

An Investigation into the Benefits of Makaton in
Early Years.

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Abstract

This study conducted in a private day nursey located in a market town in Leicestershire, was an investigation into the benefits of Makaton in Early Years specifically looking at toddlers and pre-school aged one to four. Group time was completed in each room over one occasion which had been piloted with other individuals along with six interviews with different levelled qualified practitioners to gain in-depth answers and ideas around the chosen topic; photographs were also taken to evident how Makaton impacted each child and supported interview evidence and checklist observations. Mixed research methods were examined; through the findings it became apparent that there are benefits in using Makaton with the most important aiding communication. Training opportunities was a big topic of conversation as they are available but offer little opportunity and the prices impact practitioners completing courses if self-funding. This supports other research completed on this topic as similar benefits came about and views around the lack of training opportunities. Benefits of using Makaton was highlighted for different reasons; one of the most important reasons was it is a form of communication that all children/adults can use even if they are EAL or have different disabilities/learning difficulties. Although Makaton is very beneficial for early years, the topic will remain segregated unless it is mentioned more in government policies to gain better support for children within Early Years settings and outside agencies.

Key words: Makaton; communication; benefits; training opportunities; pre-school; overcoming barriers.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

The fundamental reasoning for completing a dissertation is to discover and extend learning around a topic of choice that originated curiosity (Clark, Foster and Bryman, 2019). The topic chosen, Makaton is a communication tool used for children and adults when speaking is either unfavourable due to understanding, impractical or inaccessible (The Childrens Trust, 2020). Makaton is discussed repeatedly during practice with parents wanting to gain more knowledge so they can help children further develop, this has caused a fascination into wanting to help other practitioners, parents and agencies to further support children, completing this dissertation will provide vital information to further research. Makaton was introduced during 1970's in Surrey hospital where Margaret Walker designed the core vocabulary for Makaton with a deaf community group; Makaton is taught usually in sequences and clusters (BBC Sounds, 2020). From this Makaton was introduced in SEN schools where speech and language therapists, **M**argaret Walker, **K**athy Johnston and **T**ony Cornforth worked together supporting individuals communication; their names make up the word Makaton (Lee, 2020). As gestures were created, pictures were established later to reinforce the meaning of the signs/gestures (BBC Sounds, 2020). Makaton has become widely used and to date over 100,000 individuals use Makaton as either communication or to support speech (Makaton.org, 2021). Makaton is paramount to children's development as seen through my practice; I wanted to complete research on this topic as it is not recognised by the whole of society within the country as a form of communication due to beliefs and attitudes around disabilities (Hand and Brennan, 2016). When Makaton was devised, most societies were integrated due to lack of

knowledge/experience, however flourished from 2005 due to societies developing inclusivity (Sheehy and Duffy, 2009). Makaton has flourished through the years, the author has seen this evident in practice more recently as Birth to 5 Matters (Early Education, 2021) mentions Makaton as a strategy helping children communicate. Earlier policies such as Development Matters (DfE, 2021 and EYFS (DfE, 2012) show little awareness demonstrating although it is more widely used, it is still a segregated topic.

A flourishing programme through the years is 'Something Special', presented by Justin Fletcher who received an MBE in 2008 for his services to educating/entertaining children with communication strategies. During an interview with Ouch Team (2009), Justin expressed that Makaton is hard to learn but having right support is essential to doing your dream job. Additionally, clarity, commitment and contact are vital three c's needed to expand children's television programmes. The outline of this chapter will involve identifying the main aim of the dissertation: *An investigation into the benefits of using Makaton in Early Years* whilst briefly discussing the involvement of a literature review, methodology and analysis of research conducted using a mixed method approach. To form a conclusion around the main aim, three subsidiary questions will be examined filling gaps in literature and findings analysed.

The literature review is imperative to critique journals filling gaps in research providing readers with information (Bell and Waters, 2018) regarding the three subsidiary questions; benefits of using Makaton, training opportunities and overcoming barriers of access. The methodology includes a case study approach looking into a specific topic analyses several perspectives to discover issues raised

(Crowe, et al, 2011). Qualitative and quantitative data will support sampling strategies and paradigms used to ensure ethical considerations are maintained (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Research will be conducted within a small private day nursery in a market town in Leicestershire with an intake of approximately ninety-six children and through data collection validity, reliability and triangulation was certified (Glaw, et al, 2017). The data analysis process included six semi-structured interviews, two group time observations and a creative method involving photographs taken to evident children modelling Makaton displayed through the group times (Glaw, et al, 2017). The sample involved six practitioners all with different levelled qualifications and child participants ranging from 1-4 years, staff participants will be recognised using numbers 1-6 and child participants will be introduced as letters A-H. Throughout the dissertation document analysis will include policies such as EYFS (DfE, 2012), Birth to 5 Matters (Early Education, 2021 and Development Matters (DfE 2021) to give different perspectives from government ideologies coming from Early Years settings. The introduction has briefly analysed discussions during the dissertation and the chapters included. The next chapter is the literature review analysing journals, finding gaps in literature to further develop improvements and help future research (Efron and Ravid, 2019). Topics after the literature review will be a methodology, findings and analysis and an overall conclusion.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

Introduction

The importance of a literature review is to study a particular topic, providing knowledge to give readers additional information on the subject (Bell and Waters, 2018, p.124). A further suited ideology from Efron and Ravid (2019) suggests several journals are critiqued and analysed, to reveal gaps in literature where improvements can be made through innovative ideas for further research. The topic chosen for this dissertation is Makaton; the use of signs/symbols and pictures enabling individuals to communicate effectively. Barr (2018) indicates that Makaton came about in the 1970's when Margaret Walker, a speech and language therapist successfully signed to two small group of adults with additional needs, one group deaf and the other able to hear; Makaton became widely involved. 1970's focus of Makaton used signs to support communication while the 1980's saw the addition of graphic symbols aiding understanding and memory that allowed people to communicate when speech and signing was not accessible; more recently noted over 7000 resource vocabulary concepts. Three themes analysed throughout this review include: *Benefits of using Makaton, training opportunities and overcoming barriers*. Evaluation of these themes will allow the author to answer the questions: *What extent do early years settings see the benefits of using Makaton?* The rationale for choosing this is due to lack of information regarding Makaton; by researching this, it will help more families to be supported effectively and increase knowledge of Makaton across the country.

Benefits of using Makaton

Initial theme analysed is the benefits of using Makaton. From professional experience, benefits have become evident over years of using Makaton from speech, social and emotional development to attention and understanding skills along with others analysed throughout this section. Mistry and Barnes (2012) found that using Makaton to support children who are EAL (English as an Additional Language) had a positive effect on children when communicating. EAL describes a child speaking a home language that is different to English (Fitzgerald and Machonochie, 2019). Teachers have to adapt and plan teaching enabling them to support EAL children in an inclusive practice (Serret and Gripton 2020). Additionally, they suggest, 2019 saw over three hundred languages spoken in primary schools in England by over one million EAL children. Through experience it is recognised that children learn additional languages rapidly through their early years due to brain development. Research reinforces previous point as children's brains are spongy between the ages of two and five and by three 75% of their brain is developed and by six, 90% is developed (Harrison and Butterworth, 2002). Cummins support's this evidence finding it takes approximately two years to learn the basics of a second language which links to his findings through BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills, Cummins, 2000, cited in Franson, 2011) hence why children in younger years are able to learn new languages so quickly. Vygotsky, (Veraksa and Sheridan, 2018) an influential theorist supported this suggesting additional languages help form cognitive development, usually found from age three; learning more languages helps

with communication/social skills enhancing cultural and behavioural understanding through different experiences with peers.

Looking at the data within research conducted by Mistry and Barnes (2012), observations, interviews and questionnaires proved the success of EAL children using Makaton. Although activities were adult and child led, success came from child led activities. Research found benefits allowing all staff in school to have training around this subject as anyone might have contact and need to communicate with an EAL child. This research proved the importance of Makaton teaching in supporting different needs in children, fulfilling their potential and increasing access to the curriculum. Although there is much more support for EAL children, when looking at Early Years documents such as the EYFS (DfE, 2012) and Birth to 5 matters (Early Education, 2021) there is little information regarding this subject. Development Matters document (DfE, 2021) suggests encouraging EAL families to use their home language is important, and parents should communicate with staff about key words that they can learn to use in the nursery setting helping the child in a variety of different ways showing awareness of cultural and linguistic reasons. Sin (2020) also indicates from research conducted in Kazakhstan that using Makaton to help EAL children had positive outcomes due to repetition of words during class and positive interactions both adult and child led. Although this study found some inconsistency and complexity with certain words, overall using Makaton helps children learn new English words and create a better understanding when communicating with peers. It was noticed children mainly used two gestures before stringing words together in their early development; linking this to the Birth to five matters (Early Education, 2021), is a strong focus for practitioners in supporting a wider range of children.

Learning Makaton has seen children thrive enabling them to communicate needs without being frustrated using gestures, facial expressions and body language (Lawrence, 2015) especially if they have hearing impairments. Woolfe, *Et al*, (2010) found that children with hearing impairments who use Makaton to communicate with able hearing peers, were happy, had better relationships, felt included and were able to join in with all activities each day. According to Girli and Doğmaz (2018) some children though struggled understanding facial expressions/body language found it hard to understand what peers were saying, therefore more teaching and awareness for these would be beneficial. Makaton helps children communicate with peers even if they have communication difficulties and as Makaton is widely known nowadays, there are TV programmes and books promoting the use as well as the internet having videos demonstrating Makaton (Fitzgerald, *et al*, 2014). Hearing impaired individuals rely heavily on lip reading making it difficult for them to communicate which impacted recently when masks were worn resulting in the creation of see through masks enabling individuals to communicate (Department of Health and Social Care 2022).

Although there are many positives to using Makaton, another important benefit is assisting children with communication or learning difficulties. MENCAP, (no date) a charity assisting disabled individuals, suggests communicating using Makaton signs, symbols or gestures will in time enable understanding in stimulating sounds and words together, improving language development and an inclusive educational environment. If children are able to communicate with their peers, they will feel

more comfortable learning and playing, reaching their full potential (MENCAP, 2020). Makaton supports different groups in the Early Years settings enabling communication and Billingham (2020) supports this suggesting that using Makaton gives the child a voice and supports child development particularly with singing, performance, storytelling, reading and memory recall. If all practitioners use and are aware of Makaton, it can reinforce boundaries to all children. Conversely, Doak (2021) feels that although Makaton can help lots of children communicate, it requires prior knowledge of a few Makaton gestures/signs/symbols to understand what is being said in order for individuals to communicate; this is something that became apparent during the interviews where four out of six participants suggested it is the knowledge and consistency between all staff that will aid children's understanding. From the practitioners taking part in the interviews, it became apparent that they all had knowledge of the benefits of using Makaton in early years and supported the literature within this section around the advantages.

Training opportunities

Previously mentioned, Makaton is used widely across the country mainly in early years settings and aids communication between individuals generally or with learning/additional difficulties. Within the research undertaken, one of the questions during the semi-structured interview is: **"Are you aware of many training opportunities to learning Makaton? If so can you name them?"**. From this, results showed one participant knew about Makaton training and had completed levels one and two. Four out of six participants could only explain one way of accessing a course either through work or independently but were unaware of other

training opportunities and felt the accessibility of the course can be limited. One participant is fluent in BSL (British Sign Language) but Makaton words can be different which can confuse staff and children in nursery settings as some practitioners might be teaching children Makaton and others might teach BSL dependent on training. This participant is open to learn Makaton words but due to few training opportunities, dates and times can be inaccessible. The Makaton charity (2020) has training opportunities accessible for anyone across the country available online or in person. A disadvantage of this is time, when courses are available and access to courses cause issues either due to internet or travelling and was mentioned frequently during the interviews.

Harris (2021) suggests partaking in training allows parents and professionals to support children with communication and language development. Additionally (Harris, 2021) indicates that Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) require some knowledge regarding Makaton to support children. Harris (2021) also indicates that SLT's understand that to help children with communication. It is important for parents to join focus groups helping their development and behaviours around Makaton, along with professionals to monitor parents' well-being throughout these groups aiding confidence in themselves to help their children. Although these training opportunities benefit professionals in extending their knowledge so they are able to support children, Sheehy and Duffy (2009) highlights that even though Makaton is widely used as a tool in educational settings now, segregation still occurs for children in settings due to financial barriers and prioritising the wrong things first.

The author recently completed level one Makaton online, when interviewing the participant who recently completed levels one and two, the conversation found the value of using Makaton for children with a range of their own individual needs. Experiences were shared around how Makaton is used specifically for the participant in baby room and the interviewer in Preschool. Both individuals took different ideas away to implement within their rooms and share with staff members to increase consistency throughout the nursery. Following on from training opportunities and courses, a Makaton peer tutor, someone that trains individuals in learning disabilities to teach others the Makaton language, through promoting communication skills, work with professionals/carers to teach them Makaton, teaching individually or in groups. Hooper and Walker (2002) implies Makaton tutors are imperative helping make communities more inclusive, especially for those who have communication difficulties but also helps build individuals confidence and helped them feel empowered in making individual choices influencing their lives positively. Reflecting on the interviews, it is noted that the participants understood training opportunities coming from Makaton courses, learning words through NVQ level whilst four out of six participants were unsure on how to learn Makaton or access courses. Interview participants interestingly said that they were happy to complete courses if they were made available however, some found they gained basic knowledge through college and looking at videos and information on the internet.

Overcoming barriers

Previous paragraphs looked into benefits of Makaton and how it helps flourish children's development, (Lawrence, 2015) especially due to communication delays or

individual needs. Training opportunities were analysed finding ease for individuals and professionals to access and learn Makaton words to support children. This next section of the literature review will look at barriers to learning Makaton and overcoming obstacles from both a professional and child perspectives.

Barriers around professionals learning Makaton would be the knowledge they have around different kinds of disabilities and children with their individual needs (Pickering, *et al*, 2015). To overcome this as individuals complete the levels of the Makaton courses, they need to be open to learning about different types of disabilities and how they might have to adapt teaching Makaton to different communities. For example, Pickering, *et al*, (2015) suggests children who have Cerebral Palsy need more creative approaches such as pictures, drawings, puppets and stories to help engagement. This example is a reason why it is imperative to have a good understanding around disabilities/additional needs to help extend children's learning and support them further. Linking to this barrier, Senior (2015) indicates that for children who cannot communicate their needs, frustration can transpire and change the child's behaviour causing them to feel isolated. With professionals helping children to learn a new language/tool, patience is vital to help build children's confidence enabling them to thrive in their development and communicate their needs/wants. Linking this to research undertaken particularly interviews completed, it was found the practitioners felt that teaching children Makaton helped overcome communication barriers, express needs/wants, gives children time to understand/respond, builds self-confidence and using it consistently

allows children to interpret signs in their own way along with, practitioners understanding how children interpret certain words.

The interviews as part of the data collection process, helped the researcher reflect on personal practice and found big barriers of access for learning Makaton is resources. Sheehy and Duffy (2009) Makaton is based on sign, symbols and gestures and as societies change, community attitudes have become more inclusive. When completing the level one Makaton course, access is given to signs that can be printed and used within the nursery. Access is only for one month; this privilege can then become a barrier for finding the resources to use to help extend children's learning and aid development of a new language that can be used throughout their lives when communicating with a range of people. Through literature read, there are many businesses promoting the use of Makaton either all the time or through awareness weeks. The British Dental Association (BDA, 2021) suggests that during Learning Disability Awareness Week in 2021, all dentists were able to create a login and access Makaton prompt cards to help communicate with individuals who have learning difficulties. This will give individuals access to dental care which is a basic health need. Whilst most participants suggested supermarkets should promote Makaton, the participants were surprised when telling them that ASDA have bingo cards for children and adults in their new scheme 'Happy Little Helper'. The bingo cards include Velcro Makaton signs that children can add to shopping lists to help their parents/carers when they go shopping. This scheme launched in 2017 and has rolled out in 300 stores around the country (Hayns-Worthington 2019). ASDA found there are more pleasant shopping experiences for families where they can ignore

distractions and shop when there are reduced noise levels helping extend the children's knowledge around completing simple activities required in life (Hudspith 2019).

Conclusion

It is imperative to include analysis of literature reviews to bring additional information found to bridge gaps in literature and broaden knowledge around a particular subject (Efron and Ravid 2019). To pick themes around Makaton for the review, themes were used that came from the literature found. Throughout the review, many benefits were highlighted as to why children should learn Makaton including building confidence, overcoming communication barriers as well as learning a new language/using tool to develop and extend learning Billingham (2020). Although benefits for learning Makaton are incredible, there are limited training opportunities and those available are either hard to access or limited options to different courses. The interviews suggests that our work place are able to fund staff on courses which staff would appreciate and benefit from (Makaton charity 2020). With all the benefits and training opportunities around there can be many barriers to access learning Makaton which include resources, time, availability and knowledge around Makaton and different disabilities. Although these barriers can be imperative, they can be overcome through suggestions made that are supported with literature and academic sources. Overall, this review has provided the readers with what Makaton is, how it benefits different aged children with individuals needs as well as training opportunities and how to overcome barriers of access to Makaton. Great

analysis has additionally been used to support points through the interviews that were undertaken by the data collection process.

Chapter 3- Methodology

Introduction

This chapter examines the chosen research project, looking into the aim through exploring the research approach and methods used (Fox and Jennings, 2014). The rationale of chosen research will be discussed reflecting why qualitative data is the best source for the project. Information is provided around sampling strategies and the paradigms used whilst considering and explaining the use of ethical considerations and approval.

Aim

The main aim of the research project is **'To understand the Benefits of how Makaton can be used in Early Years settings and how it can impact the children and practitioners.** To help answer this, three subsidiary questions outlined are: 1-**'What are the benefits of Using Makaton for children and practitioners in Early Years'?**, 2-**'What are the training opportunities available for adults in Early Years to learn Makaton'?** and 3-**'What extent does Makaton help to overcome barriers of access for children with individual needs'?** The methodology chapter is imperative to readers as the methods will identify how the research was conducted, leading to reasons for using Makaton providing readers with new information regarding the topic (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012). The next section will look into paradigms used, looking at types of data utilised.

Paradigm

According to Kivunja and Kuyini, (2017) a research paradigm is a perspective/shared belief of someone that construes research data; this consists of the ontology and the

epistemology that accompany each other to get the paradigm chosen (Grant, 2022). The ontological approach adopted for this research will mainly be those who believe that worlds can only be measured using words and detailed answers (qualitative data) which is an interpretivist as there are different ideologies; a small amount of positivists ontology will be used when completing a creative method as they believe the world can be measured through numerical data-quantitative with only one answer being valid (Al-Saadi, 2014). This will influence the research giving clear evidence, observing individuals during experiences affecting them and is a detailed/reliable source (Verhoef and Casebeer, 1997). The epistemology includes using knowledge from individuals through the way they construct/interpret their own ideas through their experiences/interactions. Using two types of ontologies is the quantitative data (check list at group times- Dawson, 2009, p.14) which will gather numerical data answering how questions, whereas the qualitative data gives detailed and contextual answers (Merriam and Grenier 2019). The data will be part of a case study looking into different perspectives/issues in depth (Crowe, *et al*, 2011); using interpretivist perspective through considering people's opinions and ideologies to gain enhanced understanding along with observing experiences of children. The next section looks in-depth at why a case study approach is appropriate along with using mixed methods to promote triangulation.

Approaches

The data collected through research conducted will use qualitative, quantitative and case study approach; these are chosen to analyse results to the highest level. Quantitative data involves numerical or statistical information and their correlations (Bell and Waters, 2018) whilst qualitative data uses text and words forming depth of

analysis (Creswell, 2014 cited in Holton and Walsh, 2016). Quantitative data within this project involves completing a checklist during preschool and toddler group times, involving the following titles: *Did they participate/stay engaged? How old is the participant? Were they able or did they struggle to copy the Makaton signs? Did they sing more or use Makaton more?* During group times, the examiner ticked boxes appropriate to the child listed using an alphabetical letter for anonymity. This was found to be the most efficient and effective approach giving a summary of how each child reacted during the group time; although ticking boxes can be limiting data, pictures will be taken of the experiences children had which speaks volumes. For most of the research, qualitative data will be used to get deep ideologies from participants to answer the overall and subsidiary questions. Six interviews took place giving in depth answers/opinions and ideologies around the subject of Makaton. Using both methods is known as mixed methods with the advantage of using both leading to more in depth understanding, reducing any drawbacks of using one method independently; Bell and Waters (2017) further suggest that using both, promotes triangulation, utilising different ideas and methods for a more comprehensive conclusion. Within the qualitative research, a visual method will be utilized to gain photo evidence of the group times. Using a creative method gives another perspective of knowledge, lets the children and practitioners express their views and adds validity and reliability within the findings section of the dissertation (Glaw, *et al*, 2017).

Dissertation research is based on a case study looking into different perspectives and issues within the setting (Crowe, *et al*, 2011). Explanatory and descriptive methods

will be used due to the research analysing which nursery rooms use Makaton and the benefits to children using it of mixed ages, helping provide suggestions for rectifying issues raised. Case studies allow a thorough look into a particular aspect within the setting which could be a complex unique subjects (Bassey, 1999). Yin (1994 cited in Bassey, 1999) suggests that generalisation can be difficult for everyone due to participants selected for specific reasons. Not everyone who reads this dissertation will understand the unique topic.

Sampling strategies

The research is conducted in the investigators work place; a small private market town nursery with an intake of approximately ninety-six children. The investigator works in the nursery for circa five years, currently working in pre-school. Six practitioners of different levels were approached through careful selection, some with little knowledge around the topic and others with experience/knowledge. Two practitioners will be chosen to deliver a group time relating to Makaton either singing or learning simple sentences for everyday use, showing benefits/limitations of using Makaton in Early Years from different ages/ranges of children. These practitioners were chosen through individuals who are interested in Makaton. Choosing participants leads to the strategy being purposeful, ensuring participants had different levels of Makaton qualifications to get more in-depth answers (Emmel, 2013), this could lead to bias choosing participants who you want or think will answer the questions better, nevertheless, this is the most generalised way to collect the data (Jackson-Hollis, 2019). Bias thoughts will be resolved through keeping a clear mind, being open to conversations and understanding that individuals will have

their own opinions. Having the knowledge that bias might occur, shows that the investigator cares about the participants and vulnerable conversations can be tackled; if this was to occur, data could be affected negatively causing the research to be restarted (Schmidt and Hunter, 2015). Although the child participants were chosen, it depended on the consent forms parents filled out and assent obtained from the children. Preschool and toddler group time involved maximum twelve participants in each one. Next, research methods will be analysed showing why the chosen ones are the most appropriate.

Research Methods

Research methods are used as a tool to help interpret information from the data analysed which in turn answers research and subsidiary questions (Sage Publications, 2022). The methods used include two *observations* (two *checklist* and two *creative methods*), six *interviews* and two pieces of *document analysis*. Using a mix method approach allows data to analyse all research stages and answer questions which will be influenced between each method leading to extensive answers (Cohen, *et al*, 2018). Denscombe (2014, cited in Cohen, *et al*, 2018) indicates that using mixed methods helps reliability and validity within triangulation which in turn, reduces bias and instead allows practical approach to solve problems in research. Alternatively, Tariq and Woodman (2013) implies using mixed methods can be time consuming due to collecting and interpreting data multiple times in different ways making it more complex. Overall mixed methods are the most appropriate to solve problems and get in-depth knowledge aiding future research.

Observations

Observations were completed as a research method during the process. Using this method during preschool and toddler group times will aid answers to the second and third subsidiary questions. This evidence will show the impact of Makaton on mixed aged children with individual needs. Two observations will take place over one occasion for each group time. A checklist observation is the most efficient way to access a group time involving a number of different children (Treadwell, Lucas and Tsou, 2013). The simplicity of checklists could lead to vital information being missed due to how many participants are involved (Ilgen, *et al*, 2015).

The investigator will be a participant observer due to working in the setting, however, to avoid getting too involved, they will explain to participants to watch and not participate in group time, avoiding influencing the research in a way which could lead to bias (Pickford, 2017). Observations should last at least ten minutes and be accomplished within the chosen rooms. The observation was piloted easily due to these group times occurring often; however, the checklist was not piloted as the observer felt this inappropriate. Piloting is important to ascertain if adaptations are required to ensure sufficient data is collected (Billups, 2022). A further type of observation are photographs, a creative method. Mitchell (2004, cited in Knowles and Cole, 2012) suggested using photos in research shows new material that engages in a different way. Lal, Jarus and Suto (2012) proclaims using photos is a powerful memory method along with assisting conversations or helping annotating notes through remembering what happened thus helping when writing the findings chapter in bringing in new information for use in future research. As photographs were taken, the letter representing the child and their age will be added

underneath. Pictures will be placed in categories of songs/sentences to help when writing the findings chapter. However, they also suggest that a limitation to using photos is getting the ethical approval to use them.

Interviews

Interviews is another chosen method, thought to be one of the most appropriate sources. For this research, semi-structured interviews will aid answering the subsidiary questions, through the help of in-depth answers whilst considering individuals real world experiences (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Also, Brown and Danaher (2017) felt semi-structured interviews can become difficult and less effective if relationships between participants and the researcher is inadequate. Before conducting interviews, questions were piloted with other members of the community to ensure enough data can be collected through questions asked, checking the questions are coherent; from piloting these questions, small changes were made to make questions clearer (Majid, *et al*, 2017). When undertaking research, six interviews took place around individuals' feelings and ideologies around Makaton. Four interviewees taking part in this research had little knowledge but were interested in and wanted to learn Makaton. One interviewee completed levels one and two Makaton whilst the other interviewee is fluent in BSL understanding several Makaton words.

Two participants managing the group time, were asked additional questions reflecting on the group time considering both child and staff perspectives. Different perspectives brings different ideologies ensuring in-depth knowledge to help improve further research. All interviews lasted between ten and thirty minutes and were

recorded on either a password protected phone in line with ethical considerations or noted were taken (BERA 2018). Throughout the interview processes, the investigator ensured the data was valid and reliable through choice of questions whilst ensuring the participants are honest with their answers and not use social desirability (Nederström and Salmela-Aro 2014).

Document Analysis

Document analysis is important to include giving it another perspective of Makaton which comes from important documents that have been produced through government; documents analysed will be the EYFS (Department for Education 2012), Birth to five Matters (Early Education 2021), and Development Matters (DfE, 2021) documents include relevant information supporting the research undertaken within an Early Years setting. Documents will give a range of ideologies and how they develop through society (Rapley, 2018). A thought from the researcher suggests it can be difficult to analyse documents if there is insufficient evidence around the subject and this has affected the analysis of documents. Using government papers renders sources reliable, however as they can have opinions, they might not always be valid (Street and Ward 2011). Above evidence shows the importance of using policies and government guidance to give statutory perspectives around the subject chosen. The importance of ethical considerations will be looked into, ensuring guidelines are followed and piloting is used to gain high level information before starting the research.

Ethical considerations

Before the research is conducted, full ethical approval was obtained through Newman University Ethics Committee (Newman University, 2018); taking into consideration sensitivity of the research conducted following The British Educational Research Association's (BERA, 2018) guidelines. Consent is getting permission from participants to take part in research and assent is gaining permission from participants who are children to participate in the group time or observation along with gaining parental permission (Slaughter, *et al*, 2007). Consent is imperative when collecting data and gained from the gatekeeper who is the Manager of the nursery; consent and assent will be asserted by giving them details of requirements, along with the choice to participate giving them empowerment (Bolshaw and Josephidou, 2019), ensuring that participants have the right to withdraw at any time (Callan, Picken, and Foster, 2011). Explanation of confidentiality importance and honesty requirements to result in a true Makaton insight. Obtaining data, the author of the dissertation will be insider research but to resolve this issue; collecting data days and times when not working, means focusing solely on the data collection process and reduce limitations (Callan, Picken, and Foster, 2011, p.24). When conducting interviews, it is important for the investigator to ensure they have a positive relationship with the participant helping them feel at ease as well as letting them answer questions/complete group time at own pace so they don't feel pressurised.

Confidentiality will be reassured throughout by only allowing herself and the university supervisor to access data whilst storing them on a password protected device either phone/laptop. Participants will need to understand that if a

safeguarding concern arises, then confidentiality may be breeched. Anonymity is considered through the investigator not using names of participants/setting which is something Alderson (2004, cited in Fraser *et al*, 2005) suggests is imperative for conducting research. Participants taking part in the interviews were provided with consent forms containing relevant information to sign and return which was a form on an A4 piece of paper (Nolan, Macfarlane, and Cartmel 2013). A consent form was additionally sent out to all parents on the establishment's app called Famly where the parents could tick yes or no if they were happy for their children to participate. Parent acknowledgement will be sent to the researcher to keep track of the children who can/cannot take part; this piece of paper will be kept at work in line with the work place safeguarding policy. Before group times start, assent will be gained from children even after the parent consent; they will be asked if they want to participate with the group time and if so they can put a sticker on. If the child does not give assent or come and collect a sticker, they will not participate in the group time.

Piloting research methods

Piloting research methods beforehand is crucial to check they work and whether adaptations need to be made to ensure the highest level of data is collected (Ritchie *et al*, 2013); ensuring observations and interviews are fit for purpose meaning a greater analysis is accomplished. Piloting ensures the real data collection process can take place ensuring the research runs efficiently, and difficulties are eliminated (Bell, 2014). To pilot the interviews, questions will be checked with unassociated colleagues checking the range of questions as well as grammatical/language issues. From this, certain questions were changed due to language used making it easier for

participants to understand. Some questions were over complicated using academic words that participants found difficult to understand due to limiting knowledge some participants had around the subject. The other method being observations/group times, will be piloted on a few different occasions at the setting in both rooms to ensure it runs smoothly and the songs/sentence choice is appropriate for the ages involved. From this practitioners delivering the group time, felt these went the best they could and were happy to part take properly. Whilst these group times were carried out, the checklist was piloted to check the questions were suitable whilst ensuring enough time to take pictures of the children's hands and fill out the checklist form without getting confused or stressed. After the pilot, it was clear that the methods chosen were the most appropriate to the information required answering the research project aim and subsidiary questions. If research methods were not piloted, the data might not have been what they wanted and the whole data collection process might have required change which would be time consuming and the ethics and consent form would need to be recompleted. As research methods were carried out, it was asked whether participants were still happy to partake whilst considering the BERA (2018) guidelines which keeps in line with ethical considerations to ensure that individuals are being treated fairly and have the opportunity to express their ideologies. Finally, a conclusion will draw upon the research methods and approaches that will be used to collect the data whilst keeping in line with ethical considerations, ensuring consent and assent is gained before research is collated.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the research project chosen through analysing the aim of research and subsidiary questions. Research methods and approaches were critiqued giving an understanding of why certain methods was chosen including: interviews, observations, photos and document analysis. The methodology section is imperative giving readers more understanding of the research setting, how the research will be carried out and what sampling strategy and paradigms are involved. The methodology gave a detail analysis of ethical considerations when undertaking research and the importance of piloting research beforehand. The next chapter will analyse the findings from the research data collected to see the outcome of the research methods. By obtaining data for the dissertation, it will aid answering the overall dissertation question as well as the subsidiary questions (Fox and Jennings, 2014).

Chapter 4- Findings

Introduction

This dissertation has examined the literature around Makaton whilst analysing the methodology aiding completion of the data collection. The findings are imperative, presenting information from research and subsequent findings. Research presented through themes, highlighted in data analysis include *training opportunities*, *benefits* of using Makaton and overcoming *barriers of access* which will arise through research methods and structure the chapter; involving two observations, six interviews and photographs, linking back to literature supporting the findings which can be used for future research (Efron and Ravid, 2019). This chapter sees three subsidiary questions and the overall dissertation question answered.

The appropriate way to analyse/present data is through thematic analysis; presenting in themes not methods, allowing explication of the findings to be broader which is important in this type of research to identify themes and address issues initiated helping improve further research to support children conscientiously (Robert-Holmes, 2011, p181). Braun (2022) indicates that thematic analysis is used mainly for qualitative data as meanings can be introduced to create themes, using this helps individuals understand the data in the simplest way. Confidentiality and anonymity must be retained throughout (BERA, 2018); letters/numbers will be used to identify participants and retain anonymity maintaining confidentiality with identities only known to the researcher. Participants interviewed were labelled using numbers 1-6 and child participants taking part in group times where photographs are taken, will be identified using letters, A-H and ages 1-4. Participant summary below:

Participants	Qualifications	Room they work in	Duration of work	Interest in Makaton
1	Level 6 Early years degree	Preschool Practitioner	2 years	Fluent in BSL and limited Makaton
2	Level 3 Childcare	Baby Room Practitioner	2 years	Currently completing level 1 Makaton
3	Level 3 Childcare	Baby Room Supervisor	20+ years	Completed level 1 and 2 Makaton
4	Level 3 Childcare	Baby Room Supervisor	20+ years	Very little knowledge appetite to learn more.
5	Level 3 Childcare	Toddler Room Supervisor	8+ years	Very little knowledge appetite to learn more.
6	Studying Level 3 Childcare	Senior Practitioner in Toddler Room.	2 years	Very little knowledge appetite to learn more.

Theme one – Makaton benefits

Research conducted analysed the literature review and facilitated new knowledge around the benefits of Makaton through themes found. When conducting research, interviews, group times and photographs taken, showed different benefits for a

range of children. Interviews displayed a variety of ideologies from different levelled practitioner's producing benefits of Makaton. Benefits include the range of children Makaton can support. All participants expressed how it aided communication between peers and adults, proved during group times and evidenced through photographs attached in the appendix found on pages 62-65 allowing more children to communicate ensuring basic needs are met (DfE 2010). Participant 6 expressed turn taking, confidence and sharing can be learnt using Makaton, important aspects of child development advancing their social skills (DfE 2021). Clues and visual aids enhance understanding; if children communicate early, basic needs are met through being listened/heard, something required for practitioners to follow in the Safeguarding policy (DfE, 2015) indicating the importance of relationships with children/parents to build foundations whilst working cooperatively with staff, SENCO and outside agencies supporting children. Fitzgerald and Machonochie (2019) supports previous points indicating Makaton is used to communicate and can be learnt through television programmes, videos and internet as useful tools to learn, highlighting group time activities and ideas noted in interviews, meaning strategies are feasible through support given. Interviews were the most appropriate, gaining in-depth opinions and a wide range of ideologies expressing the importance of Makaton to aid communication. During interviews it was evident that communication was an imperative benefit through each practitioner however, only participant 1 recognised it can aid relationships between peers especially if they are EAL to support cultural differences; if participants are illiterate around EAL, they may find it hard to understand how Makaton supports EAL children. A study by Mistry and Barnes (2012) found staff trained in Makaton was able to teach this to children

communicating with peers, better through child led activities, even EAL children. Evidence found throughout research conducted, supported previously noted studies as participants discussed and noted benefits supported through group times. Through practice it is evident that Makaton supports EAL children to communicate and learn English words. Although learning Makaton has many benefits, documents including the EYFS (DfE, 2012) and Development Matters (DfE, 2021) excludes the word Makaton or anything related to this subject. However, Birth to 5 Matters (Early Education, 2021) indicates practitioners should support children communicating through strategies such as signing like Makaton. These documents suggest that although Makaton is used by individuals and nursery it is not widely known, segregating individuals able to partake in activities. This suggests that Makaton is mainly used in SEN provisions instead of as a whole, due to documents expressing the need to support individuals with SEN/disabilities and provide them with provision to support development (DfE 2015).

Interviews evidenced Makaton can help ranges of children develop through different strategies. Although communication has been mentioned, other benefits discussed included participant 1 suggesting that gestures aid communication. Billingham (2020) suggests it is an important part of children's communication giving more children communication opportunities even with delays/difficulties and gives children visual prompts for use in reinforcing. This indicates that children can learn through visual aids to prompt memory especially if they have speech delays. Participants 2, 4, 5 and 6 noted that Makaton builds confidence so children feel valued and included increasing their self-esteem. Billingham (2020) found Makaton builds confidence, leading to empowerment. This was observed substantially through two group times;

photographic evidence can be found in appendix 3,4,5,6 on pages 62-65. Practitioners 1 and 6 conducted the group times picked and received assent from a group of children with different abilities and ages. Practitioner 6, leading toddler group time was happy with how it went and surprised the majority of children engaged for fifteen minutes; highlighting that small groups help to observe for assessment purposes. Although group time went as planned, due to their young age, more staff should be involved to support the children because if they get bored they will just go off to do something else which was evident for participant F. These thoughts support previous point as children showed enjoyment and due to the small group, focus observations could be completed for assessment purposes, evident from the practitioner recording the results. Practitioners spoke about requiring additional help to keep engagement between participants and practitioners, to extend learning and sociability between peers. Findings from the check list in appendix 7 and 8 on pages 66-67 showed children aged 1 and 2 used Makaton more than singing. Out of 8 participants, child H chose not to interact but sat and watched throughout so no photos were taken, child F only engaged and sat when certain songs were sung but no photos were taken and other participants, A,B,C,D,E and H engaged throughout. Engagement was impacted either due to interest levels between peers or confidence issues in believing they can do this activity. Photos in appendix 5 and 6 on pages 64-65 prove children can learn Makaton from young ages, something Ford (2006) supports.

Practitioner 1 in pre-school noticed the group time made a positive impact on children, because of sizing, participation, helping each other when others struggled and when going home, showed parents what they learnt. Photographic evidence and

the checklist showed how children stayed engaged; found on page in appendix 3, 4 and on pages 62-63. Group time went well with children engaged for 20-25 minutes. Participants used singing, signs and gestures to interact with others. Out of ten participants, nine- A-H contributed and participant J watched the whole time, participating infrequently which could be due to their young age compared to others. Children learnt new signs helping and supporting each other when needed, encouraging making relationships either with close peers, or peers not usually interacted with, aiding their development (DfE, 2012). All children absorbed new words rapidly possibly because their brains are the sponginess between two-four years and developing continually (Harrison and Butterworth, 2002). Experience showed that children learning Makaton through various strategies can support development; all six interviews supported the researchers ideology that all areas support Makaton especially Communication and Language, (DfE, 2012). Experience over different ages proved learning Makaton supports emotional development (confidence and self-esteem), behaviour- self regulation, rule following and problem solving, understanding and responding DfE (2021). This suggests that Makaton can be used anytime to help different aged children with individual needs, flourish in their development.

Theme two- training opportunities

Examination of theme two looks into Makaton training opportunities as suggested by Harding (2009), when looking at literature and analysing data, training was beneficial as it supported simplifying language when interacting with children. Interviews produced research evidence that participants 1,2 and 3 knew training is

via the Makaton charity and participant 3 used it to complete levels one and two. Participant 4 voiced "No I don't know training opportunities, happy to find out own information", 5- "passed down in practice" and 6- "NVQ, NoodleNow (work training)"; only half of the participants knew the Makaton charity (2020) supplied training courses. The researcher having undertaken level 1 Makaton, realised fewer dates and times were available for different levels. Although level one is accessible to all, it can prove expensive if self-funding (Makaton Charity, 2020). Considering individuals understanding of Makaton, it was equally important to understand knowledge prior to working in early years as other practitioners will have a better understanding of where their professional and personal require challenging. Participants 2,3 and 4 had no previous knowledge and learnt little through practice due to college courses not covering it prior to participant 3 achieving level one and two Makaton. Participant 1, due to life experiences understood BSL fluently but little Makaton. Participants 5 and 6 learnt basic words through level three at college but learnt more through practice suggesting that practitioners learn more in practice; they can learn through different experiences whilst reflecting on this to improve practice and personal/professional development (Moon, 2013). Although college provides individuals with basic understanding, the main learning is job experience; I strongly believe there should be more academic opportunities for individuals to gain qualifications whilst working, such as apprenticeships.

Supporting Hooper and Walkers (2002), for practitioners to receive training in order to support children's communication and language, all participants voiced Makaton is an approachable suitable tool as a simplified version of BSL (Sheehy and Duffy, 2009). This suggests it is used as an educational tool making environments inclusive

whilst empowering children's confidence/choices to positively affect development, whilst also apparent segregation still appears for children due to financial barriers and misguided priorities. This resonates with findings as financial barriers will occur if the nursery or practitioners cannot pay to complete the course, hindering development further due to lack of resources or training to support children. Although Makaton is used mainly in early years settings, participant 1 expressed it should be used in all SEN schools and early years settings, whereas participants 2-6 articulated the need for it to be in other industries such as hospitals, supermarkets, play areas, community centres, playgroups, offices, leisure centres, swimming pools and all schools. Although important that other industries should incorporate Makaton, gaining an understanding of staff qualities needed to share good Makaton practice is essential. Participants 1,2,3,5 and 6 recommended facial expressions, confidence, expressive, enthusiasm, calm, understanding and eye contact required to teach children Makaton. Participant 1 added "don't be shy, don't worry if you get it wrong just join in and have fun". Participant 4 expressed similar thoughts but added practitioners should use Makaton to enhance learning throughout the day as well as in group time. These qualities support suggestions by The Makaton Charity (2020).

Theme three - overcoming barriers of access

Analysis evidence of access barriers to learning Makaton, comes from various research methods. As practitioners or other professionals learn Makaton through courses provided by The Makaton Charity (2020), they must additionally gain knowledge around different disabilities and learning difficulties to help support and

see children flourish (Pickering, *et al*, 2015). Barriers can occur such as impeding children from learning Makaton causing frustration, leading to behaviour changes resulting in isolation (Senior, 2015). Interviews raised opinions as to whether Makaton is used enough within individuals rooms. Participants 1,3 and 6 expressed they used Makaton but felt others need to learn and practice it as not everyone knows it. Participants 2,4 and 5 admitted "could be used more" and believed age, training and resources are evident barriers in my practice due to time, resources and practitioners not teaching Makaton due to their young age, segregating them from communication opportunities. When asked how Makaton is made accessible for all children, four out of six participants expressed they use lanyards, group times, visual aids, books, videos and songs that children can access anytime suggesting the visual pictures of Makaton signs, provide learning blocks helping children understand how language works as a simple way to learn and support children communicating even if EAL or learning difficulties (Hathaway, 2023). Participant 3 expressed the need for consistency to support children in signing in their own way along with learning what they mean, participant 1 felt management reward us through paying for what individuals can put into practice. Literature (Mistry and Barnes, 2012) expresses free resources available on the Makaton Charity website (2020) to download, print and implement in rooms however, the resources can be limited unless the individual holds premium membership which, in the authors opinion should be thought about, aiding improvement of practice using Makaton widely supporting individuals development to meet basic needs.

Makaton is beneficial but can have limitations in early years settings. Participants 1,3 and 4 state that staff knowledge is a limit because if participants are unsure, how

can they teach it. Ages played a factor for participants 5 and 6; they felt this and abilities can affect children as their minds can get confused if learning too much at once, hindering development (Senior, 2015). This advises staff knowledge can be a barrier on how they teach children, if they have limited Makaton knowledge (Harris, 2021) as well as ages due to younger toddlers (1 year olds) struggling due to complexities. If a child learnt Makaton from a baby, they would pick it up quickly, if it is new to a one/two year old it can be complicated to understand. Participant 2 voiced training disagreements between practitioners can add no value to using Makaton; if practitioners disagree with how words are signed, this confuses practitioners and children leading to incorrect teaching. As Makaton and BSL words differ, practitioners must agree which one to use for effective teaching (Herman, 1998), voiced by participant 1. Previous point have been observed as when completing group times Practitioner 1 might use more BSL whereas I would use more Makaton which has confused children in past experiences. This can be a restriction however, the Makaton Charity (2020) offer a wide range of courses either face to face or online spanning a year. This gives practitioners more opportunities to learn and teach Makaton signs to support children with development stopping access barriers where possible without having to pay for courses. It is important for practitioners to put strategies in place to overcome barrier obstacles ensuring all have equal opportunities and access (Oosterhoorn and Kendrick, 2001). Discussing overcoming barriers during interviews, prompted a range of responses proving that there are different ways to overcome barriers, however as Pickering (*et al* 2015) suggests, understanding different disabilities helps teach Makaton to children, supporting individual needs. Participant 1 supports this suggesting “understanding

the child and their needs especially if they speak additional languages, help build confidence through teaching a few words of Makaton at a time". Understanding individual children's needs enables practitioners to support and reach a child's full development potential (Mistry and Barnes, 2012). Other strategies noted by participants 3,5,6 "basic signs, don't overwhelm, consistent, let them do it their unique way, understand them, give time to respond/understand". Participant 2 felt allowing them to express thoughts and feelings will improve communication and participant 4 indicated that having no barriers of access helps children especially if shy or have speech delays.

During interviews, the researcher informed participants that children learn Makaton in nurseries but at school they only learn BSL; feelings and opinions were required around this statement. Participants 3 and 4 felt learning a new language can be hard so should be phased out. Thoughts from participants 2,5 and 6 disagreed with this thought feeling it can knock children's confidence as it is a new language to learn, adding pressure. Participant 1 agreed with the statement and felt she understood the demands of BSL, it is wider used compared to Makaton and due to more knowledge of BSL, would be better for children to learn (Schulte, 2022) therefore I think it should be phased out to stop confusion.

Conclusion

The findings chapter is essential in presenting analysed findings from research conducted; informing readers of potential new information for use in future research. Analysis of this data was conducted using thematic analysis, presenting the work in themes (Robert-Holmes, 2011, p181). Makaton is imperative in aiding communication between peers and adults even if they have disabilities/learning

difficulties. Benefits of Makaton include supporting EAL children, aiding communication and skills support development for a range of children (Mistry and Barnes, 2012). Theme two shows the main training opportunity is the Makaton Charity (2020), accessible for everyone as it can be face to face or online, attendance can be difficult though due to limited dates and times. Overcoming barriers of access was the final theme; although there are limitations i.e., abilities, ages, staffing and knowledge along with barriers such as training and resources, strategies can be established such as small group times, watching videos to copy gestures, reading books and facilitating whilst letting them do it their unique way supporting both practitioners and children, facilitate communication and meeting basic needs (DfE 2010).

Final thought, the researcher found it interesting participants 1 and 3 have similar interests, either Makaton training or fluent in BSL, whereas the other participants with little knowledge and wanting to know more, have similar views. The next section will be an overall conclusion of the dissertation to determine an answer to the overall and subsidiary questions created at the start of the dissertation.

Chapter 5- Conclusion

Key findings are provided from the research project whilst evaluating the methodology's effectiveness including any limitations during the study. Ideas for future research will suggest both professional and personal development reasoning. The main aim was: *An investigation into the benefits of using Makaton in Early Years*. Supporting this conclusion, three subsidiary questions will be answered throughout:

- 1- *Benefits for children and practitioners of using Makaton in Early years.*
- 2- *Training opportunities available for adults in Early Years to learn Makaton.*
- 3- *Extent of Makaton overcoming barriers of access for children with Individual needs.*

This dissertation filled gaps that future research can support literately with suitable support/strategies to help children's development in Early Years flourish; if support is required it can be accessed promptly. Gaps within literature included not having enough knowledge around different ways Makaton benefits different groups within society as well as discussing how individuals can learn Makaton through training opportunities. This dissertation aimed to give additional information around Makaton and how support can be made in the future as there is limited information and has been completed through research conducted.

The literature review and an analysis of findings provided benefits of using Makaton in early years, an important one being it provides opportunities to communicate with different groups of peers including EAL children. A study by Mistry and Barnes (2012) supported this point, as staff having necessary training to teach Makaton

helped during child led activities which were more popular for EAL children and allowed greater communication purposes within different groups. Sin (2020) supports this as Makaton supports the repetition of words which children can access easier through interactions helping them learn new/additional English words. Although some words can be complex to learn, if practitioners start teaching basic words in a fun way, then children stay engaged and learn words punctually which was noted during group times as a fun practitioner led activity keeping children engaged whilst learning without realising. Makaton aids all children, even if they have disabilities/learning difficulties to communicate without frustration as Makaton involves using gestures and signs but relies heavily on facial expressions and body language (Lawrence, 2015). Experience has shown individuals with hearing impairments rely on lip reading, facial expression and body language. COVID19 segregated these individuals due to masks, however transparent masks were created enabling communication; since looking at Department of Health and Social Care (2022), the page has been withdrawn which could segregate this group of individuals in the future inhibiting opportunities that make an inclusive society.

The methodology was imperative involving use of an interpretivist perspective (Crowe, *et al*, 2011) gathering opinions and enhance understanding of the topic through qualitative and quantitative data (Bell and Waters, 2018); carrying out interviews, group time and checklist observations and photographs, a creative method. Interviews noted in-depth answers through individual experiences (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) whereas observations gained evidence for how Makaton impacted children's learning either positively or negatively, then photographs were used to support evidence from the mixed methods. Document

analysis was used throughout to gain government ideas around this topic to help societies become more inclusive (Rapley, 2018). It was evident that only one document out of three (Birth to 5 Matters, Early Education 2021) mentions Makaton as a strategy helping children communicate whilst the two other documents do not mention it. This suggests the topic is still quite segregated; if government guidance used the phrase additional times, the topic would be more widely used and the right support will be available for children to further aid holistic development instead of impeding it. Finally, although there are benefits to using Makaton in Early Years, discovered through the analysis of findings and literature, the lack of training opportunities are restricted for practitioners teaching children effectively, potentially hindering development; something I observed in practice. Whilst there are many opportunities to access free resources, for Makaton to become more widely known, additional training opportunities need to be made regularly to continue with the demand of supporting children in Early Years and reduce delays in development.

Although there are benefits to using Makaton in Early Years, discovered through analysis of findings and literature, there is a lack of training opportunities for practitioners restricting teaching children effectively, potentially hindering development and is something I observed in practice. Whilst there are many opportunities to access free resources, for Makaton to become more widely known, additional training opportunities need to be made regularly to continue with the demand of supporting children in Early Years and reduce delays in development.

If future studies occurred, getting a parental perspective from different children could benefit to identify if Makaton supports or hinders development. Interviewing a Makaton teacher might value understanding of how Makaton supports children's

early development. Personally, if this research was conducted again I would make additional time to complete the research methods starting it earlier, asking practitioners leading group times to complete over two or three occasions to evident benefits and how much the children learnt over a period of time such as one month. The interviews could have been enhanced and had further discussions if they were voice recorded and completed in the staff room instead of in the rooms where practitioners got distracted with children and might not have felt as comfortable in speaking about this topic in front of others.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Ethics certificate



Application for Research Ethics

Approval Name of applicant: Tara Harrison

Research ethics approval number (reference):

Student number: 2003475

Date of approval: 05/01/2023

Title: An Investigation into the Benefits of Makaton in Early Years

Module code: ECU611

This letter is confirmation that the above study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee.

Approval has been granted on the basis of the information provided in this application. If it is necessary to change the research purpose, design, methods or participants in any way, then you are required to reapply for research ethics approval.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your study is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

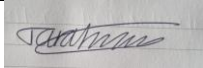
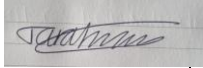
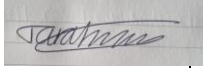
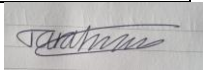
Chair of Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 2- Supervision sheet

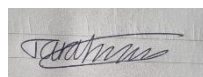
RECORD OF DISSERTATION SUPERVISION

Name of Student: Tara Harrison

Title of Project: An Investigation into the Benefits of Makaton in Early Years.

Date and time	Brief details of discussion and research progress	Student's Signature
20/10/22	Face to face meeting at University to discuss the overall and subsidiary questions for dissertation.	
21/12/22- 22/12/22.	Short email conversation regarding ethics form	
2 nd March 2023	Discussed how to annotate my research evidence including interviews, observations and the creative method which include photos.	
1/11/22- 28/4/23	Brief email conversations throughout the months of ideas and feedback around dissertation	

Student's signature:
23/4/23



Date:

Tutor's signature: Kate Dudley

Date: 27/4/23

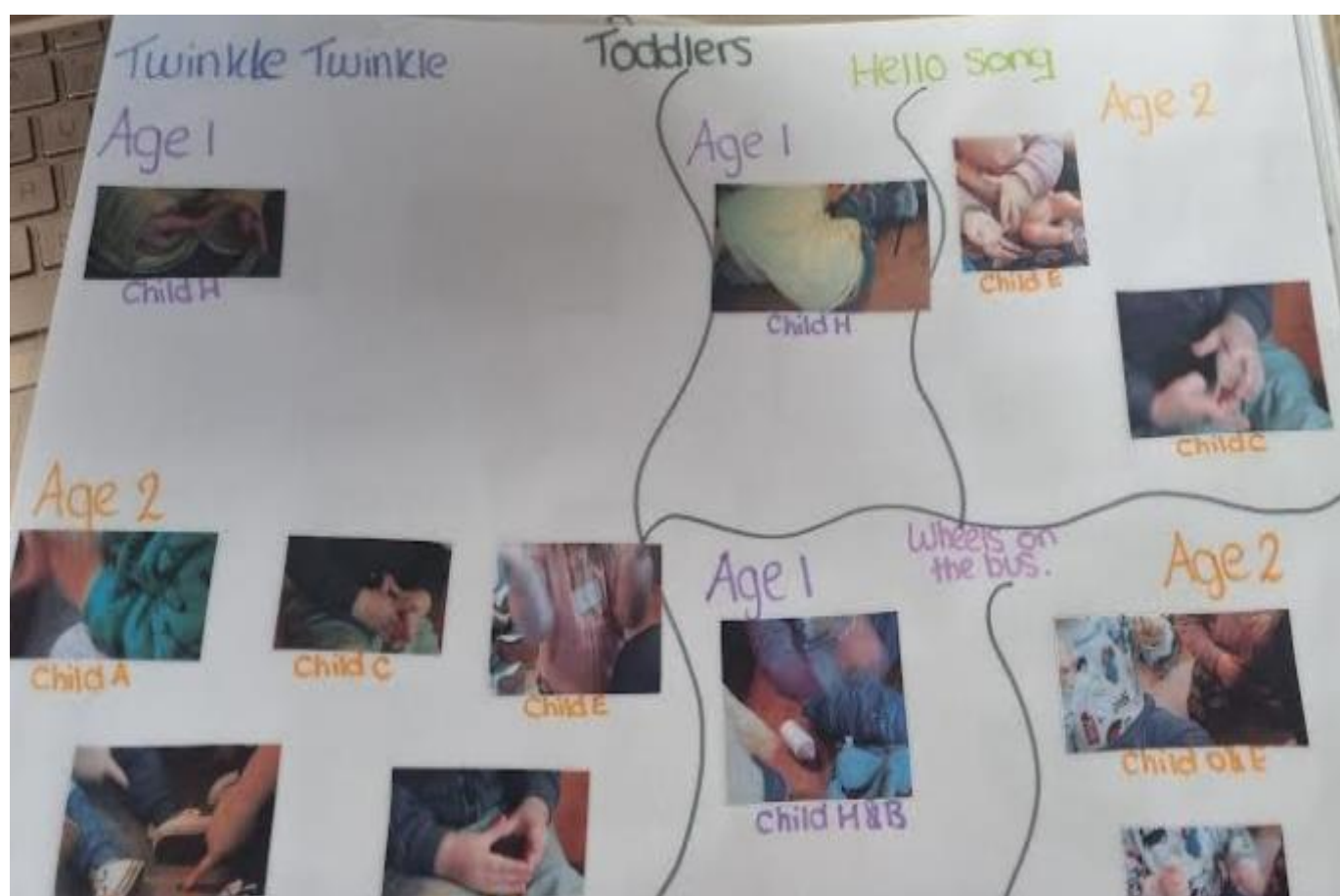
Appendix 3- Preschool photographs from group time



Appendix 4- Preschool photographs from group time



Appendix 5- Toddler photographs from group time



Appendix 6- Toddler photographs from group time



Appendix 7- Toddler checklist from group time

Toddlers							
Child	Did they participate?	How old is the participant?	Did they stay engaged?	Were they able to copy the Makaton signs?	Did they struggle using Makaton	Did they sing more rather than use Makaton	Did they use Makaton more than singing?
A	✓	2y 1m	15mins	Some	NO	x	✓
B	✓	1y 6m	15mins	✓	NO	x	✓
C	✓	2y 1m	15mins	✓	NO	x	✓
D	✓	2y 6m	15mins	✓	NO	x	✓
E	✓	2y	15mins	✓	NO	x	✓
F	✓	2y 1m	5mins	x	NO YES	x	x
NO PHOTOS		went then came back for 3 mins					
G	✓	1y 8m	0	didn't engage	✓	x	x
NO PHOTOS		sat and watch whole time					
H	✓	1y 7m	15	✓	NO	x	✓
I							
J							

Appendix 8- Pre-school checklist from group time

Preschool							
	Did they participate?	How old is the participant?	Did they stay engaged?	Were they able to copy the Makaton signs?	Did they struggle using Makaton	Did they sing more rather than use Makaton	Did they use Makaton more than singing?
A	✓	3y6m	✓ 15 mins	✓	X	X	✓
B	✓	3y1m	✓ 15 mins	✓	X	X	✓
C	✓	3y3m	✓ 15 mins	✓	X	X	✓
D	✓	3y1m	✓ 15 mins	✓	X	X	✓
E	✓	3y9m	✓ 15 mins	✓	X	X	✓
F	✓	3y6m	✓ 15 mins	✓	X	X	✓
G	✓	4y	✓ 15 mins	✓	X	X	✓
H	✓	4y2m	✓ 15 mins	✓	X	X	✓
I	✓	4y	✓ 15 mins	✓	X	X	✓
J	interacted but not signed	3y		X	✓	✓	X