

### No Substitute for Human Interaction

U of T's Team Attollo and the judges of the Hult Prize must have missed a key message of Better Speech and Hearing Month in May (sponsored by the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association): there is no substitute for human interaction when it comes to children's language development. Yes, input matters. What also matters is face-to-face interaction and turn-taking. If we want children to have a rich vocabulary, we need to give them rich experiences of the real world to talk about. Someone to talk to matters as well. A Talking Sticker could be a fun supplement to language learning. But could it truly close the word gap and empower the underprivileged? The idealism is lovely, but the simplistic magical thinking needs some talking about.

**SUSAN GOWANS**  
MEd 1993, TORONTO

### Team Attollo responds:

Based on our research and observations in India during field testing, mothers from less privileged families are often busy with multiple jobs and don't have as much time to spend with their children. Additionally, they often struggle with literacy and cannot read to their children. Our device is no replacement for a mother's (or father's) face-to-face interaction, but rather can be used to fill the gap when the parent is not around and assist the parent in reading to their child.

### Safety for Seniors

I'd like to congratulate Prof. Alex Mihailidis on his brilliant work and his commitment to help the elderly lead a better and safer life. ("A Robot's Helping Hand," Summer 2015).

**EVELYN STEFOV**  
MEng 1980, THORNHILL, ONTARIO

### Corrections

"Using Their Words" (Summer 2015) incorrectly identified the members of Team Attollo. Pictured were: Lak Chinta (PhD 2009, MBA 2015), Aisha Bukhari (BAsc 2008, MBA 2015) and Peter Cinat (BAsc 2002, MBA 2014) – Jamie Austin (PhD 2012, MBA 2015) was not in the picture. The same article stated that by age three, a child from a high-income family will generally have been exposed to 30 million more words than a child from a poorer socio-economic background. In fact, the gap is closer to 10 million words. *U of T Magazine* regrets the errors.

### Write to us!

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