Supporting dual language learning through collaboration between parents and teachers in early childhood education

Equality and Inclusion conference
Utrecht, November 28, 2019
Vibeke Grøver, University of Oslo

Thanks to…

• Veslemøy Rydland, Catherine Snow and Jan-Eric Gustafsson who are co-authors on the work I present today
• The research assistants
Thanks to…

- Paul Leseman, Josh Lawrence, and Francisco Pons in the advisory board
- The preschool directors, teachers, parents and children who contributed their time and interest
- Oslo public library
- The Norwegian Research Council

Structure of the talk

I. Review domains of prior relevant research
II. Present a study of preschool-home collaboration organized around shared reading for dual language learners
III. Concluding remarks
Shared reading

Shared reading: a term used for interactive reading; reading during which adults encourage children’s participation through questions and extensions.

All illustration photos: colourbox.no (Dowdall et al. 2019; Fitton et al., 2018)

Quality shared reading interaction

Adults’ open-ended questions that invite child participation in reasoning, inferences, and other types of decontextualized talk promote language learning in the short and long term.

(Massey et al., 2008; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Dowdall et al., 2019; Gamez et al., 2016; Wasik et al., 2006)
Quality shared reading interaction

Connecting topics in shared reading with other classroom activities such as play promotes language learning

Chen et al., 2018; Nicolopoulou et al., 2015; Wasik et al, 2006)

Studies of teacher-parent collaboration

• Interactions between home-and preschool: the mesolevel in Bronfenbrenner’s model

• Earlier studies: family programs to support home language environment

• More recent studies: acknowledge the importance of identifying families’ strength and qualities rather than their limitations, establishing partnerships

(Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 2017; Sylva et al., 2010)
Studies of teacher-parent collaboration cont.

• Is one provider of a language and literacy intervention better than two?

• A Danish randomized controlled study of effects of book-sharing on child language found no additional beneficial effects of including a preschool-home condition

• A recent metanalysis found no clear effects of preschool teachers supervising parents in cognitive support

(Justice et al, 2015; Bleses et al., 2018; Grindal et al. 2016)

Studies of teacher-parent collaboration cont.

• Empowerment of parents in partnerships
• Increased exposure dosage
• Preschool programs that teach parents interactive reading and increased responsivity found positive effects on child language
• Larger effects of a shared-reading intervention if both parents and teachers were involved

The Nordic early education model


A loosely-scripted intervention

Developed in collaboration with preschool teachers
Program characteristics

Book selection
• Shared reading (in preschool 15 books over the year, organized in four thematic units)
• Books selected to encourage child curiosity and reasoning.

Professional training for teachers
• One day workshop
• Supervision during the year
• Teachers received support material for each book

Support material for teachers

Word understanding
– Brood: think hard about something

Emotions and perspective-taking
– What do you think the penguin feels? How do you think the penguin would have told the story?

Reasoning
– Do you think the penguin wanted to return to the South poke – why/why not?

Knowledge
– Icebergs
– Antarctic
Extending the book theme

Teachers asked to
• invite play based on book theme
• collaborate with the parents

Collaborating with parents: home reading

Instructions to parents: enjoy sharing the book with your child in your preferred language

Parents received 4 picture-books over the intervention year, but they were not offered coaching in how to use the books. Teachers asked to support parents
Previous research on impact of shared reading on...

- Vocabulary Chen et al., 2018; Snow, 2017; Wasik et al., 2016; Wasik et al., 2014
- Grammar Noble et al., 2018; Senechal et al., 2008
- Narrative skills Gamez et al., 2016; Kang et al., 2009; Kuchirko et al. 2016
- Perspective taking Aram et al., 2013; LaForge et al, 2018; Zevenbergen et al, 2003

Previous research on impact of shared reading on L1 and L2

1. Equal effectiveness of home storybook reading in either L1 or L2 on L2 vocabulary learning
2. Spanish (L1) word support during shared reading increased English (L2) vocabulary gains
3. Spanish (L1) exposure increased L2 vocabulary learning

Roberts, 2008; Lugo-Neris et al, 2010; Hermanns, 2010
Research questions

1. Did children who received the intervention develop their L2 vocabulary, grammar, narrative skills and perspective taking faster than children who did not receive it?

2. Did the home component of the intervention show effects on children’s L1 vocabulary skills?

3. Were there any mediating effects of L1 vocabulary on L2 vocabulary?

The research design
Participants

- 464 bilingual children aged 3-5 years
- 60 preschools, 123 classrooms

Intervention and comparison group

- No demographic differences between the groups, but a slight child mean age in months difference
- No differences between the groups in teacher characteristics, classroom composition or classroom quality
## Languages and Number of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albanian</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnian/Serbian</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other languages</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Language Use in Families as Reported by Parents – Percent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Mostly mother tongue</th>
<th>About equal use of mother tongue and Norwegian</th>
<th>Mostly Norwegian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother to child</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child to mother</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father to child</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child to father</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents to child</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child to grandparents</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child to siblings</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fidelity in preschool

- Number of returned tapes in preschool
- Child attendance in preschool

Analytic plan to test program effects

A latent variable analysis taking into account clustered effects
Did children who received the intervention develop their L2 faster than control-group enrolled children?

- Strong effects on targeted vocabulary, no effect on general, non-targeted vocabulary
- Positive and consistent effects on grammar
- No significant effect on narrative skills
- Significant effects on perspective taking

Did the home component of the intervention show effects on children’s L1 vocabulary skills?

- Intervention effects on children’s L1 vocabulary for the words appearing in books shared with parents.
- No effect of the intervention on knowledge of L1 words that the children were exposed to only in books encountered in preschool.
Were there any mediating effects of L1 vocabulary on L2 vocabulary?

A marginally significant effect of the intervention via L1 vocabulary posttest on L2 vocabulary posttest.

Results in summary

- RQ1: Teachers were supported to share books in ways that impacted children’s vocabulary, grammar and perspective taking

- RQ2: The home components of the intervention showed effects on children’s L1 vocabulary skills for words that appeared in books sent home

- RQ3: A marginally significant indirect effect of the intervention via L1 vocabulary posttest on L2 vocabulary posttest
Limitations

A reduced L1 vocabulary sample with heterogeneity in language use and demography that limited power to detect L1 - L2 relationships

The psychometric qualities of the vocabulary assessment instruments

Few books for home sharing

According to weekly teacher reports they did not have frequent communication with parents regarding shared reading

Take-home messages

• The parents were committed to support their children’s dual language learning

• When opportunities for alignment with preschool-based book-sharing are available, parents can support the family language as a resource for learning the school language

• Need more knowledge about how teachers and parents can collaborate to support dual language learning in preschools serving a demographically and linguistically diverse population
References


