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Using Nursery Rhymes to Foster Phonological and Musical Processing Skills in Kindergarteners

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to assess the efficiency of four learning conditions to develop phonological and musical processing skills through a set of 10 nursery rhymes. According to the analysis of the teachers' practices, eight kindergarten classes (n = 100 kindergarteners) were paired and assigned to one of the following conditions: 1) music, 2) language, 3) combined [music and language], and 4) passive listening (control classes). Participants in conditions 1, 2, and 3 were met for 40 minutes per week over a ten-week period. In condition 1, the nursery rhymes were supplemented by musical activities and in condition 2 by language activities. Condition 3 was a combination of activities from conditions 1 and 2. In condition 4, children listened to a recording of the same nursery rhymes for 15 minutes daily during free exploration periods. No intervention was proposed for this control condition. All participants were evaluated using the same phonological and musical processing measures prior to and after the implementation of the program. Results indicated that children in conditions 1, 2 and 3 significantly improved their phonological awareness and their invented spelling skills at post-test. However, only the two conditions in which the music component was integrated enhanced significantly their results at the verbal memory task. Children in conditions 1, 3 and 4 enhanced tonal and rhythm perception skills. This study demonstrated that supplementing nursery rhymes with language activities is an efficient manner to develop emergent literacy skills, but the addition of musical activities could also boost phonological processing skills.

KEYWORDS

Kindergarten; Nursery Rhymes; Phonological Awareness; Invented Spelling; Memory; Tonal; Perception; Rhythm Perception; Emergent Literacy; Music Education

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