

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND ITS IMPLICATION IN AN ESL CLASSROOM

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Abstract

The study investigated language development and its implication in an ESL classroom. The study stated that children undergo different developmental stages in a bid to acquire and learn language(s). However, when the developmental does not augur well, there is every tendency that challenges would crop up. The study was guided by two research questions. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The sample used for the study was 326 primary school pupils. Instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. Means and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The result of the findings revealed that integration of developmental strategies/ programmes in lesson plan and developing oral skills and abilities have high impact on language development in children. It further revealed that poor verbal skills, limited vocabulary and difficulty in forming sentences were the challenges seen in language development among children as well. Some recommendations were made among which was that language developers and teachers which are major stimulants should be properly equipped and sensitized in order to handle and cope with children's different language developmental stages.

1. Introduction

Language is the ability to communicate with others. Language includes all forms of communication, whether expressed orally, written, used signs, gestures or facial expressions. While speech is a spoken language that is the most effective form of communication and considered most important and widely used. Language development is the process by which children learn to speak in complete sentences. It's foundational for developing appropriate communication skills. Moreso, Language development increases through the growth of the children. Parental input has been shown to play a critical role in facilitating language development with high- quality and responsive interactions promoting linguistics growth and communicative competence (Hoff, 2016). Parents should always pay attention to these developments, since it will determine the learning process. Parents are greatly responsible for the success of children's learning and should always strive to improve children's potentials in order to develop optimally (Indrayani et al., 2016).

Hence, Language development occurs in all children with normal brain functioning regardless of race, culture or general intelligence. In other words, the capacity to acquire language is a capacity of the human species as a whole (Akmajian et al, 2007). Language development starts from the first cry until a child is able to speak a word. Furthermore, the process starts at infancy and then continues through some stages until the child can speak or produce a sentence even a complex sentence. The ability and propensity to utter such sounds thus appear to be unlearned. It is also influenced by not only innate factor but also environment. In addition, we do not teach children their first language(s), we simply interact with them. We do not explain grammar rules while speaking.

Language acquisition occurs naturally through listening, repetition, and meaningful interaction within a child's environment. Through constant exposure to everyday conversations, children unconsciously acquire sounds and vocabulary before gradually mastering sentence patterns and grammatical structures. This process is supported by guided instruction that helps learners

recognize appropriate language use in context. Language development is continuous across the lifespan and is closely linked to normal brain functioning, making it a dynamic and progressive phenomenon. Consequently, language learning complements natural acquisition by providing structured theoretical knowledge that enhances accuracy, clarity, and effective communication at different stages of development. Studies on experiential, blended, and technology-supported learning environments emphasize that meaningful exposure, interaction, and guided practice significantly enhance learning outcomes across disciplines, including language education (Enemuo & Muogbo, 2023; Muogbo et al., 2025; Okafor et al., 2023; Nnoli & Muogbo, 2025; Enemuo et al., 2024; Anakpua et al., 2025).

Language development in childhood is an unavoidable part of life. It plays an important role in a child's ability to communicate and express his feelings. That is why, children can interact with others, his family and contemporaries. In consonance, Ozcan (2018) affirms that to develop thought and set up notions about the role of environment in childhoods development has been successful. Improving Language development and skills are absolute significance for a child's progress both in personal and social life. It's a grounding form the increasingly competitive and demanding world we live in. Thus, Language development no doubt integrates development strategies in lesson plans to help children to be part of a multicultural environment. Succinctly put, Language enhancement programmes develop interaction among children through a collaborative learning environment.

Here, young learners feel comfortable to pick up new words along with their peers to form sentences and communicate as well. There is also the impactful use of language in helping children to understand written languages more easily, developing oral abilities and skills, raising questions and providing information in varied situation through well-planned language development programmes. There is no disputing to the fact that language development is the basis of other acquisitions which starts with birth and last until one's last breath. Children first acquire language abilities in the environment where they live with their families and contemporaries (Yilidirim, 2020). Hence, when a child's Language is not properly developed, it leads to delayed development, auditory processing disorder (APD), poor verbal skills, limited vocabulary, difficulty forming sentences and language impairments (Conti-Ramsden, 2015).

By implication, the ESL teacher is not teaching language as such but a new manifestation of language. The learner has already developed a reasonable amount of communicative competence in his mother tongue; he already knows what he can and cannot do with it. He is in fact relearning language and the processes of relearning. The teacher therefore should strive to utilize the innate language behavior in the learner. Motivation is another indispensable tool in an ESL classroom. The teacher should strive towards motivating the learners. Positive reinforcement should be used in place of negative ones. Practice/drill must also be a constant feature in ESL classroom as they serve to strengthen learning experiences (Anyadiiegwu et al., 2023). Thus, the researcher has observed the need to investigate language development in children and its implication in an ESL classroom.

This study is grounded in the growing concern over observable language developmental difficulties among children, as language competence does not progress typically for a considerable number of learners, thereby placing them at risk of challenges that may hinder effective language development. Issues such as weak verbal skills, language impairments, auditory processing disorder (APD), and delayed language development have become prominent concerns during children's developmental stages, prompting the need to investigate language development in children and its implications for the ESL classroom. Accordingly, the study seeks to determine the impacts of language development in children and to examine the developmental challenges experienced by primary school pupils, guided by the research questions on the impacts of language development and the specific challenges encountered by pupils at the primary school level.

2. Method

The research designs employed in this study was descriptive survey research design. It was designed to investigate language development and its implication in an ESL classroom. Descriptive survey design is a research methods where a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only few people deemed to be representative of the entire group (Nworgu, 2015). The population of the study comprised of 6726 primary 5 pupils in public primary schools in Anambra State. The sample size of the study consists of 326 primary 5 pupils. Two zones were drawn

from the six zones using random sampling. The two zones are Awka and Onitsha respectively. The instrument for data collection was self- structured questionnaire designed by the researcher titled “Implication of Language development in children” questionnaire (ILDCQ). The instrument consisted of sections A and B. Section A elicited information on the personal data of the respondents, section B elicited information on impact of language development in children. The responses were rated on 4 points scale of strongly agreed(SA) = 4 points, Agreed(A)= 3 points, Disagreed(D) = 2 points and Strongly disagreed(SD)= 1 point. The research questions and answers were scored and analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Impacts of Language Development in Children

The analysis in Table 1 shows the mean scores on impact of integration of development strategies in lesson plan, understanding of written languages, developing oral abilities and language performance are 45.24. Using the mean scores of integration of development strategies, understanding written language, developing oral abilities and skills and enhancing language performance revealed that they have high impacts on children’s development.

Table 1. Mean Score of Impact of Language Development in Children

Serial No.	Variable	N	Mean	SD
1	Integrates development strategies	326	45.24	14.20
2	Understanding written language policy	326	45.24	14.20
3	Developing oral abilities and skills	326	45.24	14.20
4	Enhancing language performance	326	45.24	14.20

3.2. Developmental Challenges Observed Among Primary School Pupils in Anambra State

The analysis in Table 2 reveals that the mean score of poor verbal skills, poor understanding skills, limited vocabulary and difficulty in forming sentences are 43.24 respectively. Using the mean scores of poor verbal skills, poor understanding skills, limited vocabulary and difficulty in forming sentences revealed that they are developmental issues seen among children of children.

Table 2. Mean Score of Developmental Challenges in Children

Serial No.	Variable	N	Mean	SD
1	Poor verbal skills	326	43.24	12.20
2	Poor understanding skills	326	43.24	12.20
3	Limited vocabulary	326	43.24	12.20
4	Difficulty in forming sentences	326	43.24	12.20

This study has investigated Language development in children and its implication in ESL classroom. The study has revealed the impacts as well as the developmental challenges that are prevalent in the language development of children. Some of the impacts are integration of development strategies in lesson plan and poor verbal skills.

The findings were discussed under the research questions that guided the study. The findings of the study based on the research question one indicated that integration of development strategies in lesson plan, ability to understand written language, developing oral abilities have major impacts on language development in children. In the words of Yildirim (2020) , Language is the key element for communication and development; expression of thoughts and understanding of written words are associated to the significance of language development. The findings of the study based on research question two indicated that poor verbal skills, poor understanding skills, limited vocabulary and difficulty in forming sentences are among the developmental challenges encountered by children. This is in line with Kim (2023) that 10 % of children reaching primary school has some level of difficulty with language.

4. Conclusion

In the view of data analysis and interpretation of results, the following conclusions were drawn. The study indicated that children acquire language development as they grow. It equally meant that

at the beginning, children are not capable of the language skills they need to hold conversation and communicate, hence, the developmental challenges they encounter. On the other hand, childhood education is glaring when there is integration of development strategies in lesson plans which will make language learning and development very fascinating. In all, the study also indicated that the ability to understand written language and language impairment have impacts on language development in children.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education, educational boards, and school administrators take responsibility for ensuring that teachers and language developers receive continuous training on developmental curricula to enable them to effectively address children's diverse language needs and achieve optimal learning outcomes. In addition, language developers, as key sources of stimulation in children's learning, should be adequately sensitized and well equipped to manage pupils effectively, with a clear understanding that language development occurs at varying levels among children. Furthermore, parents are encouraged to exercise patience and develop awareness of the different stages of language development, so they can identify children with delayed development early while also supporting and appreciating those who demonstrate typical language growth.

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