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I, Alayna Evon Townsend
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This work and its defense approved by:

Chair: Nancy Creaghead, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Sandra Combs, M.A., CCC-SLP
Jo-Anne Prendeville, Ed.D, CCC-SLP
THE USE OF STORYBOOK VOCABULARY BY TEACHERS IN BOOK-RELATED DRAMATIC PLAY CENTERS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Cincinnati
In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

In

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
of the College of Allied Health Sciences

By

ALAYNA EVON TOWNSEND
B.S., Xavier University of Louisiana 2005

May 2007

Committee Chair: Nancy Creaghead, Ph.D.
Committee Members: Sandra Combs, M.A.
Jo-Anne Prendeville, Ed.D.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine differences in the use of book-related target vocabulary by teachers in traditional dramatic play centers versus the use of book related target vocabulary by teachers in book-related play centers that matched the classroom theme. Participants were six Head Start teachers. Three teachers’ play centers remained traditional (control group) while three teachers changed their centers to match the book-related theme (experimental group). Results indicated that teachers in the experimental group used more book-related vocabulary. The results suggest the value of using materials in dramatic play that are related to the targeted theme. Implications are discussed.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Research Question</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Talk Increases Child Language Opportunities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Learning Through Storybook Reading</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy in Dramatic Play</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Versus Book-Related Dramatic Play Areas</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE. METHOD</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Videotaping</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR. RESULTS</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE. DISCUSSION</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Enhancing Exposure to Vocabulary</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing from the Traditional Dramatic Play Center</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of Language Enriching Props</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications of the Study</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Research</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Teacher Consent Form</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Parental Consent Form</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Data Sheet</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total Number of Target Words Used</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Frequency of Target Words Used</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total Number of Target Words Used</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Frequency of Target Words Used</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Dramatic play centers, found in many pre-schools, can be used to increase the educational growth of students. Participation in the dramatic play center contributes to the development of children’s oral and receptive language skills, social interaction skills, and literacy skills (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Pullen & Justice, 2003). Since there is a great opportunity for development in language and literacy skills by exposure to dramatic play, it appears that more effort ought to be placed on structuring dramatic play centers, determining materials to be included within the center, and teacher-child interactions within dramatic play.

Often times the traditional dramatic play center is setup up as the kitchen or housekeeping area. Consequently, these traditional unchanging dramatic play centers result in no variation across classroom or storybook themes (Howe, 1992). This suggests that children are limited in opportunities for new learning, social interaction, and acquisition of oral language-vocabulary. As a result, this may decrease the child’s chances to use and practice new language, develop linguistic awareness, and expand lexicon. A nontraditional book-related setup may include real life play themes that may not occur in the child’s every day life such as a library, doctors office, post office, puppet house, flower shop or pet shop.

Including new props in a traditional setting may provide more opportunities for vocabulary richness. Huber (2000) suggests that if multicultural materials are added to a
traditional dramatic play area then the children may be more willing to use them. Using different garments, foods, fabrics, furnishing and baby dolls, may enhance multicultural awareness and language opportunities. Huber also suggests that adults participate in children’s play by giving children time to interact with multicultural materials, observing, listening, providing concrete experiences for children, and responding to children’s questions.

Research suggests that the implementation of literacy materials (i.e. cookbook, laundry list, prescription pad, or books, etc.) increases the frequency of pre-literacy moments and improves emergent literacy skills (i.e. making a food list, reading to a doll, or looking through the telephone book) (Christie, 1990; Howard-Allor & McCathren, 2003). It can be inferred that by changing the dramatic play center theme (from traditional to book-related), adding different materials, and increasing the amount of literacy materials, an improvement in language and literacy readiness will result.

Storybook reading has been found to be a powerful enhancer of oral language particularly in the area of vocabulary development (Howard-Allor & McCathren, 2003). Reading is a language-based skill that shares many of the processes and knowledge used in understanding oral language (Justice & Pullen, 2003). Exposure to oral language through storybook reading has also been associated with the acquisition of age appropriate vocabulary knowledge and grammatical skills (Justice & Pullen, 2003). Children who have difficulties in these areas are also more likely to experience difficulties in reading achievement (Justice & Pullen, 2003; Scarborough, 1990). The use of repetitions, expansions, open-ended questions, repeated readings and story props through adult interaction may accelerate vocabulary development (Justice & Pullen, 2003).
According to Justice, Meier, & Walpole (2005), theoretical considerations for new word learning include: incidental exposure to novel words, word learning in time, and adult input variation influencing the rate of novel word learning. First, incidental word learning refers to situations where children informally experience unknown words. Research indicates that children are able to rapidly learn words that they are exposed to during daily activities (Justice, et al., 2005). Second, word learning through gradual processes is the ability to acquire the surface representation of words through fast mapping and later construct a deeper meaning of words through slow mapping (gradually refined over time with multiple exposures). The third consideration suggests that adult input can accelerate the learning process. Adults are able to elaborate meanings of new words when they occur in storybooks thereby enhancing the child’s exposure to vocabulary (Penno, Wilkinson & Moore, 2007).

Teachers also play a major role in the development of language and literacy skills in children (Massey, 2004; Christie, 1990). Teachers can support learning through narrating play, asking open-ended questions, and introducing new knowledge about play events; providing props facilitates conversation, pretend talk, and language use (Christie, 1990). Christie (1990), suggests that teachers can facilitate exposure to more complex language, including vocabulary through outside and inside interaction. Inside interaction refers to the teacher actually taking on a role in a dramatic play episode and modeling the play behavior such as customer or shopper. Outside interaction involves the teacher encouraging play indirectly by coming up with suggestions for the students. Through these teacher driven interactions, children are given the chance to learn concepts like social skills, conversation, grammar, and vocabulary (Massey, 2004).
Because of the impact that teacher language and interactions have on student development the purpose of the study is to determine whether a storybook associated with a book-related dramatic play center increases the amount of book-related vocabulary used by teachers. It is important to design the dramatic play center with book-related props in order to reinforce student’s learning, mapping of new words and promote overall language development. In addition, dramatic play center design is important so that the teachers are able to extend and expand on words used in a storybook. The teacher can also elaborate on items included within the dramatic play center and use these props as a base to construct a more language rich environment.

**Purpose**

- The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a difference in the use of book-related target vocabulary by teachers when the dramatic play center remains traditional or when it is changed to match the classroom theme.

**The research question is:**

- Is there a difference in the use of vocabulary by the teacher when the dramatic play center remains traditional and when it is changed to match the storybook theme?

**Definition of Terms**

*Book-related vocabulary:* is defined as content words related to a specific subject of a selected book.

*Target Vocabulary/Targeted Vocabulary:* is defined as selected words (in this case seven words) taken directly from a book and/or selected words modeled by the SLP when the selected book was read to the participants.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Teacher Talk Increases Child Language Opportunities

Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, (2004) investigated whether caregivers could learn to facilitate communicative interactions using verbal support strategies in dramatic play. Seventeen adults (having at least two years of experience in the setting) participated in the study. The adults participating in the study were divided into experimental and control groups across the six-week intervention period. Pre and post assessments were made for each of the participants in both groups. Practicing speech language pathologists provided an in-service for the six-week intervention period. The content of the in-service program entitled “Learning Language and Loving it” differed between the two groups. The experimental group’s intervention focused on information about setting up interaction with verbal supports, selecting appropriate activities to facilitate interactions with peers, and the development of peer interactions in preschool children; whereas the control group’s intervention focused on strategies for enhancing adult-child interaction in small groups. The results of the study showed that there was a significant increase in the experimental group’s verbal supports. The investigation also revealed that the children in the experimental group had increases in the frequency of peer-directed interactions.

Girolametto & Weitzman (2003), trained day care staff to use strategies that may significantly increase the children’s spontaneous language opportunities. In the study the investigators explored whether an in-service provided by a speech language pathologist to selected daycare, providers would increase the amount of caregiver interactive language
stimulation techniques and child language opportunities. In addition, the investigators set out to determine the viability of the in-service training and changes maintained in caregiver interactions during follow-up. Participants were sixteen childhood educators with at least two years of experience in the setting and two years of post-secondary training. The sixteen participants were taken from four early childhood centers. Participants were randomly divided into two groups of eight, and placed in an experimental or control group. Each caregiver was videotaped with four typically developing children (development was assessed with the Speech and Language assessment Scale). The children’s ages ranged from eighteen to sixty-seven months.

Girolametto & Weitzman gave the participants pre and post-tests assessments. The control phase lasted four months. Follow-up with the caregivers took place nine months after the post-test. Pre-assessment involved both groups being videotaped while interacting in a book and play dough activity. The experimental group was trained using the fourteen-week in-service training program “Learning Language and Loving It” an interactive language stimulation model, which included eight evening group sessions and six individual sessions. The control group was given the opportunity to participate in the in-service after post-assessment. During the experimental period, data was transcribed using the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts program (SALT) (number of conversational utterances, words per-minute, MLU, type-token ratio, number of utterances read). The middle 10 minutes of both the play dough and book sessions were analyzed, yielding 20 minutes of data per participant. The Teacher Interaction and Language Rating Scale (11 items) was used to code verbal and nonverbal interactions by the childcare provider (wait and listen, follow the children’s lead, be face to face, encourage turn taking, and scan). Five items were used that
focused on child-centered techniques and interaction-promoting techniques. During pre-test no differences were found between the control and experimental group on any of the SALT or Teacher Language and Rating Scale measures in either activity.

Upon analysis of data during post-assessment significant differences were found between interactions of the groups. The experimental groups’ showed an increase in the number of utterances and words per-minute used during the book reading activity. No significant differences were found between groups on measures of mean length of utterance and type-token ratio in book or play dough activity. It was discovered that the experimental group did not read directly from the book as frequently as the control group. Comparisons made from the Teacher Interaction and Rating scale indicate that the experimental group had gains in all five items assessed. Differences that are more significant were found in the *Wait and Listen* and *Encourage Turn-Taking* measures.

There were also gains in language opportunities of the children. The analysis showed that children in the experimental group had more utterances, multiword combination and more peer-directed utterances at posttest, than the control group in both activities. There were no significant differences in variation of words used when analyzing either activity. At follow-up, it was revealed that the child-care providers had maintained the usage of the techniques.
Word Learning Through Storybook Reading

Storybook reading can be used as a tool to foster word learning in children. With adequate exposure to new words and elaboration of meanings through adult interaction, children are able to rapidly acquire vocabulary. Justice, Meier & Walpole (2005) in a pretest-posttest comparison group design, investigated the influence of small-group storybook readings on the acquisition of vocabulary for at risk kindergartners. Fifty-seven kindergartners participated in the study. They were divided randomly into a treatment group (n=29) and control group (n=28). Children were divided into six small groups for receiving intervention. During pre-test the children were assessed to determine their knowledge of the 60 target words.

The treatment group completed 20 reading sessions, during this time they were exposed to 60 novels words. The 60 novel words were randomly designated as elaborated and non-elaborated conditions. During post-test the children were assessed to measure how many words they acquired. The children in the treatment group made significantly greater improvement on the elaborated words. Those children with the lowest vocabulary made the most significant improvement. There were no significant gains on non-elaborated words. It can be concluded that storybook reading does promote vocabulary development. Exposure to new words does not impact vocabulary as significantly as elaboration. This also supports the importance of adult elaboration in storybook reading.

In another study of vocabulary development Scarborough (1990), followed 52 children from two years old through second grade to assess aspects of their language development. During this period, six evaluations were given to understand vocabulary knowledge and grammatical abilities and how these skills might affect reading abilities. The
study found that 34 children were at risk for reading disabilities. Of the 34 that were documented to be at risk, 22 of those children had reading problems in the second grade. In sum, their difficulties in oral language at the preschool level served as a later predictor of reading disabilities.

**Literacy in Dramatic Play**

Evidence is accumulating that play related literacy activities may also assist in the development of early language and reading skills. Allowing the children to experiment with reading and writing materials also promotes vocabulary acquisition and written discourse.

Christie & Enz (1992) investigated whether there would be increased opportunities for literacy moments in a literacy-enriched (materials) dramatic play center with teacher involvement versus a literacy-enriched only intervention. Subjects were thirty-two four and five year old children in the morning and afternoon classes of one teacher. Subjects were divided into seventeen students in the morning and fifteen students in the afternoon preschool. The students left their classes for 30 minutes a day to play in separate classrooms. There were two dramatic play centers: housekeeping and a theme center associated with real-life settings. The children were assessed in pre and post treatment to determine their play and literacy development. Three areas were measured: concepts about print, emergent writing and letter recognition. The pre-treatment settings of the two dramatic play centers, for both the morning and afternoon classes, included no materials. After the four-week pretreatment, for a period of twenty weeks, materials were included in the classroom. Post-treatment immediately followed lasting for four weeks. Researchers administered follow-up assessments after a six-month interval on twenty-four of the original subjects that had since moved on to kindergarten.
Results of the Christie & Enz (1992) study indicated that there was an increase in total play in the group with language-enrichment and adult involvement. There were no significant differences in social play between groups. Functional play increased and dramatic play decreased for the language-enriched only group. In the area of literacy, there were significant improvements in literacy moments across both groups in all areas (concepts about print, emergent writing, and letter recognition). The language-enrichment plus adult involvement group had significant positive shifts in each area.

Morrow (1990) attests that attention to planning is given more attention than the classroom’s physical environment. The purpose of this investigation was to determine if there would be an increase in the type and number of literacy moments by children given changes in design and implementation of writing and reading materials in dramatic play areas. Morrow used 170 children in the study divided into four groups: three experimental groups and one control group. Treatment for experimental group one consisted of the teacher guided introduction of materials. Treatment for experimental group two consisted of teacher guided thematic play with materials. The treatment for experimental group three consisted of materials but no teacher involvement. Prior to treatment, the 13 student teacher volunteers attended a workshop that introduced them to materials. Behaviors were assessed twice a week over an eight-week period in a dramatic play area set up as a train station for 20-30 minutes at a time. Morrow’s study revealed that literacy behaviors increased across all groups. There was a significant increase in the literacy behaviors of the groups with teacher guidance. The results of this study confirm the need for literacy materials along with teacher involvement in dramatic play activities. This also supports the need for more focus to be placed on the physical environment of the classroom.
Traditional Versus Book-Related Dramatic Play Areas

Morrow (1990) touched on the importance of the physical environment of the classroom with focus on the dramatic play center. Patrakos and Howe (1996) took another approach to the importance of the physical environment for dramatic play. They examined whether the center theme and equipment design, solitary or group design, had any impact on the preschooler’s social and cognitive play.

Patrokos and Howe studied a group of thirty-one preschoolers. They were divided into class A (15 students) and class B (16 students), and were randomly divided into groups of four to be assessed at a time. Students were assessed using Ryan’s Scale. The experiment lasted for eight weeks; two devoted to pre and post intervention. Over the 6-week intervention period, the traditional housekeeping area was changed weekly, in theme and design.

Overall, Patrokos and Howe found that there was a general increase in play versus non-play across both groups A and B. Social and dramatic plays were the most frequently observed. Specifically, results indicated that group design did facilitate more interactions that are social while solitary play facilitated play that was more solitary. Consequently, physical design can determine the kinds of social communicative opportunities available for the child. When looking at the differences in themes enacted in intervention versus housekeeping the researchers observed that the students engaged in more role-play that was theme-related and consistent with the theme of the center. Therefore, there were more differences in themes enacted depending on the theme of the center, thereby potentially enhancing the experiences in play and facilitating their social and cognitive interactions.
Howe and colleagues (1993) investigated the differences in themed dramatic play centers (traditional vs. book-related) and the effects on the child participant’s social and cognitive play. The children involved in the study were 2 ½ to 5 years old divided into two terms. Term one consisted of forty-seven students and term two consisted of fifty-three students.

The play behaviors of the children were observed and assessed using The Pretend Observation Scale for fifteen minutes in morning free play. The play was observed in two terms in the dramatic play center during four periods: 1. 2 days during the week prior to the novel centers; 2. Days 1 and 3 of each novel center; 3. 2 days during the week immediately following the novel centers, and 4. 2 days during a week one month after the novel centers. The traditional center was the housekeeping center. The various novel centers included; hospital, bakery, pharmacy, pirate ship, pizzeria, airplane, animal hospital, train station, fruit and vegetable store, and farm. Each novel or theme center included corresponding themed materials.

The data from Howe and colleagues (1993) study revealed that students engaged in more play (specifically dramatic play) than nonplay. Students also participated in dramatic play in more familiar than unfamiliar centers. However, there was more play in the most familiar book-related centers other than the traditional housekeeping center. Howe et. al, suggest that to increase the desire to play in unfamiliar centers teachers may need to provide information books, fieldtrips, and talks. When students did engage in dramatic play the play was according to theme. This suggests that students are willing to play in book-related dramatic play centers given the right amount of support (exposure to the theme) by the teacher.
Summary

Based on the review of the literature, it is recognized that the dramatic play center plays an integral role in language development of preschool children. Studies confirm that through teacher’s verbal support, language and literacy opportunities can be accelerated and enriched (Christie & Enz, 1992; Patrakos & Howe 1996; Morrow, 1990). Changes in the dramatic play center and implementation of different materials may provide more opportunities in both teacher-child and peer interactions (Howe et al, 1993). Teachers exposing children to different themes (doctor’s office) encourage theirs willingness to participate in book-related dramatic play areas (Howe et al, 1993). Research has revealed that storybooks are important to new word learning. With enough emphasis and elaboration on words through adult interactions, a preschool child’s vocabulary can quickly grow (Justice, Meier & Walpole, 2005; Scarborough, 1990).

Problem/Rationale

There is information in the literature about overall language use and practice among pre-school students but there is limited information on different language components, such as overall lexicon differences associated with changes in dramatic play centers combined with a related storybook. There is limited research revealing whether there is an increase in differences in the types of language utterances and richness or variation in vocabulary related to play. There is evidence to support the notion that having an overall classroom theme connected to the associated dramatic play center increases play in a book-related area. However, research does not reveal whether or not having a storybook and classroom theme enhances vocabulary variation/richness that teachers model for children when associated with a traditional or book-related dramatic play area.
It has been proven that teacher verbal support enhance overall oral language interactions of children. However, more research is needed to determine the effectiveness of teacher language facilitation in particular areas of the classroom, in this case dramatic play centers. Studies have shown increase in child language output but few studies focused on the type of language output by the teacher.
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Setting

This research study was conducted in a Head Start Center that serves an urban inner city population of low-income students qualifying for services at the center. The center was chosen due to its proximity to the university and the willingness of teachers to participate in the investigation. The investigation took place in the dramatic play centers of pre-school classrooms.

Participants

The subjects of the study were six Head Start teachers. The teacher’s interactions with their students were reviewed however the students were not the subjects of the study. The study was described to the teachers and the site managers employed at the Head Start Center. The six teachers were given a written consent notice to read and sign in order to participate in the study, with the understanding that the sessions were to be videotaped (See Appendix A). The teachers participating in the study had varying levels of education and experience. Teachers were divided randomly into experimental and control groups. There were twelve students participating in the study. Even though the students were not the subjects of the study, parental consent was obtained, allowing videotaping of the children as part of the teacher study (see Appendix B).
Materials

A storybook was selected entitled; *I Took My Frog to the Library* (Kimmel, 1990). A video tape recorder was used during the data collection portion of this study.

Procedure

The present study was a component of a larger study examining the overall effectiveness of language based in-service training. The study was conducted over a span of two weeks at the Head Start center. Half of the teachers were recorded during week one, and the rest were recorded during the second week of the study. The investigators compiled a list of age-appropriate books based on a library theme. The speech language pathologist collaborated with the teachers to select a book. The book selected for the experiment was, *I Took My Frog to the Library* (Kimmel, 1990) to match the Head Start Center’s library theme of the month, “Right to Read”. The three teachers selected to be in the control group had non book-related centers; two housekeeping and one dress-shop. The three teachers selected to be in the experimental group had book related centers; two libraries and one combined post-office/library play center. The speech language pathologist read the selected book to each individual teacher and her class. After reviewing a hand out and discussing “Wh” questions with the teachers, the SLP modeled open-ended/ “Wh” (who, what, when, where, and why) questions using the targeted vocabulary by playing with two to three children in the dramatic play center of each individual class while the respective teacher observed. Immediately following the book reading and modeling using the target vocabulary in the dramatic play center, the teacher was asked to interact with the students in the center using the “Wh” questions with the students. The target vocabulary chosen were seven words used within the reading and modeling of the storybook: library, checkout, borrow, librarian, buy, read, and
book(s). None of the teachers were told by the SLP to use the book-related vocabulary in the
dramatic play centers. The investigator wanted to determine the extent to which the book-
related or non book-related dramatic play centers would influence the teachers’ use of book-
related vocabulary.

**Weekly Videotaping**

Each teacher, along with two to three children was videotaped in the dramatic play
center one time immediately following the book reading and modeling by the SLP.
Investigators gathered approximately 10-15 minutes of data per teacher. The first 10-minute
portion of the weekly video sessions was used for data analysis.

**Analysis**

The first ten minutes of each of the six-videotaped sessions in the dramatic play
centers were analyzed. The videotapes were reviewed multiple times by the investigator to
ensure the integrity of the word counts and for reliability measures. Investigators used a
spreadsheet to tally the teachers’ use of the target vocabulary (see Appendix C). Each time a
target word was used by a teacher it was tallied on the data sheet by the investigator. The
mean number of book-related vocabulary was determined for both groups and compared by a
T-test for independent means.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Data that was collected from this study was analyzed to determine if target vocabulary used by the experimental group differed from the vocabulary used by the control group. The results from the statistical analysis of the data are as follows.

A one tailed T-test was used to determine the difference between the independent means of book related vocabulary for the experimental and control groups. It was determined that there was a significantly greater mean use of the seven book-related target words by teachers in the book-related center vs. the non book-related center (t=2.678, df=4, p<.05 one tailed) (see table 1 and graph 1). Teachers with book-related centers used a greater number of target words during their interaction with students in play. Teachers in the housekeeping center used fewer book-related target vocabulary words.

As for the experimental group the least number of target vocabulary used by a teacher was fifteen, while the greatest number target vocabulary words in the experimental group was forty-one. The fewest target words by a teacher in the control group was zero. The greatest number of words used by a teacher in the control group was four. The mean number of target vocabulary use for the control group was approximately two (Σx/n=1.66) and approximately 24 (Σx/n=24.33) for the experimental group.
Table 1.

Total number of target words used by the experimental and control group.

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<th>Control group</th>
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<td>Total No.</td>
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<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher V</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher VI</td>
<td>15</td>
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</table>

Figure 1.

Total number of target words used by experimental group teachers and control group teachers.
The most frequently used target word by the experimental group was “book” followed by library, read and checkout (see table 2 & figure 2). Teacher IV with a library dramatic play center used the most variety and number of words; library, checkout, book, and read. Teacher IV used the most there was no substantial variation between usages of target words. Teacher V used three target words, and teacher VI used two target words. It is apparent that most teachers used the target word “book” more consistently than the other target words. Teachers in the control group did not use a significant number book-related target words. The only target word that control group teachers used was “buy”. The target word “buy” was used four times by teacher III and one time by teacher I. Teacher II did not use any target words (see table 2 & figure 2).

Table 2.

Frequency of each target word used by the experimental teachers and control group teachers.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Target Vocab.</th>
<th>*TI-B</th>
<th>TII-B</th>
<th>TIII-B</th>
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*TI-B=Teacher One Book Related

**TIV-N=Teacher Four Non Book-Related

Figure 2.

Frequency of each target words used by experimental teachers and control group teachers.
*TI-N=Teacher One Non Book-Related

**TIV-B=Teacher Four Book-Related
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Teachers Enhancing Exposure to Vocabulary

The purpose of this study was to determine if preschool teachers with book-related dramatic play centers in their classrooms used more book-related target vocabulary than teachers with traditional non book-related centers. From the present study, it is evident that teachers can increase children’s exposure to book-related vocabulary through book-related activities. Teachers in the experimental group used a maximum of four out of seven target words and a significantly greater total number of target words. Teachers in the control group used a maximum of one out of seven words and significantly fewer target words. From past research it is known that adult use and explanation of vocabulary accelerates vocabulary development of children (Justice, Meier & Walpole, 2005). Therefore, the results of this research show those teachers in the experimental group who used significantly more target vocabulary increased their students exposure to the target words used. Justice, Meier & Walpole (2005) identified that students given adult elaboration of targeted storybook words versus students that did not, demonstrated a significantly greater knowledge of the targeted words. Those students in the past study with the lowest vocabulary exhibited the most significant gains. Teachers in the experimental and control group of the present study exposed the children to target vocabulary, however when observing the teacher interactions on the video tapes it did not appear that the teachers were expanding on target words used. Justice, Meier & Walpole (2005), agree that exposure to new words does impact vocabulary but not as significantly as adult elaboration of words. Therefore, teacher exposure coupled
with expansion of target words from storybooks could potentially result in greater gains in child vocabulary.

**Changing from the Traditional Dramatic Play Center**

Exposure and expansion of target book-related vocabulary by teachers is an enhancer of children’s vocabulary. In addition changing from the chronic, non-book-related dramatic play center can be an accelerator of child vocabulary development. Accordingly, teacher exposure and expansion combined with changes in the dramatic play center will be an even more powerful catalyst in enhancing child vocabulary learning. It appears that the non-book related center only allows for vocabulary related to housekeeping. The experimental group generated book or theme related vocabulary due to the implementation of theme related props. The control group’s non-use of book-related words was influenced by the lack of library book-related props within the centers. It was observed that the teachers in the control group were able to use vocabulary related to housekeeping (food, clothes, dishes) etc. Their dramatic play centers were filled with props that promoted the use of housekeeping words. Therefore, it is difficult for teachers to expose children to other sets of vocabulary if dramatic play centers remains traditional and consequently limiting their lexicon. In past research, Patrokos and Howe (1996) established that children given a novel dramatic play center would engage in role-play that is theme-related and consistent with the theme of that center. As a result, if there is a change related to theme or book, then children will engage in theme related role-play and perhaps the vocabulary used in the center will be associated with the theme. Likewise, teachers engaging with children in dramatic play are more likely to engage in theme related role-play and use vocabulary associated with the theme.
Implementation of Language Enriching Props

The implementation of enriching theme-related props is essential to the use of book and/or theme related vocabulary in dramatic play centers. Christie & Enz (1992) recognized that literacy enriched materials in the dramatic play center coupled by adult involvement increased children’s opportunities for literacy moments. Corroborating with Christie & Enz (1992), Morrow (1996) found literacy behaviors had the most significant increase in groups with teacher involvement in dramatic play. Likewise, the implementation of rich theme-related props could increase the number and variety of book-related words used, thereby increasing children’s opportunities for vocabulary growth.

Although the experimental group used a wider variety of target words than the control group, the experimental group still lacked in the variety of target words used. Teachers in the experimental group used four out of seven target words. It is likely that the experimental group lacked variety due in part to the limited number and poor quality of the theme-related props and the failure of some teachers to expand on the theme. Perhaps if a greater variety of props were within the dramatic play center then teachers in the experimental group would have had the potential to use more book-related words. It is safe to conclude that the control group lacked variety and number of target words used due to having no theme-related props implemented in the dramatic play center. It is important to note that within the procedure of the present study the teachers were not given explicit training or instruction to use the target words that were under investigation. This was due to the investigator wanting to examine the teachers ability to use the vocabulary naturally as a product of their book-related or non-book
related dramatic play center. Perhaps if teachers would have been trained or instructed to use these words, then the total number of words and variety may have increased.

**Implications of the Study**

In the present study, teachers with book-related dramatic play centers used a significantly greater number of book-related vocabulary. The teachers with the non book-related centers used few target words if any during the dramatic play sessions. The few target vocabulary words that were used by the control group were not within the context of the associated theme, but they were in the context of the theme of the non-book related area. This emphasizes the importance of teachers pre-selecting target vocabulary in association with a book or theme. These findings also imply the importance of teacher preparation of the preschool classroom. The richness of type and variety of props chosen are important to increase language development opportunities, specifically vocabulary.

Although teachers with book-related centers did use some of the target vocabulary, a variety of target words was not used. By this finding it can be concluded, that it is necessary for teachers to take time and pre-plan vocabulary words to be targeted within the classroom. The study also suggests the importance of changing the dramatic play center to connect to the story or book theme. Changing the center across themes may increase the variety of vocabulary used as well as variety of language use. Implications can also be made for increasing teacher involvement in book-related play centers. Teacher interaction can serve as an adult language model to children and facilitate children’s language practice.

Overall, the findings of the present study indicate the value of teacher training. Perhaps if preschool teachers were specifically trained in storybook reading, classroom design, and vocabulary teaching techniques, it would have resulted in a more language
enriched environment for children. Speech language pathologist servicing Head Start or any other pre-school centers can assist by providing in-services and collaborating with classroom teachers to produce a more language enriched classroom for children.

**Limitations**

In spite of the outcomes of the study, considerations of limitations must also be taken into account. This study did not examine how differences in the richness of the book-related dramatic play centers may have affected the amount and variety of target vocabulary used by the experimental group teachers. Exact pre-measurement of the number and types of props was not conducted by the investigators. Perhaps if the investigators provided the teachers with a rich set of props and designed the library dramatic play centers more uniformly the there might have been difference in the number and variety of target vocabulary words used.

A limitation to be taken into account is the participants in the study. Teachers were the focus. Children were not the subjects of the study. If children were the active subjects of the study then a determination of their book-related target vocabulary words and the influence of teacher target vocabulary use on the children could have been measured.

Another limitation of the study was the small sample of teachers. There were only three teachers in the control group and three teachers in the experimental group. An increase in the number of teachers within both groups would have assured the investigators that results were representative of teachers in general and controlled for less influence of individual differences of teachers.
Future Research

Future research on the topic of the use of storybook vocabulary in book-related play centers would be beneficial for increased understanding of the benefits of play centers associated with a storybook or theme. A study-examining preschool teachers with book related centers using target words with and without an in-service training would be helpful in determining the importance of teacher training on the use of vocabulary. A different study could take a closer look at the children’s use of storybook related vocabulary compared to teacher storybook related vocabulary. This would help to understand how teacher talk affects the vocabulary used by children. In addition, another study could be conducted on teachers with varied amounts of experience. This would show if there is a correlation between experience or education as it relates to the amount of target vocabulary used. Instead of investigating the teacher vocabulary use in dramatic play centers, another study could be conducted in other area of the preschool classroom (i.e. arts and crafts or manipulative center).

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine if preschool teachers with book-related centers in their classrooms used more book-related target vocabulary than teachers with traditional unchanged housekeeping centers. The current study found that teachers with book related centers, in this case library enriched, used significantly more book-related target vocabulary than teachers with traditional housekeeping centers. This suggests that a dramatic play center associated with a book or classroom theme yields more opportunities for teachers to use target vocabulary. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is important to change the dramatic play center according to the classroom theme. The dramatic play center
needs to be changed regularly within the academic year to promote vocabulary use by the teacher, which in turn will encourage vocabulary learning in children. In this particular Head Start center the theme is changed periodically throughout the academic year but the dramatic play remains the same in many classrooms. In other words, the changing theme is not always matched with a changing dramatic play center or theme related book.

More frequent changes in dramatic play centers can encourage teachers to use more book or theme related vocabulary as well as engage in book/theme related language interactions. Because of introducing more book-related vocabulary, student word knowledge can increase. This layering of multiple exposures to vocabulary, teacher interaction using target vocabulary, language enriching props and storybook reading creates a potent learning environment. By examining the teachers’ use of book-related vocabulary under various conditions, we can further explore the consequential affect on student vocabulary development in order to improve the education of the student by making more informed and deliberate decisions about teaching materials, classroom construct and teacher development.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Dear Teacher or SLP:

I am a Doctoral Student at the University of Cincinnati. I am researching collaboration between speech-language pathologists and preschool teachers. I would like your consent to collect information about you during the classroom activities with children.

This study will look at teachers’ talk with children during dramatic play activities following modeling by a speech-language pathologist (SLP). I hope that this research will tell me more about how SLPs and preschool teachers can collaborate during preschool activities to support children’s language.

Up to four SLPs and up to 10 teachers will participate in the study. Some SLPs may work with more than one teacher. One day each week, during the Language Enrichment Program, we will divide the children into two groups for the dramatic play time. The SLP will work with the first group while the teacher watches, and then the teacher will work with the second group of children. Each activity will last approximately 30 minutes. We will videotape you while you interact with your group of children during dramatic play. We will look at the videotapes to identify and count your use of the language targets modeled by the SLP.

In addition to the videotaping, a questionnaire will be administered prior to and following the study to collect information regarding teachers’ expectations of the in-service and satisfaction with the in-service. Interviews will also take place each week during the information sharing and after your use of the strategies. The interviews will be documented via written notes and videotaping. I am seeking your consent to use these interviews and times of informal discussion to evaluate both the information sharing and the modeling and their usefulness to you as a teacher.

There will be no direct benefits to the teachers or SLPs participating in this study. The information gathered in this study may be useful to determine if modeling teacher/child talk by an SLP results in implementation of these strategies by the teacher. In turn, this may provide information about how collaborative efforts involving talk within the preschool activities support children’s language development.
classroom environment can support children’s language. There are no expected risks to this research study, and no financial cost to you to participate in this study.

All information will remain confidential. The researcher and the SLP participants in the study will be allowed to view the videotapes and read sections of the research records related to this study. The names of the teachers and SLPs will not be used in any reporting. The information from this study may be published and presented at conferences; however, you will not be identified by name. All information will be given a code and personal information will be removed. The videotapes may be used in presentations and/or for educational purposes.

Your participation in this study is on a voluntary basis. You may refuse to participate or discontinue participation AT ANY TIME without penalty. If you have any other questions about this study, you may call:

Principal Investigator: Sandra G. Combs, Univ. of Cincinnati (221-4243)
Academic Advisor: Nancy A. Creaghead (513-558-8501)
Chair of the Institutional Review Board – Social & Behavioral Sciences: (513-558-5784)

If you do not want to participate in this study, just discard this letter. If you are willing to participate, however, please sign below and return this form in the attached envelope.

I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. I CONSENT TO BE INTERVIEWED AND HAVE WHAT I SHARE IN INFORMAL DISCUSSION BE RECORDED IN WRITING. I WILL KEEP A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.

__________________________________________  __________________________________________
Signature of Participant                      Date

__________________________________________  __________________________________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent         Date
APPENDIX B

Sandra G. Combs MA, CCC-SLP.
Doctoral Student, Principal Investigator
513-221-4243

Dear Parent:

I am a Doctoral student at the University of Cincinnati. I am researching the way speech-language pathologists (SLP) and preschool teachers work together to help children’s language improvement. I will look at how teachers talk with children in class after SLPs have shown the teachers ways to talk to children.

Your child will not be a subject in this study. Only teachers and SLPs are subjects. However, your child may be videotaped while the teacher and SLP are being taped. Videotaping will occur once a week for about 30 minutes in your child’s classroom. I would like your permission to include your child when I videotape the way his/her teacher talks with your child during regular classroom activities. The tapes will be used only for research and education purposes. Your child will not be identified in anything written about this study.

If you have any questions, you may call:
Principal Investigator: Sandra G. Combs (513-221-4243)
Academic Advisor: Dr. Nancy A Creaghead (513-558-8501)
Chairperson of the University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board – Social and Behavioral Sciences: (513-558-5784)

Your child does NOT have to be videotaped. If you do not want your child to be videotaped, just throw away this letter. Your child will continue to be treated the same way by his/her teacher and no one will be upset. If you say yes, you can change your mind at any time. If it is okay for your child to be included in videotapes of his/her teacher, please sign below and return the signed form in the attached envelope.

I GIVE PERMISSION FOR MY CHILD TO APPEAR ON VIDEOTAPE, AND FOR THE VIDEOTAPE TO BE USED FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES. I WILL KEEP A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR MYSELF.

____________________________________________________________________
Signature of Parent / Legal Guardian  Date
### APPENDIX C

#### DATA SHEET

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