

Language and Literacy in the Digital Age: Analyzing Storytelling Methods and How They Can
Promote Children's Language Development, Literacy, and Digital Literacy Skills

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ECEY5004 Language and Literacy in the Digital Age

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October 26, 2025

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Reading to infants and young children can help form strong connections and has numerous other benefits, including aiding in their cognitive development, introducing enhanced language and conversation, and providing skills necessary for literacy, oral, and language development (Zuk, 2025). Storytelling is a strategy professionals and families can use to help with children's literacy, such as reading and writing. Children's literacy and the skills they learn through storytelling can help them in their academic futures and in their careers (Miller and Pennycuff, 2008). Children who are continually read to have been shown to read above their age level compared to children who are not and even reading just one book a day can expose them to over 75,000 words a year (Logan et al., 2019). With the advancement of technology, there are many new techniques used in the classrooms that can bring changes to the way children learn. As children grow and experience new technology, they must also gain the skills needed to live in a digital world. Not only do they have to have the skills to read and write text, but also online media and how to think critically when taking in this type of information (Paakkari, L. et al., 2024). Digital literacy is a skill that soon all people will need to have. It involves all of the traditional literacy aspects, such as reading, writing, speaking, but adds on the media literacy component, which is to be able to access, analyze, and partake in different forms of information found online (Turner, K.H. et al., 2017). This paper will observe and analyze a storytelling activity in two forms. The benefits of storytelling will be discussed along with how it can promote children's digital literacy.

The first video showcases a traditional storytelling activity with a physical book in hand. The speaker is turning the pages and reading aloud to the children. Throughout the story, the speaker utilized different storytelling practices. The speaker began by reminding the children how to handle the books properly and how to care for them when they are being used. The children observe their teacher holding the book properly. Children can then practice by holding the book, turning the pages, which can also teach them that the sentences go from left to right (Irwin et al., 2014). The next practice observed is how the reader used characterization and changed the voice for each character. The tone of voice and changing tone for specific words to help emphasize their meaning is another way to keep the children's interest. This can also help

children think more about the story and what might happen next (Lwin, 2016). The speaker also chose a book that has rhymes throughout the story. It has also been shown that when mothers are reading to their young children and are more expressive and use a higher pitch, they also positively impact their language skills and help with comprehension of the story (Zuk, J. et al., 2025). Similar to the use of music and singing during storytelling, rhyming provides repetition and those familiar sounds can benefit children's language development (Shaw, 2021) and be helpful for children's vocabulary acquisition (Riordan et al., 2018).

In the next video, the speaker utilized a digital story. The speaker read aloud to the children as the video played on the screen beside her. Digital storytelling has the aspects of the traditional method but adds digital technology and is a way for teachers to provide a more entertaining and theatrical experience for the children (Rahiem, 2021). Some studies have shown how technology can aid in children's fine motor skills, creative thinking, problem-solving, and visual perception (Zomer and Kay, 2014). Throughout this story, the speaker sang songs that correlated to what was happening in the book. Incorporating music and singing can encourage better listening and hold the children's attention. It can also help them recognize patterns, which are skills needed to help children learn how to read. Adding a musical element can also introduce a new way for the children to communicate, where they might enjoy singing to express themselves instead of using their words (Shaw, 2021). The speaker also asked the children questions to help them feel included in the story. Asking questions can enhance the storytelling activity and create dialogue and conversations between the children and the speaker. It can also help the children gain critical thinking skills. They can help the children understand the story and provide an opportunity to think for themselves (Liu and Yoon, 2024). It is important to note that for the storytelling experience to help children's critical thinking, educators must ask the right types of questions. The questions should be open-ended, as closed-ended questions can limit the children's creativity and imagination (Setyarini et al., 2018). Upon reflection, asking questions may not always be appropriate, depending on the story and the child or group of children. They might be fully engaged in the story, and stopping to ask questions in the middle may be distracting. The speaker used her shoe as a prop, which can help incorporate a tangible object for this digital storytelling activity. Using props in storytelling is another way to keep children engaged, which helps develop their listening skills, learning, and understanding of vocabulary (Editor.JECCE, 2023). Digital stories can be a great tool as they provide another way of

presenting a story, can easily be tailored to children's interests and learning, and can involve them in several ways (Rahiem, 2021).

Using digital stories is a relatively new method of storytelling and can also help promote children's digital literacy skills. Children can learn how to use their library, how to look for sources, and learn skills to research online about topics they are interested in. They might also be inspired to create their own digital stories, promoting creativity differently. They can also learn how to communicate and collaborate online, allowing them to analyze and critique others' work (Robin, 2016). There are limitations to consider when using digital stories. Depending on the type of media or digital book used, the text on screen might not be in the same format as a physical book, where the words are read from left to right. There may be buttons, sounds, and symbols that distract from the words in the book. The child can also interpret different words in other ways when too many icons or images are on the screen (Ozturk and Ohi, 2018). These extra interactive elements of digital books that do not add to the story can hinder the child's ability to process the material and their comprehension (Takacs et al., 2015).

After observing the two types of storytelling, there are differences in each approach. In the first video, the children can watch how their teacher treats the book, how to turn the pages, and when pointing to the words, they can see what direction they are meant to be reading. They may not be able to gain this knowledge through a digital storytelling activity. In contrast to a traditional storytelling method, when an educator uses a digital story, they simply watch the screen. It is different in that this method can be a way for the children to see the art come to life. However, some skills can be hard to learn using a device rather than a physical book. Both methods of storytelling can be beneficial to learning and children's development, and can be incorporated into the lessons in the classroom. It is ultimately in the hands of the practitioner to use their creativity to help enhance this activity for the children and make it fun and engaging for everyone.

There are some storytelling methods that were not used and can be utilized in future activities. In both storytelling activities, the reader could have used more facial expressions, as this is a way to visualize the emotion or feelings the characters are experiencing (Farrar et al., 2024). Children can learn the difference between the pictures, words, and numbers on a page. The reader can label what is on the page and help the children understand that the words on the

page are read aloud and not the pictures. Children can also start to become familiarized with letters of the alphabet and how certain words look when they are being labeled during the read-aloud (Irwin et al., 2014). The reader could have also stopped to look at the illustrations in the book and talk more about them with the children. The images in a book can provide an opportunity for children to make interpretations and answer questions they might have about the story. The visuals in the book are also a way for children to see themselves or characters that they can relate to in the book. When there is representation of different cultures, minority groups, and expression of feelings, children are more empowered and may become more engaged with the story (Farrar et al., 2024).

According to Lev Vygotsky, children learn best through socialization and emphasize the importance of social interactions on children's learning and development (Ussher and Gibbes, 2002). Reading stories with children is a way for them to socialize with their parents, teachers, or other children (Speaker, Taylor, and Kamen, 2004). Shared reading experiences are essential to early childhood and may be one of the only times a child experiences enriching language (Zuk, J. et al., 2025). It is never too early to start reading books to a child. Studies show reading to a 9-month-old can positively impact their communication skills in the future (Egan, S.M. et al., 2022). Noam Chomsky's theory suggests that children are born with the ability to learn language and can absorb the words, conversations, and sounds around them to facilitate their learning, which can explain how children can learn language quickly (Çakıroğlu, 2019). When parents are motivated about reading, show interest in the activity (Paakkari, L. et al., 2024), and provide access to books to their children, they can help their children's reading, listening, and speaking, which can lead to the child transitioning better in school (Egan, S.M. et al., 2022). In addition to the benefits to the child's cognitive development and their learning, shared reading is a time for connections to form between parent and child or teacher and the child (Sheldon-Dean, 2024). Children learn how to express their feelings through words and are more open to do so. They then grow up to have better self-esteem, self-control, have more positive relationships with others, and are less likely to partake in risky behaviors in their adolescence and young adulthood (Duursma et al., 2008).

The use of AI is becoming more common, and with the discussion of promoting digital literacy in children, it is important for educators to continue to keep learning about different

approaches so they are better equipped to pass this knowledge on to their students. While AI was not used in this analysis, the group was instructed to research a theorist using AI. In this activity, the theorist chosen was Lev Vygotsky. Using ChatGPT, I gave the following prompt: "Write me a paragraph on Vygotsky and his theory. Include how this can help promote language development and digital literacy." The results I received were similar to what I have learned throughout my studies. I then made sure that the information it gave me could be supported by other academic research articles. While not perfect, AI is a tool that can be used to get the basic information needed to help guide further research.

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