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Effects of Literacy Based Communication Intervention on Expressive Language of a Young Child

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EFFECTS OF LITERACY BASED COMMUNICATION INTERVENTION ON EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE OF A YOUNG CHILD

by

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of

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Introduction and Statement of Problem

A positive correlation has been demonstrated between improved expressive language skills and intervention using literacy related activities in the school-aged populations for both normally developing and developmentally delayed children. Norris (1991) found that children's literature provides meaningful contexts that are ideal for helping school aged children learn language in a manner that is interesting an does not artificially fragment language into subcomponents or splinter skills. Children can learn to recognize and use the abstract, complex, and subtle aspects of language in the context provided in written language. "The use of written language for intervention provides a context for integrating spoken and written language. It enables the language-disordered child to acquire much of the vocabulary and the complex grammatical and discourse structures that are normally acquired though reading" (Nagy, as cited in Norris, 1991, p. 79).

Other sources have documented the importance of intervention that includes literacy related activities for expressive language development in normally developing and developmentally delayed preschool children. Watson, Layton, Pierce, and Abraham (1994) argued that preschool children with language disorders may benefit from programs that include activities designed to promote emergent literacy. "Active participation in literacy experiences has been shown to improve comprehension and language development in children" (Morrow, as cited in Watson et al., 1994, p. 139). Traditional clinical intervention techniques can be supplemented with literacy activities with language-delayed children. Ratner, Parker, and Paige (1993) found these interactions create a more natural adult-child interaction and can provide a pragmatic framework for language intervention, because it replicates a natural context within which normal language learning occurs in childhood.

However, less information is available about the effect of literacy based activities on the expressive language of children younger than preschool with developmental delays. Saint-Laurent, Giasson, and Couture (1997) stated that research on emergent literacy in young children with developmental disabilities is just beginning. Many programs have been developed and implemented in preschool classrooms but, few programs have been used with younger

populations. This research indicated a need for the development and implementation of literacy based communication programs for children before they reach preschool. In a recent study of the literacy-related behaviors of young children (Galentine, 1996) stated that many children learn about literacy and something about the use of literacy artifacts and tools at least a year before they enter preschool. The findings suggest that adults should integrate literacy components in to the activities of young children whenever possible during intervention.

This study investigates the effect of a literacy based communication intervention consisting of artifacts, experiences, and supplemental activities on the expressive communication development of a child between the ages of three and four with developmental delays in expressive language.

Review of Related Literature

Literacy Based Communication Intervention

Resent research has demonstrated that intervention based on literacy and literacy related activities has been used with many aspects of language development. "Reading stories with children fosters vocabulary development, general language development, interest in reading, and success in reading in school." (Watson, as cited in Perua & DeBoer, 1995, p. 13). The results of a recent study that examined the frequency of book reading to preschoolers (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995) supported the hypothesis that parent-preschooler reading is related to outcome measures such as language growth, emergent literacy and reading achievement. Machado (1985) explained that books can acquaint the child with new words, ideas, facts, and experiences. These are given in a different form than spoken conversation. In books, sentences are complete; in conversation they may not be. Stories an illustrations follow a logical sequence in books. Reading books aloud exposes children to grammatical forms of written language and displays literate discourse rules for them in ways that conversation typically does not. Barrentine (1996) stated that interactive read-alouds encourage children to verbally interact with text, peers, and teacher. This approach to reading aloud provides a means of engaging students as they construct meaning and explore the reading process.

Slaughter (1993) discussed the importance of the shared book approach. All components of language - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - are important when building a program of instruction in emergent literacy. The shared book approach can help develop ability in each of the components of language. "The shared book experience involves considerable oral participation. Children respond to questions about the story, predict upcoming words and phrases, guess at what might happen next, retell or reenact the story in their own words, and participate in choral reading of the story. All of these related activities allow the children's' speaking abilities to mature."(p. 9). Adults can help children master a wide variety of skills in the shared book experience by developing activities that are based on the initial read-aloud sessions.

A language arts approach to reading views reading as one part of the communication process. The language arts are interrelated - not separate, isolated skills. The teacher is responsible for showing the child the relationship between the various areas of language arts. In other words, the goal is to help the child to understand that communication is a total picture in which speaking, listening, written symbols, and the reading of those symbols are closely connected (Machado 1985). Reading books aloud exposes children to grammatical forms of written language and displays literate discourse rules for them in ways that conversation typically does not. Barrentine (1996) stated that interactive read-alouds encourage children to verbally interact with text, peers, and teacher. This approach to reading aloud provides a means of engaging students as they construct meaning and explore the reading process.

According to van Kleeck (1990) four general conclusions can be drawn regarding the role of the preschool years in literacy development:

First, almost from birth, children gradually begin learning a great deal about print, even through they may not learn how to actually decode print until they are formally taught to do so in school. Second, children's knowledge of print stems from learning about both reading an writing, both of which develop simultaneously and are closely related processes. Third, children learn about print by encountering it in meaningful, real-life social interaction where it is used to get real things done. Fourth, while some very general stages can be noted in early literacy development, ages at which children pass through these stages vary markedly (p. 41).

The role of literacy development is further explained by van Kleeck, children use a great deal of variability in the strategies in dealing with print because the development of reading is an extremely complex process. Facilitating children's knowledge of what print it, how it works, and why it is used is only a first step in introducing children to literacy.

Stictland and Morrow (1989) cited the following information from a joint statement of concerns about present practices in prefirst grade reading instruction and recommendations for improvement prepared by the Early Childhood and Literacy Development Committee of the

International Reading Association. For optimal learning, teachers should involve children actively in many meaningful, functional language experiences, including speaking, listening, writing and reading. Build instruction on what the child already knows about oral language, reading and writing. Focus on meaningful experiences and meaningful language rather than on isolated skill development. Provide reading experiences as an integrated part of the communication process, which includes speaking, listening and writing, as well as art, math and music. Encourage children s first attempts at writing, without concern for the proper formation of letters or correct conventional spelling. Use reading materials that are familiar or predicable, such as well known stories, as they provide children with a sense of control and confidence in their ability to learn. Encourage children to be active participant in the learning process rather than passive recipients, by using activities that allow for experimentation with talking, listening, writing and reading.

Expressive Language Development: Expressive Vocabulary

There are several ways to enrich the vocabulary of young children. Schwartz (1988) stated that providing direct experiences is the most significant way. Children need many and varied firsthand experiences - seeing, touching, tasting, smelling, and hearing - and they need to have language attached to those experiences. In the years from three to eight, children make rapid advances in vocabulary development when their environments are stimulating, as long as they have many opportunities to test and practice these new words against their actual referents. Books, films tapes, pictures, and models should be used to supplement the direct, firsthand experiences. Experiences with print and nonprint media can help children extend and retain what they have learned on a more concrete level.

Books can be used to supplement a child's everyday experiences. Machado (1985) stated that emphasis needs to be placed on the importance of abundant play opportunities as a valuable aid in contributing to child language acquisition. Although picture book experiences can't substitute for the child's real life experiences, interactions, and discoveries it can help make life's happenings understandable. "Reading material that is enjoyable and meaningful provides many opportunities for repeating and reinforcing the child's reading vocabulary. And meaningful context may be

especially important for learning function words, since they have virtually no lexical meaning in themselves." (Schwartz, 1988, p. 118).

Expressive Communication Development: Emergent Literacy

The term emergent literacy can be used to refer to the knowledge children gain about print before they learn how to read. "Emergent literacy refers to the first signs of abilities and knowledge with regard to written language, the period between birth and the time when children conventionally read and write" (Sulzby & Teale, as cited in Saint-Laurnet et al., 1997). Emergent literacy is a language learning perspective that emphasizes gradual and natural emergence of literacy competence. Children begin to learn about literacy at the same time and in much the same way they learn about spoken language: through active participation in everyday language and literacy events (Watkins & Brunce, 1996).

There are six major components of emergent literacy "these are (a) print awareness, (b) concepts of book print, (c) story sense, (d) phonological awareness, (e) the matching of speech to print, and (f) control of reading and writing." (Lipson and Wixson, as cited in Watson et al., 1994 p. 138). The following statements about emergent literacy summarize several concepts that appear frequently in published literature. Learning to read and write begins very early in life. Reading and writing develop concurrently and interrelatedly in young children. Literacy develops from real life situations in which reading and writing are used to get things done. Children learn literacy through active engagement.

Purpose and Objectives

The general purpose of the study was to determine the effect of literacy combined with literacy related activities on the expressive language of a developmentally delayed child, between the ages of three and four years of age. The findings of this single case study will be used to determine dependent and independent variables for a multiple case study.

The specific objectives of this study were:

1. To develop and implement a literacy based communication intervention program.

2. To observe the behaviors of the child and summarize behaviors of expressive language development in expressive vocabulary and emergent literacy over time.

Methods and Procedures

Development of a Literacy-based Language Intervention Program

Predictable Children's Book for Language Intervention

A children's book with a predictable format was selected for the intervention program. McClure (1985) stated that children's literature that is written in a predictable format can be an important resource for teaching reading to learning disabled children. These books are written in rhythmical, repetitive pattern, making it easy for children to begin predicting what will be on the page. Morrow (1989) stated that predictable books are excellent for emergent readers in shared book experiences as well as independently. They allow the child s first experience with reading to be enjoyable, and successful with minimal effort and can success encourage the child to continue efforts at reading.

The book, *Quick as a Cricket* written by Audrey Wood and illustrated by Don Wood was selected. A phrase is repeated throughout the story with slight wording changes as the story progresses. Activities for each session were planned around this book and the book was read by the clinician during each session. Morrow (1989) stated that besides offering the pleasure of familiarity, a repeated story helps develop concepts about words, print and books.

Literacy Based Activities for Communication Intervention

The activities that were selected for this intervention program were music, art, dramatic play, and games and movement. At least one activity from each of these categories was planned for each of the sessions.

Music activities.

Kolb (1996) stated that the spontaneous disposition children have toward rhythm and melody makes music an ideal tool for assisting them with the interwoven facets of language: listening, speaking, reading, and, writing. Music and song in early reading program have great value. A wide variety of music and singing activities combined with reading instruction can foster beginning reading success. Specifically, they can facilitate the development of book concepts, sight vocabulary, reading comprehension, and fluency. Slaughter (1993) stated that the shared

book experience is very compatible and easily integrated with music. The music activities developed for this intervention program were based on rhyming children's songs with wording changes to incorporate concepts and vocabulary from the selected children's book.

Art activities.

Predictable stories can spark many responses in the form of art projects. Children can use this medium to create three-dimensional objects and characters - or more elaborate recreations of entire scenes - from the stories they hear or read (Slaughter, 1993). The art activities developed for this intervention program included materials such as construction paper, crayons, markers, chalk and drawing easel, molding clay, glue, scissors, and stencils. The activities included drawing a picture and telling a story about it, cutting out and gluing letters, coloring pictures of characters from the selected book, and molding small replicas of characters from the book out of clay.

Dramatic play activities.

Dramatic play is using props and assuming roles to reenact the events depicted in the story. The dramatic play activities developed for this intervention program included acting like the animals in the book. The characters were acted with games like roaring like a loin, hiding like a clam, and marching like a rhino.

Games and movement activities.

The game and movement activities developed for this intervention program included a lion hunt with flashlights to capture pictures and puppets of the characters of the book hidden in the therapy room. Another activity was fishing in a pool with fishing rod for characters from the book.

Facilitation Procedures for Communication Intervention

Scaffolding, steps taken by the adult to facilitate the child's comprehension of the story, should be present in interactive book reading. The following scaffolding was noted during observations of parent-child interactions during interactive book reading (Dore, as cited in Snow, 1983) expansions that focus on content, extensions that add new information, questions that clarify, and answers to the child's questions were noted during observations of parent-child

interactions. The following procedures were used throughout the sessions of the intervention program preparatory sets, directed listening and thinking, wait time, cloze procedures, extensions, questioning, and parent extensions.

<u>Preparatory sets.</u>

During preparatory set activities the clinician asked about prior knowledge about the topic that would be discussed in the book and introduced new vocabulary. Norris (1991) defined a preparatory set as statements that help the child activate appropriate concepts or expectations. These are used to link new information to previously stated ideas and are provided before the child reads or listens to the story.

<u>Directed listening/thinking.</u>

Morrow (1989) explained that the basic framework for directed listening - thinking activities are first, preparation for listening with questions and discussion before reading the book, then reading the story and finally discussion after reading the book.

<u>Wait time.</u>

This procedure allows time for the child to comment or ask questions about the story or the activity that he is participating in. Wait time provides an opportunity to follow the child's lead and talk about topics that are of interest to him.

<u>Cloze procedures.</u>

Schwartz (1988) defined cloze procedures as a principle that requires the child to fill in, by use of contextual clues, words that have been deleted at regular intervals from a selected passage. This procedure is used to help the clinician determine if the child understands the concepts that are discussed in the book.

<u>Extensions.</u>

Extensions add clarification to unfamiliar words or concepts. Norris (1991) explained that extensions help a child understand language by adding clarification or function to elements of syntax, morphology, or discourse structure that may not be fully understood.

<u>Questioning.</u>

Questions are a natural part of communicating and are used to obtain information or to facilitate active problem solving. The types of questions used in scaffolding should be intended to extend thinking rather than to test for comprehension or factual recall (Norris, 1991) "Questions that promote prediction, role assumption, generalization, formulation of examples or exceptions, classification, justification, solutions, and inferencing can be used to facilitate language learning." (Blank, as cited in Norris, 1991, p. 75).

Parent extensions.

The influence of the home environment as the site for children's earliest language learning has long been recognized as significant. A study done by Cariney and Munsie (1995) supported the claim that parent participation programs have the potential to lead to significant t gains in student ability to use literacy for a ranges of purposes. For this intervention program a story extension book was sent home with the parent to read with her child.

Implementation of a Literacy-based Communication Intervention Program

The subject that participated in this study was a three year old male. Testing done at a speech and hearing clinic prior to this study indicated that he was delayed for his age in expressive language.

Over a five week period the subject attended eight sessions each lasting for thirty minutes. The sessions took place in an individual treatment room with a two-way mirror. These sessions were audio and video taped.

The clinician offered or prompted the child toward participation in the planned activities and then allowed the subject choose what he wanted to do with the materials. Machado (1985) suggested that adults offering initial experience with books should respect that a toddler may become disinterested and move on quickly to investigating other aspects of the environment.

Data collection consisted of informal assessment and parent questionnaires. Informal assessment was used because according to Morrow (1989) the best way to evaluate a child's knowledge about print and the skills required in recognizing and using it is to conduct frequent

individual observation, collect work samples, and personal interviews. The two parent questionnaires were completed before and after the intervention program. Expressive vocabulary was measured using Rescorla Vocabulary Checklist with additional target vocabulary added to the checklist (see appendix). Each intelligible word that the subject said during the sessions, both spontaneous and elicited was recorded. Emergent literacy was measured using an Emergent Literacy Checklist adapted from Roskos and Neuman (1994) and Galentine (1996). A literacy album was also used to measure emergent literacy.

Results

Expressive Vocabulary

The expressive vocabulary checklist completed before intervention indicated that the child had said 284 of the 369 words on the checklist. The same checklist completed after intervention indicateed that the child had said 329 of the 369 words on the checklist. See Figure 1. A record kept by the clinician of the elicited and spontaneous words that the client said during the sessions indicated that he said 7 words during the sessions that he did not know before intervention.
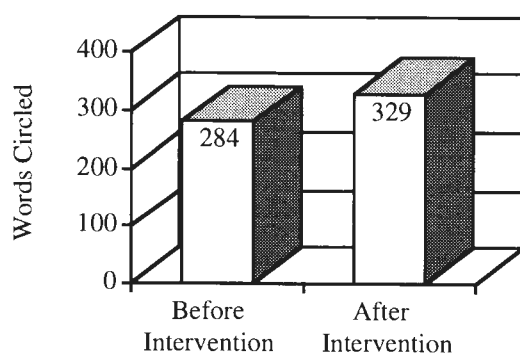

Figure 1. Expressive vocabulary checklist completed before and after intervention by the subject's parent.

Emergent Literacy

The emergent literacy questionnaire completed before intervention indicated that the child demonstrated 2 of the behaviors not at all, 4 of the behaviors sometimes, and 15 of the behaviors often. The emergent literacy questionnarie completed after intervention indicated that the child demonstrated 1 of the behaviors not at all, 4 of the behaviors sometimes, and 16 of the behaviors often. See Figure 2.
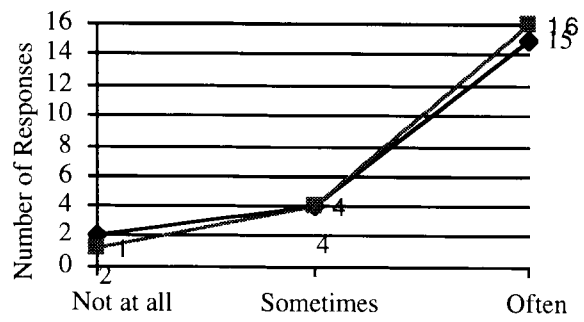
Figure 2. Emerging literacy questionnaire completed before and after intervention by the subject's parent.

Discussion

The data collected demonstrate improved expressive language in the areas of expressive vocabulary and emergent literacy. However, the data collection methods and procedures may not have been reliable enough that any conclusions should be drawn about the effectiveness of this intervention approach. The two methods of collecting data, parent report and clinician report may be biased and an additional objective measure is needed to ensure that the data collected is reflective of the behaviors being measured.

Possible research implementation problems include limited time period for the intervention, individualization to subject's needs instead of structured research design, and reliability of parent report. Factors such as fatigue and illness of the subject influenced the data collected from one session to another

Further research would be helpful in this area to determine if literacy and literacy based communication intervention can increase the expressive language development of young children with developmental delays.

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Appendix

Expressive Vocabulary Checklist

FOOD
apple
banana
bread
butter
cake
candy
cereal
cheese
coffee
cookie
crackers
drink
egg
food
grapes
gum
hamburger
hot dog
ice cream
juice
meat
milk
orange
pizza
pretzel
soda
soup
spaghetti
tea
toast
water

TOYS
ball
balloon
blocks
book
bubble
crayons
doll
present
slide
swing
teddy bear

OUTDOORS
flower
house
moon
rain
sidewalk
snow
star
street
sun
tree

ANIMALS
ant
basset
bear
beaver
bee
beetle
bird
bug
bunny
cat chicken
chimp
clam
cow
cricket
dog
duck
elephant
fish
fox
frog
horse
kitten
lamb
lark
lion
lizard
monkey
moth
mouse
ox
pig
poodle
puppy
rhino
salamander
shark
shrimp
snail
snake
tiger
toad
turkey
turtle
whale

PLACES
church
home
hospital
library
McDonalds
park
school
store
zoo

ACTIONS
bath
bother
breakfast
bring
bump
buzz
catch
clap
close
come
cough
cut
dance
dinner
dive
doodoo
eat
feed
finish
fix
flip
flop
flutter
fly
frighten
get
give
go
have
help
hit
hop
jump
kick
kiss
knock
look
love
lunch
make
nap
outside
pattycake
peekaboo
peepee
push
read
ride
run
scurry
see
show
sing
sit
slap
sleep
slip

slither
sniff
spatter
splash
startle
sting
stop
swat
swim
take
throw
tickle
topple
walk
want
wash
wake
wobble

HOUSEHOLD
bathtub
bed
blanket
bottle
bowl
chair
clock
crib
cup
door
floor
fork
glass
knife
light
mirror
pillow
plate
potty
radio
room
sink
soap
sofa
spoon
stairs
table
telephone
towel
trash
TV
window

PERSONAL
brush
comb
glasses
key

money
paper
pen
pencil
penny
pocketbook
tissue
toothbrush
umbrella
watch

PEOPLE
aunt
baby
boy
daddy
doctor
girl
grandma
grandpa
lady
man
mommy
own name
pet name
uncle
Ernie, etc.

CLOTHES
belt
boots
boat
diaper
dress
gloves
hat
jacket
mitten
pajamas
pants
shirt
shoes
slippers
sneakers
socks
sweater

VEHICLES
bike
boat
bus
car
motorbike
plane
stroller
train
trolley
truck

BODY PARTS
arm
belly
bottom
chin
ear
elbow
eye
face
finger
foot
hair
hand
knee
leg
mouth
neck
nose
teeth
thumb
toe
tummy

MODIFIERS
allgone
allright
bad
big
black
blue
brave
broken
busy
clean
cold
dark
dirty
down
gentle
good
happy
heavy
hot
hungry
large
lazy
little
loud
mean
mine
more
nice
open
pretty
quick
quiet
red
sad

shut
shy
slow
small
stinky
strong
tame
that
this tired
tough
up
weak
wet
white
wild
yellow
yucky

OTHERS
A, B, C, etc
away
booboo
byebye
curse words
here
hi, hello
in
me
meow
my
myself
nightnight
no
off
on
out
please
Sesame St.
Scuse me
shut up
thank you
there
under
welcome
what
where
why
woofwoof
yes
you
yumyum
1, 2, 3, etc.

Emergent Literacy Questionnaire

	Not at all	Sometimes	Often
1. Holds or manipulates writing tools.			
2. Likes to draw.			
3. Pretends to write.			
4. Makes circles when drawing or writing.			
5. Makes lines when drawing or writing.			
6. Will ask for something to write with.			
7. Will ask for something to write on.			
8. Points to pictures in books.			
9. Points to print in books.			
10. Recognizes own name in print.			
11. Writes own name.			
12. Understands that print is read left to right.			
13. Understands that print is read top to bottom.			
14. Associates meaning with print.			
15. Correctly positions a book to read.			
16. Indicates when it is time to turn the page.			
17. Assists in turning the pages.			
18. Talks about pages while looking at a book.			
19. Uses pictures to 'read' a book.			
20. Expresses interest in stories.			
21. Asks to have stories read.			

Book

Quick as a Cricket by Audrey Wood

1. I'm as **quick** as a **cricket.**
2. I'm as **slow** as a **snail.**
3. I'm as **tall** as an **ant**.
4. I'm as **large** as a **whale**.
5. I'm as **sad** as a **basset**.
6. I'm as **happy** as a **lark**.
7. I'm as **nice** as a **bunny**.
8. I'm as **mean** as a **shark**.
9. I'm as **cold** as a **toad**.
10. I'm as **hot** as a **fox**.
11. I'm as **weak** as a **kitten**.
12. I'm as **strong** as an **ox**.
13. I'm as **loud** as a **lion**.
14. I'm as **quiet** as a **clam**.
15. I'm as **tough** as a **rhino**.
16. I'm as **gentle** as a **lamb**.
17. I'm as **brave** as a **tiger**.
18. I'm as **shy** as a **shrimp**.
19. I'm as **tame** as a **poodle**.
20. I'm as **wild** as a **chimp**.
21. I'm as **lazy** as a **lizard**.
22. I'm as **busy** as a **bee**.
23. Put it all together,
24. And you've got me!