HELPING CHILDREN ENJOY READING - TRYING TO REACH CHILDREN’S OWN PERCEPTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Reading benefits all children in their personal growth as well as academic success.

Children with positive attitude towards reading also enjoy studying.

My studies aim at increasing reading motivation and enjoyment by understanding children’s own perceptions and even conducting research together with children.

The research methodology bases on the cooperation between teachers and researchers from emancipatory perspective.

This presentation consist of results of our prior experiences and some other perspectives to reading.
WHAT COULD THE TEACHER DO?

In order to help children enjoy reading and become skillful and motivated readers, the teacher must be familiar with

1. children literature and other kinds of reading materials as well as children’s preference for reading materials

2. pedagogical approaches which are motivating, child-centered and enhance co-operation and help children to work on their own level (+ increase the effectiveness at lessons)

3. children in general and the children of her/his own class

Allington and Gabriel: The teacher should read aloud everyday!
WHAT SHOULD WE DO AT SCHOOL?

The key for being a more skillful reader is reading more!

To give the children a feeling of pleasure while reading children must be skillful readers and we must practice reading skills at school.

This means providing children with adequate literacy skills, motivation and time.

Ivey and Broaddus: Just plain reading!

Allington and Gabriel: Children should read every day a material of their own choice.

Taueron: Just reading, not assignments.
WHAT TO PRACTISE? MECHANICAL SKILLS, COMPREHENSION SKILLS (VOCABULARY) AND METACOGNITIVE SKILLS

If the mechanical reading struggles the reader has no energy to interpret or comprehend the text and there is no motivation to read.

We must find motivating ways to practice reading fluency and vocabulary:

- Minute reading, Reader’s theatre
- Reading aloud (in reading circles, pairs etc.)
- Animal-assisted reading and reading comprehension
- Listening to more skillful readers read,
- Collaborative, arts-based activities
- Effective discussion
THE THESIS FOR THE JOY OF READING

1. Effective co-operation with families and listening to children's wishes
   
   Family literacy programs, boys’ reading, developing the discussions on literature

2. Improving the basic reading skills
   
   Intensifying rehearsing and making the training more motivating reading skills by ICT and by using research-based pedagogical approaches, versatile reading material

3. Creating peaceful reading situations during school days and enough time for reading
   
   More time for reading, connecting activities to reading, creating nice places for reading and making reading a social activity

4. Finding the right book for everyone
   
   Book endorsing, book pass, the teachers systematically choose too challenging books, many kinds of reading material
WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM CHILDREN ABOUT POSITIVE READING EXPERIENCES?

The initial research on children’s early reading experiences (Aerila & Niinistö 2015) based on Davis’s (2013) research model.

Second graders and their parents wrote small essays on their memories from reading experiences and experiences on learning to read.

FINDING A PERFECT PLACE FOR CONCENTRATED READING

Most children value reading and would read more if they had time.

Reading at schools is an important means of assuring equal opportunity for all pupils.

Children who have difficulties in literacy learning feel anxiety during reading assignments.

Being able to choose the reading place without distractions helps concentrating on reading.

Children are often encouraged to read if they have time after they have finished their assignments.

This is an effective practice for advanced readers but struggling and reluctant readers seldom have that time or may not want to find the time to read, if they want to read at all.
The most positive experiences of early reading experiences in our study were related reading with fathers or grandfathers.

Listening to a more skillful reader has many benefits, especially to reading comprehension and motivation.

The parents and grandparents in our family literacy experiment were surprised at how enthusiastically the children listened to their reading. This gave them confidence in their efforts to support the development of their children’s literacy skills also at home.
CONNECTING CHILDREN OF DIFFERENT AGES READING TOGETHER

Part of the older students were forced leave their comfort zone and their traditional school role.
First graders felt safer during school days.
The intimacy of the reading times was important for both age groups.
It was nice to show positive feelings and empathy during the school day.
The reading aloud increased their motivation to rehearse reading and pay attention to different aspects of reading.
The possibility to discuss literature in small groups improved the participation and gave children confidence.
It was important to have the opportunity to choose the reading material.
The older students who still had poor reading skills had opportunities to read books that were not as difficult as the school texts they usually read at school.
WHAT AND HOW CAN WE LEARN FROM CHILDREN THROUGH THEIR STORIES?

Children should have opportunities to stimulate exploration in playful environments and the learning should involve social interaction with others.

Connecting different art forms and humor to literacy and literature education may enhance children to elaborate their ideas, interests, and experiences.

From the perspective of learning literacy, art can be seen as a form of language through which children can communicate.

In early childhood education, stories help children feel safe and secure, and activities connected to different forms of stories should be done daily.

Stories also provide children with entertainment and tools to understand and act in the world.

Stories develop children's subconscious reasoning skills, especially among children whose abstract level of thinking is not very high.

Children's self invented stories reflect unconscious thinking, so they can reveal more about the reader's values, reading abilities, and worldview than facts and conscious thoughts about texts.
The perception of humor is a subjective, and individual differences in the sense of humor affect the way in which people respond and are affected by humor.

Humor is essential for children’s well-being in many ways, helping them to cope with new and challenging situations.

"Draw a picture that would make others laugh" (Piret 1941)
THE PROCESS DIFFERENTIATED THE STORYTELLING

The stories could be divided into three categories: portrayals, conventional stories and combinations of the stories and portrayals.

Most children empathized with their character and thought of them as a human friend.

- Most stories humorous details were positive and empathetic.
- The stories contained almost no aggressive or derogative humor.
- The most apparent feature in all stories regardless of the features of the character was friendship, happiness and acceptance of diversity.
- It seems that humor is closely related to happiness and wellbeing, and the children are happiest when doing everyday things: playing with their friends and being at home.
The character is called Tutti Tulli (Pacifier Classifier)

This character’s teeth are funny. It is a bit chubby. It makes others laugh. It is funny. It knows how to make somersault and stuff. It has crew cut. It has short legs.
CONVENTIONAL STORIES:  
CHAIN OF EVENTS

The character is called girl Long-haired girl

The girl dropped into the toilet. Then somebody goes to pee and then flushes. Then the doll was driven to the water institute. The doll gets lost. Then a girl notices that the doll is missing and goes looking for it. The girls finds a city. Then the girl goes to have a pizza and then she goes to bed. Is is night. Then in the morning the girl realizes that she is in another city. And then she realizes that a candle has fallen and there is a fire. And then the fire in the tent is being put down. Then she finds the doll. She finds it because she goes to another city and finds the doll from the water institute. She finds the doll because she has looked for it elsewhere. They went home together and make a picture of them together.
COMBINATIONS OF CONVENTIONAL STORIES AND PORTRAYALS

The character is called Ulla

Ulla uses only mens clothes. In addition, she often has dirty teeth and her nose is purple. She is like this, because she wants to be funny. Actually she has been like this since birth. She loves chili and therefore she has red hair. She has not allways had red hair, but has dyed it red. She also eats only food with chili. The only friends she has are chili peppers, which she sadly usually eats.
The literature-based follow-up story means envisioning the continuation of a text based on a fragment of it.

The aim is to write, tell, draw, or act out a text that stylistically and substantively complies with the original text.

The follow-up stories, similar to other think-aloud tasks, are a good method to use to comprehend how a reader understands texts and experiences.

It is possible to implement stories by story crafting or ICT (BookCreator).
SO WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Every child can be a reader, if he is given

1. an interesting book at the right level of difficulty and by own choice

2. enough time to read and concentrate on plain reading without the teacher control

3. a comfortable place to read (which enables him to read together with friends or concentrate peacefully

4. friends to share the reading experience with (without the teachers control; the traditional literature conversations are not beneficial or benefit only the already motivated students)

The teacher must like reading herself and believe that activities and reading materials she is using are meaningful
WHY AM I DOING THIS?

Most children read literature for the information and enjoyment.

Our life is a story: through stories created by others we can dictate our own life story: problems can be solved, things can change for the better, we will survive in scary situations, being patience and learning new skills is useful, even the smallest can be the strongest, we are not alone.

Interpreting fiction has similarities to empathetic growth: by reading stories we can become more empathetic, people are the same everywhere and everytime.

EVERY CHILD NEEDS A STORY TO BECOME A WHOLE INDIVIDUAL.


THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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