

Language and Literacy in The Digital Age

Introduction

Government UK (United Kingdom) (2023) states that story telling whether it is traditional or digital is a vital part of a child's language and literacy development, as reading a story will broaden the child's vocabulary, oracy and understanding which in turn, supports the child in progressing to the next stages of their individual development. Furthermore, British Broadcasting Corporation [hereafter BBC], (2023), says that storytelling is important to children as this helps develop their cognitive skills by showing more empathy and understanding to others, also to acknowledge that other people have individual contrasting ideas and notions. Welsh Government (2019) agrees, as skills that are learnt through languages and literature enable children to communicate more productively and efficiently. Also, Ingov (2023) believes that storytelling helps children understand and speak innovative words but also boosts and refine the child's social-emotional growth, creative thinking, listening and literacy skills. Furthermore, VisikoKnox-Johnson (2016) agrees that storytelling is an essential part of a child's developmental growth, wellbeing, health and can affect their beliefs, morals and principles in the future. McElroy (2013) believes that when babies are still in their mothers' womb, from thirty-week gestation the baby's brain and sensory process for hearing is developed and the babies can hear their mother's talk. Weintraub and Verny (2014) agrees with this as they also believe that when communicating to the unborn baby, the baby will be calmed and soothed.

Welsh Government (2018) set up The Digital Competency Framework, this was available to all schools and nursery settings to promote the skillset needed to be confident in the handling, interaction and participation of digital technology. Welsh Government (2020) claims that having knowledge and understanding obtained from technology can enable children to develop holistically and take part in society and culture in an assortment of ways. Kucirkova (2018) points out that with technology

today, when a child is using a digital book, they can zoom in and out, click on specific items, drag and interact with the story which in turn promotes their fine motor skills. Furthermore, according to the United Nation Convention of the Rights of the child in Article 17 (1989) it says that every child should have access to technology to be able to fulfil every aspect of their education. Additionally, Kucirkova (2018) says that when a storyteller reads a story digitally this will show the children that using technology is not always a terrible thing. However, not all practitioners and teachers are eager to learn technology because they are not used to it or that there is not sufficient technology in the setting (Kucrikova 2018).

Using the videos of Traditional and Digital Storytelling, this paper will focus on three sections which are Rhyming and Repetitive Words, Narrative, Emotions and Expressions.

In the traditional storytelling the practitioner has chosen a book which rhymes and in the digital storytelling the practitioner is reading a book with repetitive words, these will help children's early phonological awareness in their speech and language development. (Whitehead 2011) says this is the ability to recognise and being able to administrate sound, whilst having the understanding that words are sounds combined together, this is clapping to the syllables in a word. Whitehead (2011) believes that when children are introduced to books that rhyme and or repetitive words at an early age, this will help them in their future reading and writing. This is known as phonemic awareness, the skill to recognise that individual sounds make up a word such as the sound or phoneme 'c' 'a' 't' make up the word cat. Moritz *et al* (2013) agrees with this as he says that phonological awareness is a required oral language skill for a child to have and is crucial when reading words, as children need to obtain the ability to understand the writing on the pages to the sounds in their language to decipher the words. Additionally, Ranson (2016) supports this by saying that research has shown that rhythm and rhyme are a key role in the language and linguistic development of a child, as children's foundational skills are mostly listening and talking rather than reading and writing (Ranson 2016). Furthermore, Bell (2020) believes that when children listen to a story

with rhyme or rhythm, they start to learn a wider collection of vocabulary, together with an increase of concentration skills and decoding the sounds, children begin to recognise the rhymes, the children will start to predict the following on rhyming words (Bell 2020). This is supported by (Harper 2011) who says that data from a study has shown that children who have been read to using rhyme, have gone on to read, write and spell successfully. Additionally, in a consecutive continuing study that consisted of children aged between three to six years of age over a three-year period reported that rhyming played a positive role in a child's phonological development (Harper 2011). However, Donaldson (2013) says that not all children can learn and understand phonics, also testing children's ability to decipher the words can make children feel frustrated and disappointed if they do not do well on the test. Despite this a representative for the Department of Education believe that these tests will ensure no child that is having difficulty with phonics will be overlooked (Donaldson 2013). Theorist David Crystal (1996) believes that for children to understand phonemes and the structure of syllables in words, the child needs to start their education at a much earlier age, starting from playing games like peek-a-boo with their parents or carers, then moving onto symbolic sounds such as beep beep for a horn in a car and animal noises baa baa for a sheep. However, Myhill *et al* (2022) state that unfortunately some children are born into families that have a disadvantaged background, this will hinder the child's development growth, whether it is cognitive, social, emotional, motor skills or speech and language as their parents or carers will not have the educational background which is needed to support their child. However, Marjanovič-Umek (2012) says that the data collected during research on parents reading with their children from a variety of backgrounds, showed children learnt the unfamiliar words by listening and looking at the illustrations in the books. Moreover, Mixan (2019) supports this, if children are partaking in an activity that they enjoy and are fond of, the child will be able to store the information, hence the words, better. Additionally, Mixan (2019) says that repetitive words allow children to consume all the information on the page whilst digesting the words that are being spoken and finding sense in them.

In both traditional and digital video presentations, the practitioner created the narration or story of the book, this helps the children to understand the order of events as the story unfolds. Wang (2015) believes that a story should have a beginning, a middle and an end as this helps children to follow a reasonable linguistic structure, as this will support children's individual narrative abilities in the future. As children listen to structural stories and start to focus on the process of the storytelling, the children will transition from fictional stories to their own individual personal narratives (Wang 2015). Additionally, Whitehead (2011) says that even though narrative is an ordering of events that occurs it also contemplates on individual's behaviour which gives definition and patterns to daily occurrences. Furthermore, Bower (2014) suggests that narrative is imperative to developing language and literacy skills, as this will give children the opportunity to retell them by adjusting the language patterns in the story to suit their own needs. This will increase the children's creativity, imagination and boost their confidence in language (Bower 2014). However, Zhou (2023) says that not all children experience the same advantages from storytelling, some children who are slightly deaf to other children who are not deaf, might not hear all the narration, therefore will be more engrossed in the illustrations and text. Wilkinson (2019) believes for this to happen the narrator needs to capture the children's attention by choosing a favourite book or a book on something they like for instance superheroes, princesses, animals and dinosaurs. Theorist Lev Vygotsky believes that children learn the ability to retell a story whether a fictional story or a personal story, by mimicking or having interactions with an adult or parent within the zone of proximal development (Larson and Marsh 2015). Irshad *et al* (2021) suggests that Vygotsky was convinced that children's cognitive development is decided by cultural and social elements. According to Isbell *et al* (2004) data reported back from a study to determine how storytelling and story reading benefits children, the children were divided into two groups and given the same story to either read or have it read to them. As a result of this study, Isbell *et al* (2004) says that

there was an increase in oral language in both storytelling and story reading. However, the children who were read the story, improved their understanding of the story and could retell the story more accurately (Isbell 2004). Consequently, the children who read the story themselves enhanced their language skills (Isbell 2004).

Ingov (2023) believes that to be a good storyteller, the storyteller should be able to keep their audience interested in the story. The storyteller should apply humour, animation, apprehension and expressions. Additionally, Ingov (2023) points out that an accomplished storyteller should be able to adapt the story based on the response from the children. In both traditional and digital videos, the practitioner is seen to use expressions, body language, hand gestures and emotions, for instance, wide open eyes, smiling, confusion, shrugging, pointing and so on. Cekaite and Bjork-Willen (2018) state that in a study, research data that was collected proved that when children are enjoying and take part in the story whether it being repeating words or expressions, this will help to enrich their aesthetic literacy socialisation. Additionally, Bamberg and Reilly (1996) point out that if the storyteller is using expressions and emotions the children will be able to empathise with the characters in the book more easily. Nurjaanch, A. and Wakhudin, W. (2023) support this by saying that storytelling is an essential tool for developing emotional quotient in children. Furthermore, storytelling will support children in coping with their own individual lives by regulating their emotions through the characters in the stories. Theorist B. F. Skinner believed that using the operant theory in education, the Practitioner can obtain feedback from the children by watching and listening to their reactions and comments (Education Summary (nd), Education Summary (nd) states that this would be quite useful in storytelling, as, if the children are not paying attention, the practioner can adjust their routine to engage the children again.

Conclusion

When analysing both videos and weighing up the advantages and disadvantages, there seems to be a mixed view on what is the best way to read a story to children as both

have their merits and demerits. On reflection I would try to be more adventurous in using technology and realise that it helps the children to know that practitioners can make mistakes. I also could emphasize more of the story because after all children do not judge. Additionally, in article 3 (United Nation Convention on The Rights of the Child 1989) it says that every decision should be beneficial for each individual child.

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