

Analysis

This analysis will compare two different storytelling sessions, one traditional session with a physical book, and the other in a digital format. It will also explore the benefits of storytelling on children's language and literacy skills and discuss three points contributing to this.

According to Metcalfe, *et al.* (2013), vocabulary, grammatical understanding and text meaning are related. Therefore, using stories to teach reading and writing to children can encourage them in adopting accurate grammar and vocabulary. Ramous (2012) states that reading aloud to children fosters a favourable interaction between the child and their awareness of reading and writing. Agosto (2016) suggests that storytelling is effective as it allows children to engage their imaginations and stimulate their curiosity, by visualising the characters and the plot, as it unfolds. Lucarevschi (2016) explains storytelling and story reading have both been identified to be effective pedagogical practices that significantly boost children's language learning.

Growing in importance in education from a young age is digital literacy. Digital literacy refers to the ability and competence to use digital technology and the internet to discover, assess, use, share, and create material. It is distinct from offline literacy, which includes reading, writing, grammar, and syntax (Maureen, Mejj, and Jong, 2020; UNICEF, 2019).

Intonation

Intonation is defined as the rhythm that a sentence expresses. For example, the voice of a storyteller would fluctuate based on the narrative's purpose. Intonation is related to how attitude and emotion are communicated during speech, in addition to the way that linguistic rhythm is expressed (Westlund, *et al.*, 2017; Bernal and Morales, 2016). Linguist Noam Chomsky contends that all individuals have the innateness to acquire language, a Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Using LAD, children can construct utterances in the language they hear or see (Smidt, 2011). Additionally, Chomsky believed that acquiring language is an autonomous process. In the interest of enhancing a child's language development, a network of more knowledgeable others interacts with them, such as parents and practitioners.

Therefore, children's oracy is promoted, through speaking and listening (Smidt, 2016). This is known as the Language Acquisition Support System (LASS), proposed by theorist Bruner. He agreed with Chomsky's assertions about children having the innate drive and ability to learn language and suggested that children who are learning language should be involved in precise, predictable, and repeated interactions with others, for the LAD to firstly develop. In both the traditional and digital storytelling sessions, the practitioner promoted intonation by showing the ability of verbal interactions and response with others, making sense of written text and phrases, and using visual information to help decipher the meaning, as well as change of tone in their voice, which promotes children's oracy, children notice a change in tone of voice which enhances their listening skills (Tamura, *et al.*, 2017; Neaum, 2012; Whitehead, 2010).

According to Suprihatin and Misrohawati (2021), parents and caregivers may speak to babies and young children in a language known as Motherese, Parentese, or Child-Directed Speech. Motherese, parentese, and child-directed speech are all terms for the abridged language adults use when speaking to babies and children. This can involve using words that have been made simpler or speaking more slowly and using a higher tone of voice. Banaruee, Khatin-Zadeh and Farsani (2023) further explain that motherese with short phrases, straightforward structures, and limited vocabulary is the most prevalent form. Correlations exist between parental communication styles and directives provided to children and the process of word production. As their cognitive abilities advance, children will eventually start employing the words and sounds that adults use when speaking to them. They can recognise, assimilate, and remember these words and sounds (Barbosa and Brocchi, 2021). Law, *et al.* (2017) and Hulme, *et al.* (2017), emphasise children's oral language skills help them read and write, and the importance of letter and phoneme knowledge, in learning to interpret print. In both the storytelling sessions, the practitioner would change the tone of their voice to follow the narrative, and follow the text with their fingers.

Rahiem (2021) states digital storytelling uses a variety of modern resources, including digital images, graphics, music, and sound, to blend stories together with the storyteller's narrative voice. The storyteller used an animation of the story 'The

Very Hungry Caterpillar', Nair and Yunus (2021) suggest that digital storytelling can strengthen children's communication skills, further explaining that it encourages children to express themselves, ask pertinent questions, present diverse viewpoints, and develop narratives, all of which promote children's oracy skills. In addition to this, digital storytelling has the potential to educate children about the value of narrative and audio-visual content, whilst also fostering their language skills. Sun and Yin (2020), argue that the use of multimedia has been shown to have a positive impact on children's language acquisition, particularly among monolingual children. Wong and Samdura (2021), recognise this and state this benefit may be attributable to the dual coding theory of learning. It has been proposed that information delivered in both verbal and non-verbal forms promotes deeper learning, such as dynamic visualization. By congruently visualising stories, multimedia resources help language understanding in this way by providing non-verbal information (Jared, Pei Yun Poh, and Paivio, 2013). According to the Welsh Government (2022), to read and interact with online content, some of which may include embedded resources including hyperlinks and audio clips, that challenge children to make decisions, they must learn specialised digital literacy skills. Following the Digital Competence Framework as set out by The Welsh Government (2015), children are expected to create, collaborate on, and distribute digital information in an ethical manner. In the digital storytelling session, the practitioner demonstrated how to access the digital story, which can promote their digital literacy skills (Paivio, 2013; Rohlfing and Müller-Brauers, 2020; Undheim and Jernes, 2020).

Repetition

Repetition is used in 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'. For example, the words "but he was still hungry" are used throughout. According to Sari *et al.* (2017), the repeating pattern in a story suggests the storyteller's emotion is incorporated in the persuasive approach. Therefore, whilst being read to, children's imaginations are stimulated. Referring to Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2023), parents and caregivers that speak to children can promote their healthy brain development. Repetition is necessary for learning, as it is through repetition that new information is acquired through brain cells and can enhance children's literacy skills (Ledger, 2019; Jha and Arora, 2020). Children's language and oracy skills are strengthened by

speaking to them and introducing them to books and stories, which puts them on a path to learning and academic success (Welsh Government, 2021). Repetition is considered a language imitation skill; the better a child is at imitating, the better they are as early speakers as well, and this influences a child's holistic language development (Saxton, 2017). When children listen to a story, their language skills advance, and associations between oral and writing work can be made (Nicholas, Rossiter, and Abbott, 2011; Satriani, 2019).

Although two different methods of storytelling occurred, the practitioner read the same book, to promote repetition and consistency. According to Allen and Lalonde (2015), children can begin to expand their vocabulary through the repetition of certain stories, as they are more likely to remember repeated words. They can later use them in their own oral and writing literacies. Children can embrace the world outside their immediate knowledge and comprehension and become more accepting of diversity in individuals and places when they are repeatedly exposed to texts that introduce unfamiliarity (Sari, *et al.*, 2017; Bruce and Spratt, 2011). According to Luo *et al.*, (2014), children who are encouraged to participate in storytelling and who appreciate hearing the same story numerous times have better narrative abilities. Children pay precise attention to repetition and appreciate open ended discussions as it encourages them to be engaged, which promotes their reading skills (Feltis, Powell, and Roberts, 2011).

Furthermore, speaking to foetus' in the womb is a method that has been proven to assist children's language development. Unborn babies can hear sounds and differentiate languages from inside the womb, which can enhance their linguistic development, as well as help make them feel secure (NHS Inform, 2012; Bhamani, 2017; Lucas, 2014). The use of rhythm, rhyme, and repetition can help children's oral language development as well as their reading and writing skills, they are able to anticipate words in a nursery rhyme or poem based on what comes before, and gain satisfaction from repetition (Virginia and Barrett 2014; Kuppen, 2018). Children who are acquiring a new skill are said to be in a zone of proximal development (ZPD), according to Vygotsky. A language and literacy skill can be mastered if a child has seen and done enough repetition of it. Children practice their reading and oracy skills

in all these areas, as they practise their gestures, noises, and actions. Therefore, mastery fosters competence (Fani and Ghaemi, 2011).

Props

In the traditional storytelling session, the practitioner made use of props. Props refer as portable items. During 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' story, the practitioner had food items that the caterpillar consumes. Medlicott (2019) argues that practitioners can sometimes be overly ambitious regarding props whilst compiling an assortment of items to bring out at the key moments in the story, stating that it can be distracting for children and the practitioner themselves. Author Novak recognised this and published a book 'The Book With No Pictures'. In Novak's storytelling session, there are no props, nor images in books, and the children were very engaged (Waterstones, 2014). In his storytelling, Novak places a strong focus on the role of a storyteller, through the application of eye contact, body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions. Furthermore, the practitioner did not use props throughout the digital storytelling session; alternatively, they concentrated on these elements (Lee, 2016). Bardai (2020) disagrees with Medlicott (2019) and states children's interactions with books and stories can be made more engaging using props during storytelling. It can facilitate the child's engagement with the stories and deepen their understanding of them and the opportunity for language development is greatly increased by the introduction of props, which allow the storyteller to give the children's newly introduced words significance, which further promotes children's oracy and reading skills (Brun, 2019 Rahiem, *et al.*, 2020).

Moreover, according to Lewis (2019), children ought to associate reading with being a positive experience to learn new vocabulary and the meaning of words. Choo, Abdullah, and Nawi (2020) add that the process of telling a story involves a two-way conversation between the storyteller, and the children, in which the practitioner would employ storytelling techniques to elicit information from children. Consequently, a primary focus of storytelling is to bring characters alive in order that the storyteller and children understand their feelings and ideas. Characters can be made to come to life through using elements including diction, vocal projection, intonation, gesture, and facial expressions (Ghounane, 2021; Storr, 2019). During the traditional storytelling session, the practitioner focused on telling the narrative, whilst showing

the children the props at the suitable moment, which will contribute to enhancing children's oracy skills.

Furthermore, children display joy and pride once they realise they are contributing to the creation of the scenario and are part of the story. Props can be especially helpful for children that have additional learning needs (ALN), as they can make a connection with the word being said and the item being shown (National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS), 2023; Brinton and Fujiki, 2017). By encouraging children to delve further into the narrative, the use of props during story time enhances the reading experience. The storyteller in the traditional storytelling session displayed the foods the caterpillar consumes, however, instead of describing to the children what they were, they could have first asked the children whether they knew what they were, or not. This can help promote children's oral and reading skills. Children can express their opinions about the story at this point (Rączaszek-Leonardi, *et al.*, 2018). Props offer cues that allow children to understand the plot more easily. These visualizations can foster children's imagination and ability to create pictures from words, which promotes their writing skills (Leung, Chiu, and Lam, 2021).

Conclusion

Finally, the above evidence suggests that storytelling is beneficial to support children's language and literacy skills, and can be enhanced by employing different methods of storytelling. The involvement of the children is one distinction between traditional storytelling and digital storytelling. Traditional storytelling requires the children to hear the narrative and mentally visualise it, to comprehend the story. They may find this to be a cognitive challenge, which will make them passive listeners. Yet with digital storytelling, children can see the images and hear the sounds to get a more distinct understanding of the story. A suggestion for future practice whilst storytelling could be that the practitioner would read outside, for more opportunities of questioning and relevance to the story itself. To avoid being perceived as a hierarchical figure, the practitioner could alternatively read at the same level as the children. By introducing the usage of a second language to basic words in the story, such as some of the food the caterpillar consumes, the storyteller may have also incorporated bilingualism into the session.

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