Enhancing Vocabulary & Reading Comprehension through Oral Language Instruction in Preschool & Primary Grades

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Why Language Instruction?

• Foundation for School Success
• Precise Communication
• Reading Comprehension
• Following Directions and Figuring Out
• Success and Failure
Meaningful Differences
In the Everyday Experience of Young American Children

• Studied 42 families for 2 1/2 Years
  • 13 higher SES children
  • 23 middle/lower SES children
  • 6 low SES children

• Observed every month for 1 hour
• Starting when a child was 7-9 months old
Cumulative Language Experience in a typical week

- High SES 215,000 words of language experience
- Middle SES 125,000 words of language experience
- Low SES 62,000 words of language experience

Betty Hart & Todd R. Risley
Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children
Cumulative Language Experience at age 4

- Low SES 13,000,000 words
  125,000,000 more instances of discouraging feedback

- Middle SES 26,000,000 words
  100,000 more instances of discouraging feedback

- High SES 45,000,000 words
  560,000 more instances of discouraging feedback

Betty Hart & Todd R. Risley
Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children
Farkas & Beron, 2001, in study of family linguistic culture and social reproduction found that verbal skills from parent to child are strongly linked, and that students entering school with underdeveloped vocabularies are highly likely to fail in their basic skill development, yet the effects could be countered by intensive, early school-based assistance.
A good language program helps children

1. See and observe
2. Listen and respond
3. Talk to convey information
4. Think by processing information and drawing conclusions
5. Learn and remember information
6. Comprehend written text
7. Deal with sentence structures of increasing complexity
Oral Language Instruction

Interactive: Why?
Meaningful: Why?
Sequential: Possible?
One to One?
Groups?
Whole Class?
Necessary? You decide.
Record keeping?
Instructional Considerations for Listening and Speaking

Demonstrations:
  Pictures
  Actions
  Objects
Words with…..
Words alone – explanations

Responses:
  Words
  Sentences
  Questions
Practice
Applications
More:
The Language for Learning program was originally Developed with four year olds.

Over time it was used more in kindergarten.
Zig wrote in *Preventing failure in the Primary Grades* about the language program,

“This program is based on the ‘minimum-essential’ concept. It’s goal is to teach the greatest number of concepts and applications with the fewest number of rules and conventions.”
Our language program emphasizes:

Statement Making
Question Asking
Vocabulary Acquisition
Logical Reasoning
Information/ World Knowledge
Listening and Speaking
Brain research

Neville’s 25 year of research on second language acquisition—Suggests that from a comparison of open and closed class words, second language learners can always acquire new vocabulary (open class), but not syntactic structures (closed class)
Direction Giving Language

Preposition
Tense
Singular/Plural
Negation
Some, All, None
Or, And
First, Next, Last
Before - After
More:
Higher order thinking Skills (HOTS) + Vocabulary Builders Plus

Part/Whole – names & functions

Classifications – members & rules

Opposites & Synonyms

Locations

More:
General Knowledge

Names
Days of the week
Months of the year
Seasons of the year
Colors & Shapes
Body parts
Materials
More:
To Do
Family Names
Common Objects
Number Words
Street Signs
“Everyday Language” of Reading Comprehension

Who
Where
Why
What
When
Characters
Events
Summarize
Resolution
More:

Imbedded in statements
“Thinking” Language of Reading Comprehension

Same – Different
If – Then
True – False
Only
Analogies
Definition
Description
More:
Getting Some Action from Actions!

Prepositions
Tense
Singular/plural
Negation
Some, All, None
Or, And
Before, After
Same – Different
More:
Oral Language Activities

Games
Songs/Dances
Rhymes
Chants
Stories
Tapes
Video
Teacher/Student Interactions
L4L with ELL students (English Language Learners)

- Gersten, 1985
- Gersten & Woodward, 1995

- Anecdotal evidence from SRA sales records
- Brian Ito’s testimony, Hawaii kindergarten teacher with huge bilingual populations, including Chinese, Polynesian, Vietnamese, Korean
Implications for ELL students

- L4L teaches Academic Language, aka “the language of Instruction”, not “playground language”
- Add Show and Tell to L4L program for additional expressive language experience

- Supplement with the Language cards, etc in kit
Oral Language Instruction

Interactive: Why?
Meaningful: Why?
Sequential: Possible?
One to One?
Groups?
Whole Class?
Necessary? You decide.
Record keeping?
Problems

- Relationship of vocabulary, knowledge, world knowledge, and background to reading comprehension
- Relationship of structure of spoken language to reading comprehension
- How to make “natural” into instructional?
- How to make “instructional” into natural?
Research base for the L4L program

• Hart & Risley, 1995
• Farkas & Beron, 2001
• Follow Through results

• Becker, 1992 (A 20-year Review of Direct Instruction)
  - Adams, G.L., 1996
  AIR study, 1999
  (Gave Direct Instruction the highest possible score
   For evidence of positive effects on student achievement)
  • Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966
    (Teaching Disadvantaged Children in the Preschool)
• Studies comparing academic orientation vs cognitive programs

*Lloyd, et.al., 1981 - DI showed significant cognitive and reading gains over control group


*Mills, Dale, Cole, Jenkins, 1995 - Overall benefits of early DI appear to continue with significant effects in tests of reading comprehension

*Weisberg, 1984 - preschoolers with low-income Backgrounds make substantial reading progress in DI
Bilingual Studies

Gersten & Woodward, 1995
Found L4L superior to bilingual education for immigrants in CA and TX

Gersten, 1985
DI language and reading program was found to have improved high school graduation and lowered retention over grades
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