

AN OVERVIEW OF THE QUALITY OF INTERACTIONS IN BELGIAN PRE-KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS

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Introduction

Context



- Quality of teacher/children interactions is the most determining aspect of the educational quality, in particular regarding language development
- **Quality of teacher/children interactions plays a protective role on language and communication development for vulnerable children (Dickinson, 2011)**
- Quality of teacher/children interactions is notably determined by emotional and instructional supports (Gosse et al., 2014)
 - Association between language development and instructional support is stronger for children with stronger expressive skills
 - Association between language development and emotional support is stronger for children with weaker expressive language skills
- To date, the quality of interactions, especially those supporting language development, is not always optimal (Piastra et al., 2012).

Method

Participants

- 23 pre-kindergarten classrooms (4-5 years old) in the French-speaking part of Belgium
- 23 volunteer female teachers
- Socioeconomic status of schools: between 3 and 17 (/20)
- Number of children in classrooms: between 10 and 23
- Multilinguism in classrooms: between 10% and 100% of the children

Procedure

- CLASS Pre-K (*Classroom Assessment Scoring System*[®], Pianta et al., 2008)
 - 3 domains : Emotional Support - Classroom Organization – Instructional Support
 - Likert scale of 7 points: 1-2 **low quality**, 3-5 **mid-range quality**, 6-7 **high quality**
- Observation of interactions during four 30-minutes cycles (20 minutes of observation – 10 minutes of rating)
- No imposed activity - Several activities are observed : “big group” activities – “little groups” activities

Objectives

- In Belgium, there is a need to prevent, during early childhood, an educational gap that too often depends on the socio-economic status of a child's family (Vandenbroeck, 2015).
- Supporting the quality of teacher/children interactions in kindergarten may be a way to preventively support language development and educational achievement.
- But to date, little is known about what children experience in Belgium kindergarten, regarding language development support.
- **The objective of this study is to document the quality of teacher/children interactions, in the second year of nursery school (4-5 years old)**

Results

| DOMAINS AND DIMENSIONS | MEAN | SD | RANGE |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Emotional support | 5.36 | 0.82 | 3.00 – 6.38 |
| Positive climate | 5.73 | 0.97 | 3.25 – 7.00 |
| Negative climate* | 1.87 | 0.95 | 1.00 – 5.00 |
| Teacher sensitivity | 5.09 | 0.91 | 2.75 – 6.25 |
| Regard for student perspectives | 4.53 | 0.71 | 3.00 – 5.75 |
| Classroom organization | 5.39 | 0.71 | 3.17 – 6.50 |
| Behavior management | 5.25 | 0.85 | 3.00 – 6.75 |
| Productivity | 5.86 | 0.66 | 3.75 – 7.00 |
| Instructional learning formats | 5.05 | 0.82 | 2.75 – 6.75 |
| Instructional support | 2.43 | 0.80 | 1.33 – 4.25 |
| Concept development | 1.84 | 0.84 | 1.00 – 4.63 |
| Quality of feedback | 2.30 | 0.85 | 1.00 – 4.75 |
| Language modeling | 3.14 | 0.92 | 1.75 – 5.00 |

* Inverted score, 1 = absence of negative climate

Discussion

Instructional support

- Domain with the lower quality
 - Results already observed in other countries
 - Influence of the type of activities on results : better quality during “big group” activities than during “little groups” activities
 - Very few “child-centred” activities

Emotional support

- Good quality in general but...
 - ... important heterogeneity between classrooms
 - Questions : Where are more vulnerable children? Why is there a so high level of negative climate in some classrooms?

Importance of improving teacher/children interactions

- To offer a better support for teacher: it is necessary to propose and evaluate feasibility and effectiveness of professional development models