

Four activities from the UKRI-ESRC funded TalkTogether project



Schoolwork at Home during Covid-19:

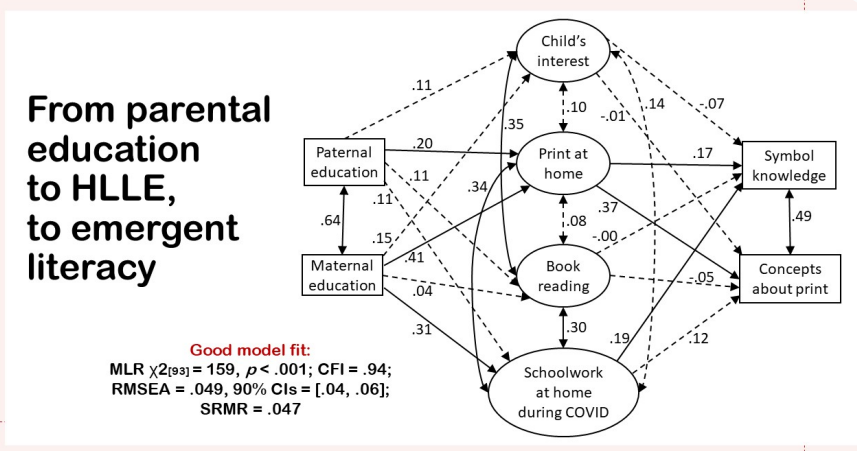
Harnessing the unique features of the home for culturally-embedded emergent literacy programmes

Ma, S., Nag, S., Pandith, P., Miranda, R., Arulmani, G.

Worldwide statistics show that, across many countries, preschool children's access to education outside the home was cut off for the longest compared to other age groups during the pandemic. This provided us with a unique historical window to look at what resources there are at home and what the homes are actually doing to support emergent literacy when facing unprecedented crises.

Methods
Location: Bangalore, Mysore, and Udupi in the southern state of Karnataka, India.
Sample: 294 children aged 5 to 6 years old, and their caregivers.
 Children assessed on their emergent literacy skills. Caregivers interviewed and asked about home language and literacy environment and family socio-economic status including parental education.

- Findings**
- Schoolwork at home during COVID links closely with all other dimensions of home language and literacy environment.
 - Child's interest links closely with schoolwork at home during COVID and book reading.
 - Parental education predicts the variety of print at home, which in turn predicts children's emergent literacy.
 - Maternal education predicts the variety in modes & types of schoolwork at home during COVID, which in turn predicts children's symbol knowledge.



- Implications**
- Harness already existing print at home**
 - Consider if preferred engagement with print is for tutoring which could potentially impact on children's symbol knowledge, concepts about print and other emergent literacy skills**
 - Be alert to variations in child's interest and hence what can be done at home**

Implicit learning of macrostructure elements in a small group

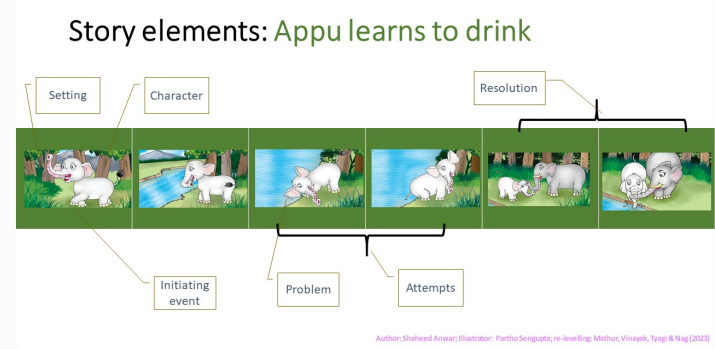
intervention study

Ntalli, A., Mirkovic, J., Pydah, A., Shetty, A., Pandith, P., Usha, M. N., Nagendra, S., Kala, B., Chandana, S., Arulmani, G., Nag, S.

We designed a story-based oral language intervention with a primary aim to examine the role of repeated exposure to structured narratives and targeted syntactic structures in enhancing their use in a diverse sample of multilingual children where the target language (Kannada) was a first or an additional language.

Methods
Location: Schools in four locations across Karnataka with Kannada as one of their school languages
Sample: 87 children (mean age in months 76)
 Each intervention session: Focusing - Story reading - Questioning - Stretching
 In 5 sessions story reading was followed by macrostructure questions and in another 5 with questions targeting microstructures. Children were assessed for details in their story retelling at pre-, mid- and post-test, and one month follow-up.

- Findings**
- Children performed significantly better in T3 compared to T1 in relation to story 'grammar' or narrative structure
 - Children did significantly better in T4 compared to T1; hence intervention effect holds over the short term of one month.
 - The impact of the questioning activity did not reach significance.
 - Child-level and not environmental factors (such as maternal education and proportion of Kannada reading materials out of all reading materials at home) were significant predictors of children's total macrostructure score in both T1 and T3



- Discussion**
- This study adds to the growing body of literature showing that structured input and systematic opportunity for language production can enhance children's narrative skills at the macrostructure level, and the effect seems to maintain over time.**
 - The type of questioning activity was not found to be more effective at T2. Contrary to our expectations.**
 - Children's prior language skills were predictive of their total score in macrostructure while factors at home were not.**

Teaching and Learning through Play

Nag, S., Simmons, H.

Five principles of Teaching and Learning

- Learnt skills have deep roots** - Play embodies natural enquiry – children express and pursue their curiosity through play. Intrinsically motivated enquiry encourages children to draw on existing skills – or 'roots' - in pursuit of their goal
- Not all information is relevant for a particular task** - such enquiry prompts children to sift through available information – either strategically or through trial and error – to identify relevant information to their goal
- Learning draws on lower-order rules and higher-order principles** - Play can aid learning of lower-order and higher-order rules
- Learning draws on domain-general and domain-specific skills** - Play can demand domain-general and domain-specific skills
- Experience plays a critical role in learning** - Play has the potential to offer space to explore, apply, take risks, experience success and failures, practice and fine tune to mastery. Play as experience; and experience is critical for learning.

Play is embedded in our research activities



Teacher-directed & guided play activities to promote multilingualism
 Tumhari Meri Batein (Our Conversations) is a self-paced teacher professional development video series on multilingualism with respect to the child, the classroom, and the school culture.



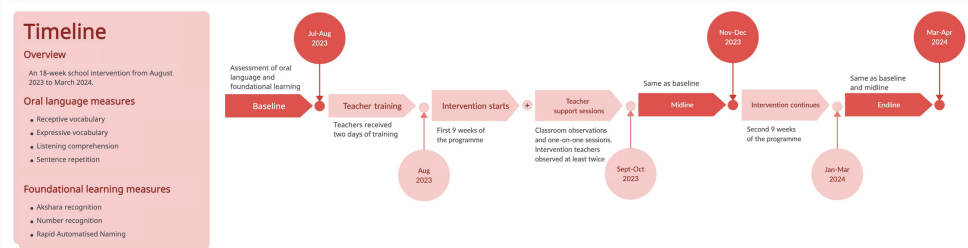
Playfulness is integrated into assessment approaches
 The A Story A Day study used a puppet to solicit children's answers about a of a story that had been read to them.

- Play doesn't have to be the destination; it can be the journey**
- Play is an important way through which children learn and develop – not a pause from learning.**
 - Research methods which leverage play may solicit deeper engagement from the child.**

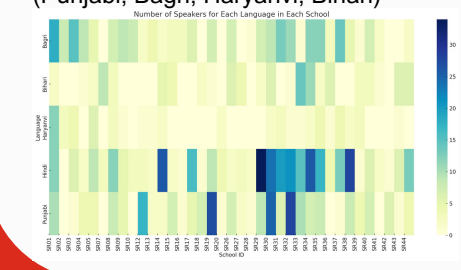
A story-based programme to support foundational learning at school entry

Roque-Gutierrez, E., Tyagi, A., LLF Haryana team, Arulmani, G., Snowling, M., Nag, S.

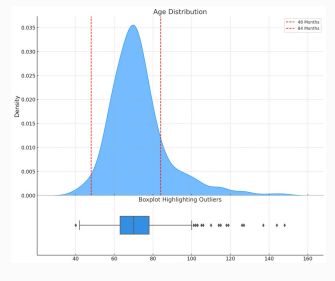
This is an on-going randomised controlled trial to evaluate the effectiveness of an 18-week-long narratives-based programme designed to improve oral language and foundational learning. The daily lessons take place in the classroom with the whole class. Lessons are organised around weekly themes. The first lessons every week focus on a target story with linked oral language activities, followed by consolidation activities at the end of the week. Each 30-minute lesson begins with a focussing activity and closes with an action poem.



Sociodemographic composition
 How Hindi (language of instruction) coexists with other local languages (Punjabi, Bagri, Haryanvi, Bihari)



Mean age = 72 months
 The age range at school entry is wider than anticipated.



Participants
Location: Sirsa, north India
Sample: approximately 800 children from 20 intervention schools and 20 control schools. Sampling: schools were randomly assigned to each condition based on a stratification variable: single-class v multiple-class to account for variation emerging from different class structures.

- Potential contributions**
- The implementation at scale of a narrative-based programme that improves children's oral language and foundational learning skills in a multilingual context.**
 - Open-access tools including a Classroom Observation Tool for multilingual settings, a pack of local-language story materials, and a language assessment battery.**

- Challenges**
- The development of coding schemes to fully account for multilingual language production.**