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Generational Differences in Oral Storytelling in Trinidad

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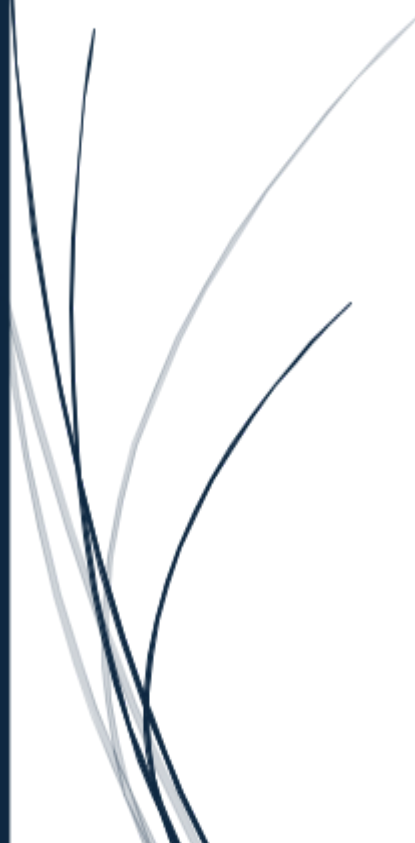


LING3099 – Special
Project in Linguistics

Generational Differences in Oral Storytelling in Trinidad

LING3099 Special Project in
Linguistics

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates generational differences in oral storytelling practices in Trinidad, focusing on linguistic features, communicative impact, and perceptions of storytelling purpose. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from thirty-seven participants across three generational groups: Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Data collection involved questionnaires, recorded storytelling sessions, and field observations, which were analysed using both quantitative frequency analysis and discourse analysis.

The findings reveal clear generational variation in storytelling style. Generation X narratives are characterised by slower speech, longer pauses, and detailed, performative structures rooted in oral tradition. Millennials demonstrate a hybrid style, balancing traditional and modern features. Generation Z narratives are shorter, faster paced, and more expressive, with increased use of fillers and hybrid language forms influenced by digital communication. These differences were shown to affect intergenerational understanding, particularly in perceptions of fluency, clarity, and narrative effectiveness.

Despite these differences, storytelling remains a vital means of communication, cultural expression, and social connection. The study concludes that storytelling in Trinidad is not declining but evolving, adapting to changing sociocultural and technological contexts while maintaining its core communicative functions.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

All cultures possess storytelling traditions. Whether expressed through folktales, myths, fables, or legends, storytelling is an artform as old as time that human beings have universally used to make sense of the world around them (Palacios 44; see Pellowski, and Cheshire). In the Caribbean, oral storytelling has historically been a major component of everyday life (Stephenson 3), and in many families and communities it remains a valued tradition (Corsbie; Maharaj-Dube). However, the way stories are being told has changed across generations, evolving with technology, social movements, and shifting cultural values (Choo, et al 46; Palacios 47).

In Trinidad and Tobago, oral storytelling has historically been a central part of everyday life, particularly through traditions such as Anansi stories. Now, in Trinidad, where those stories were once told face to face surrounded by loved ones, storytelling practices and language have now been influenced by United States (U.S)-influenced digital media and entertainment (Kelley 5). This has shaped how stories are created, told, and received. Younger generations express themselves through memes, short videos, and references rather than the structured and culturally embedded narratives characteristic of traditional Anansi storytelling. narratives. These forms retain the entertainment factor of traditional storytelling but diverge from the communal and moral aspect often associated with older generations' storytelling styles.

Palacios says that digital storytelling can empower new voices (47–48) but may also weaken the intergenerational transmission of linguistic heritage and traditional forms (49). In Trinidad, the influence of international English-language media on vocabulary, humour,

accent, et cetera, has led to younger narrators adopting language patterns shaped by global English-language culture rather than only national or regional linguistic norms. This shift has contributed to what scholars call a generation gap, “a term popularized in the 1960s, [that] describes the disconnect between different generations, particularly as they reach adulthood and experience distinct social and cultural environments” (Mercadal). This has resulted in differing storytelling styles among generations, that not only vary in delivery and medium but reflect deeper changes in cultural values and identity. It therefore aligns with the sociolinguistic theory that language is a social practice that undergoes variation as a result of several factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, social class, et cetera (Nordquist).

1.2 Statement of Problem

The rise of global media and digital culture has influenced younger speakers’ vocabulary and style, causing a disconnect between generations in communication and shared storytelling traditions. While changes in storytelling modality, such as the shift from face-to-face narration to digital formats, have altered how stories are delivered, these changes are closely tied to shifts in language use. As storytelling moves into digital spaces, younger speakers increasingly adopt U.S.-influenced linguistic patterns, which further contributes to generational differences in storytelling style.

Existing studies on oral storytelling have largely explored its cultural or historical importance (Stephenson; Sindoni), and how to preserve the knowledge passed down (Palacios). There is, however, limited understanding of how and why storytelling practices and style vary across generations and what these differences mean for the transmission and preservation of cultural values, as well as intergenerational communication through language differences, and cultural preservation specifically in the English-official Caribbean region. This study addresses the problem that there is insufficient research examining how the shift

from traditional, face-to-face storytelling to digitally mediated forms has contributed to generational differences in storytelling practices, including language use, vocabulary choice, and speech patterns, and a growing disconnect in communication and shared cultural experiences. Understanding these changes is important because storytelling not only entertains but also shapes language use, values, relationships, and community identity.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how and why oral storytelling styles differ across generations specifically in Trinidad. The study aims to investigate the linguistic and cultural factors that influence these differences and to understand what they reveal about changing language use and how that affects values, identity, and communication practices within families and communities. By exploring the linguistic aspects of storytelling techniques of both older and younger narrators, this research seeks to shed light on how evolving language use, such as changes in vocabulary, expression, and narrative style, affects the preservation of oral traditions and intergenerational understanding.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What linguistic and stylistic features characterise the storytelling of older versus younger narrators, and what sociocultural factors influence these differences?
2. How do differences in storytelling language and style affect communication and understanding between older and younger generations?
3. How do storytellers from different generations perceive the purpose of storytelling?

1.5 Rationale

Oral storytelling has long been part of the foundation of Caribbean and, by extension, Trinidadian, culture. It has served as a way to impart moral and educational lessons in communities, values, and created a linguistic and cultural identity in the Caribbean for

generations (Stephenson 3; Kelley 6, 8). However, the traditional modes of storytelling have undergone a significant transformation with the expansion of digital media and globalisation (Johnson), leading to noticeable differences in how older and younger generations utilise language, convey meaning, and construct narratives (Panjaitan and Patria 56, 57).

This study is moved by the desire to understand how exactly the language use of individuals has changed between generations, and how that change affects the preservation and transmission of cultural identity, through storytelling. Existing literature readily highlights the cultural, and historical importance of oral traditions (Stephenson; Sindoni; Palacios; Maharaj-Dube), yet few explore how shifts in language, technology and performance style have reshaped these traditions in a modern Caribbean context. In Trinidad, as in most of the Caribbean, the way a person speaks, and how they tell stories is deeply intertwined with social identity, and the shifts displayed between generations may reveal broader patterns of adaptation and evolution, both linguistically and culturally.

By employing discourse analysis as well as field observations, this study hopes to capture both the structural and performative aspects of oral storytelling. Discourse analysis will allow for the examination of how language is used to construct meaning, identity and shared values (Phillips and Hardy 11, 18), while the field observations will provide insight into how storytelling is affected by the environment. The inclusion of a triangulation method further enhances validity, ensuring that findings are cross-checked across multiple data sources.

This research ultimately contributes to the understanding of the evolution of storytelling in Trinidad, as both a linguistic and cultural practice. It highlights how generational differences in storytelling reflect changes in language, communication, values, and the

transmission of culture, offering insights for future efforts in linguistic and cultural preservation, education, and the appreciation of Caribbean oral traditions.

1.6 Significance of Study

This study is significant in that it explores an aspect of oral storytelling that is often overlooked, namely, how generational shifts in language use influences the way culture is expressed, transmitted, and understood within families and communities. In Trinidad, as in most of the Caribbean, storytelling has been a means of moral education, entertainment, and the preservation of cultural identity (Stephenson 2, 3; Kelley 3, 5). However, as younger generations increasingly use digital media and are exposed to external linguistic forms (Abdullah, et al 64), the nature of storytelling is shifting from oral performance to multimedia expression.

Understanding the impact of these technological shifts on oral storytelling is important as this provides insight into how communication styles and language use evolve alongside technology and globalisation. Secondly, the study highlights how changing storytelling styles impact intergenerational relationships, especially how older and younger speakers connect, interpret meaning, and pass on cultural values. Finally, this study may contribute to efforts in cultural preservation and education by identifying which elements of traditional storytelling remain resilient and which are being lost or adapted.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review examines major scholarly works that highlight oral storytelling, understood in this study to be distinct from written narratives and musical or sung forms, as a linguistic, cultural, and performative practice. Four major themes are centred, namely, the centrality of performance in oral storytelling (Dorson; Kaye; Sanatan), the tension between orality and literacy (James; Dorson), methodological differences in studying oral storytelling, and the interconnection of linguistic identity and generational change (Belahcen and Ouahmiche; Sanatan). In doing so, the review considers storytelling within both contemporary contexts and traditional folklore forms, recognising the continued influence of oral traditions on present-day narrative practices. Altogether, the sources aim to support an investigation into the change in storytelling styles across generations in Trinidad.

2.1 Overview, Evaluation, Relevance

Oral storytelling is represented across the five selected sources: Marilyn Kaye's *Storytelling: A Review Article*, Richard Dorson's *Folklore: Selected Essays*, Cynthia James' *From Orature to Literature in Jamaican and Trinidadian Children's Folk Traditions*, Amílcar Sanatan's interview with Trinidadian storyteller Paul Keens-Douglas, and Belahcen and Ouahmiche's "An Investigation of Language Variation and Change among Three Age Groups."

Marilyn Kaye emphasises that storytelling has historically functioned as a central cultural process through which societies "amused, taught, and communicated with each other," highlighting its social and communicative roles beyond narrative transmission. Similarly, Richard Dorson, in his Chapter 4 ("Oral Styles of American Folk Narrators"), establishes that

storytelling is shaped by individual performance styles, reinforcing the idea that oral narratives are dynamic and dependent on a storyteller's interaction with an audience.

In the context of the Commonwealth Caribbean, Cynthia James shows that oral traditions exist in a continuous relationship with written forms, where “cross-fertilization” occurs between orature and literature, leading to hybrid cultural expressions shaped by historical and social conditions. Likewise, Sanatan's interview with Paul Keens-Douglas highlights the importance of performance and language, particularly the use of “nation language” and code-switching, in preserving Caribbean identity and reflecting everyday social realities.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Belahcen and Ouahmiche argue that language is constantly changing and influenced by social factors such as age, community, and interaction, suggesting that storytelling practices will naturally reflect generational and social variation.

In these sources, oral storytelling is shown to not simply be a means of entertainment, or narrative transmission, but a deeply cultural, performative, and linguistically dynamic practice that is shaped by the historical, generational, and contextual environment in which it exists. The materials examined range from studies of folklore in the Caribbean in particular and the Americas in general, to Caribbean literary scholarship, and sociolinguistics. All of these collectively illustrate the multifaceted nature of oral tradition, such as its dynamicity and adaptiveness. The sources also highlight the tensions that define how storytelling is recorded, understood, evaluated, and transformed over time. These tensions are particularly relevant for analysing contemporary generational differences in Trinidadian oral storytelling, where performance, cultural identity, and linguistic variation intersect to uniquely shape the way stories are told.

A primary foundation for understanding storytelling as a medium of oral performance comes from Chapter 4 of Richard Dorson's *Folklore: Selected Essays* entitled "Oral Styles of American Folk Narrators", which argues that oral storytelling cannot be meaningfully separated from its performance elements. Aspects such as pacing, rhythm repetition, formulaic expressions, gesture, intonation, and strategic pauses all serve as essential conveyors of meaning. Through the stylistic analysis of the oral narratives of seven individual narrators of varying ethnicities, races, and backgrounds over several years, the author demonstrates that oral storytelling is fundamentally a stylistic and embodied craft.

Rather than treating stories as static texts, Dorson emphasises that the storyteller actively shapes the tale in relation to the audience, the occasion, and cultural norms. He shows that even short storytelling genres like jests and anecdotes employ structured oral artistry through dialogue, timing, and repetitions designed to achieve comedic or dramatic effect (Dorson 126, 127). This inability to separate the story from the teller shows that these features are unique to the individual storyteller and serves as a means of identification. This identification can be characteristic of the individual and possibly the generation that they come from, which is what this study aims to discover.

Although urban American folklore differs from the modern Caribbean context, the means of documenting and the findings of the analysis undergone are similar enough for the method and findings to be transferred with the help of a few adjustments. Dorson also identifies the inherent difficulty of the transcription of oral narratives, such as silent intervals, intonational contours, and gestural cues, all of which are central features of oral style, but are unrecordable on the page. This highlights an essential tension within oral storytelling research: the oral event is fleeting, and any attempt to document it risks distorting its full expressive quality. However, this book was written in 1972 and the technology in which to

document has greatly progressed since the intervening half-century to the present. Therefore, although non-verbal features and audience interaction cannot be transcribed orthographically in the same manner as lexical items, the means to capture them visually are possible and they can be systematically annotated within the transcription to ensure a fuller representation of the storytelling event. These features could be coded through the use of symbols and orthographic variations such as capitalisation.

Marilyn Kaye's 1979 "Storytelling: A Review Article" similarly treats oral storytelling as a performance. Here she presents storytelling as a universal human practice embedded in voice, gesture, audience interaction, and communal values. She treats storytelling as an oral performance but approaches it through a historical review of storytelling manuals from the late 19th century to the 1970s (Kaye 66) rather than ethnographic fieldwork. In her review, she identifies four consistent core principles of storytelling, namely the rationale and function of storytelling, which all agreed was "to give joy", careful selection of material, preparation without memorisation, and performance marked by expressive control, wherein she concludes that storytellers across cultures rely heavily on the use of voice, gesture, eye contact, and controlled pacing to engage audiences.

Although the manuals reviewed by Kaye focus largely on institutional settings, they nevertheless emphasise that oral storytelling depends on expressiveness, spontaneity, and learned rather than memorised understanding of the narrative (Kaye 67–9). Her comparative analysis shows that while manuals universally stress the importance of clear delivery and cultivated voice, they tend to exhibit caution regarding dialect use when it comes to the telling of foreign or ethnic stories. The review is limited to its era and so somewhat dated, and so technological, digital, and multimedia storytelling forms are not considered. However, the text briefly addresses how television has influenced children to become a more visually

oriented audience and how this affects their response to oral storytelling (Kaye 70), foreshadowing current concerns about the influence of multimedia on oral performance.

The article by Kaye helps situate my study within the broader scholarship on storytelling and legitimises storytelling as a serious cultural practice worthy of analysis reinforcing the conceptual framework of performance-based orality. Kaye's review provides a foundational conceptual layer that storytelling is not just content but performance, cultural identity, and communal memory. However, the research will need to build on this foundation through the usage of Caribbean-specific contexts, generational change, and the impact of digitisation or modern media.

The questions of cultural voice and narrative evolution are explored in depth in Cynthia James' 2005 article, "From Orature to Literature in Jamaican and Trinidadian Children's Folk Traditions." James situates oral storytelling within the Commonwealth Caribbean sociocultural history which was shaped by colonial literacy, Creole linguistic development, migration, and educational change. She describes three historical phases: the first, "The Documentation-Literacy" phase (to the 1970s), reflects a period in which oral traditions were recorded under colonial influence but often devalued, as formal education privileged English and written forms, leading to the marginalisation of Creole-based storytelling. The second phase, "The Reclamation of the Oral Voice" (1970s–1990s), marks a cultural shift in which Caribbean movements reasserted the value of Creole language and oral performance, positioning storytelling as a site of cultural identity, resistance, and authenticity. The third phase, "The Fusion" phase (1990s onward), reflects the transformation of storytelling into hybrid oral-literary and multimedia forms, where oral traditions interact with print, performance, and modern technologies, demonstrating their adaptability within contemporary contexts.

Each of the phases identified by James has direct relevance to this study, especially with regard to what differences may be seen in storytelling practices among generations. The Documentation-Literacy phase gives a reason as to why older storytellers may exhibit a disconnect between Standard English and English-related Creole, as storytelling during this period was influenced by formal education systems that prioritised written forms and often sidelined oral expression. As a result, narratives from this generation may appear more structured, less overtly performative, or shaped by text-based traditions. The Reclamation phase is significant in highlighting a shift toward valuing Creole language and oral performance as central to Caribbean identity. Storytellers influenced by this period are more likely to emphasise expressive features such as rhythm, humour, audience interaction, and the deliberate use of Creole, allowing this study to examine storytelling as both a linguistic and performative act. The Fusion phase is particularly relevant for understanding younger storytellers, whose narratives may reflect the blending of oral tradition with literary forms, media influences, and contemporary modes of expression. This phase accounts for greater experimentation, adaptability, and the incorporation of modern structures into storytelling.

Of particular relevance to oral storytelling is James' insistence that Caribbean narratives are transmitted, not only through written or taught forms, but through the dynamic interactions of family members, elders, and community storytellers. In her analysis, children's storytelling functions as a cultural educator, with oral stories providing moral lessons, cultural memory, and linguistic grounding (James 167). Her examples from Trinidadian and Jamaican texts reveal how oral forms adapt to reflect contemporary issues while preserving the rhythms, humour, and worldview embedded in Creole orality (James 165, 174). Though focused on children's narratives, James' framework highlights how oral storytelling in the Caribbean is both fluid and deeply rooted in Creole identity (165) which is a necessary insight for analysing generational storytelling practices in Trinidad. It also shows

the various influences that have affected the possible storytelling styles of the people in Trinidad. When older ones have had stories written down in (Standard) English but told to them in Creole, such as Anansi stories like “How the Crab Got a Crack on its Back,” “Trouble Made Monkey Eat Pepper,” and “The Monkey and the Alligator”, it begs the question “which are they more likely to use in their storytelling?”

The cultural, performative, and linguistic dimensions highlighted by Dorson, Kaye, and James become tactile and grounded through Amílcar Sanatan’s interview with Trinidadian storyteller Paul Keens-Douglas. In this conversation, Keens-Douglas offers a rare first-person account of oral storytelling practice in Trinidad, articulating how he uses Nation Language or Trinidadian English Creole, rhythm, comedic timing, and audience engagement to animate his stories. He discusses how pioneers like Louise “Miss Lou” Bennett-Coverley influenced his stylistic embrace of Creole and how his own work helped legitimise spoken Creole as an artistic medium (Sanatan 4). His reflections confirm Dorson’s argument that oral storytelling is best understood as performance as Keens-Douglas emphasises the importance of tone, delivery, and interaction, noting that he often revises his stories based on how they sound and feel in performance before committing them to print. He also comments directly on generational change, observing that younger performers integrate multimedia, contemporary slang, and new rhythmic structures into their storytelling. This intergenerational comparison is crucial, as it demonstrates that storytelling style is elastic and responsive to social change. While the interview is anecdotal, it remains an invaluable cultural artefact that anchors theoretical discussions in the lived reality of Trinidadian oral tradition.

The 2017 sociolinguistic study “An Investigation of Language Variation and Change among Three Age Groups” by Belahcen and Ouahmiche provides a complement by

examining generational linguistic variation through quantitative methodology. Although conducted in Algeria, its relevance lies in its methodological model: linguistic forms used by younger speakers differ systematically from those of older speakers, reflecting social, educational, and ideological pressures. The study uses apparent-time comparison, participant observation, and statistical analysis to demonstrate language change in progress (Belahcen and Ouahmiche 25). This approach ended up showing clear differences and variation within the community between older and younger generations and attempts to explain the social meaning of that variation (Belahcen and Ouahmiche 33, 34). The researchers when discovering this variation seemed to show an almost disdain towards the younger speakers for their lack of “traditional” linguistic usage, mentioning that the younger speakers “submit to the pressures of the peer group” in order to fit in and seem more prestigious in their language use. This empirical approach complements the qualitative emphasis of the other sources by offering tools to analyse how variation manifests in real time.

The researchers also acknowledged the difficulty of “scientifically and adequately” determining how social factors “such as ethnicity, social class, and illiteracy” impact the study when they are not socially structured in the context of the study (Belahcen and Ouahmiche 34). Though the study focuses on linguistic variables rather than narrative performance, its findings have clear implications for oral storytelling. Specifically, if generational linguistic differences exist across communities, then generational differences in oral storytelling style, such as lexicon, rhythm, discourse markers, and performance strategies, are also to be expected. Thus, while culturally distant, the study offers transferrable methods for examining generational shifts in oral performance in Trinidad.

2.2 Synthesis: Patterns, Tensions, Gaps

When combined and looked at through an analytic lens, the sources reveal several major thematic patterns. First, they illustrate the centrality of performance in oral storytelling. Kaye's review demonstrates that storytelling has always been a live, interactive, rhythmic, gesture-driven art form, shaped by the relationship between teller and audience. She identifies global patterns, such as ritual openings, mimicry, and call-and-response, which characterise storytelling across cultures (Kaye 66). Dorson expands on this by providing specific analytic detail on oral styles structured techniques such as pacing, voice modulation, formulaic expressions, repetition, and paralinguistic cues to organise narrative flow and manage audience engagement, and Keens-Douglas' discussion of rhythm, voice, and audience interaction (Sanatan 6, 12–15) positions Caribbean storytelling as both art and social practice. It becomes clear that oral storytelling derives meaning from performance rather than from narrative text alone. Oral storytelling is participatory, culturally grounded, and improvisational. James' account of Creole-speaking children's storytelling confirms that Caribbean orality has always been performative, rooted in physicality, which goes further than what writing can capture. This provides my study with the analytic vocabulary needed for this study, specifically, concepts such as pacing, voice modulation, audience interaction, and the use of paralinguistic features. All of these will be used as categories of analysis to evaluate how older versus younger Trinidadian storytellers differ in delivery, pacing, and performative choices.

Second, the sources collectively highlight a persistent tension between orality and literacy. Dorson critiques the inability of transcription to capture oral nuance (Dorson 107), while Keens-Douglas describes the political and creative difficulty of writing Creole speech, stating that not everybody will agree on a spelling but "This is how our language develops" and you must simply put it to paper first (Sanatan 5, 6). James shows how early Creole stories

were stripped of their oral texture through Standard English encoding and focused “alphabetic and functional literacy objectives” (James 166), and Kaye documents how memorisation of words and story beats sometimes erase the complexity and spontaneity of a storytelling, making for a stilted performance (Kaye 69). These tensions reveal how writing often becomes a site of cultural negotiation as oral stories, when moved into print, risk being flattened by external norms of correctness, prestige, or institutional expectation.

A third theme involves methodological differences in studying oral storytelling. Dorson and Keens-Douglas represent deeply qualitative approaches, viewing storytelling as art and cultural expression, while the Algerian study by Belahcen and Ouahmiche provides quantitative tools to analyse generational variation. This contrast exposes a larger disciplinary divide. Oral storytelling is simultaneously a cultural practice that demands interpretive methods and a linguistic event that can be measured empirically. Studying generational differences in Trinidadian storytelling therefore requires methodological pluralism, drawing from both performance analysis and sociolinguistic variation.

Fourth, the sources emphasise linguistic identity and generational change, though each from a distinct cultural standpoint. Algeria’s younger speakers shift toward modern prestige forms, while Creole-speaking Caribbean storytellers are reclaiming Creole as a marker of cultural legitimacy and decolonial pride. However, this is shown to be in older individuals in the Caribbean. Studies have not been thoroughly conducted on Creole use by the younger ones in the Caribbean born in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Keens-Douglas’ comments on younger storytellers’ evolving styles further confirm that oral storytelling reflects generational identity; he says that younger performers are more multimedia-driven, faster, and more rhythmically aligned with contemporary popular culture.

James' historical phases show that such change is not new but part of a longer trajectory in which Caribbean oral traditions continually adapt to new linguistic and cultural pressures.

This study will aim to address several gaps identified in the literature. Firstly, while existing research often treats storytelling as either a performative practice (Kaye; Dorson; Sanatan), or as a tracker of linguistic variation (Belahcen and Ouahmiche), there are limited works that merge these ideas. This study will therefore combine these perspectives to allow for a deeper understanding of oral storytelling. Secondly, although generational change is acknowledged there is little focus on how storytelling differs across generations, particularly in Trinidad, this study will provide a comparative analysis of three generations of Trinidadians. This analysis will consider the influence of digital media on storytelling practices, particularly its shaping of narrative structures and pacing among speakers. The study will treat storytelling as a multimodal practice and explores how its function may be shifting with generations.

2.2.1 Tensions across Sources

Kaye and Dorson rely largely on American frameworks for storytelling performance, while James and Keens-Douglas (Sanatan) represent Caribbean English Creole, postcolonial, and hybrid storytelling traditions. This allows for my study to have the analytic tools necessary to describe performance features and be adapted to Caribbean cultural realities. Another gap is shown in earlier works such as Kaye's and Dorson's which focus on oral traditions untouched by digital influence. James and Keens-Douglas acknowledge that Caribbean storytelling is now a blend of orality, literacy, and media, with modern younger storytellers drawing from social media, video culture, and online humour, all areas not present in older literature as these issues did not exist at the time, but that will play a major role in the data collected from this study.

2.2.2 Gaps

While the sociolinguistic situation of Trinidad is relatively well-documented, particularly in relation to its multilingual history, the interaction between Trinidadian English and Trinidadian English Creole, and patterns of variation within the theoretical Creole continuum (Ferreira; Durgasingh), the multimodal performance features of storytelling, specifically how generational shifts in technology affect narrative rhythm, remain under-researched. There is currently no integrated study that combines performance analysis with sociolinguistics in the Caribbean, leaving a significant gap in understanding how storytelling functions both as a linguistic and performative practice. Likewise, no known research has examined generational differences in storytelling within Trinidad, despite clear cultural shifts that suggest such comparisons would be valuable, and all sources collectively implying such variation exists. Additionally, the influence of digital media on storytelling remains unaddressed in accessible sources, even though digital platforms now play a significant role in how stories are shared and consumed. As a result, current youth narrative identity and performance patterns remain largely unexplored, highlighting the need for contemporary research that connects tradition, media, and youth expression.

2.3 Implications for Present Study

The synthesis of the literature highlights several methodological, theoretical, and analytical implications that directly shape the design of this project. The study will adopt a performance-based approach to oral storytelling, drawing from Dorson's emphasis on oral stylism. His work demonstrates that the stylistic features distinguishing older and younger narrators cannot be understood through transcription alone but must be observed in all its physicality. This justifies the use of field notes and visual data collection in the present study to capture the non-verbal and paralinguistic elements that written text cannot capture.

The project will also follow both James and Keens-Douglas (Sanatan) in treating storytelling as an expression of identity, community values, and linguistic pride. Their insights emphasise that generational differences in storytelling reflect broader cultural and historical movements, supporting the analysing of how older and younger narrators perceive the purpose of storytelling. Sociolinguistic variation methods will also be utilised, inspired by Belahcen and Ouahmiche, in order to examine how linguistic choices correlate with age, identity, and sociocultural pressures.

Practices that will be avoided include relying solely on written transcripts, as both Dorson and Keens-Douglas (Sanatan) demonstrate that transcription does not convey the crucial stylistic and affective features of oral storytelling. Instead, audio-visual recordings, field notes, and multimodal observation will be used to preserve the integrity of the oral performance, as well as special orthographic markings on the transcription that will show paralinguistic features for easier analysis. The study will also avoid western or prescriptive storytelling norms, which Kaye's review shows often promote standardised performance expectations and stilted results from the storyteller both of which would distort the analysis and undermine the study's cultural validity.

Overall, the study will adopt methods that highlight performance, cultural context, and linguistic variation, while avoiding approaches that flatten oral storytelling into written, standardised, or decontextualised forms. This ensures that the analysis remains sensitive to the lived realities of Trinidadian storytellers and capable of answering the central research questions concerning generational differences in style, communication, and purpose.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs the use of a mixed-methods approach, wherein both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilised. The utilisation of a comprehensive questionnaire, accounts for the quantitative data captured and the conduction of individual storytelling sessions combined with observational field notes accounts for the qualitative data. Quantitative data were also pulled from frequency tables created for various linguistic and paralinguistic features captured during the storytelling sessions.

The study draws on discourse analysis and field observation to explore linguistic and stylistic differences in storytelling across generations. Discourse analysis focuses on how language shapes and maintains social reality not just reflects it. It helps researchers look beyond what is said and delves into how the meaning of the words is constructed through interaction, context and shared understandings (Phillips and Hardy 11, 18) making it an ideal means of analysing the findings of this study as it will show how different generations storytelling change to reflect their values and how they see the world. The use of field observations was an ideal complementary method for this study as it provided a comprehensive understanding of how storytelling functions in real life social settings, capturing tone, gestures, how audience feedback affects storytelling choices, and overall atmosphere (Kramer and Adams 458). The design focused on comparing how Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z narrate stories, what influences their styles, and how these styles reflect broader cultural and linguistic shifts in Trinidad. These generations were chosen to ensure a representative sample of the population across the different age groups, while ensuring that participants remained within active communicative and storytelling contexts. For example, if Baby Boomers were chosen, the year range would be from 1946 to 1964 with

the upper age range being 74–79 and if Generation Alpha were chosen, the year range would be 2013–present with the upper age range being 9–12, and the lower range being newborn to 4. A triangulation method was employed during analysis, integrating data from multiple collection methods to strengthen the credibility and validity of the findings. This was valuable for the study as it strengthened the credibility and validity of the findings by combining multiple methods and data sources rather than addressing them in isolation (Carter, et al).

Generation	Year Range	Age Range
Baby Boomer	1946–1964	62–80
Generation X	1965–1980	46–61
Millennial	1981–1996	30–45
Generation Z	1997–2012	14–29
Generation Alpha	2013 to present	Newborn to 13

Table 1: Generative Cohorts by Birth Year and Current Age Demographics

3.2 Data Sources

Data were collected from three main sources. The major source of data was transcripts of the storytelling session marked up to focus on linguistic and paralinguistic features, such as language use, pauses, gestures, and intonation. The second source was field observation notes taken during the storytelling session highlighting, the environment, persons present and paralinguistic features. The final source was a questionnaire given to all participants that gauged their digital engagement, social interaction patterns in childhood and presently, as well as language usage and storytelling background.

3.3 Sampling

3.3.1 Sampling Method

Quota sampling is a non-probability method where the chosen population is divided into subgroups and participants are selected to ensure representation (Alex). The population of this study was people in Trinidad, which was further divided into subgroups by age and gender.

3.3.2 Participants

Three generations were chosen for this study: Generation X (1965–1980), Millennials (1981–1996), and Generation Z (1997–2012) (Beresford Research). These generations were further broken down into three periods, the beginning five years, middle five years, and the ending six years. Originally, the intention was to choose six individuals from each period, totalling eighteen participants per generation and fifty-four participants in total. However, as the data collection began, it was quickly realised that this quantity was unsustainable for me as the researcher for two reasons: 1) participant recruitment proved to be difficult, as securing individuals willing to take part in the study was challenging, and 2) the substantial workload involved in transcribing and analysing data from fifty-four participants was not feasible to complete this research as a lone researcher in the timeframe available for this study. Eventually, it was decided that four individuals would be chosen from each of the three periods, totalling thirty-six participants.

Participants were native to Trinidad, either through birth, or through being raised in the country from infancy, or both. It was intended that two males and two females would make up the 4 persons in each grouping, totalling six males and six females in each generation, to represent the gender divide (49.4% male and 50.6% female) in Trinidad (United Nations). However, due to difficulty in sourcing appropriately aged individuals, there were relatively

disproportionate numbers of male and female participants within the generation groups. Generation X ended up having seven males and six females, Millennials seven males and five females, and Generation Z five males and seven females. Though the individual generations had a minimally unbalanced gender divide, the overall divide evened out, with the exception of the extra male in Generation X that led to a total of 19 male participants and 18 female participants and a 51.4% male and 48.6% female split overall.

It was most difficult to source individuals for the ending years of Generation Z leading to there only being two participants from this age group, one male and one female. There is also a missing female representation from the middle years of the Millennial generation.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Questionnaire

Participants completed a brief questionnaire (See Appendix) that gathered background information about their communication habits, storytelling experiences, and social environments. It sought to understand how often the individuals engage in storytelling, the contexts in which they share stories, and their use of language, particularly English Creole versus Standard English. It also asked about participants' digital media use, including screen time and social media engagement, in order to examine how these factors may influence storytelling style, structure, and delivery across different generations.

3.4.2 Storytelling Task

Each participant was asked to tell a narrative of their choosing. Some participants who were unsure of what to say received minimal prompting on what to express from either the researcher, or other people present in the room. At the end of each session the participant was asked the question "Why did you choose to tell me that story?" in an attempt to answer

research question three, “How do storytellers from different generations perceive the purpose of storytelling?”

Storytelling sessions took place at whichever venue was most convenient for the participants. Many of the sessions took place in various rooms on The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus when individuals had time between classes. Sessions also transpired at the private homes of both the participants and the researcher, as well as places of work and places of worship. During storytelling sessions, notes on setting, gestures, tone, audience response, and performance cues were taken.

All storytelling sessions were recorded using the researcher’s mobile phone. The device was positioned on a ring light or, in some cases, a phone stand to ensure stability and clear audio-visual capture. This setup allowed for consistent recording quality while remaining minimally intrusive, contributing to a more natural and comfortable environment for participants during their narratives.

Participants were accessed through community networks, such as religious gatherings, friends and family, and the researcher’s friends’ and family’s connections, with recording sessions beginning on the twenty-third of January 2026 and continuing until the twenty-eighth of March 2026. Permission from participants was obtained through a written consent form (see Appendix), given at the time of the session, and in some instances audio-visually.

3.5 Data Preparation

After collection, recordings were transcribed verbatim, including pauses, laughter, and other non-verbal but audible markers. This was done using multiple online transcription software such as videotranscriber.ai for most recordings and uniscribe.co for longer

recordings over one gigabyte. Manual transcription was also done to ensure accuracy. Paralinguistic features such as gestures were also coded for using the Jefferson Transcription System, a conversational analysis code used for looking at speech patterns. It involves annotating speech with the use of various symbols that code for details of performance, acts, texts, movement, interaction between persons, content, and context (University Transcriptions).

Following transcription, the data were organised and tabulated to facilitate systematic analysis. Quantitative measures such as speech rate, filler usage, word count, and narrative length were calculated and recorded for each participant. These variables were then grouped and compared across the three generational categories to identify patterns and differences in storytelling performance and linguistic behaviour. These variables were also compared between genders

3.6 Data Analysis

The data were analysed using both quantitative frequency analysis and discourse analysis.

3.6.1 Quantitative frequency analysis

Quantitative frequency analysis was conducted by calculating the frequency and distribution of selected linguistic features, including speech rate, filler usage, word count, and narrative length. These measures were compared across participants and generational groups using tabulated data to identify patterns in linguistic behaviour.

3.6.2 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis was applied to the transcripts to examine narrative structure, figurative language, code-switching, humour, and emotional tone. The analysis also considered performance-related features such as pacing, pauses, repetition, and delivery style

as represented in the transcripts. In addition, narratives were coded for thematic content based on recurring story purposes and motivations identified in the dataset, including entertainment, recollection of individual experiences, emotionally significant events, life lessons, and socially meaningful interactions. These themes were further supported by contextual “reason” categories, such as whether stories were shared because they were memorable, recent, impactful, or relevant to interpersonal relationships. Linguistic and narrative features were then systematically compared across the three generational groups to examine variation in storytelling practices.

Background data obtained from the questionnaire were used to contextualise the analysis of the transcripts. Variables examined included participants’ generational grouping, language use at home, storytelling exposure in, and current storytelling practices, including who participants tell stories to and in what settings. Additional variables such as digital media usage, including screen time, preferred platforms, and interaction with short-form or long-form content, were also considered in relation to storytelling style and delivery. These background factors were used to support the interpretation of linguistic and performative features observed in the transcripts. Linguistic and narrative features were then systematically compared across the three generational groups to examine variation in storytelling practices.

3.7 Ethics

There were several ethical considerations in the conduct of this study. First, participants’ age ranges were verified through self-report, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, both in written form and, in some cases, audio-visually, ensuring that individuals were aware of the purpose of the study and their role within it. Participants were also assured of confidentiality and anonymity, with identifying

information removed and replaced by coded labels (e.g., initials and generational markers), and all data stored securely on a password-protected device.

Special consideration was given to participants under the age of 18. For these individuals, parental or guardian permission was obtained in addition to the participant's consent, ensuring that ethical guidelines regarding research with minors were followed. Care was taken to ensure that younger participants fully understood the nature of the study and were comfortable participating.

Given that storytelling often involved personal experiences, including sensitive topics such as family events, trauma, or emotional memories, care was taken to ensure that participants were not pressured to share information they were uncomfortable with. Additionally, because sessions were recorded and conducted in natural social environments, attention was given to maintaining participants' comfort and minimising any sense of intrusion. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point and that all recordings would be deleted at the conclusion of the study.

3.8 Limitations/Scope

Despite its contributions, the study is subject to several limitations. First, participant recruitment proved to be challenging, resulting in a smaller sample size than originally intended and some imbalance in gender and age representation across generational groups. In particular, there was limited representation from certain age ranges, such as the younger end of Generation Z, which may affect the breadth of comparison. Two participants from Generation X were also unable to take the questionnaire leading to a slight lack of data

Second, the study relied on quota and convenience sampling through personal and community networks, which may introduce sampling bias and limit the generalisability of the

findings. As a qualitative study, the results are not intended to be statistically generalisable but rather to provide in-depth insight into storytelling practices within a specific context.

Additionally, the presence of recording equipment and the researcher may have influenced participants' behaviour, potentially affecting the naturalness of storytelling performance (observer effect). Some participants also showed hesitancy in being recorded, which may have impacted their level of expressiveness. Finally, the workload associated with transcription and analysis required the reduction of the original sample size, and as a single-researcher study, there is an inherent degree of subjectivity in the interpretation of the data, although efforts were made to minimise this through triangulation and reference to existing literature.

Chapter 4: Findings

The analysis of the dataset reveals clear quantitative and qualitative differences in storytelling patterns across Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. These differences are evident in speech rate, filler usage, narrative length, language use, lexical patterns, dialogue frequency, thematic focus, and communicative context, and are further supported by detailed patterns observed in the transcripts.

4.1 Speech Rate

Speech rate data (Figure 1) indicate that Millennials recorded the fastest average speech rate at approximately 2.80 words per second with fillers and 2.75 without, followed by Generation Z at 2.70 with fillers and 2.60 without, while Generation X recorded the lowest rate at 2.50 with fillers and 2.46 without. This pattern shows a clear difference in pacing across generations, with Millennials and Generation Z producing faster speech overall, and Generation X maintaining a slower rate of delivery. In addition to slower speech, Generation X speakers demonstrated the longest pauses within their narratives, often inserting noticeable gaps between clauses or ideas. These pauses contributed to a more segmented delivery style. In contrast, Generation Z speakers showed the shortest pauses, resulting in a more continuous and uninterrupted speech flow, with fewer breaks between ideas. Millennials again occupied an intermediate position, maintaining relatively fast speech while still incorporating some degree of pausing, though less pronounced than Generation X.

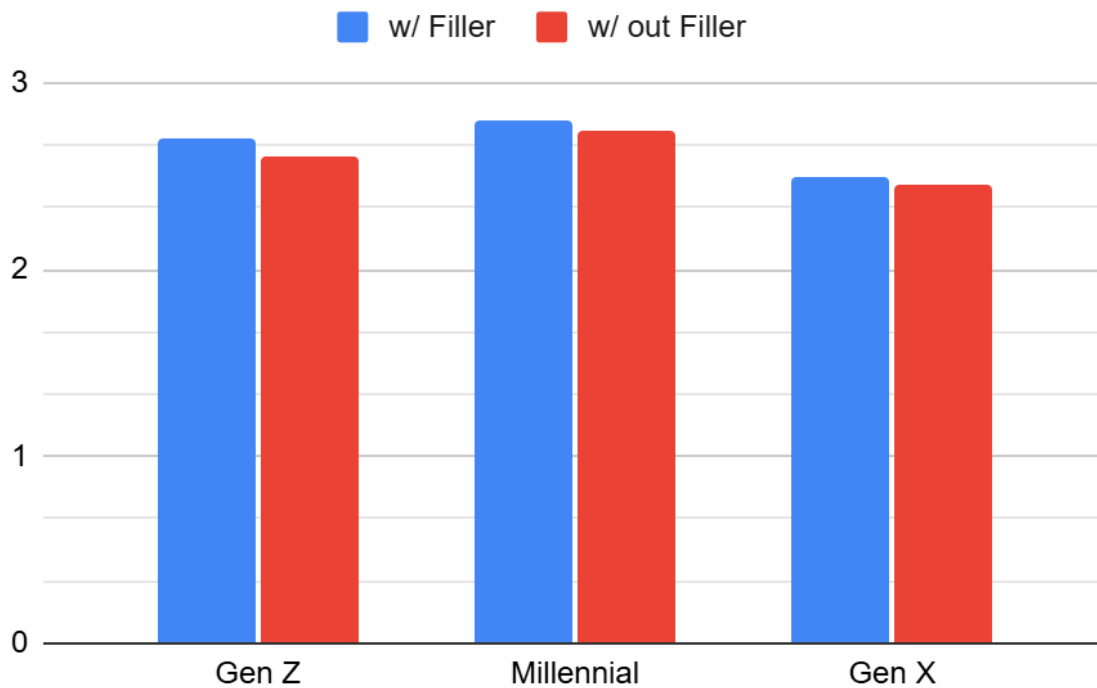


Figure 1: The Speech Rate of Each Generation

When speech rate is considered alongside pause behaviour, a distinction emerges between speed and continuity. Although Millennials had the highest overall speech rate, their slightly reduced rate when fillers were removed suggests that their speech contains measurable interruptions, even if less frequent than Generation Z. Generation Z, while slightly slower than Millennials in speed, maintained a more consistent flow due to shorter pauses, contributing to a more continuous delivery. Generation X, on the other hand, showed both slower speech and longer pauses, resulting in the least continuous speech pattern among the three groups.

Gender differences were also observed in relation to both speed and pausing patterns. Female speakers generally produced higher speech rates than male speakers, indicating faster delivery across narratives. At the same time, female speakers tended to produce fewer and shorter pauses, contributing to smoother and more continuous speech. Male speakers, by contrast, paused more frequently and for longer durations, which resulted in more segmented

narratives. These differences in pacing and pause distribution contributed to variation in overall speech flow across participants.

4.2 Filler Usage

Filler usage varied significantly across groups, with clear differences in both frequency and type. Generation Z recorded the highest average filler usage at 89 fillers, compared to 58 for Generation X and 42 for Millennials (Figure 2). This indicates that Generation Z relied more heavily on fillers throughout their narratives. Millennials recorded the lowest overall filler usage, suggesting comparatively more controlled speech production, while Generation X showed moderate use.

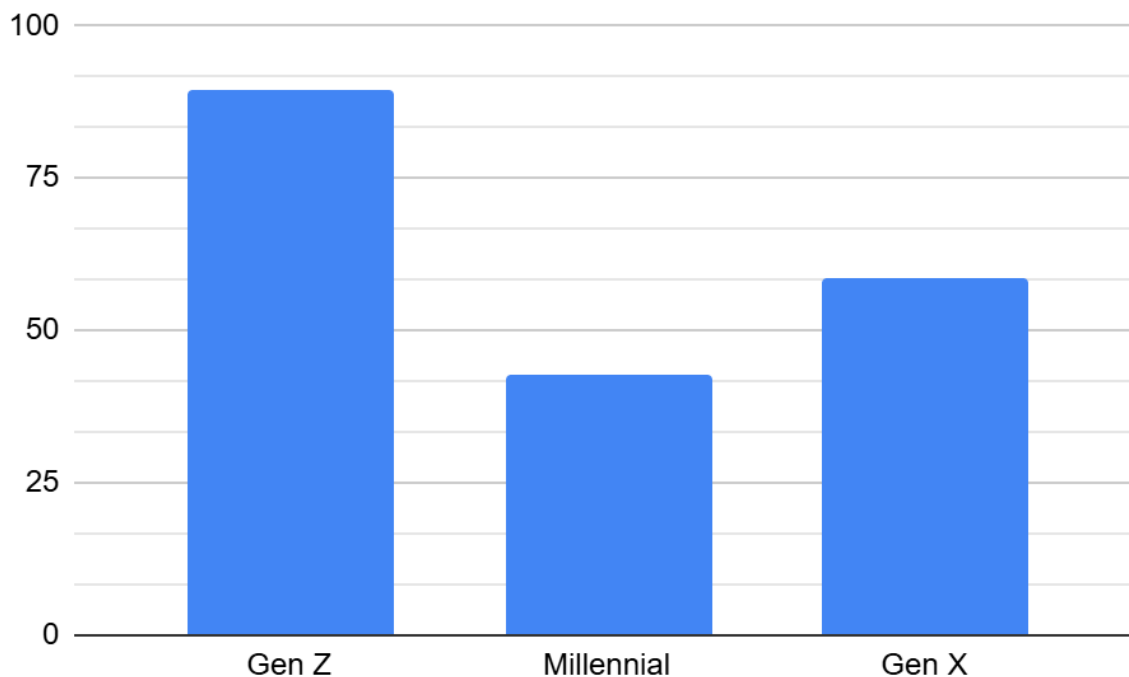


Figure 2: Average Filler Use by Generation

The most frequently used filler across was “like,”. In Generation Z narratives, “like” appeared repeatedly within single utterances and often occurred in clusters, functioning as a discourse marker to maintain flow or signal continuation. Generation Z’s use of “like”,

accounted for 76.4% of its usage across all generations at 252 instances (Figure 3) compared to Generation X's 35 and Millennials' 43. In contrast, Generation X and Millennials' filler usage was dominated by more traditional hesitation markers such as "um/am," "uh," and "you know." For both Generation X and Millennials "um/am" was the most frequent, at 116 and 88 instances, respectively (Figures 4 and 5). Their filler usage typically occurs at the beginning of clauses or before key information, indicating moments of planning or hesitation.

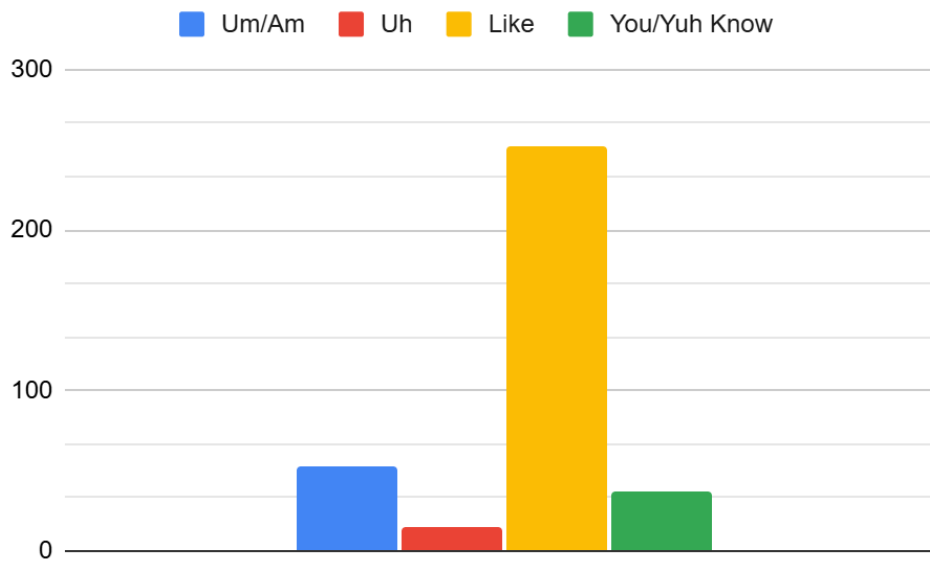


Figure 3: Filler Usage of Generation Z

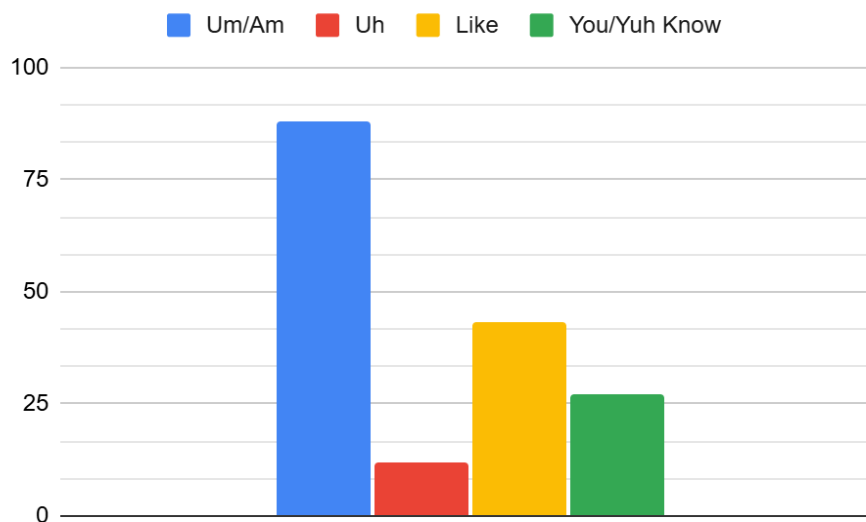


Figure 4: Filler Usage of Millennials

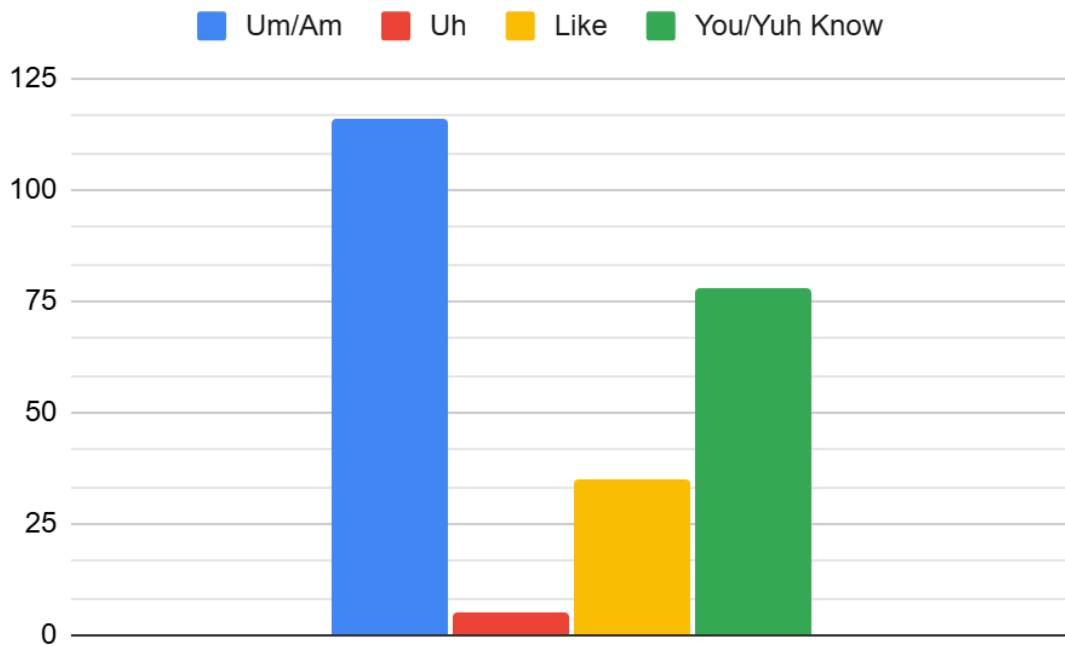


Figure 5: Filler Usage of Generation X

In addition to differences in frequency, variation was also observed in the type of disfluency strategies used. Generation X speakers often elongated words or sounds, such as extending vowels or pausing within words, instead of inserting explicit filler words. This resulted in fewer discrete filler tokens but still reflected hesitation or processing time. Generation Z speakers, by contrast, relied heavily on overt fillers, inserting them frequently within and between clauses, which contributed to a more continuous but filler-dense speech pattern. Millennials again occupied an intermediate position, using fillers less frequently overall and demonstrating a more balanced distribution between fillers and pauses.

Familiarity with the narrative content also appeared to influence filler usage. Across participants, stories that had been told before or were well known to the speaker generally contained fewer fillers, suggesting that reduced cognitive load and increased narrative familiarity resulted in smoother delivery. In contrast, less familiar or spontaneously constructed narratives showed higher filler frequency.

Gender differences were also evident in filler usage patterns. As seen in Figure 6, female speakers recorded higher overall filler usage compared to male speakers. These fillers were often used to maintain continuity and keep the narrative moving, particularly in faster-paced speech. Female speakers tended to use fillers such as “like” more frequently and consistently throughout their narratives. Male speakers, on the other hand, used fewer fillers but relied more on pauses and silence, often producing longer gaps between ideas. This resulted in a contrast where female narratives contained more fillers but maintained greater continuity, while male narratives contained fewer fillers but more noticeable pauses and breaks in speech.

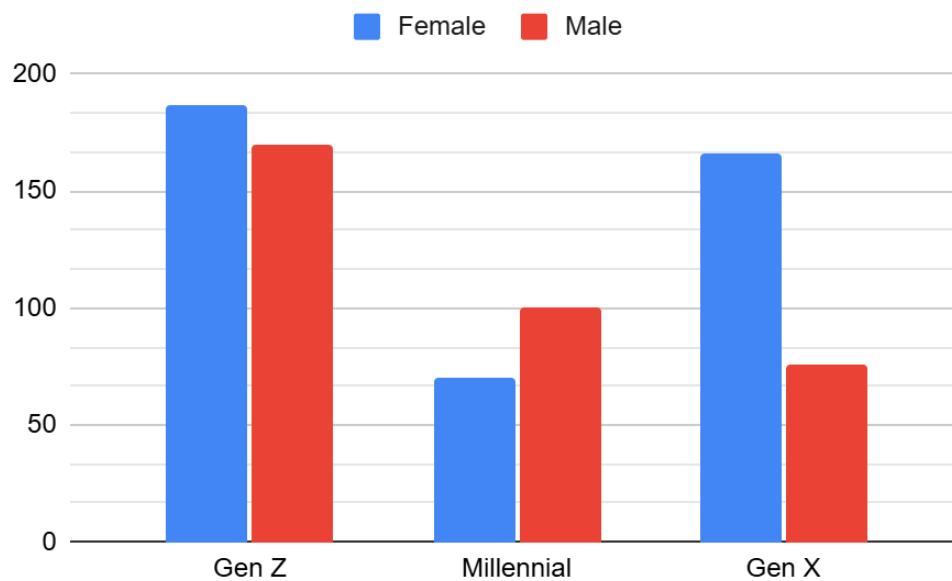


Figure 6: Overall Filler Usage of Males and Females in Each Generation

4.3 Narrative Length

Narrative length also differed across generations, with clear variation in both total word count and overall speaking duration (Figure 7). Generation X produced the longest narratives, demonstrating the highest word counts and extended speaking time across participants. Their stories often included detailed descriptions, background information, and

additional commentary, which contributed to longer narrative development. Millennials produced narratives of moderate length, typically maintaining a balance between elaboration and conciseness. Their stories were generally structured and complete but less extended than those of Generation X. Generation Z produced the shortest narratives overall, with lower total word counts and shorter speaking durations. Their narratives tended to focus more on key events or specific moments rather than extended description or background detail.

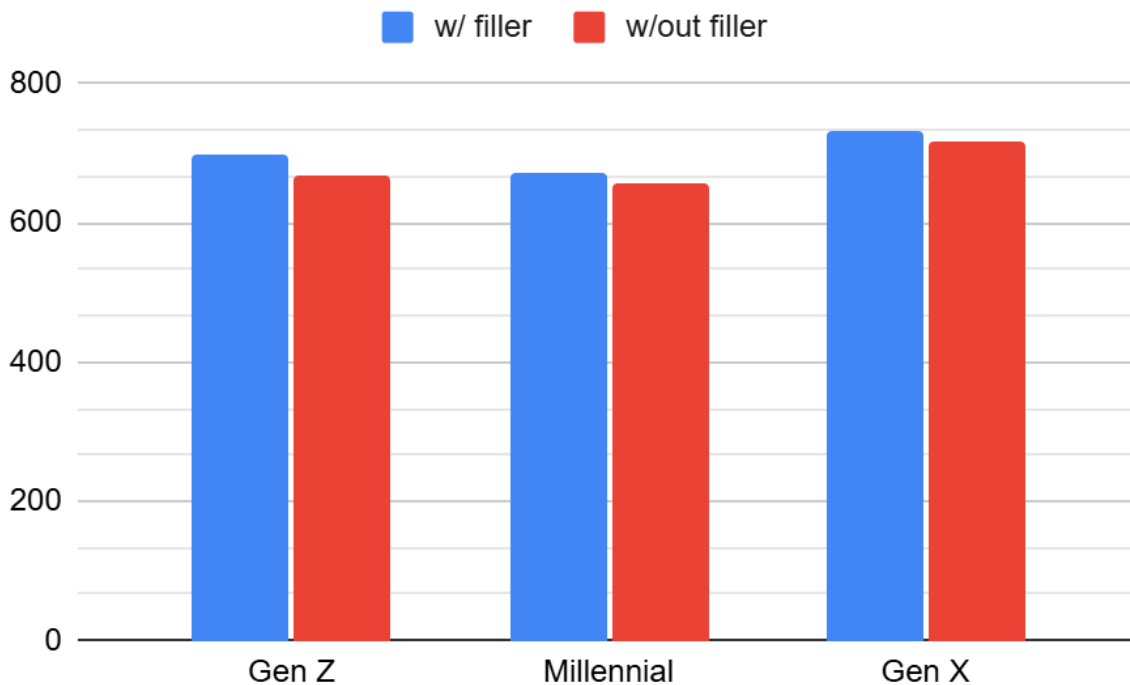


Figure 7: The Average Word Count of Each Generation

When narrative length is considered alongside delivery patterns, further distinctions emerge. Generation X narratives not only contained more words but also included longer pauses, which extended the overall duration of storytelling. Millennials maintained moderate narrative length with relatively steady pacing, while Generation Z combined shorter narratives with faster delivery, resulting in the shortest overall speaking durations among the three groups.

Gender analysis also revealed differences in narrative length and delivery. Male speakers generally produced longer narratives, contributing more words and speaking for extended periods. Their narratives often included additional details or extended sequences of events, which increased overall length. Female speakers, in contrast, produced shorter narratives overall but demonstrated smoother delivery. Their speech contained fewer long pauses, fewer interruptions, and fewer instances of disfluency, resulting in more continuous and cohesive storytelling. While their narratives were shorter in duration, they were delivered with greater fluency and less segmentation, contributing to a less interrupted narrative flow.

4.4 Language Usage

Language usage data in Table 2 shows that Standard English and Creole/Trinidadian English Creole/Dialect were the most frequently reported individual categories overall, with 9 instances each, followed by mixed language use with 8 instances, English (general) with 7, and Trini English with 2. This indicates that while both Standard English and Creole remain prominent, there is also a strong presence of hybrid language use across participants. The use of just “English” while not incorrect, when compared to other participants' use of more specific dialects of the language indicates an educational difference in language awareness, as those that specified “Standard English” come from a linguistic background. The use of “Trini English” indicates that the participants are aware that the variety of English that they are using is not what many deem the “standard” form of the language.

Category	Frequency	Includes
Standard English	16	Standard English; “Standard-ish” English
English (General)	7	English; ENGLISH
Trinidadian English	2	Trini English; Trinidad English
Creole/Dialect	9	Creole; Dialect; Creole/Dialect; Trinidadian English Creole
Mixed (Standard + Creole)	8	English and Creole; Standard English and Dialect; Standard English and TrinEC; Standard / Dialect

Table 2: Reported Language Use at Home

When broken down by generation as shown in Figure 8, Generation X showed the highest use of English (general) (4), followed by Standard English (3), with smaller instances of Creole (2), mixed usage (1), and Trini English (1), indicating a varied but less hybrid pattern of reported language use. Millennials demonstrated a balanced distribution across categories, with equal use of Standard English (3), English (general) (3), Creole (3), and mixed forms (3), suggesting consistent alternation between varieties. Generation Z recorded the highest use of Creole/Dialect (4) and mixed forms (4), with lower use of Standard English (3) and minimal use of Trini English (1), indicating a greater presence of non-standard and hybrid language use within this group.

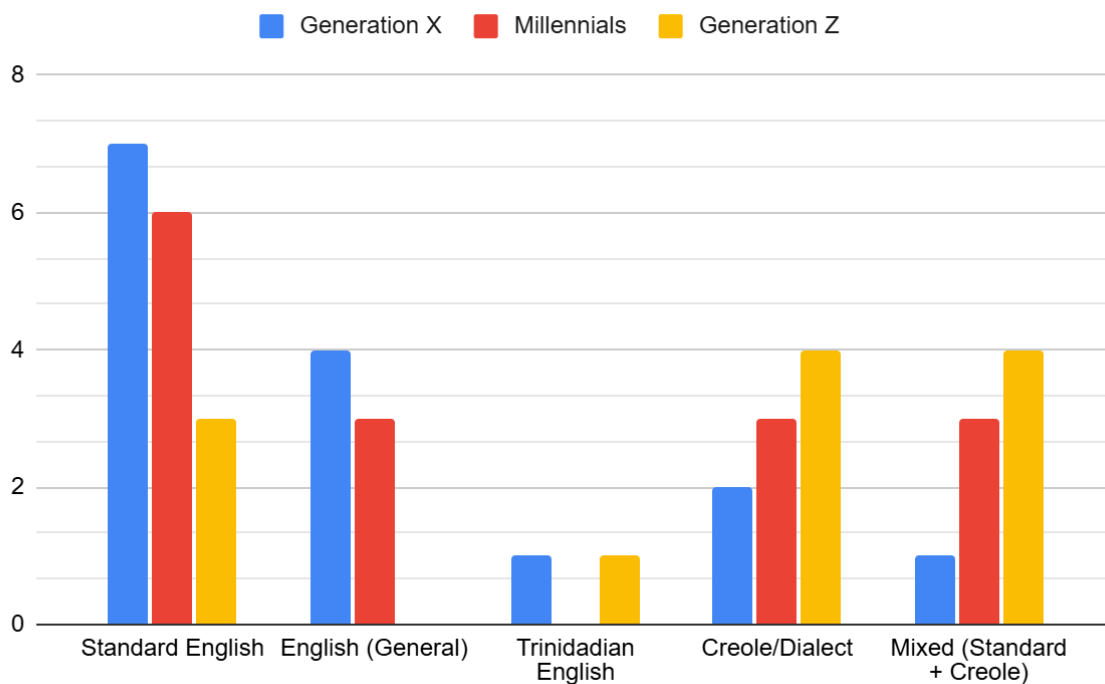


Figure 8: Reported Language Use by Generation

When these reported patterns are compared with the transcript data, further distinctions emerge in how language is actually used during storytelling. Creole usage was present across all groups but differed in consistency, structure, and integration within

narratives. Generation X showed the most consistent and structurally embedded use of Trinidadian English Creole, with features such as “ah,” indicating the first person singular, “doh,” which means “don’t”, “de,” indicating the definite article, and the demonstrative “dat” appearing throughout narratives rather than being inserted occasionally (Mühleisen). These forms occurred across clauses and sentences, as seen in examples such as “de whole school watchin” and “doh ever... make people ting bun yuh eye” indicating that Creole functions as a primary grammatical system within their storytelling. In addition, Creole was often used in extended sequences, particularly in narration and dialogue, rather than being limited to isolated words or phrases.

Millennials demonstrated a more stable mesolectal pattern, where both Standard English and Creole were used within the same narrative but with clearer boundaries between them. Creole forms such as “ah say... he say” and “ah got injured mah first time in training” appeared regularly but were often embedded within otherwise more standard English sentence structures. This suggests that these Millennials consistently draw from both varieties, producing narratives that alternate between Creole and Standard English depending on context, emphasis, or narrative function. Compared to Generation X, their use of Creole appears less structurally dominant but still clearly integrated.

Generation Z also used Creole frequently, but in a more mixed and variable way. Creole elements were often inserted into predominantly Standard English sentences, resulting in hybrid constructions such as “I got in de car, take off my handbrake, sen it in first, looked over my left shoulder an I'm...looking over and I'm trying to and I'm waiting for de car to move backwards.” These forms show the use of Creole structures, the unmarked past tense “take off my handbrake”, alongside standard English grammatical structures, the marked past tense “I got in the car...looked over...”, within the same utterance, and shifts between

varieties occurred more rapidly. In many cases, Creole was used within specific parts of the narrative, such as moments of emphasis, humour, or emotional expression, rather than consistently throughout the entire story. This results in a higher level of variation within individual narratives, with speakers moving between varieties more fluidly, that is shifting between Standard English and Creole without hesitation.

4.5 Lexical Usage

4.5.1 Vocabulary

Lexical usage patterns showed a clear generational shift in vocabulary type, not only in general word choice but also in how similar concepts are framed across groups. Generation X used more straightforward and practical vocabulary focused on lived experiences, with frequent use of terms such as “trouble,” “fight,” “licks,” and “memory.” This is reflected in examples such as “trouble used to look fuh me” and “ah geh licks,” as well as more reflective expressions like “etched in my memory forever.” These lexical choices tend to be concrete and directly tied to physical or lived experiences, often describing events in a literal and descriptive way rather than through abstract or exaggerated language.

Millennials, in comparison, used more neutral and reflective vocabulary tied to adult experiences and life interpretation. Their lexical choices include terms such as “experience,” “stressful,” “life,” “situation,” and “moment,” as seen in examples like “my story is just about real-life experience” and “life can be challenging.” These words show a shift toward more interpretive and evaluative language, where speakers not only describe events but also frame them in terms of meaning, significance, or impact. Compared to Generation X, their vocabulary is less physically grounded and more abstract, allowing for explanation and reflection within narratives.

Generation Z used more expressive and emotionally intensified vocabulary, with frequent use of words such as “traumatising,” “mess,” “disaster,” “weird,” and “funny.” This is evident in examples such as “it was a disaster... it weird, it weird.” Their lexical choices often exaggerate or amplify emotional responses, placing emphasis on how the experience felt rather than simply what happened. These words are often accompanied by intensifiers and repetition, further increasing their expressive impact.

This shift in lexical usage is further illustrated by the comparison of how similar concepts are framed across generations. The concept of discomfort or difficulty was expressed by Generation X using the term “trouble,” by Millennials as “stressful,” and by Generation Z as “traumatising.” Similarly, humour or entertainment is described by Generation X as “jokey,” by Millennials as “interesting,” and by Generation Z as “funny” or “entertaining.” In the case of conflict or anger, Generation X used terms such as “quarrel” or “vex,” Millennials used more neutral terms such as “issue,” and Generation Z used more intensified expressions such as “ballistic.” These patterns show that while all groups refer to similar underlying experiences, the lexical framing shifts from concrete and experience-based (Generation X), to reflective and interpretive (Millennials), to expressive and emotionally amplified (Generation Z).

4.5.2 Dialogue

Dialogue usage differed across groups in both frequency and function, with each generation showing distinct patterns in how dialogue was incorporated into storytelling. Millennials recorded the highest number of dialogue tags overall, as reflected in the chart data (Figure 9), indicating more frequent use of explicit speech markers within their narratives. Their dialogue was often structured and sequential, commonly following patterns such as “I say... he say...” or “she say... I say...,” which were used to clearly organise

interactions between speakers. This structured use of dialogue allowed Millennials to present conversations step by step, contributing to narrative clarity and chronological progression. Dialogue in this group was typically used to move the story forward, highlight key moments of interaction, and clarify events within the narrative.

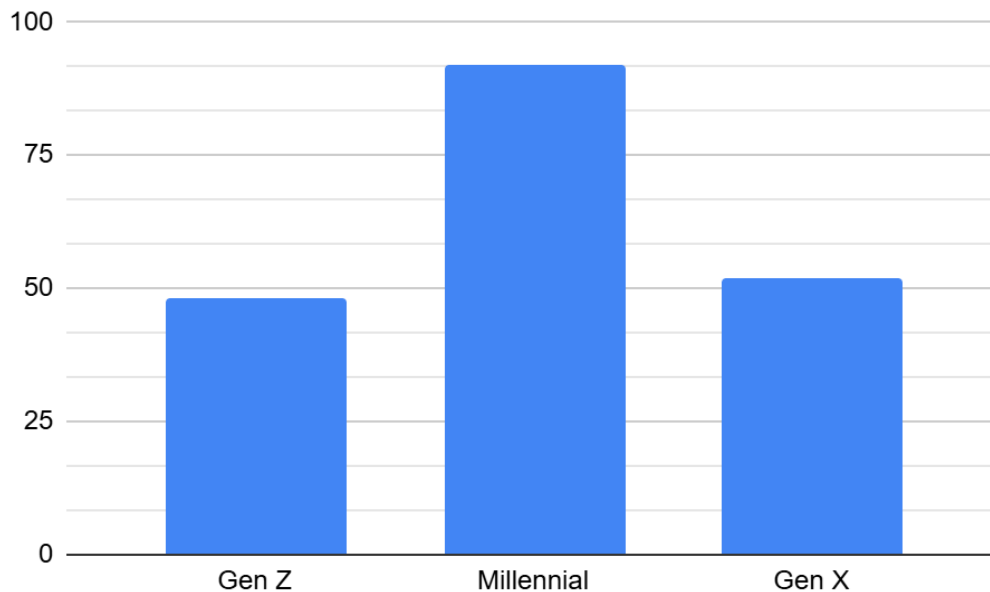


Figure 9: Usage of Dialogue Tags by Generation

Generation X demonstrated a different pattern, characterised by more dramatised and performative dialogue. Rather than simply reporting speech, Generation X speakers often recreated scenes in a vivid and expressive way, using dialogue to bring characters and situations to life. Expressions such as “wey him,” “mammy coming,” and “Wey muh change Mr. Man” were used not only to convey what was said but also to recreate the tone, emotion, and context of the interaction. Dialogue in this group often appeared in extended sequences and was closely tied to storytelling performance, particularly in narratives involving childhood experiences, discipline, or moral lessons. In many cases, dialogue was used to emphasise key turning points or reinforce the outcome of the story, especially where a lesson or consequence was involved.

Generation Z also used dialogue frequently, but in a more conversational and expressive manner. Their dialogue often included internal speech and personal reactions, with repeated use of phrases such as “I was like...” to represent thoughts and responses during the event. This type of dialogue frequently occurred alongside fillers and repetition, resulting in dialogue that reflected real-time processing rather than structured recounting. Generation Z dialogue often appeared in shorter segments and was integrated throughout the narrative rather than confined to specific moments, unlike Millennials, whose dialogue tended to be sequential and organised. Their dialogue was commonly used to express reactions, emotions, and attitudes, rather than to fully reconstruct extended conversations.

Across all groups, a consistent pattern observed was that speakers tended to increase their speech rate when reproducing dialogue. Dialogue segments were often delivered more quickly than surrounding narration, with reduced pauses and more continuous flow. Suggesting that when speakers shift into quoted or reenacted speech, they rely on more automatic and familiar phrasing, allowing for faster delivery. This pattern was evident regardless of generation, although it was most noticeable in Generation Z, where rapid speech and frequent dialogue often occurred together.

4.5.3 Repetition

Repetition patterns also varied across generations in both frequency and function, with each group using repetition in distinct ways within their narratives. Generation X showed the highest frequency of rhythmic and performative repetition. Their repetition often occurred in clusters and was used to build emphasis, create dramatic effect, and reinforce key moments in the story. Examples such as “ah dead, ah dead, ah dead” and repeated narrative framing like “again, I’m the victim” demonstrate how repetition was used to heighten tension, express emotion, and engage the listener. In many cases, repetition in Generation X

narratives appeared deliberately placed, contributing to storytelling rhythm and performance, particularly in recounting childhood experiences, discipline, or humorous events.

The Millennials showed more limited and controlled use of repetition, primarily for emphasis, clarification, and sequencing of events. Repetition in this group was often functional rather than performative. For example, phrases such as “waitin waitin” were used to indicate duration or build-up. Repetition was generally less frequent and more evenly distributed, appearing at key points rather than throughout the entire narrative. This resulted in narratives that were more structured and less reliant on repeated phrasing for effect.

Generation Z showed frequent repetition, but with a different function compared to Generation X. Their repetition was more closely tied to conversational flow and real-time speech production. Phrases such as “never again...never again” and “over and over and over” appeared regularly, often alongside fillers and pauses. This type of repetition served to maintain continuity and emphasise emotional reactions. Unlike Generation X, where repetition was often deliberate and performance-based, repetition in Generation Z narratives appeared more spontaneous and embedded within the flow of speech. It was also commonly used to intensify meaning or exaggerate experiences, particularly in emotionally expressive sections of the narrative.

4.6 Storytelling Structure

Narrative structure showed clear variation across groups, with differences evident in how ideas were organised, developed, and connected throughout the storytelling process. Generation X produced the most additive and elaborative sentence structures, often extending narratives through the use of multiple clauses, background details, reflections, and digressions. Their stories frequently moved between past events and reflective commentary, with speakers adding information as they recalled it rather than strictly following a fixed

sequence. This resulted in narratives that were longer and more layered, with ideas building cumulatively. In many cases, Generation X speakers included additional explanations, personal reflections, or side comments before returning to the main storyline, contributing to a more expansive and descriptive narrative style.

Millennials produced the most structured and linear narratives, typically following a clear chronological progression from beginning to end. Their stories were generally organised around a sequence of events, with identifiable stages such as introduction, development, and outcome. Transitions between ideas were clearer, and speakers were more likely to maintain focus on the main storyline without extended digressions. This resulted in narratives that were more cohesive and easier to follow, with a consistent flow of information. While some elaboration was present, it was usually controlled and related to advancing the narrative rather than expanding it outward.

Generation Z produced the most fragmented narratives, characterised by incomplete sentences, topic shifts, and self-corrections. Their storytelling often reflected a more conversational style, with ideas introduced, revised, or abandoned mid-sentence. This resulted in less linear progression, with speakers frequently moving between points without fully developing each one before shifting to the next. Interruptions in structure were also influenced by the use of fillers, repetition, internal dialogue, and interactions with the audience, which contributed to a more dynamic but less organised narrative form. Despite this fragmentation, key events were still communicated, but with less emphasis on structured sequencing.

4.6.1 Gestures and Physical Delivery

Clear generational differences were shown in the use of gestures during storytelling. Generation Z speakers exhibited the highest level of physical movement, with frequent and

continuous hand gestures used throughout their narratives. These gestures extended beyond simple emphasis and appeared to be integrated into the storytelling process itself. Speakers often used their hands to illustrate actions, map out spatial relationships, mimic events, or visually represent what was being described. In many cases, gesture use coincided with moments of hesitation or increased filler usage, suggesting that movement may also function as a compensatory strategy during real-time speech production. The near-constant motion observed in this group indicates a highly embodied and expressive storytelling style, where meaning is conveyed through both verbal and physical channels.

Millennials demonstrated a more controlled and selective use of gestures. Their hands were generally kept in a fixed position, with movement occurring primarily at key points in the narrative. Gestures in this group were more purposeful, often used to emphasise important moments, clarify meaning, or demonstrate specific actions. Unlike Generation Z, gestures were not continuous but strategically placed, aligning with the more structured and linear nature of their narratives. This suggests a balance between expressiveness and control, where physical movement supports the narrative without dominating it.

Generation X speakers showed the least amount of gestural activity, with most participants remaining physically still for the majority of their narratives. When gestures were used, they were minimal and typically occurred only to reinforce a specific point or provide brief clarification. Their storytelling relied more heavily on verbal delivery, including tone, pacing, and lexical choice, rather than physical expression. The limited use of gesture in this group corresponds with their slower speech rate and more elaborated narrative style, indicating a preference for verbal over physical emphasis.

4.6.2 Story Openings and Closings

The findings reveal distinct patterns in how stories are introduced and concluded, with clear differences in the level of structure, explicitness, and narrative awareness across groups. Generation Z speakers frequently used explicit framing devices at the beginning of their narratives, with several participants starting with phrases such as “this story is about.” This type of opening signals a high level of awareness of the storytelling task itself, where speakers consciously mark the transition into narrative mode. These openings create a clear boundary between conversation and storytelling, making it immediately evident to the listener that a structured narrative is about to follow. Their endings were similarly explicit and often formulaic, with repeated use of phrases such as “that’s it” or “that was my story.” These closings provide clear and definite endpoints, reducing ambiguity and signalling completion in a direct way. However, this reliance on formulaic markers also reflects a simplified approach to narrative closure, where endings are not always tied to reflection or resolution but instead serve as signals of termination.

Millennials showed less consistency in how their narratives began, often entering stories without a fixed opening phrase and instead transitioning into storytelling more naturally through context. Their endings, however, were frequently abrupt or loosely marked, with common phrases such as “so yeah” or “that’s it.” In many cases, narratives ended without a clear resolution or reflective summary, suggesting a more conversational approach to storytelling. This pattern aligns with their overall narrative style, which is structured in sequence but less reliant on explicit framing devices. Their openings and closings tend to emerge organically from the flow of speech rather than being clearly signalled, resulting in narratives that are coherent but less formally bounded.

Generation X speakers displayed the greatest variability in both openings and closings. Their narratives rarely began with explicit framing phrases, instead starting in a more embedded or contextual manner, often as part of ongoing conversation. This indicates a reliance on shared understanding between speaker and listener, where the beginning of a story is inferred rather than formally introduced. Endings in this group varied widely, with some narratives concluding abruptly, while others included reflective, summarising, or evaluative statements. In cases where reflective endings were used, they often reinforced the significance of the story or highlighted a lesson, linking the conclusion back to the overall meaning of the narrative. This variability reflects a more flexible and experience-driven storytelling style, where structure is guided by content rather than predetermined markers.

4.7 Story Themes

When participants were asked about which stories they were told growing up (Figure 10) it was shown that family history and personal experience narratives were the most frequently reported category (28 instances), followed by folktales (14) and religious stories (12). Made-up stories and gossip were reported equally (7 instances each), while humorous stories and fairytales were the least frequent, with 1 instance each. This distribution shows that the majority of stories heard are based on real-life experiences and culturally rooted narratives, with lower frequencies for fictional or purely entertainment-based categories.

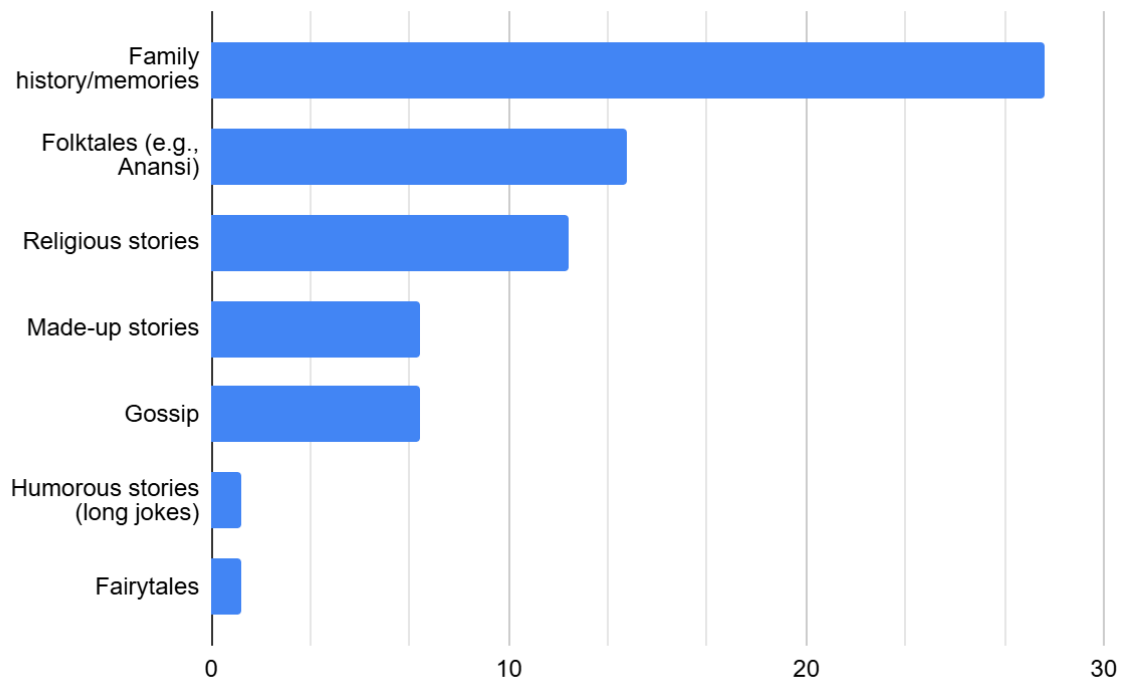


Figure 10: Stories Reportedly Heard by Participants Growing Up

When examined by generation (Table 4 below), family history and personal experience remained the most common category across all groups, with Millennials recording the highest frequency (11), followed by Generation X (9) and Generation Z (8). Folktales were reported most by Millennials (6), followed by Generation X (5) and Generation Z (3). Religious stories were reported equally by Millennials and Generation Z (5 each), with fewer instances in Generation X (2). Made-up stories were most frequent among Generation Z (4), compared to Millennials (2) and Generation X (1). Gossip showed a similar pattern, with Generation Z reporting the highest frequency (5), while Millennials and Generation X each recorded 1 instance. Humorous stories and fairytales were only reported by Generation Z (1 instance each), with no occurrences in the other groups.

The thematic analysis shows that storytelling across all participants is primarily centred on personal and experience-based content, with family-related narratives occurring

most frequently. Most stories fall into categories such as lived experiences, personal recollections, and individual events, indicating that participants consistently draw on real-life situations rather than fictional or abstract material. These include events related to school, injury, travel, relationships, and childhood, as well as broader life experiences and memorable incidents.

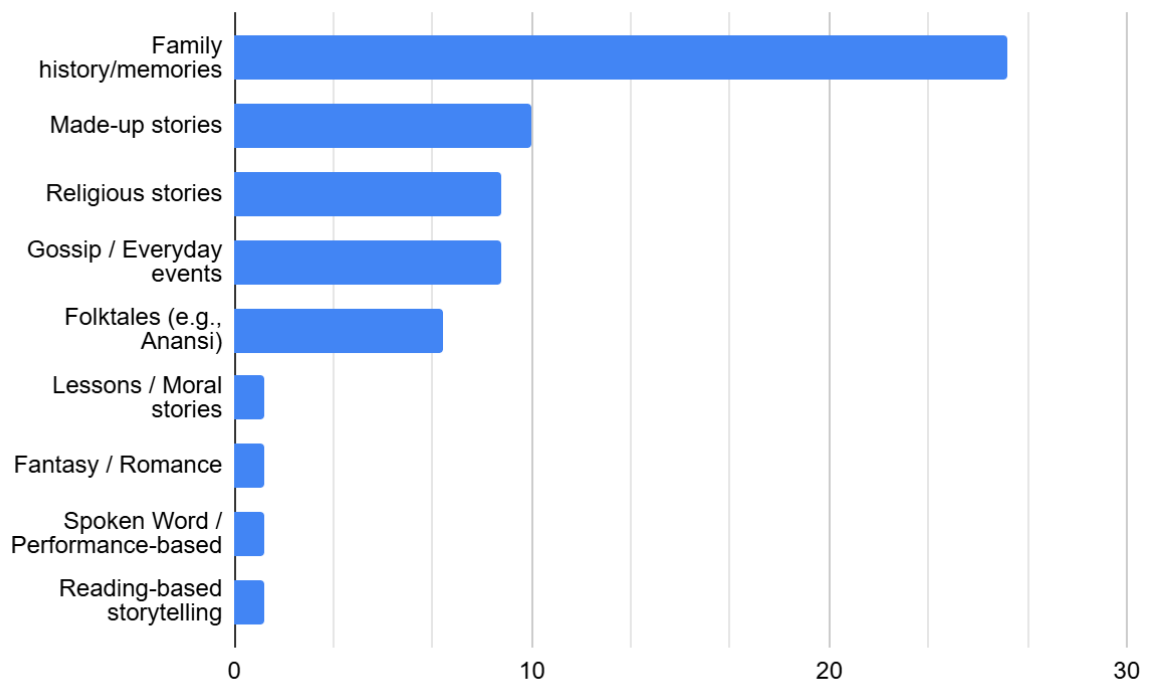


Figure 11: Stories Reportedly Told by Participants

The reasons given for selecting these stories show consistent patterns across participants. Stories were often chosen because they were easy to recall, recently experienced, emotionally impactful, or engaging to tell. Many narratives were based on events that had either been told multiple times before or remained vivid due to strong emotional associations. In addition, entertainment value played a role, with several participants selecting stories because they were interesting, humorous, or likely to capture attention. Emotional intensity, including negative experiences such as conflict, loss, or embarrassment, also appeared to influence story selection.

When examined by generation, differences emerge in both the types of stories told and the motivations behind them. Generation X narratives are largely centred on past experiences, particularly those connected to childhood, discipline, and family life. These stories frequently involve reflection and often include elements of instruction or lessons learned. The accompanying notes show that these narratives are closely tied to family members and early life experiences, with repeated references to parents, children, and upbringing. This is further supported by consistent patterns indicating strong overlap in family-related content.

Millennials display a more varied range of story types, including both past recollections and experiences from adult life. Their narratives often involve relationships, work, travel, or significant life events. The reasons for selecting these stories tend to focus on their importance, relevance, or familiarity, suggesting that participants are choosing narratives that they know well or consider meaningful. The notes indicate that these stories frequently involve interactions with partners, family members, or extended social networks. While family remains a central theme, it is often combined with other aspects of adult life, showing a broader range of narrative focus.

Generation Z shows a noticeable shift toward stories based on recent events, social interactions, and peer-related experiences. Their narratives frequently involve situations with friends, school environments, or personal incidents tied to social life. The reasons for selecting these stories often emphasise immediacy, memorability, and entertainment, with participants choosing stories that are recent, emotionally engaging, or easy to recall. The notes also indicate that these narratives tend to be less structured, with features such as interruptions and conversational elements appearing more frequently. While family is still present, there is a greater emphasis on peer relationships compared to the other groups.

Story Type	HEARD			Told		
	Gen X	Millennials	Gen Z	Gen X	Millennials	Gen Z
Family history/memories	9	11	8	8	8	9
Folktales / Anansi	5	6	3	3	2	1
Religious stories	2	5	5	2	3	3
Made-up stories	1	2	4	1	4	6
Gossip	1	1	5	1	0	5
Humorous stories (long jokes)	0	0	1	0	0	0
Fairytales	0	0	1	0	0	0
Lessons / Moral stories	,	,	,	1	0	0
Day-to-day experiences	,	,	,	0	1	0
Reading-based stories	,	,	,	0	1	0
Spoken Word	,	,	,	0	0	1
Fantasy / Romance	,	,	,	0	0	1
School-related events	,	,	,	0	0	1

Table 4: Stories Reportedly Heard and Told by Each Generation

Across all groups, several similarities were observed in storytelling themes and motivations. Family remained a central element across generations, even when the focus shifted toward peers in younger groups. Personal experience was the dominant basis for storytelling in all cases, regardless of generation, indicating that narratives are consistently drawn from lived or perceived experiences. In addition, storytelling often served a social function. While the types of stories and reasons for telling them varied, the underlying pattern shows that storytelling across all participants is rooted in experience, social interaction, and communication of meaningful events.

4.8 Attitudes Towards Storytelling

4.8.1 Perceptions of Storytelling

The data (Table 3 below) shows that storytelling is most commonly associated with personal experience, entertainment, and communication, with each category recording 6 instances. This suggests that participants primarily view storytelling as grounded in real-life events, enjoyment, and the sharing of information. Creativity and imagination (5) and cultural or traditional elements (5) were also prominent, indicating that storytelling is seen as both a creative activity and a means of cultural transmission. Less frequent responses included general definitions (4), media-related storytelling (3), and social interaction (3), showing that some participants recognise storytelling as a broader concept. Performance elements such as tone and gestures were minimally reported (2), and religious or lifestyle associations appeared only once, suggesting that these aspects are less central to participants' understanding.

Category	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z	Total
Personal Experience & Memory	4	1	1	6
Entertainment & Humour	3	2	1	6
Information Sharing & Communication	2	2	2	6
Creativity & Imagination	1	2	2	5
Cultural & Traditional Context	2	2	1	5
General Definition / Broad Concept	0	2	2	4
Media & Story Forms	0	1	2	3
Social Connection & Interaction	0	1	2	3
Performance Elements	0	0	2	2
Religious / Lifestyle	0	1	0	1

No Response	1	0	0	1
Total	11	12	12	35

Table 3: Each Generation's Perception of "What is Storytelling?"

When examined by generation, clear differences emerge in how storytelling is conceptualised. Generation X responses are heavily concentrated in personal experience, entertainment, and cultural or traditional categories, indicating a stronger association between storytelling and lived experiences, memory, and heritage. Millennials show a more balanced distribution across categories, with equal representation in communication, creativity, and cultural themes, suggesting a broader and more flexible understanding of storytelling. Generation Z responses, while still reflecting core themes such as experience and communication, show greater emphasis on social interaction, media-related storytelling, and performance elements. This indicates a shift toward a more interactive, expressive, and modern understanding of storytelling, where engagement, delivery, and media influence play a more noticeable role.

4.8.2 Enjoyment of Storytelling

Enjoyment of storytelling is shown in Table 5 to primarily be associated with entertainment and engagement, which recorded the highest frequency (10). Learning and insight (7) and social connection (6) were also prominent, indicating that storytelling is valued not only for enjoyment but also for knowledge acquisition and interpersonal bonding. Emotional engagement (5) and self-expression (5) further highlight the role of storytelling in both personal connection and communication. Lower frequencies were observed in creativity (3), personal preference for listening or telling (3), and nostalgia (2), suggesting that while these factors are present, they are less central to overall enjoyment. Conditional responses (2)

indicate that enjoyment may depend on context or delivery, while a small number of responses reflected general positive or neutral attitudes.

Category	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z	Total
Entertainment & Enjoyment	4	3	3	10
Learning & Insight	2	3	2	7
Social Connection & Relationships	1	2	3	6
Emotional Engagement	1	2	2	5
Self-Expression & Sharing	1	2	2	5
Creativity & Imagination	0	2	1	3
Personal Preference (Listening/Telling)	2	1	0	3
Nostalgia & Memory	1	1	0	2
Conditional Enjoyment	0	1	1	2
General Positive Response (Yes only)	0	0	3	3
Limited / Neutral Response	0	0	1	1
Total	11	12	12	35

Table 5: Each Generation's Enjoyment of Storytelling

Generationally, variation is evident in how storytelling enjoyment is experienced. Generation X responses are more concentrated in entertainment and personal preference categories, with less emphasis on creativity and social interaction. Millennials show a more balanced distribution across entertainment, learning, social connection, and self-expression, shown in responses that state *“stories give insight into perspectives”* and *“they are crucial to the human experience.”* indicating a broader range of motivations for enjoying storytelling. Generation Z responses show stronger emphasis on social connection and general positive engagement, alongside consistent representation across emotional engagement and

self-expression. Additionally, general positive responses appear only in Generation Z, suggesting a more immediate and less conditional expression of enjoyment. These patterns indicate that while entertainment remains central across all groups, younger participants place greater emphasis on interaction and engagement, whereas older participants show more preference-based and experience-driven enjoyment.

4.8.3 Storytelling Styles

When it comes to differences in how other generations tell stories (Table 5) most participants expressed neutral or indifferent attitudes (12), followed by positive or appreciative responses (9). Conditional responses (5) indicate that attitudes often depend on delivery or context, while negative responses (4) and mixed feelings (3) were less frequent. These findings indicate that while differences in storytelling style are recognised, they are generally accepted, with limited strong negative reactions.

Category	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z	Total
Indifferent / Neutral	3	3	6	12
Positive / Appreciative	3	3	3	9
Conditional / Depends	1	3	1	5
Negative / Critical	2	1	1	4
Mixed Feelings	1	1	1	3
Total valid responses	10	11	12	33

Table 6: Participants' Attitudes to Different Generations' Storytelling Styles

When examined by generation, some variation is evident with Generation Z recording the highest number of neutral responses, suggesting a more passive or accepting stance toward differences in storytelling styles. Millennials showed a higher proportion of positive

and conditional responses, indicating a greater tendency to both appreciate differences and evaluate storytelling based on factors such as delivery and engagement. Generation X, while also showing neutral and positive responses, recorded slightly more negative or critical attitudes compared to the other groups, with one participant stating, *“I don’t understand the way younger people speak... too much violent characters, sex and bad language.”* This suggests a greater sensitivity to differences in storytelling style.

Many participants, regardless of generation, expressed the view that younger people, namely those in Generation Z, have less imagination in their storytelling. One of those participants stated, *“Younger people tend to keep things more anecdotal to get a point across...”*, with some suggesting it is due to their frequent use of short form video content. Mixed responses were relatively evenly distributed across generations, indicating that some participants hold both positive and critical views simultaneously. Overall, the findings show that although attitudes vary slightly by generation, there is a general trend toward acceptance, with most participants showing neutral or positive responses rather than strong negative reactions.

4.9 Social and Digital Engagement

Data on storytelling context (Figure 12 and 13) indicate that storytelling occurs primarily in face-to-face settings, with 28 instances recorded, making it the dominant mode of narrative exchange across all participants. This shows that despite the availability of digital communication platforms, in-person interaction remains the primary context in which storytelling takes place. However, alternative modes were also present, including WhatsApp voice notes (10 instances), TikTok/Reels (4), and Instagram (3), indicating that storytelling has begun to extend into digital spaces.

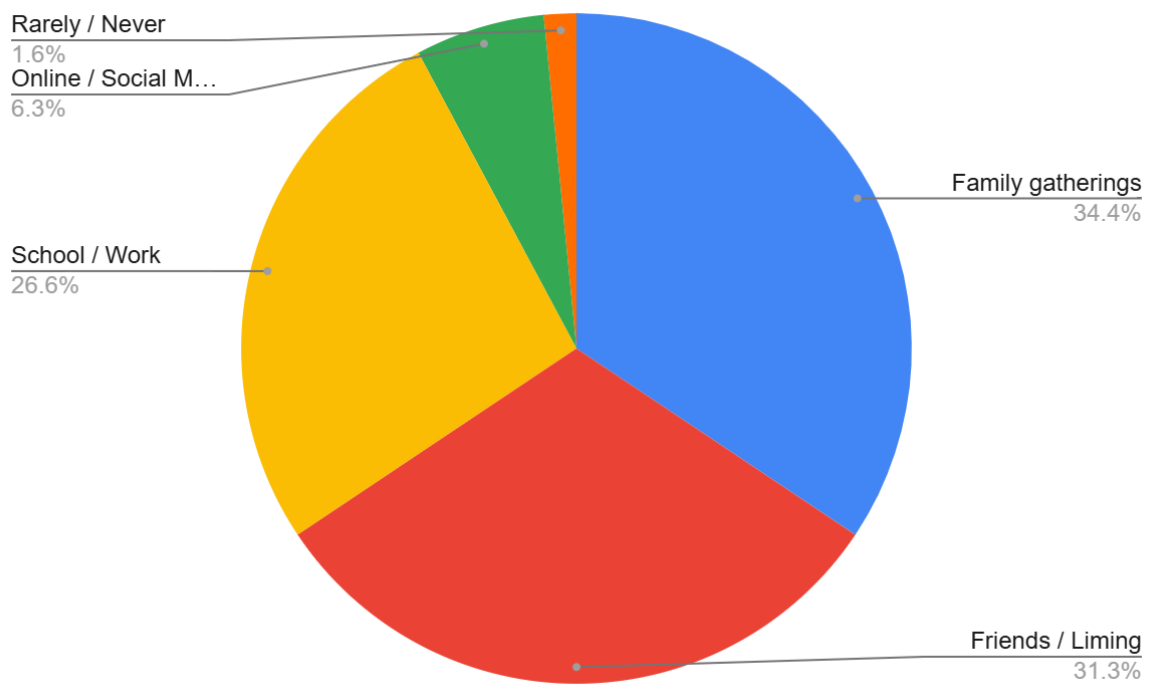


Figure 12: Where Participants Tell Stories

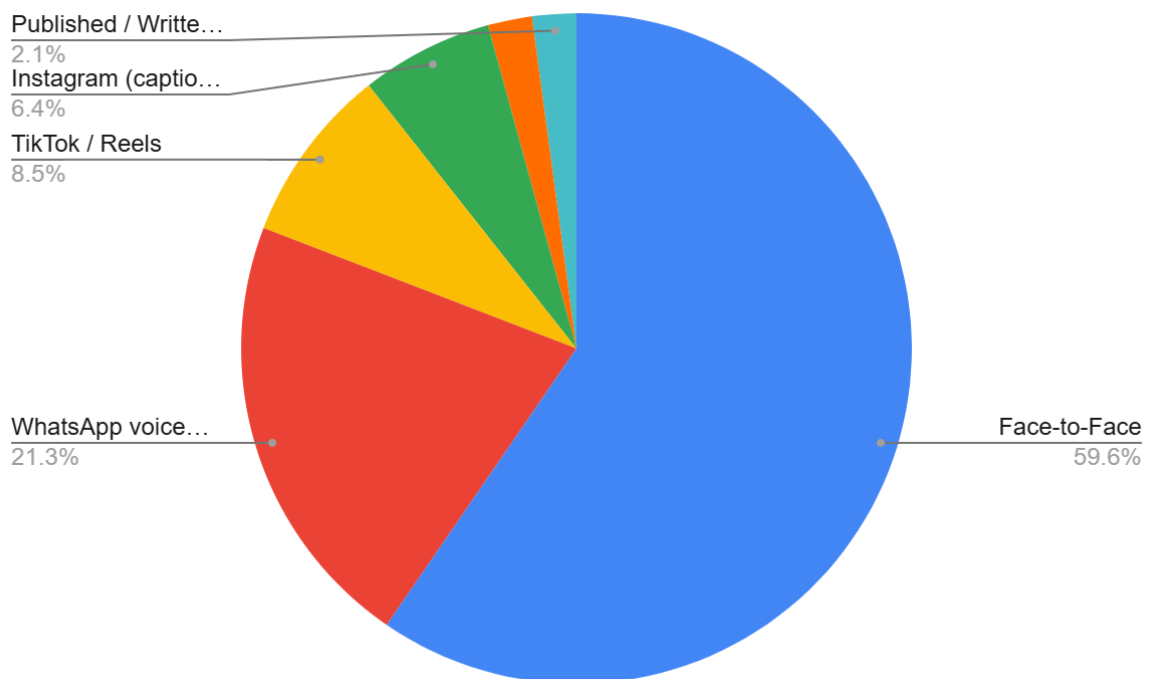


Figure 13: The Mode in which Participants Tell Stories

When examined by generation (Figure 14 and 15), clear differences emerge. Generation X reported exclusive reliance on face-to-face communication, with no recorded use of digital platforms for storytelling. Millennials showed moderate integration of digital communication, particularly through WhatsApp voice notes, suggesting a transitional pattern between traditional and digital storytelling contexts. Generation Z demonstrated the highest use of digital platforms, incorporating WhatsApp voice notes as well as short-form video platforms such as TikTok and Instagram into their storytelling practices.

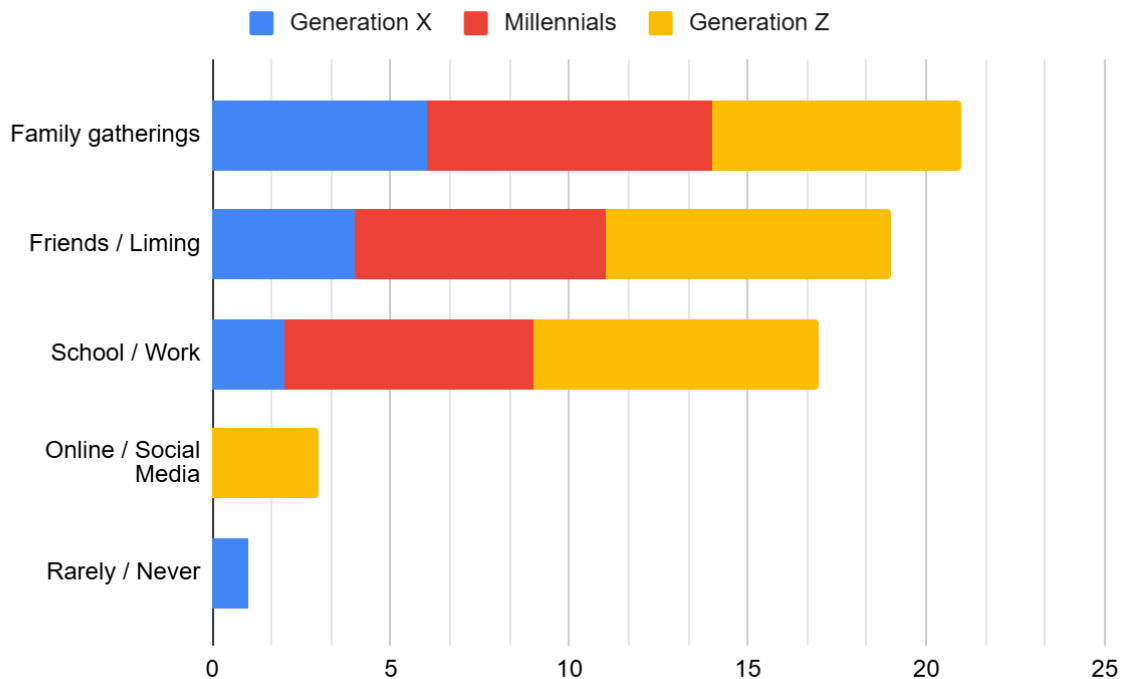


Figure 14: Where Stories Are Told by Generation

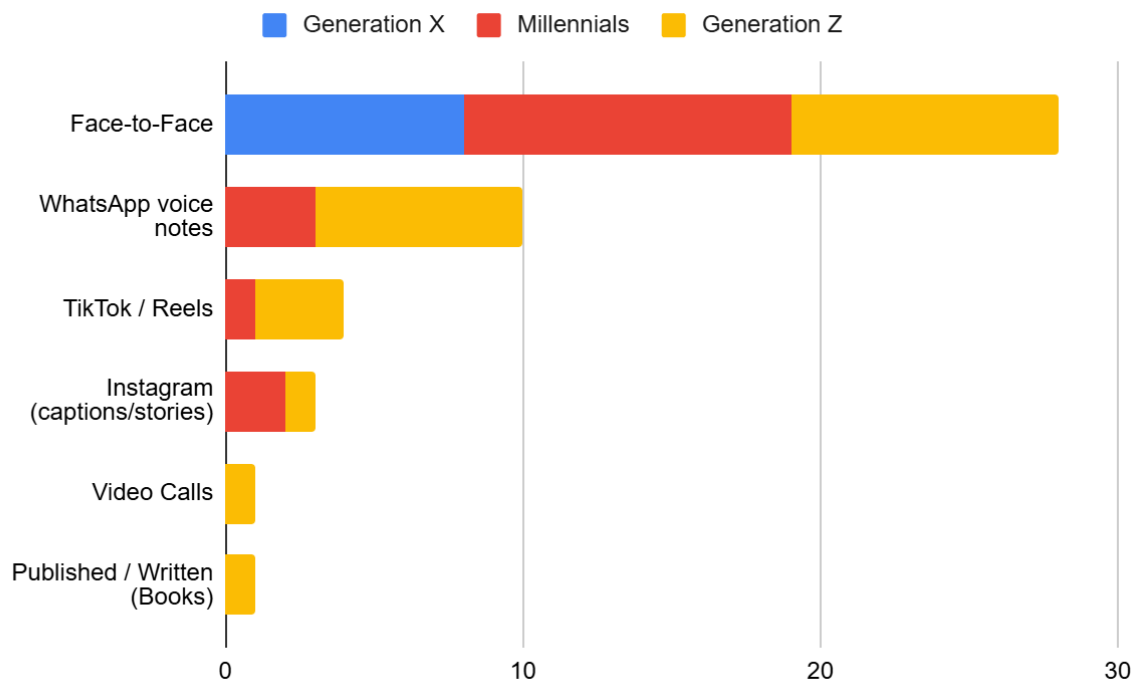


Figure 15: The Mode in which Participants Tell Stories by Generation

4.9.1 Digital Usage

Platform usage data further reflect these generational differences. Table 6 shows that WhatsApp was the most widely used platform overall, with 29 instances, followed by YouTube (25), Instagram (21), and TikTok (20). This indicates that messaging and video-based platforms dominate participants' digital environments. Generation Z recorded the highest use of YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, showing strong engagement with visually oriented and socially interactive platforms. Their usage patterns include both content consumption and participation in trends such as short-form videos. Generation X, in contrast, showed higher usage of Facebook and WhatsApp, indicating preference for more traditional and communication-focused platforms rather than content-driven ones. Millennials displayed moderate usage across multiple platforms, without extreme dominance in any one category, reflecting a more balanced digital presence (Figure 16).

Platform	Frequency
WhatsApp	29
YouTube	25
Instagram	21
TikTok	20
Facebook	16
Netflix / Streaming Platforms	12
Gaming Platforms	6
X (Twitter)	6
Reddit	1
Movie App	1
JW Website	1

Table 7: Platforms Used Most by Participants

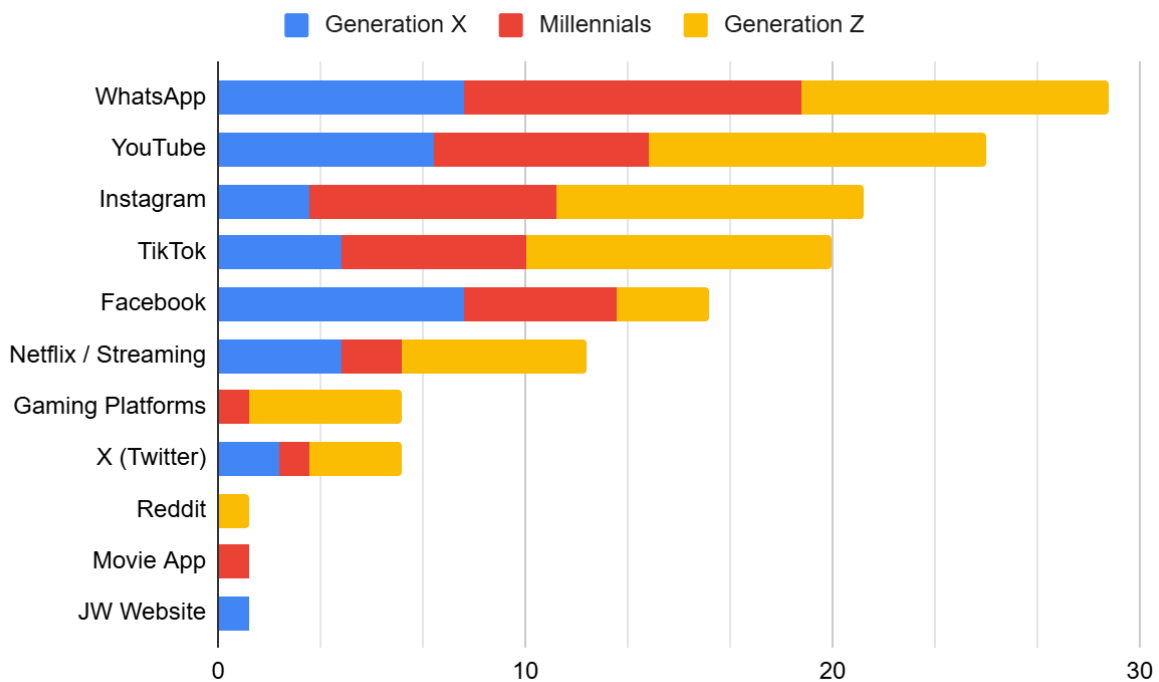


Figure 16: Platforms Used Most by Each Generation

Content consumption patterns also varied across generations. As seen in Table 7 short-form video content, such as TikTok and Reels, was the most frequently consumed overall, with 18 instances, followed by long-form video content such as YouTube and documentaries (12 instances). Generation Z showed high engagement with both forms,

indicating that they consume a wide range of digital content formats. However, their strong presence on platforms like TikTok suggests greater exposure to short, fast-paced content. Millennials showed slightly higher engagement with short-form content compared to long-form content but still maintained usage of both. Generation X showed lower overall engagement with digital content, with fewer instances recorded and less emphasis on both short-form and long-form media (Figure 17).

Category	Frequency
Short Videos (Reels/TikTok)	18
Long-form videos (YouTube, documentaries)	12
Memes	2
Podcasts / Voice notes	1
Gaming playthroughs / streaming	1
Written stories / posts	1

Table 8: What Content Participants Interacted with Most

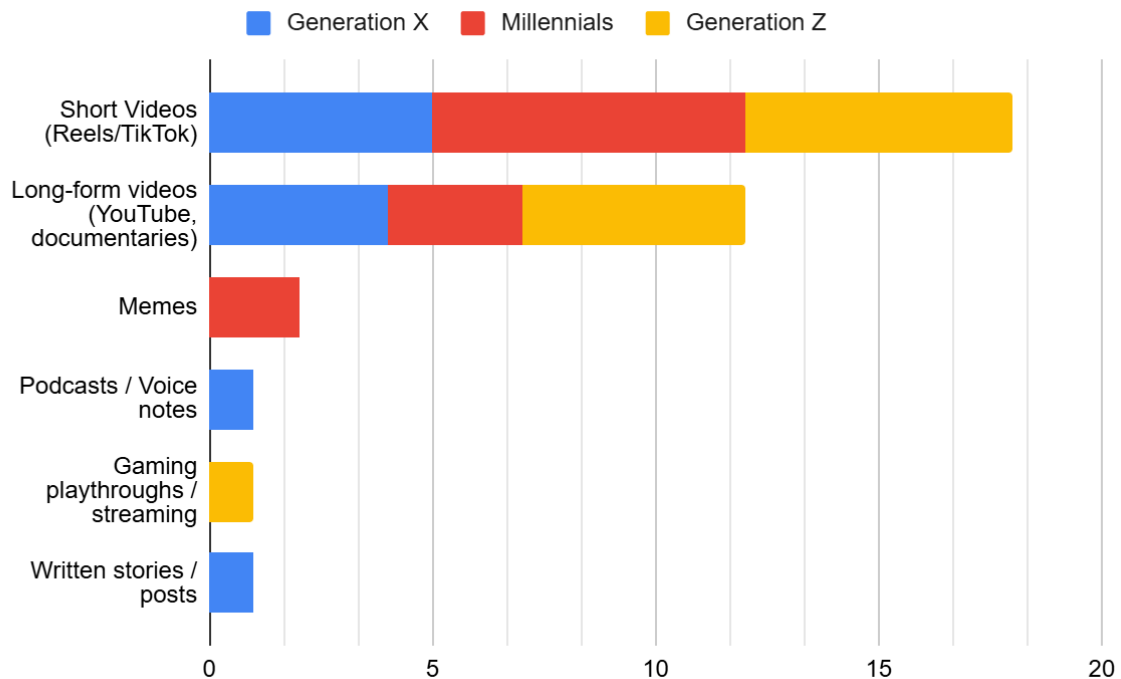


Figure 17: Content Most Interacted with by Each Generation

4.9.2 Story length Preferences

Overall, Figure 18 shows that more detailed stories were the most preferred (13), followed by short, fast-paced stories (10), while a significant number of participants (11) expressed conditional preferences depending on context or delivery. Only one response indicated no clear preference. This distribution indicates that although longer narratives are slightly more favoured, storytelling preference is highly flexible and influenced by situational factors rather than being fixed.

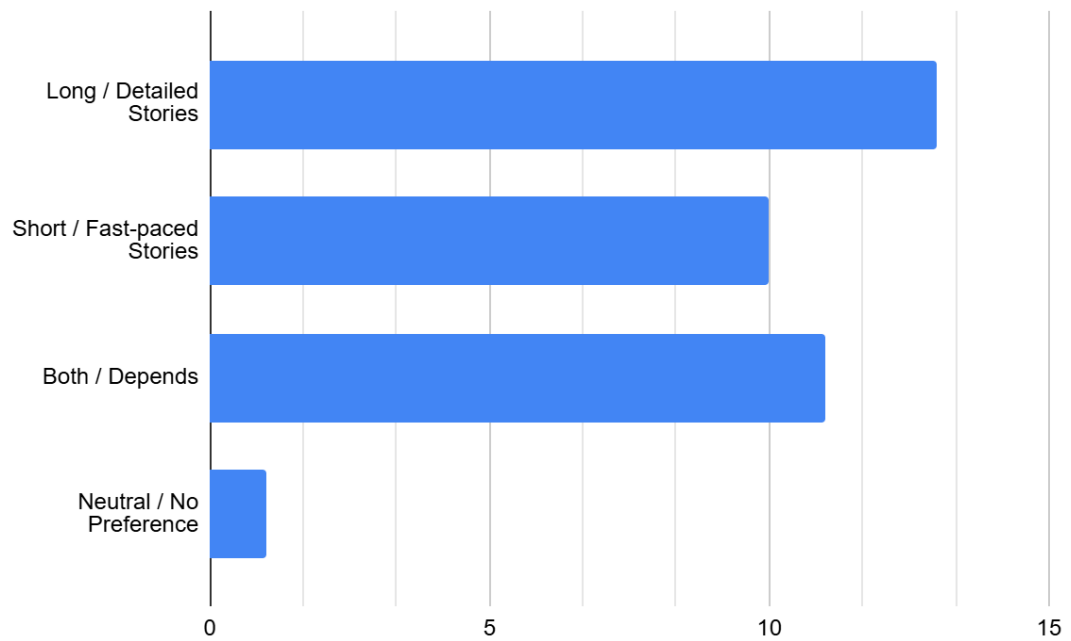


Figure 18: Participants' Preference in Story Length

Generation X shows a stronger preference for short, fast-paced stories compared to the other groups, with fewer conditional responses, indicating a more defined preference for concise storytelling. Millennials recorded the highest preference for longer, more detailed stories, suggesting a greater appreciation for elaboration, depth, and narrative development. At the same time, Millennials also show a notable number of conditional responses, indicating some flexibility in preference depending on context.

Generation Z demonstrates the highest number of conditional responses, indicating that their preference is the most flexible and context dependent. While they still show some preference for both long and short stories, their responses suggest that factors such as mood, delivery, and engagement play a larger role in determining preference. Additionally, the only neutral response was recorded within Generation Z, further indicating variability within this group (Table 8). Altogether, the generational pattern shows that older participants tend to

have more fixed preferences, while younger participants display greater adaptability in their storytelling preferences.

Category	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z	Total
Long / Detailed	4	5	4	13
Short / Fast-paced	5	3	2	10
Both / Depends	2	4	5	11
Neutral / No Preference	0	0	1	1
Total	11	12	12	35

Table 9: Participant's Preference in Story Length by Generation

Among participants who reported preferences for shorter stories, many stated that social media has reduced their patience for long stories (12), supported by responses such as *“my attention span is low now,”* and *“doomscrolling short content,”*. Participants also referred to *“instant gratification”* indicating that repeated exposure to short-form content influences attention span. A smaller number reported no change (5). Partial influence was identified in 3 responses, and only 2 responses indicated that attention span was influenced by contextual or non-social media factors. These findings indicate that exposure to short-form content has had a measurable impact on attention span for many participants, although the effect is not uniform across all individuals.

Category	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z	Total
Yes, reduced patience	3	6	3	12
No, no change	2	2	1	5

Partially / To some extent	0	1	2	2
Contextual / Depends	1	0	0	1
Other factors (not social media)	1	0	0	1
Total	7	9	5	22

Table 10: Social Media's Impact on Participants' Preference for Long Stories by Generation

When examined by generation (Figure 19), Millennials recorded the highest number of responses indicating reduced patience, suggesting that this group is most affected by the influence of social media on attention span. Generation X also showed instances of reduced patience, but responses in this group were more varied, including those attributing changes to contextual or lifestyle factors rather than social media alone. Generation Z, while also reporting reduced patience, showed fewer total responses and a greater proportion of partial influence, indicating that the impact of social media in this group may be more variable or less consistently perceived.

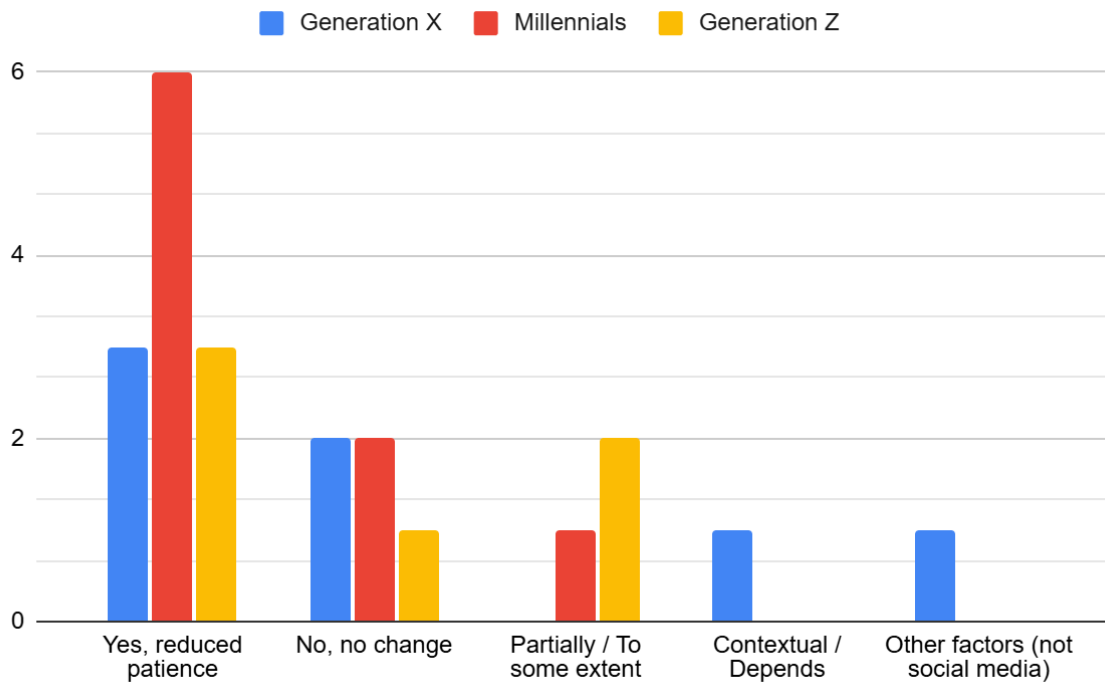


Figure 19: Social Media's Impact on Participants Preference for Long Stories

Additionally, responses indicating no change were distributed across all generations, suggesting that not all participants experience a shift in attention span despite exposure to digital content. The presence of contextual and non-social media factors within Generation X further highlights that attention span may be influenced by factors such as lifestyle, responsibilities, and personal habits rather than social media alone.

4.9.3 Social Influences

Social interaction patterns also differed across groups. Figure 20 shows that Generation Z participants interacted primarily with peers within their own age group, with the highest frequency of same-generation interaction. This indicates a strong orientation toward peer-based communication. Millennials demonstrated more balanced interaction across age groups, engaging with both younger and older participants more evenly. Generation X

participants interacted more with peers and Millennials, with fewer interactions involving younger participants, suggesting a more limited cross-generational communication pattern.

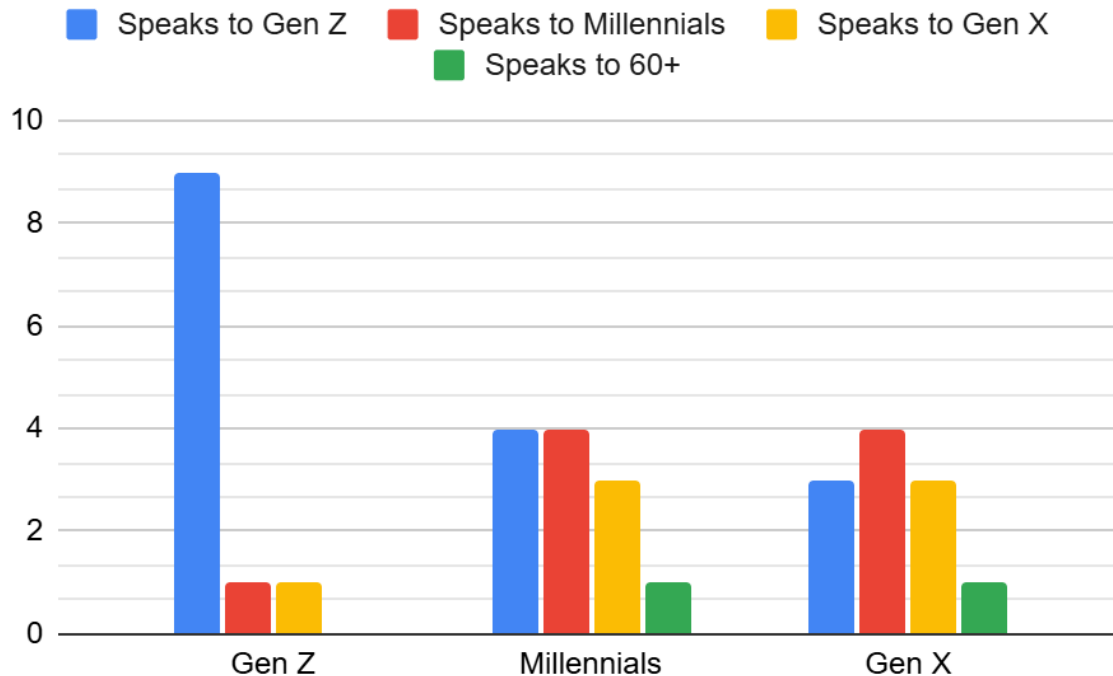


Figure 20: The Social Interactions of Each Generation

The data on who participants reportedly received stories from growing up (Table 10) show that storytelling is primarily transmitted through close family relationships, with mothers being the most frequently reported source (11 instances). This indicates a strong maternal role in early storytelling and narrative exposure. Grandmothers also appear prominently (7 instances), highlighting the importance of older female figures in passing down stories and maintaining oral traditions. Fathers were mentioned less frequently (5 instances), along with both parents together (5 instances), suggesting that while fathers contribute to storytelling, they do so less often than mothers. Grandparents as a pair were recorded in 4 instances, reinforcing the role of extended family in storytelling, though less frequently than individual maternal figures.

Category	Frequency
Mother	11
Father (Dad)	5
Parents (both)	5
Grandmother	7
Grandparents (both)	4
Aunts	9
Uncles	6
Cousins	3
Friends	2

Table 11: Who Told Participants Stories Growing Up

Beyond the immediate household, aunts (9 instances) and uncles (6 instances) were also significant contributors, showing that storytelling extends into the wider family network. Cousins were mentioned in 3 instances, indicating a smaller but still present role in peer-like family storytelling interactions. Friends were the least reported source (2 instances), suggesting that storytelling is less commonly learned or transmitted through non-family relationships.

When participants were asked about their influences, it was seen in Figure 21 that storytelling style is most strongly influenced by family members, with the highest frequency (17). Friends and peers (8) represent the second most common influence, indicating the role of social interaction in shaping storytelling practices. Mixed influences (5) and social media or media influences (5) demonstrate that storytelling style is often shaped by multiple

sources, including both interpersonal and digital environments. Individual figures such as parents or grandparents were also identified (4), reflecting direct modelling of storytelling behaviour. A small number of responses indicated uncertainty (2), contextual influences (1), or no response (1), suggesting limited variation outside the dominant social influences.

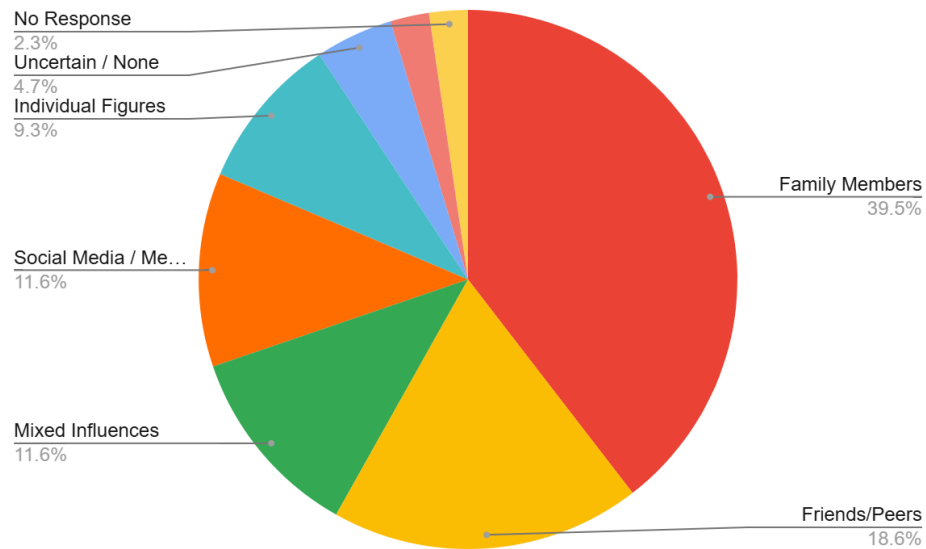


Figure 21: Influences on Participants' Storytelling

Category	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z
Family Members	7	5	5
Friends/Peers	3	3	2
Mixed Influences	2	2	1
Social Media / Media	0	3	2
Individual Figures	2	1	1
Uncertain / None	2	0	0
Contextual Influence	1	0	0
No Response	0	0	1

Table 12: Influences on Participants' Storytelling by Generation

When examined by generation (Table 11), family influence remains the dominant factor across all groups, but the distribution of secondary influences differs significantly. Generation X responses are heavily concentrated around family members and individual figures, with storytelling style largely shaped through direct interpersonal interaction within

the household or extended family. In this group, there is little to no reported influence from social media, and limited influence from peers, indicating that storytelling practices are primarily inherited through traditional, face-to-face communication and long-standing social relationships.

Millennials show a more evenly distributed pattern of influence, where family remains important but is complemented by peers and media. This group demonstrates a clear transition, with storytelling style influenced not only by upbringing but also by wider social networks and exposure to media forms such as audiobooks, spoken word, and online content. The presence of mixed influences in this group suggests that Millennials draw from multiple sources simultaneously, combining traditional storytelling models with newer forms of expression.

Generation Z reflects a further shift, with storytelling style influenced by a broader range of sources. While family influence is still present, there is a noticeable increase in the role of social media and media-based influences. This group also shows a higher occurrence of mixed influences, indicating that storytelling style is shaped through a combination of family, peers, and digital environments rather than a single dominant source. The reduced emphasis on individual figures and the increased presence of peer and media influence suggest that storytelling development in this group is less tied to specific role models and more influenced by collective and digital exposure.

Screen time data support these findings (Figure 22), showing that Generation Z recorded the highest levels of screen time, with most participants falling within the 6–8 hour range and some exceeding 8 hours. This indicates sustained engagement with digital platforms throughout the day. Millennials showed moderate screen time distribution, with usage spread across lower and middle ranges. Generation X recorded the lowest overall

screen time, with most participants falling within the lower usage categories. These patterns align with the differences observed in platform usage and content consumption, showing that increased screen time is associated with greater use of digital storytelling platforms and content engagement.

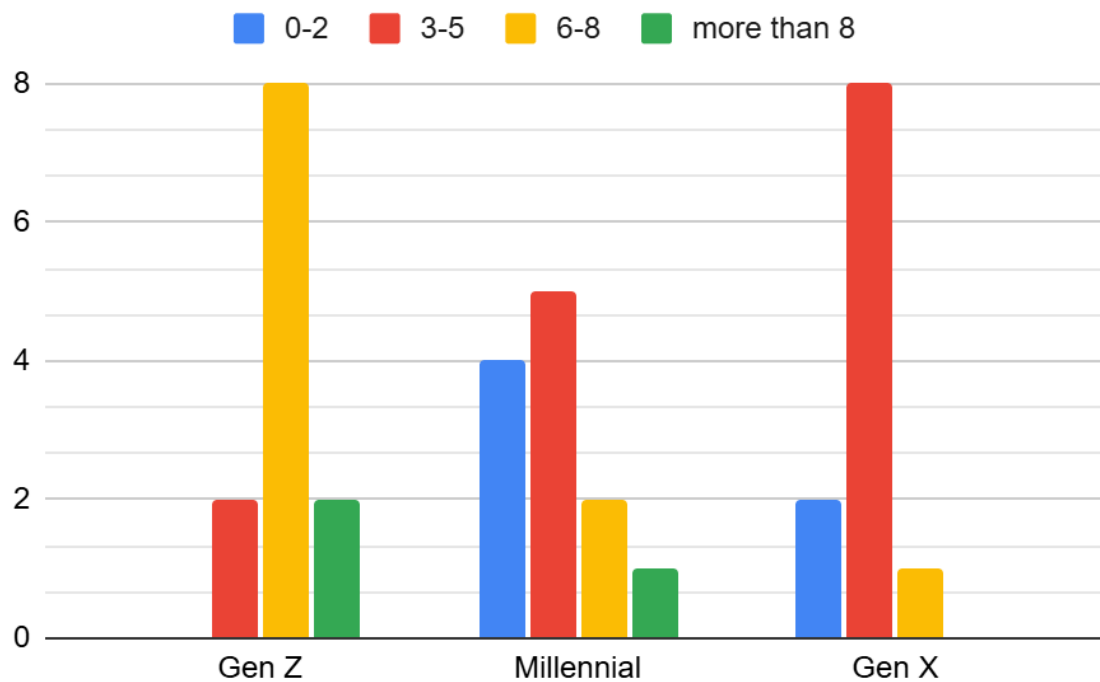


Figure 22: The Screen Time of Each Generation

Chapter 5: Discussion of Data

The findings of this study demonstrate that generational differences in oral storytelling in Trinidad are not simply the result of chronological age but rather emerge from a complex interaction of sociocultural experience, linguistic environment, and technological exposure. This supports sociolinguistic perspectives that conceptualise language variation as socially embedded and shaped by lived experience, rather than determined solely by biological aging. positioning linguistic behaviour across the lifespan as being influenced by “experiential factors” and social contexts rather than age alone (Wirtz and Pickl 88). The patterns observed across Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z reflect this interplay, showing that storytelling exists as an amalgamation of language, culture, and performance, with generational differences reflecting broader shifts in communication practices, language use and cultural transmission in a rapidly changing sociotechnological landscape.

5.1 Speech Rate and Narrative Delivery

Variation in speech rate across generations corresponds closely with established research on articulation, fluency, and communicative style. Generation X speakers in the dataset produced slower, more deliberate speech characterised by longer pauses and segmented delivery, while Millennials and Generation Z demonstrated faster and more continuous speech patterns. These findings align with sociophonetic research indicating that speech tempo varies across age groups and communicative contexts, with younger speakers typically producing faster speech (Jacewicz, et al 3). Similarly, studies note that age-related changes in speech production and lexical retrieval often result in slower articulation and increased pausing among older speakers (Burke and Shafto 2; Peelle 4), providing a physiological explanation for some of the patterns observed in Generation X narratives.

However, within the context of storytelling, these differences extend beyond purely cognitive or physiological explanations. Dorson emphasises that pacing and timing are central to oral storytelling, functioning as deliberate stylistic tools that shape audience engagement and narrative impact (126–127). The longer pauses observed in Generation X narratives therefore reflect not only age-related slowing but also a distinct communicative strategy rooted in performance. Many older speakers appear to use pacing intentionally, structuring their delivery to emphasise key moments, build suspense, and guide listener interpretation. This suggests that pauses are not simply gaps in speech but meaningful components of narrative construction.

This interpretation is further supported by participants' attitudes toward storytelling, where detailed and slower-paced narratives were associated with emotional engagement and depth of understanding. Some respondents explicitly indicated that longer and more deliberate storytelling “gives the listener time to engage with the story on a deeper level,” highlighting an awareness of pacing as a tool for enhancing audience immersion. In this sense, Generation X storytelling styles prioritise narrative immersion, reflection, and audience comprehension over speed or efficiency. The segmented delivery observed in their narratives allows listeners to process information gradually, reinforcing the idea that storytelling is not only about conveying events but about shaping the listener's experience of those events (Lalrodingi 293).

In contrast, the shorter pauses and more fluid delivery of Generation Z reflect adaptation to fast-paced communicative environments shaped by digital media. Their storytelling is characterised by a more continuous flow of speech, with fewer interruptions between ideas and a tendency to move rapidly from one point to the next. This mirrors the rapid, uninterrupted nature of online communication, where immediacy, speed, and efficiency

are prioritised. In digital contexts, communicative success often depends on maintaining attention and delivering information quickly, which may discourage extended pauses or slower pacing. As a result, Generation Z speakers appear to favour a more streamlined delivery style that aligns with these communicative expectations.

Furthermore, the reduced pausing and increased continuity in Generation Z narratives contribute to a conversational and spontaneous storytelling style. Rather than carefully segmenting narratives into structured units, these speakers often present stories as flowing sequences of events, supported by fillers and discourse markers that maintain continuity. This creates a sense of immediacy and relatability with their audience but may also reduce opportunities for emphasis and reflection within the narrative. The contrast between this style and the more deliberate pacing of Generation X highlights differing priorities in storytelling, with younger speakers focusing on maintaining momentum and engagement, and older speakers focusing on depth and impact.

Millennials occupy an intermediate position, combining relatively fast speech with moderate pausing. Their storytelling reflects a transitional communicative style that incorporates elements of both traditional and contemporary patterns. While their speech rate is closer to that of Generation Z, they retain some of the pausing strategies characteristic of Generation X, suggesting a balance between narrative flow and structural organisation. This positioning may reflect their unique sociocultural experience, having been exposed to both predominantly face-to-face communication in earlier life and the rise of digital communication technologies in adulthood.

The variation across all three groups demonstrates that speech rate is not simply an age-related phenomenon but is deeply influenced by shifting communicative norms and social contexts. While physiological factors may contribute to differences in speech

production, the patterns observed in this study indicate that speakers actively shape their delivery in response to audience expectations, communicative goals, and environmental influences. Storytelling, in this sense, emerges as a site where linguistic ability, cultural practice, and social adaptation intersect.

5.2 Filler Usage and Fluency Strategies

Differences in filler usage provide further insight into generational variation in storytelling style, revealing not only contrasts in fluency strategies but also differences in how speakers manage discourse and construct narrative flow. Generation X speakers in the dataset produced fewer overt fillers but relied more heavily on pauses and elongation, while Generation Z demonstrated significantly higher filler usage, particularly of the discourse marker “like.” Millennials again occupied an intermediate position, showing more controlled and balanced filler usage overall. These patterns suggest that each generation employs distinct strategies to manage speech production and maintain communicative effectiveness.

These findings align with research on language production, which indicates that older speakers often experience increased pausing and retrieval difficulty (Cho et al 307) but retain strong semantic knowledge and communicative competence (Burke and Shafto 2). The elongation strategies observed in Generation X narratives, such as stretching vowels or pausing within words, can therefore be understood as compensatory mechanisms that allow speakers to maintain fluency while processing lexical retrieval. Rather than inserting discrete filler words, these speakers rely on prosodic features to mitigate their linguistic hesitation, demonstrating that fluency can be maintained through multiple linguistic pathways.

In contrast, Generation Z’s frequent use of “like” reflects a different communicative function altogether. Rather than signalling hesitation or difficulty, “like” operates as a discourse marker that structures narrative progression, signals approximation, and maintains

conversational flow. Deuber, et al note that “be like” and similar forms are strongly associated with younger speakers in Trinidad and form part of broader global linguistic trends linked to youth identity and informal speech (450). Within the context of storytelling, this usage allows speakers to organise their narratives, introducing reported speech, emphasising key moments, or softening statements without interrupting the flow of speech.

Additionally, Generation Z’s reliance on fillers can be interpreted as a cognitive and interactional tool. Members of Generation Z, in the course of this study, explicitly indicated that they use fillers to maintain continuity in speech, prevent loss of thought, and signal to listeners that they have not yet finished speaking. In this sense, fillers function as markers of engagement rather than disfluency, helping speakers manage both their own cognitive processing and the expectations of their audience. This aligns with discourse-based perspectives that view fillers as integral components of spoken interaction, contributing to turn-taking, coherence, and listener orientation (Awang, et al 1029–30).

The relationship between filler usage and cognitive processing may also be influenced by broader sociocultural factors, particularly the impact of digital media. Hilman’s research suggests that younger individuals may experience shortened attention spans and more fragmented patterns of thought due to constant exposure to rapid, high-stimulation digital environments (5;7). Within this framework, filler words can be understood as a form of verbal stimulation that sustains both speaker and listener cognitive engagement within fast-paced communicative contexts. While this interpretation should be approached cautiously, it offers a useful perspective on why filler usage is not only more frequent among younger speakers but also more functionally integrated into their speech.

From a performance perspective, these differences are particularly significant. Dorson’s analysis of oral narration highlights that pauses, repetition, rhythm, and timing are

central elements of storytelling performance, contributing to creating meaning and audience engagement. In this context, fillers and so-called disfluencies are not simply errors but function as stylistic resources. Generation X's reliance on pauses and elongation creates a more rhythmic and segmented storytelling style, allowing for emphasis, suspense, and reflection. In contrast, Generation Z's filler-heavy speech produces a more conversational, informal, and continuously flowing narrative tone, which aligns with contemporary communicative norms.

Millennials, positioned between these two groups, demonstrate a hybrid approach, combining elements of both strategies. Their relatively moderate use of fillers, alongside controlled pacing, suggests an awareness of both traditional storytelling conventions and modern conversational styles. This further reinforces the idea of Millennials as a transitional generation, navigating between older and newer communicative frameworks.

These patterns ultimately illustrate that fluency is not a fixed or universal standard but is shaped by communicative goals, cultural expectations, and social context. While frequent filler usage may traditionally be labelled as disfluency, it may, in another context, represent a highly effective and socially appropriate communicative strategy. Generation X's pauses and Generation Z's fillers both maintain narrative coherence and audience engagement, albeit through different mechanisms, showing the importance of viewing fluency as the ability to effectively use available linguistic resources to achieve communicative success within a given context.

5.3 Narrative Length and Structural Change

Narrative length varied significantly across generations, with Generation X producing the longest and most elaborated narratives, Millennials producing moderately detailed narratives, and Generation Z producing shorter and more concise stories. These differences

are reflective of broader shifts in storytelling conventions, communicative priorities, and the sociocultural environments in which each generation operates.

Generation X's longer narratives align closely with traditional oral storytelling practices, where stories are extended, descriptive, and rich in contextual detail. Within folklore traditions, storytelling functions as a key mechanism for preserving cultural knowledge, transmitting moral values, and reinforcing communal identity (Lalrodingi 292). As such, narratives are not expected to be concise but rather immersive, allowing the storyteller to situate events within a broader social and cultural framework. The extended narrative structure enables the use of repetition, elaboration, and digression, all of which are recognised features of oral performance (Lalrodingi 293; Dorson 126–127). In this sense, the longer narratives produced by Generation X reflect not inefficiency, but adherence to a performative tradition in which storytelling is an event rather than simply a transfer of information.

In contrast, Generation Z's shorter narratives reflect a shift toward efficiency, immediacy, and relevance. Their storytelling tends to prioritise key events over background detail, resulting in narratives that are more compressed and action driven. This aligns with research on digital media and communication, which suggests that exposure to short-form content, such as TikTok videos, Instagram reels, and rapid messaging platforms, encourages more concise and rapid modes of expression (Panjaitan and Patria; Hilman). In such environments, attention is fragmented, and communicative success depends on the ability to deliver meaning quickly and effectively. The preference for brevity may therefore be understood as an adaptation to digital communicative norms, where information is consumed in short bursts and sustained elaboration is less common. Additionally, the reduced narrative length may reflect a shift in audience expectations, where listeners are assumed to have lower

tolerance for extended storytelling and greater preference for “instant gratification”, as one participant puts it, and entertainment value.

Millennials again represent a transitional group, balancing elaboration with conciseness. Their narratives maintain structural coherence and include sufficient detail to ensure clarity and engagement, while avoiding the extended digressions characteristic of Generation X storytelling. This suggests that Millennials occupy an intermediate communicative position, influenced both by traditional storytelling practices and by emerging digital communication norms. Their ability to navigate between these styles may reflect their position as a bridge generation, having experienced both predominantly face-to-face communication in early life and the rise of digital media in adulthood.

Importantly, these generational differences in narrative length should not be interpreted as a decline in storytelling ability among younger speakers, but rather as a transformation in narrative conventions. Lalrodingi argues that storytelling evolves alongside cultural and technological changes, adapting to new forms while retaining its core communicative functions (293–295). In this context, shorter narratives represent not a loss of complexity, but a reconfiguration of how meaning is structured and delivered. Where traditional storytelling emphasised immersion, detail, and communal experience, contemporary storytelling places greater emphasis on relatability, and immediacy.

Furthermore, narrative length interacts with other linguistic features observed in the study, such as speech rate and filler usage. Generation Z’s shorter narratives, combined with faster speech and higher filler frequency, create a storytelling style that is rapid, conversational, and continuously flowing. In contrast, Generation X’s longer narratives, slower speech, and extended pauses produce a more segmented and reflective storytelling

style. These patterns reinforce the idea that narrative length is not an isolated variable but part of a broader system of communicative practices shaped by generational experience.

Overall, the variation in narrative length across generations highlights the adaptability of storytelling as a cultural practice. While the form and structure of narratives may change, the fundamental role of storytelling, as a means of sharing experiences, constructing identity, and connecting with others, remains consistent.

5.4 Language Usage and the Creole Continuum

Language usage patterns across generations reflect both continuity and change within the Trinidadian linguistic landscape. The presence of Standard English, Trinidadian English Creole (TrinEC), and mixed forms across all groups demonstrates the dynamic nature of language systems, supporting sociolinguistic claims that language is inherently variable and shaped by social interaction rather than governed by fixed rules (Ul Ain, et al 20). This variability is particularly evident in postcolonial contexts such as Trinidad, where the coexistence of multiple linguistic varieties forms a continuum rather than discrete categories, allowing speakers to draw from a wide range of linguistic resources depending on context, identity, and communicative intent. Crucially, this shows that speakers themselves conceptualise language along a continuum, even while often simplifying it into a broad opposition between “Standard English” and “Creole”.

However, generational differences in how these varieties are used reveal clear patterns of ongoing linguistic change. Generation X speakers demonstrated more consistent and structurally embedded use of Creole, indicating that TrinEC functions as a primary grammatical system within their storytelling rather than as a supplementary or stylistic resource. Their narratives often maintained Creole syntax across clauses and extended sequences, suggesting a stable position within the Creole continuum. This reflects earlier

stages of linguistic socialisation, where Creole was more firmly embedded in everyday communication, particularly within familial and community-based storytelling contexts. These patterns also mirror broader sociolinguistic observations that non-standard varieties are often associated with informal, community-based domains and serve as markers of cultural continuity and identity (Sanatan 5).

Millennials, by contrast, displayed mesolectal variation, alternating between Standard English and Creole depending on context, narrative function, or emphasis. Their storytelling reflects a more balanced use of both varieties, where neither dominates entirely. This pattern suggests a heightened awareness of linguistic appropriateness and audience design, as speakers navigate between varieties to achieve specific communicative effects. Their position within the continuum appears more flexible than Generation X, but still relatively structured, with clearer boundaries between codes.

Generation Z, meanwhile, exhibited the highest degree of linguistic flexibility, frequently mixing and switching between varieties within single utterances. Rather than maintaining clear boundaries between Standard English and Creole, their speech reflects rapid and seamless movement across the continuum. This results in hybrid constructions where features from both varieties coexist within the same clause, indicating a shift away from traditional models of code-switching toward more integrated forms of linguistic blending. This reflects what has been described in studies as “mixed” or intermediate varieties, which speakers recognise as existing between Standard English and Creole, even if they lack consistent labels for them (Youssef). For Generation Z, then, linguistic boundaries are not only less rigid but may be becoming increasingly irrelevant in everyday communication.

This shift toward hybrid language use aligns with broader theories of language evolution, which emphasise that linguistic systems change as speakers adapt to new social environments and communicative demands. Language is not static but continuously reshaped by its users, and younger generations play a key role in introducing and normalising new forms (Alijagic 3). The increased mixing observed among Generation Z reflects the influence of globalisation and digital communication, where exposure to multiple linguistic inputs including international media and online discourse encourages flexibility, innovation, and the blending of linguistic features. In digital spaces, strict adherence to standardised forms is often less important than communicative efficiency and relatability, further reinforcing the use of hybrid language.

Moreover, the findings suggest that language use is closely tied to identity construction. For Generation X, consistent use of Creole may signal cultural authenticity and alignment with traditional modes of expression. For Millennials, alternating between varieties may reflect an ability to navigate multiple social identities, balancing formality and informality. For Generation Z, mixing may represent a more hybrid sense of identity, shaped by both national and global influences. This aligns with sociolinguistic perspectives that view language as a resource for negotiating identity rather than simply a system of rules (Deuber, et al 450).

Additionally, the findings support the argument that language change is driven by social experience rather than age alone. As Wirtz and Pickl note, linguistic variation across the lifespan is shaped by major life events, social networks, and environmental exposure, reinforcing the idea that generational differences in language use reflect broader sociocultural shifts rather than purely biological aging. The differences observed in this study therefore reflect the distinct linguistic environments experienced by each generation, including

differences in education, media exposure, and patterns of social interaction. For instance, the association of Standard English with urban, prestigious spaces and Creole with rural or informal contexts continues to shape how different generations may use and value these varieties. This is evident in the contrast between the language varieties participants reported using most frequently and the varieties they actually employed during storytelling.

Importantly, the coexistence of continuity and change highlights the resilience of the Trinidadian linguistic system. While younger speakers are introducing new forms and patterns, the continued presence of Creole across all generations demonstrates its enduring role as a core component of cultural and linguistic identity. Rather than being replaced, Creole is being reshaped and recontextualised within new communicative frameworks. This suggests that linguistic change in Trinidad is not characterised by loss, but by adaptation, where traditional forms persist while evolving to meet the needs of contemporary speakers (Sanatan 13; Lalrodingi 294).

The generational language use shown in this research reinforces the view that language is a living system, continuously negotiated and redefined through social interaction, and that storytelling provides a valuable site for observing these processes in action.

5.5 Lexical Usage and Expressive Language Change

Lexical usage patterns across generations further illustrate the evolution of storytelling language, revealing not only differences in vocabulary choice but also shifts in how experiences are conceptualised, framed, and communicated. Generation X relied predominantly on practical, experience-based vocabulary grounded in lived events, often using concrete and direct lexical items to describe situations and actions. Their language tends to reflect a descriptive orientation, where meaning is constructed through the recounting of events as they occurred. Words associated with physical experiences, conflict,

memory, and everyday life dominate their narratives, suggesting a storytelling style that prioritises clarity, realism, and experiential authenticity.

Millennials, in contrast, demonstrate a shift toward more reflective and interpretive language. Their lexical choices often include abstract terms that frame experiences in terms of meaning, impact, or personal growth, such as references to “situations,” “experiences,” or “lessons.” This suggests a move away from purely descriptive storytelling toward a more evaluative mode, where narrators not only recount events but also interpret and contextualise them.

Generation Z, by contrast, employed highly expressive and emotionally intensified vocabulary, frequently using exaggerated or emphatic terms to convey their experiences. Their lexical choices often prioritise emotional impact over descriptive precision, with frequent use of words that amplify feelings or dramatise events. This results in narratives that are less focused on the detailed unfolding of events and more oriented toward how those events are experienced and felt. The frequent use of repetition and intensifiers further enhances this expressive quality, creating a storytelling style that is dynamic, affective, and highly engaging.

This progression from concrete to reflective to expressive language reflects broader patterns of language change, where each generation reshapes the linguistic system by introducing new lexical forms, meanings, and functions. Language evolution is cumulative, with younger speakers playing a central role in innovation and change. Language is not a homogeneous system but a dynamic one that reflects ongoing variation and change within a speech community (Belahcen and Ouahmiche 34). The lexical differences observed in this study therefore represent not isolated variations, but part of a broader process of linguistic transformation occurring over time.

Furthermore, the increased use of expressive and intensified language among Generation Z reflects the influence of digital communication environments, where exaggeration, humour, and emotional emphasis are key features of interaction. Social media platforms often reward attention grabbing language, encouraging users to frame experiences in ways that are engaging, or dramatic. As a result, lexical choices become shaped by the need to capture attention quickly and convey meaning efficiently within limited communicative space. This tendency to dramatise is substantiated by the researcher's own experiences, when peers with no suicidal ideation frequently threaten to kill themselves at minor inconveniences or when expressing dismay in the recounting of a story. This aligns with research suggesting that digital communication fosters linguistic creativity while also promoting simplification and emotional intensity in language use (Panjaitan and Patria 54; Alijagic 3; 7).

Importantly, these shifts do not indicate a decline in linguistic competence but rather a reorganisation of linguistic priorities. While Generation X emphasises detail and realism, and Millennials emphasise interpretation, Generation Z emphasises emotional engagement and immediacy. Each of these styles represents a valid and effective form of communication within its respective sociocultural context.

5.6 Story Themes and Cultural Orientation

The thematic content of stories varied across generations, reflecting differences in cultural orientation, social experience, and the shifting functions of storytelling within Trinidadian society. While all groups shared a common emphasis on personal experiences and family narratives, demonstrating the enduring role of storytelling as a means of sharing lived reality, clear distinctions emerged in the types of stories prioritised by each generation. Generation X were more likely to reportedly include traditional folktales, moral lessons, and

culturally grounded accounts in their narratives, whereas Generation Z narratives placed greater emphasis on peer interactions, gossip, humorous incidents, and imaginative or socially immediate scenarios.

This variation reflects broader changes in the role and function of storytelling across time. Traditional folklore scholarship consistently highlights storytelling as central to cultural continuity, functioning as a vehicle through which beliefs, norms, and collective memory are passed from one generation to the next. As Kaye notes, storytelling has historically been used to “amuse, teach, and communicate,” illustrating its multifunctional role within society (65). Similarly, Dorson emphasises that oral narratives are deeply embedded within cultural contexts and cannot be separated from the communities that produce and sustain them (123), reinforcing the idea that storytelling is inherently tied to social structure and cultural identity.

Within this framework, the prominence of folktales and moral narratives among Generation X reflects their closer alignment with traditional modes of storytelling, where stories often carry explicit or implicit lessons and are rooted in shared cultural heritage. These narratives frequently extend beyond individual experience to engage with communal knowledge, reinforcing values such as respect, caution, or social responsibility. The inclusion of such themes suggests that storytelling for this generation retains a strong collective function, serving to entertain as well as educate and preserve cultural continuity.

In contrast, the reduced presence of folktales among Generation Z suggests a shift away from storytelling as a primary means of cultural transmission. Instead, their narratives are more likely to centre on immediate social experiences, including interactions with peers, humorous or embarrassing events, and everyday situations. The increased presence of gossip and socially oriented narratives indicates a move toward storytelling as a form of social bonding and identity negotiation within peer groups. At the same time, the inclusion of

imaginative and creative scenarios reflects a diversification of narrative forms, influenced by exposure to digital storytelling platforms.

This shift toward more individualised and socially immediate content can be understood as part of a broader transformation in communicative practices. As storytelling moves away from predominantly face-to-face, intergenerational settings and into more fragmented, peer-oriented, and digitally mediated spaces, its function evolves accordingly. Rather than serving primarily as an archive of cultural knowledge, storytelling becomes a means of expressing identity, navigating social relationships, and engaging with contemporary experiences. This aligns with findings in Caribbean scholarship, such as Sanatan's discussion with Keens-Douglas, where storytelling is shown to adapt to reflect everyday realities while maintaining its performative and cultural significance (13–14).

It is important to note that the reduced emphasis on traditional folktales does not necessarily indicate a complete breakdown in cultural transmission. Instead, it suggests that cultural knowledge may be transmitted through different channels and in different forms. Elements of traditional storytelling, such as humour, rhythm, and performative expression, may persist within modern narratives, even if the content itself has changed. Additionally, family-based storytelling remains a significant influence across generations, as indicated by the continued prominence of parents and grandparents as primary sources of stories in the dataset. This suggests that while the content and form of storytelling are evolving, its role within family and social structures remains resilient.

Furthermore, the thematic differences observed across generations reflect broader sociocultural shifts, including changes in social structure, technological advancement, and patterns of interaction. Generation X's narratives are shaped by environments where storytelling was a central form of entertainment and communication within the home and

community. In contrast, Generation Z's narratives are shaped by a media-saturated environment, where stories are encountered and shared across multiple platforms and formats. This exposure influences not only the content of their stories but also their expectations of what storytelling should be.

While the emphasis may shift from communal and traditional themes to more individualised and socially immediate ones, storytelling continues to fulfil its core function as a means of communication and connection. Rather than representing a decline, these changes illustrate the ongoing evolution of storytelling in response to changing cultural and technological contexts, demonstrating its resilience and relevance within contemporary Trinidadian society.

5.7 Attitudes Towards Storytelling and Purpose

Generational differences in attitudes toward storytelling further highlight this broader shift in both the function and perception of narrative practices across Trinidadian society. Generation X participants closely tie storytelling to recollection and reflection, with it functioning as a way to preserve personal and collective histories, reinforce moral values, and maintain cultural continuity. This aligns with traditional conceptions of storytelling within folklore.

In contrast, Millennials and Generation Z participants placed greater emphasis on storytelling as a form of entertainment, creativity, and social interaction. Their responses suggest that storytelling is increasingly viewed as a flexible and informal communicative practice, rather than a structured or culturally bound activity. For these younger generations, storytelling often functions as a means of self-expression, allowing individuals to share personal experiences, showcase creativity, and engage with others in socially meaningful

ways. This shift reflects a move away from storytelling as a primarily didactic practice, toward one that prioritises engagement, relatability, and interaction.

The emphasis on entertainment and creativity among younger participants also reflects the influence of contemporary media environments. Social media, in particular, has transformed storytelling into a highly fast paced act, where stories are disseminated across global networks in real time. This has contributed to a redefinition of storytelling as an everyday communicative activity rather than a specialised or formalised practice. In this context, storytelling becomes less about preserving tradition and more about participating in ongoing social exchange.

These findings indicate a broader transformation in the perceived purpose of storytelling, moving from collective cultural preservation toward individual expression and communication. This shift aligns with wider cultural trends toward individualism, where personal experience and self-representation are prioritised, as well as with the rise of digital communication, which emphasises immediacy.

However, it is important to recognise that these perspectives are not entirely mutually exclusive. Elements of cultural preservation, entertainment, and social interaction coexist across all generations, though they are prioritised differently. For instance, while younger participants may emphasise entertainment, their storytelling still contributes to the construction of shared experiences and social bonds within their peer groups. Similarly, older participants' focus on memory and lessons does not exclude the entertainment value of their narratives. This suggests that storytelling continues to fulfil multiple functions simultaneously, even as its dominant purpose shifts over time.

Ultimately, the variation in attitudes toward storytelling reflects broader sociocultural changes in how communication is understood and valued. As storytelling adapts to new technological and social environments, its purpose evolves to meet the needs of its users.

5.8 Social and Digital Engagement

The influence of digital media is particularly evident in the storytelling practices of younger generations, especially Generation Z. Participants from this group reported high levels of engagement with platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, all of which are characterised by short-form, fast-paced, and highly interactive content. This sustained exposure to digital environments appears to have a direct impact on both the linguistic and structural features of their storytelling. As observed in the data, Generation Z narratives tend to be shorter, more rapid in delivery, and marked by increased use of informal language, discourse markers, and expressive vocabulary.

The relationship between digital media use and storytelling style can be understood through broader research on digital communication, which suggests that social media platforms encourage linguistic simplification, abbreviation, and the development of new informal registers. In digital spaces, communicative efficiency is often prioritised over grammatical completeness, leading to the widespread use of shortened forms, hybrid structures, and conversational language. This is reflected in Generation Z's storytelling, where narratives often move quickly between ideas, omit extensive background detail, and incorporate features typical of casual spoken interaction. Language in these contexts becomes more flexible and adaptive, shaped by the need to communicate effectively within time-constrained and attention-driven environments (Panjaitan and Patria 56).

Additionally, research on attention span and media consumption suggests that frequent exposure to rapid, short-form content can influence cognitive and communicative

preferences. Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels present information in brief, highly engaging segments, conditioning users to expect quick delivery and immediate payoff. This may help explain the preference among Generation Z participants for shorter, more concise narratives, as well as their tendency to focus on key moments rather than extended narrative development. The reduced tolerance for prolonged elaboration is therefore not simply a personal preference but reflects adaptation to a broader media ecology that values speed, efficiency, and stimulation (Hilman).

Moreover, digital media does not only influence the structure of storytelling but also its function and audience orientation. In traditional storytelling contexts, the audience is typically physically present, and narratives are shaped through direct interaction, feedback, and shared cultural knowledge. In contrast, digital storytelling often takes place in mediated environments where the audience may be distant, asynchronous, or unknown. This shifts the storyteller's focus toward producing content that is broadly relatable and immediately engaging, often through humour, exaggeration, or emotional appeal. Generation Z's storytelling reflects this shift, with narratives that are designed to capture attention quickly and maintain engagement through dynamic and expressive delivery.

At the same time, digital platforms introduce new modes of storytelling that extend beyond verbal narration. Visual elements, sound effects, text overlays, and multimedia editing all contribute to how stories are constructed and experienced online. While this study focuses on oral storytelling, it is important to recognise that Generation Z's narrative practices are shaped within a multimodal communicative environment. This exposure influences how they organise information, emphasise key points, and structure their narratives, even in face-to-face storytelling contexts.

Importantly, these findings suggest that digital media is not replacing storytelling but rather reshaping its form, function, and delivery. Storytelling continues to serve as a fundamental means of communication, self-expression, and cultural interaction. However, it is increasingly mediated by technology, resulting in new narrative conventions that reflect contemporary modes of interaction. Rather than signalling a decline in storytelling, the influence of digital media demonstrates its adaptability as a cultural practice.

Furthermore, the coexistence of traditional and digital storytelling forms highlights the resilience of storytelling within Trinidadian society. While Generation X may rely more heavily on face-to-face, elaborated narratives, and Generation Z may favour shorter, digitally influenced storytelling styles, both groups continue to engage in narrative practices that fulfil similar communicative purposes. This suggests that storytelling remains a central component of social life, even as its form evolves.

5.9 Synthesis and Interrelationship of Findings

When considered collectively, the findings reveal a clear generational continuum in storytelling practices, illustrating how narrative style evolves progressively rather than existing as sharply divided categories. Each generation reflects a distinct but interconnected approach to storytelling, shaped by its unique sociocultural and communicative environment.

Generation X is characterised by traditional, performative, and highly detailed storytelling rooted in oral tradition. Their narratives emphasise structure, elaboration, and audience engagement, drawing heavily on features such as pacing, repetition, and descriptive detail. Storytelling for this group often functions as an immersive experience, where meaning is constructed gradually and supported by performative elements that enhance listener involvement.

Millennials occupy a transitional position within this continuum, demonstrating a hybrid storytelling style that combines elements of both traditional and modern practices. Their narratives retain a degree of structure and coherence characteristic of older storytelling styles, while also incorporating features associated with more contemporary communication, such as moderate pacing, selective elaboration, and flexible language use. This balance reflects their position as a bridge generation, shaped by both pre-digital and digital communicative environments. As a result, their storytelling demonstrates adaptability, drawing on multiple narrative conventions depending on context and purpose.

Generation Z, by contrast, is characterised by fast-paced, expressive, and digitally influenced storytelling. Their narratives prioritise immediacy, emotional impact, and conversational flow, often at the expense of extended elaboration or traditional narrative structure. Linguistic features such as increased filler usage, rapid speech, and hybrid language forms contribute to a storytelling style that is dynamic and engaging but less formally structured. This reflects the influence of digital media, where communication is often brief, interactive, and oriented toward maintaining attention within fast-moving environments.

These generational differences are not isolated but deeply interconnected across multiple dimensions of storytelling. Faster speech patterns observed in younger generations are closely linked to shorter narrative length, as rapid delivery naturally limits the extent of elaboration. Increased filler usage supports conversational flow, allowing speakers to maintain continuity despite reduced pausing and planning time. Similarly, high levels of digital engagement influence both language use and narrative structure, encouraging informal expression, hybrid linguistic forms, and concise storytelling. Story themes, lexical choices, and attitudes toward storytelling further reinforce these patterns, reflecting broader

sociocultural changes in how individuals communicate, construct identity, and engage with others.

Importantly, these relationships demonstrate that storytelling operates as an integrated system in which linguistic, cultural, and technological factors interact continuously. Changes in one aspect of storytelling, such as exposure to digital media, do not occur in isolation but influence multiple components of narrative practice, including structure, delivery, and language choice. For example, the shift toward shorter attention spans associated with digital media not only affects narrative length but also contributes to faster speech, increased reliance on fillers, and more immediate thematic focus. Similarly, changes in language use, such as increased code-switching or lexical innovation, interact with narrative style and performance, shaping how stories are constructed and understood.

This interconnectedness highlights the dynamic and adaptive nature of storytelling as a cultural practice. Rather than viewing generational differences as a decline or loss of traditional forms, the findings suggest that storytelling is evolving in response to changing communicative needs and environments. Each generation modifies storytelling practices to align with its social context, resulting in new forms that remain functional and meaningful within contemporary society.

Ultimately, the generational continuum identified in this study underscores the importance of viewing storytelling as a fluid and evolving system. While the specific features of storytelling may change over time, its core role as a means of communication, identity construction, and social connection remains consistent. The differences observed across generations therefore reflect transformation, demonstrating the resilience of storytelling as it adapts to the shifting linguistic and cultural landscape of Trinidad.

5.10 In Relation to Research Questions

5.10.1 Linguistic and Stylistic Features across Generations

What linguistic and stylistic features characterise the storytelling of older versus younger narrators, and what sociocultural factors influence these differences?

Generation X storytelling is characterised by slower speech, longer pauses, extended narrative length, and consistent use of Trinidadian English Creole as a structural system. Their narratives are typically detailed, descriptive, and performative, reflecting strong alignment with traditional oral storytelling practices. Features such as repetition, pacing, and elaboration indicate a storytelling style that prioritises audience engagement, clarity, and immersion. This aligns with Dorson's assertion that oral storytelling is fundamentally performative, with meaning shaped through delivery, timing, and interaction rather than solely through linguistic content.

Millennials demonstrate a hybrid storytelling style, combining elements of traditional and modern practices. Their speech rate is faster than that of Generation X but more measured than Generation Z, and their narratives balance detail with conciseness. Linguistically, they exhibit mesolectal variation, alternating between Standard English and Creole depending on context. This suggests a high degree of linguistic awareness and adaptability, allowing them to navigate different communicative settings effectively. Their storytelling reflects a transitional position, shaped by both traditional oral practices and increasing exposure to digital communication.

Generation Z storytelling, by contrast, is characterised by faster speech, shorter narratives, higher filler usage, and greater linguistic fluidity. Their narratives prioritise immediacy, emotional impact, and conversational flow, often incorporating expressive vocabulary, repetition, and discourse markers such as "like." Language use within this group

reflects frequent mixing between English and English Creole, resulting in hybrid forms that blur traditional linguistic boundaries. Their storytelling style is less structured and more dynamic, reflecting adaptation to contemporary communicative environments.

These linguistic and stylistic differences are shaped by several key sociocultural factors. Digital media exposure plays a significant role, particularly for Generation Z, whose communication patterns reflect the influence of fast-paced, short-form content. Globalisation also contributes to changes in language use, introducing new lexical items and discourse patterns that are integrated into everyday speech. Additionally, differences in socialisation environments, such as the extent of exposure to traditional storytelling within the home, further influence storytelling practices. Together, these factors support sociolinguistic theories that language variation is socially conditioned and evolves in response to changing environments.

5.10.2 Impact on Communication and Intergenerational Understanding

How do differences in storytelling language and style affect communication and understanding between older and younger generations?

When looked at in relation to RQ1, the findings show that the generational differences create both challenges and opportunities for intergenerational communication.

One key area of divergence lies in narrative pacing and structure. Generation X's slower, more elaborated storytelling style may be perceived by younger listeners as overly lengthy or less engaging, particularly in contexts where brevity and immediacy are valued. Conversely, Generation Z's fast paced and highly condensed narratives may appear fragmented or lacking in depth to older listeners, who may expect more detailed contextualisation and narrative development. These differences in pacing reflect broader differences in communicative expectations, which can lead to misalignment in how stories are interpreted and valued.

Language use also plays a significant role in shaping intergenerational understanding. While all groups employ both Standard English and Trinidadian English Creole, the ways in which these varieties are used differ considerably across generations. These differences are further influenced by prevailing social attitudes toward language, particularly longstanding associations of Standard English with education and prestige, and Creole with informality. As a result, Generation X's consistent use of Creole may, in some contexts, be perceived as less formal or less aligned with notions of standardised speech, despite its structural complexity and cultural significance. Conversely, Generation Z's fluid mixing of linguistic forms may challenge traditional expectations of linguistic separation, leading to perceptions of inconsistency or lack of clarity among older listeners.

In addition, the use of expressive and exaggerated vocabulary by younger speakers can contribute to differences in interpretation. Generation Z's tendency toward hyperbolic and emotionally intensified language may not always be readily understood by older audiences, particularly when such expressions are used figuratively rather than literally. This can result in misinterpretation, where statements intended for emphasis or humour are taken at face value. Furthermore, differences in lexical choice and communicative style may occasionally lead to tension, especially in situations where older speakers perceive indirect or exaggerated expressions as inappropriate or unclear. In such cases, expectations for directness and clarity may conflict with younger speakers' preference for expressive and affect-driven communication.

Filler usage further contributes to these differences. Generation Z's frequent use of discourse markers such as "like" supports conversational flow but may be perceived as disfluency or lack of precision by older listeners. At the same time, Generation X's longer pauses, which function as performative and reflective tools, may be interpreted by younger

listeners as hesitation or inefficiency. As a result, differences in filler usage and pacing can lead to misalignment in how speakers are perceived, even when communicative intent is successfully conveyed. These differences may contribute to subtle misunderstandings or judgments about competence, attentiveness, or clarity, particularly in interactions where speakers are not attuned to each other's communicative norms.

Despite these potential challenges, the findings also indicate that storytelling continues to function as a bridge for intergenerational connection. Shared themes such as family experiences and personal narratives provide common ground across generations, allowing individuals to relate to each other despite differences in style. Furthermore, the adaptability of storytelling plays a crucial role in facilitating intergenerational communication. Speakers often demonstrate the ability to adjust their narratives based on their audience, modifying aspects such as pacing, language choice, and level of detail to enhance understanding and engagement, suggesting that intergenerational communication is not static but negotiable.

The differences observed do not necessarily prevent understanding but require greater awareness and adaptation from both speakers and listeners. In this sense, intergenerational communication through storytelling is not inherently limited by linguistic differences but is instead shaped by the willingness of speakers and listeners to accommodate and interpret varying styles. Rather than acting as a barrier, these differences can become a site of negotiation and mutual understanding, reinforcing storytelling's enduring role as a means of connection within Trinidadian society.

5.10.3 Perceptions on the Purpose of Storytelling

How do storytellers from different generations perceive the purpose of storytelling?

The findings reveal a clear shift in how storytelling is conceptualised, moving from collective cultural functions toward more individualised and interactional purposes.

Generation X participants predominantly view storytelling as a means of preserving memory, transmitting cultural knowledge, and conveying life lessons. Their narratives often reflect a sense of responsibility to pass on experiences and values, reinforcing storytelling as a culturally significant practice. This aligns with traditional folklore perspectives, where storytelling serves as a tool for socialisation and the maintenance of cultural identity.

Millennials demonstrate a more balanced perspective, recognising both the cultural and interpersonal functions of storytelling. For this group, storytelling serves not only as a means of sharing experiences but also as a way to reflect on and interpret those experiences. Their responses suggest that storytelling is both informative and expressive, bridging traditional and contemporary functions.

Generation Z, by contrast, places greater emphasis on storytelling as a form of entertainment, creativity, and social interaction. For these participants, storytelling is less about preserving tradition and more about engaging with others, expressing identity, and sharing experiences in relatable ways. This reflects the influence of digital communication, where storytelling often occurs in interactive and informal contexts.

These differences indicate a broader transformation in the perceived purpose of storytelling. While older generations emphasise its role in cultural preservation and knowledge transmission, younger generations prioritise its function as a tool for communication and social connection. This shift aligns with wider cultural trends toward individualism and digital interaction, where personal expression and audience engagement are central.

However, it is important to note that these functions are not mutually exclusive. Elements of cultural preservation, entertainment, and social interaction are present across all generations, though they are prioritised differently. Storytelling continues to fulfil multiple roles simultaneously, demonstrating its flexibility as a communicative practice.

5.11 Limitations

While this study provides valuable insight into generational differences in oral storytelling in Trinidad, several limitations must be acknowledged.

Firstly, the study utilised a relatively small sample size of thirty-seven participants, which limits the generalisability of the findings. Although the sample was sufficient for qualitative and comparative analysis, it may not fully represent the diversity of storytelling practices across the wider Trinidadian population. Additionally, the use of quota and convenience sampling, relying on personal and community networks, may have introduced sampling bias, as participants may share similar social, educational, or cultural backgrounds.

Secondly, there was some imbalance in participant distribution across gender and age groups, particularly within Generation Z, where representation from the younger end of the cohort was limited. This may have affected the breadth of comparison and the ability to fully capture variation within that generation.

Another limitation relates to the observer effect. Since storytelling sessions were recorded and conducted in the presence of the researcher, participants may have altered their natural speech patterns, either consciously or unconsciously. Some individuals may have been more reserved or self-conscious, potentially affecting the authenticity of their storytelling performance.

Furthermore, while the study aimed to capture both linguistic and performative features, the transcription process inherently limits the full representation of oral storytelling. Despite the use of Jefferson notation and field observations, certain elements such as gesture, facial expression, tone variation, and audience interaction cannot be fully conveyed in written form. As highlighted in the literature, oral storytelling is a multimodal performance, and any attempt to document it risks partial loss of meaning.

Additionally, the study focused primarily on verbal storytelling and did not extensively explore multimodal or digital storytelling forms, such as video-based narratives, memes, or social media storytelling practices. Given the strong influence of digital media identified in the findings, this represents an area that was acknowledged but not fully examined within the scope of this research.

Finally, as a single-researcher study, there is an inherent level of subjectivity in data interpretation, particularly in discourse analysis. Although triangulation was used to strengthen validity, the analysis remains influenced by the researcher's perspective.

5.11.1 Future Recommendations

Building on the findings and limitations of this study, several recommendations can be made for future research.

Firstly, future studies should aim to include a larger and more diverse sample size, incorporating participants from a wider range of social, educational, and geographic backgrounds within Trinidad and Tobago. This would enhance the generalisability of findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of storytelling variation across the population.

Secondly, further research should explore additional generational groups, particularly Generation Alpha and older cohorts such as Baby Boomers. Including these groups would

allow for a more complete generational continuum and provide deeper insight into long-term changes in storytelling practices.

Thirdly, there is a need for greater focus on multimodal storytelling. Future studies should examine how storytelling occurs in digital spaces, including platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp. This would allow researchers to analyse how visual, auditory, and textual elements interact with language to shape modern storytelling practices, particularly among younger generations.

Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide valuable insight into how storytelling practices evolve over time within the same individuals or communities. This would help to distinguish between age-related changes and broader generational shifts more clearly.

Future research could also adopt a more detailed sociolinguistic approach to language variation, examining factors such as social class, education level, ethnicity, and urban versus rural background. These variables may further influence storytelling style and could provide a more nuanced understanding of linguistic variation within the Trinidadian context.

Another important area for exploration is intergenerational interaction itself. While this study examined differences between generations, future research could focus on how storytelling occurs in real-time interactions between older and younger speakers, analysing how they negotiate meaning, adapt their styles, and respond to each other.

Finally, interdisciplinary approaches combining linguistics, anthropology, media studies, and psychology would enrich the study of storytelling by providing a more holistic understanding of its cognitive, cultural, and social dimensions.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study set out to examine how and why oral storytelling practices differ across generations in Trinidad, with particular focus on linguistic features, communicative impact, and perceptions of storytelling purpose. The findings confirm that storytelling remains a central cultural and communicative practice; however, it is not static. Rather, it is continuously evolving in response to changing social environments, technological influences, and shifting communicative norms.

In relation to the first research question, the study revealed clear generational differences in linguistic and stylistic features. Generation X storytelling is characterised by slower speech, longer pauses, extended narrative length, and more consistent use of Trinidadian English Creole as a structured linguistic system. Their storytelling reflects traditional oral practices that emphasise performance, detail, and audience engagement. Millennials demonstrate a hybrid style, combining elements of traditional storytelling with more contemporary communicative patterns, including moderate pacing, balanced narrative length, and flexible language use. Generation Z, by contrast, exhibits a fast-paced, expressive, and fluid storytelling style, marked by shorter narratives, higher filler usage, hybrid language forms, and emotionally intensified vocabulary. These differences are shaped by sociocultural factors such as digital media exposure, globalisation, and changing patterns of social interaction, confirming that language variation is deeply influenced by social context rather than age alone.

With respect to the second research question, the findings indicate that differences in storytelling style can influence intergenerational communication and understanding. Variations in pacing, narrative structure, filler usage, and language choice may lead to differing interpretations of fluency, clarity, and effectiveness. However, despite these

challenges, storytelling continues to function as a bridge for connection. Shared themes such as family experiences and personal narratives provide common ground, and speakers demonstrate the ability to adapt their storytelling style depending on their audience. This highlights the negotiable and flexible nature of intergenerational communication.

In addressing the third research question, the study found a clear shift in how storytelling is perceived across generations. Generation X participants view storytelling as a means of preserving memory, transmitting cultural knowledge, and conveying life lessons, reflecting its traditional role within Caribbean society. Millennials adopt a more balanced perspective, recognising both the cultural and expressive functions of storytelling. Generation Z, however, places greater emphasis on storytelling as a form of entertainment, creativity, and social interaction. This shift reflects broader cultural trends toward individual expression and digitally mediated communication. While the purpose of storytelling has evolved, it continues to fulfil multiple functions across generations, demonstrating its adaptability as a communicative practice.

Taken together, the findings illustrate that storytelling operates as an integrated system in which linguistic, cultural, and technological factors are closely interconnected. Changes in one aspect of storytelling, such as digital media exposure, influence multiple dimensions, including narrative structure, language use, pacing, and performance style. The generational continuum identified in this study demonstrates that storytelling is not declining but transforming, adapting to meet the communicative needs of different generations while retaining its core role.

This study contributes to the limited body of research on generational storytelling differences in the Caribbean by combining sociolinguistic analysis with performance-based approaches. It highlights the importance of examining storytelling as both a linguistic and

cultural practice, particularly within contexts shaped by rapid technological change. However, the study is not without limitations. The relatively small sample size and reliance on convenience sampling limit the generalisability of the findings, and further research is needed to explore these patterns across a wider population. Future studies could also investigate the role of multimodal storytelling, including digital and visual forms, as well as explore younger generations such as Generation Alpha.

In conclusion, storytelling in Trinidad remains a dynamic and resilient practice. While its forms, styles, and purposes continue to evolve, its fundamental role as a means of communication, identity construction, and cultural expression endures. The differences observed across generations reflect not a loss of tradition, but a process of transformation, one that ensures storytelling remains relevant within an ever-changing social and technological landscape.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

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Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

This questionnaire asks a few questions about you, your background, and your experiences with storytelling. It includes questions about the kinds of stories you heard growing up, whether you tell stories now, and how you share stories in everyday life, including through social media and digital platforms. Your answers will help the researcher better understand how people from different age groups tell and experience stories and will help guide a short interview later on.

* Indicates required question

1. Email *

2. Full Name

3. Generation *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Generation X (1965-1980)
- ☐ Millennial (1981-1996)
- ☐ Generation Z (1997-2012)

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15HR-_qad_I05-wtbY1GL0bwi5FfAaDJGpeHAJlU4v4m4/edit

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Pre-Interview Questionnaire

4. Year of Birth *

5. Gender *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

6. Place of Birth *

7. Where did you grow up? *

8. What language(s)/language varieties do you use at home? (e.g. Standard English, Creole/Dialect etc.) *

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15HR-_qad_I05-wtbY1GL0bwi5FfAaDJGpeHAJlU4v4m4/edit

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Pre-Interview Questionnaire

9. Who do you speak to the most at home? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Parents/Elders
- ☐ Partner (Husband/Wife; Boyfriend/Girlfriend)
- ☐ Siblings
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Children

10. What age is the person you speak to the most? *

Skip to question 11

Storytelling Background

This section explores the types of stories you heard growing up and how, where, and with whom you share stories today.

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Pre-Interview Questionnaire

11. Growing up, were you told stories by older relatives? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12. If Yes, by whom?

13. If Yes, what kinds of stories did you hear most often? (Select all that apply)

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Folktales (e.g., Anansi)
- ☐ Family history/memories
- ☐ Religious stories
- ☐ Made-up stories
- ☐ Gossip
- ☐ Other: _____

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15HR-_qad_I05-wtbYIGL0bwi5FfAaDJGpeHAJlU4v4m4/edit

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Pre-Interview Questionnaire

14. Do you tell stories now? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

15. If Yes, to whom?

16. If Yes, what types of stories do you tell? (Select all that apply)

Tick all that apply.

☐ Folktales (e.g., Anansi)

☐ Family history/memories

☐ Religious stories

☐ Made-up stories

☐ Gossip

☐ Other: _____

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15HR-_qad_I05-wtbY1GL0bwi5FfAaDJGpeHAJlU4v4m4/edit

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Pre-Interview Questionnaire

17. If Yes, in what settings do you usually tell stories? (Select all that apply)

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Family gatherings
- ☐ Friends/Liming
- ☐ School/Work
- ☐ Online/Social Media
- ☐ Rarely/Never

18. Which platforms do you use most to share stories or experiences? (Select all that apply)

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Face-to-Face
- ☐ WhatsApp voice notes
- ☐ TikTok/Reels
- ☐ Twitter/X
- ☐ Instagram captions/Stories
- ☐ Other: _____

Social Media Use

This section is about your phone and social media use, including the platforms you use most and how you interact with online content.

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Pre-Interview Questionnaire

19. On average, how many hours per day do you spend on a phone, tablet, or computer (that is not work/school related)?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 0-2 hours
- ☐ 3-5 hours
- ☐ 6-8 hours
- ☐ More than 8 hours

20. Which apps or platforms do you use most? (Select all that apply)

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ WhatsApp
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ TikTok
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ X (Twitter)
- ☐ Netflix/Streaming Platforms
- ☐ Gaming Platforms (e.g., PS/Xbox/PC/Mobile)
- ☐ Other: _____

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Pre-Interview Questionnaire

21. Which online formats do you interact with most?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Memes
- ☐ Short Videos (Reels/TikTok)
- ☐ Long-form videos (YouTube, documentaries)
- ☐ Written stories/Posts
- ☐ Podcasts/Voice notes
- ☐ Gaming playthroughs or streaming

22. Do you create digital content (memes, vlogs, short videos, voice notes, story posts)?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes, frequently
- ☐ Yes, occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

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Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Short Answer Questions

This section asks about your understanding of storytelling, your enjoyment of telling or listening to stories, the influences on how you tell stories, your preferences for different storytelling styles, and your views on how storytelling may differ across generations.

23. When you think of "storytelling," what comes to mind?

24. Do you enjoy telling or listening to stories? Why/Why not?

25. Who influenced the way you tell stories? (Family members, Friends/peers, Social media, etc.)

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Pre-Interview Questionnaire

26. Do you prefer short, fast-paced stories or longer, more detailed ones? Why?

27. (If short, fast-paced stories were chosen from above,) Do you feel that social media has changed your patience for long stories? Why or why not?

28. How do you feel when older/younger people tell stories differently from you?

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Pre-Interview Questionnaire

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Google Forms

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Consent Form

18 and Over

Researcher Information

Researcher: Gabrielle King

Institution/Affiliation: University of the West Indies, St. Augustine

Contact Information: gabrielle.k464@gmail.com

Purpose of the Study

This research project explores how storytelling differs across generations. The study examines the types of stories shared, how stories are told, and the role storytelling plays in family, cultural, and social life among different age groups.

This research forms part of an academic project and may contribute to broader understanding of cultural communication and generational change.

What Participation Involves

If you agree to participate, you may be asked to:

- Share personal, family, cultural, or traditional stories
- Talk about your experiences with storytelling (for example, stories you heard growing up or stories you now tell)

Your participation will involve:

- **Audio recording** of your interview and storytelling session
- **Video recording** during interview and storytelling activities

Participation is voluntary, and there are no right or wrong answers.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

- Your participation is voluntary.
- All recordings will be stored securely and accessed only by the researcher(s).

- Your name and any identifying information will not be used in publications or presentations unless you give explicit permission.
- Pseudonyms may be used to protect your identity.

Use of Audio/Visual Materials

The audio and visual recordings will be used for:

- Academic analysis
- Research presentations
- Educational purposes

Right to Withdraw

You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that your recordings not be used, provided analysis has not already been completed.

Consent Statement

I have read and understood the information above. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and all my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study and consent to the audio and/or visual recording of my participation as indicated above

Participant Name:

Participant Signature:

Date:

Researcher Signature:

Date:

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO AND VISUAL RECORDING

Under 18

Researcher:

Gabrielle King

Contact Information:

gabrielle.k464@gmail.com

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Participant Name:

Participant Signature:

Parent/Guardian Name:

Date:

Parent/Guardian Signature:

Researcher Signature:

Date:
