



Can same-language subtitles help children become better readers?

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Do same-language subtitles help children learn to read?



The project was inspired by the 'Turn on the Subtitles' campaign in the UK.



turnonthesubtitles.org

“Extensive research from top academics in many countries has shown that simply turning on the subtitles for children’s television improves literacy. Dramatically. In fact it may double their chance of becoming a proficient reader ...

Promising initiative, but not enough scientific evidence at present.

Experiment 1



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Do children in primary school look at the subtitles and read them?

Eye tracking during watching videos with subtitles or without subtitles

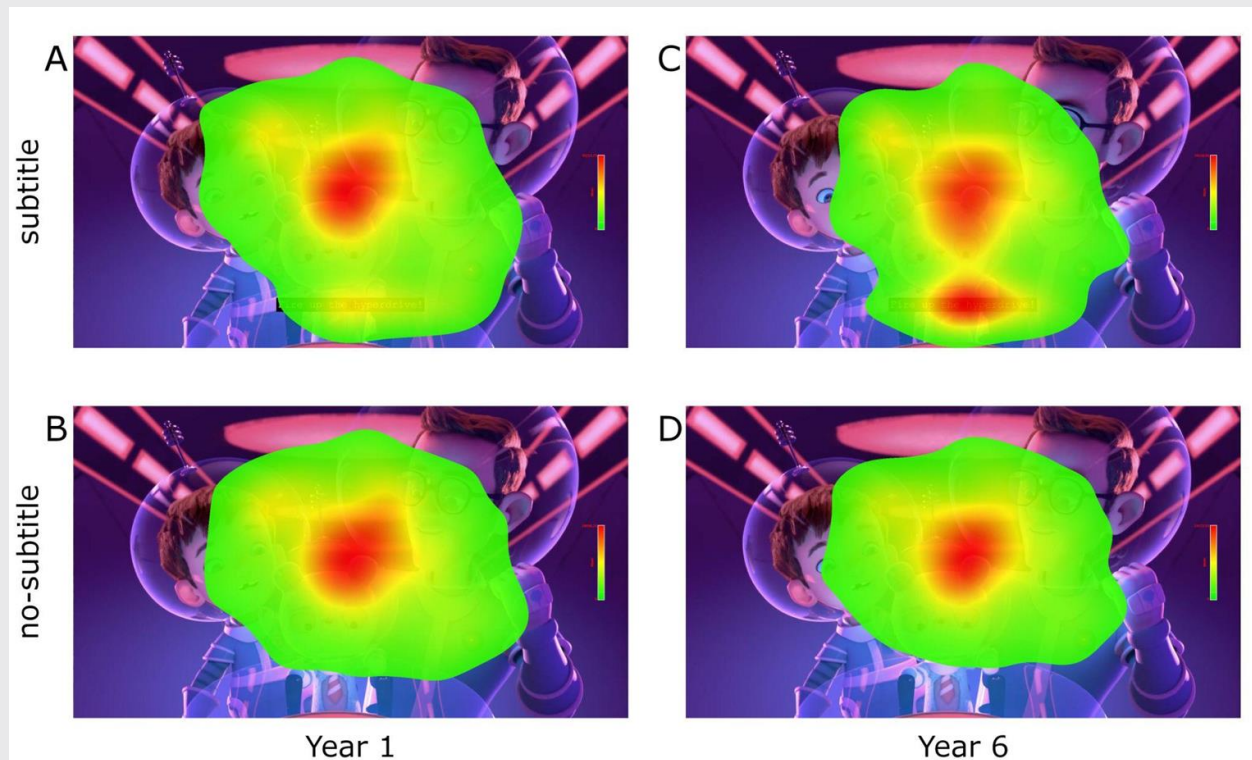


Experiment 1: results



Some degree of reading fluency is necessary before children are able to read the subtitles.

By Years 2-3, they reach this degree of fluency.



Experiment 1: results



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Year 1: subtitles

Year 6: subtitles



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Experiment 2



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Does watching television with subtitles improve children's reading?

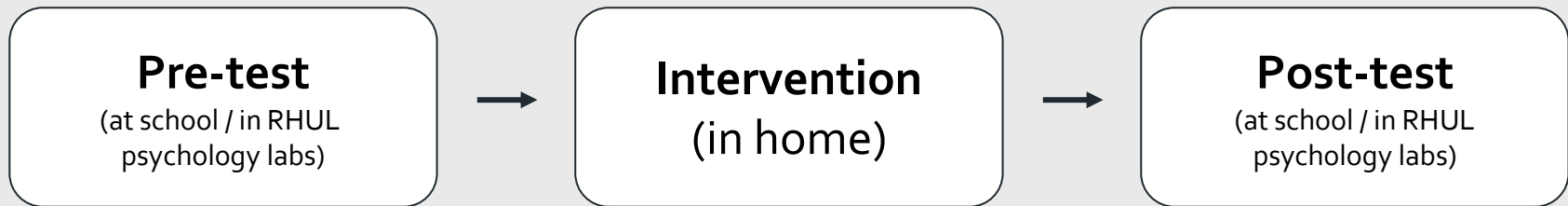


Does watching television with subtitles improve children's reading?

We invite schools and children to participate in our study

- attend Year 2 or Year 3
- have English as the main language they speak at home
- have no language or literacy disabilities
- have no (or minimal) experience watching subtitles
- watch at least 5 hours of television or streaming services per week

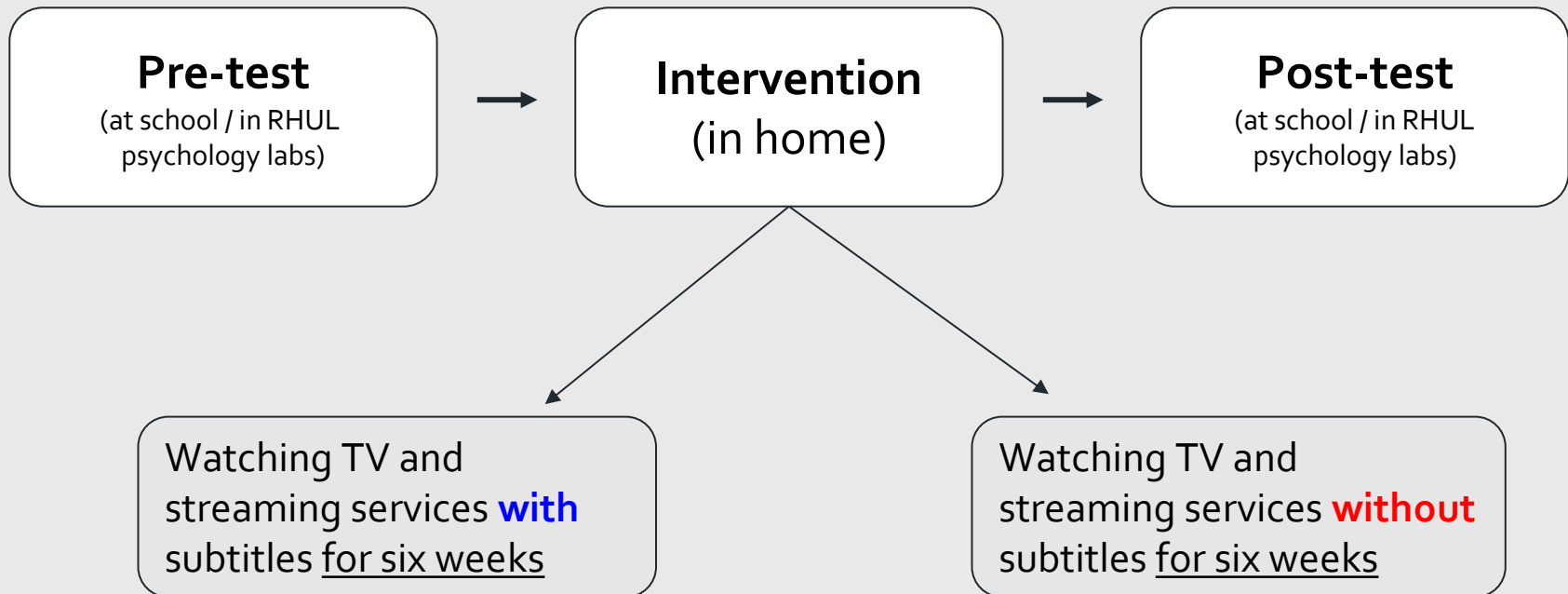
Three phases of the study



reading skills
attention to subtitles
reading attitudes
vocabulary

reading skills
attention to subtitles

Three phases of the study



For at least 5 hours a week (≈ 315 pages read on captionsON calculator), including g some episodes from a list of recommended videos on CBBC that we will provide. In total, min 30 hours of subtitles viewing.

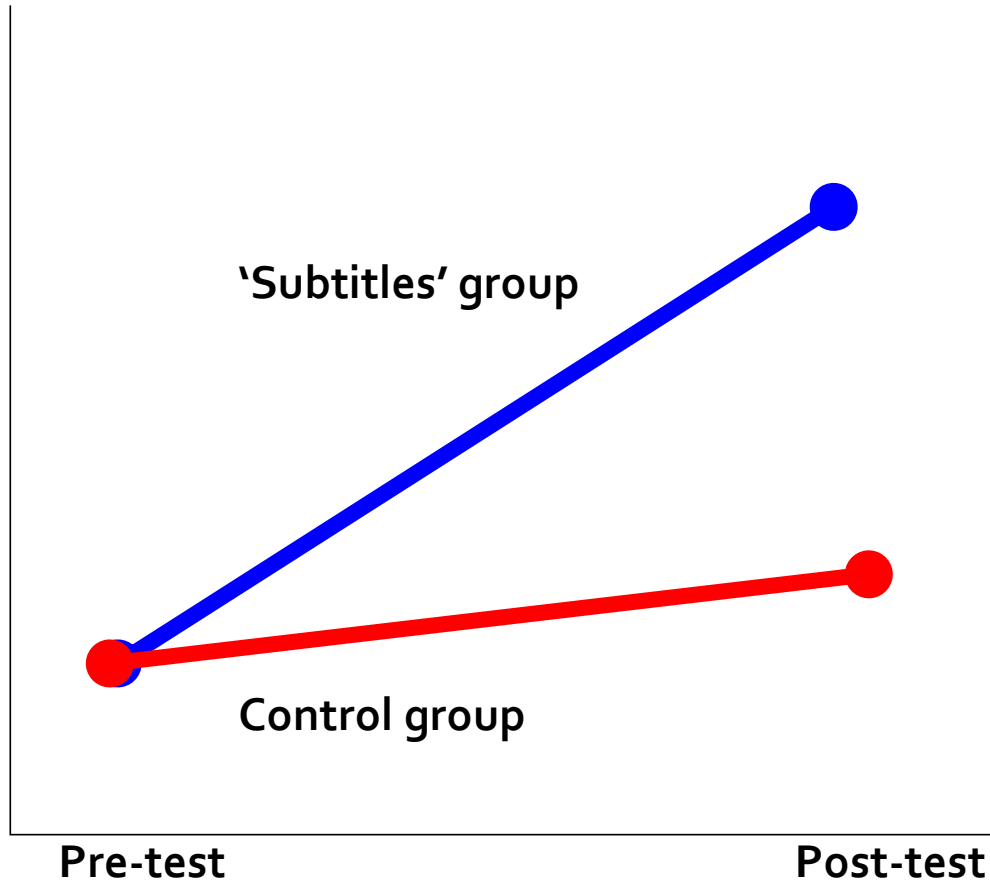
We need parents' assistance during the intervention



- Make sure that the subtitles are turned on or turned off for six weeks.
- On Monday-Friday, we will send the parents a text message asking 3 short questions about watching television that day. They will take 30 seconds of their time.
- On Sunday, we will send the parents a short survey asking about television viewing time and the content of the recommended videos that your child watched. It will take 10 minutes of their time.
- Six weeks after the post-test, we will contact the parents to discuss your child's reading and television viewing habits.

Parents are paid £50. If tested in schools, then we pay the school £10. If parents need to travel to the lab, then we give a travel payment of £25 for the two visits. The child will get a gift.

What do we expect



We are testing a hypothesis that six weeks of subtitles exposure will improve reading fluency, as measured by standard tests and eye-tracking.

First feedback from the children and parents



It's easier to hear what's being said with the help of subtitles. My son says that if he doesn't catch what was said through speaking, he can pick it up through the words on the screen.

My daughter thinks they are good because when you watch the TV you can read them and concentrate more.

He doesn't like subtitles very much and didn't try to read them.

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- My daughter has been wanting to read more on her own, particularly before bedtime.
- I believe the subtitles have helped my child with her reading.
- On occasion she came to me asking the meaning of words which she had seen on the subtitles. I felt would not be asked if the subtitles were not on.

7/10 families would like to turn on the subtitles after the end of the project.

Join us for this study



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We need local schools to support us to conduct this study.

Can you host us or advertise the study to families next term?

Contact us: subtitles.rhul@gmail.com

Visit our webpage to learn more about the study:
www.rastlelab.com/intervention

Or watch our short video by scanning the QR code:



Scan me!



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