

**Total: 2092words**

**Title: Well story telling approach can support children's language and literacy**

**Children's Language Development and Early Literacy**

Children's language development and early literacy in the early years (7 years or under) are critical aspects of their overall development. These skills lay the foundation for successful communication, reading and writing abilities later in life. The Matthew Effect coined by Stanovich (2009), describes the widening gap between children who develop strong early literacy skills and those who do not. Children with early literacy skills tend to read more, which in turn enhances their literacy abilities. Conversely, children with poor early literacy skills may avoid reading, further hindering their literacy development.

**Stages of Language Development**

Children in 0-12 months which is pre-linguistic stage, this is the earliest stage where infants communicate primarily through crying, cooing and babbling. Babies begin to recognize sounds and respond to familiar voices, especially those of their parent or caregivers. By around 12 months, children typically utter their first words, which are often single words representing objects or people. During 18-24 months, children's vocabularies expand rapidly. They may start combining two words to form simple sentences. In sentence formation stage around 2-3 years, children begin to form more complex grammar rules, such as using plurals and past tense. At 3-5 years stage, children use language for a variety of purposes, including asking questions, narrating events and interacting socially.

In the recording, the focus is on children aged 4-5 years, who are typically in what Piaget (1952) described as the "preoperational stage" of cognitive development. During this stage, children's thinking becomes more symbolic, and their language capabilities expand significantly. In part 1 of the recording, the teacher uses digital storytelling to capture the children's attention and interest. The use of engaging graphics and a lively song helps children understand and enjoy the story. The introduction lasts just one minute, after which the teacher extends the interaction by engaging the children in conversation. Open-ended questions, such as "What colour are your school shoes today?", "Do you remember the song?", and "Shall we sing together?" encourage the children to express their thoughts after the digital storytelling.

Following this, the teacher concludes the activity by introducing a colouring sheet, encouraging the children to design their own school shoes using different colours and materials. In part 2 of the recording, the teacher uses traditional storytelling with a physical book to introduce concepts such as the book cover and author details, aligning with the *Understanding the World* area of learning in the EYFS framework. This helps children grasp basic concepts of books and stories, which will be useful for their future learning.

The children's familiarity with the song from part 1 helps them engage more easily in part 2, where they can sing together with their friends and teacher. Through storytelling, the teacher encourages the children to express their feelings, express themselves creatively, and build their spelling skills. These activities provide a rich and integrated learning experience, addressing key areas of development highlighted in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework.

### **The benefits of storytelling for Early Years Children (Especially 4-5 years old)**

Storytelling is a powerful educational tool for young children, particularly for those aged 4-5, as it supports various areas of development including language, cognitive, social and emotional growth. By hearing words in context, children can learn the meanings of unfamiliar words. Stories also present varied grammatical structures, which can help children learn how sentences are formed and encourage the development of more sophisticated language use. Studies as Mol *et al.*, (2009) indicate that exposure to books and storytelling significantly contributes to vocabulary growth in young children, especially in those who are regularly read to or told stories.

At the age of 4-5, children are developing abstract thinking skills, and stories help them visualise scenarios, characters and place beyond their immediate reality. Research by Engel (1995) shows that storytelling fosters children's cognitive development by promoting memory, imagination and the ability to sequence events in a logical order, all of which are important precursors to later academic skills. Stories often depict characters experiencing different feelings and challenges, which children can relate to or learn from. Storytelling and shared reading help children emotional intelligence by enabling them to recognise and discuss feelings and social situations (Aram *et al.*, 2009).

Moreover, storytelling also lays the groundwork for literacy by introducing children to the structure and elements of stories. This understanding supports their ability to later retell stories or create their own narratives later on. Rhymes and sound patterns in stories help children recognise the sounds in words, a key precursor to reading. Storytelling encourages active listening, as children must follow the narrative, anticipate what might happen next, and ask or answer questions. This enhances their active listening skills, which are vital for communication and comprehension (Isbell *et al.*, 2004). A study by Bus *et al.*, (1995) demonstrated that shared book reading, including storytelling is associated with stronger parent-child bonds and improved emotional well-being in children.

Bruno Bettelheim (2010) argued that fairy tales play a crucial role in helping children confront their emotion, fears and challenges in a safe, symbolic way and emphasised how fairy tales give children the psychological tools to navigate the real world by symbolically resolving problems. Brian Cambourne's theory of language acquisition, development from his work on literacy, stresses that immersion in language-rich environments helps children learn language naturally (Cambourne, 1988).

According to both Bettelheim and Cambourne, storytelling nurtures creativity. Bettelheim saw fairy tales as vehicles for children to explore their fantasies and confront their inner fears through imagination. For Cambourne, stories offer children a way to engage with and experiment with language, leading to more creative expression. These theories affirm the transformative power of storytelling in early years children.

### **The role of practitioners in storytelling: Supporting children's oracy, reading, writing and digital literacy skills**

Practitioners such as teacher, early year educators and caregivers, they play a critical role in facilitating storytelling experiences that promote the development of oral, reading, writing and digital literacy skills in young children. Oral language is the foundation for all literacy development, and practitioners use storytelling as a tool to enhance children's listening and speaking abilities. Through listening to stories, children enhanced their oral language comprehension and their ability to recall and retell events, which are foundational literacy skills (Isbell *et. al.*, 2004). Interactive storytelling, where the adult prompts the child with questions, helps develop both receptive and expressive language skills. Adults can encourage children to actively participate in storytelling by asking open-ended questions, prompting them to predict what will happen next, or inviting them to retell parts of the story in their own words. In my record part 2- when teacher is asking to children do you like dinosaur? Tom told teacher he had 5 dinosaur books in his home and count it. Teacher can extend share concept to children and engage them to share interesting books in the class to enhance reading culture. Teacher also tries to asks children "Do you think what's happen next after dinner?" and try relate some daily routine for children that they might do same like "Will you take a nap?" "Will you want to play somewhere else?" to engage children thinking and predict which help them develop the ability to concentrate. This interaction also helps improve children's oral language development, particularly in vocabulary and expressive language skills (Whitehurst *et. al.*, 1994).

Practitioners can engage children in story mapping activities, Studies by Storch *et. al.*, (2002) found that children who engage in storytelling have better narrative skills, which predict reading comprehension later in life. Children grasp the idea that written texts also have these components. Adam (1990) emphasises the importance of phonological awareness as precursors to reading development. Storytelling especially when practitioners emphasise sounds that contributes significantly to these early literacy skills. Pete the cat collection which including singing or some activities through the story. Enhance with the digital support that will help children more involves in the story and easier to recall the memory about the story details. In my record part 1- Teacher using digital video- simple storytelling with typical songs which is the tools to help children get a strong memory of the story and after the colouring activities to extend the with other skills of development. After part 1, teacher in part 2 traditional storytelling which is easier to encourage children sing a long together, answer with some related question and express their feeling as well.

Children who frequently engaged in storytelling activities demonstrated better emergent writing skills, as they were more likely to understand the connection between spoken and written language and had a greater ability to organize their thoughts for writing (Aram *et. al.*, 2009). Digital storytelling allows children to combine images, sounds and text. Given them a broader means of expression and a deeper understanding of the writing process. Practitioners might also provide opportunities for children to create their own simple storybooks, helping them organise ideas into beginning, middle and end while practicing writing skills, such as drawing, scabbling and writing letters. At the end of the recording, teacher using a scramble game to engage children work out the word, blend sounds into words so they can read short words that made up of known letter-sound correspondences. For example, W-W-White, R-R-Red then spell it together with them. Repeating to use phonic sound to support children and match with the school phonic programme.

Incorporating digital storytelling into early years education introduces children to technology and helps build digital literacy skills, which are increasingly important now. Digital storytelling allows practitioners to use multimedia elements like sound (songs), images or animation to enhance the storytelling experience. It also increases engagement and motivation to participate in literacy activities (Kervin *et. al.*, 2016). Practitioners can use digital tools to foster collaboration among children during storytelling activities, helping them practice communication skills in a digital environment. Teacher in the recording, choosing a eBook with songs to attract children's attention which is the method suitable for language delay's children to pick up knowledge. Songs often have repeated phrases and structures, which help language delay's children become familiar with new vocabulary and sentence patterns. This repetition reinforces language learning in a fun, memorable way.

Practitioners play a pivotal role in supporting children, creating an environment that celebrates stories and supports diverse literacy experiences, practitioners help children develop the foundation skills they need for lifelong literacy success but practitioner need to ensuring a balanced approach, which focus on the development of digital literacy while avoiding over-reliance on technology. Ensure that digital tools are used with specific goals in mind. Always balance digital activities with traditional, hands -on learning like reading physical books, engaging in art or sensory activities. This fosters a well-rounded learning experience and ensures that digital literacy doesn't overshadow other critical areas of development.

### **Support literacy and ICT skills at EYFS**

The Early Years Foundation Stage in the UK provides a comprehensive framework for early years education, including the development of literacy and information and communication technology skills. It is designed to support the holistic development of children from birth to five years, and it plays a critical role in shaping early literacy and digital literacy skills. In the communicate and language area of the EYFS (2024) focuses on the three strands which is listening and attention, understanding and speaking. Practitioners can align storytelling activities with communication and language goals by providing children

with opportunities to engage with both traditional and digital stories, helping them express themselves clearly and listen attentively. Using dialogic storytelling techniques, where children are encouraged to ask question, predict, and retell parts of the story. For the literacy section of the EYFS (2024) focuses on two primary goals, which is reading and writing. Go deep to developing a love of books and stories and promoting reading comprehension, vocabulary development, phonics, creative expression and emergent writing through storytelling. Storytelling aligns with these objectives by fostering children's understanding of story structure, character, plot and sequencing, which are essential for reading comprehension.

The understanding the world area of the EYFS(2024) helps children make sense of their physical and digital environments. This includes development early ICT skills. The EYFS encourages children to use technology to interact with the world such as using digital storybooks. This helps meet EYFS's aim of familiarising children with technology and fostering curiosity about the digital world. By integrating traditional storytelling with modern digital tools, practitioners can support children's holistic literacy development, preparing them for a future where both print and digital literacy are essential.

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