Introduction

Hello, my name is Nathan Barker and today I am going to be sharing with you my storytelling presentation's analysis. There is a growing concern that many young children nowadays are starting nursery and school with a language delay. This paper intends to discuss the importance of storytelling as a resource to be used by practitioners to support learners in their language and literacy abilities. Furthermore, this paper will discuss in more detail three specific aspects of storytelling and how these aspects support children in their language development. According to Crerar (2018), more than 25% percent of children aged four and five years old in the UK are starting school without the ability of being able to communicate in full sentences.

Firstly, I am going to give a brief overview on the benefits, behaviours, and skills of storytelling. Then give you an analysis on how the activity could promote aspects of literacy and digital literacy.

Benefits of storytelling

Personally, I believe that storytelling is one of the most effective ways in which learners learn a new language. Miller and Pennycuff (2008) says that storytelling is one way to develop language and literacy development by improving oral language, reading, and writing. Story time is part of daily routines in most early year's settings, which emphasises the enjoyment that learners get out of it and importance of storytelling itself. Early years practitioners often suggest that storytelling is something that comes naturally to them which is supported by Bruner 1990 cited in Hibbin who suggested, storytelling is an activity that we are hard-wired for. This is also supported by Nicolini (1994) who states that, "We are by nature storytellers". There is a difference in reading a story and being a good storyteller. Isbell et al (2004) suggest that those who are natural storytellers use repetition and gestures to enhance storytelling which supports language and literacy development. According to Crerar (2018), more than 25% percent of children aged four and five years old in the UK are starting school without the ability of being able to communicate in full sentences.

Story telling can support all areas of language and literacy development including oracy, literacy and reading which is why, as supported by Wang 2014, the earlier that learners are introduced to books the better. Learners are influenced by the language that other people use which is described by Wang 2015 as bootstrapping. This means that learners learn new words from the influences around them and that story telling is the perfect opportunity for this to happen.

After reflecting on my own storytelling experience, I found that there were 3 key themes throughout the story itself which were repetition, gestures, and questioning. I am going to be talking to you about how these key themes could support learner's oracy, literacy and reading development.

Oracy Development

I chose to read 'Room on a Broom' by Julia Donaldson because of the clear repetition involved throughout the whole story. Using a book with lots of repetition may encourage learners to follow the story and start to say words or sounds which is something I have observed during practice with this story. Wang 2015 believes that learners are more likely to enjoy a story which outlines a clear beginning, middle and end which involves repetition of words or phrases throughout. To support this further, it is important that learners are given time to recognise and respond to this repetition, which is why moments of pause was done throughout the storytelling to allow learners to finish the repetitive parts of the story which they may become familiar with. Klem 2015 states that learners often imitate words or sentences which are repeated several times which also relates to what Isbell 2004 cited in Hibbin once suggested, stating that learners enjoy repeating words or phrases when listening to a story. The use of repetition during storytelling may introduce new language to learners which they will then go on to use to support their oracy development. National Safeguarding Team, (NHS Wales), 2010 believe that the use of repetition supports learner's oracy development but outline the benefits of the use of repetition within storytelling for learners with communication needs, stating that learners are more likely to use the word or phrase which is repeated to them.

Throughout the storytelling, I used gestures to emphasise certain parts of the story. For example, when the dragon appeared I used a deeper voice to emphasise the loud and deep and slightly scary approach. I raised my voice and used hand gestures to emphasise this. Swingley 2009 suggests that learners learn new key words and phrases when they are paying attention to the emphasis made on a certain describing word. Lowry 2016 supports that when hand gestures are used it can help learners to understand the meanings of words involved in a story.

Learners often use gestures before they start to use language, which is why they are an important aspect of oracy development. Goldin-Meadow 2012 supports this and state that the use of hand gestures can support learners to understand words that are being said to them and will facilitate their vocabulary gain.

Isham (2016) states that questioning is one way to encourage learners to use language. During the storytelling, I made time to pause and emphasise some of the key points at the end of the page. This will encourage learners to use language to answer the questions.

I made sure that the questions related to the story which could encourage learners to use new language which they have learned from the story. Welsh Assembly Government (2015) states that questioning supports oracy development by encouraging learners to engage in dialect relating to the topic or in this case the story being told.

Literacy development

The Sundell (2021) believes that telling a story creates a path for learner's literacy development. Nicolini, (1994); Wallace, (2000); Houston, (1997) citied in Miller (2008) all found that even into further education, storytelling will enhance writing skills which is why it is so important for storytelling to take place during the early years.

As one of the key themes, repetition throughout the story is clear. The same sentence "Down! Cried the Witch!" is repeated five times. These repeated words could encourage learners to begin to recognise the words and letters, this is support by Tall Stories (2013). Welsh Assembly Government (2015) suggests, the more learners see words in print and the more they are given the opportunity to write the more likely they will reproduce spellings of words which they have seen or recognise. Although learners may not spell the word correctly at first, Lutz (2021) supports that invented spelling can later contribute to reading development. Within the story, the illustrations are repeated and are visible throughout the book. This repetition of illustrations may encourage learners to use their literacy skills and interpret them into their own drawings. Wang 2015 supports that storytelling can lead to self-expression through drawing which can support literacy development in the future.

Reading development

The importance of reading development and how it can support other aspects of language and literacy development has been outlined by Langer and Flinhan (2000) cited by Miller (2008) states that reading like a writer allows one to become a writer. Haven and Ducey (2007) cited in Tanni (2015) promote the importance of reading and comprehension skills and state that storytelling is an effective way to enhance such skills. There are lots of ways in which reading can be enhanced by storytelling. One of those things could be questioning. Miller and Pennycuff (2008) state that storytelling can motivate learners who are most reluctant to read.

As I was reading the story, I ensured that some statements or emphasised some words were read throughout. Pacey (2016) state that questioning and emphasising key words can develop reading development as well as literacy development. Open, Learn, create (2021) support the use of questions throughout storytelling as they suggest that when leaners are asked questions during a story, they develop comprehension skills which are key skills for reading. According to The National Strategies Early Years (2017) learner's reading development can be encouraged by expressing their own ideas. Using questioning is a way in which children can interpret their ideas to achieve this. In Wales, primary school teachers stated that it is a regular occurrence to see early years or young learners having difficulties with their speech and language and has had an impact on learners falling behind other learners in their class groups (Save the Children, 2016).

Gestures used throughout the story telling can emphasise words or phrases in the story. Education Endowment Foundation (2019) support that the use of gestures and voice change can support the overall storytelling experience and support all areas of language and literacy development. This could then

encourage learners to look at the word in print and recognise it. According to Ganea et all (2018) gestures draw learner's attention to words in a book, and as a result are more likely to recognise it and go on to read it.

Welsh Assembly Government (2020) and The Borgen Project (2015) say that almost 400,000 learners do not have books at home and that learners who do have books at home are 6 times more likely to have a higher-than-expected reading age than those who do not. Learners who grow up surrounded by books have a major boost in their literacy and numeracy development compared to those who do not. Learners who do not have access to books are more likely to have lower reading and writing abilities, to struggle with phonological awareness, poor communication skills and are more likely to drop out from school.

Conclusion

After analysing my storytelling presentation, I have learned that there are many ways in which the simple things we do in daily practice can support language and literacy. Although language and literacy development are something which I always consider as a practitioner, I feel as though I have gained more knowledge and understanding when looking at specific aspects of this for example when breaking it down to oracy, literacy and reading.

I have learned that there are theorists who talk about language and literacy development which with the information I have gained from these, I believe that I can put some of this into my own practice. I believe that with the knowledge I have gained during this module, I will be able to put this into practice to become a better storyteller.

Stanford News (2014) Professor Elliot Eisner, once said that enduring outcomes in education is not about arriving at the destination, but in fact enjoying the ride. I feel as though language and literacy development could relate to this. I find is quite spectacular for something which comes naturally and is often carried out in everyday practice, storytelling, and the benefits it has towards language and literacy development is a journey which we should all enjoy.

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