Title: The Use of Print Referencing Techniques through Preschoolers’ Play-based Creative Writing Experiences: Its Impact on Oral Language Development, Print Awareness, and Literacy Abilities with Children Diagnosed with Language Disorder

Author: Catherine Sanderson

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explored the lives of ten children who were diagnosed with a language disorder. They were enrolled in a therapeutic half-day speech-language preschool classroom for three- and four-year old children within a public-school system in the rural southeast. The research was a 15-week process that involved a mini-ethnographic case study through participant observation. Through a socio-cultural Vygotskian approach to holistically meet their language and literacy needs, the children were encouraged to use meaningful artifacts from which their play, talk, and stories developed. The researcher collected both qualitative and quantitative data to answer whether creative writing experiences that included print referencing approaches impacted the children’s abilities in oral language, their awareness of print, and their development of literacy abilities.

The results revealed the children’s engagements in creative writing were influenced by toys, specifically superheroes— independent of ownership of the toy—as well as media representations of superheroes and cartoon characters. The toys offered the children an opportunity for movement and engagement which resulted in creative writing pieces that the children revisited during print referencing engagements resulting in growth in their oral language
development, awareness of print, and literacy development. The results also showed that children’s natural use of interactive movements and self-generated songs throughout the creative writing sessions functioned as necessary socio-cultural interactions the children utilized to aid them in the development of their ideas. This is contrary to the belief that a quiet environment offers the best atmosphere for creative writing opportunities, and to the notion that toys should remain at home since it was realized toys and other media representations were the most commonly represented themes in the children’s creative writing pieces.

This study revealed when children realize they have autonomy when producing their own stories throughout a play-based context, they are more apt to attend to their oral language that has been scribed for them thus creating an interconnected awareness among their oral language abilities, their awareness of print, and their literacy abilities when their scribed words are emphasized.