

Storytelling As a Stimulation of Early Childhood Expressive Language Skills

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the effect of the storytelling method on the expressive language skills of children aged 5-6 years at RA Perwanida 4 Palembang. This study used a pre-experimental approach with a one-group pretest-posttest design. Data collection techniques include observation, tests, and documentation, with data analysis through normality, homogeneity, and hypothesis testing involving 15 children. The results showed a significant increase in children's expressive language skills after storytelling treatment, with a tcount value of 41.748 and a table of 2.144. The storytelling method can be used as an effective learning strategy in developing early childhood language skills. Storytelling activities can be used as an alternative to learning in the stimulation of language development, especially expressive language in children.

Key Word:

Early Childhood Education; Expressive Language; Storytelling Method

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Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the first stage in the educational process that serves to stimulate various aspects of child development in accordance with the age stage. According to the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture, PAUD is a learning process provided to children from birth to six years of age, with the aim of providing educational stimuli so that children's growth and development, both physically and spiritually, can develop optimally as a provision for entering the next level of education (Wahyuni et al., 2023). Early childhood is an important period in the formation of a child's personality that will affect his or her life in the future (Wahyuni et al., 2023). At this stage, children experience a rapid growth and development process, both physically and cognitively, which is known as the golden age or golden period, which is a time when children's brain development takes place optimally (Wahyuni & Rudiyanto, 2021).

Early childhood has a very important role and is entitled to education as an effort to support their growth and development, both physically and mentally. Law No. 23 on Child Protection states that 'every child has the right to education and learning in order to develop their personality and level of intelligence.' Children not only have different ways of learning but also have diverse abilities in the eight types of intelligence that have been identified (Novianti et al., 2022; Sartika et al., 2023). Early childhood is a group of young children who are in a phase of rapid growth, so it is very appropriate to be given stimulation to optimise their growth and development process (Nada et al., 2021). Therefore, providing appropriate stimulation during this period is very necessary so that children's development can take place optimally. The age of 0 to 6 years is known as the golden years, a period in which children are very sensitive or sensitive to various stimuli that will form the basis of their abilities in the future (Ningrum et al., 2021).

Language development that is in accordance with the standard level of achievement of its development will make it easier for children to interact with their peers. As according to (Kholilullah, Hamdan, 2020), language functions as an essential communication tool for all humans, including children, in conveying their thoughts, feelings, and desires to others. Children's language increases in the process of imitation when children begin to mention objects or objects that children see with babbling that is not yet meaningful; then children begin to imitate the sounds commonly used by other people in their environment. Language is used as a tool when wanting to communicate with someone where this activity is fundamental or called very important in stimulating child development (Cáceres et al., 2020; Nabillah et al., 2024). Berliana & Atikah (2023) mentioned that children's language skills begin to develop from baby talk to toddlers' simple sentences; the ability to use language and words develops in childhood, both in writing and speaking, developing with sensitivity to the rhythm of words. Language is a symbolic system that is organised and used to convey ideas and information, both through verbal and visual symbols (Agustriana & Wahyuni, 2025; Nabillah et al., 2024). Verbal symbols include forms of language that can be spoken and heard, while visual symbols refer to language that is written, seen and read. Children are able to manipulate these symbols in varied ways, depending on their level of thinking skills and cognitive development (Mailani et al., 2022; Wardana et al., 2024). Language skills are the initial capital in developing other language skills such as writing, speaking, movement, gestures, symbols or gestures (Wahyuni et al., 2025).

Language skills are divided into two forms, namely receptive and expressive language skills. Receptive language refers to a child's understanding of words (speech symbols) when using certain words, while expressive language can develop during social interaction activities and when a child's speech mechanism begins to mature and the child begins to control the production of speech sounds (Agustriana & Wahyuni, 2025; Eka Putri & Kamali, 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2025). In communicating, children can use expressive language, which consists of the ability to express and convey ideas or thoughts of children. Early

childhood language development always accelerates after school, both in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure. Children aged 5 to 6 years are able to understand several commands at once; children are able to repeat a complex sentence and understand the rules of a game (Septiani et al., 2024).

There are various methods that are usually used in developing expressive language, including the storytelling method. Storytelling is the art of oral storytelling that describes real or fictional events and can be delivered without the help of special tools (Doludea & Nuraeni, 2018). The use of media or methods that involve children directly, such as storytelling, can improve communication skills in children because it can train body language through facial expressions, movements and voice intonations that make children interested and not easily bored in listening to fairy tales, and many new vocabulary words are obtained by children so that children become more language skilled (Mahyuddin, 2020).

Based on observations made at RA Perwanida 4 Palembang, it is known that most children have not mastered expressive language skills optimally. It was noted that 12 children were not able to retell the contents of the story they had heard in front of the class, 10 children had difficulty in expressing their opinions when participating in the activity of making mosaic pictures of peacocks, and 9 children were not able to ask questions during colouring activities. In addition, the learning media used in the field tend to be monotonous and less varied, so that children become less interested and easily feel bored.

Currently, there have been many studies related to children's language skills, especially in the stimulation of expressive language skills. One of them is research conducted by (Solekah & Putriyani, 2024) which states that language skills, especially speaking in early childhood, can be effectively stimulated with character puppet media. Furthermore, research conducted by (Doludea & Nuraeni, 2018), states that the use of storytelling methods with the help of paper puppet media can improve children's listening skills. However, previous studies focused on the use of storytelling methods with the help of media such as puppets and were limited to this age range and only highlighted communication

skills in general, without focusing on expressive language aspects specifically. Based on these limitations, researchers feel the need to examine more deeply to recognise the effect of storytelling methods on expressive language skills, especially in children aged 5-6 years.

Methods

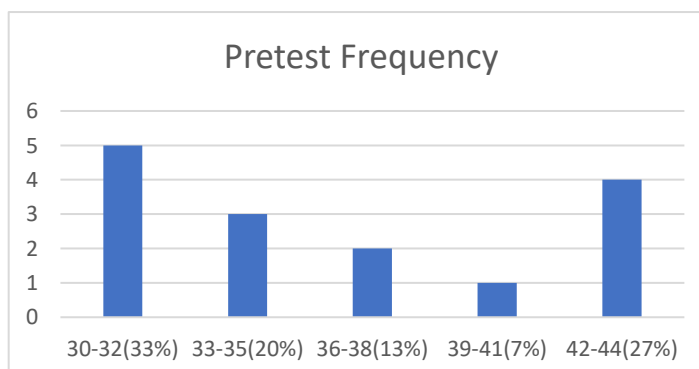
This research uses a quantitative approach with an experimental research type, namely, a pre-experimental design in the form of a one-group pretest-posttest design. In this design, an initial measurement (pretest) before treatment is given and a final measurement (posttest) after treatment is given. The experimental method is seen as the most accurate approach in determining cause-and-effect relationships compared to other types of research (Sugiyono, 2021).

The sample in this study were all B3 group children aged 5-6 years at RA Perwanida 4 Palembang, with a total of 15 children, consisting of 6 boys and 9 girls. The results of the data obtained from pretest and posttest activities will be analysed using normality tests, homogeneity tests, and hypothesis tests to see the effect of the storytelling method on children.

Results and Discussion

Obtaining research data was carried out by conducting pretests and posttests for three meetings. In these activities there are children who show a lack of socialisation skills according to the indicators that have been made. The following is the frequency distribution data for the pretest value of language skills, as follows:

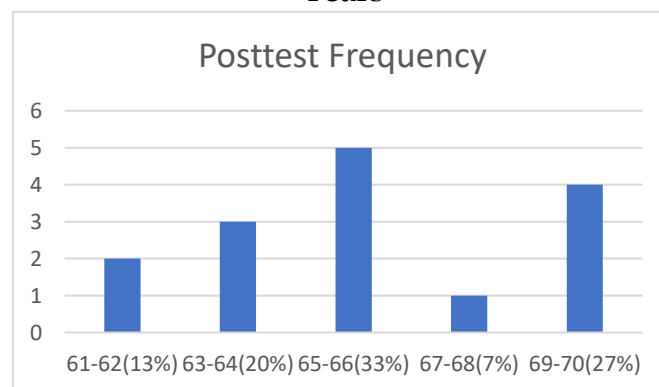
Diagram 1. Pretest Score of Expressive Language Skills of Children Aged 5-6 Years



It can be seen that in the first interval with a value of 30-32, there are 5 children with a percentage of 33%. In the second interval with a value of 33-35, there are 3 children with a percentage of 20%. In the third interval with a value of 36-38, there are 2 children with a percentage of 13%. In the fourth interval, which is the value range of 39-41, there is 1 child, or 7% of the total respondents. Meanwhile, in the last interval with a value range of 42-44, there were 4 children, or 27%. This shows that before applying the storytelling method, children's expressive language skills are still very low and need to be stimulated.

Furthermore, from the results of the posttest after giving stimulation in the form of using the storytelling method with children, the following results were obtained:

Diagram 2. Post-Test Results of Expressive Language Skills of Children Aged 5-6 Years



Based on the data results, it is known that in the first interval with a value range of 61-62, there are 2 children, or 13%. In the second interval, which is 63-64, there are 3 children with a percentage of 20%. Furthermore, the third interval in the 65-66 value range includes 5 children, or 33%. Meanwhile, in the fourth interval with a value of 67-68, there was 1 child, or 7%. Finally, in the 69-70 interval, there are 4 children with a percentage of 27%.

To determine the magnitude of the effect of the storytelling method on children's expressive language skills, the effect size calculation was carried out using Cohen's *d* formula. Based on the results of data processing, the average pre-test score was 36.20 with a standard deviation of 4.83, while the average post-

test score was 65.77 with a standard deviation of 2.72. The pooled standard deviation value was obtained as 3.92.

The calculation results show a Cohen's d value of 7.54, which is categorised as a very large effect size. This interpretation refers to Cohen's effect size interpretation guidelines, where the value of $d \geq 0.8$ is considered large. Thus, it can be concluded that the storytelling method has a very strong influence on improving expressive language skills in early childhood.

After conducting the pretest and posttest, the researcher described the results of the study based on the comparison of the overall average scores. The pretest results showed an average score of 36.2, while the posttest results showed an increase with an average score of 65.8. This shows that after the treatment, there was a significant increase in the average value, which means that the treatment activities had a positive impact on the measured ability.

The use of the storytelling method shows an influence on children's expressive language skills. This is proven through hypothesis testing using the t -test, where the t -count value is 41.748, while the t -table value at the 5% significance level is 2.144. Because $t_{\text{count}} > t_{\text{table}}$, then H_a is accepted and H_0 is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant influence between the use of storytelling methods on improving the expressive language skills of children aged 5-6 years at RA Perwanida 4 Palembang.

In line with the findings of this study, (Helvionita, 2023)) states that storytelling activities can improve language skills in children due to the messages conveyed by the characters in the story. This will have a positive impact on children in responding to stories told by storytellers. The use of varied learning methods such as storytelling can provide direct opportunities for children to feel and practice directly every word conveyed by the storyteller (Mahyuddin, 2020). So that the direct impact felt by children is learning through experience. This intervention provides space for children to actively participate in two-way communication, express ideas, and respond verbally to all core skills in expressive language development.

Storytelling activities are one of the effective strategies to develop children's expressive language skills. This is because in storytelling activities, children not only listen to the story but are also actively involved in expressing ideas, feelings, and responses to the content of the story, because storytelling activities involve active verbal interaction between the storyteller and the listener. During the storytelling process, children are encouraged to listen carefully, understand the content of the story, and re-express the story using simple sentences. In addition, this activity also stimulates children to ask questions, give responses, and expand their vocabulary through the context of the story being told. Thus, storytelling can improve the language aspects of children aged 5-6 years through the two-way communication that occurs during the activity.

Through storytelling activities, children are given the opportunity to express their thoughts, desires, and feelings verbally. This helps children build the courage to speak, increase self-confidence, and train the ability to communicate more clearly and structured. In addition, storytelling activities also encourage children to imitate characters, retell the content of the story, and express emotions, all of which are part of expressive language skills.

In addition to the application of storytelling methods, the variation in results in improving children's expressive language skills after the application of storytelling methods can be explained by several contextual factors, such as social environment and family background. Family background, such as parents' level of education and family dialogue habits, also influences the extent to which children are able to absorb and express the language they hear. The use of learning media and play tools that are in accordance with the form of stimulation to be provided will have an impact on the outcomes of children (Agustriana & Wahyuni, 2025; Novianti et al., 2022; Oktamarina et al., 2023). Thus, although the storytelling method is generally effective, its success remains highly dependent on the environmental context and individual characteristics of the child.

However, this study has some limitations that need to be stated openly in order to maintain the transparency and academic value of the study. Firstly, the use of a quasi-experimental design without a control group limits the generalisability of the results, as it cannot fully isolate the effect of the storytelling method from other external factors. Secondly, the limited sample size and short time span of the intervention could potentially affect the validity of the results, especially in measuring the long-term impact on children's expressive language skills. Thirdly, the measurement instruments are conventional and subjective, so the results obtained may not represent children's expressive abilities as a whole, especially in the context of spontaneity and wider social interaction. Therefore, it is recommended that future research use experimental designs with control groups, expand the scope of samples from various social and cultural backgrounds, and adopt more authentic and observational measurement tools, such as video recordings, for in-depth analysis of children's verbal interactions. Practically, educators are advised to integrate storytelling activities into the daily learning curriculum on a regular basis, as well as utilise diverse media such as puppets, pictures, or interactive props to maximise children's engagement. With a more systematic and comprehensive approach, it is hoped that storytelling can be optimised as a learning strategy that is not only effective but also inclusive and sustainable.

Conclusion

This research uses a quantitative approach with an experimental research type, namely, a pre-experimental design in the form of a one-group pretest-posttest design. In this design, an initial measurement (pretest) before treatment is given and a final measurement (posttest) after treatment is given. The experimental method is seen as the most accurate approach in determining cause-and-effect relationships compared to other types of research (Sugiyono, 2021).

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