



The Role Of Storytelling In Supporting Language And Early Literacy Development In Early Childhood: A Literature Review

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana mendongeng mendukung perkembangan bahasa dan literasi awal pada anak usia dini melalui tinjauan literatur sistematis terhadap 27 referensi ilmiah yang dipublikasikan antara tahun 2017 hingga 2026. Penelitian ini menjawab pertanyaan mendasar tentang peran pedagogis mendongeng dalam mendukung perkembangan kosakata, pemahaman menyimak, kemampuan komunikasi lisan, kompetensi naratif, kesadaran cetak, dan orientasi motivasional terhadap keterlibatan literasi. Dengan menggunakan analisis konten kualitatif, penelitian ini secara sistematis mengidentifikasi, mengodekan, dan menginterpretasikan pola-pola berulang di berbagai konteks penelitian, termasuk setting pendidikan anak usia dini di Indonesia, kelas English as a Foreign Language (EFL), dan lingkungan pendidikan multibahasa. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mendongeng secara konsisten meningkatkan kemampuan reseptif dan ekspresif bahasa anak dengan memberikan input linguistik yang kaya dan kontekstual melalui kosakata, pola kalimat, model pengucapan, dan struktur naratif. Anak-anak yang berpartisipasi dalam kegiatan mendongeng menunjukkan peningkatan yang terukur dalam pemahaman menyimak, penguasaan kosakata, kefasihan berbicara, konstruksi kalimat, koherensi naratif, dan kepercayaan diri dalam berkomunikasi. Penelitian ini lebih lanjut mengungkapkan bahwa mendongeng berfungsi sebagai jembatan transisi yang menghubungkan bahasa lisan dan literasi formal dengan memperkenalkan anak pada organisasi naratif, pemaknaan cerita, kesadaran cetak, dan kepekaan fonologis. Efektivitas mendongeng semakin meningkat ketika diimplementasikan secara interaktif melalui teknik *scaffolding*, pertanyaan terbimbing, media visual, alat digital, dan aktivitas menceritakan kembali yang terstruktur pada fase pra-mendongeng, selama mendongeng, dan pasca-mendongeng. Baik format mendongeng tradisional maupun digital, bersama dengan pendekatan dramatis dan kreatif, berkontribusi secara signifikan terhadap hasil literasi awal ketika pendidik memberikan penyampaian yang ekspresif, pemilihan cerita yang tepat, dan pengalaman tindak lanjut yang terarah. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar pendidik anak usia dini memasukkan mendongeng sebagai komponen reguler, terencana, dan bertujuan dalam pembelajaran bahasa dan literasi sehari-hari, dengan memilih narasi yang relevan secara budaya dan sesuai dengan usia anak serta mengimplementasikan siklus mendongeng terstruktur yang mengintegrasikan persiapan kosakata, narasi interaktif, dan kegiatan tindak lanjut.

Kata kunci: *Mendongeng, Perkembangan Bahasa, Literasi Awal, Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Scaffolding*

Abstract: This study examines how storytelling supports language development and early literacy in early childhood through a systematic literature review of 27 scholarly references published between 2017 and 2026. The study addresses a fundamental question regarding the pedagogical role of storytelling in supporting vocabulary development, listening comprehension, oral communication skills, narrative competence, print awareness, and motivational orientation toward literacy engagement. Using qualitative content analysis, this study systematically identified, coded, and interpreted recurring patterns across various research contexts, including early childhood education settings in Indonesia, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, and multilingual educational environments. The findings indicate that storytelling consistently enhances children's receptive and expressive language abilities by providing rich and contextualized linguistic input through vocabulary, sentence patterns, pronunciation models, and narrative structures. Children who participated in

storytelling activities demonstrated measurable improvements in listening comprehension, vocabulary mastery, speaking fluency, sentence construction, narrative coherence, and confidence in communication. The study further reveals that storytelling functions as a transitional bridge connecting oral language and formal literacy by introducing children to narrative organization, story meaning-making, print awareness, and phonological sensitivity. The effectiveness of storytelling is further enhanced when it is implemented interactively through scaffolding techniques, guided questioning, visual media, digital tools, and structured retelling activities during the pre-storytelling, while-storytelling, and post-storytelling phases. Both traditional and digital storytelling formats, along with dramatic and creative approaches, contribute significantly to early literacy outcomes when educators provide expressive delivery, appropriate story selection, and purposeful follow-up experiences. This study recommends that early childhood educators incorporate storytelling as a regular, planned, and purposeful component of daily language and literacy instruction by selecting culturally relevant and age-appropriate narratives while implementing structured storytelling cycles that integrate vocabulary preparation, interactive narration, and follow-up activities.

Keywords: *Storytelling, Language Development, Early Literacy, Early Childhood Education, Scaffolding*

A. Introduction

The earliest years of a child's life constitute a critical and irreplaceable period for language acquisition and foundational literacy development, during which children begin building their vocabulary, decoding oral messages, expressing emerging ideas, recognising symbolic forms, and constructing meaning through social interaction. Linguistic growth during this phase spans a wide spectrum, ranging from listening comprehension and lexical mastery to articulation, grammatical understanding, communicative confidence, and the ability to express thoughts and feelings coherently. These capacities subsequently lay the groundwork for higher-order literacy competencies, encompassing reading, writing, and textual interpretation. Early literacy itself extends far beyond the recognition of letters or the decoding of printed words; it also encompasses oral language proficiency, print awareness, phonological sensitivity, breadth of vocabulary, depth of comprehension, and children's intrinsic motivation to engage in literacy-related activities (Halimatuzzuhrotulaini et al., 2023).

Among the wide range of pedagogical strategies available to support language development in young learners, storytelling emerges as one of the most powerful approaches due to its capacity to provide linguistically rich input within experiences that are both engaging and meaningfully contextualised. As children immerse themselves in stories, they encounter unfamiliar vocabulary, varied syntactic structures, expressive language use, and narrative sequences that illustrate how language functions as a medium for conveying meaning. Storytelling also creates authentic opportunities for children to respond to questions, reconstruct story events, describe narrative characters, and articulate their personal reactions to plot developments. Empirical investigations have confirmed that the storytelling approach exerts a measurable positive influence on early childhood language development, particularly in relation to fluency, vocabulary use, and sentence construction (Rafiola et al., 2022). Complementary research has further demonstrated that storytelling broadens children's vocabulary range, sharpens listening comprehension, improves pronunciation accuracy, strengthens narrative coherence, and builds confidence in verbal expression (Sitinjak et al., 2025).

The processes through which storytelling stimulates language learning in young children can be theoretically anchored in sociocultural theory, which posits that language acquisition is fundamentally rooted in social interaction, scaffolded support, and purposeful communication. Within storytelling contexts, educators occupy a role that extends far beyond mere narration; they actively guide children to listen attentively, respond purposefully, anticipate narrative developments, formulate questions, and reconstruct story content. These dialogic exchanges enable children to internalise language through authentic communicative encounters with both adults and peers. The instructional impact of storytelling is further amplified when educators incorporate expressive vocal delivery, deliberate gestures, dynamic facial expressions, visual media, and dramatic enactment into their practice, as these multimodal elements substantially deepen children's understanding of story meaning (Alkilani & Zhang, 2025).

Storytelling also exerts a direct and significant influence on the trajectory of early literacy development. Literacy in early childhood extends far beyond print decoding to include listening comprehension, oral vocabulary, print awareness, phonological sensitivity, narrative understanding, critical reasoning, and the disposition to engage meaningfully with books and written symbols. Systematically designed storytelling activities have been identified as an effective vehicle for advancing early literacy, particularly when structured to incorporate pre-story, during-story, and post-story learning phases (Maureen et al., 2022). Creative storytelling practices that utilise vocal intonation, visual materials, puppet characters, purposeful gestures, and imaginative narrative development have similarly demonstrated the capacity to deepen children's vocabulary, heighten phonological awareness, strengthen story comprehension, and cultivate positive attitudes toward reading and writing (Dina et al., 2025).

Within early childhood educational settings, storytelling manifests across a rich spectrum of forms, including oral narration, digital storytelling, dramatic enactment, picture book-based narratives, puppet-mediated storytelling, multilingual formats, and audio-visual story presentations. This diversity of modalities enables educators to adapt storytelling experiences to the developmental needs, personal interests, linguistic backgrounds, and contextual realities of their classrooms. Both digital and traditional storytelling approaches have demonstrated effectiveness in advancing vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and narrative competence within early childhood English learning environments (Surya & Aprilia, 2024). The incorporation of digital storytelling centres has further been shown to strengthen children's listening abilities, capacity for character identification, understanding of story sequences, and confidence in narrative retelling (Nasution, 2025). Additionally, technology-supported storytelling can expand children's access to visual, auditory, and interactive learning experiences, provided that it remains developmentally appropriate and carefully facilitated by educators (Paramansyah, 2025).

The integration of media into storytelling activities enhances children's attentiveness, imaginative engagement, and participatory involvement. Interactive digital platforms, including PowerPoint-based storytelling and educational games, have been observed to foster greater focus and enthusiasm as children follow

narrative sequences, respond to questions, imitate characters, and engage in language play (Sianipar et al., 2025). Earlier research on virtual peer storytelling similarly suggests that technology can model advanced narrative language and encourage children to adopt the dual roles of storyteller and critical listener (Ryokai et al., 2002). Taken together, these findings indicate that media-enriched storytelling can reinforce literacy learning, provided that digital tools are utilised to support rather than replace meaningful interaction between teacher and child.

The pedagogical value of storytelling extends further to its capacity to bridge language development, early literacy, imaginative growth, and social-emotional learning. Narratives provide children with conceptual frameworks for understanding characters, emotional states, conflict, resolution, and the moral dimensions of human experience. Through sustained engagement with stories, children are encouraged not only to expand their vocabulary and comprehension but also to reflect on empathy, friendship, cultural identity, and appropriate social behaviour. This broader developmental role resonates with scholarship that characterises stories as powerful contributors to children's holistic growth, as well as with recent community-based research demonstrating that storytelling can nurture literacy, imagination, and anti-bullying values in early childhood settings (Kerry-Moran & Aerila, 2019).

Despite these well-documented benefits, storytelling in early childhood classrooms does not automatically fulfil its full pedagogical potential. In certain educational contexts, storytelling may be implemented merely as entertainment or as a habitual classroom routine, without clearly defined literacy objectives. Children risk becoming passive recipients when educators dominate the storytelling process and fail to provide opportunities for authentic interaction. The extent to which storytelling proves genuinely effective depends on a constellation of interrelated factors, including the appropriateness of story selection, the expressiveness of teacher delivery, the quality of media employed, the depth of children's active participation, and the richness of follow-up activities such as discussion, narrative retelling, drawing, symbol recognition, and experiential connections with story themes (Maureen et al., 2022).

Informed by the foregoing discussion, this article addresses the central question of how storytelling supports language development and early literacy in young children by drawing upon evidence synthesised from prior empirical studies. It aims to critically examine and analyse the role of storytelling in advancing vocabulary growth, listening comprehension, oral communication ability, narrative competence, print awareness, textual understanding, and motivational orientation toward literacy engagement. Through this systematic literature review, storytelling is positioned as a pedagogically significant strategy that equips educators to design language and literacy learning experiences that are interactive, enjoyable, inclusive, and genuinely responsive to the developmental needs and capabilities of young children.

B. Theoretical Framework

1. Early Childhood Language Development

The acquisition of language in early childhood serves as a critical foundation for children's development across cognitive, social, emotional, and academic domains. Throughout this period, young learners develop both their

ability to understand and produce language, accumulate vocabulary, improve pronunciation skills, enhance their use of grammatical structures, and understand the social functions of communication. Thus, language development encompasses far more than simple word learning; it represents the integrated maturation of auditory comprehension, verbal expression, meaning construction, phonological awareness, grammatical competence, and the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts (Halimatuzzuhrotulaini et al., 2023).

2. Early Literacy Development

The concept of early literacy refers to young children's emerging abilities to understand and use linguistic elements, symbolic representations, auditory patterns, visual imagery, written materials, and storytelling before they receive formal instruction in reading and writing. This developmental domain incorporates multiple components, including competence in spoken language, auditory comprehension skills, awareness of print conventions, sensitivity to sound patterns, lexical acquisition, interpretation of visual information, comprehension of narrative forms, and enthusiasm for interacting with texts and environmental print. Viewed comprehensively, early literacy constitutes an interconnected system of communication and meaning-making activities that can be fostered through interactions within families, educational settings, and broader community contexts (Marwany & Kurniawan, 2020).

3. Storytelling as a Language Learning Strategy

As an instructional method, storytelling utilises narrative frameworks to enhance children's capacities for listening, oral production, lexical expansion, comprehension, creative thinking, and story construction. When children experience storytelling, they encounter purposeful language conveyed through characterisation, story settings, problem situations, plot sequences, and conclusions. Such rich linguistic immersion enables children to absorb grammatical patterns, acquire novel vocabulary, learn expressive language forms, and understand how ideas are logically structured. Furthermore, storytelling creates opportunities for children's active engagement by encouraging them to answer questions, repeat unfamiliar words, predict narrative outcomes, retell stories, and offer their own interpretations. Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that storytelling enhances various aspects of children's language abilities, including verbal fluency, vocabulary use, grammatical construction, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation accuracy, listening comprehension, narrative organisation, and communicative confidence (Sitinjak et al., 2025).

4. Storytelling as a Bridge between Oral Language and Literacy

Storytelling serves as an essential mediating mechanism linking spoken language abilities with developing literacy competencies by introducing children to textual structures through oral narrative forms. Prior to acquiring independent reading and writing abilities, storytelling demonstrates to children how story events are arranged chronologically, how characters are introduced, how conflicts emerge, and how communication is structured for listeners. These experiences facilitate children's progression from context-dependent communication toward more decontextualised language forms that are fundamental for subsequent

literacy achievement (Ryokai et al., 2002). Storytelling also functions as a vital bridge between oral communication skills and emerging literacy development by introducing children to the organisational principles of texts through spoken narratives. Before young learners are able to read or write independently, storytelling helps them understand that narratives possess meaning, follow organised patterns, and include characters, conflicts, and resolutions. Through consistent exposure to storytelling, children progressively internalise the structural logic underlying oral narratives and recognise how meaning can be communicated through linguistic, visual, and symbolic forms. Additionally, storytelling strengthens children's narrative comprehension, memory recall, and ability to reconstruct story elements using their own linguistic repertoires. Consequently, storytelling performs an important role in facilitating children's developmental transition from oral language engagement toward readiness for literacy activities (Florit-Pons et al., 2025).

5. Sociocultural Theory and Scaffolding in Storytelling

The theoretical foundations supporting storytelling in early childhood pedagogy are closely aligned with sociocultural perspectives, which propose that language acquisition is primarily facilitated through social interaction and assistance from more knowledgeable individuals. Within storytelling environments, teachers provide responsive scaffolding by modelling language patterns, explaining unfamiliar terms, asking guiding questions, prompting children to make predictions, and assisting them in reconstructing narratives. Such interactions enable children to acquire language within authentic and meaningful communicative contexts, rather than through isolated practice or mechanical repetition. Dramatic storytelling further intensifies this scaffolding process, as bodily movements, facial expressions, voice modulation, physical actions, and theatrical presentation provide additional support that enhances children's understanding. These multimodal elements make narratives more comprehensible and encourage children to participate more actively and enthusiastically in language learning (Ovati et al., 2026).

6. Digital and Multimodal Storytelling

Within early childhood educational environments, storytelling can be implemented through diverse modalities, including conventional oral narration, picture book sharing, puppet theatre, dramatization, digital technology platforms, audiovisual narratives, podcast formats, and participatory presentations. Digital and multimodal storytelling facilitates children's comprehension by integrating verbal communication with visual elements, auditory components, moving images, physical expression, and active child participation. When implemented with pedagogical intentionality, these approaches can enhance attention span, narrative understanding, vocabulary application, and story retelling abilities while simultaneously creating opportunities for authentic communication in culturally diverse learning environments (Shi & Cheung, 2024).

7. Creative Storytelling and Children's Active Participation

Creative storytelling includes narrative practices that utilise varied voice modulation, visual resources, puppet characters, expressive body language,

spontaneous adaptation, dramatic role-play, and interactive questioning techniques. This pedagogical approach is particularly important because young children tend to learn more effectively through play, imaginative engagement, kinaesthetic experiences, and multisensory stimulation. Creative storytelling fosters a learning environment characterised by enjoyment and meaningful engagement, transforming children from passive observers into active participants who contribute as listeners, speakers, actors, and co-constructors of narratives. When children participate in these active roles, storytelling measurably enhances their vocabulary development, phonological awareness, narrative comprehension, interest in reading, and foundational writing skills. Therefore, creative storytelling is widely recognised as an effective pedagogical strategy for making early literacy instruction more adaptive, child-centred, and developmentally appropriate (Dina et al., 2025).

8. Multilingual and Inclusive Storytelling

Storytelling also possesses considerable potential for promoting multilingual and inclusive literacy practices within early childhood settings. In classrooms characterised by linguistic diversity, children bring distinct home languages, culturally embedded experiences, and varied meaning-making frameworks. Storytelling can honour these linguistic and cultural resources by enabling children to utilise their full communicative repertoires through translanguaging practices, collaborative narratives, visual representation, verbal elaboration, and cooperative story development. Empirical investigations of multilingual storytelling suggest that these practices can enhance participation in emergent reading and writing activities while simultaneously supporting spoken language development and cultural self-awareness (Ollerhead & Pennington, 2024).

9. The Role of Stories in Children's Holistic Development

The benefits of storytelling extend considerably beyond language and literacy domains, influencing children's imagination, emotional growth, social competence, ethical reasoning, identity formation, and the overall culture of educational communities. Through participation in narratives, children develop deeper understandings of human experiences, acquire perspective-taking abilities, and practise socially appropriate responses to differences and conflicts. Stories can therefore contribute to the development of empathy, imagination, self-understanding, and moral character, in addition to their more observable benefits for language and literacy development (Rahma et al., 2025).

10. Analytical Assumption of the Literature Review

Based on the theoretical perspectives and research evidence examined throughout this review, the analysis operates from the fundamental assumption that storytelling facilitates language and early literacy development through three primary pathways. First, storytelling provides rich and contextually situated linguistic input that supports vocabulary expansion, listening comprehension, oral communication proficiency, and narrative competence. Second, storytelling creates interactive pedagogical situations through questioning techniques, story retelling activities, facilitated dialogue, dramatic performance, and teacher-

provided scaffolding. Finally, storytelling exposes children to essential literacy foundations, including narrative organisation, the communicative function of written symbols, phonological awareness, comprehension abilities, and intrinsic motivation to interact with books and representational systems. These considerations position storytelling as a valuable analytical framework for examining how early childhood educational practices can simultaneously support both language acquisition and early literacy development in an integrated and cohesive manner (Alkilani & Zhang, 2025).

C. Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in a literature review framework. The literature review was conducted to systematically identify, analyse, and synthesise relevant scholarly evidence regarding storytelling and its role in fostering language acquisition and early literacy skills among young learners. This methodological approach was intentionally selected because the primary objective of the research was to develop a theoretically and empirically robust understanding derived from existing academic literature, rather than to collect primary data through direct participant involvement. A literature review is widely recognised as an appropriate methodological strategy when a study aims to analyse, compare, and synthesise insights from diverse sources in order to generate comprehensive conclusions regarding a particular research topic.

The data sources for this investigation consisted of 27 academic references, including peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and academic books focusing on storytelling, language acquisition, literacy education, and early childhood pedagogy. The materials were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on their direct relevance to the research objectives, publication recency (prioritising works published between 2017 and 2026), and academic credibility. Source identification was conducted through recognised academic databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus, using the following search keywords: storytelling, early childhood, language development, early literacy, vocabulary, phonological awareness, narrative skills, digital storytelling, and scaffolding. Only sources that specifically examined storytelling as an instructional approach within early childhood educational settings and reported outcomes related to language or literacy development were included in the review.

The data collection process was carried out through documentation techniques, involving careful and comprehensive examination of each selected source, identification of relevant information, and systematic recording of key findings aligned with the research questions guiding the study. The documentation procedure included detailed analysis of the abstracts, introductions, theoretical frameworks, research findings, and conclusions of each reference, thereby ensuring comprehensive and balanced representation of relevant information. The documented findings were then organised according to the primary thematic dimensions of the study, including the relationship between storytelling and language acquisition, storytelling and early literacy development, various storytelling approaches, scaffolding mechanisms within storytelling contexts, and patterns of children's engagement.

The analytical framework employed qualitative content analysis, which represents a systematic approach for identifying, classifying, and interpreting recurring patterns and emerging themes within written materials. The analysis progressed through four consecutive phases. In the initial phase, data reduction was conducted by focusing exclusively on information directly related to storytelling and language or literacy development in early childhood, while intentionally excluding irrelevant or marginally related content. The subsequent phase involved thematic classification, during which related findings were grouped into coherent themes addressing vocabulary development, listening comprehension, oral communication competence, narrative abilities, phonological awareness, literacy readiness, and the distinct contributions of various storytelling formats. The third phase involved narrative synthesis to present findings from each identified theme in a logical and analytically coherent manner, integrating perspectives from multiple sources to identify trends, similarities, and differences. The final phase involved drawing conclusions, whereby the major findings were synthesised to address the research questions and generate meaningful implications for early childhood educational practice.

To strengthen the validity and reliability of the analytical process, the study implemented source triangulation by incorporating a diverse range of references from various research contexts, including Indonesian early childhood programmes, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructional settings, multilingual educational contexts, and Western educational systems. Analytical rigour was maintained through repeated verification of thematic classifications against the original source materials throughout the writing process. The study also upheld transparency by explicitly acknowledging its inherent limitations, including the considerable variation in research methodologies and assessment instruments across the reviewed sources, thereby ensuring that interpretations were approached cautiously and did not exceed reasonable claims regarding the transferability of the findings.

D. The Role Of Storytelling In Supporting Language And Early Literacy Development In Early Childhood: A Literature Review

1. Storytelling as a Strategy for Supporting Language Development

The evidence compiled from the reviewed literature consistently indicates that storytelling functions as a reliable and effective strategy for supporting language acquisition during early childhood. By exposing children to vocabulary, expressive linguistic structures, diverse grammatical patterns, accurate pronunciation models, and meaningful communicative contexts, storytelling creates repeated opportunities for children to listen to, comprehend, imitate, and use language purposefully (Rofi'ah et al., 2025). Recent Indonesian studies likewise confirm that storytelling and participatory language activities can enhance vocabulary mastery, verbal fluency, grammatical understanding, and confidence in oral communication (Supriyadin et al., 2025).

The influence of storytelling on language acquisition becomes more evident when examined from the perspective of its inherently interactive nature. When teachers encourage children to predict story developments, answer

questions, imitate characters' speech, or reconstruct story content, children are encouraged to use language actively and meaningfully. This process simultaneously develops receptive language skills, such as attentive listening and comprehension, as well as expressive language skills, such as speaking and narrative retelling. The quality of teacher language during shared reading and storytelling activities is also highly influential, as the use of cognitively stimulating questions, rich vocabulary, and extended discourse has been shown to contribute significantly to children's oral language development, particularly in syntactic understanding and vocabulary growth (Ovati et al., 2026).

These findings collectively emphasise that storytelling achieves its greatest linguistic benefits when it extends beyond one-way narrative delivery. Children require authentic opportunities to interact with the story, the teacher, and their peers. Storytelling activities enriched with questioning techniques, collaborative dialogue, language rehearsal, and retelling tasks create a communicatively rich environment in which children can practise meaningful language use naturally. Therefore, within early childhood educational contexts, storytelling should be intentionally designed as an interactive language-learning strategy rather than being limited to mere entertainment.

2. Storytelling and Early Literacy Development

In addition to its influence on oral language, storytelling plays a pivotal role in early literacy development by familiarising children with the structure, purpose, and meaning of language before the introduction of formal reading and writing instruction. Early literacy includes oral language proficiency, listening comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, print awareness, phonological sensitivity, narrative understanding, visual literacy, and motivation to engage with texts and written symbols. This comprehensive understanding is reinforced by early childhood literacy studies that identify reading, writing, cognitive processing, and meaning-making as interconnected developmental processes (Marwany & Kurniawan, 2020).

The studies analysed in this review reveal that storytelling equips children with the ability to follow narrative sequences, identify main characters, understand conflicts and resolutions, and reconstruct story events using their own language resources. These emerging abilities are closely associated with later readiness for reading and writing. Findings from picture-book interventions, story grammar approaches, and collaborative reading programmes indicate that narrative-based instruction can strengthen children's understanding of story structures, episodic complexity, and future narrative competence, even when some vocabulary or grammatical gains diminish over time (FitzPatrick et al., 2026).

The relationship between storytelling and literacy becomes increasingly clear when examining the developmental pathway children experience from oral language participation toward symbolic understanding. Before children develop the ability to interpret written texts independently, they first learn that stories contain meaning, that images can represent real events, and that spoken language corresponds to written symbols. In this respect, storytelling fulfils the essential role of bridging oral communication skills and formal literacy learning. This

finding reinforces the pedagogical principle that early literacy instruction should not rely solely on isolated reading and writing drills, but should instead be grounded in meaningful and purposeful language experiences that are developmentally appropriate for young children.

3. Traditional, Digital, and Dramatic Storytelling

The literature reviewed in this study demonstrates that storytelling can be implemented through various formats, including traditional oral narration, digital storytelling, dramatic performance, and storytelling supported by visual or multimedia resources. Each format offers distinct pedagogical advantages. Traditional storytelling promotes direct and emotionally meaningful interaction between teacher and child, strengthens emotional bonds, and encourages spontaneous communication. Digital storytelling captures children's attention through the use of visual elements, sound effects, animation, and visual sequencing. Dramatic storytelling enhances children's understanding through bodily movement, facial expression, kinaesthetic activity, and character enactment.

Comparative studies examining traditional and digital storytelling have shown that both approaches significantly improve vocabulary acquisition, narrative comprehension, and story construction abilities within early childhood English learning environments (Surya & Aprilia, 2024). The implementation of digital storytelling centres in early childhood classrooms has also enhanced children's listening skills, character recognition, understanding of narrative sequences, and confidence in retelling stories (Nasution, 2025). Additional technology-supported storytelling interventions using interactive PowerPoint presentations have been found to increase children's concentration, enthusiasm, participation, and responsiveness during instructional activities (Sianipar et al., 2025).

Collectively, these findings indicate that no single storytelling format should be regarded as universally superior. Instead, educators benefit most from selecting storytelling modalities intentionally based on children's developmental needs, classroom conditions, instructional objectives, and available resources. Although digital technology can enrich storytelling experiences, it should not replace the irreplaceable value of authentic human interaction between teachers and children. Ultimately, the effectiveness of storytelling depends not on the medium itself, but on how the medium is used to promote listening engagement, oral expression, comprehension, creativity, and active participation.

4. Storytelling, Scaffolding, and Children's Active Participation

The instructional effectiveness of storytelling is substantially enhanced when educators incorporate intentional scaffolding throughout the activity. Scaffolding may take various forms, including explaining unfamiliar vocabulary, presenting carefully designed questions, modelling grammatical structures, using visual supports, encouraging children to predict upcoming events, and providing structured opportunities for story reconstruction. Research on collaborative reading and narrative instruction highlights that teacher discourse, guided questioning, visual support, and explicit story-structure instruction can

significantly influence children's oral language and narrative development (Grøver et al., 2024).

Children's active participation constitutes an essential element of successful storytelling implementation. When children are encouraged to predict future events, portray story characters, organise narrative sequences, answer questions, or retell stories, they move from being passive recipients of language to active constructors of meaning. This aligns with findings showing that participatory storytelling and language-based activities help children apply new vocabulary in communication, express ideas verbally, and engage more confidently in literacy experiences (Rofi'ah et al., 2025).

The reviewed literature consistently recommends that storytelling should be organised into three integrated stages: pre-storytelling, during-storytelling, and post-storytelling activities. During the pre-storytelling stage, educators can introduce key vocabulary, activate children's prior knowledge, and present visual materials related to the story. During storytelling, teachers can employ expressive narration, ask thought-provoking questions, and encourage active participation in the story progression. After storytelling, children can participate in retelling the story, drawing characters, arranging story pictures, discussing moral lessons, or connecting story events with their personal experiences. This three-stage framework provides storytelling with stronger pedagogical structure and ensures its purposeful integration with broader literacy development goals.

5. Summary of Reviewed Findings

Table 1. Summary of Storytelling Contributions to Language and Early Literacy Development

No.	Storytelling Aspect	Main Contribution	Supporting Sources
1	Oral storytelling	Improves fluency, vocabulary, sentence structure, and speaking confidence	Rafiola et al. (2022); Sitinjak et al. (2025); Supriyadin et al. (2025)
2	Structured storytelling	Supports early literacy through planned before, during, and after story activities, including narrative structure and story grammar	FitzPatrick et al. (2026); Maureen et al. (2022); Grøver et al. (2024)
3	Digital storytelling	Increases attention, comprehension, vocabulary, narrative skills, retelling confidence, and interactive participation	Nasution (2025); Shi and Cheung (2024); Sianipar et al. (2025); Surya and Aprilia (2024)
4	Dramatic storytelling	Strengthens emergent literacy through dramatization, gestures, and active involvement	Alkilani and Zhang (2025)

5	Creative storytelling and language games	Improves phonological awareness, reading interest, writing readiness, story comprehension, vocabulary, and oral confidence	Dina et al. (2025); Rofi'ah et al. (2025)
6	Multimodal narrative intervention	Supports narrative and pragmatic skills through verbal, visual, and embodied scaffolding	Florit-Pons et al. (2025); Ryokai et al. (2002)
7	Multilingual storytelling	Validates children's home languages and cultural identities while supporting oral language, early reading, and writing engagement	Ollerhead and Pennington (2024); Shi and Cheung (2024)
8	Storytelling for holistic development	Supports imagination, empathy, character formation, social understanding, and identity development	Kerry-Moran and Aerila (2019); Rahma et al. (2025)

Table 1 demonstrates that storytelling supports language and early literacy development through several interconnected mechanisms. Oral storytelling strengthens children's oral communication skills and vocabulary development, while structured storytelling supports purposeful literacy instruction. Digital storytelling enhances concentration, comprehension abilities, and confidence in story retelling, whereas dramatic and creative storytelling encourage active participation, imagination, and phonological awareness. Multilingual and multimodal storytelling further expand the relevance of storytelling for children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Ollerhead & Pennington, 2024).

6. Interpretation of the Literature Review

Based on the body of research analysed in this review, storytelling can be understood as supporting language and early literacy development through at least four central processes. First, storytelling provides meaningful and contextually situated linguistic input by repeatedly exposing children to new vocabulary, grammatical structures, expressive language, and narrative frameworks within logical and meaningful contexts. Second, storytelling actively stimulates language production by encouraging children to answer questions, formulate their own questions, make predictions, provide descriptions, and reconstruct narratives. Third, storytelling enhances comprehension by guiding children to interpret characters, events, causal relationships, outcomes, and embedded moral meanings. Finally, storytelling nurtures children's motivation toward literacy by making literacy-related activities enjoyable, imaginative, and emotionally meaningful (Cremin et al., 2017).

These processes strongly correspond with the developmental characteristics of early childhood education. Learning during this stage is most effective when it is concrete, interactive, playful, and connected to children's real-life experiences. Storytelling fulfils these characteristics by naturally integrating

language, movement, visual representation, sound, play, imagination, and social interaction. This perspective is supported by literature on storytelling and child development, which consistently highlights that stories contribute to language growth, literacy learning, classroom culture, imagination, identity formation, and the development of social relationships (Kerry-Moran & Aerila, 2019).

The findings of this review further indicate that storytelling should be recognised as a comprehensive pedagogical approach rather than merely a narrow instructional technique. Its benefits extend beyond isolated language aspects such as vocabulary knowledge to include listening comprehension, oral communication, narrative competence, social interaction, and early literacy readiness in an integrated and mutually supportive manner. Consequently, storytelling emerges as a practical and educationally valid strategy for educators seeking to systematically integrate language and literacy development within early childhood learning environments.

7. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this literature review reveal substantial consistency with previous studies documenting the positive influence of storytelling on children's vocabulary development, comprehension skills, and narrative competence. Storytelling has been shown to function not merely as an entertaining classroom activity, but as a pedagogical strategy that provides children with meaningful language exposure, organised narrative frameworks, and opportunities for oral expression. Empirical evidence has demonstrated that storytelling contributes to improvements in children's overall language development, particularly in verbal fluency, vocabulary usage, and grammatical construction (Rafiola et al., 2022). Similarly, storytelling has also been found to enhance children's vocabulary breadth, pronunciation accuracy, narrative coherence, listening comprehension, and confidence in oral communication (Sitinjak et al., 2025). These findings are further reinforced by evidence showing that systematically organised storytelling interventions can function as effective tools for promoting early literacy when integrated with purposeful learning activities before, during, and after storytelling sessions (Maureen et al., 2022).

The results also align with studies examining digital, dramatic, and multimodal storytelling formats. Both traditional and digital storytelling approaches have demonstrated effectiveness in supporting English language acquisition among young learners, particularly in vocabulary learning, comprehension, and narrative competence development (Surya & Aprilia, 2024). Dramatic storytelling has likewise been recognised as an influential approach for fostering emergent literacy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) kindergarten settings because it combines storybooks, dramatization, expressive communication, and children's active participation (Alkilani & Zhang, 2025). Multimodal narrative instruction has also shown positive effects on preschool children's narrative production and pragmatic communication abilities through the use of verbal scaffolding, visual supports, gestures, facial expressions, and interactive reconstruction activities (Florit-Pons et al., 2025). Collectively, these studies suggest that storytelling maintains its educational significance across

diverse pedagogical contexts, including Indonesian early childhood programmes, EFL instructional settings, and multilingual educational environments.

Despite these encouraging findings, the reviewed literature also clarifies that the effectiveness of storytelling depends heavily on the quality of its implementation. Storytelling is unlikely to generate optimal developmental outcomes when educators merely read or narrate stories without incorporating meaningful interaction, scaffolded support, media resources, or purposeful follow-up activities. Teacher competence therefore emerges as a crucial factor influencing effectiveness. Educators must be able to select contextually appropriate stories, use expressive and varied language, actively involve children in narrative experiences, and connect storytelling activities with clearly defined literacy learning objectives.

8. Research Limitations

As this study is based on a literature review approach, the breadth and depth of the analysis are inevitably influenced by the quality, availability, and thematic relevance of the reviewed sources. The studies included in this review exhibit substantial variation in methodological design, participant characteristics, educational settings, assessment instruments, and storytelling formats. Some studies focus primarily on language development outcomes, whereas others emphasise early literacy, digital storytelling, dramatic storytelling, multilingual storytelling practices, or narrative instruction. This diversity prevents the formulation of a single generalisable conclusion applicable to all early childhood educational contexts.

Another limitation lies in the absence of standardised assessment criteria for language and literacy outcomes across the reviewed studies. Some investigations measure development through vocabulary and comprehension assessments, whereas others emphasise narrative competence, participatory engagement, story reconstruction ability, or classroom observation data. This inconsistency makes cross-study comparisons more interpretative and analytical rather than statistically precise. Furthermore, several of the reviewed sources consist of community engagement reports or theoretical academic discussions which, although valuable for providing practical insights and theoretical perspectives, may not possess the same level of empirical rigour as experimental or longitudinal studies.

9. Practical Implications

The findings of this review carry important implications for early childhood educational practice, suggesting that educators should regard storytelling as a carefully planned and systematically structured instructional strategy. Effective storytelling implementation requires clearly defined instructional objectives, thoughtful story selection, well-designed interactive questions, expressive and engaging delivery, purposeful integration of media supports, and structured follow-up literacy activities. Educators can utilise a wide range of materials, including picture books, hand puppets, story cards, digital presentation media, dramatic role-play, and children's drawings, to enrich storytelling experiences and maintain children's engagement. Children should also

be consistently encouraged to participate actively throughout storytelling sessions by making predictions, answering questions, portraying characters, engaging in peer discussions, drawing, sequencing stories, and retelling narratives.

Within the broader context of educational practice, storytelling should be integrated as a central component of daily language and literacy learning activities. Educators can use storytelling as a strategy for introducing new vocabulary, developing listening comprehension, encouraging oral expression, building narrative understanding, and strengthening children's personal connections with books and reading. When implemented purposefully and systematically, storytelling has the potential to become a genuinely transformative approach for supporting both language development and early literacy growth in early childhood education.

E. Conclusion

This research establishes that storytelling represents a powerful and significant pedagogical strategy for promoting language development in early childhood. Storytelling consistently strengthens children's receptive and expressive language abilities by providing rich and contextually embedded linguistic input through vocabulary, sentence structures, pronunciation models, and narrative organisation. Children who participate in storytelling activities demonstrate improvements in listening comprehension, vocabulary breadth, oral fluency, sentence construction, narrative coherence, and confidence in verbal communication. These language achievements are further enhanced when storytelling is implemented interactively, enabling children to predict story developments, answer questions, imitate character behaviours, and retell narratives using their own language expressions. The findings confirm that storytelling supports language development most effectively when it is designed as a two-way communicative interaction rather than a one-way transmission, and when teachers employ expressive language, visual materials, and guiding questions to provide scaffolding for children's language use throughout the storytelling experience.

This research also establishes that storytelling supports early literacy development by introducing children to narrative structure, story meaning, print awareness, phonological sensitivity, and motivation to engage with books and written symbols. Storytelling functions as a transitional bridge between oral communication and formal literacy instruction because, through repeated storytelling experiences, children learn that language carries meaning, that stories contain sequences and characters, and that spoken language corresponds to written symbols. Systematic storytelling activities that incorporate pre-storytelling, during-storytelling, and post-storytelling phases are particularly effective in supporting early literacy because they connect language learning with reading readiness, comprehension skills, and motivation for writing. Both traditional and digital storytelling approaches, together with dramatic and creative techniques, contribute positively to early literacy outcomes. Their effectiveness depends on the quality of teacher-child interaction, the appropriateness of story selection, and the implementation of follow-up activities that encourage children to respond, retell stories, draw, and reflect on the narratives.

Moreover, this research demonstrates that the effectiveness of storytelling in early childhood classroom settings is determined not solely by the storytelling medium or approach, but by how storytelling is planned, implemented, and sustained by educators. Storytelling that incorporates supportive scaffolding, interactive questioning, visual supports, digital technologies, multilingual resources, and structured retelling activities provides richer opportunities for children to listen, express themselves, understand, imagine, and construct meaning. These characteristics position storytelling as a developmentally appropriate strategy for strengthening children's language, literacy, imagination, and social-emotional development.

Based on these findings, this research recommends that early childhood educators integrate storytelling as a regular, systematic, and purposeful component of daily language and literacy learning experiences. Teachers are encouraged to select stories that are culturally meaningful, age-appropriate, and connected to children's lived experiences, while implementing structured storytelling cycles that include vocabulary preparation, interactive narration, and follow-up activities such as retelling, drawing, and discussion. Future studies are recommended to investigate the long-term effects of systematic storytelling programmes on children's literacy development, as well as to examine the role of family involvement, multilingual storytelling practices, and locally developed digital storytelling platforms in advancing early literacy within Indonesian early childhood education contexts.

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