

ECEY5004 Language and Literacy in the digital age.

I have not used any AI in this assignment.

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1 Reflective Analysis

This reflective analysis will explore the benefits and significance of storytelling in the early years and examine the impact it has on effective communication, oracy, reading and writing skills. This reflection will discuss the value of traditional storytelling and the new opportunities created by digital media, and compare the two methods, linking them to the recording.

Kucirkova (2018) describes storytelling in early years as an active process that can bring wonder and delight to children from birth up to seven years old and can support their cognitive, emotional and social skills. Lysaker (2018) would agree and highlights the importance of storytelling, including wordless books in early childhood as powerful tools for promoting narrative competence, language development, and social imagination and suggests wordless picture books invite children to construct meaning through observation and storytelling actively. This process encourages rich oral language use, vocabulary expansion, and comprehension skills as children describe and interpret what they see. Moreover, she suggests wordless books support both cognitive and socio-emotional aspects of literacy development, providing opportunities for children to engage deeply with stories and deepen their understanding. In the same vein, Marjanovic and Podlessek (2012) and the Department for Education (2021) both agree with the benefits of storytelling and points out that parents are an influencing factor on children's language development and highlight the importance of joint reading and repetition when telling stories to their children, stating parents should read the same stories several times together with children to support literacy and language. This view is supported by theorist Vygotsky (cited in Smidt, 2009), who states that as children listen to and retell stories with others, they operate within the zone of proximal development and learn new vocabulary and ways of thinking through social interaction and more knowledgeable others. Visser-Bochane *et al* (2020) would support this view and states language is a basic and fundamental skill for children and suggests having age-appropriate milestones set in language can help assist the practitioner or parent to further children's development. This view is supported by the Welsh Government (2024) curriculum for Wales that aims to embed storytelling within the languages, literacy, and communication and suggests the benefits of storytelling can be used to spark imagination, support empathy, and well-being. The

curriculum promotes a rich language environment and connects oracy, reading, and writing to develop confident, independent learners and creative storytellers.

The classic storytelling recording showed the story of Room on the Broom being told by the practitioner who was in costume and told the story dressed as the witch, using a broomstick, hat, and plush toy animals to represent the main characters. According to Cekaite and Bjork-Willen (2018) this multisensory and engaging method held the children's attention, fostering engagement through visual and tactile elements. Both researchers suggest traditional storytelling is an interactive and embodied experience, and by embodying the character, the practitioner can offer a lively example of expressive reading and effective language use. Cremin et al. (2016) would agree and states that a practitioner's enthusiasm and performance play a crucial role in animating stories and sparking children's interest in reading.

According to Kuirkova (2018) digital storytelling aids in the enhancement of digital literacy, which involves the ability to navigate, assess, and produce digital content. Erstad *et al.* (2019) would agree and points out that even at an early age, children's exposure to digital text helps them realise that meaning can be conveyed not just through words, but also through images, audio, and movement. The authors suggest that by interacting with digital stories, children acquire the ability to interpret information presented in different formats and learn to engage with stories through elements such as sound and animation. The digital recording illustrated this by broadening the scope of storytelling beyond the physical classroom and showcasing how digital tools can improve engagement by the movement of the characters on screen and offer children a sensory experience of the story.

According to Buczko (2020) communication is a life skill and suggests lower levels of oracy in the early years can have a negative impact on children's development. She points out that children must be able to listen and be free to ask questions and suggests these social interactions as key opportunities for children to develop skills such as turn taking and both verbal and nonverbal cues. Atwal (2019) would agree, and states children should be free to talk and express themselves in an enriched environment where adults talk with quality and act as role models for the children. The Welsh Government (2022) aim to support this and continue to promote

oracy for early year education and suggest languages, literacy and communication help children understand the world around them and state schools in Wales must ensure practitioners offer children effective pedagogical approaches to ensure all children are given opportunities to learn through activities such as storytelling. This runs in the veins of previously discussed theorist Vygotsky, (cited in Smidt, 2009) and his sociocultural theory of how storytelling fosters language development through interaction and suggests in storytelling sessions, practitioners should scaffold children's language by modelling expression, posing questions, and encouraging children to give their opinion. Similarly, Bruner (1986) suggested that storytelling helps children make sense of the world by structuring experiences into meaningful activities. He proposed that storytelling is more than mere entertainment and can serve as cognitive and linguistic development and understanding. However, Lodge (2020) would disagree and points out that oracy skills can and are still being neglected and suggests silence is being normalised resulting in children missing out on expressing their thoughts, feelings and opinions.

During the recordings, the practitioner highlighted the use of rhyming and repetitive phrases, inviting children to participate by joining in. For example, the practitioner tapped the broom and smiled at the children before saying "woosh, they were gone". According to Berkowitz (2011) repetition when telling stories eases children and allows them to feel comfortable and confident and offers them the opportunity to use their imaginations. Nazurty (2019) would agree and suggests this pre reading stage for young children should be a time for children enjoy stories and gain experiences that will lay the foundations for language in the early years and states that simple page turning and pointing at the words are easy ways practitioners can support language acquisition, strengthening oral and listening skills. In the same vein, Schwartz and Sparks (2019) states repeating sounds and words during storytelling allows children to connect what they are seeing or hearing to real life experiences and adds, storytelling from birth to seven contributes to multiple areas of development including linguistic, cognitive, emotional, and social. These findings can be supported by theorists Piaget (1969) and Chomsky (2006) who share similarities and both believed that children should be active participants in their own learning and suggest that when children engage with rhymes, they identify patterns and categories in sounds and words, which helps refine their mental schemas for

language. Bruner (1986) suggests that practitioners can scaffold learning by rhyming activities with children and can help children build internal understanding and independence. This is supported by the Welsh Government (2022) and the Curriculum for Wales that aims to promote oracy and storytelling by fostering a communication rich environment where children regularly hear and share rhyming stories. Furthermore, languages, literacy and communication area of Learning encourages practitioners to use rhymes, poems, and songs to scaffold the children's learning.

During the recording the practitioner modelled page turning to the children and pointed out that the pages need to be turned from left to right and that stories start at the front of the book. According to Lysaker (2018) turning pages plays a key role in fostering children's oracy skills and suggests by inviting children to turn the pages in a book can transform them into becoming active contributors to the storytelling experience. She points out that this practical involvement can strengthen conversational skills like turn-taking, as children practice when to listen and when to engage. Similarly, O'Brien (2022) states page turning encourages anticipation and prediction, helping children connect spoken language with visual cues and grasp the structure of a story, which enhances their comprehension and narrative thinking and suggests the practitioner should pause to allow children to turn the pages allowing natural discussion moments. This runs in the veins of theorist Bruner (1986) who highlighted the value of scaffolding and language acquisition support systems [hereafter LASS] and argued that familiar routines such as page turning provide consistent shared experiences that promote conversation, attentive listening and turn taking. This is supported by the Welsh Government (2022) Curriculum for Wales that states page turning supports interactive language experiences that build children's confidence, communication and shared understanding through purposeful storytelling and encourages practitioners to tell stories and share experiences encouraging children to participate.

According to Maureen, van der Meij and de Jong (2018) contemporary research highlights the educational benefits of digital storytelling in early childhood and suggest storytelling activities supported by digital tools can enhance both traditional literacy and digital literacy by fostering collaboration, creativity, and communication. Similarly, Derbashi (2021) states that digital storytelling in the

classroom improves children's ability to construct narratives by themselves, enhance digital literacy and increase motivation and engagement in learning. Daniels *et al.* (2020) would agree with previous authors and suggests digital storytelling creates a connection between home and educational environments, enabling families to interact with learning resources at their own pace. This is supported by the Welsh Government (2024) and the Curriculum for Wales that states the digital competence framework [hereafter DCF] within the Curriculum plays a key role in developing young children's digital literacy skills in the early years and ensures that children gain the confidence, knowledge, and understanding. Furthermore, the Curriculum points out that digital competence is not taught as a separate subject but is embedded across the curriculum.

In my recording, digital elements such as clicking the mouse and following the words on screen promote experience and understanding. Furthermore, the characters from the story were brought to life and were shown as moving images. According to O'Bryne. *Et al* (2018) online stories offer flexibility for the children and allow them time to read stories at their own pace using the mouse to be able to pause or stop the story. The authors state digital storytelling also encourages multimodal understanding, showing children that meaning can be expressed through a combination of images, text, and audio. Rahiem (2021) would agree and adds that practitioners must ensure that technology serves to enhance rather than replace personal interactions and suggests that preserving the relational and emotional components of storytelling remain. However, according to Daniels *et al.* (2020), many early years practitioners can become a barrier and suggests when practitioners feel unprepared or uneasy, they may avoid using digital storytelling methods altogether and may restrict the children's access to such learning.

While exploring the topic of page turning within early childhood digital literacy, I encountered difficulties finding academic studies that examined this concept specifically. Most research on digital literacy in the early years focuses more on children's interaction with technology, rather than physically or digitally turning pages. Therefore, finding recent sources that directly supported this area proved challenging. However, to tackle this issue I examined several academic books in depth and selected key concepts from each that were relevant to my topic. This allowed me to bring ideas together from different authors which enabled me to

understand how page turning connects to early literacy and children's experiences with digital reading.

In summary, traditional and digital storytelling during the early years is essential for fostering children's holistic growth and learning. It strengthens communication, language, and literacy by introducing them to rich vocabulary, varied story structures and expressive ways of using language. Storytelling also stimulates creativity and imagination, giving children the opportunity to experiment with ideas, emotions, and problem solving in both real and fictional contexts. Additionally, it promotes social and emotional development by encouraging empathy, active listening, and cooperation as children engage with and share stories collectively. They bring together language, creativity, emotion, and technology to lay the groundwork for literacy, communication, and critical thinking skills that children will continue to build upon as they progress through their education.

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