

ECIE5008

Literacy – A Key to Learning

Reflective Commentary

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Part 1.

Literacy development is a multifaceted and complex process involving various theoretical perspectives and contributions from renowned scholars in cognitive development and learning experiences. In this reflective commentary, I will focus on three theorists who have significantly impacted the field and my personal development and learning experiences: Noam Chomsky, B.F. Skinner, and Lev Vygotsky. Skinner, and Lev Vygotsky. I will compare their views, link them to my educational settings, practices, and policies, and reflect on my contribution to developing literacy skills. Through my storytelling of "The Tiger Who Came to Tea," I have actively sought to foster a literacy-rich environment and facilitate children's development of essential skills. To fully comprehend the impact of my storytelling practices, it is crucial to delve into the contributions and views of the three influential theorists: Chomsky, Skinner, and Vygotsky. Chomsky, renowned for his theory of Universal Grammar, strongly emphasises children's innate language acquisition abilities. His theory posits that children are born with a language acquisition device that facilitates effortless language learning. In the context of storytelling, this theory suggests that children possess an innate capacity to comprehend and engage with narratives. I align with Chomsky's view by incorporating rich language and engaging storylines. This alignment provides children opportunities to develop their language skills and vocabulary and underscores the practical application of Chomsky's theory in literacy development. I am deeply grateful for Chomsky's insights, which have greatly enriched my understanding and practice in literacy development. Chomsky, N. (1957)

Conversely, Skinner's focus on behaviourism and the role of reinforcement in learning has significantly influenced my approach. His theory posits that learning results from environmental stimuli and subsequent responses. In the context of literacy, Skinner's theory advocates using positive reinforcement techniques, such as praise and rewards, to foster children's active participation and engagement. Skinner, B. F. (1957). I have embraced Skinner's approach by creating a supportive and encouraging environment during storytelling/literacy sessions, reinforcing children's motivation to participate and develop their literacy skills. As a practitioner, I have integrated Skinner's ideas into my practice by providing students with structured reading and writing activities that offer clear and consistent feedback on their progress. Using positive reinforcement to reward students for their efforts and achievements, I have played a pivotal role in helping them develop the skills and confidence they need to become proficient readers and writers. This practical application of Skinner's theory underscores its relevance and usefulness in literacy development.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasises the role of social interaction and the influence of the cultural context on cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, learning occurs through collaboration and interaction with more knowledgeable others. In storytelling, Vygotsky's theory suggests children can benefit from engaging in discussions, asking questions, and sharing their story interpretations. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). I align with Vygotsky's view by incorporating interactive elements, such as open-ended questions and group discussions, fostering social interaction and collaborative learning during storytelling sessions. In my role, I have drawn on Vygotsky's ideas to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment in which students can learn from each other and build on their collective experiences. By promoting collaboration and dialogue in the classroom, I have been able to foster a sense of community among students and help them see themselves as active participants in the literacy development process.

Regarding policies that have changed literacy in the last 30 years, the Donaldson Successful Futures Report (2015) has been instrumental in shaping teaching methods and approaches to literacy. This report emphasises the importance of providing a broad, balanced curriculum that promotes literacy development across various subjects and contexts. It encourages a shift from a narrow focus on literacy skills to a more holistic approach incorporating creativity, critical thinking, and digital literacy. As a storyteller, I have embraced the principles outlined in the report by incorporating diverse stories, promoting creativity, and encouraging children to think critically and engage with the narrative. Another significant change in literacy policies has been the introduction of phonics-based teaching methods. Phonics instruction teaches students to decode words by recognising the sounds of individual letters and letter combinations. This approach effectively improves reading skills, particularly for students who struggle with traditional reading methods. The government has made the teaching of phonics a priority in primary schools, and it has become a key focus of literacy instruction across the country.

In my setting, the literacy policy aligns with the principles outlined in the Donaldson Successful Futures Report. It highlights the importance of fostering a love for reading and storytelling, providing a wide range of literacy experiences, and creating a supportive environment catering to each child's needs. Donaldson, G. (2015). By incorporating research throughout my reflective practice, I have adapted my storytelling

techniques to meet the diverse learning styles and preferences of the children in my setting. This research-informed approach has allowed me to effectively engage children with different learning profiles and maximise their literacy development.

One of the primary links between poor oracy skills and reading development is that oral language is the foundation for reading. Oral language skills, such as vocabulary knowledge, phonological awareness, and comprehensive abilities, are crucial in acquiring reading skills. Children with weak oral language skills may struggle to decode words, understand text, and connect spoken and written language. Similarly, poor oracy skills can also impact writing development. Writing translates thoughts and ideas into written form, and a lack of strong oral language skills can hinder this process. Children with limited vocabulary, weak sentence structure, and poor expressive language abilities may need help to convey their ideas effectively in writing. Addressing the links between poor oracy skills and reading, writing and cognition development requires a comprehensive approach. Educators can help children overcome these challenges by providing targeted support, creating language-rich environments, and fostering their overall language and cognitive development.

Furthermore, research has also highlighted the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students. This includes considering cultural background, language proficiency, and socio-economic status. Educators can create a welcoming and supportive learning environment for all students by incorporating research on inclusive teaching practices into our reflective practice.

Acknowledging the connection between pupils living in deprived areas and those with poor literacy skills is crucial. Research has consistently shown that children from disadvantaged backgrounds often face additional barriers to developing strong literacy skills. According to a study conducted by Smith et al. (2019), children from deprived areas are more likely to have limited access to books, experience a lack of parental engagement in literacy activities, and have lower vocabulary and reading comprehension levels. Smith, E. T., Dickson, K., & Smith, L. (2019). The effects of poor literacy skills can be far-reaching. Children who struggle with reading and writing often face significant challenges in school, where literacy skills are a fundamental curriculum component. With the ability to effectively read and write, these children may stay caught up on their peers, become disengaged from their education, and ultimately struggle to achieve academic success. To address this issue, policymakers and educators must work to provide additional support and resources for children living in

deprived areas. This may include increasing funding for schools in these communities, providing professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their literacy skills instruction, and implementing programs that support parents in promoting literacy at home. My storytelling practices aim to provide equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their background. By incorporating culturally diverse stories, ensuring access to various reading materials, and fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, I strive to bridge the literacy gap and promote equitable literacy development.

I provide my students with opportunities to work together on reading and writing tasks, to experiment with language in authentic contexts, and to make connections between literacy and other subject areas. By drawing on the insights of these three theorists, I hope to foster a love of reading and writing in my students and equip them with the skills they need to succeed in school and life.

Overall, the policies that have changed literacy in the United Kingdom over the last 30 years have improved overall literacy rates and ensured that all students have the skills they need to succeed in school and beyond. The Donaldson Successful Futures Report has been instrumental in shaping teaching methods and curriculum development, and ongoing efforts to support struggling students have helped to ensure that literacy remains a top priority in UK schools. Donaldson, G. (2015).

In conclusion, the ideas of Noam Chomsky, B.F. Skinner and Lev Vygotsky have significantly shaped my approach to supporting literacy development. Drawing on these diverse perspectives, I have addressed the complex and multifaceted nature of literacy acquisition and helped students build the skills and confidence they need to become proficient readers and writers. Chomsky's emphasis on innate linguistic abilities, Skinner's focus on environmental factors, and Vygotsky's emphasis on social and cultural dimensions informed my practice. It has helped me create a holistic and inclusive approach to literacy development that empowers students to succeed academically.

In addition to changes in teaching methods, there have been efforts to improve literacy outcomes through targeted interventions and support for students who are struggling with reading and writing. The introduction of national literacy screening tests for primary school students has helped to identify students who need additional support, and schools are now required to provide tailored interventions to help these students catch up with their peers.

2nd Part

1. Description:

I read the story "Tiger Who Came to Tea" during the storytelling session. To enhance the storytelling experience, I used props such as a toy tiger, teapot, teacup, and plastic toy food. I incorporated these props into the story as visual aids to engage the children and make the story more interactive. It is a fun and engaging story with colourful illustrations. This session aimed to engage the children in a fun and interactive storytelling experience.

2. Feelings:

I felt excited and enthusiastic about using the props. They added an element of playfulness and creativity to the storytelling process. However, I did feel a little nervous about effectively using the props to capture my future audience,

3. Evaluation:

The overall use of props in the video reading was successful. It helped create a visual representation of the story's elements, allowing the audience to better connect with the narrative. Upon reflection, I used my voice for Dad, whereas I feel it would have been more engaging to use a deeper voice for him.

4. Analysis:

The props in this story had several strengths. They brought the story to life and made it more interactive, which I feel will work with my pupils. The props serve as a visual aid, helping to reinforce the story's themes and characters. However, there were a few moments where I felt unsure about how to use certain props effectively, which led to slight interruptions in the flow of my reading.

Using the props should provide a multisensory experience, enhancing the children's comprehension of the story's plot and themes.

5. Follow-up activity:

As a follow-up activity, I have created story stones that the children can use in a multisensory way to sequence or re-create the story.

6. Conclusion:

Overall, it was a positive experience, and I am confident it will engage my students. I will continue to explore different strategies and techniques to enhance their engagement and participation during future storytelling sessions. The children that I work with have severe and complex needs, so it will be vital for me to consider their individual needs and attention spans when planning another session.

7. Action Plan:

To further improve my storytelling sessions with props, I will:

- Ensure a balance between play with the props and active listening to the story, gently redirecting the children's focus when necessary.
- Explore additional props or visual aids that can enhance the storytelling experience and cater to different learning styles.
- Seek feedback from the children and their parents to understand their preferences and suggestions for future storytelling sessions.
- Experiment with different ways to incorporate props into the storytelling, such as inviting the children to manipulate the props actively during critical moments in the story.
- Observe the children's reactions and adjust my delivery to maintain their engagement.

By implementing these actions, I aim to create even more immersive and engaging storytelling experiences for the children, fostering their love for literature and supporting their overall development.

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