

Interdisciplinary strategies in developing oral comprehension skills in preschool education

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Abstract: One of the tasks of preschool education is to lay the foundation of the oral comprehension competency. Through specific activities, didactic strategies and establishing development benchmarks, the preschool teacher provides support in understanding messages transmitted orally and prepares the next step, comprehension of written texts. The teaching approach has to be coherent, gradual, progressive, oriented towards achieving goals such as the understanding tasks, the reception and personal interpretation of literary and nonliterary texts. This article proposes some concrete strategies to deepen understanding adjusted to the age particularities of preschoolers, preschool strategies that practitioners can apply them in their daily activities with groups of students.

Keywords: semantic integration, comprehensive strategies, textual reception, narrative language, logical and chronological connectors

1. Conceptual framework

The first signs of understanding occur during the first months of life, when the child is communicating with those around him. The comprehensive side of the language develops very early, even before the child is able to express himself through words. This gap between skills is significant and continues throughout development.

Several recent studies focus on the strong correlation between oral comprehension skills and the approach of written language skills. Knowledge of vocabulary, mastery of morphology and syntax, capabilities approach to textual organization will play a fundamental role in understanding by preschoolers of texts read to them.

The comprehensive dimension of the language is approached starting with preschool, although this linguistic activity is transparent to the child. To understand it is not enough to listen, you have to develop an inner cognitive activity called semantic integration of information provided by the text or the message, which is reflected in a mental representation. This integration links new information to prior knowledge. Training comprehension requires a phased approach that can be structured by age groups. Thus, smaller children are trained to understand a simple request made in an unambiguous situation, to listen quietly to a story or brief poem and understand these texts, demonstrating their understanding by providing answers to some simple questions related to the text they heard. Guided through images by the teacher, the child will be able to reformulate some elements of the story he heard. Another activity, specific small children is reading the images. The child will be able to observe a picture book and express their observations in words.

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The 4-5 years old child will be able to understand the instructions provided by the teacher, at least when they are face to face with an adult. Oral texts will be more complicated than the ones in the previous year, so the child will be able to understand the storyline of an event read or narrated by the teacher, where logical and chronological sequence of the scenes will be associated images.

For 5-6 year old children the aim is to understand guidelines and explanations provided collectively. The child is expected to understand a narrative read by teacher and be able to retell it, respecting the logical sequence and timeline, to interpret or to transpose it into a puppet show, dramatic play or drawings. In this group texts will go beyond literary ones. The teacher will also read informative texts, documentation, so the student will be able to make connections between the questions posed and what was presented in class. Before beginning school the student will be trained in receiving lyrical texts, in extracting keywords, and expressing the impressions and feelings experienced through drawings or paintings.

One of the challenges of kindergarten is to train students to understand the guidance provided by the teacher. They are part of the directive language and they trigger questions and clarifications. Collective guidance are hard to use during preschool. The difficulty of using them is that they are only heard in exceptional cases since, long after the start of kindergarten, the child is not capable of decentering, managing to listen and respond only if he is addressed individually. At this age, children do not yet understand the role of this act of specific language.

In formulating tasks, the teacher will pay more attention to content and expression. In kindergarten, more than at school, where students can reread workloads, the teacher should enunciate clear, concise and precise indications. The terms used will be varied ("color", "cut", "paint") and formulation of statements like: "Arrange your drawing!", "You need to arrange drawing!", "You Please arrange your drawing. " will not be neglected. By rephrasing the teacher teaches the child to rephrase.

The 3-4 years old will understand a simple workload in an unambiguous situation. By capturing the child's attention (through eye contact, through touching the child's shoulder with his hand) the teacher will achieve the desired effect. To obtain the desired feedback, the teacher will formulate a single workload, which will concatenate a second task only after the first task was finished. There are rare cases where students can conduct two activities associated through the temporal connectors "then", "after". In the case of 3-4 year olds the teacher is forced to clearly state the recipient, avoiding impersonal expressions such as "It will be done", "We will do."

The 4-5 years old student is already able to understand the tasks outlined by the teacher when they are face to face with the adult. During the year the difficulty of the tasks will progressively increase and tasks will become increasingly complex. The vocabulary used in formulating requirements is increasingly complex and formulations will be like "Sort by color!", "Unite!", "Cut on the dotted line!". Even at this age the teacher addresses each student using her name and asks him if he understood what he has to do. Towards the end of the year the teacher can evoke objects and events that occurred previously and in other areas than where the action is performed or ones to be carried out later. For example: "Johnny, when the break is over, you will bring this message to the schoolmistress.

Until then I will put it on the desk. ". We note the use of the first name in the beginning of the phrase and the use of the personal pronoun. Spatio-temporal landmarks have the same importance.

Students can be trained to perform multiple tasks through the repetition of the same tasks as in the following example: "I will trace the outline of my hand, then give the drawing to my neighbor.", "On the drawing of the hand that I received I will draw a ring on the index finger then pass the drawing to my neighbor. ", " On the drawing of the hand that I received, I will colour the fingernails, then pass the drawing to my neighbor.". This gaming situation trains the students in understanding a series of simple successive tasks which they should not only listen to but also execute in a sustained manner.

With older children complex phrases that will initially be decomposed and possibly reformulate can be used. Guidance becomes increasingly lighter, because children understand collective guidance, which means that their attention should double. The difficulty, even for the older ones, lies in the complexity of the task, being influenced by the number of activities, the relationship between them and objectives. If the guidelines are too complex, they will not be respected. The teacher will take the chronological chain of actions into account. A phrase such as: "You will stick the pictures after you've arranged all of them, numbering them to start", which sets out all the components of a task, but in reverse order of their realization is difficult to memorize and therefore to achieve.

In kindergarten, more than at school, where students can reread exercise guidelines and requirements, special attention should be paid to brevity and precision. Phrasing of the questions should be anticipated starting with the moment when the lesson is prepared.

2. Interdisciplinary strategies for developing oral communication

A preschool child only has access to a literary text through an adult which reads or tells him a story. This mediation brings some support in understanding the text. Drawings, photographs, pictures as well as the adult's gestures and physiognomy facilitate the understanding of the message. An expressive tone captures the attention, carries more meaning and also stimulates the child's memory. During storytelling or reading, the teacher's expressivity becomes a language model. A slow and articulate flow, phonetic emphasizing facilitate access to meaning. Therefore the teacher's expressivity, his way of narrating and reading represent a path towards understanding. It's desirable for the teaching approach to be a progressive one. For small children text comprehension is supported by external elements (puppets, pictures, objects, albums with illustrations). Albums with illustrations are a particular case, as some albums are designed to be complementary to the text and illustrations do not allow the independent reading of the text. Although these albums have their usefulness, even in training understanding, it is desirable that teachers choose autonomous texts. In most cases, the intermediate children and especially older children need to understand the messages of some texts and narrated stories without any form of support besides the teacher's voice. Even when the teacher chooses to use teaching materials that facilitates understanding of the text, the text will be read several times, and one of the readings, most often the last, will be done without support.

Choosing text is crucial in training understanding. This choice will be made according to the topic, it will appeal to the student's cultural references, it will take into account how to narrate, the complexity of the narration and the vocabulary used.

Narrating an event is not an easy exercise for the teacher addressing the children, nor for the child that tells something, whether to an adult or to the other children. The act of narration requires fluidity, involves a first contact with the text, familiarizing one with it, assimilating and ordering spatiotemporal guides and the logic of the events, clarifying causal relationships. In the case of narratives without didactic support the narrator's attention is directed to the listeners. The narrator tries to capture the gazes, to regulate his gestures and voice modulations, to make adequate breaks and accelerate some narrative sequences to achieve interaction with the class and receive feedback. A story means to appeal to orality as stories are related to the oral tradition. Another approach is required when reading. Reading aloud directs the reader's gaze to the text pages. Readers and listeners lack eye contact and, therefore, are to some extent separated. This distance implies a form of isolation and introspection, leaving room for personal reflections.

Understanding involves comments, questions, nuances, nonverbal elements. The teacher's role is that of mediator. He maintains an atmosphere opened to questions, stimulates different interpretations, trains critical thinking and provokes debate.

Items that facilitates understanding texts are: refreshing knowledge acquired previously to achieve consistent links between stories of the same author or the same collections and formulating hypotheses and questions starting from the title, the names of the characters, two or three suggestive images. The student is challenged to anticipate what will happen on the next page by using the chronology of the events and the implicit knowledge of the text, to imagine what will happen in the story, based on all the factors mentioned at the beginning of the story.

Guided by the teacher, the student exceeds the first form of narrative understanding by deepening and expressing a multitude of perspectives. The teacher can help deepen understanding through the analysis and interpretation of illustrations, through debate from general questions, through role play (silent or spoken), by expressing critical views, by making drawings that are then presented to the whole group, by recomposing the story starting from the most successful drawings, by making summaries of the events narrated.

To stimulate narrative language development the teacher organizes discussions, directs the confrontation of viewpoints, asks exciting questions, makes children reflect on the questions presented, highlighting agreements and especially disagreements. For the success of such an approach, each speaker must explain the reasoning. Complicating such an activity involves making connections with other books read or listened to, with life experiences or information previously acquired by the children. The aim is not explaining the text, not even when some textual forms are explained, as much as the observation and the use of connectors that organize the text (the teacher can explain the value of words such as "suddenly"). These activities can be evaluated through other activities, such as the continuation of a story after a "suddenly" at which reading stops. Other ways to check understanding are reformulating, with the book closed or open, providing free access to the book, giving rewording a functional value,

through partial synthesis, through requesting summaries, which will be used in the next day's update, through dramatizing stories, through dramatic plays, puppets or mime. The text improvised by the child feeds on what he knows about the characters, about their motives, about the theme of the story. Dramatic play reactivated stereotyped formulas, ensures the transition from indirect to direct style style, even offers the right to speak to a character who has not had this right in the initial version of the story, expresses emotions through body movements that nuance the language, offers coherence to the narrative path. Evaluation of textual understanding may involve transposing the stories in the papers type model in which students can move characters to identify the time and place. Open-ended narratives allow imagining dialogues between characters, a creative approach to default situations so that the gaps in the narrative text can be filled.

Debates after reading a text helps establish relationships between the explicit content of the text and previously acquired information. Systematic organization of such activities leads to overcoming the immediate comprehension of the story, to going beyond the descriptive or explanatory content of a text. In this case, progressivity is essential because the students progress relies on the success of simple situations. Games stimulate deduction, the formulation of relationships between cause and effect, they involve a logical and intellectual journey, they rely on knowledge aquired outside the activity and can only be achieved in small groups, because some students have difficulty expressing themselves in front of the whole class.

3. Conclusion

Acquiring oral proficiency comprehension is therefore a complex process, involving interdisciplinary and global learning activities, the only ones through which the transition from the informative to the formative can be realised. In this case the teacher exceeds his status as a mentor, he becomes a real conversation partner and steps into a new paradigm, that of collaborative learning, of implicit learning, through absorption and impregnation by using tacit connections that today's preschooler needsto be trained to do in order to naturally adapt to the world of tomorrow.

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