Storytelling in initial literacy processes within library programmes

La narración en procesos de alfabetización inicial en un programa de biblioteca

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Abstract

This article analyses, on the one hand, the program activities designed, to promote reading with children whose ages are comprised between nine months to seven years; and, on the other, the possible contribution of the program for creating appropriate conditions to the future literacy learning of the children. Based on different works about the idea of *emergent literacy*, various reading sessions of the reading promotion program have been analyzed. Using video recordings and surveys we registered the work that the specialized librarians carried out with participants in the group reading sessions and the effects over the families. This article, based on the qualitative method, analyzes variables as the time that has been dedicated to narration, the actions that have been developed during the readings, the implemented basis on the readings, or the effects over participants. Results reveal the importance of the maturity factors to explain the storybook reading practices. Also, results distinguish between different narrative patterns along the group story reading activity, emphasize the importance of certain features of the context as multiple resources and the diverse narrative formats that have been employed and last but not least, we should also emphasize the positive effects over parents and children.

Resumen

El trabajo describe las actividades que se desarrollan en un programa para promocionar la lectura con niños de entre 9 meses y 7 años, y su posible contribución para crear condiciones que podrían facilitar el proceso de alfabetización posterior. Partiendo de diversos trabajos desarrollados en torno al concepto de alfabetización emergente, se analizan sesiones presenciales de dicho programa, así como resultados de cuestionarios contestados por los padres. Mediante grabaciones en video, se registró el trabajo que el personal especializado realizaba con los participantes en la narración y se recogió información a través de cuestionarios. El estudio, de carácter cualitativo, cifra el análisis sobre variables como el tiempo dedicado a la narración, las acciones que se desarrollan durante los relatos, los soportes empleados en la lectura o los efectos sobre los participantes. Los resultados obtenidos subrayan el papel que los aspectos evolutivos juegan en la configuración de las prácticas de narración, distinguen entre distintos patrones narrativos detectados en la actividad de contar historias, ponen de relieve la importancia de ciertas características del ambiente como la riqueza en los recursos y los formatos narrativos empleados. También pudimos valorar los efectos y satisfacción de las familias mediante los cuestionarios aludidos.

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Introduction

Written language is an essential tool to function in the current society. For this reason, it is not surprising that parents attach high importance to the fact that their children become competent readers, be interested in reading and start reading at an early age.

The learning process of written language lies primarily with school, and teachers are those who are professionally qualified to perform initial literacy. Nevertheless, there are other agents who play very important roles in this process. Families play an essential role during early childhood when bringing reading to children (Pascual, Madrid & Mayorga, 2013), as well as other professionals such as librarians, who have a deeply influence both in parents and children who walk into their libraries.

Learning how to read and how to write is a lot more than assuming the code. In fact, other essential processes are generated before starting that task, these being giving reading a functional meaning, generating positive attitudes and real expectations to become a reader. In other words, showing learners that reading is something interesting, useful and even funny. With the code assumption, learners must simultaneously feel the need to obtain a true meaning from what they are reading. Moreover, they must understand different types of texts, extract and extrapolate the meaning, search and choose texts, etc. Being a good reader never starts or ends when children have command on and assume the code. As stated before, their growth as competent readers is a long process where multiple agents linked to their comprehensive education take part.

For this reason, it is important that those adults who are close to the learner, teachers, parents and other reference people could demonstrate their interest as readers. If children could see them enjoying reading, this could sound interesting to them. Many steps can be taken to promote this, such as buying books for all, going to libraries, taking books to their homes, etc. Furthermore, educational research has spotted something else, this being: telling and reading tales to children. So few actions seem to have a deeply influence on promoting motivation and even in long term, generating reading habits, such as telling and reading books and stories to them.

This study will prove how two librarians bring the world of reading to children aged between nine months and seven years and their parents, by means a creating a rich, highly stimulating context.

Theoretical Framework

Academic research in Psycho-Pedagogy has provided us with relevant arguments to show storytelling, both written and oral or even with audiovisual codes (Kendeou *et al.* 2005), as an especially suitable way to initiate children in their culture knowledge in other people, in other worlds or, in short, in other situations of the socialisation process (Bruner, 1986). Oral and told storytelling by the adult to the child is also foreseen as an immense potential activity in order to promote written language learning.

Emergent literacy is defined as the set of skills, knowledge and attitudes that have been generated by children about written language before facing explicit, systematic and formal teaching that is developed in the closest literate and learning contexts, these being: family, the school´s first years or children's libraries. In short, growing up in learning contexts allow children learning what written language is and used for at an earlier age (Pressley, 1999). Storytelling and shared reading are two of the activities that have been studied in greater depth because these are substantially linked to the literacy process.

As stated by Bruner (1986) a few decades ago, children participation in these experiences that are related to storytelling may contribute to increase their skills in two ways, these being: on one hand, at a first level related

to action, increasing knowledge on the stories and behaviours of the characters; on the other hand, at a second level, they are provided with knowledge of the thoughts, wishes and emotions that gear the actions that were performed by the characters. Likewise, the children ability to tell stories from the point of view of actions anticipates their skills to refer to the underlying reasons of the referred actions.

When a book is read to them, little learners start to have some experience regarding how written texts are organised, its structure and characteristics; they learn how to pay attention to the linguistic message as a way to understand the world, which will allow them to enrich their vocabulary, if the message that is mainly shared with their adults has been expanded and reformulated (Piasta, 2016). Also, shared reading of stories also allows children to start to create mental frameworks and schemes.

These cognitive advantages of being exposed to storytelling experiences, along with other experiences already demonstrated and related to progresses in vocabulary (Larraín, Strasser & Lissi, 2012; Ortiz & Jiménez, 2001) and literacy of children that had been exposed to reading promotion experiences, emphasises stories creation from conversations with children (Mol, Bus & de Jong, 2009; Mol, Bus, de Jong & Smeets, 2008).

All the skills that make children create their concept of reading are promoted or potentially learnt through shared reading of books, as well as through other activities related to storytelling (Reese, Cox, Harte & McAnally, 2001). This potential becomes even more important when there are interactions between children and adults while the latter are reading stories; when there are discussions about what is read, stimulating the children's thinking and cognition (Walsh, Sánchez & Burnham, 2016); when there are comments on the pictures and they are enjoyed (Hindman, Skibbe & Foster, 2014; Wolf, 2008); when questions are made

and children are invited to make assumptions, reflect and draw inferences about the story (Zucker, Justice, Piasta & Kaderavek, 2010); in short, when actions about the text are performed. In this sense, Bruner (1991) highlighted the role played by interaction contexts mediated by literature as a way to negotiate meanings. The more children participate when creating joint stories, the more significantly they assimilate cultural values and also create a sense of belonging to the group, which may strengthen their perception of being competent readers.

Therefore, it seems obvious that giving non school-age children the opportunity to participate in storytelling and reading activities may create more favourable conditions for further learning of reading and writing. Some of the elements that could play an important role in this process are, among others, how often these books are read, the real interaction that was generated around narration and the books quality and type that were used in reading (Van Kleeck, 1998).

The study of these aspects has resulted in valuable information on the most optimal way to face shared reading processes and its impact on subsequent literacy processes. Among the studies that have attempted to analyse this relation, there is a quite important line of development aiming at studying how these experiences are at home (Aram, Fine & Ziv, 2013; De Temple & Tabors, 1994) and at school (Zucker *et al.*, 2010), as well as their impact on the learning process, thus highlighting some efficient practices. First of all, it seems obvious that the ways to approach reading and shared storytelling processed will be different in both contexts, mainly because the experts of written language teaching and reading promotion are not the parents but the teachers and librarians. Hindman, Connor, Jewkes & Morrison (2008) suggest that the first difference between both contexts lies in the stories selection process. Teachers and librarians could select tales and readings that were based on specific objectives related to

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the school content or any specific aspect they want to develop, while the criteria followed by parents when selecting tales and readings may be based on other more playful, even pleasant issues. Secondly, it is easy to think that situations of shared reading take place individually in family contexts, those which at school or at the library are part of broader contexts where reading is shared with more children, which shall affect the attention processes, the generated interactions, in their participation in conversations and in the possible learning process. Finally, it is very possibly that these situations could be the result from notably different purposes in family and school contexts. Therefore, the way to perform them will also be different.

Regarding reading in family, Piasta (2016), in a documentary revision of good practices that make literacy development easier in family contexts of shared reading, explains that using different strategies when reading, such as writing short summaries that integrate the ideas that have been read, writing expansions, making open-ended questions or having highly reciprocal conversations, encourage this kind of learning. Meanwhile, in school contexts, the demands that had been derived from the interaction with books are more demanding (Hindman *et al.*, 2008). For instance, Blewitt & Langan (2016), who analysed the teachers' interactions quality, found that making explicit questions of a text during shared reading or storytelling activities is more useful to learn vocabulary rather than having a conversation. Otherwise, Zucker *et al.* (2010) suggest that when teachers make inferential questions, these help children think about what they read and to reflect on the information contained in the texts. Therefore, their narration level comprehension is increased. Furthermore, both teachers and parents seem to use the pictures from the texts repeatedly, commenting on them, pointing at naming some objects therein, as a usual strategy during shared reading and storytelling activities (Hindman *et al.* 2008), which may enrich the children vocabulary.

Far beyond the employed strategies and their impact on the literacy development, many studies are focused on the parenting styles to face shared reading activities. Hindman *et al.* (2014), for example, analysed the shared reading processed of almost 700 families in their own contexts. These authors stated that parents, mostly mothers, basically implemented two ways to talk to their children during and about shared readings: those focusing on the code and those focusing on the text's meaning. They also found that almost none of the mothers who participated in their study talked about the letters or the sounds during the shared reading activity and that just a few of them invited their children to read part of the text. On the contrary, the most usual pattern seems to be discussing on the meaning of what has been read, commenting on the pictures and making assumptions of the heard stories, linking them to everyday life situations. This scheme seems to be implemented in school contexts too (Hindman et al., 2008). On their behalf, De Temple & Tabors (1994), identify the following four parental storytelling styles, these being: (a) direct readers, who read the story aloud and sometimes make pauses to discuss on the reading; (b) standard interactive readers, who systematically stop during the reading and discuss on the story; (c) non-readers, who turn pages and discuss on the book but do not actually read; and finally, (d) reciting readers, who ask the child to repeat sentence by sentence after every piece of reading of the book. In addition to these patterns identification around which stories are recreated, an evolution in the routines used by mothers when performing storytelling activities at home with their children has been confirmed. For example, Sulzby & Teale (1991) found that the content of mother-child interactions varied depending on age and that they became progressively more dense and complex compared to the information narrated. At earlier ages, parents dealt with

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specific elements or characters using pictures from the books. As their children grow up, they tended more often to narrate the story major events and read specific parts of it. All these routines seem to contribute to create a predictable format that allows children to learn and participate in storytelling activities, taking gradually more responsibility in constructing the story. This fact may explain, among others, the powerful influence of reading tales during the children's development after the literacy stage (Sulzby & Teale, 1991).

Otherwise, although there are many studies that analyse the different parental styles to face shared reading activities, according to Hindman *et al*. (2008), there are fewer that analyse how do teachers perform these activities. Dickinson & Smith´s work (1994) is an example of these, where the storytelling styles of pre-school education teachers are classified into (1) aimed at interpretation, (2) co-constructive and (3) didactic-interactive. The first emphasises a more dramatized type of reading, with few pauses and includes a final discussion focusing on the comprehension of the story, defining unusual words and identifying connections between the story and the student's experiences; the co-constructive style tends to promote a more analytical conversation while the book is read; while the didactic-interactive style aims at the student repeating the reading, inviting him/her to do it with the teacher. In this work, Dickinson and Smith obtained different results regarding the impact of these narrative styles in the reading and writing skills of the students at the end of the school year. Those students who were taught by those teachers whose narrative style were mainly focused on the discussion and the stories analysis obtained better results.

Regarding the role played that has been played by shared storytelling in the forthcoming literacy process, Piasta (2016) suggests that interactions with books or the presence of a wide range of high quality materials, are insufficient elements to promote initial literacy. For this reason, Piasta insisted on the fact that adults must act as mediators between narrations and children, using strategies that support the learning process. These mediations between text and children, i.e. shared readings, usually involve the use of different materials that may allow children to be familiar with the written text (Rugerio & Guevara, 2015). Helping families to develop strategies to face shared reading and discover different guide materials is a role that can be taken by means of reading promotion programmes that has been implemented in children's libraries, among others. Although there are not many studies analysing the impact of reading promotion programmes on those parents who learn strategies, there are some studies of a descriptive nature that may be useful to understand the advantages of these programmes regarding the strategies that had been used by parents and the way they interrelate with their children and these books. For example, Brand, Marchand, Lilly & Child (2014) show the design of a reading promotion programme that was implemented in collaboration between the school and the families. In this study, they offered bags with reading materials to establish those activities that could be performed with each one of them, held joint reading sessions where adults, assisted by a teacher, read tales to the children, and groups of parents who met each other to tell and comment on those tales. Their programme evaluation showed that very positive reading experiences were created, that the quality of the interactions between the family/child and books were improved, and that the parents acquired strategies to offer satisfactory reading situations both at home and at school. They also state that the number of literacy activities that had been performed in family contexts increased, that the parents enriched their concepts of how to deal with these issues and that they become more aware of the importance of reading with their children.

All this accumulated knowledge suggests, among others, that what happens during sto-

rytelling activities in pre-reading children may contribute to subsequent learning at school and moreover, to take part in shared reading experiences at early ages would contribute positively to the literacy acquisition. Not only are the teachers who take part in this task, but also other agents play important roles in this process, these being parents, families and, more professionally, librarians.

In this work, we have tried to analyse how a reading promotion experience is developed in a library that holds different groups of children whose ages are comprised between nine months and seven years and their parents to face-to-face sessions where storytelling was the main objective. This study aims to deepen in different issues that are linked to this experience, under the generic target of the actions valuation that were performed during the programme and their training impact identification on the families. For this reason, some of the derived goals from the final aim are related different issues such as: (a) To what extent are face-to-face storytelling sessions derived from organisational and activity patterns to create favourable conditions to learning to read? (b) Are there any differences during the sessions that are related to the different age groups participating therein? (c) What are the effects of participating in this reading promotion programme on the parents? (d) Are the parents with their participation in the programme?

Method

Study

The data that were presented in this work are obtained from the evaluation of the Casas Lectoras[1] programme implemented by Germán Sánchez Ruipérez Foundation. Most of this evaluation was performed on the face-to-face activities that were implemented during the programme which summon the participants grouped by ages, together with their parents, in face-to-face storytelling sessions held at the foundation's library. In these sessions, the participants get involved in different tasks

that are supervised and organised by the librarians. In addition to the valuation of such sessions, different data from questionnaires aimed at the parents were obtained in the general study. These proceedings were applied because the programme also deals with direct actions with the families: in addition to their direct participation in the sessions, they were lent a bag with books and materials.

In order to answer the questions that were risen in this study, we will be presenting data related to the following aspects:
– Time devoted to adult-child storytelling in the sessions.
– Nature of the activities performed during and around reading books.
– Assessment of the sessions by the parents.
– Training effects and assessment of the programme by the parents.

Sessions and participants

Table 1 shows the information about the sessions recorded compared to the total, the participants by age groups and the specialised personnel in charge of the group in each case.

The proceeding followed registered on video a total of 33 meetings (51.56 % of the total) between September 2014 and May 2015. This register was systematically performed by the researchers. The sessions registered were supervised by two librarians: One for the groups of participants aged between 9 months and 2 years and the group of participants aged 3 years, and another one for the groups of participants aged between 4 and 5 and 6

Table 1. *List of registered sessions and participants by age groups and specialised personnel*

	9 months-2 years	3 years	4-5 years	6-7 years	TOTAL
Number of sessions held	16	16	16	16	
Number of sessions held	8	8	9	8	
Number of participants	10	11	14	17	
Librarians in charge	A	A	B	B	

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and 7 years, in different times for each group (table 1). As suggested by Smolkowsky & Gunn (2012), the stability of this kind of practices enables to obtain a common action patter with three observations only. Therefore, the saturation of the sample we obtained was sufficient.

Instruments of analysis

As we have already stated, different instruments of analysis have been used to perform a comprehensive evaluation of the programme (encoding of video recordings, questionnaires aimed at the families and inventory of the register for the virtual platform). In this study, we will be focusing on the data that have been obtained from video recordings of the face-to-face sessions, as well as from some additional information obtained from the questionnaires completed by the parents.

The analysis of the data recorded on video was performed using a system of categories based on the observation work that was carried out in face-to-face storytelling sessions, which the research group had previously performed in other study (Clemente & Ramínez, 2008).

The researchers performed the analysis as follows: the recordings were viewed and encoded based on the system of categories created; the encoding was performed by two researchers and revised by a third researcher. It should be mentioned that previous encoding phases were followed to achieve an agreement. Therefore, in the first phase, the level of agreement was higher than 60% and rose to 80% in the second phase.

The system of categories differentiates between types of activities performed during the sessions, actions carried out by the participants in the activities and resources used to carry out the task. As far as the type of activities is concerned, the system of categories identifies five types sufficiently differentiated on which the structure of the sessions is based, in other words:

– Welcome: The children and their parents are welcome, they say hello and they are placed in the initial context of the task.
– Collective storytelling: In this activity, one or more stories are created, in most cases in supports of a different nature.
– Workshop: Activities where the participants get involved in the construction and creation of objects, little toys, instruments and characters using different materials, related to the contents of collective storytelling
– Provision and presentation of materials: Digital and analogue materials are provided to describe and explain their use, functionality, format, content, structure., etc...
– Farewell: Close and conclusions from the sessions. Marks the end of the activities performed and it is the time to recapitulate them and to arrange the next meeting.

The data of the analysis that are closely linked to the collective storytelling activity are presented in this study, because it is the kind of steps taken during the sessions where one or more stories is built, which is thus more closely related to this article's approach.

As far as the questionnaires are concerned, two were used, one at the beginning of the programme and another at the end thereof.
– Initial questionnaire: it was prepared in order to assess the sociological aspects of the participants (socio-occupational status, academic level, reading habits of the family, importance attached to reading, etc.), as well as the motivations, reasons, expectations and attitudes towards the programme. It was applied in October 2014.
– Final questionnaire: it was prepared in order to assess the impact and assessment of the programme by the parents, both in terms of fulfilment of expectations and of certain training parameters for them and their own children, notably their children's evolution around reading. It was applied in June 2015.

Results and discussion

The results will be presented on the basis of the elements set forth in the "Method" heading: (1) Time devoted to adult-child storytelling in the sessions, (2) Nature of the activities performed during and around book reading activities, (3) Assessment of the sessions by the parents, and (4) Training effects and assessment of the programme by the parents.

Time devoted to adult-child storytelling in the sessions

The face-to-face sessions lasted for 60-50 minutes approximately. Of the total recording time, table 2 shows how long was devoted to the storytelling activity as a percentage, broken down by sessions and age groups.

Table 2. *Percentage distribution of the time devoted to storytelling by sessions and age groups*

Session number	9months-2 years	3 years	4-5 years	6-7 years
Session 1	-	-	22.80	-
Session 2	42.34	45.54	18.09	16.27
Session 3	43.48	43.37	15.56	-
Session 4	51.82	44.41	21.88	8.10
Session 5	50.61	53.37	20.65	25.32
Session 6	41.35	37.63	40.26	19.36
Session 7	78.11	87.22	15.31	19.35
Session 8	52.34	27.01	28.85	-
Session 9	40.49	19.35	34.78	14.73
TOTAL	50.36	42.93	24.70	12.83

When analysing the data shown in table 2, the first evidence is that the collective storytelling activities are those that give a meaning to face-to-face work. Nonetheless, a clear trend can be noted: the older the participants are, the less time is devoted to storytelling in the sessions. This trend is supported both by the total percentages by age groups and by the partial percentages of each session by age

group. This trend could partially be explained by the fact that there are two librarians who supervise the sessions: On the one hand, there is one for the two lower age groups and on the other, there is another one for the two higher age groups. Therefore, each of them can implement different styles to supervise the activities during the sessions as a whole. Nevertheless, it does not explain the trend pointed out at the beginning, because the decrease in the amount of time devoted to storytelling can also be noted in the two groups with younger participants and in the two groups with older participants. On the contrary, we are more inclined to provide an explanation related to the children's age. Younger children depend more on adults to access the narrative texts, while the older children are, the more independent to approach books they become. We should take into account that children from group aged between six and seven years attend school; they are thus guaranteed initial knowledge on reading, as a result of their school experience. We should also take into account that other types of activities of each session, such as workshops, allow older children to work on aspects derived from topics dealt with in the stories without being so dependent on the librarians. Most workshops performed with the older children are relatively "school-based", such as building stories using sentences, with the book *My little story factory by* Bruno Gibert (2008); or creating a character with crafts materials, giving a name to it and inventing a short story around it; or making a visual composition and give a title to it. In other words, activities that are very closely linked to teaching of reading are performed, in the line held nowadays (Clemente, 2008; Clemente & Rodríguez, 2014; Paratore, Cassano & Schickedanz, 2011; Riley-Ayers, 2013; Tracey & Morrow, 2015). On the contrary, the workshops for the younger children are more related to actions of drawing or visual arts used to extend the topic narrated and which require collaboration from the parents while they supervise their children.

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In short, the younger children are, the more meaningful storytelling activities performed by adults are, because as they age and acquire more skills, the librarians combine the storytelling activity with other activities related to the story that do not necessarily require explicit, direct storytelling, which coincides with the results obtained by Reese *et al*. (2003) and those by Sulzby & Teale (1991).

Nature of the activities performed during and around reading books

The collective storytelling activity is the core part of the face-to-face sessions, where one or more stories are created, in most cases in supports of a different nature. In this activity, the librarians supervise and carry out different actions to implement storytelling. Table 3 shows the percentages of the actions that make up the storytelling activity by the librarians in the different age groups.

The storytelling types focus on three formats: tales, poems and songs ("storytelling types" item in table 3). It has been proven that all types of songs and poems are used with younger children, while tales with longer stories have greater prominence in those sessions held with older participants.

The assessment of the strategies used by storytellers to draw the attention of children is more interesting. To that end, storytellers use different media (objects, music, activities, and positions). Objects are more frequently used, and they also play an essential role in younger children, while they gradually become less important in the other age groups. Music is not usually used with the lower age group. It is very difficult for little children to focus their attention being placed in a specific position. This similarly happens to those actions that have been performed to motivate towards the story; objects (moving long stripes of satin, little chests, finger puppets) always generate greater motivation together with interaction, which coincides with the results obtained by Brand *et al*. (2014) and Rugerio & Guevara

(2015), while gestures and especially music are less relevant.

In any case, the most important aspect of our analysis is how the own storytelling is performed.

As it can be seen in table 3, storytelling is fundamentally supported on strategies

Table 3. *Percentage distribution of the actions performed by the librarians during the storytelling activity by age groups*

Actions performed by the librarian during the storytelling activity	9 months-2 years	3 years	4-5 years	6-7 years
Drawing attention with objects	7.29	1.53	2.19	3.77
Drawing attention with music	.61	-	.73	-
Drawing attention with activities	-	.38	2.55	3.77
Drawing attention with position	-	-	2.19	.94
Motivation introduction with objects	8.10	4.60	4.38	-
Motivation introduction with music	1.21	-	-	-
Motivation introduction with gestures	3.04	3.07	1.82	1.89
Motivation introduction with interaction	3.44	-	2.55	6.60
Motivation introduction with recited singing	.40	-	.36	1.89
Narrative strategies intonation	7.49	19.54	7.30	8.49
Narrative strategies gestures	20.85	17.62	8.03	9.43
Narrative strategies rhythms and songs	7.49	-	3.28	2.83
Narrative strategies interaction	12.15	30.65	22.63	30.19
Narrative strategies noises	1.01	.77	5.47	2.83
Narrative strategies onomatopoeias	3.85	2.30	4.38	.94
Narrative strategies reading aloud	-	.77	10.95	6.60
Strategies end with end formulas	1.82	1.92	2.55	3.77
Strategies end offering tales	-	.77	.73	-
Storytelling types				
Tales	4.88	-	84.62	100
Poems	9.76	14.29	7.69	-
Songs	85.37	85.71	7.69	-

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to build the story based on resources such as intonation, use of gestures, rhythms and songs, construction of the story through interaction, onomatopoeias or noises. These resources have more outstanding percentages in the storytelling activity and constitute its core. Therefore, the storytelling activity involves the librarian's acting using other body language elements and also complicity of the audience through interaction.

Anyway, storytelling could vary enormously depending on age. Gestures and interaction are used above all with younger children. Intonation and other musical aspects such as rhythms and songs are used at an intermediate level. Books are not read with the group of younger children. Therefore, the librarian must be an actress and a resource at the same time, with the support of interaction and intonation to dramatize the story in a clear way. Both librarians and their respective groups gradually increase the use of interaction as a narrative resource, as stated by Sulzby & Teale (1991). Songs and rhythms become less important as the participants' age increases, which clearly matches what we emphasised before: resources are used according to ages.

The end of the storytelling activities is frequently supported and increased based on the age, by formulas such as "Happily ever after...", chanted by the children together with the librarian.

As we just stated regarding the data shown in table 3, the direct storytelling activities carried out by the librarians trigger different mechanisms that refer to and prove some of the results described in the theoretical introduction. Therefore, certain resources to motivate and to draw the attention on the stories suggest storytelling patterns where adults resort to dramatization using objects, music, gestures... (Brand *et al.* 2014; Dickinson & Smith, 1994). As the story is being told, strategies such as gestures, intonation, noises and onomatopoeias also appear, which largely dramatize storytelling itself. But dramatization

is not the only pattern that configures direct storytelling by the adult to the child; as can be seen in table 3, the interaction between the storyteller and the listener is also very important in the construction of the story (Blewitt, Rump, Shealy & Cook, 2009; González *et al.*, 2014). This interaction suggests a dialogic pattern in the line that was pointed out by De Temple & Tabors (1994), Mol *et al.* (2008, 2009).

The data in the table also show issues that had been emphasised by the results that were obtained in other research as supportive for reading experiences in the future: exposing children to different storytelling models (tales, poems, songs) (Van Kleeck, 1998), or giving participants the opportunity to perceive how do stories start and end with formulas they know (end formulas). According to Colomer (2005), one of the functions of children's literature is to facilitate learning of narrative and poetic models that are used in each culture, the ways to structure the storytelling, the pace of verses, in short, the rules of the different narrative or poetic genres.

All these characteristic of the storytelling activities implemented in the programme have differences linked to the different age groups who took an active part in the sessions. This way, allowing for the differences in the groups due to the singularity of the librarians, a storytelling pattern that is more based on the interactive construction of the stories in the higher age groups can be verified. On the contrary, in the groups with younger participants, the pattern seems to resort to the fiction representation, to more visual or sound resources instead. This evolution was also emphasised in studies on parental storytelling patterns (Sulzby & Teale, 1991).

As far as the resources that were employed in storytelling are concerned, as it can be seen in table 4, the richest resources are implemented with the group aged between four and five years, where all the types of supports -excepting puppets- were used. The group with a smaller variety of supports is that aged

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between six and seven years.   The group aged between nine months and two years and that aged three years basically share the same supports and the projector with screen was not used in the storytelling activity. In this sense, it is necessary to clarify that when the librarians applied these digital resources, they were telling traditional stories that had been digitised for the group as a whole. Therefore, the results regarding digital supports are closely related to the traditional book.

The use of supports more prone to dramatize storytelling activities (puppets, flannelgraphs, and other objects) is more linked to groups of lower ages, an aspect that is also shown in table 3, regarding the actions performed by the librarian in the storytelling activity.

Table 4. *Percentage distribution of the actions performed by the librarian during the storytelling activity on different supports by age groups*

Supports used by the librarian during the storytelling activity	9months-2 years	3 years	4-5 years	6-7 years
Giant book	-	4.55	35.29	66.67
Traditional book	31.37	40.91	5.88	-
Puppets	3.92	4.55	-	-
Flannelgraph	21.57	18.18	2.94	-
Panel rotatory boxes	-	-	35.29	-
Other objects	37.25	9.09	2.94	-
Digital blackboard	5.88	22.73	14.71	11.11
Projector with screen	-	-	2.94	22.22

Parents´ Assessment on Sessions.

Apart from describing the sessions, we were interested in showing the parents' assessment of same. In order to obtain this information, some questions where included in the second questionnaire about the activities performed in that space, as well as about the analogue and digital resources used during those sessions and during the programme generally.

The obtained data are shown in table 5. We should highlight the general consensus

regarding the importance families attach to the activities performed by the librarians face-to-face, as well as to the resources they learnt and implemented during the programme. The librarian´s reading performance is highlighted above other aspects such as the workshops, which emphasises the core importance of storytelling to promote interest in reading and to learn how to tell stories.

The *apps* and the iPAD are the most valued resources, as well as the books in the room, because they enable the families to work at home with their children. We should take into account that these materials facilitate deepening into or even repeating the storytelling activities performed by the librarians at home (Brand *et al.,* 2014).

Table 5. *Percentage distribution of the assessment of the Casas Lectoras sessions*

Aspects under assessment	Very much	Quite	Little	Very little
Storytelling by the librarian	80.49	19.51	-	-
Workshops	65.85	34.15	-	-
Resources used by the librarian	70.73	29.27	-	-
Use of digital blackboard	41.46	39.02	12.20	-
iPAD	87.80	9.76	-	-
Apps	92.68	7.32	-	-
Books for the children in the room	85.37	14.63	-	-

Training effects and Programme Assessment by Parents

In order to provide a deep analyse in the different aspects related to the programme assessment by the participants, as well as its possible effects, first of all, we world like to obtain information on the raised expectations at the beginning of this experience. We could thus know the valuation of the programme by the end, and even its impact on different aspects of family reading. As it has been stated before, two questionnaires were provided, these being: one at the beginning and the other one at the end.

As far as expectations are concerned, the data obtained at the beginning are shown in table 6. We find that, in line with the study by Pascual *et al.* (2013), *Promoting pleasure in reading* is what raises more expectations, and so state 100% of families, regardless of their age group. *Entertainment* is the second axis; so are more than 50% of respondents, although there are variations depending on their age group, intermediate groups being the ones that pick it more frequently. The data on *Advice* are curious because its average amounts to 42.86%, but it clearly falls as the children's age increases. The average value of *Having books* amounts to 31.43%, but there is no pattern by age group. *Having technological resources* is what raises less expectations; only 25% of respondents picks that option.

Table 6. *Percentage of the programme's expectations by the parents*

Programme's expectations	9months-2 years	3 years	4-5 years	6-7 years	Total
Promoting pleasure in reading	100	100	100	100	**100**
Entertainment	50	80	62.50	36.36	**57.14**
Advice	66.67	50	37.50	27.27	**42.86**
Having books	16.67	60	25	18.18	**31.43**
Having technological resources	16.67	40	25	18.18	**25.71**
Others	-	-	12.50	-	**2.86**

Note: These data show the affirmative answers in each category

Promoting pleasure in reading is one of the most important expectation of the parents; given that one of the mechanisms to achieve that objective is storytelling precisely, they were asked in both questionnaires about the strategies they used to tell stories, which

Table 7. *Percentage distribution of strategies when telling stories between the initial and the final questionnaire by age group*

Strategies telling a tale	0 to 2 years		3 years		4 to 5 years		6 to 7 years		Total	
	C-1	C-2	C-1	C-2	C-1	C-2	C-1	C-2	C-1	C-2
Showing pictures	100	100	90	100	100	100	90.91	100	94.29	100
Oral storytelling without book	33.33	42.86	30	88.89	25	33.33	36.36	40	31.43	48.78
Puppets	-	14.29	20	55.56	-	20	-	-	5.71	21.95
Others	16.67	-	10	-	25	13.33	18.18	-	14.29	4.88

Note: * C-1 = Questionnaire 1   ** C-2= Questionnaire 2

would allow us to identify any differences after participating in the programme. The results are shown in table 7.

As we can see in differences between the two questionnaires regarding the strategies used in interactions with their children, we find that the *storytelling* strategy has changed notably from the first to the second questionnaire, especially in the group of parent whose children are aged 3 years. It must be taken into account that there were several answers to this question, *showing pictures* is the strategy most frequently used by adults, as stated by Hindman *et al.* (2008, 2014), although it has barely changed during the programme, because this strategy was used from the beginning. The new strategies that were mentioned by them from the second questionnaire should be highlighted when asking them for *others* openly. The mention *making things*, which may be linked to the workshops carried out during the sessions; *making theatre,* which is very repeated also in the storytelling sessions; and *intonation, surprise and mystery*, a resource that has been frequently employed by the librarians.

The three groups with younger children have increased all the strategies, but in the older ones, with children aged between six and seven years, nobody mentions using *puppets* or any other means, which is strange due to motivating instruments that do not seem to be necessary since they are older.

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Table 8. *Percentage distribution of the positive effects for the parents*

Have your expectations been fulfilled	Totally	Very much	Quite	Little	Very little
Knowing materials	48.78	39.02	12.20	-	-
Knowing children's literature	56.10	39.02	4.88	-	-
Guidelines to initiate children as readers	51.22	46.34	2.44	-	-
Greater personal interest in reading	43.90	43.90	7.32	2.44	-
Contact with other families	58.54	31.71	9.76	-	-
Knowing and using digital resources	58.54	34.15	7.32	-	-
Strategies when telling stories	58.54	31.71	7.32	-	-
Enriching his/her relation with his/her child	63.41	31.71	2.44	2.44	-

When information about fulfilment and the effects of initial expectations was obtained subsequently, it was found that the assessment was very high, for example, regarding the positive impact on the parents due to their participation in the programme. The data can be verified in table 8.

It can be appreciated how almost all the options in the questionnaire are highly valued. For example, the answers *totally* and *very much* amount to 95.12% in the case of those aspects more linked to the *knowing children's literature*. Other examples are *strategies when telling stories*, which are very highly valued by the parents in the two most positive categories of the scale amount to 92,69% and the *Guidelines to initiate children as readers*, whose results coincide with the data obtained by Brand *et al.* (2014). Other related data related to *knowing materials* in general, and *knowing and using digital resources*, which are very important aspects, are also noteworthy.

Other advantages that had been found by the parents and that go beyond issues that are related to the promotion of reading, are the facts of *enriching my relation with my child*, (Wolf, 2008). Otherwise, as shown in table 9,

all the elements have been valued very positively, even the issue *Greater personal interest in reading*. The parents answered the following to the open questions: "Valuing how far can go my child's imagination and mine itself", "A lot of new material which, as a teacher, I have used with my students", "A lot of suitable books I did not need to select". The value that had been attached by the parents to the programme regarding the found advantages for their children is noteworthy. The answers from the parents are also very positive when they are asked specifically about the most valued aspects for their children when attending the Casas Lectoras main activities.

Finally, to sum up, the parents make a positive experience balance and their participation in the programme. This is evidenced by the contained data in table 10 about the expectations fulfilment.

Conclusions

The reading promotion sessions include the characteristics that were defined as suitable by experts to create functional conditions in children that may increase their interest in written language, these being: A rich environ-

Table 9. *Percentage distribution of the fulfilment of expectations regarding the advantages for their children*

Have your expectations been fulfilled	Totally	Very much	Quite	Little	Very little
Reading habits acquired	46.34	48.78	4.88	-	-
The sessions were very funny	73.17	21.95	4.88	-	-
The relations with other children	39.02	48.48	12.20	-	-
The care and order habits acquired	19.51	51.22	24.39	-	-
His/her progress in terms of attention	24.39	56.10	17.07	2.44	-
The materials discovered	60.98	39.02	-	-	-

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Table 10. *Percentage distribution of the fulfilment of expectations prior to the Casas Lectoras programme*

Have your expectations been fulfilled	Totally	Very much	Quite	Little	Very little
Promoting the child's pleasure in reading	65.85	29.27	4.88	-	-
Entertainment	56.10	39.02	4.88	-	-
Advice	53.66	39.02	7.32	-	-
Having books	80.49	14.63	4.88	-	-

ment with a wealth of storytelling materials; the use of different resources tailored according to the developmental characteristics of children; and the performance of storytelling as the most relevant activity during the sessions compared to other potential activities.

Moreover, the use of interaction in storytelling processes is a primary element when building a story at all ages, proving its value, according to a large number of studies (Blewitt *et al.* 2009; González *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, the older the participants are, the greater interaction in storytelling processes is. On the contrary, dramatization resources are more frequently used when the participants of the group are younger, which is justified given their shortened attention spans, which is enhanced through material rather than verbal resources.

The librarians employ different formats according the age. Songs and poems are more frequently used with younger children, while tales are used with older children. The traditional book is still used as a resource to make children establish a connection with the storytelling process, although digital resources are gradually being incorporated to support such process.

In spite of certain constraints, the study shows how the appropriate conditions that promote the reading acquisition experience are created, in line with the obtained results in other similar studies (Blewitt & Langan, 2016; González *et al.*, 2015; Piasta, 2016; Wolf,

2008). It also highlights the multiple dimensions that storytelling must include at early ages, not only due tio the changes that had been experienced by children according to their developmental processes, but also due to the storytelling strategies or the resources that were implemented to that end.

Furthermore the obtained results emphasise that the parents are generally satisfied with the programme. They value the face-to-face sessions very positively, especially those storytelling activities performed by the librarians, as well as the materials provided to them in order to continue with their reading promotion activities at home.

Therefore, we can conclude by saying that the programme had an impact on the parents in terms of acquiring new strategies to approach the world of tales, stories, etc. In order words: literary culture. The parents themselves have also appreciated positive effects on their children.

In order to conclude, the constraints of this study should be highlighted. They are derived from its descriptive nature and the number of participants in the programme. This study falls within the field of emergent literacy, where studies of a descriptive nature are more frequent than experimental designs (Van Kleeck, 2001). Hence that those descriptive studies using observation techniques and even having an ethnographic approach are more frequent. Otherwise, it is hard to design experimental approaches for informal contexts involved in storytelling activities between parents and their children, or in programmes exclusively aimed at promoting reading, such as this study. Therefore, we should be very careful when assessing the results of those researches on an experimental nature. As a matter of fact, it would be risky to establish a cause and effect link between the participation in the programme and the literacy level of any participant; as far as that link is concerned, we are skating on thin ice but approaching the books, the stories and thus reading promotion

programmes undoubtedly has positive effects. Likewise, we have provided data on the satisfaction level that these programmes have in the family environment and their contribution to training parents as mediators.

Hence, such studies as this one should contribute to enrich the knowledge corpus and provide guidelines on performances in similar experiences.

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