Journal of Education and Practice
ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288X (Online)
Vol.4, No.10, 2013

Promoting English Language Literacy among Jordanian Kindergarten Children

Dr. Rasmieh Khleel Haddad[1]

[1]*Lecturer, The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan*

Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of an instructional program designed by the researcher for the purpose of teaching English language literacy skills among Jordanian Kindergarteners. The study was conducted in Irbid Directorate of Education in the second semester of the academic year 2009/2010. The participants of the study were randomly chosen from Zainab Bint Arrasoul School. Then, they were divided into two equal experimental and control groups (N=17). The experimental group received the instructional program designed by the researcher, whereas the control group received the textbook designed by the Ministry of Education. To answer the question of the study, the researcher designed an achievement test. Proper statistical methods were used to analyze the pretest and posttest scores. The results revealed that with the help of the instructional program application, the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of learning English language literacy skills. These results explain how components of the instructional program contributed to promote English language literacy. As a result, the researcher recommended that educators should conduct further experimental studies across all early language learning settings to test what contents and instructional methods of teaching best help children improve their English language literacy skills.

Key words: English language literacy skills.

Introduction

Literacy begins early in children's development before they go to Kindergarten. Childhood literacy skills development provides the basic of children's later academic success. For the past twenty years, researchers have shown the unexpected literacy skills grow progressively in children through their kindergarten years and highly expected of later success in language learning .These skills include phonological awareness (e.g. hearing and operating smaller sounds in words), alphabet knowledge (e.g. identifying and naming letters), print knowledge (e.g. recognizing print pictures words), and oral language (e.g. indentifying numbers and naming colors). This knowledge are actually taught in our kindergarten school, but the difference lies in how we teach these knowledge and link these skills with what children had experienced. It's important to extend their knowledge to develop their literacy through playing games (Casey& Howe, 2002).

Learning English language in Jordan begins early in children's development, when they enter kindergarten. Besides, the English language skills development appears to be central for the foundation of children's academic success. Researchers have identified key factors of literacy skills that develop effectively in children during their kindergarten, and highly affect later success in reading and writing. These skills include phonological knowledge (e.g., hearing and forming smaller sounds in words), alphabet knowledge (e.g., naming letters and recognizing them), print knowledge (e.g., recognizing print and pictures and following words on a page); number knowledge (e.g., recognizing numbers, naming them, and counting from one to ten), and color knowledge (e.g., recognizing colors and naming them) (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Teachers, in fact, should work hard to extend and develop these literacy skills in teaching a foreign language. The present study concerns itself with these skills in order to develop Jordanian kindergarteners' English language literacy.

The English language teaching has in the past several years become a major cross- cultural and worldwide enterprise. Language teaching tradition has witnessed an enormous change, this tradition has been practiced in a variety of teaching approaches or methods (Brown, 2001). Comenius was one of the theorists who wrote about how language is learned, and about methods of teaching a language. He seized that language learning must be associated with interest and experience. Teaching must be oral. The classroom should have real objects or pictures of real entities in the world. As a result, he published the first illuminated children's book, Orbis Sensualim Pictus (Richards and Rodgers, 2007).

The study of a foreign language did not become part of education of European schools until the eighteenth century. The innovation in foreign language teaching began in the nineteenth century and progressed in the twentieth century. In the early part of the twentieth century the Direct Method enjoyed popularity in Europe, it was also officially approved in France and Germany, and became widely known in the United States. By the end of the 1950's the Audiolingual Method began to take shape to add the latest insights from behaviorist psychology to the structural linguistics and constructive analysis already being used (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

As the Audio-lingual method began to decline in the 1960's and many shortcomings were recognized in it, the cognitive approach developed as an improvement over the Audio-lingual method. IT started to fade away when the Chomskian revolution in linguistics changed linguistics and language teaching to the "deep structure" of language. Linguists gave ways to the generative linguistics and focused the attention from mechanical habit formation to meaningful learning (Schunk, 2007).

Therefore, teaching children a language should take into consideration this aspect of meaningful learning. The present study is based on the Cognitive Approach which emphasizes meaningful practice in the classroom. This approach emphasized that learning is based on deductive procedure instead of the inductive procedure of the Audio-lingual method, advocating that children can only learn the language after they have understood the system of that language. Learners cannot mimic without functioning the cognitive process. Cognitive learning focuses on a cognitive awareness of rules putting them in use to foreign language learning (Haight, Herron, and Cole, 2007). This cognitive learning guides children to meet their needs and interests by obtaining language knowledge in order to develop their language literacy.

Cognitive linguists asserted that knowledge of language arises out of language use (Croft and Cruse, 2004). Print knowledge also arises from frequencies of engaging children with print – during writing, reading, and other activities such as playing games, which is the most important to the development of children's literacy.

In order to develop children's literacy skills, children must be taught to realize that there is a connection between the letters of the alphabet and their oral sounds. Kindergarteners, who match letters names and their sounds, are going to be able to pronounce and spell words. Teachers can help kindergarteners to acquire the alphabetical knowledge through "phonological awareness" games, songs and alphabet activities. These activities include recognizing, naming, and producing letters. Teachers can lead children to learn about letters through multi-activities including play with alphabet (e.g., puzzles and magnetic letters), and to form and write letters using different materials (e.g., with play dough, letter cards, finger prints, pencils). Teachers can also help children to match sounds and letters by singing, saying words slowly, so children learn to recognize each sound, reading alphabet books, and by encouraging children to write and sound out letters and words (National Institute for literacy, 2009).

In the same vein, children mathematics skills can be separated in kindergarten, and they are connected to later general cognitive outcomes. Children in kindergarten lack correct articulation of the words of mathematics knowledge, such as, big, long, more, less, half, and name of numbers. The classroom is designed to support early mathematics skills through practical activities that attract children. These activities provide children with games, counting order, and demonstration. The aim of this study is that children will be able to compare amounts, gain a sense of number order, understand the link between numbers and amount, develop the skill of counting from one to ten, recognizing, writing, and naming numbers. These skills form the basis for mathematical development (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2006).

In addition, the researcher believes that colors knowledge is a fundamental part of this study. Children color pictures and initial letters of words. Working with colors helps children to develop a sense of beauty and fine motor skills, as well as, developing a sense of recognition and focus. Teachers provide tremendous opportunities for coloring with crayons, chalk, marking pens and papers. Teachers also show children how to carry out activities. These activities are pleasure rather than being suitable for kindergarteners (Clements, Sarama, and DiBiase, 2004).

Snow, Burns, and Griffin, (2006) obtained proof that print knowledge, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, color knowledge, and number knowledge, are the fundamental skills for learning a foreign language. Besides, literacy success needs consistent deliberate instruction in these skills in Jordanian kindergartens. Building on this base, the proposed instructional program depends on the assumption that children need to draw their attention to and interest in print, with frequent oral and written interaction with adults to develop language skills. Evans and Melanie (2006) stressed that language and cognition mutually affect each other, and are situated in children's experiences and environment.

Any instructional program for children is based on the awareness that the educational environment and children language experience play an essential role in developing children's foreign language literacy. Children's parents and teachers also play a vital role in promoting successful literacy development. Curriculum, as well, has a positive impact on children's literacy development. Educational research by Justice, Mashburn, Pence, and Wiggins (2008) documented a relationship between curriculum and children's language growth. They also assured that curriculum provides the foundation for a number of teaching strategies, and focused on the importance of teachers, as teachers and curriculum do not stand apart.

Teachers are the main, if not the only models for their students in an EFL context. Correct pronunciation is presented by teachers. When a child reads with wrong pronunciation, teachers should repeat what the child pronounces with the corrections and may invite children to pay attention to these mistakes. Children hear the correction and realize the correct patterns and vocabulary. Vocabulary enrichment is an aspect of the kindergarten environment. Children learn the names of things in the classroom. Language learning is the main emphasis in all curriculum areas, and is thought as an important way to develop their literacy as literacy-rich environment includes alphabet that can be displayed and visible to children's eyes, (e.g. alphabet, games, numbers, puzzles, magnetic letters) (Smith, Dickinson, Sangeorge, and Anastasopulas, 2002).

Justice, Mashburn, pence and Wiggins (2008) investigated child impacts following implementation of comprehensive language curriculum within their preschool classrooms. The study identified child level predictors of expressive language outcomes for children attending at – risk preschool programs as well as main effects for children's exposure to language curriculum and its active ingredients-namely, teacher use of language stimulation techniques (open question, recasts, models) . Fourteen preschool teachers were randomly assigned to 2 conditions. Treatment teachers implemented the experimental curriculum for an academic year; a total of 100 children were enrolled in their classrooms. Comparison teachers maintained their prevalent curriculum, a total of 96 children were enrolled in these classrooms. Teachers accuracy of implementation was suprvised using organized observation conducted 3 times during the academic year. Children's growth in expressive language was evaluated using measures derived from language samples in the fall and spring, specifically percent of complex utterances, rate of noun use, number of different words, and upper bound index .The result of this study was that children's language in the fall, socioeconomic status (household income), and daily attendance served as significant, positive predictors of their language skill in the spring. The impact of the language curriculum was moderated by children's classroom attendance, in that the language curriculum accelerated language growth for children's who attended preschool regularly; a similar effect was found for language stimulation techniques (open questions, recasts, models) exposure.

William and Rask (2003) reported on finding from a research aimed at identifying factors that enable children to extend and develop their literacy. The data substantiated much that is already known about the significance of preschool home influence on the emergence of literacy. It underlined the importance of children being able to hear the sounds in words-phonemic frequently playing games and hearing nursery rhymes which led to their early success with reading. It also suggested that there might be a link between their ability to plan their imaginative play and their ability to learn aspects of literacy systematically when they enter school.

Kindergarten teachers should set a special time to mathematics although it can be involved in many daily activities as well as content area learning in kindergarten classroom. When a child counts out the number of pens or the teacher actively links terms from books to hands-on mathematics activities, children can practice what they have learned. For example, if children are learning about colors, the teacher can help them to count "how many" of colors they have. A study of the alphabet provides the opportunities to count the number of letters that initiate their names. Teachers creating everyday math opportunities need careful planning as these activities deepen kindergarteners' learning of mathematics (Clements, Sarama, DiBiase, 2004).

The outdoor environments of preschool classes provide opportunities for gross motor development, cooperative learning, games and sports as well as free and active play. Physical activities include jumping, balancing, and ball throwing. Large motor development also encouraged through play and activities. All school activities are carefully performed by children and supervised by the teacher for safety. The goals of these physical exercises are: to demonstrate, control, balance, strengthen, and coordinate in gross motor tasks, participate in healthy and safe physical activities and practice hygiene and self-help skills (Nemours Health prevention services, 2006).

With regard to achievement and cognitive comprehension, they are interrelated in children's reading capability. Starting as visual readers of pictures books, children learn to recognize people and things. Moreover, they know how to remember and make a sense of natural beauty from games. This learning process moves children from illiterate to beginning readers as they develop their literacy (Schwaneflugel, Elizabeth, Joseph, Melanie, Gregory, and Robin, 2006).

Children like reading as they listen to speech and participate in conversations, when they are exposed to vocabulary, and letters representing sounds so that they can code pictures into words through frequent practice; the development of reading skills begins in kindergarten as it is considered the fundamental goal for elementary education (Schwanenflugel, et al, 2006).

Biemiller (2006) emphasized the idea that children should grow as listeners and participants. Language develops as children are exposed to completely different words or to familiar words used in different domains. In this way, children can learn words after they are exposed to them more than once, and when they are accompanied with objects, pictures or actions. This type of learning explains the quick learning of words when they are in a rich-language environment. In addition, children develop understanding of words with each exposure. They need to hear the word many times before sounding it out.

Involving children in the clear purpose of developing their knowledge is important for cognitive literacy, and numeracy development. The opportunities to play with objects, which include letter, numbers, colors, words with picture support, do not promote children's literacy development. Rather, it is crucial for parents to direct their children's attention to the name of letter, and to sound them out, to name numerals, recognize colors, read words with picture support, and teach their children some songs (Ievy , Gong , Hessels , Riley , and Jared , 2006).

Korkmaz (2007) examined teachers' role in promoting children's language learning. The results showed that school, should have enough physical capability , supply important materials , focus on physical and social activities in the school curriculum, interact with parents, show a successful adaptation, focus on the social system, and direct children's behaviors, moreover, teachers should understand, admire, care about children, use different teaching strategies, consider individual differences, motivate children, prepare lesson plans, have a communicative competence, be fair, promote children's self-respect, prepare children to increase their responsibilities, and motivate them to interact with the environment.

Recent research has focused on helping children to find an appropriate environment to enhance their literacy. Polakow (2007) advocated taking time to understand children and their difficulties. Children go to school with a lot of worries about their needs. They need to find a comfortable place in the classroom to release the pressure in their life. Teachers' expressions and caring accompanied with compassion can change chaotic children into active participants.

Gettinger and Stoiber (2007) described the design and implementation of a program that integrates response-to-intervention (RTI) framework for promoting the development of early literacy and language skills among low-income minority children. The early literacy program, called the Exemplary Model of Early Reading Growth and Excellence, or (EMERGE), included 15 classrooms, each classroom had about 18-20 children. Findings showed that the use of an RTI model with young children is consistent with the increasing emphasis on early intervention and scientifically based early literacy instruction. As presented through the development and implementation of EMERGE, there are significant benefits to the RTI approach, such as enhancing early literacy development and long-term reading success among low-income, high-risk preschool children.

Mckeough, Brid, Tourigny, Romaine, Graham, Ottman, and Jeary (2008) designed early literacy programs that engaged Aboriginal children and produced positive results. The study was carried out at the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Authors proposed that such a program included oral storytelling by teachers and students because it is predecessor to reading and writing across cultures and a traditional Aboriginal teaching tool. Moreover, storytelling fits with Aboriginal philosophical theory of their knowledge, its foundation, scope, and validity, reviewing a reprehensive sample of the research that has examined the results of an early literacy instruction with Aboriginal children. Next the authors described Aboriginal epistemology, highlighting the role of the oral tradition. Finally, the authors described an ongoing study aimed at improving early early literacy development through a developmentally and culturally suitable oral storytelling instructional program. Momani, lhmeideh, and Momani (2008) aimed at investigating kindergarten teachers' views of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The sample of this study consisted of forty-four kindergarten teachers in the United Arab Emirates who responded to an open-ended questionnaire. Data from questionnaires, interviews, and assessment were collected during the first semester of the 2003/2004 academic year.

The results revealed that some teachers believed that the official curriculum was not developmentally appropriate, as it focused more on academics rather than on child development in social, physical, emotional and intellectual aspect. Besides, they revealed that the vision of developmentally appropriate practices among these kindergarten teachers was not well-acknowledged and that their instructional and assessment practices emphasized teaching academic skills, using a direct instructional approach.

Grim, Hawkins, Thornton, Rosof, Copley and Thomas (2008) explored the extent to which early childhood educators were knowledgeable in regard to phonetic awareness and language structure. The participants of the study were 64 female teachers with an average age of 39.7 years. They were randomly selected and voluntarily participated. The results showed that many early childhood educators were not adequately prepared to teach young children how to identify syllables, morphemes, and phonemes. The children in the classroom targeted in this study, already identified as high need due to language and socioeconomic status, do not have teachers that currently have the necessary skills to provide appropriate and systematic instruction in phonetic awareness.

Justice, Kaderavek , Fan, Sofka, and Hunt (2009) examined the impact of teacher use of print referencing during classroom-based storybook reading sessions conducted over an academic year . Impact on preschooler's early literacy development were examined, focusing specifically on the domain of print referencing style on 106 preschool children attending 23 classroom serving disadvantaged preschoolers. Teachers in 14 classroom randomly selected used a print referencing during 120 large-group storybook reading for sessions during 30-week period. Teachers in 9 comparison classrooms read at the same frequency and with the same storybook but used their normal style of reading . The results made it clear that children whose teachers used a print referencing style showed large gains of print knowledge, print concept knowledge, and alphabet knowledge, Results also suggested that language gains were similar for children who received a print referencing style of book reading as compared to those received their teacher's typical reading style.

Play is a powerful tool for language learning. While playing, children can practice their language skills. For example, exposure to art material such as puzzles, craynon, plastic numbers, and letters helps them to develop their literacy when they set letters or numbers in the right order, when using crayons to color some drawings, and when putting pieces of a puzzle with varying sizes and shapes (Genishi& Dyson; 2009)

The Ministry of Education Kindergarten Curriculum (MEKC) and the researcher's instructional program (RIP) are both alike in focusing on learning the alphabet of the English language. To achieve this goal both MEKC and RIP provide learners with pre-reading and pre-writing activities and proceed to more tasks and exercises teaching them to use the language effectively and communicatively. The activities of both programs introduce learners to the letters gradually. They both focus upon letter discrimination, matching letters and / or sounds to objects, writing capital and small letters, saying numbers, pointing at objects or pictures, naming things correctly, and understanding meaning of words. All the exercises are mechanical, providing learners with a variety of drills on themes or topics which are realistic and part of their immediate environment. The various tasks are intended to create and enhance aptitude and readiness to further learn the language.

The researcher's instructional program differs from the MEKC in that the RIP provides other activities: games and picture flashcards. These activities play a very significant role in recycling the language taught in previous tasks and exercises. Also, the RIP focuses on teaching sounds in addition to the four skills of the English language. The sounds are the vowels / i:, i, e, ei, u:, and ʊ/ and the consonants /p,b,f,v/.These sounds are chosen because they are the most widely used in the RIP and because some of them are problematic for Arab learners of English such as /e/. They are, therefore, meant to help young learners become aware of and fully understand how to produce them properly at a very early stage of learning English. To sum up, the Ministry curriculum, MEKC, and the present teaching program, RIP, are really distinct. Thus, there is a goal reasoning behind using RIP which would, hopefully, improve and add to the quality of kindergarten teaching and learning programs of the English language. The present study investigated the effectiveness of the instructional program on developing children's literacy skills through alphabet, numbers, colors, pictures, games and proper activities.

This study found that the instructional program was effective and provided children in Jordan with the language skills and the necessary activities to meet their needs and interests in order to develop their English language literacy.

Statement of the Problem

After examining the curriculum of the Ministry of Education used in the Kindergartens of the public schools, the researcher found that the amount of knowledge is not sufficient to promote children's language literacy. Thus, a new instructional program was designed. The researcher also suggested the instructional techniques that should be used by teachers to implement this program. The present study tried to find out the effectiveness of the instructional program on promoting Jordanian kindergarteners' literacy.

Question of the Study

The study tried to answer the following question:

1- Is there a statistically significant difference at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the experimental and control groups achievement in English due to the instructional program?

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is based on the following considerations:

1- The results of this study could be helpful to different groups of specialists including Jordanian kindergartens' specialists who are interested in building and developing kindergartener's literacy, EFL teachers, and decision makers.

2- It should also cover five components of the English language learning: alphabet, numbers, colors, pictures, games and proper activities. These components cover the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

3- The results of the study combine children's literacy with social interaction.

4- The study tends to favor the cognitive approach in applying the instructional program because it is widely accepted for teaching kindergarteners all over the world.

5- The study should produce recommendations to improve the Jordanian kindergarteners' literacy for further research in Jordan.

6- No previous studies were conducted in this area, so it is of great need to carry out this study.

Definition of Terms

English language literacy skills include the following components:

Print knowledge: In this study, it is a curriculum which consists of five components: these components are alphabet, numbers, colors, pictures, and games / activities, appropriate for kindergarten children.

Pictures knowledge: It includes printed letters, a picture or a design printed from a plate, block, or roll.

Alphabet knowledge: It is a branch of knowledge about the letters of a language arranged in the usual order, or a system of characters used in writing a language or indicating a speech sound.

Number knowledge: It is the ability of the child to count the numbers of objects.

Colors knowledge: It is the knowledge about these colors: black, white, blue, red, green, yellow, brown, purple, pink, violet, and orange. Besides, it is the knowledge about the words related to the colors.

Games/ activities knowledge: It constitutes a number of play skills such as running, throwing and catching balls, constructing things from wood, sand, or any other material. There are fundamental skills of individual and group activities related to their chronological age.

Methods and Procedures

Procedures that were followed to conduct this study present participants of the study, instrument of the study, validity and reliability of the instrument, and statistical analysis

Participants of the Study

Participants of the study were 34 kindergarteners. They were randomly chosen from Zainab Bint Arrasoul School in Irbid Directorate of Education in the second semester of the academic year 2009-2010. Their age ranged between 5 and 6 years old. They were divided into two equal experimental and control groups (N=17) seven boys and ten girls. Both groups received a pre-test and a post-test. the experimental group received the instructional program designed by the researcher, and was taught by the researcher herself, whereas the control group received the textbook designed by the Ministry of Education, and was taught by the teacher.

Instrument of the study

To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher designed an achievement test. It covers six major skills: 1- Print knowledge, 2- Pictures knowledge, 3- Alphabet knowledge, 4- Number knowledge, 5- Colors knowledge, and 6- Games / activities knowledge. The test included (20) questions of different types of activities, such as filling gaps, drawing, coloring, matching, completion, and sounding out words or letters. The

researcher administered the test herself to children individually and she was present to explain and answer children's questions if any.

Validity and reliability of the achievement test

to ensure the validity of the achievement test, a jury of seven experts and specialists in EFL was asked to evaluate the test whether the questions were accurate, enough, appropriate, and comprehensive. They all asserted that the achievement test was valid, and it could measure what it was supposed to measure. The researcher chose a pilot group of (20) kindergarteners from outside the participants of the study to take part in the test. On the other hand, the reliability of the achievement test was measured by administering the test to (20) kindergarteners who were chosen from outside the participants of the study for the second time after ten days from the test which was administered earlier. Cronbach Alpha was used to compute the internal consistency coefficient, it was (0.89), this coefficient evidently indicative that the reliability of the achievement test was under consideration.

Statistical Procedures

Means, standard deviations, and the t-test were computed to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the performances of the two groups.

Contents of the instructional program:

The instructional program includes a student's book, a teacher's book, a set of flashcards, and a cassette.

Findings and discussion

To establish the equivalence of the two groups student's scores on the pre-test were computed using means, standard deviations and the t-test. The results are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations and the t-test for the pretest scores of the control and the experimental groups.

Group	N	Means	S.D	T-test	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Control	17	25.41	9.57	1.49	32	0.147
Experimental	17	30.00	8.41			

Table 1 shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the achievement scores of the two groups in the pretest. The performance of the control group (M =25.41, SD =9.57) and that of the experimental group (M = 30.00, SD = 8.4) at α= 0.05. T-test = (1.49, p.147) are almost similar. This result establishes the equivalence of the two groups before the beginning of the study.

The researcher believes that this result is possibly because all children have similar characteristics when they enter kindergarten. They have little experience because of their initial start of learning English. They also come from homes without English reading materials. In some cases, they are not mentally, emotionally, or academically ready to succeed. Some may be distracted by the stranger (the researcher). It is possibly because they are taught the same thing in the same way as the schools lack the proper activities to meet children's needs and interests.

Results related to the Question of the Study

The question asks if there is a statistically significant difference at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the control and the experimental groups' achievement in English due to the proposed instructional program. To answer this question means, standard deviations, and the t-test were computed. Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and the t-test for the posttest scores of the control and the experimental groups.

Table 2: Means, standard deviations, and the t-test for the posttest scores of the control and the experimental groups

Test	Group	N	Means	S.D	T-test	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
post	Control	17	60.76	8.87	- 6.85	32	0.000
	Experimental	17	92.59	9.69			

In relation to the question of the study, the data in table 2 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the control group (M = 60.76, SD = 8.87) and the experimental group (M = 92.59, SD = 9.69) at α = 0.01. T-test = - 6.85, p.000) in favor of the experimental group. This result demonstrates that the participants of the experimental group had benefited from the instructional program. Thus, one can say that the program is effective and meets its objectives.

One may rise why the experimental, but not the control group achieved better results and scored higher on the achievement test. This result could be attributed to several factors.

The program content focused on the classroom environment to enhance the children's language and literacy. Children's literacy skills are highly influenced by the features of the class environment including availability of materials for reading and writing exhibits of pictures print and all over the room. For example, the classroom was rich with literacy material around children such as accessible reading and writing materials , models of pictures and print of the language (e.g, sings, posters, alphabet, pictures, numbers, and colors). Within literacy-rich environments, the teacher worked as an effective facilitator of children's language and literacy. The researcher exposed children to the environmental print in the classroom and promoted their reading of the pictures or words around them. This literacy-rich environment provided frequent opportunities for children to engage in literacy and language activities. Smith, Dickinson, Sangeorge, and Anastasopulas, (2002) Stressed the idea that any classroom for children should be rich with displayed literacy material to enhance the children's literacy development.

The instructional program used methods that are doubtlessly produce cognitive gains for kindergarteners. The distinguishing features of this program are that it is taught with a wide range of examples and it is taught under the researcher's control and discipline. This instructional program involves constant efforts to enhance children's language literacy. The results of this study provide a strong support for the effectiveness of the instructional program in enhancing children's language literacy. The researcher's practices, beliefs, and the method she used in the classroom strengthened her confidence in her ability to teach effectively and to make a difference in student's learning. The activities practiced by the experimental group included singing, dancing, drawing, coloring and counting. Such activities would certainly have had a positive effect on children's achievement test scores. Further, they would have motivated children to exert more time and effort to learn English.

For example, to introduce and practice the song of alphabet (a,b,c,d,….. etc) to the children, the teacher did the following: A. She played the cassette from the beginning to the end; B. she played the cassette again from the beginning, pausing after each line, repeating it and allowing the class sing what they heard, in chorus and individually; C. Gradually the teacher built up the whole song so that class could sing, i.e. The teacher played line 1- class repeated then line 2 – class repeated. D. the teacher played lines 1 and 2 the class sang with the cassette. E. The teacher played line 3 – the class repeated, then the teacher played lines 1,2 and 3 –and the class sang. F. the teacher allowed children enough time to sing aiming first of all at enjoyment. The teacher came back to the song again in another lesson, and gradually improved the performance. The teacher made sure of re-singing the song in the following days.

Another example is drawing:

- The teacher pointed to incomplete pictures and explained in Arabic that she wanted children to draw the rest of the pictures.
- The teacher gave children time to do this.
- When children had finished, she encouraged them to ask and answer questions about their pictures. First, she demonstrated this by asking a few children. Then, children worked in pairs.

A third example is coloring:

- The teacher explained the task in Arabic.
- She asked children about the pictures.

- The children colored them with the appropriate color.
- The teacher moved round the class to check if they were doing this correctly.
- They could work in groups in this exercise.

A fourth example is counting:

- First the teacher asked the children to say what was there in the pictures.
- Next the teacher asked them to count the amount of each row.
- They then wrote the correct number in each blank. They could do this in pairs.
- The teacher moved round and checked. Then went over their answers as a class.
- The teacher encouraged them to give full answers, i.e. three balloons.

The results of this study support those of the previous studies such as (Nemours Health Prevention Services, 2006; Momani, Ihmeideh, and Momani, 2008) Who found out that children learn from participating in kindergarten setting, while paying attention to all the educational surroundings, with their physical, psychological, social, cognitive, language learning, and games.

However, other activities like songs and drawings that meet children's needs and interests were provided in this instructional program.

These results agree with the results of the previous studies regarding the time given to children to learn (Polakow, 2007). The time spent in teaching children had a positive effect on the children of the experimental group. The experimental group teacher used to teach English for two periods a day. As children go to kindergarten with a lot of uncomfort about their needs and interests, the researcher used to release their pressure by hugging and kissing them and by using happy expressions and a lot of caring accompanied with love and comfortable class environment that make these worried children happy and active learners. The researcher used to vary the activities and choose the morning time of the day when the activity was performed because children were actively involved earlier in the day. The researcher used to give them time to eat and act freely whenever they needed to.

The findings of this study clearly showed that children in the control group had less opportunity for cooperative learning, games and sports as well as free and active play. These findings provided a strong support for initiating literacy activities in a play setting (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; National Institute for Literacy, 2009). Children in the experimental group wanted to practice more reading and writing tasks than their peers in the control group because they were highly motivated by their success and knew that literacy was an important mean of finding out information. Children benefited from being given opportunities to learn through play providing opportunities for gross and large motor development, cooperative learning and physical activities such as hopping, balancing, and ball throwing. All these activities were carefully performed by kindergarteners and supervised by the researcher for safety. Such activities enabled children to experience the power and aim of literacy in meaningful settings and helped to be secure about their future learning. For example, to introduce and practice ball throwing to the children in the experimental group the teacher:

- Explained the task (in Arabic).
- Gave balls to children and asked children to dribble the ball four times, five times, seven times.
- Asked children to pass the ball to their partners, i.e., four times, five times, six times, seven times.
- Children worked in pairs in this exercise.

Hopping

The Teacher

- Drew squares on the playground, wrote alphabet in order up to the letter k, for example.
- Asked children to hop and say the letter.
- Asked children to play in pairs.

- Children took turns to hop. Children moved to the squares in sequence.
- Allowed children to play more than once.

Parents might have played a role in motivating their children of the experimental group. They used to visit the school inquiring about their children's interaction, learning and achievement. They spoke about the value of the instructional program. They thought it helped their children to form loving relational ships with the teacher and with other children. Parents believed that this program developed their children's independence and self-reliance. Parents liked the way their children learn because children were able to learn and play at their own pace successfully and without pressure. All parents had a clear and accurate picture of what their children were doing throughout the day. This constant follow-up of parents had made their children highly motivated to learn and practice English.

Another piece of evidence for the effectiveness of the program is the sound recognition. The children's reactions and comments constitute a very strong support for the teaching material of the program. For example, to introduce and practice the sounds to the children in the experimental group, the teacher taught the sounds, consonants and some vowels to children. The teacher presented words having letters representing the sounds like /v, l, u/, pronounced the words several times . Then the teacher asked children to chorally and individually repeat them, till the teacher was sure that children were articulating the sounds correctly. Afterwards, the teacher asked the children to find other words in their book representing the sounds so that the teacher felt certain that the children had learnt those sounds. This finding lends further support to those of other scholars including William and Rask (2003), Crim, Hawkins, Thornton, Rosof, Copley and Thomas (2008).

Conclusion

Language literacy development forms a main area of concern to educators dealing with children's language teaching, which is the concern of this study. The researcher agrees with researchers like Casey and Howe (2002) who believed that literacy skills develop progressively in children during their kindergarten and are highly prophetic of later academic success. These skills include phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, print knowledge, and picture knowledge. The researcher also agrees with National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (2006) who stressed that number knowledge is an important part of all areas of kindergarten curriculum. These educators emphasized the importance of alphabet, numbers, colors, and games or proper activities in foreign language literacy development. Mastering these skills needs a special care in teaching – learning process.

This study explored the effectiveness of the researcher's instructional program. The findings showed that the instructional program provided kindergarteners with the language skills and activities necessary for promoting English language literacy.

Finally, if we value our children who are the most important in our future, we would be wise to make every effort to provide high-quality kindergarten English language literacy programs and endorse such programs in the educational future of our country Jordan.

References

Biemiller, A. (2006). Vocabulary development and instruction: A perquisite for school Learning. In handbook of Early Literacy Research, (2) by Dickinson, D. and Neuman, S. (Eds). New York: Guidord Press.

Brown, H.(2001). Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy. New Jersey. Prentice Hall.

Casey, A., and Howe, K. (2002). Best Practices in early literacy skills. In A. Thomas and J. Grimes (Eds.), Best practices in school psychology (P. 721-735). Betheseda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Clements, D., Sarama, J., and DiBiase, A. (2004). Engaging young children in Mathematics: Standards for Early childhood Mathematics Education. Lawrence Erlbaum: Mawah, N.J.

Croft, W., and Cruse, D. (2004). Cognitive Linguistics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Evans, V., and Melanie, G. (2006). Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction Edinburgh University Press.

Genishi, C., & Dyson, A. (2009). Children, language, and literacy Diverse learners in diverse times. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Gettinger, M., and Stoiber, K. (2007). Applying a Response-to-Intervention Model for Early Literacy Development in Low-Income Children. Early Childhood Special Education 27 (4), 198 – 213.

Crim, C., Hawkins, J., Thornton, J., Rosof, H., Copely, H., and Thomas, E. (2008). Early childhood Educators Knowledge of Early Literacy Development. Issues in Teacher Education 17(1)m 17-30.

Height, C., Herron, C., & Cole, S. (2007). The effects of deductive and guided inductive instructional approaches on the learning of grammar in the elementary foreign language college classroom. Foreign language Annals, 40(2), 288-310.

http://uncs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/nelpreport09.pdf

Justice, L., Kaderavek, J., Fan, X., Sofka, A, and Hunt, A. (2009). Accelerating Preschoolers Early Literacy Development Through Print Refreshing. Language, Speech, and Hearing Services In School, 40, 67-85.

Justice, L., Mashbum, A., Pence, K., and Wiggins, A. (2008). Experimented evaluation of preschool language curriculum: Influence on children's expressive language skills. Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing research, 51, 983-1001.

Korkamz, I. (2007). Teachers opinions about the responsibility of parents, schools, and teachers in enhancing student learning. Education, 127 (3), 389-399.

Levy, B., Gong, Z., Hessels, S., Evans, M., and Jared, D. (2006). Understanding print: Early reading development and the contributions of home literacy experiences. Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 93, 63-93.

Mckeough, A., Brid, S., Tourigny, E., Romaine, A., Graham, S., Ottman, J., and Jeary, J. (2008). Storytelling as foundation to literacy development for aboriginal children: Culturally and developmentally appropriate practices. Canadian psychology, 49(2), 148-154.

Momani, I., Ihmeideh, F., and Momani, M. (2008). Teachers views of the effectiveness of United Arab Emirates Kindergarten Curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment procedures. Journal of Research in Childhood Education. www.thefreelibrary.com.

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. (2006). National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

National Early Literacy Panel. (2008). Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel. Washington, DC: http://uncs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/nelpreport09.pdf.

National Institute for literacy. (2009). Developing Early Literacy: Reported of the National Early Literacy Panel, 1775 I Street NW, Suite 730, Washington, DC, 2006 – 2401.

Nemours Health and Prevention Services, Center for Evaluation and Research. (2006). Delaware survey of children's health's descriptive statistics summary. 2007; 1:1 86.

Polakow, V. (2007). In the shadows of the ownership society: Homeless Children and their Families. In S. Books (Ed). Invisible children in the society and its schools (p.39-62). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Richards, J., And Rodgers, T. (2001). Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching(2nd ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J., And Rodgers, T. (2007). Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schunk, D. (2007). Socail cognitive theory. In custom course materials ETEC 512. Vancouver, Bc: University of British Columbia, Bookstore. (Reprinted form learning theories: An educational perspective, pp. 83-136, 2004, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson).

Schwanenflugel, P., Elizabeth, M., Joseph, W., Melanie, K., Gregory, S., and Robin, M. (2006). Becoming a Fluent and Automatic Reader in the Early Elementary School years. Reading Research Quarterly, 41, 251-259.

Smith, M., Dickinson, D., Sangeorge, A., and Anaslasopoulas, L. (2002). Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation. Baltimere, MD: Brookes.

Snow, C., Griffin,P., and Burns, M. (2006). Knowledge to support the teaching of reading: Preparing teachers for a changing world. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

William, M., and Rask, H. (2003). Literacy through play: How families with able children support their literacy development. Early Child Development and Care, 173 (5), 527-533.