READING ALOUD WORDLESS PICTURE BOOK FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD: A UNIVERSITY WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE

LETTURA AD ALTA VOCE DI SILENT BOOK PER LA PRIMA INFANZIA: L'ESPERIENZA DI UN LABORATORIO UNIVERSITARIO

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes wordless picture books (WPB) reading experience for pupils aged 0-3 in a workshop for students as part of the Degree in Education Sciences of Sapienza University of Rome.
Its aim is to show a possible organisation of a university workshop and analysing the students' feedback.
The theoretical framework is reading aloud in early childhood.
Students were asked to work in groups, choose a WPB and create a short video to tell animatedly one of the possible stories of the chosen book.

L'articolo descrive un'esperienza di lettura di silent book per bambini da 0 a 3 anni in un laboratorio universitario nell'ambito del corso di laurea in Scienze dell'educazione e della formazione di Sapienza Università di Roma.
Scopo del lavoro è mostrare una possibile organizzazione di un laboratorio universitario e analizzare le opinioni delle studentesse in merito.
A queste è stato chiesto di lavorare a gruppi, scegliere un silent book e creare un breve video per raccontare, attraverso una lettura animata, una delle possibili storie contenute nel libro scelto

Introduction

This article describes a workshop experience, carried out in May 2022, at the end of a six-month course in General Pedagogy, as part of the Degree in Education Sciences of Sapienza University of Rome.

Students were asked to work in groups, choose a wordless picture books (WPB) deemed suitable for 2- or 3-year-old-children, and create a few-minute video to tell one of the possible stories in the chosen book, through an animated reading.

These are the aims of the paper: describing the workshop's phases to repeat the experience; collecting and commenting students' opinions; sharing the videos they made.

The first paragraph is dedicated to the theoretical framework. The paper continues describing the several phases of the workshop and analysing the students' opinions. At the end, the limitations of the described experience and the future prospects are discussed.[1]

1. Theoretical framework

The paper moves among three theoretical fields: reading aloud, in particular for early childhood; the WPB, as workshop subject; reading training for educators. At the end of the paragraph, there is a reference to a fourth field, although it was not crucial for the activity: children digital education.

Research has long shown that listening to reading aloud benefits all ages (Vahedi, 2014; Batini et al., 2021). As for childhood, crucial age range in this article, Batini and Giusti (2021, p. 99) wrote that «Little girls and boys who are focused on listening to reading aloud, engaged in complex mental operations, are carrying out an extraordinary cognitive training, which will have positive consequences for their future life».

Reading aloud for children is a very important activity that immediately shows positive effects, as «children's cognitive and social skills» depend «on the amount

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[1] The author of the article is the teacher of the General Pedagogy course and of the following workshop, subject of this paper.

of language to which they are exposed between 6 months and 3 years of age» (Oliverio, 2017, p. 51).

The progress in the ability to communicate contributes to the structuring of the «autobiographical and narrative self», «an ego built on the basis of the stories which the child tells himself» (Oliverio, 2017, p. 51), as defined in the neuropedagogical field.

Therefore, reading and telling stories allows children to develop narrative thinking, which is the basis of the ability to build worlds, crucial not only for thinking, but also for living and being active in the society (Bruner, 1960). Rodari (1973, pp. 147-8) wrote: «Children's imagination, stimulated to invent words, will apply its tools to the throughout all experience that will challenge their creative intervention. Fairy tales are up to mathematics as mathematics are up to fairy tales. They're up to poetry, to music, to utopia and to political engagement: anyway, to the whole man and not only to the daydream storyteller».

Books are exceptional and precious symbolic tools, from this point of view, and can be used by educators as a tool to bring children closer to culture and, at the same time, to activate in them the neurobiological mechanisms that underlie dialogue and empathy (Ammaniti, Gallese, 2014; Gerhardt, 2006 cited by Bobbio, 2021; Buccolo, 2017).

If it is true that the instrumental learning of the ability to read takes place during the school years, it is also true that learning to read is eased by all those activities which bring children closer to words, to their semantic field and to their ability to describe and arouse emotions. Therefore, the foundation of learning autonomous reading is laid from the earliest years of life before primary school. In fact, as early as the mid-1980s, the *National Institute of Education* defined reading aloud for children as the most important activity for them to become strong and autonomous readers in the future, in the report *Becoming a nation of readers* (Anderson et al., 1985). The report, focused on the educational aspects of reading, underlines the importance of reading to students not only at the beginning of the schooling, but throughout its duration (Batini et al., 2021). The relevance of this practice is reaffirmed by a series of experimental researches which show that reading to children in early childhood contributes to the development of some pre-language skills such as the increase in productive and receptive vocabulary, memorization and understanding. The so-called emerging literacy (Farrant, Zubrick, 2012; Lonigan, Shanahan, 2009), is essential for future educational success and beyond:

it performs a "protective" function against scholastic failure and school drop-out (Batini, 2019; Batini et al., 2021; Vahedi, 2014).

As for books as cultural mediators for early childhood, this article will deal with a particular type of book used in the workshop, the WPB, in which the narration is entrusted only to a sequence of images linked by a narrative thread, a more or less defined screenplay, which the reader is asked to fill with meanings (Terrusi, 2015, 2017).

Terrusi, one of the leading scholars of the genre in Italy, wrote that «A textless book is a silent place where readers' shrill voices can resound freely, or even a quiet space for whispered secrets, for patient contemplations, for waiting or miraculous discoveries or still wonders» (Terrusi, 2017).

The absence of words constitutes a stimulus for readers to narrate the images they are looking at and it could be said, quoting Eco (1979), that intrinsically polysemous WPBs put the reader at the centre in the co-construction of the sense of the masterpiece.

Shaun Tan, one of the more important WPB authors in the world, seems to validate this interpretation: «As a creator, you provide a little architecture, build some imaginary walls, add a few furnishings, then wait for an anonymous visitor to arrive: should they accept the invitation, any real meaning can only come from their own hearts and minds. The reader is not so much the recipient of ideas; they are a conversationalist, enjoying a language that transcends the ordinary boundaries of daily chit-chat. All we need to do as creators and readers sitting together in the imaginary guest room is look at things and wonder about them openly. There is not a fixed meaning that needs to be unearthed like an archaeologist finding bones; all interpretations are alive and well, and changeable too» (Tan, 2014).

In educational terms, WPBs prove to be useful for very young children. They can help children to understand how a book works: even if it is too early to master the characters for them, however, they recognize, interpret and express themselves early through the images, which contribute to their visual literacy (Jalongo et al., 2002). WPBs not only help to develop the language through images, but also encourage independence in reading because they allow early familiarization with the book, as an object (Haese et al., 2018).

Pre-conventional reading experiences play an active role in the development of children's reader identities and their attitudes toward reading (Collins & Glover, 2015).

WPBs can be enjoyed by children at different stages of reading literacy development, different levels of familiarity with the mother tongue and with special educational needs. Not only that: they can play a part in breaking down language barriers (Grilli & Terrusi, 2014). In this regard, it is worth mentioning Ibby Italia project: *Silent books. Final Destination Lampedusa.* The 2012 still ongoing initiative is responsible for periodically supplying the library of the Sicilian island with a selection of the best WPBs published in the world and intended for both resident children and guests of the Shelter for refugees and asylum seekers[2].

From an educational point of view, WPBs offer many possibilities to educators, who can dialogue with children in the construction of the story, eluding a passive fruition of the story (Terrusi, 2017). This implies a good training of professionals.

Educational courses, besides promoting the skills required for educational professions (Law 205/2017), must also train educators capable of knowing how to read (and not just WPBs).

It is reassuring that in Europe the political attention to the quality of early childhood education services is increasing more and more: suffice it to know the document *Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care* of the European Commission (European Commission, 2014), to name one. Also, in Italy the debate has grown and there has been a regulatory update on the integrated system 0-6 (Bobbio, 2019) starting from Law 107/2015 and up to the approval of the pedagogical guidelines for the integrated system "0-6" in 2021[3].

Beyond university courses to learn to read for early childhood and not only, there is no shortage of resources for training (Catarsi, 1999; Blezza Picherle: 2015); there are also excellent projects to promote reading and training, in the Italian field. Two of them are mentioned: *Nati per leggere* (*Born to read*), a more than 20-year-initiative which also offers training in reading to children; and the ample portal dedicated to the project *Leggere: forte! Ad alta voce fa crescere l'intelligenza* (*Reading: cool! [Reading] Aloud makes intelligence grow*) by Tuscany Region, which is interesting for both educators and teachers, where it is possible to find book suggestions, reading practices and strategies, training webinars, and research contributions.

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[2] Visit the project web page to deepen the topic: https://www.ibbyitalia.it/progetti/ibby-libri-senza-parole-lampedusa/

[3] Miur web page on the integrate system 0-6 https://www.miur.gov.it/en/sistema-integrato-0-6

Various resources have been drawn from this portal for the design and implementation of the workshop described here.

As described in paragraph. 2.1 , the creation of a digital product was a fallback compared to the initial project, which involved face-to-face reading in nursery schools. Therefore, a transition to the digital education of children in the 0-6 age-range is required. Digital technology in the educational field has long been envisaged by the 2012 National Guidelines for nursery schools and lower secondary education curriculum, which include the new media among the languages available to children stating that «Children face themselves with new media and with communication languages, as both audience and actors. School can help them to become familiar with the multimedia experience (photography, cinema, television, digital technologies) by promoting an active contact with media and the search for their expressive and creative possibilities» (MIUR, 2012: 27).

Therefore, digital technologies can be used in services for 0-6 year-older, integrating them with other languages already widely used in nursery schools and kindergartens (Metastasio, 2021; Parola, 2019).

School inevitably found itself confronted with the digital world during the 2020[4] lockdown, and it was obvious that serious training is needed for educators, which does not only concern periods of emergency (Lucisano, 2020).

Indeed, as Metastasio, a psychologist at Sapienza University of Rome states: «Teacher training does not end with the attainment of a degree in Education Science, but it continues [...]. Among the teacher's skills and expertise is the digital competence, which is essential to be able to introduce technologies into the educational experience even in nursery schools and kindergartens, and to bring children closer to multimedia languages, fostering an active and an expressive and creative research positioning through their use.

However, often there are the so-called internal barriers, attributable to just one teacher, which take on particular relevance on the effective application of

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[4] In May 2020, Miur issued a document entitled *Orientamenti pedagogici sui LEAD: legami educativi a distanza (Pedagogical guidelines on LEADs: distance educational links)* "to support nursery schools' and kindergartens' educators in strengthening educational relations with the pupils and with their parents during and after the emergency phase linked to the pandemic". The document is available at: https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/orientamenti-pedagogici-sui-legami-educativi-a-distanza-per-nido-e-infanzia-lead-

technologies in everyday life in the classroom, such as attitudes and personal opinions towards technology, perceived self-efficacy and self-confidence in comparison with the use of one or more tools, as well as the reason for usage»[5].

2. The workshop

During the degree in Education Sciences at Sapienza University of Rome, each course includes a certain number of hours in class and 12 hours for the 0-3 workshop, dedicated to early childhood. In fact, there are the early childhood education careers, among the main outlets of the degree course.

The workshop, entitled *La parola a libri muti: lettura animata dei silent book (Hand over the floor to wordless books: animated reading of wordless picture books)*, took place in May 2022 at the end of a General Pedagogy course and was attended by 21 female students, almost all in their twenties, from the first year of the degree course. Most of the students participated in person, while some connected via video conference.

The workshop was carried out in different phases, described below.

2.1 The planning

First of all, the teacher gave some ideas, in which the recipients of the workshop, the already mentioned future nursery school educators, were placed at the centre of the consideration. Starting from their training needs, some workshop targets were defined: offering an operational experience that sets off the creativity and some knowledge relating to childhood, learnt during the first year of the course; structuring a useful and repeatable experience as future nursery schools' educators or in other contexts.

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[5]Interview available at https://www.letture.org/la-media-education-nella-prima-infanzia-percorsi-pratiche-e-prospettive-renata-metastasio

As for the working methods, it was considered important that the students work in groups. For two reasons: to promote work and comparison between colleagues, also thinking of future teamwork in educational contexts; and the desire to get students mingle to each other after the long period of Covid-19 restrictions. The participants, as some told during the lessons, had lived the most rigid phase of isolation during the years of secondary school, suffering from it.

The initial idea was to work on children's books, but later it was considered to work on just wordless books. Also, it was considered to make the students read the books in person in nursery schools.

However, the project was conditioned by some limitations: nevertheless, the relatively high number of participants, various legal and bureaucratic difficulties and the persistence of some restrictions due to Covid-19 made the access to nursery schools in good season for the conclusion of the course impossible. Therefore, it was required to reconsider the activity: no longer a face-to-face project with children, but a remote one.

The new starting point was the indications contained in the *Orientamenti pedagogici sui LEAD* (*Pedagogical guidelines on LEADs* – see note 3) which, in the paragraph *Attività a strumenti per mantenere il legame* (*Activities and tools to maintain the link*), state that «podcast and videos can be created and sent (or uploaded to the electronic register, to Drive or to educational platforms), a blog that parents can access whenever they want can be created». Then, a very advantageous exploratory research on YouTube was made to verify whether nursery teachers had already experimented with reading WPBs asynchronously and with which techniques.

Therefore, the task assigned to the participants was defined: form a working group of 3 or 4 people, choose a WPB or do one from scratch, and create a short audio-visual product to tell one of the possible stories contained in the book, through an animated reading. The ideal recipients of the video should have been children between 2 and 3 years of age attending the last year of nursery school and who would have watched the video asynchronously.

2.2 The training path

The first two workshop meetings, which lasted about an hour and a half each, were dedicated to training female students on the following aspects to reach the expected result: benefits and educational aspects of reading aloud in early childhood; presentation of the workshop subject, the WPB; explanation of some reading aloud techniques for early childhood; explanation of simple techniques for creating an audio-visual product.

The first mainly theoretical aspect was addressed in class in the first part, in which some results of the pedagogical research on the benefits of reading for children in the short and long term were highlighted; in the second part of the lesson, two scientific papers, previously uploaded to Moodle, were presented by some students and were then commented on together with the whole group in the classroom. One concerned reading as a factor in the prevention of school failure in children from socio-cultural and economic disadvantage (Batini, 2019); the other concerned reading as a tool for emotional literacy in early childhood (Buccolo, 2017).

In the training phase of the students, two projects to promote reading were presented: *Nati per leggere (Born to read)* and *Leggere, forte! (Reading: cool!).* The teacher's aim was to get the discussion out of the exclusively theoretical level and show how research can become practice and in very structured regional or national projects, sometimes.

Among the materials available on the website of *Leggere, forte! (Reading: cool!),* the book by Batini and Giusti (2021), illustrating reading techniques for children from 0 to 6 years old, was presented and made available to students. It is worth dwelling on how the book by Batini and Giusti (2021: 14) is made: «The experience and the direct voice of the participants of the first year of the project *Leggere: forte! Ad alta voce fa crescere l'intelligenza* (*Reading: cool! [Reading] Aloud makes intelligence grow*) were integrated with the bibliographic research on national and international sources [...]. 57 interviews were conducted with educational and teaching staff in the field 0-6 for this purpose [...]. The collected material was catalogued and categorized on the basis of the support of a panel of experts from different professional fields and disciplinary areas who provided valuable suggestions for the analysis and organization of the different types of sources collected».

A precious job, born from a research review, from the experience of teachers and educators and redefined thanks to the contribution of university professors and reading and book experts.

Some aspects of the book were then recalled after the presentation of the WPBs, and they will be discussed below.

A list of WPBs suitable for different ages was taken always from the same website.

Even if there was not enough time to discuss it in class, among the materials shared with the students there was a classic of storytelling theory for children: *The Grammar of Fantasy* by Rodari. This book was considered above all for those who wanted to create a WPB from scratch, suggesting also to start from one of Rodari's nursery rhymes.

WPB genre was presented in the next meeting, characterised by an inductive approach, asking the students if they knew it. None knew the expression, but someone said they remembered some books made of just images in their childhood. From an initial discussion, the group tended to define them as masterpieces just for children.

One of the videos found on YouTube was showed, in which the WPB *Professione coccodrillo* (*Crocodile Profession*), (Zoboli, 2017)[6] was browsed. Students were then asked to tell their impressions aloud on the video.

Some of the considerations are reported as example: it emerged how a WPB, even wordless, suggests a plot through the images. And then what the group said just before was questioned: WPBs are suitable for children, but they can have different reading levels. In the case of *Professione coccodrillo* (*Crocodile Profession)*, the theme of the roles that each person plays according to the context in which they live emerged from the discussion. One of the students compared the book to Pirandello's theme of masks, saying that she saw a kind of "Pirandello explained to children".

In order to continue the consideration on the different levels of reading a WPB, the video of another masterpiece suitable both for children and adults was showed: *Sidewalk flowers* (Lawson, 2015). After another discussion, it emerged the theme of the book polysemy and the reader's freedom of interpretation.

There was a theoretical moment even for WPBs, albeit very short: the book by Terrusi (2017), *Meraviglie mute (Muted Wonderful)*, was essentially introduced, so that it can be used as a theoretical reference as well as a stories and reflections repertoire around children 's literature.

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[6]Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEwusXBc9ig

Then referring to multiculturalism, one of the topics covered in the General Pedagogy course, the great potential of the WPBs in breaking down language barriers was addressed, citing Ibby Italia project for Lampedusa (par. 1).

Then resuming the inductive approach, an activity was proposed: watching the video (without audio) of a famous WPB twice, *L'Onda* (*The Wave*) (Lee, 2008), in order to define a small script of the video, imagining what the protagonist child might say or think. During the first screening they were asked not to write anything and just watch. The second time they were allowed to take some notes. The students were asked to work individually in this case without exchanging ideas with the others.

Afterwards, some volunteers read their own text and, albeit with some similarities, different readings or interpretations emerged.

The video was watched a third time with audio to show an idea of the work to be done.

The penultimate step for the students training was the commented reading in class of some passages from the book by Batini and Giusti (2021), a manual of 27 reading techniques for the 0-6 age-range.

Given the limited time available, the following points were selected from the text and commented on, so that the students paid particular attention to the writing of the text and, in the creation phase, to the rhythm and the voices of the characters. Last but not least, it was important to have fun and convey fun:

«Technique 1. Like a script: read aloud a text that you have previously studied and annotated as if it were a script, highlighting the strategies that you want to implement during your "show" to play your part with exceptional results, keeping the listener anchored to your sentences and words» (Batini & Giusti, 2021, p. 25).

«Technique 14. Rhythm: underline and emphasize the flow of the story with the voice and with the right pauses. Whether it is a descriptive passage, an action scene or direct speech, use the tone of voice and timbre to comply with author's intentions in describing emotions or moments of suspense» (Batini & Giusti, 2021, p. 27).

«Technique 15. Enjoy: Contaminate the listener with your amusement; it is essential that you are able to experience pleasure while reading to raise interest and be engaging » (Batini & Giusti, 2021, p. 99).

«Technique 19. Do voices: interpret the voice of the several characters, use volume, tone of voice, accents and pauses to bring the words of the story to life in order to make the reading interesting, to actively involve the group and to increase the chance of identifying oneself with the protagonists» (Batini & Giusti, 2021, p. 100).

Regarding reading with interpretation, a piece of advice from Serravallo was also reported (2015: 36), who effectively wrote: «Storytellers make their characters talk. Think about what's happening on the page, and when you open your mouth to speak, pretend you're the character talking. Think about the character says and how he or she would say it. say it just like the character».

Other animated WPBs available on YouTube[7], and videos of reading techniques[8] to give practical ideas were showed.

The penultimate phase of the training concerned simple techniques for creating audio-visual products: the use of Audacity was suggested and explained, a simple free recording tool which offers the possibility of recording overlapping audio tracks to have voices and sounds in sync. Also, the use of platforms such as *Clideo* was showed to pair a video with an audio track and suggested a way to search YouTube for audio effects to import them into the recordings.

In the last part of the training, the teacher showed a short self-produced video with the modeling technique, starting from some scenes from the WPB *Il Barbaro (The Barbarian)* (Moriconi, 2015), which had been edited with sounds and voices.

All the materials used during the training were shared with the students on Moodle, including a list of WPBs deemed suitable for early childhood and a list of animated WPBs Italian videos.

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[7]For example, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4LK-buPYrY
[8] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5hmbZJvNNA

2.3 The fulfilment of the project and the showed WPBs phases.

At the end of the training phase, 20 students gathered in 6 groups and started to create the audio-visual products. A student, who cannot attend, chose to create a silent book with her 8- and 10-year-old daughters and handed in the assignment in June (Fig. 1)[9].

Figure 1: an illustration of *Una goffa amicizia* (*An awkward friendship*) (Prece, 2022).

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[9]The book was self-published and tells the story of a friendship between a boy and a penguin in a polar landscape.

The class hours were approximately 6, divided into three days. However, each group also worked extra time at home, given the limited time available in class.

Each of the 6 groups chose a WPB to voice and followed the given instructions: there was a phase of negotiating about the meaning in which, by putting together the readings of each member, the group identified just one plot among the possible ones; the second phase was writing the story, and then the lines for each character.

The groups then moved on to the dramatization phases where they rehearsed the text, without recording it.

The registration was the last phase for everyone.

The WPBs chosen were the following:[10]

- *The silent red book: a fox and girl story* (Walczak, 2015), whose title the students translated into

Amicizia al chiar di luna (*Friendship in the moonlight*)

- *Chiuso per ferie (Closed for holidays)* (Celija, 2020);

- *Costruttori di stelle (Star Builders)* (Kwak, 2019);

- *(Il pupazzo di neve) (The Snowman)* (Briggs, 2019);

- *Io sono blu (I am blue)* (Guglielmi, 2022);

- *Tempesta (Stormy:A Story About Finding a Forever Home)* (Guojing, 2020).

Those 6 videos were collected and screened during the last meeting of the workshop, which was attended by several students who had followed the course, both in person and online.

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[10] All the 6 video are available on youtube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=resE28pIYec&list=PLypk-w2WmCLHiY-gvnhoG_nmErG59du3K

Each video was briefly introduced by one of the students of the related group and at the end there was a vote for the best one through a Google form. The winning video was *Amicizia al chiar di luna* (*Friendship in the moonlight*).

The workshop concluded with a discussion in which the participants expressed their appreciation for their experience and for each other videos. Non-participants in the workshop also took part, expressing interest and appreciation for the assignments presented.

All the students then were asked to fill out an online form to express their opinions on the General Pedagogy course. In the same form there was a section dedicated only to the workshop, which only the 21 participants had to fill out. The results of this part of the form will be illustrated and commented on in the following paragraph.

3. The opinions of the participants

The section of the form to evaluate the workshop experience consisted of two questions. The first asked «How well did the workshop meet your expectations? » and students had to choose the answer on a 5-point scale from *Not at all* to *Completely*.

The second one was an open-ended question, which gave the possibility to include a comment: «Here you can add your opinion or thoughts on the workshop».

Graph. 1 shows the 21 answers to the first question: 2 answers for point 3, 3 for point 4 and 16 for point 5, corresponding to *Completely*.
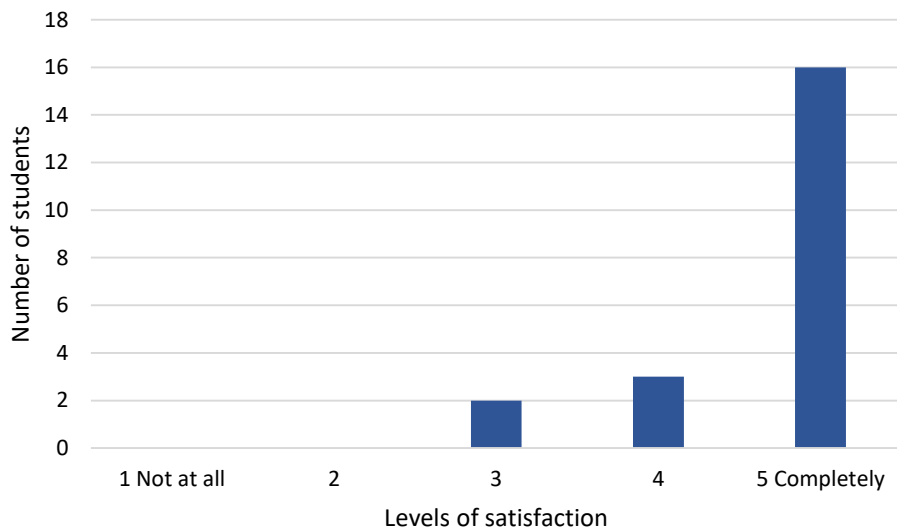
Graphic 1: «How well did the workshop meet your expectations?»

17 students answered the second question, underlying the positive aspects of the workshop. Despite being a very small number of short texts, there are some recurring themes: appreciation for the activity and for having been able to learn about WPBs; learning new skills and having the chance to experiment creatively; learning something that will be useful for their future job in nursery schools.

(1) «I liked being able to experiment with the WPBs through the workshop. I did not know them, and I thought were very interesting».

(2) «It was very interesting to approach practically what we could do in the workplace with this course of study. The WPBs workshop was very fun!».

(3) «I loved this workshop; I liked both the idea and the planning. It was nice to do something practical, to realize how many activities, sometimes little known, can be done with children. For example, I did not know the Wordless Pictured Books, but

now, as soon as I get the chance, I'd like to try reading it with some children to see their interpretations. This workshop has certainly helped my creativity (which is essential to work with little ones). My group and I had a lot of fun, worked well together and shared ideas. This made me realize how "powerful" working in a group can be».

(4) «The workshop represented a good opportunity to challenge ourselves and experiment. It was a great moment of collaboration (for those who carried out the assignment) and sharing (for those who then watched it) ».

(5) «It was a wonderful activity; it allowed us to work in groups and to try something new. If we had simply talked about it in class, it probably would not have been the same».

(6) «0-3 workshop that we carried out in groups in the last 4 lessons has represented for me a perfect opportunity to learn practical and creative skills, especially in the field of nursery schools, where I would like to work in the future. The workshop also allowed me to get in touch with the world of WPBs, which I didn't know before, but which immediately fascinated me: a world without words but full of stories to tell».

(7) «It was a very nice activity as it allowed those who participated to use all the concepts learned during the course, also letting their imagination run wild to create small stories suitable for children in the 0-3 age group».

(8) «The workshop made us to get involved into the project, implementing all the theoretical knowledge related to the shared planning too».

(9) «The workshop was a creative and highly motivating way to learn. It is an experience that I would certainly repeat.

It was very interesting; I didn't know WPBs existed and I'm glad I found out about them. It was interesting to work thinking of an audience aged 0-3, therefore with a specific dialectic etc. ».

Then there are answers in which other aspects of the workshop emerge, such as the possibility of discovering again sociality and face-to-face confrontation after the lockdown:

(10) «The workshop was the icing on the cake... After the lockdown we all lost the habit of meeting people, of talking to someone. So, working in groups gave me the opportunity to know people with whom I would not have spoken due to lack of courage… It made me discover again the pleasure of sharing opinions directly, confronting each other and achieving a goal, even if in a short period of time... Brief, but intense... I was very satisfied with the project».

Or answers emphasizing the individual value of the experience:

(11) «Although this workshop did not reflect my inclinations and took me out of my comfort zone in several aspects, it turned out to be a good experience, which helped me to "do a little more". So, I am very satisfied, and it definitely exceeded my initial expectations».

However, the lack of practical experiences during the academic year is underlined in some answers.

(12) «0-3 workshop was the first thing in this academic year that made me feel "be in tune" with the passion that led me to choose this degree course. I would like to suggest doing this workshop for next years' students; it was really a very pleasant experience».

(13) «It was really very interesting, a new thing for almost all students. I liked it also because it was the only practical thing I did all year long, and I think it is really useful».

The opinions gathered on the workshop experience are certainly encouraging and suggest that the targets set during the planning phase have been fully achieved.

4. Limitations and future prospects

The main limitation of the experience described was the limited time available, which forced a necessarily too short training period so that the workshop part would not get too short. Such a workshop would be perfect at the end of a course dedicated to children's literature, during which lessons would be dedicated to a literary genre, to reading for early childhood and reading techniques, according to the course contents.

Another limitation is the lack of feedback from the real recipients of the videos, the children, that would have been essential to test the quality of the work carried out and to improve it.

Future prospects are based on the very positive feedbacks of the students: practicing with creativity, collaborating with colleagues, learning about resources and techniques that are also useful for the future nursery teachers.

Therefore, there is above all the need to increase practice and creativity moments within the degree course, to make this experience more productive.

It would also be very useful to establish contacts with nursery school educators so that students can have the chance to talk with them while preparing products and activities for children. Not only that: it would be beneficial that the videos could be shown to the children of nursery schools and that students could have feedback from the educators.

Another prospect would be the possibility of creating digital products such as those described, shareable even outside nursery schools and universities; this goes beyond the strictly educational field but would benefit the community and also

make one's project perceived as useful. For example, it would be suggested to affix QR codes that refer to the videos at bus stops or in other waiting areas, in compliance with the Municipality. In this way, adults with very young children would have the opportunity to offer them short quality digital content. A small contribution to the digital education of the little ones.

Conclusions

It has been seen in par. 1 that reading aloud is an extraordinary tool for cognitive, linguistic and emotional growth for children aged 0 to 3. However, the benefits of reading aloud do not end in early childhood but help lay the foundations for future independent and more understanding readers. Studies also show how being exposed to reading as a child can avoid early dropping out, especially for children in socio-culturally disadvantaged conditions.

Therefore, it is necessary that the various educational figures are prepared to know what and how to read. Recently, much attention has been paid to the training of nursery school educators, both nationally and internationally. The workshop aims to establish itself as a link between nursery school educators training and reading for early childhood.

It was decided to work on the WPB genre, which potentialities have been already described in paragraph 1. Among these, the multiplicity of meanings of the masterpiece and the interpretative work required to the reader stand out, as well as all the cognitive benefits for children.

The organisational and construction phases of the workshop were described, and the videos of animated readings of WPBs for 2-or-3-year-old children produced were shown.

As emerged from the opinions of the students who took part to the workshop, it proved to be a positive experience for learning new skills also in view of future jobs, for getting involved and for collaborating with colleagues.

It was an experience with some limitations but good future prospects.

Among the limitations there are the limited time available and not having been able to show the videos to children so far.

Among the future prospects it is beneficial to increase practical experiences within the degree course and to activate in parallel collaborations with nursery schools, so that students will be able to exchange views with possible future colleagues.

Acknowledgments

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