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An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Caregivers' Support for Their Preschool Children's Language and Social Skills Development

Sheri Stein Blum
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Walden University
2015

Abstract

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Caregivers' Support
for Their Preschool Children's Language and Social Skills Development

by

Sheri Stein Blum

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Early Childhood Education

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August 2015

Abstract

Some children have difficulty communicating due to a lack of age-appropriate language and social skills. Researchers have explored how music and language share features that shape language processing. The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis was to explore the experiences of caregivers of preschool children who participated in a music-based program and to understand their perspectives related to children's language and social skill development. Learning style and sensory integration processing theories were used as framework to provide foundations of skills in this study. Research questions addressed caregivers' choices related to this program for their children, their experiences of their children's participation in the program, and how the caregivers perceive their children's language and social skills change as they participated in the program. Data from 8 participants were collected using narrative journals and interviews and were analyzed by identifying relationships and themes. Identified themes included the importance of choice of quality music program, improved language skills, improved social skills, and improvement in other areas. Caregivers reported that their children's language and social skills developed in the early weeks of participation in The Listening Program. Primary recommendations included providing opportunities to educate other parents and professionals about the benefits of music-based programs. Contributions to positive social change include the value of music-based programs as a complementary technique to aid language and social skill development in preschool aged children, and that children who participate become more effective communicators and interact more appropriately with others.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family. I could not have accomplished this without your support and love. Thank you for your patience, understanding, and encouragement. For that, I will forever be grateful.

Jay, thank you for using your “wet noodle” to keep me focused even though I wanted to stray many times. Aidan, you have enjoyed many trips to Monkey Joes and “quiet play” at home in order to allow me some time to work on this... all without complaint. Aidan, I love being your mom. Thank you for your patience and understanding the past 7 and for Jay almost 10 years. I am so proud of both of you and YOUR accomplishments! I look forward to making up for lost time now that this is finished. I love you guys!

To Mom and Adam, thanks for believing in me and encouraging me to pursue this degree. Mom, thank you for reminding me that I could achieve the almost impossible dream. I love you both.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Caregivers, who are most likely parents or other family members, seek to improve their children's language and social skills and further develop their academic abilities. Some caregivers seek out alternative programs to benefit their child. The Listening Program (TLP) and other similar auditory stimulation music-based programs have increased in acceptance with the attention to communication and attention in children. "The Listening Program is a music-based auditory stimulation method with the primary goal of bringing the auditory system into balance" (The Listening Program, 2015, t.2, p.2). Educators and therapists are recognizing these programs as successful methods that show positive improvement in children's academics. "Music-based methods have shown to provide adaptive techniques for children who need more support in their developmental growth" (Hiatt, 2014, p. 33). However, there is limited research that reflects the caregiver's perceptions about their children who participate in these programs.

"The Listening Program is a music-based auditory stimulation program that provides engaging brain stimulation to improve performance in school and life" (Advanced Brain Technologies, 2008, p.3). TLP (2015) "is used as a safe and effective method to gently train the auditory system to process sounds for improved listening, learning, attention, and communication" (t.2, p.4). It is also used to "provide advanced auditory training to the ear and brain through a systematic delivery of psychoacoustically modified music" (The Listening Program, 2015, t.3, p.4).

Music-based programs have different effects on each child in terms of the impact on their ability to relate to others and communicate. Tomatis (1953) and Doman (1998) suggested that the purpose of auditory stimulation is to retrain the way children listen in order to expand their learning and language abilities. This in turn will further develop their communication, creativity, and social skills. Treharne (2002) and Minson (1999) investigated the areas of listening function and verbal processing using TLP as a method. In both studies, the researchers found significant improvements in the areas of learning, listening function, and verbal processing with the consistent and appropriate use of TLP.

Background of the Study

Language and social skill development begins in early childhood (Montessori, 1967). Children need these skills in order to function in everyday activities. These skills can be finely tuned in children with the assistance of music-based programs (Doman, 1998). However, in order for children to be successful these programs different ways one must determine whether or not the music-based programs are able to assist in the development of the originally identified deficit skills (Minson, 1999).

In the fields of psychology and neuroscience, researchers are looking into the influence music has on cognition since music and language shape language processing. Gee and Nwora (2009) noted, “professionals have used music in various forms in attempt to aid in skill development of children with research dating back to several decades” (The Listening Program, 2015, t.5, p.1).

Gee and Nwora (2009) referenced that the field of sound-based interventions initiated in the early 1950s with Tomatis, and was later expanded on by one of Tomatis's students, Berard.

Tomatis developed his method initially to assist vocal performers, but then expanded to functional and developmental difficulties, whereas Berard developed *auditory integration training* (AIT) which has been shown, both anecdotally and in small-scale empirical studies, to be effective in improving attention to task, communication, and behavior. (Doman, 2006)

Doman (2006) followed Berard and Tomatis, and developed TLP. "TLP uses psychoacoustically modified music as a means of treatment and differs from AIT and the Tomatis Method in the frequency and intensity of sounds and duration of treatment" (Doman, 2006).

Table 1

Comparison of Music Programs

	Frequency	Intensity	Duration
Auditory Integration Therapy	Random shuffle between .5 – 4,000Hz	40 dB	2 half hour sessions daily / 3 hour break in between - total of days provided
Tomatis method	High frequency shuffle between 4,000-20,000Hz	40 dB	2 hours continuous listening – total of 15 days & then 4 weeks off & to resume for another 8 days of program listening
The Listening Program	Full Spectrum 0 – 20,000 Hz	20-60 dB (based on each individual's comfort listening level)	2 fifteen minute listening sessions / 30 minute break in between – 20 weeks total listening

Doman (2006) stated that, “TLP has support within the community of clinicians and clients, but has limited scientific support due to the lack of published empirical evidence of the technique and its relative newness.” At the time of this study, few others have investigated the specific association between music and language skill development and overall brain functioning (Moreno, 2009). Forgeard (2008) and Overy (2003) conducted pilot longitudinal studies, which they suggested a relationship between music-based programs and language-related skills. Even though sample sizes in their studies were relatively small, the authors revealed some positive effects of the music-based intervention and suggested that music influences language processing skills and relationships, demonstrating a causality of this connection (Moreno, 2009). Although there may be barriers in determining whether particular music-based programs are effective, it is possible to consider these programs as a tool for language and social skill development. A comprehensive review of literature in Chapter 2 reveals principles of language and social skill development.

Problem Statement

Language and social skills are crucial for children to have. However, some children have barriers and challenges that inhibit their ability to develop typically in their everyday environment. In order to have successful interaction with others, children’s language and social skills need to be adequate. The uses of complementary techniques, such as music therapy programs, have been questioned as to whether or not they aid children’s language or social skill development. Many caregivers are looking for ways

for their children to show improvements in language and social skills, and some caregivers seek out alternative programs to benefit their child.

TLP and similar auditory stimulation music-based programs have become more popular. Educators and therapists are recognizing these programs as successful methods that show positive improvement in children's academics. However, I found limited research that reflects caregiver perceptions about their children who participate in these programs. I wanted to know if the caregivers perceive any progress toward more age-appropriate language and social skill levels.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis was to explore the experiences of caregivers of preschool children who participated in a particular music-based program and their perspectives related to language and social skill development. The different programs in the research reviewed for this study build on existing knowledge based on one particular music-based program, the Tomatis method (Tomatis, 1953). In this study, TLP, the music-based program was being provided to the preschool-aged children as recommended by an authorized provider, and I wanted to understand the families' perspectives regarding experiences and perceived changes in their children's language and social skills.

Research Questions

The following research questions were the focus of this study:

1. How do caregivers choose a music-based program for their preschool children?
2. How do caregivers of preschool children experience their children's participation in TLP?
3. How do caregivers of preschool children perceive their children's language skills as they participate in TLP?
4. How do caregivers of preschool children perceive their children's social skills as they participate in TLP?

Nature of the Study

Professionals are concerned with examining experiences significant to the person, and they are concerned with everyday experiences as the person reflects on the significance of what has happened. Qualitative researchers tend to focus on meaning, looking at how things happen (Flowers, Larkin, & Smith, 2009). A qualitative approach using an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was chosen due to the nature of TLP being used in the clinical setting (Arbesman and Case-Smith, 2008). This study was intended to gain knowledge from the caregiver's experiences and their reflections on their children's language and social skill development after participating in TLP.

Phenomenology is the study of the structures of subjective experience and consciousness (Van Manen, 1990). It appeals to an immediate common interest and what is most evident. An interpretive phenomenological analysis was chosen since I wanted to understand how families make choices and understand growth in their interactions with

and observations of children; a smaller sample appropriate for an IPA study allowed me to listen carefully to the details of their observations.

Eight caregivers of children who participated in TLP completed narrative journals and participated in individual interviews. Data were collected, transcribed, coded, and analyzed with the purpose of understanding the caregivers' experiences and interpretations providing a comprehensive reflection of their lived experiences. The methodology is presented in further detail in Chapter 3.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is based on Ayers's (1972) theory on sensory information processing, Doman's (1998) understanding of music based programs, Gardner's (1983) theory on learning, and Montessori's (1967) theory on language and social skill acquisition. Tomatis's (1962) theory on listening and auditory stimulation was used to conceptualize the literature related to the research questions. Ayers's theory on sensory information processing was used to understand how children overcome obstacles and challenges in their everyday routines and environment participating in different activities as well as the decision of caregivers seeking assistance with these areas. Doman's understanding of music-based programs was used to understand TLP and the reasoning why caregivers seek these types of programs for their children. Gardner's theory on learning was used to understand the categories of learning and approaches best used to assist children in order to function in everyday routines. Montessori's theory on language and social skill acquisition was used to understand development of skills in

early childhood and how the environment impacts these areas. Tomatis's theory on listening and auditory stimulation was used to shape an understanding of these processes and the impact a child's overall development.

Researchers have focused on the opinion of professionals, such as occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, psychologists, behaviorists, and educators and their interpretations of the child's performance in the classroom using formal testing measures (Cohen, Esteves, Stein-Blum, & Tischler, 2006; Francis, 2011). These theories were based on research bridging the gap between the brain, sensory processing, and social skill development in children. These researchers demonstrated that children with language and social skill deficits benefit from alternative and music-based programs. Studies such as those conducted by Ayers (1972), Doman (1998), and Tomatis (1991) incorporated Gardner's (1983) and Montessori's (1967) theories and these researchers highlighted language and social skill development in children.

Using music-based programs for improved skill development complement the perceived changes noted by educators and professionals completing performance testing with children in schools (Cohen et al., 2006). However, the results felt by caregivers of these children participating in the music-based programs might be reflected upon differently in the home. Each of the theories of Ayers, Doman, Tomatis, Gardner, and Montessori provided insight into the interpretations of the caregivers about their children's current and desired abilities. A more detailed analysis of these areas can be found in Chapter 2.

Definitions of Terms

Advanced Brain Technologies (ABT): A “neurotechnology company that develops and distributes interactive software and music-based programs for the improvement of memory, attention, listening, academic skills, sensory processing, brain health, and peak performance” (Doman, 1998).

Auditory stimulation: The “use of sound to elicit a response in the nervous system” (Tomatis, 1953, p. 54).

The Listening Program (TLP): “A music-based auditory stimulation method that gently trains the auditory system to process sounds for improved listening, learning, attention, and communication” (Doman, 1998).

Primary auditory cortex: The “region of the cerebral cortex, located within the brain that receives auditory data from the medial geniculate body, and is referred to as the auditory area” (Tomatis, 1953, p. 74).

Assumptions and Limitations

The study results were based on caregivers’ responses in a narrative journal and interviews focusing on their perceptions of their child’s changes in language and social skill development following participation in TLP. Since this was a self-report by the caregivers, I assumed the caregivers’ memories were accurate as to what they reported in the journals and in the interviews. I assumed that the facility in fact enrolled the children in TLP according to ABT standards.

Results of this study may have limited transferability to a similar population due to the small number of participants, though the findings may yield the need for additional research. Having a limited number of participants in the sample, the focus was on the depth of the data and analysis of the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants (Smith et al., 2009; Van Manen, 1990). The homogeneous sample was necessary as this would allow for a more meaningful and effective study.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this inquiry was to explore the lived experiences and reported interpretations of caregivers whose children participate in TLP and to identify the reported perceptions of their children's language and social skill development. The inquiry was bound by a number of criteria. The use of one facility to obtain the sample of eight adult caregivers of children who participated with their children in TLP for a minimum of 2 weeks was the focus of the inquiry. Purposive sampling followed specific criteria to identify caregivers whose children who are of preschool age (3 to 5 years) and who have participated in TLP. According to Kershner (1990), children are still developing at this age, and any outside event or situation can hinder or contribute to an individual child's development (p.47). This study was questioning if a music-based program was considered as one of these situations Kershner described that impact preschool aged children's language and social skill development.

The findings from this study informed future research in language and social skill development as well as TLP. The knowledge gained from this study would provide

insight as to how a certain group perceive changes of their children's language and social skill development following participation in TLP. Insights from this study also help to differentiate between music-based programs and language and social skill development by providing direct accounts from a specific group of families.

Significance of the Study

Professionals seek to find ways to improve the communication process, beginning with language and social skills. They understand the need for evidence based practice and look for ways to improve our approach and policies in our field. Without effective communication skills as children, it is hard to imagine what the future may hold.

IPA adopts analytic procedures for moving from single cases to more general statements, but which still allow one to retrieve particular claims for any of the individuals involved (Flowers, Larkin, & Smith, 2009). If professionals genuinely are listening to stories that the caregivers tell, they tend to pay attention to and reflect on their own perceptions (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2007). Learning changes identity, and engaging in research carries through the passion of finding a solution (Merriam, 2009).

This study was designed to explore and investigate TLP based on caregivers' perceptions and experiences with regards to their child's language and social skill development following participation in the program. TLP can improve an individual's sensory system tolerance and motor skills. For example, Minson (1999) found that when once school-aged children complete the base program of TLP they improved in their overall motor skills by up to 1 year.

In documented studies, the use of alternative approaches such as TLP demonstrated remarkable improvement in the behaviors and sensory processing in children. “Seen through examples, different directions emerged from the literature found, some theoretical and some of them more applied” (Moreno, 2009). The goal was to determine whether or not caregivers identified TLP as an effective approach for educators and clinicians to use with children in further developing their language and social skills.

Future direction in the exploration of TLP potential with children is needed in society. The significance of this study served to identify one method that can change children’s learning and language abilities, communication, creativity, and social skills. It is responsible to diffuse the results of the future studies in order for children to actively participate appropriately within the community.

Summary

This chapter included the foundation for this research and need to further investigate alternative programs to assist in the development of language and social skills. This introduction provided an explanation of the problem being investigated, and outlined the purpose of the study. Music-based programs were discussed, and background information was presented, and I explained why TLP was chosen for this study. An interpretive phenomenological analysis was described as the best avenue to study for this topic; assumptions, delimitations, and limitations possible within the study were also presented. Key terms used in this paper were operationally defined, and significance of the study was mentioned.

In Chapter 2, I present a review of the literature that focuses on music-based programs, the topic of language and social skill development, and the brain and auditory systems. Chapter 3 includes the methods and procedures used for this investigation, and an outlined approach how the participants were selected, and the specific methods used to collect and analyze the data. In Chapter 4, I present the demographics, data collection and analysis, and findings. Chapter 5 includes the interpretation of the findings, recommendations, and implication for social change.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

TLP is “a music-based auditory stimulation method” that has a primary purpose to organize the auditory system (The Listening Program, 2015, t.4, p.3). Doman stated that “this method helps improve brain function, reduce stress, and trains the brain with the auditory skills needed to effectively listen, learn, and communicate” (The Listening Program, 2015, t.4, p.7). It was my intent to determine whether children’s language and social skills develop as a result of completion of TLP.

This chapter is an examination of the literature about language and social skill development, sensory information processing, listening, and the brain. The content of this section includes developmental periods, learning styles, listening skills, and specialized programs, all related to learning. The section presents a comprehensive review of the literature and issues related to the questions this qualitative study sought to answer.

This review of literature begins with a theoretical review examining language, social, and learning skills. A presentation of learning styles, the brain and listening, and sensory experiences are presented. Finally, a brief section details on activities and learning.

Because each child approaches learning in different ways, there are many positive or negative factors that can influence his or her learning potential. Current methodologies in early intervention, particularly for those between 3 and 5 years of age are limited. It is essential to address the child as a whole, sparking each child individually, and children’s interest and joy of learning during their everyday routines (Montessori, 1967).

The information collected for this section of the study was gathered through a variety of sources. Key word searches were conducted in databases including Education Research Complete, ERIC, Walden Dissertations, Google Scholar, Sage Education, and Academic Search Premier. Keyword searches included, but were not limited to, *language, pragmatic language, social skills, development, learning styles, learning programs, TLP, sensory information, processing, brain, neurological development, alternative therapy, therapy treatments, listening, and listening skills*. Books and journal articles also served as sources during research efforts.

Review of Framework-Related Literature

Language and Social Skills

A child's learning process can be influenced through various approaches with teaching/learning within their everyday routines. Children learn language and social skills through these events having daily observations and use. The more opportunities they have the stronger their basic communication foundations are strong foundations are the start of core academic skills and build self-confidence. For decades, educators have been influenced in their understanding of education, learning, and best practices by the beliefs of many theorists. These theorists include Ayers (1972), Gardner (1983), Montessori (1967), and Tomatis (1962), who have established theoretical foundations, perspectives, and views that are noted in the literature. The theories these individuals each have established impact the lives of children and their education. Throughout history, it appears these theorists have influenced children, parents, as well as, educators.

Ayers (1972) focused on how to maximize all children and their many different learning abilities in their everyday routines, whether at home, in the community, or school. Gardner (1983) studied the nature of human intelligence and indicated that each of seven intelligences is found in different areas of the brain. Gardner also proposed that educational processes are related to intelligences and the developed skills. Montessori (1967) addressed social development and the learning process. She also thought that a child's intelligence was higher than that of an adult, and that early learning can occur in a prepared environment. Tomatis (1962) believed that hearing and listening skills were required for learning and producing speech and language.

These theorists have examined and defined unique concepts and beliefs, which have influenced children and their language and social skills success. In addition, they also were instrumental in educating the educators with efforts in how to maximize the learning process for children. Educators and parents understand the importance of being involved in a child's everyday routine in order for them to be successful. In turn, maximizing academic achievement and believe in the importance of learning.

It is significant to recognize and understand how children and their learning process are influenced and impacted everyday through their experiences (Aertsen, Braun, Mehring, Waldert, & Wolpert, 2010). As children transition into school-based programs, whether it is Head Start or a typical preschool, they are provided with academics based on their learning styles, the environment they are in, and exposure which encourages the ease of processing of various sensory information integration essential for brain

development. However, each child's cognitive process develops differently, and many factors can influence, whether it positive or negative, their learning potential (Piaget, 1985). Some programs do not prepare the child for academic success, while others have educators capable but the environments for these programs are not conducive to the learning process (Gardner, 1991).

Adams and Anderson (1992) believed it is important to understand what is known and what can be known about children's learning abilities, as well as their influences that affect their own success. Some of the school-based programs children attend restrict them and their overall development because of lack of sensory information processing experiences for these children therefore limiting the children's potential (Montessori, 1967). If these same children were provided adequate activities, an ideal learning environment, and opportunities that are stimulated by their learning styles, they might achieve their learning potentials (Grasha, 1996).

Studies and reviews continue to persist on the effectiveness of the learning process. Children approach learning in different ways, and there are many factors that can influence, whether it positive or negative their learning potential (Adams & Anderson, 1992). It is time to merge about the theories of learning styles, sensory integration processing, and what can influence a child's academic success. Focusing on specific play routines and utilizing music, computers, and practical sensory activities gearing towards a child's lead is a great strategy eliciting language and social skills (Higbee & Sellers,

2010). It is essential to address the child as a whole, sparking each individually, with their interest and joy of learning during every day routines.

The foundations discussed by Gardner (1983) and Montessori (1995) on intelligence, learning, and motivation have influenced children and their academic success. These theorists provided the needed foundation and understanding that are involved in the efforts in convincing educators and administration to reform schools to maximize learning for children. Educators are encouraging children to be successful, producing work that is excellent in quality, teaching them social responsibility, and seeing that their final outcome is personally meaningful in order to have them believe in the learning process (Adams & Anderson, 1992).

Sensory Information Processing and Environment

Researchers are investigating ways to improve the quality of lives for children. Links have been established in the areas of sensory information processing and learning environments (CITE). Information is continually leading to and leaving from each of our senses (Hillock et al., 2008). Children face numerous societal differences when they are unable to adjust to the everyday environment. Some perceive the environment as dangerous or overwhelming and have difficulty managing their behaviors and actions.

Sensory information that is collected through the senses are processed and then produce responses by combining the stimuli and the surrounding environment (Daniels, & Evans, 2006). The brain works with all of the senses and then intends for them to function synchronized (Muluk and Yalcinkaya, 2010). When children are exposed to

sensory integrated learning, their brain and overall nervous system changes and children can integrate and understand the stimuli around them normally. “Ayers was the first to research, named sensory integration, and built the foundation of the therapy that has been instrumental in helping children all over the world” (Daniels and Evans, 2006).

Alternative treatments and therapy approaches can address and improve a child’s ability to concentrate, listen, and overall physical/motor functioning. Senel (2009) conducted a survey which asked parents their experience and views on the alternative approaches (one focus was music) for improved sensory integration information processing in the children.

Arbesman and Case-Smith (2008) indicated that sensory integration information processing therapy as one of a few approaches to address children and their educational needs, despite the complexity of components to it. Ayers (1972) believed that sensory integration processing therapy “should not be used as a standalone approach, but together with diet, nutrition, and fun methods of learning can all help children interact with the social world in a more productive fashion” (p. 134).

Learning and brain development occurs when the senses are exposed to and demonstrate the ability to integrate information that is presented to the various senses. Some researchers have indicated that taste, vision, smell, and hearing are the primary systems; however compared to the vestibular, tactile, and proprioceptive systems they only cover a smaller component to regulating the whole body (CITE). Together these

systems provide the essential unifying foundation for organizing and regulating the whole body.

Language is an integrative function, and its development is dependent on the body's regulation, connecting it all together (Kontu, Sajaniemi, & Suhonen, 2008). Educators guide the children to participate activities in order to facilitate stimulation of brain development and learning. Typical young children spontaneously engage in many types of physical play, whereas those who are developmentally delayed do not get the opportunity to do so. The fact that the brain "can develop throughout life, regenerate and form a strong form of neural plasticity is what makes development possible" (Ayers, 1972, p. 121). The ears control balance, body movements, and coordination and transmit messages to the brain. The harmony is between the brain and the ability to communicate messages to people and listening is one component of it. Communication is cut off if the harmony is broken (Madaule, 1994).

Tomatis (1963) contended that, "the voice of the mother speaking plays a key role in the child's language and social skill acquisition and development" (Andrews & Thompson, 2000). A key element is that the child has an active role within the entire process. It is the educator's role to provide a challenge for a child and use the child's interests and motivation as a guide. The educator is more likely to understand, as well as can analyze and adapt activities to meet the needs of a child (Ayers, 1972). It is the role of the educator to guide parents to understand the child's needs and provide as much as possible support for them at home. Educators as well as professionals working with

children who participate in classroom education need to focus approaches to include sensory interventions that may improve educational outcomes (Marr, Mika, Miraglia, Roerig, & Sinnot, 2007).

Montessori (1967) wrote her educational method before Piaget (1977) introduced his cognitive-development theory of children's intelligence. Montessori's (1967) method and technique documented about periods in a child's life as behaviors which included smiling, infant-mother attachment, and language development. She described these periods as critical for certain aspects of human development (Lillard, 1996).

As Montessori (1967) refined her method, she defined distinct periods that were conducive to particular areas of development. For instance, from the ages of 1 to 5, sensory activities are beneficial for learning, so it is important for children to experience sensory input whenever possible (Lillard, 1996). Another age that Montessori felt was crucial was between 3 and 5 months, as children are sensitive to sounds and are able to discriminate between them, and being provided with auditory stimulation at this age fosters successful language development (Lillard, 1996). One trial revealed results in language and social skill development differed between two groups based on their childhood play experiences (Harrison, and McLeod, 2009). Other researchers reported that auditory-based activities (music) and enriched settings contribute to the development of skills (Celec, Ing, & Mrazova, 2010; Aertsen et al., 2010).

Montessori (1967) found that nature and nurture worked together in human development. She supposed that human development lies with the environment and the

individual with respect to genetics that, “children possess natural tendencies” (Montessori, 1995). Montessori (1967) believed the mind of a child “absorbs the environment, leaving lasting impressions upon it, forming it, and providing nourishment for it, and warned that the quality of the environment can greatly enhance a child's life or seriously diminish it” (p. 87). Montessori saw the developmental stages as different for each child, and knew when it was appropriate to provide opportunities for optimum learning when a child was ready (Lillard, 1996). Working toward the child’s independence, these opportunities were what Montessori declared as vital for growth and development, and complemented the process of learning.

Montessori (1967) discovered that children desire to learn and can absorb an incredible amount of information. The most difficult thing is for the adult to understand if the child is to progress in learning, is to not have immediate influence on the child and to have confidence in the child. Montessori revealed that the advising to a child shows them the adult’s “superior nature based on experiences” (p. 106). Montessori’s method was derived with using indirect actions to introduce materials in exercises carefully and distinguish those who seek the correct way and redirect those who are on the wrong path (Lillard, 1996).

Children from birth to 3 years of age are active, however their minds at this age are apt to best acquire language when they are unaware that they are learning. From three to 6 years of age, Montessori (1967) mentioned these children as entering a more conscious period, in that the child takes and processes the information from the

environment and begins to form an interpretation on their own. A child then starts to enjoy certain components in that particular environment and is viewed as spending more time or focused in that area. Montessori termed this stage a child goes through as a “sensitive period” (Lillard, 1996).

If the child is placed in an environment that facilitates language and social skills, the child will be drawn into it. Montessori (1967) believed that a child learns best with activities that are sensory enriched. Given the opportunity to demonstrate independent learning through self-correcting, engaging in equipment and supplies, exploring, experimenting, and ultimately reach new understandings by themselves (Lillard, 1996). Like in a preschool classroom today, when grouped together with others of similar aged children will work and learn from each other. This will increase the opportunities for children to experience interacting with others and being listened to by an adult positively affects their educational progress (Smith, 2006). Like Piaget, Montessori found that children thrived with a chance to “experience real life skills and knowledge that was appropriate to their age and stage of life,” and allow them to express their perceptions of the world (Lillard, 1996).

Learning Styles and Development

Developmental periods are influenced slightly by the environment and receiving the most attention are the periods related to speech, language, motor, and visual development. The brain has some periods where it is more sensitive and engages learners being that it is so flexible and is easily influenced by its early exposure to things

(Merzenich, 2001). The ear is a receptor of movements and all movements are recorded in utero (Tomatis, 1991). As with any other sensory stimulation, these movements have an energizing effect on a child's developing brain, also contributing to the future development of motor functions (Goin-Kochel, Mackintosh, & Myers, 2009).

People learn in different ways and through different approaches. These are approaches that were described as learning styles by Gardner (1983) as auditory, visual, and kinesthetic-tactile. At the birth of a child, they are in a new world, receiving sensory stimulation in air, other than through fluid in utero. The child has to overcome the initial challenges as the auditory system adapts to the new environment. During the first two to three months of life the child's ear is adapting to the airborne mode of auditory perception effecting the brain's development.

Though several theorists have distinct theories, most seem to address the idea that students are not uniform, and teachers should adjust to them. Gardner (1983) first described his theory about individuals with multiple intelligences and established a classical model for the purpose of education. Educating children needs to incorporate the aspects of intelligence, personalities, behaviors, and learning styles. Chapman (1993) led into that, Gardner (1983) developed his ideas and theory on multiple intelligences initially as a contribution to psychology. Education and training communities have now adapted it using it as a classic reference as well.

Gardner (1991) defined intelligence in children and promoted their value in life by fulfilling their capabilities in the academic environment. Gardner's visual, auditory,

and kinesthetic learning styles model (VAK) describes children's preferred ways to learn. Gardner's theories of intelligences were illustrated by the VAK learning styles model. The VAK concept, theories and methods have been defined further in the works of other teaching specialists such as Montessori, beginning in the early 1920s (Gardner, 1991). The VAK also referred to as a multi-sensory approach to learning for which conventional teaching methods were not effective. Researchers have discovered from the VAK model that they are able to tap into the auditory component as a channel for learning, and with music feel that it is one way to modify the brain at structural learning as well as functional level (Moreno, 2009). Evidence in research noted that music can impact many areas, including intelligence (Moreno, 2009).

Researchers that are familiar with VAK method recognize that people learn in different ways. They also believed that the method is a favorite of the accelerated learning community in educating young children. The VAK method provides an understanding and explains a child's preferred or dominant thinking and learning style, and their strengths (Moreno, 2009). Whereas through music, one has an intrinsic communication potential, Tomatis aimed that music can stimulate communication and social interaction skills (Doherty & Rosner, 1979).

Researchers found that parents report has good sensitivity and specificity in identifying young children with language and social skill issues (Harrison & McLeod, 2009). Harrison and McLeod (2009) believed that parents know their child's learning style and can help them learn and remember new things (Harrison & McLeod, 2009). It is

common to teach in your preferred learning style as a parent or educator, but it may differ from the child's. We can learn in other ways and thrive on interacting with others despite our preferred learning style (Smith, 2006). However a child learns more easily using their preferred learning style but should be encouraged to experience others. More information can be obtained about anything by using several senses at one time (Grasha, 1996).

Grasha (1996) suggested to allow the children to “use their preferred style when learning essential information, and to practice using other learning modes for things that are not as important” (p. 47).

Although using music as a form of training the brain has been researched, the impact of music on and the learning process is new (Abbamonte, Boso, Emanuele, Minazzi, & Politi, 2007). There are suggestions that music is central to learning. The systems that are nourished include the sensory, attentional, cognitive, emotional, and motor processes, all necessary and valuable to daily functioning. It is important to know how children process information. The cycle would include physiological, neurological, sensory, cognitive, linguistic, as well as other factors, to allow for information to effectively flow. For the purpose of language and social skill development, it is the complexity of perception and attention that are the keys to the process. The child's physiological and psychological experience of the world is mediated by the processes of transformation, inference, and interpretation (Grasha, 1996). The child is given the opportunity to experience learning through sense and awareness, as babies they put everything in their mouths, and as toddlers they touch to explore. The early stages of

school, preschool and even kindergarten, are when the child's listening is most flexible (Abbamonte, et. al, 2007). This is when the child learns the fastest and with the most success. It is the prime learning time, and when the child maintains a high level of motivation. Visual and auditory preferences may emerge at a later age (Grasha, 1996). Montessori believed that children's learning is affected only if children are actively involved in their experiences (Kontu, Sajaniemi, & Suhonen, 2010).

Emphasis is made on the learning environment and techniques, and theorists, such as Ayers and Montessori noted that learning takes place across all settings. Young children are active and curious, and explore to learn about the items that are in their environment. Children need movement and sensory experiences to learn, more importantly they enjoy the support and acceptance of the surrounding environment (Montessori, 1967). Children gain knowledge of the world through conversation, observation, sharing, and understanding, and social interaction as a key to learning and cognitive growth. It is the personal and social influences that are one part of an individual child's perception. Parents, educators, and peers are the primary influences on an individual child's motivation to learn. Material can be presented as a new and exciting world to be discovered. The best schools and teachers are those who help the individual children learn to love learning. Learning, and how to learn, begins early in life and continues as the individual children mature in age. The earlier the intervention starts, the less consequences or challenges children may have in future academics (Kontu, Sajaniemi, & Suhonen, 2010)

Listening, Music, and the Brain

The communication process is composed of listening, speaking, and word choice. Jensen (2006) referred that the human brain is essential in the involvement of learning and memory, and suggested that learning experiences, such as skill building can benefit the brain. Parents, even educators would benefit from knowing how the brain changes in order to implement learning strategies. If the rest of the environment stays the same, but a skill that is new to the brain is presented, that skill can be learned due to the brain's neural plasticity (Doman, 1998). Neural plasticity relates to learning due to the changes in brain structure or functioning in order to understand an activity on hand. Pioneers such as Doman (1998) and Merzenich (2001) both reflected in their studies that processing is reflective of cortical changes in the brain, and that the brain changes for what is deemed to be relevant to the possessor. The critical discovery is the brain and how it responds to change and is the foundation of the entire learning process (Jensen, 2006).

In infancy it is suggested that the parents should use sensory stimulation in order to develop the necessary pathways for brain development and function (Cohen, 2001). Using positive sensory stimulation in brief intervals helps the sensory pathways in the brain to initiate and achieve permanent learning (Ayers, 1979). As the pathways continue to develop, parents understand the needs of their children more. It is important to understand the need for sensory stimulation, and be able to provide others with the knowledge about the children's needs for development to occur. Montessori (1967) was convinced that providing them with the experiences everyday allows them to gain more

knowledge to use in the future. If the academic support is not provided, as it is important to the individual child, it then changes the drive of the child, in turn affecting the individual child's involvement within their social group (Grasha, 1996). Effective teachers are ones that offers the many opportunities to provide sensory based learning as a part of the daily routines, and act as a positive support to the individual children defining their place in the classroom.

The experience of sound begins in utero. In the sixth month after conception, the acoustic (auditory) nerve starts to myelinate, carry a neural impulse to the brain (Inoue, McClannahan, Ross, & Tremblay, 2010). It was Tomatis (1997) that revealed that information is processed from the temporal region of the brain. Language understanding and use evolves from the left temporal and parietal lobes. So most theorists refer to the left temporal and parietal lobes as more for the critical day-to-day functioning (Ratey, 2002). The right temporal and parietal lobes deal with hearing, identification of noises, and processing of sounds and information; in addition to, vision, movement, and sensation (Ratey, 2002).

Theorists such as Harvey and Descartes examined with research on how they perceived as well as analyzed the connection between each of the lobes in the brain and the relation to one another to gain insight on children's intelligence and their brain development (Edelson & Rimland, 1995). Merzenich (2001) further reviewed those theorists' foundation and scrutinized their practices in brain research. Best practices with regards to sensory information processing and the methods of learning are also being

investigated (Chandrasekaran & Kraus, 2010). Lecanuet's work explained that the experience of sound begins in utero (Fifer, Krasnegor, Lecanuet, & Smotherman, 1995). In addition, Lecanuet further clarified that infants can combine and process the different frequencies of sounds into single phonemes as early as 6 months (Fifer et.al., 1995). It was then explained that children who learn to recognize and reference stimulation are then able to validate what they processed into their daily experiences (Fifer et.al., 1995; Ayers, 1975).

Tomatis tried to understand where language originated and analyzed the frequency content of the sounds emitted by an infant at various stages of development. Oral language, like music, has its own rhythm which is associated with the lower frequencies of the sound spectrum. Tomatis (1963) realized how the loop between the ear and the voice were and clarified in research of how sounds are filtered, heard, and perceived in utero. Tomatis (1997) then shared with other theorists and researchers his opinion on how the filtered sound is the first the children experience in their life. It's as if the filtered sound of the mother's voice increases their desire to be born to a world where sound and language are a means of communication.

From a very early age, children begin to perceive and respond to the rhythm of language. This rhythm accounts for what is conveyed as intonation, inflections of voice and gestures, all which accompany talking, verbal expression. Starting as early as singing the different nursery rhymes to babies while rocking them, allows for the child to embody the music behind language. This benefits oral and written language later on. Children can

repeat the same words and sentences over and over again, completely out of context and with no intent of using them to communicate. They make up their own speech and language, to paraphrase Piaget's description of "private speech and magical language, terming it as magical thinking" (Piaget, 1975).

From ages two to four, important cognitive functions including learning letter sounds, learning the alphabet, and getting exposed to more vocabulary. Although at this age reading is not a skill, introducing it to children is a smart beginning (Montessori, 1995). Using the same stories and increasing the availability of these story books provide the children with the initial needed exposure. Language development is also primarily stimulated from these opportunities.

Parents are advised to encourage children to listen to the millions of words presented in complete sentences. As one presents, highly fluctuate the tones in what is being said. Chambers and Sugden (2003) suggested that eliminating the parentese, the embarrassing babbling considered baby talk, is actually helpful from birth to twelve months. It is important to speak clearly, enthusiastically, and making continuous eye contact with the children, as it is beneficial for the children to hear adults speaking normally (Chambers & Sugden, 2003). Early intervention research shows that children who had the most impoverished vocabularies were least likely to read once they were entering school (Buchanan & Flouri, 2004). In addition, children who hear phrases all day have a weaker vocabulary development than those who parents take time to talk with them (Buchanan & Flouri, 2004). According to Oneill (2007) the children are absorbing

all of these experiences with the parents early on. Parents are creating this foundation for their children and need to ask as well as answer questions, and speak slowly.

Activities and Programs

Activities which include multi-modality learning are simple in everyday context. As parents, point out letters, words, etc. that are real, use fingers to show letters, and even use of sign language is valuable for children to learn and develop a vocabulary, both receptive and expressive. This approach reduces children's stress of being unable to communicate at an early age (Buchanan & Fluori, 2004). The more sensory stimulation the better, as children advance, they talk through things by asking probing questions, such as, who, when, where, why, and how, during activities that have interest to children.

Montessori explained that expansion activities aid in providing infants' skills for making specific identifications, in that it takes core vocabulary learning and moves it forward. As children get older it is not acceptable to give only labels to items, and according to Medewetsky (2011), parents need to make definitive distinctions so their children can understand similarities and differences. Montessori (1995) and Medewetsky (2011) believe that if there is accent on the multi-modality learning process by pointing it out, gesturing, written format, and providing continuous reinforcement when the children acknowledge what was said correctly, it allows for language to be processed.

Buchanan and Fluori (2004) researched parents who spoke continuously to their children at an average of two to five thousand words a day in everyday activities, had children who began school with an excellent vocabulary. This gives an idea as to how

much language children should hear in order to be ready for school. In addition, it is evident that more quality speaking to children, leads for better outcomes in education.

In one simple but elegant study reported by Wankoff (2011), infants who received attention that was specifically prompted by their vocalization used more syllables and demonstrated faster consonant-vowel transitions. The study showed the value of just not talking, but of listening responsively and gently acknowledging the sounds. Hart and Risely (1992) further investigated children with classified best vocabularies were from parents who cared the most, who loved and acted on love every day.

Lecanuet and Montessori believed that normal developing children connect the information within the environment easier in turn developing speech and language at an earlier age (Fifer et.al, 2004 & Montessori, 1967). The learning of language is only possible if the brain is able to interpret and integrate effectively the different sensory stimuli. All sensations that flow to the brain via the different senses need to have organization in such a way that we can respond accordingly, planning and executing motor movements, learning and understanding, and finally producing spoken language (Ayers, 1984). Language is the most important foundation for building interpersonal relationships. Ayers and Lecanuet both believed that language development is facilitated when there is interaction, acceptance, and demonstrated interest for children (Madaule, 1994).

Many researchers, including Doman (1998) and Tomatis (1997) studied and determined that learning begins with music. Ky, Rauscher, and Shaw (1997) and Moreno

(2009) conducted studies on the effects of musical exposure. They, as well as others believed that children are influenced by music and sounds as early as in utero. “Children who receive systematic training through listening to psychoacoustically modified classical music (which trains the brain to process sound more efficiently) will improve performance in school, work, and life.” (Advanced Brain Technologies, 2008, p.3). “The Listening Program techniques were designed with a focus to stimulate (exercise) the different functions of the auditory processing system (in the brain)” (Doman, 2006). This way the brain can be used to integrate the information that is received through the everyday environment in which someone lives. “These are the changes in techniques that have implications for language, learning, and listening tasks creating everyday challenges” (Gee & Nwora, 2009), as an attempt to increase children’s ability to communicate, socialize, and be successful. Doman (1998) believed as long as the children were exposed to the music in this program, positive changes are noticed by educators as well as parents.

There is a side of development that has been less researched, the study of the mind and how it is influenced by adaptive programs, one of which is music. “Music has long been known to have value as a preparation for activities on the basis of belief that sensory input through the auditory system can be beneficial for children” (Case-Smith & Hall, 2007). Whitehead (1925) revealed an account of the brain’s creativity side, a distinction as to how an individual engages with the world. With Ayers development of sensory processing, came the understanding of the limbic system and how images can be

drawn from momentary sensory input. In several studies researchers explored neural processes using varying music pieces to activate the brain systematically for motor control, such as hands, arms, as well as vision. Whitehead (1925) defined the stages of life as a being in coevolution, adapting and influencing each new stage with what was just experienced. In early stages of life, we are exposed to a minimal amount of sensory activities. Life experiences are on hold and spark a concern on children's development. Whitehead (1925) studied development in utero, questioning at what stage, if any, a sound environment could be established. Lehrer, Van de Carr, and Van de Carr (1988) used the foundations of Whitehead and found that limbic reactions reinforced the emotional relationship between mothers and their children, facilitating a stronger development cycle. More recently, it was Doman (1998) who studied how music was such a positive effect on children's minds, and how his clinical reports favored music as a calming effect stimulating an alternate neural pathway or system for development. Tomatis (1963) further explained that without music, the capacity of recollection, and an understanding of sensory input could not be obtained. Whitehead (1925), Doman (1998), and Tomatis (1997) believed this was possible since the entire brain processes music.

Children learn by what they see and hear around them (Montessori, 1967). The speculation is out with various studies on how children correlate between what is learned in the everyday environment and act on these behaviors observed. As parents we can be simply involved and practice as well as demonstrate resilience (O'Neill, 2007). It is easy to predict children's exposure to these visual and auditory images and to control them.

Otherwise children develop a stage of distress that is ongoing and difficult to readjust (O'Neill, 2007).

Doman (1998) suggested there is one way to soothe or regulate the early brain by playing music to it, especially if the music is organized, and soothing. Many others believe that listening to similar with encourage an effective enrichment response (Keen & Simpson, 2011). Researchers have moved forward and specified that including a daily dose of music of an hour a day enhances preschoolers' brains over time (Moreno, 2009). The research revealed more integration and connectivity as shown by the children's electroencephalography (EEG) activity. Brain imaging techniques in neuroscience were developed to offer new possibilities to determine whether or not music can modify the brain function and impact language and social abilities (Moreno, 2009).

Ayers (1972) defined that children's brain need active stimulation across all of the senses for learning. Gardner believed that children have independent learning styles based on their own brain development to maximize academic learning. Montessori explained needing the right environment for children to flourish. Most of these theorists studied how children were successful academically and within their everyday routines; maximizing their learning potentials. Whereas, others studied how particular approaches affect one's development of language and social skills early in life.

The effectiveness of the educators and parents play an integral role with the children's language, social skill, and learning process. Ayers (1984) influenced the parents and educators to help the children to learn through the sensory-motor process,

directly through classroom interventions. Gardner (1991) interpreted that children have different ways to handle the information they receive and process, and directed it toward the intelligence levels in children. Montessori (1995) believed development was achieved through children's personal experiences with other children and were influenced by daily experiences and activities. Whitehead (1925) and Tomatis (1997) explored the importance of music to enhance development. To achieve insight to the issues related to language and social skill development, learning, and the motivation of children, one must accept these theorist's views that influence the children's success.

Many of the studies, such as ones conducted by Aertsen, Braun, Mehring, Waldert, and Wolpert (2010) and Baranek (2002) on enrichment, suggest the need for a positive social environment to support learning. This type of environment can do wonders on enhancing health and more importantly social outcomes (Baranek, 2002). Children need people who can serve as mediators, to mentor, encourage, rehearse, guide, limit, and celebrate experiences in their life. Parents want to serve as their mediators and help them to understand how everything works (Chard, Farrington, Hodgson, Moran, & Purdy, 2002). Having them understand from these experiences is the hardest but most important principles for enriching the brain. The first five years are a time when the children are unable to regulate their own brain and require the assistance of others to regulate their sensory systems for development (Corbett, Ferrer, & Shickman, 2008). From age two to five, children need someone to navigate the way for them in order to learn these outcomes. After all it is essential for enrichment.

Children are born with a million nerve connections ready to encode life experiences. They seek stimulating input such as a loving gaze, a caress, and movements to strengthen these connections. The connectionist is a person who believes children learn things about the world through the neural network of the brain and the neural network expands and increases in speech and efficiency with age (Doman, 1998). During normal development, the brain overproduces connections that compete for the nourishing chemicals needed to form a strong configuration (Tomatis, 1963).

Huttenlocher (2002) has published detailed studies of brain development that are classics in modern neuroscience. His understanding of the growing brain and reveals it as a complex process, and maintains that it is costly if one crams too much too fast into a young brain. Enrich and allow for settling time, he conveys. Huttenlocher (2002) believed that some experiences are being presented too early and should be held for later development. On the other hand, the more, faster, and earlier approach movement has been enforced by many parents around the world. In Kolb's (1995) studies, he believed there is absolutely no harm done to the brain if the parents chose to provide all cognitive and physical activities every day, as some learning is clearly going on.

Researchers are beginning to point to specific anatomical and physiological differences in sensory processing skills (Koomar & May-Benson, 2010). Some sensory processing problems are related to an abnormal cerebellum, which studies suggest act as a sort of volume control for sensory input (Williams, 2008). In addition, researchers have also found abnormal brain serotonin synthesis that is responsible for fine sensory

discrimination (Whitehead, 1925; Koomar, et. al., 2010). Approaches for children described in literature tend to be sensory impairment oriented. These sensory driven approaches are essential to performance; the systems cannot operate optimally coordinating sensory and motor information (Cantin & Polatajko, 2010).

In scientific studies, children who overreact to sensory experiences don't habituate to sensory input but instead feel it over and over as a brand new experience that alerts the nervous system (Ayers, 1979). Recent studies show that children demonstrate sensory processing problems, showing nervous system disturbances (Ayers, 1972, and Cantin & Polatajko, 2010). The central nervous system is an open system that receives input in order to produce a motor output. If the environment is unable to be processed, the result is problematic and yield problems. The problems will then result in consequences of a disorganized central nervous system can reflect in behavior and learning problems (Advanced Brain Technologies, 1998, p.7).

Parents Perspectives on Interventions

Over the years, parents have focused efforts in improving their children's language and social skills, and have become increasingly concerned that their children do not have the skills needed to meet their academic needs (Senel, 2010). Therefore parents are looking to specialists such as Speech-Language Pathologists and Occupational Therapists to assist their children (Richard, 2011). Collaboration between parents, educators, and specialists need to focus on comprehensive assessment of children to understand and improve the management of academic needs for them. Strategies and

interventions need to be children specific and should be used across all settings the children are in (Medwetsky, 2011). Review of the literature provided an overview of language and social skills, diagnostic assessment, and guides to intervention. There are several standardized tests available to assess children's language and social skills (Moore, 2011). Medwetsky (2011) explained that most standardized tests are not comprehensive enough to give a complete picture of preschool children's abilities. Therefore the Children's Communication and Social Skill Checklist (Baird & Bishop, 2001), can be provided for parents to complete as they observe their children's abilities as they interact with other children and adults (Medwetsky, 2011). This issue has led to many researchers identifying a need for comprehensive measures to assess competence in communication.

Parents can take the time to assist in the development of skills if they want emotional and socially healthy children. Doman (1998), as well as other researchers such as, Hart & Risely (1992), and Ayers (1972) strongly believe that children develop most skills beginning at two years of age. Timing and involvement in all developmental processes is essential for healthy, normal functioning in children. The warmth combined with stimulating activities help promote positive actions in children. The quality time that is spent between children and their parents is the baseline contact that is needed for the skill of paying attention (McCabe & Meller, 2004). Attention becomes a recurring property of the brain and it becomes self-reinforcing for children (Doman, 1998).

Researchers have studied topics, such as language and social skill abilities with different aged children. In addition, there are reported studies completed with children

that were followed over time and concentrated on the earliest intent of children, in the areas of requesting, labeling, answering, and greeting, ranging from the age of 9 months to 2 years of age and the emergence of conversation communication of more than 100 words (O'Neill, 2007). The refinement of children's abilities are during their preschool years and it's when they tailor their productions to their conversational listener (O'Neill, 2007; Wallach, 2011). A major aim of this study is to deliver a clear picture of the development of language and social skills from 3 to 5 years of age following the participation of TLP.

The Listening Program is one of several "auditory training programs developed to address various types of deficits and disorders" (Inoue, McClannahan, Ross, & Tremblay, 2010). Neuroscience is starting to investigate newer themes, such as experiences that involve the brain in research. In the auditory domain, motivation is one part of the process of learning, whereas the other is perception (Hornickel, Kraus, Nicol, Russo, & Zecker, 2010). Inoue et al. (2010) examined repeated stimulus contacts, and revealed that children were sensitive to the experience and reflected positive changes to their systems. Hornickel (2010) also researched similar areas, and believed that specific auditory trainings, like TLP, may potentially alleviate the language and social skill deficits particularly in children of preschool age.

Smith (2008) believed while there are many evidenced based interventions for children, not all are validated. Several sensory based interventions are to be expected to complement educational programs and educators should be expecting to hear about and

encounter them from the children's parents. Albeit there are many studies that question these interventions and their validity, parents are seeing the effectiveness in their children (Goodlin-Jones, Ono, Solomon, & Timmer, 2008). By using these interventions in conjunction with general education which focuses on using sensory experiences to facilitate language and social skill development, children should thrive in the academic environment (Mirenda, Smith, & Zaidman-Zait, 2007). The interventions used by specialists in the field yield differences in opinions, therefore noting the need for continued research.

Research

Recent studies, such as those conducted by Ayers (1972), Doman (1998), and Tomatis (1991), while incorporating Whitehead's (1925) findings and bridging the gap between the brain, sensory processing, language, and social skill development in children. In turn these researchers have influenced others to further investigate children's learning abilities and how specific programs might impact the same development of skills.

Researchers, psychologists, educators, and parents are beginning to embrace the notion that the children acquire skills differently compared to one another. Skill building by itself is not an overall enhanced environment, but it is an addition to the experience for children (O'Neill, 2007). For decades, research has demonstrated that the learning process in children has been emphasized on the need for academic success, and now parents accept the various approaches in order to expand on their child's development in

language and social skills. As a result of research, music has been demonstrated as one alternative approach that impact children's development (Brandes, Fischer, Fischer, Ottowitz, Schuessler, Terris, Thayer, & Titscher, 2009), of which parents are beginning to understand and becoming more knowledgeable in their children's needs, as they seek programs to further advance their language and social skill development.

From the 1900s to 2000s, the Age of Integration was further defined (Hillock, Polley, Popescu, Royal, Spankovich, & Wallace, 2008). During this time, the ear was explained as having a profound impact on the connection to one's self, others, the world, and the relations it has (Tomatis, 1992). All these relationships undeniably connect to one's developmental history personally and/or academically. Tomatis offered valuable insight into the role of the ear and the learning process, as well as its importance to the auditory and vestibular systems (Gerritsen, 2010; Ayers, 1984).

Forlin and Peters (2011) defined the educational process of students with disabilities as challenging, and with alternative approaches being used and often focusing on listening strategies as the source for intellectual and physical development. In the classroom children have repeated stimulus exposures on subjects and partake in interventions to further develop academic skills. However, educators continue to look toward the interactions between the children, and the children with their caregivers as situations experienced and as sources of learning skills in language and social skill development (Goodlin-Jones, Ono, Solomon, & Timmer, 2008).

Occupational, physical, and speech therapists have joined educators in the understanding that children's ability to develop certain skills beginning with their listening abilities (Koomar & May-Bensen, 2010). Research from these professionals have shown that the use of music-based programs such as TLP, have contributed to children's tolerance to various sensory experiences, as well as motor and communication development. Therefore, music-based programs can interact with the fundamentals of development and have measurable effects (Senel, 2010; Goin-Kochel, Mackintosh, & Myers, 2009). However, few studies look specifically towards the perceptions of caregivers as a result of participating in music-based programs and consequently warrant further studies.

Summary

It is important to understand the types of response patterns that are evident daily assisting young children and influencing their language and social skill development, and as much as the children, the parents need to develop too (Buchanan & Flouri, 2004). Tuning into their unique way of experiencing and responding to the world takes patience and willingness (Ayers, 1972). As providers and educators the desire is for parents to understand that it is important to recognize and understand how their children perceive and how they are affected by different experiences. In turn, also consider the demands placed on children to process and respond and have active involvement in their response to an activity. Now having an understanding of what the children struggles with, if it is

either or both language or learning, the subtle signals the children make, parents can pick up (Chambers & Sugden, 2003).

Researchers noted in the literature review include Ayers (1972), Baranek (2002), Bryan & Case-Smith (1999), Celec, Ing, & Mrazova (2010), Doherty & Rosner (1979), Doman (1998), and so on. Although each of these studies were relative to the different aspects in regards to the use of TLP and how it relates to sensory processing and learning. None of them noted were that of phenomenological research base. In addition, other considered methodologies such as effective quantitative and qualitative, especially those related to case study approaches (Abbamonte, Boso, Emmanuele, Minazzi, & Politi, 2007; Neysmith-Roy, 2001), as well as observational, archival, and interview data collection methods (Koomar & May-Benson, 2010; Ross-Swain, 2007; Senel, 2010) were reviewed, but did not reflect on personal experiences.

The roles of an occupational therapist, a speech-language pathologist, an educator, and the parents are all integral to the collaborative process for children and their needs. Parent's views, experiences, and perspectives on interventions and the learning process for their children are important. In some of the literature, there are comparisons of interventions and commentaries on the importance of these same interventions for children. Even though few phenomenological studies have been completed, they are not geared to the areas of language or social skill development. Overall, efficacy studies alone are still minimal in determining the areas of language and social skill development after participating in TLP, a music-based auditory stimulation program, and even fewer

directed to the preschool population. In chapter 3, the methodological plans for the study are discussed in detail.

Chapter 3: Design and Methods

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis was to explore the experiences of caregivers of preschool children who participated in a particular music-based program and their perspectives related to their children's language and social skill development. Language and social skills are crucial for children to have. However, some children have barriers and challenges that inhibit their ability to develop typically in their everyday environment. In order to have successful interaction with others, children's language and social skills need to be adequate. The uses of complementary techniques, such as music therapy programs, have been questioned as to whether or not they aid children's language or social skill development. In the following section I address the research design and methodology. I clarify the choice of the phenomenological method, the participant selection process, research questions, and data collection and analysis.

Research Design and Rationale

Merriam (2009) expressed in fields of practice, such as health professions and education, the vast majority of topics come from personal interest in the field and from the work setting itself. Learning changes our identity, and engaging in research carries through the passion of finding a solution (Merriam, 2009). There was careful consideration to different methodologies for this study, including quantitative and mixed designs. Quantitative research tends to try to explain associations, focusing on what happens (Flowers et al., 2009). Whereas qualitative research tends to focus on meaning, looking at how things happen (Flowers et al., 2009).

Phenomenology is the study of the structures of subjective experience and consciousness (Van Manen, 1990). It appeals to a common interest and what is most evident to people. In order to develop thorough comprehension of what is being studied, an IPA research study is best suited and will allow the readers to understand the common or shared experiences of several of the participants (Creswell, 2013).

The sample then becomes those who can account to similar experiences or have a common thread. Merriam (2009) explained that “typical samples would be one that is selected because it reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest” (p.78). Patton (2002) believed that “sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to gain insight and must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61). In this study the sample was caregivers whose children of preschool age (3 to 5 years) participated in TLP. Since IPA is the selected research approach in particular, the sample was selected purposively, as the goal is for the caregivers of the children who have participated in TLP to offer insight across their particular experiences into their children’s language and social skill development.

Auditory training programs, such as TLP, are being used to remediate various types of deficits, more so communication disorders, such as delays in language and social skills. An IPA paradigm was chosen because of my intent was to explore how caregivers perceive their children’s language and social skill develop. Caregiver’s observations offered insight across their particular experiences following participation in TLP. The research questions that guided this study focused on the caregiver’s perceptions as to

whether their children's language and social skill development is addressed as a result of participating in TLP. The remaining sections of this chapter described the methodology used to accomplish this study.

The research questions were designed to explore the experiences of the caregivers and their perceived changes in their children's language and social skills following participation in TLP:

1. How do caregivers choose a music-based program for their preschool children?
2. How do caregivers of preschool children experience their children's participation in TLP?
3. How do caregivers of preschool children perceive their children's language skills as they participate in TLP?
4. How do caregivers of preschool children perceive their children's social skills as they participate in TLP?

The sample included at least eight caregivers of the children who participated in TLP to complete a narrative journal and participate in an interview. Caregivers were asked to reflect on why they chose TLP, what they experienced as their children participated, and what changes they have seen in their children since participating in TLP. In the interviews the caregivers reflected on their experiences with their children participating in TLP in further detail. I also addressed a gap in the literature, particularly with TLP being a relatively new program, as well as that few research studies focusing on

caregiver's perceptions and experiences, and the specific focused areas of language and social skills.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I had limited knowledge about this particular outpatient rehabilitation setting as well as the owner and other professionals in the facility. I am a licensed and certified speech-language pathologist (SLP); however, I was not practicing at this setting at the time of this study. As a practicing SLP, I am aware that baseline testing is necessary for the understanding of children's current abilities. The professionals at this setting provide comprehensive assessments for all children and the collaborative process that occurs between the providers and the involvement of the caregivers.

Although I am familiar with TLP, have been immersed in the literature on TLP, worked with cases whom have participated in TLP, and have seen the benefits of this method, which can possibly present a bias, I was seeking information related to the experiences and perceptions of the caregivers with their children who are participating in TLP alleviating those potential biases.

I was not an authorized or certified provider of TLP at the time of this study. I declare no investment or relationship as an employee with ABT, the company that created TLP. At the time of this study I was not employed by, nor did I have children who received services from or participated in TLP with any professionals in this setting. The owner of the facility contacted potential participants with a solicitation/invitation letter providing my contact information to those who have participated in TLP for this

study. I did not have any opportunity to have relationships formed with the immediate providers or with the caregivers of the children.

I waited for those who are interested in participating in the study to contact me. At that point I obtained reliable contact information (telephone number/e-mail address) of the participants in order to send the necessary information to them. I was responsible for sending the template for the narrative journal and for conducting interviews with the caregivers. Finally, I conducted an analysis of the responses that further examined the caregivers' personal experiences and reflections of their children's participation in TLP and their language and social skill development as a result of participating in TLP.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The sample for this study was selected from a group of caregivers of preschool-aged children who attend physical, occupational, and/or speech therapy in an outpatient rehabilitation setting with an authorized provider of TLP. The owner of the facility as well as one occupational therapist and one speech-language pathologist are certified and trained providers in TLP as noted in the guidelines by ABT. In order to participate in TLP, the children met the necessary criteria and requirements established by ABT.

Flowers, Larkin, and Smith (2009) and Creswell (2012) both mentioned there is no right answer to sample size; however, the sample should provide sufficient amount of cases for the development of meaningful points between the participants. The purpose of this study was to obtain some detailed information and value from the personal

experiences of the caregivers. I initially targeted for eight-12 participants, and having only eight participate, I was not overwhelmed by the amount of data generated with this study.

Obtaining an adequate sample was important for this study. Several children are provided services in this facility; but, not all participate in TLP. The owner of the facility contacted the potential participants, the caregivers of those children who participated in TLP at this facility within the last 6 months. Guba and Lincoln (1985) stated that “all sampling is done with some purpose in mind, and with that purpose almost always is to define a sample that is in some sense representative of the population to which it is desired to generalize” (p. 199). Justification in limiting the sample size allowed for a thorough and comprehensive analysis in the studied area.

Eight people participated in the study. Upon consenting to participation, the caregivers were provided with a template to a narrative journal to complete (Appendix C) over a 2 week period for children were participating in TLP. The journal template was formed by the research questions, developed to help participants organize their thoughts for the personal narrative, and included as a way for participants to capture their thoughts. The participants were required to complete the narrative journal within 5-7 days of receiving it in an e-mail; I did not have to contact the owner to return to his list for additional participants. Participants in this study were invited to offer a detailed account of their personal experiences regarding the changes about their children’s language and social skill development. A semistructured, narrative journal was used (Flowers et al.,

2009) and recorded interviews with follow-up questions (Appendix D) were asked that relate to each participant's answers as an additional source of data collection. Interviews varied in length, and the flow of the session as well as the comfort level of the participants was determined from how long the interview lasted. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to at least 1 hour, as to build rapport and getting to know the participants before I asked my interview questions.

Van Manen (1990) noted interpretative phenomenological processes do not follow a rigid sequence or structure and instead progress without a predetermined set of procedures. With the process of IPA, the interview process needs to be structured so the interviewee has time to answer questions and expand upon them; sometimes the interviewer will use prompts or probes to facilitate such expansion (Smith et al., 2009).

Procedures for Recruitment, Instrumentation, and Data Collection

Data were collected from a narrative journal (Appendix C) completed by the participants after a 2 week period of time their children participated in TLP with responses (Appendix C) that facilitated the elicitation of stories, thoughts, and feelings. The journal template was informed by the research questions, developed to help participants organize their thoughts for the personal narrative, and included as a way for participants to capture their thoughts between them completing it and the follow up interviews. The conducted interviews (Appendix D) with each of the participants were to further discuss and clarify the responses from the narrative journal. This way both the participant and I were active members in the research process.

Given my remoteness and that of some of the potential participants, each participant was given the option to have follow-up interviews conducted remotely via Internet or telephone. I conducted the interviews over the course of 1 month and collected data through audiorecordings of interviews using a digital device. After the recordings were transcribed, and I checked the transcripts for accuracy, listening to each audio file as I verified line-by-line accuracy and coded each interview. Participants were provided a copy of their transcript in order to review and further discuss/clarify their responses if needed. No interview was scheduled or took longer than the 1 hour allotted. I made every effort to respect the participants' comfort with the process to promote openness and sufficient depth of their reflections to gain a deep understanding of their experiences.

Using interviews as well as the narrative journal together as a form of triangulation adds depth to the results that are not possible using a single method study, thereby increased the validity and utility of the findings. The benefits of triangulation include "increasing confidence in research data, creating innovative ways of understanding a phenomenon, revealing unique findings, challenging or integrating theories, and providing a clearer understanding of the problem" (Thurmond, 2001). Multiple data can be used for analysis based on the results from the quantity. Although can be perceived subjective in nature, the IPA method requires rich data, suggesting that the participants can speak freely, and can convey their outcomes from their own experiences by discussing them at some length (Flowers et al., 2009).

The present research study extended on similar work that was conducted by other researchers showing, a connection to finishing TLP with progress in motor skill development. I investigated the caregiver's perceptions with regards to their children's language and social skill development. Each component played an integral part in the process of this entire research study, and the participants were provided with the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

The pool of potential participants was quite small due to the newness of the TLP and the selection criteria. At each component of the study, narrative journal and interviews, the participants were thanked for their time and reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any point if they desire to do so. The contact information for me, the dissertation chair, and the head of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) were shared with each participant in case any concerns arose.

Data Analysis

The present research study required the completion of a narrative journal that focused specifically on the caregiver's experiences and their perceptions of challenges and successes of their preschool-aged children's language and social skill development as they participated in TLP. I completed a line-by-line analysis of each participant's responses and identified emergent patterns within the material. Follow-up communication with the caregiver was needed to further clarify details relative to the study. All verbal communication was recorded verbatim using a digital recorder and helped clarify the participant's responses in the journal and ensure the participant's intentions were met.

Detailed interpretation and line-numbered transcriptions of the participant's responses were completed and sent to the participant in an email to review. I then requested that the participant review the content and verify the perceptions as being represented accurately and send confirmation back to me. This is for structure to be met with the results found, and I could illustrate the methodological relationships between themes.

I obtained considerable detail of experiences reported by the caregivers of those children who participated in TLP. I directed attention to the analytic focus and made sense of the participants' experiences. The method of IPA was used to draw on these lived experiences of the caregivers and I interpreted the data as a more complete analysis.

Once all journals were received, each was analyzed systematically using a bottom-up approach (Flowers et al., 2009). I looked for patterns or connections in each of the participant's responses. Further analysis was made by me with identifying the connection of data to the research questions. With a clear and close analysis, comments by the participants involved me to make sense of the patterns of meaning or themes in each of the participant's accounts (Flowers et al., 2009). Each participant pointed out important aspects of their experiences. The key was for me to draw together the information provided by the caregivers as specific themes with regards to their children's language and social skill development after participating in TLP and compile it into a structure for analysis. To bring it all together visually, I organized the content obtained into a graphic representation to convey the overall information and how it connected back to the purpose of this study and the research questions.

During the interviews I recorded the participants and transcribed their comments verbatim, as recommended by Flowers et al. (2009). The analysis of the data included aspects of interpretative phenomenology. The raw data were coded as each transcript to let the themes emerge. The IPA process involves five steps: reading and rereading, initial noting, developing emergent themes, searching for connections across themes, and moving to the next case (Flowers et al., 2009). By using an iterative process a deep understanding of the commonalities of the participants and their shared experiences were developed. As commonalities began to be identified, data that were qualitatively different from other participants' responses were used in contrast and as a way to broaden the discourse about their children's language and social skill development following participation in TLP. Discrepant cases were identified and explored with the participant as a way to check for possible biases.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Language and social skill development is defined by McCabe and Meller (2004) as being influenced by "biological and social preconditions as well as environmental influences in order to achieve some purpose" (p. 313). To establish trustworthiness of a study, Guba and Lincoln (1985) used terms such as, "credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and conformability, as the naturalist's equivalents for internal and external validation, reliability, and objectivity" (p. 300). Yardley (2000) explained these four principles for assessing the quality of qualitative research, and using these four principles allowed for this study to be thorough and complete.

Credibility

The narrative journal template was provided via email with an expected return date to be within 7 calendar days. In an effort to minimize the external and internal threats related to participants and the study, I conducted the follow-up interview with the participant at a time/date agreed upon by both parties. This interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes in length, and allowed the caregivers to further clarify and reflect on their personal experiences with their children, seeking dependability in their comments. I paraphrased participant's responses to ensure understanding of responses to questions asked. Recorded information from the interview was transcribed in a line-numbered transcript following the interview, and provided to the participants for review. As Creswell (2008) cautioned, during the course of research, natural events can occur that can influence the results. This was monitored through audits as needed throughout the research process (Creswell, 2013).

Transferability

I demonstrated sensitivity to the context by showing awareness to the subject and related to the discussion. I yielded a level of commitment by being attentive to the participant as they described their experiences. I showed transparency and coherence in the analysis of data, making sense of the participant's experiences and how they fit with the study. Then I reflected on the impact and importance of the research findings in the final write up, for all those readers who show interest in the topic. To further determine that credibility was met within this study, I checked findings noted on the narrative

journals through individual interviews with the participants, as well as, debriefed the participant following the study. In addition, solid interpretations of raw data led to dependable judgments about the findings and may direct other researchers with transferability to their studies.

Dependability

Although I was a single coder with the data analysis, dependability was met by using a peer reviewer respected in the field of rehabilitation science to look at the research and advise if the findings were meaningful and free from bias. The findings were also compared to better understand how different issues are viewed. If the reviewer and I reach the same supposition the confidence will be increased with the findings (Merriam, 2009).

Confirmability

Confirmability was met by using a peer reviewer respected in the field of rehabilitation science to look at the research and advise if the findings are meaningful and free from bias. Having another individual to review the research supported the triangulation in the analysis process.

Ethical Procedures

The owner of the facility agreed to be a part of the research study and contacted potential participants whose children have participated in TLP in the last 6 months for this study. I was contacted initially by 12 participants from this group, and had 8 participate in the study. Data were collected from a narrative journal completed by the

participants with responses (Appendix C) that facilitated the elicitation of stories, thoughts, and feelings. The participants completed the narrative journals within 5-7 calendar days of receiving it in an e-mail. I did not have the opportunity to return to the list of 12 who initially contacted me, as additional participants were not needed.

Participants in this study offered insight across their personal experiences regarding their children's language and social skill development following participation in TLP.

Data gathered for the purpose of this study remained confidential, and pseudonyms were used for the participants who requested. The name of outpatient rehabilitation facility, the city and county in which the study was conducted was omitted or disguised. I informed the participants that they may withdraw from the study at any time.

Reference to the research participation was made in broad terms in order to ensure the participant's confidentiality. All data remain secure in a locked filing cabinet in my home office and in password protected electronic files on my personal computer. Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was responsible for reviewing the research proposal to ensure the university's ethical standards and federal guidelines were maintained (IRB approval number 03-19-14-0026945).

Summary

This interpretive phenomenological analysis was established to explore and investigate TLP based on caregivers' perceptions and experiences with regards to their children's language and social skill development following participation in TLP, an

alternative method of treatment. The specific participants in this study participated in TLP at an outpatient rehabilitation facility. These participants are the caregivers of preschool age children who receive skilled therapies and other alternative methods of treatment at this facility.

There have been few studies that researchers have investigated the efficacy of using TLP for the purpose of language and social skill development and even fewer that investigate the perceptions of the caregivers. Information gathered from this study facilitated a deeper understanding of TLP and the impact it can have with children and their language and social skills. Through a phenomenological approach, I inquired from the caregivers if there was a noticed change in their children's language and social skills following participation in TLP. Although previous studies suggested that the purpose of auditory stimulation is to re-educate the way children listen in order to improve their communication abilities; there are many programs on the market that can be used to increase a variety of different skills. Currently there are several programs being used that provided the foundation for other programs to be developed. Most of which have research studies that evaluate the efficacy of them.

The purpose of this study was to document the caregiver's perceptions and experiences with regards to their children's language and social skill development following participation in TLP. The plan was for caregivers to begin to embrace the notion that children acquire skills differently. In turn I hope they increase their understanding for and become more knowledgeable in their children's needs, and

continue to seek programs to further advance their development, as well as, academic success.

Chapter 4: Findings

A qualitative phenomenological study was chosen to describe the lived experiences of eight caregivers whose children participated in a particular music program. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the essence of meaning in the lived experiences of these caregivers of preschool children and how they perceive changes of their children's language and social skill development following participation in TLP. This information may help other parents who are deciding between particular music-based programs for their children that focus on language and social skill development. The interpretative phenomenological analysis was the most appropriate for this study because this methodology seeks a composite meaning of several individuals' description of their lived experiences as interpreted by me.

Setting

As the researcher, I had limited knowledge about this particular outpatient rehabilitation setting, the owner, and other professionals in the facility. I am a licensed and certified SLP; however, I was not practicing at this setting at the time of this study. As a practicing SLP, I am aware that baseline testing is necessary for the understanding of children's current abilities. The professionals at this setting provide comprehensive assessments for all children and facilitate the collaborative process that occurs between the providers and the involvement of the caregivers. At the time of the study, I was not employed by, nor do I have children who have received services from or participate in TLP with any professionals in this setting. I am familiar with TLP, have been immersed

in the literature on TLP, worked with cases whom have participated in TLP, and have seen the benefits of this method, all of which possibly present as avenues to influence the participants. In reviewing the results, I believe all biases were effectively addressed and alleviated.

Demographics

The participants were caregivers of preschool-aged children who participated in TLP in the last 6 months. The participants had experienced their children's language and social skill change following participation in TLP. The owner of the outpatient rehabilitation setting was the person designated to provide the initial contact for the pool of participants meeting selection criteria. The owner was to provide to the participants my contact number and email in order to initiate the study participation process.

Data Collection

From the participant pool of 12, only 10 reached out to contact me to hear the information about the research study. At that initial contact I also obtained reliable contact information for each interested participant. I stressed the confidential and voluntary nature of participation during this initial conversation. Each participant was informed that they would need to complete a consent form, a narrative tool, and participate in an interview upon the completion of the narrative tool. All of the participants responded that this would not be a problem. No data were collected during this call.

Within 2 days of the initial contact, I sent the consent forms and narrative journal template to the participants. Up to 7 days later I received the consent form and narrative tool templates from 8 of the participants. All of the participants in this study were given subject numbers to ensure confidentiality. Table 2 displays the subject numbers.

Table 2

Participants Attributes

Participant's Name	Child's Age	Length of time in TLP	Subject Number
Jennifer	3 yrs 6 mos	4 weeks	1
Allison	4 yrs 4 mos	6 weeks	2
Mark	4 yrs 8 mos	7 weeks	3
Heather	3 yrs 11 mos	4 weeks	4
Bori	4 yrs 6 mos	8 weeks	5
Amanda	3 yrs 8 mos	5 weeks	6
Maria	4 yrs 6 mos	7 weeks	7
Cody	4 yrs 10 mos	3 weeks	8

The narrative tools were received via e-mail and are saved in a password locked electronic file and a hard copy is retained in a locked file cabinet in my home. Shortly after receiving the research tools, I reviewed them and developed several baseline questions to ask each of the participants in their interviews. I then contacted the participants to schedule a follow-up interview at a date, time, and location of the

participant's choice. My availability and ability to host the interview in a familiar, safe environment to the participant would encourage an honest sharing of lived experiences.

I allowed the participants to choose interview times that were convenient to their schedules. The interviews were scheduled to last for one hour, and the participants were reminded that the interview would be recorded. A minimum of 1 hour was scheduled between interviews to ensure an adequate amount of time was available as a buffer between participant interviews. The time between the interviews provided me time to review and organize my notes. The interview schedule was kept on a password-protected calendar assistant.

At the beginning of all interviews, I introduced myself, confirmed their identity, and thanked them for their participation. Then I explained to each participant that I would be using a digital voice recorder in order to record everything he or she said and asked if he or she was comfortable with having the interview recorded. Each participant stated that having the interview digitally recorded would not bother him or her. I then took time to review the interview protocol, the research questions, and the purpose of the study in order to keep these in the forefront of the interview process. I reviewed the consent form to ensure that the participant was aware of the confidential nature, the right to withdraw at any time from the study, and the requirements of the participants, such as the review of their transcript and documents.

I assured that the sending of the documents would be in a secured electronic document via e-mail, and all participants were in agreement of that and additional contact

could be made via telephone and/or e-mail correspondence. I informed the participants that what they had to share was important and reassured them that there were no wrong answers. In addition, I reiterated that if the participant was uncomfortable or simply did not wish to answer a question, that he or she simply had to inform me of their choice and I would honor all requests.

The interview proceeded following the protocol made, with probing questions added from the information provided in the narrative journal by each participant in order to ensure that the participants' lived experiences were fully explored. At the conclusion of the interview, I thanked the participants and reminded them that they would be able to review the narrative journal and documents from the interview at any time. I further mentioned to each of the participants that they can meet with me to review the findings from the study as I plan to meet with the community research partner as well.

Each of the digitally recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim using Dragon software to a Microsoft Word document and saved on a password protected laptop and encrypted password protected file. I completed a secondary review comparing the transcription with the original audio recording to ensure accuracy. I e-mailed the transcription to each of the participants for review and reiterated the instructions for review and return to notify me if there were any changes. None of the participants had any changes or additional information to submit. During the transcription review, several main ideas expressed throughout all of the interviews became apparent.

Data Analysis

Prior to beginning the interviews, I spent time reflecting on the research questions and interview questions in an attempt to group my own ideas. Van Manen (1990) stated “the insight into the essence of a phenomenon involves a process of reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience” (p.77). The process of developing an understanding of the lived experience of children’s language and social skill development following participation in TLP was accomplished through an analysis of data.

Phenomenological methodology lacks a clearly definitive explication. There is not a single, correct interpretation of the data. A varied approach to interpretation creates an environment in which phenomenological researchers need to make practical applications on the basis the ideas of the scholars in the field (Van Manen, 1990). I chose to spend time in reflection with the transcriptions and met with a colleague concerning my own thoughts and opinions about this study. Moustakas (1994) stated that the “the epoche principle inspires one to examine and enhance one’s openness even if a perfect and pure state is not achieved” (p. 61). Van Manen used the term bracketing to describe the process of epoche, and described bracketing as “the act of suspending one’s various beliefs in the reality of the natural world in order to study the essential structures of the world” (p. 175). The importance of the process for me was accentuated when I began the epoche process and actually took the time to listen to one of the CDs of TLP. These biases were not shared initially with the participants but, in some instances, were shared

following the participants' responses, often with an opposing point of view in order to provide the participant choices and further explore their lived experience.

Tracking the Data

The study's process and protocol were approved for use following an oral presentation to my doctoral committee and Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB Approval Number 03-19-14-0026945). The Atlas.ti software program provided structure to the analysis of the qualitative data in a creative yet systematic way. Using the tools embedded within the software package, I was able to visualize the relationships that were uncovered through the analysis. Each question in the journal was reviewed to create preliminary codes that were used in identifying the responses to each question. The transcripts of the interviews were entered into the Atlas.ti software as primary documents. The preliminary codes facilitated sorting of the data and provided a foundation.

I also used the software to examine the grounded nature of the codes related to the theories addressed. No additional codes were needed indicating data saturation was reached. The complete list of the codes used is found in Appendix F. The codes for language and social skills were the most frequently used codes. Using the network editor in the software, I was able to link the codes into networks to classify significant information into domains. Domains were identified from the base of the research questions and narrative journal. The domains included feelings, challenges, and successes. The analysis of data is further described in the findings which follow.

Discrepant Cases and Nonconforming Data

The search for the discrepant and nonconforming patterns required a detailed inquiry of the data that demonstrated contraindication to the findings (Hatch, 2002). None of the participants emerged with responses that conflicted with the others. Each communicated similar experiences and positive outcomes with specific comments noted in their child's language and social skill development following their participation in TLP.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness in this study, methods were used for validity. Four principles for assessing the quality were thorough and complete.

Credibility

The narrative journal template was provided via e-mail, and journals were returned within 7 calendar days. Follow-up interviews with the participants were completed and allowed the caregivers to further clarify and/or reflect on their personal experiences with their children. After the recordings from the interview were transcribed, they were provided to the participants for review. The participants acknowledged via email or in voice-to-voice conversations that they received the transcripts and did not note any corrections. I remained attentive to each of the participants as they described their experiences. The analysis of data showed coherence as the participants' experiences were appropriate to the study.

Transferability

Transferability is limited due to the qualitative approach and to the specifics of the population. I used purposeful sampling so similar participants could be identified in future research. I provided details as to the ways in which I conducted each part of the study.

Dependability

I transcribed the interviews and served as the coder with the data analysis. A second check on the validity was used with a peer reviewer respected in the field of rehabilitation science. The peer reviewer was provided with a copy of the transcripts, a copy of the findings, and my preliminary statement about language and social skill development following participation in TLP. Together we discussed the review, and no fundamental changes were made. The conference confirmed my preliminary interpretations.

Confirmability

The peer reviewer respected in the field of rehabilitation science determined the research findings were meaningful and free from bias. The research analysis process consisting of the narrative journal and interview, transcription and coding, using the software to show links in the domains all assisted in the validation of the study and supported triangulation.

Findings

The findings as presented here were grouped based on the research questions that guided this study. Quotes were kept as close as possible to the original transcript in order to retain the conversational style of the participants. I chose this format because it kept the focus on the combined meaning of the participants' description of their experiences. The convergence of the responses in these sections led me to uncover themes that helped describe the essence of the phenomenon.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked, "How do caregivers choose a music-based program for their preschool children?" This question sought to build an understanding of the essence of the participants' lived experience with choosing a particular music-based program for their children. Extensive research of music-based programs looking at the intensiveness of the program, costs, and anticipated outcomes (which would include language and social skill issues) were noted by the participants.

Jennifer, Allison, Mark, Heather, Bori, Amanda, Maria, and Cody all remembered doing extensive research and reading reviews on various programs. Six of the participants reported the programs reviewed were Auditory Integration Therapy, Tomatis method, and The Listening Program (Jennifer, Allison, Heather, Amanda, Maria, and Cody). Two of the participants reported the programs reviewed were the Tomatis method, The Listening Program, and SAMONAS Sound Therapy (Mark and Bori).

Each of the participants mentioned hearing from a professional that TLP would benefit their child in one or more of these areas: sensory integration, regulation and mood, motor coordination, listening, language, and social skill development. All of the participants appeared most concerned with their children's poor interactions with others their own age. Amanda mentioned that her child was extremely impulsive with others prior to TLP. In the interview she described her child as "bossy, manipulative, and at times physical to others." Amanda described one situation to provide an example,

I remember being at the park on a playdate. All of the children were running around and playing tag, and my child would chase the others and push them hard into the ground causing them to cry and even get scrapes and bruises. When this was done, my child would laugh and just run away.

As if there was no remorse to what was done.

Maria was also detailed in explaining on how impulsive her child was prior to TLP, describing the child as "rough and bossy." In addition, Allison explained that her child "does their own thing, and doesn't really interact with others during play" (park, home, etc.). Instead Allison mentioned that "her child prefers to spin themselves around in circles and slams into the wall or frequently drops to the floor and will ignore others."

When the participants were asked about the aspects of TLP that attracted them most and if anything about the program concerned them before their child started the program. Allison, Amanda, and Cody expressed concern with the costs of the program, but "felt the outcomes outweighed the concern of cost." Cody commented that "his

parents needed to assist with the cost, as it was difficult to come up with the program cost suggested by the facility's owner." When asked did anything about the program concern you before your child started, one participant (Bori) stated, "At the time when my child is supposed to listen to the Gregorian chants, I wonder if he will scream," whereas, another participant (Jennifer) said, "I hope to be able to keep him occupied so he completes the listening requirements for each day because he loses interest so quickly."

The music-based aspect of the program was described as intensive, with all eight participants expressed that they liked the variety of music genres which included Mozart, Haydn, Vivaldi, and human voice which TLP used. Allison was pleased to know that classical music was being used. In addition she, Amanda, and Jennifer all expressed excitement that they would be actively involved in the process of TLP with their voices. All participants reported an understanding for these types of music and an awareness that it is similar to the sounds that a child would experience while in utero. Jennifer explained in her interview that she

Always felt a disconnect to him. Even though we adopted him at birth, it seemed we could never calm him when he was upset or scared. No matter how much we tried, he seemed angry when he was around others. Every time we hugged him and comforted him, he would continue to scream and cry louder, we always felt like we failed.

All of the participants mentioned that it was a requirement for their child to complete comprehensive speech and language testing prior to starting TLP. Three of the

participants (Bori, Amanda, and Maria) explained that they were surprised to see their child's test results from the SLP. Each of their children was more than a year behind their actual ages and was concerned that they would not catch up to other children their age. Bori explained in her interview that she "was dumbfounded to hear the scores on the tests," thinking her child did better. Cody and Mark did not disclose details of their child's language skills other than that they were behind what they should be. Jennifer, Allison, and Heather knew their children were behind in language skills and mentioned they were receiving speech and language therapy individually before starting TLP. Allison in the interview disclosed that she had her child "participating in speech therapy at the facility the TLP was offered at."

All of the participants expressed other concerns with their children, in addition to the areas of language and social skills. Some of the areas that were touched upon in each of the interviews included play, speech, eating, touch (hugging/kissing), listening, and learning. They further discussed the need to find complementary treatments that would be addressing the issues their children had as a whole. Cody mentioned programs such as "biofeedback therapy, illumination therapy, and astronaut training as other possibilities to help solve the missing pieces to his child." Also noted in the interviews several of the participants mentioned that despite researching other programs, they seemed to be happiest with those that were music-based such as TLP. (Maria, Mark, Allison, and Cody).

Research Question 2

The second research question asked, “How do caregivers of preschool children experience their children’s participation in TLP?” Noted in the participants overall experiences were comments that TLP was an intensive program and required a lot of family time and energy. In addition, the participants reported that overall it seemed the children enjoyed the experience and it appeared to have an impact on their more positive behavior as seen in fewer tantrums and improvement in relationships with others.

Bori and Cody mentioned they were pleased with the facility itself and having incredible therapists that cared immensely for their children. Bori stated the, “experience with the facility is what helped in making it worthwhile,” whereas, Cody said, “the facility is so inviting for children and the staff absolutely know what they are doing.” They both talked further about the accommodating schedules with their child’s preschool hours and participant’s work schedule and included examples. Bori stated,

The facility opened at 7:00a.m. to allow for my child to receive their program each day before she went to preschool. In turn, the preschool was able to report to me any issues that impacted the day. Albeit it was early, we could focus on other family events in the later afternoon.

When probing further with several participants, Jennifer, Allison, Mark, Heather, Amanda, Maria, and Cody mentioned the consecutive days made it difficult to do other activities with their children or their siblings, as participating in TLP required dedicated time. Most of the participants were happy to be actively involved in TLP with their

children. Mark and Cody gave me the impression that the commitment to TLP and the requirements were too much for their daily routine. Mark stated,

As a working parent with other children, the time needed to support my child through this program was surprising. Between the need to be punctual at the facility, to ensuring that my child does not participate in other programs, and keeping to a regular schedule overall, limiting television, movies, and music were all difficult. But I wouldn't have changed it for the world; the progress I saw in the little amount of time out weighs all of the other items.

Bori explained that for her child, she “would do anything that she had to,” but also mentioned “that many days went by and she and her child were “tired.” I probed further and Bori described that, “there were times she was not feeling good and wanted to stay home rather than going to the facility.” Factors such as time dedication to the program, other family commitments, and whether or not there will be “enough growth” in their children (Mark and Cody) were mentioned.

The participants were asked to further discuss their child's experiences, and they expressed with relief that it appeared that their children enjoyed the overall experience. Comments such as “there was a smile on her face when she left the facility” (Jennifer) and “it was so nice to get a hug as we walked to the car” (Heather) were mentioned. Jennifer, Allison, and Amanda mentioned that the relationships at home were better. Screaming and tantrums were described as occurring much less, which allowed the child

to play more with their siblings, was mentioned by three of the participants (Amanda, Heather, and Cody). Five of the participants (Jennifer, Amanda, Mark, Heather, and Cody) stated that their children's sleeping habits improved, with the amount of actual sleep time per night increasing by at least three hours whereas the remaining three participants (Allison, Bori, and Maria) also commented that their children's sleeping habits increased but only lengthened about 1-2 hours overall.

Overall the participants desired for the program to help their child speak better with others and each felt that this was the most important reason as to why they were interested with TLP. The participants reported that they do plan to have their children continue participating in TLP. Jennifer, Allison, Heather, Bori, Amanda, and Maria reported that their children were near completion with the program and stated they are planning to complete a booster of TLP in the upcoming months. Whereas the other two participants (Mark and Cody) stated that they would wait until their children complete TLP before making additional decisions about future use of TLP with their children.

Further comments focused on the amount of progress in development with their child's language and social skills. Factors that influenced the support or lack of support of TLP appeared when the participants showed some nervousness with responding to this question. Participants mentioned that they were pleased with the changes and growth seen in their children and reached a decision about the benefits of TLP. Two participants (Bori and Jennifer) mentioned to me that they were informed early on in the process that their child may need additional cycles in the program as certain neural pathways were not

fully developed with only the first level of TLP and would need another cycle level. Each indicated that when they started seeing changes with their child as a result of TLP, they registered them for the next cycle. Allison's child was also recommended for an additional cycle, however at the time of the interview she was not entirely willing to sign up for the next cycle for her child. Therefore I was unable to fully determine if this yielded a lack of support with TLP.

I was surprised with the comments in the area of learning, especially from Mark and Cody. Both of these participants who were initially doubtful that their children would make enough progress, mentioned how their children were doing so much better with listening to others. Mark even shared that his child's teacher in preschool could not believe how his child improved in attending and completing requests made of his child in the classroom. Several other participants, including Cody were pleased that their children were listening and doing things more at home, such as picking up clothes and toys willingly when asked. Further discussion in the area of learning will be expanded upon under the third and final research questions.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked, "How do caregivers of preschool children perceive their children's language skills as they participate in TLP?" Some of the difficulties caregivers observed in their children prior to TLP were decreased after about three weeks of participation and that their expectations of the program were met in the area of their child's language skills. Each of the participants mentioned prior to starting

TLP that their children had one or more of the following issues: answering questions, understand/following directions, describing items, and making phrases or sentences.

Jennifer, Heather, and Bori mentioned that their therapists for their children indicated that their language skills were younger than their child's chronological age. In addition, several of the participants (Jennifer, Allison, Amanda, and Bori) mentioned that they heard from others and during their research about how beneficial TLP could be for children. Amanda described,

One of the selling points of TLP was the research that supported progress in the same areas that I was looking for my child. It was a pleasure to hear the successes from other parents who had their children participating, but all in all I wanted the best and only the best for my child.

Jennifer, Heather, and Bori further reported that they saw many changes in their children and reinforced the skills of answering questions and following directions as the most significant areas that were improved in the shortest amount of time. When probed further, they said the time frame in which they noticed the changes occurred near the beginning of the third week of TLP. Five of the participants (Allison, Mark, Amanda, Maria, and Cody) reflected having a "more talkative" child as their children were participating in TLP. When asked to explain further, each participant described it as hearing more sentences and that their children were using words that they never heard before, including names of people, locations, and even concepts such as colors, size, etc. Bori explained that her child was initiating more when with others, asking simple

questions and commenting about items they saw in their immediate surroundings.

Furthermore, Allison, Amanda, and Maria each described how their children were awful with following directions prior to TLP. Allison further explained,

Despite the amount of times I found myself repeating the directions, I remember having to physically get up, and actually bringing my child to the location to complete the task requested of them in order to get it done.

It was extremely frustrating, and sometimes I just wanted to do it myself.

As their children started completing the first two weeks of TLP, Amanda mentioned that she noticed less times getting up to help her child complete something she asked them to do, Whereas Allison reported this change to occur sometime around week 3 of TLP.

Mark, Bori, Allison, and Cody mentioned that their children were improving in using complete thoughts. Mark and Cody further explained their child's complete thoughts as making sense and somewhat sentences. Mark provided examples such as, "Daddy look, it truck" being used, whereas before TLP his child would just say "truck." Cody described one phrase he remembered hearing from his child, "ball fall down there."

In the interview with the participants, I probed into their expectations about the program and whether they were met or not. Each of the eight participants expressed that their child's participation in TLP exceeded their expectations and hopes for, and are confident that, there is improved language development for their children. Each remembered portions of their child's testing prior to starting TLP, and believe they have improved in at least one area. Maria was very enthused to tell me about how her child is talking, and

even though she talks a lot, she doesn't want to tell her to be quiet. All participants reported that they are looking forward to the follow up testing by their child's therapists. They hope that their children's tests reflect what they believe as significant progress with their language development as a result of their child participating in TLP. The progress in language development was one of the reasons they pursued TLP as their program of choice for their child.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question asked, "How do caregivers of preschool children perceive their children's social skills as they participate in TLP?" An improvement in social skills as their children moved through the TLP and their expectations were met in this area. More than half of the participants mentioned choosing the program because of the difficulties their children had with others.

Jennifer and Allison specifically wanted their children to interact with others more and be more compliant when instructed by other adults. Bori and Cody desired for their children to initiate more, such as requesting for help, and asking for items that they wanted or needed. Bori expressed that this area was her priority concern, compared to that of her child's language skills prior to starting TLP. She described her child as, "always having difficulty with attending to activities and that they seemed all over the place, whether it was at preschool or home, it was challenging for my child and us as a family." When I probed further Bori revealed the family had history of others with medical diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit

Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and that attention was an overall problem for those who were diagnosed in her family, and that she wanted to see a change in following her child's participation in TLP. In the area of social skills, each of the participants discussed that their children had difficulty with eye contact, interacting with others, seeking assistance, initiating requests, and maintaining attention to a given activity. Allison mentioned,

Are you a parent? Have you a child who attended preschool? How did they do? Well let me tell you a story. Every day before my child started TLP I would cry at drop off and pick up. My heart ached all the time. My child would cry and wiggle while in the arms of the teacher before I left the room. At pick up, I would see my child just sitting alone in an area in the class. I felt like a terrible parent. Who does this to their child?

I felt the need to reassure Allison at this point. I explained to her that these feelings are normal with the adjustment of children to preschool. She expressed understanding that, but felt her child's social skills needed TLP in order to change. Allison and the other participants revealed many reasons as to why they sought out the program, also knowing that other children who have completed it, already showed improvements in the same areas. When asked to further explain how they knew this information in the interview, most indicated (Jennifer, Amanda, Mark, Cody, Allison, and Heather) doing research on the internet, speaking to the owner of the facility, and speaking with other caregivers such

as parents to have a better understanding of TLP and outcomes noted by others while their children participated in the program.

When I probed further in the interview about the participant's experiences with their child's social skill development while they participated in TLP, an additional area the participants reported change was in behavior, such as less screaming and complying with directions given by an adult, being able to sit at the dinner table, and improvement in morning/night time routines. Support for TLP became more evident when the stories between the participants were compared to each other. Three of the participants (Amanda, Heather, and Cody) mentioned that their child's screaming and tantrums decreased. They further elaborated on this area, reflecting on how their children were able to express what they wanted now using words and appropriate actions. Heather mentioned, "It is nice to be able to give her a cup of milk without being attacked or screamed at." Other changes reported by two of the participants (Bori and Maria) were the ability for their children to sit for an entire book to be read to them, and by participants (Jennifer, Allison, Mark, Heather, and Amanda) as engaging with their siblings or other children with things like playing a board game or taking turns while on the slide or swing at the playground. Cody expressed that their child asked for help to put on their shoes one morning while getting ready, and another participant (Bori) was in tears when her child looked into her eyes and said "I love you mommy" for the first time.

There were some inconsistencies between the participant's responses in this study. Only Jennifer and Allison described hearing about a change with other children

who participated in TLP a few years back that was fearful to them. They mentioned that parents of children that participated in TLP had crying fits towards the end of the second and sixth week. They discussed that it was unfortunate that the parents of those children were unable to determine the reason as to why these described fits happened but were able to remember and to mention the time frame of them lasting 2-3 days. When I asked if their children experienced this behavior while participating in TLP, they both stated they did not see this at all. Heather mentioned that during week 2 her child started to tilt their head to the right side when being spoken to, describing it as possibly listening to what someone had to say more intently. However, she then said her child had seen the pediatrician toward the later part of the week, was given antibiotics for an ear infection. No other participants had mentioned any researched or personal experiences like these with their children.

Each of the participants mentioned that their experiences with TLP had surpassed each of their expectations and hopes for their child relative to their social skill development, as their children each acquired skills that they never demonstrated before. Despite researching TLP, as well as hearing the positive and negative outcomes participating in it, all of the participants still elected to choose TLP as the music-based program for their child. As I posed the closing question at each of the interviews with the participants, all of them stated again how they were pleased with the outcomes noted while their children have been participating in TLP, and look forward to these

experiences moving forward in their children's future, no matter where the future takes them.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I detailed the journal and interview process and the responses of the eight participants who were involved in this study. In conducting this study, I have learned how to listen explicitly to the participants whose responses have formulated the results of this study. While evaluating the themes that revealed themselves, I was able to connect them to the other participants based on the experiences themselves and analyzed further based on their perceived reported outcomes and progress noted in their children. Finally, I was able to reflect on each of the participant's comments on how they felt about the changes in their children since participating in TLP. The participants agreed that the selection of the TLP, an intensive, time consuming, high quality program was critical. The participant's experiences indicated TLP had a positive impact in the development of their children's language skills. The participants indicated participation in TLP had a positive impact in the development of their children's social skills. The participants felt that there was a positive impact on other areas in their children's development, such as attention, behaviors, interactions, and even sleep. In Chapter 5, I summarize the study and discuss interpretations and conclusions. I also make recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Caregivers have been looking for ways for their children to show improvements in language and social skills. Some caregivers have been looking into using complementary techniques, such as music therapy programs, and question if they would benefit their children. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of caregivers of preschool children who participated in TLP and their perspectives related to language and social skill development. To accomplish this, I conducted an interpretive phenomenological analysis to provide an opportunity to hear an account of the experiences in the voices of the participants. The research questions that guided this study asked the following:

1. How do caregivers choose a music-based program for their preschool children?
2. How do caregivers of preschool children experience their children's participation in TLP?
3. How do caregivers of preschool children perceive their children's language skills as they participate in TLP?
4. How do caregivers of preschool children perceive their children's social skills as they participate in TLP?

Phenomenology is the study of the structures of subjective experience and consciousness (Van Manen, 1990). It appeals to the immediate common interest and what is most evident. I interviewed eight caregivers whose children have participated in TLP

following their completion of a narrative journal. These caregivers were given an opportunity to form a comprehensive reflection of their lived experiences. Using an interpretive analysis process, interviews were transcribed verbatim and data were coded and emergent themes were noted. Relationships between the codes appeared and formed into domains such as feelings, challenges, and successes. The data were further reviewed to find examples of these relationships. Discrepant cases did not emerge and did not need to be addressed.

The findings of the study revealed insights into caregivers' perceptions and experiences regarding their children's language and social skill development following their participation in TLP. The findings include the following:

1. The caregiver's selection of a quality of music program played an important role.
2. The participant's experiences reflect that TLP had a positive impact in the development of their children's language skills.
3. The participant's experiences reflect that TLP had a positive impact in the development of their children's social skills.
4. The participant's experiences reflect that TLP had a positive impact on other areas in their children's development.

These findings were used to identify the themes of this study which include their perceived, reported outcomes and progress noted in their children and the essence of the overall TLP experience.

Interpretations of Findings

The interpretation of findings section of this study is organized according to the research questions. The patterns found in the findings associated with each research question were used to develop basic themes, which were used to describe the essence of the participants' perception of their children's language and social skill development following participation in TLP.

The Importance of Selecting a Quality Music-Based Program

The first research question asked how do caregivers choose a music-based program for their preschool children. Participants were asked about their memories of the selection process. The first conclusion is that the participants spent quite a deal of time looking into various programs that are offered. The participants indicated that the particular music-based program played an important role in providing opportunities for their children to develop skills that were noted to be in deficit. These deficits were mentioned by the caregivers from either a professional's evaluation, or from their experiences with their children during their everyday routines. The Listening Program was identified as the ideal music-based program compared to others that were looked at by the caregivers. The data revealed themes about the strengths about TLP when caregivers described the essence of their lived experiences with their children.

Mark described the importance of his early experiences in his research with the different music-based programs and how these experiences generated an interest as to how music can impact his child. Mark mentioned how members of his family served as a sounding board when comparing the different programs. He further mentioned how several of his family members knew of others who participated in TLP, as well as SAMONAS Sound Therapy and the Tomatis method. Mark also expressed confidence in his choice of TLP for his child as he “completed extensive research” himself.

In the interview with Bori, she mentioned that her child was quite involved and needed help in many areas. When looking into the different music-based programs, her experiences described as a more intensive review as she was seeking a program that was able to cover a group of deficits it was reported that her child presented with as well. Everyone who participated in the study had concerns about the costs of TLP, but they felt it was of the lesser of the overall concerns. Both Mark and Bori mentioned their professional connection with their therapists several times in the interview, giving praises to the attentiveness they provide to their children and how the therapists also assisted with the final decision with the music-based program selection for their children. They further mentioned knowing the intensiveness of the program would keep their children and families occupied over several weeks. Knowing this, the participants expressed that all the members of the family were going to need to change their routines in order to make the time in TLP work. In attempting to probe further in the interview, not a single participant mentioned this to be a problem.

The framework was based in part on the studies and writings of Doman (1998) and Tomatis (1963) that music stimulates cognitive and sensorimotor processes in the brain which transfers into daily functions. (p.96). It is becoming more evident that there is a gap between the brain, sensory processing, and social skill development in children. Researchers have shown that children with language and social skill deficits benefit from alternative and music-based programs. Studies such as those conducted by Ayers (1972), Doman (1998), and Tomatis (1991) incorporated Gardner's (1983) and Montessori's (1967) theories and highlighted language and social skill development in children and reflect this.

“The Listening Program techniques were designed to stimulate (exercise) the different functions of the auditory processing system (in the brain)” (Doman, 2006). This way the brain can better receive, process, and integrate information that children are exposed to in the everyday environment in which they live. Doman (1998) believed as long as the children were exposed to the music in this program, positive changes will be noticed by educators as well as parents. It would appear from the literature review that using music-based programs for improved skill development are complementing the perceived changes noted by educators and professionals as they are completing performance testing with children in schools (Cohen et al., 2006). This was a marked difference compared to prior years in education and private practice where music-based programs were either not used or not recommended as often.

The Experiences Reported While the Children Participated in TLP

The second research question asked how do caregivers of preschool children experience their children's participation in TLP. All of the participants expressed that they were pleased with the experience in participating with TLP. In addition to the language and social skill development, many of the participants related other experiences with areas of recognizable improvements following participation in TLP. These discussed improvements included sleep, attention, coordination, bicycle riding, behavior, and eating to name a few.

The literature established the conceptual framework and revealed that it is essential to look at the child as a whole, and to understand the efforts involved to maximize learning of skills. The conceptual framework was based in part of the writings by Gardner (1991) and Doman (1998). Gardner believed that we can discover the child's range of possibilities by guiding them in learning new skills and used various learning styles to do so. Using a multisensory approach when individual methods were not effective and directing learning as a completed process. Music-based programs were defined as one way to aid the brain (Doman, 1998).

Although there may be barriers in determining whether particular music-based programs are effective, children improve in multiple areas and not only language and social skills. Tomatis (1962) and Cohen et al. (2006) determined clinical documented improvements in attention, language, social, speech, gross and fine motor, and behavior skills. During interviews, Jennifer, Allison, and Amanda mentioned that the relationships

at home were better. Amanda, Heather, and Cody indicated screaming and tantrums were occurring much less frequently, which allowed the child to play more with their siblings.

Amanda described the reaction her child's teacher had after participating in the third week of TLP. She mentioned that the teacher expressed in an elated tone that Amanda's child has made so much growth in a short period of time. It was reported that Amanda's child was sitting for most of circle time, playing nicely with others, and following routines without outbursts.

The participants were asked to further discuss their child's experiences, all eight expressed with relief that it appeared that their children enjoyed the overall experience, with comments such as "there was a smile on her face when she left the facility" (Jennifer) and "it was so nice to get a hug as we walked to the car" (Heather). Doman (1998) presented findings that children were more aware of their environmental surroundings and ultimately others within the environment after starting to participate in TLP.

The Listening Program has Positive Impact in Children's Language Skills

The third research question asked how do caregivers of preschool children perceive their children's language skills as they participate in TLP. Many of the participants of this study commented that their children's language skills advanced following participation in TLP. Interviews with the participant reflected experiences that were incredible. One participant (Allison) explained her child went from single words to phrases and sentences being used. Whereas, another participant (Jennifer) mentioned that

her child just started using words and following simple directions without having to assist them. A third participant (Maria) described her child to be “asking and answering questions more than before.”

The framework was based, in part, on the studies and writings of Tomatis (1963), and Montessori (1967). Children begin to perceive and respond to the rhythm of language at a young age. This rhythm accounts for what is conveyed as intonation, inflections of voice and gestures, all which accompany talking, verbal expression. Tomatis realized how the loop between the ear and the voice were and how sounds are filtered, heard, and could be perceived in utero. Lecanuet supported Tomatis by explaining that children can combine and process the different frequencies of sounds into single phonemes as early as 6 months (Fifer et al., 1995). As children get older it is important to continue to stimulate a child’s language abilities through singing, nursery rhymes, story reading, etc. It is important to speak clearly, enthusiastically, and making continuous eye contact with the children, as it is beneficial for the children to hear adults speaking normally (Chambers & Sugden, 2003). According to Oneill (2007) children are absorbing all of these experiences with the parents early on.

Montessori (1967) advocated for a preschool education for those less than 6 years of age. It was described in the literature that Montessori felt that a child’s intelligence was higher than that of an adult, and that early learning can occur in a prepared environment. Of the eight participants, seven attend preschool or daycare either full or part time with the purpose of learning everyday skills from other children of similar ages.

None of participant's children reportedly attended the same childcare program at the time of the study.

Some programs do not prepare the child for academic success, while others have educators capable but the environments for these programs are not conducive to the learning process (Gardner, 1991). The participants described looking for both schools and therapy locations for their children. They mentioned searching for programs that provided stimulating and enriching language based activities as well as a relaxed environment. Grasha (1996) described if children were provided adequate activities, an ideal learning environment, and opportunities that are stimulated by their learning styles, they might achieve their learning potentials. However most programs children attend restrict them and their overall development because of lack of sensory information processing experiences for these children therefore limiting the children's potential (Montessori, 1967).

Jennifer described that her child's school allows the children to explore, experiment, and reach an understanding of their environment on their own. She further explained that the teachers encourage engagement, and provide models to allow for them to understand the skills being taught on their own. Hornickel (2010) believed that specific music-based programs, like TLP, alleviate the language and social skill deficits particularly in children of preschool age. Kraus and Slater (2015) believed that specific music-based programs, like melodic intonation therapy, engaged the neural networks to compensate for damaged language-processing regions in the brain. On the other hand,

some researchers questioned these intervention programs and their validity (Goodlin-Jones, Ono, Solomon, & Timmer, 2008). Prior to TLP, Jennifer's child reportedly would wander the classroom and not speak at all (whereas she would talk at home). Since participating in TLP, Jennifer's child reportedly is following the class and her peers more, as well as speaking in her class. Despite the findings in the study by Goodlin-Jones et al. (2008), this study's participants are seeing the effectiveness in their children following TLP.

The Listening Program has Positive Impact in Children's Social Skills

The fourth research question asked how do caregivers of preschool children perceive their children's social skills as they participate in TLP. According to Factor, McCracken, Kasari, & Shire (2014), interventions are necessary for some children in order to achieve optimal adaptive and social outcomes. Jennifer said her child reportedly started to participate more in classroom with her peers, is initiating more, and seeking assistance from others while at home. Jennifer expressed with excitement seeing many changes since her child started participating in TLP.

A child learns when influenced or engaged with others during every day routines and the more opportunities they have, the stronger their foundations will be in social skills (Montessori, 1967). The participants felt that TLP had a positive impact on their children's social skills. Most of the participants mentioned seeing changes in their children's social skills as early as in the second week of TLP. Maria was excited to express how her child finally sat for an entire picture book to be read. Bori expressed a

similar story where her child also sat for an entire book to be read and even helped turn the pages as well as returned it to the bookshelf. Bori also graciously shared an emotional moment with me, her child for the first time looked into her eyes and said, “I love you mommy.” I was so overwhelmed at that point, and remembered the first time I heard those words from my son and can relate with that milestone.

The conceptual framework that structured this study was based in part on the writings of Ayers (1972) and Montessori (1967). Both defined children as having individual needs and behaviors that are developed and evolve at a young age. Research shows that early intervention strategies are important for younger children’s overall developmental growth (Hiatt, 2014). Montessori documented social skills, such as smiling, infant-mother attachment, and eye gaze that are learned before the age of 6 months. She further described these skills in the early period of life critical for other areas of development (Lillard, 1996).

Several of the other participants described events being seen with their children who participated in TLP, their siblings, and other children. Social skills that were noticed, but were not exhibited prior to starting TLP reported by the participants (Jennifer, Allison, Mark, Heather, Cody, and Amanda) were: looking into the eyes of others talking to them, taking turns with others during games/activities, saying hello to other children and adults, asking for help from others, and following directions. It is these social difficulties that ultimately hinder success in the general classroom (Factor et al., 2014). Social skill development is influenced based on their childhood play experiences

(Harrison, & McLeod, 2009). Each of the participants mentioned that their experiences with TLP surpassed each of their expectations and hopes for their child.

Limitations of the Study

The study results were based on caregivers' responses in a narrative journal and interviews focusing on their perceptions of their child's changes in language and social skill development following participation in TLP. Since this was a self-report by the caregivers, the caregivers' memories were accurate as to what was reported in the journals and interviews. During the interviews, I refrained from commenting or sharing experiences with participants. Having the interview and the accompanying probes was very helpful to stay neutral during the interview process. Based on the responses in the interview probes, findings revealed that the facility enrolled the children in TLP based on ABT standards.

I found the involvement in this study to be personally challenging, yet refreshing. The participants were willing and forthcoming about their experiences, both positive and negative, and how TLP would benefit other children. The study focused on depth and analysis of the lived experiences and the perceptions of the participants were met with the sample and resulted in a meaningful study (Smith et al., 2009; Van Manen, 1990). However, due to the small number of participants, limited transferability was noted. Therefore there is a need for additional research.

Recommendations for Further Research

I explored the lived experiences and reported interpretations of caregivers whose children participate in TLP and to identify the reported perceptions of their children's language and social skill development. Due to the limited scope of this study, the results cannot be generalized to include the perceptions of all parents who had children who participated in TLP and saw changes in their child's language and social skill development. For that reason, it is recommended that this study be replicated using a larger population. Another consideration would be to include participants from other facilities.

Six of the eight participants (Jennifer, Allison, Heather, Bori, Amanda, and Maria) reported that their children were near completion with the program and stated they are planning to complete a booster of TLP in the upcoming months. Whereas the other two participants (Mark and Cody) stated that they will be waiting until their children complete TLP before making additional decisions about future use of TLP with their children. A subsequent study could be conducted to gather data about those who completed two courses of TLP also looking at the participant's perceptions of their children's language and social skill development.

An interesting area for further study might include looking at parent perceptions compared to the actual pre and posttest data completed by the therapists that are done with each child that participates in TLP to see correlation. Other studies can be conducted and look at parent perceptions with regards to other areas more specific to gross and fine

motor skills following participation in TLP. These types of studies could be helpful to parents, therapists, and even medical providers when recommending music-based programs as complimentary methods of treatment.

Implication for Social Change

The implications for social change related to caregiver's perceptions of their children's language and social skill development following participation in TLP were originally presented in Chapter 1. Chapter 4 presented the participant's experiences and stories related to TLP and their perceptions of their children's language and social skill development. The participant's stories help enrich the understanding of and experience with TLP and language and social skill development. The findings of this study are important to caregivers more so parents, as well as professionals, and even teachers. This study contributes to social change in that it provides other caregivers that are going through the investigation process of alternative programs, particularly those that are music-based, with more information related to TLP.

Caregivers more so parents will find this study helpful as it presents from other caregiver's perspectives and their lived experiences as their children were involved with TLP. The findings in Chapter 4 demonstrated that the children's language and social skills did develop following the participation in TLP. Other caregivers will find that important as well as the other indicated areas that changed from participating in TLP. The findings should aid in other caregiver's decisions when investigating alternative programs for their children.

Professionals such as therapists and specialists will find this study helpful to recommend alternative programs, such as those that are music-based like TLP as a complementary approach to the traditional services provided. Having reliable studies that reflect on lived experiences of caregivers to support the outcomes that are already based on traditional clinical findings completed by professionals. In turn, this will help solidify the overall benefits of TLP, this particular music-based program. Professionals will also feel more confident in recommending TLP as a supportive program to caregivers as they will be able to offer a more comprehensive approach for the children they provide services for, in order to acquire various skill development.

Finally, teachers will find this study helpful as a method to encourage them to move beyond their four walls in order to promote and assist the caregivers of their students with the decision to have their children partake in music-based programs. Participants in this study indicated that there were preschool teachers that noticed a change in their children's behaviors upon participating in TLP. In addition, the findings of this study could benefit teachers from using a multi-modal method of teaching and how the TLP program can be seen as a more effective approach as well as contribute to success by hands on learning of curriculum.

Concluding Statement

The lack of knowledge regarding caregivers' lived experiences in language and social skill development in their children following participation in TLP served as a problem for this study. As a result of the aforementioned problem, caregivers are looking

more in detail to alternative programs to benefit their children with the development of language and social skills. In an effort to address this problem, I used the methodology of IPA in a search for a composite meaning of several individual's description of their lived experiences as interpreted by me. This study explored the essence of the lived experiences of eight caregivers with children who had experienced participation in TLP. Analyses revealed that the participants find value in their child's language and social skill development following participation in TLP.

Based on the analysis of the data, the value of the participants' experiences with TLP in can be described in four statements. First, the participants found success with the selection of TLP, a music-based program as a complementary approach in their comprehensive services for their child. Second, the participants in this study found improvements in their child's language and social skills following their participation in TLP. Third, the participants in this study also reflected on other areas, skills that were once deficits, as areas that also improved following their child's participation in TLP. Finally, participants in this study felt that experiences with children and TLP would be helpful to others, as well as their own in the future because it thus far have seen benefits in school and other everyday activities. The results of this study will help caregivers, professionals, therapists, and teachers experience and understand the value of using a music-based program as a complementary technique to aid language and social skill development in preschool aged children.

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

(Copied from a personal e-mail to Sheri Stein-Blum received on July 18, 2013 with revised study title and process.)

[REDACTED]

July 18, 2013

Dear Ms. Stein-Blum,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled, "An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Caregivers' Support for Their Preschool Children's Language and Social Skills Development" within [REDACTED]. As part of this study, I authorize you to conduct the necessary components of your choice with those caregivers interested in participating in the study. I am aware that the individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. In addition, we as well as participants, reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Owner/Director

Appendix B: Consent Form (unsigned)

CONSENT FORM

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Caregivers' Support for Their Preschool Children's Language and Social Skills Development

Background information about the project:

You are invited to participate in a research study on the efficacy of The Listening Program[®] (TLP). The researcher is interested in the perceptions and experiences you have noted in your child's language and social skill development after they have participated in TLP.

This study is being conducted by Sheri Stein-Blum, M.S., CCC-SLP, a doctoral candidate at Walden University. You were selected as a possible participant due to your child's participation in TLP.

It is critical that you understand the involvement in this study. Therefore, please read this form, and do not hesitate to ask any questions you may have before acting on this invitation to be in this study.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete a narrative journal that would be provided in an email to you. This will take up to 60 minutes. Please return it to the researcher within 5-7 calendar days.
- Participate in a follow-up interview, either telephone, face-to-face, or internet-phone (Skype), which could last up to 45 minutes. This interview will help clarify your responses to the journal and give you the opportunity to make sure the researcher has understood your intentions.
- An interpretation of your responses will be completed and sent to you via email. You will be asked to review its content and verify that your perceptions were represented accurately. Your response is requested within one week of receiving the interpretation and it should take you approximately 30 minutes to review.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Walden University, and/or the outpatient facility you attend. If you initially decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time later without affecting those relationships.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no risks associated with participating in this study. However, there can be short and long-term benefits to participating in this study benefiting your child and others. In the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation in the study you may

terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any report of this study that might be published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Sheri Stein-Blum. The researcher's contact information is: telephone [REDACTED] and email at sheri.blum@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is: 03-19-14-0026945 and it expires on March 18, 2015.

You will receive a copy of this form from the researcher.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Printed Name of the Participant's
Caregiver _____

Participant's Caregiver's Signature _____

Printed Name of Investigator Sheri Stein-Blum, M.S., CCC-SLP

Signature of Investigator _____

Appendix C: Data Collection Tool (Narrative Journal Template)

Subject Number: _____**Date Completed:** _____

Instructions: Please document about your child participating in TLP over the documented two weeks at a time. You may use the sample below or create your own journal. Pay close attention to your feelings, and about the challenges and successes you experienced during the noted period your child is completing TLP. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at my email address below. All of your responses will be kept confidential. Thank you again for your participation.

	Weeks 1-2	Weeks 3-4	Weeks 5-6	Weeks 7-8	Weeks 9-10	Not at all/ Completed
My child is currently participating in Week ___ of TLP [®] (please check one box)						
Feelings:	Explain:					
Challenges:	Explain:					
Successes:	Explain:					

Please return your completed journal in 5-7 calendar days to Sheri Stein-Blum, the researcher of this study at sheri.blum@waldenu.edu

Appendix D: Interview Questions and Probes

Research Questions

1. How do caregivers choose a music-based development program for their preschool children?

Related interview queries and probes:

- A. What about your child's needs made you look for a program to help him/her?
- B. How would you describe your child's language skills at that time?
- C. How would you describe your child's social skills at that time?
- D. Why did you choose to have your child participate in TLP?
- E. What aspects of TLP were most attractive to you?
- F. How aware were you of the music-based aspect of the program?
- G. Did anything about the program concern you before your child started?

2. How do caregivers of preschool children experience their child's participation in TLP?

Related interview queries and probes:

- A. Please reflect on your overall experiences while your child has been participating (or was participating) in TLP. Think of your personal feelings and perceptions.
- B. What kinds of experiences do you think your child was/is having during TLP?
- C. What kinds of things have happened at home in relationship to your child's TLP activities?
- D. What aspects of the program do you think have been most important for your child, for you, and your family?
- E. What aspects of the program have been most challenging for your child, for you, and your family? (e.g., In the journal you reported ___).
- F. How are you anticipating your child's continuing participation in TLP?
- G. What kinds of factors are influencing your or lack of support of the program?

3. How do caregivers of preschool children perceive their child's language skills as they participate in TLP?

Related interview queries and probes:

- A. Please reflect upon your experiences with your child's language development as she/he participates (or participated) in TLP.
- B. What kinds of changes have you observed?

- C. You mentioned that you chose the program because ____, what did you experience that supported your expectations/hopes for your child's language development? What did not meet these?

4. How do caregivers of preschool children perceive their child's social skills as they participate in TLP?

Related interview queries and probes:

- A. Please reflect upon your experiences with your child's social skill development as she/he participates (or participated) in TLP.
- B. What kinds of changes have you observed?
- C. You mentioned that you chose the program because ____, what did you experience that supported your expectations/hopes for your child's social skill development? What did not meet these?

Closing question:

What else would you like to share about your family's experiences during your child's TLP participation?

Appendix E: Codes

<u>Code</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
LANG	Language skills
SOC	Social skills
MUS	Music
PLA	Play
SLEE	Sleep
ATTN	Attention
FEEL	Feelings/Emotions
BEH	Behaviors
INT	Interaction
COS	Cost
TIM	Time
LIST	Listening
EXP	Experiences
APP	Application
MEM	Memories
WELL	Well-being
EXP	Expression

Appendix F: Federal Certificate of Confidentiality

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Name of Signer: _____

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research “An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Caregivers’ Support for Their Preschool Children’s Language and Social Skills Development” I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant’s name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I’m officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

 Signature

 Date

Appendix G: Debriefing Handout

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Caregivers' Support for Their Preschool Children's Language and Social Skills Development

This study was designed to explore and investigate the efficacy of The Listening Program[®] (TLP) based on caregiver's perceptions and experiences with regards to their child's language and social skill development following participation in the program. Previous research has shown that TLP can improve an individual's gross and fine motor skills as well as sensory system tolerance. For example, Minson (1999) found that when once school aged children complete the base program of TLP they improved in their overall motor skills by up to one year.

The present research extends on similar work conducted by other researchers showing a connection to finishing of TLP with progress in motor skill development. This study investigated TLP with regards to language and social skill development. The present research study required completion of a narrative journal that focused specifically on the caregiver's experiences and perceptions of their preschool-aged children's language and social skill development as they participated in TLP. Follow-up communication with the researcher may be needed to further clarify details relative to the study. Each component played an integral part in the process of this entire research study.

Thank you for your help with this study. It would not be possible to continue this research without your cooperation and goodwill. I hope that you enjoyed this study. If you would like to learn more about TLP or language and social skill development you may contact me directly or consult the references listed below. I expect to have the results analyzed by the end of the fall and if you are curious about my findings please do not hesitate to contact me via telephone at [REDACTED] or email at sheri.blum@waldenu.edu.

Respectfully,

Sheri Stein Blum, M.S., CCC-SLP, Ph.D. Candidate, Early Childhood Education

Reference Citations:

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