

Children are born communicators and active linguistics, storytelling and sharing books support children's language and literacy (Whitehead, 2007). Storytelling helps children play with the power of language. Froebel suggested books are vital to children, as they provide rich experiences of narratives that children can use in their play (Tovey, 2013). Sharing books with children help develop vital skills such as; attention, listening, language and communication. Ann Gallagher (2022) also highlights that through storytelling, children can be introduced to topics to learn about the world around them and situations they may not understand. This includes skills significant to the development of literacy distinctive language patterns, such as beginnings and endings (Whitehead, 2010). Furthermore, they help children develop their words and how they are put together. Whitehead (2002) and Bower (2014) state that through listening, children also develop the ability to anticipate and predict. Tancock and Bower (2004) suggests that Chomsky an American linguist believed children are born with innate language and are born with some skills this could be correct, as it has been found that even before birth in the womb babies respond to music and language, recognising mums voice. Therefore this notably shows that language and literacy begins as babies.. Parvin and Bower, (2014) tell us that babies recognise voices. When they are born, they use cooing crying as communication before babbling. Therefore, born communicators. After this stage children use first single words and gestures such as pointing, before developing sentences use of grammar, tenses, and plurals. Listening skills of children and highly developed as babies Whitehead, (2010) suggests that they can listen for patterns of intonation, tone which helps them know when there is a beginning and ending in communication. Children begin learning language from their parents or caregivers. They have a secure attachment with them and through feeling secure and happy can learn. Bowlby, believed children need to develop a secure attachment for them to learn (Learning Theories, 2022).

The first activity was an oral reading of the book of *The Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. This was first published in 1969, a favourite within the early years and recently celebrating its 50-year anniversary. This book has been used as a campaign to promote literacy and is listed in the teachers top 100 books for children (National Education Associates, 2007). The book tells the story of a caterpillar and how he transforms into a butterfly. The caterpillar eats fruits and other foods which introduces new language vocabulary for the children. It also enables children to learn concepts such as days of the week and counting.

Learning new vocabulary allows children to discover new and exciting things and according to Scottish Book Trust, (date unknown) children's books contain 50% more words than television. Learning new language can help children express themselves such as what they would like to say, therefore connecting sound to meaning. In the book, they hear vocabulary about colours, shapes, sizes and well as learning actions such as turning the page.

The story has lots of repetition, which is important for children learning language and literacy. It gives children opportunities to practice and repeat what they have heard. Bower (2014) states that repetition supports children with their early language skills, and by repeating stories children develop and extend vocabulary which they can use speaking or writing. Additionally, Fitzgerald, (2022) and Montessori, (date unknown) says that through repetition, connections are made and strengthened in the brain which is needed for language and literacy development and helps children retain knowledge.

The book allows for lots of opportunities of interaction with the children, waiting their turn, observing participating, and building on their listening skills which are all vital for children's language and literacy development. Both Bruner, and Vygotsky (1978) state the importance of interaction with adults. Bruner had a referencing adults' theory this theory believed children can learn from adults and Vygotsky told of the importance of interaction with more able others and peers to discover more language. The adult reading the story being the more knowledgeable other. (Wheeler, 2022). The story has silly words for the children to copy and repeat "he was still hungry". Silly words have been found to be intellectually stimulating for children (Whitehead, 2007)

The book has lots of pictures as well text. Whitehead (2004) suggests pictures can play a part in introducing children to literature and prepare them for literacy. Just pointing to a picture in a book encourages a child to learn what the picture is called. Pictures can give clues to children to help them discover more about the narrative of the story. They also enable the child to make links and solidify their understanding of the new language.

The story facilitated the use of props, which permitted more interaction and engagement with the children by offering visuals for memory and ensuring engagement. Kelly (2016) suggests that props are good for developing listening skills. Props also draw children's attention and make the story a rich learning experience. (Brun, date unknown). Piaget says visuals enhance a story for children, encouraging imagination, through listening to words, gestures, and facial expressions (Whitehead, 2010). According to Browne (2009), listening gives children sound combinations which are needed to help form words and then go on to help form sentences. Listening skills are essential for speaking and language. Furthermore, Kelly (2016) tells us that giving children a part in the story such as holding a prop builds on self-esteem and confidence. As an adult it is important to listen to children, to respond to question to ensure they feel valued respected and build on self-esteem to develop language and literacy skills. While reading books remain important, digital literacy allows children to understand to navigate and search for information, whilst interpreting visually and aurally at the same time. (Hopkins, Green and Brooks, 2013). Additionally, it has been found that if children have poor literacy from five years of age, this can lead to having problems up to ten years later. Therefore, it could be said that early year's literacy skills can play a large part in a child's life outcomes. This is supported by research which has shown that children who are shown books at an earlier age have greater success later.

The story is fun and allows it to be read with expression. Examples of this was when the caterpillar is still hungry and when he changes into a beautiful butterfly. This encourages engagement and builds on attention skills, encouraging children to listen. (Early Literacy Skills, 2012).

The digital story was also The Hungry Caterpillar an animated version. Although this felt unnatural and long moments of silence the story had animated images Children have been found to learn words easier with moving images. It has also been stated that reading a book digitally with an adult as the role model provides higher levels of learning for children in comparison to a child reading a traditional book aloud. The digital story had lots of opportunities for children to learn digital concepts such as play and pause.

Pausing the story is important to allow for conversations between the practitioner children. They may not feel they can talk when the video is playing. (Kuoirkova, 2018) This allows the children to absorb information they have heard and have a voice should they wish to say something.

Books are the main method used for children for language and literacy development. There is no comparison to seeing, and holding the book in front of you, turning the pages with anticipation to see what is coming next. However, digital literacy is becoming more widely used and technology and although research only looks at short term usage Kuoirkova, (2018) tells us that digital stories still support early language and literacy development. Digital stories are easily available at the touch of a button. They are more cost effective as they can be accessed in many languages and not damaged. Digital books can be more suitable to children with ALN where they can change font size, volume to suit the listener and any learning support they may need. Erstad and Gullen, (2020) also believes that digital literacy is needed for the future, and it is important that children being able to read, write and being digitally literate will influence children's outcomes. Although it has been found that some children skim words when digitally reading, Allcott, (2021) the child can re-read a word if they do not understand. Some digital books have a calming audio background Shabat and Karat, (2017) suggests that this enhances story comprehension for children so could be a benefit over the traditional story.

The book allows for more engagement and interaction facial expressions, sensory touch. The pictures were more attractive to children. Whithead, (2010) tell us that although story telling is the best introduction to language and central to literacy, some digital stories can have unsuitable language and inferior quality illustrations. The book provided the richer experience for the children it was told in outside environment, among nature which relates to the story. A rich environment has been found to play a big part in children's learning. Children are born with innate interests to learn. The story provided opportunities to learn through their senses such as exploring the smell and feeling the real fruit, this allowed for children to develop thinking skills which builds on confidence and language skills.

For future practice I would include the song and finger rhyme there is a tiny caterpillar on a leaf this would extend the activity and help promote language and literacy. Tovey, (2013) tells us that finger rhymes help with motor development which are needed for writing skills in children. Furthermore Bruce, (2012) reminds us of Froebel and his ideas that through finger rhymes and songs children gain vital language and literacy skills. The digital video had long silent moments where more language could have been used, or more questions asked to support the children language and literacy. The children could have also had the opportunity to press pause, play, and further develop digital skills and language.

To conclude there are good arguments for and against digital literacy. Technology is developing and children will need to be able to use technology for school, college, and employment in the future. Practitioners' roles are increasing and technology easier to use. There are some great advances in reading online such as finding stories in a child's language which can make them feel valued and a sense of belonging which is important for brain development. (National Literacy Trust, 2017) However, it is important that it is recognised the value of parents learning with their

child through sharing a story and similar interaction in school children learn more literacy skills with a knowledgeable adult and around their peers. Digital technology should not replace parents and children time and a balance of both would be beneficial with learning.

Reference List

Allcott, L. (2021) *Reading on screens, reading in print. What is the difference in learning?* Available at: <https://natlib.govt.nz/blog/post/reading-on-screen-vs-reading-in-print-whats-the-difference-for-learning>. (Accessed 25th October 2022).

Bower, V. (2014) *Developing Early Literacy 0 to 8 from theory to practice*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Browne, A. (2009) *Developing Language and Literacy 3-8 years*. 3edn. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Bruce, T. (2012) *Early Childhood Practice- Froebel Today*. London: Sage publications Ltd.

Brun, H. (date unknown) *Use of props in a story starter session*. Available at: <https://www.beanstalkcharity.org.uk/blog/toddler-uses-useofprops>. (Accessed: 20th October).

Carle, E. (2020) *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. London: Puffin Books.

Early Literacy Skills, (2012) [video] Available at: <https://youtube/JxwipfeB6om>. (Accessed 12th October 2022).

Erstad, O. and Gillen, J. (2020) *Theorizing digital literacy practices in early childhood*. London: Routledge.

Fitzgerald, B. (2022). *Improving early child development with words*. [video] Available at: <https://youtu.be/y89c8Aa3WeE>. (Accessed: 10th October 2022).

Gallagher, A. (2022) Storytelling and the EYFS [blog] 29 February. Available at: <https://www.pacey.org.uk/new-andviews/pacey-blog/2022/february-2022/blog-storytelling-and-the-eyfs/>. (Accessed: 17 October 2022).

Hopkins, L. Green, J. and Brookes, F. (2013) '*The Implications of new knowledge for Childrens early literacy learning.*' 38,1 Available at: <https://journals.sage.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1836939113800105>. (Accessed: 10th October 2022).

Kuoirkova, N. (2018) *How and why to read and create children's digital books- A guide for primary practitioners*. London: UCL Press.

Learning Theories, (2022) *Attachment Theory (Bowlby)*. Available at: <https://learning-theories.com/attachment-theory-bowlby.html>. (Accessed: 26th October 2022).

Montessori Academy.com, (date unknown) *Repetition and child development in Montessori education*. Available at: <https://montessorriacademy.com.au/repetition-child-development-montessori/>. (Accessed: 10th October 2022).

National Literacy Trust, (2017) *Digital Technology and the Early Years*. Available at: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/digital-technology-and-early-years>. (Accessed: 16th October 2022).

Scottish Book Trust, (no date) Available at: <https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/reading-and-stories/why-read-to-babies-and-young-children>. (Accessed: 15th October 2022).

Shabat, A and Korat, O. (2017) Background music and content expansion support story comprehension in e book reading for preschoolers. Available at: <http://digithey.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Background-Music-and-Content-Expansion.pdf>. (Accessed: 29th October 2022).

The Hungry Caterpillar animated film [video] Available at <https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=the+hungry+caterpillar+animated+film&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=en>. (Accessed: 22nd October 2022).

Tovey, H. (2013) *Bringing the Frobel approach to your early years practice*. London: Routledge.

UNICEF UK. (1989). *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Available at: [http://uncrc19-summary2.pdf \(savethechildren.org.uk\)](http://uncrc19-summary2.pdf(savethechildren.org.uk)) (Accessed: 17th October 2022).

Wheeler, S. (2022) *Jerome Bruner on the Scaffolding of learning*. Available at: <https://www.teachthought.com/learning/jerome-bruner/> (Accessed: 21st October 2022).

Whitehead, M. (2004) *Language & Literacy in the Early Years*. 3edn. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Whitehead, M. (2007) *Developing Language and Literature with young children 0-8*. London: Paul Chapman.

Whitehead, M. (2010) *Language and Literacy in the early years 0-7*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.