

Integrating Culture and Language Into Intervention

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Cultural & Linguistic Foundations of Interventions

- Most existing language interventions are based on research on White, middle-class children and their families.
 - As a result, interventions are grounded in White, middle-class culture.
- If the linguistic and cultural foundations of interventions do not complement families' backgrounds, the interventions may not be maximally effective for young children and their families.
- Lack of alignment may be found in:
 - Targeted activities & materials,
 - Parenting goals, &
 - Beliefs about social interactions.
- Efforts are needed to integrate families' cultural and linguistic backgrounds into interventions. These efforts may:
 - increase families' engagement and participation &
 - maximize the effectiveness of the intervention.
- However, it is recognized that some aspects of interventions may be based on the middle-class culture, because of lack of research on other cultures.
- In these cases, it is important to discuss potential cultural differences with families (van Kleeck, 1994).

Purpose

- Present a model for developing culturally and linguistically responsive interventions.
- Discuss how the model was used to develop a book-reading intervention, "Mothers Educating Their Children," that was designed for Latina mothers and their Head Start children who are dual language learners (DLLs).

Development of Culturally-Sensitive Interventions

Step 1: Establish a theoretical & research foundation

- **Theoretical and research framework of Mothers Educating Their Children.**
 - **Socio-cultural theory** (Rogoff, 2004; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1983)
 - Parenting practices are based on cultural norms and values, with the goal to help their children become competent members of their culture.
 - Language, communication & culture are inextricably linked.
 - **Emergent literacy perspective** (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998)
 - Literacy emerges from outside-in processes (language & understanding of the context) and
 - inside-out process (letter knowledge & phonological awareness).
 - **Importance of home language**
 - Language is linked to one's identity.
 - Mothers' use of Spanish supports children's Spanish language growth and is not harmful to English development (Hammer et al., 2009).
 - Mothers' use of English did not impact English vocabulary growth and slowed Spanish vocabulary growth (Hammer et al., 2009).
 - Home (and English) language growth supports reading development.
 - Spanish and English language growth during 2 years in Head Start predicted both Spanish and English early reading in kindergarten and first grade (Hammer et al., 2007; Davison et al., 2011).

Step 2: Learn about the families' culture

- **We consulted the existing literature.**
 - Research on Latino culture revealed:
 - Mothers may possess both traditional and progressive beliefs about parenting & culture (Gillanders & Jimenez, 2004; Hammer et al., 2007; Resse & Gallimore, 2009).
 - Mothers use a range of book reading styles (Hammer et al., 2005).
 - Text reading style – Focus on reading the text of the book
 - Labeling style – Label pictures in the book
 - Story-teller style – Encourage children to make up their own story
 - Interactive style – Read the text and ask children questions about the text (similar to a dialogic reading style)
 - Mothers are more engaged in book reading interventions when their cultural values are incorporated (James & Kermani, 2001).
- **We interviewed Latina mothers from the community**
 - We conducted semi-structured interviews w/ 20 Latina Head Start mothers.
 - The interviews revealed:
 - Mothers wanted children to know and identify with the Latino culture.
"I want them to understand where we come from and where it all started." & *"He needs to know he is Puerto Rican."*
 - Several aspects of the Latino culture were important to the mothers.
 - Traditional foods, music, and festivals/fiestas
 - History of their home country
 - Cultural values
 - The importance of family
"At home, it's that the education is based on family, for me."
 - Relationships with elders – such as asking for elders' blessings
 - Helping others whenever they are in need
 - Being "well-educated" - good manners, good relationships with others, being a good communicator, & being respectful
"Teach them manners. And that they respect others" & ". . . teach her how to be in front of people . . . how to feel the pain from other people, because I believe that when you can put yourself in someone else position you learn more."
 - Mothers wanted their children to know Spanish and English.
". . . so you have to learn how to read Spanish cuz you are Puerto Rican, so you have to learn," & "It's better for you, you speak two language[s]."
 - Mothers viewed themselves as responsible for teaching their children school-related concepts.

Step 3: Obtain input from staff & parent teams

- **We created teams of Latino staff members and parents to provide input about the intervention as it was developed.**
- **The Staff Team**
 - consisted 2 teachers, 2 assistants, and a staff member,
 - met with the team one time/month for 4 months,
 - provided input on:
 - design of the intervention, and
 - possible themes for the 8 books that we were developing for the intervention.
- **The Parent Team**
 - consisted of 5 Latina, Head Start mothers
 - met 8 times & provided input on each book as we developed them
 - discussed the theme of each book,
 - reviewed the story line and text of each book, &
 - provided input on the authenticity of illustrations.

Step 4: Develop the intervention

- **Using the information gathered through Steps 1-3, we developed the book-reading intervention.**
 - Title – Mothers Educating Their Children/Madres educando a sus niños
 - The Parent Team named the project. The name reflects that mothers are responsible for educating their children.
 - Eight books were developed for use during 8 home visits
 - The books tell the story of the Alvarez family and their visit to their homeland.

BOOK TITLE	CULTURAL CONNECTION
A Trip to Abuela's House Un viaje a la casa de Abuela	Family, homeland, traditional foods, blessing from elders
Fiesta Patronales	Traditional festival, foods, music, family
Rosa learns a lesson Rosa aprende una lección	Importance of respect and being "well educated"
Bobo & the Chickens Bobo y los pollos	Modeled after a traditional character
Even Pirates Have Neighbors Hasta los piratas tienen vecinos	The importance of helping others in need
Going to the River Ir al río	Spending time at the river with family A regular event
The Flower & the Hummingbird La flor y el colibrí	A traditional story
A Wonderful Trip! ¡Un viaje maravilloso!	The family reflects on their visit

The Intervention

- Eight home visits were conducted by bilingual home visitors
 - Presented the intervention as an opportunity for mothers to
 - share their culture with their children &
 - support their children's language and literacy development.
 - During the initial home visit, home visitors talked with mothers about how they read books to their children.
 - Encouraged mothers to continue their style
 - Discussed how teachers read books with children
 - Encouraged parents to supplement what they do using dialogic reading strategies
 - In subsequent home visits, home visitors taught mothers how to use dialogic reading strategies, promote vocabulary, expand their children's utterances, and engage children in narrative activities
 - During each home visit, mothers were provided with:
 - A new book about the Alvarez family
 - Each book included example questions for mothers to ask their children
 - Reminder cards that highlighted strategies targeted during the home visit
 - Supplemental activities that targeted:
 - Vocabulary
 - List of new vocabulary words to target (from the books) with photos
 - Narrative abilities
 - Mothers were encouraged to tell stories from their childhood and/or about their homeland.
 - Children made own copy of the targeted books & retold stories to family members.
 - Commercially-produced bilingual books (generalization of strategies)
 - Books were provided without embedded questions to give opportunities for mothers to develop their own questions as they practiced dialogic reading strategies

Pilot Study

- 73 Latina mothers and their Head Start Children participated
 - Randomly assigned to either Control or Intervention conditions
- Intervention group ($n = 35$) – 8 home visits over 4 months
- Control group ($n = 38$) – 4 packets of math activities to do on own
- Pre- and Post-intervention assessments were conducted.
 - Standardized Tests: Children's language abilities were assessed in Spanish and English.
 - Picture vocabulary & Listening Comprehension subtests of the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement III/Bateria III
 - Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test – Bilingual Edition
 - Language samples were elicited:
 - narrative activity using a wordless picture book
 - book reading activity (mothers looked a book with their children).

Results

- **Intervention vs. Control Differences**
 - No differences were observed on standardized tests.
 - Children in the intervention group exhibited greater gains in:
 - the number of different words produced (lexical diversity) during narratives &
 - mean length of utterance (grammatical complexity) during book reading.
- **Social & Cultural Validity**
 - Almost all mothers (95%) in the intervention group read the project's weekly book at least once and used the targeted strategies.
 - Mothers reported learning that book reading is more than reading the text. Mothers were more interactive and enjoyed reading to their children.
 - Most mothers (87%) completed the supplemental activities.
 - 65% of mothers expressed that the books allowed them to share their culture with their children.
 - One mother stated that the project "*helped parents that come from another country to keep practicing their cultures and prepare their children for kindergarten.*"
 - Several mothers shared that the books reminded them about aspects of their culture they had forgotten.
 - Half of the mothers reported that their children enjoyed the books so much that they shared the stories/books with others (including grandparents, fathers, siblings, cousins, and teachers).
 - One mother stated that her child "*even tells his bus driver about the books*" and could not wait for her to read the next book to him.
 - Several mothers shared that their children's teachers noticed a change in their children's reading interest and/or ability.

Discussion

- The model resulted in the successful development of a culturally and linguistically-responsive intervention
- Mothers appreciated the integration of their culture and language into the intervention.
- Mothers enjoyed reading with their children and consistently reported using book-reading strategies.
- The pilot study showed promising results. Lessons learned included:
 - The need for more rigorous training of home visitors, and
 - Increased dosage of intervention (length of intervention and/or multiple settings).

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