

Chapter 1

Poverty Effects on Oral Language Development: Birth to Third Grade

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on oral language development in children birth to third grade. Additionally, the effects of poverty on oral language development in children is explored. Subject matter includes typical language development, common language disorders, and current information regarding the interplay of language and technology. Particular attention is paid to the ways the home environment influences early language in infants and toddlers. Strategies to support language development in young children through the language experience approach, literacy, text sets, and technology are explained. Resources, materials, and suggested activities for parents, caregivers, and educators are embedded.

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INTRODUCTION

Oral communication is one way to verbally share thoughts, ideas and information. Young children develop their knowledge of vocabulary and syntactic structure from oral language, specifically oral language used at home, the knowledge that children gain from the home environment will influence their later literacy skills (van der Pluijm, van Gelderen, & Kessels, 2019). The quality of oral language becomes a key factor for literacy development and school success (van der Pluijm, van Gelderen, & Kessels, 2019). Therefore, oral language development is directly influenced by the home environment and experiences with family (Bingham, Kwon, & Jeon, 2017).

Communication can be an important method to share emotions, experiences and knowledge about the world. As children develop, they use verbal and nonverbal communication for a range of purposes including showing, sharing, commenting, questioning, and requesting. Through opportunities to observe and participate in social situations, children learn how conversation, and social interaction work. These important social rules and skills enable children to communicate with others in more sophisticated ways. Thus, the development of conversation and social skills is dependent upon opportunities for children to interact with peers and adults, as part of supportive and enriching experiences (van der Pluijm, van Gelderen, & Kessels, 2019). Joint attention, or interaction between parent and child, can be effective for learning new words and contributing to social learning. Positive and caring relationships between parents and children have been shown to relate to children's language and emergent literacy skills (Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein & Baumwell, 2001). Based on the research regarding oral communication, a deeper focus has been placed on the domain of family, and how to strengthen children's literacy development.

Research on the social world of children, specifically socioeconomic status (SES) and the development of language has been ongoing. SES does not only encompass a family's financial stability, but also educational achievement and job acquirement (American Psychological Association, 2021). Empirical research has shown that parents with less than a high school diploma, and living below the poverty line engage children in fewer language experiences when compared to parents with more education (Wasik & Van Horn, 2012). Families with less than a high school diploma also appear to have a different social-emotional environment and they are less likely to provide an encouraging, warm, relationship with their children that helps promote the use of oral language (van der Pluijm, vanGelderen, & Kessels, 2019). Overall, SES has a direct impact on language development in both the short and long term (Perkins, Finegood, & Swain, 2013).

EARLY LANGUAGE DISORDERS

In the first five years of life, humans experience rapid brain development that can be favorably or adversely affected by interactions with others and the environment (Clark, Van Dyke, Tussey & Haas, 2021). Beginning with attention to caregiver eye gaze, infants begin to draw meaning from spoken language (Cetincelik, Rowland, & Snijders, 2021). Eye gaze has been widely studied by researchers seeking to understand infant language acquisition. Barry, Estes, and Rivera (2015) found that infants attend to nonverbal cues given by adults, including eye gaze, and these cues along with spoken language, direct infant attention to critical information in object and information-rich environments. Furthermore, Golinkoff, et. al. (2019), reiterated the existence of a language gap based on SES and influenced by the amount of language infants are exposed to at an early age. These early skills combined with the ability

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