

ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

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DOI: 10.47750/pnr.2022.13.S09.001

Abstract

In early childhood, oral language should be enhanced due to its importance in social relations and learning, and it is notorious that children often grow up with difficulties in their orality due to poor stimulation at home or in schools. This is an essential factor in favoring linguistic competence. The objective of the present study was to determine the skills that influence oral language development in children aged 4 to 5 years for communication through the application and analysis of surveys. The methodological approach is qualitative and quantitative, using documentary and descriptive research through text analysis. Likewise, in the province of Santa Elena, a survey directed to 15 early education teachers and an interview with an institution's director in charge of the mentioned level were used. From the data collected, results point to an integration of skills in acquiring linguistic signs and manifesting thoughts and emotions; therefore, their application is essential. On the other hand, it was determined that the teachers, when defining the concept of skills, relate it to related terms such as abilities and competencies. Therefore, it is concluded that all skills influence oral language development, so they must be expressed in the lesson plans.

Keywords: oral language; linguistic sign; skill; competence; development.

INTRODUCTION

Proper pronunciation between girls, boys and adults begins with emotional communication, the main content of reciprocal relations between them. This is of great importance to raise the development of oral language, so we must seek ways and procedures to achieve proper pronunciation and prevent popular verbal errors, accentuations and pronunciations given by linguistic folklore, where the adult plays a leading role, and must provide a correct speech model to guide children for proper pronunciation (Labrada Batchelor, 2021; Yacelga et al., 2022).

Language in everyday life is manifested in various ways to externalize what is produced in mind, and one of those ways is the oral form, which, through articulated words, is possible. However, most children from 4 to 5 years old find it difficult to communicate their thoughts, feelings and emotions due to the complexity in the pronunciation of words or to order of their ideas, restricting the clarity at the moment of expressing themselves.

Oral language is important when attending educational centers because it benefits auditory and reading comprehension, being its bases and influencing the interest in reading; likewise, it is indispensable to understanding learning in later years (Foorman et al., 2015; Mandel Morrow et al., 2015) but, as Fallarino et al. mention (2020), although students have guidelines on how to do it, they still do not fully develop their linguistic competence. In order to do it efficiently, it is necessary to have the mediation of teachers and people in their context, and thus reach a cognitive level that will help them in their school, personal and social needs to develop with total security.

In the educational environment, students are the builders of their knowledge; therefore, teachers are the ones who manage the group through activities to strengthen the oral language. In Ecuador, this is done according to the Early Education Curriculum, in which, to achieve the learning objectives according to the areas of development, skills should be considered to the age of the infants (Ministry of Education, 2014).

From this, a problem is presented, evidenced in the pre-professional practices carried out in the province of Santa Elena, in sub-level 2, with children aged 4 to 5 years, who showed difficulty in their orality, articulation of words, keeping short conversations, expressing themselves clearly, which prevented them from expressing their thoughts, emotions, events and needs

They understand “before and after” temporality and order of events.
Articulates phonemes /m/, /p/, /n/, /b/, /k/, /g/, /d/, /t/, /f/, some show difficulty with consonants /r/ and /s/.
Has difficulty in answering the questions how, why, why, why not, why not, why not, why not, why not, why not, why not, why not, why not, why not?
They ask questions about what is happening around them, why?
They use verbal games, such as riddles, rhymes, jokes.

Note. Data obtained from Andreu (2018); Laza and De la Rosa (2016); Owens (2003); Sala (2020).

In this age range, infants develop broad characteristics of the language they use in the family and school environment; therefore, their stimulation should be constant through play and interaction with the surrounding context to strengthen a series of skills that contribute to the verbal-linguistic area. (Yépez & Padilla Álvarez, 2021). In this way, the skills are essential for the child’s linguistic process; therefore, they are present in the activities carried out in the classroom.

Skills from the socio-training approach

Socio-training is nothing more than an approach that aims to guide the formative process of students through the development of competencies with the purpose that they can meet their needs, be competent, and solve challenges of different contexts and problems with creativity and innovation. Likewise, it considers approaches such as constructivism, meaningful learning, and critical thinking (Alonzo Riveradiana et al., 2015; Ambrosio, 2018).

From this approach, competence has to do with the integration of knowledge: knowing how to do, knowing how to be, knowing how to live together, knowing how to know, to the basic knowledge acquired in their school years. Therefore, it is not separate from what they already know but mobilizes each one according to the needs in their environment to develop and solve a problem (García Fraile et al., 2016). To achieve this link, skills and abilities are required.

Dexterity is used concurrently, attributing to it a meaning of motor area (Hager & Beckett, 2019), i.e., being dexterous with the hands, and crafts, among others. However, from the educational approach of socioformation, a specific concept is attributed to it about competencies and skills, being different in their conceptualization, although, commonly, there is a tendency to confuse their terminations due to the similarity in their meanings.

Skills, for their part, are related to mental processes strengthened through activities related to cognition, thinking, knowledge acquisition, and information processing, which, when combined with practice, results in a mastery of various tasks employed in a given action, for this reason, they must be exercised constantly in order not to lose or forget them (Hager & Beckett, 2019).

As for skill, it differs from competence because it is more flexible due to the tasks required to develop it (Perrenoud, 1999). They are also characteristics that a person possesses in a certain place, performing them with expertise and accuracy to have an efficient result. Therefore, it is based on knowledge, which allows one to execute it with dexterous behavior and confidence (Fischer & Farrar, 1987). In this way, continuous testing will determine the level of skill that the person possesses, considering contextual and social factors.

These aspects are necessary for oral language because they will allow the child to communicate easily and learn from the environment and the people around him. Through cognitive skills, the understanding of content and the ability to respond to activities and conversations are developed because through the cognitive functions of recall, memory, seriation, classification, discrimination, etc., the child will be able to identify linguistic signs and understand the language (Gagné, 1970). The child will be able to identify linguistic signs, use the acquired knowledge and mentally organize ideas.

Continuous interaction with others is achieved with social skills, being the ability to work as a team with other people and relate efficiently; in addition, it requires attitudinal aspects around the relationship that children establish with classmates, emotional to mediate the feelings they experience and express; and cognitive to know how to act depending on the social environment (Smogorzewska & Szumski, 2018).

The movements that students perform are related to motor skills, which have to do with fine and gross manual performance, corresponding to the management of their limbs for the displacement from one place to another or the grip of pincer for daily

activities (Figuroa et al., 2019). In this way, this skill allows children to experience through their senses the world around them; thus, they acquire the linguistic signs in the sign and meaning.

On the other hand, linguistic skill corresponds to the expression and conceptual understanding of linguistic signs that children perceive from their context (Kuhn et al., 2014). Thus, it allows the development of efficient communication through speech with other people, making the student express how he/she feels, his/her thoughts, ideas and needs effectively, in the same way, to understand the words of other people when listening.

Finally, and as a result of the analysis carried out, it is concluded that the skills are specific tasks that, guided by the teacher with expertise and efficiency, will make it possible to achieve the skills for cognitive development and can provide the ability to respond to daily activities in order to achieve competence.

Methodology

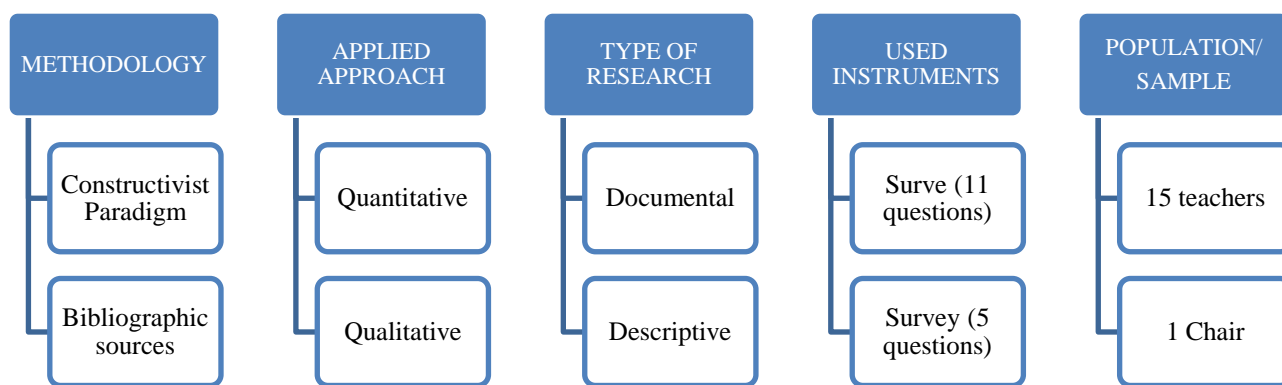


Figure 1. Eight questions were chosen that are directly related to the article’s topic.

Results

Table 1. Difference between the terms skill and ability as perceived by teachers.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	7%
Disagree	1	7%
Agreed	7	46%
Totally agree	6	40%
Total	15	100 %

Of the teachers surveyed in the Province of Santa Elena, 40% stated that they totally agreed and 40% only agreed, showing that they know the difference between “ability” and “skill.” The remaining 14% said they disagreed, showing that these words are similar in meaning. Thus, more than 50% are sure that the words presented have a different conceptualization; therefore, they cannot be confused.

Table 2. Identification of the concept of dexterity in contrast to other endings.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Integral performance of acquired knowledge.	1	7%
Knowledge and attitude to perform a task with agility and accuracy.	6	40%
Set of mental and practical skills to achieve a goal.	7	46%
Ability to solve a contextual problem.	1	7%
Total	15	100%

This knowledge question was used to find out the concept of skills that the teachers have. Among the results obtained, less than half affirmed option 2, which, according to the theoretical study carried out from the socio-training and competence approach, is the correct answer. Also, 46% say that the skill is an ability, and the remaining percentage states other meanings with similar terms but different meanings. Thus, more than 50% continue to confuse the conceptualization of skill.

Table 3. Skills applied by teachers in class for oral language development.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Social	1	7%
Oral	3	20%
All of the above	11	73%
Total	15	100%

The different activities that the teachers carry out in the classroom are framed in skills that guide the development of oral language according to the Early Education Curriculum. In this question, more than half of the teachers share that they use all the skills: social, oral, motor and cognitive to work on children's orality, that is, comprehensively. However, less than 30% prefer using only one social and oral skill, due to the benefits they provide independently.

Table 4. Skills that influence oral language, from the knowledge of preschool teachers.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Cognitive	1	7%
Social	3	20%
Oral	2	13%
All of the above	9	60%
Total	15	100%

In addition to the skills applied for the development of oral language in school activities, the teachers identified, from their knowledge and experience, those that have the greatest contribution to the orality of the infants. Sixty percent of the teachers affirm that all the skills: oral, cognitive, social and motor directly influence the strengthening of the verbal area of the children in initial 2. However, the remaining 40% independently state that the social skill has the most significant effect; for others, it is the oral skill and finally, the cognitive skill.

Table 5. Influence of cognitive skill.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Manifest thoughts, desires, emotions	4	27%
All of the above	11	73%
Total	15	100%

Seventy-three percent of early childhood education two teachers state that cognitive skills influence syntax, semantics and the communication of thoughts because this type of skill contributes mainly to the mental processes of infants, the acquisition of linguistic signs and the use of them in conversations. However, 27% believe it only contributes to the emission of ideas, desires and emotions, i.e., to externalize what is produced in their minds.

Table 6. Oral Skills

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Word fluency	4	27%
Understanding short sentences	1	7%
Counting events	3	20%
All of the above	7	46%
Total	15	100%

This type of skill, from the perspective of the preschool teachers, influences 27% in the fluency of words, allowing children to utter words with confidence and eloquence; for 20%, it contributes to telling events, helping students to narrate their stories without difficulties; 7% believe that it allows them to understand short sentences, since, having the facility to tell, they must also understand what they say and hear. Finally, 46% think this skill contributes to all the proposed characteristics.

Table 7. Motor skills

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Articulation of words	1	7%
Exploration	4	27%
Expression through gestures	2	13%
All of the above	8	53%
Total	15	100%

The results obtained in this question show that 27% of the teachers think that motor skills influence exploration, an important activity for children to know the context and learn new words; 13% contribute to expression through gestures since it is not only a matter of uttering words but also of being expressive in sentences; 7% of the teachers determine that it helps in the articulation of words. Finally, more than half of the educators believe that motor skills intervene all the proposed qualities.

Table 8. Social skills

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Establishing conversations	6	40%
All of the above	9	60%
Total	15	100%

Pre-school teachers report that social skills have a 40% influence establishing conversations, allowing infants to initiate conversations by telling about things that have happened to them or to keep them going and not cut them off in a matter of seconds. More than half of the educators affirm that this skill intervenes in conversations, learning new words because they absorb the vocabulary taught by people in their context, and in the exchange of information by sharing thoughts, feelings and emotions with other classmates or adults.

About the survey and the interview, language, from the teachers' perspective, is present in all student activities; therefore, its development through skills is indispensable. For this reason, in the lesson plans, they prepare in each class, they have instructions for the oral, motor, social and cognitive areas that allow the strengthening of orality in infants in the narration of events, correcting the pronunciation of words through songs, learning new words through socialization, play, and ordering ideas from stories. Likewise, each skill is naturally integrated into another, achieving harmony in verbal praxis, as the teachers stated, to help the students improve their verbal area.

It is necessary to consider the four skills identified when planning activities since they determine the development of oral language in childhood. Through games, songs, stories and other practices, it is possible to develop them; however, it is important to specify the tasks to be performed so that the student acts feasibly, thus also linking and integrating the other skills because they are carried out together.

Discussion

The development of oral language is of great importance because it is a crucial factor in society by allowing human beings to participate actively in the social construction and interpretation of culture, being that ability to communicate and meet with others and establish social relations (Bruner, 1986; Uribe-Hincapié et al., 2019). Moreover, according to the existing literature, it is essential in early childhood because it is the first approach to reading and writing due to the comprehension and oral expression that infants must acquire prior to their acquisition.

In Ecuador, the Early Education curriculum, the area of language is developed through skills, which are called a continuous and progressive process acquired according to the pace of work of infants and have to do with the knowledge, attitudes and experiences that the student possesses... (Ministry of Education, 2014). These are enhanced for the necessary output profile in the educational contents of the later years. Hence, each initial teacher establishes in their planning activities according to the objectives of each area proposed by the curriculum, with the student as the main protagonist of learning.

Under the perspective of socio-training with a competency approach, the skill is the agility and expertise to perform a proposed activity, considering the person's characteristics and the environmental factors and are strengthened through continuous exercise (Fleishman, 1972; Shuelke & Day, 2012). The results of this study made it evident that its conceptualization is confused with other terms, such as skill. However, they differ because it is a materialization of knowledge based on an individual's cognitive scheme and habits; therefore, they cannot contain the individual's knowledge (Petrovsky, 1984). Therefore, they cannot contain the skills because these are required to achieve the requirements of the abilities, and through the acquired knowledge, they reach the competencies (Tobón, 2013).

Although there is diffusion in the conceptualization, teachers announce that the skills are necessary for the development of students; therefore, they apply them in daily school activities to enhance oral language integrally; that is, they do not use them separately because they consider that each one is articulated to the different contents, mobilizing that knowledge to different spaces where they can exercise them (García Fraile et al., 2016).

Early childhood teachers work with the skills in the classes they teach, understanding that these contribute to the formation of oral language in infants through small tasks or activities to then achieve the skills so that in the environments where they frequently attend, children can express their thoughts and emotions in a clear and understood way both in the order of their ideas and in the articulation of words. In addition, by mastering these small tasks, infants attain the competence that comes from knowing how to effectively and efficiently apply each skill in different scenarios (Tobón, 2013).

Each of the identified skills: cognitive, social, motor and oral are those that directly influence the student's oral language since, respectively, they benefit cognitive flexibility favoring learning in their comprehension and retention of linguistic signs; social behavior, emotional and interactions facilitating communication; performing motor movements allowing exploration of the environment and playing and understanding linguistic structure (Cassany et al., 2003; Murray et al., 2018; Stad et al., 2019; Winterton et al., 2006).

The results obtained from each skill regarding the development of oral language favor the establishment of conversations, fluency, learning and articulating words, narrating events and understanding sentences, understanding that for this, it is necessary that the teachers, through the skills, strengthen the acquisition of linguistic signs, since they are constructed in the environment from reality through cognition and social context, considering their acoustic image with the relationship of the object and depending on the significance that the place gives them. (De Saussure, 1945) In other words, with mental representations, they make their ideas verbal, making the exchange of information possible.

Likewise, the congruence between the application of skills by teachers and the influence they claim to have on language development is evident since, in their vast experience, they recognize that each directed action has its *raison d'être* in the

linguistic development of students. At the same time, they state the integration of each of them due to their relevance in the social, cognitive, movement and speech areas.

Conclusion

This work aims to determine that the following skills directly influence oral language: cognitive, motor, social and oral. It is identified that social and oral is essential in early childhood for its intervention in the learning of students in the understanding of content and communication established in the school and family environment through social relations, also the cognitive and motor by exploring the environment to learn the linguistic signs and internalize the mental schemas, fundamental in reading and writing.

In the province of Santa Elena, the teachers affirm that in the first years of schooling in oral language, there is an integration of all the skills mentioned above because each one contains aspects that are articulated with the different areas that apply them, although it is possible to work on one in particular, however, they are always present to a greater or lesser degree in the other activities that the teachers propose.

It is also necessary to socialize the conceptualization due to the similarities that cause the teachers to use terms such as ability and competence. From the socio-formative approach, each has a meaning that makes them different and simultaneously complements each other to allow optimal development.

The use of cognitive, social, motor and oral skills in children from 4 to 5 years of age is beneficial in their daily lives because they help each infant to enhance the ability to express their thoughts, establish social and group relationships through words, facilitate communication, help the understanding of the contents according to their age and in the following years, and an approach to writing and reading.

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