



Mother–child interaction quality in shared book reading: Relation to child vocabulary and readiness to read

Kathryn E. Bojczyk^{a,*}, Anna E. Davis^b, Verda Rana^b

^a The Catholic University of America, Department of Education, United States

^b The Catholic University of America, Department of Psychology, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 5 May 2014

Received in revised form 6 January 2016

Accepted 9 January 2016

Available online 9 February 2016

Keywords:

Early literacy
Shared book reading
Maternal beliefs
Readiness
Head Start
Preschool

ABSTRACT

Past research has indicated that parent–child book reading interaction quality, not just quantity, is a relevant consideration in children's vocabulary acquisition. In particular, children's active participation is considered key. This study investigated links between maternal beliefs about shared reading strategies and children's readiness to learn to read, mothers' observed shared reading behaviors, and children's vocabulary sizes. Participants were 62 mothers and their preschool children attending Head Start. Mother–child book reading was observed, and mothers' beliefs were measured via self-report and ratings of videotaped vignettes portraying reading strategies. Children's expressive and receptive vocabularies were assessed. Results revealed that dyadic shared reading quality mediated the link between mothers' beliefs and children's expressive, but not receptive, vocabulary. Further, mothers' perceptions of children's readiness to learn to read moderated the link between mother's beliefs and shared reading quality. This evidence highlights the importance of maternal beliefs in guiding behaviors that facilitate preschoolers' vocabulary development.

© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The income-based gap in academic skills is evident early in development (Denton Flanagan & McPhee, 2009; Halle et al., 2009). Beginning in early childhood, children whose families have a low socioeconomic status (SES) tend to have smaller vocabularies, an important factor in reading ability and academic success (Brooks-Gunn & Markman, 2005; Hulsey et al., 2011; Walker, Greenwood, Hart, & Carta, 1994). Vocabulary size is related to aspects of the home environment—in particular, how parents interact with their children during shared reading activities (Mol, Bus, de Jong, & Smeets, 2008). High-quality interactions encourage children to make inferences, ask questions, and formulate predictions, thereby increasing children's exposure to and use of new words (Hindman, Connor, Jewkes, & Morrison, 2008). The extent to which parents engage in these high-quality interactions may reflect their beliefs about what is helpful in reading to children (Bingham, 2007), as well as what they think suits their children's level of cognitive development (Sy, Gottfried, & Gottfried, 2013).

The current study investigated the impact of maternal beliefs and the quality of dyadic shared reading interactions on children's vocabulary skills, in a sample of mothers and their preschool children. Cross-sectional self-report and observational data were gathered, and statistical models were created to parse the influence of beliefs and interaction quality on preschoolers' receptive and expressive vocabulary. Specifically, it was predicted that mothers' beliefs about children's active engagement in shared reading would be associated with the quality of dyadic shared reading interactions, which in turn would be associated with children's vocabulary skills. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that the link between mothers' beliefs about interactive reading and dyadic interaction quality would depend on mothers' perceptions of their children's readiness to learn to read. The sample consisted of families that were predominately low SES, European-and attending a rural Head Start program; sparse research has been conducted for this kind of population (see for exception Curenton & Justice, 2008).

1.1. Income, vocabulary, and the home literacy environment

There is a pronounced gap in academic achievement between children from lower- and middle-income backgrounds that emerges early in development. Cognitive differences between the two groups are evident in infancy (Halle et al., 2009) as well as preschool (Hulsey et al., 2011). Ultimately, as a result of that,

* Corresponding author at: The Catholic University of America, Department of Education, 222 O'Boyle Hall, 620 Michigan Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20064, United States.

E-mail address: Bojczyk@cua.edu (K.E. Bojczyk).

children from low-SES families are less prepared for kindergarten entry as compared children from middle-SES families (Denton Flanagan & McPhee, 2009). One specific domain in which the SES-based gap is particularly salient is vocabulary; preschoolers from low-income families demonstrate markedly lower vocabulary skills than preschoolers from higher-income families (Hulsey et al., 2011). By the time children are 3-years-old, Brooks-Gunn and Markman (2005) calculated that children from low-SES families knew only half as many words as children from high-SES families and two-thirds as many words as children from middle-SES families. Despite the positive influence of formal education, the gap in vocabulary knowledge may increase over time and affect other educational domains, such as reading comprehension and overall academic achievement (Stanovich, 1986). Considering that it may affect future academic success, it is important to understand factors impacting this disparity in vocabulary sizes.

The SES-based gap in vocabulary knowledge may reflect disparate early educational opportunities. It is widely acknowledged that parents, as children's first teachers, play a vital role in development of many skills in children, including language (Boomstra, van Dijk, Jorna, & van Geert, 2013; Han & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2014; Hindman et al., 2008). The richness of home learning environments that parents create may relate to children's early literacy skills, such as vocabulary (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Griffin & Morrison, 1997). One specific kind of home learning environment is the home literacy environment, which includes factors such as oral communication and shared reading. Characteristics of the home literacy environment are related to family income (Dickinson & Neuman, 2007), as well as maternal education (Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009), a strong correlate of family income (Planty, Hussar, & Snyder, 2009). Children from low-SES families may be exposed to significantly fewer words (Hart & Risley, 1995; Rowe, 2008) and participate in fewer home literacy activities before commencing formal schooling, relative to middle- and upper-SES children (Planty et al., 2009). It is clear that SES-based differences exist for both children's vocabulary and the home literacy environment.

1.2. Shared reading interaction quality and vocabulary

In studying home literacy environment, most research examines the amount of time parents spend with their children engaged in literacy activities such as shared reading, in order to parse its relationship to literacy development. For a more nuanced understanding, the *quality* of parent-child book reading experiences is another important area of research. Various researchers have coined different terms to describe these parent-child reading practices, that most enhance early literacy by facilitating children's active involvement, including meaning-related talk (Hindman et al., 2008), dialogic reading (Whitehurst et al., 1994), distancing (Sigel, Stinson, & Flaughner, 1991), non-immediate talk (Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, & Serpell, 2001), and decontextualized language skill (Dickinson & Snow, 1987). Empirical evidence for each can be considered support for active parent-child reading strategies. These overlapping concepts capture the extent to which parents encourage children to go beyond just reading the text, by asking them to predict, summarize, and connect with the story line. The adult's role is to prompt the child with questions, to expand the child's verbalizations, and to praise the child's efforts to tell the story and to label objects within the book (Arnold, Lonigan, Whitehurst, & Epstein, 1994). For example, asking open-ended "wh-" questions that elicit more than a yes or no response from the child is an active strategy (Whitehurst et al., 1994). Such tasks require children to formulate their own words and think critically—and hence are more cognitively rigorous than merely listening to the story read aloud. In this paper, these active reading strategies will be referred to broadly as shared reading interaction

quality. This term was chosen because it acknowledges that both parent and child contribute to the child's active engagement, and because it emphasizes the importance of the quality of the parents' strategies, rather than just the quantity.

Correlational and intervention research has indicated that children's active participation in shared reading yields greater benefit than passive observation (Newland et al., 2011; Phillips, Norris, & Anderson, 2008). In high-quality shared reading interactions, children show greater gains in language development compared to when adults simply read the book to the child (Britto, Brooks-Gunn, & Griffin, 2006; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003). More specifically, studies suggest that shared reading interaction quality is related to children's vocabulary skills (Hindman et al., 2008; Mol et al., 2008) and oral language (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008).

The effect of shared reading interaction quality on vocabulary can be parsed by examining expressive and receptive vocabulary as separate outcomes. With regard to expressive vocabulary, a recent meta-analysis of sixteen outcome studies demonstrated that children whose families received an intervention to increase their interactive reading demonstrated higher expressive vocabulary skills, particularly for children 2–3-year-olds (Mol et al., 2008). Further, Hindman et al. (2008) found that several aspects of high-quality shared reading interactions (e.g., inference-making, recalling, and predicting) were positively related to expressive vocabulary skills (though this relationship may be bidirectional). Additionally, in a sample of 126 young African-American mothers and their preschool children, Britto et al. (2006) found support for the association between behaviorally-coded maternal reading patterns and children's expressive vocabulary skills. In short, there is strong evidence that higher interaction quality is associated with larger expressive vocabularies in young children.

Although more support exists regarding expressive vocabulary, studies also report a link between quality of shared reading interactions and receptive vocabulary as noted above. In the meta-analysis conducted by Mol et al. (2008), the authors also found an effect of shared reading interventions on receptive vocabulary, though not as strong. Tabors, Roach, and Snow (2001) found that the kinds of book-related activities that mothers engaged in with their children were related to children's receptive vocabulary in kindergarten. More specifically, DeTemple (2001) found that high-quality mother-child interactions during shared reading time were positively associated with 3-year-olds' receptive vocabularies. Hence, the quality of shared reading interactions impacts both expressive and receptive vocabulary, although the effect on expressive vocabulary may be more powerful.

1.3. Maternal beliefs about shared reading interactions and reading readiness

The evidence cited thus far has demonstrated that high-quality shared reading interactions may be related to increased vocabulary acquisition. Nevertheless, these strategies that research shows to be effective are not universally implemented. Van Kleeck (2003) suggested that parental beliefs may predict home literacy experiences because they may directly influence what skills are considered important to teach at home.

The extant research on parental beliefs related to reading has shown that there is variability in mothers' theoretical perspectives on literacy instruction, such as the purpose and progression of shared reading activities (DeBaryshe, Binder, & Buell, 2000; Neuman, Hagedorn, Celano, & Daly, 1995; Newland et al., 2011). For example, the results of several studies suggested that low-income parents and those with less education tended to believe that "drill and practice" approaches were most appropriate for teaching reading (Baker, Sonnenschein, Serpell, Fernandez-Fein,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/353675>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/353675>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)