Using Skype interactive book talks to support literacy learning in young children?

Amy Chantra
St. John Fisher College

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Abstract
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Using Skype interactive book talks to support literacy learning in young children?

By

Amy Chantra

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Dr. Gloria E. Jacobs

Ralph C. Wilson School of Education

St. John Fisher College

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**Introduction**

Technology is becoming more prevalent in today’s schools and classrooms. Using information communication technologies in the classroom allows teachers to explore variations of student social interaction and literacy learning. During my research I will be specifically focusing on emergent literacy learners using information communication technology to enhance their literacy learning. This topic will help teachers be aware of the information communication technology that is available to them and their students. It will also illustrate a different way to enhance student literacy learning using technology. The issues that are being addressed through research are: is information communication technology enhancing student literacy learning? Is this a practical way for schools and teachers to enhance student literacy learning? And, is exposing students to these technologies allowing students to expand their social interaction, therefore enhancing their literacy experience?

During the research I will be addressing all of the questions above by using information communication technology, such as Skype, with kindergarten students to enhance reading comprehension. I will be able to collect data that will allow me to observe if information communication technology is enhancing their reading comprehension through social interaction with other kindergarten students.

**Theoretical Framework**

Literacy is a social practice that encompasses many different aspects of a person’s environment. This is best stated by Barton and Hamilton:

> Literacy is primarily something people do; it is an activity, located in the space between thought and text. Literacy does not just reside in people’s
heads as a set of skills to be learned, and it does not just reside on paper, captured as texts to be analyzed. Like all human activity, literacy is essentially social, and it is located in the interaction between people. (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 10).

Larson and Marsh explain that literacy is not just reading and writing; it is everything that a person is engrossed when they are born. This includes their culture, their experiences with the world, and the people they interact with. Goodman explains that “children discover and invent literacy as they participate actively in a literate society” (Goodman, 2001, p.316). This applies to every child since we live in a literate society where reading, writing, and speaking is all around us. This includes technology interaction as they become exposed to evolving technologies.

Literacy is also the changing technology around us. People use technology every day but this does not mean everyone is technologically literate. Lankshear and Knobel define literacy as “socially recognized ways of generating, communicating and negotiating meaningful content through the medium of encoded text of participation in Discourses (or as members of Discourses).” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p.64)

This definition explains that literacy can be communicated through many different sources including encoded texts. Encoded texts are electronic text that include, but are not limited to email, AIM, and blog discussions. These texts are types of discourses that people use to communicate. It makes sense to include technology in the definition of literacy since it can be used in discussions and in many other forms of communication. Many schools and homes have computers readily available to use, but some schools and homes can not afford to have computers. This creates a gap between the technologically
literate and the un-technologically literate people (Mullen & Wedwick, 2008). Teachers and parents need to be aware of this and know that it is crucial for children to be exposed to technology. This is just another form of literacy that children should be aware of because it has had a tremendous impact on our world.

Both of the above definitions relate to the sociocultural theory, this theory states that being literate is being able to use text within communities for a specific purpose (Bloome, Dyson, Gee, Nystrand & et al, 2006). Both definitions of literacy are allowing text to be used to communicate with others; they are just formed in different ways. Larson and Marsh (2005) agree that learning takes place through participation in social, cultural and historic contexts that occur through interaction. Children learn by participating in sociocultural activity in both formal and informal contexts of culturally connected situations (Larson & Marsh, 2005). Literacy knowledge is constructed through tools teachers and students use in everyday life in and out of school such as traditional texts, and multimodal texts such as blogs, instant messaging, computers (Larson and Marsh, 2005). Each individual has multiple literacies and can build on these literacies and add to them as they learn more about them (Larson & Marsh, 2005). Literacy instruction should be based on children’s experiences in and out of school allowing children to use a variety of technologies to express what they know, such as information communication technologies, PowerPoint, Smart board, and email.

Technology has profoundly impacted literacy and communication between people. We have entered an age where technology is everywhere and unavoidable. Larson and Marsh depict how Lynn Gatto, a teacher from Rochester, New York, utilizes video conferences to communicate with a class in Kentucky. This type of technology has
many benefits including broadening communication skills. Gatto’s class is able to collaborate with children from another state on ideas about what they are studying (Larson and Marsh, 2005). Another teacher that uses technology to further children’s literacy skills is Hilary Malden. She is allowing her class to use technology to enhance their work. The children create stories and other pieces of writing using an interactive whiteboard that has access to the internet (Larson and Marsh, 2005). These integrated technologies are helpful in literacy learning and allow for creativity from students.

The impact of new information and communications technology on literacy acquisition is so profound. According to Larson and Marsh, “children become competent in using these digital technologies from a very young age and the lack of attention by educators to this experience creates dissonance between home and school experiences” (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 70).

Many children are able to explore technology at home, but some teachers do not incorporate the use of technology in school. This is creating a separation between home and school learning (Larson & Marsh 2005). This gap could be lessened if teachers used the children’s technological awareness to foster learning in the classroom. Larson and Marsh (2005) describe Hilary Malden’s use of technology in the classroom. Malden’s class participated in a project involving electronic presentations using digital media (Larson and Marsh, 2005). Children were able to use multiple modes of technology to present and share their projects with each other. This is important since Malden is allowing children to be exposed to technology in school; this is an example of how the gap between home and school learning can be smaller. Another example of how technology is impacting literacy acquisition is brought up by Davies who states,
These multimodal developments are ones which evolve from new social practices created by the existence of a new social space which occupies an intangible but highly significant position in the digitally developed world; they therefore need a pace on the curriculum quite urgently (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 133).

Davies is explaining that because literacy is a social practice, and many children are familiar with the new technologies available, teachers need to implement this type of learning into the classroom; otherwise the gap between home and school learning will remain. He is saying that technology is relevant and important enough to imbed into the school curriculum.

I agree with Davies that literacy instruction needs to include forms of technology since children are surrounded by it and incorporating it into their daily lives. I believe literacy instruction should be relevant to childrens’ lives and if they are using technology at home then teachers should be building off this knowledge at school. When Lynn Gatto used the video conferencing with her class, they were able to accomplish so much just by communicating with an out of state classroom. She set up days where they would conference about a book that both classrooms were reading and a study session that included games such as, Jeopardy. In a study done by Ikpeze and Boyd where students were able to navigate a WebQuest and answer questions based on the WebQuest. Results “suggest that WebQuests can facilitate thoughtful literacy when tasks are carefully selected, organized and delivered.” (Ikpeze & Boyd, 2007, p.647) Thoughtful literacy is a type of inquiry based learning where the focus of what was studied was how to “make connections between what was read and the real world.” (Ikpeze, Boyd, 2007, p.649)
This lesson shows how to make use of technology and relate it to its significance in the real world.

**Research Question**

Considering that technology is an ever-changing and evolving component in many classrooms, my research question will ask: How can Skype interactive book talks support literacy learning in young children?

**Literature Review**

**Introduction**

Research shows that new technologies are becoming a part of young childrens’ lives in and out of schools. Technology has affected how emergent literacy learners are acquiring information and using it to communicate (Wohlwend, 2009). Based on the limited research on and young children and information communication technology, I have expanded my research beyond information communication technologies. After reviewing the literature I have found these three themes: technology and play, technology and teachers and technology and literacy learning in young children.

**Technology and Play**

Young children are incorporating technology into their play by imitating what they are experiencing at home and in the world (Wohlwend, 2009). Wohlwend describes children as “‘early adopters’ to signal two simultaneous identities for young technology players: (1) as developing learners of literacies and technologies and (2) as curious explorers who willingly play with new media” (Wohlwend, 2009, p. 119). Young literacy learners are using what resources they have during play to make up for what technologies are missing (Wohlwend, 2009). During Wohlwend’s studies inside
kindergarten and first grade classrooms, she found that children were turning toys into technology; a young child was playing with plastic foods and turned a carrot into a cell phone, while another child created a paper cell phone (Wohlwend, 2009). Results showed that “children found play spaces for exploring technologies, demonstrating their awareness of emerging forms of being literate” (Wohlwend, 2009, p. 137). Another experience that Wohlwend (2009) observed was children constructing a video game on a piece of paper. While observing children at play she discovers “Two first grade boys play an invented game that resembled *Digimon Rumble Arena*, a two player fighting genre” (Wohlwend, 2009, p. 128). The boys were able to recreate the video game on paper and pretend to play it by animating sounds and motions to make it real (Wohlwend, 2009). While these discoveries were made inside the classroom, Smith (2002) discovered technology being used in play at home.

A researcher and parent used her son to discover how new technologies impact emergent literacy learners. Smith studied her son James, a toddler, as she exposes him to CD-ROM storybooks at home (Smith, 2002). James was able to use technology and literacy as he explored the CD-ROM stories by “questioning, evaluating and retelling the movements and language of the hypertext” (Smith, 2002, p.11). Smith (2002) video taped her son playing and recorded his knowledge of technology while he played and in his everyday interactions. Smith found that “James’s play involved the re-enactment of story parts as his understanding of technology increased” (Smith, 2002, p. 14). James used technology when he played by pretending that he or his father was being “clicked on” and that would produce various responses, including imitating hypertext (Smith, 2002). Results showed that “James’s experience with CD-ROM storybooks effectively
illustrates the powerful connection between technology, literacy and play” (Smith, 2002, p. 16). The link between technology, literacy and play, lead Smith to conclude that teachers should think about the impact of technology on how children develop literacy skills (Smith, 2002.)

Another study by Marsh, reveals the techno-literacy practices in a group of children between 2 and 4 years of age. Marsh (2004) used parent questionnaires, interviews and field studies to discover what types of technology children were exposed to at home. Marsh found that “literacy as a means of pleasure and self-expression was strongly evident throughout children’s engagement with television, computer games and mobile phones” (Marsh, 2004, p. 62). Marsh (2004) discovered that children were learning elements of literacy, such as, graphemes and phonemes from watching TV, problem-solving skills from video games and communication and expression from mobile phones (p. 61).

Mavers’s (2007) study also shows that young children are using technology when they play, but as a form of communication. During this study a six year old, Kathleen, chooses email as a way to communicate with her Uncle (Mavers, 2007). “That Kathleen switched on the computer, found the application, went online and autonomously produced, sent and accessed her emails is testimony to her technical capability and her confidence in digital communication” (Mavers, 2007, p. 161). Even though this is only one instance of a child being able to spontaneously use email as a way to communicate, it shows that Kathleen made a choice; instead of writing, drawing or calling, she chose to use email (Mavers, 2007). Another researcher found many young children were exposed to a variety of media in their home life (Yamada-Rice, 2010). The presence of technology
in young childrens’ lives presents the question “Are children being sufficiently well prepared to evaluate and communicate in view of visual dominance in new multimodal ways of meaning-making?” (Yamada-Rice, 2010, p.360). The importance of this research is that the use of the computer allows children to practice technology and “provides insight into a young child’s literate capacities in the here and now” (Mavers, 2007, p. 172). Burnett (2010) sums up why literacy and play can play an important part for emergent literacy learners; “as studies of children’s home lives indicate, many young children engage in digital practices in the home and such experience needs to be recognized as a resource for their current and future meaning-making” (Burnett, 2010, p. 265). While there is research showing that digital practices at home are beneficial, (Burnett, 2010) there is still much more research that is needed in this area, teacher researchers are helping to play an important role in discovering more information about technology and literacy learning.

**Technology and Teachers**

Research reveals there are many reasons why teachers are finding that it is difficult to incorporate technology into their everyday instruction, but other research shows there are many benefits to incorporating technology into teaching. The review of literature shows that there are valid reasons why teachers are not incorporating technology into their teaching, but also how it can benefit student learning when it is incorporated.

The reasons for lack of technology integration in the classroom include lack of computer knowledge, not enough computers in the classroom, more aids in the classroom to help children use the computers, and appropriate software (Turbill, 2001). Another
barrier could be “most teachers have not grown up with computer technology as part of their schooling, nor their training, and the teachers in this study were no different” (Turbill, 2001, p.272). Turbill’s (2001) research also showed that the teachers were not unwilling to integrate technology into the classroom; they just needed more time to learn about how to use the computers. Research also suggests that “technology could play a much greater role if there were more computers in the Kindergarten classrooms, more technical support for those computers, more time for teachers to examine the software and plan how to use it” (Turbill, 2001, p.277). All of these factors explained by Turbill (2001) contribute to the lack of integration of technology in the classroom. Many of Turbill’s ideas about technology in the classroom coincide with Boling’s (2008) research about teachers’ conceptions about technology. In Boling’s study she taught a Literacy and Technology course at a University that included teachers and teacher candidates she found that

“Half the class reported that they had never taken a an educational technology class at the University, and only a couple of these students had taken an introductory technology course that introduced basic skills related to spread sheets, databases and web design (Boling, 2008, p.80).

Boling (2008) also found that many of the students in this course were reluctant to incorporate technology into their teaching because they simply did not know how to (p.84). Not all schools or teachers share this frustration, while some districts and teachers struggle to integrate technology into their curriculum; others find new ways to teach that involve new technologies.
One study shows the impact of Interactive White Boards (IWB) in the classroom (Coyle, Yanez & Verdu, 2010). The interactive white board is used in many classrooms in the US. This study found “that the IWB does have the potential for making a successful impact on the quality of the classroom interaction” (Coyle, Yanez & Verdu, 2010, p. 12). The research shows for the IWB to be successful, “teachers’ technological competence is essential” (Coyle, Yanez & Verdu, 2010, p.12). This study shows that not only students need to be educated about new technologies, but teachers as well (Coyle, Yanez & Verdu, 2010). The significant impact of technology on schools and society can be labeled the “digital turn” (Mills, 2010). The “digital turn” is “the increased attention to new literacy practices in digital environments across a variety of social contexts, such as workplaces and educational, economic, and recreational sites” (Mills, 2010). This study exposes that New Literacies are not just effecting education; it is affecting everyday life (Mills, 2010). This research shows “New Literacy Studies has similarly reflected the changing emphasis from research of print-based reading and writing practices to include new textual practices that are mediated by digital technologies” (Mills, 2010). Literacy practices are changing and teachers want to make certain that inquiry based teaching; questioning and problem solving is included in technology learning (Hill, 2010). Hill reports, “teachers wrote that the visual aspect of the internet was a valuable tool making access to information instantaneous and engaging children received instant answers to questions about their world” (p. 325).

Another important reason why teachers should include technology into student learning is the idea of the digital divide. Gudmundsdottir (2010) researches the digital
divide by exploring information technology communication (ITC) and its use in the curriculum. His research reveals that

Raising the ICT competence of the learners needs to be addressed in a comprehensive way, which means that merely implementing ICT in the classrooms is not adequate for reaching greater digital equality. More attention to supporting teachers in the disadvantaged schools, especially those that do not have access and opportunities outside of school to practise and prepare their lessons, should be given. (Gudmundsdottir, 2010, p. 15)

Some of the factors that lead to this conclusion were the children’s access to computers at home, teacher competence and whether teachers are supported within their school (Gudmundsdottir, 2010). Another study found that there are other factors contributing to why pushing technology into the classroom may not be the answer to the digital divide, including socioeconomic status of students (Warshauer, Knobel & Stone, 2004).

Research suggests that schools should consider amplifying peer mentoring with teachers and more aid for students who do not have access to computers at home, rather than place computers in the classroom which might further inequalities between socioeconomic statuses (Warshauer, Knobel & Stone, 2004).

Another study directly assesses students on their own knowledge of technology through “an online interactive tool” named the Student Tool for Technology Literacy (Hohlfeld, Ritzhaupt, & Barron, 2010). This tool was revealed to be a valid measurement for the assessment of technology literacy (Hohlfeld, Ritzhaupt, & Barron, 2010). The Student Tool for Technology Literacy can be used by teachers to “analyze results to determine which skills the class needs to develop. Then the teacher can deliberately
integrate those technologies into the daily instructional activities to guide students’ technology literacy development” (Hohlfeld, Ritzhaupt, & Barron, 2010, p. 383). This tool may be helpful to teachers and students, but they would need the appropriate amount of planning time and preparation as Gudmundsdottir (2010) states.

**Technology and Literacy Learning in Young Children**

The review of literature within the topic of technology and literacy learning in young children reveal that teachers should begin to include more elements of technology into their teaching, (Hassett, 2006) that more research is needed in this area (Burnett, 2010) and that technology does play a large role in young children’s literacy learning (Hill, 2010). There is strong evidence that technology should be included in curriculums for young children.

In one study the use of technology by young children surpassed the expectations of teachers (Hill, 2010). The use of technology at the homes of young children included playing online games, accessing websites connected to TV shows and using search engines (Hill, 2010). This research suggests that children are “aware of an ever increasing abundance of choice about ways to communicate information and increasing choice about how to access information” (Hill, 2010, p. 322). Children are being exposed to these types of technologies at home, but there is a need for children to use this information to learn through inquiry and problem solving as well (Hill, 2010). Even though children may not always be using technologies to problem solve, research shows that communication technology can help to expand abilities that are significant in the aptitude of print literacy (Gillen, 2002).
In Gillen’s (2002) study of young children using the telephone to communicate, she found that children understood the “relationship between print media and communication technology” (p.36). Another study agrees that technology is prevalent in young children’s lives at home and in school (Johnson, 2010). This research exposes that the use of the Internet meets “the Internet literacy needs of both school-oriented information seekers and school oriented-communicators, where home-based support for Internet use appears limited” (Johnson, 2010, p. 291). Research expresses that children born in the 21st century will need skills such as Internet literacy and online social skills (Johnson, 2010). Many literacy practices that young children are involved in today present a type interaction with the reader that requires them to extend past the deciphering of print (Hassett, 2006). Hassett (2006) explains that if teachers continue to exclude technologies from their teaching, then young children will miss other important concepts of reading such as “interactive, hypertextual, non-linear, and complex texts” (Hassett, 2006, p. 96).

In conclusion, children are being exposed to technology at home and at school. This exposure is affecting how they interact socially and academically. Before we can completely understand the affects of technology on young children’s literacy learning, Burnett (2010) explains,

A need for more extensive exploratory research in this field, which considers how digital practices within educational settings relate to other dimensions of children’s literacy learning, in order to better understand how new technologies are and could be contributing to children’s literacy within educational settings (Burnett, 2010, p.247)
If literacy truly is everything that surrounds us and all of our experiences (Larson & Marsh, 2005), then technology is part of literacy. More research is needed in this area, but the research that does exist shows positive effects of literacy learning.

Method

Context

Research for this study took place an after school program at a Liberal Arts College in upstate New York. This after school program has eleven K-3rd grade children enrolled. The children are bussed to the child care center after school from a local suburban public school district. The kindergarteners have half day kindergarten; therefore they arrive before lunch and can stay until 6pm when the child care center closes. The research involved four kindergarten students. There are five different elementary schools in this district that bus to the after school program at the college. The kindergarteners come from four of the elementary schools. One of the children in the study is currently attending half day pre-k in the morning then he attends the after school program in the afternoon.

Participants

I participated in the research study, since I am the After School teacher for the children in this study. I have a Bachelor’s degree in Childhood Education and Special Education and I am currently finishing my Master’s degree in Literacy Education. The other participants are four kindergarten children, three girls, and one boy. The boy is currently in a pre-k program that he attends in the morning and then is dropped off to the after school program during lunch. The girls attend four different elementary schools within the same district. There is one six year old and three five year olds. The
kindergarten children communicated using Skype with 6th grade students from another local suburban school district. The 6th grade teacher, Mrs. O’ Brien, (pseudonym) has eight students participating in the Skype interactive read alouds. All of the 6th grade students that signed up are girls. All of the children participating in this study are Caucasian.

Researcher’s Stance

I am currently a graduate student at St. John Fisher College finishing my Master’s degree in Literacy. I have a Bachelor’s degree in Childhood Education and Special Education. As a researcher in this classroom, I will be a passive observer; which means that I will not interfere or be teaching while observing the children. This will provide an opportunity for me to observe my “students in a different setting, through a different lens.” (Mills, 2011).

Methods

For this study I focused on the impact of Skype interactive book talks and emergent literacy learning. I began by sending out a parent questionnaire about the technology that their child is exposed to home (see appendix A). Then I emailed Mrs. O’Brien to set up four Skype interactive book talks. I wanted to be a passive observer to focus on how the kindergarten students responded to the Skype interactive book talks by recording my observations during each Skype session, but I did have to shift my stance due to the needs of the students. I also was able to interview each kindergarten student individually about the Skype interactive book talks after all four sessions were completed (see appendix B). The four kindergarten students that participated in the study also wrote and illustrated pictures about their experience with the Skype interactive book talks.
During each Skype session two 6th grade students read one book aloud to my kindergarten students. Mrs. O’Brien had eight 6th grade girls that wanted to participate in the four Skype sessions. The 6th grade students included several self-produced questions for the kindergarteners to answer during the read alouds. The kindergarten students sit around one computer while the Skype sessions took place. The Skype sessions lasted about 15 minutes to 25 minutes each. The four Skype sessions took place over the course of three weeks.

**Quality and Credibility of Research**

During this research study it is important to confirm the quality and credibility of the study and the results. There are four criteria that Mill’s (2011) describes to ensure that this study is reliable, they are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility describes the “researcher’s ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained.” (p. 104). My research study included credibility since I have been working at the child care center for eight years, having close relationships with children and their families for a prolonged period, and conducting the research in my own classroom. I also used triangulation, by collecting data from three different resources, to further the credibility of this research. I sent out parent questionnaires to all of the kindergarten parents, I observed and took field notes while the students were Skyping, I interviewed all of the kindergarteners about their experience with Skype and collected student work from the kindergarteners writing and drawing about their experience with Skype.
Mills describes transferability as “researchers’ beliefs that everything they study is context bound and that the goal of their work is not to develop “truth” statements that can be generalized to larger groups of people.” (p. 104). I recognize that the results of my study cannot be generalized to larger populations of people. This study’s results are solely based on the participants of this research. I have informed the readers about the focus of the study, the research site, and the participants to ensure understanding of the context in which the research was done.

Dependability is the “stability of the data” (Mills, 2011, p. 104). This refers to how stable the data is that is collected. I have ensured dependability through sending out parent questionnaires to the participants’ parents, observing and taking thorough field notes during all four Skype sessions, interviewing the students about the Skype sessions and collecting student work about their experience.

The last criterion Mills discusses is confirmability, or the “neutrality or objectivity of the data that has been collected.” (p. 105). This includes practicing triangulation and reflexivity (p.105). I was able to confirmability throughout the research by practicing triangulation and reflexivity by taking field notes and reflecting on the process.

**Informed Consent and Protecting the Right of the Participants**

To ensure the protection and rights of the participants involved, I had parental permission forms signed from all of the students involved in the research study. I obtained the permission to Skype and be interviewed from the students involved. Pseudonyms were used on all of the participants to guarantee confidentiality.
Data Analysis

Many different approaches were taken to analyze the data that was collected during the research study. I typed up the field notes that were taken during each observation. I thoroughly read the parent questionnaires and the student interviews. I analyzed the student work that was collected.

Findings and Discussion

After reviewing the data and analyzing the field notes taken, the parent questionnaires and the student interviews and student work, three themes were present. These four themes were seen throughout the data, those themes were familiarity, student motivation, resistance and parent resistance.

The parent questionnaires showed that the students are exposed to technology at home as well. One response showed that the types of technology that their child uses include, computer, Wii, DVD player, TV. The technologies that their child uses are both academic based and recreational and they spend 2-3 hours a day with technology (Parent questionnaire, February 2011). The other questionnaire showed that the student uses Leapster, Wii and the computer, specifically Microsoft Word, Painting and Internet games. The parent responded that the Leapster is mostly academic based the computer is both academic based and recreational and the Wii is mostly recreational (Parent questionnaire, February 2011). I found that all of the kindergarten students are very familiar with technology whether it is at school, home or at the after school program.

After all the data was collected I was able to categorize the data into specific areas. There were reoccurring themes throughout the data and I was able to organize the data into three categories: resistance, student motivation and familiarity.
Familiarity

Another theme that surfaced while analyzing the data was familiarity. Two of the kindergarten students had already been exposed to Skyping either at home or at school (Student interview, March 14, 2011). Wohlwend (2009) explains that young children are “early adopters” and are using technology in their play. This particular idea showed up in several places in the data collection.

During the very first Skype session and during the student interview Molly explained that she has Skyped before at home and Annie told me that she has Skyped at school before with her teacher (Student interview, March 14, 2011). Skype may not have been a new concept to these students, but for some it was. Even though Skype may have been a new technology for some of the students, they are not technology illiterate by any means. Everyday the kindergarteners have fifteen minute computer turns and fifteen minutes to play on the Wii during the after school program.

Student Motivation

I began to see student motivation right at the beginning when I explained to them that we would be Skyping with some sixth grade students. The kindergarten students were excited that they would be partaking in this activity. During the four Skype interactive book talks, I observed that once the students got past the initial newness of Skyping, they began to answer the questions that the sixth grade students asked them in more complete sentences and with more enthusiasm. During my observations I also noticed the students leaned close to the computer screen when they answered the questions and to see the pictures from the books.
The student interviews that were done at the end of the four Skype sessions also showed student motivation. All of the students except for one answered that they liked participating in the Skype interactive book talks, also that they would like to Skype again and that they would like to read to other students through Skype when they are older (Student interviews, March 14, 2011). When I asked the students why they would want to do this again, they explained that it was fun, they can meet new friends and they get to choose the books that they read (Student interviews, March 14, 2011).

The parent questionnaires showed that students were using technology at home. These technologies were both academic and recreational. When the parents were asked if they think that technology can benefit their child’s literacy learning they replied yes (Parent questionnaires, February, 2011). When they were asked why one explained that their child learns more through visuals, the other explained that it provides variety and guided self-learning with feedback (Parent questionnaires, February, 2011). Technology is supported at home as well as the after school program.

Resistance

Another theme that stood out while analyzing the data was student resistance. This theme showed throughout the data collection in the observations and field notes, the student interviews and parent questionnaires. As Wohlwend (2009) states young children are “early adopters” and they have been exposed to technology; therefore they are finding ways to incorporate technology into their play. I quickly observed that being read to on Skype was not what my kindergarteners considered as “playing”. Since the students were already familiar with computers they initially thought it was nothing new or exciting.
During each Skype interactive read aloud I observed the students and how they reacted to the activity. The first session began with the sixth grade students introducing themselves. The sixth grade students began reading *Lily’s Purple Plastic Purse* to the kindergarten students. The kindergarteners seemed excited about starting to Skype, but as soon as the 6th grade students began to read Emma got up from the computer and hid underneath the table. After a minute she came back to the computer, she repeatedly kept running away from the computer. Since this became a distraction to the other students I did have to ask her to sit quietly at the computer and listen to the story. Emma did sit back down and listen. The sixth grade students asked a few questions before, during and after the story; the kindergarteners constantly looked to me for approval to answer their questions. This behavior and Emma running away made it very difficult for me to be a passive observer because I am the only teacher in the classroom.

Another example of resistance was shown when Emma refused to answer the questions that the sixth grade students were asking. She was not the only one that showed resistance, Luke joined the kindergarteners for the first time during the third Skype session and he was reluctant at first. After the four Skype sessions were over I conducted the student interviews. When I asked Luke if he liked Skyping he said “not so much” and when I asked if he would want to read to children on Skype when he is older he said “no”(Student interview, March 14, 2011).

I also found resistance when I asked the students to write about their experience with the Skype interactive book talks. All of the kindergarten students were reluctant to write about it. I wanted the writing to be a free write about the Skype sessions, but the students kept asking me what they should write about. I gave them a few options and told
them they could write about what they did, or if they learned anything. The responses that the kindergarteners gave were short and simple.

Parent Resistance

The parent questionnaires were sent out before the Skype sessions began to the five students’ parents. Even though I sent the questionnaires home multiple times, I only received two questionnaires back. The last question that was asked was “How do you think teachers should approach technology instruction with young literacy learners?” The responses were “personally I like the approach of having mom or dad sit with you while you play” and the other response was, “it should be used sporadically as a tool to support traditional methods” (Parent questionnaire, February 2011). Even though the second response shows that they are not opposed to teachers using technology sometimes, they seem to be more dedicated to traditional methods.

Implications and Conclusions

The findings from this study show that there are several implications that apply to teachers. The first implication that I have found is that technology is a necessary addition to classroom instruction and can be used to enhance literacy instruction. Even though I experienced some resistance to the use of a specific technology being used in the classroom, I believe that there is still value that students will receive from learning about technology. Through this study I have discovered that technology can be both recreational and academic not just one or the other. While implementing the Skype interactive book talks I realized we were not only including literacy learning, it was also recreational having these interactive read alouds for students to enjoy.
Technology is more prevalent than ever before and therefore should be imbedded into all school curriculums so that students can benefit from its uses. Since technology is advancing rapidly, I believe that it will become essential for students to understand as much as they can about the ever increasing world of technology. There are many different forms of literacy that teachers need to incorporate into their instruction and technology should be included as well. Literacy is not only reading, writing, listening and speaking, it is many other things as well as technology and how we navigate through it. Students may be expected to use technologies such as, blogging, Skyping, and emailing for school assignments. Students and teachers need to be aware that this type of technology will most likely be used in school and out of school by the majority of students. To best prepare students for this type of learning, I realize that this means that teachers have to continue their education to keep up with the technology that is useful to them and their students. Some research that shows technology can benefit student learning can be seen in the research of Marsh (2004), Wohlwend (2009), Hill (2010), Lankshear and Knobel (2003), Burnett (2010), Mavers (2007), Gudmundsdottir (2010), Smith (2002), and Turbill (2001).

Another implication that I discovered was that students are familiar with technology. This was not very surprising to me since I knew that some of the students have used Skype before and were familiar with other technologies as well. I was glad that the students have been exposed to technology at home, at school and in our after school program. Students who are familiar with technology at a young age are developing essential skills that they will need in a world full of technology. This leads me to believe that I will need to increase the amount of technology that I use in future instruction of my
students. Even though all of the students that I work with were familiar with technology, I realize that not all students will have access to as much technology as others. This just means that I will need to differentiate my instruction and expose students to many different types of technologies that they may not be as familiar with. Mavers (2006) and Smith’s (2002) research shows that children are learning to use technology at a young age and have become comfortable using technology.

The last implication that I found was increased student motivation. This helped me realize that technology can be used to motivate students to learn. This is an important implication since student motivation is essential for learning. Students who are motivated are attentive and more interested in what is happening in the classroom than those who are not. Using technology in the classroom can change students who normally are not motivated learners into motivated learners. Many students have different learning styles and fortunately technology can incorporate many of those learning styles when it is applied. Technology can be visual, interactive and informational which can benefit a broad range of learning styles. By increasing the motivation of students they are becoming more involved in their learning and enjoying what they are learning about.

I found that throughout the literature review there were many studies that portrayed student motivation was increased when technology was being used. This also requires teachers to become more familiar with the uses of technology in the classroom so that the benefits can be used. Coyle and Yanez’s (2010) research showed that teachers technological competence needs to be increased so they can provide the opportunities for their students to use various types of technology.
Conclusion

Technology is valuable to student learning in the classroom. When technology is used in the classroom teachers are providing opportunities for their students to increase their knowledge of the different types of technologies available to them. Technology enhances student learning by motivating students to learn and engaging them in diverse activities that integrate different learning styles. Teachers should increase their use of technology in the classroom to advance student learning and provide the necessary skills that students need to function in a technological society.
References


Appendix A

Parent Questionnaire

1. Does your child use technology when they are at home?
2. If so, what types of technology are they using?
3. Are the technologies that your child uses more academic based or recreational?
4. How often does your child use technology at home (min/hrs per day or week).
5. Do you think that technology can benefit your child’s literacy learning, why or why not?
6. Would you consider your child internet savvy? Why?
7. How do you think teachers should approach technology instruction with young literacy learners?

Appendix B

Kindergarten Interview

1. Did you like participating in the Skype book talks?
2. Were you able to listen to the stories and answer the questions that the students asked you?
3. Would you like to Skype again with other students?
4. Did you learn anything new from Skyping?
5. Would you like to read to other students on Skype when you get older, why?