Language and Literacy in the Digital Age

Derbashi (2021), believe the practice of storytelling is an action where tales are narrated by a person with intonation, imagination, and imitations of characters, that is also executed around the world. (Vasalou, A. *et al*. 2020). Derbashi (2021) suggests the practice of digital storytelling is an activity consisting of technological resources, using a combination of videos, images and sounds. Auger, Reich, and Penner (2014), suggests the practice of narrating stories to children early in their childhood are impacted by the knowledge mothers have towards their infants early development, the benefits, and the importance of storytelling, which is implemented to encourage children to attain positive advantages towards their language acquisition.

In suggestion with Lodge (2020) children who have delays and struggles with acquiring early language skills by the age of five are more likely to struggle and not meet the expected standards they are supposed to reach when they are 11. According with Brodin and Renblad (2019), children that struggle with acquiring those early language skills can still improve their linguistic and literacy skills when the right support is provided for them. Those emergent literacy skills are inevitably important to be able to read and write in the future. (Neumann, M. M. and Neumann, L. D. 2014). Visser – Bochane *et al.* (2020) also believe that acquiring language skills early is vital for children's academic and future careers. Ramos (2012) says, with early promotion of storytelling and reading to infants, and being that enabler of books and reading habits, enhances children's ability to conversate and be exposed to greater vocabulary. In accordance with the Welsh Government (2019) the learning of language and literacy are important stages as they are needed for effective communication, with the understanding of those learning skills children can provide their own responses successfully. (Welsh Government, 2019).

The story chosen for this assignment is called 'Room on the Broom', written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler. This story was narrated on two days, using two different strategies. Reading in a way that is habitual, in addition to narrated with a digital resource, using a combination of animation, videography, and images. Oral storytelling is where a tale is told without a book and is conveyed with intonation and movement. It is also a practice that is most engaging and meaningful than a read aloud where a book is used. (Hibbin, R. 2016). Derbashi (2021) claims that digital storytelling is a practice that can be used to help strengthen children's acquisition of language, as well as their intellectual, cognitive and social development. Brodin and Renblad (2019) believe the practice of shared reading both using a book and oral narrating are activities used in ways to help and enhance the teaching of oracy and language skills to children, in addition to their literacy and numeracy abilities. (Rahiem, H. D. M. 2021). Stated by Luo *et al*. (2014) providing children with good books and promoting the experiences of reading together as well can support children's ability to achieve language skills that will help shape the children's own capabilities of being able to tell their own stories as well as preparing themselves for their future academic years. Visser – Bochane *et al.* (2020), suggests the development of children's language skills is

attainable through stages, that occurs at different ages. The development of language is gained as infants enters their first milestone where they begin to understand and process the speech sounds they hear and responds and communicates through babbling. (Visser – Bochane, I. M. *et al.* 2020). In accordance with the Welsh Government (2021), the stage of babbling occurs when the infants reach the ages between 6 – 12 months. The babbling stage that is essential to the process of infants learning language is supported using their senses, suggests Laing, and Bergelson (2020). Laing and Bergelson (2020), believe that the soundings of words that infants hears when caregivers interact with them and what they see within their surroundings and environment, initiates and are influences towards their abilities to babble. Visser – Bochane *et al* (2020) and Welsh Government (2021) both have the same idea and suggests that when infants reach the age of 12 months, they go through the second stage of acquiring language, they go through the holophrastic stage where infants begin to use speech sounds and says single words up until they reach the ages of 18 months and 2 years.

Throughout the storytelling activities completed as part of this assignment where the story 'Room on the Broom' was read traditionally and narrated utilising a digital resource, three practices was recognised and observed analytically.

Cited by Barman (2012) Noam Chomsky a theorist, developed a theory based on language acquisition and believes that the acquisition of language for children is naturally acquired within them, as they are born with this natural and exitance awareness of language influenced by their inheritance. However, in critique cited by Farrant and Zubrick (2013), pioneers Jerome Bruner (1975) and Lev Vygotsky (1981, 1987) have theorised and believed that the experience of social interactions between parent and child is how children acquire their language and literacy skills. Bruner (1975) and Vygotsky (1981;1987) suggests in their theories that social interactions with the child and their parents is a practice that is an essential way of teaching and supporting children's acquisition of early and critical language skills. (Farrant, M.B and Zubrick, R. S. 2013). In a recent study, Kinsner and Parlakian (2021) believe storytelling activities should be a practice that engages that adult and child communicative interaction. Furthermore, the practice of storytelling that encourages children's involvement is a vital way of supporting children's development of meaningful literacy skills. (Porta, D.S. 2021). In his book, Bettelheim (2010) claims that in order for children to process and learn from a story, it needs to encourage active involvement and stimulation, and enable children to learn about real life experiences. At the beginning of the storytelling activity, where the story 'Room on the Broom' was narrated with a digital resource, the reader engaged the children's involvement by asking an open – ended question, "Does anyone know what the story is about?" and paused to allow children time to digest and respond back. The storyteller repeated after the child who had responded and explained with a clear voice what the story was about and what the message of the book is reaching out for. With the providence of what the story that is narrated is about, it supports children's linguistic skills and their vocabulary. The practice of pausing was identified and analysed while the story 'Room on the Broom' was read using the storybook and when a digital resource was used. Throughout both activities, pauses were taken between certain words and phrases as the pages were turned and as the animations of the digital story were played. In accordance with Kinsner and Parlakian (2021) the practice of pausing allows children to vocalise and get their ideas, thoughts and opinions

across and to be heard, which also engages serve and return between the children and the adult who is narrating the story. This enables children to practice understanding and make links with the words they use. The pause between phrases and words that are read and orally narrated during storytelling positively influence the familiarity of new words, help children become phonological aware and engages children to easily recall and memorise those new words that they hear and process them easily. (Read, K., Furay, E., and Zylstra, D. 2019). Abayan (2023) suggests that with a pause, it can provide and enable infants and children to have the chance of processing speech sounds they hear and allow them to in their own time to make connections of those words and phrases to vocalise in the way the infants and children intend to do so, promoting their conversational and linguistic skills. When pauses were taken during the storytelling activity that was narrated using the digital resource, the practice of serve and return was applied, and conversations were stimulated. In compliance with Melzi, Schick and Wuest (2022) the promotion of conversations that allow children to provide their feedback, ask and answer questions can support the children's development of using language.

Melzi, Schick, and Wuest (2022) have suggested that the amount of language that adults use and emphasises throughout their daily practice is essential to promoting positive impacts on children's literacy. Speech sounds that infants and children understand, in addition to the practice of repetition and the repeating of words, can also foster the development of children's linguistic skills. (Laing, C. 2016; Ramos, M. A. 2012). Consequently, the practice of repetition has been identified and is applied throughout both storytelling activities. The story 'Room on the Broom' was read one day with the use of props and then the same story was repeated on a different day narrated in a digital way with the same props being used. In accordance with Horst (2013) with the repetition of the same story, children's learning of words is supported as they hear words being repeated, enabling them to become familiar and understand those new words. Horst (2013) claims that when children reach the school age, they can acquire and understand at least five words from a story that is narrated repetitively. Certain words and phrases within the story were also repeated, and there is repetitive structure provided throughout the story. Laing (2016) suggests that when words are repeated and are heard frequently, it is likely then going to be the infants first words. Accordingly, with Read and Quirke (2018) when stories and certain words that are new to children are explained in detail and are repeated, it supports children to be exposed to, retain and gain greater vocabulary. Therefore, if the storyteller was to repeat this shared reading experience in the future, the storyteller would next time provide children with a detailed explanation of the meaning of certain words that are within a story to help their development of vocabulary.

As the storyteller narrates the story 'Room on the Broom' traditionally and orally using a digital screen, children were exposed to words and phrases that rhyme. Accordingly, to Riordan *et al* (2018) stories consisting of phrases that rhyme have shown to be the stories that children most enjoy listening to. Words that are structured in a rhythmic pattern and in a sequence, are much easier to process and remember. (Read, K. and Quirke, J. 2018; Read, K., Furay, E., and Zylstra, D. 2019). Similarly, cited by Read, Macauley and Furay (2014), Kenny (2005), a theorist, explains that rhyming words in storybooks or when a story is narrated orally, can have positive advantages on children's acquisition of language. With the emphasis of uncommon words expressed and highlighted in a rhythmic pattern it can improve the children's abilities to retain and recall those new words and become familiar of how and when to use them to enhance their learning of literacy and language. (Read, K., Macauley, M., and Furay, E. 2014). Like other studies, Riordan *et al* (2018) also explains that rhyming words can help

children's emergent literacy, linguistic development and attain greater vocabulary, the rhyming words children hears strengthens their abilities to become aware of speech sounds and helps them to understand the pronunciation of those verbs to connect the words together. Similarly, Fleta (2017) also claims that with the practice of rhyme used it stimulates sound recognition, it can help children to tell and recognise the difference between the speech sounds of each word that may sound the same and engages children's active participation to help them strengthen their speaking skills and word recognition.

In conclusion to this assignment, both practices of storytelling, the traditional read aloud and the use of digital resources with video, sound and images are the most useful and meaningful ways of supporting and have positive advantages towards the teaching and learning of children's language, literacy and oracy development.

With the use of pausing, repetition and rhyme, in addition to social interactions between adult and children, the children can retain, become familiar and recall speech sounds and words much quickly, helping them make connections between phrases and make sense of the story as well as express their knowledge of what they know.

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