



## Effects of Interactive Story Techniques in Developing Some Language Skills among Early Childhood Children

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Stories have an effective and important place in children's self-expression, language development, adaptation to the social environment, and the development of problem-solving skills and creativity. This study investigated the effect of interactive story techniques on listening, writing, speaking and reading among early childhood children. Pre-test post-test quasi-experimental design with control group was used in this study. Fifty children were chosen from public kindergartens in Rafha, Saudi Arabia. Data were analyzed with t- test. A significant difference was observed in post-test language skills total score and sub-test scores in experimental group, compared to the control group. As a result of this paper, it was seen that interactive story techniques was effective in developing children's language skills. Children's stories lead to a good and clear impact on children's language in their acquisition of language and in their composition of phrases and sentences, so the child becomes more accurate and proficient in language skills.

**Keywords:** interactive story techniques, literature, kindergarten children, writing, speaking, reading, listening

### INTRODUCTION

Stories can be used as an effective tool in the learning process thanks to their easy-to-remember feature (Benabbes & AbdulHaleem, 2024; Saksiriphol & Kunchune, 2023; Tatlı et al, 2022). Stories have an effective and important place in children's self-expression, language development, adaptation to the social environment, and the development of problem-solving skills and creativity (Barakat, 2023; Barakat et al., 2024; Ulvia & Vera, 2024). Stories help children develop their imagination, as well as perceiving real life by concretizing and simplifying information (Eissa, 2016; Metwalli & Barakat, 2022; Barakat et al., 2020; Saripudin et al., 2021).

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Stories are of paramount importance to children. They instill in them values and principles, and develop the sensual, mental and spiritual aspects of their personality (Sayed, 2018). The child experiences the story and imagines himself as a hero in it, especially if its events are realistic (Hasanin, 2014). What it contains of ideas, fantasies and incidents, in addition to the fact that it provokes the child's interests in information, develops his linguistic output, and develops his knowledge of the past and present (Eissa, 2016; Sawi, 2014; Yanti et al., 2023).

Storytelling is one of the educational tool to prepare students in their first years of study, rather it is one of the oldest of these tools. Storytelling has been used in education throughout the ages (Mostafa, 2016). The opinion of educators and psychologists has settled that the narrative method is one of the best means through which it presents what is intended to be presented (Hanipah & Siagian, 2023; Tatlı, Selçuk & Gülay, 2022). For children, whether it is a religious or moral value, or behavioral or social directives. Storytelling occupies the first place in children's literature, as it is the most prevalent among children, and has the ability to attract their attention (Mostafa, 2016).

The importance of storytelling for children lies in that it is a means of satisfying the child's love and desire for knowledge, where new ideas, events, situations and images of daily life are assumed (Agosto, 2016).

Storytelling is a type of literature in which children and adults love fun, where the elements of the story consist of an idea, events, characters, style, time and place (Brígido-Corachán & Gregori-Signes, 2014). Storytelling is a prestigious art that has a place among the other arts of literature, and it is one of the most beloved colors of literature and closest to the soul, especially the soul of the child (Lee et al., 2022; Tatl et al., 2022). The storytelling helps him to adapt well with himself and his environment, and it is a source of the child's curiosity, and the satisfaction of his freedom of movement, because its characters are animated and speaking (Mostafa, 2016).

A good storytelling is one that deals with a topic that arouses the child's interest and attention, due to his strangeness or psychological temptation, or because of his attachment to the child's world, environment or fantasies (Psomos & Kordaki, 2015). The storytelling should be formed from an artistic unit through which the main idea emerges, without being overwhelmed by secondary ideas (Flewitt, & Mardell, 2016), and it tends to hint instead of declaring, because children need to infer meaning and achieve understanding. In order for the events of the storytelling to be effective and effective, it must be sequenced in a coherent manner in which the events intertwine and overlap, and its threads form a knot that needs to be resolved and an explanation that helps children understand it (Aina & Omojemite, 2022). The events must be derived from the situations that children encounter every day, so that it will be a source for their stories. In general, there should not be too many events in children's stories so that they do not miss the opportunity to capture the main event, and understand the meaning of the story (Maureen, Hans & Ton, 2020).

Stories have a special site for children. Among the arts of children's literature, story plays an important role in their lives, as it is the art that matches their inclinations with which children communicate since the world opens to their awareness (Robin, 2008).

The story builds their imagination, instils feelings of goodness and nobility in their souls, and nurtures the strength of innovation and creativity in children. After that, it is one of the most common forms of literature in this era, because it is one of the favorite types of literature for children, in addition to being one of the most capable language arts in serving its various activities in the basic education stage. The method of telling and storytelling achieves intimacy, intimate relationship, affection and mutual trust between the recipient, who is here the child, and those at the level of childhood stages, and the storyteller. Within the framework of this warm exchange in the relationship, information sneaks in lightly and easily, and children accept it with longing and eagerness

### **Aims**

This study investigated the effect of interactive story techniques on listening, writing, speaking and reading (Arabic language) among early childhood children.

### **Research gap and Problem Statement**

Child literature (e.g. storytelling) is the essence of education and an important way to raise him on good morals and virtue on the part of the parents or the teacher, by relying on the Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah to make the child distinguished by the character of pride and not to bow down to worldly pleasures, knowing good from evil, and educating his behavior. It also aims to teach the child new needs to adapt to reality. Hence, the child's literature can serve as the key to the teacher or the parents. It is the main pillar in building the child's health, mentally, psychologically and linguistically.

Kindergarten curricula have shown many difficulties in teaching children there. By informing the researchers about the educational field, they noticed a weakness in the students' linguistic and cognitive skills, and they also noticed a weakness in the children's involvement in participating in the classroom educational pillars, due to the teachers' use of a specific pattern in the single activity. The difficulties may be due to the failure to use appropriate teaching methods for the target age, which take into account the individual differences between students and lead to activating the role of the learner in educational situations.

However, in our country, research concerned with effects of interactive story techniques in developing some language skills among early childhood children is rear, though the importance of using interactive story techniques in teaching language skills to children in preschool stage.

The main question is that" *What is the effect of interactive story techniques in developing some language skills among early childhood children?*".

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### ***The role of the story in developing the listening skill***

Listening is one of the messages that the child relies on to acquire different information and knowledge, as the oral word plays an important role in the education process, so the listening skill is the basis that they depend on in education, and this prompted the

educators to adopt the story style to develop this skill (Avcı & Engin-Demir, 2021; Okumuş, 2021; Tabieh, Al-Hileh, Abu Afifa & Abuzagha, 2021).

The child tends to hear stories and tales as soon as he understands the language and his ability to deal with linguistic with adults (Albayrak & Serin, 2022; Kanina & Hind 2024; Karayazgan & Yurdakul, 2014). The passionate child follows the events of the story and imagines its characters and its sins, and the story carries to the child with new meanings and images of life and accidents that he does not find in his environment and therefore it is a source of satisfying his desire to know (Copeland, & de Moor, 2018).

Narrating stories, conversation, acting, songs, hearing poetry, songs and music is an important activities in developing the ability to listen, meaning that these activities teach the child to listen and develop many of his skills in addition to strengthening the auditory memory by hearing stories, and keeping information for a longer period (Ellison & Wang, 2018).

#### ***The role of the story in developing the speaking skill***

There is no doubt that addressing all language skills in early childhood is important and necessary, but speaking skill takes special importance for children because of its positive participation in the conversations that revolve around them and a contribution to their social development and treatment of some cases of shyness and introversion they have (Tanju & Hakkoymaz, 2022). We find the story a role in developing speaking skill through telling them, narration and reading by adults help to strengthen the child's observation, enrich his language, and even overcome the superficiality of his thinking and experiences, especially if their subject is related to the child's reality and fighting it (Sağlam & Arslan, 2018). On the contrary, if the content is based on imagination or away from The reality of the child, they open a door to the world of imagination. Undoubtedly, the exploits and features of the story and reading are clear and open to everyone with two eyes, especially in terms of language (Karayazgan & Yurdakul, 2014).

They enrich the child's dictionary, correct his pronunciation, teach him the use of words and vocabulary, and provide him with linguistic models in the context of love and interesting, and more than that, they provide opportunities for dialogue and conversation (Tanju & Hakkoymaz, 2022).

That is, it helps the child to enrich his linguistic dictionary and how to correctly pronounce words and acquire new words and vocabulary. The story has a clear impact on this skill, as it accustoms them to being proficient and expressing themselves in the correct language and helps them to be familiar with the idea and present it clearly, and it develops their ability to select words, sentences and structures expressing ideas and enhances their control over the composition of oral sentences and the linking between them (Avcı & Engin-Demir, 2021).

#### ***The role of the story in developing the reading skill***

Kindergarten children, or some of them, may be characterized by low reading of letters, syllables and words and the ability to construct syllables in order to form sentences

(Eissa, 2014). Given the lack of feasibility of the various methods used, the role of storytelling in developing reading skill was determined because the story is a popular educational tool for children, helping them to know letters (Eissa, 2017). In an easy way, in an interesting and enjoyable way, in addition to its efficiency and ability to remove boredom from the student, and develop creative thought without fear or shame.

It also develops their tendencies and attitudes towards school subjects, increases their achievement in the Arabic language, and increases the student's motivation to learn and develop reading skill by teaching some alphabets, for example: puzzle stories. (Sayed, 2018)

Puzzle stories can develop children's speed-reading skills, increase their vocabulary, and develop their scientific thinking methods by observing the details, arguments and proofs of problems, the secrets presented by the story (Atyya, 2014), the solutions offered and their alternatives, and choosing the appropriate solution.

### ***The role of the story in developing the writing skill***

Teaching the writing skill to children is not an easy thing in many cases, the teacher must be familiar with many things before doing this process that affects them, as many teachers teach the writing skill incorrectly, and the matter varies from place to place according to the quality of education and the environment in which children are able to absorb and collect information (Tepetaş & Erol, 2021), we find there are several methods for developing the writing skill, including the narrative method or storytelling.

This strategy is suitable for teaching reading and writing skills, and it takes into account the many abilities of the learner, if used correctly (Toshpulatova & Kinjemuratova, 2020). That is, through storytelling, the student can learn the skill of reading and writing through his story. The stories attract the child's attention and help them acquire information, and new ideas they can write and express.

The teacher has a great role in teaching the child to write, so he puts strategies to develop this skill, for example, the teacher reads the story in a way that attracts the attention of the students, pointing to each word. The teacher helps each child choose the words they like best and repeat them slowly. These activities are important in developing pupils' understanding of new words (Coracini, 2016).

Through the story, the child learns words and vocabulary, and the doors of culture are opened for children. Through the story, the child learns knowledge, words, letters and the way to write them correctly, which increases the effectiveness of teaching students writing skills and responding to them (Aina & Omojemite, 2022).

### **Hypotheses**

1. The experimental group will gain better listening test scores in post-test over the control group due to implementing storytelling strategy.
2. The experimental group will gain better speech test scores in post-test over the control group due to implementing storytelling strategy.

3. The experimental group will gain better reading test scores in post-test over the control group due to implementing storytelling strategy.
4. The experimental group will gain better writing test scores in post-test over the control group due to implementing storytelling strategy.

## METHOD

### Research Design

Pre-test post-test quasi-experimental design with control group was used in this study (see figure 1).

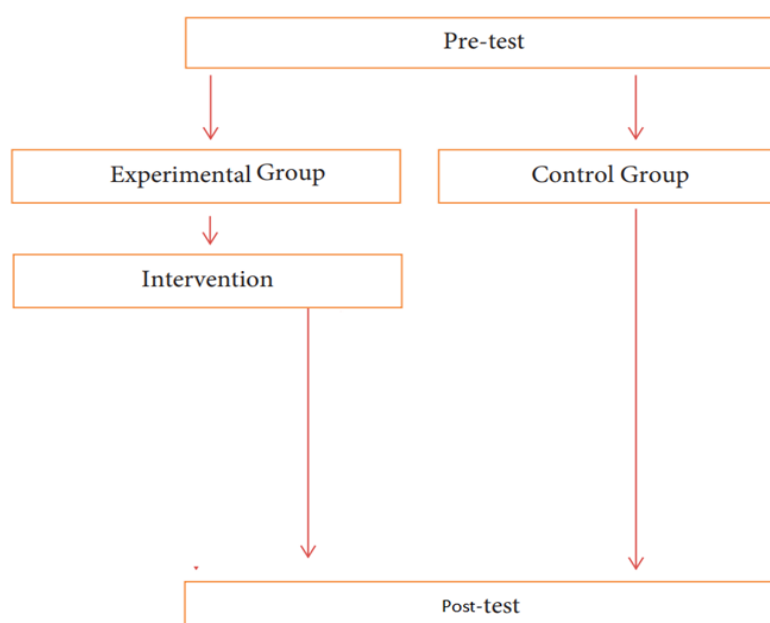


Figure 1  
Research design

### Participants

Children were from four public kindergartens in Rafha, Saudi Arabia. The sampling methodology used random sampling. Participants children were 25 per treatment and control group. Accordingly, 50 students were chosen from public kindergartens in Rafha, Saudi Arabia. Inclusion criteria were: 1) kindergarten children, and 2) parents agreed to participation. The kindergartens were randomly selected from the total number of public kindergartens in the city. They were divided into two groups: experimental group, where they received storytelling strategy instruction for 6 weeks (2 sessions, each lasted for 40 minutes). While children in the control group did not receive such an instruction.

### Ethical Procedure

Children were given informed consent to be signed by their parents. Parents are free to allow their children to participate or withdraw after participation at any time.

### Data Collection

#### Instruments

**Listening Test.** The aim is to show how much the child understands spoken Arabic. A list of words (on the left) and multiple choice picture that only one represents the word are presented and selected from the students' book to ensure that those words are familiar to children, was designed particularly for this study. Two cards with the words and pictures was presented (see figure 1). The child is asked to circle the correct picture of the spoken word he listens to. This is done individually. The corrected chosen picture is given one point. While the incorrect is given zero. Raw scores were used for analysis. For this task, good reliability (Split-half reliability coefficient = .89) was found.

1.	قف	a. 	b. 	c. 
2.	اقفز	a. 	b. 	c. 
3.	توقف عن القفز	a. 	b. 	c. 
4.	المس أنفك	a. 	b. 	c. 
5.	اجلس	a. 	b. 	c. 

Figure 2  
Sample of listening test

**Writing Test.** The aim is to assess child's ability to write words with the help of pictures. Word are presented and selected from the students' book to ensure that those words are familiar to children, was designed particularly for this study. A card with the words and pictures was presented (see figure 2). The child is asked to write the word under its right picture. This is done individually. The corrected chosen picture is given one point. While the incorrect is given zero. Raw scores were used for analysis. For this task, good reliability (Split-half reliability coefficient = .90) was found.

## ابحث عن اسم الصورة بين الكلمات المبعثرة , واكتبه تحته



Figure 3  
Sample of writing test

*Speaking Test.* The aim is to assess child's ability to speak with the help of pictures. Word are presented and selected from the students' book to ensure that those words are familiar to children, was designed particularly for this study. A card with the pictures was presented (see figure 4). The child is asked to say what is happening in each picture. This is done individually. The corrected chosen picture is given one point. While the incorrect is given zero. Raw scores were used for analysis. For this task, good reliability (Split-half reliability coefficient = .88) was found.

انظر الى الصورة وقل ماذا يحدث فيها



Figure 4  
Sample of speaking test



**Reading Test.** The aim is to assess child's ability to read with the help of pictures. Word are presented and selected from the students' book to ensure that those words are familiar to children, was designed particularly for this study. A card with the pictures was presented (see figure 5). The child is asked to the words that suits each picture. This is done individually. The corrected chosen picture is given one point. While the incorrect is given zero. Raw scores were used for analysis. For this task, good reliability (Split-half reliability coefficient = .88) was found.

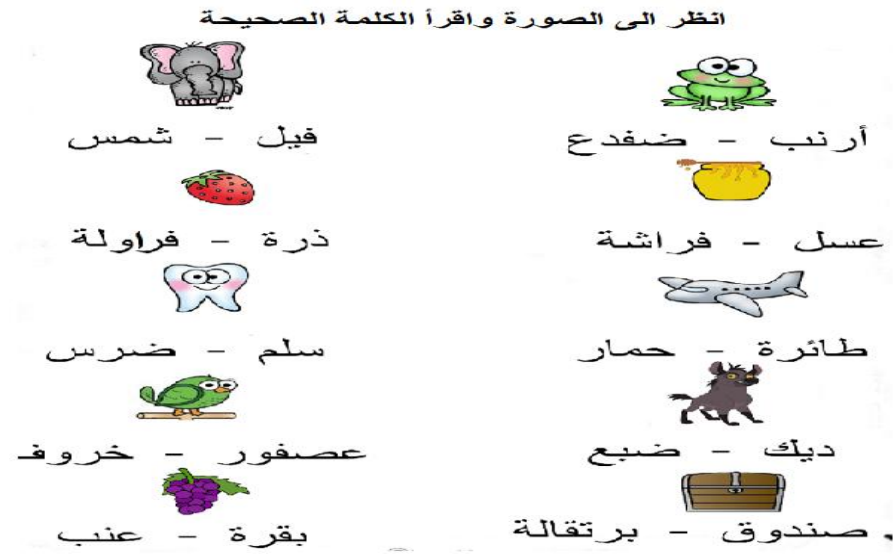


Figure 5  
Sample of reading test

### Procedure

The two scholars prepared a set of models for children's stories, studied and analyzed them and extracted the phrases and words in them that contribute to teaching the child a set of morals and principles, through the help of the class teacher for us in completing this work.

With the help of the children, the teacher reads the title of the story and shows them the cover so that they discover everything that is drawn and written on it, and then they try to anticipate the story, that is, tell it in their own way. After that, the children listen to the teacher who reads the story. She points to pictures as illustrations. Then the children help the teacher to compare the story they told at the beginning of the class and the story the teacher read to them.

Before presenting the story to the kindergarten children, the characters and events of the story were studied; This is in order to be able to assume the roles of the characters included in the story, and then the necessary means for presenting the story were

prepared, including tools, materials, and pictures, and the appropriate place was prepared for presenting the story, whether it was inside or outside the kindergarten.

After that, the kindergarten child retells the story, and then a dialogue takes place where the teacher asks questions to the kindergarten children; So that the children can relate the events of the story, the teacher also asks the kindergarten children to act out the story where each child chooses a certain character, in addition to the child using the drawing to express the events of the story.

### **Data Analysis**

After checking the normality of the data using the Shapiro-Wilk test, the t- test was used to test the hypotheses. All data were analyzed using SPSS software version 23, and the significance level was considered as  $P \leq 0.05$ .

### **Ethical Procedures**

The purpose of the study has been announced. The authors wish all children can continue with them till the end of the study. However, they were free to discontinue at any time.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Hypotheses testing**

#### **Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

The research used the quasi-experimental approach due to its suitability to the nature of the research, which relies on the experimental design based on two groups, one experimental and the other is control, and by using the pre- and post-testing of the two groups. T-test was used.

First, table 1 shows that the two groups were equivalent in pre- test score.

Table 1  
t-test results for pre-test mean scores of the children in the experimental and control groups on Language Skills Tests

Sub-scales	Groups	N	Mean	Std. deviation	t-test	p-value
listening	Experimental	25	5.12	1.22	0.446	Not sig.
	Control	25	5.40	2.39		
writing	Experimental	25	5.10	1.98	0.576	Not sig.
	Control	25	5.20	2.44		
speaking	Experimental	25	5.01	1.48	0.225	Not sig.
	Control	25	5.18	2.18		
reading	Experimental	25	5.24	1.70	0.382	Not sig.
	Control	25	5.50	2.25		
Total score	Experimental	25	20.47	2.11	0.432	Not sig.
	Control	25	21.28	2.18		

Findings obtained from the study conducted to determine the contribution of storytelling strategy as a literature tool to the development of language skills among kindergarten children are presented in the Table 2. Table 2 shows t-test results for the

differences in post testing between experimental and control groups in language skills (listening, writing, speaking and reading). The Table shows that (t) values were as follows: listening ( $t=5.331$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), writing ( $t=4.263$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), speaking ( $t=6.112$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), reading ( $t=6.102$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), and total score ( $t=8.684$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). (see Fig.5)

Table 2

t-test results for post-test mean scores of the children in the experimental and control groups on Language Skills Tests

Sub-scales	Groups	N	Mean	Std. deviation	t-test	p-value
listening	Experimental	25	8.53	1.02	5.331	$P < 0.01$
	Control	25	5.32	2.34		
writing	Experimental	25	7.11	1.33	4.263	$P < 0.01$
	Control	25	5.02	2.65		
speaking	Experimental	25	7.56	1.71	6.112	$P < 0.01$
	Control	25	5.40	2.92		
reading	Experimental	25	7.88	1.70	6.102	$P < 0.01$
	Control	25	5.67	2.25		
Total score	Experimental	25	31.08	2.31	8.684	$P < 0.01$
	Control	25	21.41	4.56		

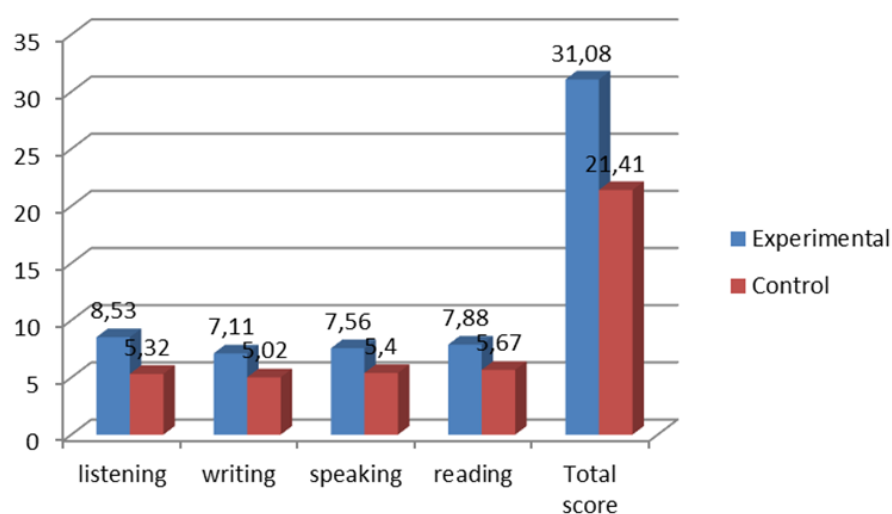


Figure 6

Differences in mean scores of the children in the experimental and control groups

## DISCUSSION

The aim was to investigate the contribution of storytelling strategy as a literature tool to the development of language skills among kindergarten children. Results show that children in the experimental group outperformed their peers in the control group in all language skills (listening, writing, speaking and reading) as well as the composite score.

The story is a tale presented to young children in an entertaining and interesting way that carries several implications, and the stories of adults differ from those of children. It achieves for him a sense of beauty and pleasure, as it is a means of transferring knowledge, and besides all that, it develops in him a love of curiosity (Bay, Başaran, & Döş, 2021; Yalçın & Akar Vural, 2016), and reading and enriches his linguistic balance, so that he possesses the cornerstone of the language and the statement of style, as it contributes to the satisfaction of some of his psychological needs.

This result is due to that the childish story is supposed to be a fine literary art, possessing special artistic components, based on a group of interrelated incidents, inspired by reality or imagination, or both, revolving in a temporal and spatial environment, and representing various human values, leading to an end that must be good.

The children's story is a popular educational tool that aims to instill positive values and trends in the hearts of its audience, satisfy some of their psychological needs, contribute to expanding their perceptions, stir their imaginations, and respond to their inclinations of adventure and exploration. This art is considered the most prominent and most prevalent of children's literature arts. It accounts for the highest percentage of creative output directed to children, and holds the first place for them in comparison to other children's literary arts.

The result is also due to the fact that the story contains an important element, which is the character, as it is an essential element in building the story, and a main condition for its success, as it carries out the events in the story. The character in the child's story has several advantages, the most important of which is the exceptional ability to attract the child, by virtue of his nature that is fond of exploring and imitating characters, and because it allows him to satisfy his inclinations and impulses. (The characters in the story embody attitudes and ideas, in a way that makes children take an emotional attitude towards them, attachment, aversion, or sympathy.)

The story contains an important element, which is construction and plot, as it is the art of arranging and developing incidents, and the method of presenting facts and characters in a natural and logical sequence...so that they are logically linked, making them a coherent unit. (The plot in the story represents a climax, in which the idea, accidents and other facts grow, and the characters move, forming an invisible thread, which holds the fabric of the story and its construction, which prompts the child to continue reading it, or listening to it, because that thread requires thinking, imagination, remembrance, or requires these are all.)

The style. The style is characterized by simple language appropriate to the level of development of the child for whom it is written, string structures, short sentences, graceful phrases, and words drawn from his linguistic dictionary.

The child, through storytelling, may learn self-confidence, gain them the etiquette and tact of speaking, enable them to use the voice expressing the content of the conversation, prepare them for future situations that require fluency and travel, and make them able to use signs, symbols and movements to influence their listeners.

The use of different types of children's stories. For example, animal stories. This type of stories is considered one of the most interesting for the child, especially the early stage child (3-6 years old). The child is attracted to this type of stories at this stage more than any color of children's stories.

The reason for this, according to psychologists, is that the young child feels very happy about small animals, especially when he is associated with them in a friendship relationship. The child is familiar with animals, and they become familiar with him, and perhaps the relationship between the child and those animals is closer than his relationship with those around him from the adults, and they have response factors that are expressed in forms of gentle movements that draw a smile on the child's lips. In this type of stories, pets and others play the basic roles as they form the main characters in them. Young children (preschoolers) are fascinated by simple stories with realistic content and related to the environment in which the child lives.

Animal stories aim to convey a moral or educational meaning or wisdom, or convey a literary significance, and they teach these moral facts in an interesting and attractive form. Therefore, they are the most detailed stories for kindergarten children, provided that these animals have physical characteristics that are easy to perceive, such as the red chicken and the black cat. It is permissible for these animals to be talking or with sound and movements, because the child at this age tends to believe that inanimate objects, animals and plants speak.

These results go in the same line with many studies. For example, Whitty & LeBlanc-Haley (2021). emphasized that storytelling supported linguistic development. Azhari (2021) indicated that learning using the storytelling method could develop language potential in early childhood. Surya & Aprilia (2024) revealed significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and narratives skills, with both traditional and digital storytelling methods proving effective

## CONCLUSION

The process of reading stories for kindergarten children is very important, as it is one of the educational means that increases the intelligence of the kindergarten child in addition to raising the level of his concentration by unleashing the imagination of the child. The children, when choosing the story, should be purposeful, and contain educational values, in order for the kindergarten child to acquire these values and adopt them in his behavior.

The story works on developing the child's linguistic wealth, and helps his linguistic development, with its new vocabulary and good phrases, some of which he may memorize. Sources of acquiring and increasing vocabulary. They expose the child to the word directly by seeing, hearing and pronouncing it. They also correct slang words that have been stuck in his mind and change them into eloquent words that suit his linguistic ability.

The more the child becomes attached to the story and sticks to it, the more he has a linguistic balance, because the story gets the child used to reading and loves it, so the child becomes passionate about reading and reads everything that falls in his hands. The

child's language grows through imitation. If we provide the child with good examples of stories, he will imitate them in his daily life, and the child's linguistic score will increase through the words of the story and Arabic language phrases and accustom him to proper pronunciation.

### **LIMITATIONS**

The main limitations of this study are as follows. First the study is limited to children from a certain geographical area. This limits the generalizations of the results. Second, small number of children were included. Future research should include more children from different geographical areas.

### **Implication and future research**

It is known that the role of the story is not limited to the development of language in the child, but goes beyond that until the child becomes linguistically fluent through his passion for reading and his interest in it. His hands are like a story, so he reads it with enthusiasm, his language grows and he develops writing skills because he wants to use these phrases and words that he has acquired to become a good writer in the future.

Therefore, we educators must first choose the content of the story, and investigate the selection of words that suit the child's mind and the age stage he is going through. The content of the story and the language in which it was formulated, whether in classical or colloquial, affects the child's language. Children's stories lead to a good and clear impact on children's language in their acquisition of language and in their composition of phrases and sentences, so the child becomes more accurate and proficient in language skills. Unlike slang or local language, it develops listening skill more than it develops speaking skill, and it does not enrich his linguistic crop and does not increase his vocabulary to the extent that qualifies him to have linguistic fluency, the Arab child lives in a dual language, which is classical and colloquial, and opinions differ in addressing this point, but most researchers agree to use a simplified language that combines classical and colloquial and colloquial is not dominated by the introduction of popular sayings and anecdotes in the text.

The content of the story also has a great impact on the development and enrichment of the child's language. When the content is close to the child's reality and likable to himself, the content is beautifully formulated, simple words, close to his mind and thinking.

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