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Reading storybooks in Vietnamese families as a language intervention: An activity analysis

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Abstract

Leont’ev understood activity as a mutually influenced process between the subject and the objective world. This process makes changes in both the subject and the objective world. He described activity as a system with its own structure which is created by its basic components and interrelationships among these components and the environment in which the activity exists (Leont’ev, 1978, 1981). In this research, an adapted model of Leont’ev’s activity psychology, incorporating Gal’perin’s stage model of formation of mental action and concepts (Gal’perin, 1992), and other developmental concepts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bruner, 1977; McNaughton, 1995; Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978), was employed for design, implementation and evaluation of a family storybook reading activity intervention. This new approach of joint activity to early language intervention is the original contribution of the present research.

This research aimed to describe and demonstrate effects of the intervention on individual children’s vocabulary and comprehension development, before school and over the transition to school. A semi longitudinal set of case studies combined with a single-subject experimental design was chosen. Less well educated Vietnamese parents were provided with support, in order to develop their children’s language, through storybook reading. Six families in Vietnam received storybooks, a workshop with shared reading techniques, a DVD of family shared reading samples, and home coaching sessions.

The data from the Baseline, Intervention and Maintenance phases showed that the parents made changes in their understanding of: Family shared reading benefits, how to select high-quality storybooks and how to set reading goals suitable to their
own child’s ability and interest. They also improved their shared reading techniques. Through the joint reading activity, the children’s vocabulary increased significantly, especially in using expressive words. Changes in narrative comprehension were recorded. This progress was sustained over a period of 22 weeks after the intervention.

The findings provide evidence of the completeness and generativeness of the theoretical framework for family literacy education. The model acted as a tool to guide a family literacy intervention. The research population was small and further studies in different literacy learning and teaching contexts are needed to enhance its practical implications.
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