

Chapter 9

Recommended Interventions for the Promotion of Language Development for Children With Learning Difficulties

Agathi Argyriadi

Frederick University, Cyprus

Alexandros Argyriadis

Frederick University, Cyprus

ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the influence of an innovative type of activities called “aesthetic flow activities” in enhancing the holistic functionality of first graders in the five domains of language—phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics—as well as in attention processes along with enhancing motivational responses. The sample consisted of 98 children aged 6-7 years with learning difficulties and disabilities. Participants were divided into experimental groups taking part in 30 experiential “aesthetic psychological flow activities” and control groups who received a traditional approach. Data were obtained from a pre-test/post-test design, participant observation, and interviews with children and their teachers. Pre- and post-intervention measures suggest that the children of the experimental groups demonstrated higher scores in language post-tests and greater engagement in the learning process. The chapter highlights ways for educators to support language and literacy skills development of all children, whether they belong to a vulnerable group or not.

INTRODUCTION

The chapter focuses on a research study and looks at the influence of an innovative type of activities called “aesthetic flow activities” in enhancing the holistic functionality of first-graders, in the five domains of language; phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, as well as in attention pro-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-4680-5.ch009

cesses along with enhancing motivational responses, and communication climate in the classroom. The sample consisted of 98 children aged 6-7 years, with learning difficulties and disabilities and of various etiologies. Participants were divided into experimental groups, taking part in 30 experiential “aesthetic psychological flow activities” and control groups who received a traditional approach. Activities were designed based on fundamental theories of development and, in particular, motivation theories, positive psychology, and theoretical framework for arts integration. The ultimate goal of this interventional program was to help children develop holistically -on a cognitive, social, emotional, and physical level. Data were obtained from a pre-test/post-test design, participant observation, and interviews with children and their teachers. Pre and post-intervention measures suggest that the children of the experimental groups demonstrated higher scores in language post-tests. Data also revealed enhanced attention, increased internal motivational responses, greater engagement in the learning process, a more positive atmosphere in communication between students and student-teachers compared to children of the control groups.

BACKGROUND

Learning difficulties are conditions that can cause students to struggle in traditional classroom-learning contexts. The term “learning difficulties” is broad and includes challenges arising from learning disabilities, whether from attention deficit or other psychological disorders, medical illnesses, environmental conditions, family difficulties, or combinations of these factors (Kontantinou & Kosmidou, 2011). Students with LD are far more likely to be excluded on a fixed-term basis or permanently (Timpson, 2019). Moreover, students with language-based LD have been identified as being at high risk for school failure due to difficulties acquiring language and literacy (Bridgeland, Dilulio & Morison, 2006; Scott, 2004; Westby, 1994). In the field of language, they have been reported to struggle with narrative competence (i.e., storytelling) and exhibit less cohesive discourse elements than the typical peers (e.g., Paul & Smith, 1993). Low academic achievement may reinforce lower levels of emotional well-being as it increases negative perceived self-competence and self-efficacy, further reducing engagement in learning.

In this study, emphasis is given in students’ engagement. “Student engagement” is defined as the level of attention, curiosity, enthusiasm, optimism, and passion that students display when learning or being taught, as well as their motivation to learn and succeed in their education. It isn’t just about students, though. “Student engagement” can also refer to the ways in which school leaders, instructors, and other professionals “engage” students more completely in decision-making processes. When individuals with LD encounter challenges in learning and are less engaged, task-irrelevant thinking increases, and concentration decreases. This interferes with information processing and subsequent use of metacognitive skills, further exacerbating difficulties in learning (Alesi, Rappo & Pepi, 2014; Hampton & Mason, 2003; Sainio, Eklund, Ahonen & Kiuru, 2019). Language disorders make it difficult for students to express themselves and understand what others are saying. This has nothing to do with hearing impairments. Furthermore, there does seem to be a relationship between anxiety and learning for those with learning difficulties (Alesi et al., 2014; Sainio et al., 2019). Lavis, Burke & Hastings (2019) state that students with learning difficulties are four times more likely to develop a mental health condition than those without as a by-product of experiencing difficulties in school and learning). Their families also often experience feelings of helplessness or high levels of anxiety. In addition, research shows lower self-esteem in children with language difficulties compared to children without. It also seems that language

15 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/recommended-interventions-for-the-promotion-of-language-development-for-children-with-learning-difficulties/307847

Related Content

A Closer Look at Supporting Elementary Students With Autism in School

Haidee Copeland (2020). *Special Education Design and Development Tools for School Rehabilitation Professionals* (pp. 103-123).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-closer-look-at-supporting-elementary-students-with-autism-in-school/246665

Challenges and Dilemmas in the Education of Children With Special Needs in Romania

Emilia Oprisan (2022). *Research Anthology on Inclusive Practices for Educators and Administrators in Special Education* (pp. 191-201).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/challenges-and-dilemmas-in-the-education-of-children-with-special-needs-in-romania/292880

Treating Stuttering in Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder

Shoko Miyamoto and Masayoshi Tsuge (2021). *Education and Technology Support for Children and Young Adults With ASD and Learning Disabilities* (pp. 208-222).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/treating-stuttering-in-children-with-autism-spectrum-disorder/265810

Social-Emotional Learning Iterations to Strengthen Programs in India for Gifted Students in Poverty

Anabel L. Jensen and Cherilyn Gain Leet (2022). *Creating Equitable Services for the Gifted: Protocols for Identification, Implementation, and Evaluation* (pp. 278-302).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/social-emotional-learning-iterations-to-strengthen-programs-in-india-for-gifted-students-in-poverty/290606

Students With Specific Learning Difficulties: Skills and Problems in Writing

Ilias Vasileiou (2023). *Perspectives of Cognitive, Psychosocial, and Learning Difficulties From Childhood to Adulthood: Practical Counseling Strategies* (pp. 179-194).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/students-with-specific-learning-difficulties/323638