Oral Language Developement Essay, Research Paper

Children develop oral language at a very early age. Almost every sound a human being makes can be considered communication. As children grow up, they are constantly observing and practicing communication and oral language. What they know about oral language has an effect on the development of their literacy skills. ?Students who had difficulty with early speech communication skills were believed to be at risk for reading?and consequently writing? (Montgomery, 1998). Therefore, the development of oral language has an effect on the ways in which emergent readers develop literacy.

Transcribed dialog taken from a personal interview with a 3-year-old girl named Gianna will be referred to in this paper. Gianna?s dialog will provide examples and will be the foundation for the discussion and analysis of language development and its effects on emergent readers. ?A language requires the use of signs or symbols within grammar-that is, within a structure of rules that determines how the various signs and symbols are to be arranged. Language also allows the use of signs or symbols within a grammar to create novel instructions? (Dworetzky, 1996, p. 226-227).

Today, more than ever, oral language is being carefully studied and assessed. ?It has been only recently that spoken language has been recognized as a condition of learning in all subjects, and thus the assessment of performance in it a necessity? (Keenan et. al., 1997). This is one reason why we must assess oral language. According to Salvia and Ysseldyke (1998), there are two main reasons for this type of assessment. ?First, well-developed language abilities are desirable in and of themselves? (p. 539). This means that an individual should have the ability to carry on a conversation, as well as, express thoughts, emotions, and feelings. ?Second, various language processes and skills are believed to underlie subsequent development. For example, research indicates that difficulties in oral language are related to the incidence of behavior disorders? (Salvia et. al., 1998, p.539). However, early detection of these oral-language disorders can have a positive effect on that child?s academic development.

There are many different views of oral language. Language theorists describe the various structural aspects of language. They also focus on explanatory mechanisms. More recently, they have been focusing on descriptive types of structural analysis. ?Language can be defined as a code for conveying ideas? (Salvia et. al., 1998, p. 536).

There are different stages in language development, and each stage is made up of many different components. In the One-Word stage of language development, children develop naming skills. Naming is ?a development of early childhood in which the child begins pointing out objects and calling them by name. It is considered a special development because it appears to be intrinsically reinforcing and satisfying to humans and seems to occur only in our species? (Dworetzky, 1996, p. 236). Gianna displays the naming skills by pointing to the dog and calling him ?Simon.? She also correctly names pictures in the coloring book, such as a ?rocket? and ?Winnie da Pooh? (DiNobile, 1998).

Naming skills are very similar to logographic knowledge. This can be applied to emergent readers. For example, a child may not know how to read the word ?McDonald?s?, but she may be able to recognize the sign on a highway. ?Children see written language all around them ? in books, supermarkets, department stores, fast-food restaurants, and on television, signs, and a variety of printed materials from the TV listings to label on household products. Print is everywhere? (Vacca et. al, 1995, p.73). Children are able to ?read? these familiar words even though they have not yet learned the fundamentals of reading.

Phones or phonemes are the ?smallest units of speech.? These units have meanings although they are not complete words (Dworetzky, 1996). Although Gianna has developed the ability to speak complete words, occasionally she speaks in phonemes. For example, she says ?ca? instead of ?could? or ?can.? She also says ?da? for ?that?s,? ?u? for ?use,? and ?wa? for ?what? (DiNobile, 1998).

Many teachers use a phonics-based instruction when they teach students to read. ?The two most common ways of teaching phonics are: (a) to teach the beginner to segment and blend the letter sounds in a word (synthetic phonics), or (b) to teach the beginner to recognize the common spelling patterns in a word (analytic phonics)? (Foorman, 1995).

Pronunciation is another skill in language development. Gianna can pronounce many words correctly. She says words such as ?space rocket,? ?color,? and ?mother.? However, she also mispronounces some words, such as ?favwit? (favorite), ?dis? (this), ?dat? (that), and ?bwoke? (broke) (DiNobile, 1998). Although Gianna has the ability to pronounce words correctly, sometimes she does not. This is not a sign of regression it simply shows that she has not yet mastered pronunciation.

Once children have learned to read, fluency is an important skill to develop and master. ?The term fluency is often associated with doing something easily and well.When applied to reading, fluency, in everyday terms, means reading easily and well? (Vacca et. al., 1995, p.198). Among other aspects, pronunciation is a very important aspect of fluency. In order to read fluently, the reader must be able to quickly and correctly pronounce the words.

After learning pronunciation skills, children learn syntax. ?In addition to containing sounds and words, the sentence follows a specific word order. This aspect of oral language is known as syntax: it includes the rules for arranging words in a sentence? (Salvia et. al., 1998, p.536). Gianna understands this. Most of her sentences show syntax. For example, she says ?I like to touch him? and ?Look, now I?m using yellow.? (DiNobile, 1998). Both of these examples are grammatically correct.

Syntax is basically the same with regard to reading. When a student reads a sentence in a book, she typically understands the material because it is worded just as it would be spoken. ?Readers use their knowledge of the meaningful arrangement of words in sentences to construct meaning from text? (Vacca et. al., 1995, p.26). For example, a sentence that reads, ?my book is green? makes sense. If it were worded, ?green book is my,? it would not make sense to the reader.

In the two-word stage of oral language development, children between 18 and 20 months of age, begin to use two-word statements. ? During this stage, children rapidly learn the value of language for expressing concepts, and especially the power of language to aid them in communication their desires to others? (Dworetzky, 1996, p.241). There are four different types of two-word phrases. Children use two-word phrase to locate or name something, to demand or desire something, to indicate possession, and to question

something. A few examples are ?there book,? ?more milk,? my shoe,? and ?where ball? (Dworetzky, 1996, p.241).

There is no Three-word stage. After the two-word stage, children move on to telegraphic speech. ?Children spend the next few years creating many short sentences? (Dworetzky, 1996, p.241). These sentences or phrases usually lack function words. For example, a child will say ?doggie play now,? rather than saying ?the doggie is playing now.? This is typical of telegraphic speech.

Grammatical morphemes are also a component of language development. Grammatical morphemes are ?words or parts of words that help add meaning to a sentence and that are acquired by children generally between the ages of 2 ½ and 5 years. Conjunctions, prepositions, suffixes, and prefixes are examples of grammatical morphemes? (Dworetzky, 1996, p.242).

Table 8.2 in Dworetzky?s book contains a list of Fourteen English Grammatical Morphemes. The first one is Present Progressive. These words usually end in -ing and show an ongoing process. Gianna says, ?I?m using pink? and ?I?m making da windows brown? (DiNobile, 1998). The second and third are Prepositions. These sentences include the words ?in? or ?on? and show containment or support. She says, ?You used browm on yer hand? (DiNobile, 1998).

The forth grammatical morpheme is the use of Plural words. These words end in ?s or ?es and show number or amount. Gianna says, ?I know awl my colors, silly goose? (DiNobile, 1998). The fifth one is Past Irregular. Irregular verbs such as ?went?

are used to tell of an event that happened earlier in time relative to the time of speaking. She says, ?My mother taught me when I was a lille girl? (DiNobile, 1998). The sixth one is the use of Possessives. The sentences contain nouns which end in -?s. This shows

ownership or possession. For example, ?This is Bobby?s book.? Gianna did not use possession in the transcribed dialog.

The seventh grammatical morpheme is Uncontractible Copula be. These sentences contain words such as ?are? and ?was? and show number or something that took place earlier in time. Gianna says, ?My mother taught me when I was a lille girl? (DiNobile, 1998). The eighth one is the use of Articles. Articles are words like ?a? and ?the.? She says, ?A space rocket? (DiNobile, 1998). Number nine is Past Regular. These verbs end in ?ed and show past tense. Gianna says, ?You used browm on yer hand? (DiNobile, 1998).

The next three grammatical morphemes all show number or an event that happened in the past. They are; Third Person Regular, Third Person Irregular, and Uncontractible Auxiliary. Gianna did not use any of these examples in her dialog.

The thirteenth is Contractible Copula be. These words end in ??s or ??re and they also show number or an event that happened in the past. She says, ? That?s a wrock? and ?Dat?s Winnie da Pooh? (DiNobile, 1998). The final grammatical morpheme is called Contractible Auxiliary be. These words also end in ??s or-?re and show number, ongoing process, or an event that took place at an earlier in time. Gianna says, ?Now he?s gonna look like a girl? (DiNobile, 1998). The previous examples show that Gianna uses most of the 14 grammatical morphemes and she uses them correctly.

At the age of only 3 years, Gianna?s language development is progressing very well. She has learned to use naming skills, phonemes, pronunciation, syntactic skills and

grammatical morphemes. Although she has not yet mastered all of these skills, she is learning and getting better day by day.

?A leading language expert suggests that teachers focus on their students’ content (or ideas) of the message, the interpersonal aspect of the message, or how things are said, and finally, the textual aspect of the message, including grammar and vocabulary. Grammar and language usage, in particular, are as that most language experts agree should be taught and measured in the classroom? (Keenan et. al., 1997). Once Gianna begins school she most likely will excel in her oral language development as well as her literary skills. Considering she is only 3 years old, her language skills are very well developed. She knows her ABC?s, has a large vocabulary, and speaks in grammatically correct sentences. Also, during the interview, Gianna spoke about 70% of the time. She was very eager to talk as well as expressive and animated in both, her verbal and non-verbal language. These skills will help her learn to read when she begins school.

There are many uses for oral language. In the first several years of a child?s life, they discover what language can do for them. ?They learn that language is a tool that they can use and understand in interactions with others in their environment? (Vacca et. al., 1995, p.26).

According to Frank Smith, there are ten uses of language. The first is called instrumental. This is when language is used to get something. For example, ?I want.? The second is called regulatory. This is used to control what others do, feel, or say. An example of this is ?Do as I say.? The third is called interactional, and it is used to establish relative status. ?You and I are in this room.? The forth use of language is called personal. It is used to express individuality. For example, ?here I am.? The next is called heuristic and it is used to seek or test knowledge. ?Tell me why.? The sixth use is called imaginative. It is used to create or make things up. An example of this is ?let?s pretend.? The next use is called representational. It is used to communicate information. ?I have something to tell you.? The eighth use of language is called divertive, and it refers to jokes or riddles. For example, ?enjoy this? or ?listen to this.? The ninth use is either called authoritative or contractual. It is used in regard to laws, contracts, and statements. An example of this is ?it must be done this way.? The final use of language is called perpetuating. Perpetuating sentences refer to records, notes, or diaries. For example of this is, ?this is how it was.? (Vacca et. al., 1995, p.26-27) Children recognize the many use of language, and soon realize just how meaningful it can be.

There are five phases of literacy development. The first is the awareness and exploration phase. This phase ?begins at birth and progresses through the child?s preschool years. Children explore their environment and build the foundations for learning to read and write? (Vacca et. al., 1995, p.71). They listen to and talk about stories. They also understand that the printed words are directly related to the words that make up the story. They begin to pretend-read in this phase.

The second phase is called the experimental phase. Children enter this phase when they enter kindergarten. In this phase, children begin to ?recognize letters and letter-sound relationships, become familiar with rhyming, and begin to write the letters of the alphabet and high frequency words? (Vacca et. al., 1995, p.71).

The early reading and writing phase is next. This usually occurs in the first grade. ?Children begin to read simple stories and can write about topics about which they have much prior knowledge and strong feelings? (Vacca et. al., 1995, p.72). They also become aware of punctuation and capitalization. The forth phase is called the transitional reading and writing phase. This occurs by the second grade. In this phase, children can use more complex reading and writing skills. Fluency also begins to progress in this phase.

The final phase of literacy development is called the independent and productive phase. This is a life long process. ?The third grade marks the beginning of their journey into independent and productive learning? (Vacca et. al., 1995, p.72). Even as adults, readers are constantly progressing and developing their reading and writing skills.

Having a literate environment is crucial for an emergent reader. ?Children learn to become more fluent in an environment that supports oral reading as communication? (Vacca et. al., 1995, p.201). Family interaction can be a very useful tool for emergent readers. Unfortunately, some children enter school with absolutely no literacy skills simply because their parents or guardians are illiterate. This is known as intergenerational illiteracy. However, if the parents are literate, they should provide a literate environment for their young children.

?Researchers, parents, and teachers have suggested that the home environment is a likely source of experiences that can enhance the development of oral and written language. Story book reading has received the most attention within the array of parent-child literacy activities that might enhance oral- and written-language skills? (Senechal, 1998). There are many benefits to story book reading. They include, ?the acquisition of word knowledge and novel vocabulary, increased familiarity with the syntax of written language, and a heightened awareness of written letters and words? (Senechal, 1998). Parents who read to their children are giving them a head start for school. They are encouraging their child to learn to read.

There are many aspects of oral language development and emergent literacy. Many of them are connected and intertwined. The similarities between the development of oral language and the development of reading skills may not be so obvious on the surface. However, once the different aspects of each are brought to your attention, you can?t deny that they are connected. ?Traditionally, educators assumed that the development of oral language preceded other forms of literacy, especially formal writing. Recent research, however, has suggested that all forms- reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking ? emerge concurrently in children, serving to reinforce each other throughout school years? (Montgomery, 1998). In conclusion, it is very important for children to have a well-developed oral language and vocabulary. These skills will be necessary when they begin school. ?Spoken language has been recognized as a condition of learning in all subjects, and thus the assessment of performance in it a necessity? (Keenan et. al., 1997).

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