



Critical Analysis of the Gap between Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Children's Communicative Skills and their Learning Behaviour

Aaliya Bahadur*

M.Phil Scholar-College of Education

Faculty of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences

Ziauddin University

Prof.Dr Muhammad Yousuf Sharjeel**

muhammad.sharjeel@zu.edu.pk

Director Postgraduate Studies

College of Education, Faculty of Liberal Art and Social Sciences

Ziauddin University

Mir Adnan***

M.Phil Scholar-College of Education

Faculty of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences

Ziauddin University

Abstract

The early years of life are crucial for the development of language and communication. Within Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) frameworks, communication is an indicator and determinant of success in learning. Despite this, there is still a gap between the development of a child's communication skills and the effective demonstration of learning behaviours. This study attempts to close this gap by examining the developmental, pedagogical, and sociocultural aspects. Applying mixed-methods, this research combines quantitative observational checklist data with qualitative data from interviews with teachers and parents. Findings indicate the potential of communication to predict a child's engagement in learning, while a multitude of contextual factors, including socio-economic status, the level of interactions between teachers and children, and the degree of parental involvement, act as barriers. This gap can be reconciled with strategies that integrate responsive pedagogy, family engagement, and practices that embrace cultural diversity. Communication is the primary way young children start to make sense of their world, interact with others, and become ready to learn. During the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) phase, the foundations for later academic achievement and social success are built. Research has shown that acquisition of essential communication skills during the formative years includes the development of expressive and receptive language, as well as the use of gestures and other nonverbal sign systems like facial expressions. These skills are the basis of participation in classroom discourses, curiosity venting, and peer relations building. Vygotsky (1978) and Snow (1999) highlight the significance of early language competence not only for academic learning, but also for the development of socio-emotional skills. A gap exists between what early childhood education (ECCE) frameworks hope to achieve and what is actually seen in children's communication and learning outcomes. There are children with strong language skills who have little attention and motivation and children with speech delay who are highly inquisitive and persistent in their work. These cases point to important issues about communication and learning behaviors and why they are at odds. The global context of early childhood education (ECCE) adds

complexity to the situation described above. In many developing situations, the opportunities for communication to happen meaningfully are very restricted due to large class size, multiple home languages, and inadequate teacher training. Even in cases where policy documents highlight the importance of language-immersive learning, poor implementation due to resource constraints and mismatched cultural expectations can undermine the goals of the policy. Therefore, addressing the gap between communication and learning, inequitable and ineffective early childhood education can delay the fundamental gaps left by ECCE.

Keywords: *Early Childhood Education, Communication Skills, Learning Behaviours, Sociocultural Factors, Mixed-Methods, Teacher–Child Interaction, Parental Involvement*

Statement of the Problem

Children in ECCE settings are offered specialized integrated planning instructional designed pedagogical activities to promote communication and social participation. Many children still do not display the anticipated learning behaviours like attention and participation and do not exhibit cooperation. For example, some fluent speakers disengage and do not participate in the activities with verbal fluency and cognitive persistence. On the other hand, some children with limited verbal expression do problem solving, nonverbal reasoning, and emotional self-regulation exceptionally well. This paradox raises the question of how learning communicatively does not imply that one is ready to learn. Learning behaviours and the language of learning, suggests that varying contextual, developmental, and environmental factors, are the result of separate, albeit parallel, systems. In ECCE settings, complexities multiply for instance in Karachi, where one speaks a different language and comes from a different culture. There, classroom expectations differ from the communicative styles children use at home. Silence may be perceived as disengagement while over-activity may be viewed as misbehaviour. This highlights the significant need to understand the nature, causes, and the possible ways the communication–learning gap may be addressed in order to guide the pedagogy of early childhood education. The need to embrace different instructional and educational practices to promote and integrate expressive pedagogy for the support of the complete development of the child is staggering.

Research Questions

- * What is the nature of the gap between communicative skills and learning behaviours in ECCE children?
- * What developmental, environmental, and educational factors contribute to this gap?
- * What are the perceptions and responses of teachers and parents regarding the differences between communicative and learning behaviours in ECCE?
- * What are the evidence-based gap-closing strategies that bridge the gap in an effective and sustainable manner?

*** Research Objectives**

- * To study the communicative behaviours and the learning behaviours in ECCE children
- * To examine the developmental, environmental, and instructional factors that influence the communication–learning gap
- * To investigate the perceptions and practices of teachers and parents relating to the communicative and behavioural development.



- * To develop pedagogical and parental strategies that promote the alignment of communicative competence and learning readiness to enhance early learning outcomes in various ECCE contexts.

Justification of the Study

Educational inequalities can be prevented long before they begin when the communication–learning gap is identified and addressed. This is important because educators recognize more and more the importance of language development in the early years. However, it is important that this understanding is based on the diverse developmental needs of children. This research examines the ECCE literature focusing on the integration of communication and learning, especially the sociocultural contexts that are absent in much of the early education research. The study results assists in the evolution of more effective child-centred pedagogies, and provide evidence that will be valuable to ECCE curriculum developers, and encourage inclusive practices that address the needs of children with differing linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This research sought to improve more responsive and equitable early learning environments by indicating the strengths and limitations of inclusive practices.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on children enrolled in ECCE programmes, ages three to six years, in both urban and semi-urban regions of the country. It looks at the child's verbal and nonverbal communication, attention, task persistence, group participation, and integration. It gathers teacher and parent perspectives to provide a more complete understanding of the communication–learning relationship. This research focuses on typical ECCE settings, particularly excluding children with speech-language disorders and those receiving specialized intervention programs. The observations spanned six months and were carried out in different linguistic and socioeconomic settings. Despite collecting valuable qualitative data, the small sample size and limited geographic area still burden broader generalizability.

Review of Literature

Overview of Early Childhood Communication Skills

In the realm of early childhood, the essence of communication serves as the foundation for the development of thought, emotions, and social relationships. Children experience remarkable development in language skills during the early years of life. For every year from birth to age six, a new milestone in the child's ability to communicate is reached. Children move from simple gestures and utterances to complete sentences and conversations. Here, communication is also a social interaction and a product of social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory states that, in a social context, language is developed through interactions with more knowledge bearers, e.g., parents or teachers. These interactions might help the child internalize a mental function. With Bruner (1983), language development also occurs during moments of 'scaffolding'. He explained that, during a period of 'joint attention', a gap closes between what a child can perform without help and what a child can perform with help. Research on early childhood communication highlights the important roles of both verbal and nonverbal communication skills in meaning making. With respect to verbal skills, one thinks of the building of vocabulary, the mastery of syntax, and the use of language at the pragmatic level. As for nonverbal communication, one thinks of facial expressions, tone, posture, and gestures,



which are important for meaning comprehension. Snow (1999) argues that the ages of three to six are especially important periods for language development, as children begin to engage in language for abstract reasoning and for the construction of narratives.

The literature suggests that children's communicative development, however, is highly variable. Socioeconomic status, parental responsiveness, and exposure to early literacy all affect children's development and use of language. According to Hart and Risley (1995), the amount and quality of words and the interactions in the home environment shape the child's vocabulary and, influence school readiness and learning engagement. In ECCE contexts, communication is an integrated cognitive, emotional, and social competency. Consequently, the development of communication in early education should also consider the interaction, emotional attunement, and quality of sustained verbal engagement, particularly in turn-taking opportunities.

Concept of Learning Behaviour in ECCE

Learning behaviour includes actions, attitudes, and approaches that children take toward tasks, as well as a child's motivation, attention, persistence, curiosity, and flexibility. These behaviours are essential for a child's involvement in a learning activity, as structured learning contexts require some degree of self-regulation, which children do at McClelland et al. (2000). Learning behaviours can forecast some children's future academic achievement even more than cognitive ability, as stated by Fantuzzo et al. (2004). This is consistent with the claims of Blair (2002), who articulated that self-regulatory competencies are of a cognitive and emotional synthesis that allows a child to control impulses, maintain attention, and regulate emotional frustration in the face of obstacles. The ecology that fosters learning behaviours involves a classroom, home, and peer contexts. Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2000) demonstrated that children's persistence and task orientation depend, in part, on the sensitivity of the teacher and on structural characteristics of the classroom. In supportive teacher-child relationships, autonomy and active engagement are promoted, while curiosity and exploration are dampened in rigid or punitive contexts. In addition, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors within a culture shape learning behavior patterns. In some cultures, children are taught and expected to be obedient and silent, and this is a sign of quality attention, while in others, people are taught to actively question a speaker and give feedback as a sign of engaged attention. In considering learning behaviors, contextual factors and not only Western developmental benchmarks must be applied.

In addition to cognitive readiness, learning behavior can also be a sign of emotional dissonance in a classroom. Psychological safety and value significantly strengthen curiosity, persistence, and resilience in children as they problem-solve (Diamond, 2013). In contrast, the fear of failure and excessive correction can lead to withdrawal, anxiety, or passivity, and this contributes to the loss of active learning. This is in line with the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979), which identified a family, school, and community as the systems within social contexts that influence children's behavior. Learning behavior of children is the result of the alignment and consistency of support given to them from multiple systems. When parents and teachers are in sync about expectations for balance and participation, children are given messages that build self-regulation and intrinsic motivation. Parent and educator collaboration is therefore essential, though poorly studied, in the development of positive learning behaviors (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002).



Communicative Skills and Learning Behaviour

In early education, a foundational principle is that communication enables children to begin a dialogue, resolve misunderstandings, and work with others to learn. However, the relationship between communication and learning behaviour is still intricate and nonlinear. There are also contextual boundaries surrounding this relationship. Tough (1977) recognized that while communication functions as a mechanism for the construction of knowledge, it is not the case that learning engagement is cultivated for every instance by communication. For instance, a verbal child may be diffident and lack perseverance or focus, while a silent child may be gifted with reasoning, problem-solving abilities, and a willingness to collaborate. This challenges the assumption in pedagogy that a developed verbal command is a necessary criterion for learning. Dickinson and Tabors (2001) developed this view further by discussing the dimensions of communication as its quantity and quality. Their longitudinal work demonstrated that children's participation in rich, reciprocal dialogues was a predictor of better learning outcomes in comparison to being merely exposed to a broad range of vocabularies. Thus, the quality of communication competence must be defined in terms of meaningful interaction, not merely linguistic output.

Besides, language develops with a heightened metacognitive awareness where children are able to plan, reflect, and evaluate learning. Children's dialogues serve to internalize patterns of thoughts and self-directed learning. This dependence of cognition on communication calls for integration of dialogic pedagogy in ECCE curricula. Here, the conversation is the vehicle to think, not the passive exchange of information. Still, dialogic pedagogy develops empathy, turn-taking, and mutual respect that are all integral components of cooperative learning. When teachers demonstrate and enact active listening, and reciprocal questioning, they are facilitating the development of language and the social-emotional competencies that are crucial for motivation and engagement (Bruner, 1983). In this way, communication is both the means and the expression of learning behaviour that unites speech, thought, and social interaction.

Developmental Variability and Learning Diversity

In psychology, the term "Developmental Variability" refers to the different rates of progress across the dimensions of a child's speech, cognition, and emotion. As the noted Diamond (2013), the executive functions of attention, working memory, and cognitive flexibility develop in a gradual stage-like fashion and influence the way a child learns and engages with the content. For instance, a child may have advanced vocabulary skills, but they may still struggle with impulse control and sustained attention. When there are different developmental profiles, communication and learning behaviors may not progress in harmony. Each child must be guided considering its bio-psycho-social-educational profile at any given point in time. Each child must be given opportunities that meet their strengths and challenge their weaknesses. For instance, children with speech delays can be included in learning opportunities that offer varied communication and participation through visuals, gestures, and other playful methods of interaction. This kind of differentiation in instruction puts equity in early learning, signaling that it does not mean uniformity in teaching. This is the value of differentiated instruction within the circle of varying developmental timelines. Flexible inclusive ECCE practices that offer children the choice of varied methods within a given task promote the narrowing of the participation and achievement gaps by enabling children to



demonstrate their mastery of the task through different ways—verbally, visually, and through movement.

Social Class and Place

Social class differences can have a significant effect on a child's communication and learning potential. Bradley and Corwyn (2002) argues that the SES of the family also affects a child's experience with education and language and the time parents dedicate to the child. Affluent families are also more likely to be more communicative and read to the children more, thus providing greater levels of verbal stimulation compared to the impoverished families, whose children, after a point, are likely to hear more and talk less. The differences translate to weaknesses in vocabulary and comprehension, and thus learning. There is research documenting these differences, with Hart and Risley (1995) noting that children from high-income families, between the ages of one to three, are spoken to 30 million more words than children from low-income families. In closing the language gap resulting from differences in SES, community literacy initiatives, early interventions, and training teachers in culturally responsive pedagogy are the most effective measures. In addition, some literature indicates that even in lower-SES settings, children's learning behaviours shift positively when caregivers practice responsive communication, storytelling, and play (Levenstein, 1972). Therefore, the interaction and quality of dialogue is more relevant than the economic background when considering ways to close communicative gaps.

Learning Environments and Teacher-Child Interactions

Understanding the effects of children's different learning environments on their communication and behaviours is important. Sensitivity of teachers and the organization of the classroom, along with planned and structured language support, is a positive predictor of children's social and academic success (Pianta et al., 2005).

ECCE environments that offer children the opportunities of dialogic reading, and the promotion of cooperative play and peer interaction, are important in children's opportunities to learn verbally and to learn the skills needed for collaborative work. In contrast, teacher-centered instruction and lectures lead to passivity, a sense of helplessness, and a lack of creative thinking. Children's expressive language, comprehension, and motivation are all greatly advanced through interactive book reading and open dialogue (Whitehurst et al., 1994). Lastly, Mashburn et al. (2008) showed that embracing inclusive teaching is when educators shift their communicative patterns in response to a student's level of language ability.

Research Methodology and Data Analysis

Research Design

Within this gap in understanding ECCE children communicative skills and learning behaviours, a more balanced use of the qualitative and quantitative methods research frameworks was integrated in this study. The integration of these two paradigms was essential in dealing with both the visible and behavioural, as well as the contextual and subjective, facets of the gap in the research question. The reason for this, as Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) put it, is that it enables the researcher to address the gaps in the breadth and depth of the issue to be studied, thus, is essential in the triangulation of results. This, in turn, reduces the research bias by addressing the intertwined and intricate social dimensions of the research question that is not adequately captured by numbers alone. The qualitative part was operationalized by the use of structured observational checklists



and rating scales geared towards evaluating the communicative skills and learning behaviours of children during specific scored classroom activities. This encompassed the examination of both the linguistic (expressive, listening, turn taking, responsive, and nonverbal) and behavioural (attention, persistence, cooperation, motivation) dimensions of communication.

The qualitative aspect consisted of semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents, which provided contextual and interpretative understanding of the quantitative data. These interviews detailed the understanding of children's communication and participation in lessons, as well as parents' strategies in learning facilitation. The combination of these two data strands offered results that were statistically reliable and socially contextual, thereby amplifying the richness of interpretation and the validity of the study. A convergent parallel design was employed to gather the two data types at the same time. This facilitated simultaneous analysis and highlighted both convergent themes and any contrasts, particularly regarding teachers' perceptions and what was actually happening in the classes. Integrated findings offered enhanced understanding regarding the communication-learning interplay.

Population and Sampling

The study's focal population consisted of children ages three to six active participants attending ECCE programmes in urban and semi-urban Karachi, Pakistan. The selection of centres from varying socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds was purposeful, to account for the linguistic diversity and home literacy environments, which are important predictors of children's early communication and learning abilities (Hart & Risley, 1995).

Selection of the six ECCE centres was done through purposive sampling using three criteria: (a) mixed-gender enrolment (b) qualified ECCE teachers and c) parental consent to participate. From these sites, 90 children, 18 teachers and 30 parents were selected. The focus of the research was on depth of understanding rather than the generalization for which purposive sampling was deemed appropriate. Including both parents and teachers allowed the study to capture the interaction of the three key ecological systems affecting child development as proposed in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory - home, school and community. This enriched the interpretive scope as it was critical to acknowledge that the social networks supporting a child also affect the child's learning behavior.

Data Collection Instruments

For the study, three complementary instruments were designed and validated.

Children's Communicative Skills Observation Checklist

Based on the frameworks of Dickinson and Tabors (2001) and Pianta et al. (2005), this checklist assessed children's communicative skills in the areas of verbal expression, receptive listening, turn taking, gesture use and play and instructional interaction responsiveness.

Learning Behaviour Rating Scale

Using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = rarely observed, 5 = consistently observed), teachers rated children's behaviour across the four domains of motivation, attention, persistence and cooperation (McClelland et al., 2000; Fantuzzo et al., 2004).

Development of Semi-Structured Interview Protocols

The communication and learning frameworks employed the teachers' and parents' perspectives guides separately. Engaged learning, impediments, and frameworks to foster engagement were explored. Open-ended questions were constructed to capture richer and more detailed qualitative



accounts while reflecting the individual and cultural perspectives of the interviewees. All three senior faculty members of ECCE, then cultural appropriateness, clarity, and reliability were validated through a pilot study involving ten children and two teachers validated the research instruments. Feedback resulted in the following minor changes: simplifying the wording of items and better describing behaviours.

The Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was carried out over six months and broken into two phases. This ensured that the children's communicative and behavioral patterns were thoroughly and methodically followed. Having the phases like this allowed the researcher to weigh structured observation against contextual interpretation, which added breadth and depth to the data collected. In the first phase, the focus was on observation and the collection of quantitative data. Each ECCE centre was visited twice a week for four consecutive weeks, where the observer recorded free play, small group, and structured literacy session interactions. This was to ensure a wide range of communicative contexts, which included the spontaneous, the social, and the instructional. Reliability was ensured and observer bias was minimized by the use of standardized observation protocols.

Immediately after each observation period, the teachers were asked to complete the Learning Behavior Rating Scale. Having this observation period structured in this way helped to mitigate recall bias and maximally capture the children's engagement and attention span across a variety of learning contexts. Naturalistic observation was an important focus, as it helped in the authentic collection of behavioral data, rather than having this data artificially elicited. As Pianta et al. (2005) describe, children's communicative interactions are far richer when observed in freely available play rather than in laboratory elicited environments. The researcher reflected on field notes after each session while paying attention to contextual notes, teacher-child interactions, and environmental factors. This form of reflexivity helped to integrate quantitative figures and qualitative narratives. It also touched on researcher positionality through the reflexive realization of interpretive influence the researcher bore on the data.

Phase 2: Qualitative Interviews

Interviews with the two teachers and the parents were conducted after the observation phase. This was after the quantitative data were analyzed to enable for a qualitative explication of the findings. This sought to respond to the why questions surrounding the patterns of behavior and communication. The 30 to 45 minutes interviews were framed as conversations, to facilitate free and open discussions. The questions centered on the role of communication in learning, the challenges posed in the classroom, the relationships and structures of dominant strategies in the posited framework, and the engagement of parents in take home literacy activities. This phase was anchored on phenomenological principles, focusing on the lived realities of the participants and the meanings they attached to those experiences. After obtaining the needed ethical clearance from the Ziauddin University Research Ethics Committee, participants were given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. The ethical reflexivity of the researcher as regards the power balance in the interviewing process maintained credibility and authenticity.

Data Analysis Techniques

Analyses of the intersection of communication and learning behaviour involved an integrated approach which considered both the quantitative and qualitative aspects.



Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential approaches. Descriptive analysis captured and summarized the mean levels of the communicative and behavioural dimensions and inferential analysis outlined the significant associations. In terms of results, the most salient of which is the significant and strong correlations communicative dimensions of expression and the learning behaviours of attention and persistence ($r = .58$ to $.72$, $p < .01$). This would suggest and imply that more articulate learners are also more attentive and motivated willing to tackle the learning tasks at hand. The correlations of more weak with receptive listening and cooperation point toward more contextual and cultural influences, which may potentially include the contextual factors of teacher expectations or cultural norms that may place obedience and hierarchy over dialogue.

High-SES background children scored higher on the communication and learning more consistently. These findings align with the patterns reported in Bradley and Corwyn (2002) and Hart and Risley (1995), which positioned SES as a significant predictor of language and cognitive development. This study does, however, add to the literature, particularly with a non-Western ECCE perspective, highlighting that SES-driven disparities exist and are evident in other ways in multilingual collectivist cultures, which is in contrast to the oral informal literacy practices and storytelling traditions. The data indicate the existence of some cluster variations across centres, indicating that the communication style of the teacher might moderate the association between SES and learning behaviour. This is a valuable area for future studies.

In the qualitative phase, the data were analyzed according to the six-phase thematic model provided by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, definition, and reporting. Coding of the transcripts was done manually and included both the inductive (bottom-up) and deductive (top-down) strategies.

The analysis produced three overarching themes:

Inequitable Opportunities for Expressive Communication: Teachers monopolized the discussions, thus, the children lost the opportunity to share their thoughts and to collaboratively negotiate for meaning. This thematic finding is also in line with the criticism by Alexander (2008) of monologic pedagogy.

Sociocultural Expectations and Behavioural Compliance:

Silence was rewarded more than curiosity, thus obedience, which reflects cultural priorities of respect and harmony within a group.

Connection Between Teacher Feedback and Learning Persistence

Supportive, dialogic feedback was strongly correlated with persistence and task engagement. Reliability was established through peer debriefing with an independent qualitative researcher. The integration of the two data sets displayed eco-coherence, showcasing that the cognitive, communicative, and behavioral facets are all processes within the greater sociocultural milieu.

- * **Reliability and Validity:** Attention to validation from multiple dimensions and multi perspectival frameworks fully robusted the methodology Instrument Reliability: Internal consistency was supported by the range of Cronbach's alpha values (.82–.88).
- * **Construct Validity:** Convergent validity was confirmed through the comparison of observation data and teacher ratings.



- * **Content Validity:** Alignment to the ECCE communication frameworks was achieved through the review of the content by seasoned experts.

Triangulation:

The combination of data from teachers, parents and children, and data forms (both qualitative and quantitative) strengthened the findings.

Member checking showed that participants of the study endorsed the findings, which added to the integrity of the study.

Dependability, along with an analytic trail of decisions, was provided through audit trails. In addition, confirmability was achieved via journaling.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical framework guiding this study was based on the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2011) and Pakistan's national research ethics framework. Consent and assents procedures were culturally and developmentally tailored. Anonymity and confidentiality were secured through stored transcripts and coded identifiers. Participants could withdraw from the study in any stage. The researcher offered no evaluative comments on teaching practices or parenting, and remained neutral. A heightened awareness of children's need for emotional safety was present. During play or learning, researchers were unobtrusive to avoid data collection practices that would contravene children's autonomy and dignity.

Methodology and Findings Summary

The mixed-method design provided a multi-layered understanding of how communicative skills and learning behaviour are related. The quantitative correlations gave proof of relationships while qualitative accounts provided explanatory understanding. Children exposed to linguistically rich environments and responsive teachers and more importantly, engaged parents, demonstrated greater persistence, motivation, and cooperation. This is a positive case for the impact of dialogic teaching. It is a clear case of teaching where language is not merely a tool for the transmission of knowledge but a medium for the co-construction of knowledge. Nevertheless, institutional barriers such as heavy workload, absence of professional growth opportunities, and inflexible curricula remain as obstacles to the uptake of dialogue-based pedagogy. As Freire warned in 1970, transmissivity teaching models risk creating "passive learners." ECCE transformative change and envision communicative pedagogy positively hinges on redefining the teacher's role from "the sole provider of knowledge" to "the facilitator of interaction."

Implications for Practice

Insights from this study offer important initial directions for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) practice. They offer evidence of the interdependency of communication and learning behaviours and the relational, reflective, and equitable participation as the core of all teaching efforts. Communication as learning's conduit suggests that fostering it cannot remain a secondary pedagogical teaching focus. These all suggest the necessary shift in teaching practice for the ECCE curriculum, educational policy, teaching practice, and parent engagement to focus on the communication and learning constructs for young children.

Responsive Communication Teacher Training

Professional development for teachers must also have particular sustained, context-driven, and integrated scopes on 'dialogic pedagogy', 'responsive listening', and 'scaffolding various forms of verbal and nonverbal communication' as these will deepen the skills acquired in communicative



relationship development. Teacher training must shift from the espoused theory to putting communicative relational training into practice in real classrooms. There are numerous frameworks for activity design; some examples are microteaching, role-play simulations, and reflective video analysis. They will also serve to deepen self-identifying communicative habits excess talking in a classroom and 'wait-time' deficit in question asking. Other frameworks for distance communicative relational training include peer mentoring and collaborative reflection circles where the problem as well as the approach are defined by the mentor and the class as a whole. In ECCE programs, where children are beginning to form basic expressional and reception skills, teacher training must include the recognition of other forms of communication, whether it be through gestures and touch, through the acts of play, drawing, or imaginative stories. Communication training should focus on the sequence of active interpreting, then evaluating. Before the 'evaluation' of right or wrong' can be gauged, the meaning of what it is the child is trying to communicate should be deciphered.

Professional training should prioritize the integration of sociocultural dimensions. Educators, given their training and experience, tend to see behaviors through specific cultural 'lenses'. For instance, a child's quietness in a group may be interpreted as disengagement, where, in some contexts, it may be silence as a form of respect. Hence, training when designed in the integration of cultural norms around communication and multilingualism can strengthen awareness on the underlying communication competence of educators. The goal of responsive communication training is to shift the educators' role from knowledge transmitters to dialogue facilitators. As Alexander (2008) and Mercer and Howe (2012) describe, a classroom in which children are guided to reason, question, and co-construct meaning is not only more interactive, but is intellectually more rigorous.

Integrating Communication with Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Goals.

Communication should not be treated as a separate 'standalone' domain in the educational curriculum. It must be rolled out in every curriculum area, whether it be mathematics, the arts, play, or science and in coordination with collaborative, turn taking, and other forms of expressive articulation behaviors. Storytelling, cooperative problem-solving and dramatized play present wonderful opportunities for intertwining communication and self-regulation. During play, children negotiate their roles and practice linguistic flexibility and empathy, and they learn persistence. Equally, children engage in self-reflection when their behaviour and emotions are articulated after an activity, fostering a deeper understanding of their actions.

The integration of these domains is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist approach, which holds that language mediates thought. Children learn internal cognitive strategies first through social discourse, and later, they practice self-dialogue. Hence, curriculum designers and educators need to ensure communicative opportunities being provided in class are tailored to scaffold not just the language, but also higher-order executive functions of self-regulation, control, and attention. The integration of these domains also calls for a shift in assessments. Traditional assessments that use checklists and focus only on verbal fluency tend to miss the emotional and social aspects of learning behaviour. Hence, the appropriate use of assessment tools should focus on the children's ability to use language in reasoning, problem-solving, and collaborative learning, which are fundamental for learning readiness.



Communication is one of the practices that strengthen learning behaviours when reinforced at school and at home. As a result, ECCE institutions should implement structured parental engagement activities that help families strengthen these practices. Building the capacity of families to support children's language and social skills in everyday activities will help children. Workshops for parents can highlight exercises like shared reading, story retelling, and conversations during everyday activities like meals or chores. To integrate home and school learning, schools might provide parents with bilingual story packets, literacy calendars, and "conversation journals" for parent-child interaction. Workshops can inform parents about the significance of responsive interaction—reciprocal dialogue as opposed to monologic directives. For instance, asking open-ended questions like, "Why do you think that happened?" encourages cognitive and emotional processing.

Educators working in linguistically diverse communities should recognize the value of parents speaking to children in their home languages. Research by García and Wei (2014) on translanguaging illustrates that maintaining the first language aids in developing socio-cognitive skills. Schools that support bilingual communication help children with identity affirmation and literacy skills transfer.

Culturally and Linguistically Inclusive Pedagogy

Cultural gaps can amplify the communicative-behavioural gap due to home-school discourse pattern misalignments. Teachers might misinterpret indirect communication, group-based participation, and minimal verbal interaction as an absence of ability. To address bias in ECCE pedagogy, we can look to culturally sustaining ECCE pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017). Embracing children's diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds as bridges to inclusion, rather than obstacles to inclusion, makes for more equitable educational environments and learning experiences. You can strengthen the cultural relevance of educational experiences by integrating clients' contemporary and traditional culturally appropriate folkloric resources, such as stories and songs. Integrating multi-modal communication, using visual resources, movement, and dramatization, will also assist educators in spanning linguistic differences. It is equally important for children to see various families and diverse languages represented in teaching resources as well as in instructional curricula. Systemic Translanguaging and Code switching policies can be incorporated into everyday teaching practices, promoting the use of all linguistic registers and layers in educational discourse. Comfort in using all of the linguistic resources will improve learning and reduce cognitive load, while strengthening the connections between home and academy.

Systemic Approaches to Policy Change

On the level of policy maker, the study equally applies to them as it pertains to pedagogy. Infrastructure will not improve outcomes in early learning unless it is accompanied by quality interactions and teaching. This would require a decrease in teaching loads to the 1:5 or 7 ratio, and smaller group sizes. Professional development and instructional leadership need to be linked to the appraisal system and initiated as mandatory. Curriculum standards must recognize communication and collaboration competencies as primary learning objectives along with literacy and numeracy. National ECCE policies can set standards for the construction of language-rich environments, making certain that all children, irrespective of socioeconomic status, attain equitable inclusion to interpersonal verbal and emotional engagement. Furthermore, both governmental and private entities ought to invest in community-based early literacy initiatives, particularly in economically



disadvantaged communities. Collaborative efforts among universities, teacher training organizations, and ECCE centers can facilitate the development of innovative research initiatives such as parent literacy mentoring, digital storytelling, and mobile learning programs that promote communication learning beyond the classroom.

Sustaining the Change.

For the potential on these implications to be realized, their implementation must be systemic, reflective, and collaborative. Teachers hoping for the rest of the institution to follow without any attachment to goals cannot single-handedly initiate change. Schools should promote communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) on the construction of communicative practices where educators can collectively reflect, articulate their practice, and share their achievements on practices of communication. Improvement in communication-rich teaching can be evidenced through classroom observations, reflective journals, and child portfolios. Support for these practices from leadership is paramount, as is the expectation for teachers' time and autonomy to be embraced from leadership.

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