112

An exploration of the knowledge, practices, and needs of Arab early years teachers in promoting oral language development

Juhayna Taha, Julie Dockrell
University College London, London, United Kingdom

Abstract

A significant number of children, including those living in social disadvantage, enter formal education with poor oral language (OL) skills. These difficulties can hinder children's ability to access the curriculum and increase the risk of literacy difficulties. In Jordan, over 50% of children cannot read and understand a simple text by age 11[1]. High-quality OL teaching in the early years can improve reading outcomes and mitigate this learning poverty. However, little is known about the status of OL-supporting practices in early years classrooms in the Arab region, including Jordan. This study aims to evaluate the knowledge, practices, and needs of Arab early years teachers in supporting children's OL skills.

Using a purposeful sampling method, we will collect data from teachers of kindergarten to grade 3 classrooms in schools in Jordan. Using an online survey, we will gather information on a) demographics and teaching experience and evaluate the b) knowledge and implementation of elements of language-rich environments, c) knowledge and experience in supporting children with language difficulties, and d) barriers and training needs in these areas. Data collection for this project will take place between March 1st and April 15th. Data analysis will include generating descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and multiple logistic regressions.

Given the scarcity of research, policy, and resources related to language development in Arabic, we predict to identify some gaps in Jordanian early years teachers' knowledge and training, influencing the frequency and effectiveness of their practices for supporting OL, especially for children with language difficulties. This study will be a stepping-stone towards promoting OL development in Arab early years classrooms, addressing the educational inequalities encountered by children with language difficulties. The next stages of the project, including the co-production of the Arabic adaptation of the Communication Supporting Classroom Observation Tool[2,3], will be discussed.