

Language and Literacy in the Digital Age

Reading to pre-school age children around 11 minutes a day showed a positive outcome with their literacy skills by the end of Primary school according to Brown, Wang and Mcleod, (2021). Story telling is one of the oldest teaching methods, giving a sense of community and involvement, teaching good listening skills, enhancing imagination and creativity, and scaffolding influential language. These are all skills children can acquire in order to reach their full language and literacy potential (University of Texas Arlington, 2015 and Friday, 2014). Lysaker, (2018) and Balcazar, (2019) believe that children can learn to read a story before learning to read words in a book. Picture books can encourage a child's imagination, by looking at the pictures, they are given the opportunities to tell their own story about what they believe is happening. In addition to this Torr and Clugston, (1999) states that informative style picture books offer a higher level of thinking, questioning, vocabulary, and interaction than a story picture book.

Intonation plays a vital role in storytelling; the story can be boring or even miscommunicated if the intonation is not executed correctly, furthermore, when the narrator shows more expression and intonation, for instance, facial gestures and noise the character may have been using were used, for example when the narrator starts with the opening line, it captures the child by drawing attention to how the character may be feeling, moreover, the children can gain an emotional connection to the story, in addition to this, when a child is in a happy emotional state, then their bodies release chemicals to the brain which enhancing development, making further connections in the brain's circuit, thus enabling deeper learning and retention according to The World Counts, (n.d.) and Welsh Government, (2021) and Kory Westlund, et al, (2017). Intonation starts from the moment the baby is born, the cry can vary depending on the needs of the baby, despite what some parents / caregivers believe, suggests Auger, Reich, and Penner, (2014) storytelling can have an impact on the child's language and literacy skills before the baby is born Laevers, et al, (2011) suggests that a baby as young as 15 months old will listen attentively to a story and the language that is being used, maybe even starting to say the three letter words, displaying intonation at some points. This is the start of phonological awareness, building and understanding sentence structure. Phonological awareness starts with the auditory skill of syllables, rhyme, sounds and the knowledge and understanding of segmenting words, the

segmentation of sentences and storytelling can play a vital part in this according to Victoria State Government, (2018).

Inspirational intonation can have a huge impact on the child's development, it is suggested that children imitate words conveyed in a tone-unit, for example a fall tone, or a rise tone, this is when the narrator changes the pitch of their voice to convey a message according to Fletcher, and Garman (2012). Vygotsky's theory cited in Sarikas, (2020) blog, of scaffolding is very pertinent to the art of storytelling, with the narrator being the knowledgeable other can create an extensive about of learning opportunities. The narrator read the story 'Monkey Puzzle'; this was aimed at children ages three to five years old. The narrator stopped at every full stop, got more expressive with the exclamation marks and questions, using a rise tone. According to the Welsh Government, (2019) children around this age are starting to understand questions and sentence structure. Punctuation is vital to language even though it is silent when reading, with out it, the story would not have the same effect, it adds depths, meaning and excitement (Burrell and Beard, 2022). A rise and fall tone was used when the characters were confident with what they were saying. Intonation makes the story easier to understand and more enjoyable, however, this works best when the narrator is familiar with the story and able to convey the message in the most effective way suggests Hudson, Setter and Mok (2022).

Crystal, (2011) believes that the excitement conveyed in storytelling with effective intonation also introduces children to grammar, in the English language words have many meanings, hence, the use of intonation and pointing to the pictures deepens the child's understanding. The narrator displays this by moving her finger and then pointing to the picture of the snake coiled around the tree, however, this is not displayed during the digital storytelling, as the narrator had to time the story to the pace of the video, they may have felt the pressure of keeping to time rather than enjoying the story. However, gestures and eye contact were present in both activities which can improve a child's concentration to the story, resulting in an enhanced understanding of the comprehension according to Lenhart, et al, (2020).

Bruner, cited in Delcheva Dizdareviki, and Dizdareviki, (2019) states, children need to understand how things work to further their development, storytelling is a profound way to gain acquisition of language literacy. Controversially Chomsky's theory as cited in Mizen (2017), believes that language acquisition is innate, Children are born with the understanding and structure of language, stemming from the

accuracy a child can have from inadequate influences at an early age, however, to hear it, and see it being read, especially in a story they can relate to, will deepen their understanding, by giving them a sense of belonging and confidence in themselves, (Brun-Mercer, 2022) and when asking children questions during storytelling, informs the narrator of their enjoyment and understanding.

It is important that a variety of open and closed questions are asked. An open question can help to develop cognitive skills, broaden the vocabulary and introduce new learning (Care for kids, 2019). The narrator demonstrates this more so during the storytelling with the book. There is a mixture of questions asked during the book.

How do you think monkey feels?

Do you think we have found his mum?

Questions were not asked during the digital storytelling, the narrator may have felt under pressure to keep in time with the pictures being displayed, therefore, more training with the digital device may be required, however, lack of time and funding for training can be a big restraint in settings suggests Karakoyun, and Kuzu, (2016). In contrast, at the end of both storytelling activities an open and closed questions were asked. Allowing children time to answer the question is essential, thinking time about their answer and how they will answer, moreover, informing narrator of their knowledge and understanding. In contrast to that, too many questions can lose the child's interest, it can be conveyed as a more structured activity and not a fun and enjoyable one like it started out suggests Grigg, (2016).

Children require phonological awareness in order to attain language and literacy acquisition. For a child to hear rhyme is one of the first auditory skills required for phonological awareness, according to Van Goch, McQueen, and Verhoeven (2013). In Contrast to this Riordan, *et al*, (2018) suggests that a more complex learning took place reading a non-rhyming book than a rhyming book. Children developed greater levels of predictions and facts which contribute to oral language skills. however, the rhyming books support children's early literacy skills like phonological awareness. Although, a child with dyslexia, can not hear the sound in the words and would need extra support with their phonological development. This is a lifelong condition, techniques will need to be adopted to support the child's development. For example, the book the narrator has chosen has clear line spaces between text and is not overloaded, however, the pictures in the book are bold in colour, which can cause a sensory overload, consequently, going over the story slowly with the child before

hand is good practice to not overwhelm them, recommends the NHS 111 Wales, (2022) and Valente, (2017). The narrator tries to emphasise the rhyming words throughout the story, by elongating the fall tones and shortening the rise tones. This pattern gives the story a rhythm, which in turn can support a child with dyslexia, hearing rhythm, then moving to rhythm helps develop audio processing (Kay, 2017).

Sakamat, Sabri, and Diah, (2017) suggests digital storytelling can be an effective tool for supporting children with dyslexia and according to National Literacy Trust, (2020) figure have risen since 2014 of young children spending between one to three hours a day on a digital device, furthermore, using digital technology is crucial for children's development. Digital competency is one of the core-skills in education today and storytelling can be accessed this way. Children who enjoy using a digital device, with an enabling adult, can access the art of storytelling, introducing them to a fun and enjoyable way of all the benefits of storytelling. Digital devices can also support and scaffold children with learning difficulties, assisting with spelling, punctuation, grammar, and writing. Some children find it easier to press the buttons on a device than write the words down on paper or alternatively record them saying the story suggests Sylvester, and Greenidge, (n.d.). Digital storytelling can also help Parents / carers that may be illiterate, they may not speak the language of the setting, there may be cultural differences, these are difficulties that families face, and according to Anderson, *et al* (2016) a study carried out revealed that children can also be a parent's teacher and that there are many ways to develop the whole family's language and literacy skills by working in partnership with the setting. Moreover, Preradovic, Lesin, and Boras, (2016) states that children who were introduced to digital storytelling for learning opportunities, seemed more engaged and motivated than children who were learning from traditional storytelling.

Literacy is everywhere, and with Literacy and digital competency two of the three cross-curricula skills in the Welsh curriculum, enjoyment and opportunities need to be available to all learners according to the Welsh Government, (2022). Children need to hear it, then learn to say it, once they can say it, subsequently read it, following with the art of writing it, suggests Arnold and Malcolm, (n.d.). Wilkinson, (2019) stating that reading with children is not about teaching them to read, it is more than that. It is spending quality time with them, by talking and reading a story, you are introducing them to a vast amount of language, the tone of voice and the intonation of the sentences can make the story exciting and fun for a child, showing the enjoying that

can be had and stimulating imagination. Furthermore, through scaffolding from a knowledgeable other children learn the structure of storytelling, they start with a preface, wait for acceptance from their peers or adults before continuing with their story states Theobald, (2015). The Narrator seemed to use a lot of intonation and the voice tone to point out the rhyming words, however, confidence seemed more apparent in the book story, with questioning and facial and hand gestures through-out. The narrator seemed to have less confidence with the digital storytelling, in addition to this could be the lack of experience and training suggests Sanchez-Cruzado, Campion, and Sanchez-Compana, (2021), consequently, the narrator could add this to their professional development plan states Trodd, and Dickerson, (2018).

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