

EDF5021: LENSES ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

ASSESSMENT TASK 2

ANALYTICAL REPORT OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

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A boy was playing a game with his friend. They were competing to reach the bottom of the staircase as fast as possible by sliding down the hand rail. As hazardous as the game sounds, there were only about five to six steps, hence, I was certain that they were safely practicing their gross motor skills. So, I was their referee, timing their movement. In the first go, he came down in five seconds and his friend in six. The second time, he was faster than the last time and took four seconds, whereas, his friend took the same time to complete this round. His performance against his friend was making him feel sad and after investigation, I discovered that he was considering lesser seconds as losing.

Philip is an energetic, friendly, outgoing eight-year-old boy studying in Grade 3. He pretends to be a Pokemon trainer and wishes to become a Jedi one day – characters from a television show and Star Wars movies. Coming from an immigrant background, he speaks Serbian at home and is being brought up by his single mother and a maternal grandmother, whom he is extremely attached to. His English language skills are equally good compared to other native English speaking students in the class. When it was time for reading, he would gravitate only towards fiction books. Known by all, Philip gets along with everyone, however, sometimes other children tend to feel overwhelmed by his extroverted personality. His expressive self would always share with me the places he has visited and the number of goals he shot at the basketball court during recess.

During individual class activities such as solving worksheets, he tries to ask for help from other students on his table and blindly copies answers. Simultaneously, he also requests the teacher-aide or us, student teachers to tell him if the answer to this question is what he thinks it is. Once he has them all, the class teacher reviews the sheet of paper and appreciates his intelligence. He finds paying attention in class quite challenging and is also the last one to complete tasks. On every occasion, he raises his hand to answer questions during group sessions on the carpet but takes a few moments to think of a response when the teacher gives him a chance to speak. Without careful observational lenses, Philip might seem like an ordinary child as he

never explicitly expresses discomfort in comprehending concepts but his behavior demonstrates numerous learning difficulties.

This essay investigates learning behaviours of Philip based on observations made during my professional experience placement at a Primary school in the outer south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. In the first section, a descriptive analysis of his learning process is illustrated in various contexts, simultaneously, explaining the gaps and reasons for their existence based on Piagetian developmental learning expectations. Lastly, theoretical perspectives are used to inform planning of enhanced learning strategies to overcome learning gaps.

OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS

In the instance mentioned at the beginning of the essay, Philip participates in co-operative play and has developed a sense of competence, attributes of a child in Piaget's preoperational stage. Through play, he has expressed feelings and used creativity and imagination to make a game from the staircase hand-rail. However, according to his current understanding, six is more than four in terms of quantity, therefore, he loses because four is lesser than six. The quantitative dimension was solely included in his thought process, which is a display of his logical thinking capacity. Nonetheless, he fails to realise the fact that four seconds is lesser time taken than six seconds, making him faster than his friend. This can be associated with Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which argues that children tend to focus on one dimension or viewpoint while thinking rather than integrating different dimensions or viewpoints together in the preoperational stage (Siegal, 2003, p.190). Another observation slightly related to the same contention is illustrated next.

The class was asked to write a factual persuasive discussion text after their excursion to the National Gallery of Victoria. His work mainly involved asking people to visit because he got a chance to create a Mother's Day greeting card at one of the art exhibits using different cutouts of animal skin patterns and flower bushes. Basically, Philip wrote a personal recount of the day by describing activities he engaged in. He was able to remember events of the day showing us that he has a good memory but in this case, the child was supposed to learn to give reasons from different points of

view in order for others to make an informed decision regarding their willingness to visit the art gallery.

Egocentrism is a child's belief in the preoperational stage that what he thinks and feels is felt by everyone else as well (Slater, Hocking & Loose, 2003, p.45). Hence, due to the existence of this characteristic, there was an absence of incorporation of different elements of his own experience in his writing, which required him to separate himself from his own perspective and think according to viewpoints of other people with varied interests and thereby persuade them.

Next week, students were asked to write a fictional literary narrative text about a bug trapped in an office. After receiving feedback from last week and personal help as well as instructions from the teacher to write from the bug's or office people's perspectives, Philip's excellent imaginative piece included ideas such as – 'The bug tickled the computers until they laughed their monitors off! And then all the wires turned into noodles. Sick of the bug, they decided to send him home. On the way, the space shuttle wrote "HELLO MUM" in the sky on its way into orbit.'

In the preoperational stage, children display what Piaget called animism, the belief that inanimate objects or animals think and feel like humans (Slater et al., 2003, p.45). His writing clearly displays this characteristic. Nevertheless, he is able to move away from 'I' in this particular context, wherein, he has written the text in third person. Additionally, he demonstrates knowledge about surroundings outside home or school. Existing in fictional form, this awareness assures that his schema related to the real world is rich and varied due to the usage of words such as computers, space shuttle and orbit in my understanding.

REFLECTION

Piaget asserts that children's ability to solve logical problems increases as they move from one stage to another until they can solve problems that require multi-dimensional thinking (Siegal, 2003). Information processing approaches, which are part of 'neo-Piagetian' principles are built on the idea that by the age of seven, children become capable of considering more than one relation simultaneously and can reliably make

inferences by integrating two premises together (Slater et al., 2003, p.45). Hence, the overall goal is to transition Philip (eight years) from this to the concrete operational stage (seven to eleven years) as his ability to do so is important for successful performance on the tests of logical reasoning that mark the transition to the next stage – concrete operational. Secondly, the ability to take another person's perspective means that children understand in a new way that other people think differently than they do, that other people may literally and figuratively "see" things differently. Thus, Piaget claims that egocentrism permeates young children's thinking and is a severe, general limitation on their knowledge of the world (Slater et al., 2003, p.45).

Furthermore, there is a process of assimilation and accommodation that results in the child's attainment of developmental stages (Centre for Learning Innovation, 2006). After an individual is exposed to new concepts, he or she goes through the 'assimilation' process of organising newly acquired knowledge into existing schemes, or views of the world (Southwell, 1998). If Philip does not get exposed to different viewpoints, he is going to be in a constant state of disequilibrium. Therefore, he needs to overcome egocentrism to be able to change perceptual view. In order to reach the equilibration state, new schemas need to be created or current ones need to be adjusted to accommodate new knowledge.

While animism fuels creativity, supporting the development of Philip's schema around animals and habitats would be a good way to advance his thinking and logical understanding of the world. One way to do both could be to allow him to apply factual thinking to his imagination capabilities. Here, he will use logic and schema together during mental analysis to determine the animal's needs, separate and independent from what humans might need. In the following activity based on a storybook, I aim to utilize his imagination capabilities (also where his interests lie) to make him start thinking about the world in a factual sense. Once he gets this understanding and his schema builds from only knowing the objects to knowing what they do or eat, he will slowly move from looking at things from the perspective of animals or fictional characters he is reading about to people eventually.

STRATEGISING

Learning gaps	Existing capabilities in Preoperational stage to be used as strengths	Learning goals
Absence of logical thinking in dual dimensions	Extended schema – uses language tools as symbols	Apply logical reasoning using facts
Cannot think from another person's perspective	Animism – imagination	Writing from a different point of view

[Dear Greenpeace](#) is a book about Emily. It begins with a letter to Greenpeace professing her love for whales and claiming to have seen one in her garden pond, then asking for some more information on how to care for him (James, 2016). Greenpeace replies to her letters subtly familiarising the readers with facts about blue whales. For example, letters to Emily state that whales can only survive in salt water, they are huge and migratory and eat tiny shrimp like creatures. These facts are also stated in a way so as to gently get her to realise the impossibility of the existence of a whale in her garden pond, moving from imagination to reality. Further exploration can lead to building schema about sea creatures and the ocean in general. This book is ideal for Philip because it can be used to transition from fictional world to a factually logical one.

LESSON PLAN

Link to curriculum – Creating literature (ACELT1601) – Create imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students' own and other cultures using visual features (ACARA, 2016).

Learning objectives	Teaching and learning activities
• Drawing on literary texts read, viewed and listened to for inspiration and ideas, appropriating language to create mood and characterisation (ACARA, 2016). • Innovating on texts read, viewed and listened to by changing the point of view (ACARA, 2016). • Children develop and use their imagination and curiosity by building a 'tool kit' of skills and processes to support problem solving, hypothesising, experimenting, researching, and investigating activity (Department of Education and Training, 2016).	• Introducing and reading the book. • Investigation on iPad about blue whales. Search facts such as size, weight, food they eat, etc. • Using these collected facts, place different aspects in the bubble worksheet (example shown below in Figure 1). • Imagine the life of a whale and map out a day in a whale's life on a worksheet with pictures as a home project. Metacognition begins to develop as young children begin to 'think aloud' and discuss learning in ways that help to deepen their knowledge of information and processes (DET, 2016). • Next, write a narrative story in first person from the whale's perspective and name it Day 1 in the 'Adventures of a Whale' Diary as it will be continued. Continuous engagement will ensure Philip uses his imagination skills to create literature based on facts.
	• Another learning activity will include exploring body parts of a whale. • As shown in Figure 2, the correct names will be written in the dialogue box. This activity introduces Philip to the concept of facts that are scientifically logical. Just like us, animals have body parts too.
	• Activities mentioned above will lead to the final task – persuasive exposition text to 'Save Whales' using ideas from previous activities. The text should give reasons for the point of view to try and convince others of it. • Contention will be discussed before starting with the child through a video (Sustainable Human, 2014)

	followed by discussion and then by noting the main points – focusing on viewpoints discussed in the video. Use of video because the child’s brain develops rapidly through physical explorations and their active engagement with others (us) who speak and respond to their interests (DET, 2016). • Content gathered in previous activities will be appropriately separated for the factual text by circling selected ideas. The final activity will enable Philip to utilize newly developed schemas to create a piece that incorporates multiple elements.
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In conclusion, Philip’s transition from Piaget’s preoperational to concrete operational stage requires a careful synthesis of logical thinking and perceptual understanding. As Philip learns to expand his thinking by active construction of varied perspectives, reaching a state of equilibrium will build new schemas by accommodation of mental functions in second and third person. Resultantly, he will process multiple mental operations at the same time because factual understanding will enable logical thinking.

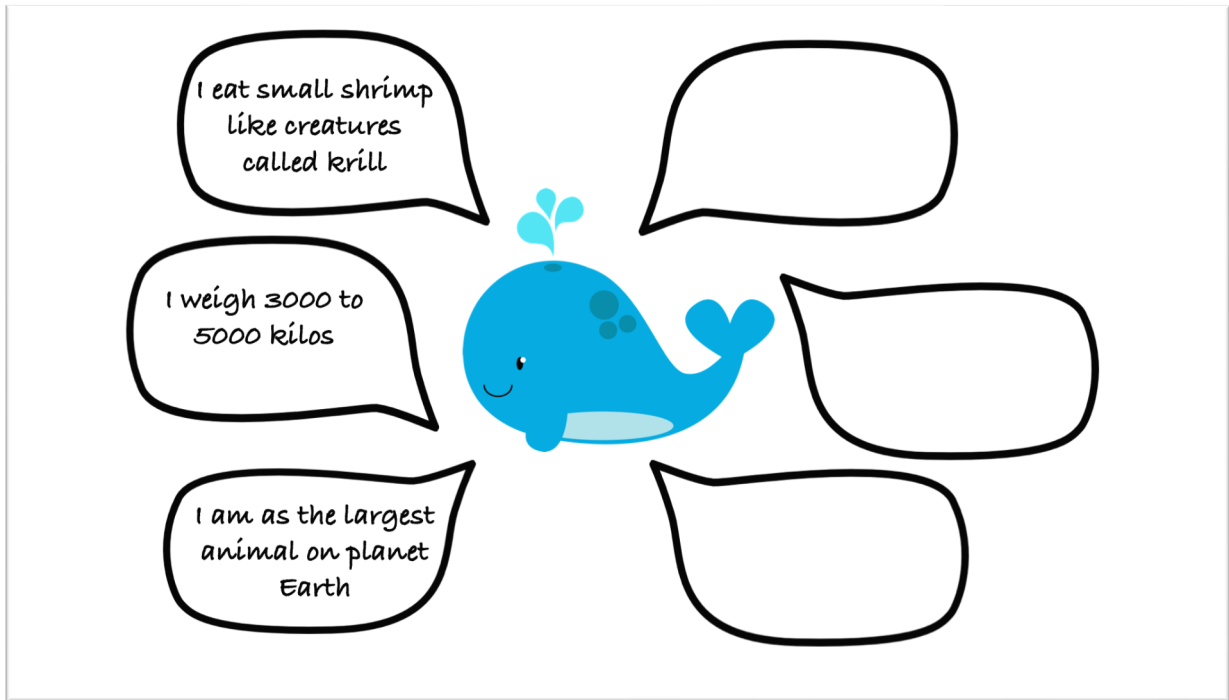


Figure 1

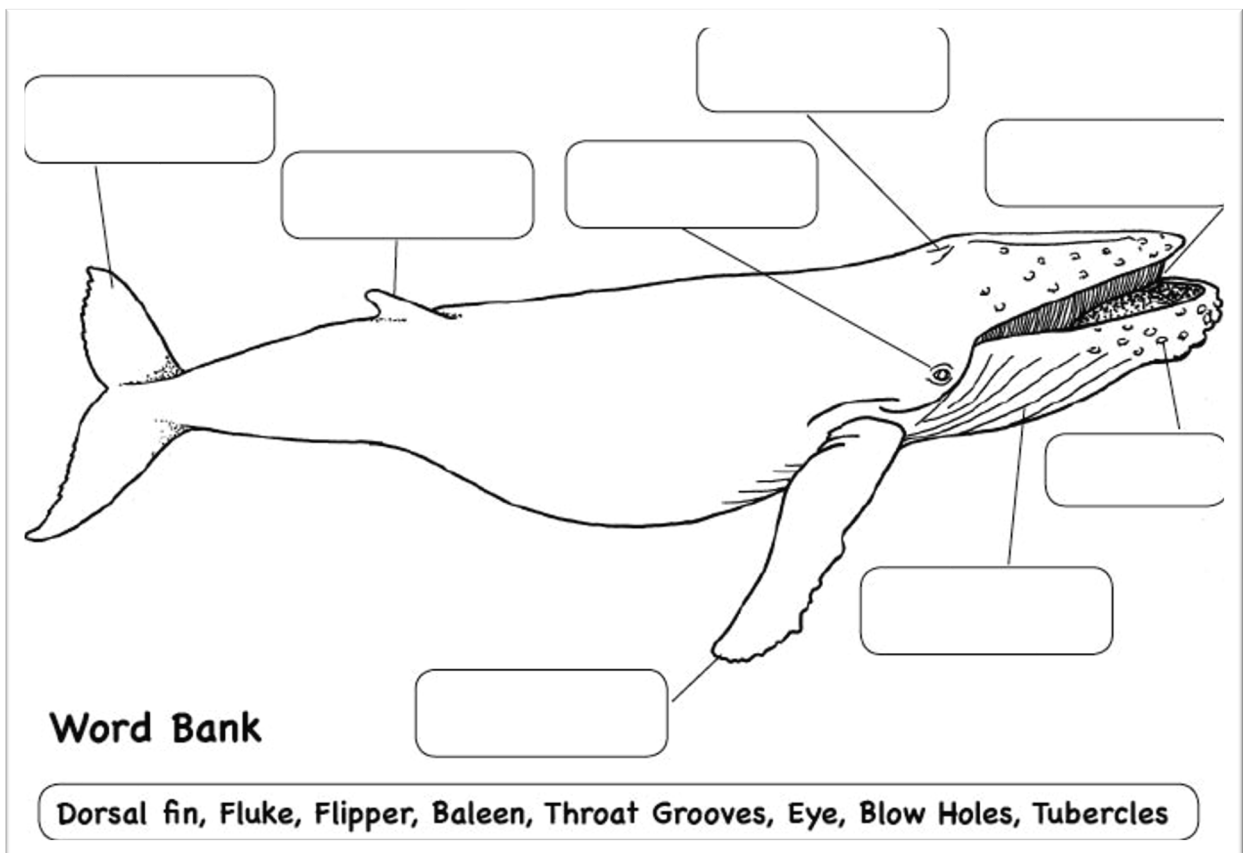


Figure 2 (Mira, 2011).

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