Colour Me…Orange? Incorporating Aspects of the Colourful Semantics Approach into a TESOL Programme at Preschool

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Among the challenges faced by Sri Lankan children learning English as an additional or second language is the accuracy of word order and vocabulary knowledge. The Colorful Semantics approach has been used successfully in the UK and in Australia with children experiencing language-learning difficulties, with many programmes devised by Speech and Language Therapists. It uses thematic roles and a colour-coding system to support the development of syntax through a semantic route. The aim of this study was to evaluate the efficacy of using aspects of Colourful Semantics to develop expressive language skills (accurate responses to target wh questions, sentence length and syntactic complexity) in young learners of English. Twenty-one preschool children in TESL classrooms were included in the study. Key aspects of Colourful Semantics were introduced as a whole-class approach using children's storybooks, colour-coding and signing with lessons offered thrice a week for a month together with supplementary activities. Pre- and post-intervention measures were undertaken on two expressive language measures of sentence-length and syntax. In this paper we will discuss the programme offered, the pre- and post-intervention assessment results, and the benefits of incorporating aspects of the Colourful Semantics approach into the English language teaching classroom.