Enhancing Language Learning Opportunities, Birth - Five

David K. Dickinson
Vanderbilt University

Tampa Florida,
September 23, 2016

Research funded by the Department of Education #S359B080078 and the Institute for Educational Sciences # R305A110128, R305A150435.
Maximize Language-Enriching Opportunities

- Classrooms:
  - Book reading
  - Meal times
  - 1-1 times: play, diapering, dressing

- Community partners
  - Pediatricians
  - Libraries
  - Businesses

- Parent supports
Recommendations for Teaching

- Give children information
  - Guess what children do not grasp and give them information.
- Follow their interests and note attention. Re-focus as needed (or stop reading!)
- Be explicit and clear.
- Make connections to shared experiences
- Be engaging – vary pitch, pace; use gestures and facial expressions
- Select books that will interest children – interesting pictures, characters, surprised, humor
- Use factual books with good pictures of animals, machines, places
Read Books Four (or more) Times

- Re-read books and provide explicit definitions:
  - One read, no explicit definition: 4% of words learned
  - 3 – 4 readings, no explicit definitions: 10 – 15% learned
  - Re-reading and explicit definitions: 14 – 29% learned
    - (These data are for 4-5 years olds. Younger children certainly will benefit from even more repetition)

- Children repeatedly hear and begin to use complex sentences.

- Rereading builds comprehension.
Goal: overall understanding of the story:
- characters’ names
- motivations
- sequence of events

Introduce and define core vocabulary. Choose words that will stretch their vocabulary; not words they will easily learn as part of everyday life.

Have follow-up discussion that ensures understanding of core events.
Strategies for Teaching

___ define words verbally in full sentences

___ link to another word or concept
  
  Shared activity, book read in the past
  
  Similarity to or difference from other objects, activities

___ give children background knowledge, translate into home language if possible

___ respond child comments or questions

___ encourage children to say the word
Using Nonverbal Information to Teach Vocabulary

- Point to the picture
- Use facial expressions
- Use gesture, encourage children to use gestures
- Convey meaning with the tone of voice or volume
- Say the word slowly and clearly, special emphasis draws attention to words
Later Readings

- Co-construct the story with children.
- The children and teacher recall and discuss the story.
- Continue to review the meanings of the words you have decided to teach.
- Use and prompt use of vocabulary when possible.
- Follow-up discussion goes more deeply into the story content.
- Make connections to their experiences.
Working with Families: Focused Coaching Approaches Work

- Home visitors are teachers and coaches, not counselors.
- Visitors teach specific skills.
- Parents practice new skills.
- Attend carefully to how language is being supported.

Promising Programs in Your State

Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) http://www.parent-child.org
- Seeks to build language and cognitive skills of 2 – 3 yr olds.
- New toy given, the visitor models, and the mother practices.

HIPPY HippyUSA.Org (one site in Tampa)
- Focus on cognition, language and school readiness of 3 and 4 year olds
- Visitors are trained community members

- Reach Out and Read (two in the Tampa-St. Petersburg area)
  - Delivered in pediatrician’s office during well-baby visits
  - Modeling of reading in waiting room
  - Doctor gives a book and “prescribes” reading

- Dialogic Reading (English and Spanish):
  - Read Together-Talk Together, Pearson Education
  - http://www.pearsonschool.com/index.cfm?locator=PSZu68&PMDbProgramId=22109
Be “The One” for Your Children

I am only one.
But still I am one.
I cannot do everything.
But still I can do something.
And because I cannot do everything
I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

Rev. Edward Everett Hale
from: Singing the Living Tradition,
Unitarian Universalist hymnal