Language and Literacy in the Digital Age

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Word Count: 2197

I have not used AI in this assignment.

Traditional Storytelling Video (Length: 09:09): WIN_20260224_15_13_04_Pro.mp4

Digital Storytelling Video (Length: 07:11): Digital Storytelling video.mov

Traditional Storytelling

Storytelling is a social and cultural practice focused on the communication and exchange of narratives, historically serving as a primary method for transmitting knowledge across generations (Ahmad, 2023; Maureen, van der Meij and de Jong, 2021). As one of the earliest forms of teaching and learning, storytelling retains significant pedagogical value in early childhood education (Babita Maharjan et al., 2024). Research indicates that teacher-led storytelling enhances children's motivation and engagement, especially when narratives are connected to children's everyday experiences and prior knowledge, thereby supporting understanding (Babita Maharjan et al., 2024). Although storytelling is often associated with enjoyment and relaxation, it also plays a crucial role in communicating narrative structures such as characters, setting, theme, plot, and conflict (Maris, 2025). These elements model spoken language, create purposeful learning contexts, and stimulate imagination, all of which contribute to early literacy development (Maureen, van der Meij and de Jong, 2021). Additionally, storytelling supports language development by promoting imagination, expanding vocabulary, and developing comprehension of complex sentence structures (Hasanova, 2025). Expressive storytelling promotes sustained attention, emotional engagement, and deeper understanding of narratives, supporting both receptive and expressive language development (Suggate et al., 2021). Introducing new vocabulary within meaningful contexts and through repeated exposure enables children to use language more accurately and confidently (Khayati, 2024). This process also supports the development of empathy and emotional intelligence, highlighting storytelling as a powerful tool for promoting holistic language and narrative competence (Khayati, 2024). In my storytelling video, I read a book called 'Frog in a Fjord' by Marielle Bayliss (Bayliss, 2025).

In my storytelling video, I intentionally used a hand puppet to enhance children's engagement, imagination, and overall listening experience (Rahmawati and Zulviana, 2025). Research demonstrates that hand puppets stimulate creativity and support vocabulary development, as children become more attentive and responsive when stories are presented through imaginative and visually engaging approaches (Rahmawati and Zulviana, 2025). The movement and expressive gestures of a puppet provide visual cues that help children interpret facial expressions and develop emotional understanding as they follow the narrative (Sari, Fasikhah and Iswinarti, 2024). Evidence also shows that the use of hand puppets can increase children's confidence and motivation to participate in storytelling contexts, strengthening their engagement and willingness to contribute (Hakim, Zuriyati and Rohman, 2019).

Puppets play a distinctive role in early years by providing comfort, encouraging playful interaction, and supporting meaning-making, much like familiar toys (Loy, 2022). Through listening to a puppet-led story, children are exposed to rich language modelling, expressive dialogue, and contextualised communication, which can support vocabulary growth and pragmatic language development (Hadiniyah and Wahyuni, 2024). Practitioners can therefore use puppets to enrich storytelling sessions, encouraging attentive listening, narrative comprehension, and emotional engagement, while also creating opportunities for children to later retell stories, assume character roles, and explore alternative endings (Karaolis, 2023).

Puppets are also effective in reducing anxiety and encouraging participation, especially for shy or hesitant children, as they are perceived as friendly and non-threatening (Gal, Ryder and Levy, 2026). While puppets are widely recognised as beneficial in early years practice, some research calls for stronger theoretical and empirical evidence to fully substantiate their impact (Rade, 2021). Overall, storytelling with hand puppets supports speaking skills, listening, early literacy, vocabulary acquisition, and oral language development, demonstrating their value as a pedagogical tool in early childhood education (Mujahidah, Damayanti and Afiif, 2021).

Another technique I used in my storytelling video was repetition. Repetition is a highly effective technique in early childhood storytelling, as it strengthens narrative coherence and increases children's engagement (Sari et al., 2017). Research demonstrates that repetition links new information to prior content, making stories easier to follow and stimulating emotional and imaginative involvement (Sari et al., 2017). Repeated language patterns enable children to anticipate events and engage more deeply with the story (Suggate et al., 2021). Repetition functions as both a structural and persuasive tool, emphasising key moments and creating rhythm that maintains attention and supports comprehension (Suggate et al., 2021).

In addition to supporting engagement, repetition is essential for early language development. Studies show that preschool children are more likely to acquire new vocabulary when words are repeated multiple times during a storytelling session, even without explicit explanation. Words introduced only once are less reliably learned, indicating that repeated exposure within stories provides sufficient input to support receptive vocabulary growth (O'Fallon, Von Holzen & Newman, 2020).

In my storytelling video, I incorporated repetition by using the phrase "ribbit, ribbit" in several languages throughout the story. This strategy highlighted the frog character's sound and introduced new vocabulary and linguistic patterns, supporting word recognition and comprehension (Nencheva et al., 2024). By presenting repetition in a playful, multilingual format, I aimed to increase engagement, encourage participation, and reinforce language learning, demonstrating how repetition can enhance both narrative involvement and early language development (Suggate et al., 2021).

The final technique I used in my storytelling video was prosodic language. Prosody, which includes the rhythm, intonation, and stress patterns of speech, is essential for early language development and story comprehension in children (Davison et al., 2025).

Evidence indicates that prosodic variation in child-directed speech enhances comprehension by marking syntactic boundaries, making it easier for children to parse sentences (Davison et al., 2025). Research also shows that shared book reading between caregivers and children exposes children to rich prosodic cues, supporting vocabulary and syntactic development (Davison et al., 2025). In spoken communication, prosody conveys linguistic information through pitch, timing, pauses, and loudness, helping listeners identify key content and sentence structure (Davison et al., 2025). Meta-analyses reveal that exaggerated prosody in infant and child-directed speech captures infants' attention and promotes communicative skills, supporting later language acquisition (Spinelli, Fasolo and Mesman, 2017). When caregivers read stories expressively, using clear phrasing, pacing, and rhythm, they model storytelling prosody and encourage children to develop more fluent and engaging oral language (Chung and Yang, 2022). Collectively, these findings demonstrate that caregiver prosody is a dynamic tool that supports children's language comprehension, expressive abilities, and enjoyment of stories (Davison et al., 2025).

Digital Storytelling

The integration of technology into classrooms has transformed traditional learning methods. Among these innovations, digital storytelling has emerged as an effective approach for promoting early childhood literacy (Maureen, van der Meij and de Jong, 2020). By combining storytelling with digital media, digital storytelling enriches the learning experience and increases engagement, interactivity, and accessibility for children (Mustafa, Ahmed and Haider, 2024). However, several challenges must be considered. Young children may become overly reliant on screens, and not all families or schools have equal access to high-quality digital devices or stable internet connections. Additionally, without careful guidance, digital storytelling may sometimes detract from traditional literacy skills, such as print awareness or handwriting (Zu, Zhang and Wang, 2026). In my storytelling video, I read a book called 'The Digger and the Flower' by Joseph Kuefler (Kuefler, 2018).

The simplicity and interactivity of technology have contributed to the rapid expansion of digital storytelling methods (Bautista, Ghesquière and Torbeyns, 2024). As technology becomes more accessible, digital storytelling serves as a reliable learning platform for a broader population. Technology can help children from low- to middle-income households improve their vocabulary, literacy, mathematics, and overall school readiness (Rahiem, 2021). Screen media is increasingly prevalent in the lives of young children (Ponti, 2023). Research indicates that many preschoolers are exposed to digital technology before being introduced to books (Rahiem, 2021). Even without the ability to read, young children can engage with and enjoy stories through digital media (Rahiem, 2021). Moreover, digital storytelling supports communication skills by encouraging children to organise ideas, ask questions, share opinions, and construct narratives (Rahiem, 2021).

One digital storytelling technique I used in my video was expressive voice and prosody during narration. Since I did not appear on screen, vocal expression became the primary means of conveying meaning and emotion. I intentionally varied tone, pitch, volume, and pace to reflect shifts in the story, such as contrasting the busy construction environment with gentler moments involving the flower. Research demonstrates that prosodic variation in adult oral reading supports young children's listening comprehension by emphasising syntactic boundaries and emotional cues within spoken language (Davison et al., 2025). A significant strength of using prosody in digital storytelling is its ability to help listeners construct meaning from spoken language, thereby enhancing comprehension (Davison et al., 2025). Studies indicate that speech prosody, including phrasing and intonation, contributes uniquely to how children understand and organise linguistic input, even after accounting for decoding and vocabulary skills. This evidence suggests that prosodic cues facilitate meaning construction rather than simply reflecting decoding ability (Chung and Yang, 2022). In my animated storybook video, the use of varied pitch, appropriate pauses, and expressive phrasing aimed to help children follow the narrative more easily and connect emotionally with the content, as prosody supports the listener's interpretation of sentence boundaries and emphasis (Nencheva, Piazza and Lew-Williams, 2020). However, while prosody can aid comprehension, its effectiveness depends on the

listener's developing language skills. Excessively rapid or inconsistent prosodic delivery may reduce comprehension for some children (Giberga et al., 2025). Nonetheless, the deliberate use of prosody in my narration demonstrates an understanding of spoken language patterns that can make digital stories more accessible and meaningful for children (Zanchi et al., 2016).

Another technique I used was visual sequencing, combined with a clear narrative structure. Visual sequencing is essential in digital storybooks because it enables children to construct meaning from successive images and events within a coherent narrative (Sarı et al., 2019). Research on visual narratives shows that sequential images must be understood in a specific order, which helps viewers link characters, events, and actions across the sequence. Without this structure, each image would be perceived as unrelated, making it difficult to build a continuous understanding of the story (Cohn, 2019). Using a clear narrative structure in my digital storytelling video provided a meaningful framework that could help children recall the story's events (Hill et al., 2025). Research indicates that when narratives are organised around identifiable elements such as goals, attempts, and outcomes, children are better able to remember story details over time. For example, one study found that children who imposed a strong narrative structure when first telling a story were more accurate in recalling its content after a delay compared to those with a weaker structure (Hill et al., 2026). This evidence suggests that a clearly sequenced narrative supports children's cognitive processing by providing a scaffolded path for connecting ideas and events (Park, Song and Shim, 2025). In my animated storybook video, having a distinct beginning, middle, and end would likely make it easier for children to follow the story's causal flow and retain its key messages (Hill et al., 2025). This demonstrates the pedagogical value of intentional narrative organisation in digital storytelling (Hill et al., 2025).

Finally, I used pacing, strategic pauses, and intentional silences to enhance the storytelling experience. These elements are effective in digital storytelling because they engage young audiences and emphasise important moments in the narrative (Read,

Furay and Zylstra, 2019). Research on communicative rhythm in storytelling suggests that *"what is not said impacts the audience as much as what is,"* and that pacing, pause, and silence are rhetorical tools that help listeners pay attention and become more engaged with the narrative (Lingard, 2019). In an early years context, incorporating deliberate pauses and controlled pacing in my narrated animated storybook could give children time to process new vocabulary, absorb emotional meaning, and anticipate what comes next, rather than overwhelming them with continuous speech (Read, Furay and Zylstra, 2019). Pauses allow meaning to settle and invite young listeners to reflect on what has occurred, supporting deeper comprehension and emotional connection (Davison et al., 2025). However, if pauses are too long or not deliberately placed, they can disrupt the narrative flow and distract children. Research indicates that *poorly timed pauses may interrupt the natural flow of speech and hinder perceptions of fluency and coherent phrasing* (Godde, Bailly & Bosse, 2022). This highlights the importance of carefully placed pauses in storytelling, as intentional, appropriately timed pauses can enhance engagement, support cognitive processing, and help young listeners follow and interpret the story effectively (Peristeri et al., 2024). In my narrated animated storybook, the deliberate use of pacing and silence demonstrates an understanding of how temporal dynamics in speech can scaffold comprehension and maintain children's attention (Davison et al., 2025).

In conclusion, both traditional and digital storytelling play essential roles in early childhood education by supporting language acquisition, literacy development, and learner engagement (Surya and Pratiwi, 2024). Traditional storytelling provides interactive and relational experiences that foster imagination, expand vocabulary, and improve comprehension (Suggate et al., 2021; Khayati, 2024). Digital storytelling builds on these strengths by incorporating visual and auditory elements, controlled pacing, and interactive features (Mustafa, Ahmed and Haider, 2024). In my narrated animated storybook, I intentionally used pauses, expressive phrasing, and a clear narrative structure to help children follow the storyline and process new language (Davison et al., 2025). By combining the relational benefits of traditional storytelling with the accessibility and engagement offered by digital media, early years practitioners can

design developmentally appropriate experiences that promote comprehension, enjoyment, and comprehensive language development (Maureen, van der Meij and de Jong, 2021; Babita Maharjan et al., 2024).

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