

According to Dr Marianne Bamkin (2016) storytelling is an engaging and interactive experience that can provide benefits which include overall cognitive growth and literacy development. There is evidence of language development in pre-birth babies, according to Gervain (2015) her paper explores how familiarisation of speech and language within the womb can influence learning capabilities and language progression. The Estyn (2021) report 'English language and literacy in all settings and primary schools', it recommends that there should be a classroom culture that provides children with reading opportunities irrespective of gender, ability and social status. Books should be accessible for children to freely choose and storytelling from caregivers should be available. Crystal (2017) believes that the way children develop and learn language is influenced by many factors, and places an emphasis upon the connections between learning to communicate and learning to read. Schatt (2022) also highlights the positive impact of children's learning during story time, and she explores the cognitive, practical and social advantages that oral story telling can have in classroom settings for both educational purposes, and as a way of classroom behavioural management.

The Book Trust (2024) emphasises the vital role that storytelling plays, which can help expand language and communication skills. Early years educational specialist Jan Dubiel (2024) believes that storytelling can provide children with the foundations to understand emotions, thoughts and behaviour. He continues, that due to the natural intrinsic engagement and relationship that children have with books, this will assist practitioners in the delivery of curriculum within early years settings. Welsh Government introduced a literacy framework to raise targets and improve overall literacy levels across Wales, which was then introduced into the national curriculum (Dauncey, 2021).

In addition to traditional storytelling, digital literacy has increasingly developed over the last decade and has now become a key aspect within education systems across the world which is now included in the Curriculum for Wales (Dauncey, 2022). Joyce (2024) regards digital literacy as a critical skill for all people these days. She believes that educating children in the early years foundation stage will help develop knowledge and understanding, in preparation for growing up into a society where digital skills play a fundamental part of everyday life. Following its first introduction in 2016, The Digital Competence Framework has been updated and is now seen as a fundamental aspect within the New Curriculum for Wales (2022). Welsh Government (2022) have a mandatory requirement in place that practitioners in schools across Wales help children to progress in cross-curricular skills of literacy, numeracy and digital competence across all curricular areas.

There are many different behaviours and styles that can be used during storytelling. Medlicott (2018) discusses the different behaviours or techniques that can be used to build on the storytelling experience for young children. These can begin before the story starts using routines to prepare and settle children down, and by introducing a welcoming environment that is safe and comfortable. During stories, Medlicott believes that sounds and actions are important factors to maintain engagement and interest, and by introducing relevant props could encourage a hands-on play experience, which can aid and support the child's understanding of the story by enacting their interpretation of characters and events within the book (Medlicott, 2018).

This next section will explore and analyse three of the many different behaviours that can be observed during the storytelling video techniques, which can support children's language and literacy. These behaviours are: - stories with rhythm and rhyme, using subtitles and the use of props.

According to Department for Education (2023) the very nature of repetitive and rhyming stories will help children remember and include newly introduced vocabulary into their dialogue. Applying a 'call and response' approach in the rhythm and rhyme example books *Stick Man* and *The Gruffalo's Child* also encourages children to participate in the story at their individual confidence levels and learning pace. Asking open ended questions or pausing for the reader to finish the sentence will encourage interaction in this call and response example. The more the words are repeated, the child will become increasingly familiar with the words and how they are associated within the story. Prosic-Santovac (2015) believes that reading literature that rhymes will reinforce word recognition, develop language and can be a contributing factor in overall linguistic growth and achievement.

Both the traditional example and the digital method of storytelling demonstrates interaction from the children joining in. However, in comparison to *The Gruffalo's Child*, *The Stick Man* book provides the young listeners with more repetitive words for example 'Stick Man, Stick Man' throughout the book. This resulted in the children who were listening to *Stick Man*, interacting more frequently with the repeated and familiar words and phrases. In argument, there was additional resource in the form of props for the children listening to *Gruffalos Child*, which perhaps draws attention more to the role play aspect rather than verbal interaction. Furthermore, there is evidence of the use of the scaffolding theory by Lev Vygotsky, where the young listeners are sometimes prompted to finish a sentence or asked a

question about their understanding of a certain event in the books. Mooney (2013) states that Vygotsky's theories have demonstrated the significance and importance of learning through interaction. He believed that language development and learning would develop cognitive capacity, which could be achieved by scaffolding and interacting with children at relevant points and key moments throughout the books.

While observing Stick Man in digital format there is a predominant difference in comparison with The Gruffalo's Child book format. In both versions the text and illustration can be seen by the listeners. The book is read to the audience and as each page is turned, a new illustration is uncovered, however the visual illustrations in the digital version are displayed in a larger format, and the transcript of the story can be seen highlighted at the bottom of the display screen, potentially allowing the children to familiarise themselves with words as they are seen and read out aloud. The Green (2021) research paper looks at extensive viewing of children's entertainment with the use of subtitles and explores incidental learning as a result of this. The study found that distributed repetition is required in addition to appropriate dialect, which is supported by meaningful and diverse illustrations that focuses on key words or characters, that need to be present to achieve this incidental form of learning. An example of these factors are present during the Stick Man digital format.

Turner and Chapman (2012) also believe that subtitled dialogue may aid language acquisition, vocabulary and illustrations, and can be seen as interconnecting factors for this development. This in turn provides a larger word database for the child, therefore harnessing comprehension and the ability to read independently. More recently Goldenberg (2020) has discussed the presence of subtitle reading considering several studies across the world. The consensus found that subtitles should not be used as a tool to substitute reading books traditionally, however they can be seen as a beneficial addition to support children's literacy, especially in children who have a lower reading level. World Literacy Foundation (2023) also support use of subtitles and reports that in a digitally led world, the use of subtitles surfaces as a transformational aspect to support young children. By linking the love of storytelling with the skills of reading through the use of same language subtitling; it is likely to elevate children's literacy, increase phoneme awareness, trigger multisensory learning, expand vocabulary, and reinforce the pathway of learning their language. However, in contrast Taylor (2012) is apprehensive about electronic technology, and how it could be limiting young readers to digital only options. The experience of holding, turning pages and

sharing books cannot be felt in the same way with e-books and it is important to expose both variants to children.

Maryville University (2022) believes that there are many advantages and disadvantages of modern-day technology. Technology opens many new channels of learning options for children, and those with speech or language delay, it can be a significant tool to support learning. However, it also states that children are particularly vulnerable to over exposure to digital devices. They claim that multiple risks are associated with children which are closely linked to time spent with devices and behavioural and developmental issues. The findings suggest that selecting the correct usage time for digital viewing is vital. However, providing sufficient time that will benefit children educationally should be a primary factor over recreational alternatives (Maryville University 2022).

According to Leicestershire Council SEND Team (n.d.) the use of puppets or props can be seen as an effective tool during storytelling. There are many ways to implement puppets into stories, which can aid understanding and encourage interaction from the listener. This can be particularly useful with children who are not confident with oral communication. They are an extended visual from the story that can be felt and touched to mimic characters and events during the story. Dyke (n.d.) discusses how fingers can be used in stories and rhymes which can help develop fine motor skills and be used to associate actions to match the story. The University of Edinburgh (2021) combines the importance of a variety of factors. Taking a Froebelian approach, they believe that practitioners will prompt children's curiosity by raising open ended questions and having an awareness of the way in which volume and tone is used at appropriate points. Similarly, utilisation of props can increase confidence and can be a direct way for the child to fully understand the meaning of the story.

As can be seen in the Stick Man example, there are aspects of Froebelian storytelling, ensuring the environment is comfortable and welcoming, there is an interest and engagement in the book, prompts from the reader are present, and the Stick Man character is on display for the children to connect and interact with. The Gruffalo's Child, however, also introduces the added resource of finger puppets, drawing further on interaction and understanding of the characters. The large screen illustrations and running dialogue, that Stick Man has, may not be present in this traditional style version but the direct and hands on experience the children are receiving are also regarded as important factors.

Bruce et.al (2020) sees storytelling as a multi-sensory experience that aids development and growth across many essential educational and life skills. Within the video examples both have introduced background music that aids the listener to understand the setting and environment of the storyline. The digital example is primarily a screen that displays the visual book and includes the running subtitles which are highlighted as the reader progresses through the book. Rhythm rhyme and repetition is present with expressive and relevant reactions. The traditional format is set in a Christmas backdrop to provide a cold and wintery affect. The inclusion of the puppet theatre adds interest to the inquisitive mind, providing a more interactive experience during the session.

Piaget's theory which is closely linked to Montessori's work supports the above examples that children need opportunity and resource to develop and gain self confidence to learn. If tools and resources are provided this will build upon the learning journey that they engage with (Mooney, 2013). John Bowlby's theory of attachment also plays a dominant part in successful storytelling. When there is a safe and familiar environment and there is a good relationship with the caregiver, the child will tend to feel relaxed and comfortable in their surroundings and is more likely to respond and engage with the adult. Bowlby believed that future learning and social outcomes were highly dependent upon caregivers providing a safety net of support and care to reinforce the attachment that the child feels (Rees, 2007).

In conclusion this paper has analysed how language and literacy develops from within the womb and progresses throughout childhood. By visiting several theorists who explore what guidance and help children need to flourish in their language and literacy journey.

Identifying that many of these theories can be seen in modern day teaching styles such as Froebel, and Welsh government who have implemented theory within the national curriculum. Unpacking the various methods and approaches of storytelling and analysing the tools and resources which can be considered to scaffold children's language, literacy and social qualities. Finally comparing the differences between these styles, seeking the advantages and disadvantages of these methods and how, through encouragement and support, oracy, reading and digital skills can grow and develop.

To broaden a child's imagination and trigger their inquisition, requires skill and understanding. The art of storytelling should be more than just a book being read, it is a journey that involves the correct environment, and a knowledgeable storyteller, that has the ability to engage through tone and sound, encourage interaction and response, and utilise

resources that will enhance the child's enjoyment of the story; which should in turn have a positive outcome on their learning journey.

I confirm that I have not used any A.I. technology.

Works Cited

- Book Trust. "The Crucial Role of Storytelling in Early Childhood Education." *Wwww.booktrust.org.uk*, 17 Apr. 2024, www.booktrust.org.uk/news-and-features/features/2024/april/the-crucial-role-of-storytelling-in-early-childhood-education/. Accessed 17 Jan. 2025.
- Book Trust. "The Crucial Role of Storytelling in Early Childhood Education." *YouTube*, 16 Apr. 2024, www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJ9mVVgTGVU. Accessed 17 Jan. 2025.
- Bruce, Tina, et al. *Putting Storytelling at the Heart of Early Childhood Practice*. Routledge, 20 Apr. 2020.
- Crystal, David. *Listen to Your Child : A Parent's Guide to Children's Language*. Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books, 2017.
- Danjela Prosic-Santovac. "Making the Match: Traditional Nursery Rhymes and Teaching English to Modern Children." *Making the Match: Traditional Nursery Rhymes and Teaching English to Modern Children*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1 May 2015, pp. 25–48. Accessed 18 Jan. 2025.
- Dauncey, Michael. "Going Live: Rolling out the New Curriculum from This September." *Research.senedd.wales*, 1 July 2022, research.senedd.wales/research-articles/going-live-rolling-out-the-new-curriculum-from-this-september/.
- Dauncey, Michael . "Reading between the Lines: Welsh Children's Literacy Skills." *Research.senedd.wales*, 12 Nov. 2021, research.senedd.wales/research-articles/reading-between-the-lines-welsh-children-s-literacy-skills/. Accessed 19 Jan. 2025.
- Department for Education. "The Reading Framework." July 2023.

Dyke, Jane. “Froebel Trust Songs Rhymes and Finger Plays Pamphlet.” *Froebeltrust.org*, www.froebel.org.uk/training-and-resources/pamphlets. Accessed 19 Jan. 2025.

Estyn. “English Language and Literacy in Settings and Primary Schools - Estyn.” *Estyn*, 21 Nov. 2024, estyn.gov.wales/improvement-resources/english-language-and-literacy-in-settings-and-primary-schools/. Accessed 19 Jan. 2025.

Gervain, Judit. “Plasticity in Early Language Acquisition: The Effects of Prenatal and Early Childhood Experience.” *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, vol. 35, Dec. 2015, pp. 13–20, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conb.2015.05.004>.

Goldenberg, Gemma. “Can Turning on the Subtitles Really Improve the Literacy Levels of Millions of Children?” *My College*, 2020, my.chartered.college/research-hub/can-turning-on-the-subtitles-really-improve-the-literacy-levels-of-millions-of-children/. Accessed 18 Jan. 2025.

Green, Clarence. “Extensive Viewing of Children’s Entertainment and the Potential for Incidental Learning of Early Years Reading Vocabulary: A Corpus Study.” *Language and Education*, vol. 37, no. 1, 6 Oct. 2021, pp. 1–15, www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/09500782.2021.1983587 , <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2021.1983587>. Accessed 18 Jan. 2025.

Joyce, Katie. “The Importance of Computing in EYFS.” *Stem.org.uk*, 2024, www.stem.org.uk/all-news/the-importance-of-computing-in-eyfs. Accessed 18 Jan. 2025.

Leicestershire Council. *The Effectiveness of Puppet Play & Storytelling to Promote Children’s Social and Emotional Development*.

Martin, Andy . “The Art of Storytelling in Early Years Education.” *Stonebridge Associated Colleges Blog*, 4 Feb. 2020,

www.stonebridge.uk.com/blog/education-teaching-and-coaching/the-use-of-storytelling-for-early-years-educators/. Accessed 18 Jan. 2025.

Maryville University. "Children and Technology: Positive and Negative Effects." *Maryville Online*, 18 Jan. 2022, online.maryville.edu/blog/children-and-technology/. Accessed 19 Jan. 2025.

Medlicott, Mary. *Storytelling and Story-Reading in Early Years : How to Tell and Read Stories to Young Children*. London ; Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2018.

Mooney, Carol Garhart. *Theories of Childhood : An Introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget, and Vygotsky*. 2nd ed., St. Paul, MN, Redleaf Press, 2013.

NDNA. "Curriculum for Wales - Digital Competence in the Early Years Factsheet Wales."

Reading is. "Stick Man - Animated Read Aloud Book for Kids." *YouTube*, 9 Jan. 2023, youtu.be/mS3r7n_TfLU?si=iTkn5SsCrXVbcYcC. Accessed 19 Jan. 2025.

Rees, Corinne. "Childhood Attachment." *British Journal of General Practice*, vol. 57, no. 544, 1 Nov. 2007, pp. 920–922, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2169321/, <https://doi.org/10.3399/096016407782317955>.

Schatt, Donna, and Patrick Ryan. *Story Listening and Experience in Early Childhood*. Palgrave Macmillan, 6 Apr. 2022.

Taylor, Jim. *Raising Generation Tech : Preparing Your Children for a Media-Fueled World*. Naperville, Ill., Sourcebooks, 2012.

University of Edinburgh. "Happily Ever After? Storytelling in Froebelian Settings." *Froebelian Futures*, 1 Aug. 2021, www.froebel.ed.ac.uk/happily-ever-after-storytelling-in-froebelian-settings/. Accessed 19 Jan. 2025.

University, Loughborough. "The Children Sat and Listened: Storytelling and Learning." *Loughborough Research Blog*, 2 Mar. 2016, blog.lboro.ac.uk/research/communication-culture-citizenship/children-learning-storytelling/.

Welsh Government. "Cross-Curricular Skills Frameworks - Hwb." *Hwb.gov.wales*, 2022, hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/cross-curricular-skills-frameworks. Accessed 18 Jan. 2025.

World Literacy Foundation. "Turn on the Subtitles - World Literacy Foundation." *Worldliteracyfoundation.org*, 9 Oct. 2023, worldliteracyfoundation.org/turn-on-the-subtitles/. Accessed 18 Jan. 2025.