

Student number: 2512177

Module code: ECEY5004

Word count: 2187

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Language and Literacy in the Digital Age.

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Part 1 - Link to the recorded videos.

[A Frogs Life\u0027s Part 1.MOV](#)

[The Gruffalo Part 1.mp4](#)

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Part 2- Language and Literacy in the Digital age.

Introduction.

Storytelling has many benefits for young children. Stories can help increase a child's vocabulary and shows them how sentences work. Predicting what happens or repeating a story gives children an opportunity to develop their skills in speaking, listening and sharing ideas. These oracy skills encourage reading and writing. Children hear sounds, learn words and understand the story sequence before they create their own stories (Dickinson and Morse, 2019).

Welsh Government, (2026) States, stories help with early reading and writing. Children become familiar with story patterns, sounds and written words. Children may also be inspired to draw a character, create a new ending, or write their own stories. When children listen to, or read stories, it can help them with their speech and writing during their early years. Digital storytelling can help children to explore technology in a creative way. An adult might record a story, put in pictures or sounds and listen to it again with the children. Structured storytelling activities, including digital storytelling, support literacy and online literacy development (Maureen, van der Meij and de Jong, 2020).

This essay will analyse three storytelling skills such as, facial expressions, questioning and the use of props and resources during the activities. These will be linked to theorists such as Bruner, Vygotsky and Clark.

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Facial Expressions.

Stories are more than words of a book. A storyteller's expressions on their face can show fear, joy, surprise or sadness, helping the audience picture what is happening. If the storyteller's eyes widen when a character hears a noise, listeners can feel the suspense. Facial expressions also make the storyteller seem interested and connected to the audience. In a study of preschool storytelling, teachers used facial expression, gaze, voice and gesture together to share the story's feelings and invite children to join in (Cekaite and Björk-Willén, 2018). A face does not tell the whole story, but it gives spoken words extra meaning.

Facial expressions support language because children hear a word and see a matching feeling or action. For example, a storyteller can say "the giant was furious" while frowning. Children may connect "furious" with the character's face and remember the word. Lwin's study of professional storytellers found that facial expressions, gestures and changes in voice helped children work out unfamiliar words (Lwin, 2016). The storyteller used facial expressions during *The Gruffalo*, by raising her eyebrows and opening her mouth to emphasise shock. This can build vocabulary and help children notice how tone and expression change meaning. When children copy a character's expression or explain why the character looks worried, they practice speaking, listening and taking turns. These are important parts of oracy. Expressions can also help quieter children join in. They can copy a face, point to a picture or make a sound before trying a sentence. This can allow children to take part and can make the group story feel welcoming.

Children follow characters, events and problems, which gives them practice and an understanding how a story is structured. Therefore, they can later retell the story, discuss a character's feelings, or write their own stories or endings. Facial expressions can help children remember what happened and why. Skinner's theory helps explain how this learning may happen. He said that verbal behaviour is shaped through other people's responses, such as attention or feedback (Skinner, 1957). In a story session, a child might copy the storyteller's frightened face, say "the bear is scared," and receive a smile or an interested reply. That response could encourage

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the child to speak again and try new words. This is a process of Skinner's ideas, the audience's reactions can encourage storytelling and language development. Skinner also included gestures in his broad account of communication, so expression and speech can work together (Meindl, Miller and Ivy, 2018).

However, Skinner's theory focuses on behaviour and feedback, while children also use imagination, memory and their own ideas (Meindl, Miller and Ivy, 2018). Facial expressions can be misunderstood too. A frown might mean anger, concentration or simply tiredness. Children may also express feelings differently, so a storyteller should use words, voice and actions as well as their face. This also recognises the limitations to children with visual impairments, as facial expressions may not be seen and therefore may not be as effective. However, facial expression are a useful part of storytelling because it helps make feelings visible, supports children's language and gives them ways to understand and retell stories. It works best as one part of a rich, welcoming story experience.

Questioning.

When a storyteller asks questions, children become involved in the story and not just listeners. Children can gather information, show curiosity and gain an understanding. The Curriculum for Wales, Welsh Government, (2022) states that children should listen, speak, read and write as connected skills, and to express ideas through words. Questioning also gives children a voice which is linked to their right to express their views under Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, (1989) (UNCRC). Their contributions are worthy of respect and attention.

Questions can support children's language development and oracy. A storyteller might ask, "What do you think the character is feeling?" or "What might happen next?" The storyteller did this when asking "what do you already know about frogs?" and "what would you like to find out about frogs?" The child has to find words, explain a concept and listen to other answers. The adult can echo the words of the child, introduce a new word and gently extend the answer. This provides practice for

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children in vocabulary, sentence building, taking turns and speaking clearly. Cekaite and Björk-Willén, (2018) found that children participated in the stories by repeating, finishing and foreseeing parts of the story. They suggest that shared, lively participation can help children's literacy experiences. Questions about a book can also help children notice clues, predict what will happen and explain their understanding.

Vygotsky's theory helps explain how this works. Vygotsky believed that learning develops through language and social interaction. His concept of the zone of proximal development is that a child can do more with help than it can alone. The storyteller can give a small clue, picture, example or follow up question, and then allow time for the child to think. Bates B (2019) explains Vygotsky's view of supported learning and the zone of proximal development. For example, if a child cannot explain a character's sadness, the adult might ask, "What happened just before this?" That prompt can help the child make connections and come up with an answer.

Research suggests that interactive storytelling can be good for children's literacy, but it depends how it is used. Maureen van der Meij and de Jong, (2020) looked at structured storytelling over six weeks with young children. Both storytelling groups improved their early literacy and online literacy skills.

Storytelling can be done traditionally or digitally. In a traditional story the adult's voice, facial expression, pauses and props can make children curious and invite them to participate. A digital story may contain pictures, sound and animation. However, it is all about the conversation. A screen should not interrupt children's voices and questions should invite different answers, not test memory. Some children need a little more time to think or a picture cue or some other way to answer. The good storytellers see that and they adjust their approach to suit the individual's needs.

Questioning makes storytelling a shared activity. It provides children with reasons to think and talk, which supports their language, listening, reading and writing. Vygotsky shows us a way to see how a well timed prompt can help a child to reach a new

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idea. The research is promising, but also a reminder for adults to ask good questions, listen well and let children lead parts of the story.

Use of props and resources.

Props and resources help children see or act out parts of a story. They can be puppets, toy animals, a scarf, pictures, costumes or digital images. They do not need to be expensive. A cardboard box can become a boat or a cave. These resources help children imagine what is happening and make storytelling something they can join in with, not just listen to.

Props give children a clear focus. The storyteller used a Gruffalo teddy to help children visualise the colours used when describing The Gruffalo. This was used to make connections between the word “purple” and the colour of the prickles on his back. Cekaite and Björk-Willén (2018) observed preschool storytelling and found that teachers used and named props, then invited children to respond. The objects linked words to characters and events, supporting understanding. A child may understand an idea better when it is shown as well as explained. A frog with a happy face can also help children talk about being happy and excited.

This supports language and oracy because children get chances to listen, predict, repeat phrases and share ideas. They practice new words in a fun situation and learn to take turns. Cekaite and Björk-Willén (2018) found that children joined in through repeated words, movements and guesses about what came next. Storytelling becomes a conversation. A quiet child may point or move a puppet before feeling ready to speak.

When a storyteller and children look at the same puppet, they share a focus. The storyteller can name it and check what children understand. The object gives everyone a clue about a word’s meaning. Clark, (2024) suggests language grows through shared interactions, not only by hearing words alone. Eve Clark’s theory helps explain why this works. She also states that conversation depends on people

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paying attention to the same thing and building shared understanding, called common ground.

Stories also support reading and writing. Children hear that stories have characters, places, problems and endings. They can retell events in order, predict an ending, draw a picture or tell a story for an adult to write down. When children retell a story, they practice ordering, sequencing and remember details. Their drawings can become a plan for a new story, and seeing an adult write their spoken words shows how speech can be developed into a story. Digital resources can add photos, sounds and children's recorded voices. These can make the stories exciting and allow children to create their own version of the story. However, digital storytelling is not necessarily better than real objects. Screens can distract, and settings may lack equipment or staff confidence. Rahiem' (2021) case study involved one club, so the positive views cannot prove the same approach works everywhere. The study also calls for more research into children's experiences. A real prop can be moved around and shared; a digital image can show a faraway place or record a child's narration. The storyteller should choose what helps the children understand and participate.

Resources should be suitable for the children. The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code (2021) states, practitioners should consider how each child wants to communicate and participate. A puppet, picture or communication aid may give a child another way to join in. Therefore, props matter because they make stories clearer, memorable and welcoming. Good storytelling leaves room for children's own words, actions and ideas.

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Conclusion.

To conclude, storytelling can support children's language, oracy, reading and writing when they are encouraged to take part. Facial expressions help make characters' feelings visible and give spoken words extra meaning. They can support children as they connect words with feelings, remember story details and talk about why a character looks worried or scared. However, expressions can be easily misunderstood, so storytellers should also use words, voice and actions.

Questioning makes storytelling a shared activity by giving children reasons to think, listen and speak. A well-timed prompt, clue or picture can help a child develop an idea, while time to respond allows children to participate in ways that suit them. Props also help children connect words with characters and events. The storyteller can encourage children to predict, repeat phrases, retell events and share their own ideas. Real objects or digital resources can both be useful to the storyteller, it can all depend on what helps children understand and take part, neither approach is better than the other.

The thoughts of Skinner, Vygotsky and Clark help explain different parts of this learning, responses can encourage children to speak, adult support can help them reach a new idea, and shared attention can build understanding. At the same time, the theories and research discussed have limits, and children also bring their own imagination, memory and ideas. Subsequently, storytelling works best when adults listen, give children time, and adapt their expressions, questions and resources to individual needs. This can help make stories a welcoming experience in which children can speak, participate and develop their understanding.

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