

Literacy Essay

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The aim of this essay is to distinguish the difference between three theorists and how their approaches support the development of literacy skills. Literacy is related to the development of a child's ability to understand language and use it as a fundamental part of learning in all aspects. In order to interact, children need to express themselves and develop their learning across the curriculum through four forms of language: reading, writing, listening and talking (CCEA, n.d). Under the Curriculum for Excellence, literacy is referred to as a skill set that enables a person to full participate in society and in learning, through the various forms of language and texts, which society deems useful (Education.gov, n.d). Moreover, the Department for Education and Skills (DES) define literacy as "the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media" (DES, 2011, p. 8).

Under the 'White Paper Our National Mission: A Transformational Curriculum', it is outlined that funded maintained schools in Wales will need to offer a broad and balanced curriculum, meeting the four purposes as proposed by Donaldson (2015), and comprising of six areas of learning. It is intended that the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience will lead to 'ambitious, capable learners,' by supporting them to communicate confidently through different mediums, in Welsh, English and international languages. Language competency enables learners to understand concepts and express their reasonings when problem solving and analyzing information. Multiple language skills help learners to engage to different contexts. These skills develop the confidence of learners, enabling them to adapt to different roles and increase their employability opportunities (Welsh Government, 2019).

According to the Every Child a Trust (2009), a lack of literacy skills can cause major barriers across life. A child will not be able to prosper at school and as a young adult, it will become increasingly difficult to have a wider opportunity for jobs. As parents, they will also face difficulty supporting their child's learning. This intergenerational cycle can make social mobility and a fairer society much more challenging to achieve. Panneton (2015), literacy is vital to achieving a sense of citizenship and

wellbeing. Children who have strong reading skills, do better at school and become life-long learners and highly requested employees.

There are several approaches and theorists that have contributed to the field of language acquisition. Whilst some theorists emphasize theoretical issues, others focus on social, cognitive or developmental factors relating to language acquisition (Taghinezhad, 2017). According to Vygotsky (1962), the roles of language are many, one of which is responsible for transferring abstract concepts to logical reasoning. A further role is the development of communication via social interaction, which according to Vygotsky, is the key factor in child language development. Vygotsky asserts that humans did not learn language stemming from evolution of their 'bio-type' but rather, through the development as social creatures (Ruthrof, 2012). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory suggests that the way in which an individual interacts with others and their culture, influences their cognitive abilities (Saracho, 2017). The socio-constructivist approach of language development focuses on the role of reinforcement and feedback in language acquisition. It suggests that most of a child's linguistic development comes from imitating and interaction with parents and adults. This is similar to the behavioural theory of language development but differs significantly in that it suggests the existence of a 'socio-cognitive' element and other varied mental structures in children. Vygotsky (1978) pointed out that cultural development in children can be observed in two ways: the child initially observes other people interacting and then the child imitates this behaviour, meaning that the child is then able to communicate.

Bruner (1983) believed that human competency develops from both biological and cultural means. He emphasized the importance of input from parents and scaffolding to construct shared meaning. Like Vygotsky, Bruner (1983), highlighted the social aspects of learning, indicating that adults should assist a child develop their skills through the process of scaffolding. Bruner's Language Acquisition Support System (LASS), asserts that language is learned through communication. However, given the complexity of language and its numerous codes such as grammars, and the limited cognitive ability of a child, he argues that certain elements of language acquisition must be 'biological wired' in children (Fahim and Amerian, 2015).

Piaget on the other hand, suggests that egocentrism is an early learning mechanism related to private speech to regulate inner thoughts and is an important factor in the cognitive development with differentiation. The concept of egocentric language is that the language centers around the speaker (the child) in the absence of social interaction. Egocentric language is a result of symbolic function a child has learned. In the early years, a child is able to picture their surroundings through language but is not yet able to understand social communication, thus, language centers around them until at a later stage, they develop theory of mind which enables them to understand and use language as a form of social communication; their thought process move from egocentric to logical (Heo, et al, 2011). Unlike Vygotsky, Piaget states that learning is an individual activity in that through the interaction of their surroundings, children develop their own understanding of the world. He argued that language signifies the construction of logical thinking and reasoning skills that occurs through distinct stages, namely: sensori-motor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational. Piaget asserts that a child must be able to understand a concept before they can develop language form which articulates that concept. An example of this is seriation in respect to size, for instance, if a child is given several sticks, they would be able to order the sticks in order of size (Heo, et al, 2011).

They focus highly on balancing the curriculum and enforcing digital competence as this is now part of modern and wider world, its now of importance for literacy, languages and wider communication skills. Media, use of working on projects independently, It helps the development of reading, and numeracy skills as well. This reason alone. the future. The cross- curriculum that Donaldson (2015), has enforced after meeting with staff, parents and children's from visiting over 60 schools across wales, He believes that in order for children to confidently learn, participate and gain experience they would need to learn to communicate effectively by having to learn of literacy languages, this is a skill in itself and would be taught in the area of learning and experiences. other areas of learning and experiences would indicate that the application and development of these skills would be consolidated. He says that oracy and writing are viewed as tools of how children would express themselves ,and includes demonstrating their understanding of these skills. This links to what the theorists beliefs are. In the school setting there are four basic aspects of language, Phonology which is the study of the sounds of language for example the sound of a

mobile phone makes; Syntax: ²⁶the grammar of the language for example how we put words in order; ¹⁷Semantics: the study of the meaning of words and Pragmatics: the rules that guide how we use language in social situations for example you speak differently to someone of a profession such as a teacher than what you would to a one a year old. ⁶“Each case the language you use is used in different ways , when children develop the ability to communicate with language they develop all four of these area “(Gleason, 2005).

Reflection

¹⁶Habib (2017, p. 944), refers to reflective practice as “the ability to reflect on one’s actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning.” Reflection is viewed as a synonym for ‘thought process’ which involves reviewing past experiences and subsequently asking questions for exploration and further depth. Reflecting requires exercising the practice of self-appraisal or self-assessment, as a means of actively establishing learning points and seeking clearer understanding for future development and practice (Hayes et al., 2014). CIPD (n.d) add the reflective practice is the basis of professional development, it helps to create meaning from experiences and transforms insight into practical interventions for personal development and growth.

Menard (2013), states that models of reflection offer a foundation for developing learning activities that can help practitioners reflect on their abilities. There are various type of models of reflection, Gibbs (1988), Schon (1983) and Kolb (1984) are some examples of the frequently referenced models. For this purpose of this reflection, Gibbs reflective cycle will be adopted. His reflective cycle provides a systematic approach to thinking about an experience. Reflection is therefore ²⁹regarded as a cyclical pattern of behaviour involving six distinct stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan.

²⁹The story telling experience involved reading the book ‘Rita the Rescuer,’ by Hilda Offen. Initially, it was anticipated that the story telling activity would occur within a school setting. However, given the outbreak of Covid-19, safety restrictions were put in place by the school, meaning that this could no longer take place. As such, the

activity took place within the home environment and with my own children, both of them are at key stage two, one aged nine and the other aged 11. and action plan.

Before the session started, I was feeling apprehensive and unsure about what direction this activity would take, as I was reading to my own children and not to a group of children in a school setting. I was conscious that I was being recorded, and this exasperated my nerves. I was not able to relax and this caused me to mix up some of words, I felt I was unable to read in my natural tone and self. However, once I got into the flow of reading the story, I started to feel a little more relaxed, it helped to see that my children were listening attentively, and they were showing positive non-verbal communication such as smiling, giggling and bouncing up and down, indicating their excitement. They were also asking questions about the story, this showed me that they were invested and interested in the storytelling activity.

Reflecting back on the experience, I found that although I attempted to use different voices for different characters, I felt I was not able to portray the characters accurately and sounded quite monotone. According to one of the fundamental aspects of story telling is using emotions. This can help draw the listeners, exercising story telling techniques, can increase a child's literacy skills. For example, by pointing, it can help make children make connections .

In conclusion following my reflection, I can say that overall the video presentation didn't quite go to how I had planned it, my anxiety and nerves had got the better of me, the children however were absolutely fantastic, I was amazed how I was able to attain the children attention and emotions even though I didn't portray the characters as well as I hoped. I thought that the book that I had chosen for the age group provided was good , the children were able to be imaginative and ask questions about the story. One of the negatives about this exercise is that I wasn't able to use any props and equipment and maybe chosen a different book so props could of been used. To improve my performance for next time is to prepare and plan better, read the book several times to myself before reading to the children and be more confident within myself, practice recording whilst reading several times without a audience so I can be better reading to an audience, and to make notes on how to improve. I did however read this story to my children several times and recorded myself repeatedly and I did get more confident. We did a worksheet about 'Heros' that

relates to the book and they both enjoyed the worksheet and have asked if we can do more like this which is a positive for both myself and them, they found it colorful and interesting to do.

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