

# LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** This article discusses literature and language teaching for early childhood education. The aims of this study were: (1) to introduce letters and early reading skills, (2) to develop children's skills in processing information, and (3) to draw conclusions and take action based on the knowledge gained through their reading. This study used a descriptive qualitative method. The subject of this research is early childhood, aged (4-6 years) in this study. From this research review it was found that children's language skills and literacy are significantly influenced by the quality of teacher-child interaction in the preschool years, and reading aloud and telling stories are effective ways to share literature with young children and to support learning language and literacy. In conclusion, language and literacy development are critical for early childhood education. Supporting children's language and literacy development can be done through various methods, including read-aloud, discussions, dialogic reading, and modeling language and literacy skills.

**Keywords:** *literature, language teaching, education, early childhood*

## INTRODUCTION

Language and literacy development play a vital role in early childhood education. Effective instruction in early literacy provides preschoolers with appropriate environments, materials, experiences, and social support that promote their language and literacy skills. Researchers have discovered that the quality of teacher-child interactions during the preschool years significantly influences children's language and literacy abilities. Reading aloud and storytelling are both effective methods of introducing literature to young children and supporting their language and literacy learning. Educators recognize that engaging in creative and artistic activities, including literature, is essential not only for expanding students' knowledge but also for acquiring practical life skills to navigate challenging situations. Exposure to written language through books offers opportunities for learning new words and sentence structures that are less commonly encountered in speech, thereby promoting language, literacy, and overall development in children. Utilizing literature as a resource in a second language and foreign language classrooms provides numerous

advantages. Thus, incorporating literature into language instruction for early childhood education is an effective approach to fostering language and literacy development.

The field of literature in language education (referred to as LLE) has been examined from various perspectives, including language learning, personal growth, and intercultural and transcultural learning. (see for example Bland Citation2018b; Bland and Lütge Citation2013; Mela and Mikkonen Citation2007; Teranishi, Saito and Wales Citation2015 for collections of studies on the subject). However, further exploration is necessary to understand the interpretations and significance that teachers assign to LLE, as their conceptions and values regarding literature guide their teaching practices. (Turunen Citation1992: 10).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs qualitative research, which serves as a comprehensive resource for comprehending, planning, executing, and presenting qualitative research studies. The fourth edition incorporates updated content on mixed methods, action research, arts-based research, online data sources, and the latest advancements in data analysis, including software packages for data analysis and strategies for narrative and poetic analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Literature and Language**

Literature refers to expressive language and materials that creatively engage readers' cognition, emotions, and imagination, such as novels, short stories, poetry, and plays. (e.g. novels, short stories, poetry, and plays), as opposed to referential language and materials, where the purpose is to purely provide information (e.g. an instruction manual) (Fabb, Citation2010; McRae, Citation1996). While language is an expression that contains the intention to convey something to others. Something intended by the speaker can be understood and understood by the listener or interlocutor through the language that is expressed. It differs from referential language and materials, which solely aim to provide information, like an instruction manual. Language, on the other hand, is the means through which intentions and messages are conveyed from the speaker to the listener or interlocutor.

The field of literature in language education (referred to as LLE) has been explored from various angles, including language learning, personal growth, and intercultural and transcultural learning. In the past, language and literature were taught and learned together until a rejection of using literature in language classrooms arose in the mid-twentieth century.

Literature gradually vanished from foreign language curricula, and language programs focused primarily on developing language skills. (See for example Bland Citation2018; Bland and Lütge Citation2013; Mela and Mikkonen Citation2007; Teranishi, Saito and Wales Citation2015 for collections of studies on the subject). Language and literature had been taught and learned in tandem up until the mid-twentieth century when the consistent rejection of the use of literature in the language classroom emerged (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014). Literature disappeared from the foreign language curriculum and the language programs focused almost exclusively on the development of language skills (Carter, 2007).

However, there has been a growing consensus among researchers, international organizations, and education ministries regarding the importance of bridging the gap between language and literature instruction. This approach enables learners to build their language and cultural competencies more comprehensively, connecting with language, culture, and its speakers. The Modern Language Association (MLA) advocates for a curriculum that integrates language, culture, and literature as an interconnected whole, aiming to develop critical language awareness, interpretation and translation skills, historical and political consciousness, social sensibility, aesthetic perception, and functional language abilities. (MLA, Citation2007; see also Paesani, Citation2011).

In summary, literature encompasses creative language and materials that engage readers, while language serves as the medium for conveying intentions and messages. The need to merge language and literature instruction has gained recognition among researchers and educational institutions, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive language and cultural development for learners.

## **2. Application of Literature and Language to Early Childhood Education**

It is widely acknowledged that reading books together with children in preschool settings promotes the development of oral language and emergent literacy skills (Mol et al., 2009; Noble et al., 2019). For children from disadvantaged backgrounds, engaging in high-quality shared book reading experiences in preschool can help counteract the negative effects of limited home literacy resources (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Rodriguez et al., 2009) and contribute to reducing the socioeconomic gap by providing stimulating environments (Hoff, 2003). Shared book reading in preschools significantly contributes to supporting children's oral language and emergent literacy abilities. Early childhood educators can enhance these learning outcomes by incorporating extratextual utterances (expanding on the story content). However, the quality of interaction between adults and children holds

particular importance in maximizing these benefits. (Kaderavek et al., 2014; Mol et al., 2009).

Not only through reading books, but several methods can be applied to learning literature and language in early childhood education, including:

a. Story Method

Storytelling is activities carried out by one person to another orally with or without tools in the form of messages or information or tales, which are listened to with a sense of fun and delivered in interesting way. In early childhood, storytelling is one method of language development that can develop physical aspects and child psychology. Storytelling goals so that children can listen to what other people say, can ask and answer the contents of the story the heard, and can tell and express what they heard, so that the message/content of the story is understood and gradually implemented.

In the storytelling method, the method of delivering learning material is done orally in the form of stories from the teacher to the children. With the aim of training comprehension, thinking power, and concentration power, helping the development of imagination, creating a pleasant atmosphere, and adding to the vocabulary of children.

b. Conversational Method

Conversational method is a method by way of oral communication between children and teachers or children with other children through monologue and dialogue activities which is not rigid. Activities that communicate thoughts and feelings verbally or realize receptive and expressive language skills. The purpose of the Conversational Method is: (1) to demonstrate the ability and courage of children in conveying their opinions to anyone, (2) To provide opportunities for children to express themselves orally, (3) To improve children's pronunciation and speech, (4) To increase vocabulary, (5) Train children's comprehension, (6) Train children's thinking and fantasy, (7) Increase children's knowledge and experience, (8) Give pleasure to children, (9) to stimulate children to learn to read and write.

Those are some methods that can be applied in learning literature and language in early childhood education.

### **3. The Benefits of Teaching Literature and Language for Early Childhood Education**

Teaching literature and language in early childhood education offers numerous benefits for young learners. Here are some of the key advantages:

- a. **Language Development:** Literature provides an excellent platform for developing language skills. Through reading and listening to stories, children are exposed to new words, sentence structures, and vocabulary. They learn to express themselves effectively, develop better communication skills, and expand their understanding of grammar and syntax.
- b. **Cognitive Development:** Engaging with literature helps children enhance their cognitive abilities. Reading stimulates their imagination, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. It encourages them to make predictions, analyze characters and events, and draw conclusions. These cognitive processes foster intellectual growth and lay the foundation for advanced learning.
- c. **Vocabulary Expansion:** Exposure to literature exposes children to a wide range of words, including complex and abstract terms. This exposure helps expand their vocabulary and improves their ability to comprehend and articulate ideas. A rich vocabulary empowers children to express themselves more precisely and effectively.
- d. **Creativity and Imagination:** Literature encourages creativity and stimulates the imagination of young learners. Stories with vivid descriptions, engaging plots, and imaginative characters inspire children to think beyond the boundaries of reality. They learn to visualize and conceptualize ideas, fostering creativity and original thinking.
- e. **Emotional Development:** Literature provides opportunities for children to explore and understand various emotions. Stories often present characters experiencing different feelings and situations, enabling children to empathize and relate to the characters' experiences. This emotional engagement helps children develop empathy, emotional intelligence, and a better understanding of themselves and others.
- f. **Cultural Awareness and Diversity:** Literature exposes children to diverse cultures, traditions, and perspectives. Through stories from different backgrounds, children gain a broader worldview and develop an appreciation for cultural diversity. They learn to respect and value differences, promoting inclusivity and tolerance.
- g. **Social Skills:** Literature can be used to teach important social skills, such as taking turns, active listening, and cooperation. Reading stories together and engaging in discussions cultivates social interactions and enhances children's ability to collaborate, share ideas, and respect different opinions.

- h. **Aesthetic Appreciation:** Exposure to literature introduces children to the beauty of language, imagery, and storytelling. They learn to appreciate literary elements such as rhythm, rhyme, metaphors, and symbolism. This aesthetic awareness cultivates a lifelong love for literature and the arts.
- i. **Parent-Child Bonding:** Reading aloud to young children creates a special bonding experience between parents and their children. It fosters a love for reading and learning, while also providing a nurturing and comforting environment. Shared reading activities strengthen the parent-child relationship and promote positive family dynamics.

Incorporating literature and language into early childhood education offers a wide range of benefits that support children's overall development, including language skills, cognitive abilities, emotional intelligence, social skills, and cultural awareness. By nurturing a love for literature at a young age, educators lay a strong foundation for lifelong learning and academic success.

## **CONCLUSION**

The development of language and literacy plays a vital role in early childhood education. Effective instruction in early literacy provides preschoolers with suitable environments, resources, experiences, and social support that foster their language and literacy abilities. The field of language education and literature (referred to as LLE) has been examined from various perspectives, such as language acquisition, personal growth, and intercultural learning. Further exploration is needed to understand how teachers perceive LLE, as their values and interpretations of literature influence their teaching methods. In summary, language, and literacy development is essential in early childhood education, and there are various approaches to support children's growth in these areas, such as reading aloud, discussions, dialogic reading, and modeling language skills.

Teaching literature and language in early childhood education offers numerous advantages for young learners. Here are some key benefits: (1) Enhancing language skills, (2) promoting cognitive development, (3) expanding vocabulary, (4) fostering creativity and imagination, (5) supporting emotional development, (6) promoting cultural awareness and diversity, (7) developing social skills, (8) cultivating aesthetic appreciation, (9) strengthening parent-child bonding. By integrating literature and language into early childhood education, children's overall development is nurtured, including their language abilities, cognitive

capacities, emotional intelligence, social skills, and cultural understanding. By instilling a love for literature from an early age, educators establish a solid foundation for lifelong learning and academic achievement.

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