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Language and Literacy in the digital age.

According to the Scottish Book Trust (No Date), babies in the womb can hear their parent's and family's voices from 22 weeks of development during pregnancy. Reading or singing to babies in the womb can assist in building a relationship with the child after they are born. An additional benefit given by the Scottish Book Trust (No Date) from reading and talking to babies during pregnancy is that it can assist their language development.

Through interactive storytelling the early years practitioner can use different storytelling techniques to both engage and improve the children's literacy and language development. In the videos the early years practitioner can be seen to be utilising three storytelling techniques. These are props, body language and tones of voice

In Early years settings we use digital technology in a variety of activities. According to Hwb (2022) a compulsory part of the National Curriculum of Wales is the Digital Competence Framework which states to educate children and young people on digital devices and how to use them independently and in a manner which is safe to them and to others around them. This can start by allowing children the opportunity to familiarise themselves with digital technology and have access to use them and develop their digital literacy skills.

The National Literacy Trust (2024) suggests that digital technology can assist the early years practitioner in supporting children's language development when accompanied by interaction from themselves and the children's families. There are a variety of educational apps designed for early years children which can engage the children in their learning in new and interesting ways.

In the first video, the early years practitioner is reading a book using finger puppets as a prop to enhance the story session. By using the book and the finger puppets it gives the early years practitioner the opportunity to involve the children within the story session.

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By doing this, it could allow the children to become more engaged within the story session which, as a result, could hold the children's concentration for longer. An additional benefit from using props may be that it allows the children to feel more involved in the story session whilst expanding on their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Book Trust (2024) suggests that young children who are still developing their empathy, understanding their emotions and knowledge and understanding of the world can gain a wider sense of understanding through books. Books may act as a communication point to allow children to express themselves and their emotions whilst simultaneously learning about the emotions and experiences of their peers and adults in their lives.

Another additional benefit of using props is that it can reinforce the children's memory of what they are learning. This is evidenced through the sources such as Riyani (2019). Riyani (2019) explains that by using finger puppets during story time can reenforce the development of language and vocabulary. By providing the education in a fun and engaging way the children may memorise the new vocabulary learnt better than they may do if they are just being shown pictures and told the word.

In both videos, the early years practitioner has demonstrated use of body language throughout the story session ranging from facial expressions to eye contact to body posture and language. The early years practitioner ensured that she had a range of facial expressions from happy, curious and sad. Raising Children (2024) states that body language is a positive mode of building and strengthening a bond with children and young people. By smiling, making eye contact and having open body language the early years practitioner is inviting the children and young people to engage with them in a nonverbal manner.

In the first video the approach of storytelling is a traditional form, using books and puppets. The second video, the approach is more consistent with modern technology by

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using an iPad to deliver the story. The Loughborough University (2015) suggests that Vygotsky insinuated “that imagination feeds the creativity which gives humans the drive to invent and to change their current circumstances. The brain of sedentary children listening to stories is actually working frantically and learning to think.”

BBC Teach (No Date) explains that learning to read is an important skill to develop as it is a skill that children and young people will carry with them throughout the rest of their lives. Fredericks (2011) states that reading is a vital way of educating children and young people on new vocabulary, providing it to them in a context that they will understand and remember, whilst inspiring their creativity and imagination. The activities shown in the videos a fun and interesting way of reading and engaging in a story telling session. By providing the activities in an interesting format, in this circumstance it being by using a story sack and an iPad, it can ignite a creative spark in the children to want to read and learn more which engages them and encourages their natural curiosity to seek out more fun and engaging opportunity's similar to this example.

The activities seen in the videos could be a good way of developing writing skills in children and young people. Fredericks (2011) suggests that listening and reading stories can encourage children to want to write their own stories, creating their own worlds using their imagination. Alongside this, reading stories can encourage word and letter recognition which is the starting foundation of learning to write.

In conclusion, the above research suggests that both traditional and modern storytelling can be advantageous to children and young people.

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