

Welsh Government (2019) state that storytelling experiences, through a range of media, develops a Child's sense of identity, promoting empathy and therefore contributing to a Child's wellbeing, whilst sparking imagination and creativity and ensuring a lifelong passion for literature. Further stating that practitioners can embed these literacy experiences in the early years, empowering learners to become independent resilient creative contributors in the world. Furthermore, Bruner (1960) states that storytelling is a bridge to early literacy. Whitehead (2009) describe stories as timeless and a universal way of a child making sense of the world they live in, offering explanations to feelings, events and ideas, allowing for opportunities for predictions as well as affording them the opportunities to absorb new exciting vocabulary.

Neaum (2012) stresses that children must be immersed in language to build the foundations for language development, in a quality rich literate language environment where reading and writing activities such as storytelling are everyday activities with practitioners who are enthused about reading writing and oracy.

As well as building reading, writing and oracy skills the storytelling activities were carried out in the storybook area filled with an array of books, pillows and a nice comfy carpet to sit on. This provides the children with a safe comfortable place where they can relax, feel love and belonging and build confidence with a nurturing care giver who offers praise, building self-esteem and allowing children to reach that point of self-actualization, aligning with Maslow (2013).

There are positive links between storytelling and vocabulary development and research suggests that children in early years who share reading experiences with others directly link to academic achievement, as shared storytelling afford children unique opportunities for language acquisition (Shahaeian *et al.*, 2018 and Wasil *et al.*, 2016). Phillips (2000) research found that storytelling experiences have many benefits including promoting creative thinking, enhancing memory recall and supporting early literacy development whilst being an effective educational tool which further develops cognitive skills. Aligning with Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1960) who state that children need a more knowledgeable other to share these experiences to encourage language development through interactions with others in a language rich environment. Alternatively, Chomsky as discussed by Neaum (2012) and Pinker (2015) explored how language learning in children is innate and children are almost pre-programmed to learn language and would learn language even if never read a story.

Wilkinson (2019) agrees that for a good storytelling experience the storyteller needs to be a good role model, whilst being confident and having fun, as storytelling is about sharing books whilst feeding imaginations, as children's experiences of literacy in the early years will fuel their love for literacy in later life. In both storytelling experiences the storyteller offered dramatic pauses, characterisation and changes to pace and pitch. As discussed by Barbee (2020) these prosodic features of speech increase engagement with the story and add excitement, highlighting words and phrases to assist with language acquisition. Barbee (2020) further encourages the use of paralinguistic features to reinforce the story that is being told, the practitioner displayed facial expressions throughout both storytelling experiences to demonstrate worry, shocked, happy feelings in line with the story. The practitioner also displayed further hand gestures and movements throughout the digital storytelling experience to help Children's receptive language, which were however limited in the traditional storytelling experience due to the holding of the book. Further reflection highlights the development of whole body movements, the traditional story could have afforded itself to an outdoor experience where the children walked through the grass, squelched through the mud, and

through the wind allowing further experiential learning and physical activity as well as reinforcing the language development, as discussed by Whitehead (2009).

Both storytelling experiences interacted with the children, who listened, joined in with rhyme, and asked questions suggesting they were engaged in the storytelling experiences. This aligns with Laevers, who as discussed by Nutkins, McDonald and Stephen (2013) suggest that experiential learning lends itself to a Childs improved confidence and self-esteem, ensuring children become happy confident children ready to learn, a main purpose of The Welsh Government (2015).

Tomasello (2019) further states that storytelling should be a shared experience where a child is taken on a journey through the story and implores that the skills of the storyteller in sharing the story will determine the engagement and the outcomes for that child. These skills include sharing eye contact and pointing to text and images. The use of eye contact was prominent in both stories and the use of pointing to images in both the traditional and digital story to draw attention and reaffirm what was being discussed was evident, aligning with Wilkinson (2019) who state that pictures help children make connections with the world. However, Novak (2014) suggests that pictures are not needed in storybooks if an expressive storytelling technique is used, and the storyteller is enthused and interesting to children.

On reflection further pointing to text could have aided language development for children to assist word association, as discussed by Flack, Field and Horst (2018) who consider how storytellers who use such interactive reading styles as open-ended questions, repetition and pointing positively influence language acquisition, further stating that encouraging interaction with text through pointing significantly improve word learning as a practitioner's reading style is of paramount importance.

In both storytelling activities the practitioner affords time for questioning, giving children the opportunity for oracy development. However, the digital storytelling experience affords children fewer opportunities for questions throughout the story due to the storyteller ensuring the timings of the story remained. With further technological training or equipment, the story could have been competently paused to allow for further interaction. The storyteller asks children questions, as well as encouraging questions and responses. During these interactions the storyteller models such skills as listening and responding to questions whilst showing interest and offering meaningful praise for responses. This type of interaction allows for children to learn such social skills as turn taking. This aligns with Neaum (2012) who discusses that questioning is key for children to learn and understand language, especially at their peak of questioning, around three to four years. Petrie (2011) also agrees that questioning is a valuable interaction to help children learn about the world they live in and right their misconceptions. Further aligning with Crystal (1969) who implores questioning is essential for the child and practitioner to gain valuable information during questioning.

Cambourne (no date) state that one of the eight conditions of learning is response. The practitioner in the traditional storytelling activity, especially, involved, listened to and responded to children's questions and interactions during the activity therefore supporting the acquisition of language. The storyteller could have further supported this theory by allowing for approximation, by accepting mistakes but modelling back the correct use of language to the children reinforcing that language. Siraj-Blatchford (2010) focuses on the richness and quality of language interactions which result in a higher level of language development. Furthermore, Hart and Riley (1995) research found that language development relied on the experiences of

the child and whether the child had high, or low levels of language interaction would determine their language development.

Agosto (2016) state that follow up activities could enhance the literacy benefits of storytelling such as follow up questions or retellings. The digital story offered this by recalling together the different animals that were on the broom, however further examples of this could have been made by the storyteller, to extend language and recollection especially in the traditional story. Skinner stated that language acquisition is learned through praise and reinforcement, as discussed by Neaum (2012). In both storytelling experiences praise was afforded to children following responses and praising listening skills, whilst children interacted with the story during rhyme, for example within The Bear Hunt story. Clark as discussed by Pitzer (2010) further stated that language repetition and rhythm, as demonstrated in the digital story will help language acquisition in children as that language is being reinforced. Crystal (1969) further agreed that rhythm, rhyme, song and imitation is pivotal to language acquisition and assists children in learning language and remembering words.

University of Kansas (2017) suggests that babies acquire language pre-birth as they hear the rhythm of language through intonation, aligning with the rhythmic properties of the chosen digital story. Read, Macauley and Furay (2014) research agreed that rhyme books foster language development through boosting memory and recollection for children, with rhyming stories strengthening young Childrens vocabulary. Further stating that children being able to memorise and complete sentences by carrying out this repetition will help children with self-esteem and boost their confidence as they are able to predict and participate in the story making for a more enjoyable and beneficial experience. The Bear hunt story told to children offers children this rhyme and repetition and pattern to allow for this learning.

Derbashi (2021) research found that children enjoyed digital storytelling as a learning method and that using this learning method promoted Childrens language skills as well as their social and problem-solving skills.

Smeda *et al.*, (2014) implore children enjoy listening to digital stories especially as they are an innovative pedagogical approach that can engage students in deep and meaningful learning whilst creating exciting learning environments.

However, Van Den Heuvel *et al.*, (2019) and Zimmerman *et al.*, (2007) discussed the negative impacts between digital storytelling on a screen as demonstrated with this digital storytelling experience and vocabulary development. Furthermore Agosto (2016) considers that even with the advantages of modern technology where focus is switching to digital skills, traditional storytelling remains an essential tool in building children's literacy. As well as bringing joy to children and embedding that joy for literacy.

Maulana (2020) and Kartushina *et al.* (2021) research suggested that children who had too much 'screen time' had a higher risk of language delay and suggested that those children who had less exposure to screen and more face-to-face interactions benefitted from larger gains in vocabulary development. The interaction during the digital storytelling experience could have been improved through the use of questions to allow for this.

However, Robin (2008) although agrees that digital storytelling is a powerful teaching, learning and engaging tool, states digital stories can be time consuming with some practitioners lacking the skills and confidence to integrate and use technology, and implore that adequate training must be afforded to practitioners to ensure this.

Normann (2011) agrees that issues with software or adults using the software might be hindering these experiences, such as a lack of battery or wi-fi limiting the digital story to the

indoors without the allowance of spontaneous storytelling unless previously planned. However, Donaldson (2015) implores that digital competence is important for now, as well as the future and practitioners need to ensure that thorough training is completed to ensure confidence in this, as practitioners will ensure children succeed in life. Aligning with Welsh Government (2018) who implore that digital competence for learners is essential to ensure they are informed capable learners. Furthermore, stating that settings and practitioners must ensure digital competence is embedded and incorporated into daily routines such as storytelling, which will help learners thrive in an increasingly digital world. Derbashi (2021) further considers how technological advances over recent years mean that educational settings must integrate such digital technology to prepare children with skills for the 21st century.

The digital story allowed for onomatopoeia words which were emphasised through the use of props, helping children learn the meaning of words and sounds by stimulating their senses and focusing attention on them as discussed by Laing (2019). This could have been improved by the children having their own sound props to use during the relevant part of the story to allow for a more interactive experience.

Both experiences afforded children an interesting storytelling experience offering many of the same benefits with regards to the interaction offered, eye contact, voice intonation and dramatic skills as the practitioner delivered both stories in a similar style. However, the lack of experience and knowledge with technology could have improved the digital story, with training needed here to allow for further interaction during the story.

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