

I acknowledge the use of Microsoft Copilot (<https://copilot.com/>) on 4th October 2026 to assist with researching academic sources on language, literacy and storytelling in early years education, summarising sources to assess their relevance, and proofreading my essay for grammar, spelling and punctuation.

I used the prompt(s):

1. Find research published between 2015 and 2025 examining how storytelling supports young children's oral language, vocabulary, listening skills and communication in early years education. Identify relevant academic sources and explain briefly what each source investigates
2. Find research from 2015 to 2025 about the role of early years practitioners in supporting children's language and literacy through storytelling, including interactive story reading, questioning, repetition, props, puppets and opportunities for children to retell stories
3. Find contemporary academic research published between 2015 and 2025 that explores Jerome Bruner's theory in relation to language, literacy and storytelling in early years education. Identify peer-reviewed journal articles and other reliable academic sources that explicitly apply Bruner's theories.
4. Summarise this academic source to help me decide whether it is relevant to my essay on language, literacy and storytelling in early years education.
5. Proofread my essay and identify grammatical errors, spelling mistakes and punctuation errors. Suggest corrections while keeping my original meaning and ideas unchanged
6. Carry out a final proofreading check of my essay, focusing on grammar, spelling and punctuation. List suggested corrections separately so I can review and decide which changes to make

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work.

I confirm that I have 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 as evidence.

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Part 1 – Traditional story telling video link

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Part 2 – Digital story telling video link

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Language and Literacy in the Digital Age

Introduction

Storytelling plays a significant role in supporting children's communication, language and literacy development from birth to seven years. According to Maureen, Van der Meij and De Jong (2020), storytelling provides children with opportunities to encounter new vocabulary, narrative structures and meaningful social interactions, which support early language and literacy development. Storytelling has been identified as an effective stimulus for emergent literacy, particularly when combined with play-based activities that encourage active participation and engagement. Furthermore, technological developments have extended literacy beyond traditional print-based practices. Erstad *et al.* (2020) argue that children increasingly engage with a range of digital tools and media from an early age, contributing to the development of digital literacy alongside traditional literacy skills. This discussion critically evaluates the use of expressive storytelling, repetition and visual resources and props during the presentation of *Room on the Broom*, considering how these techniques may support children's language, oracy and emergent literacy development.

Expressive Storytelling

The storyteller used an expressive voice to bring characters to life and emphasise important moments within the narrative. Changes in tone and pace conveyed characters' emotions, while variations in volume and intonation highlighted key events (Davison *et al.*, 2026). Facial expressions and gestures were also used to communicate meaning and maintain children's engagement with the story. Macoun and Sweller (2016) suggest that meaningful gestures can support preschool children's understanding and recall of story events. Similarly, Blanc (2022) argues that combining vocal expression with non-verbal cues may help children recognise emotions, distinguish between characters and follow important events within a narrative. Through the use of voice, facial expression and gesture, the storyteller communicated meaning beyond the spoken text and provided additional cues to support children's understanding.

From an oracy perspective, expressive storytelling may support children's communication skills by exposing them to different ways of using language to express emotions, intentions and meaning (Davison *et al.*, 2026). By listening to expressive narration, children can observe how a character's voice and actions reflect their feelings and motivations. They may subsequently draw upon these features when retelling stories or engaging in imaginative play (National Literacy Trust, 2026). Developing an understanding of characterisation, sequencing and narrative language may also support emergent writing by providing models that children can draw upon when creating their own stories. Consequently, expressive storytelling may provide valuable opportunities for children to observe language being used for different communicative purposes and apply these approaches within their own spoken and written communication.

The value of expressive storytelling can also be understood through its contribution to meaningful language use. Creating opportunities for purposeful communication is an important aspect of children's communication and language development because language is acquired and strengthened through social interaction and meaningful communicative experiences (Department for Education, 2024). Expressive storytelling may support language development by exposing children to rich vocabulary and meaningful communication within a shared social context. Furthermore, the Education Endowment Foundation (2025b) reports that oral language approaches are associated with an average of six months' additional progress in learning outcomes. Although this evidence does not specifically examine expressive storytelling, it suggests that expressive narration may contribute to broader language and literacy development.

A sociocultural perspective provides a useful framework for understanding the potential value of expressive storytelling. Drawing on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Mercadal (2021) argues that children's language develops through social interaction and participation in meaningful activities, with learning supported by more knowledgeable others. Through storytelling, children can observe and gradually incorporate expressive language and communication strategies into their own speech (Education Endowment Foundation, 2025a). Expressive storytelling may therefore be particularly beneficial when children are encouraged to respond to the

story, discuss their ideas and practise the language and expressions they have encountered rather than remaining passive listeners (Pillinger and Vardy, 2022).

Despite these potential benefits, expressive storytelling does not automatically lead to improved understanding. Yang *et al.* (2024) suggest that excessive changes in volume, exaggerated gestures or overly rapid delivery may distract children from the narrative itself. Furthermore, while expressive narration can provide a rich model of language use, a predominantly adult-led approach may limit opportunities for children to actively participate in and make sense of the story. Research on interactive reading suggests that oral language development and comprehension are enhanced when children actively engage with stories rather than simply listen to them (Education Endowment Foundation, 2024). Consequently, effective storytelling requires a balance between expressive adult modelling and opportunities for children's participation, discussion and reflection.

Repetition in Storytelling

In addition to expressive vocal and non-verbal communication, repetition was used throughout the storytelling to support children's engagement with the narrative and reinforce key language patterns. The storyteller incorporated repetition through recurring language and familiar narrative structures, creating a predictable and engaging storytelling experience. According to Horst, Parsons and Bryan (2011), repeated exposure to vocabulary within storytelling can support children's word learning by enabling them to process and retain unfamiliar words over time. Similarly, O'Fallon, Von Holzen and Newman (2020) highlight the importance of repeated exposure in children's language processing and learning. Van der Wilt, Smits-van der Nat and Van der Veen (2022) suggest that familiarity with story events and narrative organisation can support children's comprehension by helping them understand how narratives are structured.

From an oracy perspective, repetition may encourage active participation by enabling children to join in with familiar refrains, complete predictable sentences and retell sections of the narrative. Repeated engagement with story language provides opportunities to hear, practise and use language within meaningful social contexts. This reflects Tomasello's (2019) view that language develops through participation in social interaction. Although Weadman, Serry and Snow (2022) focus on shared book reading rather than repetition specifically, their findings suggest that opportunities for discussion, vocabulary learning and active engagement with stories can support oral language and emergent literacy development.

The potential value of repetition can be illustrated through the repeated phrase in *Room on the Broom*, 'The witch tapped the broomstick, whoosh! They were gone!'. This recurring phrase may encourage children to anticipate and join in with familiar language, providing opportunities for active participation. Such participation enables children to practise vocabulary and sentence structures within a meaningful context, which may support language learning through repeated exposure and social interaction (Horst, Parsons and Bryan, 2011; Tomasello, 2019). In addition, familiarity with recurring story patterns may support emergent literacy by helping children recognise how narratives are organised and sequenced (Van der Wilt,

Smits-van der Nat and Van der Veen, 2022). However, Lenhart, Suggate and Lenhard (2021) argue that the benefits of repeated story experiences are strongest when repetition is accompanied by interaction and discussion.

Evidence from the broader storytelling and shared reading literature further highlights the potential value of repeated story experiences. For example, Noble *et al.* (2019) found positive, although modest, effects of shared book reading on children's language development. However, these findings relate to shared reading more broadly and do not demonstrate that repetition itself is responsible for these outcomes. This suggests that the effectiveness of repetition may depend on how it is implemented within storytelling practice. While some children may gain confidence through repeated exposure to familiar language, others may lose interest if stories become overly predictable. Furthermore, excessive reliance on repetition may reduce opportunities for children to encounter new vocabulary, ideas and narrative structures. Consequently, repetition alone may be insufficient to promote language development. Instead, its effectiveness appears to depend on opportunities for questioning, discussion and exploration of new language that encourage children to actively construct meaning from the story (Lenhart, Suggate and Lenhard, 2021)

The role of repetition in supporting children's language development can be further understood through Bruner's (1983) social interactionist theory of language acquisition. Bruner argued that language develops through structured interactions and familiar routines in which adults scaffold children's participation in communication. This perspective aligns with Behrens' (2021) argument that language learning is shaped by repeated exposure to linguistic patterns within meaningful social contexts.

Within storytelling, repeated phrases and predictable patterns may support children in progressing from listening to independent language use. However, both Bruner (1983) and Behrens (2021) emphasise the importance of meaningful social interaction, suggesting that repetition alone is unlikely to support language development unless it is accompanied by responsive adult support and opportunities for purposeful communication. Consequently, repetition should not be viewed as an inherently effective strategy.

Visual Resources and Props

The storyteller used props representing characters and significant elements from the story to support children's engagement and understanding. Introduced at key points throughout the storytelling, these visual resources helped children to visualise characters, settings and important events, making aspects of the narrative more concrete and accessible.

From a language and communication perspective, visual resources may support children's understanding by helping them interpret unfamiliar vocabulary and narrative events (Dixon and Dobson, 2024). Illustrations and props can create connections between spoken language and visual representations, enabling children to associate new words with their meanings (Taylor and Leung, 2020). For example, in *Room on the Broom*, paper characters and a broom prop were used to represent key characters and events within the narrative. By linking spoken language to visual representations, these resources may have supported children's understanding of the story and encouraged discussion about characters, emotions and descriptive vocabulary (Thomson, 2023). Similarly, Luen (2021) found that puppetry activities can promote children's communication, language use and engagement by creating meaningful opportunities for interaction and storytelling. Dixon and Dobson (2024) also argue that picture books support language development through the interaction of visual and verbal information. Consequently, visual resources may help bridge the gap between spoken language and meaning, supporting children's comprehension and active participation in storytelling.

Visual resources may also contribute to children's oracy and emergent literacy development by encouraging discussion, questioning and narrative retelling (Pillinger and Vardy, 2022; Özcan, 2026). Through interactions with props and story-related objects, children are provided with opportunities to explain ideas, sequence events and engage in collaborative talk. Such experiences may support oral language, reading comprehension and writing by encouraging children to organise and communicate their understanding of narrative events (Vretudaki, Tafa and Manolitsis, 2022). Consequently, visual storytelling may support children's understanding of narrative structure and emergent literacy by providing opportunities to engage with, discuss and retell stories. However, these outcomes are likely to

depend on how effectively visual resources are integrated into purposeful language and literacy activities, rather than the resources themselves being inherently beneficial.

According to the Education Endowment Foundation (2025a), interactive reading is effective because it combines language modelling with opportunities for adult-child interaction and meaningful communication. Similarly, Towson *et al.* (2020) found that dialogic narrative reading using wordless picture books improved preschool children's vocabulary and narrative comprehension. These findings suggest that visual resources may be most effective when they are used to promote discussion, questioning and shared meaning-making. However, it is difficult to determine whether the benefits arise from the props themselves or the quality of adult-child interaction.

The role of visual resources can also be understood through Kress' (2010) theory of multimodality, which proposes that meaning is communicated through multiple modes, including images, speech, gestures and objects. This aligns with Taylor and Leung's (2020) argument that young children's literacy learning is inherently multimodal. Visual resources may therefore provide an additional way for children to access and interpret stories.

Despite these potential benefits, visual resources do not automatically enhance learning. Eng, Godwin and Fisher (2020) found that unnecessary visual details can compete for children's attention and hinder comprehension. Furthermore, an overreliance on props may limit opportunities for children to develop mental imagery and imagination. Gambrell and Jawitz (1993) argue that constructing mental images can enhance children's comprehension and recall by encouraging them to actively create representations of narrative events. Access to props may also be restricted by funding and resource limitations, particularly within settings serving disadvantaged communities. Cattan *et al.* (2022) highlight that socioeconomic inequalities can affect children's early learning environments and access to educational opportunities, potentially creating inequalities in access to high-quality storytelling resources

Dickinson and Morse (2019) emphasise that language development is strongly influenced by opportunities for meaningful talk and interaction, suggesting that resources alone are unlikely to improve learning without adult support. Similarly,

Hayes (2016) argues that children benefit from actively constructing meaning rather than relying solely on external supports. Therefore, visual resources should not be viewed as a standalone strategy for supporting language and literacy development. Rather, their effectiveness depends on the extent to which they promote interaction, discussion and active meaning-making. Ultimately, the educational value of props lies not in the resources themselves, but in how effectively they are used to encourage engagement, communication and learning.

Conclusion

Overall, the storytelling techniques used within *Room on the Broom* demonstrated the potential to support children's language, oracy and emergent literacy development. Expressive storytelling may enhance children's understanding and engagement through the use of voice, facial expression and gesture, while repetition can provide opportunities to reinforce vocabulary, narrative structures and active participation. Similarly, visual resources and props may support comprehension by helping children connect spoken language with visual representations and engage more fully with the narrative. However, the literature suggests that these techniques are not inherently effective in isolation. Rather, their success depends upon how they are combined with meaningful interaction, discussion and adult scaffolding. Therefore, effective storytelling requires a balanced and purposeful approach that promotes children's active engagement, communication, understanding and construction of meaning.

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