Personalization & Young Children: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly
Theoretical frameworks

- Lev Vygotsky: socio-cultural theory

- Jerome Bruner: power of narratives

- Allison Druin: participatory research with children

- Personalisation : Luis Moll: Funds of knowledge
Socio-material entanglements

Image from the facebook fanpage la bioguia.
Kucirkova, N. (2017)
*Digital Personalization in Early Childhood*,
London: Bloomsbury Press.
Children’s reading of narratives (print & digital)

Affective (Dungworth, Cremin, Flewitt)
Shared & sustained (Littleton, Mercer, Siraj-Blatchord)
Creative (Craft, Cremin, Burnard)
Interactive (Csikszentmihalyi)
Personalised (Bernhard, Kucirkova, Allen et al.)

Digital Book Award Evaluation Criteria

These criteria draw on the theoretical and empirical work by Kucirkova, Littleton and Cremin, 2016 (Knowledge Transfer Partnership between BookTrust and the Open University), adopted and refined in conversation with UK primary school teachers and literacy specialists. For examples of literacy apps and information about children's digital books corresponding to these and other criteria, check the Literacy Apps guide from the National Literacy Trust and information on the UKLA Special Interest Group for children's digital books and literacy apps.

UKLA Digital Book Award Criteria ©2017. UKLA

Your Details

Full name

Email
Literacy Apps is a handy guide for parents from the National Literacy Trust. Get the most out of apps.
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Personalisation: definitions

= a nexus of practices, products and processes that have been tailored to a single human being

≠ commoditised/generic products (industry)
≠ standardised curriculum (education)

→ customised/localised/ relevant

The micro influences

Personalised books

THE MATERIAL
Types of personalisation in children’s narrative picture-books

- Story characteristics:
  - Textual (Name of story character)
  - Visual (Photo/ drawings)
  - Audio (Voiceover, music)

- Story plot:
  - Choice of story endings (template)
  - Open-ended (no script)

- Story aesthetics:
  - Appearance

[Image: Mr Glue Stories personalised books app]
Once upon a time, there was a little girl called Natalia.

One morning, after she had got out of her bed, she had some porridge and went to the park to play with her friends Jill and Kate.
Sophisticated textual personalisation

Wonderbly (Lost My Name): www.wonderbly.com
Visual personalisation

Make a Face

Swipe to change!
Visual personalisation in digital books

Cinderella storyapp (Nosy Crow)
Customisation in print books

Image from: http://www.vulture.com/2013/06/ranking-all-185-choose-your-own-adventure-books.html
Customisation in digital books

Shall I take the path to the flowers or the path to the feathers?
Audio personalisation
Material aspects of SBR of personalised books

- 3-year-old children learnt more new words embedded in lab-designed printed personalised books than in closely matched non-personalised books

- Reading personalized books with 3-year old children led to more spontaneous but also more self-referential speech


The micro influences

Personalised books
THE SOCIAL
Adults personalising generic texts

- ‘subset of decontextualized talk that is focused on elaborative reminiscing (e.g., Reese, Leyva, Sparks & Grolnick, 2010).

- More talk about child’s emotions during memory talk than storybook reading or play

- distancing talk’ (e.g., Sigel, Stinson, & Kim, 1993; Van Kleeck, 2008)

- Print books versus eBooks with eighty-six 3- and 5-year-old children, parents who used more distancing comments had highest story comprehension scores.
Social aspects of SBR of personalised books

- **Positive shared** parent-child interaction when reading digital personalised books at home


- **Less hierarchical** parent-child interaction


- **Teachers’ versus designers’ perspectives**


Current project:
2017-2019 Economic and Social Research Council Future Leaders Fund (P.I.) Supporting early language development and interest in reading with digital personalised books (£231,560 FeC)
DESIGNERS:
Benefits for parents: “superpowers”
Benefits for children: “Magical”
TEACHERS
Concerns about parents’ role: “it’s outsourced parenting!”
Concerns about children’s learning: “it’s scary, very scary!”

- Content automation
- Too much interactivity
- Data safety and security
- Socio-emotional detachment
- Gadgetry
- Distraction
- Narrow experience
- Commercialisation
- Too self-centred
A profitable business model

• An opportunity to create a new revenue stream by monetising existing IP
• Print on demand models minimise production costs
• Valuable customer data

Examples:
• Kid Hero Stories
• My Very Own Name Storybook
• That's My Storybook
• Put Me in the Story
• My World and I
• Mr Glue Stories
• Make My Book stories
• You Star Novels
• Etc.
Increasing amount & type of personalisation
Prescriptive or Participatory?
Programmatic or Personalized?
New trends in children’s publishing industry

- Digitally connected reading (e.g. Kindomna)
- Augmented reality apps (e.g. Toontastic)
- Digital library systems (e.g. RM Books)
- Textual Tinkerability (e.g. MiT Books)
- Personalised reading systems (e.g., iRead)

Create to understand …
The 5As of personalisation

Focus on Agency

• The child → Children as authors
• Other children → Communities of authors
• Teachers → Teachers as writers
• Parents → Parents as story authors
• The technology provider → Professional authors
Front screen of Our Story when downloaded

Our Story
Create, Read and Share

Get Started
Create New Story
Use Existing Story
Creating a new story: the Create mode
Sharing options of a finished story: Use mode
Enabling and capturing children’s voices


Pedagogical principles

- Teachers’ agency = empowerment combined with competence
- Well-designed materials + modelled practice
- Co-construction of implementation, design-based approaches


Questions for design & pedagogy

• How can we reduce the risks of commercialised personalisation (motivation/attention to self)?
• How can the tool appropriately challenge the child?
• How can personalisation be a platform upon which children not only develop their skills, but also build reciprocity?
• How can personalisation bring in another dimension to shared conversations?
• How can we engage children in generative activities as opposed to consumer oriented activities?

Future project
2018-2020  Dynamic, Real time, On-demand Personalisation for Scaling, EPSRC, (Co-I) with Prof Ng (P.I. Warwick), Maull (Surrey), Parry (UWE), Vasalou (UCL). (£1.5 million FeC)
Thank you

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Research articles OA at IOE Depository
MOOC: Childhood in the Digital Age
Children’s personalized stories at UCL
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