

My voice and my life through and with literacy

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A moment on motivation and expectations

- Motivation refers to a willingness to act toward a goal and relates to personal needs
- Being literate is a goal for many people
- The expectations, views and (mis)conceptions of others (e.g., parents, teachers) can influence a person's motivation

Challenging outdated expectations, views and misconceptions about Down syndrome/intellectual disability

Cognition

"He/she is too cognitively impaired to learn to read and write" (i.e., developing literacy skills is seen as an intellectual impossibility)

Versus

Numerous accounts, biographies and personal narratives and autobiographies of those with intellectual disabilities who are literate (Buck, 1955; Erickson & Koppenhaver, 1995; Hunt, 1966; Kliewer & Biklen, 2001; Kliewer, Biklen, & Kasa-Hendrickson, 2006; Oelwein, 1995; Schmidt, 1945, 1946; Seagoe, 1964)

The literature also makes similar and unsubstantiated claims ...

- Those with significant intellectual disabilities "profit to only a limited extent from instruction in pre-academic subjects, such as familiarity with the alphabet [and] can master learning sight reading of some 'survival' words" (American Psychiatric Association, 2004, pp. 43-44)

Challenging outdated expectations, views and misconceptions and the idea of "normal"

- **Using a standard of "normal"**

"But s/he couldn't possibly be making sense of that/meaning that/doing that" i.e., "using symbolic tools for complex interaction" (Kliewer & Biklen, 2001, p. 12)

Versus

Teachers and parents who observe and know deeply, know otherwise (Kliewer & Biklen, 2001)

- Effective teachers listen to parents' interpretations

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Challenging outdated expectations, views and misconceptions of literacy (cont.)

- "[Real] Literacy is too complex and comprehensive. They need to learn the type of literacy that focuses on functional or life skills"

Versus

New understandings of literacy (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Freebody & Luke, 1990; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Knobel & Healy, 1998)

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Challenging outdated expectations, views and misconceptions about learning (cont.)

It's too late

"If they can't read by the time they are ..."

Versus

- Readers/writers etc develop over time through a continuous process
- Literacy learning continues into adolescence and beyond (Moni & Jobling, 2001; Young, Moni, Jobling, & van Kraayenoord, 2004)

Challenging outdated expectations, views and misconceptions about teaching (cont.)

Let's take them back to the beginning

"if they can't do the basics then they can't be involved in literacy learning that involves higher order thinking (i.e., they need to master these subskills first)"

Versus

Many children with Down syndrome are more likely also to have problems with comprehension, unfamiliar vocabulary, insufficient background knowledge, reading fluency or engagement

Challenging outdated expectations, views and misconceptions about teaching (cont.)

"There must be a program I can use that will teach him/her"

Versus

Developing knowledgeable teachers with a repertoire of pedagogical approaches working in a classroom enriched with resources is more likely to be effective than 1 single program (Morgan, Moni & Jobling, 2006)

Challenging outdated expectations, views and misconceptions about teaching (cont.)

But you have to use different (i.e., special) pedagogies

"You can't use the same pedagogical practices with students with Down syndrome as you use with 'other learners'"

Versus

LATCH-ON (Moni & Jobling, 2000)
plus
Katims, 2000; Koppenhaver, 1993; van Kraayenoord, Moni, Jobling, & Ziebarth, 2002; Young, Moni Jobling & van Kraayenoord, 2004)

Literacy involves

- Being able to construct, create and use multiple sign systems.

Teachers and parents need to build:

- Competence
- Confidence
- Control

Developing literacy competencies

- Letter names and letter sounds
- Phonological awareness: *"Skills in the awareness and manipulation of sound structures at the syllable, onset/rime and phonemic level"* (Kennedy & Flynn, 2003, p. 100)

Note:

Children with Down syndrome may find tasks involving smaller phonological units (phoneme level) to be easier than tasks involving larger units (e.g., syllables and rimes) (Snowling, Hulme, & Mercer, 2002; Sun & Kemp, 2006). (see also Gombert, 2002)

- Sight words and high frequency words
- Phonic skills/Decoding
 - It is often not the decoding itself but the lack of fluency in decoding (issue of speed of processing and automaticity)

Developing literacy competencies

- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Writing
- Critical awareness

The Learning Centred Model (Rogoff, 1990, 1993) and the Sociocultural Model (Vygotsky, 1962; 1978)

teacher/parent >> learner

text >> reader/writer/
listener/speaker/
viewer/shaper

knowledge >> contexts/
and strategies communities of
practice

How should we teach? Four key elements of teaching

(Beers, 2003; Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko & Hurwitz, 1999; Wilhelm 2004)

Engage the learner in the activity and call attention to the subtasks and the strategies being used

Situate it

Learning should occur in the context of use

Give students varied opportunities for literacy and transforming texts for different audiences and purposes

Offer multiple contexts

Knowledge and skills should be used in multiple contexts

"Recognising multiple modes of valued expression"
(Kliewer & Biklen, 2001)

- The expert should make the invisible visible by externalising their cognitive activities
- Prompt, don't correct.

Model it

Learners benefit from seeing various models of expertise

Provide social support for learning

Make it social

Learners often improve their skills when they are participating with others

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How we should teach?

- > **Focus on creating a comprehensive literacy program (sometimes referred to as balanced)**
- > **Based on knowledge of the learner/ learner-centred (van Kraayenoord, Moni, Jobling, Koppenhaver, & Elkins, 2004)**
 - ~ based on students' interests
 - ~ based on students' prior knowledge and experiences
 - ~ based on students' strengths and abilities
- > **Learning through environmental print**
- > **Observing everyday uses of literacy** (e.g., writing lists, reading junk mail, using books, DVD/videos etc)
- > **Opportunities to engage in a variety of meaningful literacy experiences**
- > **Lots of daily literacy experiences**
- > **Use of multiple types of texts with a range of difficulty levels (van Kraayenoord, Moni, Jobling, Koppenhaver, & Elkins, 2004)**

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How we should teach? (cont.)

- **Direct and explicit instruction** (e.g., phonics activities - see Morgan, Moni, & Jobling, 2006)
- **Involve the students in literate conversation**
- **Use technology**
 - Computer assisted instruction (CAI) for teaching words recognition skills (Lin, Podell, & Rein, 1991) and word recognition and spelling (Stevens, Blackhurst, & Slaton, 1991)
 - Creating e-Books (Pickering, 2005)
 - WriteIdeas (van Kraayenoord, Moni, Jobling, Koppenhaver, & Elkins, 2004)

How we should teach _____?

Letter and word awareness

Talk about letters and words and how they work in meaningful contexts (Center, 2005)

Phonological awareness:

- Encourage production of sounds of letters in isolation, blend letter sounds together to form words (Al Otaiba & Hosp, 2004; Gerding & McLaughlin, 2003; Gombert, 2002; McNaught, 2007)

- It is suggested that interventions combine phonological awareness training and [alphabetic] sight word approaches may have a positive effect (Al Otaiba & Hosp, 2004; Sun & Kemp, 2006).

Sight word fluency:

Encourage reading high frequency words in isolation (Didden, Prinsen, & Sigafos, 2000); repeated readings of sight words through games on flash cards (previewing, error drill, and praise) (Gerding & McLaughlin, 2003)

How we should teach _____?

Vocabulary

Promote listening to texts and asking questions

Comprehension

Teach as strategies (Moni & Jobling, 2001; Morgan, Moni & Jobling, 2004; van Kraayenoord, Moni, Jobling, & Ziebarth, 2002)

Writing

Written lists (Stromer, MacKay, McVay, & Fowler, 1998)

Teaching text structure (Guzel-Ozmen, 2006)

Teaching writing strategies within a process approach to writing (Guzel-Ozmen, 2006; van Kraayenoord, Moni, Jobling, Koppenhaver, & Elkins, 2004)

Using visual cues and prompts (Guzel-Ozmen, 2006; Moni & Jobling, 2000; Moni, Jobling, van Kraayenoord, Elkins, Miller, & Koppenhaver, 2007; van Kraayenoord, Moni, Jobling, Koppenhaver, & Elkins, 2004)

Speech-to-text and word prediction, software programs, as well as interactive multimedia software programs (Wehmeyer, Smith, Palmer, & Davis, 2004)

Word processing/creating PowerPoints (Moni & Jobling, 2000; Pickering, 2005)

My voice, my life (Why expectations about literacy are important: Common views of the benefits of literacy learning)

Literacy can

~ help individuals become more independent (Heward, 2006)

~ help individuals have more control over their lives (Heward, 2006)

~ facilitate independent living (Bochner, Outhred, & Pieterse, 2001)

~ improve quality of life (Bochner, Outhred, & Pieterse, 2001)

~ increase leisure and recreational opportunities (Heward, 2006)

~ increase vocational opportunities (Bochner, Outhred, & Pieterse, 2001)

**My voice, my life
(Why expectations about literacy
are important: New views of the
benefits of literacy learning)**

"For those students who have been outside the conversation, ways must be provided to include and value their voices, to make them a part of the meaning-making community."

(Wilhelm, 1997, p. 152)

Literacy can

- ~ help individuals to define who they are
- ~ help them become proactive in their lives and in their world
- ~ help them to imagine and enter the worlds and perspectives of others who are different from them
- ~ can help them to look outward, to critically "read and write" and converse with the world; this provides a sense of agency and the ability to "rewrite" and help to transform the world

(adapted from Garcia & Sobel, 2007; Wilhelm, 1997)

I have argued that when students with Down syndrome [all students] have opportunities to develop competencies with and through literacy, when they learn to be confident and are taught to control the use of multiple literacy experiences, texts and tasks and share these with others, then their voices will be heard and their lives and the lives of others will be personally and socially enriched.

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