

## In and out the digital worlds.

### Hybrid-transition as a conceptual tool to explore new forms of children's agency

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#### THE RESEARCH

This poster presents the concept of **hybrid-transitions** as a theoretical tool to explore transitions between the digital and non-digital worlds as spaces at the intersection between young children's agency and the network of relationships and expectations constituting the context of children's action.

**Hybrid-transitions** refers to a child's movement from the immersion in digitally-enhanced experiences generated by educational technologies to non-digitally mediated interactions with peers or adults.

Observations took place in two settings. In **Boston**, the observations concerned the use of a software for the development of communication skills for children age 4 to 5 with English as second language. Eight children were observed over two weeks. Two PCs were provided with the software, allowing four children working at the same time, over a 30 minutes session in the early afternoon.

In **London**, 5 children age 4 were observed for one month, using a software installed in the nursery's tablets, and design to support children in building their vocabulary, as for the curricula goals for their age. Children accessed software in group of 2 and used in 15/20 minutes sessions. In both settings, the researcher observed children and their interaction during the use of digital learning technologies and in its aftermath when children re-joined the group. In both settings, the researcher (an experienced early years practitioner herself) observed children and their interaction during the use of digital learning technologies and in its aftermath when children re-joined the group.

#### BACKGROUND

A rich tradition of pedagogical and psychological research has explored the impact of technology on the cognitive and social development of the child. However, little research has focused on the implications of the use of digital technologies in educational settings for children's agency.



#### RESULTS

Hybrid-transitions between digital worlds and non-digital worlds are dense social spaces, rather than mere temporal sequences. Observations suggest that the experiences enhanced by digital technology becomes the pivot for children's production of interlaced narratives. Individuals' narratives are "interlaced" in co-constructed group narratives authored by the children through face to face interactions. Interlaced narratives, and their interactive co-construction, represent a form of agency within the peer-groups. Children's agency is observable as authorship of narratives based on digitally-enhanced experiences. However, data suggest that hybrid-transitions and children's agency in the use of digital resources may represent a blind spot of the adult. The divergence between children's agency and adults' curricula-driven agenda can generate a form of digital scotoma, where hybrid-transitions become elusive.

#### HYBRID-TRANSITION AND CHILDREN'S AGENCY

Adults should be mindful of unforeseen but nevertheless important spaces of children's agency in the transition between digital and non-digital worlds. The observations discussed suggest that the use of digital technologies by a small group of young children may be the context for hybrid-transitions that open opportunities where personal memories and narratives can be produced and negotiated, possibly leading to the interactive co-construction of small cultures, that is, cultures that characterise group identities and relationships.

Hybrid-transitions will inevitably occur between digital and non-digital exploration, and it is here suggested that the observation of interactions and communication at the encounter of digital and non-digital worlds can be of the greatest importance to promote a culture of mutual trust and positive engagement in contexts where the use of digital resources impact on children's (and adults') experiences and learning. It is possible of course to romanticize about yesteryears' traditional play experiences but digital play has become the 'real play' and lived experiences of today.

As Khalil Gibran famously wrote about our children of tomorrow, '*your children are not your children, you may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams*'. So today, an invitation is offered to join children to learn alongside them whilst on their journey to visit the digital and non-digital worlds they enter in which constitutes the reality of their everyday experience of their social worlds.

Read more 

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