

Scripted Dialogic Reading and Oral Language Acquisition in Addis Ababa's Pre-schools

A Policy Brief

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ABSTRACT

Oral language proficiency is a critical foundation for literacy and academic success, yet many children in low-resource pre-school settings lack sufficient language stimulation. In Addis Ababa, pedagogical approaches in early childhood education often emphasise rote learning, with limited use of interactive, language-rich strategies. This policy brief evaluates the impact of a structured, scripted dialogic reading programme on the oral language development of pre-school children. It aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for integrating this approach into early childhood education policy and teacher professional development. A quasi-experimental design was employed, involving 24 pre-school classrooms randomly assigned to intervention and control groups. Teachers in the intervention group implemented a scripted dialogic reading protocol over one academic term. Child language outcomes were assessed using a pre- and post-test oral language assessment measuring vocabulary and narrative skills. Children in the intervention group showed significantly greater improvement in oral language scores compared to the control group. Specifically, their mean score on expressive vocabulary increased by 32% more than that of their peers in control classrooms. Qualitative data indicated enhanced teacher confidence in facilitating language-focused interactions. The scripted dialogic reading programme proved to be an effective, scalable intervention for boosting oral language acquisition in this context. It offers a viable model for addressing the language gap in resource-constrained pre-school environments. Integrate scripted dialogic reading into the national early childhood education curriculum framework. Develop and mandate in-service teacher training on dialogic reading techniques. Provide schools with curated sets of high-quality picture books to support implementation. early childhood education, oral language development, dialogic reading, scripted instruction, teacher professional development, Ethiopia This brief provides novel evidence on the efficacy of a scripted, low-cost dialogic reading intervention in a Sub-Saharan African pre-school context, directly informing scalable pedagogical policy.

Keywords: *dialogic reading, oral language development, early childhood education, Sub-Saharan Africa, scripted instruction, policy implementation*

Article Highlights

- Scripted dialogic reading boosted oral language scores significantly in Addis Ababa pre-schools

Policy Recommendations

Integrate scripted dialogic reading into national early childhood curriculum; mandate teacher training on dialogic

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intervention increased expressive vocabulary by 32% more than control group• Teachers reported enhanced confidence in facilitating language-focused interactions• Provides scalable model for addressing language gaps in low-resource environments	<p>techniques; provide schools with curated picture book sets.</p> <p><i>This brief offers novel evidence from a quasi-experimental study in Sub-Saharan African pre-schools.</i></p>
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