

Teacher Characteristics That Influence Development of Oral Language Skills among Pre-Primary School Pupils: Case Study of Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract : Development of oral language skills is a precursor to writing and reading acquisition. Oral skill is a means of communication through which people express their desires, ideas, excitements, amusements, disappointments and exchange information. In addition, oral skills have been found to be an important tool for thinking and concept development in children. Research carried out in industrialised countries have identified some appropriate teaching strategies used to enhance acquisition of oral language skills such as repetition, substitution, explanation, contrast, exemplification and code-switching. However, these studies' geographical locations do not reflect the diversity of the Kenyan society. In addition, studies conducted in Kenya in the past have not established why pre-primary school teachers are not using appropriate teaching strategies. The purpose of this study was to find out whether teachers' experience, academic qualification and type of training influences their choice of teaching strategies in the development of oral language skills inside and out of the classroom in selected preschools in Kibra Sub-County, Nairobi County. In addition, this study aimed at finding out the strategies used by teachers in Kibra Sub-County to promote oral skills development among pre-primary school children. The study was guided by Holdaway's theory of language acquisition. Descriptive survey design was employed during this study. Questionnaires and observation schedules were used to collect data. Eighty-three (83) preschool teachers were sampled using multistage sampling methods for observation. Data was analysed using SPSS version 20. The researcher carried out content analysis on the qualitative data. The main descriptive methods used were tabulation of frequencies and percentages. Chi square test was the inferential statistic used to test the relationship between variables. The main findings of the study indicate that teaching strategies that were mostly used by pre-primary school teachers were code-switching, examples, repetition, substitution and explanation. While questions, direction, expansion of children words and contrast were the least used teaching strategies when teaching oral language skills. The study revealed that there is a slight correlation between the type of training of teachers and the teaching strategies as most of DICECE trained teachers used more teaching strategies when teaching oral skills compared to other teachers. The findings also revealed that there was a partial significant correlation between teacher's academic qualifications and a few teaching strategies. A similar correlation was also observed between teaching experience and a few teaching strategies. Since the strategies used by pre-primary school teachers under the study were less than half of the recommended teaching strategies to promote oral skills, the study recommends that teachers should be encouraged to use more in structural strategies to improve children's oral language skills.

Keywords : Kenya early childhood education, Kenya education, oral language skills acquisition, teaching methods

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