



Teacher perspectives on the use of the Aistear framework in infant classes to develop oral language, communication skills, and communicative relationships through play.



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Introduction and Background

- This study examines teacher perspectives on the use of the Aistear framework in infant classes to develop oral language, communication skills, and communicative relationships through play.
- Language is a social tool, but it also enhances children's ability to self-regulate, learn, imagine, connect with peers, and achieve learning outcomes, meaning that language can enhance play (as well as play-enhancing language) (Cregan, 2019, p.2). Research on behalf of the Department of Education has found that play can be a key pedagogical strategy in supporting language development and emergent literacy (Kennedy, et al., 2023, p.118). Rand and Morrow (2021) recommend sociodramatic play particularly, as a framework for teachers to develop a wide range of written, reading, and oral literacy.

Research Aims:

To identify how Aistear can be used to create opportunities for communication and oral language development.

To investigate how the Aistear framework helps teachers to teach oral language skills through play.

To identify how the Aistear framework can facilitate the teaching of the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC).

Recommendations

- Further research and legislation is needed on the use of play in language education. Woods, Mannion and Garrity (2022) identify the discrepancy between research and legislation on play in Ireland. The Ready Steady Play policy (DCEDIY, 2004) has not been replaced since its targets expired in 2008.
- This dissertation supports play as a valuable and effective means of language learning for infants in Irish primary schools. Role-play emerged as central for meaningful interactions, suggesting it could be beneficial to embed it in support documents or future revisions of the PLC for Stage 1.
- Participants in this study reported on the use of 'teacher in role' as method of playful pedagogy that engages students in oral language. To resolve the issue of balancing academic focus and play, Walsh (2017) recommends that play be reimagined as a pedagogical practice, with active adult involvement in the play.

Methodology

Quantitative methodology: focus on observable and factual-based knowledge

Non-probability Convenience Sampling: 20 participants who have taught infants 2 years since the PLC in 2019.

Positivist Approach

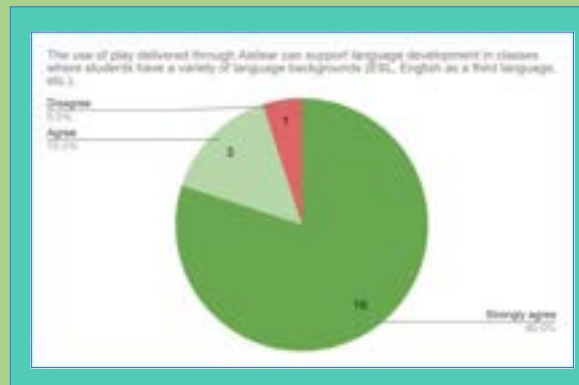
Descriptive Statistical Analysis: generating data to analyse and interpret objectively.

Survey Study: with open questions, closed questions and Likert scale questions.

- Taking a positivist view, a quantitative approach provides an objective examination of the 'externally' existing social world (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002, p.28).
- The researcher's role is 'external observer' who objectively studies the 'parts of a social phenomenon' to understand the entire system (Kuada, 2012, p.73).

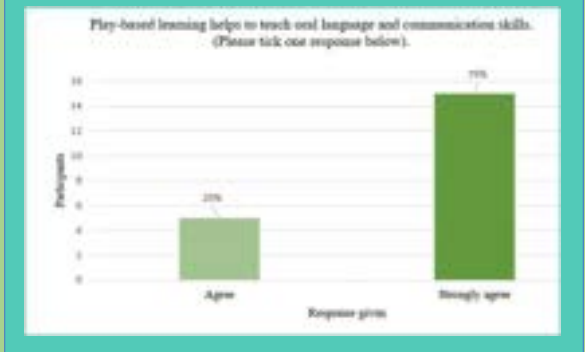
Results and Findings

- Aistear creates opportunities for meaningful language interaction 'often' (40%) or 'always' (60%).
- Aistear helps to implement play-based learning methodologies in the classroom, with 85% (n=17) strongly agreeing and the remaining 15% agreed.
- Respondents reporting that pupil enjoyment and engagement with Aistear creates an informal, 'fun', and 'safe' way to use oral language.



Conclusion

- Aistear supports play and language interactions in the infant classroom.
- Teachers find play beneficial when teaching oral language and the PLC, with 85% of respondents preferring 'play' as a methodology to teach oral language.
- The Aistear framework supports the PLC through role-play, pretend-play, and small-world play.
- Participants credited language immersion, play contexts, materials (Chung, 2023) and collaborative learning with the enhancement and efficacy of Aistear in supporting students of all abilities, especially EAL students, in oral language development.



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