

Conceptualising pedagogical inquiry into supporting children' oral language for learning

Susan Nichols¹

Jenni Carter¹

¹ University of South Australia

This paper will establish and discuss the conceptual framework and methodological approach underpinning the research reported in the remaining symposium papers. First, children's oral language learning is understood from a sociocultural perspective, in which oral language is seen as a resource for the accomplishment of social goals (Danby 2002; Theobald & Danby, 2017). From this perspective, the classroom is viewed as a social context, just as other environments for linguistic interaction, such as the home or playground. When educators seek to build on and extend children's oral language, it is important for them to consider the nature of the communicative environment in their classrooms (Alexander, 2003). Secondly, all children are considered to be active agents in their own learning, able to form and act on their own social goals, and to use oral language in the pursuit of these (Dunphy, 2012). From this perspective, educators seeking to improve children's oral language competence need to shape opportunities that are meaningful from children's perspectives and be responsive to children's preferred modes of participation where possible. The study's design centres on pedagogical innovation within a collaborative practitioner inquiry approach. A practitioner inquiry approach aims at generating changes not just in students' learning but in the knowledge, practice and dispositions of educators, as this level of change is transferable to new cohorts of students and curriculum contexts (Nichols & Cormack, 2017). The research team was composed of five teacher-researchers and two academic researchers, who met regularly throughout the study. The team read in the field of oral language, investigated the related work of other researchers, generated research questions relevant to each teacher's site of practice, conducted initial inquiry to establish children's oral language competence in several domains, and planned new pedagogical actions. These pedagogical interventions varied from site to site but all aimed to extend the opportunities available to children to participate in learning using their voices, provided scaffolding for the development of specific oral language skills, and contributed to creating oral language positive classroom environments (Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2013). The process and outcomes will be discussed in the following papers.

References

- Alexander, R. (2003). Oracy, literacy and pedagogy: international perspectives. In E. Bearne, H. Dombey, & G. Teresa (Eds.), *Classroom Interactions in Literacy* (pp. 23-35). Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.
- Danby, S. (2002). Constituting social membership: Two readings of talk in an early childhood classroom. *Language and Education*, 10(2), 151 - 179.
- Dunphy, E. (2012). Children's participation rights in early childhood education and care: the case of early literacy learning and pedagogy. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 20, 290-299.
- Nichols, S., & Cormack, P. (2017). *Impactful Practitioner Inquiry: The ripple effect on classrooms, schools and teacher professionalism*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Theobald, M., & Danby, S. (2017). Co-producing cultural knowledge: children telling tales in the school playground. In A. Bateman & A. Church (Eds.), *Children's Knowledge-in-interaction: Studies in Conversation Analysis* (pp. 111-125). Singapore: Springer.

Wasik, B. A., & Iannone-Campbell, C. (2013). Developing vocabulary through purposeful, strategic conversations. *The Reading Teacher*, 66(4), 321-332.