

P6: COMPARING THE USE OF SHARED STORIES IN THE LITERACY HOUR, USING AN INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARD OR A BIG BOOK WITH YEARS 2 AND 3 CHILDREN WHO HAVE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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Aim

The aim of the research was to compare children's reactions, interaction and attention and concentration when using teacher-presented "big books" compared with the same book content animated on the interactive whiteboard.

Research

The main research was carried out over two days, with the classroom assistant videoing children during the whole class "big book" session of the literacy hour. However, the children's and other teachers' views about big books and stories using the interactive whiteboard were collected over a number of weeks.

The research was based around a reading programme of stories that are regularly used in the class both with the interactive whiteboard and in big book format. Prior to the research it had been noted by some staff in school that many children reacted better to the stories on the interactive whiteboard than with the same big book.

Normally, the class who were researched would look at the big book and the same story on the interactive whiteboard, but not always in this order. The only change in my everyday practice for this research study was that the activities were video-filmed and studied using an observation sheet.

Background – School, class and children

Whitworth School is a special school mainly for children with moderate and severe learning difficulties. The main research class has 8 children with a teacher and a Learning Support Assistant (LSA). There are 6 Year 2 children and 2 Year 3 children, with a variety of difficulties and disabilities. The research was focused on two of these children.

Child 1 – is diagnosed with Downes Syndrome. He has poor attention and concentration skills and regularly requires support to sit and listen for periods of time. He is a very cheerful and enthusiastic boy.

Child 2 – is diagnosed with Autism. He has very poor communication skills and very little eye contact. He can sit for long periods of time but shows very poor listening and attention skills. He requires a lot of support to focus on tasks.

The interactive whiteboard was introduced into the class in April 2003. Prior to this the class enjoyed a range of big books and stories, although they found it very difficult to sustain concentration and respond to the stories appropriately. Since the introduction of the whiteboard the class have used the interactive stories, as well as the same story in big book form. They have also revised these stories using shared small texts and talking stories on individual PCs.

Strategies

The video taken by the LSA was then studied and discussed between us. An observation schedule of the two selected children focused on what they were actually doing, what they were meant to be doing (teacher expectations), and how they were benefiting from the experience. The views of other staff in the school were also collected as well as children in the class.

Findings

It was apparent from the research that children engaged more in the session with the use of the interactive whiteboard. It was found that children fidgeted less when using the whiteboard and a longer period of concentration and attention was sustained.

The big book

When using just the big book format of the story, child 1 responded to the book and was interested in the story, although he regularly stood up and moved around – disturbing the rest of the class.

Child 2 had very poor concentration regarding the story. He was not fully focused and was seen to be moving his head around. He made continuous inappropriate noises through the story and the teacher needed to say his name to retain his attention on more than one occasion. He regularly looked around the room and at other children and on one occasion began to shake another child. He did respond to some parts of the story, responding with the correct answer 'fish' appropriately, but attention was soon lost as he began to look at other children.

The Interactive Whiteboard

It was immediately apparent how much more focused and interested the children were in the story using the whiteboard. All children were ready to begin the session much more quickly and all children were focused on the board.

Child 1 – was very attentive from the beginning. He answered questions with 'ye' and made appropriate noises associated with the story. He was listening at all times. He also used signs to accompany the story and responded by laughing at appropriate events in the story. It seemed apparent that he thoroughly enjoyed it.

Child 2 – had his head up looking at the whiteboard from the beginning and was very excited about the story. He was seen to move his head when another child got in this way to enable him to see the board. He became very excited on many occasions and laughed and smiled as the story progressed. He also showed signs of communicating with the teacher and said 'fish, fish' at appropriate times in the story. When the story had finished and the teacher moved on to an activity not on the whiteboard, Child 2 soon became less attentive and required a lot of continuous prompts to get him to listen.

Children's views

On asking the children in the class with speech, what they thought about big books and interactive stories they said;

"I like big books on the board because they are easier to look at"

"Books on whiteboard because they move"

"I like board"

Staff views

The staff in school also had opinions about this matter and responded by saying:

“Children seem to be more interested in stories on the whiteboard. They concentrate more and enjoy the moving pictures. They look at the words more, and children who cannot read follow the words when the computer reads them. The children also enjoy looking at big books but tend to just look at the pictures.” Class 3 – Teacher

“The animation and sound of the talking stories promotes interest and enthusiasm. Words are easier to follow as they are highlighted when read.” Class 5 – Teacher

“When observing the children reading the big book I noticed the children were easily distracted, they were not paying attention and they were very fidgety. When the same book came on the whiteboard the children sat still, paid more attention and joined in more with the story.” Class LSA

Reflections on the value of the Whiteboard

- Regardless of whether the teacher used the big book or the whiteboard first to share the same story, children’s concentration, interaction and interest was always greater when using the whiteboard.
- It is felt that factors that may improve children’s attention include the size of the whiteboard; the fact that children can see it more clearly; and that pictures are moving.
- Teachers of older children also commented that the timely highlighting of text on the Interactive Whiteboard emphasised the importance of written words.

Effects of this research on my teaching

- I still use a big book as well as a story on the interactive whiteboard. Without the use of a big book children may not learn the basic skills of how a book works, and it may stop them from attempting to read the words themselves.
- It has been found though that if the story is looked at first using the whiteboard, they are then more interested in looking at it in paper form, as they have some background knowledge of the story. The children also enjoy looking at the story again on the individual PCs and many children’s mouse skills have also developed because of this, and their determination to control the story.

Opportunities for future research

- It would be interesting to produce a case-study focusing on one child with specific attention difficulties and investigating how he or she combines activities using the Interactive Whiteboard, the Big Book and the PC.