

### Language and Literacy in the Digital Age

Story telling and shared reading can have a large impact on the development of essential foundational literacy skills in the early years as according to Merga (2017). Isbell *et al* (2004) supports this and details that literacy skills such as spelling and speaking derive from storytelling. Storytelling has a range of benefits including improving listening skills, encouraging creativity, increases participation and interaction and develops skills in literacy and language (University of Texas Arlington, 2015). Maureen (2020) talks about innovation regarding digital storytelling improving young children's skills in their digital literacy.

National Council of Teachers (1992) defines storytelling as 'relating a tale to one or more listeners through voice and gesture', they state that storytelling is not just simply reading a book aloud but instead making the book come to life through emotion and interaction with the audience. 'Storytelling is an important aspect in the early years as told by Medlicott (2019); they suggest that by telling children stories in a traditional manner it enables children the opportunity to develop empathy for others, extend vocabulary and patterns of language and generally give children a wider view of themselves and the world around them. Pedersen (1995, as cited by Sadik, 2008) supports this and describes traditional storytelling as one of the most effective teaching approaches and can allow children to enhance knowledge and literacy. During the traditional story time activity there was a variety of props used, such as character lolly pop sticks, a teddy, a tea set and the book itself. By using props in the storytelling, it enriches the children's experiences and creates a pleasant involvement with books and literacy (Brun, 2019). Barton (2013) furthers this and details how using props to support the story encourages children to identify language and carry it into their play. The use of props in the traditional story aimed to engage the audience, the props gave a way in which interaction was easy and questions could be asked, and answers could be given.

Miller and Pennycuff (2008) suggest that using storytelling in the classroom can drastically affect the development of oracy of children in the early years. Oracy can be seen as a process in which students learn how to communicate and deepening their understanding through dialogue with the adults around them and their peers (Millard and Gaunt, 2018). Oracy is a highly important developmental area and by supporting children in raising literacy standards it sets them closer to achieving their full potential (Welsh Government, 2013). McCormack and Kloppe (2016) further this and suggest that oracy pedagogy has potential to present opportunities to learners to communicate creatively and purposefully. Corbett (2008) supports this and details that local authorities in South Gloucestershire found that storytelling is a powerful strategy in gaining success in children's writing and oracy. Evans and Jones (2007), furthers this by suggesting that storytelling in the early years can support language and oracy development by listening and retelling stories to their peers; therefore, by practitioner storytelling children take note of keywords and sentences and quickly put them together to retell the stories they have

heard. Corbett (2008) emphasises the need of repetition and how the repetition such as common characters, events and settings acts as building blocks of narrative and lead to the improvement of oracy. In both traditional and digital activity there was interaction with children about the characters and there was repetition of words in book throughout. Through this interaction the development of oracy skills were encouraged as the children were asked questions and able to ask questions themselves.

Miller and Pennycuff (2008) suggest that storytelling serves as an effective technique for developing reading comprehension skills in children in their early years. The beginning stages of the reading process is when young children begin to decipher words on a page and linking these to sounds and objects (Schwartz and Sparks, 2019). Therefore, using this point, by seeing the words on the page and around them in the traditional activity or on the screen in the digital activity it was encouraging the beginning or recognising words and sounds and how they look written down. Montag *et al* (2015) offer a counter argument and suggest that children in the early years predominantly are shown picture books by parents and therefore their language is developed through the interaction surrounding the pictures rather than the basic words on the page. Boris (2017) details that storytelling has learning aspects for every type of learner to begin to develop their skills, they suggest that in any group roughly 40 percent are visual learners who learn from illustrations or videos and another 40 percent will be auditory learner, who learn from communication and discussions. The final 20 percent learn through experience and doing something for themselves. Milby (no date, as cited by CES-Schools, no date) emphasised that by asking children questions during storytelling it helps children learn to be active readers and think critically. This was witnessed in the traditional storytelling video as the children encouraged to get involved and interaction was key.

According to Victoria State Government (2019) by allowing children to express themselves using written, visual and verbal modes along with the help of practitioners to guide and communicate text with the children it encourages the development of writing or mark making skills. Miller and Pennycuff (2008) offers a link between reading and writing, they furthers this and details that there is a connection between being a good reader and a good writer, therefore children who are being read to and are familiar with reading will eventually become good writers. Pacey Organisation (no date) also agrees that storytelling between a child and an adult has a large impact on children's interest for reading later in life, they go on to note that this reading time with an adult has an impact on literacy in the early years regarding early mark making and writing.

On the other hand, Zero to three organisation (2016) argues that often stories written for children lack any narrative or linguistic power, so suggest that it is not the book and visuals themselves that benefit the child but instead is the person telling the story; the interaction between the storyteller and the child is what benefits the child and not the words on the page themselves. This was not the case in either activity as the practice showed a range of vocabulary and discussions based upon these.

According to O'Byrne et al (2018) the use of digital storytelling is a powerful technique that has the ability to transform learning in the early years, they suggest that emergent digital methods of storytelling open new possibilities for collaborative approaches. Using digital storytelling It allows support for practitioners to adopt innovative and improved methods of pedagogy (Rahiem, 2021). Digital storytelling allows children to explore their identity and to create their own experiences through digital technology (Alonso et al, 2013). Dillon (2014) believes that practitioners should maximise the effects of technology and digital storytelling in order to benefit from a story in its maximum capacity. Technology is important in the early years as it can have a great impact on supporting early communication, language and literacy (National Literacy Trust, 2017). The Donaldson Report (2015) states that digital competency in children is just as important as literacy and numeracy as children will be required to use technology in their futures; the report talked about a cross-curriculum purpose that encouraged the use of digital technology to develop literacy and language.

According to Derbashi (2021) using digital storytelling in settings it improves children's ability to gather their own thoughts and express feelings and ask questions. Thang *et al* (2014) furthers this point and suggests that by using digital storytelling it allows children to become positive communicators who can interact with their peers and develop their interpersonal skills. By children watching and interacting with digital storytelling it allows them to gain a deeper understanding of their own emotions and how they can communicate these to the people around them through oracy (Nair and Yunus, 2021). This was displayed in the digital activity through interaction with the children and opportunities for question and answers. Hava (2019) also details how it was found that self-confidence levels in children were significantly higher after use of a digital storytelling activity, this then had a positive effect on vocabulary learning, writing and speaking skills. The Welsh Government (2022) state that learners who speak and write effectively are prepared for life and work, and learners who listen and read effectively are prepared to learn throughout life.

Levy and Marsh (2011) believe that young children are competent users of technology from a very early age, by having this digital competency they are using the internet for reading and writing and therefore believe that use of digital technology should be encouraged and supported through the early years. Karan-Miraj (2009) believes that digital storytelling has improved language performance as children can be encouraged to form explanations and personal viewpoints that they can communicate with an increased vocabulary. Bakar (2019) backed this claim and suggests that children who have access to digital storytelling and technology have a wider access to reading and therefore develop these skills quicker. However, Gilchrist (2020) contrasts this and talks about that a child who is a good readers can flexibly engage with different formats both onscreen and offscreen, so therefore a traditional story time would benefit them just the same as a digital story time in regard to reading. Welsh Government (2022) talk about the need for digital competency so that children can have an increased understanding and awareness of different languages and cultures; by using technology it is said that the young children

can deepen their understanding of the world around them thus given them a broad range of vocabulary and literacy.

Traditional and digital storytelling hold many similarities, according to Gutierrez (2019) the both are similar and hold the same benefits for the child as it isn't about the resources used but instead the storyteller and how they tell the story through enthusiasm and interaction with the children; they suggest the difference is that the traditional storytelling takes on a storyteller-listener approach while digital storytelling uses computer-based tools. Choo *et al* (2020) contrasts this and suggests that digital storytelling creates a richer experience as it incorporates the factors of traditional storytelling but further them with graphics, audio and animations. This is shown in the traditional and digital storytelling activity as factors such as the storyteller remained constant however the resources differed such as the hard book compared to the online book. An observation made was that during the traditional story there was a greater opportunity to use props as there was more focus on the activity whereas, in the digital activity there was less room for props in practice as more attention was placed on the animations and text on screen. O'Byrne *et al* (2018) furthers this and details how digital storytelling opens new possibilities for collaborative approaches and more interaction than traditional storytelling. The use of digital storytelling enables the audience, the children, to be considered as active participants who can interact and modify the story (Dorner *et al*, 2002). However, Ramasubramanian and Albrecht (2018) looks at the other side of digital storytelling and details that a limitation of this way is that it requires specific technologies and technical expertise whereas traditional storytelling is simpler and can be done with less specific technologies and resources. There is also a concern that practitioners will fall behind children in their ability to utilise digital technology in order to develop skills, if practitioners are not trained, they cannot provide high quality digital learning (Winter *et al*, 2021).

To conclude, it is important to recognise that although traditional and digital storytelling hold many similarities, they also hold many differences that effect children in different ways. Traditional storytelling involves a storyteller and an audience with props whereas digital storytelling includes a device that may be the storyteller. Both allow interaction and are said to develop oracy, reading and writing skills in the early years. In future practice digital storytelling is likely to become more prominent as digital literacy and competence becomes increasing prominent in the curriculum and society in general.

### Reference List

Alonso, I. *et al.* (2013) 'Multimodal digital storytelling: integrating information, emotion and social cognition', *Rev. Cogn. Linguist.* 11, pp. 369-387. DOI: 10.1075/rcl.11.2.10alo

Baker, R.A. (2019) 'Digital Storytelling: an Influential Reading Comprehension and Creativity Tool for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy Skills', *Journal of English Language Teaching Innovation and Materials*, 1(2), pp.49-53. DOI: [10.26418/jeltim.v1i2.34362](https://doi.org/10.26418/jeltim.v1i2.34362)

Barton, K.L. (2013) *Literacy and dramatic play: Storytelling with props increases preschool children's language skills during play*. Available at: [Literacy and dramatic play: Storytelling with props increases preschool children's language skills during play - ProQuest](#) (Accessed: 10 February 2022)

Boris, V. (2017) *What Makes Storytelling So Effective For Learning?* Available at: <https://www.harvardbusiness.org/what-makes-storytelling-so-effective-for-learning/> (Accessed: 11 February 2022)

Brun, H. (2019) *Use of props in Story Starter sessions*. Available at: [#ToddlerTales - Use of props in Story Starter sessions | Coram Beanstalk \(beanstalkcharity.org.uk\)](#) (Accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022)

CES-Schools. (no date) *5 Ways to Get Your Kids to Read More This Year*. Available at: <https://www.ces-schools.net/5-ways-to-get-your-kids-to-read-more-this-year/> (Accessed: 13 February 2022)

Choo, Y.B. *et al.* (2020) 'Digital Storytelling vs. Oral Storytelling: An Analysis of the Art of Telling Stories Now and Then', *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(5), pp.46-50. DOI: [10.13189/ujer.2020.081907](https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.081907)

Corbett, P. (2008) *Storytelling and story-making*. Available at: [https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2011/10/Story-Teling\\_Story-Making1.pdf](https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2011/10/Story-Teling_Story-Making1.pdf) (Accessed: 12 February 2022)

Derbashi, K.Y. (2021) 'Attitudes of Primary School Students in UAE Towards Using Digital Story-Telling as a Learning Method in Classroom', *E-Learning*, 10(11), pp.20-28. DOI: [10.7176/RHSS/11-10-03](https://doi.org/10.7176/RHSS/11-10-03)

Dillon, B. (2014) *The Power of Digital Story*. Available at: <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/the-power-of-digital-story-bob-dillon> (Accessed: 14 February 2022)

Donaldson, G. (2015) 'Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales,' <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150225-successful-futures-en.pdf> (Accessed: 14 February 2022)

Dorner, R, et al. (2002) 'Synergies between interactive training simulations and digital storytelling: A component-based framework', *Computers and Graphics*, 26, pp.45-55. DOI: 10.1016/S0097-8493(01)00177-7

Evans, R. and Jones, D. (2007) 'Perspectives on oracy-towards a theory of practice', *Early Child Development and Care*, 177(6-7), pp.557-567. DOI: [10.1080/03004430701424938](https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430701424938)

Gilchrist, K. (2020) *Early learners: digital media and learning in the lives of under-eights*. Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/parenting4digitalfuture/2020/03/11/early-learners-digital-media-and-learning-in-the-lives-of-under-eights/> (Accessed: 14 February 2022)

Gutierrez, M.P.C. et al. (2019) *Digital Storytelling vs Traditional Storytelling: Teaching English Language to ANHS Students*. Available at: <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/8882047> (Accessed: 14 February 2022)

Isbell, R. et al. (2004) 'The Effects of Storytelling and Story Reading on the Oral Language Complexity and Story Comprehension of Young Children', *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32, pp.157-163. DOI: 10.1023/B:ECEJ.0000048967.94189.a3

Isbell, R. et al. (2004) 'The Effects of Storytelling and Story Reading on the Oral Language Complexity and Story Comprehension of Young Children', *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32, pp.157-163. DOI: 10.1023/B:ECEJ.0000048967.94189.a3

Judith Kerr. (1968) *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*. London: Collins.

Karan-Miyar, D. (2009) 'Digital storytelling: Using photo story 3 to create digital stories', *Distance Learning*, 6(1), 27-29. Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/230698389>

Levy, R. and Marsh, J. (2011) 'Literacy and ICT in the Early Years,' in D. Lapp and D. Fisher (eds) (2011) *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). London: Routledge.

Maureen, I.Y. et al. (2020) 'Evaluating storytelling activities for early literacy development', *International Journal of Early Years Education*. DOI: [10.1080/09669760.2021.1933917](https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2021.1933917)

McCormack, B.A. and Klopper, C. (2016) 'The potential of music in promoting oracy in students with English as an additional language', *International journal of music education*, 34(4), pp.416-432. DOI: [10.1177/0255761415619066](https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761415619066)

Medlicott, M. (2019) EYFS best practice: All about... Storytelling. Available at: <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/features/article/eyfs-best-practice-all-about-storytelling> (Accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022)

Merga, M. K. (2017) *Research shows the importance of parents reading with children – even after children can read*. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/research-shows-the-importance-of-parents-reading-with-children-even-after-children-can-read-82756> (Accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022)

Millard, W. and Gaunt, A. (2018) *Speaking up: The importance of oracy in teaching and learning*. Available at: [https://my.chartered.college/impact\\_article/speaking-up-the-importance-of-oracy-in-teaching-and-learning/](https://my.chartered.college/impact_article/speaking-up-the-importance-of-oracy-in-teaching-and-learning/) (Accessed: 12 February 2022)

Miller, S. and Pennycuff, L. (2008) 'The Power of Story: Using Storytelling to Improve Learning', *Journal of Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives in Education*, 1(1), pp.36-43. Available at: <https://wmpeople.wm.edu/asset/index/mxtsch/storytelling#:~:text=Storytelling%2C%20when%20modeled%20properly%2C%20can,sense%20of%20story%20in%20participants.>

Montag, J.L. et al. (2015) 'The Words Children Hear: Picture Books and the Statistics for Language Learning', *Psychological Science*, 26(9), pp.1489-1496. DOI: [10.1177/0956797615594361](https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797615594361)

National Council of Teachers. (1992) *Teaching Storytelling*. Available at: <https://ncte.org/statement/teachingstorytelling/> (Accessed: 12 February 2022)

National Literacy Trust. (2017) *Digital technology and the early years*. Available at: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/digital-technology-and-early-years/> (Accessed: 14 February 2022)

O'Byrne W.I, et al. (2018) 'Digital storytelling in Early Childhood: Student Illustrations Shaping Social Interactions', *Frontier Psychology*. DOI: [10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01800](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01800)

Pacey. (no date) *Literacy in the early years*. Available at: <https://www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/literacy-in-the-early-years/> (Accessed: 13 February 2022)

Rahiem, M.D.H. (2021) 'Storytelling in early childhood education: Time to go digital', *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 15(4), pp.1-20. DOI: [10.1186/s40723-021-00081-x](https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-021-00081-x)

Ramasubramanian, L. and Albrecht, J. (2018) 'Implementation', *Essential Methods for Planning Practitioners*, pp.129-141. DOI: [10.1007/978-3-319-68041-5\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68041-5_7)

Sadik, A. (2008) 'Digital storytelling: a meaningful technology integrated approach for engaged student learning', *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 56, pp.487-506. DOI: [10.1007/s11423-008-9091-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-008-9091-8)

Thang, S. M. et al. (2014) Enhancing 21st century learning skills via digital storytelling: Voices of Malaysian teachers and undergraduates. The Proceedings of the 13th International Conference on Knowledge-I

University of Texas Arlington. (2015) *Using Storytelling to Improve Literacy*. Available at: <https://academicpartnerships.uta.edu/articles/education/using-storytelling-to-improve-literacy.aspx> (Accessed: 11 February 2022)

Victoria State Government. (2019) *Writing with Children*. Available at: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/ecliteracy/emergentliteracy/Pages/writingwithchildren.aspx>

Welsh Government (2013) *National Literacy and Numeracy Framework*. Available at: <http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/nlnf/?lang=en> (Accessed: 11 January 2021)

Welsh Government. (2019) *Language, Literacy and Communication*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/storage/4373f5ea-f77e-4b10-a20f-4b06eb02f6a0/draft-statutory-guidance-languages-literacy-and-communication.pdf> (Accessed: 17 February 2022)

Welsh Government. (2022) *Languages, Literacy and Communication*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/languages-literacy-and-communication/designing-your-curriculum> (Accessed: 14 February 2022)

Winter, E. *et al.* (2021) 'Teachers' use of technology and the impact of Covid-19', *Irish Educational Studies*, 40(2), pp.235-246. DOI:[10.1080/03323315.2021.1916559](https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2021.1916559)

Zero To Three. (2016) *Storytelling in the First Three Years*. Available at: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1057-storytelling-in-the-first-three-years> (Accessed: 13 February 2022)