'Colourful Semantics’ as a whole-class approach with Sri Lankan Tamil-speaking children experiencing language-learning difficulties

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Abstract

The Colourful Semantics approach (Bryan, 1997) has been used effectively as a whole-class approach to support vocabulary and syntactic development in children. Using a colour-coding system and thematic roles, it helps children learn to use and respond to key ‘wh’ questions. This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Colourful Semantics approach to develop target vocabulary and the use of Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) structures in 30 Sri Lankan-Tamil speaking children experiencing language-learning difficulties. The Colourful Semantics approach was introduced as a whole-class approach via the teacher and incorporated into daily literacy activities for 6 weeks. Pre- and post-intervention assessments were undertaken on five receptive and expressive language and literacy measures of vocabulary and syntax.

There were positive changes in all the vocabulary and syntactic measures undertaken at an individual and group level. The post-therapy language scores on all five measures were highly significant at a p< 0.05 level. It is recommended that the Colourful Semantics approach be used as a whole-class intervention approach, facilitated by the teacher under the supervision of a speech and language therapist in deprived and under-resourced areas.

Keywords: Colourful Semantics, Whole-Class, Sri Lankan Tamil, Language Delay