A Cautionary Tale for the New Year

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Ben, d.o.b. 26.6.77, child of speech therapist and linguist. Language development prognosis—brilliant. Off Reynell Scales in weeks. 26.6.79. Still no sign of much Stage II L.A.R.S.P. Why not? What do? Refer to literature via intuition. What would good speech therapist do under the circumstances, if early referral? Literature replies: stimulating language environment (Ben got that—one elder brother, two elder sisters, two dogs, two cats, one hamster, three grannies, one grandpa, etc); person-directed questions, all at right level (Ben got that esp. when attempts to eat hamster, etc.); structural expansion and paraphrase of his one-word sentences (cf. P. ëgg/T. that's an ëgg/ it's a nice egg/, etc.) (Ben got that, except when no time for expand, e.g. B. (putting hamster into food processor) ñône/T. (unintell.)


Linguist and speech therapist case conference. What normal parents be doing under circumstances? Answer obvious: not be giving child so much stimulus, expansion, etc. Maybe Ben stays L.A.R.S.P. I because he sees no need to move L.A.R.S.P. II. (Possible Ben not heard of L.A.R.S.P. However, no other sign of deprivation.) What point? Adults do talking for him. Wonderful world. I say "car": adults tell me all kinds of nice things 'bout car. No need to say more if they do it. Nice life.


Linguist and speech therapist case conference. Remember first cautionary tale. What normal parents be doing under circumstances? Most normal non-fluent children; normal parents (i.e. not sp. th., linguist): non-fluency clear up. Normal parents get cross, impatient. Maybe we being too kind. Maybe non-fluent children learn stop being non-fluent 'cos get fed up with others getting at them be fluent. Maybe we better be impatient when Ben not spit out. Maybe tell him stop? Not stop children interrupt? Risky. Goes against grain, and C.S.T. brochure on subject. Still-worth try out be like normal parents. For two—three days.

Strategy collapse. Visit of sp. th. friend (Chief III). Get told off. Stammering till 4 or 5 no problem. Normal. We know, but
Chief III say: maybe too many ideas in Ben's head, wanting get out. Maybe high intelligence. Purr, purr. Go back to other strategy. O.K., O.K.

But wait—stutter seem already going? Wishful think? No, really. Reduces fast, and in two months gone. Coincidence? Not know. Perhaps touch by Chief III do it. If so, wonder what happen if touch by Area sp. th.—or by Chairman C.S.T.

Conclusion? Relevance parents linguistically handicapped? Think not. No
genralise from normal to abnormal just like that. Relevance other parents? Maybe those who try take up linguistic policy for child: watch out. Relevance professionally involved parents, like us: watch out, more so. Relevance for sp. th.? You say.