

Improving Children's Language Skills Learning through Storytelling Method Using the Story Tree Media in Group B at Al Atfal Qusqazah Inclusive Kindergarten Medan

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ABSTRACT

The background of this study is the children's limited vocabulary, their inability to construct sentences from existing pictures, and their struggle to express opinions and thoughts on various topics. The objective of this research is to describe how children's language skills can be improved through the storytelling method using the story tree media for Group B at Al Atfal Qusqazah Inclusive Kindergarten in Medan. This study employs a classroom action research method. The findings indicate that the improvements made to language skills using the storytelling method through the story tree in Group B at Al Atfal Qusqazah Inclusive Kindergarten resulted in enhanced language abilities among the children. This is evident from the changes observed in Cycle 1, where 2 children were still "Not Yet Developing" (BB) and 2 children were "Developing as Expected" (BSH). After Cycle 2, only 1 child remained at the BB level, while 2 children had achieved the "Very Well Developed" (BSB) rating.

Keywords:

Language Skills the Story Tree

1. Introduction

Early childhood education is essentially education conducted to facilitate the comprehensive growth of a child, emphasizing the development of all aspects of a child's personality. Education for young children involves efforts to stimulate, guide, nurture, and provide learning activities and skills for children in Kindergarten. Early childhood education (ECE) is highly important and foundational for every individual. These early years are crucial in determining a child's growth and development. Apart from that, there are also many methods that must be taken into account, such as implementing interactive storytelling activities. Children are expected to be more directly involved in the story, hone their language skills, and stimulate their imagination and creativity.(Parapat et al., 2023). In supporting children's education, interpersonal communication between parents is important in educating their children. Children's education that is instilled from an early age, especially religious

knowledge, will grow and make them accustomed to good deeds, so that children will avoid negative deeds. (Tambunan, 2023)

In the National Ministry of Education Regulation No. 137 of 2013, it is stated that Kindergarten must develop and stimulate six aspects, which are: 1) Religious and moral values, 2) Physical motor aspects, 3) Cognitive aspects, 4) Language aspects, 5) Socio-emotional aspects, and 6) Artistic aspects. One of the developmental aspects that needs to be optimally developed is the child's language ability. Children use language to adapt and communicate with their environment as a way to exchange ideas, thoughts, and emotions. Each developmental aspect must be developed optimally. Education for early childhood is very important because education for early childhood is the basis for the formation of human character as a whole. Therefore, character education is now absolutely necessary not only in schools, but at home and in the social environment. (Utami et al., 2020)

In line with the language development program in Kindergarten, the goal is for children to be able to express their thoughts using simple and accurate language, communicate effectively, and foster an interest in speaking well and correctly. The aspects of early childhood language development include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking is a tool used to express feelings or intentions to others, where children try to convey their ideas and thoughts by building communication. In addition, parental involvement and the use of engaging and child-friendly techniques are key factors contributing to children's communication success. (Ritonga et al., 2024)

At an early age, the most common and effective language skill is communication or speaking. This aligns with the language abilities of young children. These characteristics include a child's ability to communicate well, follow three consecutive verbal instructions correctly, listen to and retell simple stories in an easy-to-understand sequence, mention their name, gender, age, speak more than three sentences, and recognize simple written words.

To spark children's interest in speaking well and correctly, teachers, as supporters of children's abilities, must be able to create lessons that capture children's attention. One characteristic of young children is that they have a short attention span, so the lessons created should be engaging. A child's attention to the lesson is an important factor that teachers must consider, as the success of learning depends on how much attention the child gives to the material being taught. It is hoped that children will feel happy and comfortable while learning through play, and the learning materials provided will be well received by the children.

Good learning outcomes can be achieved if children pay attention to the material they are studying; if the material is not interesting, boredom will arise. Children's attention can be enhanced through engaging learning strategies. One learning strategy that can be used is the storytelling method. Listening to stories is enjoyable for kindergarten children, as stories present various fascinating tales related to the learning material. According to Ratminingsih and Paramarta (2012:34), "one of the powerful techniques in language teaching is the storytelling technique."

Attracting young children's interest through storytelling requires creative strategies to capture their attention, so teachers must have visual aids to help engage children in storytelling activities.

This aligns with the statement by Astini et al. (2017:32), which states that Educational Play Equipment (APE) is a medium intentionally designed or created to support the implementation of effective, efficient, and enjoyable learning activities for children, as well as a tool for learning something new.

Educational props created by teachers or those already available on the market can be used as learning media to develop children's language skills. In this case, the educational play equipment (APE) used is a prop or game created by the teacher at school, called the Story Tree. The Story Tree is an alternative to storybooks traditionally used by teachers at Al Atfal Qusqazah Inclusive Kindergarten. The learning activities conducted by the teacher tend to be monotonous, focusing solely on storybooks without additional props. As a result, children have memorized the contents of the books, leading to a lack of focus and boredom with the teacher's reading.

The researcher observed that the children's speaking skills were still underdeveloped, as they had not reached the expected milestones in speaking proficiency. Most children struggled to express their opinions and thoughts, and their vocabulary was also limited. Although storybooks encourage children to enjoy reading, children who can read tend to focus solely on the sentences in the book, without attempting to create their own stories. To develop children's language skills and expand their vocabulary through constructing stories based on pictures without text, using the Story Tree APE—a tool not previously used by teachers—can attract children's interest in expressing their ideas and thoughts to teachers and peers, even if they have not yet learned to read. . In addition to that, the education received by children from home has been well-ingrained, so God willing, this will be a fortress in facing various environmental influences that are not conducive. However, children cannot be sterile from various "viruses" of the external environment. So it is important to carry out synergy through informal education.(Nofianti et al., 2024)

2. Methods

The type of research conducted is classroom action research, which is a "system inquiry" carried out by teachers, school principals, or school counselors to gather information about the best practices they implement (Mills, 2000) in Wardani and Wihardit. According to Carr & Kemmis (McNiff, 1991), "Action research is a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants (teachers, students, or principals, for example) in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of (1) their own social or educational practice, (2) their understanding of these practices, and (3) the situation (and institutions) in which these practices are carried out.

The classroom action research model used by the researcher is the Kemmis and Taggart model from 1990. According to H.M. Sukardi (2013:7), they utilize four components in classroom action research: planning, action, observation, and reflection, within an interconnected spiral system, where each step is related to the next.

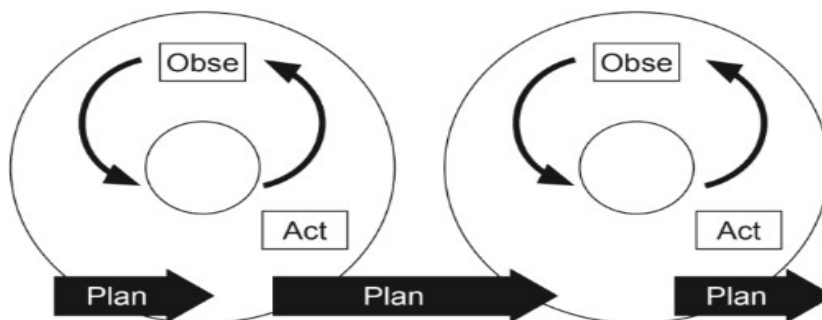


Figure 1 : Kemmis and McTaggart Cycle Model

3. Results and Discussion

The improvement scenarios that have been designed for both cycle 1 and cycle 2 will be implemented by paying attention to aspects that support learning improvement activities. The factors that need attention include:

- Preparing learning media according to predetermined indicators.
- Preparing the children's condition before starting the activity.
- Efficient management of learning time.
- Arranging the classroom in a way that allows all children to participate.
- Providing appreciation for children for successfully engaging in the activities.

The discussion of each cycle explains the findings from the implementation of the simulation, including its strengths and weaknesses:

Cycle 1

Based on observations during Cycle 1 at Al Atfal Qusqazah Inclusive Kindergarten, the learning process proceeded according to the improvement scenario that had been developed. However, there were still weaknesses or shortcomings in the implementation that affected the children's learning outcomes in language development. Therefore, the actions taken to improve learning were not yet successful and require further refinement. The observations were as follows:

- The children focused only on the pictures.
- The children did not pay attention to the bold letters, which were the focus of the lesson.
- Some children had not yet memorized the shapes of the letter symbols.
- Some children were impatient to start the activity.

In this Cycle 1, the learning achievements did not meet the researcher's expectations, as shown by the assessment results: 2 children with BB (Below Expectation), 3 children with MB (Developing), and 2 children with BSH (Proficient). Based on these results, Cycle 2 was implemented.

Cycle 2

Observations of Cycle 2 activities during the learning process showed improvements. The children were more focused on the teacher when the teacher told stories or explained the learning activities, and they were interested in activities using picture cards, which encouraged them to communicate with the teacher and classmates. This was evident from:

- During storytelling activities using the Educational Play Tool "Story Tree," the children were more enthusiastic about communicating with the teacher and their friends.
- The children showed more variety in choosing the picture cards they wanted to stick on for storytelling, rather than imitating the choices of the teacher or their friends.

Some communication challenges among the children were due to developmental conditions, such as Global Developmental Delay or Down Syndrome. However, in Cycle 2, there was an improvement in the children's abilities based on each indicator observed by the researcher. In this cycle, only 1 child had a BB (Below Expectation) rating due to Global Developmental Delay, and 1 child was rated MB (Developing) due to developmental challenges associated with Down Syndrome. Three children demonstrated abilities "Developing as Expected," and two children "Developed Very Well." Therefore, the researcher deemed the improvements satisfactory and concluded the research at Cycle 2.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research conducted through classroom action research, it was concluded that the improvements made in language skills using the storytelling method with a "Story Tree" in Group B at Al Atfal Qusqazah Inclusive Kindergarten led to an increase in the children's abilities. This was evident from the changes observed between Cycle 1, where 2 children were still rated as Below Expectation (BB) and 2 children were Developing as Expected (BSH). After Cycle 2, only 1 child remained in the BB category, and 2 children achieved the Very Well Developed (BSB) rating.

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