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Module code

ECEY5004_BIRM

Language and literacy in the digital age

Age group (preschoolers)

Introduction

According to Pasqualotto and Filosofi (2023) storytelling is not new, it has always been part of human nature to tell stories (Roig et al., 2018). Society (2020) traces storytelling back 30,000 years, as evidenced by carved pictures. Over time, storytelling has continued as a way to educate in schools and became a regular practice (Galdwin, 2020). According to Catala et al., (2023) storytelling became integral to teaching values and sharing ideas, helping to build an “emotional bond” (Pasqualotto & Filosofi, 2023).

Isbell et al. (2004) highlight the differences between story reading and storytelling. The authors suggest that story reading focuses on reading sentences as they are written, while storytelling fosters communication, language, and interaction by narrating the story based on images without directly reading from the text. They also discuss the traditional approach to storytelling, which involves using imagination and personal interpretation to retell the story. This approach is based on the relationship between the storyteller and the story itself, filling the narrative with creativity to make it more excitingly engaging than merely reading the text. Additionally, the authors argue that while storytelling and reading are similar in some ways, they differ significantly in that storytelling encourages children to actively participate. This engagement helps children build confidence as they make choices about the storyline or change its direction (Isbell et al, 2004).

Thompsons (no date) describes about Story telling plays a significant role in the learning journey of children, guiding them through all the main stages of development. A good storyteller has the unique ability to transfer ideas and imagination into children's minds. Children learn language skills, expand their vocabulary, and construct sentences with proper structure, which helps them socially active. Story telling encourages children to use their imagination to understand the words and from the story in their minds, which helps their cognitive development. The storyteller's use of expressive interactions helps children relate to the characters and events. Moreover, the role of the storyteller is an essential part of their learning journey. A good storyteller knows how to capture a child's attention by using the right tone, expressions and gestures to bring the story to life. It helps children to feel more connected to the narrative. As they engage with the story, they also develop social skills, such as empathy and an understanding of diverse perspectives, as they shape the story based on their interpretation (Thompsons, no date).

According to Miller (2019) digital story telling is an extension form of the traditional ways humans have been telling stories to entertain for centuries. It is simply another way of storytelling through technology, which can be used on tv, computers and other digital platforms. One major difference between these two approaches is that books contain fixed texts that guide the story, while digital storytelling allows for flexible formats. With digital media, stories take different forms, allowing the audience to navigate back and forth without a set of words (Millers,2019).

Benefits

Farantika et al (2022), elaborates on the history of the tradition of storytelling has deep roots in Indonesian culture, and preserving this tradition is very important. While the importance of storytelling may often be underestimated, when delivering using the right techniques, it can significantly enhance children's understanding and development. Shofwan (2020) suggests that storytelling activities help children learn between right and wrong, allowing them to differentiate between good and bad. In a later study, Shofwan elaborates on how story telling is particularly important for young children's education, emphasising that from children aged birth to six years, incorporating storytelling activities prepares them to explore and engage with the world more effectively as they advance in their studies. Story telling from an early age supports children's brain development, making it a valuable educational tool (Farantika et al 2022).

According to Isbell et al. (2004) numerous studies have been conducted on story reading, while comparatively fewer have focused on storytelling. Story reading involves reading a book with preassigned text and illustrations on each page, whereas storytelling is about narrating a story and engaging with children through pictures. Huck et al (1989) argues that storytelling is known to positively impact children's language development and foster communication skills (Isbell et al.,2004).

Santos (2018) discusses how storytelling benefits listening skills. The author explains teaching techniques that show how storytelling can improve listening skills, especially when learning a new language. Moon (2000) suggests that repeatedly listening to words is more effective for language acquisition than reading alone. Similarly, when storytellers use engaging tools to draw young children's attention to specific words or language, it keeps them entertained and enhances their focus. Dujmovic (2006) agrees that children enjoy listening to the same stories repeatedly, which reinforces learning through repetition, helping them grasp new vocabulary and words as they hear them multiple times. Young children understand stories better when they have already heard them from their storyteller. Ellis and Brewster (2014) further suggest that young learners observe the

storytellers' gestures and expressions, helping them form mental images of the story's events, which supports comprehension and retention (Santos, 2018).

Hibbins (2016) suggests Bruner (1990) that oracy story telling is a fundamental activity for humans, almost naturally instinctive. Bruner implies that narrative stories we tell help us make sense of our experiences and interaction in society. Bruner also implies that humans have the ability to retell the story of the experiences they intake, that's naturally built in human. He also believes that story telling is not just a way to pass the information but also a way to comprehend the knowledge and understand the meaning. For example, humans have a naturally built-in skill to tell story, not just to pass on the information but to dwell on their experience and to learn from it. Bruner's theory of reading books with strong narratives allows children to engage with different ideas or experiences which helps towards fostering empathy and understanding (Hibbins, 2016).

The book "we are going on a bear hunt" was chosen for its engaging, repetitive structure, making it ideal for shared reading with children. The story's repetition and simple text encourage language reinforcement and active participation, allowing children to connect words with gestures and emotions, enhancing comprehension. Throughout the session, expressive storytelling was emphasised, helping children associate words with actions and emotions, making the reading enjoyable and interactive. The book's journey structure invites children to use their imagination and problem solving as they consider how to overcome obstacles like mud, river, and snowstorms. Additionally, the sensory descriptions encourage children to visualise and mentally experience the story's settings, enhancing their connection to language and the physical world. Repetition of phrases helps vocabulary building, memory retention and cognitive development. Expressive storytelling including body language and tone, drew children into the story, boosting their confidence in repeating words and mimicking actions, thereby reinforcing language skills in an enjoyable way that supports future reading and communication.

Pasqualotto and Filosofi (2023) highlighted the history of storytelling, tracing it back to ancient times, and noted how new methods of storytelling have emerged today through digital platforms. Teachers have used various digital tools to continue this practice, referred to as Digital storytelling (DST). This approach has helped children develop their own ideas and understanding (Armstrong, 2003). According to Pitler (2006), digital storytelling is essential to preserve in today's technology driven world, as children are accustomed to using technology in their daily lives. Digital storytelling plays a significant role in inspiring a digital approach to learning and is beneficial for improving problem solving skills and supporting cognitive development (Pasqualotto, Filosofi 2023).

Shengjergji (2024) describes the benefits of digital storytelling in educational settings. According to Shengjergji, earlier study (Eisazadeh & Rajendram, 2020) suggests that digital storytelling empowers children to become narrators of their own stories. Merjovaara et al. (2020) further agree, noting that a well-organized digital story encourages children to structure and regulate their ideas, adding layers of personal meaning to the narrative (Shengjergji, 2024).

The digital book I chose, *The very hungry caterpillar*, provided children with an interactive reading experience that went beyond simply looking at a screen. As they followed the story, they were inspired to predict what might happen next as the caterpillar ate its way through various foods each day of the week. By the time the caterpillar developed a stomachache, the children eagerly suggested possible remedies, showing their engagement and curiosity. When the caterpillar finally ate a Greenleaf, which soothed its stomach like a natural medicine, the children remarked that the leaf seemed to work like medicine. This observation sparked a conversation about healthy eating, as they connected the caterpillars' experience with their own ideas about food and wellness. Through this digital reading, children not only felt motivated to think about healthier choices but observed the transformation of the caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly, which added to their senses of wonder. This experience showed the impact that digital storytelling can have on children's thinking and motivation, encouraging them to consider the connections between story elements and real-life concepts, like health and growth.

Conclusion

In conclusion, storytelling whether through traditional books or digital formats, remains a fundamental tool in child development, entertainment education in a way that attracts young minds. Stories "we are going on a bear hunt" showcases how repetitive language and sensory experiences can make shared reading an immersive, engaging activity that helps children connect language to actions and emotions, the interaction allows children to understand language patterns, develop memory, and reinforcement comprehension skills. The story structure encourages imagination as children consider ways to overcome obstacles in the narrative, thereby promoting problem solving skills and critical thinking. The digital approach, by "the very hungry caterpillar" expands these benefits by offering an interactive experience that sparks curiosity and allows children to make predictions and draw connections to real life concepts, like health and growth. Through digital storytelling, children become not only listeners but active participants who learn to regulate ideas and make meaningful connections with the storyline. As they follow along, they

experience a richer understanding of narrative structures and are empowered to form interpretations, which fosters confidence in both their language and cognitive abilities. Moreover, both traditional and digital storytelling have social and emotional benefits. Children learn empathy and perspective as they relate to characters and scenarios, an interaction for social development. Storytelling also supports oracy skills, as children repeat phrases, participate in actions, and share their own interpretation. These interactions are essential for building communications skills, an important foundation for future academic success and social relationships. As storytelling continues to evolve in a technology driven world, its value as an educational tool remains vital. Traditional storytelling not only preserves cultural values and morals but also adapts to new mediums that resonate with today's young learners. Through the combination of language, imagination and interactive elements, storytelling in all its forms builds a bridge between learning and real-life application, shaping children's understanding empathy and creativity.

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