

# The Role of Home Literacy Environment in the Acquisition of Oral Language Skills in the Preschool Years

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## ABSTRACT

Parental involvement, home literacy environment, socioeconomic status, and literary resources are some of the factors that positively influence language acquisition. Exposure to materials and activities that support oral language development, such as picture books, alphabet books, stories, songs and shared book reading experiences create a responsive and encouraging home literacy environment. However, there is currently no evidence in Zambia to show how the home literacy environment (HLE) affects the development of oral language in children. Therefore, the overall objective of the study was to examine the extent to which the home literacy environment influenced children's oral language development. The study further sought to identify the factors within the home environment that supported development of oral language skills. The study used a mixed methods approach because it allowed the researcher to benefit from detailed insights offered by the participants on one hand as well as the generalizable inferential statistics drawn using quantitative data. This was important because it allowed for the triangulation of the data and offered complementary advantage in drawing conclusions. The study used a Familiar Language Test (FLT) and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) tests to conduct child assessments while a home structured guide was used to collect socio-economic data and home parent-child practices. The data generated from the study was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) while qualitative data was analysed thematically. The study comprised 100 preschoolers (50 males and 50 girls) drawn from selected early childhood centres in Lusaka district. The study concluded that activities such as shared book reading, singing, and storytelling were crucial in fostering language development at home. Therefore, it was recommended that parents or caregivers should engage children at home in storytelling, book reading and songs to promote the development of oral language skills in the early years.

**Keywords:** Home literacy environment, Oral language development, Early childhood education

## INTRODUCTION

Although research evidence shows that factors such as socioeconomic status, language-rich home environment and parental participation in literacy activities are cardinal in influencing language development, there is limited evidence to show how these factors influence or contribute to oral language development among early childhood education going children in Lusaka's shanty compounds. This study explored home literacy environment (HLE) and how it affected oral language skills among learners in selected early childhood centers in Lusaka's Chazanga Compound. Evidence shows that provision of a responsive and supportive home literacy environment by exposing children to activities, materials and

support of a more competent adult provides valuable scaffolding for oral language development in early years. The presence of picture and story books as well as activities such as stories, songs and shared book reading experiences are central to acquisition of oral language and setting the foundation for language development and future learning (Dulin, Loveall & Mattie (2023); Matafwali & Mofu (2023); Nag, Vagh, Duly, Snowling, Donolato & Melby-Lervag (2024); Matafwali & Bus (2013); Mwanza-Kabaghe, Mubanga, Matafwali, Kasonde-Ngandu & Bus (2015); Lusby & Heinz (2020); Burgoyne & Cain (2022); Barton-Hushley, Lorang, Renfus & Sterling (2020); Al Otaiba, Lewis, Whalon & McKenzie (2009); Abbeduto, Warren & Conners (2007).

As children progress in school, they depend on oral language to acquire reading and writing skills. The relationship between reading and language acquisition process is well documented in the literature (Reeder, 2017; Byrnes & Wasik, 2019; Clay, 2015; Fountas & Pinnell, 2016; Scharer, 2018; Vukelich, Enz, Roskos, & Christie, 2020). Children use oral language in playing and making their needs known which is the foundation for integration and participation in social life. Himmele (2009) argued that exposure to a rich language environment in early childhood years can help children become successful communicators, readers, and writers. Similarly, Rigg (2019) argued that oral language skills form the basis of literacy and academic success in early and later years. Consequently, a strong oral language foundation helps children develop confidence and overall sense of well-being.

Moreover, oral language is foundational for children's school readiness and achievement. It forms a basis for acquiring relevant skills that facilitates learning from an early age into school years. Matafwali (2010) indicated that language was a strong predictor of reading and that mother tongue formed the basis for acquiring literacy skills in the later years of learning. Further, Mwanza-Kabaghe (2015) indicated that oral language skills predicted literacy attainment in primary school years. Skills, such as reading and speaking were directly dependent on the well-developed language skills by the learner.

In the same vein, Matafwali (2010) argued that oral language and phonological awareness played a central role in the early reading achievement and this was firmly dependent on well-developed language skills by the children in the preschool years. Hart (2004) found that preschoolers' language abilities predicted their reading achievements in grades one through to three, and expressive vocabulary skills during the preschool years predicted later reading skills in second grade children. For these reasons, a vast body of research has been dedicated to understanding the social-contextual factors that supported children's early language development, learning at home and school (Puglisi, Hulme, Hamilton, & Snowling, 2017; Nag, Vagh, Duly, Snowling, Donolato & Melby-Lervag, 2024; Matafwali & Bus, 2013; Mwanza-Kabaghe, Mubanga, Matafwali, Kasonde-Ngandu & Bus, 2015; Lusby & Heinz, 2020; Burgoyne & Cain, 2022; Barton-Hushley, Lorang, Renfus & Sterling, 2020; Al Otaiba, Lewis, Whalon & McKenzie, 2009; Abbeduto, Warren & Conners, 2007). The processes underlying children's acquisition of language and literacy had been a focus of research for many years and the home literacy environment had been a strong predictor of early literacy development of children at home and school (Hamilton, Thomas, Hulme & Snowling, 2016). Factors that influenced the development of language have been the focus of studies and research in the discipline of education and psychology for many years. This is because language played a significant role in the development of children not only in reading but also in social interaction.

Although many scholars have continued to examine what constitutes school readiness (Nag, Vagh, Duly, Snowling, Donolato & Melby-Lervag, 2024; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2015) it is generally agreed that one of the core components include early language development (Law, Charlton & Asmussen 2017; Law, Charlton, Dockrell et al. 2017) and pre-reading skills. It has been established that children's academic success and early reading success is anchored on emergent literacy knowledge and skills attained before the age of four (Sloat, Letourneau, Joschko et al 2015) which in turn is underpinned by oral language skills. Nevertheless, there is limited research evidence that links

home literacy environment to oral language development among ECE going children in Lusaka's Chazanga and Kabanana compounds.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The social-constructivist theory was used in the study. Vygotsky (1968) propounded the social constructivism theory, which states that language and culture are the frameworks through which humans experience, communicate, and understand reality. Vygotsky stated that language and culture play essential roles in human intellectual development and concepts are communicated and transmitted through language and understood as well as interpreted by experience and interactions within a cultural setting. Further, Vygotsky placed importance on the role of the more knowledgeable others (MKO) in the development of language through a process of scaffolding where the knowledgeable adults support children to attain a higher skills built on what they were able to do without the support of adults to reach the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

### **Study Objectives**

The study sought to determine how the home literacy environment influenced oral language development in pre-school years among ECE learners from Lusaka's Chazanga and Kabanana compounds. The study further sought to determine the influence of the parent-child interaction on the development of oral language skills in pre-school years.

### **Study Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions

1. What is the home learning environment's influence on oral language acquisition in the pre-schoolers?
2. What home factors supported oral language acquisition in preschoolers?
3. How do parent-child interactions influence oral language acquisition skills in preschoolers?

## **METHODS**

A mixed methods approach was used in the study. The rationale for adopting a mixed methods was that it gave the researcher both conceptual and analytical integration of qualitative and quantitative data which helped to triangulate data and improve validity. Qualitative data collected from the familiar language test (FLT) and parents' interview guide offered in-depth empirical use of how a supportive home environment nurtured language skills and offered opportunities for language development. The rationale for using the familiar language was that it was contextually appropriate and locally developed and, administered in a language familiar to the child. However, inadequate language skills on either the learner or administrator could have led to biased results. Therefore, the data collectors were adequately trained to administer the tool and had to be fluent speakers of language as the child. On the other hand, quantitative data collected from selected parts of the Zambia Children's Attention Test (ZamCAT) captured child performance in storytelling, picture naming, comprehensive and expressive activities while a structured questionnaire captured parental participation in book reading, storytelling, parent-child interactive sessions and household possessions that supported language developmental outcomes. The ZamCAT is a Zambian developed child assessment tool used to measure the child developmental outcomes through a combination of cognitive tests for testing numeracy and literacy skills, fine motor skills as well as social-emotional skills.

### **Study Site**

The study was conducted in Lusaka district's Chazanga and Kabanana compounds. A purposive sampling

technique was used to select the ECE schools that took part in the study. Thereafter, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the 100 learners who participated in the study.

## Participants

The sample size comprised of 100 learners and 98 caregivers. The male learners were 50(50%) and the female learners were 50 (50%) while the caregivers involved were 80 (81%) female caregivers and 18(19%) males.

## Instruments for Data Collection

The study used some selected parts of the ZamCAT, a Peabody picture vocabulary test (PPVT), familiar language test (FLT) as well as parental interview guide to collect qualitative data from the caregivers. ZamCAT being a test that contains multiple tests, only subtests relevant to this study were used such as the caregiver tool, home possession tool, expressive language subtest, writing subtest, and expressive language subtest.

## Data Analysis

The data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The data generated from the ZamCAT, home literacy questionnaires, the familiar language tests were entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), and thereafter, relevant frequencies and tables were generated. The data from semi-structured interview schedules were analysed thematically to generate the most common responses and themes.

## Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Zambia Research Ethics Committee for Social Sciences before commencement of data collection while informed consent was obtained from participants at both school and home.

## Key Assessments

**Home Literacy environment:** the home literacy environment was measured using a structured tool to determine the consistency and number of times caregivers or other household members engaged a child in activities that promoted oral language acquisition.

**Familiar language test:** a familiar language test was used on the learners to determine their level of comprehensive and expressive language by describing and connecting the activities they saw on picture story. The child scores on the test had a mean of  $M=3.18$  and a standard deviation of  $SD=1.72$ .

**Home possessions:** an extracted section of the ZamCAT was used to collect information on the household possessions. This was to determine if there was a link between home possession and oral language acquisition skills.

**Peabody picture vocabulary test:** the PPVT was used to determine the level of oral language skills among the learners. This exposed the learners to both receptive and expressive language, the results from this test showed a varied range of scores with a standard deviation of  $SD=3.69$ .

## RESULTS

The study investigated the home literacy environment for ECE learners and how their caregivers contributed to language development. Quantitative data is presented showing the home literacy environment and how

specific variables helped determine how language development in early years. The score from the familiar language tests and Peabody picture vocabulary test showed varying results among the leaners. On the other hand, qualitative data gave an in-depth observed indicator at household level that helps to explain the difference in the results presented in the quantitative tables.

Table 1 below shows the descriptive results from the key variables that were investigated. These included familiar language scores, home possessions, receptive and expressive language, picture naming scores and letter naming and attention test scores. From the table below, it is shown that home literacy environment was broad in nature. For example, the home literacy score had a range of 4, which was a difference between the minimum score of 1 and the maximum score of 5, with a mean score of 3.01 and a standard deviation of 1.72. This meant that there were no huge differences in the children’s exposure to home literacy. Similarly, receptive language scores had the smallest range of 3 with a mean of 1.86 and standard deviation of 1.07. On the other hand, some variables had huge differences such as the attention test score which had a range of 20, with a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 20, and mean score of 6.23 while standard deviation of 6.31. This meant that the scores obtained from the children were widely spread and some children scored zero while others scored 20.

Table 1: Descriptive Results

	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Home Literacy	4	1	5	3.01	1.72
Familiar Language Test	6	0	6	3.18	1.72
Home Possessions	9	3	12	8.83	2.82
Receptive Language	3	0	3	1.86	1.07
Expressive Language	6	0	6	3.49	1.77
Picture Naming Scores	12	0	12	4.15	3.69
Letter Naming Scores	16	0	16	5.90	4.42
Attention Test Scores	20	0	20	6.23	6.31

Table 2: below shows a correlation table between the background variables of the child with some dependent variables. The table correlated several variables that would have an influence on the oral language outcomes of the children. Some of the variables that were critical included the education level of the parents and caregiver-child interaction at home. The home literacy score was a composite score that comprised of the availability of age appropriate books, adult-child shared book reading moments, storytelling, and child’s interest in the books and print materials at home. The results showed that child age negatively correlated with home literacy score ( $r=-.14, p<.01$ ) implying that younger children had higher scores in the home literacy environment. On the other hand, age correlated positively with receptive and expressive language of the children ( $r=.29, p<.003$  and  $r=.35, p<.001$ ) age had an effect on the performance of children on the receptive and expressive language tests. The positive correlation between caregiver level of education and the home literacy environment ( $r=.61, p<.05$ ) implied that caregiver level of education played a role in laying a supportive home literacy environment for the children. On the other hand caregiver level of education and the child’s scores on the picture naming test ( $r=.307, p>.05$ ) implied that children of educated parents performed better in the picture vocabulary test.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Child’s gender	1										
2	Caregiver’s age	.031	1									
3	Caregiver Education	.090	-.080	1								

4	Home Literacy	.018	-.150	.610	1							
5	Home Possession	.018	-.121	.035	.818**	1						
6	Picture Naming Scores	.063	.046	.307	.208*	.353**	1					
7	Familiar Language Test	.151	-.165	.032	.847**	.673**	.254*	1				
8	Letter Naming Scores	.050	.040	-.076	.202*	.260**	.164	.178	1			
9	Receptive Language	.112	.290	-.145	.610	.072	.367**	.019	.257**	1		
10	Expressive Language	.107	.346	-.170	-.450	.009	.358**	-.029	.338**	.555**	1	
11	Pencil Tapping Scores	.056	-.179	-.060	.217*	.268**	.451**	.273**	.225*	.447**	.395**	1
	<b>Mean</b>	1.50	35.87	3.51	3.01	8.83	4.15	3.18	5.90	1.86	3.49	6.23
	<b>SD</b>	.50	12.12	9.70	1.72	2.82	3.69	1.72	4.42	1.07	1.77	6.31

\*\* Correlate is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Hierarchical multiple regression table**

		<b>B</b>	<b>SE b</b>	<b>bb</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>VIF</b>
Model 1	Child's age	-.079	.081	-.172	2.445	.015	.222	1.410
	Child's Gender	.444	.022	.041	1.703	.021	.307	1.100
	Caregiver's education	.135	.003	.396	4.37	.000	.980	1.111
Model 2	Child's age	-.143	.012	-.039	2.979	.000	.187	1.302
	Child's Gender	.031	.031	.083	1.698	.309	.478	1.222
	Caregiver's education	.235	.009	-.054	1.098	.001	.980	1.041
	Home possession	.156	.017	.413	3.282	.022	.709	1.020
	Picture naming	.228	.028	.440	6.422	.001	.800	1.321
	Familiar language test	.168	.043	.370	5.145	.000	.990	1.121
	Letter naming	.353	.090	.362	4.592	.072	.613	1.352
Model 3	Child's age	-.050	.071	-.153	2.890	.004	.906	2.612
	Child's Gender	.033	.001	.033	4.628	.140	.717	1.480
	Caregiver's education	.333	.041	.292	1.454	.033	.723	1.523
	Home possession	.222	.011	.311	2.647	.003	.716	1.231
	Picture naming	.118	.033	.456	1.106	.000	.990	1.521
	Familiar language test	.081	.032	.088	5.804	.000	.763	1.142
	Letter naming	.398	.006	.432	3.596	.001	.833	1.780
	Receptive language	.248	.027	.186	2.800	.000	.578	1.340

	Expressive language	.107	.059	.467	4.004	.000	.698	1.209
	Pencil tapping test	.364	.044	.517	5.688	.002	.784	1.221

Table 3 above shows a hierarchical regression analysis to ascertain the level of relationship between multiple factors that contributed to oral language acquisition in the early years. The table above showed that in the first model the age of the child had no significant influence on language acquisition as a stand-alone variable, however, it showed significant difference in model 2 and 3 when combined with other factors such as home possessions and parental level of education. On other hand, the regression results showed that the parental level of education had significant influence on language acquisition at  $p=.000$ . Other variables that had significant influence were caregiver-child literacy engagement which resulted in performance differences among learners in picture naming  $p=.000$ , familiar language test  $p=.000$ , receptive and expressive languages both with a significance of  $p=.000$ , letter naming  $p=.000$  and pencil tapping test  $p=.002$ . From the data presented, oral language skills in early years were anchored on quality caregiver-child interaction, exposure to language supporting materials like books and storytelling practices.

## DISCUSSION

A supportive home literacy environment was key in the acquisition of oral language skills in early years. A quality and supportive home literacy environment coupled with the availability of material support such as exposure to age appropriate books and shared book reading was a strong predictor of oral language acquisition for the preschoolers. The availability of age appropriate materials, though limited in most households established by the study, produced undeniable evidence that oral language development was anchored on the home literacy environment and the deliberate oral development activities such as reading books to children, engaging the child in conversation with the aim of promoting use of oral language, storytelling time, nature walks to promote curiosity in the child and singing songs. Such activities created a platform where children would use their language skills to engage with others. Some aspects of the home literacy environment such as shared book reading were consistent with the findings of Kabali (2014). Bloom (2002); Honig (2007) and Dickinson, Griffith, Golinkoff, and Hirsh-Pasek (2011) who found positive correlations between the effects of shared book reading at home and language development and literacy skills. Specifically, age appropriate book reading materials strengthened written language of the children in the preschool and primary school years. On the other hand, however, when children were read to, it increased or improved the receptive and expressive language skills. Oral language skills enhanced and strengthened reading fluency, writing skills and increased the relationship of verbal expressive meanings.

The study found that the children from households that had evidence of shared caregiver –child story sessions had performed better in the receptive and expressive language skills tests. A large body of research work is in line with the influence of storytelling on the language acquisition skills of the children in the early years. Pace, Luo, Hirsh-Pasek and Golinkoff (2017) found that telling stories by caregivers at home or teachers in the classroom setup furthered oral and written language development for the children, as well as furthering comprehension for reading and listening. Malo and Bullard (2000) indicated that storytelling might be more powerful than other mediums at developing skills that prepare children for reading and comprehension. Palmer, Harshbarger, and Koch (2001) in their observational study found that young children made gains in story concept, comprehension, vocabulary, and many other areas, after participating in a story time program using storytelling. Similarly, Matafwali and Mofu (2023) found that exposure to indigenous games by ECE learners formed a strong base in play-based learning which in turn promotes oral language skills.

The other facilitating factor in the development of oral language for the children was the participation of the extended family members in the oral language development of the children. The study found that most

families had extended family members who most times played a critical role in helping children develop oral language skills from early age. Some of the family members found to be important in the study were the siblings, grandparents, uncles, and aunties of the child. These talked to the children, told stories and read to them even when the parents or primary caregivers were not available to do that. Further, some parents or primary caregivers indicated that they did not always have enough time to engage children by way of storytelling or reading to them, but they indicated that other family members helped in this role. For example, grandparents told stories and the siblings helped with book reading or homework. Matafwali and Mofu (2023) further reiterated the importance of having other family such as grandparents in enhancing language skills through games and storytelling activities with learners.

The study established that the home literacy environment had other factors that supported the development of oral language, these factors included child centered talks, storytelling, parent-child intended and unintended talks, availability of books, radio and television where some of the factors that contributed to the development of oral language by the preschoolers. The first and most important home factor was the parent-child interaction. This was key to the development of oral language in children, this relationship involved parent initiated but child-centered talks, songs, stories and parentese. Dockrell, Stuart and King (2010) in their study compared the impact that storytelling and story reading had on the oral language development of the pre-schoolers, they established that storytelling as an intervention that improved children's language skills more than story reading interventions. Storytelling positively affected children's receptive language, expressive vocabulary, and sentence repetition competences while story reading largely affected sentence repetition (Lungu, Matafwali and Banja, 2020).

The hierarchical multiple regression analysis done in the study found that the three factors that were statistically significant in promoting oral language were availability of books or literary material in the house  $p(.003) < .05$ , parent-child or adult-child book reading  $p(.001) < .05$  and child centered stories initiated by the adults  $p(.001) < .05$ . Other scholars have emphasized the importance of storytelling in language development. The study established that the children who had the experience with books and other literary materials had advanced skills oral language skills, they could name objects in the environment and did not have significant challenges in connecting picture stories as compared to their peers who did not have exposure to the book materials. Similarly, the children whose parents indicated that they had parent-child shared book reading had higher oral language skills as compared to the ones who did not spend the time with their children. Finally, storytelling was a fundamental factor in oral language acquisition, it allowed for the imaginative skills of the child in developing oral language.

According to Haven and Ducey (2007) storytelling can be used as an effective means to not only promote oral language but also increase early literacy and promote reading comprehension skills through active engagement with the stories that helps preschoolers develop a sense of story. Similarly, Miller and Pennycuff (2008) stated that using storytelling was one way to address literacy development by improving oral language, reading comprehension and writing. Because of the interrelated nature of the processes involved in reading and writing, storytelling was an effective pedagogical strategy that could be woven into instruction to increase students' competencies in all areas.

The study further established that book reading was critical to oral language development of the children, shared book reading was one of the factors that the study established to have an indelible influence on oral language acquisition of the children. The habit of reading a book to the child by a parent or other adult was found to be central in oral language acquisition in the study. Although only 47% of the participants indicated that they read a book to the child, a correlation analysis found that book reading was strongly correlated to child speaking clearly (.722,  $p < .001$ ), narrated a story (.397,  $p < .001$ ), high scores on the PPVT (.755,  $p < .05$ ), familiar language test (.812,  $p < .05$ ), receptive language (.261,  $p < .05$ ) and expressive language (.402,  $p < .001$ ). The above correlation results indicated that book reading was central to language acquisition



by the preschooler.

Other scholars such as Noble, Sala, Peter, Lingwood, Rowland, Gobet and Pine (2019) indicated that shared book reading referred to the practice of sharing or reading a book with a child, this excluded storytelling in the absence of the book. The scholars indicated that book sharing or reading could support vocabulary skills, narrative and conversational skills, future reading abilities, print awareness, grammatical development and phonological awareness. Further, scholars such as Law, Charlton, McKean, Beyer, Fernandez-Garcia, Mashayekhi and Rush (2018) indicated that parental book reading was an important feature of what was sometimes called the child's Home Learning Environment (HLE). Evidence suggested that the more parents read to their children and the more books there were in the child's home, the better a child would perform in terms of their later academic and social performance.

On the other hand, much research has demonstrated the influence the social economic status of the family has on the language and literacy skills of the child. However, other studies found that there was no significant relationship between SES and literacy or language development of the child. Matafwali (2010) and Kabali (2014) in their studies found that socioeconomic status had little influence on the literacy skills development of the children. However, scholars such as Heckman et al (2010) found that family SES, especially during early childhood, affected performance in some neuropsychological systems more than in others, particularly memory, oral and written language and executive functions of the child. Hurt and Betancourt (2016) in their study found that language skills differed in the children of different socioeconomic status, it was found that the children from lower economic status families performed poorly in language skills than their counterparts from the higher socioeconomic status families. Similarly, Hoff and Ribot (2018) indicated that throughout childhood, higher SES children have more advanced language skills than lower SES children of the same age have. SES-related differences in children's communicative behavior have been found as early as infancy, are consistently found in the preschool and school age years, and appear in adulthood as well.

It was established that most parents engaged children in different parent-child interaction through two major means namely, planned and unplanned parent-child interactions. Fewer parents indicated that they engaged children in planned activities, the study further found that the parents who engaged children in planned activities were more educated than the parents who did not engage their children in planned language activities. However, generally more than 90% of the parents indicated that either they or an older family member engaged the children in unplanned activities that were important for stimulating oral language development.

Safwat and Sheikhy (2014) indicated that positive quality of parent-child interactions and increased verbal responsiveness was essential in shaping a child's literacy environment and language development. The first 3 years were the most intensive, as this is when the brain rapidly developed and was able to learn new information. If this critical period passed without adequate interaction and opportunity for language development, it would become more challenging to accomplish the milestones as the child developed.

Further, Saracha (2016) indicated that parents engaged in joint storybook sharing where adults read an appropriate text to children, usually in the home environment to promote language development of the children. It was established that storybook sharing promoted the young children's development of receptive and expressive language abilities as well as their emerging early literacy abilities, which subsequently had an effect on the children's success in school-based literacy activities. The key component to shared book reading that is centered on parent-child interaction parent initiated but child centered reading, it specifically focuses on the parents teaching behaviors and storybook reading interactions during formal and informal literacy experiences including the quality of their interactions, reading and extra textual interactions (Kelly and Robyn, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the study established that the home literacy environment supported the acquisition of oral language, which further underpinned the development of emergent literacy skills such as reading, writing, and numeracy. Parental involvement was more important than home possessions in influencing oral language acquisition, the practice of reading together, singing and storytelling were found to be important in supporting language development at home.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Parental or caregiver involvement should be encouraged to promote attitude and practice of reading, singing, and engaging children in conversations encouraged oral language development for the preschoolers.

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