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Economic and Social Research Council

Researching 0-3-Year-Old Children's Language and Literacy Play at Home in a Digital Age

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| 31st EECERA Conference, Glasgow, 23-26 August 2022 |

Manchester Metropolitan University

Queen's University Belfast

University of Strathclyde Glasgow

Swansea University Prifysgol Abertawe

Overview

I. Background

II. Objectives

III. Project team

IV. Theoretical framework

V. Ethics

VI. Methods

VII. Provocative questions among friends

Background

- Digital tech features heavily in family life (Chaudron et al. 2018; Kumpulainen & Gillen 2020)
- Very young children observe/use digital tech playfully (Arnott et al. 2019; 2021; Zhao & Flewitt 2020)

Objectives

1. Build empirically robust body of knowledge about how 0-3 year old children's lives intersect with digital techs at home in diverse families (ethnically, socially, city, town, rural) in the 4 UK nations
2. Understand how 0-3 year olds develop early talk and literacy while engaging with different semiotic systems in diverse media and how family members mediate and safeguard
3. Construct theoretical models of sociomaterial entanglements in the contemporary Home Literacy Environment (HLE)
4. Develop innovative participatory methods with our methods palette

Project team

Prof Rosie Flewitt, Principle Investigator

Dr Sandra El Gemayel, Researcher

Angie Cooke, Project co-ordinator

Manchester Metropolitan University

Scotland	Dr Lorna Arnott; Dr Zinnia Mevawalla **University of Strathclyde** RA to be recruited 2023
Wales	Prof Janet Goodall **Swansea University** RA to be recruited 2023
Northern Ireland	Prof Karen Winter; Dr Katrina McLaughlin **Queens University Belfast** RA to be recruited 2023
Also in England	Prof Julia Gillen **Lancaster University** RA to be recruited 2023

International Advisory Board

Theoretical framework

- All language learning is embodied and embedded in multimodal semiotic domains (Kress, 2010)
- Meaning making and relationship building is entangled with "humans, nonhumans and more-than-humans" (Kuby & Rowsell 2017: 286) – participation requires mastery of complex repertoire of modes
- HLE: a digitally networked space, with porous boundaries where young children negotiate affectively intense relationships as they connect with distant others in a digitally mediated world (Flewitt & Clark 2020); constant crossing of material/virtual and offline/online boundaries (Burnett & Merchant 2020)

Ethics

- Methodological and ethical issues are constantly entwined (Kuntz, 2015)
- Genuinely participatory approaches with 0-3s need to recognise imbalance in power; offer ways to decline; eschew regarding children as a homogeneous group; see children as experts (Arnott et al., 2021; Flewitt & Ang, 2020)
- Working in the HLE demands flexibility and an ethnographic sensibility (Sandberg & Gillen, 2021)

Methods - overview

Phase 1: survey

Phase 2: interviews

Phase 3: case studies

Phase 4: consolidation

Phase 1: survey

Aim for 270 respondents per nation total 1080, online recruitment; translation into multiple languages

Device ownership, use and parental attitudes. For each device:

- Does your child OWN the device?
- How confident are you using the device?
- How often does your 0–3-year-old child play with this device by themselves?
- What activities does the child do themselves on this device?
- How often do you use this device when you play with your child?
- What activities do you do together with your child on this device?
- How often do other children (siblings, friends of your children, child relatives) use this device when they are playing with your child?
- What activities do other children do together with your child on this device?
- How often do other adults (aunts, uncles, adult cousins, grandparents, family friends) use this device when they are playing with your child?
- What activities do other adults do together with your child on this device?

Phase 2: interviews

- 60 semi-structured interviews (20 families in each nation & 20 ECEC professionals)
- purposive diversity in recruitment
- digital device ownership & use
- parental beliefs on play & learning including with digital devices
- parental attitudes towards children’s digital safety and security

Phase 3: case studies

10 families in each nation

purposive diversity in recruitment

methods palette

co-creation of approaches to data collection and analysis, e.g.

- participant accounts in various modes (paper or iPad – given)
- parent diaries; parent and child-generated data e.g. vlogs in secure space; screen capture; apps
- Day in the Life methodology
- photo/video elicitation etc.

Phase 4: consolidation

Data analysis and write up, revisiting key objectives

1. Build empirically robust body of knowledge about how 0-3 year old children's lives intersect with digital techs at home in diverse families (ethnically, socially, city, town, rural) in the 4 UK nations;
2. Understand how 0-3 year olds develop early talk and literacy while engaging with different semiotic systems and how family members mediate and safeguard;
3. Construct theoretical models of sociomaterial entanglements in the contemporary Home Literacy Environment (HLE);
4. Develop innovative participatory methods with our methods palette

Summary and questions

- Provocative questions for a friendly audience
- Are we in a “post-digital” age cf. posthumanism?
- Is our aim of working with very diverse families feasible – and should we be cautious of ‘families’ cf. ‘intergenerational groups’?
- What do you think of our “methods palette”?

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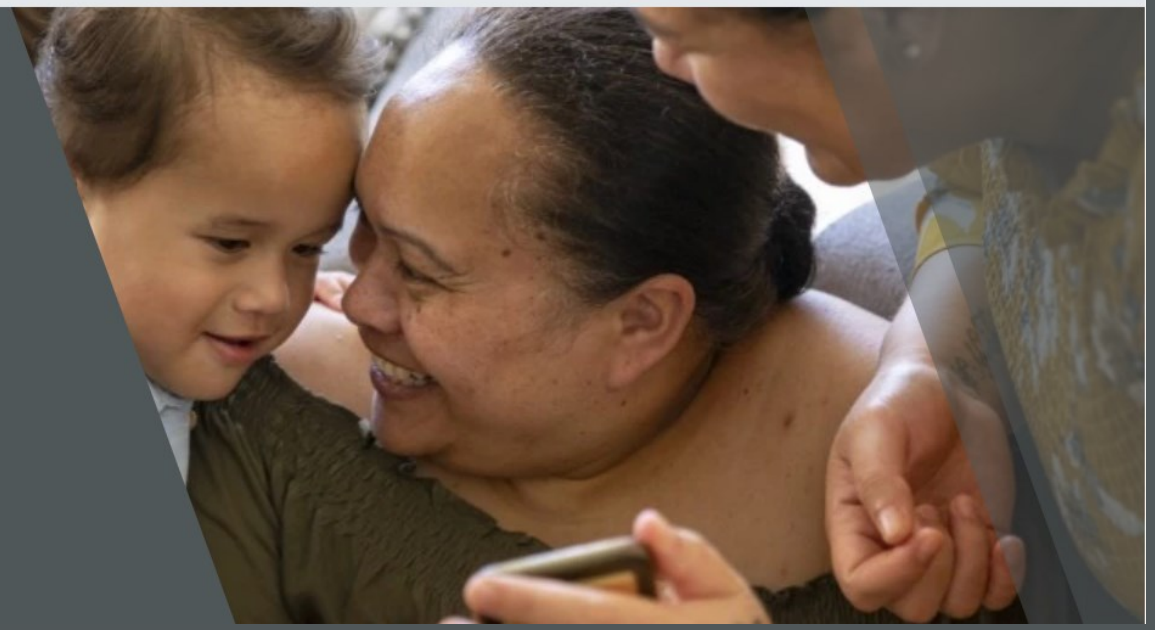
Understanding how very young children learn language and literacy at home in a digital age.