

## **Importance of storytelling**

The aim of this article is to explore if reading to children from a young age can support their language development and enhance their literacy skills to achieve academic attainment.

Children's literacy skills are critical in the first three years of life, it is a well-known fact that communicating with children can support their language and literacy skills (Niklas, Cohrssen and Tayler, 2016). The Communication Trust has seen an increase in children starting school with delayed language abilities and a lack of communication skills (Hurd, 2021). please revisit the opening sentence as it needs attention. Children experiencing language delay find it challenging to learn new words, have difficulty talking, answering questions and listening to parents and teachers (National Literacy Trust, 2015). Hurd (2021) state children who have language difficulties can be quiet and well behaved, therefore it can be difficult for professionals to see.. Other children sometimes do not understand what the practitioners or their peers are saying to them, which can lead to signs of bad behaviour, but at other times children will simply copy others, as they do not understand what has been asked of them (Hurd, 2021). please revisit this sentence as it needs to be supported with references

Through reviewing the literature, I have learnt how important storytelling is when supporting language development and the benefits this has on children in the early years sector. Storytelling and rhymes can help children with their listening and attention skills, and it allows children to join in and build their confidence (Bowkett, 2021).

Storytelling has been around for centuries and has a range of narratives for example fairy tales, legends, myths and fables. Originally, these stories were of people sharing their experiences about their lives and it brought a sense of comfort (Bower, 2014). Society for Storytelling (2017-18) believe if parents share true stories about their own family then the children get a greater insight of their family. Chesapeake Montessori School (2017) also agree with this and believes it helps children to connect and build emotional bonds with the storyteller. Furthermore, Niklas, Cohrssen and Tayler (2016) state that reading with children can encourage them to explore new experiences and worlds around them.

Whitehead (2009) adds that when practitioners and parents read to children, they develop a more extensive vocabulary and progress further in reading, listening, speaking and writing. Whitehead believes that it encourages children to read later in life. The Welsh Government (2017) also supports this, and states that language and literacy are key for future learning in schools, and it helps build social relationships. Sammons et al. (2014) suggests that reading to children in pre-school improved GCSE results, and enhanced long-term academic outcomes. Quigley (2020) also agree with this and claims that children who have better literacy skills performed significantly higher in their GCSEs and had the opportunity to achieve more academically.

Dickinson and Morse (2019) believe devoting time to reading with babies, even for a few minutes, improves cognitive development. Studies have shown that reading to children in the first 12 months of their life impacts on the brain's neural circuitry even before they say their first words (Kuhl, 2010). Furthermore, Dickinson and Morse (2019) believe storytelling in the early years can help lay the foundations for a future of literacy, while Towell et al. (2019) believes reading aloud to children helps develop their listening skills which is a key part of literacy. this section is well written and well referenced – well done

Storytelling does not have to be read from a book; it can be made-up stories, re-telling stories about the past that can help develop children's memory and sequencing skills (Lewisham Children and Family Centres, 2020). Chesapeake Montessori School (2017) also agree with this, and state children need to have a strong sense of reality to support their vocabulary and development. Khan, Nelson and Whyte (2013) claim that children who make up stories have greater narrative skills; they state that children are more focused and engaged because they can identify themselves with the characters emotions and motives. Storytelling can allow children to help deal with everyday life and provide a safe place for them. It can also enable children to build strong bonds and make them feel valued (Community Playthings, 2020). good section

The Nuffield Foundation (2020) undertook a study where practitioners focused more on narrative skills, vocabulary and listening over 20 weeks with children who were having difficulty reading. Findings demonstrate that the project was very successful and that it improved children's grammar, vocabulary, spelling and letter sounds by an additional three months.

Book Trust (2019) point out that adults have a responsibility of showing enthusiasm when reading a book out aloud. The charity states that using funny voices, facial expressions and acting out scenes is fun for children, and it does not matter how a story is read, as long as all are having fun. According to Laing (2019), onomatopoeia helps children recognise sounds and to understand the meaning of the words. For example, by using 'where's the woof, woof' instead of 'where's the doggie' promotes more engagement in children and enables them to have better understanding of objects. Furthermore, when children hear animal sounds, it activates a separate part of the brain and encourages faster processing that can help with early word learning. Mages (2020) also agrees with this and states that when the adult recites the story to the children, it activates a part of their brain which allows children to synchronise with the storyteller and therefore the children gain a sense of empathy and understanding. this is an interesting section

When adults expand or describe the meaning of words to children when reading, it improves children's oral language skills and helps children to develop a love of reading (Schwartz and Sparks, 2019). Lysaker (2019) points out how important it is to make facial expressions when reading to children, as it is a part of communicating with children. In addition, use of gestures when storytelling, such as pointing, supports children's writing skills.

Meier (2009) suggests that acting out stories to children by using different tones, language, expression and actions makes the story more appealing and understandable for all different styles of learners. She believes that practitioners and parents need to adapt their voice when a story contains a scary or upsetting part, so the children get to understand how to control fear. Neaum (2012) says children engage in language play when we alter our tone of voice, pitch, rhythm and speed. Language play also encourages children to interact more, and it enhances their exposure to different ways of using languages as well as helping them to recognise and respond to various types of words. Furthermore, Neaum (2012) claims that children who are exposed to onomatopoeia in the early years have a more increased knowledge of phonological awareness as they have learnt different experiences of sounds and language. good section

Miller and Pennycuff (2008) believe by actively engaging the children in the storytelling can enhance their reading comprehension as they start to make sense of the story and begin to understand the story. They also claim that it supports children's writing skills due to them being exposed to new vocabulary. Hibbin (2016) believes that there is not enough emphasis of onomatopoeia and adults concentrate more on reading and writing but expressing words in a meaningful manner is very educational and can help children with their writing skills. Charles and Boyle (2014) agree with this and claim that when reading aloud to children and expressing different sounds, gestures and movements it can help children to engage with written text and strengthen their writing skills.

Cicerchia (2021) suggests that using sensory material, images and sounds when reading can help children with their writing and drawing skills as they get to express their feelings in text, and it also improves their fine motor skills. Mages (2020) says to be a good storyteller you need to captivate the audience by being a performer and getting the children to engage in the story. She believes that this practice promotes children's listening skills, helps problem solving and gives them a sense of belonging. yes, good section

According to Bower (2014), rhymes and repetition in stories encourage children in a variety of ways. Rhymes can help children engage in language play without fear of failure with words, and children who have excellent initial rhyming skills often became better speakers and readers. Crystal (2001) agrees with this and is convinced that children who learn nursery rhymes in the early years, progressed further in literacy skills later in life. He believes that rhymes help children focus on the development of pronunciation, also known as language play.

The National Literacy Trust (2017) believe that narrating rhymes and songs to babies is a good starting point to learn language skills. It encourages communication and provides an important introduction for new vocabulary. Goswami and Bryant (2007) maintain that children's understanding of rhymes are acquired prior to literacy, and that rhyme is not only essential for learning about phonemes but also for learning

numbers. Peter (2020) also agrees, stating that children notice the structure of language and sounds when adults sing in rhymes.

Children understand words more effectively when adults make up rhymes and songs. If repetition is incorporated into rhymes, children have opportunities to use all their senses that can help them learn new words in a fun manner (Communication Trust, 2012). The Welsh Government (2015) states how important it is to include rhyme and alliteration as part of Wales' play-based curriculum (the Foundation Phase). They believe it helps children to memorise words and understand what words mean, and repeated words in rhymes helps children learn phonemes. Harper (2011) adds that adults who include nursery rhymes in their practice helps improve children's awareness of rhyme. In addition, teaching children new sound patterns helps with the development of writing, reading and spelling skills. yes, this is really interesting and good

Children who are exposed to rhymes and songs have an increased knowledge of phonemes. This knowledge enhances children's language acquisition and development, expands their vocabulary and it encourages them to interact and engage with different aspects of language (Neaum, 2012). Meier (2009) claims that rhymes can help children learn to draw. She says that it can bring their imagination to life and helps them to understand what the story was about.

Donaldson (2015) claims that reading is an essential part of a curriculum. He states that in order for children to learn to write then they must first begin the 'basics', which is discussing the stories, repeating sounds and rhymes so the children understand the meaning before they begin to write about it.

Luo et al. (2014) suggest children's narrative skills improve if they are encouraged to interact during storytelling. Brock and Rankin (2008) add that children enjoy hearing stories several times. They pay particular attention to the repetition and enjoy being asked questions as it encourages them to get involved. Book Trust (2019) point out that by asking questions throughout stories allows children to help deal with fears, worries or emotions. Storytelling also gives children an opportunity to talk and discover how books and stories work. Wellcomm (2017) states that it is always important to ask questions to the children and incorporate this in the storytelling, so they become familiar with concepts. While Miller and Pennycuff (2008) states that children have a more enhanced experience of literature when adults use questions throughout the story.

Millard and Gaunt (2018) suggest that asking children questions supports various stages of learning and improves cognitive development. The Welsh Government (2015) also believe it is important to ask questions throughout the storytelling so that children identify the purpose of the story and understand it more in depth. By asking open-ended questions, children may be able to relate to their own experiences and demonstrate that they understand what has been read to them. Children will then begin to recognise the language associated with writing. Meier (2009) suggests that children become more engaged in the story if

you ask open-ended questions as this allows children to discuss and express their feeling about the story, which consequently develops their vocabulary.

To conclude, storytelling as a means of supporting children with language delay can be a very effective strategy the secret. Storytelling not only improves children's language and literacy skills but can also improve children's mental health and well-being. It allows children to feel valued and interact with others. Reading with children is an enjoyable activity for all involved, which helps them to stimulate their imagination and expands their knowledge of the world, by telling them true stories about their family can make them feel involved and gain a better understanding of their heritage.

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