

I acknowledge the use of ChatGPT to give me ideas. I used the prompt(s):

1. Benefits of pointing when reading a story – 20/10/24
2. Vygotsky's language development – 12/10/24
3. Chomsky language development – 12/10/24

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Language and Literacy in the Digital Age

1 in 10 children in Wales have a language delay by the time they start school (Cerys, 2019). The Welsh Government (2020) reported that the impact of this language delay can affect not only language and literacy skills but can also impact on behaviour and mental health. Reading has many benefits to children's language and literacy skills. Reading stories develops language skills by giving children the ability to communicate through new vocabulary, they learn about different cultures and worlds, and begin to develop their imagination through awe and wonder (Sheldon-Dean, 2023). Books enable children to learn language patterns which supports the development of pathways in the brain, enhancing language and literacy skills. When a child is being read to, it lays the foundation of the process of reading, for example, they learn to hold a book, turn a page, identify the characters and start at the beginning.

Children love to read books or have books read to them (David, 2020). Reading develops listening skills via enjoying the story and retaining information which they can use to relate to real life experiences (Athena Career Academy, 2023). Children begin to see words and relate them to the pictures, developing early literacy skills and phonological awareness. Storytelling provides the children the opportunity to lose themselves in their imagination. Agosto (2016) believes that critical thinking skills are developed from listening to a story as children imagine the scene and the characters, and they become unaware of their surroundings, thinking of possible endings of the story. Cekaite and Björk-Willén (2018) discuss the value of stories in developing the skills children need to write and retell their own stories, and the fact that stories have always been used as a foundation to develop literacy skills.

When in the womb, fetuses develop language skills. Talking to babies in the womb, or playing music, enables the foetus to start discovering the life outside the womb

(Creative Cloud Design, 2013). They can respond to stimulus and the sound of voices. Although a foetus is not able to pick up words Laing (2016) believes that early language in the form of intonation and rhythm can be heard. Nevills (2023) writes that development in the womb can affect the child's future development. Chomsky believed children have a basic understanding and the ability to learn language, believing that they can pick up grammar and words without being taught it (Hamilton, 2011). This was called 'The Language Acquisition Development'. However, Vygotsky's view of language development was that children learn by being spoken to and having communication and interaction with something or someone. The scaffolding of language enables the child to learn from listening and hearing language. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development looks at that which children can do with support from people around them (Kurt, 2020).

Pointing

The reader used pointing to reinforce pictures of the story, pointing to words, looking at the characters or an object on the page. This reading behaviour all impacts the children's language and literacy development. Vygotsky (cited in Kurt, 2020) believed that when an adult interacts with a child they develop more from being guided by the adult, the adult scaffolds the reading process, pointing out new vocabulary or images that reinforce understanding. Bruner (cited in Wheeler, 2014) also believed that when an adult interacts with children they help to achieve higher levels of understanding.

McRory (2021) believes that pointing to pictures or words whilst reading, is the beginning of modelling gestures and emphasising something of importance. Kay (2020) furthers this and adds that pointing is way to communicate with others.

Pointing when reading directs the child's attention to the pictures and keeps them engaged in the story (University of Lincoln, 2016). In the tale of Goldilocks, the reader stopped and encouraged the children to look at an object on the page, which gave the children further understanding of the story and allowed the child to be inquisitive and ask questions. Paulus, Kammermeier and Melzel (2023) believe that pointing when reading not only encourages a shared enjoyable experience, but also encourages questions which promotes critical thinking and observational skills.

Pointing to words supports children when they are beginning to learn to read, they use their finger to decode the words they are unsure of (Reis-Frankfort, 2022). Bibby

(2022) agrees and adds that pointing out images and words improves children's vocabulary by associating the pictures to words. The Bell Foundation (n.d) concur and state that when an image or a word is focused on, then the listener can gain a better understanding regarding what is happening in the story, giving the child a connection between language and meaning. By the reader reinforcing and scaffolding, it provides the children with a head start into becoming an emergent reader by them looking at the pictures and decoding their own opinions of the story and plot (Reis-Frankfort, 2022).

Paulus, Kammermeier, and Melzel (2023) discuss that pointing to the words on the page as well as the physical act of holding a book develops knowledge on the structure of a book, for example, reading words from left to right.

Pointing is a skill which improves children's fine motor skills (Evans, 2020). Fine motor skills develop the muscles in the brain which are needed for actions such as using scissors to cut, zipping up a coat and eventually holding a pencil (Department of Education, 2023). The reader points at the icons on the Gingerbread man story and modelled what the icon does, this links with the Digital Competence Framework (Welsh Government, 2019 b), where children need to be given experience of clicking on icons on different devices. Rahiem (2023) say that when children are listening to a digital story it has shown to offer more engagement, higher achievement and motivation from the children.

Questioning

Questioning allows the children to use books to connect with the world around them by linking it to what they see (Wilkinson, 2019). For example, the reader asked the children if they knew where the story was set so that they could use their imagination whilst being read to. Boryga (2024) suggests that questioning lets the audience make predictions regarding what may happen in the story.

The reader used questioning before, during and after the story. Asking questions before the story such as "Who knows what this story is about?". This enables the children to think and predict what the book may be about. They may be able to retain details from previous reading or tell a fact using their knowledge about the subjects in the book (Prim Ed Publishing, 2020).

Questioning during the story allows the reader to check for understanding so far. The reader uses questions to ensure that the children are listening, this is linked to Progression Step 1 in the Welsh curriculum (Welsh Government, 2019 a). Ronford *et al.*, (2018) says that children who are aged 4, need to ask questions and from answering them children develop their understanding (Piaget 1929, cited in Levato, 2018: 16).

Questioning after the story can be used to evaluate the story, “Did you enjoy the book?”, “What happened when the fox came into the story?”. Questions that make the children remember details from the story will develop their critical thinking skills (Agosto, 2016) and make them think about the details from the stories.

Checking for understanding after the story and reinforcing parts such as a moral or emphasising why a character did what they did, develops the children’s language and literacy skills by explaining and reinforcing (Athena Career Academy, 2023). Asking these questions can enhance their language and literacy skills which they can then use to further their learning by retelling or writing a story (Prim Ed Publishing, 2020). Questions can help to clarify definitions of vocabulary or the context of a story, this can deepen understanding, allowing the children to extend their vocabulary when speaking or writing (Boryga, 2024).

Repetitive texts

In both stories read, the reader chose books that have repetitive language in them, this encourages the children to become actively involved in the story by listening to the words and joining in when they are familiar with it (Dugger, 2020). Stories that have repetition and rhythm are important to a child’s language development and the rereading of familiar stories children enjoy is vital for language development (First Five Years, 2019).

Cekaite and Björk-Willén (2018) say that stories such as fairy tales use repetitive structures and children can use this to help them retain information from the story. In the reader’s digital story of the Gingerbread man the children were encouraged to join in and repeat the rhyme. Nevills (2023) continue this idea adding that reading familiar stories develops the memory and enables the children to pick up language patterns and ‘read’ the story with the adult. Nevills (2023) also believes that when you involve children in the reading process it enhances their connection to the book.

In both stories the reader involved the children encouraging them to open the flaps and join in with the rhymes. Joining in with story rhymes is part of the Language and Literacy strand of the Welsh Curriculum (Welsh Government, 2019 a).

The practitioner in the stories modelled repetitive language for the children to follow, allowing the children to retain and use the language when retelling the story or writing a story. This is an expectation of Progression Step 1 in the curriculum (Welsh Government, 2019 a) and also improves children's comprehension and fluency skills (Boryga, 2024).

In the case of the story Goldilocks where there is a pattern of 3 bowls, 3 bears, 3 beds, this repetition supports children in remembering the concepts of the story and embeds new language and vocabulary (Bogie, 2021).

Montessori saw repetition as a way to perfection (Montessori Academy, 2017), this is also believed by First Five Years (2020) and Bogie (2017) who say that repetition builds confidence and strengthens the neurons in the brain which reinforces memory and delivers success.

Conclusion

Kucirkova (2018) shares curriculum practice on developing children's digital literacy skills by being able to show knowledge of digital tools. Erstad (2019) agrees and states that there is a growing use of children using digital devices and because of technology changing and evolving practitioners need to ensure children are given the opportunity to develop their digital literacy skills. Rahiem (2021) reports that digital literacy devices are encouraging children to develop improved literacy skills as they offer more engagement, and the children enjoy the process and respond more as they interact digitally. However, Sheldon-Dean (2023) believes that literacy and digital literacy have the same benefits but adds that eBooks are harder for children to follow due to the pace. Although the use of digital technology promotes digital development, there has been research on the disadvantages of children spending too much time looking at a screen. (Rahiem, 2023).

On completing this module the researcher found it difficult to find appropriate sources. For example, when researching the use of pointing as a reading behaviour, the practitioner was unable to find a good range of information needed to analyse

best practise. The sources were limited due to the specific dates required and websites were used instead of the preferred method of articles from credited sources.

The practitioner used AI ChatGPT to gather guidance for example “Vygotsky’s language development”, although extra depth on the concepts that the source gave needed to be explored through personal research.

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