

“There’s no time for a story today”’: Why time should always be made for storytelling.

Story telling for young children is important, Bower (2014), Agosto (2016) and Ramous (2012) explain storytelling to young children can support their oracy, writing and reading skills. Ramous (2012) explains when children are listening to a story, it builds a positive relationship between the child and their awareness of reading and writing. Children’s language develops as they listen to the story and significant relationships can be built between oral and written work (Ramous, 2012). Bower (2014) explains when children are engaged in a story it sparks their imagination, which provides children with the chance to develop an understanding of literacy. Agosto (2016) believes children who engage in story telling become better at reading and Doriet (2011) discusses the importance of storytelling to develop children’s oracy, writing and reading skills. A five-minute presentation was undertaken as part of an assignment, reading the story *Dear Zoo* by Rod Campbell (2010), which was pre-recorded. The presentation included sign language, repetition, onomatopoeia and using props. Repetition is used in the story *Dear Zoo*. For example, the words “*so they sent me a*” and “*so I sent them back*” are used throughout. This leads to the question, why is repetition beneficial for children’s literacy skills? Repetition is used in story books, Sari et al. (2017), *Raising children* (2018) and *Teaching English* (2020) explain repetition is included in stories to develop children’s language and literacy skills. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) and *Reading bright start* (2020) explain when words are repeated, connections are made in young children’s brains which builds their language and literacy skills. Evidence Based Teachers’ Network (2017) states a learner needs repetition, explaining brain cells make connections with new information that is presented in a repeated pattern. Sari et al. (2017) describes repetition as a ‘persuasive strategy’ which stimulates children’s imagination, therefore it can encourage children to learn. By reading out new words over and over they become familiar to the children and this can support their literacy skills (Sari et al., 2017). Repetition has been discussed by theorists for many years. Repetition in stories could be linked to Piaget’s schema: the pre- occupational stage. Andersen (2016) explains Piaget’s pre-occupational schema as loops of repetition that encourage children to learn. However, without repetition it could be more difficult for the child to remember (Andersen, 2016). Additionally, repetition is included in Bruner’s *Spiral Curriculum*. Clark (2010) explains Bruner’s theory for children’s learning was for information to be revisited by the children and for methods such as reading to be repeated. In this case, the words in the book could be linked to Bruner’s theory. Weibel (2011) explains repetition has been an effective method of learning, dating back to 3,000 BC and was once described in Ancient Greece as the more frequently things are experienced together, the more one will learn. To support this further, more specifically on how repetition can support children’s reading skills, Frost (2017) and Kuppen (2018) explains repetition in stories helps children’s reading skills and when a child listens to a story, they build an understanding of reading along with the meaning of the words. Finally, Welsh Government (2019) states learners who listen and read effectively are prepared to learn and prepared for life. Sign language is used in the presentation. Mayberry (2006), Angier (1991) and Lenneberg (1962) suggest deaf babies have an instinct to acquire language and communicate just as a hearing baby would. However, instead of using babbling noises, they mimic their caregivers’ sign language to display communication from around 6-12 months old. Therefore, this suggests it is important to include children’s sign language in storytelling to support the development of sign language. Spence (2010) suggests that deaf children should experience storytelling in schools to build on their literacy skills. Similarly, Mayberry (2006) states sign language includes linguistic rules, just as spoken language includes words and sentences. Sonesson (2020), Lawrence (2015) and the National Deaf Children’s Society (2020) explains sign language can be used to support children’s language and literacy skills. Lawrence (2015) discusses how sign language can be beneficial for children’s language development for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. However, the use of sign language for children who can hear can be just as beneficial for their literacy skills. Lawrence (2015) states the use of sign language, even from an early age for children who do not yet have the ability to speak,

has been linked to benefit children's literacy skills. Studies have shown that children from families who used sign language have better language and literacy skills (Lawrence, 2015). This evidence highlights the importance of using sign language to promote children's literacy skills, however more specifically research suggests links between sign language and children's oracy skills. English Speaking Union (2020) and McCormack and Klopfer (2016) describes oracy skills as listening to others, being able to express themselves and to share views. Sign language provides children with opportunities to experience these skills. McCormack and Klopfer (2016) suggest oracy is a necessity in society and a beneficial for all children to learn. The presentation includes the use of onomatopoeia.

Sasamoto (2016), Cambridge Dictionary (2020) and Assaneo and Nichols (2011) explain onomatopoeia is a word that is used to imitate sounds or exaggerate words. An example of onomatopoeia in storytelling could be imitating the noises of animals. Laing (2017) states using onomatopoeia helps children associate speech with sounds and promotes children's language development. Children's phonological development can be supported when onomatopoeia is practised. Laing (2017) explains when children hear new words it can enhance their literacy skills to remember. To support this further, Laing (2014) emphasises the importance of onomatopoeic words by explaining that the first forty-eight words listed by children acquired from a range of languages, forty of them are onomatopoeic words. This suggests the use of onomastic words support children's literacy skills (Laing, 2014). Twinkl (2020) explains when a word is said aloud using onomatopoeia, to children it can be phonologically imitated to describe the sound of the word, therefore suggesting onomatopoeia supports the development of children's literacy skills. Onomatopoeia can be used to make words dramatic and clear for children. Early Years Careers (2020) suggest that using onomatopoeia while story telling can be a 'good tool' to engage children into the story and introduce new words. Onomatopoeia from an author's view is included in stories to fully engage the reader and listener into the story, to enhance learning and enrich the language in the stories (Harris, 2018). It could be suggested that links to children's writing skills can be made. Although children may not be aware of some of the words being spoken using onomatopoeia, this practice introduces them to the meaning of the words along with the pronunciation (Early Years Career 2020). Props have been used in the storytelling presentation. Using props or puppets can support children's language and literacy skills. Stadler and Ward (2010), Toddler Tales (2017) and Early Years Careers (2017) suggests using props while telling a story to children can develop children's literacy and language skills. Toddler Tales (2017) explains when a prop is used, such as a soft toy or puppet while telling a story, it not only draws on children's attention, it could also enrich and encourage children's language to develop. Furthermore, Early Years Careers (2017) discusses the importance of using props, explaining children's language can expand when props are used. Props can grasp children's attention and children become more engaged when props are used. Early Years Careers (2017) explains if props are used there is an element of fun, which can encourage children's vocabulary as well as provide children with the opportunity to get involved. Children could hold the props with the practitioner, or children could be asked to select a prop to use ready for the story. Furthermore, National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS, 2021) explains using props can be a useful tool to support deaf children with sign language; props can enrich the story telling and entice an interest in language and storytelling (NDCS, 2021). Lewis (2019) suggests the use of props such as finger puppets or toys can support children to listen and engage. Lewis (2019) states for a child to learn new words and the meaning of words, it is important children associate reading with being a positive experience and by using props can make it more fun for children. Lewis (2019) adds storytelling is strongly linked to building early literacy skills and props are a useful tool to support this. Similarly, Childcare Extension (2019) explains by using props, such as puppets or soft toys, this could support children's language skills and communication skills. Childcare extension (2019) explains that using props can encourage children's language and at times provide more variety to keep the fun element in storytelling. Maynard (2020) discusses how using props while

storytelling is not only a valuable tool for children's language development, but it can also add a mixture of fun and variety. Story sacks are an effective to use, which could enrich children's interest in storytelling, therefore will support the development of children's language skills. Likewise, Raising Children (2021) states reading with props to children at an early age builds a solid foundation for developing a larger vocabulary, explaining some words can be very new or unfamiliar to some children. Teaching English (2021) and Stadler and Ward (2010) states props have a positive effect on building children's descriptive language and literacy skills. Early Years Educator (2015) explains storytelling while using props can support children's communication, language and listening skills. Lastly, Cocherane (2014) explains props such as puppets can be used to support children's language and literacy skills. Props can draw on children's attention and allow children to feel part of the story telling session (Cocherane 2014).

This evidence suggests story telling can have benefits for children's literacy skills and their learning can be enhanced by using certain methods. Repetition is used to enhance children's learning; sign language is used to encourage language development and onomatopoeia is used to add excitement and encourage children's interest. To support children's language, based on this research, it is clear enthusiasm is an essential tool to entice children's attention initially. However, to keep children interested, the enthusiasm must be attained throughout the storytelling to build on children's language which could develop new words and associate them with one another. From the research, it suggests, children select the same book to read over and over due to interest of the story. Therefore, it is important that practitioners allow this to happen and not simply ask "why?" they would like the same book again. The evidence suggests children's literacy develops with repetition and reading the same book over and over is a repetitive tool which practitioners can use to support children's literacy. From these findings, using props while telling a story has an effective impact on children's engagement, children's attention and provides children with the opportunity to feel involved with the story. Providing children with the opportunity to be more involved with the story, asking them to join in by using the props in the story could have a positive impact on children's language and literacy development. Another key area to consider is on occasions children's story time is often associated with sitting down, being quiet, sitting still and remaining patient and not asking any questions. This could be linked to the sayings "fingers on the lips" or "children must be seen, but not heard". However, evidence suggests it is important that children are provided the opportunity to be able to explore, they are given the freedom to move around and are they are not restricted. For children's language to be able to develop, children should be given the chance to be able to ask any questions regarding the story. Using onomatopoeia while discussing the characters or environments when storytelling can support children's literacy and language skills. Going forward, based on this evidence, the importance of using onomatopoeia should be encouraged for all practitioners. Finally, this evidence suggests settings should be encouraging sign language for children who are not deaf and deaf to support children's language and literacy skills.

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