Rhyme and Reason: Exploring Textual Lens in Nursery Rhyme Songs

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Abstract

This study examined the linguistic and metadiscourse features in children's English nursery rhymes using Text Inspector. The researchers conducted an analysis of eight (8) nursery rhymes which meet some basic criteria for rhyme and rhythm, and playing a considerable part in developing early language and literacy skills. The study highlights the use of repetition as a mnemonic and engagement tool, which helps cement the material in the memory while maintaining the interest of young children. The songs were provided for metadiscourse analysis to illustrate how markers, which signify linguistic features, such as logical connectives, sequential words, relational markers, and personal pronouns, support increased phonological awareness, language enrichment, and cognitive development. Findings showed that nursery rhymes naturally contain interactive metadiscourse features such as repetition, sequence, and structure, which facilitate comprehension and promote active participation among young learners. The nursery rhymes that develop many skills besides logical connectedness are "*Baa, Baa, Black Sheep", "Wheels on the Bus", "If You're Happy and You Know It", "Jack and Jill", 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star", and "Five Little Monkeys".* While songs such as "*Apple and Bananas" and "London Bridge*" were particularly rich in logical connectives, which lend predictability to the rhythm of the rhymes while also supporting memory retention. However, the limited use of personal markers stressed that the rhymes are more structural than referential. Ultimately, nursery rhymes are not only rich in culture but also pedagogically relevant to support language and literacy development, especially through storytelling, rhythm, and play. The researchers recommend to further examine nursery rhymes in other languages to study metadiscourse from a broader cultural perspective.

Keywords: Metadiscourse, Nursery Rhymes, Relational Markers, Text Inspector

1. Introduction

Nursery rhymes, or Mother Goose rhymes, are short songs or verses that may be read or sung to or by young children (Sayakhan & Bradley, 2019). These playful compositions spark children's imagination while simultaneously teaching them essential linguistic and social skills. They form the medium for the active memory and the social behavior movements with rhythmical and rhyming play conduct towards the making of learning fun (Stevenson et al., 1963).

The stories are usually simply constructed but often hide deeply moral meanings, making them applicable to study. Nursery rhymes are primary ways of exposing an infant to language and story-telling. In addition to being simple songs, they generate the phonological awareness of infants that is important in obtaining fluent grammar and deep comprehension (Neuman & Dickinson, 2001). Additionally, children can benefit too, as rhymes teach them language skills, memory, and creativity through rhythm and playfulness. According to Neuman & Dickinson (2001), the act of singing nursery rhymes also enhances children's sociability. The study of nursery rhymes continues in the twenty-first century since they form cultural heritages, hone children's language skills, and serve as a transmission interface for unchanged social values and historical contexts.

Using nursery rhymes is an effective strategy for helping young children learn English. Research has shown that nursery rhymes can increase children's English vocabulary and make them feel more confident (Christina & Pujiarto, 2023). This means that singing and reciting nursery rhymes can be a fun and effective way to help children develop their language skills and build their self-esteem.

Additionally, developing phonological skills is crucial for children's success in learning reading (Snow, 2010). The collective activity of singing or reciting these lines fosters a feeling of togetherness and relationships, enhancing social engagement and cohesion (Fang & Zhuang, 2022). Although the rhythm and repetitive nature of the nursery rhymes would facilitate learning a language (Hyland, 2005), their developmental aspect for creative and social capabilities requires further scrutiny. A comprehension of the different facets of child development would require more analysis of the moral and social lessons imparted by these nursery rhymes (Gillivan, 2024) and the role of metadiscourse in the comprehension and recall processes. Moreover, this study adopts a much broader view by considering the language within the nursery rhyme songs with a linguistic approach of metadiscourse. Providing how words are related to each other, the meaning and this research intends to concretize the relevance of literature in early childhood education with regard to how the rhythm, repetition, and playful language of nursery rhymes improve children's phonological awareness and vocabulary at the same time, it intends to investigate how long children can develop language skills through exposure to rhymes without being taught formally (Elmer, 2022).

Metadiscourse refers to the ways in which writers or speakers guide their audience through a text, shaping how information is understood and engaging the reader or listener. It includes elements such as transitions, engagement markers, and stance indicators, all of which help structure discourse and clarify meaning (Hyland, 2005). Nursery rhymes, though simple in structure, often incorporate metadiscourse elements to engage young listeners, guide their interpretation, and enhance memorability. Interactive metadiscourse is one of the sub categories of metadiscourse markers which refers to a feature used to construct and organize the information effectively in order to make coherent and convincing written text. Interactive metadiscourse consists of five categories: transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidential, and code-glosses (Hamid, 2019). In nursery rhymes, this occurs through transitions, frame markers, and repetition. Frame markers help structure a text by showing the order of events or providing emphasis. Many nursery rhymes use these to create rhythm and predictability.

Nursery rhymes are ideal for researching metadiscourse due to the naturally incorporated linguistic patterns that guide interpretation, engagement, and comprehension. They establish coherence and interactive fundamental parts of metadiscourse by their repeating structure, rhythmic rhythms, and predictable wording. Nursery rhymes' meter demonstrates both universal and language-specific structures (Hanna et al., 2002). This helps to make the rhymes rhythmic and predictable, which facilitates language processing and understanding.

Analyzing the metadiscourse of nursery rhymes gives a sharp perception of how it affects early childhood language development (Ervin & Miller, 1963). This research is advantageous to teachers, linguists, and parents alike in better appreciating how language structures create literacy skills. To elaborate, teachers are able to utilize the findings in enhancing strategies of teaching children in conformity with their cognitive as well as linguistic development. Further, linguists and future researchers can better understand the impact of meta-discourse on communication at a young age. Finally, parents are also among the readers who can be helped by this study by understanding the importance of using language in shaping the cognitive and social development of their children. Further, the research is also capable of supporting curriculum planning since it would give insight into how nursery rhymes can serve as a means for language learning in children

This study investigates the role of traditional English nursery rhymes in the early development of children's language and literacy, with their efficacy in promoting phonological awareness, and vocabulary (De Mello et al., 2022) further being considered. This also analyzes the linguistic feature of nursery rhymes using metadiscourse analysis. However, for the purpose of delimiting the study, a

traditional English nursery rhymes songs were used, excluding other genres or language of children beyond the wider contextual framework.

The importance of nursery rhymes in developing early language as well as providing the enhanced ability to understand was once much more pronounced through metadiscourses like transitions and engagement markers. The same highlights their value in not only phonemic awareness of young learners but also the organization and handling of ideas and language. Ultimately, this research aims to help educators, researchers, and parents understand how nursery rhymes entertain, educate, and lay the foundation for literacy and communication.

2. Literature Review

A. Nursery Rhymes

Nursery rhymes, also known as Mother Goose rhymes, are short verses or songs recited or sung to young children (Sayakhan & Bradley, 2019). They not only entertain but also stimulate imagination and promote essential linguistic and cognitive skills. These rhymes serve as a medium for developing memory, rhythm, and social interaction, making learning both engaging and enjoyable. Dodson (1981) described nurseryrhymes as, "sentences set to music" (p. 37) and believed that the rhythm and rhymes are so appealing to young children, helping them to improve their listening skill. In addtion, (Pourkalhor & Tavakoli, 2017) attempt to account for the effectiveness of nursery rhymes on the language learners' improvement in learning language skills and sub-skills, which thoroughly been recognized since it helps teachers to put the learners in a motivating learning environment.

B. Cultural Significance

Nursery rhymes often feature simple narratives but embed profound moral lessons, making them meaningful subjects of academic study. They serve as children's first exposure to language, rhythm, and storytelling, nurturing phonological awareness that supports fluent grammar and comprehension (Neuman & Dickinson, 2001). Moreover, they enhance memory, creativity, and sociability while preserving cultural heritage and transmitting moral and social values across generations. Moriya (1988) emphasizes the pedagogical value of songs for pronunciation practice with Asian young language learners of English due to the phonemic differences between Asian languages and English.

C. Early Development of English Vocabulary

One of the three components of language, vocabulary, is the foundation and building block of language. The first premise is that we need a specific quantity of vocabulary in order to communicate with people in a fluent manner. With so many words to learn, it is important to look into vocabulary learning techniques (Bai, 2018). It is great to start learning English vocabulary at an early stage by reading books and listening to nursery rhymes. It is often acknowledged that reading books helps youngsters enhance their vocabulary and oral language skills. Given the growing focus on language and vocabulary development in young children, particularly those living in poverty, it is critical to review the research on book reading and vocabulary development to guide classroom and home activities. Increasing early vocabulary knowledge enhances reading in several ways, even though many early skills support later reading success. These include enhancing comprehension of words that children decode, assisting children in recognizing words they are decoding more quickly, cultivating phonological awareness skills that also support reading, and improving children's comprehension of teachers' reading and other instruction (Wasik et al., 2016).

Metadiscourse refers to linguistic strategies that guide audience understanding and engagement (Hyland, 2005). In nursery rhymes, features such as transitions, repetition, and frame marker's structure

rhythm and meaning, enhancing predictability and comprehension. These elements make nursery rhymes effective tools for early literacy and discourse awareness.

D. Cognitive Growth and Language Development

Nursery rhymes are valuable for studying metadiscourse because their repetitive and rhythmic structures promote coherence, engagement, and comprehension. According to Hanna et al. (2002), the predictable meter supports auditory processing and memory retention, facilitating children's understanding and language organization. Analyzing metadiscourse in nursery rhymes provides insight into early childhood language development. Teachers can use the findings to enhance literacy instruction aligned with cognitive and linguistic growth, while linguists and researchers gain deeper understanding of early discourse patterns. Parents can also apply these insights to support their children's language and social development through rhythmic play and storytelling (Dujmović, 2006). Moreover, (Peterson, 2000) reported a study where children were exposed to a curriculum emphasizing music instruction to get mastery over language and mathematics. Results showed that students in the music instruction group improved in language and reading. Learning to listen for changes in pitch in music may promote the ability to sound out new words.

3. Method

The study used qualitative descriptive approach in the metadiscourse analysis of selected nursery rhymes. The chosen nursery rhymes are among culturally endearing to bring significant value into the objective of this study. Eight (8) nursery rhymes were selected for the analysis to demonstrate how metadiscourse influences children's engagement and understanding, the following nursery rhymes were analyzed: *"Baa Baa Black Sheep," "The Wheels on the Bus," "Five Little Monkeys," "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," "London Bridge," "Jack and Jill," "Apples and Bananas," and "If you're happy and You'll Know It."*

The data collection process targeted selecting lyrics from eight (8) nursery rhyme songs selected carefully. The selection of nursery rhymes was primarily based on the language feature and culturally endearing characteristics. These nursery rhymes also possess notable linguistic and literary features, the final choices reflect the group's familiarity and preferences, aligning with the study's focus on accessible and culturally prominent texts. The data set limited itself to consistency and in-depth analysis. But later studies would have room for a wider inclusion of children's songs to make comparisons and check for similar metadiscourse patterns across other types of lyrics (Skillman, 2016).

The Text Inspector was utilized in this study. A Text Inspector provides detailed information on the readability, complexity, lexical diversity, estimated Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level and other essential features, including metadiscourse markers which was vital for this study. These elicit connections between the speaker and the audience, thus creating a more engaging experience, together with resonating messages. These direct the audience on how they should interpret the rhymes, thus creating a more personal, interactive experience with the text. This included the specific data of the lyrics, but some nursery rhymes in this research exceeded the maximum threshold of 250 words, hence, the researchers redacted them to allow the text inspector to work. The nursery rhymes' overall lyrics are largely designed to engage children while learning essential concepts and skills in language and simple life lessons using fun, easy-to-remember stories and characters.

4. Result and Discussion

This section provides the data obtained from the metadiscourse analysis of the eight (8) Nursery Rhyme Songs using Text Inspector. The data obtained were interpreted and analyzed. The results

uncovered some metadiscourse patterns that suggest implications for early literacy development and future research on mediational perspectives of nursery rhymes.

Table 1 is predominantly composed of unlisted words, which account for **90 tokens or 87.38%** of the total. This indicates that the rhyme uses simple, high-frequency vocabulary that enhances accessibility and comprehension among young learners. Meanwhile, **logical connectives** such as "*and*" and "*but"* appear **three times (2.91%),** suggesting that the rhyme employs basic connectors to maintain narrative flow and coherence between ideas. **Relational markers like "*you"* and sequencing words such as "*three"* both occur at 2.91%**, showing the rhyme's role in fostering interaction and numerical awareness. On the other hand, hedges "*little*" and **personal markers "*my*" are minimally present, each at 1.94%,** implying that the rhyme places less emphasis on personal expression and uncertainty.

The distribution of metadiscourse markers in *Baa Baa Black Sheep* reveals that the rhyme prioritizes simplicity, repetition, and clarity, which are essential features for early language acquisition. The dominance of unlisted words, along with the limited but purposeful use of connectives and sequencing markers, reinforces its educational value in developing vocabulary, pattern recognition, and early comprehension skills in children.

Table 1. Metadiscourse Analysis of the Nursery Rhyme "*Baa Baa Black Sheep*"

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens Percentage
Hedge	Little	2 (1.94%)
Logical Connective	And	3 (2.91%)
	But	
Person Marker	My	2 (1.94%)
Relational Marker	You	3. (2.91%)
Sequencing	Three	3 (2.91%)
Unlisted	For	90 (87.38%)
Total Listed Tokens		**13 (12.62%)**

Table 2. Metadiscourse Analysis of the Nursery Rhyme "*Wheels on the Bus*"

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens Percentage
Logical Connective	And	12 (6.12%)
Unlisted	The	184 (93.88%)
	Round	
	Swish	
Total Listed Tokens		**12 (6.12%)**

Table 3. Metadiscourse Analysis of the Nursery Rhyme "*Five Little Monkeys*"

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens Percentage
Hedge	Little	5 (3.45%)
Logical Connective	And	10 (6.90%)
Evidential	Said	5 (3.45%)
Code Gloss	Called	5 (3.45%)
Sequencing	Five	4 (2.76%)
	Four	
	Three	
	Two	
Unlisted	The	116 (80.00%)
Total Listed Tokens		**29 (20.01%)**

It is evident in Table 2 that the word "*and"* functions as a logical connective, accounting for **12 tokens or 6.12%** of the total words in the rhyme. Meanwhile, **unlisted words**, including "*the," "wheels*," "*round,"* and *"swish*," make up **184 tokens or 93.88%**. These unlisted words help stimulate children's imagination by evoking vivid sensory images, making the rhyme more engaging and memorable. The presence of logical connectives such as "*and"* adds structural coherence to the narrative, promoting predictability and aiding cognitive development in early childhood through recognition of rhythm and pattern. The repetitive structure of lines like *"The ___ of the bus goes…"* further enhances the rhyme's entertainment value and supports language learning through repetition (Mishra, 2022).

Meanwhile, Table 3 showed that the **'Unlisted' category has the highest frequency, with 116 tokens (80.00%**), indicating that most of the words used are simple and familiar to young learners. This simplicity supports the rhyme's accessibility and ease of comprehension among children. Meanwhile, the **'Sequencing' category**, represented by words such as *"five," "four," "three,"* and *"two,"* **comprises 4 tokens (2.76%)**, emphasizing the counting-down structure of the rhyme. Other categories such as '**Hedge' (5 tokens, 3.45%), 'Logical Connective' (10 tokens, 6.90%)**, **'Evidential' (5 tokens, 3.45%)**, and '**Code Gloss' (5 tokens, 3.45%)** occur less frequently, suggesting that the text does not rely heavily on hedging, logical connections, or elaborative explanations. This limited use of metadiscourse reflects the rhyme's straightforward narrative style designed for early learners. Overall, *"Five Little Monkeys"* highlights sequencing as a central linguistic feature, which aids in children's early number recognition and promotes foundational mathematical skills through repetition and rhythmic patterning (Nguyễn et al., 2021).

The analysis revealed that the 'Unlisted' category has the highest frequency, with **50 tokens or (78.13%)**. Table 4 indicates that most of the words in the rhyme are simple, familiar, and easily recognizable by children. Words such as *"twinkle," "star,"* and *"wonder"* create vivid imagery and emotional appeal, contributing to the rhyme's poetic and imaginative quality (Literopedia & Literopedia, 2023). Meanwhile, other categories such as **'Hedge' (4 tokens, 6.25%)**, **'Person Marker' (4 tokens, 6.25%),** and **'Relational Marker' (4 tokens, 6.25%)** occur moderately, showing the presence of descriptive and relational elements that add emotional connection and a sense of perspective between the speaker and the subject. The '**Logical Connective' category, with 2 tokens (3.13%**), indicates minimal use of linking words, which aligns with the rhyme's simple and lyrical nature. Overall, the pattern of repetition, rhythm, and imagery in *"Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"* enhances children's engagement and supports early cognitive and language development through predictable and melodic structures (Queensland Government, 2023).

Table 5 presents the results of the Metadiscourse Analysis of the nursery rhyme *"London Bridge is Falling Down."* The findings reveal that the **'Unlisted'** category has the highest frequency, with **184 tokens (76.35%)**, indicating that most of the words in the rhyme are simple and repetitive, which contributes to its memorability and rhythmic appeal for children. The **'Logical Connective'** category follows, with **36 tokens (14.94%)**, primarily including the words *"and"* and *"so."* This frequent use of connectives supports the rhyme's sequential and narrative flow, allowing young learners to follow the progression of events easily. The **'Person Marker'** category, consisting of words such as *"I," "my,"* and *"we,"* records **17 tokens (7.05%)**, showing how personal references help establish involvement and emotional engagement within the song. Meanwhile, the **'Sequencing'** marker *"last"* appears **4 times (1.66%)**, emphasizing the order and temporal structure within the rhyme. Overall, the high presence of connectives and pronouns, along with repetitive unlisted words, enhances the lyrical rhythm and promotes language learning through pattern recognition and participatory repetition.

Table 4. Metadiscourse Analysis of the Nursery Rhyme "*Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*"

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens Percentage
Hedge	Little	4 (6.25%)
Logical Connective	So	2 (3.13%)
Person Marker	I	4 (6.25%)
Relational Marker	You	4 (6.25%)
Unlisted	Twinkle	50 (78.13%)
Total Listed Tokens		**14 (21.88%)**

Table 5. Metadiscourse Analysis of the Nursery Rhyme "*London Bridge is Falling Down*"

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens Percentage
Logical Connective	And	36 (14.94%)
	So	
Person Marker	I	17 (7.05%)
	My	
	We	
Sequencing	Last	4 (1.66%)
Unlisted	Up	184 (76.35%)
Total Listed Tokens		**57 (23.65%)**

Table 6. Metadiscourse Analysis of the Nursery Rhyme "*Jack and Jill*"

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens Percentage
Evidential	Said	1(1.23%)
Logical connective	And	8(9.88%)
	So	
Relational marker	Let's	1(1.23%)
Unlisted	La	71(87.65%)
Total Listed Tokens		**10 (12.35%)**

Table 7. Metadiscourse Analysis of the Nursery Rhyme "*Apple and Bananas*"

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens Percentage
Emphatic	Know	1(0.40%)
Logical connective	And	22(8.84%)
Person marker	I	21(8.43%)
Relational marker	Let	4(1.61%)
Unlisted	Eat	201(80.72%)
Total Listed Tokens		**48 (19.28%)**

Table 8. Metadiscourse Analysis of the Nursery Rhyme "If You're Happy and You Know it"

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens Percentage
Emphatic	Know	20 (10.31%)
	Show	
Logical connective	And	16 (8.25%)
Relational marker	You	41 (21.13%)
	Your	
Sequencing	Three	3 (1.55%)
Unlisted	It	114 (58.76%)
Total Listed Tokens		**80 (41.24%)**

In Table 6, the **'Unlisted'** category has the highest frequency, with **71 tokens (87.65%)**, suggesting that the rhyme heavily relies on simple and repetitive words that enhance rhythm and memorability. The **'Logical Connective'** category follows, accounting for **8 tokens (9.88%)**, mainly represented by the words *"and"* and *"so."* These connectives help establish narrative flow and coherence, allowing the events of the rhyme to unfold smoothly. Meanwhile, the **'Evidential'** and **'Relational Marker'** categories both appear **once (1.23%)**, with the words *"said"* and *"let's"* respectively. Though few, these markers contribute to the interactive and expressive nature of the rhyme by showing speech and social engagement. Overall, the dominance of unlisted and connective words reflects the rhyme's simplicity and rhythmic structure features that are beneficial for early language learning, phonological awareness, and cognitive development among young children.

Table 7 presents the results of the Metadiscourse Analysis of the nursery rhyme *"Apple and Bananas."* The findings indicated that the **'Unlisted'** category dominates with **201 tokens (80.72%)**, suggesting that the rhyme primarily relies on simple and repetitive vocabulary that supports language rhythm and memorization. The **'Logical Connective'** category follows with **22 tokens (8.84%)**, represented by the word *"and,"* which links ideas and maintains narrative flow. The **'Person Marker'** category, represented by the word *"I,"* accounts for **21 tokens (8.43%)**, highlighting personal involvement and self-reference in the rhyme. The **'Relational Marker'** *"let"* and **'Emphatic'** *"know"*categories appear least frequently, with **4 tokens (1.61%)** and **1 token (0.40%)**, respectively. Overall, the data reveal that *"Apple and Bananas"* emphasizes repetition and personal engagement, both of which are essential for children's early language development, particularly in improving pronunciation, sentence formation, and phonological awareness.

The data in table 8 revealed that the **'Unlisted'** category dominates with **114 tokens (58.76%)**, indicating the song's reliance on simple and repetitive words that enhance memorization and engagement among children. Following this is the **'Relational Marker'** category, represented by the words *"you"* and *"your,"* with **41 tokens (21.13%)**. These second-person pronouns directly address the listener, promoting interactivity and inclusion an important feature of children's songs that encourages participation. The **'Emphatic'** category, containing the words *"know"* and *"show,"* accounts for **20 tokens (10.31%)**, emphasizing key actions and expressions. The **'Logical Connective'** category *"and"* follows with **16 tokens (8.25%)**, linking ideas and maintaining rhythmic flow. Lastly, the **'Sequencing'** category, represented by the word *"three,"* has the fewest occurrences with **3 tokens (1.55%)**, showing minimal but structured progression within the lyrics. Overall, the results suggest that *"If You're Happy and You Know It"* utilizes repetition, direct address, and clear sequencing to foster engagement, rhythm, and comprehension among young learners.

Table 9 gives an enlightening impression about the occurrence and distribution of common tokens which are frequently used words in famous nursery rhymes. These tokens were simple repetitive words like "and", "so", "little," pronouns such as "I", "you" and "my." It can be interpreted that the objective of such nursery rhymes is related to how often the words actually come into use, demonstrating that repetition and simplicity have been tailored into children's songs to help in early language development. Of all the nursery rhymes examined, "If You're Happy and You Know It" contains the highest number of tokens, being 80, constituting 41.24% of all words used in the rhyme. This suggests that a very high degree of repetition goes into it of a small set of words repeatedly to reinforce learning. Meanwhile, the least token percentage is "Wheels on the bus" with an average of 6.12%, which means that this song shows more vocabulary variety and is a bit more complicated than the other nursery rhymes.

Moreover, the nursery rhymes portray a purposely designed with the frequent occurrence of simple words for developing early cognition and language skills. The ones with higher indications of tokens were basically the simpler and easier ones to learn. Those with lesser percentages, however, tended to have a little variety, possibly due to a very wide range of developmental levels in children.

Table 9. Metadiscourse Summary of Eight (8) Nursery Rhymes

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens Percentage
Baa Baa Black Sheep	Little, And, But, My, You, Three, For	13 (18.8%)
Wheels on the Bus	And, The	12 (6.12%)
Five Little Monkeys	Little, And, Said, Called, Five, Four, Three, Two, The	29 (20.01%)
Twinkle Twinkle Little Stars	Little, So, I, You, Twinkle	14 (21.87%)
London Bridge is Falling Down	And, So, I, My, We, Last, Up	57 (23.65%)
Jack and Jill	Said, And, So, Let's, La	10 (12.35%)
Apple and Banana	Know, And, I, Let, Eat	48 (19.28%)
If You're Happy and You'll Know It	Know, Show, And, You, Your, Three	80 (41.24%)

The analysis revealed distinct patterns in the use of metadiscourse markers across nursery rhymes, suggesting that each text fulfills a unique linguistic and developmental function. In general, unlisted words dominate most rhymes, indicating the prevalence of simple vocabulary that enhances accessibility and comprehension among young learners. However, notable variations emerge in the distribution of metadiscourse categories, particularly in the use of logical connectives, relational markers, and sequencing devices. These differences highlight the diverse ways in which nursery rhymes achieve coherence, engagement, and instructional purpose.

For example, the rhyme *London Bridge* exhibits a high frequency of **logical connectives** such as "*and"* and "*so*," accounting for 36 tokens (14.94%) of all identified markers. This finding suggests that the rhyme emphasizes **sequential reasoning and narrative flow**, helping children follow the storyline through clear cause-and-effect relationships. The consistent use of connectives also supports the development of logical thinking and comprehension of temporal order. In contrast, *If You're Happy and You Know It* relies heavily on **relational markers** like "*you"* and "*your*," which constitute 21.13% of total tokens. This pattern shows a greater focus on **interpersonal communication**, as the song directly addresses the listener and encourages active participation. The contrast between these two rhymes illustrates how metadiscourse functions vary: some prioritize structural coherence, while others promote social interaction and emotional involvement.

An imbalance is also observed in the overall distribution of marker types across the corpus. Logical connectives and sequencing markers (e.g., "*and*," "*then*," "*one*," "*two*," "*three"*) appear far more frequently than personal markers, evidential, or hedges. This imbalance suggests that nursery rhymes generally function as **narrative and instructional texts** rather than reflective or persuasive discourse. Rhymes such as *Five Little Monkeys* and *Jack and Jill* exemplify this trend, employing sequencing markers to create predictable and rhythmic patterns that reinforce number concepts and chronological understanding. The minimal use of hedges and evidential reflects the **straightforward and declarative nature** of rhymes, which aim to present information clearly and confidently for early learners.

Furthermore, rhymes like *Baa Baa Black Sheep* and *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* emphasize the **aesthetic and imaginative** aspects of language through the use of vivid and unlisted words such as "*sheep*," "*wool*," "*star*," and "*wonder."* Although these words are not categorized as metadiscourse markers, they contribute to the overall coherence by evoking sensory imagery and emotional engagement. Their repetition and rhythmic structure enhance memorability and aid in the development of phonological awareness.

Overall, the analysis reveals that nursery rhymes employ diverse metadiscourse strategies to achieve coherence, engagement, and developmental value. *London Bridge* demonstrates an emphasis on logical structuring, *If You're Happy and You Know It* on relational interaction, and *Five Little Monkeys* on sequencing and predictability. These findings indicate that nursery rhymes differ not only in their linguistic composition but also in the cognitive and social functions they support. The varying

use of metadiscourse markers thus reflects how each rhyme aligns with early childhood learning processes—developing reasoning, pattern recognition, and interpersonal connection through distinct linguistic choices.

5. Conclusion

Nursery rhymes are not merely simple means of engaging young children but also powerful educational tools that promote language development, social interaction, decoding skills, and phonological awareness. Nursery rhymes embedded with metadiscourse features play a crucial role in enhancing children's comprehension and memory recall.

The findings of the study affirm that nursery rhymes serve as meaningful foundations for language development and cognitive growth, beyond their function as entertainment. Teachers and parents, like other educational practitioners, can utilize nursery rhymes to foster children's vocabulary and phonological awareness. However, the study is limited to traditional English nursery rhymes, avoiding any new or cultural variants that might share a different idea into global multicultural metadiscourse patterns. Given the qualitative nature of this research, future quantitative studies using statistical correlation tests could further investigate the relationship between these metadiscourse markers and children's learning and development.

Such research may also enable cross-lyrical comparisons and facilitate the identification of parallel metadiscourse patterns across various genres of children's songs. This study reinforces that nursery rhymes inherently contain linguistic features that support children's social, linguistic, and cognitive development through the use of metadiscourse.

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