

Contents page

Page 1 - contents page

Page 2 – Ai cover sheet

Page 3- Video links

Page 4 –8 Written assignment.

Page 9 – Reference list

Ai cover sheet

B) I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide as evidence.

Video links:

[Meeting with Nicola Evans \(2419341\)-20251027 114106-Meeting Recording.mp4](#)

[Meeting with Nicola Evans \(2419341\)-20251027 111206-Meeting Recording.mp4](#)

Introduction

Storytelling significantly enhances early childhood development across cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and social domains. Research by Maureen et al. (2022) found that structured storytelling activities, both oral and digital positively influenced early literacy skills, including phonological awareness and narrative comprehension, in children aged 4–5. Bartan (2020) demonstrated that storytelling methods using audio-visual elements, such as digital media and puppetry, improved children's attention span and understanding, highlighting the importance of multimodal engagement in early years settings. These findings align with broader pedagogical guidance, such as that from BookTrust (2025), which emphasizes storytelling's role in developing vocabulary, empathy, and emotional resilience, particularly in Reception and Year 1. Together, these studies reinforce storytelling as a powerful tool for supporting the Curriculum for Wales four purposes, helping children become confident communicators, creative thinkers, and ethically informed citizens.

Main body

Through demonstrating enthusiasm when storytelling plays a pivotal role in elevating storytelling from a simple narrative activity to a powerful pedagogical tool that enhances children's engagement, comprehension, and motivation. Research shows that enthusiastic delivery through expressive voice, gesture, facial animation, and emotional energy acts as an attentional cue that helps children track meaning and remain cognitively invested in the story (Maureen, van der Meij and de Jong, 2022). Enthusiasm also supports emotional contagion, where children mirror the storyteller's affective tone, increasing enjoyment and deepening their connection to the narrative (Bartan, 2020). Broader evidence on teacher enthusiasm demonstrates that it significantly boosts learners' intrinsic motivation and achievement, with expressive teaching styles directly improving children's willingness to participate and their overall learning outcomes (Patrick, Hisley and Kempler, 2000). Storytelling itself is already a highly motivating practice, but when delivered with genuine enthusiasm it becomes even more effective in supporting language development, attention, and socio-emotional wellbeing (Maureen, 2020). Together, these findings highlight that enthusiasm is not merely a performance choice but a research-supported strategy

that strengthens the cognitive and emotional impact of storytelling in early childhood education.

Enthusiastic storytelling strongly supports the Curriculum for Wales by creating emotionally engaging, learner-centred experiences that help children develop as ambitious, capable learners and healthy, confident individuals. Expressive delivery through varied tone, gesture, and facial animation acts as a cognitive and emotional scaffold, helping children make meaning, sustain attention, and connect with narrative structures. Research shows that expressive, emotionally rich storytelling enhances children's comprehension, vocabulary development, and narrative recall (Isbell et al., 2004), while also increasing motivation and engagement through the emotional resonance created by the storyteller's energy (Haven, 2007). Enthusiasm also supports the curriculum's emphasis on wellbeing and belonging, as animated storytelling fosters positive relationships and shared enjoyment, strengthening children's sense of security and participation (Nicolopoulou, 2014). Outdoors, enthusiasm becomes even more impactful: it helps children tune into the narrative amid sensory distractions and encourages imaginative play with natural materials, aligning with the curriculum's commitment to experiential, authentic learning. In this way, enthusiastic storytelling is both pedagogically purposeful and fully aligned with the curriculum's vision for joyful, meaningful learning experiences.

Intonation the rise and fall of the voice during speech is a central feature of effective storytelling because it helps children interpret meaning, follow narrative structure, and stay emotionally engaged. Research shows that variations in pitch, rhythm, and stress act as prosodic cues that support children's comprehension by signalling character changes, emotional shifts, and key events (Wennerstrom, 2001). In early childhood settings, expressive intonation has been found to increase children's attention and recall, as it highlights valuable information and makes the narrative more memorable (Isbell *et al.*, 2004). Studies on teacher talk also demonstrate that prosodic features such as intonation and emphasis help young learners process language more efficiently by drawing attention to new vocabulary and supporting the development of listening skills (Wells, 1986). Intonation additionally contributes to the emotional richness of storytelling: expressive vocal patterns help children infer characters' feelings and intentions, strengthening empathy and socio-emotional understanding (Nicolopoulou, 2014). Together, these findings show that intonation is

not simply a performance technique but a pedagogically meaningful tool that enhances linguistic, cognitive, and emotional learning during storytelling.

Integrating digital literacy into storytelling enriches children's learning by combining narrative, technology, and multimodal expression. Digital storytelling allows learners to create and interpret stories using images, audio, video, and simple editing tools, supporting the development of both traditional literacy and essential digital competencies. Research shows that digital storytelling strengthens children's ability to organise ideas, sequence events, and express meaning through multiple modes, leading to deeper comprehension and more sophisticated narrative skills (Robin, 2016). In early childhood settings, digital storytelling has been found to increase engagement and motivation, as children respond positively to interactive, visually rich formats that allow them to co-construct stories with peers and adults (Maureen, van der Meij and de Jong, 2020). Digital tools also support inclusive practice: multimodal storytelling enables children with emerging language, EAL needs, or communication differences to participate meaningfully through images, sound, and movement (Flewitt, Messer and Kucirkova, 2015). Additionally, digital storytelling nurtures creativity and agency, giving children opportunities to make choices, solve problems, and develop confidence with technology skills that align with modern curricula and the wider digital world. Together, these advantages show that digital literacy is not an add-on but a powerful enhancer of storytelling, supporting cognitive, linguistic, social, and digital development.

Traditional print books and digital storytelling tools each contribute distinct, valuable elements to children's literacy development. Print books offer a tactile and distraction-free medium, fostering sustained attention, advanced language exposure, and opportunities for joint reading experiences. Research demonstrates that print books are associated with high-quality adult-child dialogue, vocabulary acquisition, and narrative comprehension due to their encouragement of reflective engagement (Bus, van IJzendoorn and Pellegrini, 1995). Furthermore, physical books support foundational print concepts, including directionality, page turning, and the relationship between text and images.

In contrast, digital literacy tools incorporate multimodal features such as audio, animation, and interactive components that can enhance motivation and

accommodate diverse learners. Current studies suggest that digital storytelling bolsters children's abilities to organise information, sequence events, and communicate meaning across formats, thereby supporting both literacy and digital skills (Robin, 2016). Additionally, digital platforms may increase engagement, particularly for those who benefit from visual or auditory supports and provide accessible options for children with emerging language or communication requirements (Flewitt, Messer and Kucirkova, 2015). Nevertheless, while digital resources can enrich storytelling, poorly designed interactivity may detract from narrative understanding—whereas print books intrinsically promote focused attention.

Collectively, these formats present complementary advantages: print books deliver depth, consistency, and robust language input; digital storytelling introduces multimodality, creativity, and technological proficiency. Each format makes a unique contribution to children's literacy development.

Conclusion

Taken together, the sources reviewed present a coherent and complementary evidence base demonstrating that storytelling whether delivered through print, voice, or digital media plays a significant role in supporting children's cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development. Classic literacy research such as Bus, van IJzendoorn and Pellegrini (1995) provides strong foundational evidence for the value of shared book reading, highlighting its impact on vocabulary, comprehension, and early print awareness. More recent studies extend this understanding: Isbell et al. (2004) show that expressive oral storytelling enhances language complexity and comprehension, while Wells (1986) and Wennerstrom (2001) emphasise the importance of prosodic features such as intonation in supporting meaning-making. Research on enthusiasm in teaching, including Patrick, Hisley and Kempler (2000), demonstrates that teacher affect is not peripheral but directly influences motivation and learning outcomes, reinforcing the pedagogical value of expressive, emotionally rich storytelling. Digital literacy research adds a further dimension: Flewitt, Messer and Kucirkova (2015) and Robin (2016) show that digital storytelling broadens access, increases engagement, and supports multimodal expression, while Maureen, van der Meij and de Jong (2020; 2022) provide robust evidence that digital

tools can enhance both traditional and digital literacy when thoughtfully integrated. Although digital formats offer inclusivity and creativity, the literature also cautions that poorly designed interactivity may distract from narrative meaning an important contrast with the attentional stability offered by print books. Overall, the sources collectively demonstrate that no single medium is superior; rather, each contributes distinct advantages. Print books offer depth, focus, and rich language input; oral storytelling provides emotional resonance and linguistic modelling; and digital storytelling adds multimodality, accessibility, and technological fluency. Together, they form a balanced, research-supported toolkit for high-quality literacy practice.

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