

ECEY5004- Language & Literacy in the digital age.

- 1. Hyperlink to recordings.**
- 2. Paper.**
- 3. References.**

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1. Hyperlinks:

[ECEY5004 Digital Recording.mp4](#)

[ECEY5004 Book Recording.mp4](#)

2. Paper:

Traditional and Digital Storytelling in the Early Years: Supporting Language, Literacy, and Oracy Development

Introduction:

Early childhood education plays a critical role in fostering holistic development in children, particularly in language, communication, and literacy. Evidence demonstrates that early intervention and targeted support can substantially improve cognitive, social, and emotional outcomes (Paul and Norbury 2021; Sylva *et al.*, 2021; Department for Education, 2022). In Wales, the Foundation Phase Framework highlights the significance of play-based learning, with practitioners serving as facilitators to encourage engagement, interaction, and skill acquisition across all developmental domains (Welsh Government 2021; Bagnall, 2020; Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke, 2021). This essay evaluates the benefits of storytelling for children from pre-birth to seven years by analysing two practical examples: a recording of *Room on the Broom* with six-

to seven-year-olds and a digital storytelling activity for four- to five-year-olds. The analysis addresses elements such as rhyme, repetition, characterisation, page turning, props, visual cues, and facial expressions, and compares traditional and digital storytelling formats. Additionally, it considers how these activities support oracy, reading, writing, and digital literacy, referencing relevant theories, contemporary research, and principles of inclusive practice.

Observation and Analysis of Storytelling Practice

The recording of Room on the Broom illustrates the influence of traditional storytelling on children's literacy, communication, and cognitive development. The use of rhyme and repetition enhances phonological awareness and engagement, allowing children to anticipate narrative patterns and strengthen memory skills (Bryant *et al.*, 2020). According to Dickinson and Tabors (2020), repeated phrases improve predictive language abilities, which supports meaning-making and reinforces vocabulary acquisition. This perspective is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, which underscores the role of practitioner scaffolding in enabling children to achieve higher levels of narrative comprehension than they could independently. Bruner (1986) further contends that storytelling introduces narrative structures that are fundamental for cognitive growth, facilitating the internalisation of story sequencing and characterisation.

This activity aligns with the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience (Welsh Government, 2021) by encouraging attentive listening, verbal response, and self-expression among children. Cross-curricular skills frameworks identify storytelling as an effective approach for developing communication, creativity, and digital literacy (Welsh Government, 2022). Incorporating props, illustrations, and interactive page-turning supports sequencing, comprehension, and sustained engagement (Marsh, 2021). Theobald (2024) emphasizes that practitioners who model expressive storytelling facilitate children's imitation of intonation and gestures, thereby enhancing oracy skills. Expressive reading has also been shown to increase attention spans, expand vocabulary, and strengthen engagement (Little Scholars NYC, 2024).

Characterisation during the storytelling session was enhanced through deliberate use of voice modulation, gestures, and facial expressions. These techniques enabled children to form emotional connections with the narrative. FLeer (2021) emphasises that expressive reading supports both engagement and comprehension, as children observe and replicate expressive cues. Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke (2021) highlight the critical role of practitioner interaction in scaffolding language development, particularly for children with additional learning needs (ALN). Furthermore, Luo *et al.* (2023) demonstrate that shared book activities in ethnically diverse and low-income contexts significantly improve storytelling skills, vocabulary, and comprehension, underscoring the importance of intentional practitioner facilitation.

The storytelling session further demonstrates the benefits of repeated exposure to language structures and narrative patterns. Visser-Bochane *et al.* (2023) identify key

language milestones for children aged one to six and emphasise the significance of repetitive story structures in promoting syntactic and semantic development. These findings reinforce the practitioner's role in guiding dialogue, posing predictive questions, and prompting reflection, all of which foster cognitive engagement and oracy development.

Digital Storytelling in Early Years Learning

Digital storytelling integrates multimedia elements including animations, sound effects, and interactive prompts, offering an alternative method for fostering engagement and literacy development. The use of repetition and rhyme in digital stories strengthens phonological awareness and aids early word recognition (Livingstone *et al.*, 2020). According to Rahiem (2021), digital features enhance attention and promote vocabulary retention. Paul and Norbury (2021) further argue that the combination of visual and auditory components improves emergent literacy skills among pre-school-aged children.

In contrast to traditional storytelling, digital stories convey characterisation through animations instead of live practitioner modelling. While this method enhances engagement, Sylva *et al.* (2021) warn that the lack of real-time practitioner scaffolding can restrict spontaneous conversational opportunities, which are essential for narrative competence development. Marsh (2021) asserts that interactive digital features offer alternative means of engagement, prompting children to participate actively in story navigation. Fabulungua (2023) notes that guided discussions accompanying digital storytelling improve comprehension and facilitate the acquisition of narrative skills.

Visual cues and interactive prompts in digital stories support the development of sequencing, prediction, and comprehension skills (Marsh, 2021). Engaging independently with these resources promotes early technological fluency and prepares children for the growing use of digital tools in educational settings (Buffett Institute, 2024). According to Parent App (2024), combining digital and traditional storytelling enables children to apply literacy skills across diverse modalities. This strategy is consistent with the Welsh Foundation Phase Framework, which emphasizes the purposeful integration of technology to enrich learning experiences (Welsh Government, 2021).

Digital storytelling also supports children with diverse learning needs by offering consistent visual and auditory cues, which accommodate variations in attention span and language processing. Lovato *et al.* (2023) found that conversational agents and digital storytelling tools deliver immediate responses to children's questions, fostering curiosity and advancing oral language development in preschool settings. These results highlight the potential of digital storytelling as an effective supplementary tool for enhancing literacy and communication.

Comparison of Traditional and Digital Storytelling Approaches

Traditional and digital storytelling differ in the degree of practitioner involvement, the nature of social interaction, and the modes of engagement they offer. The Room on the Broom activity featured direct practitioner scaffolding, immediate feedback, and peer discussion, all of which are essential for fostering oracy and literacy development (Fleer, 2021). In contrast, digital storytelling facilitates independent engagement with multimodal content, which can limit opportunities for spontaneous dialogue (Marsh, 2021).

Both approaches contribute to the development of phonological awareness, though they do so through distinct mechanisms. Rhyme and repetition enhance word recognition and memory retention (Bagnall, 2020), while social interaction and guided discussion strengthen narrative competence (Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke, 2021). Additionally, digital storytelling promotes digital literacy by enabling children to navigate multimedia content and interact with digital elements (Livingstone *et al.*, 2020; Hilke, 2023).

From a developmental perspective, Piaget's (1952) preoperational stage accounts for younger children's positive responses to visual and interactive stimuli, whereas older children derive greater benefit from discussion and reflection during practitioner-led storytelling (Visser-Bochane *et al.*, 2023). Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development highlights the significance of social support, indicating that practitioner involvement bridges the gap between independent performance and potential achievement with guidance. Bruner (1986) further asserts that narrative scaffolding, whether through traditional or digital storytelling, supports the internalisation of story structure and character development.

Promotion of Children's Literacy and Oracy through Storytelling

Storytelling, whether in traditional or digital formats, supports literacy and oracy through distinct mechanisms. For example, the use of Room on the Broom prompted children to retell events, discuss characters, and engage in writing activities, which facilitated the development of expressive language skills (Bryant *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, practitioner-led narrative activities have been shown to enhance vocabulary, syntax, and comprehension, especially when children are encouraged to make predictions and express their thoughts (Paul and Norbury, 2021).

Digital storytelling facilitates word recognition, sequencing, and comprehension, and also contributes to the development of foundational technological skills (Marsh, 2021). Incorporating interactive digital prompts enables children to practice problem-solving, recall, and oral articulation. Evidence suggests that integrating both traditional and digital storytelling approaches increases engagement and optimizes learning outcomes by providing diverse pathways for literacy development (Busy Bees, 2024; Parent App, 2024).

Storytelling also enhances children's narrative competence, such as understanding temporal sequencing, character motivations, and cause-and-effect relationships

(Theobald, 2024). Interactive storytelling has been shown to foster conversational abilities (Lovato *et al.*, 2023), while joint book-sharing improves vocabulary, syntax, and narrative skills in various settings (Luo *et al.*, 2023). Collectively, these findings emphasize the value of practitioner-facilitated discussion in conjunction with storytelling, irrespective of the format used.

Development of Digital Literacy Skills in the Early Years

Digital storytelling supports the development of early digital literacy by allowing children to navigate devices, respond to interactive prompts, and engage with multimedia content (Livingstone *et al.*, 2020; Buffett Institute, 2024). According to Maureen (2020), practitioner guidance further develops problem-solving, communication, and digital interaction skills, thereby maximizing the educational benefits of technology.

Traditional storytelling forms the basis of foundational literacy and oracy, which in turn support later digital learning (UNICEF, 2024; Fabulungua, 2023). Integrating traditional and digital storytelling enables children to develop literacy, oral language, and digital competencies concurrently. This combined approach aligns with the Welsh cross-curricular skills framework and promotes transferable skills in communication, creativity, and technology (Welsh Government, 2022).

Digital storytelling also facilitates differentiated learning. Interactive features, visual cues, and audio prompts offer scaffolded support for children with diverse attention spans or language development needs. Lovato *et al.* (2023) and Aubrey & Dahl (2023) demonstrate that digital tools increase engagement for children who encounter challenges with traditional story formats, thereby promoting equitable access to learning.

Inclusive Practice and the Role of the Practitioner

The practitioner plays a pivotal role in the effectiveness of both traditional and digital storytelling activities. By modelling expressive reading, facilitating participation, and scaffolding language, practitioners ensure that all children, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), can access learning (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2021; Sylva *et al.*, 2021). The use of visual cues, props, and interactive prompts offers multiple avenues for engagement, addressing a range of learning needs (Bryant *et al.*, 2020; Fleeer, 2021; Welsh Government, 2021).

Inclusive practice is supported by adjusting instructional pacing, encouraging participation, and expanding vocabulary as needed (Luo *et al.*, 2023; Little Scholars NYC, 2024). Vygotsky's (1978) focus on social learning provides a theoretical foundation for these strategies, emphasizing that children learn most effectively through guided interaction within their zone of proximal development (ZPD). Bruner's (1986) framework further validates the practitioner's role in scaffolding both cognitive and narrative development. Additionally, Siraj-Blatchford's concept of sustained shared thinking underscores the value of collaborative dialogue in promoting deeper comprehension and language acquisition (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009).

Practitioners facilitate reflective discussions that encourage children to relate stories to their personal experiences, foster empathy, and participate in imaginative play (Fleer, 2021). The integration of digital and traditional storytelling enables practitioners to provide diverse learning modalities, supporting both literacy and digital fluency while meeting a range of learning needs. This methodology aligns with the Foundation Phase Framework and the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) guidance, both of which prioritize practitioner-led, play-based learning and holistic child development (Welsh Government, 2021).

In summary, the analysis of traditional and digital storytelling highlights the complex role of storytelling in fostering literacy, oracy, digital literacy, and inclusive educational practices. The following conclusion evaluates the supporting evidence and sources, and considers their significance for understanding effective early childhood pedagogy.

Conclusion

This essay has critically examined the benefits of storytelling for children from pre-birth to seven years, analysing both traditional and digital approaches. The evaluation demonstrates that storytelling is a multifaceted pedagogical tool that supports literacy, oracy, and digital literacy, while also fostering cognitive, social, and emotional development. Traditional storytelling, as illustrated by Room on the Broom, underscores the importance of the practitioner in modelling expressive language, scaffolding comprehension, and facilitating discussion. These practices promote vocabulary development, narrative understanding, and sustained engagement. Digital storytelling offers complementary advantages, such as interactive engagement, multimodal learning, and the development of early technological fluency, although it may provide fewer opportunities for spontaneous dialogue. Collectively, these approaches align with the principles outlined in the Welsh Foundation Phase Framework and cross-curricular skills guidance, which emphasise play-based, inclusive, and holistic learning (Welsh Government, 2021; 2022).

The sources researched for this essay were selected to achieve a balance between observational research, theoretical perspectives, and practical guidance. Peer-reviewed journal articles provided robust evidence on the effects of rhyme, repetition, characterisation, and scaffolding in literacy and communication development (Bryant *et al.*, 2020; Visser-Bochane *et al.*, 2023; Luo *et al.*, 2023). Welsh Government frameworks ensured curriculum alignment by demonstrating how storytelling practices meet statutory requirements and support inclusive pedagogy. Online resources supplemented these academic and policy sources by offering practical examples and current perspectives on digital storytelling and literacy development. Through critical evaluation, it became clear that academic literature offered the most reliable and detailed evidence, while online content required careful scrutiny to confirm its accuracy and relevance.

The research process was enhanced by the use of AI tools, which enabled rapid identification of relevant literature, synthesis of complex ideas, and accessible

explanations of theoretical concepts. These tools were efficient in gathering diverse sources, highlighting key themes, and supporting critical analysis. However, their use required careful scrutiny, cross-referencing with primary academic sources, and selective integration of credible information to maintain scholarly rigour. Grammarly was also used to ensure clarity, coherence, and adherence to academic conventions, assisting in refining language, sentence structure, and referencing style.

In conclusion, this essay demonstrates that storytelling, whether delivered through traditional or digital means, is an essential practice in early childhood education. By integrating theory, research evidence, and curriculum guidance, the analysis underscores the central role of the practitioner in facilitating language, literacy, and digital skills. The combined use of diverse sources and reflective research practices, supported by AI tools and digital proofreading, has enabled a comprehensive evaluation of storytelling in early years settings and offers clear implications for effective pedagogical practice.

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