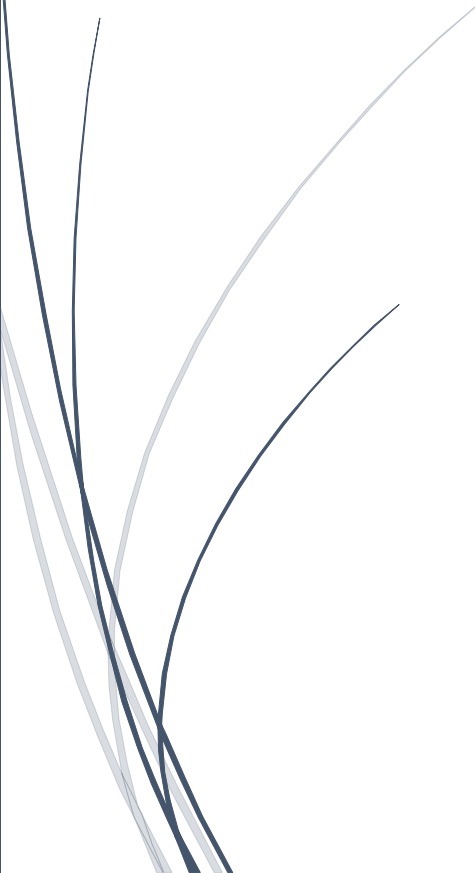Fall 2021

Intentional Teaching Project
Part A: Classroom language and literacy Practices.
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ECE 411
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Intentional teaching

Children learn best when they are engaged in a purposeful learning environment that stimulates interest and eagerness to learn. An environment that combines both, students, and teachers in the learning process. And the way teachers interact with children is fundamental in challenging children's abilities, and knowledge. Intentional Teaching is a teaching pedagogy that promotes children's curiosity as they interact with their peers, adults, and materials in the classroom. It helps them organize, make sense, and connect between what they observe and what they already know and thus construct meanings of their surroundings. Intentionality is "Directed, designed, interactions between children and teachers in which teachers purposefully challenge, scaffold, and extend children's skills." (Pianta, 2003, 5; Epstein, Pg.4).

Classroom language and literacy practices

Cora: Are you still my best friend?

Lucas: YES, for the third time, I am your best friend, and I am still your best friend.

Mason: (jumped into the conversation) we are all best friends, You, Lucas, and me. (As he sticks out his three fingers and points to each finger as he says the names).

Cora: Yes, we are friends, three of us (and copies Mason's finger gesture) and counted, one, two, three.

On the other side of the classroom, Ian and Nadia are playing "Zingo", a word game (Figure 1)

Figure 1

Nadia: Please, please, pleeease make it a star (as she gently jumps in place, and crossing her fingers)

Ian: 1-2-3 (and pushes the button)

Nadia: YAAAY! A star, I got a star, I won!

A typical day in Ms. Amanda's first-grade classroom. Children develop, construct, and learn through social interactions and the use of language as a "window into their knowledge and thinking." (Owacki & Goodman, Pg. 49). And a thoughtful environment and materials that promote children's Literacy. Language is one of the most important developmental domains that children construct "as they use it to engage with the people and objects in their environments and to make sense of their surroundings (Halliday 1975; Owacki & Goodman, Pg. 48).

To start with, Ms. Amanda, and her assistants, devote a considerable amount of time (especially at the beginning of the year) to the assessment and screening of children's language development and literacy. Using a variety of assessment tools to meet children at their level and to support each child's needs to develop their language skills.

The classroom is designed in a rich and encouraging way for children to develop their language. everything is labeled, there are many posters, months of the year, schedule of the day, Jobs list, the Alphabet, numbers, and a library with a great collection of high-quality books. (Figure 2). In this Integrated Co-teaching classroom, the teaching strategy fosters social interactions, inclusion, and diversity. Rules of conversation are very important and "a natural activity" (Beaty, Pg. 210) throughout the day. Children are highly encouraged to look at the teacher while she is talking, listen to what the teacher is saying, try not to interrupt but wait for

their turn (Beauty, Pg. 211). These rules are meant to engage children in meaningful conversation, thus, to develop their oral language which is the "foundation of early literacy" (Beauty, 212).

Figure 2

The classroom talk takes different forms, depending on the activity, and also to engage quitter children and draw them into the conversation. Teacher-Child conversation (Beaty, Pg. 211) where the teacher uses many strategies to extend the child's vocabulary and communication skills. Small group conversation, where children who are usually shy, or not feeling comfortable in a large group can have the opportunity to engage in conversations. Child-

child conversation, the tables are arranged to allow continuous collaboration and conversations between children. every day during the morning meeting, children take turns to say good morning to each other. It starts with the teacher, who says good morning to one child, and that child passes it to another child by saying good morning and the name of the child. I notice how children's talk is different, some stand up and shout "Good Morning -name-) others whisper, one particular child puts his head down and refuses to talk, and the teacher has to encourage him to either say good morning or waive Hi. For another child who was new to the class and doesn't speak English the teacher has to model for him (yesterday was his eighth day of school, he stood up and said "Good Morning -name-) all the teaches in the classroom were surprised and cheered him, and the child felt so happy and proud.

The night of the veggie monster!

Teacher: (after reading the night of the veggie monster by George McClement) Do you think he likes veggies?

Children: Nooooooo

Teacher: what detail did you notice? What happened when he eats peas?

Children: hmm hmm…

Teacher: His fingers became…

Children: His fingers became Wiggly.

Teacher: What else happened?

Children: hmm…

Teacher: his eyes began to…

Children: His eyes began to water.

Interactive Read Aloud, is one of the balanced literacy components practiced in the classroom. The conversation above models how the teacher uses read-aloud to stimulate children's thinking, listening, and the use of language. She uses scaffolding strategies to guide their thinking. When the teacher asked the open-ended question "what do you think happened when he eats peas?" she built on the student's response (in this case they struggled to answer) and decided to Downward scaffold (Zucker et al, Pg. 279), to elicit the conversation, by asking them a Fill-in-the-blank question, "His fingers became…….". scaffolded conversations are fundamental for developing children's language and to detect what the child is capable of doing, what he can do with guidance, and what a child is unable to do even with guidance. Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky) and thus, allows the teacher to plan lessons and activities accordingly. Another way the teacher engages children in Literacy events is through Reader's workshop, shared reading, and guided reading.

The teacher also encourages storytelling to promotes children's language and literacy (Curenton, Pg. 81). After explaining and modeling how to write a narrative. The teacher put the children in small groups and asked them to talk to each other about a short story (a specific reel event). I was amazed to see, even children who are usually quiet, telling stories about themselves and their families. Stories that reflected their culture, and feelings. Most of the stories had a clear beginning, middle, and end, where topic-centered, and the child is the main character of his own

story. After that, the children were asked to share the stories of their peers to develop their

listening and comprehension skills.

Supporting Phonemic Awareness: What is your Favorite place.
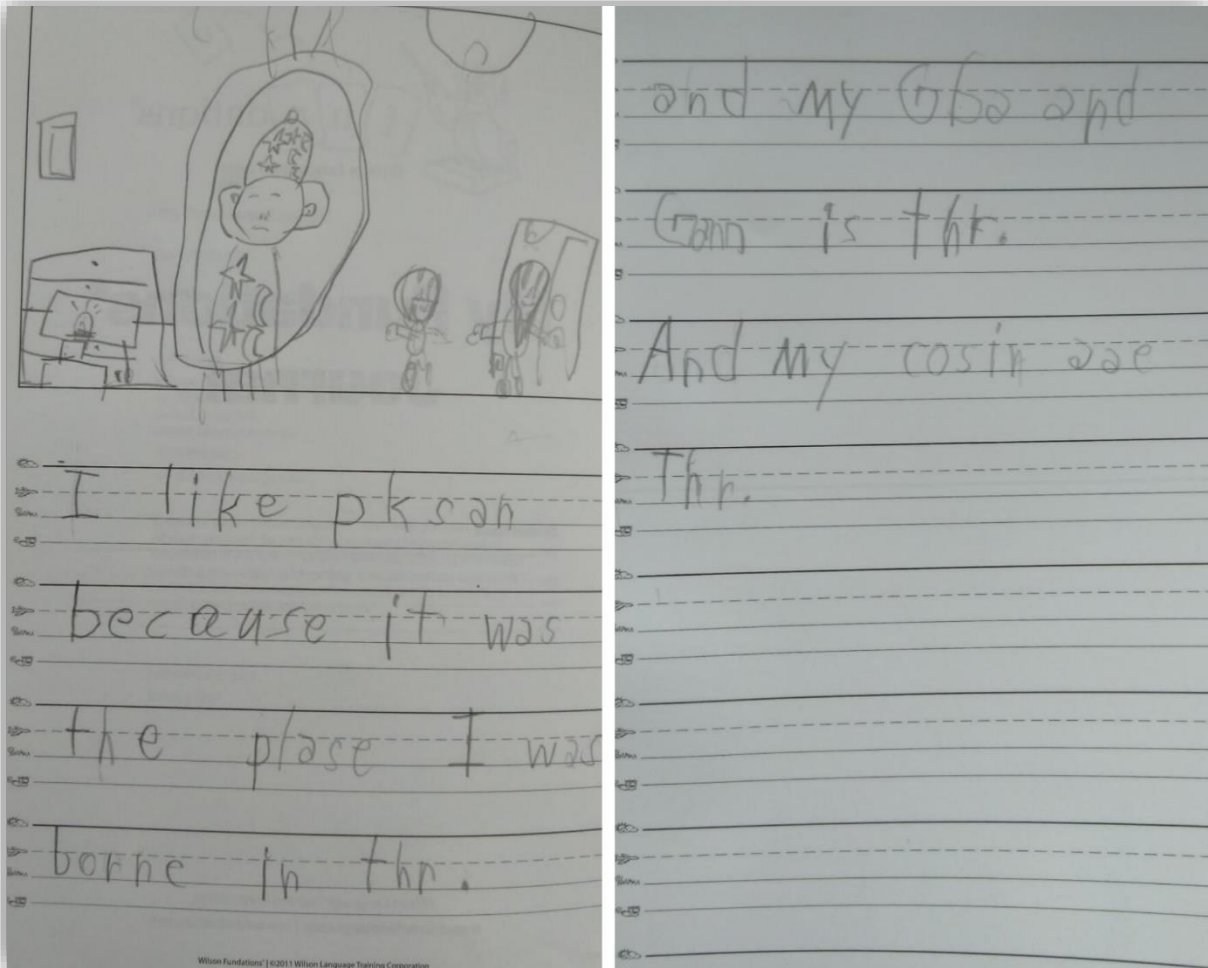

Figure 3

Another component of a balanced literacy program practiced in the classroom is Word

study. The goal is to support Phonemic awareness "the awareness that spoken language consists

of a sequence of phonemes (Yopp & Yopp, pg. 131). Phonemic awareness is a great tool for

decoding and encoding. If storytelling helps children make the connection between spoken and

written language. Word study supports children's phonemic awareness and allows them to write

their stories and read other people's stories. The writing simple seen in (Figure 3) reveals how

the writer is aware that a running speech is made up of a sequence of small sounds. (Yopp &

Yopp, pg. 131).

References:

Beaty, 2014, Spoken Language

Curenton, 2006, Oral Storytelling

Epstein, 2007, The intentional Teaching

Owacki & Goodman (2002) Kidwatching Documenting Children's

Literacy Development

Zucker et al (2020) Asking Questions is Just the First Step

Yopp and Yopp (2000) Supporting Phonemic Awareness Development in the Classroom