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PROFILING LANGUAGE IN YOUNG URBAN ENGLISH ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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FOR KOMMUNIKA

SANDRA DU PLESSIS
LYNETTE MEYER
ANNA-MARIE WIUM

It was always a team effort

Also Marietjie Couvaras Marina Lessing Lisel van Eeden Elsa Popich
Elsie Bezuidenhout Retha Kruger Louisa Nortier Rosina Phalakatshela

Est autem amicitia nihil aliud nisi omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum benevolentia et caritate consensio; qua quidem haud scio an excepta sapientia nil unquam melius homini sit a dis immortabilis datum.
Cicero

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SOLI DEO GLORIA

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: Profiling language in young urban English Additional Language learners.

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The development of language and communication skills in young children is directly related to future academic success. Young children who are at risk for language impairment should, therefore, be identified as early as possible so that their language development may be optimised. Multilingualism, which has become a universal phenomenon, may mask the presence of language impairment if the pre-school teacher or speech-language therapist is not proficient in the young multilingual learner's primary language. In some urban areas of South Africa, where many languages are represented in each pre-school classroom, it is likely that the teacher or therapist will lack proficiency in the primary language of quite a number of the pre-school learners. In these contexts, the language of mutual understanding is English and assessment of learners' language behaviour will also be conducted in English.

Against this background the aim of this study was to determine the feasibility of constructing a profile of typical English language behaviours for pre-school EAL learners in a circumscribed urban area. The profile is intended to provide speech-language therapists and pre-school teachers in collaborative practice with a dual-purpose tool: an instrument for identifying those learners who are at risk for language impairment/language learning disabilities, and a means of obtaining guidelines for the development of an appropriate programme for facilitating language development.

The literature study reviewed the language diversity in South African pre-schools, and the role of speech-language therapists in these multilingual pre-schools. The

aspects of language to be included in a profile of typical English language behaviours for young EAL learners were discussed.

A quantitative descriptive research design was selected. The language database for 30 EAL pre-schoolers from a circumscribed geographical area was collected during 20 minutes of conversation between each pre-school participant and a trained speech-language therapist who acted as research fieldworker. The language data was analysed to identify typical language behaviours relating to language form, language content and language use.

The results show that it was possible to construct a profile of typical English language behaviours for nine aspects of language form, one aspect of language content, and six aspects of language use. The information was used to construct two versions of a profile of typical English language behaviours, as well as a profile of risk indicators for language impairment in the specified group of EAL pre-schoolers. An action plan was designed to indicate the way in which these three profiles – the comprehensive profile, the essential classroom profile, and the profile of risk indicators – may be used by the collaborative team of speech-language therapist and pre-school teacher for language assessment, the identification of learners with language impairment, and the facilitation of language development for all EAL learners.

Key words: multilingualism, English Additional Language, pre-school language development, Specific Language Impairment, profile of language behaviours, language form, language content, language use, profile of risk indicators, difference versus disorder, collaborative practice.

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OPSOMMING

TITEL: Profiling language in young urban English Additional Language learners.

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Die ontwikkeling van jong kinders se taal- en kommunikasievaardighede hou direk met hulle toekomstige akademiese welslae verband. Jong kinders met ‘n risiko vir taalafwyking moet dus so vroeg as moontlik geïdentifiseer word, sodat hulle taalontwikkeling met die nodige ingrype optimaal kan geskied. Veeltaligheid, wat tans ‘n wêreldwye verskynsel is, kan die teenwoordigheid van ‘n taalafwyking verberg in gevalle waar die voorskoolse onderwyser of spraak-taalterapeut nie met die jong leerder se primêre taal vertroud is nie. In sommige stedelike gebiede in Suid-Afrika, waar daar in elke voorskoolse klaskamer ‘n groot aantal tale verteenwoordig word, sal die onderwyser of terapeut waarskynlik onvertroud wees met heelparty van die voorskoolse leerders se primêre taal. In sulke omgewings is Engels die gemeenskaplike taal wat deur almal begryp word en sal die assessering van leerders se taalgedrag ook in Engels plaasvind.

Teen hierdie agtergrond was die doel van die studie om te bepaal hoe haalbaar dit is om ‘n profiel van tipiese Engelse taalgedrag op te stel vir voorskoolse leerders van ‘n omskrewe geografiese gebied, met Engels as Addisionele Taal (EAT). Die doel van so ‘n profiel is tweeledig: dit kan ‘n werktuig vir spraak-taalterapeute en voorskoolse onderwysers in kollaboratiewe praktyk wees om leerders te identifiseer wat ‘n risiko loop vir taal-/taalleerafwykings, maar ook ‘n middel om riglyne te bekom vir die ontwikkeling van ‘n gepaste program om taalontwikkeling te fasiliteer.

Die literatuurstudie bied ‘n oorsig oor die taalverskeidenheid in Suid-Afrikaanse voorskole, asook oor die rol van spraak-taalterapeute in hierdie veeltalige voorskole. Die aspekte van taal wat in ‘n profiel van tipiese Engelse taalgedrag by jong EAT leerders ingesluit behoort te word, word bespreek.

‘n Kwantitatiewe beskrywende navorsingsontwerp is gekies. Die taal-databasis vir 30 EAT voorskoolse leerders uit ‘n omskrewe geografiese gebied is ingesamel tydens gesprekke tussen elke voorskoolse deelnemer en die navorsingsveldwerker, ‘n opgeleide spraak-taalterapeut. Die gesprekke het telkens 20 minute geduur. Die taaldata is ontleed om tipiese taalgedrag met betrekking tot taalvorm, taalinhoud en taalgebruik te identifiseer.

Die resultate toon dat dit wel moontlik was om’n profiel van tipiese Engelse taalgedrag saam te stel vir nege aspekte van taalvorm, een aspek van taalinhoud, en ses aspekte van taalgebruik. Hierdie inligting is benut om ‘n profiel van tipiese Engelse taalgedrag op te stel, asook om ‘n risikoprofiel op te trek met aanwysers van taalafwyking in die bepaalde groep EAT voorskoolse leerders. ‘n Aksieplan is ontwerp om aan te dui op watter wyse die drie profiele – die omvattende profiel, die kernprofiel vir klaskamergebruik en die profiel van risiko-aanwysers – deur die kollaboratiewe onderwyser – spraak-taalterapeut span benut kan word vir taalassessering, die identifikasie van leerders met ‘n taalafwyking en die fasilitering van taalontwikkeling by alle EAT leerders.

Sleutelwoorde: veeltaligheid, Engels as Addisionele Taal, voorskoolse taalontwikkeling, Spesifieke Taalafwyking, profiel van taalgedrag, taalvorm, taalinhoud, taalgedrag, profiel van risiko-aanwysers, verskil teenoor afwyking, kollaboratiewe praktyk

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