

Basic Acknowledgement format of AI tool use:

I acknowledge the use of Co-Pilot [benefits of storytelling in early childhood - Search](#) on 22nd Oct 2026 to further check sources within my work.

I used the prompt(s):

1. Benefits of storytelling in early childhood
2. [Prompt]
3. [Prompt]

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

I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide as evidence.

Introduction

There are many benefits to hearing stories in the early years. Aspire Education (2025) promotes these benefits and notes that they enhance language skills, stimulate creativity and imagination whilst improving concentration and memory. Vygotsky's theory centres around young children learning through play and making storytelling playful and interesting, often with the use of simple resources and strategies, such as puppets, rhyme and prosody. Gray and MacBlain (2015) wrote that Vygotsky's sociocultural theory shares similarities with Piaget in that they both state that children have the building blocks for learning and that their cognitive development arises through social interaction and engagement in cultural practices, rather than through individual growth alone. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the difference between what a learner can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with a supportive 'More Knowledgeable Other'. An MKO can be a teacher, parent, or a more capable peer - not being limited to adults. Scaffolding describes the temporary assistance an MKO offers within the learner's ZPD, which should be gradually withdrawn as the learner becomes more competent. In Vygotsky's framework, language is the most significant psychological tool, shaping and transforming thinking rather than simply communicating it.

Early language acquisition is reported to happen in the womb. According to Gross (2022), whilst in utero, a baby establishes their mother's voice and tonal changes due to the mother's body amplifying the sound. This is considered the foundation of the learning of language. Research indicates that this is the early development and learning of language, detecting speech patterns, and rhymes whilst in the womb. Yetkin, Güneş and Erbaş (2023) developed a research paper stating that it is around the 27th week of pregnancy that the fetus becomes able to hear, initiating a complex process of auditory development within the womb as it offers a dynamic environment of internal sounds such as the mother's breathing, heartbeat and digestion for this early stage of brain development. External sounds like the mother's voice, family, music and other everyday sounds further advance the development of the brain and therefore support the progress of early language acquisition.

Children are exposed to language from birth, surrounded by familiar speakers who provide constant feedback and regular opportunities for practice. Through interaction and shared activities, they gradually develop the language used around them. Clark (2016) presents an extensive account of this process, outlining development from an infant's earliest sounds to their growing ability to convey, explain and entertain through language.

Children learn through rhyme and repeating patterns when learning to read according to Cousins and Minns (2024). The prosody of a storyteller supports the learning from an early stage of early language acquisition. The storyteller in the presentations appeared to use their voice to make the text seem a little more interesting for the listener to promote engagement with the story. Page (2010) highlights the importance of gesture within storytelling, giving the audience an opportunity to express what they have heard through a more visual approach.

The DaVinci Collaborative approach (2023) advises that early language development typically progresses through seven interconnected stages. Pre-linguistic communication begins with crying, cooing and babbling, where infants experiment with sounds and learn turn-taking. In the one-word (holophrastic) stage, children use single words to express whole ideas, supported heavily by contextual cues. The two-word stage follows, where children begin combining words to form simple meanings, often showing early grammar. During the telegraphic stage, children produce short, content-heavy phrases that resemble telegrams, gradually expanding vocabulary and syntactic awareness. As they enter the multi-word stage, sentences become longer and more complex, with clearer grammatical structures. The later grammar stage involves refining tense, plurals and sentence organisation, alongside rapid vocabulary growth. Finally, in the pragmatic stage, children learn to use language appropriately in social contexts, adjusting tone, turn-taking and conversational strategies. Together, these stages build the foundations for fluent, purposeful communication in early childhood.

Badrkhani (2018) researched that when children and young people were presented with a pedagogic method it was felt it provided appropriate opportunities to stimulate a process of learning within a language rich and play-based curriculum. Imagination and narration were recognised as the basis for improvements in literacy and speech within an early years placement. Curriculum for Wales (2019) recognises that effective language learning relies on a learner's willingness to experiment and take risks with new structures. Experiences within the Language and Communication Area of learning can encourage learners to be imaginative and to persist when they face difficulties. These abilities help build confidence to embrace new opportunities and adjust to varied situations, ultimately supporting the development as enterprising, creative contributors who are prepared to participate fully in life and work.

The storyteller used props whilst narrating the text, such as puppets linked to the characters. A survey conducted by Timmins and King (2024) examined early years educators' perceptions of both the advantages and the obstacles associated with using puppets in classrooms and childcare settings. Findings from an online survey of more than 120 practitioners showed that,

although puppets are commonly available, they were said to be only used occasionally. Among those who use them, puppets are generally viewed as effective pedagogical tools. Educators report that puppets support play, teaching, wellbeing, and the communication of behavioural expectations, while also enhancing engagement, learning, and behaviour management. Practitioners who use puppets more frequently expressed greater positive views than those who used them rarely. Barriers to puppet use can include limited confidence or understanding of how to use puppets with a pedagogical approach, a lack of suitable resources, and a range of largely unconscious decisions not to use them, often driven by indifference rather than active dislike. A small number of educators chose not to use puppets because they held negative views and lacked confidence with their use. To increase puppet use and highlight their benefits, training and accessible information are needed, alongside improved access to puppet resources, so that the pedagogical value of puppet play in the early years can be fully realised and developed.

Storytelling and communication can take on gendered patterns in many ways, and it is important to recognise how these patterns emerge, why they happen, and the situations in which they can be seen. Kilby's (2023) paper focuses on children in formal education, drawing on observed data and connecting it with theoretical ideas to build a clear picture of how gender shapes communication in school settings, especially within the classroom. The findings show that boys often take up a dominant role in interactions, and this is understood to stem from traditional gender stereotypes that remain, in varying degrees, across society, including within schools. Educators need to be aware of how these dynamics can undermine gender-fair learning because of this and should plan their teaching with this challenge in mind.

Gale (2025) states that Feral, or "wild," children are those who have grown up with little or no human contact, sometimes raised by animals or living in complete isolation. Their experiences offer a rare but tragic insight into the critical periods of language development and the importance of early social interaction. Exploring whether a feral child can learn to speak involves understanding how biological potential and environmental input interact. The critical period hypothesis proposes there is a time-sensitive window, closing around puberty, during which language can be fully acquired.

Often tools are required to increase a child's focus around a story. Eodin (2026) suggests that there is an increase in a child's focus and attention when they are the hero within the story. They are said to "lean in, wanting to hear more", suddenly having their attention peaked. A willingness to hear the outcome, what happened to the hero? It becomes a personally meaningful event

that happens only to them. Children are said to pay closer attention with the brain giving priority when they hear themselves within the text. The analogy is said to be linked with a person hearing their name in a crowded room, suddenly their awareness is heightened. The narrative changes from events happening to someone else to becoming extremely personal and happening to themselves.

In the recording, the storyteller employed several strategies for maintained focus, such as directing attention to the text, tracking the words visually while reading and creating opportunities for the audience to observe the text as it was being narrated. The Department for Education (2026) promotes reading to children regularly, and actively involving them in stories, non-fiction texts, rhymes and poems, while also giving them rich opportunities to practise and experiment with new vocabulary across varied situations. This supports their ability to flourish. Through sustained conversation, storytelling and role play, where children are encouraged to express their ideas with guidance, modelling and carefully framed questions from their teacher, they develop confidence in using a broad and sophisticated range of vocabulary and language structures. This is backed up by the Welsh Government's (2026) statement of intent for teaching early reading, the Welsh Government adds suggesting the teaching of phonological awareness stating that the development of early speech, language, and communication is crucial for early literacy skills such as reading and writing. All early literacy experiences should be underpinned by high-quality oracy provision.

There are many ways to engage children in literacy, with digital resources becoming more readily available than ever. The Welsh Parliament's (2024) 'Digital Competence Framework' (DCF) establishes digital skills as a core cross-curricular requirement for learners aged 3–16, placing them alongside literacy and numeracy in importance. Rooted in Donaldson's Successful Futures review, the DCF defines digital competence as the confident, creative and critical use of digital technologies, and emphasises its relevance to learning, participation and everyday life. For early-years learners, the DCF offers clear advantages for language development. Digital tools support multimodal communication, allowing children to interact with text, sound, images and video in ways that strengthen vocabulary, phonological awareness and storytelling abilities. Foundation Phase expectations, such as safe digital behaviour, simple data handling and early content creation, encourage children to express ideas, make choices and communicate with growing independence. When used with purpose, these digital experiences provide rich contexts for talk, shared attention and collaborative meaning-making.

Donaldson's (2015) learner-centred approach aligns with Vygotsky's ideas about enabling adults and More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs). Practitioners scaffold children's digital engagement by modelling language, guiding exploration and supporting problem-solving. Activities like co-creating multimedia texts or navigating child-friendly platforms promote joint attention and dialogic interaction, both central to early language growth. However, some have felt it necessary to proceed with caution as they mention that digital tools may reduce sustained verbal interaction or widen inequalities if access is imbalanced. The DCF therefore stresses meaningful, purposeful use rather than adding technology for its own sake. Overall, the DCF provides a coherent structure that, when applied thoughtfully, enhances early language acquisition while fostering confident, critical digital learners.

Whilst retelling the story, in contrast to a traditional book, the storyteller found that the digital format made gesturing more difficult, as the pages advanced quickly and any contact with the screen caused the virtual pages to move. Consequently, attempts to interact with the text often resulted in unintentionally losing the page, which in turn led to a noticeable decline in the children's engagement and focus.

In conclusion, early language acquisition is shaped by a rich mixture of biological readiness, social interaction and purposeful pedagogical practice. From the earliest auditory experiences in the womb to the complex linguistic stages of early childhood, children's development is strengthened through meaningful engagement with More Knowledgeable Others, caregivers, and storytellers. Storytelling, rhyme, gesture and imaginative play all provide powerful contexts for language growth. While tools such as puppets and digital media offer additional opportunities when used effectively and in appropriate ways. At the same time, practitioners must remain aware of barriers, inequalities and social dynamics, such as gendered communication patterns, additional learning needs and a socio-economic status that can influence children's experiences. Together, these perceptions highlight the importance of purposeful, receptive and well-scaffolded practice within the early years. When practitioners combine developmental understanding with creative, inclusive approaches, they create environments in which children can flourish as confident, capable and expressive communicators. It is pertinent to note that there are many benefits to digital storytelling, however, on this occasion, the storyteller preferred the traditional approach, hoping to foster a love of reading physical books within young children as a skill they cherish in later years. When considering the use of AI to support this document, AI was able to confirm the some of the sources that were used were credible. However, all sources were checked thoroughly.

Links to videos:

Traditional <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Cc68kHevo4P4XCJbA>

Digital <https://photos.app.goo.gl/aWRsCbP6afTaogJX9>

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