

Examination of the Relationship between the Language Development Levels and Social Acknowledgement Situations in 5-6 Year-Old Preschool Children

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Abstract

In this study, the relationship between the level of language development and social acknowledgement situations of 5-6 year-old children attending to a preschool institution was examined. The participants of the study, which is in the screening model, are 327 children in the 5-6 age group who are educated in kindergartens and their teachers. In order to determine children's social acknowledgement situation, "Teacher Form" of "The Self Perception Scale for Children S.P.S.C", and "Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test P.P.V.T" for word recognition in language development levels were utilized as data gathering instruments. Additionally, "Personal Information Form" designed by the researcher was utilized in order to identify the demographical features of children. The data collected were analyzed via Pearson correlation analysis and simple linear regression analysis techniques. According to the results, a significant linear relationship was determined between the language development levels and social acknowledgement situations of 5-6 years old children. According to the regression analysis, the subdimensions "Cognitive Competence", "Acceptance by Friends" and "Physical Competence" of The Self Perception Scale for Children Teacher Form were determined as an important predictor of the scores derived from Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

Keywords: preschool education, language development, social acknowledgement

1. Introduction

Preschool education is an educational process which provides a rich stimulating environment appropriate to the developmental levels and individual characteristics of children aged 0-72 months, supporting their physical, intellectual, emotional and social development, guiding them in the direction of the cultural values of society and preparing them for primary school education within the scope of basic education (XIV. National Education Council, 2010).

Preschool period is an epoch in which the most critical periods of developmental areas of the individual are experienced intensively and the bases of the healthy development of the individual are laid (Deniz, 2008). This epoch includes the most critical years for personality construction, basic knowledge, skills and habit acquisition and development. The experiences to be gained in this period should not be left to chance and should be taken into consideration seriously. Many development and personality theoreticians emphasize the importance of early childhood. They set forth that the experience gained during this time affects the developmental areas in the adulthood (Oguzkan & Oral, 1983; Kopp, 1987). One of these developmental areas is the language development.

Language is a natural means of communication; a living being developing and maintaining its life within its own rules; a social establishment which is the common property uniting the community and protecting them; a structure consisting of sounds; a system of secret agreements and contracts drawn out in the unknown times (Ergin, 1985). Language development also refers to attaining words, numbers and symbols, keeping and using them suited for the rules of language (Erden & Akman, 1995). Learning to use language is one of the most significant indicator of the child's development. Linguistic skills of the child is believed to develop in the prenatal period. Social environment and education have a great role on language development together with the child's biological capacity. Therefore, the child takes the advantage of the supportive role of education at the stages of language acquisition (Razon, 1976; Whedall & Barry, 1977; Jersild, 1979; Lempert, 1985; Baykoc-Donmez & Ari, 1992; Ozturk, 1995; Kocak & Dereli, 2005; Erdogan, Simsek-Bekir & Erdogan-Aras, 2005; Taner & Basal, 2005; Damar, 2007; Yildirim, 2008). Changes in language development, limit of vocabulary knowledge, accurate use of language, ability of expression develop as the child grows. Parents and family circle are the most important environmental factors in the child's language development.

Social development is another developmental area established in early childhood. Existence of the individual as a social being in the society and acting in the expected manner depend on meeting his/her psychosocial needs from the birth and raising him/her by teaching the requirements of social life. Social development takes place upon acting in an expected manner, learning how to control the unwanted behaviors and bottom them out, keeping oneself out of behaviors forbidden in a society, making a habit out of accepted behaviors and fulfilling the social requirements by using time and space correctly while doing these in early childhood, youth and adulthood. Social life includes family relationships, making friends, group participation,

conflicts and conflicts of thought, cooperation, competition, girl and boy relationships. Social acknowledgement is election of an individual for any activity as a member of his/her group, or is other people's reactions to the personality of the individual (Rosenberg, 1979; Civelek, 1990; Lawler & Gryme, 1990; Alisinanoglu & Koksak, 1999; Watins & Regmi, 1999; Gokalan, 2000; Walker, Irving & Berthelsen, 2002; Ruggiero, 2002; Baran, 2005; Esaspehlivan, 2006; Kapikiran, Ivrendi & Adak, 2006; Seremet, 2006).

The characteristics of children who perceive themselves positive and valuable include acting frankly and impulsively, flexibility, being emotionally close to the inner circle, accepting criticism and feedback, feeling physically competent, taking opportunities to display their abilities, asking for support and help when necessary, sensitivity to differences, being self-confident, responding positively, interest in social environment, openness to learning, willingness to communicate, willingness for self-expression. Children are observed to evaluate themselves positive in four areas in early childhood. These areas are cognitive competence, physical competence peer acknowledgement, and satisfaction with other people's attitudes towards themselves (Harter, 1983a; Humphreys, 1996).

A child growing up in a developed environment is expected to possess a richer vocabulary and express himself properly and fluently. Besides, lack of social problems and a peaceful environment are positively effective on language development. For those reasons, the examination of the relationship between preschoolers' levels of language development and social acknowledgement situations is needed.

1.1. Aim

In this scope, this research study aims to investigate children's levels of language development in terms of social acknowledgement (cognitive competence, acceptance by friends and physical competence).

2. Method

This section includes information about the research model, participants of the study and analysis of the data collected.

2.1. Research Model

Relational survey model was used in this study which is in quantitative research design.

2.2. Participants of the Study

Participants of the research consisted of 5-6 years old 327 children within low and high socioeconomic groups attending preschools of the primary schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in the central districts of Konya city center and their teachers in 2011-2012 academic year.

2.3. Instruments of Data Collection

In the study, "Teacher Form" of "The Self Perception Scale for Children S.P.S.C" and "Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test P.P.V.T" were utilized as data gathering instruments. In addition, "Personal Information Form" was utilized in order to find out the demographical features of children in the study.

2.3.1. The Self Perception Scale for Children S.P.S.C (S.P.S.C) Teacher Form

In the study, "The Self Perception Scale for Children S.P.S.C (S.P.S.C) Teacher Form" developed by Harter (1983b) and adapted into Turkish by Onder (1997) was utilized. In the original form of the scale (Harter & Pike, 1984; Onder, 1997) which was applied to 146 preschoolers of middle socioeconomic levels, Cronbach Alpha internal reliability coefficient was found (.88) for the whole scale. For subscales, Cronbach Alpha internal reliability coefficients were calculated as follows: Cognitive Competence (.67), Physical Competence (.62), Acceptance by Friends (.74).

The validity and reliability study of the scale into Turkish was conducted by Onder (1997). Cronbach Alpha technique was used with the aim of determining the internal consistency of the scale which was adapted into Turkish language and culture. As a result, the internal consistency coefficient was measured as 0.88 for all age groups with the adapted scale. Regarding the subscales of the test, Cronbach Alpha internal reliability coefficients were as follows: Cognitive Competence (.73), Physical Competence (.64), Acceptance by Friends (.78). The Self Perception Scale for Children S.P.S.C (S.P.S.C) Teacher Form consisting of 18 items was filled out by the teachers of children participating in the study.

2.3.2. Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test P.P.V.T

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test P.P.V.T was developed by Dunn in 1959 and adapted by Katz and his colleagues in 1974 in Turkey. It is a performance test measuring the vocabulary knowledge development of 2-12 year-old children and applied individually. This test which doesn't have any time limit can be answered in 10-15 minutes.

No special training is required to administer the test. The Peabody Picture-Word Test consists of 100 cards, each consisting of 4 pictures, and a record form where the answers given by the subjects are recorded by the

researcher. The record form states the child's name, surname, place of residence, date of test, date of birth, date of calendar, age, score, age of recipient, and the titles of 100 pictures in total. One word for each card is uttered, and the child is asked to indicate the appropriate one of the four pictures on the card with his/her finger, or to say the number under the appropriate picture.

There are pictures of animals, objects, and pieces of nature on the cards of The Peabody Picture-Word Test. The Peabody Picture-Word Test is proceeded until 6 incorrect answers are given to 8 consecutive questions during the test. Every correct answer of the child is 1 point. Therefore, the lowest score that can be taken from the Peabody Picture-Word Test is 0, the highest score is 100 points (Oner, 1987).

2.4. Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was done via SPSS 16.0 software program. The significance level was set at 0.05. Correlational analysis was done to find out the relationship between language development scores and social acknowledgement scores. Simple linear regression analysis technique was also used.

3. Findings

In this section, firstly the findings regarding the relationship between preschool children's social acknowledgement (cognitive competence, acceptance by friends and physical competence) and levels of language development were given. Then whether children's social acknowledgement (cognitive competence, acceptance by friends and physical competence) predict their levels of language development was tested via simple linear regression analysis.

Table 1. Correlation Analysis of Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and Self Perception Scale for Children Teacher Form

		Cognitive Competence	Acceptance by Friends	Physical Competence	Peabody Score
Cognitive Competence	r	1.000	.517**	.460**	.530**
	p	-	.000	.000	.000
	n	327	327	327	327
Acceptance by Friends	r	.517**	1.000	.541**	.280**
	p	.000	-	.000	.000
	n	327	327	327	327
Physical Competence	r	.460**	.541**	1.000	.363**
	p	.000	.000	-	.000
	n	327	327	327	327
Peabody Score	r	.530**	.280**	.363**	1.000
	p	.000	.000	.000	-
	n	327	327	327	327

**p<0.001

In this table, a significantly positive relationship between the scores of preschoolers on Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and the Cognitive Competence (p<0.001) subscale of The Self Perception Scale for Children Teacher Form, the Acceptance by Friends (p<0.001) subscale of The Self Perception Scale for Children Teacher Form and the Acceptance by Friends (p<0.001) subscale of The Self Perception Scale for Children Teacher Form was found. In other words, as children get higher scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, an increase is observed in children's levels of Cognitive Competence, Acceptance by Friends, and Physical Competence. Similarly, as children get lower scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, children tend to show a decrease in the scores on those subscales (p<.001). All the subscales of The Self Perception Scale for Children Teacher Form test had a positive relationship with the scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. While the relationship coefficient of 1.00 means excellent positive relation, -1.00 means perfect negative relationship and 0.00 means no relationship. The relationship coefficient between 0.70 and 1.00 as an absolute value indicates a high relationship, similarly if it is between 0.70 and 0.30, a moderate relationship and if it is between 0.30-0.00, a low relationship is indicated (Buyukozturk, 2002).

Table 2. Regression Analysis Predicting Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test

Variables	R	R ²	R ² (Adj)	S.E.	F	p
Cognitive Competence	.530	.281	.278	9.8182	126.724	.000*
Acceptance by Friends	.280	.078	0.75	11.113	27.542	.000*
Physical Competence	.363	.132	.129	10.784	49.427	.000*

p<.05*

According to the regression analysis, the Cognitive Competence subscale of The Self Perception Scale for Children Teacher Form was determined as an important predictor of the scores on Peabody Picture Vocabulary

Test. Cognitive competence explained 28 % of the variance regarding language development score. The Acceptance by Friends subscale of The Self Perception Scale for Children Teacher Form was determined as an important predictor of the scores on Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. Acceptance by friends explained 7.8 % of the variance regarding language development score. The Physical Competence subscale of The Self Perception Scale for Children Teacher Form was determined as an important predictor of the scores on Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. Physical competence explained 13 % of the variance regarding language development score.

4. Discussion

According to the research results, it can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation between children's mean scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and the mean scores of the subdimension Cognitive Competence, Acceptance by Friends, and Physical Competence of The Self Perception Scale for Children S.P.S.C (S.P.S.C) Teacher Form. A linear relationship was observed between the language development levels and social acknowledgement situations of 5-6 years old children. Another result of the research is that the subdimensions Cognitive Competence, Acceptance by Friends, and Physical Competence of The Self Perception Scale for Children S.P.S.C (S.P.S.C) Teacher Form are a significant variable in predicting children's language development levels.

As suggested by the findings, preschool education plays an important role in children's life. Children's behaviors and skills in their educational setting develop since preschool children benefit from preschool education. It was concluded that children who have more stimuli around are more successful in the activities implemented to develop children's metalanguage skills. Accordingly, it was observed that children's attendance to preschool education institutions is in direct proportion to metalanguage development in children (Taner, 2003).

Bal (1988) aimed to investigate the expressions of 4-6 years old children who attend kindergarten and who don't in terms of syntax. The participants of the study are 48 children who attend kindergarten and who don't. 50 oral expressions recorded during children's plays were selected. As a result of the study, it was observed that children who received preschool education used more words than those who didn't. Besides, the number of sentences with 2-3-4 words increased and they frequently used different word types in these sentences. Another result of the study is that children who received preschool education had a richer vocabulary, exhibited more positive social behaviors and were more active and sociable in primary school compared to those who didn't. As can be concluded, preschool education entirely influences children's development and supports their language and social development (Oktay, 1983).

Mendez, Fantuzzo & Cicchetti (2002) investigated social skills of 141 black children with low level of income who attended kindergarten and participated in the Head Start program in their study. The study aimed to examine the relationship between children's character traits, mood states, language and communication skills and play skills with their peers. According to the results of their study, children with high social skills were observed to play along and have a positive social interaction with their peers during play. Besides, children's language development was positively affected in a play environment with their peers. Children who refused to play along in peer plays were observed to exhibit negative social behaviors such as anger and rejection of sharing and those with poorer communication skills were observed to refuse being in a play environment and have low level of autonomy.

Hazen & Black (1989) aimed to determine the relationship between preschool children's social statuses and communication skills and demonstrate that these status differences have a big role in social interaction. 48 children at 43-66 months old participated in the study conducted via sociometric measurement. It was concluded that differences in social status influence children's social adaptation. The children who were especially loved by their parents tended to display skills of initiating communication, interact with not only one peer but two peers, talk to their peers, reply, thank, and try communicating again when they were refused. The deficiencies in communication skills were more in children who were unloved compared to those with lower status. It was concluded that communication skills are necessary for interpersonal relationships and social interaction and that they influence peer acknowledgement.

Bierman & Furman (1984) aimed to identify the effect of social skills education in the fourth and fifth grade children who are unloved by their friends. It was observed that speaking skills education which include areas such as self-expression, asking questions, giving opinions, and inviting enhanced children's social interaction. In addition, it was seen that children who belonged to the group with no speaking skills education had better peer acknowledgement but no changes were observed in their speaking skills. It was also observed that children who belonged to the environment where both skills were taught had better speaking skills and peer acknowledgement. Taner (2003) and Celenk (2001) stated that the skills of social acknowledgement and socialization had a proportional relationship with language development levels.

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