

Action Points:

1. Use theories woven into your paragraphs, so that they link directly to your points.
2. Work on your referencing and your reference list
3. Proofread for little mistakes and informal language.

Literacy – A Key to Learning SJIE5002

Reflection

During the lesson it is important to remember many factors have been set out to ensure the lesson is appropriate for a Learning Resource Centre. Inclusion is the number one factor when catering for multiple levels of spectrum and in this scenario that was very successful. During the lesson it is apparent that sign language is consistent throughout, allowing for pupils who rely on hand sign to be included within the group session and understand what is being said. It is also important to take note on the tones of voice used at various times during the lesson, the reader ensures voice tone indicates the end of a sentence, and shocking moments during the story are spoken in a louder, more astonished tone. This is done for many reasons. First, it allows the listeners to understand literacy key points, such as the end or the beginning of a sentence, when multiple characters speak or respond to one another, and secondly, the reader is trained in Attention Autism and group time activities which allow her to maintain the focus of the group for an extended period by using captivating voice tone and multiple methods of both oral and body language.

During this lesson the reader left feeling accomplished that she was able to hold a successful group session, something which is a rarity in this classroom due to multiple factors including lack of focus, understanding and development, coupled with the range of learning difficulties that each pupil has. For example, one cannot cope with group activity usually and one will shout and become upset. The reader also felt a great deal of emotion as this was her final group activity with this classroom due to a change of contract that happened almost immediately afterwards resulting in, for the reader, a very bittersweet and emotional final experience. The children's response to the story was fantastic and they maintained a high level of enjoyment throughout, and seemed eager to guess 'what is next?' on each stage of the lesson. They responded well to each other guessing individual ideas, showing

group co-operation and some even went on to elaborate onto other pupils guesses which was lovely to witness as the reader.

When thinking about the circumstances involved with this lesson, it is crucial to remember that this has been a very tough period for the pupils, particularly the pupils of a learning resource centre and to have their attention for an extended period under a positive wavelength was fantastic. The group of pupils included have had an extremely hard time with their phased school return from the COVID 19 pandemic, so resulting with a successful group time activity with someone other than their usual class teacher is a massive achievement for both them and the reader.

Story time is one of the most important parts of the school day within a Learning Resource Centre due to activities solely being individual based as per the choice of the pupils, however with group activities such as story time it brings all students together around one table where they interact with one another and the teacher. They volunteer to involve themselves which allows for teacher/pupil bonding and engagement which brings positiveness to the classroom for a long time after. The follow-on activities included that were selected were to encourage that group bonding for a bit longer, with two groups selected by the reader at random. One activity was hands on based, where puffy paint was used to create Gruffalo children and finished off with split pins to secure. The second activity involved a trip out of the classroom into the school's local woodland, to find the trail that was placed there that morning. The children were able to find clues leading them to specific houses mentioned in their stories and they planted their own wooden label to indicate where they will place their Gruffalo during their second activity when the groups swapped over. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed both activities and over all the activity lasted for more than an hour which is fantastic attention building from all involved.

Moving forward from this lesson, the reader would be encouraged to maintain a higher level of eye contact and better posture towards the classroom, however, the sequence of sign - regardless of the few incorrect signs used later on out of confusion – was fluent throughout and the reader continued despite knowing mistakes were made. The tone of voice was strong and consistent and the maintained level of attention from the pupils, particularly the silence from listening, was nice to see from this classroom.

The use of sign during any lesson within any primary foundation phase or learning resource centre setting is very important to encourage the development of speech and language and communication skills, particularly if there are delays or barriers within the classroom. Sign language is paramount for inclusion as it allows for students who are deaf or non-vocal to become embraced among their peers. It promotes sound relationships with teachers in terms of communication and understanding, as all students are spoken to in an equal manner and the desired outcome is the same throughout. Moreover, sign language also acts as a visual cue for many children, as it represents the object being described which hones in on the cognitive process of imagination. I CAN, describes this as 'A picture is worth a thousand words' and later goes on to say "Signs are a wonderfully visual way to catch and hold a child's attention. They provide extra information which supports understanding and often look like the object or action they represent." (I CAN, 2020)

Generally speaking, children learn literacy skills before they begin to read or write. This comes in many forms such as letter formation and recognising that each letter makes a sound, to being able to tell their own story. However, for those that are not able to speak, this gives them the opportunity to do this through hand signing. An article written by Judy Maclean which is titled "Library Preschool Storytimes: Developing early literacy skills in Children" has a wonderful example of the key benefits of group stories listed. Judy goes on to quote Shirley-Kirkland 2002, Arnold 2003, and Ghoting 2006, by citing

- Print motivation – thinking that books and reading are fun
- Vocabulary – knowing the names of things
- Print awareness – recognizing print and understanding how books work
- Letter knowledge – understanding that each letter has its own name and sounds
- Narrative skills – being able to tell stories and describe things
- Phonological awareness – being able to recognize and play with the smaller sounds that make up words.

(Shirley-Kirkland 2002, Arnold 2003, Ghoting 2006, as cited by Maclean, J 2008)

These examples stem the building blocks to literacy development in the foundation stage of learning, which can relate closely to Vygotsky's Zone of proximal

development theory. Vygotsky theorised his zone is the scaffolding for children's emotional, cognitive and volitional psychological process and allows them to build subconscious milestones of what they feel they can and cannot do, both via the zone of proximal development and a human mediator. Once the mediator influence has transferred knowledge onto the child, it allows them to create a mindset of ability to mimic the task. Once completed, they acquire the skillset to repeat their performance. This will, as loosely shown above, begin with listening to the sounds of letters from an adult mediator (The teacher in this case) and their formation during early years development, and then progressing onto being able to form a story from imagination to eventually reading and writing. Vygotsky's theory is a sociology theory of which children learn beliefs, dialogs and problem solving strategies from more knowledgeable members of society. This is an excellent example of why, in Vygotsky's opinion, reading group activities are a crucial social building tool for all students of a foundation phase level. Vygotsky's Educational Theory In Cultural Context, written by Kozulin, A 2003, goes on to quote "Vygotskian theory stipulates that the development of the child's higher mental processes depends on the presence of mediating agents in the child's interaction with the environment." Thus, the saying goes, the influence of a good teacher can never be erased.

Jean Piaget, on the other hand, had an opposing view to Vygotsky and argued that all children have a mental process of four stages, The sensorimotor stage, the preoperational stage, the concrete operational stage and the formal operational stage. These steps theorised by Piaget all have a loose window of development time. He believed that while outside influences play a crucial part in development, the child himself will learn the four built in processes by themselves by experimenting with the world around them and learning from doing. This was a personal theory that began by observing his own children and young members of his family from an early age and later concluded that children are no less intelligent to adults, they just think differently. This encouraged Piaget's interest into cognitive development and he was later recognised as a worldwide influence on education for his studies.

Speech and Language studies show that from a very young age, behaviour generates a positive influence on the development of oral speech. Behaviouralist Skinner, dubbed the father of modern behavioural theories, claimed that language must be mimicked to later become learnt. He suggested that all children have an oral influencer, be that the parent or primary caregiver and thus the child will memorize

the tone, context, language and use of how they received the speech in context and later go on to use this in the correct sense. The theory centres around the idea that children are conditioned by their environment and they are able to reinforce their communication.

The incorporation of all theories mentioned puts one under the assumption that there is no wrong or right influence on perfect literacy development, as each play a vital role for each individual. However, despite the Welsh curriculum incorporating many snippets of learning from viable methods to find the right antidote, the primary teacher will always imagine new methods of learning for each pupil body, without delving too far from the guidance framework. Referring back to the reader it is apparent that she has attempted to incorporate both a learning through mediation and a hands on approach, with a small expectation of behavioural projection with her later activity. There is a large window for pupil inclusion within the activity as the reader continues to ask for input throughout, however maintains the notion that her students are expected to listen. There is a fluent visual there for all students, with both the book in a prime location to view and consistent sign language throughout. There is steady voice tone and a steady pace of reading for the pupils to have ample time to process what has been said. The 'Whats next' aspect was enjoyable to see, as with any pupil of a learning resource centre a large part of preventing sensory overload is to attempt to pre-warn, if you like, to allow them a few moments to understand something new or a change is coming. The children seemed eager for both parts of the activity and from the footage shown it is likely that the reader was able to capture the imagination of her pupils for an extended period of time. To conclude overall, the reader has encapsulated her pupils focus and understanding, involved them well with the activity and used three separate methods of learning theories. Moving forward, the use of eye contact should be increased and body language presented stronger.

Reference List:

Billingham. S, (2020) I CAN, *Why use signing in Early Years Settings?* Available at: <https://ican.org.uk/news/why-use-signing-within-early-years-settings/> (Accessed on: 9th April 2021)

Kozulin. A, (2003) *Vygotskys Educational Theory in Cultural Context*. 1st Ed. New York: Cambridge University Press

Maclean. J, (2008) *Library Preschool Storytimes: Developing Early Literacy Skills In Children*. 13(3), (Assessed on: 8th April 2021) URL: <http://amesburylibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Library-Preschool-Storytimes-Article.pdf>