

Language and Literacy in the Digital Age

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Analysis
 - 2.1 Props and puppets
 - 2.2 Rhyme
 - 2.3 Repetition
 - 2.4 Curriculum for Wales and Digital Competence Framework
3. Conclusion
4. References

AI Statement

I acknowledge the use of Copilot on 23 October 2026 to support me with my assignment. I used the prompts:

“Can you help me check if my section has a good structure?”

“Are there any gaps? Have I missed anything?”

“Can you help me check if my introduction supports my conclusion?”

“Can you summarise this source”

“Can you help me understand the term ‘language acquisition?’”

“Can you find a peer-reviewed, academic source for David Crystal on digital storytelling?”

“Have I compared and contrasted both stories enough?”

“Can you tell me about Eve Clark?”

Language and Literacy in the Digital Age

Introduction

Storytelling plays a vital role in early childhood development, helping children make sense of their experiences and supporting imagination, communication, and emotional growth (National Literacy Trust, n.d.). It encourages children to share ideas, build narratives, and develop confidence in expressing themselves through language (BookTrust, n.d.). Exposure to stories provides rich vocabulary, patterned language, and opportunities for interaction, all of which strengthen early language acquisition (Welsh Government, 2019). Listening to stories also supports sequencing, prediction, and comprehension, forming key foundations for later reading and writing (EEF, n.d.). Traditional tales offer familiar structures and symbolic themes that help children explore emotions and develop narrative competence (Bettelheim, 1976). Current guidance on literacy in the digital age highlights the importance of multimodal storytelling, where children interpret meaning through sound, image, and movement, supporting emerging digital literacy (Crystal, 2014). Together, traditional and digital storytelling provide complementary pathways for communication, creativity, and early literacy development (National Literacy Trust, n.d.)

Analysis

In the two recordings, the storyteller used three practices to support children's early language and literacy development; props/puppets, rhyme, and repetition. These practices offered different opportunities for engagement, communication, and meaning. Storytelling is widely recognised as a powerful approach in the early years, helping children make sense of experiences, develop imagination, and build early communication skills (National Literacy Trust, n.d.). Through shared story experiences, children encounter patterned language, new vocabulary, and opportunities to participate verbally, all of which contribute to early speech and language development (Welsh Government, 2019). The storyteller's use of multimodal cues, expressive language, and interactive elements aligns with guidance that emphasises the importance of rich, varied input in supporting children's communication (Speech and Language UK, n.d.). Crystal (2011) explains that digital texts rely on multimodal features such as images, sound and movement, meaning digital storytelling supports children in interpreting meaning across modes, not just through spoken language (Crystal, 2011).

This analysis explores how each practice functioned within the recordings, how they differed across storytelling approaches, and how they contributed to oracy, early reading and writing, and digital literacy.

Props and puppets

In the recordings, the storyteller used props and puppets mainly in Room on the Broom (Donaldson and Scheffler, 2001), while the digital version of The Three Little Pigs (Twinkl, n.d) did not include any physical items. In the traditional story, the storyteller held up and added the characters as the story went on, as well as showing the ingredients used in spell. This made the story more visual and helped show the sequence of events clearly. Early language guidance explains that young children learn well when adults use visual support to help them link words to real objects (National Literacy Trust, n.d.). Props also help children understand new vocabulary because they can see what the adult is talking about (Speech and Language UK, n.d.).

In contrast, the digital story relied on pictures and animations. This meant the storyteller did not use physical props, and the story was carried by the screen instead. David Crystal's work on digital communication highlights how children engage with language differently in digital environments. Crystal (2011) explains that digital texts often rely on multimodal features such as images, sound, movement and simplified language structures. This links well to the digital version of The Three Little Pigs, where meaning was carried mainly through visuals and repeated actions rather than complex language (Crystal, 2011).

Using props also links to joint attention, which is important for language development. Crowley (2017) explains that joint attention happens when the adult and child focus on the same thing at the same time. Showing a prop at the right moment helps guide attention and supports meaning-making. Saxton (2017) also explains that children learn new words when adults give clear input and repeat language in meaningful ways. Props make this easier because the adult can point, show, and repeat the word while the object is visible.

Bruner (1983) also explains that children acquire language through structured interaction formats, and props help create these predictable routines by giving children clear visual cues to map words onto meaning (Bruner, 1983).

Overall, props and puppets were a strong feature of the traditional recording but not the digital one. This difference shows how physical storytelling can support language and literacy in different ways compared to digital storytelling.

Rhyme

Rhyme was clear in Room on the Broom (Donaldson and Scheffler, 2001), but it did not appear in the same way in the digital version of The Three Little Pigs (Twinkl, n.d). In the traditional recording, the storyteller followed the rhythm and rhyme already written into the book. The rhyming lines appeared often and helped the story flow smoothly. Research on nursery rhyme teaching shows that rhyme supports early language because repeated sounds help children notice patterns in words and develop

phonological awareness (Xiaoying et al, 2026). This means rhyme helps children hear how words fit together, which is important for early reading.

Laing (2019) also explains that sound-based language can support phonological development by helping children tune into the sound structure of words (Laing, 2019). This links well to *Room on the Broom* (Donaldson and Scheffler, 2001), where the storyteller emphasised the rhyming parts to keep the rhythm strong. Saxton (2017) also explains that children learn language through repeated and clear input, and rhyme naturally provides this because the same sounds appear again and again.

Froebel (2021) also highlighted the importance of rhythm and musical patterns in early learning, suggesting that children internalise language more easily when it is presented through playful, patterned experiences (Froebel, 2021). His principles emphasise that rhyme and rhythm help children anticipate sounds and sequences, supporting early language acquisition through enjoyment, repetition and active participation (Froebel, 2021).

The Hwb Languages, Literacy and Communication guidance also highlights the importance of children hearing rich language patterns to support literacy development (Hwb, n.d.). Rhyme supports this by giving children predictable and repeated sound structures. In *Room on the Broom* (Donaldson and Scheffler, 2001), the rhyming lines helped build excitement and made the story memorable. In the digital story, the focus was mainly on the images, so rhyme was not used in the same way.

The digital story used simple sentences and repetition rather than rhyming lines. Smogorzewska (2014) shows that patterned language supports children's creativity and helps them play with sounds (Smogorzewska, 2014). This is easier to achieve in traditional stories with rhyme than in digital stories where the focus is mainly on visuals and movement.

Overall, rhyme played a key role in the traditional recording but was less noticeable in the digital one. This shows how different storytelling approaches support language and literacy differently. Traditional storytelling supports phonological awareness and early reading through patterned language, while digital storytelling supports understanding through images, sound, and movement.

Repetition

Repetition appeared in both recordings. In *Room on the Broom* (Donaldson and Scheffler, 2001), repetition came from the repeated sequence of characters joining the witch on the broom. Each time a new character appeared, the storyteller used a similar pattern of language and actions. This predictable structure made the story easy to follow and helped children anticipate what might happen next. Bruner (1983) explains that children learn through "formats," which are repeated and familiar patterns that help them understand how stories work. The repeated broom sequence is an example of this, as it creates a clear structure that children can recognise and remember.

The digital story, *The Three Little Pigs* (Twinkl, n.d), repeated the same phrases and events, such as “Little pig, little pig, let me in,” and the wolf blowing down the houses. The BBC Tiny Happy People page explains that children love repetition because it helps them understand cause and effect and supports prediction (BBC, n.d). The repeated dialogue and actions in the digital story help children follow the plot and anticipate what the wolf will do next. Chomsky (1965) also argues that repeated and predictable language input helps children internalise grammar and sentence patterns, which supports early language development.

Bruno Bettelheim’s work highlights the importance of traditional tales in children’s emotional and psychological development. In *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), Bettelheim argues that fairy tales help children make sense of complex feelings, fears and developmental challenges through symbolic characters and events. He explains that traditional stories often present clear moral dilemmas, danger, safety, and resolution, allowing children to explore these themes safely through imagination. For example, repeated threats or challenges in tales like *The Three Little Pigs* or help children rehearse coping strategies and understand consequences (Bettelheim, 1976).

Bettelheim also emphasises that the simplicity and repetition found in traditional tales make them accessible and meaningful. The predictable structure helps children follow the narrative while engaging emotionally with the characters (Bettelheim, 1976)

The Education Endowment Foundation (n.d), explains that repeated story structures help children sequence events and retell stories confidently (EEF, n.d). This links to both recordings, as children could retell the broom sequence or the wolf’s repeated actions. The National Literacy Trust (n.d), emphasises that familiar and repeated stories help children build a bank of known narratives they can draw on in their own storytelling (The National Literacy Trust, n.d). BookTrust (n.d) also highlights that repeated language in stories helps children learn new vocabulary and understand how words fit together (Book Trust, n.d).

The difference between the two recordings shows how repetition can support learning in different ways. In the traditional story, repetition supported narrative structure and prediction. In the digital story, repetition supported memory and understanding through repeated dialogue. Both approaches show how repetition helps children make sense of stories and supports early language and literacy development.

The Curriculum for Wales also emphasises the importance of storytelling for language acquisition and literacy development. Within the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience, children are expected to engage with rich, varied texts that support vocabulary growth, patterned language, and expressive communication (Welsh Government, 2022). Storytelling aligns with the Communication and Exploration pathways, as children learn to make meaning, sequence ideas, and respond to familiar narratives. The Digital Competence Framework (DCF) further highlights the need for children to interpret meaning across multimodal texts, including sound, image and movement. This links closely to the digital version of *The Three Little Pigs*, where children develop early digital literacy by understanding how visuals and

repeated actions carry meaning. Together, the Curriculum for Wales and the DCF show that both traditional and digital storytelling contribute to children's language acquisition by offering diverse opportunities for communication, creativity and meaning-making.

Conclusion

The sources used in this assignment provided good understanding of how props, rhyme and repetition support children's language and literacy development. The academic studies, such as Laing (2019), Smogorzewska (2014) and Xiaoying et al. (2026), offered reliable, peer-reviewed evidence that strengthened the analysis. These studies were supported by guidance from organisations like the EEF, BookTrust, Welsh Government and the National Literacy Trust, which helped connect theory to early years practice. They offered a clear picture of how storytelling supports phonological awareness, prediction, creativity and narrative understanding.

Using AI was helpful for locating sources and theorists, but it also had limitations. For example, when asked for peer-reviewed research on digital storytelling, AI suggested non-academic sources after checking. This highlighted the importance of critically evaluating AI-generated suggestions and relying on academic and peer-reviewed sources to ensure accuracy.

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