Supporting Language Development in Preschool Classrooms

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SUMMER in MUSIC CITY!

David K. Dickinson
Vanderbilt University

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Hypothesized Pathways from Early Competencies to Later Reading

- End of Pre-K Language
- End of K. Language
- End Gr 1 Language
- Early Print, PA
- End of K. Early Print, PA
- End Gr 1 Decoding, Reading
- Gr. 4 Comp.
Early Reading First: A Four Year Professional Development Effort
The Power of a Sustained, Well Supported Focused Effort

- OWL as curriculum
- Well-funded Early Reading First project
- 11 – 13 classrooms over four years
  - Most teachers were involved all four years.
- School district program, certified teachers
- Strong supports
  - Coaching
  - Professional development
- Data collected fall-spring. Feedback to teachers.
## Causal Evidence of Intervention Effects

(Wilson, Dickinson, & Rowe, under review)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Receptive Vocabulary Effect</th>
<th>Expressive Vocabulary Effect</th>
<th>Oral Comprehension Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year One</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Native English</td>
<td>1.30*</td>
<td>1.31*</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Two</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Native English</td>
<td>.73*</td>
<td>1.20*</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Three</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Native English</td>
<td>.76*</td>
<td>.82*</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: NS indicates not significant.
PPVT Gains by Ethnicity, Language Status

**PPVT Gains by Ethnicity**

Year

- African American (n=103)
- Hispanic (n=77)
- Other Minority (n=24)
- Caucasian (n=15)

**PPVT Gains by ELL Status**

- ELL
- non-ELL

- African American (n=107)
- Hispanic (n=74)
- Other Minority (n=26)
- Caucasian (n=15)
- Non-ELL (n=124)
- ELL (n=98)
Pre-Post Effect Sizes, 8 Sites: Language, Phonological Awareness

(n = 2,174)
FEATURES CONVERSATIONS THAT SUPPORT LANGUAGE LEARNING
#1 Tune In

- When initiating a conversation:
  - Observe, Wait, Listen before initiating
  - Establish eye contact
  - Follow the child’s interest
    - Determine “interest” by watching and listening
    - Connect to enduring themes (family, child’s special interests, recent events)
#2 Sustain Conversations

• Extend and develop a topic: Strive for Five.
  – Build understanding over multiple turns.
  – Expand and extend children’s comments.
  – Don’t fake understanding
  – Ask honest (open-ended) questions.
    • Really seek understanding
    • Avoid quiz-show teacher-directed exchanges
  – Contribute ideas, experiences, knowledge without taking over.

• During centers/choice avoid excessive movement
#3 Strive for Child Engagement

- Converse 1-1 and in small groups
- Encourage children to respond when 1-1 or in groups
- Provide interesting experiences such as props, hands-on activities, or pictures
#4 Provide Rich, Meaning-Giving Experiences

- Varied vocabulary that stretches children’s minds and vocabularies
- Well-formed sentences model adult uses and provide gentle correction when necessary
- Children are helped to understand by use of:
  - Objects, gestures, pictures
  - Explicit verbal definitions
#5 Strive for Repeated Exposures That Deepen Understanding

- As part of the same activity
- Across the classroom day in multiple settings
- Across the year
Video Clips

• Lunch conversation

• Group content lesson
Teach with the Intention to Teach Language All Day Long

• Informal conversations
• Small group activities
• Large group times: Book reading!
Your Task

• In the OWL teacher’s manual find the week when the book on your table is used.
• Note activities that are suggested during that week and the materials provided that link to that book.
• Identify
  – Activities you might enjoy
  – Materials you might use and how
  – Other books, activities or materials you might use
USE BOOK READING EFFECTIVELY
Read Books Three – Four Times

• Rereading is critical for language learning because:
  – Children repeatedly hear words used appropriately in contexts they understand. They begin to use the words.
  – Children repeatedly hear and begin to use complex sentences.

• Rereading builds comprehension.

• Each reading has a different core purpose. This helps the teacher keep a clear instructional focus.
Reading One

• Goal: overall understanding of the story:
  – characters’ names
  – motivations
  – sequence of events

• Introduce and define core vocabulary

• Draw children into enjoyment.

• Have follow-up discussion that ensures understanding of core events.
Reading Two

- Co-construct the story with children.
- The children and teacher recall and discuss the story.
- Use and prompt use of vocabulary when possible.
- Story text is read again.
- Follow-up discussion goes more deeply into the story content.
Reading Three
• Children chime to co-produce story.
• Children produce core vocabulary and phrases with support and prompting.
  – Try to get children to say key words even if they are readily memorable.
  – Encourage children to chime in with enjoyable, memorable phrases.
  – Use reading three to help prepare for reading four.
• Have a deeper and probing discussion.
  – Further explore the complexities of the story.
  – Make connections to children’s lives.
Reading Four

• Performance of the book
  – roles and lines are divided up (or group performs one role together
  – group enjoys reconstructing the story together
  – teacher prompts and supports performance

• Follow-up discussion links to children’s experiences.
Children Learn From Repeated Readings

• Kelli – all children are dual language learners. Video from spring.
Plan Your Discussion After the Story is Read

• Strive for questions that require thinking. Support comprehension.

• Take children back to the story using pictures and words.

• Plan a sequence of questions – know what you want children to understand. Don’t be afraid to tell children things.

• Use key vocabulary as much as possible. Encourage children to use words.
Plan for Building Comprehension

1. Return to the pages you worked on for planning vocabulary instruction.
2. Identify points that might confuse children.
3. Decide how you could avoid confusion by providing guidance as you read by using asides.
4. Practice integrating vocabulary instruction with comprehension teaching.
Guiding Principles

Teach with intentionality.

Reflect constantly.

Believe passionately in the importance of your work.
Be “The One” for Each Child

I am only one.
But still I am one.
I cannot do everything.
But still I can do something.
And because I cannot do everything
I will not refuse to do the something
that I can do.

*Rev. Edward Everett Hale*

from: [Singing the Living Tradition](https://www.singinglivingtradition.org),
Unitarian Universalist hymnal