

Literacy in the Digital Age – Analysis

“Research evidence had demonstrated that before birth and in the first days of babies lives, they are already processing information about the sounds and patterns of their mother’s language.” (Bowen, 2014)

According to Bowen (2014) babies are predisposed to develop tones and tune patterns including a structure of language before birth, particularly the sounds of their mother’s voice as it is the most familiar to them. From this, the babies will already be attuned to a discord of sounds when they are born. Similarly, Sprouts (2019) emphasises the importance of social interactions and that we learn language naturally through motivated human relationships as appose to digital technology, with this we babies are able to develop their language by imitating that of their parents or caregivers therefore children with bilingual parents or caregivers are able to differentiate between the two languages by watching the different lip movements of the adult.

As Sprouts (2019) states, the first years of a person’s life is significant in developing words and language, as the first year is where the brain muscle is the strongest, and as peaks from birth to three years old, this is where children form thoughts, structure ideas and communicate with others. According to NICHD (2000) cited in Brown (2014) there are three elements of foundational skills and behaviours that become proficient as children get older, these skills are; Phonemic awareness – *ability to manipulate individual sounds that make up spoken words*, Knowledge of sight words – *most common words*, and the Ability to decode words – *using sound-symbol concepts to sound out a word from print to speech*. Furthermore, Study with ATD (2021) describes the theory of the pre-verbal stage of language question by David Crystal theory (1996) that begins with babies’ cries, burps and burbles, moving onto cooing and babbling at six to nine months, following on with first and second words that occurs between twelve and twenty-four months, the telegraphic stage by the age of three which can be from questions to imperative or simple statements, lastly the rapid progression post-telegraphic stage at thirty-six months.

The work of Arpita Kawrwa (2018) states Noam Chomsky also considered that children learn language naturally and that it is not necessary for parents to coax their children into speaking as they will produce the language in their own time, regarding the concept that the optimal time for children to learn to speak their language in its fluency is between the age of zero to seven in the early years (Mariah's Art & More, 2015). Furthermore, Chomsky believed that children will speak in the same as they always have even after being corrected by a teacher or parent.

The work of Larson (2014) asserts the process involved in praxis for educators and practitioners in terms of the development of literacy education. One model demonstrates skills, knowledge and understanding for reading and writing with the assumption that all children progress in similar ways and acquire particular skills in classification, children are introduced to concepts at specific ages. Bowen (2014) gives structural suggestions of activities that supports educators and practitioners to enhance the development of children's oracy such as traditional storytelling of books that contain rhyming words and how the teacher can direct by emphasising the rhyming words as they are read aloud which will encourage children to learn pattern recognition. Another activity can be songs and nursery rhymes that can be collaborated with hand actions or gestures, for example clapping. Furthermore, Bowen (2014) states the use of appropriate technology such as iPad, interactive whiteboards and computer software are useful tools that both teachers and children can use to support phonological and phonemic awareness.

However, a study by Olson *et al* (2013) indicates the print-knowledge in pre-school children were due to differences in shared family environments. Children of lower homelives had low reading and comprehension ability and those of better homelife opportunity.

There are many behaviours in storytelling to which the storyteller can provide to the listeners in both the traditional sense and digital sense for example; voice characterisation, use of props and questioning.

Voice Characterisation

One behaviour that is apparent during both storytelling presentations is voice characterisation, which is a key aspect of storytelling that captures the attention of the children, drawing them into the story and thus increasing the children's engagement with the story. According to Freedom Kingdom (2017) the skill of voice characterising contributes to the ability of bringing any story or event to life by telling it in a more interesting way, also voice characterisation contributes to the whole scene which give the listener feel the atmosphere of the story which sequentially allows the listener to imagine the picture in their head, giving and overall, more valuable experience.

During the digital presentation there are specific words or phrases that are pronounced and spoken in different ways, these are highlighted throughout the story and gives the children opportunity to join in with saying the words aloud in the way in that myself and the man in the video say, with actions. Smagorinsky (2013) states that the emphasis on this promotes inclusion for the listeners and supports feelings of inclusion that enables productivity in areas such as reading, writing and enhances the development of digital skills by watching and listening to the video. This also supports the development of oracy skills.

During the traditional presentation of storytelling voice characterisation is more apparent and has more contribution towards the visualisation of the story. More so, each character has a particular voice and way in which they speak which continues throughout the story, this supports the children to follow along with the story and have a better understanding of each character and what they represent. The children are able to identify who is speaking and have better understanding of their role within the story.

Use of Props

Both presentations display a visual aid for the children. The use of digital video projects a follow along picture story for the children to watch while listening simultaneously. In the story of the bear hunt, each new scene or environment the children in the story approach, there is a different background that appears and appropriate sounds that occur thus creating an overall engaging and exciting experience for the children. This is seen to support the development of the children's digital skills as they are able to follow along with the story by listening and watching as the picture changes throughout the story, enriching the children experience and encouraging a pleasant involvement with the story for young children (Brun, 2019).

Meanwhile, the traditional story has the use of soft toys as social props for each individual character. Each time a new character is introduced and then speaks throughout the story, the prop is brought into play and used to form a clear progression of the story. According to Barton (2013) the use of props during storytelling can be seen as play for young children, and this suggests the interaction of character props being seen as play can facilitate an increase of positive play and literacy relationship for children (Barton, 2013).

“Dramatic play improves children's ability to acquire literacy and language skills such as labelling through abstract thought, role assignment, developing conversational skills and imaginative story-telling. Make-believe play are concepts that develop gradually as children grow.”

(Barton, 2013)

This is supported by Piaget and Vygotsky argument that emphasizes the notion that children form connections with literacy and play resources. Evidentially Piaget theorised children's imagination illustrated in the sense that children are able to recognise

concepts and relate to their own experiences, similarly to Vygotsky's theory that children recall their experiences and create new scenarios through the dramatic play (Smagorinsky, 2013).

Questioning

One other behaviour that is used during both digital presentation and traditional presentation is questioning, many times throughout each story I will pause the story and ask the children what they think may happen next in regards to what the next character may say or what sound the environment that the characters are in may sound like.

Bow Tie Guy and Wife (2020) states that questioning can better enhance the reader and listeners ability to connect with text, this activates knowledge of the story and are more likely to understand and comprehend the story. Reflecting on the digital presentation, there are times where I will stop to ask questions to the children of what sound they may consider the environment to make. This provides the children opportunities to think for themselves and engage with the story developing their oracy and developing their reading skills as they are given the chance to read the words and sound out what they are. While I do give the listeners this time, I feel there could have been more emphasis on this which would enhance their learning experience further.

James *et al*, (2019) asserts the importance of sounds and patterns of rhythm, with inflections will convey the right meaning of a story, however, the words and sounds being spoken out loud is essential for them to be understood. This support children with the opportunity to interact with the information and develop their language acquisition, suggesting an increase in their sense of control and academic success in oral skills. With this, by questioning the children and giving them the opportunity to think for themselves to respond with sounds or answers, this in turn will enhance their oracy, literacy and language acquisition development.

Conclusion

Storytelling has many benefits for young children and there are many ways in which the story telling can enhance children's development of oracy skills, reading and writing skills of literacy and language acquisition and digital skills in order to support them in becoming high achievers in their academic lives.

“The child begins to perceive the world not only through hi [or her] eyes but also through [or her] speech” – Vygotsky (thefamouspeople, 2022)

As Sprouts (2019) asserts, children peak their brain muscle development between ages zero to three years old. It is in the best interest of the child, supported by the UNCRC article 2 (2022) that the practitioner supports each child and provide them with the necessary tools to enhance their learning development.

Through the findings I believe that both traditional storytelling and with the support of digital competence there are many advantages and disadvantages. We are now living in a more technological era, children are exposed to technology on a daily basis for both play pleasure and educational purposes, the traditional way of storytelling allows more opportunity for the reader to be able to stop and allow the children question and answering opportunities. Furthermore, the visual aid is more upfront and in reach of children to feel and touch the props, which delivers a greater involvement for the children within the story.

I feel there is reason for both ways of storytelling at this point in time, however, the digital age is increasing at a vast rate that children are more familiar with.

Reference List

Arpita Karwa, 2022. [online] Youtube.com. Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fW_8bDGdX0> [Accessed 6 April 2022].

Barton, K., 2022. [online] Ir.ua.edu. Available at:

<https://ir.ua.edu/bitstream/handle/123456789/1780/file_1.pdf?sequence=1> [Accessed 6 April 2022].

Bower, V. (Ed.) (2014) *Developing Early Literacy 0-8*. London: Sage Publications Ltd

Brun, H., 2022. #ToddlerTales - Use of props in Story Starter sessions. [online] Coram

Beanstalk. Available at: <[https://www.beanstalkcharity.org.uk/blog/toddler-props-in-story-starter-](https://www.beanstalkcharity.org.uk/blog/toddler-props-in-story-starter-sessions#:~:text=Using%20props%20in%20storytelling%20can,Source%3A%20Learning%20and%20Teaching)

sessions#:~:text=Using%20props%20in%20storytelling%20can,Source%3A%20Learnin

g%20and%20Teaching> [Accessed 6 April 2022].

Crown, B., 2022. [online] Files.eric.ed.gov. Available at:

<<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1034914.pdf>> [Accessed 6 April 2022]

Freedom Kingdom. 2022. [online] Available at:

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHvg7pAfgEg>> [Accessed 6 April 2022].

James, P., et al 2022. [online] Pdfs.semanticscholar.org. Available at:

<<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/aade/0c79753576df4ea2bd633640d251373ddeba.pdf>> [Accessed 6 April 2022].

Larson, J. (2014) *Making Literacy Real: Theories and Practices for Teaching and Learning*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Smagorinsky, P., 2022. [online] Petersmagorinsky.net. Available at:
<<http://petersmagorinsky.net/About/PDF/LA/LA2013.pdf>> [Accessed 6 April 2022].

Sprouts. 2022. [online] Available at:
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u49uLLCUIEk>> [Accessed 6 April 2022].

Study with ATD. 2022. [online] Available at:
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfcbfvAYgdM>> [Accessed 6 April 2022].

Quotes.thefamouspeople.com. 2022. *Thought-Provoking Quotes by Lev Vygotsky*.
[online] Available at: <<https://quotes.thefamouspeople.com/lev-vygotsky-5998.php>>
[Accessed 6 April 2022].