What younger children really think and understand about internet safety: The value of stories and role play as research methods

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BY LINDSEY WATSON
Senior Lecturer in Early Years
FHEA, MA by Research, PGDip, BA Hons

Aims of the presentation

- **To provide an overview of the context of the proposed research**

- **To examine the proposed research aims**

- **To discuss the proposed methodological approach and how this impacts on younger children's autonomy within the research environment**

Research context (1)

What are the issues?

What does the literature say?

- Children are accessing the internet at younger ages and for longer periods of time (Sharkins, Newton, Albaiz & Ernest, 2015, p.437)

- Much of the research focuses on the engagement of older children over the age of nine (Chaudron, 2015, p.11)

- Widening gap, demonstrating a lack of understanding in how best to support younger children's digital engagement (Holloway, Green & Livingstone, 2013, p.4; Ólfasson, Livingstone and Haddon, 2013, p.32)

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Research context (2)

- Chaudron (2015) suggests younger children show limited understanding of what the internet is, or the associated benefits and risks

- More research is needed to help shape online safety for this age group

- Socio-emotional abilities

- The current lack of research surrounding younger children's online engagement may reflect difficulties in research involving the perceptions of younger children (Olfasson et al., 2013, p.20)

- Are there more creative ways to genuinely attempt to include children in the production of knowledge? (Lomax, 2012)

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Research context (3)

Different perspectives: Home and school environments

- Children's, parents and teachers perceptions of the potential risks and benefits of online engagement are an important aspect of understanding child online safety (Kanthawongs & Kanthawongs, 2013)

- Sharkins et al. (2015) suggest that there is a lack of research that includes the perspectives of caregivers, such as parents and teachers regarding younger children's use of digital technologies

- The British Government recognises the influential position of parents and encourages them to take responsibility for child internet safety through ideals surrounding effective parenting (Byron, 2008, 2010; Lewis, 2014).

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Different stakeholders

Different perspectives: Home and school environments cont...

- Shipton (2011) suggests teachers and parents' views of online safety often differ, potentially causing barriers

- Parents of younger children recognise the importance of taking responsibility for child online safety and are willing to share this with teachers (Chaudron, 2015)

- Holloway et al. (2013) suggest that sharing responsibility for online safety with teachers may lead to some parents of younger children having less support through a lack of communication

Proposed research aims

- **Critically interrogate how the home and school environments work together to tackle the issues of child online safety**

- **Apply a phenomenological approach to examine the possible differences between younger children's and adult's perspectives, gaining insights into how best to support younger children with online safety**

- **Critically analyse the effectiveness of storytelling and role play in eliciting the views of younger children in the research environment**

Theory

Ecological Systems Theory

- To encourage further understanding of younger children's perspectives surrounding online safety, multiple environments need to be analysed (Chaudron, 2015)

- Opportunities to examine how individual's views and perceptions are potentially influenced through interactions between different environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977)

- Interactions between different perspectives to further examine and understand younger children's digital autonomy, digital literacy and possibly leading to a safer digital environment (Chaudron, 2015)
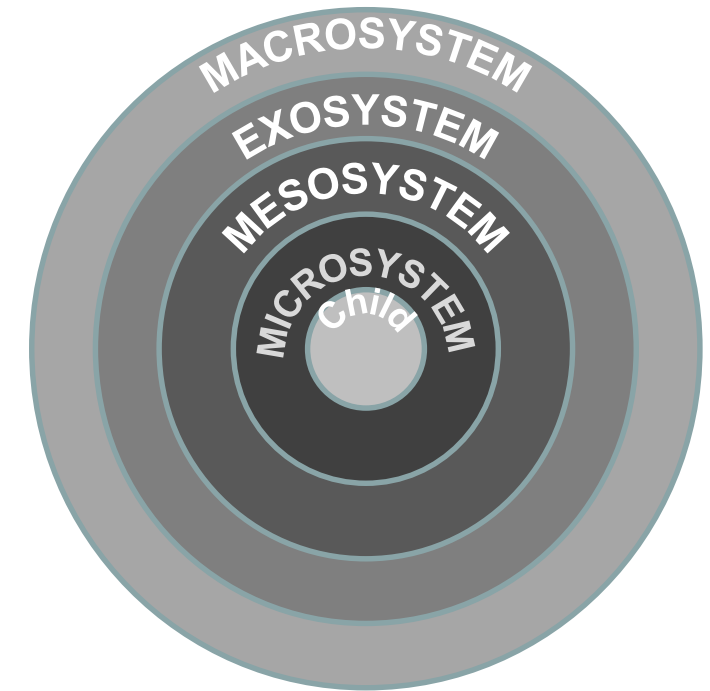
Proposed methodological approach (1) Storytelling

- As a pedagogical strategy, storytelling capitalises on children's desire to interact and talk to others

- Engaging in storytelling is a way of motivating young children to engage within an activity

- Storytelling has a potential ability to motivate children and to connect with the content

(Miller & Pennycuff, 2008).
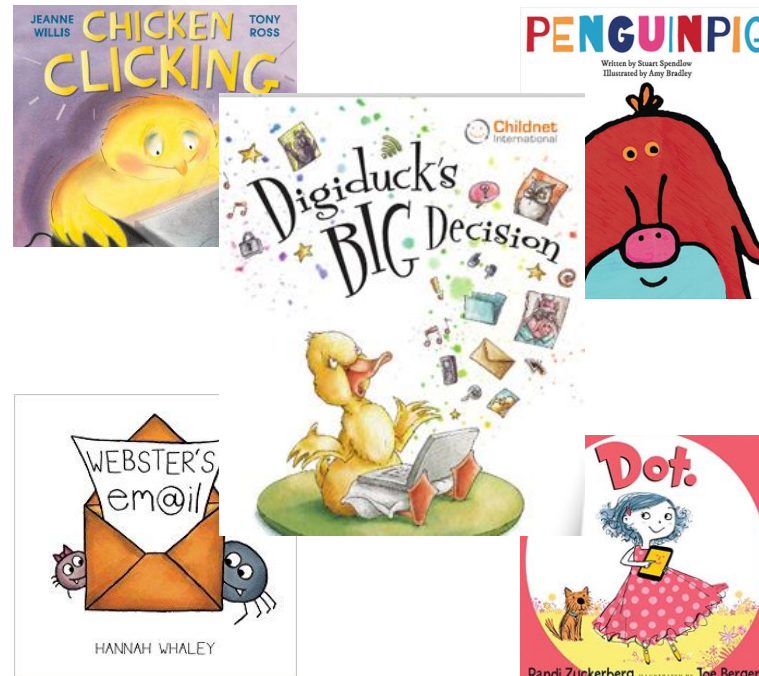
- Jug and Vilar (2015) storytelling with pre-school children

- Audio recording

- Age appropriate storytelling five children (reception and year one)

Proposed methodological approach (2) Role play

- Role play enables children to communally explore and assign meaning to their worlds and themselves in it (Papadopoulou, 2012, p. 575)

- A pretend world that is reality grounded, where children are able to recreate aspects of their everyday world (Papadopoulou, 2012, p. 576)

- A medium of expression to demonstrate their current levels of understanding, anxieties and fears (Papadopoulou, 2012, p. 582)

Proposed methodological approach (3) Role play

Revisiting roleplay data with children
- Research with children continues to examine how their perspectives can help add to the body of knowledge about various issues in their lives (Einarsdottir & Harcourt 2011; Lansdown 2005).
- Increased use of video recording has also contributed to a paradigm shift within early childhood educational research, where the child is viewed as a competent research participant (Rayna & Laevers, 2011)
- A clear rationale for video recording, ethical considerations, confidentiality, anonymity, data storage

Data analysis
- Thematic Phenomenological Analysis

Conclusion

- **Provided an overview of the context of the proposed research**

- **Examined the proposed research aims**

- **Discussed the proposed methodological approach and how this impacts on younger children's autonomy within the research environment**

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Lindsey Watson

Senior Lecturer in Early Years

FHEA, MA by Research, PGDip, BA Hons

l.watson2@hud.ac.uk

@Lje1994

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