

I acknowledge the use of My Bib <https://www.mybib.com/#/projects/BvYReL/citations> on 01/10/24 until 22/10/24 to organise my bibliography. I used the prompt:

1. Organise my references into Harvard refencing style.

I acknowledge the use of Microsoft Editor <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/microsoft-editor> on 18th – 23rd October 2024 to check for spelling and grammar. I used the prompts:

1. Check for spelling
2. Check for grammatical errors
3. Formal writing technique

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Language and Literacy in the Digital Age. ECEY 5004

Story telling can offer an array of benefits to all ages, Yabe *et al* (2018) discovered that story telling can develop imagination, support visualisation of the spoken word, improve vocabulary and support opportunity for good communication skills. This research is further supported by Winters (ND) who writes for the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) that story telling can take children and their imagination to faraway places and, in some cases, storytelling can help children solve problems presented in reality. In more recent years the use of technology has become more present for story time. The first electronic book was available to adults in 1971,(Jackson 2021) but it is widely believed that the first children's digital book wasn't until 1992 on Compact Disc Read Only Memory (CD Rom), the title of the book, Just Grandma and me, Parham (2020) discusses the delights from children when they experienced a book in a digital version. Strouse and Ganea (2017) found that toddlers paid better attention to a story from an electronic device and were keener for story time which is considered a benefit. By reading to children in the early years and exposing children to literature traditionally or digitally, practitioners and parents can teach children some valuable skills. Three of these skills may be Prosody, which is described by Cambridge Dictionary (2021) as "the patterns of rhythm and sound used in poetry", this skill can be transferred to storytelling in the early years. One to one matching with the words is a skill modelled by the Practitioner as well as the skill of using a storybook that has a rhyming feature.

The use of prosody can make the story more interesting and engaging for the children and enhance the story time. Prosody may support children understand the meaning of the text more clearly. The way tone, pitch, and pace are used when reading can help convey emotions, and emphasise important parts of the story, a small animal may speak in a smaller voice, as demonstrated by the practitioner in the stories when speaking for the mouse. In both versions the reader changed their tone of voice when asking a question, and occasionally changed their voice to match the character, this could have been done with more emphasis. This could have made the story more meaningful to the children. By changing the tone and the pitch of voice the concentration levels are likely to be higher and children would become more engaged with the story, if the children are engaged in the story, they are more likely to show an interest in the story and other books once story time is over.

Children may develop a connection to a character from the story and any follow up work may be much more enjoyable. By using different tones in a story children who may not have a full understanding of the story will have more opportunities to pick up when there is a loud noise or something happening slowly in the story (Allen 2023). Rasinski (2012) found children's literature often contained words and phrases that are more complex than learnt or used in everyday conversation. When these words are read aloud with expression, children not only hear new vocabulary but also gain insight into how these words are used in different contexts, promoting their cognitive development. Prosody can help children recognise sentence structure and punctuation marks, which contribute to smoother and more accurate reading. For example, changes in tone can indicate the end of a sentence or change in character like when the practitioner moved from the mouse to the snake they added emphasis on the S sound. By hearing these natural cues, children learn to group words into meaningful phrases rather than reading word by word, which will support developing fluency.

Prosody can invite children to be more interactive during story time. Children may mimic the expression or repeat certain words and phrases, or even join in on familiar or repeated parts of the story. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2017) prosody also encourages active participation during reading. Children may become more involved in the story, asking questions, predicting what will happen next, or repeating key phrases, this would be likely when reading *The Gruffalo* as there are parts of the text repeated. This interactive aspect strengthens the children's engagement with the text and promotes a more collaborative reading experience. This can make reading a shared and active experience, reinforcing learning in a fun way. Reading to children in a fun way whether a practitioner or a parent can help develop a secure bond which was explored by Williams (2018) who looked at Bowlby's attachment theory and could recognise the link between reading and a secure attachment being developed, this is viewed by Williams as a benefit for good childhood development where the present adult can reflect and explore a child's feelings and emotions by using a story, Story time could be one to one but can also be a tool for developing friendships. Roald Dahl recognised that *"If you are going to get anywhere in life you have to read a lot of books."* (Stutman 2017) this is further supported by David (2020) who writes for the National Literacy Trust and recognises that reading aloud

to a child not only develops a variety of literacy skills but also supports a child's holistic development with David paying particular focus to comfort and reassurance, confidence and security, relaxation, happiness, fun and self-esteem, areas that the Welsh Government are keen to promote in the What Matters Statements (Welsh Government 2019) where the first statement highlights that languages connect us with the following statement guiding practitioners that by reading a variety of text, children can connect to the world around them and become ethically informed citizens, one of the four purposes highlighted by the Welsh Government (2020). All of this can be met by reading to children at the earliest opportunity.

A second skill modelled by the reader was the one-to-one matching, pointing at the words while the traditional story was read. During the traditional story the reader used finger puppets to point to the words, this may not have been the most effective way to demonstrate one to one matching as the finger puppets pointed to more than one word at a time and it was not clear exactly which word was being pointed to, but using the puppets was an effective way of highlighting which character in the story was saying which parts of the text. During the digital story there were no words to be pointed at for the one-to-one matching.

One to one matching while reading to children can help make the connections between spoken language and written text. This practice benefits children's literacy development in several ways and is supported by Dufresne(2018) who discusses in video clips the most beneficial way to model this for children in the early years.

One to one matching at words as they are spoken can support children to begin to associate the printed word with its meaning and pronunciation, this helps them recognise words and understand that text represents spoken language. Children will learn that text is read from left to right (in languages like English and Welsh) and from top to bottom, this may be helpful for children who are new to English and learning the structure of words and language in English. By the reader following along, the mechanics of reading are modelled which is crucial for early literacy development. Modelling this skill is supported by Bruner's theory as discussed by Pound (2014 p53-54) who recognises that by modelling and showing children something new will allow for children to have better knowledge and confidence when they try to do the same task independently, Bruner explained that it allows for growth

and to develop into a more informed individual further supporting development in other areas of learning, Bruner found that development could be further enhanced when peers were engaging in the same learning experience around them.

When children see, the spoken word being pointed to by the reader, they can start to connect specific letters with their corresponding sounds. In the early years this is the beginning of phonics, which is fundamental for starting to decode words independently. By connecting spoken and written words using one to one matching , children have the opportunity to expand their vocabulary, especially when they are exposed to new words in text that they may not hear in everyday conversation. Children often become more involved when the reader points to words while reading. With regular reading children may start to recognise familiar words, predict upcoming text, or even point along with the adult. This was not possible for the reader in the traditional story as the book was held in front of a group of children but had the story been read with an individual there may have been opportunity for the child to one-to-one match with the reader. One to one matching while reading can support children grasp the basic concepts of print and can support their transition from just listening to stories to being active readers.

Another skill the reader enhanced with their story telling, was the vocabulary of rhyming. The Gruffalo story that was read both traditionally and digitally had occurrences of rhyming. Ahrndt (2023) who writes for the Book Creator Application looks at a well-known children's nursery rhymes and discusses the benefits to children hearing rhymes. Ahrndt tells us that the use of rhyming in text read to children could enhance learning as there is sound repetition and the opportunity for children to begin repeating the sounds and patterns as the text is read which can increase the enjoyment of the story. Ahrndt continues to find advantages to children listening to rhyming text, touching on cognitive development as they believe when a rhyme is heard it can aid memory and sequencing skills, which helps children remember and understand longer strings of words. Which can then be reflected in follow up activities such as retells or sequencing activities . Crystal (1996 p328-326) has highlighted the importance of rhyme in language development. He argues that rhyming plays a crucial role in helping children understand the rhythm and flow of language, which is essential for speech development. Rhyming is recognised as a

fundamental component of language development, by enhancing phonological awareness and early literacy skills

Using a digital version of the story without the words the children would gain more opportunity to focus on the spoken words, rather than the visual text and spoken word at the same time, using the digital version of the story as well as the traditional one allows children to see that the same story can be told in different ways and as recommended by the Welsh Government (2018) in the Digital Competency Framework (DCF) it exposes children to the digital world, at a cross curriculum level. This is further supported by Erstad (2024 p282-290) who have found that reading digitally by using an eBook or listening to a story read digitally can still offer many advantages in supporting development of both digital skills, literacy skills and oral skills. Belshaw (2015) proposed a model that includes eight essential elements: cultural, cognitive, constructive, communicative, confident, creative, critical, and civic literacies. Belshaw argues that digital literacy is not a fixed skill but a range of competencies that are continually evolving as technology changes, further supporting the Welsh Government strategies and the Four Purposes.

In both the traditional and digital story, the practitioner responded to comments from the children quickly and used closed questions to keep attention and the flow of the story. There were opportunities in both of the story readings for the reader to ask questions to ensure that the children were following the story, and that attention was at the highest level. The reader read with enthusiasm which according to Scott (2022) improves focus and engagement, but Scott has found that too much enthusiasm can become distracting to children and then impact potential learning goals. The reader made some effort to use body language but there was opportunity to do more when reading each of the characters, it can be seen in the recordings that some effort is made to make eye contact but this proves tricky when not actually reading to children.

Storytelling, whether traditional or digital, plays a huge role in language and literacy development for young children. It offers opportunities to enhance skills such as prosody, one-to-one matching, and rhyming, all of which are essential for building literacy foundations. Prosody adds expressiveness to reading, helping children grasp the meaning and emotional tone of a story. One-to-one matching reinforces the

connection between spoken and written words, aiding in print awareness and phonics development. Rhyming promotes cognitive growth by familiarising children with sound patterns. It was tricky to find literature to support the skills the reader used, the articles were useful to find snippets of information, Belshaw and Williams were of particular interest, and backed up the theories. The use of digital storytelling provides additional benefits, such as engaging attention and introducing digital competencies in line with the Welsh Government Frameworks. By using diverse storytelling methods, Practitioners and parents can develop a love for reading, enhance engagement, and prepare children for lifelong learning.

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