

Language, Literacy and Learning in the Early Grades

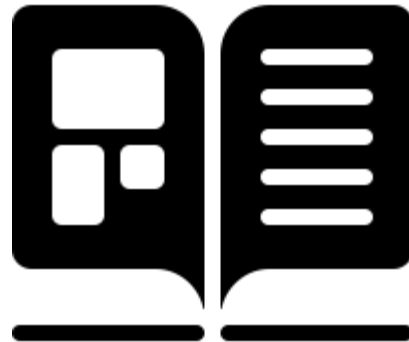
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7th RAP International Literacy Conference
Theme: Enabling Learners through Language and Literacy
Organised by the Reading Association of the Philippines
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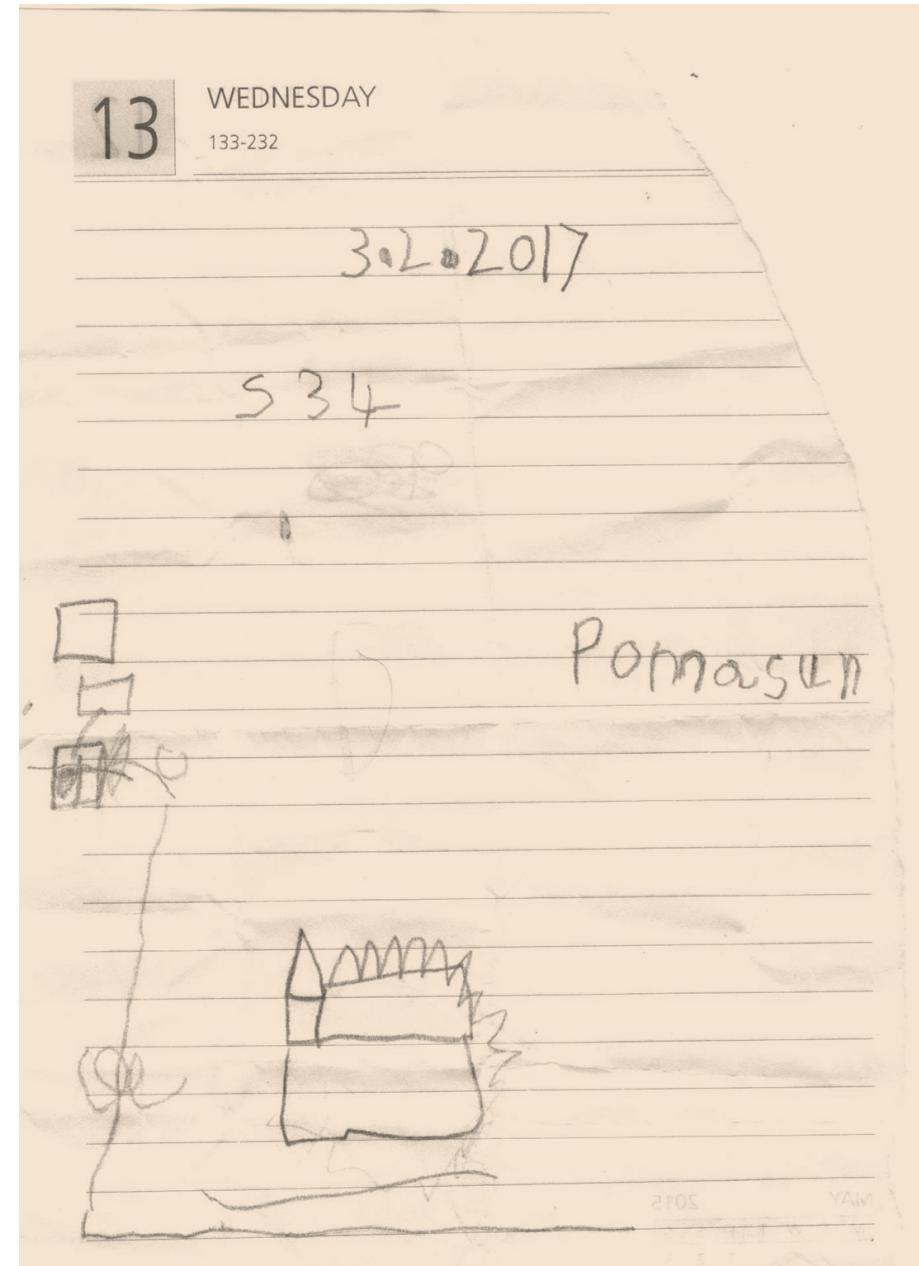
This talk focuses on children, their learning partners and one class of tools that is used to enable literacy learning.



Child C, 5 yrs

“How will my friend find my house? That is why I made my address.”

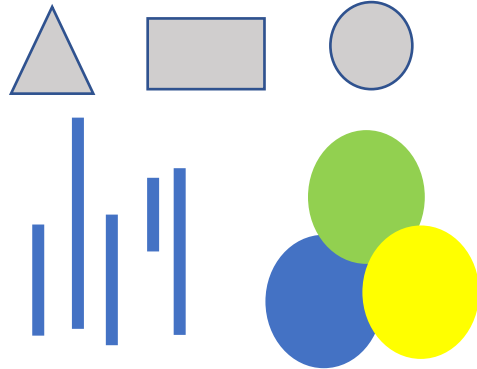
Many skills informed this map!



Learning



About
words & sentences



About
the physical world



About
animate-inanimate



About
the social world

Several theoretical debates link these different domains of learning.

- A) Are cognitive systems modular or interlinked?
- B) Does learning occur mainly through associations?
- C) How specific is the learning? Will it transfer?
- D) What is the developmental path by which these knowledge bases grow over time?

Two enduring insights in the field of child development

- a variety of basic processes underpin children's learning
- these bases of learning, though seemingly universal, are influenced by context

I will review these points with examples from three domains:
socio-emotional learning, language learning and literacy learning

A lost toy

Emotion recognition: a 'narrow' competence that is propped up by a range of information pulled together for the task at hand

- read the social context,
- mentalize about another's response
- find the appropriate vocabulary to label



A lost toy

Emotion recognition: to learn is to become more sensitive to or selective about what is pertinent within a continuous stream of information

- What is task relevant
- What is task irrelevant



A lost toy

Emotion recognition: to learn is to develop greater perceptual finetuning and/or conceptual complexity

- To apply varying levels of inferences to task-pertinent information



A new word

Vocabulary learning: a 'narrow' competence that is propped up by a range of information pulled together for the task at hand

- world-word mapping,
- recognising multiple uses
- find the appropriate occasions to use the word



A new word

Vocabulary learning: What is task relevant and task irrelevant; this may be both linguistic and non-linguistic ambient information

- the word 'buzz' occurs when
 - bees appear
 - when the child is physically near a bush of scented flowers



A new word

Vocabulary learning: to develop greater finetuning and/or complexity; to abstract

- The ability to abstract arguably releases the learning for use in novel situation
- Generalisation and transfer of learning can then occur



Don't worry, bee punny!



BUZZ + ING



BUZZ



A tricky word

Decoding: a 'narrow' competence that is propped up by a range of information pulled together for the task at hand

- Letter-sound mapping,
- Recognising irregularities
- Sound out to find appropriate word in one's vocabulary
- Write to learn
- Recognise variations in the word
(kite+s ✓, kite - ed✗)



A tricky word

Comprehension: to become more sensitive to or selective about what is pertinent within a continuous stream of information

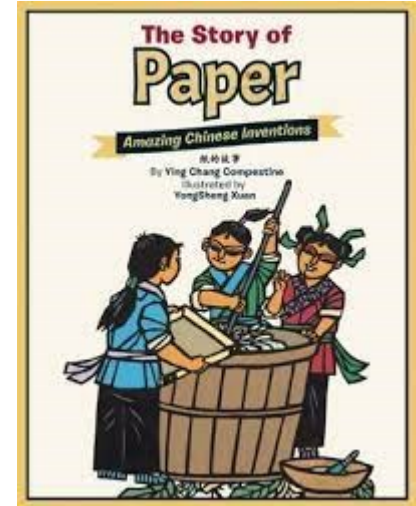
- ‘information distributions’
- how the orthography encodes language
- what is task irrelevant (orality-literacy gap/ diglossia)
- Streams of information on multiple-dimensions:
 - Vocabulary
 - Grammar knowledge
 - Listening comprehension
 - Decoding accuracy
 - Reading fluency



A tricky word

Decoding and comprehension: to develop greater perceptual finetuning, conceptual complexity, and inferencing

- The ability to abstract arguably releases the learning for use in novel situation
- Generalisation and transfer of learning can then occur



Kite

KITE

Kíte

KITE

Kite



An inside-out view of what drives learning: the deep influencers

- a visible skill has deep roots
- only some of all available ambient information are task-relevant
- applying lower-order rules or increasingly higher-order principles help select pertinent information



Two enduring insights in the field of child development

- a variety of basic processes underpin children's learning
- these bases of learning, though seemingly universal, are influenced by context

In the previous slides I focused on the bases of learning. I will now turn to the issue of context by listing a few examples.

Context and literacy learning



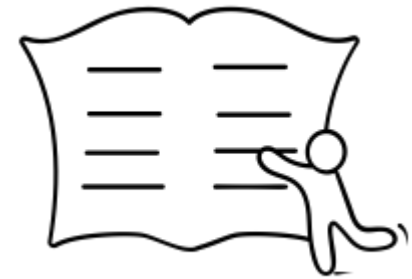
Type of
instruction



Literacy-related
practices



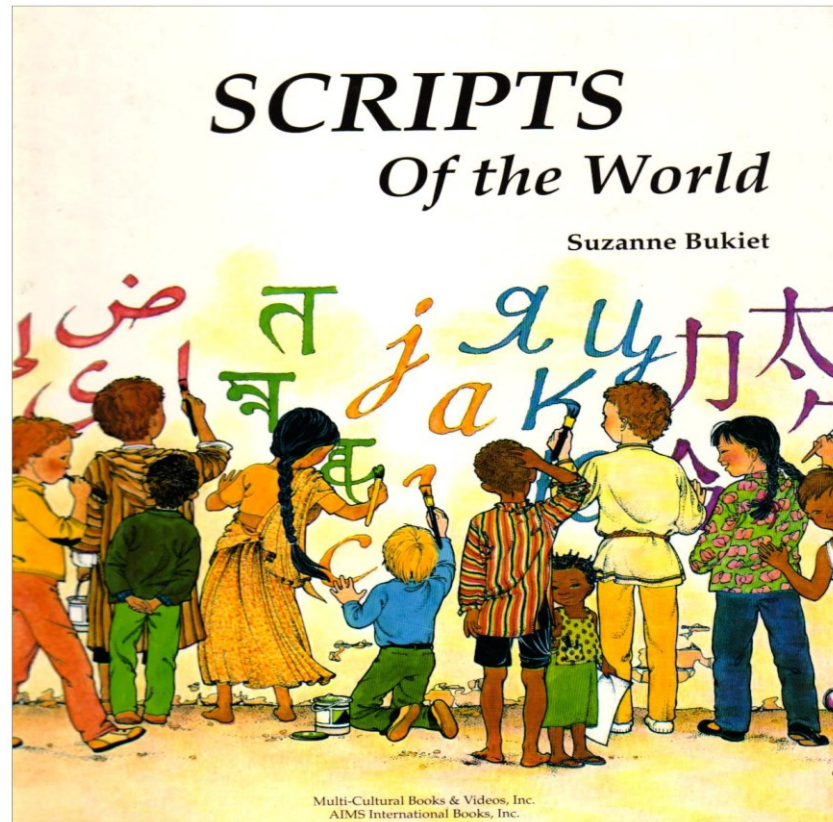
Print in the
environment



Home
tutoring

These contextual factors shape the nature and pace of learning.

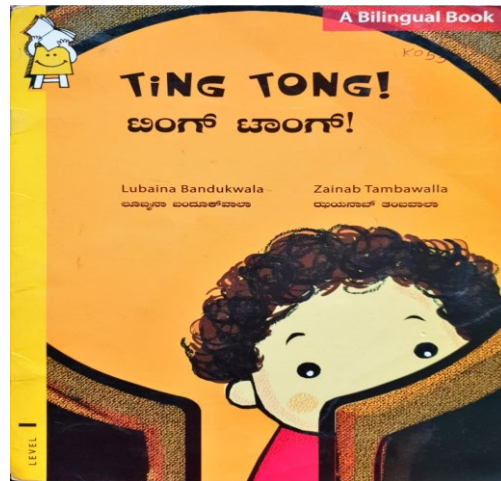
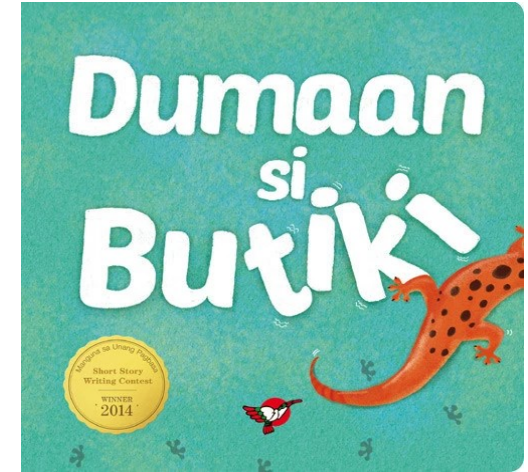
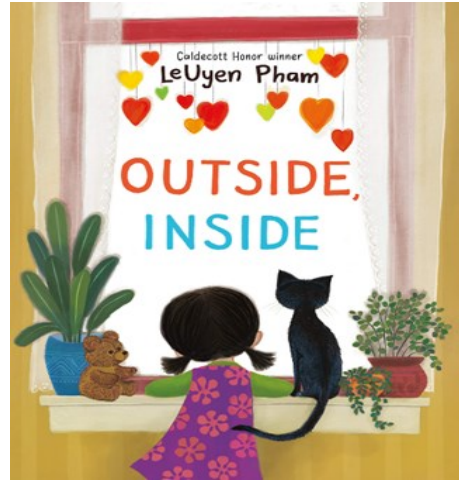
Context and literacy learning



Illustrators: Hélène Muller & Christian Lai Cong Phuoc


The writing system & language of literacy are proximal contextual factors.

Writing systems fine-tune literacy learning in some unique ways




Pedagogical implications



- a visible skill has deep roots
 - only some of all available ambient information are task-relevant
 - information is used using lower-order rules or increasingly higher-order principles
 - **Focus on foundation skills**
 - **Explain, narrate, walk through the specifics of a task**
 - **Demonstrate, describe, do & show**
 - **Provide variety**
 - **Provide graded practice**
 - **Scaffold higher-level tasks**
- 

Pedagogical implications



- Type of instruction
 - Literacy practices
 - Print in the environment
 - Home tutoring
 - Writing system details
 - Language specific details
 - **Become a critical consumer of research**
 - **Create a book flood**
 - **Support parents to support child**
 - **All alphabets are not the same!**
 - **Children know more language than we give them credit for. Draw on their language to teach well.**
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Thank you!

Acknowledgement: Icons are from The Noun Project, book covers are from publisher websites, and the illustration for the 'bee' pun is from Readers Digest, 2021 (hyperlinked in slide 11).



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