

For this assignment I will be submitting the following

1. A digital story reading of the 3 Little pigs
2. A story being read with props- Stickman
3. A written assignment

I have used AI within this assignment, as requested by the lecturer. Gemini was used to research Michael Tomasello.

Introduction:

Agosto (2016) explains storytelling as the ability to tell stories from memory without the support of books and scripts; this differs from the typical reading story books to children. According to Agosto (2016) through observations some practitioners have suggested that storytelling helps children become better listeners and readers whilst building vocabulary – this is due to children entering a six-step trance like situation when they become so engrossed in the storytelling that is taking place. Participants in this article have also explained that during storytelling experiences older children are able to make mental memories of these experiences and envisioned themselves taking part in the action. It has also been discussed that from live storytelling children have the ability to develop visualisation, experiencing the story through picturing it through their own mind, and this is the foundation of literacy skills. According to Rahiem (2021) storytelling is ever growing and always evolving, and this can be seen through emerging digital storytelling methods. Digital storytelling mixes both storytelling with digital technology such as video cameras and laptops and can be used throughout any age and stage of learning, it is also believed that digital storytelling has many benefits for children.

Building on this, research suggests that children's attunement to rhythm and sound begins whilst they are still in the womb, with foetuses having the ability to hear and take in the melody of speech. (DeCasper and Fifer, 1980). This has also been researched by scientists such as Rene et al. (2025) who carried out research on foetuses in the womb by playing music to them by putting headphones on the mother's belly, when born the babies were more attuned to the auditory patterns that they had repeatedly heard, whether this being in their native language or a foreign one compared to just hearing their native language being spoken. However, both (Vygotsky, 1978 and Bruner 1983) argue that these skills are developed through social interactions and shared experiences, this is known as the constructivist theory. Through sharing rhythmic stories like 'stickman' with children, and the use of props actively helps build vocabulary and understanding of the story.

Rhyme:

One of the chosen story books for the reading activity was Stickman, by Julia Donaldson. One of the reasons this book was chosen was due to its effective rhythm

and rhyming couplets, these actively promote children's language and literacy development. According to the principles of Friedrich Froebel rhyme and rhythm help to set down children's foundations of future reading skills, this is created through children's ears being tuned to sound and cadence of language, hearing the natural flow of the rhythm and melody (Rigby, 2024). As Froebelian pedagogy emphasizes, repetitive rhythm and focusing on sound, is what starts the recognition of linguistic pattern, this starts to support children as they begin to move towards decoding words. Throughout the story of stickman, the continuous use of "I'm stickman, that's me!" helped the children to anticipate what is coming next. This supports participation as well as cognitive engagement linking back to Agosto (2016) who observed how engaged and immersed in storytelling children can be. Similarly, Vygotsky (1978) believed that rhyming couplets made story telling more inviting to children and encouraged active participation, leading to a rich exchange of language. Whilst this was being read the children looked on in anticipation to see what was coming next throughout the story. The repetitive line "stickman, oh stickman beware of the ..." had the children eager to see what would be behind the next page.

Although many theorists as well as Froebel describe the engaging benefits of rhyming for children, (Rigby, 2024) others argue differently. Shanahan (2015) argues that although traditionally rhyming has been seen to be a foundational pre reading skill, research has shown that it has a weak correlation to reading achievements. He explains that rhyming is a fun element and encourages engagement, however it should not be used as a short cut to decode and understand words, it should be used more as a support.

Props

Furthermore, supporting storytelling through the use of props aligns with Jerome Bruner's constructivist framework., Bruner (1983; 1986) explains that children learn best through actively engaging and having hands-on experiences, sharing stories is a collaborative experience where practitioners and children come together. During this time practitioners have the potential to scaffold children's language and literacy development through sharing attention and familiar repetition, especially during the story of 'stickman' where there are certain lines and phrases that are repeated throughout. For children, actively engaging with props provides opportunity for

participation and opportunities for participation of spoken language skills. The use of props adds visual meaning to the words being spoken, making the story come alive, this then helps children to make links and unlock new vocabulary through a shared experience. The use of props can be linked back to the zone of proximal development and scaffolding (Vygotsky 1978) during the shared story experience, practitioners scaffold children learning by introducing props and enriching children's vocabulary and early literacy. Within this activity the use of physical props act as a supportive tool, helping to reduce cognitive load and promotes social interactions. Whilst the story book was being read the props were handled by the children, the children observed the pictures of the props they were holding, enabling them to make links between the words they heard from the story and the images that they were looking at. The props could then be used for the children to retell the story in their own words, putting into practice the learning that they had taken in from the story time session.

This shared reading experience is further supported by Tomasello et al. (2005) who highlighted the importance of shared joint attention and shared intention in learning in the early years. The use of physical props provides a shared focus for both practitioners and children allowing them to engage with the story collaboratively. This connection scaffolds social interaction and in turn promotes language acquisition.

According to the National Literacy Trust (2024) there are significant benefits to using technology to support early communication, language and literacy.

However, it is advised that digital tools are used appropriately and purposefully, alongside adults rather than replacing them, this approach has been reported to be particularly effective with young boys from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In accordance with the Curriculum for Wales (2018) digital competence framework, early digital experiences should be purposeful supporting children with engaging with technology. An example of this can be witnessed during the story of the 3 little pigs, the reader encourages children to participate and engage in the story through simply swiping the pages as the story is being read aloud. This allows children to explore a simple form of technology and interaction without it becoming too overpowering for the intended experience. Other forms of digital story telling could include interactive noisy buttons and touch and response

apps however, they were not used during this activity. This connects closely to the concept of emergent digital literacy, where young children start to develop an understanding of how technology can do many different things. (Levy, 2009). Just as with traditional story books, children learn to handle them, lift and turn pages one by one, look at the text and supporting images, children need to learn the basic interactive actions such as the swiping action of a digital book. Levy also explains the importance of the role of the practitioner in scaffolding the learning rather than the technology taking over and replacing the learning.

However, there can be some challenges to integrating digital story telling within the early years. For practitioners one of these hurdles could be lack of experience and being unprepared to deliver digital story sessions. As previously explained by Levy (2009) digital story times require a high level of staff and child engagement, this will ensure children receive a high-quality experience. Without practitioners' confidence and preparation, the use of screens could become a passive screen activity rather than a rich interactive language opportunity.

Compare and contrast:

When comparing both story time experiences, differences can be seen throughout. During the story of the stickman the children accessed a physical story book with props, this offered a rich multisensory experience for the children as they had the opportunity to handle physical props alongside the story telling experience, bringing the story to life. This aligns with Bruner's theory emphasis on hands on learning, physically taking a part in the experience. An example of this could be children using the props to retell the story in their own words in their own time, showcasing what they have taken away during the story telling experience.

The story of the three little pigs offers a different learning experience for the children as they are using a digital device for the story. There are no physical pages to be turned, the children are encouraged to join in with the swiping action to move the pages and continue the story. For this the children need to be aware of cause and effect in a digital context.

Both story telling opportunities provide children with rich language and learning opportunities, exposing them to new vocabulary and opportunity to explore and grow their imagination. Tomasello et al. (2005) argues that learning happens through shared intentionality. This is where both children and practitioners have shared goals and common interests during the activity. Both forms of storytelling remain a social and collaborative process even if one has the use of a physical story book with props and the other has a swiping action on a screen.

This is supported by David Crystal (2005) who argues that rather than causing language to deteriorate the internet has innovative ways to be creative and expressive with writing. Through texting and experimenting with images people are able to find fresh new ways to communicate. Crystal (2005) also argues that rather than viewing screen time as being a passive activity, it should be exciting and fresh, bringing a positive and engaging opportunity for storytelling, expanding on existing knowledge. Whilst explaining this Crystal (2005) continues to agree with Levy (2009) on the role of the early years practitioners in supporting children with the use of digital equipment. An example of this is texting; although this shows creativity and can include the use of images and abbreviated words, it is the role of the practitioner that is needed to show children how and when it is okay for these styles to be appropriate.

Conclusion:

During the assignment AI was used, in particular Gemini. Gemini was asked for information regarding Michael Tomasello in the early years. The information that was brought up on the platform discussed many of the thoughts and ideas that Tomasello had. This was then searched more in-depth in the form of an article which similarly shared the same information. The information recovered was used to support both the props and comparative sections of the assignment.

To conclude, storytelling and sharing books, whether this be digitally or with the use of a paper book supported with props is a social and collaborative process. It is with the role of the practitioner that children have the best opportunities to scaffold learning and take this learning to other areas of their development. The hands-on experiences that come alongside story telling provide a vital role in

scaffolding learning. Crystal (2005) and Levy (2009) have shown that the use of digital technology is considered to be a creative extension of what children already know rather than being a passive activity to distract them from what is considered to be 'actual learning.' both forms of storytelling provide unique opportunities to build confidence and spark interest within the child.

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