



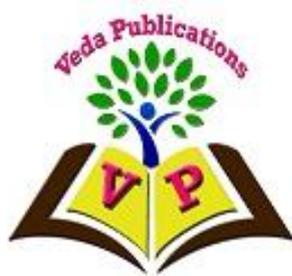
PARENTAL SCAFFOLDING USING STORYBOOKS WITH THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN: A LAUNCH-PAD FOR EARLY LITERACY SKILLS

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ABSTRACT



Early one morning Sarah's mother entered her daughter's room and found her 5-year-old in night-suites pijamas, sitting-up in her bed reading 'Snow white and the Seven Dwarfs' to her stuffed toys. The little one was not just reading but adopted a mixed-mode of reading, narrating and asking questions pointing to pictures. The mother was surprised not by her mixed-mode story reading but upon the fact that it was the first thing the child has decided to do upon awakening; and the mother observed that the child was reading for pure pleasure. All parents and caregivers who have invested their time and energy in encouraging their children to read can claim themselves as major stakeholders when their children become life-long readers. This paper throws light on the role of Family Literacy in developing early Literacy skills, preparing the children for reading readiness and on how families build children's literacy during the years before formal schooling. This paper is backed up by some early literacy theories and a research study among the parents who reside in a gated-community, about their observations of their children to assess their reading pattern and levels of motivation.

Keywords: *Parents, Gated- Community, Scaffolding, Literacy Theories.*



INTRODUCTION

Children do not learn to read and write spontaneously. Children come to preschool and kindergarten having been exposed to various language and literacy environments at home. Adult support is needed to maximize children's learning as they actively construct knowledge about the way read and writing work. The values, attitudes, and expectations toward literacy that are acquired in the home can have a long-term effect on learning to read. The below discussed history of Early Literacy Skills establish a link between the home and school environments and lays foundation for current teaching learning practices.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY

The Social Constructivist theory based on Vygotskian principles adds a cultural dimension to the conversation about children's acquisition of literacy (Vygotsky, 1978). The basic tenets of this theory are (a) children construct knowledge within a socially mediated cultural context, (b) language is a key component in children's appropriation of knowledge, (c) knowledge is constructed most effectively when adults 'scaffold' or 'support' children's development at appropriate levels, and (d) children acquire knowledge with the assistance of an adult or more experienced peer with a continuum of behaviour called the Zone of Proximal Development. Most of the researches on Early Literacy Skills development state that children who come from homes and communities in which adults model and discuss reading and writing have quite different literacy schemes and practices than do children whose caregivers interact less with the tools and processes of literacy.

MATURATION THEORY

Arnold Gesell (1925), the leader of the maturist movement compared cognitive maturation to physical maturation. Children would be "ready" to read when they had developed certain prerequisite skills that could be evaluated by the readiness testing. According to this theory there is little teachers and parents can do to hurry the process of development. Reading readiness and readiness testing were central themes of early reading

instruction until well into 1950s (Lilly & Green, 2004:2)

BEHAVIORIST THEORY

Reading program based on behaviourist theory, which is still used by some school systems today, are fast-paced, teacher-directed approaches based on the behaviourist science of the 1970s. Children learn languages by repeating words and sentences modelled by their teachers, and working through sequences of reading skills in workbooks and programmed texts. The act of reading is seen as a series of isolated skills addressed by teachers hierarchically and scientifically.

PARENTAL SCAFFOLDING CREATES AN AWARENESS ABOUT THE ALPHABETIC PRINCIPLE

The National Research Council recommendations state that letter knowledge is one of the basic prerequisites for success in literacy learning (cited in Lily & Green 2004; 14). Many experiences with environmental print, books, and other literacy materials give children the opportunity to become familiar with letters and sounds. Through their own active learning as adult scaffolding, young children become aware of the alphabetic principle which is the awareness of the systematic relationship between letters and sounds. Children will become familiar with the shapes and names of letters when they play with magnetic letters, alphabet puzzles, and matching games or form letters out of clay.

RESEARCH METHOD AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

A survey was taken among the parents of a Gated-community called Rosedale at OMR to find out the scaffolding pattern of the parents towards their children at pre-schooling stage and the related aspects which provide almost a springboard in developing the Early Literacy Skills. A questionnaire which had 9 questions on the choice of books, the notable behaviour of the children after listening to the stories, their observation about how they correlate some texts, rhymes, titles in the day- today life from the stories they heard. This survey was taken among 30 parents. The following are the significant statistical findings:



- 53 % of the children are not scaffolded and 47 % of them are scaffolded with storybook at preschooling days.
- Out of the 40 % of the scaffolded children, 72 % are scaffolded by mother, 13% of them by father and 15% by grandparents. Study reveals caregivers are not scaffolding the children due to illiteracy.
- To a question about the age of scaffolding, 83 % of them are read stories from the age of 2.5 years almost at kindergarten level whereas 17 % of them are supported even before that period.
- When responses were elicited about the choice of books, 68% of the parents stated using moral storybooks, 12 % were using mythological stories, 10 % were using board books 5 % were using music books and 5% were using pop-up books.
- Various reasons can be attributed for lack of scaffolding among the children using storybooks. 42 % of the parents attributed it for lack of time as both the parents are working, 28 % of them stated they had no such awareness about engaging the child with literary activities, 20 % of them didn't get any positive response from the child and 10% of them attributed other factors for this.

- To a question about their opinion on the effect of scaffolding in developing the early literacy skills, 79 % of them believe in positive effect whereas 21 % are skeptical about it.
- When the parents were asked to write some critical observation of their children about any notable behaviour, any correlation of the characters, objects, texts with real life situations almost all parents failed miserably in giving response.

SUGGESTIONS TO PARENTS TO CREATE CONCEPT ABOUT PRINT AMONG THE PRESCHOOLERS

A child at the age of 2.5 demonstrated a beginning awareness of print when she sat down with her mother to read stories. Opening a book on her lap, she told her, "I'll read it". After looking at it for a minute or two she turned to her mother and said, "You read the words". The child maintained control by holding the book and turning the pages herself. Her request revealed that her new knowledge that print rather than pictures produce the meaning of the story. Parents giving awareness about the print materials at pre-schooling days augment their reading and writing skills at later stage.

Fisher (1991) has given the following factors that adults can help young children as they grow in their learning about print:

Book Knowledge	Directionality	Visual conventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front and back of book • Progression of reading left-hand page before right-hand page • Page turning and book care • Difference between pictures and print • Title, author and illustrator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where to begin reading on a page • Reading left to right • Return sweep • Following pages sequentially 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepts of letter, word, and sentence • Spacing between words • Punctuation • Letter recognition

CONCLUSION

This paper is limited to a survey on parental scaffolding using storybooks. This can be extended to scaffolding using music, rhymes and other animation

pictures, videos, CD ROM stories. The study can be extended out of the gated community and from the parents of various strata of the society.

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ANNEXURE-1 QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Was your child scaffolded with stories at pre-schooling stage with stories?
2. Who are/ were reading or telling stories to your child?
 - a) mother
 - b) father
 - c) grandparents
 - d) caregiver
3. At what age of your child you started reading stories for your child?
4. What type of books were you choosing?
 - a) picture-books
 - b) comics
 - c) board books
 - d) pop-up books
 - e) cloth books
 - f) shape books
 - g) mythological stories
 - h) others
5. Did you adapt any specific strategy to lure the child towards listening to stories? If yes, please specify.
6. Could you specify any notable behaviour from your child at home or from her academics after the child has gone to school which you correlate to your pre-school reading of stories to the child? (This can also be a sort of conversation between you and your child or some repeated questioning of your child on something).
7. After the Harry potter mania many children had a special attachment towards broomstick which otherwise becomes least noticed by children. Do you find any such objects from any of the stories which are used in your daily life that garnered interest in your child?
8. If you are not able to engage with the child with reading activity, even if you are an educated parent, which of the following factors you attribute to this failure?
 - a) lack of time
 - b) not- so-good -response from the child
 - c) lack of books
 - d) any other - please specify.
9. Do you think parental engagement with children in the pre-school days will have a tremendous impact in developing early literacy skills of the children?