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AI Statement – I acknowledge the use of AI to put reference list in alphabetical order.
And to research articles as stated in my conclusion.

ECEY5004Language and Literacy in the digital ageIntroduction

Storytelling plays a significant role in children's development from pre-birth stage to seven years and beyond. Story telling supports communication, imagination and early learning. From hearing familiar voices and rhythms before birth to engaging with stories independently, these are skills that provide a foundation for their future learning.

Storytelling supports children's literacy development by introducing new vocabulary, developing listening and comprehension skills, encouraging and understanding of narrative structure and fostering an early interest in reading and writing. Shared story telling can strengthen relationships between children and adults, creating meaningful opportunities for interaction and language development. As technology continues to evolve, storytelling has also expanded beyond traditional books but to now include digital stories using multimedia resources. These developments provide new opportunities for children to engage with stories while developing their digital literacy skills. However, it is important to consider how digital storytelling can be used appropriately alongside traditional approaches. This assignment will explore the benefits of storytelling from pre-birth to seven years, its relationship with children's literacy development and the growing role of digital literacy in early childhood. Comparing the two approaches highlights how different formats can provide varied experiences while maintaining the same narrative.

Engagement and interaction

The story telling activity provided an opportunity to explore the similarities and differences between traditional storytelling using a physical book and digital device to read a copy of a text. Although both formats presented a story, the methods of interacting with the book differed. When using a physical book, the reader can physically turn the pages, point to the illustrations and allow the children to explore the book physically. In comparison the digital device to tell a story requires the reader to swipe the screen to move between the pages. Both approaches can encourage

children's engagement and curiosity, particularly when the adult uses expressive language, facial expressions and open-ended question. Physical book can offer a more tactile experience for readers, whereas the digital version introduces children to interacting with a touchscreen.

Engagement and interaction can be linked to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasises the importance of social interaction in children's learning and development. The adult supports child's learning by modelling language, asking questions and encouraging them to participate in the story telling experience. The adult support can be viewed as scaffolding, as the practitioner helps children engage with the story and understand how to use either the physical book or the digital device.

It is important for practitioners to recognise that technology does not automatically increase children's attention or engagement. Instead, it is the quality of the adult's story telling skills and the opportunities for interaction that are key factors in supporting children's learning.

Pace, Tone and Speech development

During the storytelling activities the practitioner maintains a calm but enthusiastic pace and tone to engage the children and sustain their interest in the story. The storyteller used expressive voices to bring the characters and events in the story to life, while ensuring that their speech remained clear and easy to understand. The practitioner used their tone of voice to reflect the emotions and events within the story; this helped the children to remain focused and develop their listening skills as well as developing the understanding of the narrative and learning new vocabulary. Maintaining appropriate pace is important when reading as it gives the children the time to process the information they are hearing and understanding what is being communicated. During the story telling activity, the practitioners aimed to support children's language and speech development by using clear speech, expressive language and engaging descriptions throughout the story.

On reflection of the activity the practitioner could improve the story telling experience by incorporating more pauses at key moments and more opportunities to

make predictions. By doing this the practitioner would encourage a stronger interaction with the listeners and provide more opportunities to support children's communication, language and literacy development. During the activity the practitioner could have used more pauses to ask the children questions to allow the children time to share their ideas. By offering more of those opportunities the practitioner would encourage active participation and supporting the development of child's communication, language and early literacy skills.

Maintaining an appropriate pace and expressive tone allows the practitioner to pause, ask questions and leave gaps for children to complete familiar phrases. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (n.d) highlights questioning as a strategy to support children's language development. When practitioners provide opportunities for children to process language, predict events and develop vocabulary.

Expressive tone can help support children's understanding Davison et al. (2025) explored the importance of an adult's vocal expression, pace and pausing and it's association with children's comprehension skills. Suggests that a calm but enthusiastic, changing vocal expression and maintaining an appropriate pace may help support children's engagement and understanding of the story.

Storytelling can provide valuable opportunities for practitioners to observe children's speech and language development through their interaction and communication. When practitioners encourage children to answer questions, describe illustrations and retell parts of the story, they are able to observe children's vocabulary, pronunciation, sentence structure and ability to express their ideas. These interactions can help a practitioner to identify potential speech, language and/ or communication difficulties. Story telling cannot diagnose speech and language difficulties, but it gives practitioners the opportunity to record any concerns which they can then discuss with the appropriate professional.

Developing digital literacy skills

During the activity the practitioner introduced digital literacy skills by using an iPad to display a digital copy of a story and swiping the screen to turn the pages. This provided opportunities to demonstrate how technology can be used to access stories

and support children's early digital skills. By the practitioner allowing children to participate by swiping the pages it encouraged an interaction with the device and help the children become familiar with touchscreen technology. On reflection, the practitioner recognised the need to develop greater confidence in using an iPad to deliver stories effectively. With further practice the practitioner could improve the flow of digital storytelling and focus more on engaging with the children, supporting their literacy development and creating a positive learning experience.

The use of a digital book provides an opportunity to introduce children to early digital literacy. By observing and practicing how to swipe between pages, children can begin to understand how touchscreen technology is operated and how digital content can be navigated. During digital storytelling, the practitioner and children can focus on the screen together, allowing the practitioner to model how to use the device which encouraging children's engagement with the story. The Welsh Government Digital Competence Framework (DCF) looks at the skill of shared attention it is placed within 'Interacting and collaboration' strand and 'collaboration' element, which identifies shared attention between adult and digital activity as an early skill (Welsh Government, 2021). With the appropriate adult guidance, this experience may encourage children's confidence in using technology as a tool for communication and learning.

The development of ICT skills is embedded within Foundation Phase pedagogy through active, child-centred learning experiences rather than through discrete ICT lessons. The Welsh Government emphasises that children should engage in experiences that enable them to take on "a variety of roles, including leadership within a small group, paired learning or working within a team" and to use "different resources, including ICT". These collaborative learning opportunities allow children to develop digital competence in meaningful contexts while also enhancing their communication, problem-solving and social skills. In this way, ICT becomes an integral tool for exploration, cooperation and learning across the curriculum rather than a stand-alone subject. (Welsh Government, 2015, p. 18)

Digital literacy can be connected to Vygotsky (1978) as he explained how children develop their understanding through interaction with a more knowledgeable adult

who demonstrates how a device can be used. The adult can support children by modelling how to swipe, explaining what is happening and encouraging them to take part safely. The Welsh Framework explains how children should develop early digital literacy skills. Within the reading strand, children are expected to "recognise and make meaning from words and pictures on-screen" (Welsh Government, 2015, p. 20). This highlights the importance of ICT within the Foundation Phase, recognising that children increasingly encounter information through digital media. By engaging with a text and images on screen, children begin to develop the skills needed to access, interpret and communicate information in a technology rich world.

Nastasiuk et al. (2024) investigated how parents interact with children when reading physical and digital books. This research is relevant to the storytelling activity, as the practitioner used both formats to present a story. The digital version required the practitioner to swipe the iPad screen to move between the pages, introducing an opportunity to demonstrate basic ICT skills.

Comparison and evaluation

Overall, the activity demonstrates that physical and digital books can both support children's early literacy development while offering different ways to access a story. The physical book provides opportunities for tactile exploration and direct interaction with printed materials, whereas the digital version introduces touchscreen navigation and familiarity with electronic texts. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal development highlights how children can achieve more with adult guidance than they can independently. This helps to explain why the adult's role is important in both storytelling approaches. Children's learning is supported through interaction, communication and guidance, rather than through the book format alone.

Wood, Bruner and Ross (1979) also explored the concept of scaffolding, which involves an adult providing support to help a child complete a task they may not be able to do independently. This relates to storytelling as the practitioner can support the children's learning by modelling language, asking questions and encouraging them to predict what might happen next.

Both physical and digital books can support speech, reading and writing when adults encourage discussion, introduce vocabulary and promote children's active participation. However, digital books should not be assumed to be more effective

simply because they use technology. A balanced approach that combines physical and digital story telling can provide children with varied opportunities to develop language, early literacy and digital skills from birth to seven years

Although these experiences differ, both contribute to children's understanding of how stories and information can be presented. It is important to recognise that digital literacy involves more than operating a device it also includes developing an age-appropriate understanding of technology is used purposefully and safely. Therefore, swiping between pages provides an initial opportunity to develop those basic digital skills. Both formats gave opportunities to introduce vocabulary and encourage children to make their own predictions of what might happen next. It also highlights that although digital books introduce children to technology, the practitioner's interaction with the children remains important in supporting their language and literacy development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, storytelling plays an important role in children's development from pre-birth to seven years, supporting communication, language, imagination and early years literacy skills. The activity highlighted how traditional and digital books can both provide valuable storytelling experiences, although they offer different ways for children to interact with stories. The practitioner's pace, tone, questioning and encouragement of predictions can support children's engagement, comprehension and vocabulary development. Shared storytelling can also provide opportunities to observe children's communication and identify potential speech and language concerns that may require further support.

Overall, the assignment reinforced the value of combining traditional and digital storytelling while recognising the importance of practitioner interaction and evidence-based practice in supporting children's development.

Artificial intelligence (AI) was explored as a tool for academic research using prompts like, "find me research on the effects of reading to young children". Although AI provide interesting research articles, many were America based and did not always relate to UK early years practice or educational framework. This highlighted the

importance of critically evaluating AI generated information and ensuring the research is relevant to the educational context.

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