

A Survey on Vocabulary Development of Migrant Preschool Children-Taking N City in China as an Example

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Abstract: *Language is the most important communication tool for human beings, the acquisition of vocabulary lays the foundation for the development of children's language, children's mastery of vocabulary is an important standard to judge the level of language development. PPVT test was conducted among 153 migrant preschool children in 5 kindergartens in N City, and questionnaires were sent to their teachers and parents. We found: the migrant children's vocabulary mastery of different types is unbalanced, the level of mastering increases with age, the effect of on the vocabulary is significant, there is significant effect of the quantity of family books and family cultural activities and the application of toys in kindergarten and the teacher-child conversation on the vocabulary development of migrant preschool children. As for improving the vocabulary ability of migrant children, we should play the foundation role of family education, and made up the shortage of vocabulary development by high-quality kindergarten education.*

Keywords: *Migrant preschool children, vocabulary mastery, PPVT, receptive language, the development of children*

1. INTRODUCTION

The large-scale population migration is the most significant population phenomenon in the process of industrialization and urbanization in China. The movement of population tends to take family as the unit, so there are more and more children come to cities from countryside with their parents who work in cities. According to statistics, the number of migrant population is 221 million, 0-14 years old children up to 35.81 million, of which preschool children accounted for 25.09%, to 8.99 million (Duan Chengrong, et al., 2013). Therefore, the growth and education of the migrant children have become unavoidable problems of social development in China.

Language is the most important communication tool for human beings; early childhood is an important period of language development. In the process of language development, the acquisition of vocabularies lays the foundation for the development of children's language, and has an important influence on the future study. Therefore, children's mastery of vocabulary is an important standard to judge the level of language development. The literature shows that research about the floating preschool children's language development is limited, only few studies (Wei Cai, 2010; Liu Deyong, 2012; He Haibo, 2013) make it as an aspect of school readiness, not explore the situation and characteristics of their vocabularies. This study attempts to explore the development level and cognitive characteristics of migrant preschool children's vocabulary, and try to help educators to improve their language education and guidance level.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This research use the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), which revised by the Shanghai institute of pediatrics and xinhua hospital affiliated to Shanghai second medical college. It is applicable to the evaluation for 3 years old and 3 months to 9 years old and 2 months children's receptive vocabulary development level. There are 120 black and white pictures in the test, which are 79 nouns, the 32 verbs, the 8 adjectives and the 1 quantifier. Each page has four small pictures, one of the pictures is correct. The testing tool is internationally recognized as the development of children's vocabulary level test tools, test method is simple and need less time (15 minutes), the score is relatively objective and fast, its reliability and validity is high, with high internal consistency and test-retest stability.

This survey was carried on five kindergartens from N city in Jiangsu province, a total of 153 preschool children (see table 1). Make a one-to-one survey in a quiet, undisturbed area. When the child is seated, the tester can communicate with them to help the child in a natural state, and then open the tools, tell the test requirements and make the test.

Table1. *Research Objects*

Number		3 -4years old	4-5 years old	5-6 years old	Total
G preschool	boy	8	7	8	23
	girl	10	9	10	32
Y preschool	boy	5	7	5	19
	girl	1	4	1	11
H preschool	boy	2	2	2	5
	girl	6	2	6	10
S preschool	boy	9	0	9	9
	girl	3	3	3	6
B preschool	boy	4	10	4	19
	girl	5	6	5	19
Total		53	50	50	153

In this study, we conducted the questionnaire to children's parents and teachers, the questionnaire content including the background information of parents or teachers (such as age, professional title, education level, income, etc.) and cultural environment in family or kindergarten (such as books and toys ownership, the activities such as reading, watching TV, visiting and so on). The results of the questionnaire and the test were matched, checked and recorded, and then analyzed by SPSS18.0.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. Migrant Children's Vocabulary Mastery of Different Types is Unbalanced

Table2. *Migrant children's vocabulary mastery of different types*

	Noun	Verb	Adjective	Quantifier
Mean score	39.35	9.10	0.44	0.20
Accuracy *	49.81%	28.43%	5.56%	19.60%

*Accuracy= mean score / vocabulary number (same below)

Table 2 shows there is difference between the lexical categories that the migrant preschool children master. They master noun best, followed by verb, classifier, and adjective. The research result shows that children mastered content vocabularies best, which was overwhelming in all lexical categories (Bai Yinting, 2013). This result is consistent with those of Chen Jie et al. (2007), that is children had "none advantage" in mastering vocabularies. This was not only related to the cognitive level of children, but also had relation with the things they contacted with in daily life. Nouns are closed related to the common things in life. Children's thinking has the nature of instinct action. Noun is strongly associated with the objects they know, therefore, compared with other lexical categories, it is easier to understand and master.

3.2. Level of Vocabulary Mastery of Migrant Preschool Children Increases with Age

Table 3 and 4 show, the level of vocabulary mastery is rising with age. Further test indicates that there were significant differences between vocabulary mastery by children of different ages, which were the significant differences between 3-4 years old and 4-5 years old, 3-4 years old and 5-6 years old, 4-5 years old and 5-6 years old. The lexical development level of children is improved with the increasing of cognitive development level, just like Liu Jinhua's(1997:114) opinion, that is the cognitive structure changes with age, which lays foundation for children's mastery of vocabularies.

Table3. Level of vocabulary mastery by migrant children of different ages

	noun			verb			adjective			quantifier			Total		
	3-4	4-5	5-6	3-4	4-5	5-6	3-4	4-5	5-6	3-4	4-5	5-6	3-4	4-5	5-6
Mean score	26	41	51	4	9.62	14	0	0.30	1	0.02	0.26	0.30	30	51.62	67
Accuracy (%)	33	53	65	13	30	44	0	4	13	2	26	30	25	43	56

Table4. Comparison on vocabulary development of migrant children at different ages (M±SD)

	3-4 years old	4-5 years old	5-6 years old	F	P	post hoc test
noun	25.94±10.27	41.46±8.33	51.46 ±7.81	107.91	0.000***	3>2***,3>1***,2>1***
verb	3.83 ±2.87	9.56 ±3.91	14.22 ±4.13	103.99	0.000***	3>2***,3>1***,2>1***
adjective	0.00 ±0.00	0.32 ±0.913	1.04 ±1.82	10.72	0.000***	3>2**,3>1***, 2>1*
quantifier	0.02 ±0.14	0.26 ±0.443	0.32 ±0.47	9.21	0.000***	3>2*, 3>1***, 2>1**
total	30.38±12.39	51.62±12.67	67.04±12.97	107.73	0.000***	3>2***,3>1***,2>1***

Note: 1=3-4 years old, 2=4-5 years old,3=5-6 years old,*** P<0.001, **P<0.01, *P<0.05 (same below)

3.3. The Effect of the Quantity of Family Books and Cultural Activities on the Vocabulary Development of Migrant Preschool Children is Significant

Among the family factors, family income had no relation with the vocabulary development of children; there was significant difference between vocabulary developments of the migrant preschool children whose parents had different education level. However, the vocabulary mastery level of the children whose mother had education level above senior high level was higher than that of the children whose mother was low-educated (see Table 5). This proved the found by Haobo et al. (2004), that was the vocabulary development of children was affected by the education level of their mothers; if parents spend more time on mother-child interaction or activities, the children will mastered more vocabularies(Zhang Yiwen, Jin Xingming, et al, 2002). This is because mother plays an irreplaceable role in the language development of children. The higher-educated mother grasps more parenting knowledge, and can apply richer vocabularies and more complex sentences in parent-child interaction, which drives and improves the vocabulary development of the children.

Table5. Influence of parents' educational level on vocabulary development (M±SD)

Educational Level		Noun	Verb	Adjective	Total	T	P
Father	Middle schooland below	41.18±13.63	9.86 ± 5.80	0.51± 1.33	51.8±20.15	0.13	0.90
	High school and above	40.21±13.27	9.52 ±5.33	0.44 ±1.20	51.35±17.86		
Mother	Middle schooland below	40.36±13.59	9.64 ±5.68	0.38 ±1.09	51.24 ±19.03	-0.31	0.76
	High school and above	41.61±13.27	9.86±5.48	0.68±1.57	52.34±19.69		

Note: quantifier only one word, here ignore quantifier.

Table6. Effect of number of family books on vocabulary development (M±SD)

	Less Than 10	11-20	More Than 21	F	P	Post Hoc Test
Noun	36.71±12.75	45.65±13.67	46.06±8.24	5.60	0.001***	3>2 , 3>1*,2>1*
Verb	8.01±5.34	11.55±5.94	12.17±3.54	5.25	0.002**	3>2, 3>1*, 2>1*
Adjective	0.23±0.94	1.05±1.739	0.22±0.73	4.28	0.007**	3>2,3>1, 2>1*
Quantifier	0.13±0.34	0.28±0.45	0.39±0.50	2.80	0.043*	3>2 ,3>1*, 2>1
Total	45.10±18.38	58.53±20.72	58.89±11.86	5.76	0.001***	3>2, 3>1*,2>1*

Note: 1=less than 10, 2=11-20, 3=more than 21.

From Table 6, we can know, with the increasing of family books, the vocabulary mastery scores of migrant preschool children gradually raised; there was significant difference between the vocabulary mastery scores of the children whose family had less than 10 books and the children whose family had

"more than 21 books" and "11-20 books". Investigation showed that the families with less than 10 books accounted for more than 50% (54%) and the families with more than 21 books accounted for 15%. It can be seen that most migrant parents didn't provide abundant books for children, which affected their vocabulary development to a extent.

The more times the parents accompanied children to watch programs and go to cultural center, the higher the scores of various lexical categories and the total scores were(see Table 7 and Table 8). Because as for the preschool children, their mental image is closely related to the directly felt object image (Xu Fuxiao, 2013). Children contact with specific things and phenomena during watching programs and visiting, and comprehensively use various sense organs to obtain vocabularies and effectively understand the vocabularies. In the process of parent-child interaction, parents will develop a meaningful conversation according to children's interests, and the children will actively express their ideas and opinions. Therefore, in the context of wanting to say, daring to say, having the chance to say, and being able to get positive answer, the vocabulary development level of children will be improved.

Table7. Influence of parents and children watching programs on vocabulary development ($M\pm SD$)

	Less Than 2 Times	3-4 Times	5-6 Times	Every Day	F	P	Post Hoc Test
Noun	37.21±12.82	37.77±14.76	43.50±10.43	45.12±12.50	2.35	0.06	4>1*,4>2*
Verb	8.39±4.90	8.83±5.90	11.29±5.69	11.17±5.51	2.12	0.08	4>1*
Adjective	0.25±0.64	0.40±0.97	0.43±1.09	0.79±1.72	1.09	0.37	4>1*
Quantifier	0.11±0.30	0.30±0.47	0.14±0.36	0.29±0.46	1.49	0.21	4>1*, 2>1*
Total	46.57±17.81	47.33±21.28	55.36±16.60	57.38±19.10	2.31	0.06	4>1*,4>2*

Note: 1=less than 2 times,2=3-4 times,3=5-6 times,4= every day,

Here only list significant differences among comparison.

Table8. Influence of going cultural centers frequency on vocabulary development ($M\pm SD$)

	Few	1-2 Times	3-5 Times	More Than 6 Times	F	P	Post Hoc Test
Noun	36.59±14.36	43.28±13.84	44.58±9.63	45.07±7.97	2.07	0.09	2>1*,4>1*
Verb	7.83±5.84	10.81±5.99	10.12±4.49	11.53±3.75	2.37	0.06	2>1*,4>1*
Adjective	0.24±0.97	0.84±1.66	0.27±0.83	0.53±1.27	1.57	0.19	2>1*
Quantifier	0.15±0.36	0.19±0.39	0.23±0.43	0.47±0.52	2.63	0.04	4>1*,4>2*,4>3*
Total	44.85±20.65	55.12±20.79	56.19±14.49	57.60±12.23	2.22	0.07	2>1*,4>1*

Note: 1=few, 2=1-2 times, 3=3-5 time, 4=more than 6 times,

Here only list significant differences among comparison.

3.4. There is Significant Effect of the Application of Toys in Kindergarten and the Teacher-Child Conversation on the Vocabulary Development of Migrant Preschool Children

The times of using toys with sound module weekly had close relation with the vocabulary scores, which was embodied in that the more frequent it was, the higher the scores was, especially for nouns and verbs(see Table 9). This is because the teacher provides toys to children who are interested in the toys, then they are more positive to explore, and apply the language for more times. Therefore, they can learn a large number of vocabularies unconsciously.

Table9. Effect of use language toys weekly on vocabulary development ($M\pm SD$)

	0-2 Times	3-6 Times	Every Day	F	P	Post Hoc Test
Noun	32.74±14.26	37.21±10.50	41.35±15.24	6.80	0.000***	3>2 *, 3>1*,3>2*
Verb	6.70±4.79	7.89±3.24	9.94±6.54	6.25	0.000**	3>2*, 3>1*, 2>1*
Adjective	0.22±0.85	0.25±0.82	0.67±1.56	1.09	0.363	3>2,3>1, 2>1
Quantifier	0.09±0.29	0.27±0.49	0.22±0.42	1.84	0.124	3>2 ,2>1*, 3>1
Total	41.59±17.63	45.62±10.68	52.20±22.68	6.14	0.000***	3>1*,3>2*, 2>1*

Note: 1=0-2 times, 2=3-6 times, 3= every day.

Table 10 shows, the more times the teacher talked and chatted with children, the higher the total score was, especially for the scores of nouns. This proved the research of Wang Yuqiong (2013), that was the vocabulary size and vocabulary quality of teachers were the most critical influences on the vocabulary development of children, and the vocabulary ability of teachers significantly affected the vocabulary development of children. The larger vocabulary size and better vocabulary quality of a teacher with excellent language quality will directly affect the migrant preschool children, and lets the children have a rich conversation environment; accordingly, the vocabulary level of the children will be improved.

Table10. *Influence of teacher-children's conversation times weekly on vocabulary development (M±SD)*

	1-4 Times	5-6 Times	Every Day	F	P	Post Hoc Test
Noun	35.50±10.48	38.79±9.93	40.27±13.84	3.62	0.015*	3>2, 3>1*, 2>1*
Verb	7.50±4.19	8.50±3.76	9.47±5.86	2.20	0.091	3>2, 3>1*, 2>1
Adjective	0.50±1.62	0.21±0.80	0.50±1.31	0.71	0.549	3>2, 3>1, 2>1
Quantifier	0.19±0.48	0.29±0.47	0.20±0.40	0.46	0.460	3>2, 2>1, 3>1
Total	46.60±15.77	47.79±14.07	50.46±20.38	0.16	0.160	3>1*, 3>2, 2>1

Note: 1=1-4 times, 2=5-6 times, 3= every day.

4. SUGGESTIONS

4.1. Play the Foundation Role of Family Education, Subtly Improve the Vocabulary Ability of Migrant Children

4.1.1. Parents Should Constantly Increase their Own Accomplishment

In the process of developing the children's language, parents' language features and conceptions have significant effect on the language development of the children(He Lizhong,2007). Parents of migrant preschool children should activately look for various ways to enrich their own theories and knowledge, improve their own all-round attainment on language education of children, abandons the rigid and backward education principles, and actively adopt the language education according with the developing reality and the physical and mind law of children. For example, studying by making full use of some public resources of community, library and education institution; participating in the lectures related to parent-child education and learning helpful experience; actively communicating with teachers and consulting the education methods and strategies, etc.

4.1.2. Parents Should Communicate with Children with High Quality Conversation

Parents of migrant children should actively encourage their children to communicate with their friends or adults, and encourage them to express their feelings and experience bravely. Parents should pay attention to the diversity of vocabulary when communicate with their children. For example, parents always ask the feeling of the children like "do you like it", and seldom say diversified vocabularies like "think" and "feel", etc. Besides, if you see red flowers in the park, you should not only say "red flower", but also should use the complex vocabularies such as "brilliant red" and "bright red", which can enrich the vocabularies of migrant preschool children.

4.1.3. More Time and Energy Should be Invested on Language Education

Effected by the busy work and low income, most of the parents of migrant children have invested less time and energy on educating children, and can't create rich language and cultural environment, which are important to the vocabulary development of children. In the future, parents should provide more books for reading, and tell story for children when they are free. They also can encourage children to tell the story according to the picture, because parent-child reading can help children improve the language level and effectively enlarge their vocabulary size(Pan Chao,2009). Moreover, parents also can watch some healthy and rich animation or children's program together with children, and ask children some open questions to encourage them express their own views, help them improve the language level and enlarge the vocabulary size.

4.2. The Shortage of Vocabulary Development of the Migrant Children Should be Made up by High-Quality Kindergarten Education

Migrant children should accept systematic education as soon as possible, which is conducive to improve their living environment, make up the shortage of family education(Wang Xiaofen, Zhou Hui,

2013), and guarantee the language competence to develop stably. In the future, the national and local government should issue the policies helpful to the disadvantaged children, invest more funds and materials to the institution where the children are from, enhance the relevant management and supervision, improve the quality of teachers, and help them to enjoy high-quality kindergarten education.

4.2.1. Language Education Should be Carried Out According to the Features of the Vocabulary Development of the Migrant Children

It can be found according to the above, the mastery of vocabulary of migrant preschool children is not balanced. In order to help the migrant preschool children to integrate into the language environment of classes, teachers should emphasize on the learning of everyday vocabulary of the migrant preschool children. Especially as for the migrant children with slow language development, teachers should teach them some everyday vocabularies, encourage them to practice and use repeatedly, help them to better communicate and interact with others.

4.2.2. Rich Language Environment Should be Created for Migrant Children

Teachers should create a rich language environment for children, provide enough times for independent game and abundant materials for game, and subtly enrich their vocabularies of the migrant children. Teachers can organize book day activities, encourage independent reading, encourage each child to read poem or perform story in front of their peers, which is not only conducive to enhance the self-confidence of the migrant children, but also helpful to promote the language competence and improve the vocabulary building capability. More importantly, the quality and quantity of the vocabularies taught by teachers will directly affect the vocabulary development of children(Wang Yuqiong,2013), so teachers should improve their own language competence, teach the children with the abundant vocabularies and better vocabulary quality, actively communicate with the migrant preschool children, organize challenging intellectual debate, and help them to enrich their vocabularies.

4.2.3. The Guidance of the Parents of Migrant Preschool Children Should be Enhanced

Parents are the important partner of kindergarten. Family co-education is helpful to improve the education quality. Teachers should pay attention to the special group, that are the parents of migrant preschool children, should propagate correct education concept depending on parents meeting and publicity column in class, and help them to understand the vocabulary learning and development features of the children and the education model, in order to lead them to improve their own language education level and the education effectiveness of children.

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