An alternative method for measuring lexical comprehension is looking-while-listening. It is non-social, has limited task demands, and requires the child to differentiate the correct referent from only one other option. For these reasons, looking-while-listening may be a more sensitive measure of comprehension than parent report.

Our research question was:
In a looking-while-listening task, do young children with ASD understand words their parents had reported them not to know?

We predicted that children’s understanding of ‘unknown’ words would be evident in the looking-while-listening task.

Children spent significantly more time looking at the target image after it was named, $p = .04$.

Baseline: 
$M = .50, SD = .10$

Test Window: 
$M = .56, SD = .12$

In a looking-while-listening task, children with ASD understood words that their parents had reported them not to know.

This is an important finding because it shows that looking-while-listening can reveal lexical knowledge in young children with ASD that may otherwise have been overlooked.

Additional work is needed to investigate the alignment between different measures of early comprehension.

Our goal should be not to identify the ‘best’ measure of comprehension, but to learn what each measure tells us and what it does not.