



Measures to Develop Language for 3-4 Years Old Preschoolers Through Picture Storytelling Activities

MA. Nguyễn Thị Ngọc Diệp

Faculty of Education, Thu Dau Mot University, Vietnam

ABSTRACT: Language is a tool for children to communicate and exchange. Lean on language, children can express their thoughts and expand their communication skills in learning and playing. The task of language development for children is one of the important aims in the childhood education. Preschool teachers need to develop children's language in all kinds of educational activities anywhere, anytime in the preschool. One of the activities that create an opportunity for children to develop language is storytelling with picture activities. Through storytelling with picture activities helps children develop coherent language, clearer pronunciation, and increases their vocabulary. In addition, storytelling with picture activities is a tool of comprehensively education children.

KEYWORDS: Language development, picture storytelling, 3-4 years old preschoolers, preschool language.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language development for preschool children is one of the core tasks of early childhood education. The age of 3-4 years old is considered a crucial stage for language development. Among preschool activities, picture-based storytelling helps children expand their vocabulary, develop accurate pronunciation, use various sentence structures, and express themselves clearly and coherently. Appropriate storytelling activities are an important means of stimulating language development in children at this stage. However, currently, picture-based storytelling in preschools is not very diverse and has some limitations in developing vocabulary and improving pronunciation. While some studies have addressed the role of storytelling in language development for preschool children, it has not been given sufficient attention for 3-4-year-olds, especially in the context of current early childhood education reforms. Therefore, appropriate measures are needed to develop language skills in 3-4-year-old preschool children.

II. RESEARCH RESULTS

2.1. Language development for children

In the book *Developing language in early - childhood - 2008*, Otto Beverly - an expert in the field of children's language development from the University of Illinois in the United States - sees children's language as an integrated expression of linguistic elements: phonetics, word meanings and word formation, grammar and pragmatics. Ms. Oto Beverly looks at young language in both structural and holistic aspects. Structurally, language is made up of phonetic, lexical, grammatical and pragmatic units. In terms of polity, language is expressed in the unit of communication. Thus, language development for children develops each aspect of language units but must achieve the integration of those elements in an overall communication unit which is written language, coherent speech that is expressed in two forms: dialogue and monologue. Dialogue in children is the child's ability to interact linguistically with people around him, while monologue is the ability to tell stories, express his thoughts, and present something so that others can understand. [1]

2.2. Tasks to develop spoken language for children

2.2.1. Educating Vietnamese phonetic standards

- Train children to listen to language sounds.
- Teach children to pronounce phonemes correctly, in syllable - word - sentence combinations according to Vietnamese sound standards.
- Children learn to adjust their language breathing, training them to use intonation to create expressions in terms of speech sounds.
- Correct pronunciation errors for children: because the child's pronunciation system is not yet complete, it is necessary to correct lisping errors (mispronunciation of phonemes and tones)



2.2.2. Form and develop children's vocabulary

Enrich children's vocabulary: increase the number of words in children's vocabulary, provide additional names of things, phenomena, activities, states, properties and characteristics of things and phenomena.

Improve children's ability to understand the meaning of words, teach children to use words correctly, provide synonyms and antonyms to help children choose words and use words accurately when expressing.

Actively promote children's vocabulary: teach children to use correct sentence structure and use many different sentences in communication activities

2.2.3. *Teach children to use Vietnamese sentence patterns:* Teach children to say correct sentence patterns according to Vietnamese sentence structure in communication situations

2.2.4. Develop coherent speech

Train your linguistic thinking ability and develop coherent speech in communication. Developing coherent speech is developing in children the ability to listen and understand language, the ability to present a certain content logically, sequentially, and with images

2.2.5. Developing artistic speech through exposure to poetry and stories

Preschool children are very sensitive to the art of language. Stories are especially appealing to them. Therefore, exposing children to poetry and stories is a way to develop speech, especially artistic speech

2.2.6. Cultivating love for the mother tongue and language communication culture

Educating children about language communication culture is also an important aspect of language development. Language communication culture is reflected in all linguistic elements such as using sounds and intonation appropriately for different communication contexts. In addition, attention should be paid to training children to use non-verbal means such as gestures and body language

2.3. Language development characteristics of 3–4-year-old preschool children

Their vocabulary increases rapidly to approximately 900-1500 words. Nouns and verbs are dominant, and they use adjectives and other word types more frequently. They use personal pronouns (child, mother, friend, younger sibling, etc.) proficiently.

Children pronounce words better, more clearly, and with less hesitation. They still make mistakes with difficult sounds or words with 2 or 3 phonemes, and with syllables containing multiple phonemes. They can pronounce the sounds of their mother tongue more smoothly and fluently.

They speak longer sentences, from 3-4 words to 5-6 words, and begin to use connecting words ("and," "because," "so"). They begin to use questions (who, what, where, why, how much).

Children understand and answer adults' questions, but they can only converse about what they perceive. They begin to express their understanding in a more coherent way. They can listen and understand when adults read or tell them about things that are appropriate to their understanding. However, their language is still heavily contextualized; they speak unclearly and rely heavily on gestures and body language. They use longer sentences (subject and predicate as a phrase). They use fewer compound sentences and less short sentences. However, some children still use words inaccurately, and some have difficulty remembering words and speak with a lisp or lack fluency.

In short, 3–4-year-old children have a richer vocabulary than before, both in quantity and word types. Their thinking is more developed; they can compare and recognize similarities and differences between things. Their language is clearer and more meaningful. In monologues, they often use short sentences and paragraphs. Children not only talk about what they perceive but also begin to talk about things they know. They may tell stories based on pictures, toys, or objects. Although much of their storytelling imitates that of adults

2.4. Teaching Children to Tell Stories Based on Pictures

In preschool, 3–4-year-old children learn to tell stories based on pictures of objects or themed pictures. Children mainly learn to construct descriptive stories based on pictures of objects and themed pictures. Their ability to create coherent narratives is limited because at this age, speech is still developing, and their active participation and speaking skills are gradually increasing. They primarily learn to create stories based on pictures of objects and themed pictures. Storytelling based on themed pictures is considered



by researchers as a very suitable way to develop coherent language skills in preschool children, as they have a fairly rich vocabulary and their ability to speak coherently has reached a significant level. Some picture-based storytelling activities can be used as follows:

2.4.1. *Storytelling using pictures is conducted in combination with the teacher's model narration.*

Initially, children almost always repeat the model sentences, but gradually, creative elements begin to appear more frequently in their storytelling. Using pictures in combination with the teacher's narration allows children to observe the picture and understand its theme, aiming to help them recognize and become interested in that picture. From observing the picture, the teacher will tell the story to the children. During this process, children's understanding is reinforced by the details and situations depicted in the picture through the teacher's narration. This helps children further understand the content of the story, and their ability to intentionally remember is developed. The teacher's narration helps children perceive the entire story through the picture, seeing the relationships between the characters within it.

2.4.2. *Storytelling using pictures is conducted in combination with conversation through a system of questions.*

This activity helps children recall the sequence of the story through a system of questions, helping them to build an outline of the story and the sequence of content. Children can express the story more easily using a structured format.

2.5. The current state of language development for children through picture-based storytelling activities in some preschools in Thu Dau Mot ward, Ho Chi Minh City.

2.5.1 *The current state of teachers' awareness of the necessity of language development through picture-based storytelling activities for 3-4-year-old children.*

To understand teachers' awareness of the level of necessity of language development for 3-4 year old children, the author used closed-ended questions with 5 levels from completely unnecessary to very necessary. The results obtained are as follows:

Serial	Necessary level	Ratio
1	Very necessary	81,5
2	Necessary	18,5
3	Normal	0
4	Unnecessary	0
5	Completely unnecessary	0

Table 1 shows that teachers highly value the necessity of language development activities, with 81.5% rating them as "very necessary." This result reflects teachers' correct understanding of language development through picture-based storytelling for children. This is an important basis for prioritizing the implementation of language development through picture-based storytelling for children.

2.5.2. *The current state of teachers' awareness regarding language development tasks through picture-based storytelling activities for 3-4 year old children*

Serial	Language development tasks	Very necessary	Necessary	Normal	Unnecessary	Completely unnecessary
1	Educate phonetic standards and use expressive means when speaking and telling stories.	42%	31%	27%	0	0
2	Develop children's vocabulary	47%	42%	11%	0	0
3	Use Vietnamese sentence patterns	22%	29%	31%	18%	0
4	Develop the ability to speak and narrate coherently	21%	30%	33%	16%	0



For teachers, vocabulary development is the most important task. This is why teachers always seek opportunities to integrate language into various activities, especially storytelling using pictures, to help children learn new words and apply them. Preschool children aged 3-4 years old have already developed better pronunciation than at previous ages, so vocabulary development is crucial for their flexible use in different sentences, contexts, and topics. Furthermore, teachers believe that teaching children Vietnamese sentence structures and developing their ability to speak and tell stories fluently is less important than other tasks. Teaching children to speak correct sentences with all the necessary components is essential in language development; they should be able to use simple sentences, limiting their ability to use complex ones.

2.6. Some measures to develop language for 4-5-year-old children through picture-based storytelling activities:

2.6.1. *Creating an environment for developing fluent speech in the classroom.*

Create a storytelling environment using materials such as pictures, puppet frames, models, puppets, etc. The visuals must be beautiful, diverse, and rich to attract children's attention. Children will be captivated and focused on listening to the teacher tell the story, enthusiastically participating in activities to understand the content of the story and be able to retell the story using the materials prepared by the teacher.

When conducting storytelling activities using pictures, arrange the materials, teaching aids, stage frames, and pictures in a large, clear, beautiful, and lively manner that suits the theme to create a good and comfortable learning environment for children. To have novel and attractive toys for children in storytelling activities, teachers should utilize readily available local materials such as books, newspapers, old calendars, tin cans, plastic bottles, styrofoam, fabric scraps, dry branches, etc., to engage children actively and thus develop their language skills.

2.6.2 *Using a variety of visual aids such as pictures, films, models, puppets, objects, toys, and real things*

Using visual aids such as pictures, films, models, puppets, objects, toys, and real things in developing coherent speech is a particularly important and effective method because it suits children's visual-figurative thinking. When exposed to visual aids combined with conversation, not only does it develop coherent speech, but it also helps children form new symbols and develop their perceptual abilities. Furthermore, using a variety of aids will make children more interested in the lesson, achieving the set goals and requirements.

In storytelling activities, teachers need to frequently use a variety of visual aids: pictures, films, models, puppet frames, objects, toys, and real items. Using visual aids is a very active teaching method. However, if the visual aids are inappropriate and not used properly, they will not yield the desired results, and may even be counterproductive. Visual aids not only recreate the content of the work but also help explain difficult words to children. Therefore, teachers need to choose appropriate aids and maximize their effectiveness.

Teachers must choose pictures with content that is suitable for the theme and age group. Since children cannot yet read, stories must reach them through the teacher's reading and narration. Before conveying a story to children, teachers must carefully study the content to ensure its suitability. The selection of the content of the pictures is extremely important; it determines the complete development of the child's personality.

2.6.3. *Using Games to Develop Fluent Speech*

Play is where children best express themselves verbally and where their need for self-affirmation and exploration of the world around them is satisfied. This helps children develop motivation and purpose for playing. This is the foundation of learning, because for preschool children, "learning through play, and playing through learning." For children, play is the primary activity; they learn through play. Therefore, using games is an effective method for developing children's language.

The use of games not only meets children's need for play but also allows them to learn through play. Games play a significant role in shaping emotions, attitudes, cognitive development, thinking, and especially in developing fluent speech in children, satisfying their need for play, creating a sense of comfort, and thereby developing fluent speech. Games that develop fluent speaking skills and culturally appropriate language communication include themed role-playing games such as: Mother and child, shopkeeper, teacher, doctor examining a patient, etc.

2.6.4. *Enhancing the Combination of Songs, Riddles, Rhymes, and Proverbs in Picture-Based Storytelling Activities*

For preschool children in general, and 3-4-year-olds in particular, children are very sensitive to the art of language. The melodies and imagery of lullabies, rhymes, folk songs, and folk poetry quickly enter the hearts of children. Songs, riddles, rhymes, and proverbs are especially appealing to children.



Rhymes, folk songs, and proverbs function to satisfy the need for play in young children, as rhymes are linked to games, folk songs are linked to songs, and proverbs are colorful verses reflecting the life around children. With such outstanding characteristics in content and art, rhymes, folk songs, and proverbs are truly an indispensable source of spiritual nourishment for young children.

Rhymes and folk songs with familiar content that children often recite while playing, such as: "Dung Dang Dung De"; "Sawing wood";...For example: When children play the game "Dragon and Snake in the Clouds," they not only embody the characters in the game but also satisfy their psychological and physiological needs as preschoolers, enjoying themselves, exploring, and becoming familiar with the nursery rhyme...

To develop children's language through picture-based storytelling, teachers can integrate songs, riddles, rhymes, and proverbs into various activities to create a stable and engaging learning environment during storytelling sessions. This allows for changes in atmosphere and mood during storytelling, making children interested, providing opportunities for experience, and helping them develop language confidently and comprehensively.

2.6.5. *Encouraging Children to Talk, Ask Questions, and Practice Storytelling*

Creating the best possible conditions for children to develop fluent language skills and a rich vocabulary helps them express the content of their stories. Through activities that allow children to communicate more with each other, the teacher talks to the children and encourages them to answer. The teacher listens to children's questions in cases where they are confused or do not understand how to tell the story, and corrects them in portraying the characters in the story. The teacher listens to the children's explanations and questions to provide appropriate guidance and create opportunities and encourage children to practice storytelling, suggesting ways to help them tell stories creatively.

2.6.6. *Let children practice storytelling using pictures*

Teachers must create opportunities for children to practice communication by telling stories, retelling what they already know and have learned. This will allow children to use different types of sentences, practice pronunciation, use words, and express their wishes in the best way. Always encourage and engage children in storytelling activities using pictures, continuing the story told by the teacher, etc.

2.6.7. *Collaborating with Parents in Teaching Children Storytelling*

Teaching children storytelling is not solely the responsibility of the school; collaboration with the family is indispensable. Parents are the key factor in children's language development. Collaborating with parents is crucial in teaching children storytelling and developing their language skills. Regularly communicate with parents to understand the importance of introducing children to literature. Advise and recommend age-appropriate storybooks to parents and tell them stories. Highlight the importance of language development, especially storytelling, at the beginning-of-year meeting.

Regularly discuss stories children have heard in class with parents. Encourage parents to have their children retell the stories they've learned at home, or encourage children to tell a story they know. This will enrich and diversify children's fluent speech.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Storytelling using pictures is an important and necessary activity for children aged 3-4 years old, contributing to the formation and development of their language and, in particular, their holistic personality development. When children tell stories, their language develops, their pronunciation becomes clear and fluent, and their vocabulary is enriched. They learn to express their opinions and thoughts, describing objects or events in their own words. Storytelling using pictures helps children accumulate and expand their rich and diverse vocabulary, helping them speak Vietnamese correctly. Through familiar stories, characters, objects, and phenomena, children can easily access and recognize the world around them, developing their creative thinking, curiosity, and desire to explore.

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