



The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development

LANGUAGE PLANNING IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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This article provides a discussion of ways parents and teachers can provide language-enriching experiences for preschool children. Focussing specifically on children in group settings where the mother tongue is not spoken, the article reviews what is known about the factors influencing language development. Issues in the implementation of bilingual preschool programmes are also highlighted.

The preschool years see rapid, dramatic developments in children's abilities, particularly in the areas of language and cognition. Children of 18 months express their thoughts in gestures or in single-word utterances, but by 6 years of age they can express themselves in long, complex sentences. During these early years children's expressive vocabularies expand from only a few dozen words to several thousand. The purposes for language use also change and become more complex. These developments parallel and rely on equally astounding cognitive developments—the abilities to plan, to remember, to categorize taxonomically¹, to learn intentionally, to

¹ Taxonomy is a term for the science of classification, especially in biology.

entertain a variety of perspectives, to understand complex and abstract phenomena, to analyze problems and solve them.

A global perspective on language learning for preschool education must take certain factors in account. First, it must reflect that preschoolers' social environments—where cognitive and language development takes root—increasingly include group care settings. In some instances preschool group care functions as an alternative to home care, and focuses on protecting health, promoting nutrition, and providing enjoyable experiences to the children served. In other cases preschool group care is designed to help children develop interpersonal skills and to become members of a peer group. In still other situations group care is seen as "preschool" where activities are organized into a "curriculum" designed to promote cognitive development, language, and early literacy skills.

A second factor to emphasize in language planning for preschool education is that a majority of the world's children are living in multilingual societies where children themselves are either bilingual or multilingual or are expected to develop those skills. Some children are first confronted with the need to learn a new language during their initial exposure to formal education, but in many cases this happens even earlier during preschool in group care settings. Central questions for educators about language development include the following:

- What does normal language development look like?
- How do we know which children are showing slow or deviant development and may need special help?
- Does bilingualism retard language development?
- How do we design environments to ensure optimal language development?
- How does language development relate to literacy?

The goal of this article is to illuminate the nature of practices employed to provide language experience and teaching to preschool aged children. Focussing especially on children in group care settings when the mother-tongue is not spoken, the article attempts to (1) briefly review what is known about language development in preschool children and the factors influencing it; (2) discuss issues that arise when considering language-oriented preschool education; and (3) present several case studies illustrating different choices about language for preschool children.

Language Development of Preschool Children

In this discussion the term “preschool children” pertains to children older than 2 years of age. The upper end of the preschool age-range is difficult to establish, since formal schooling starts in some countries as early as 4 years and in others as late as 7, 8, or even 9. However, we will focus in this discussion on the years 2 through 5. In considering issues and programmes, we include in later sections of this paper programmes designed for older children if they are not part of the local formal “public” educational system. In discussing language acquisition, we base our descriptions

primarily on work done with English speaking middle-class children, although descriptions of children learning other languages in diverse cultural settings are becoming increasingly available.

What can children reasonably be expected to learn about language during the years 2 through 5? First and most obviously, children learn words; estimates for the size of a 6-year-old's vocabulary range from 8,000 to 12,000 words. The lower figure works out to 3.6 words a day or over 25 words a week! Of course many of these words represent new concepts as well. In these cases several exposures to the word in information-rich contexts are necessary for children to learn the words (e.g., a word like "harvest" might be learned from repeated discussions of "the grain harvest," "harvesting the crops," "after the harvest," etc.). However, if children already know something about a particular semantic² domain (e.g., if they already know several color terms or several different animal names), they can learn the meaning of a new word in that domain from hearing it used (in a way that is understandable) only once or twice.

In addition to words, children by the age of 5 learn an enormous amount of detail about how the language in their environment works. Much of this detail has to do with form—which prefixes or suffixes or little function words express particular meanings (see the papers in Slobin 1985 for more information about cross-language differences). But a large part of what children learn about language has to do with meaning itself.

Thus, during their preschool years children learn how to use at least some parts of the morphological systems of their language to express semantic distinctions (e.g., the difference between magnet and magnets, the difference between jump, jumping and jumped). They also can learn to control morphological differences that are not semantically motivated, such as gender in German, French, or Hebrew, or noun class in Russian. Particularly in languages more intricate in form than English, such learning requires hearing and analyzing many individual instances to see the underlying patterns. English-speaking children display their discovery of those underlying patterns when they make errors such as *foots* for *feet*, or *bringed* for *brought*. These errors are common in any language that permits exceptions to its morphological rules and patterns. Thus, Spanish-speaking children learn early on that feminine words typically end in *-a* and masculine words in *-o*, so they regularize exceptions (producing *la flora* for *la flor*, and *el mano* for *la mano*), and Hebrew-speaking children note very early that many present-tense verbs start with **m-** prefixes (**mi**, **me**, or **ma**), and incorrectly use this prefix as a present-tense marker with groups of verbs where present and past tense are actually the same form (e.g., *mesim* instead of *sam*, or *mirademet* instead of *nirdemet*). The crucial thing to note about these errors is that they are, in fact, indicators of progress in language acquisition; thus, while it is considered nonstandard for an adult English speaker to say *brang* for *bring*, such a form is an indicator of linguistic sophistication and thoughtful analysis in a 5-year-old.

Whether or not 5-year-olds have fully mastered the morphological system of their language has to do in part with the internal complexity of that system. Plural is relatively easy in English and few mistakes are made after about age 3. In Arabic, the formal marking of plural is much more complex (though the idea is, of course, perfectly simple), and children still make mistakes until 10 or 12. There are five classes of nouns and seven cases in Russian, with a complex system of

² Semantic means relating to meaning in language, to connotation of words.

noun endings, many of which are ambiguous. Russian children still make errors with this complex noun morphology³ through the early school years; the same basic system of case and noun classes is much more regular in Polish, and children learn it much earlier. German- French- Hebrew- and Spanish-speaking children typically no longer make mistakes with gender by about age 5, but Polish children still have problems with this distinction, which is marked only on plural nouns.

Children also learn about word order by age 5. English speaking children make such statements as “Can I take it off and put it on?” in which the subject and verb have switched places, and “I don’t want any cheese,” in which the negative is correctly marked. Five-year-olds are typically able to understand passive sentences like “The boy was kissed by the girl,” which confuse younger children. And they are generally able to produce sentences that have adult-like word order. Turkish children typically put objects first and verbs last, like Turkish adults, whereas French children put subjects first and objects last, like French adults.

Most languages have a few areas of difficulty that school-aged children have not yet mastered, but usually the basic syntactic system is largely acquired by about age 5. An obvious difference between the speech of a 2-year-old and that of a 5-year-old is in pronunciation. Two-year-olds often make phonological⁴ simplifications (goggie for doggie, ehpane for airplane) and often find substitutes for difficult sounds or sound combinations (waywo for yellow, peam for cream). Most 5-year-olds, however, have basically achieved adult-like pronunciation. In addition, 5-year-olds often have started to think about words as sounds, not just as communicative symbols. Thus, 5-year-olds typically use word play or games that reveal their understanding of rhyme, of concepts like “the first sound” in a word, and even of ambiguity (one word with two meanings). Five-year-olds who know the names or the sound values of the letters in their alphabet will often produce spontaneous spellings that reveal their analysis of the sound structure of words.

Of course, 5-year-olds have not finished with language learning, and many skills will continue to develop. First, their word learning rate will triple until they achieve adult-like vocabularies of 70,000+ words by the age of 20. Second, their ability to talk about complex topics (e.g., politics, agriculture, literature) will develop along with the cognitive capacity to consider such complexities. Third, their vocabulary for expressing the relationship between thoughts will grow. Fourth, their control over non-literal uses of language (irony, metaphor, sarcasm), over sociolinguistically complex uses of language (condolence talk, ritualized speech-making, jokes, issuing and declining invitations, arguing a legal case, praying, etc.), over politeness dimensions, and over many other matters will increase dramatically as they mature. Five-year-olds are just beginning to transfer their oral language skills to those needed for literacy.

Facilitating Preschool Children's Language Development

Most of the research on how the environment fosters language development relates to the early period (ages 1 to 3) and to children’s interactions with their mothers at home, not in group care settings. For young children, one helpful style of interaction is a highly responsive one, in which

³ Morphology means the study of word formation in a language.

⁴ Phonology is the study of sounds in a language.

the adult lets the child decide what to talk about, expands on that topic, works hard to figure out what the child means, suggests new activities, and pays more attention to what the child wants to say than about whether it is being said correctly. This picture shows an optimal language teacher who assumes the role of cooperative conversational partner rather than taking an explicitly didactic or directive role. The studies on which this picture is based have mostly been carried out in middle-class, English-speaking families, a cultural group within which responsive, non-directive, child-centered parenting is considered desirable (see Table 1 for a description of when different words and types of language appear). In this group children and adults have relatively equal social status and children are expected from a very early age to function as conversational partners (Cazden 1988; Snow 1989).

Table 1

Milestones in early language development*

<i>Milestone</i>	<i>Age (months)**</i>	<i>Milestone</i>	<i>Age (years)**</i>
Responds to bell	1-1.5	Says 3 words other than Dada or Mama	1.5
Vocalizes (not crying)	1.5	Combines 2 different words	2
Laughs	2.5	Points to 1 named body part	2
Squeals	3.5	Names 1 picture	2.5
Turns to voice	7.5	Follows directions	2.5
Says Dada or Mama (non specific)	9	Uses plurals	3
Imitates speech sounds	10	Gives first and last name	3.5
Says Dada or Mama (specific)	12.5	Comprehends cold/tired/hungry	3.5
		Comprehends prepositions	4
		Recognizes colors	4
		Defines opposite analogies	5

Defines words	6
Composition of 3 objects	6

*Source: Language component of the " Denver Development Screening Test." Frankburg W.K. and Dobbs J.B. (1969). University of Colorado Medical Centre.

**The ages represent 50 percent of middle-class American children. Normal infants and young children show wide variations in the ages at which they develop these language capabilities.

In other cultures the rules governing parent-child interaction and parental roles are quite different. In Samoa, for example, social status is closely connected to age, and the idea of engaging a child in conversation as a social equal would seem unnatural. Among the Kaluli of Papua, New Guinea, it is considered better to ask children to talk as adults about adult matters than to descend to their level in talking to them. In these cultures we would not expect the responsive style of talk that facilitates language acquisition for American children to work well.

Language teaching is most useful to young children if it is presented in the context of their own activities and attempts at expression. As they get older, children can use language to learn language—they no longer need to encounter every new language skill within a meaningful context. Furthermore, they become increasingly capable of learning intentionally, of attending to and benefiting from explicit instruction, and of using models as sources of learning. At this stage simply responding to the child's interests might not optimally stimulate language development. Talking about a wide variety of complex topics, modeling an enriched vocabulary, engaging in talk about talk itself, discussing word meanings, challenging children to explain themselves and to justify their own thinking, setting higher standards for comprehensibility, and explicitly correcting errors are important in the language development of 4-, 5-, and - 6-year-old children. Children in this age-range are also expected to control certain language-related literacy skills that probably emerge from being read to, from experience in looking at books with adults, and from experience with letters, with pencils and paper, and with observation of adult literacy activities. Parents foster such skills when they manage the environment to provide and encourage the use of literacy artifacts.

With respect to group care settings, one study has shown that the quality of the language environment of the day care centre has a large impact on the language development of the children enrolled (McCartney 1984). The amount of expressive verbal interaction with caregivers has a specific effect on the children's language development. Children's language level is related to opportunities to initiate conversations with caregivers and is negatively related to the number of conversations initiated with peers. For example, observational studies that compare children's talk at home and at school consistently find that homes are the richer environment.

One such comparative study was carried out in England (Tizard and Hughes 1984; Tizard 1981). The researchers discovered that the average child had almost three times as many conversations per unit of time with a parent at home as with a caregiver in nursery school and that the home conversations continued for twice as many adult/child turns. As Tizard says about these results,

A brief conversation may suffice for demands to be made and either met or denied, encouragement to be given, suggestions to be made, information or orders to be given, and even for a question to be answered. But any deep exchange of meaning *takes time to achieve* (Tizard 1981).

Thus, many of the characteristics of the optimal group care centre resemble those of the language-rich home environment where numerous opportunities to talk one-on-one with an interested and responsive adult take place. Children with experience in group care settings, however, also learn the important rules for playing, conversing, negotiating, and arguing with peers.

The Importance of Early Language for Emergent Literacy

The quality of the setting has an important effect on cognitive as well as language development. During the preschool years language and cognition are very closely related. Stimulating children's language involves enriching their vocabulary, their understanding of how things work, their knowledge about numbers, about weather, about how things grow, about how people live in other parts of the world, and dozens more such topics. Furthermore, preschool programmes that prepare children for schools in which reading and writing are central activities need to plan ways to stimulate the development of pre-literacy skills. Although 3-year-olds do not need to start learning how to read formally, they can learn through preschool activities a great deal about letters and the sounds they stand for, about how to write important words like their own names, about the many purposes writing is used for, about books and the stories in them. Children who start formal reading instruction with this kind of background have a head start over children with little exposure to either the forms or uses of literacy.

Enough research evidence exists concerning the importance for later school success of beginning, or emergent, literacy experiences during the preschool years to merit consideration here. Admittedly, research is concentrated in England and the U.S. But to the extent that children in Third World countries also face Western-type educational expectations once they enter primary school, this research should have general relevance.

The most extensive evidence is from a large-scale longitudinal study of children in Bristol, England (Wells 1985). Wells found that the single most important influence on children's success in learning to read in primary school was the extent of their direct experience with print during their preschool years. Such experience can include being read to as well as attempting to write. Wells could only report with confidence about the benefits of regular book-reading to young children because he found little evidence of their attempts to write during his visits to the home. But other researchers have documented the benefits of early writing activities and children's observations of reading and writing in their environment.

As far as we now understand, preschool literacy experiences prepare children for primary school in several specific ways:

- *Deciphering the written language code.* Following along as an adult reads aloud, asking questions about words in books or signs in the social environment, and trying to write for oneself—even in invented spelling—all serve to focus children's attention on written language symbols and on how they combine to represent oral language.
- *Comprehending text meaning.* Discussions about the text being read help to accustom the child to deriving meaning from words alone, apart from the momentary physical interpersonal context. The fact that books often contain more varied vocabulary and sentence patterns than everyday conversation is an added benefit.
- *Appreciating the function of reading and writing.* Being read to contributes to a personal motivation to learn to read; and seeing people writing helps children understand that writing is a useful activity in their community.

While these benefits of deciphering, comprehension, and appreciation are important for all children, they may be especially important in communities where having books to look at and materials to write with and seeing adults engage in literacy activities are not widespread outside of school settings. For these reasons, preschools whose objectives include reducing the risks of primary school failure should attempt to provide such beginning literacy experiences.

Fortunately, the particular language in which children have such literacy experiences does not seem to matter as much as the fact that they do happen, consistently and regularly, in some language. Canadian psychologist J. Cummins (1986) has reviewed research evidence in support of what he calls the “linguistic interdependence hypothesis.” In formal terms, considering two languages in the children’s environment, L_x and L_y:

To the extent that instruction in L_x is effective in promoting proficiency in L_x, transfer of this proficiency to L_y will occur provided there is adequate exposure to L_y (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn L_y.

Cummins goes on to explain in more detail:

In concrete terms, what this principle means is that in, for example, a Spanish-English bilingual programme, Spanish instruction that develops Spanish reading and writing skills (for either Spanish L₁ or L₂ speakers) is not just developing Spanish skills, it is also developing a deeper conceptual and linguistic proficiency that is strongly related to the development of literacy in the majority language (English). In other words, although the surface aspects (e.g. pronunciation [and word order] etc.) of different languages are clearly separate, there is an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency which is common across languages. This "common underlying proficiency" makes possible the transfer of cognitive/academic or literacy-related skills across languages.

Cummins’ research emphasizes that preschool programmes should prevent situations where children with few literacy experiences outside of school confront, for the first time, both literacy and a second language when they enter primary school.

Multilingual Preschool Children at Home and in Group Care

Four types of situations in which preschool children learn a second language can be defined, including home settings, submersion settings, immersion settings, and bilingual preschools. The characteristics of these situations are discussed below.

Home settings. Some children grow up in homes where two or more languages are used. Studies of the language development of such "native bilinguals" (e.g., Fantini 1985; Saunders 1988; Taeschner 1983) suggest they behave much like monolingual children. They manage to learn two language systems in about the same time and to about the same degree of skill as monolingual children take to learn one. Of course, if such children stop hearing or using one of their languages, they typically lose it quite quickly.

Submersion settings. Very often children have to become bilingual at the time when they enter group care settings. For example, immigrant families' children may be almost entirely monolingual until they enter a day care or nursery school, where they have to learn the societal language. Group care is, in fact, utilized as a procedure for speeding assimilation of nonnative children in Sweden, where children of immigrant families have priority for places in government-subsidized day care centres. Such settings are called "submersion" settings for second language learning, since the learners are submerged in a situation where their first language is not used at all. Often no one in that situation even understands the children's first language.

It is a common belief that children such as those studied by Tabors (1987) and by Meyer (1989) will learn their new language quickly and easily, benefiting from the child's ability to "just pick languages up." Some have argued that this ability relates to a critical developmental stage, when the brain is more flexible and capable of new learning than is the older child's or adult's. In fact, a normally developing preschool child can take quite a long time to learn a second language. It is not uncommon for such children to start out refusing to speak at all, for a period of weeks or even months. They are, of course, learning a great deal during this silent period, starting to pick up words, phrases, sounds and meanings; but they are also failing to understand a good deal of what is being said around them. It is hard to assess exactly how much preschoolers understand of the language they hear, since they can look as if they understand just by attending to other children's activities and joining in. Children are very clever in understanding the structure of the classroom, the daily schedule, and what is expected of them. These nonverbal understandings help them ultimately to learn the language that accompanies the activities.

Sometimes children living in largely monolingual societies like the U.S. come to reject the use of a different familial language, refusing to speak it in public, or at all. Parents who continue to use the family language at home without forcing their children to speak it can at least maintain the children's comprehension ability. Moving back home, or even visiting for just a month or two in an environment where the other language is used widely typically enables the child to catch up quickly in production. But the issue of maintaining two languages is not a negligible one for young children, for whom loss can occur much more quickly than acquisition.

Immersion settings. Preschool-aged children in immersion settings can also acquire second languages. The term immersion derives from an innovative way of teaching second languages first used in Quebec to teach French to English speakers. In immersion programmes for school-aged children, a class of same-language children is taught by a native speaker of the target language, entirely in the target language. Thus, the curricula language is one the children do not know at all (to begin with), but an entire group of children who can talk to one another face this experience together. Their teacher can understand and respond to the children's language (although teacher talk is all in the second language), and the nature of the teacher's talk is designed to be adapted to the needs and capacities of the children.

Immersion programmes have been used with preschool-aged children in precisely this way to start the children out early in the second language. An example of the use of immersion with preschool-aged children is presented in our case study of the Maori in New Zealand.

Bilingual preschools. Bilingual programmes are those in which two languages are used by the teaching staff. Although children may enter school speaking only one language, in principle they emerge competent in both. Bilingual programmes have been used in a wide variety of settings with different purposes: to ease the children's transition into the school language (transitional programmes), to maintain development of the home language while fostering acquisition of the school language (maintenance programmes), and to enable two groups of children to become bilingual (two-way programmes). Preschool programmes that are explicitly bilingual are not common.

Planning Preschool Environments for Language Learning

In reviewing descriptions of preschool programmes from around the world, we have noticed an important difference in the attention given to language planning. In situations where some kind of language change is a programme goal—whether from children's mother-tongue to a national language or to a heritage language that is being revitalized—then language goals are prominent in the overall curriculum. But where no language change is intended, language seems to recede in importance. It becomes part of the background, something taken for granted that is not consciously attended to by planners or teachers. Because of the importance of language in child development as well as in readiness for primary school, we believe that all preschools must give it attention. The following section highlights factors to consider in the creation of environments that enrich children's language and cognitive development.

■ ADULT-CHILD RATIO, GROUP SIZE AND ORGANIZATION

Adult-child conversations in a preschool are apt to be limited for several reasons: the large number of children per adult and the way the adults and children are organized into working groups; and the lack of continuity in the adult-child relationships resulting in teachers' relative ignorance of each child's life outside of school. Adult-child ratio and group size are related, and both are important. Summary statistics in programme descriptions and governmental regulations usually give or prescribe the adult-child ratio. In the Tizard (1981) study, for example, the average ratio was 1 (adult):10 (children). In situations where infants are in group care,

recommended ratios in the U.S. usually drop to 1:4. In developing countries reports of the ratio of adults to young children are much higher: 1:28 in a Bolivian study (Barrera de Martinez, 1985); 1:55 in one preschool in Kenya.

The number of paid staff is a major, probably the major budget item for most preschools. But the teaching staff can often be augmented by volunteers. In many cases, mothers become paraprofessional teachers, while fathers are primarily involved in building the centres. But in an Islamic preschool in Kenya, construction of two huts was shared by 30 fathers and 60 mothers who worked with male and female trainers respectively. Older members of the community not currently in the work force are another available group, and their language abilities are especially valuable in programmes of language revitalization.

But ratio is not the only number that counts. A large national study of day care in the U.S. found that group size mattered as well.

Across all sites, smaller groups are consistently associated with better care, more socially active children and higher gains on developmental tests (Ruopp et al. 1979).

Thus, 1 adult for 10 children is preferable to 2 for 20 or 3 for 30, even though the adult-child ratio is the same in all three cases.

Three experiences can be suggested for the importance of group size. First, the larger the group, the more hectic the environment is apt to be and the more control adults will need to exert. Under such conditions, adult talk will be more managerial than informative, and such talk requests compliance and invites silence, not dialogue. Conversely, in a smaller group, control problems will be lessened, and adult-child conversations will be more apt to focus on activities and ideas than on behavioral control.

Second, in any group with more than one adult, relationships among the adults become important. The most obvious danger is that the adults will talk among themselves and interact with the children only to the extent necessary to maintain control. But even where the adults are careful to give their attention to the children, adult relationships can affect how that attention is expressed. A study of residential nurseries in England found, for example, that the quality of conversations was affected by hierarchical relationships among the staff. If two staff were on duty with a group of children, the junior of the two tended to interact less with the children than when she was alone, considering her job only to "mind the children" when her superior was also present (Tizard et al. 1972).

We should not be surprised that adults, as well as children, are influenced in their interactions by relations of interpersonal power within any given speech situation. Such relationships are likely to be especially important among adults who see themselves as having unequal status outside of school—for example, certified teachers vis-a-vis community adults, community elders vis-a-vis younger parents, or members of dominant ethnic groups vis-a-vis non-dominant groups. In such situations the particular language ability of the adults with the lower societal status may be crucial to the preschool objectives. Yet those very language abilities will only be fully expressed in interactions with children if all adult speakers are fully respected for their important roles.

■ CONTINUITY IN ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

The third result of the size of group and sheer number of adults is their effect on the continuity of adult-child relationships. Group caregivers are inevitably less familiar with their children than are members of a child's family. Family members are superb conversational partners for young children not only because of a powerful affective relationship but also because they know the child's world—and therefore what the child is likely to be talking about—so well.

When children in their second year of life can utter only a few meaningful words, a family member is most likely to understand the child's intent and make a meaningful response. Later, when children's pronunciation has become intelligible, their highly individual choice of words can continue to make communication difficult with strangers. Anthropologist Margaret Mead used her experience as a grandmother to speak of the importance for children of a shared world:

I was walking along a Cambridge street with my two-year-old granddaughter, and we stopped in front of a florist shop. She stared in the window and said, "Never be a cat." What would you say? Most grandmothers would say, "Yes, dearie, see that nice doggie," but I knew what she was talking about. Because I knew she was referring to a song that my grandmother sang to me, that I sang to my daughter, that my daughter sang to her, which said, "Always be a pussy, never be a cat./ They call me pussywillow, and what do you think of that?" There was a pussywillow in the florist window. Now, this is what our children don't have and this is what we have to begin to put together for them. This is the reason for bringing parents into the child care centre and into the nursery school. It is the reason for bringing the teachers into the homes of the children. It is an attempt to establish at least a certain degree of commonality so that people can talk to each other and have some identity (Mead 1973).

Mead's recommendations are important: we must welcome parents into the school, and encourage teachers to visit children's homes—after discussion to make sure such visits would be welcomed, of course.

The benefits of interaction for extended adult-child conversations in the preschool will be maximized if a teacher is assigned special responsibility for contact with a small number of children and their families within the larger group, and if the daily schedule ensures that each adult and child group will spend some time together each day.

The positive effects of such parent/teacher relationships go well beyond their influence on children's language development—for example, in helping to build networks of families in sparsely populated areas, as in the Western Isles of Scotland and as the Saami in Norway.

We have emphasized the importance of opportunities for children to talk with adults because these opportunities require the most careful planning. Children's language development is also nurtured by talk with other children. We assume opportunities for such interactions, whatever activities the children are engaged in. But talk with adults has special value for all children. This value is accentuated in situations where the entire child group is learning a second language that initially only the adults know, as in the Maori immersion preschools in New Zealand.

■ THE QUESTION OF MATERIALS

Creating rich language learning environments requires materials—especially books for teachers and/or children, to read—and caregivers who are literate, or interested in becoming literate, in the language being used in the preschool. In many situations this is a tall order, and we can only encourage creativity in devising the best possible local solutions.

For example, if children become writers, then their own stories can become “books” for other children to read. In a combined kindergarten and first-grade Hawaiian language immersion preschool—which follows an immersion preschool, Punana Leo, modeled after the Maori Kohanga Reo—Slaughter and Watson-Gegeo (1988) found 25 of the 42 Hawaiian texts in the book corner in one classroom and 11 of the 49 texts in the other classroom had been written by the children themselves. Teachers, local secondary school students, and accessible tertiary experts are other possible authors and illustrators.

■ PRESCHOOL STAFF: SELECTION AND TRAINING

A critical question for preschool education is the criteria for selecting teachers/caregivers. With respect to language, teachers should be fluent, ideally native, speakers of whatever language serves as the medium of communication in the programme. In the case of language revitalization programmes, the largest, maybe the only, pool of such persons will be older adults, “elders” in the community. Such people are not apt to have formal teaching credentials. In cases where preschools are part of the formal educational system, it may be difficult, or even impossible, to employ, these adults, except in the low status of aides. And the status of the speakers of the focal language influences public perception of the status of the language itself.

If group care of young children of approximately the same age is not part of traditional community life, adults working in preschools—whether called “teachers” or “caregivers”—may be in a new situation for which there are no tried and true cultural models. This is the case whether the teachers are men and women in their 20s or 30s who have had six years of primary education, or whether they are community members who may have even less formal education.

The problems that are apt to arise do not stem from teachers' lack of formal education. In Papua, New Guinea, Delpit (1984) found no relationship between the classroom performance of teachers and whether they had completed only six years of school or were high school graduates. Rather, the problem is that teachers' personal experience with formal education may provide an inappropriate model to fall back on when improvisation is required, especially with young children. In instances where personal experience was in colonial schools with very large classes and predominantly rote learning of, and in, an unfamiliar language, remembered models will be especially inappropriate.

Where preschool teachers are drawn from the ranks of primary or secondary teachers in excess because of a falling birthrate, as in the case of Thailand, the problem will be similar, though for a different reason. In the absence of special training for work with preschoolers, primary teachers follow what was traditionally practiced at the elementary level and overemphasize formal instruction and scholastic achievement.

In such situations, training courses specifically focused on young children are critical. With respect to language aspects of the preschool curriculum, the training needs to focus on organizing group life so that interaction among children and among adults and children is as rich as possible. Striving for activities typical of Western-type preschool centres is not necessary. Any activity can be a topic for conversation, and therefore stimulate language learning. In fact, research consistently finds that where adults and children are active together in some kind of joint activity, more informative talk occurs than when children are expected to play apart from the adults. So, for example, preparing food can be just as valuable as playing with blocks or painting—as long as conversation about the activity, or anything else, is encouraged.

Where objectives of the preschool include helping children become better prepared for primary school, teacher training needs to include specific work with beginning literacy. Surprising as it may seem, many adults need help in learning how to talk with children in ways that extend conversation rather than cut it off.

The following section presents three case studies that illustrate different choices about language programmes for preschool children. The case studies are from Peru, New Zealand, and Hungary.

Case Studies

■ PERU: A SPANISH-QUECHUA/AYMARA TRANSITIONAL BILINGUAL PROGRAMME

Preschool education in Peru began in Lima in the 1930s as private facilities for privileged children and was closely associated with "middle class values" and the church. After the state assumed responsibility for preschool education in 1941, the number of centres, teachers, and enrolled children increased rapidly but preschool remained irrelevant and unavailable for the vast majority of children, namely those from rural Peru and the new migrants to Lima. With the 1972 Educational Reform introduced by the Revolutionary Government, preschool education was not only given unprecedented weight, but more important, a new objective: to attend to the needs of children from underprivileged populations, the rural poor and the ever growing number of migrants to Lima. Renamed *educacion inicial* (initial education), it has since been provided in two forms: (1) the formal mode of schooling in government-run centres called *Centros de Enseñanza Inicial (CEI)* (initial teaching centres) including creches for children up to age 3 and kindergartens for children aged 3-5; and (2) the non-formal initial education programme called *Programas no Escolarizadas de Educacion Inicial (PRONOEI)* for 3- to 5-year-olds. PRONOEI, administered by the Ministry of Education, serves remote rural areas as well as marginal urban settlements that are without access to formal programmes. One of PRONOEI's goals is to capitalize on the diverse socioeconomic and cultural condition of a given area or community by emphasizing parental and community involvement in different aspects of the programme, from building the centre to running it. The latter is largely done by women from the community—*animadoras* (promoters)—who have received continuous training and support from *coordinadoras*, professional preschool teachers.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation has supported Peru's community-based nonformal preschool education programme, and in particular its project in Ate-Vitarte, an area of poor neighborhoods

on the outskirts of Lima. Between 1979 and 1984, the Foundation helped to establish 31 PRONOEI and train more than a hundred mothers as *animadoras*. Upon request of the Ministry of Education, a dissemination phase followed and a National Centre for the training of nonformal preschool educators was established within the Ministry of Education.

In collaboration with the National Preschool Education Training Centre, two language programmes have been implemented. One is concerned with transfer of preschool teaching methods, the other with developing strategy for the transition between preschool and the early years of primary school. Both projects involve training people who then train preschool staff and primary school teachers. The training methods used are characterized as "action-reflection-action" and "investigation-action," and the PRONOEI of Ate-Vitarte function as field sites.

Within the larger activities of these projects, a small action research programme specifically concerned with language was carried out in four communities in the Ate-Vitarte area. In three sites both children and parents participated in the programmes; in the fourth there was no parent component. The language skills of children both in Spanish and Quechua were found to be very limited as a result of language-poor home environments. One of the project's objectives was to encourage parents to talk to the children, tell them stories, and generally stimulate the children's language, thus creating conditions where children could advance their language skills.

Preliminary results of actively-promoted parent involvement in child-parent communication found that:

- The language of all children improved in some way.
- Five-year-olds' language improved more than younger children's did.
- Children's language improved more in the three groups where parents were involved.
- Fathers' attitudes towards their children changed (they became more involved and more aware of being role models).

Bilingual education in conjunction with the officialization of Quechua was one of the cornerstones of the Revolutionary Government's education reform in the early 1970s. Though much of the fervor was lost in the late 1970s and early 1980s, bilingual education has once again gained status within the Ministry of Education. One indication is the elevation of the Office of Bilingual Education to the level of *Direcion General* (General Department) in 1987.

■ NEW ZEALAND: A MAORI REVITALIZATION PROGRAMME

The Maori, indigenous people of New Zealand, comprise approximately 10 percent of the population and a higher percentage of the country's children. By the late 1970s, survival of the Maori language—a single language, spoken by all New Zealand tribes—had become a major Maori concern. Governmental policies discouraging or even forbidding use of the language coupled with migration from rural Maori communities into cities had all taken their toll. In response to these concerns, the Department of Maori Affairs began, for young children from birth to school age, a programme of immersion in Maori language and values.

Since 1982, a network of more than 500 Maori language immersion preschools—language "nests," or *Te Kohanga Reo* (TKR)—have been established. As of March 1988, 8,000 children, approximately 15 percent of Maori children under 5, have participated in the programme. Of this population 7 percent of the enrollees are under 1 year. The aim of the coordinating body, Te Kohanga Reo National Trust, is to reach 75 percent of the Maori preschoolers within 10 years.

In general, the number of children attending the centres ranges from 10-19. Only 10 percent of the adults involved in the centres are paid, and some centres function without staff. Half of the centres are located on *marae*, traditional Maori land and building for both religious and secular functions, while others are in community centres, public schools, churches, and private homes.

The specific aims of the programme include:

- Teaching children the Maori language and culture, including the spiritual dimension, through immersion.
- Supporting language and cultural learning for all members of the *kohanga reo whanau* (the extended family, traditionally based on kinship, but now often extended beyond such ties in cities).
- Teaching members of the *kohanga reo whanau* a range of other skills within the *whanau* setting.
- Fostering collective responsibility for the administration and operations, of the *kohanga reo* through *whanau* development.
- Establishing Maori control over the content and context of the programme.

To facilitate adult *whanau* learning, a training programme has been developed which includes the following objectives:

- Developing the values inherent in Maori language and culture.
- Developing fluency in Maori language.
- Gaining an understanding of language development in children.
- Acquiring a sound knowledge of *Tikanga Maori* (Maori customs) and the effects of such knowledge on the spiritual, cognitive, and social development of children.
- Enhancing the effects of Maori life in contact with Western culture.
- Gaining experience in the shared care of children in a Te Kohanga Reo Centre.
- Developing the ability to observe, record, interpret, and evaluate situations relating to child development and *whanau* management.

Although Maori women have carried a very heavy load in the TKR movement, their participation, whether paid or unpaid, has provided exposure to Maori language and culture, as well as providing administrative and organizational skills and a sense of personal and public empowerment. One observer summarized her understanding of TKR objectives for children:

The philosophy of the *te kohanga reo* revolves around desire of the Maori people to 'stand tall' and to overcome adversity by producing a generation of bilingual and bicultural children who are capable of interacting in the Maori and *pakeha* world. Within this framework, primary *kaupapa* is the promotion of the Maori language and Maori *whanau* values in a caring environment where children are lovingly ensconced by Maori speaking persons. For the child the ability to speak Maori is seen as stimulating a pride of race, a growth of personality, character and morals as well as an awareness of a positive self-image. Alongside the development of language, *kohanga* is expected to develop the practical skills of the child at the social and cognitive level in order to facilitate entry into school on an equal basis. Taken together, the ultimate objective of the *kohanga* is nothing less than the renaissance of the Maori as an equal but separate component in the mosaic of New Zealand society (Fleras 1983, 9-10).

From the outset of the TKR movement, Maori people realized that the transition from preschool into the public school would pose many problems. The *whanau* want schooling to follow and build on the learning experienced in the preschool centres, particularly the learning of, and in, the Maori language. When this does not occur, the learning environment linguistically and culturally ceases to be Maori, and the children experience *whakama* (shyness) about their minority status. In this context, learning no longer takes place in a *whanau* context, and children are separated from each other and from siblings and adult members of their *whanau*. The teachers are no longer Maori, so role models are lost.

In an effort to address these concerns, some primary schools have established partnerships with the *kohanga whanau*. In a few schools, a commitment to bilingual classes at each grade level has emerged. In one community, TKR graduates return to the *kohanga* for part of each school day. In another, the *kohanga* is on primary school grounds, and a close relationship to Maori bilingual classes is maintained. However, in other communities, schools have not been responsive to the needs of these children and to the demands of Maori adults for more extensive bilingual/bicultural education. One result has been the growing demand for primary schools under Maori auspices, following the precedent of religious schools, which receive public funds while retaining church control. As part of the restructuring of the entire New Zealand educational system as of October 1, 1989, comparable status is being negotiated for Maori schools.

The establishment of Te Kohanga Reo in Waiwhetuu has brought many social, cultural, and linguistic changes to this community, and in many homes the preschoolers are the agents of this change. Parents are now attending night classes at Waiwhetuu Marae and elsewhere, in order to communicate in Maori with their own children. Any hesitation on the part of the local schools to accommodate and to build upon the foundations laid in Te Kohanga Reo will be seen by the Maori people as a disguised form of the "unofficial" suppression of New Zealand's indigenous language, which existed within the state education system up to the 1950s.

■ HUNGARY: NATIONALITIES, LANGUAGES

Hungary has a population of 10.7 million, of which approximately 95 percent are of Hungarian descent and are monolingual. The non-Hungarian population includes people with varying

degrees of proficiency in Hungarian. An additional ethnic group includes Gypsies, who speak three different languages.

The main goal of the preschool programme for the non-Hungarian population is to prepare children for primary school. Other specific objectives include the development of children's communicative skills and literacy readiness, although the preschool programme does not include the teaching of reading or writing skills. A secondary aim is designed to address specific problems within the Gypsy community, such as high drop out rates and extensive attendance in "correctional" classes. While preschool is not compulsory, almost 90 percent of children between 3 and 6 years of age attend some form of preschool programme. An additional 4 percent are enrolled in classes that prepare them for the primary school.

Three different types of preschools are available for non-Hungarian speaking children. The "nationality-language preschool" is a programme in which children work in their native language. This programme follows the guidelines for the Hungarian preschool, and children learn Hungarian three times a week. The language-teaching preschool is a Hungarian preschool programme that offers activities in the native language three times a week. Another type of preschool programme employs both Hungarian and one of the Gypsy dialects as a means of communication.

In general terms, the implementation of preschool education for non-Hungarians has experienced some difficulties due to the lack of bilingual professional nurses and auxiliary staff. Also, training programmes for Gypsy educators have not yet been designed. In addition, the programme has had problems with respect to the continuity of children's attendance in primary school. Continued primary school attendance is ensured for children of national minorities who acquire writing and reading skills in their own national language if they attend a native language primary school. In these schools, acquisition of Hungarian reading skills begins in the second grade. As far as the Gypsy community is concerned, few of the existing primary schools teach Gypsy dialect as an auxiliary language. These schools start speech development in Gypsy during the first half of the first year while teaching reading and writing during the second half. This approach constitutes an unsystematic attempt to provide a more promising alternative for Gypsies at school. It remains unclear whether this has been either a compensatory effort or a real concern for the maintenance and revitalization of Gypsy language and culture.

Conclusion

A major item on the developmental agenda for the child up to age 6 is language. Accomplishments during this period typically include development of control over one's native language sufficient to enable participation in social interaction with peers and with adults, to provide the resources for telling and understanding stories, to offer and understand explanations of interesting phenomena, and to use language to solve problems. Language development during this period typically culminates in the development of abilities that will contribute to the achievement of literacy during the early school years.

Despite the centrality of language achievements in the developmental agenda of the first five years, language issues are rarely in the forefront of thinking about how to plan environments for young children. When designing programmes to provide care and promote development during the preschool period, (whether these programmes are formal and classroom-based, or more informal, community- or home-based), optimizing the language environment usually becomes an issue only in cases where complex linguistic situations highlight it. For example, in multilingual societies where group care involves native speakers of several different languages, or in societies where preschool teachers are likely to use a national language different from that spoken by children, some form of language planning for preschools might occur. We would argue that the quality of the language environment deserves attention for every young child, especially those in group care settings, whether monolingual or multilingual.

There is some basis in the research literature for describing the optimal language environment for preschool-aged children. This is an environment in which children have access to one-on-one interaction with adults as well as with peers, in which adults attend and respond to children's communicative attempts, in which a rich array of interesting topics of conversation is made available, and in which real communication (rather than language teaching) is the primary activity.

In group care settings for preschool-aged children, a number of factors can be identified as constituting likely obstacles to an optimal language environment. Very large groups of children and high child/adult-ratios reduce the likelihood of one-on-one interactions between children and adults. Repeated failure on the part of the adult to respond to the child's communicative attempts (either because of disinterest, because of commitment to more adult-centered activities or because the adult and child do not share a language) constitutes another environmental obstacle. Failure on the part of adults to value the child's native language as a useful and valid communicative system similarly constitutes a risk to the child's language development. Failure on the part of the adult to recognize the need to attend to **all** children, including those who may seem shy, less interested in the group activities, less responsive, or less competent can further diminish the quality of the environment for children. A strong programmatic emphasis on teaching academic skills (letters, numbers, colors, rote memorization of materials) may absorb energies that could better be devoted to real communicative activities and language-enriching conversations. The absence of appropriate books and materials that provide the context for conversations that build oral vocabulary and readiness for literacy may likewise reduce the value of the language environment to the child.

The prevalence of multilingualism in the world adds a particular urgency to the recommendation to attend to the quality of preschool care settings as environments for language development. It is estimated that 60 percent of the world's children are growing up in situations that will require some use of more than one language; for many of these children, the second language will first be encountered at school or in a preschool group care context. Bilingualism does not in itself constitute any risk to children's development—on the contrary, bilingual children may have some cognitive advantages over monolinguals, beyond the obvious advantage of knowing two languages. But multilingual environments may represent some risk to optimal development (by which we mean development of full control over all the modeled languages), simply because the

quality of the information available about each of the languages to be learned may be compromised. Thus, multilingual societies in particular must attend to issues related to the quality of the language environments available to preschool-aged children. In formal preschool programmes, strategies for introducing children to a second language include bilingual programmes that utilize the native and the second language, immersion programmes in which an entire group of children from the same language background interact with specially trained group leaders from another language, and submersion programmes (entailing the greatest risk) in which a few children whose first language is foreign to the staff are literally submerged in a second language setting without any provisions for language learning support.

Language development is not normally a perilous matter. Most children learn to talk quite easily and efficiently because traditional patterns of child care provide adequate access to interaction and other sources of support. However, group care settings for preschoolers, especially when combined with situations in which acquisition of a second language is expected, constitute potential problems; there is need to ensure attention to the quality of the preschool language environment when the situation is complicated in these ways. Furthermore, since age-appropriate language skills are crucial to effective functioning in school, we threaten children's long-term, optimal development by failing to ensure that they arrive in formal school settings with a full set of the language resources needed to support further learning.

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Suggested Readings

■ EARLY LANGUAGE

The Developing Child. By Peter A. and Jill G. de Villiers (1979). Available from Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts.

This book provides a lucid and entertaining account of the child's entrance into the world of language. By means of amusing and informative examples, the authors describe the language acquisition process, from birth to school age, showing how children gradually master the intricacies of sounds, words, rules, and concepts.

■ EARLY LITERACY

The Developing Child. By Joan Brooks McLane and Gillian Dowley McNamee (1990). Available from: Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The authors emphasize the importance of children's relationships with significant adults and peers for growth in literacy. They also devote chapters to early literacy development at home and in the neighbourhood, and in preschool and kindergarten settings.

Language Acquisition. By Peter A. and Jill G. de Villiers (1979). Available from Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts.

The authors provide a lively introduction to language acquisition. Their book deals centrally with the way the child acquires the sounds, meanings, and syntax of his language, and the way he learns to use his language to communicate with others. In discussing these issues, the authors provide a clear and insightful treatment of classic questions about language acquisition.

Reading and Writing Connections. By Jana M. Mason (1989). Available from Allyn & Bacon, Needham Heights, MA.

At the time when "whole language" reading and writing instruction is being implemented in schools throughout the US, this book provides valuable information on the nature of the reading and writing processes, the reciprocal relationship between oral and written language, descriptions of children's development in their emerging literacy, and research implications and applications for the classroom.

Language in Early Childhood Education. Revised edition. Edited by Courtney B. Cazde (1981). Available from: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20009, USA.

This book offers parents and teachers a research-based approach to helping children acquire language. Its contributors discount myths and offer practical suggestions on a variety of current issues in language development and learning.

PUBLISHING IN LESSER USED LANGUAGES

Children growing up in homes and communities which speak lesser-used languages often lack the stimulation of well produced books in their own language. To address this concern, the European Bureau of Lesser Used Languages has been looking at the possibilities of children's book publishing, particularly helping communities to work together with publishers so that several language editions could be produced of the same book, thus cutting costs.

The benefits of such cooperation are that children's language acquisition, and imagination can be encouraged and stimulated by books in their mother tongue. The very limited market for such books in the past has often meant that children's books in their mother tongue appear old-fashioned in comparison to those available in the majority language.

Additional information is available from: European Bureau of Lesser Used Languages, 10 Hatch Street Lower, Dublin 2, Ireland.

Supplement—ERIC Digest: Young Children's Oral Language Development

by Celia Genishi

The development of oral language is one of the child's most natural—and impressive—accomplishments. This digest presents an overview of the process and mechanics of language development, along with implications for practice.

When and How Language is Learned

Almost all children learn the rules of their language at an early age through use, and over time, without formal instruction. Thus one source for learning must be genetic. Human beings are born to speak; they have an innate gift for figuring out the rules of the language used in their environment. The environment itself is also a significant factor. Children learn the specific variety of language (dialect) that the important people around them speak.

Children do not, however, learn only by imitating those around them. We know that children work through linguistic rules on their own because they use forms the adults never use, such as "I goed there before" or "I see your feets." Children eventually learn the conventional forms, went and feet, as they sort out for themselves the exceptions to the rules of English syntax. As with learning to walk, learning to talk requires time for development and practice in everyday situations. Constant correction of a child's speech is usually unproductive.

Children seem born not just to speak, but also to interact socially. Even before they use words, they use cries and gestures to convey meaning; they often understand the meanings that others convey. The point of learning language and interacting socially, then, is not to master rules, but to make connections with other people and to make sense of experiences (Wells, 1986). In summary, language occurs through an interaction among genes (which hold innate tendencies to communicate and be sociable), environment, and the child's own thinking abilities.

When children develop abilities is always a difficult question to answer. In general, children say their first words between 12 and 18 months of age. They begin to use complex sentences by the age of 4 to 4 1/2 years. By the time they start kindergarten children know most of the fundamentals of their language, so that they are able to converse easily with someone who speaks as they do (that is, in their dialect). As with other aspects of development, language acquisition is not predictable. One child may say her first word at 10 months, another at 20 months. One child may use complex sentences at 5 1/2 years, another at 3 years.

Oral Language Components

Oral language, the complex system that relates sounds to meanings, is made up of three components: the phonological, semantic, and syntactic (Lindfors 1987). The phonological

component involves the rules for combining sounds. Speakers of English, for example, know that an English word can end, but not begin, with an -ng sound. We are not aware of our knowledge of these rules, but our ability to understand and pronounce English words demonstrates that we do know a vast number of rules.

The semantic component is made up of morphemes, the smallest units of meaning that may be combined with each other to make up words (for example, paper + s are the two morphemes that make up papers), and sentences (Brown, 1973). A dictionary contains the semantic component of a language, and reflects not just what words make up that language, but also what words (and meanings) are important to the speakers of the language.

The syntactic component consists of the rules that enable us to combine morphemes into sentences. As soon as a child uses two morphemes together, as in "more cracker, " she is using a syntactic rule about how morphemes are combined to convey meaning. Like the rules making up the other components, syntactic rules become increasingly complex as the child develops. From combining two morphemes, the child goes on to combine words with suffixes or inflections, (-s or -ing as in papers and eating) and eventually creates questions, statements, commands, etc. She also learns to combine two ideas into one complex sentence, as in "I'll share my crackers if you share your juice."

Of course, speakers of a language constantly use these three components of language together, usually in social situations. Some language experts would add a fourth component: pragmatics, which deals with rules of language use. Pragmatic rules are part of our communicative competence, our ability to speak appropriately in different situations, for example in a conversational way at home and in a more formal way at a job interview. Young children need to learn the ways of speaking in the day care centre or school where, for example, teachers often ask rhetorical questions. Learning pragmatic rules is as important as learning the rules of the other components of language since people are perceived and judged based on both what they say and how and when they say it

Nurturing Language Development

Parents and caregivers need to remember that language in the great majority of individuals develops very efficiently. Adults should try not to focus on "problems," such as the inability to pronounce words as adults do (for example, when children pronounce r's like w's). Most children naturally outgrow such things, which are a tiny segment of the child's total repertoire of language. However, if a child appears not to hear what others say to her; if family members and those closest to her find her difficult to understand; or if she is noticeably different in her communicative abilities from those in her age range, adults may want to seek advice from specialists in children's speech, language and hearing.

Teachers can help sustain natural language development by providing environments full of language development opportunities. Here are some general guidelines for teachers, parents, and other caregivers:

- Understand that every child's language or dialect is worthy of respect as a valid system for communication. It reflects the identities, values, and experiences of the child's family and community.
- Treat children as if they are conversationalists, even if they are not yet talking. Children learn very early about how conversations work, (taking turns; looking attentively; using facial expressions, etc.) as long as they have experiences with conversing adults.
- Encourage interaction among children. Peer learning is an important part of language development, especially in mixed-age groups. Activities involving a wide range of materials should promote talk. There should be a balance between individual activities and those that nurture collaboration and discussion, such as dramatic play, block-building, book-sharing or carpentry.
- Remember that parents, caregivers, teachers, and guardians are the chief resources in language development. Children learn much from each other, but adults are the main conversationalists, questioners, listeners, responders, and sustainers of language development and growth in the child care centre or classroom.
- Continue to encourage interaction as children come to understand written language. Children in the primary grades can keep developing oral abilities and skills by consulting with each other, raising questions and providing information in varied situations. Every area of the curriculum is enhanced through language, so that classrooms full of active learners are hardly ever silent.

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