

Language and literacy essay

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Teachers must have a sound knowledge and appreciation for language and literacy to be able to make the two concepts a valuable part of a student's curriculum. This essay will explore the importance of language and literature in a student's learning and how they assist in enhancing their development. Most importantly the similarities and differences will be distinguished so that the relationship between the two can be understood. Defining both language and literacy as different entities, but also closely linked concepts, allows readers to bridge together their affiliation when taught to children in a classroom environment.

We can see literacy in having a relationship with language and vice versa. Language and literacy are not seen as separate entities; rather a way of understanding one is part of understanding another. The way in which the two can be integrated can vary. For example, learners cannot develop literary competence without an adequate competence in language. Literacy assists learners in developing their overall language awareness and knowledge about language (Paran 2006). Children must have a sound understanding of the English language to be able to apply their skills into their literacy. When engaging in literacy experiences, children need to have a purpose for applying their language skills and an audience to apply it to (Kervin 2010). Language is essential in development and growth of a child, as they seek knowledge and understanding, and gain skills through language to explore their world around them.

A child requires language to effectively communicate and express their needs and wants and thus, is able to grow and develop as an active member of their community. Language is how we communicate and how we learn.

Language is functional- it enables us to get things done' (Droga ; Humphrey 2003, p. 1) Prior to their schooling years, children achieve knowledge through language. Children use language as a tool for making sense of their world and surroundings. This is achieved through various forms of communication, including body language, spoken language, gestures and expressions. Children seek information and knowledge through language to gain understanding and achieve clarification.

' It is impossible to overestimate the role of language in child development' (Vialle et al, 2003 p. 01). The development of a child's language, including their vocabulary, begins and takes place in their first years of life, right from birth. Children's language is expanded by the many interactions they participate in with both adults and other children. I believe this is how children develop a large vocabulary that is constantly growing and how they make sense of their language that is being used and its purpose and meaning. As children progress to their schooling years, their language and how they use it will surely differ from that they used at home.

Their use of language at home has evolved and been influenced by their immediate environment such as their parents, family and siblings. I believe that each individual family, form their own personal language, as we all grow up in unique, diverse backgrounds, cultures and nationalities. Children will use a less formal yet more intimate language at home, in comparison to the language they will be required to use at school.

Once at school, children will come across a more structured and consistent form of language that will be more formal. The child's language will develop

more broadly as they are exposed to increased influences and resources regarding learning. Their language will be used for a greater purpose and they will have many opportunities to apply and practice their language knowledge through literacy. The purpose for the child's language will differ and be used in greater forms, amongst the KLAs in their schooling.

Language is used to communicate and convey meaning from one person to another. We use these different purposes for different genres. A genre is 'a spoken or written language staged to achieve a particular purpose (Love et al 2007)' Children will be introduced to various genres through their literacy experiences, and will extend upon their knowledge of language through literacy in such forms as explaining, writing, recounting, entertaining, describing, responding and arguing. Vygotsky believed that by the time a child enters school, they use language not only for communicative purposes, but also for thinking and planning (Daniels et al, 2007 pg. 138). Literacy is control of secondary use of language. It can be seen as being able to apply language to "use", "function" and "control". We all use language everyday; however literacy is the act of applying our knowledge of language.

We use language to produce a range of modes for different purposes and audiences. Literacy is used to develop language and use it, for practical and purposeful situations and work. There is little use for possessing the knowledge of language if we cannot use and apply it in our everyday lives to gain knowledge and understanding (Kervin 2010). As educators, we must be aware that our knowledge of literacy and how we convey it to our children is an essential and ongoing process that is constantly adapting. The

importance of applying the student's knowledge of language to literacy is crucial as it plays a crucial part in a child's education, development and life skills. If a child cannot apply their language skills to literacy they will find it difficult to succeed in school, flourish in society or be an effective citizen within their community.

Being soundly literate will highly benefit any child within their personal, professional and global growth, (Cohen 2008). As each child is individually unique, we should be attentive that they are influenced by their own cultural background and thus have knowledge of the sociocultural context an individual child operates in at home. Teachers will need to recognise the way in which children communicate and use language at home in their own culturally specific ways as this may not always be school aligned (Cohen 2008). Teachers will need to have sound knowledge in the child's external environment in which their language has developed.

The child will learn to understand and use their acquired language through literacy experiences in the way in which their specific culture has nurtured and supported it. It is vital, when teaching that these sociocultural elements are understood and taken into consideration when planning literacy activities (Cohen 2008). As educators we must understand that literacy is a forever-changing process that is constantly growing and reflecting our fast evolving world. Teachers need to continually keep themselves up to date with various conceptions of literacy and be flexible and open to a range of methods in the approaches they take in teaching the topic (Cohen 2008).

Literacy is now well beyond the thought that it is only composed of reading and writing. It is now seen as a much broader conception (Cohen 2008). We need to consider the diversity in children's literacy experiences and establish individual differences in children or groups regarding educational or home situations. Children's pathways to literacy are so diverse as children experience a large range of different social interactions and through different modes such as spoken, written, visual and multimodal. Amongst their daily lives a child will experience many kinds of texts and have various interactions with others regarding the texts they encounter (Makin, et al 2007). The way in which children make sense of, and are familiar with language and literacy is becoming increasingly multimodal, through television programs, computers, the internet, electronic games, CD's, DVD's, telephones, toys, books and magazines. These may emphasise one or more aspects of the spoken or written language and visual image modes. These three modes are directly linked in many forms and are not seen as separate in children's lived experience (Makin, et al 2007).

In conclusion, language and literacy go hand in hand. One cannot operate without the other. Language can be seen as the knowledge we learn to be able to communicate and express ones needs, emotions and thoughts. Literacy can be seen as the act of using our knowledge in language to apply it to everyday life activities and experiences. As humans we need both language and literacy to understand and function in our world and society on a day to day basis. The way in which we use language and apply it to literacy is an ever evolving process that is constantly growing and changing at home, in our schools and in our world.

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