

A study on using drawing as a pedagogical tool.

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Abstract

In the context of emergent literacy, becoming literate can be seen as a process which starts before children enter school. Restricted exposure to written language can make the culture of literacy alien for some children. However, teachers play an important role in supporting each child's path to literacy and understanding their distinctive ways of learning to read and write. Even a child's early scribbles and simple drawings hold meaning as they start to sort, select, and form connections between pictures and words. Drawing acts as a form of graphic speech, allowing children to demonstrate themselves before traditional writing. It's interesting to note how children effectively communicate through various forms, such as sharing stories and symbols from their own culture, engaging in creative arts like drawing and painting. These early experiences lay the foundation for future literacy development. This study tends to explore how drawing can help children who are first generation learners, effectively delve into the process of writing.

Keywords: *emergent literacy, drawing, communication, writing, language.*

Introduction

Vygotsky writes that acquiring skills in language is essentially an organic and natural process, and writing should not become a mechanical or artificial exercise divorced from a wider cultural context. He says that reading and writing must be something the child needs. It must be "relevant to life" learning to read and write it is a gradual process which starts for young children with an exposure to the written word in a meaningful context. The perspective of emergent literacy views becoming literate as a process which begins long before children are expected to decipher letter and word in a school setting. There are many children who have limited exposure to written word and the very purpose of writing may not be clear when they enter school. For such children the culture of literacy may seem like entering unknown, unfamiliar and even hostile

territory. The concept of letter, word and sentence which seem natural to a literate person, may evolve gradually for some. Hence it is teacher's responsibility support each child to grow into literacy and to recognise ways in which different children learn to read and write.

At first sight child's scribbles and rudimentary lines and circles may not seem to make much sense but if look closer it can be seen how the child is beginning the process of sorting, selecting and shifting to make meaning both through picture and word. The first markings a child makes are often an extension of physical movement. Vygotsky speaks of drawing as graphic speech and stresses the equal significance of image, making play, gesture and writing in the way a child comes to understand

literacy. Children are constructive communicators. The way they communicate can take many forms including sharing stories and symbols from their own culture. Drawing allows the children to communicate from simple marks to complex creations, before they learn conventional writing. It's a universal language that goes beyond cultural barriers and allows children to connect and share their ideas with each other.

Drawing can help children to comprehend and express complex ideas. Drawing acts as an anchor when children start their experimentation with letters and indulge in emergent writing activities. When children are young, they start exploring written communication by scribbling, drawing and producing approximations of writing. Drawings show how children express their understanding and develop their understanding. Drawings unfold useful information and children's insights into the world around them: a picture is worth a thousand words. In order to understand the meaning of a child's drawing, it is important for a teacher to have a conversation with a child. The teacher, hence, should continuously assess the learning outcomes by listening to children, understanding what they want to communicate, and review drawings to have modifications in curriculum and instructional approaches.

Drawings serve as the foundation for the adults to guide and promote young children's learning in several ways. When children are young, they draw, use letters and words to represent people, objects or things they know about. Drawing and writing are similar as they both help the children to communicate their ideas using symbols. The children's drawing and writing skills develop as they gradually grow. The children begin by making

simple shapes and eventually move on to more detailed drawings and words. For them, drawing and writing go hand in hand.

Objectives of the study

Using drawing as a pedagogical tool can be of great help to the teachers as well as students. For Students, who have limited exposure at home for literacy development, drawing can act a stepping stone towards writing. So, in order to help students, the main objectives of the study are:

- Using drawing as a pedagogical tool in the classroom to help in writing development.
- Understanding and analysing the drawings made by students.
- Analysing the progress of the writing process of students during the internship period.
- To find out the relationship between drawing and language development.

Rationale

The intern was allotted class 2 of the primary school. Most of the students in the class were disinterested in the writing process involved in the language period. However, with observation it was found out that the students enjoyed drawing a lot rather than simply writing something. For them the drawing and writing part was totally different and independent to each other. It could be guessed that this perception of students was formed due to the traditional teaching methods used by the teachers at the school. The class teacher of class 2 did not see drawing as a part of writing. If he found that students were drawing in the classroom, he would scold them and ask them to keep it aside. The teacher did not value drawings' importance in the early literacy development. Most of the students in the class were

first generation learners and they had very little or no exposure to the print rich environment. The teacher also taught in the traditional ways where drawing was not a part of the classroom studying. As a result, for students also drawing and writing had no connection. The classroom becomes a learning space with frequently changed visuals and display spaces which children are involved in and respond to. It is important that pictures are integrated into learning within the whole curriculum. In order to make the classroom a print rich area, various poems, picture stories and other things were added so that the students could interact with the material.

When the internship started, intern observed that drawing could be used as a pedagogical tool in the classroom where students found no connection or linkage between drawing and writing. Most of the students had difficulty in writing but were actively involved in the drawing process that was used in the language classroom. It is important to understand that writing includes all the forms of written and visual communication rather than just the conventional form of writing which the school was emphasizing on. In early childhood it is important to engage children experiences with writing and creating text for self-expression. Young children usually involve in writing through the means of drawing and in the allotted school the children could be seen involved in the drawing but not as a means to develop writing. So, the intern decided to use drawing as a pedagogical tool in the classroom for early learners where they can enjoy the process of writing and not consider writing to be a difficult process which is hard for them. If the children are scaffolded in the process which involves drawing as a stepping stone. By scaffolding, the teacher helps children build a strong foundation for their literacy development. Children require

continuous experience in writing. As the children were early learners, the intern thought of various writing tasks where the students could be involved in the drawing and eventually move to writing.

Literature Review

In the article 'Understanding children's perspectives of classroom writing practices through drawings', (2019) the authors focus on how the drawings of children have material reality and depict children's experiences with learning to write. The article discovers how 'draw and talk' methodologies can be used as learner's voice. The authors identified various depictions of writing, as per the children's drawings and emphasised on various elements of writing such as the relational, the material and the spatial. Drawings are considered to be a form of communication. The drawings made by children are interactive, visual expression of ideas and mode of meaning making.

The study conducted by Mackenzie and Veresov (2013) investigate what would happen if teachers encouraged children, in the first six months of formal schooling, to continue visual text creation while they taught them to create written texts. Genetic Research Methodology was used to explore and understand the data. A 'new' way was found to explore the relationship between drawing and early literacy in terms of writing development. The study argues that encouraging children to draw, leads them to the path of reading and writing and thus creating meaningful texts which they might not be able to create using conventional methods. Writing is an important component in the literacy development. This research proposes that usually the focus is on the accurate letter and word formation in many classrooms which may be a response to the 'accountability movement'.

The study by Mackenzie (2013) examines the relationship between children's drawing and learning to write in the first six months of formal schooling in an era where visual literacy and linguistic literacy combine. There are still classrooms where young children are being forced to see drawing and writing separately and not as interrelated processes. The result presents that the teachers should encourage young writers to see drawing and writing as interrelated system so that they can produce texts which are composite. The research identifies the important relation between drawing and emergent writing. The approach discussed in the study can also lead children to develop a positive attitude towards themselves as writers.

As per the study (Iris and Adriana,2003) drawing and writing, systems used for expression and communication in literate societies. The study looked at the drawings and writings created by children between 28 to 53 months old and compared them. The authors wanted to see how these skills develop and change as children grow. The study explores how drawing and writing are connected in children's development.

Methodology

The research was conducted in the class 2 of SDMC Primary school of R.K. Puram Sec 3. The children were in age group of 8-10 years. It was a co-ed school where most of the students were first generation learners and found writing a difficult task. Qualitative research was conducted with the students where the samples of their drawings were collected. Over the internship period, lesson planning was done in a way that students were provided opportunity to draw in the language classroom. All the students in the class

were encouraged to participate in the drawing and writing process. The drawings that students made were collected and studied by the intern. Students would be usually given a task which involved drawing in it.

The progress in the process of the writing of the students can be seen using the samples collected. The progress in this research can be seen in three phases which can be identified as the starting of the internship, middle of the internship and towards the end of the internship. The samples of the tasks given during these phases are studied and analysed. During the beginning of the internship, students were given a task where they had to make a drawing of themselves and write their names below it. The other task which was given during the middle of the internship was that the students were provided with isometric sheets on which they had to draw something using straight and curved lines. Whereas towards the end of the internship, the students were provided a worksheet of riddles where they had to guess the answer, draw and write it. The worksheet was prepared by the intern herself and students had to fill it themselves. The samples of three tasks help us understand the progression that the students made with their drawings in the writing process.

Samples and their analysis

The samples were collected as a result of the tasks that were given to students in the different phases of the internship. These samples help in understanding the progression that the students made in the entire period of internship. The drawings of the students that were collected during the internship as a part of the study can be analysed in the three categories which are (a) drawing as a way to communicate, (b) using letters and numbers in the drawing and (c) writing text along with the

drawing.

Drawing as a way to communicate

At the beginning of the internship the students were given a task where they had to make a drawing of themselves and write their names below it or how they were feeling in that moment. The students made the drawing, but they did not write anything. It was just the drawing of themselves. The students did not want to write, so the intern did not force them to write. Dyson observed that the drawing is often more engaging and enjoyable for young children, so it's natural for it to receive more attention in the early years. It's like they're using drawing as their primary means of communication before fully diving into writing. It was left upon the students if they wanted to write. The two samples of the drawing are:



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

Children disclosed their emotions and feelings through the facial expression and the posture of the body as the girl in the figure is looking up depicting that she is thinking something, and the boy is drawn as such that it appears to be sitting. Although, there is no chair or table shown on which he is sitting but the position of the body is drawn in such a way.

Children expressed themselves through the drawing. The way children have drawn themselves draws a parallel with the reality in the way they have shown physical features like the way their hair are or the colour of their dress that they were wearing. For emergent writers, drawing and writing have similar purpose, which includes communication using symbols. The spaces where children have placed themselves in their drawings play an important role in understanding their perceptions of that space like both the students have drawn themselves in the school which implies that although they are there in the school either they are thinking about something else or getting bored. Schools and classrooms have a structure and regulations to ensure discipline and order, and this could be understood in relation to the drawings made the children.

Using letters and numbers in the drawings

In the middle of the internship, students were given a task where they had to make figures using curved and straight lines on the isometric sheets provided to them. Horizontal and vertical straight lines, loops facing right, left, up and down, unclosed loops, dots and circles may become patterns, drawings or the beginning of letters of the alphabet and often a combination of all three. Sometimes in children's exploration in markings, the letters of the alphabet often take a form where there is fluidity between picture and sign and the drawings might symbolise various letters or numbers. The samples

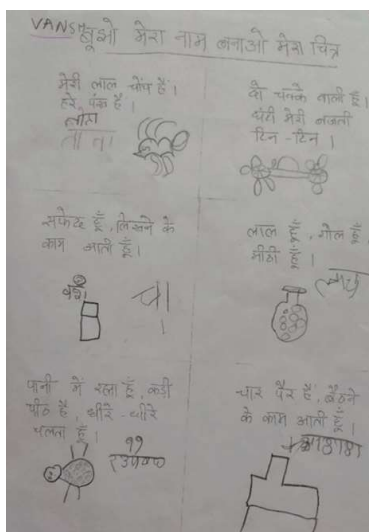


Figure 6.

In the above samples, we can see that the students have tried to write along with the drawing. However, not all the answers are written but there is a shift in children's will to write that can be seen here as compared to the task of drawing themselves. The relationship of markings to sounds, of letters to words and of spoken language to written text has begun to take shape in the child's mind. It can be seen that the child has adopted the conventions of writing from left to right and from top to bottom. There are some letters that cannot be recognised but a significant aspect of writing has been understood. The child has tried to write the words on the basis of letter sound correspondence. The children here have learnt to identify and differentiate the units of sound used in the language.

Conclusion

School is a space where children come to acquire knowledge and develop their social, emotional and cognitive skills. In early years, language development is one of the important aspects where learning to write can be challenging

for some children as they might be first generation learners who do not get enough support from their homes. Therefore, it becomes the Responsibility of the teachers to help students in whatever they can. Using appropriate strategies to help students in reading and writing process can be of great help. In this study, drawing was used as a pedagogical tool to help students in the process of writing as most of the students in the school had difficulty in writing. Drawing as a strategy was helpful as students seemed disinterested in writing in the beginning of the study. With the passage of time and constant involvement in the drawing, students moved towards writing. Through the study, it could be seen that there has been a shift in the interest of the students from non-writing to willing writing. The usage of drawing as a tool in early years can be really helpful in emerging writers and readers. It is important to value children's perspectives as it helps them in their literacy development. Writing is the key element in literacy development. Children's drawings help in relating text construction and early writing. Drawings are a primary form of written language whereas written text is formed of words and letters. In the study it could be seen that initially children did not want to write i.e. drawing dominated the writing, whereas in the end, children could be seen using both written form as well as the drawing.

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