

Improving Language Skills Through The Storytelling Method In Group B Early Childhood

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Abstract

Language skills are one of the developmental aspects that need to be stimulated from an early age because they play an important role in children's ability to communicate, express ideas, and interact with their environment. Observations in Group B of PAUD Pelangi showed that most children still experienced difficulties in answering questions, expressing opinions, and retelling stories in a coherent manner. This study aimed to improve children's language skills through the implementation of the storytelling method using animal-themed stories. This study was a Classroom Action Research (CAR) using the Kemmis and McTaggart model and was conducted in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The research subjects were 15 Group B children. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative descriptive methods. The results showed that the percentage of children who reached the Developing as Expected (BSH) and Developing Very Well (BSB) categories increased from 53.3% in Cycle I to 86.7% in Cycle II. These findings indicate that animal-themed storytelling supported by big books and hand puppets is effective in improving children's language skills and can be used as an engaging learning alternative appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood.

1578



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INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a level of education that plays a crucial role in stimulating all aspects of a child's development. One aspect that needs optimal development is language skills, as language is the primary means for children to convey ideas, understand information, interact socially, and build readiness for learning at the next level of education. Early childhood language development includes listening, speaking, early reading, and early writing skills, which develop gradually according to the child's developmental characteristics. These skills need to be stimulated through fun, meaningful, and child-appropriate learning activities.

Children's language skills don't develop automatically, but are influenced by the learning experiences they acquire throughout the learning process. Teachers play a crucial role in providing a language-rich learning environment so that children have the opportunity to listen, speak, ask questions, answer questions, and recount their experiences. A communicative learning environment will help children enrich their vocabulary, increase their speaking confidence, and develop their ability to think logically.

Initial observations in Group B indicated that children's language skills were still low. Most children were unable to express their opinions using simple sentences, had limited vocabulary, lacked confidence when asked to speak in front of their peers, and had difficulty retelling stories they had heard. The learning process was still dominated by lectures, resulting in children acting more as listeners than active participants in the learning process. This resulted in children's verbal interactions during the learning process not developing optimally.

Storytelling is an activity of conveying stories orally by utilizing voice intonation, facial expressions, body movements, and supporting media so that children gain a learning experience that is both enjoyable and meaningful.(Musfiroh, 2017)Through storytelling, children not only listen to stories but are also encouraged to interact, answer questions, guess the plot, express their opinions, and retell the story in their own words. This activity provides children with the opportunity to develop both receptive and expressive language skills simultaneously.

In this study, storytelling was conducted using animal-themed stories. Animal stories were selected because they are close to children's lives, feature easily recognizable characters, contain moral values, and can attract children's attention during the learning process. Characters such as rabbits, turtles, lions, mice, elephants, birds, and ants can stimulate children's imagination, making it easier for them to understand the story. In addition, animal stories provide opportunities for

1579



teachers to portray characters through hand puppets, pictures, and big books, making the learning atmosphere more interactive.

Various studies have shown that storytelling has a positive influence on the language development of early childhood. (Isbell et al., 2004) shows that storytelling activities can improve children's listening skills, vocabulary mastery, ability to understand story content, and speaking skills. (Nicolopoulou, 2015) also explains that storytelling activities contribute to the development of spoken language, early literacy, and social skills in early childhood. Meanwhile, research (Anisyah, 2021) and (Erdiyanti & Syukri, 2021) showed that the use of media and interesting learning activities can increase children's involvement during the learning process so that the development of various aspects can develop optimally.

Although extensive research on storytelling has been conducted, most studies still use pictures or storybooks as the primary medium. Research specifically utilizing animal-themed storytelling as the primary medium to improve early childhood language skills is still relatively limited. Furthermore, few studies integrate the use of big books and animal-themed hand puppets into retelling activities as a strategy to increase children's speaking confidence. This situation presents a research gap that requires further study.

Based on the description, this study aims to describe the application of the animal-themed storytelling method and analyze its effectiveness in improving the language skills of group B children. The results of the study are expected to contribute to the development of language learning strategies in early childhood education, as well as being a reference for teachers in creating learning activities that are more interesting, interactive, and in accordance with the characteristics of child development.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method with the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which consists of four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Sugiyono, 2019). These four stages were implemented repeatedly in each cycle until the research objectives were achieved. This model was chosen because it provides teachers with the opportunity to improve the learning process based on the results of reflection in each cycle.





Figure 1. Classroom Action Research Model according to Kemmis and Taggart

The research was conducted in Group B of Pelangi Early Childhood Education (PAUD Pelangi) with 15 children, consisting of 15 children aged 5–6 years, as subjects. The research was conducted during the odd semester of the current academic year and consisted of two cycles, each with two meetings. The researcher acted as the implementer of the action, working together with the class teacher as a collaborator throughout the research process.

In the planning stage, the researcher developed a Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH), determined learning objectives, prepared animal-themed stories, and prepared learning media in the form of big books, hand puppets, animal character picture cards, and research instruments. The stories used included Rabbit and Tortoise, Lion and Mouse, and Ant and Grasshopper because they are easy for children to understand and contain character values such as honesty, cooperation, responsibility, and mutual assistance.

The implementation stage of the action was carried out through storytelling activities. The teacher conveyed the story using expression, intonation, body movements, and the aid of hand puppets and a big book. During the activity, the teacher engaged the children in a discussion about the story, introduced new vocabulary, posed simple questions, and asked them to retell the story in their own words. In Cycle II, improvements were made by providing opportunities for each child to speak through small group activities so that all children could actively participate.

Research data was collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were used to determine the development of children's language skills during storytelling activities. Interviews were conducted with class teachers to obtain information on

children's development and learning implementation. Documentation, including photos of activities, field notes, and children's assessment results, served as supporting data for the research.

The research instruments consisted of teacher activity observation sheets, child activity observation sheets, and language ability assessment sheets. Indicators observed included the ability to listen to stories, answer questions based on the story content, name characters, use new vocabulary, construct simple sentences, and retell the story coherently. Child development assessment used the categories Not Yet Developing (BB), Beginning to Develop (MB), Developing as Expected (BSH), and Developing Very Well (BSB) in accordance with early childhood development assessment standards.

Data were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative descriptive methods. Quantitative data were obtained by counting the number of children in each developmental category and then converting them into percentages using the following formula.

$$\text{Percentage} = (\text{Number of children in each category} \div \text{Total number of children}) \times 100\%$$

The results of these calculations were used to compare the development of children's language skills at baseline, in Cycle I, and in Cycle II. Qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and reflection to determine the success of the implemented actions.

Data validity was validated through technical triangulation by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. The study was declared successful if at least 75% of all children had achieved the Developing According to Expectations (BSH) and Developing Very Well (BSB) categories on language ability indicators after participating in the animal-themed storytelling activity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The classroom action research was conducted in two cycles, with two meetings in each cycle. Each cycle followed the planning, action, observation, and reflection stages of the Kemmis and McTaggart model. The intervention consisted of animal-themed storytelling supported by big books and hand puppets. The stories used were Rabbit and Tortoise, Lion and Mouse, and Ant and Grasshopper. During the intervention, children were encouraged to listen, respond to questions, learn new vocabulary, and retell stories in their own words. The quantitative findings below are

1582



based on the developmental-category assessment reported in the original study, while the qualitative interpretation is derived from the observation, teacher interview, and documentation procedures described in the methodology.

Overall Development of Children's Language Skills

In Cycle I, 7 children (46.7%) were still in the Not Yet Developed (BB) and Beginning to Develop (MB) categories, while 8 children (53.3%) had reached the Developing as Expected (BSH) and Developing Very Well (BSB) categories. After the improvements implemented in Cycle II, the number of children in BB and MB decreased to 2 children (13.3%), while 13 children (86.7%) reached BSH or BSB.

Developmental Category	Cycle I (n)	Cycle I (%)	Cycle II (n)	Cycle II (%)
Not Yet Developed (BB)	4	26.7	1	6.7
Beginning to Develop (MB)	3	20.0	1	6.7
Developing as Expected (BSH)	6	40.0	8	53.3
Developing Very Well (BSB)	2	13.3	5	33.3
Total	15	100.0	15	100.0

Table 1. Development of Children's Language Skills in Cycles I and II

The pattern of change is also meaningful at the category level. The BB category decreased from 4 children (26.7%) to 1 child (6.7%), while the MB category decreased from 3 children (20.0%) to 1 child (6.7%). At the same time, BSH increased from 6 children (40.0%) to 8 children (53.3%), and BSB increased from 2 children (13.3%) to 5 children (33.3%). Thus, the seven children who initially required greater support in Cycle I were reduced to two children in the BB/MB categories by Cycle II.

Analysis of Language Indicators

The research instrument covered six language indicators: listening to stories, answering questions based on story content, naming story characters, using new vocabulary, constructing simple sentences, and retelling stories coherently. However, the original manuscript does not report separate numerical scores or percentages for each of these six indicators. Therefore,



indicator-level numerical claims cannot be made from the available dataset without introducing unsupported data. The observation findings nevertheless provide a qualitative pattern across the indicators. Children initially showed the greatest difficulty in expressive tasks, particularly constructing responses and retelling the sequence of events. In Cycle I, some children could identify characters but could not yet explain the plot clearly, and several children responded using only one or two words or spoke softly. By Cycle II, observations indicated more active responses, greater use of newly introduced vocabulary, more coherent sequencing of events, and greater willingness to speak before peers. This pattern suggests that the intervention supported the transition from receptive participation (listening and recognizing story elements) toward more expressive language use.

Teacher and Children's Activities

The methodology states that teacher and child activity observation sheets were used, but the original manuscript does not provide numerical activity scores. Consequently, the results are interpreted descriptively rather than assigning unsupported percentages. In Cycle I, the teacher's storytelling was still relatively dominant, while opportunities for children to engage in dialogue were not evenly distributed. Children's participation was therefore uneven: although they showed enthusiasm toward the big book and hand puppets, some children remained passive or gave very short responses. In Cycle II, the teacher adjusted the interaction pattern by using small groups, increasing open-ended questions, inviting children to enact animal characters with hand puppets, and giving simple encouragement or rewards for children who attempted to retell the story. These changes increased opportunities for individual speaking and appear to have supported more active participation.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative evidence in the original manuscript is consistent across observation, teacher reflection/interview, and documentation. In Cycle I, children were attracted to the visual and dramatic features of the stories, particularly the animal characters, big book, and hand puppets. However, attention and enthusiasm did not automatically translate into extended verbal responses. Some children could identify characters but had difficulty connecting events into a coherent narrative. The reflection therefore identified participation opportunities and teacher-child dialogue as areas requiring improvement. In Cycle II, the revised interaction structure provided more space for children to speak. The observations described children as more active in



answering questions, using new vocabulary, sequencing story events, and retelling stories with simple sentences appropriate to their developmental level.

No verbatim quotations from teacher interviews or children's speech are included in the source manuscript. For that reason, this revised version does not fabricate quotations. If the researcher has field-note excerpts or interview transcripts, one or two short anonymized examples can be added to strengthen the qualitative evidence.

Discussion of Cycle I

Cycle I demonstrates that attractive storytelling media can initiate children's engagement, but media exposure alone was insufficient to achieve the research success criterion. The combination of big books and hand puppets successfully captured attention, yet the teacher continued to carry much of the verbal load. This explains why children could recognize characters and attend to the story but some still had difficulty producing longer responses or retelling the sequence of events. The findings point to an important distinction between being attentive to a story and actively using language. For early childhood language learning, opportunities to produce speech must be deliberately built into the storytelling process.

The reflection after Cycle I identified three practical issues: children were not yet accustomed to active participation, speaking opportunities were not distributed evenly, and the teacher's role remained more focused on narration than dialogue. These observations provide a direct rationale for the Cycle II modifications rather than treating the improvement as an unexplained effect of repetition.

Discussion of Cycle II

Cycle II incorporated changes directly linked to the weaknesses identified in Cycle I. Small-group organization reduced the number of children competing for speaking opportunities and allowed the teacher to provide more individualized prompts. Open-ended questions also shifted the interaction from short recognition responses toward explanation and recall. Role-play with hand puppets gave children a concrete way to represent characters and events, which may have reduced the difficulty of producing language independently. Simple rewards and encouragement were used to support children's willingness to speak. The original manuscript does not report an exact speaking time allocated to each child, so no specific duration is added here.

The Cycle II results suggest that the strongest contribution of the intervention was not merely the use of animal stories, but the interactive structure surrounding those stories. The 33.4



percentage-point increase in children reaching BSH or BSB coincided with greater opportunities for dialogue, retelling, role-play, and vocabulary use. The decrease in BB and MB indicates that children who had previously demonstrated limited participation also showed developmental movement after the instructional adjustments.

Comparison with Previous Research

The findings are broadly consistent with Isbell et al. (2004), who reported benefits of storytelling and story reading for young children's oral language complexity and story comprehension. The present study adds a classroom-action-research perspective by showing how storytelling can be adjusted through reflection between cycles. The finding is also compatible with Nicolopoulou (2015), whose work highlights narrative- and play-based activities as a context for promoting oral language development. In the present study, the use of hand puppets and role-play similarly created opportunities for children to use language rather than only listen to it.

The findings also relate to the studies cited in the original manuscript by Anisyah (2021) and Erdiyanti and Syukri (2021), which emphasize the value of engaging learning activities and appropriate learning media. A contextual difference should be noted: those studies were not identical to the present classroom action research intervention, so their findings should be interpreted as supporting evidence rather than direct proof that the same mechanism produced the present results. The present study specifically combines animal-themed narratives, big books, hand puppets, small-group interaction, and retelling within a two-cycle CAR design.

Interpretation and Practical Implications

The findings indicate that storytelling is more likely to support language development when children are positioned as active language users. For PAUD teachers, an effective storytelling sequence can therefore include: (1) an engaging story presentation with visual or puppet support; (2) questions that move from recall to explanation; (3) explicit introduction of selected new vocabulary; (4) opportunities for children to act out or manipulate characters; and (5) individual or small-group retelling. The present study suggests that these components can be implemented with familiar animal stories and simple classroom media.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study involved only 15 children in one Group B class, so the results should not be generalized to all early



childhood settings without further research. Second, the intervention was conducted over only two cycles, with two meetings per cycle. Third, the study did not include a control or comparison group; therefore, the increase in BSH and BSB cannot be attributed exclusively to storytelling because maturation, repeated practice, or other classroom experiences may also have contributed. Fourth, the quantitative analysis was descriptive and based on developmental categories. The manuscript does not report inferential statistical testing, so statistical significance cannot be claimed. Fifth, the original manuscript does not provide separate numerical results for each language indicator, teacher activity scores, child activity scores, or verbatim interview excerpts. These missing details limit the precision with which the mechanisms of improvement can be evaluated. Finally, because the researcher implemented the action and the class teacher acted as collaborator, observer-related bias cannot be completely excluded despite the use of triangulation.

Overall Interpretation

Taken together, the evidence supports the conclusion that the animal-themed storytelling intervention was associated with improved language development in this classroom. The proportion of children reaching BSH or BSB increased from 53.3% in Cycle I to 86.7% in Cycle II, exceeding the predetermined success criterion of 75%. The most plausible explanation supported by the classroom observations is that Cycle II did not simply repeat the storytelling activity; it increased children's opportunities to speak through small-group interaction, open-ended questions, role-play, vocabulary practice, and retelling. The finding should therefore be understood as evidence of successful classroom improvement within the studied context rather than as a statistically proven causal effect applicable to all early childhood classrooms.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of animal-themed storytelling supported by big books and hand puppets was associated with improved language development among the 15 Group B children involved in this classroom action research. The proportion of children in the BSH and BSB categories increased from 53.3% in Cycle I to 86.7% in Cycle II, exceeding the study's success criterion of 75%. Qualitative observations indicated that the improvement was accompanied by more active participation, greater willingness to answer questions, increased use of newly introduced vocabulary, more coherent sequencing of story events, and greater confidence in retelling stories.



The main contribution of the study is the integration of animal-themed narratives with big books, hand puppets, interactive questioning, small-group participation, and retelling as a classroom language-learning strategy. The study also demonstrates the value of reflective adjustments between CAR cycles: when Cycle I revealed unequal speaking opportunities and teacher-dominated interaction, Cycle II addressed these issues through a more participatory learning structure.

However, the findings are limited by the small single-class sample, the absence of a comparison group, the descriptive nature of the quantitative analysis, and the lack of indicator-level numerical data and verbatim qualitative excerpts in the manuscript. Future studies should report indicator-specific results, use clearly defined observation rubrics, include multiple classes or comparison groups where feasible, and provide richer qualitative evidence to clarify how storytelling supports different dimensions of children's language development.

AWARD

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