

For this assessment I have submitted the following:

Component 1: Written essay

Component 2: Video one- [Traditional story.mov](#) (Also shared via email).

Component 3: Video two- [Digital story.mp4](#) (Also shared via email).

I acknowledge the use of AI to support research and proof reading between October 1st to October 21st 2026.

I used the prompts:

1. Find me articles that explore the language development in the early years
2. Find me articles that explore storytelling and links to symbolic play
3. Find me research the strengths of digital storytelling
4. Please check this essay for spelling and grammatical error
5. Please put these references in alphabetical order

Introduction

Storytelling supports children's development by encouraging attentive listening, engaging the head, heart and hands, and building relationships and community (Social Care Wales, 2026). Language development begins before birth, as babies become familiar with speech rhythms in the womb (University of Kansas, 2017), highlighting storytelling's potential to nurture communication, understanding and social connections.

Storytelling also supports early literacy. The Curriculum for Wales emphasises how literature develops imagination and creativity, encouraging children to respond to, retell and create stories (Welsh Government, 2022). These experiences help develop vocabulary, comprehension and expression, laying foundations for reading and writing.

In an increasingly digital world, storytelling can also foster digital literacy. In *Successful Futures*, Donaldson (2015) highlights how technology is becoming increasingly embedded in children's personal and educational lives, emphasising the importance of digital competence for participation in modern society. This reinforces the need for children to develop familiarity with digital technologies alongside traditional literacy skills. Digital storytelling offers one way of bringing these areas together, enabling children to engage with narratives through images, sounds and interactive features. Maureen, van der Meij and de Jong (2020) further explore the potential of storytelling to support early digital literacy by providing opportunities for children to engage with multimodal texts and become familiar with digital communication. Together, these perspectives highlight how digital storytelling can provide opportunities for children to develop literacy while engaging with forms of technology that are increasingly relevant to their everyday lives.

Analysis of Storytelling Practice

Following the completion of both storytelling recordings, a review of the presentations enabled a critical examination of the presenter's storytelling practice.

The two recordings presented the same narrative through different storytelling approaches. One utilised a digital presentation, incorporating the books illustrations and a video thumbnail of the presenter, while the other used a physical paperback book supported by props. Comparing the recordings highlighted differences in the presenter's use of resources, eye contact and delivery. These observations provide an opportunity to examine how the choice of storytelling medium may influence the storytelling experience.

Repetition in Storytelling

Across both storytelling presentations, repetition was a prominent feature of the presenter's delivery. The repeated use of words, phrases and events within the narrative provided opportunities to reinforce key aspects of the story and support children's understanding.

This can be explored in relation to Crystal's (1971) discussion of children's language development, which emphasises the gradual process through which children develop an understanding and use of linguistic structures. From this perspective, the presenter's repetition of particular words and phrases may have provided children with opportunities to become familiar with language patterns and recognise recurring elements within the narrative. For example, when the presenter repeated key phrases, this may have helped children anticipate what would happen next and become more familiar with the language used to convey the story.

Sari et al. (2017) further discuss repetition in children's stories as a device that emphasises linguistic features and may engage readers' emotions and imagination. This can be seen in Jill Murphy's *Peace at Last*, where the repeated phrase "Oh no! I can't stand this!" reinforces Mr Bear's frustration as he struggles to find somewhere peaceful to sleep. The recurrence of this phrase draws attention to his emotional response and reinforces the central problem of the narrative, allowing children to recognise the pattern of events as the story progresses. Furthermore, the presenter's expressive delivery of the repeated phrase may have helped children connect the language with Mr Bear's frustration, supporting their understanding of how language can communicate emotion. As the phrase "Oh no! I can't stand this!" recurred throughout the story, the presenter provided opportunities for children to become

familiar with the language and anticipate its repetition. However, the digital presentation offered fewer opportunities for direct engagement between the presenter and children, potentially limiting opportunities for responsive interaction and shared discussion.

This observation can be understood through Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, which emphasises how social interaction and adult guidance can support children's learning (Armstrong, 2015). While the repeated phrase reinforced the narrative's central problem and conveyed Mr Bear's emotional response, the more limited opportunities for interaction in the digital presentation may have reduced the potential for the presenter to extend children's understanding through questioning, explanations or discussion of the character's feelings. This highlights how, although repetition can support familiarity with language and reinforce meaning, opportunities for adult scaffolding may further enrich children's engagement and understanding of the story.

Understanding Stories through Sounds, Movements and Gestures

Receptive language development in storytelling is supported by the ways in which children listen to and interpret not only spoken language but also non-verbal cues. Cekaite and Björk-Willén (2018) highlight how storytelling is collaboratively created through the coordinated use of vocal expression, intonation, facial expressions, gaze and gestures. This multimodal view of communication reflects the Curriculum for Wales Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience, which recognises that children make meaning through speech, gestures, images and other forms of media (Welsh Government, 2022). Together, these perspectives suggest that children's understanding of stories is shaped not solely by the words they hear, but also by their ability to interpret the visual, auditory and physical cues embedded within the storytelling experience. By responding to changes in tone, sounds, movements and visual cues, children may develop their understanding of meaning and follow the events of a story, even when some of the language is unfamiliar.

This was relevant when comparing the digital storytelling presentation with the in-person traditional performance. The traditional approach appeared to facilitate more natural eye contact and enabled the presenter to point directly to illustrations,

creating opportunities to draw attention to particular characters, objects and actions. These interactions may support children's understanding of semantics, as they can begin to associate spoken words with their meanings through visual references and non-verbal cues. Welsh Government (2023) acknowledges the importance of interpreting meaning through multiple modes of communication, and the shared attention created through pointing, gesture and visual references appeared to support this process.

This observation aligns with Clark's (2016) discussion of how adults adapt their speech to children's developing language comprehension through strategies such as changes in intonation and the use of pauses. Similarly, Cekaite and Björk-Willén (2018) emphasise the importance of coordinated verbal and non-verbal communication in children's interactions. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that children's understanding can be supported through linguistic scaffolding, gesture and shared attention. Within the traditional storytelling session, the use of expressive voice, gesture and direct reference to illustrations appeared to help children connect spoken language with meaning. However, this interactionist perspective can be contrasted with Chomsky's (2006) theory of the Language Acquisition Device, which proposes that humans possess an innate capacity for language acquisition. From this nativist perspective, environmental input and social interaction provide children with linguistic experiences, but language acquisition is not explained solely by these external influences. Therefore, although expressive storytelling may support children's immediate comprehension and engagement, Chomsky's theory suggests that the underlying capacity to acquire language is also shaped by biological predispositions. This highlights the distinction between supporting children's understanding in a particular learning context and explaining how they acquire language more broadly.

Although both formats incorporated expressive sounds and images, the traditional presentation appeared to offer greater opportunities for responsive interaction through eye contact, gestures and adaptations to children's reactions. This may have supported shared attention, meaning-making and oracy development. Van der Wilt, Bouwer and van der Veen (2022) found that dialogic classroom talk significantly improved children's oral communicative competence, supporting the value of purposeful spoken interaction. In this observation, the traditional presentation

appeared to encourage spontaneous dialogue, turn-taking and opportunities to practise speaking and listening.

The Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (2021) guidance on receptive language also provides a useful framework for understanding how sounds, movements and gestures can support children's comprehension. This practical guidance aligns with the literature, which emphasises the importance of combining verbal and non-verbal forms of communication to support children's understanding. Consistent with the Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2023), both storytelling formats enabled children to engage with multiple modes of communication; however, they appeared to do so in different ways. The in-person presentation seemed to facilitate greater interpersonal interaction and shared attention, whereas the digital presentation offered enhanced visual and auditory supports. Therefore, the effectiveness of storytelling may depend not simply on the format used, but on how successfully verbal and non-verbal cues are combined to support children's receptive language development.

Props

One notable difference between the traditional and digital storytelling presentations was the use of physical props to support the narrative. Bruce et al. (2020) acknowledges the role of props within storytelling experiences, suggesting that resources can enhance children's engagement and participation in stories. During the traditional retelling, props provided opportunities for children to interact with objects that they could see, touch and feel, creating a more multisensory storytelling experience. These tangible resources offered additional ways to support the narrative, enabling children to connect story events, characters and themes to real-world objects. This can be viewed through a Froebelian lens, which emphasises the importance of first-hand experiences, storytelling and symbolic play in children's learning. Froebelian approaches recognise that objects used within stories can move beyond their literal purpose and become symbolic representations within children's imaginative worlds. Hawkins (n.d) highlights in *Happily Ever After? Storytelling in Froebelian Settings*, children exposed to rich storytelling often progress from using a specific prop to understanding it symbolically, reinforcing the concept of one object representing another. Through interacting with props, children may therefore develop

their ability to engage in symbolic thinking, using tangible objects to represent characters, events and ideas within the narrative. This process may support imaginative engagement while helping children bridge concrete experiences with more abstract concepts.

The use of props can also be considered alongside Clark's (2016) discussion of language development through meaningful social interactions and shared experiences. Physical resources can provide a point of focus between the storyteller and child, creating opportunities for discussion in this way, props may support not only engagement with the narrative but also the collaborative construction of meaning. This reflects the Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2022), which recognises that children communicate, interpret and construct meaning through a range of modes and experiences rather than through spoken language alone.

In comparison, the digital presentation appeared less able to provide opportunities for children to physically manipulate or explore objects connected to the story. While the digital format incorporated visual and auditory features that enhanced the narrative, interaction was limited to observing and listening. The traditional retelling, however, offered opportunities for children to engage with the story through multiple senses, supporting active participation in the process. At the same time, the digital presentation reflected the principles of the Digital Competence Framework (Welsh Government, n.d) which recognises the importance of engaging with digital content through combinations of images, audio and other forms of media. Through interpreting meaning from these different modes, children were exposed to forms of communication that contribute to emerging digital literacy skills and reflect the increasingly digital nature of contemporary literacy.

Furthermore, the use of props required the storyteller to coordinate additional elements alongside the narrative, including managing resources, introducing objects at appropriate moments and maintaining children's attention. In comparison, the digital presentation appeared less demanding in terms of performance, as the format reduced the number of elements requiring the presenter's attention. These observations raise questions about how different storytelling approaches influence the balance between resource management, delivery and audience engagement. Whilst digital storytelling may allow presenters to focus more heavily on narration and support children's engagement with digital forms of communication, the use of

props within traditional storytelling appeared to create opportunities for the kind of symbolic representation described within Froebelian approaches, whilst also supporting the engagement and participation highlighted by Bruce et al. (2020). Consequently, although digital storytelling may promote aspects of digital literacy through children's interaction with multimedia, traditional storytelling appeared to offer unique opportunities for sensory exploration, imaginative thinking and shared interaction that were more difficult to replicate within the digital format.

Conclusion

The sources used throughout this assignment provided a range of theory, policy and practice-based perspectives on storytelling, literacy and digital literacy. Academic literature relating to repetition, multimodal communication, language development and symbolic play, some of which was identified during the initial literature search using artificial intelligence, provided a useful framework for analysing the similarities and differences between traditional and digital storytelling approaches. Policy documents, including the Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2022) and the Digital Competence Framework, provided an educational context for the discussion, establishing expectations that children should be provided with opportunities to develop literacy, communication and digital competence, whilst allowing practitioners professional autonomy in how these experiences are delivered. Together, these sources helped connect theory, research and practice throughout the discussion. Careful evaluation of all sources, including those initially identified through artificial intelligence, was necessary to ensure their relevance and credibility within the assignment.

However, during the literature search, fewer sources were identified that focused specifically on digital literacy within early childhood storytelling contexts. In comparison, a wider range of literature was available in relation to storytelling, language development and early literacy. Consequently, discussion of digital storytelling often drew upon policy documentation alongside broader literacy and communication research.

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