**Strategies for Improving English Speech Production in Kindergarten Immersion Settings**

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This study examines the strategies teachers employ to enhance English speech production in kindergarten immersion settings in Japan. Reflecting global trends in early English education, many Japanese pre-primary institutions have incorporated English into their curricula. At this developmental stage, a primary learning objective is increased English verbal output, yet this goal remains challenging, particularly in contexts where English is taught as a foreign language. Therefore, understanding the methods teachers use to stimulate verbal engagement among young learners is crucial.

For this research, teachers of immersion classes for children aged three to five were interviewed. Interview data were transcribed and analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2022) reflexive thematic analysis approach. Findings indicate that teachers focus on creating a positive and supportive environment for English learning. In doing so, they consider the roles of four primary stakeholders in the learning process: children, parents, colleagues, and themselves.

To support children, teachers employ strategies such as choosing topics that match children’s interests, systematically introducing new vocabulary, and building trusting relationships. In their interactions with parents, teachers prioritize frequent and transparent communication, fostering a collaborative approach to language learning. For their colleagues, teachers utilize cooperative techniques to promote teamwork and maintain a cohesive learning environment. Concerning their own practices, teachers engage in regular reflection, account for individual differences among children, and maintain realistic expectations regarding children’s English retention at this stage.

In summary, this study suggests that teachers take a comprehensive approach to meet the needs of all stakeholders, ultimately centering their practices around the best interests of the children. These findings imply that teachers in English immersion programs implement child-centered strategies, even within educational frameworks that prioritize target language acquisition.

References:

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Sage Publications.

Keywords: English, speech production, kindergarten, immersion