long day care settings. *Early Years*, 39(1), 97-113.
4. Letts, C., & Hall, E. (2003). Exploring early years professionals' knowledge about speech and language and development and impairment. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 19(2), 211-229.
5. Law, J., & Levickis, P. (2018). Early language development must be a public health priority. *Journal of Health Visiting*, 6(12), 586-589.