

Language and Literacy in the Digital Age.

Teehan (2006) emphasises the significance storytelling has on children regardless of the method. Children can be entertained, informed, influenced and taught all through a story. Agosto (2016) states that children's literacy development benefits significantly through storytelling as children become better listeners and readers whilst building their vocabulary. Cremen *et al.* (2016) suggest that children's early literacy skills thrive through storytelling as the creativity of a story is inherited into their pretend play. This contributes to their holistic development. Agosto (2016) supports this stating that children create emotional connections with the reader. Teehan (2006) reveals that digital storytelling seems to be developing everyday and could soon be the world's newest and prevalent hobby. Digital storytelling is essential in classrooms to meet the creative and visual young learners. The practitioner is reading to 3-5 year olds.

The practitioner uses props throughout her storytelling. Huff (2000) states that using props or puppets are multi-sensory vehicles for storytelling. By introducing props the storyteller is creating an art and language experience for children that they are able to understand and engage with. According to Alavesa (2013) and Huff (2000) and Wright (2009) argue that using props help the children hear and feel the language communicating the meaning of the story. Additionally they state that through the use of props make the children feel included in the story and therefore maintains their engagement. Finlayson (2012) and Huff (2000) say the use of props can help the child retell the story of events. The practitioner is seen using a sensory tray to tell the story. The story recalls past events and the children are able to recall using the tray at the end. The practitioner has used real objects such as grass and water throughout the story which will help the children link the story to real life (Wright, 2008). Making the story tangible creates a sense of reality in the story. Gascoyne (2016) suggests that using sensory items brings learning to life. The children have an inclusive learning opportunity to explore their imagination experiencing what it would feel like to be in the story and create story awareness. Froebel and Montessori both believe that children are able to learn best through sensory play (Gascoyne, 2016). Grace (2017) develops this stating that sensory objects help individuals engage in the moment and create enjoyable experiences creating emotional and

physical development while developing their literacy skills. Wright (2008) demonstrates the significance of symbolic objects allowing children to use their imagination creating ideas they might have never had before. The storyteller uses symbolic objects such as the blankets to create a cave and chocolate powder to represent mud.

However Alavesa *et al.* (2014) state that when props were used in practice they only made a slight significance to the children's engagement as only affected the youngest children. The activities with young children, therefore suitable.

The practitioner also chose a book that used onomatopoeia throughout. Trischitta (2000) and Laing (2019) states that onomatopoeia is when a word or words imitate a sound from the environment. For example in the story travelling through the river is described as "splash, splosh". The practitioner using onomatopoeia during the video will include the child into the story (Szatrowski, 2010). Keuleman (2007) develops this stating it allows children to explore their imagination and expand their vocabulary. This is crucial in nurturing the children's minds. Piaget's (1952) theory of cognitive development highlights the sensorimotor stage in young children. Children learn large amounts from sensory experiences. Onomatopoeia is used as a bridge to link spoken language and sensory encounters together by engaging the senses and aid the understanding of the surrounding world. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasises the significance of social interactions in learning. Social interactions are created between the storyteller and the child. The use of onomatopoeia encourages active participation as children will begin to copy sounds creating social interactions and new language development. Both Piaget (1952) and Vygotsky (1978) show the value of onomatopoeia in nurturing language skills, encouraging new interactions and enhancing the storytelling experience. In contrast Keuleman (2007) states that onomatopoeia can be seen as meaningless but arguably can recreate the sensation of the action.

Furthermore the practitioner's story has repetition. It uses the same rhyme throughout the book and often repeats vocabulary. According to Stanovich and West (1989) the children hearing a word or sound repeatedly aids phonemic awareness which is a critical skill for early literacy. The repeated word will familiarise the child

with new vocabulary and sounds to enhance their language skills. Simcock and DeLoche (2006) insist that children love consistency, children can predict what comes next providing a sense of security or comfort. Repetition will encourage the children to participate as they can join in familiar phases. Prosic-Santovaci (2017) reveals that repetition prevents boredom and introduces alternative learning methods.

Piaget (1952) states that repetition has a crucial role in cognitive development in children because they build an understanding of the world through repetitive interactions. Repetition reinforces the important concepts and aids memory retention. Piaget (1952) develops this idea stating repetition helps children grasp fundamental ideas.

Walsh (2013) defines storytelling as an art that has the ability to captivate the listeners and send messages through various methods. According to McLuhan and Fiore (2017) traditional storytelling is an individual reading emphasising the importance of words. Bolter and Grusin (1996) state that traditional storytelling has been transformed into new digital forms such as e-books or audio books. Kress (2003) and Robin (2008) reveal that digital storytelling is using digital media that could range from images, video and text expanding the narrative possibilities and creates an immersive experience. The practitioner uses both methods in the video.

Penguin (1995-2020) explains that pointing to the words helps children understand the different letters in words. In the traditional storytelling video the practitioner points to the words as she is reading which will familiarise the letters and sounds to the child in comparison to the digital storytelling she did not point as the screen would be covered. Finnegan (2003) suggests that oral storytelling strengthens the bond between the reader and listener. The practitioner is able to capture the children's attention during the traditional storytelling by including the children. Laevers (2015) supports this insisting that involving the children is significant in high quality care. During the digital video the practitioner is asking questions to the children throughout to include them.

Jenkins (2006) and Erstrad *et al.* (2020) argue that digital storytelling can be easily translated and accessible worldwide through the internet making this approach more flexible and adaptable. The practitioner can find the book online when convenient. However traditional storytelling is limited to what has been printed (Erstrad, *et al.* 2020). Murray (2017) and Bolter (2001) states digital storytelling can create interactive experiences allowing the reader to choose their own path. Despite this the practitioner did not include any interactive experiences during the video instead she followed demands by the children such as using the rewind button to go back when requested allowing the children to lead their learning. The curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings suggests that child-led play is significant in early years and develops their emotional well-being allowing them to have power and maintain engagement throughout (Welsh Government, 2022).

A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings states that children's language and communication is developed by ensuring the children have time to process the information they are seeing and hearing (Welsh Government, 2022). This took place in both videos as the practitioner read at an appropriate pace for the children. The curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings states the natural world provides numerous opportunities for language development through playful experiences (Welsh Government, 2022). During the traditional storytelling video the practitioner provided a sensory tray containing natural loose parts for the children related to the story and enabled them to develop their fine motor skills. Welsh Government (2022) states developing the children's fine motor skills will support them in learning how to write.

Hsiung-Blodgett (2020) reveals that children learning through books is very beneficial for language development because children are likely to be engaged if it is entertaining and is able to hold their concentration for a longer period of time. Similarly Evans (2009) states storytelling can provide happiness to children with opportunities for children to ask questions or discuss their thoughts. This will challenge and enhance their use of language. The practitioner asked questions throughout for the children to participate promoting the children's literacy skills. Moreover Wright (2000) explains that children will listen to the story looking for a purpose. The children will therefore develop their listening, reading, speaking and

writing fluency. According to Dickinson and Tabors (2001) phonological awareness is understanding that each letter of the alphabet represents different phonemes in speech. Harper (2011) states phonological awareness is significant in order for children to learn how to read. When the practitioner is reading she is building an awareness of phonemes that will enable children to hear and blend sounds and learn to spell phonetically. Children will begin to understand that the letters of the alphabet represent phonemes in speech (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001).

Vygotsky (1966) suggests play increases children's imaginations and suggests it was a way to portray past experiences or stories. Reading a story to children supports their recall, imagination and allows them to create the situations through play to help develop their ability to think abstractly. The zone of proximity is what Vygotsky described as the space between what a learner can do without help and what a learner can do with someone more knowledgeable on the situation. The storyteller reading the story will assist the play. The practitioner has supported this by reading a story to the children. In the traditional story they are able to recall events back through sensory play. This will develop their literacy and memory retention (Simcock and DeLoche, 2006).

According to Bishop and Leonard (2014) language delay is common in toddlers. Basset (2018) indicates that listening to stories can positively help language delay because children begin to understand different ways that language can be used. The activities are aimed for this age group therefore providing stories to listen to is beneficial. The Welsh Government (no date) insists in the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) that children should begin to recognise a rhyme and repeat when modelled by the adult. The practitioner follows the LNF pausing for children to join in any rhymes or familiar patterns.

The Donaldson report (2015) states the adult should ensure that literacy and numeracy development is centred in their teaching. Children should have the ability to use language and numbers confidently. The practitioner is providing language opportunities through storytelling with basic vocabulary repeated throughout for the child to familiarise themselves with. According to Estyn (2017) adults do not plan effectively for the children regarding delivery of literacy. However it is apparent that

the practitioner has prepared as she is using a sensory tray clearly prepared before the session and has considered equipment that would be beneficial for the children.

Harrison and McTavish (2016) state that children interact with a range of digital text and become familiar with new symbolic information. Kuchukova and Littleton (2017) believe that digital tools expand children's knowledge. The practitioner models different digital skills such as pausing the video, fast forwarding, rewinding the video and pressing play. These simple tools are suitable for age appropriate and promote digital literacy skills. The practitioner asks questions about feelings helping them understand other people's feelings, recognise their own and provide new vocabulary (Whitehead, 2009). Plowman *et al.* (2012) the adult is able to scaffold their digital learning by adding interactions such as games. The practitioner did not include further digital interactions for the children limiting their digital awareness.

In the digital competence framework (DCF) Welsh government (2018) states that the main focus of digital competence is to develop children's digital skills that can then be applied to a range of subjects and transferable to the world of work. A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings states that digital competence is an essential skill for children in order to be successful in the world (Welsh Government, 2022). Additionally digital skills should be incorporated into everyday activities. The practitioner uses digital skills by reading the story on the ipad with simple age appropriate digital skills.

Teehan (2016) states that adults need to be skilled to teach and use digital literacy skills. Adults need to have the desire and passion to use this authentic method. However Wohlwend (2016) reveals there is a lack of training in supporting early years with digital literacy which can prevent the use. Using digital storytelling helps stimulate communication whilst integrating more of the curricular. Wohlwend (2016) states that digital play incorporates literacy too. This is evident in the video, reading a story via technology.

To conclude both traditional and digital storytelling both are beneficial to children in multiple ways and should be included in early years children's daily routine. The evolving nature of storytelling in the digital age is offering new creativity, engagement

and accessibility, however traditional storytelling still creates a more intimate and emotional connection with the listener and therefore should both be taking place.

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