Influence of pre-school education on child’s language development: a case study in Morigaon, Assam, India

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Abstract
The early years are considered to be the most impressionable and formative period in a child’s life. The period of life that stretches from around 3-6 years is a period of momentous significance. Childhood foundations play a great role in the way an individual would adjust to life later on. It has been held that the first few years of life are critical years for language development. Formal schooling starts from primary education. But entering to the formal schooling without any preparation will lead towards wastage and stagnation in subsequent levels of education. It is a common fact that language plays a very important role in the life of a human being. Language makes a man a perfect human being. Infact it can be said that the efficiency of a human being is measured on the basis of the linguistic ability of the same. As such the investigator tried to find out the influence of Pre-school Education on child’s Language Development, where the study area has been selected as Morigaon District, Assam, India.

Keywords: Pre-school Education, Language Development Rural Children, Urban Children.

1. Introduction

Human beings develop in a rapid way during infancy. The entire human beings is shaped during the period of infancy and attains maturity in the next stages. Therefore better nourishment is necessary during the early period of life. A child’s early development has an enormous and a decisive influence on the whole of his/her future life. It is during these years that the foundation of habits are laid, behaviour patterns established, proper language developed and attitude towards life developed. The rate of development at this stage is so rapid that the child is able to take in almost anything that is given to him/her in a form which he/she can understand. At no other stage is the child able to benefit as much from an enriching environment as he/she can at the preschool stage.

Pre-school education has made popular mainly to help the children in developing their traits properly. It is also essential to support the subsequent stages of human life. Language skills are intimately related to the solution of complex problems. Therefore children who fail to acquire satisfactory language skills (speech, reading and writing) are immeasurably handicapped in modern social living. Children who fail to develop a minimum of language skill cannot become full co-operative members of a democratic society.

Today great importance has been given to pre-school education. The term “pre-school” usually refers to the arrangement of education before formal schooling. Pre-school children are generally referred to children who are between the age group of 3-6 years. These early years are very important because on them rests the entire span from childhood to old age. This is the time when children need to get correct guidance and assistance to help their growth, good opportunities to release their energies creatively and to express their feelings properly.

1.1 Need and Significance of the Present Study

One of the important objective of Pre-school education is to develop the child’s ability to express his/her thoughts and feelings in fluent, correct and
clear speech. All the basic functions of language are strengthened when children are engaged in active conversation rather than when they are simply passively exposed to language. Pre-school education has an important role to provide language skills to children.

The study of language development is undoubtedly an important matters. A survey of the related studies revealed that very few studies were conducted on the language development of children more participating between the ages of 3 and 6 years. In view of the growing importance of Early Childhood Education and acquisition of correct language such a study seemed to have some special significance.

2. Objectives of the study
a) To find out whether pre-school attendance helps in fostering language development of children.

b) To find out the difference if any, between school going boys and non-school going boys regarding different norms of language development.

c) To find out the difference if any, between school going girls and non-school going girls regarding different norms of language development.

d) To find out the difference, if any, between school going boys and school going girls regarding different norms of language development.

e) To find out the difference, if any, between non-school going boys and non-school going girls regarding different norms of language development.

f) To find out the difference, if any, between urban school going and rural school going children regarding different norms of language development.

g) To find out the difference, if any, between urban non-school going and rural non-school going children regarding different norms of language development.

3. Hypotheses for the study

Based on the above mentioned objectives following hypotheses have been formulated—

H₁ Pre-school attendance fosters the language development of children.

H₂ There is a significant difference between school going and non-school going boys regarding different norms of language development.

H₃ There is a significant difference between school going and non-school going girls regarding different norms of language development.

H₀ₐ School going boys and girls do not differ significantly regarding different norms of language development.

H₀₉ Non-school going boys and girls do not differ significantly regarding different norms of language development.

H₄ There is a significant difference regarding the different norms of language development of school going children coming from urban and rural areas.

H₀₆ There is no significant difference regarding different norms of language development of non-school going children from urban and rural areas.

4. Methodology

The present research work, which was designed to study and evaluate the influence of pre-school education on the language development of the young children, falls under the descriptive survey method of Educational research

4.1 Area of study

Morigaon district of Assam, India has been selected as the area of study.

4.2 Population and Sample

All the pre-school children who were enrolled in provincialised primary schools of Morigaon district were the population for the present study.

For the present study, 360 children ranging from the age group of 3-6 years were selected as the sample by using simple random sampling technique. Out of which 240 children were drawn from a population attending pre-schools from 10 schools and 120 children from a non-school going population. Out of 240 school going children, 120 children taken from urban locality (5 schools) and 120 children from rural locality (5 schools). Regarding non-school going population also, 60 children drawn from urban locality and 60 children from rural locality. The number of the two sexes—Boys and Girls were kept equal in both the groups.
4.3 Tools used
In the present study the following tools were used to collect data—

3 sets of self prepared observation schedule—

i) Observation schedule for the investigator.

ii) Observation schedule for the Teachers.

iii) Observation schedule for the parents.

2. Interview (for teachers and parents).

3. Personal information sheet for each child.

5. Analysis of Data
The collected data have been analysed on the basis of the seven (7) objectives and twelve (12) different norms of language development considered for the present study. In interpreting and analysing the collected data following statistical techniques have been used— Simple frequency Analysis, Mean, Standard Deviation and T-test.

6. Results and Discussion
The findings related to the different objectives of the study are given below—

Objective- a) Impact of pre-school on language development

H1. Pre-school attendance fosters the language development of children.

Table-1 : Mean, Standard Deviation (Pooled), Mean Difference and ‘t’ value of school going and non-school going children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School going and Non-school going children</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Significance (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Level of Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School going</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>82.217</td>
<td>12.95127</td>
<td>38.2667</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>21.099</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-school going</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>43.950</td>
<td>21.32535</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i) The language abilities of children who attended pre-schools have been found to be significantly higher (0.05 level) than those who did not. Mean difference of both the groups was found as 38.27.

ii) In different aspects, like— understanding, and giving names, naming and giving use, ability to give agent of action, comprehension of words, using prepositions, recognising and giving use of words, response to picture cards, behaviour with regard to picture books, sentence construction (with the help if pictures) etc. significant difference have been found regarding school going children in comparison with their non-school going counterparts.

iii) Regarding general observation of like— speaks clearly and coherently, speaks without unnecessary pauses, uses complete sentences, uses complete complex sentences, tells simple stories etc., school going children were differ significantly than non-school going children.

Objective : b) Difference between school going boys and non-school going boys

H2. There is a significant difference between school going and non-school going boys regarding different norms of language development.
i) Significant difference (0.05 level) has been found between school going and non-school going boys regarding different norms of language development.

ii) In most of the aspects of language skills, like understanding and giving names, naming and giving use, to give agent of action, comprehension of words, using prepositions, recognising and giving use of words, response to picture cards, behaviour regarding picture books, matching picture with sentences, sentence construction with the help of pictures and regarding general observation regarding speech, school going boys have shown higher abilities than non-school going boys. Mean difference of both the groups was found as 35.75.

iii) Both school going and non-school going boys have shown nearly similar abilities in the aspects of language skills like— Identification and naming (Mean of school going boys = 5.81 and non-school going boys = 5.18) and ability to indicate parts of body (Mean of school going boys = 7.99 and non-school going boys = 7.38).

Objective : c) Difference between school going girls and non-school going girls

H₃: There is a significant difference between school going and non-school going girls regarding different norms of language development.

Table-3 : Mean, Standard Deviation (Pooled), Mean Difference and ‘t’ value of school going and non-school going girls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School going and Non-school going children</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Significance (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Level of Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School going</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>82.450</td>
<td>12.45081</td>
<td>40.7833</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>17.494</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-school going</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>41.667</td>
<td>18.52590</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i) There is a significant difference (0.05 level) between school going and non-school going girls regarding different norms of language development.

iii) Only in two aspects of language skills, that is in identification and naming and ability to indicate parts of body, like the school going boys, both school going and non-school going girls have shown similar abilities in language skills.
Objective : d) Difference between school going boys and girls

H_{0a} School going boys and girls do not differ significantly regarding different norms of language development.

Table-4 : Mean, Standard Deviation (Pooled), Mean Difference and ‘t’ value of school going and non-school going Boys and Girls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School going Boys and Girls</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Significance (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Level of Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>81.9833</td>
<td>13.48138</td>
<td>-.4667</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>-.279</td>
<td>.781 NS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>82.4500</td>
<td>12.45081</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i) Regarding school going boys and girls, in terms of language abilities, no significant difference was found. Both boys and girls shown similar language abilities in all the aspects of language skills. Mean difference of both the groups found was .47.

Objective : e) Difference between non-school going boys and girls

H_{0b} Non-school going boys and girls do not differ significantly regarding different norms of language development.

Table-5 : Mean, Standard Deviation (Pooled), Mean Difference and t value of school going and non-school going Boys and Girls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-school going Boys and Girls</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Significance (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Level of Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>46.2333</td>
<td>23.73681</td>
<td>4.5666</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1.175</td>
<td>.242 NS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>41.6667</td>
<td>18.52590</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i) In most of the aspects of language skills, both non-school going boys and girls have shown similar language abilities. Their mean difference found was 4.57.

ii) Only in 3 aspects, like— ability to give agent of action, recognising and giving use of words and response to picture cards, boys have shown slightly better language abilities than girls.

iii) But in the aspect, like— General observation regarding speech, non-school going girls have shown slightly better language abilities then the boys, where mean scores found as, girls mean = 2.17 and boys mean = 1.43.

Objective : f) Difference between urban school going children and rural school going children

H_{4} There is a significant difference regarding the different norms of language development of school going children coming from urban and rural areas.
Table-6: Mean, Standard Deviation (Pooled), Mean Difference and ‘t’ value of Urban and Rural school going children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban and Rural School going children</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Significance (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Level of Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>96.6000</td>
<td>6.16363</td>
<td>18.76667</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>8.562</td>
<td>.000 *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>77.8333</td>
<td>15.71026</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i) In all of the twelve (12) different aspects of language skills, school going children from urban areas shown higher language abilities than school going children from rural areas. Mean difference between both the groups found was 18.77 which was found significant at 0.05 level of significance.

ii) In two aspects of language skills, like — behaviour with regard to picture books and sentence construction with the help of pictures, urban school going children shown greater abilities than their rural counterparts.

Objective: g) Difference between urban non-school going children and rural non-school going children

H_{0X} There is no significant difference regarding different norms of language development of non-school going children from urban and rural areas.

Table-7: Mean, Standard Deviation (Pooled), Mean Difference and ‘t’ value of Urban and Rural non-school going children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban and Rural Non-School going children</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Significance (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Level of Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>46.1000</td>
<td>22.04902</td>
<td>4.300</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1.105</td>
<td>.271 NS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>41.8000</td>
<td>20.53505</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i) In all of the twelve (12) different aspects of language skills, urban non-school going children have slightly better language abilities than their rural counterparts. The mean difference found between both the groups was 4.30, which was not found significant.

Findings of the Studies done by Hannon, Peter (2000), Pankajam, G (1979), Muralidharan and Bevli (1974), Devi, T.K. and Venkatramaiah (1992), regarding child’s language abilities in relation to Pre-school education also indicate that Pre-school education has a great impact regarding the child’s language development.

From the above studies it is clear that Preschool education has a great impact regarding the language development of the children. In the present study, it has been found that in all the 12 norms of language development, children attending pre-schools have scored higher than their non-school going Counterparts.

One of the major objective of the present study was to find out whether the language development of children from Urban areas differ from that of the children from rural areas. The finding of the present study regarding the difference between Urban and Rural children gets support from the earlier studies done by— Muralidharan and Bevli (1974), Pankajam, G. (1979). From their findings it has been found that children from Urban and Rural areas differ in their language development.
In the present study it has been found that in all the developmental items urban school going children have scored higher than their rural counterparts.

7. Conclusion and Suggestions

In the present study the investigator had made an attempt to find out the role of pre-school experiences in the acquisition of language skills by children from urban and rural areas. On the basis of the study the investigator forwards the following suggestions—

* Inspite of the rapid expansion of pre-primary schools, the rural children of working class and the children of the urban slums are mostly deprived of the benefits of pre-school education. As such an effort has to be made to get these children into pre-schools thereby ensuring that the early years of life are not wasted but spent in gaining fruitful experiences.

* For harmonious development of the children, parents and teachers have to take prime responsibility by maintaining a cordial relationship with each other and also by establishing Parent-Teacher Associations as well as mother's welfare associations in every school.

* The pre-school institutions must be able to offer a unique environment for proper and correct speech development to the young children. More scope for interaction, scope to speak, scope for free expression of feelings must be provided to the children in the school.

It may be stated that attending pre-schools with adequate facilities and good programmes, especially in rural areas, definitely plays a prominent role in language development of children. Pre-school education has a great value regarding the all round and a harmonious development of the child to make him/her a perfect future citizen. Therefore pre-school education should be made universally available not only to the privileged children of the community but to the children of the weaker section of the society and those belonging to the lower income group. To provide a strong foundation for future higher education pre-school education must be strengthen and made free and compulsory in the educational system.

References

Pankajam, G., 1979 : A comparative Analysis of Language Development of children among the age group 21/2 to 5 years who are attending and who are not attending pre-schools. Ph.D. Thesis, Madurai Kamraj University.