

Language and Literacy in the Digital Age

Introduction

Telling stories to children has been a tradition for many years according to National geographic (2021) “Some of the earliest evidence of stories comes from the cave drawings in Lascaux and Chavaux, France. The drawings, which date as far back as 30,000 years ago, depict animals, humans, and other objects. Some of them appear to represent visual stories.”. However, are the benefits of traditional storytelling still the most effective or is the use of digital equipment superior to the traditional style of storytelling in order to benefit the children, the most and if so what are the limitations of both as well as individual strengths.

1. The benefits of Storytelling, from pre-birth to 7 years of age.

Research has proven that storytelling can have the ability to construct a larger sense of community, intensify knowledge and experience recall, aid early development in literacy, and increase creative potential in young children also children which are read to at an earlier age have proven to be more successful in school than children that did not experience reading at an early age (Pankey,2000). Another benefit of storytelling is that it can motivate children and helps build resilience from an early age will have significant impacts on how children manage demanding situations in later life (Wright,1995). Many theorists have spoken about the importance of reading to children at an early age, one of which is Naom Chomsky who states that the child's brain is ready-made to acquire language (Chomsky,2000). Theorists such as Eve Clark (2016) spoke about the links between reading to children at an early age and the boost it has in native language development. Eve Clark (2016) goes into further detail and states that acquisition of a first language starts from pre-birth and is developed further by hearing sounds and listening to their parents speak. Also, Noam Chomsky (2000) speaks about how they believe that children are born with an innate knowledge of grammar that provides a foundation basis for all language acquisition. However, Steven Pinker addresses their theory that a child's development is purely dependent on their culture and environment (Pinker,2002). (Cremin, Flewitt, Mardell and Swann, 2016) talks about how when you read with a child the story does not stop once the book closes and how children are likely to remember certain concepts from the book and are likely to use them for inspiration when they play therefore it is important that children should be exposed to appropriate reading material to stimulate their brains and cognitive development.

2. According to the two activities, are there any differences in your approach to storytelling?

With the differences between the delivery of storytelling both traditional and digital, there was a slight difference in approach. During the traditional storytelling activity, sensory props were provided to enhance the children's experience and to also make it more memorable for them. Providing sensory props has been proven to make children more engaged with lessons this has been supported by Joanna Grace (2017) in her recent book “sensory-being for sensory beings” which outlines the importance of engaging in a child's senses and also mentions the more sense that are initiated in a child during a lesson the more the child is likely to take away from it. The traditional “in class” style has fewer distractions which could cause children to lose interest in the activity at hand. Therefore, sensory props that are relevant to the story keep the children engaged.

An example of this is during the traditional storytelling activity the props were used to create a visual aid. This being the bears and goldilocks as well as the other props targeting other senses such as touch. The lumpy porridge was represented by a lumpy textured toy, the cold porridge was represented by a cold compress pack. Then asking the children questions such as “how would you like your porridge” allows them to feel like they are part of the story. The way the storyteller presents themselves is also particularly important and does change between the two activities. In the traditional video, the storyteller can be seen offering visual prompts, making eye contact, and changing the tone and pitch of their voice. The storyteller also adjusts their speech volume and pace so that the listeners can understand how the characters felt, for example when the father bear was angry the narrator spoke louder and at a slower pace whereas when the baby bear was excited to go for a walk the storyteller spoke with a slightly higher pitch and with a faster pace. Moving on to the approach for the digital style of reading activity. More questions were asked to keep the children engaged as there tend to be more distractions at home than in the classroom despite when performing a reading activity in class the adult telling the story can manage the classroom by ensuring everyone remains quiet and stays focused throughout the activity this has been described as one of the roles of the adult

3. How could your activity promote young children's oracy, their reading, or their writing?

Stories can act as an excellent stimulus for future literacy-based tasks and activities. In terms of oracy, young children can engage in their own storytelling activities using the skills that have been modeled by the adult. These would include oracy skills such as speaking for an audience, using expression and intonation to make stories more entertaining also learning to control the pace and volume of their speech. Retelling stories could include activities such as role-play, puppet shows, and discussions. Stories are an excellent source for initiating rich discussions about characters, comprehension of the text, making predictions, and drawing inferences. The children will develop reading skills by being exposed to books and a variety of texts. Books can be used to introduce certain vocabulary such as sight words as well as high-frequency words similarly books can be used to teach and consolidate knowledge of phonics and digraphs by demonstrating grapheme to phoneme correspondence. Also, an adult reading from a book will demonstrate key reading behaviors such as: reading the text in the correct direction, using pictures to support reading skills, and allowing children to link words to pictures as well as responding to grammar the traditional style activity also meets certain areas within the curriculum for Wales 2021 oracy framework starting from steps b “make an attempt at representing things/animals/etc. in structured role-play activities.” (Welsh Assembly Government, 2021). This can be achieved when the children are asked about their perception of things within the story such as the bears talking and goldilocks jumping on the beds and breaking the chair. The storyteller also asks children questions about their preference for what they would like their porridge. This promotes further thinking into the story. When working with children it is important to ask questions to allow the children to display their knowledge of the nature of the question and allow the children to display their ideas and opinions (Strasser and Bresson, 2017).

4. How could your activity promote children's digital literacy skills?

By exposing children to digital equipment, they become more familiar with it and are more likely to use it in later years. An example of this is during the digital Storytime activity the children were watching the video with a voice-over and able to see a digital image of the story and the events that take place within the book also allowing children to associate images with names of objects an example of this would be. (Danby, 2018) talks about the importance of children developing digital competency at an early age and the setbacks it could have in later life if children are not capable nor confident when using digital equipment more so now than before due to the rate in which people access ICT. The activity helps children work in accordance with the digital competence framework an example of this is to “distinguish between someone they know and someone they have never met,” which is a goal set within the new curriculum for Wales. (Welsh Assembly Government, 2021). Also, if the children enjoyed the style of storytelling and them staying at home while still being able to access a reading activity this would benefit the child further. This links strongly to Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1993) as children will be more comfortable at home and more likely to focus on the task at hand also if the audience feel comfortable, they are likely to watch another digital story which could then aid them with language development and digital fluency.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both activities having similar natures both have their strengths thus being traditional allows children to be more engaged with the story setting and have access to appropriate props. However, the strengths for the digital storytelling approach consist of multiple factors, one of which being convenience. The digital approach can be more convenient because it allows children to access it when it is suitable for them as well as allowing the children to participate in the activity whilst being in the comfort of their own home. Both approaches also have their limitations. One of which being for the traditional style is that it can be very time-consuming in comparison to the digital style and can often make children feel nervous about interactions with other pupils and adults they might not feel comfortable with. A limitation of using the digital approach is that there are additional factors that could go wrong ie, internet connections and display issues. Therefore, it is difficult to say which style is best as both have multiple strengths and weaknesses and can only be decided by the person planning to perform the storytelling activity and their desired outcome.

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