

Student Number – 2508338

Module: ECEY5004 – Language and Literacy in the Digital Age

Word Count – 2200

Total Recording Time – 16 mins 06 seconds

AI Statement

I acknowledge the use of Copilot and Google editor in line with the guidance given by UWTSD for Module ECEY5004 – 28/09/2026 - 25/10/2026

I used the prompt(s):

1. Use of Google Editor to check spelling and grammatical errors
2. Put my Harvard references into alphabetical order.
3. Co-pilot – 23/10/26 - Can you find me sources for Michael Rosen's published articles about the benefits of storytelling for linguistical development or the benefits of digital technology used in storytelling?
4. Co-pilot – 24/10/26 - Can you find me sources for Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) for an assignment on language and literacy in the digital age

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have retained copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence

Story recording links

 [2508338 - ECEY5004 - Traditional story.mp4](#)

 [2508338 - ECEY 5004 - Digital story.mp4](#)

Introduction

Storytelling is widely recognised as an important contributor to children's communication, language and literacy development. Research suggests that regular engagement with stories, songs and rhymes supports speech, language and communication skills while fostering the phonological awareness that underpins later literacy development (Webber, 2025; Welsh Government, 2022). Storytelling also exposes children to rich vocabulary, varied sentence structures and opportunities for discussion and prediction all of which are important foundations for language and literacy development (Education Endowment Foundation, 2024).

This reflective study critically analyses two storytelling activities based on the book *Sharing a Shell* (Donaldson, 2004). The first activity involved a traditional storytelling approach on a beach using natural resources and props, while the second utilised an interactive digital version of the story incorporating audio features and child-controlled navigation. Drawing on the work of Bruner (1983), Crystal (2010), Clark (2009) and contemporary literacy research, the discussion analyses how practitioner strategies including pointing and gesture, turn taking and question interactions, and the use of rhyme and repetition supported children's language, communication, literacy and digital literacy development alongside the benefits and limitations of both.

Storytelling Sessions and their key features

Whilst the traditional and digital storytelling activities differed in their mode of delivery, both relied on a range of practitioner led strategies to support children's language and literacy development. A significant feature of both was the use of pointing and gesture to establish joint attention. During the traditional storytelling session, the practitioner frequently pointed to illustrations, shells, the toy crab and environmental features such as the sea. These deictic gestures directed children's attention towards specific objects and concepts within the story and supported the development of shared meaning. Bruner's (1983) concept of the Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) suggests that adults play a crucial role in supporting children's language learning through scaffolding and shared interactions. By drawing attention to both the illustrations and real-life objects, the

practitioner helped children connect words and strengthening vocabulary acquisition and comprehension. Similarly, Clark (2009) argues that children learn new vocabulary most effectively when words are heard in meaningful contexts and linked to objects and experiences.

The beach environment also contributed to children's language development by providing a meaningful context for communication. Rather than learning vocabulary in isolation, children were able to encounter and discuss concepts within an authentic setting.

Richardson et al. (2023) suggest that natural environments support language development by providing real-life experiences that children can observe, explore and communicate about. This approach may enhance vocabulary retention because children are able to connect language to direct sensory experiences (Welsh Government, 2023). This is further supported by Bower (2014) who argues that outdoor learning environments can enrich literacy experiences by encouraging curiosity, discussion and collaborative exploration. The combination of storytelling and environmental interaction therefore created opportunities for children to develop language through both narrative engagement and first-hand experience. This supports Bruner's (1983) view that language learning is strengthened when children actively participate in meaningful social contexts.

Although gesture and pointing can support understanding, their effectiveness depends upon the quality of adult scaffolding. Bruner (1983) argued that without meaningful discussion and explanation, visual cues alone are unlikely to promote deep language learning. Consequently, the success of this strategy depended not simply on directing children's attention, but on extending their understanding through conversation.

The use of props further strengthened understanding of the narrative. The shells and toy crab acted as concrete representations of story elements, enabling children to visualise and physically engage with concepts being discussed, whilst helping them connect spoken language with tangible experiences. Whitehead (2010) emphasises that young children develop language and literacy effectively when stories are linked to meaningful experiences and supported by rich interactions. This approach supported learning by linking spoken language with visual and tactile experiences. The use of objects of reference was particularly beneficial for younger children and emerging speakers, as it reduced the abstract nature of language and made story content more accessible.

Similarly, within the digital storytelling activity, interactive sound buttons provided additional auditory cues that supported children's understanding of the narrative. Sound effects such as crab and ocean noises helped reinforce connections between vocabulary, images and meaning, creating a multimodal learning experience. This approach is consistent with Froebel's belief that children learn through direct sensory experiences and active engagement (Froebel, 1887). Furthermore, the Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2022) recognises the importance of multimodal experiences, suggesting that engaging with visual, auditory and linguistic forms of communication can support meaning-making and literacy development.

However, whilst props can enhance engagement, they may also become a distraction if children focus primarily on the objects rather than listening to the narrative. The effectiveness of this approach therefore depends on the practitioner's ability to maintain a clear connection between the props and the story content. On reflection, the use of props appeared to increase children's engagement and support vocabulary development by creating concrete links between language and experience. However, future practice could involve encouraging children to take greater ownership of the props by using them to retell the story independently. This may further support narrative development and expressive language skills.

A second important strategy was the use of turn-taking and responsive interaction. Throughout both sessions, the practitioner regularly paused to allow children time to comment, answer questions and make predictions. They also used a slower pace, clear intonation and emphasis on rhyming words to maintain engagement. This demonstrated awareness of the importance of rhythm in supporting children's attention and comprehension.

Hayes (2016) argues that effective communication develops through meaningful interactions where adults listen and respond sensitively to children's contributions. These interactions support oral language development and provide a foundation for later literacy development. These interactions also reflected a serve and return approach where the adult responds to children's verbal and non-verbal communication and extends their thinking through further discussion. Bruner (1983) argues that language develops through these

social interactions, as children learn how communication functions within meaningful contexts.

Turn-taking also supports the development of communicative skills. Crystal (2010) suggests that children acquire the practice of conversation, including listening and responding through participation in authentic social experiences. By encouraging children to contribute their thoughts, the practitioner positioned them as active participants rather than passive listeners.

The effectiveness of turn-taking was further enhanced using questioning. Questions ranged from simple recall to those requiring children to predict and explain their thinking. According to Wasik and Bond (2001), open-ended questioning encourages children to use more complex language and supports the development of vocabulary and narrative skills. Within both sessions, questions encouraged children to think beyond the text and draw upon their own experiences. This is consistent with Bruner's (1986) view that narrative participation helps children organise ideas and communicate their understanding. However, the quality of children's responses depends largely on the skill of the practitioner in providing sufficient wait time and extending children's contributions through extending discussion.

The benefits of this approach were evident during both stories. The face-to-face nature of both allowed the practitioner to respond immediately to children's contributions and adapt questioning according to their interests and level of understanding. This supported both expressive language development and sustained shared attention. However, some differences emerged during the digital storytelling activity. Whilst the digital book promoted children's agency by allowing them to make choices and engage more actively with the pages, their educational value remains dependent on thoughtful adult facilitation (Kucirkova, 2019).

While children remained highly engaged with the digital version, some attention was directed towards operating the technology, navigating pages and activating sound features. Consequently, there were fewer opportunities for extended conversation at certain points due to the children moving on to the next page quickly. This supports findings that digital texts can sometimes reduce the quantity of adult-child interaction when technological

features become the primary focus of children's attention (Zucker, Moody and McKenna, 2009).

Bus, Takács and Kegel (2015) found that interactive features can either enhance or hinder literacy development depending on their relationship to the story. This was reflected within the digital storytelling activity, where sound effects supported engagement but occasionally diverted attention away from listening to the story content. Additionally, whilst digital features occasionally disrupted dialogue, they simultaneously enabled children to demonstrate emerging digital literacy skills through making choices and interacting with multimodal forms of communication (Kucirkova, 2019).

The digital storytelling activity also reflected contemporary understandings of literacy, which recognise that children increasingly encounter and interpret information through a range of digital media. Whitehead (2010) argues that literacy extends beyond reading and writing to include the ability to make meaning from symbols, images and other forms of communication. Through activating sound features and controlling page progression, children demonstrated emerging digital literacy skills alongside traditional language and literacy skills. However, Kucirkova (2019) warns that technological engagement should not be mistaken for meaningful learning. Without effective adult intervention, there is a risk that children become focused on operating the device rather than engaging with the story. Therefore, practitioners have an important role in ensuring that digital tools are used to support interaction, discussion and comprehension rather than simply entertainment.

On reflection, more open-ended questioning could have been incorporated during the digital storytelling session. Whilst children actively engaged with sound features and page navigation, opportunities for sustained discussion were reduced due to children leading the progress. In future practice, additional pauses could be incorporated to encourage prediction, explanation and reasoning, extending children's expressive language.

A third strategy evident across both activities was the use of rhyming and repetition, which are key features of *Sharing a Shell*. Bower (2014) suggests that rhythm, rhyme and repetition are important foundations for early literacy because they develop children's awareness of the sounds within language and support later reading acquisition. Repeated phrases, predictable sentence patterns and rhyme created opportunities for children to anticipate

language, join in with familiar sections and develop phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is recognised as a crucial foundation for later reading and literacy development because it enables children to recognise sound patterns within words and language (Welsh Government, 2026).

Bruner (1986) suggests that repeated participation in narrative experiences enables children to internalise language structures and develop an understanding of how language is organised. The predictable nature of rhyme encourages active participation, as children become increasingly confident in anticipating and repeating familiar phrases and language patterns (Neaum, 2012). Furthermore, opportunities for verbal participation allowed children to become co-constructors of meaning rather than passive recipients of information, supporting both language development and understanding (Larson, 2014).

From Crystal's (2010) perspective, exposure to repeated language patterns supports children's growing awareness of how spoken language works. Repetition within the text provided opportunities for children to hear vocabulary multiple times within meaningful contexts, increasing familiarity and supporting retention. Within the traditional storytelling session, children were able to join in with repetition, such as counting alongside the practitioner, creating a collaborative storytelling experience. In contrast, the digital format provided additional auditory reinforcement through narration and sound effects, which may have further supported memory and comprehension.

However, there is a potential limitation in that children may focus on repeating words without fully understanding their meaning. The practitioner therefore needed to supplement repetition with discussion and questioning to ensure deeper comprehension. This reinforces the importance of the adult's role within storytelling activities, regardless of the format in which the story is delivered.

Reflection on the use of Artificial Intelligence for research

The use of Artificial Intelligence to support research into storytelling, language development and digital literacy provided an efficient method of identifying relevant theories, research and contemporary articles. This enabled a wider range of literature to be explored within a relatively short period of time.

However, a significant limitation of AI was that information was occasionally inaccurate, lacked context and wasn't supported by original academic evidence. UNESCO (2023) highlights the potential for AI generated content to contain errors, bias or fabricated information, emphasising the need for careful verification of sources. Consequently, all AI-generated information that was accessed was critically evaluated and cross-referenced against academic literature, journal articles, policy documents and professional guidance to ensure accuracy and reliability. Whilst AI initially appeared to save time, the need to verify information against original sources often doubled the research process. This highlighted the importance of academic rigour and reinforced that AI should be viewed as a research support tool rather than a substitute for independent reading.

Conclusion

Overall, both storytelling approaches supported children's communication, language and literacy development through opportunities for joint attention, turn-taking, repetition and active participation. Whilst the traditional storytelling session provided richer opportunities for responsive communication, shared attention and environmental connection, the digital activity promoted independence, multimodal meaning making and emerging digital literacy skills. However, the findings indicate that neither traditional nor digital approaches are superior. Rather, the quality of adult-child interaction, opportunities for sustained dialogue and the practitioner's ability to scaffold learning appear to be the most significant factors influencing language and literacy outcomes.

Whilst Chomsky's (1965) theory suggests that children possess an innate capacity for language acquisition, the observations from both stories indicate that social interaction, scaffolding and meaningful communication are central to children's language development. Bruner's (1983) emphasis on adult support and shared meaning-making, together with Crystal's (2010) focus on communicative competence, therefore, provide the most convincing explanation of the language learning observed across both activities.

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