
THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING TO IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract

Early childhood is a critical period for language development, laying the foundation for future communication skills. Storytelling has long been recognized as a powerful tool in language acquisition, particularly in enhancing speaking abilities. This paper examines the role of storytelling in improving speaking skills among early childhood learners. It explores the theoretical underpinnings of storytelling as a pedagogical approach and its alignment with early childhood development theories. Furthermore, the paper reviews empirical studies and evidence supporting the effectiveness of storytelling in fostering oral proficiency in young children. Additionally, it discusses practical strategies and techniques for integrating storytelling into early childhood education curricula. The findings suggest that storytelling not only enhances speaking skills but also promotes

language comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and socio-emotional development. The paper concludes with implications for educators and recommendations for future research in this field.

Keywords: Early Childhood; Speaking; Storytelling

Introduction

Language takes a very important role in early childhood development. Good speaking skills at an early age help children express their thoughts, emotions and needs effectively (Damayanti 2021). Through language, children can express ideas, think abstractly, and understand complex concepts. Good language skills help children process information, solve problems, and develop critical thinking skills (Anggraeny 2021). Children use language to convey their feelings, wants and needs to others. Good language skills help children establish positive social relationships, understand others' perspectives, and develop important social skills (Saepudin, Latif, and Farida 2022).

Storytelling has been widely recognized as one of the most effective learning methods in developing children's language skills. Through storytelling, children are actively involved in the process of listening, understanding and responding to the narrative (Hoerudin 2023). Storytelling opens the gates to a rich world of imagination, allowing children to expand their vocabulary, understand complex sentence structures, and develop deep listening skills. When storytellers deliver stories with enthusiasm and lively expressions, children will be swept up in the storyline, imagine the scenes and characters told, and feel the emotions contained therein (Helvionita 2023). This process promotes children's language development holistically, from understanding the meaning of words to the ability to communicate their own ideas and feelings. In addition, storytelling also helps strengthen the relationship between the storyteller and the children, creating a fun learning atmosphere and supporting healthy social-emotional development. Thus, it

is not surprising that storytelling is considered a highly effective learning method in developing children's language skills from an early age (Yana 2022).

Through storytelling, children are exposed to a variety of new words and phrases that enrich their vocabulary. When listening to stories told with a lively language style and rich descriptions, children naturally absorb a wider and more complex vocabulary (Suryana and Nurhayani 2022). They are introduced to new words that they may not have heard before, expanding their language horizons. Not only that, storytelling also provides the right context for children to understand the use of those words in meaningful sentences and narratives. They learn how words are organized and strung together to convey ideas, describe situations, and express emotions. Through rich exposure and relevant contexts, children can assimilate new words into their vocabulary and learn to use them appropriately in communication (Hartati and Faizah 2022). Storytelling is more than just entertainment, it is also a powerful vehicle for improving children's overall language skills, from vocabulary acquisition to the ability to speak and understand complex narratives (Pradana, Djamali, and Khoiriyah 2024).

In the context of storytelling, children are not only passive listeners, but also actors in the learning process (Khotimah, Kustiono, and Ahmadi 2021). They get the opportunity to get directly involved and participate in various activities related to the story. After listening to the story, children can be asked to play the role of characters in the story, expressing the dialogue and actions that occur. Activities like this help children develop the ability to speak, express, and empathize with the situations depicted in the story.

In addition, children can also be asked to create illustrations or pictures related to the story, practicing their fine motor skills and creativity. In fact, they can be encouraged to create new stories on their own, by stringing plots, building settings, and developing characters according to their imagination. This process not only enriches children's vocabulary and storytelling skills, but also hones critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Khairiah and Jumanti 2024). By actively engaging in storytelling activities, children can build a deeper understanding, explore their creative potential, and develop an interest

and love for language and literacy from an early age (Rezieka, Wibowo, and Fatmawati 2021).

Storytelling plays a very important role in developing children's language skills. Through this activity, children get the opportunity to expand their vocabulary significantly (Aisyah 2021). When listening to stories rich in descriptions and narratives, children are exposed to new words that they may not have heard before. This exposure helps to enrich their vocabulary naturally. Not only that, storytelling also helps children understand the structure of language and how to compose good sentences. They can observe how words are assembled into meaningful phrases and sentences, as well as capture the grammatical patterns used in the story (Gusti 2020).

In addition, storytelling provides an opportunity for children to improve their speaking skills (Fajriani and Kurnia 2021). By asking questions, responding to narratives, or even retelling the story, children are trained to express themselves verbally in a fluent and structured manner. Through active involvement in listening to and responding to stories, children are naturally involved in the process of learning a fun and meaningful language. Stories often contain moral messages and positive values. Through stories, children learn about kindness, honesty, friendship, and other values that are essential for growing up to be good and responsible individuals. As such, storytelling not only provides entertainment, but also plays an important role in the holistic development of early childhood, shaping them into intelligent, creative, and strong moral values individuals (Rahmawati 2022).

In addition, in storytelling there are listening skills. Listening is a two-way communication activity that is carried out directly (Suryana and Nurhayani 2022). Listening is one of the initial abilities that must be developed, when children as child listeners actively process and understand what they hear. Listening is the process of receiving language orally that enters the mind and then becomes a meaning. Listening skills are the most widely used language skills among other skills (Katoningsih 2021). Listening requires a process to be able to accept and understand. The purpose of

listening to a story is to gain an understanding of what has been listened to. Starting from the child listening and seeing until the child really understands what is being conveyed. When listening to or listening to a story, children are invited to focus, pay attention to details and understand the content of the story as a whole. It is important to build good listening skills, which will be useful in the daily learning and communication process (Muthaharah 2022).

Method

In this research process, the researcher used qualitative research. Qualitative research serves to explain phenomena in the field to know what things are obstacles or may be problems that are difficult to express. In addition, Bogdan and Taylor, added that qualitative research is research that produces data in the form of descriptive sentences found in writing, from a person's speech or data obtained from observed behavior (Abdussamad 2022). The researcher uses qualitative research because the main data sources obtained by the researcher from this study are words, language or actions from interview subjects and observations, and the use of documentation related to the research that the researcher analyzes, namely "The Role Of Storytelling Improving Early Childhood Speaking Skills"

The research approach used is a phenomenological approach. In essence, qualitative research uses a phenomenological approach, meaning that researchers go to the field by observing phenomena that occur in the field naturally (Lexy J. Moleong 2015). However, what will differentiate each type of research is the focus of the research. Does the research focus on culture, phenomena, cases and so on. Qualitative-phenomenological research tries to explain or at least reveal the meaning of concepts or experiential phenomena based on consciousness that occurs in several individuals. In this context, researchers try to explain the phenomenon "The Role of Storytelling Improving Early Childhood Speaking Skills"

Findings

Early childhood experiences an important period for language development. One effective way to improve speaking skills in early childhood is through storytelling activities. Storytelling can provide significant benefits in enriching vocabulary, building speaking skills, and stimulating children's imagination. Early childhood experiences a critical developmental phase in language. Montessori said that the age between 1.5 years and 3 years is a sensitive period for the development of language skills for children. In this period, children's language skills developed rapidly (Rambe, Sumadi, and ... 2021)

During this time, they begin to learn new words, develop the ability to construct sentences, and understand the basic rules of language. Good language development at an early age plays an important role in a child's overall communication skills, including listening and speaking skills (Zein and Puspita 2021). Storytelling plays a key role in language development in early childhood. In this context, the role of adults as narrators is very influential. When adults read stories to children, they present not only words, but also intonation, facial expressions, and emotional expressions, all of which help children understand the meaning and nuances of language.

We have to do vocabulary introduction; storytelling introduces children to new vocabulary and unusual words in meaningful contexts. Through stories, children can expand their vocabulary of words. Introduction of vocabulary in children can improve speaking skills (Putri 2023). So as a teacher refers to the process of introducing and expanding the words known by children in a meaningful context. It is an important part of a child's language development.

This is corroborated by the results of interviews with teachers at RA MASYITOH 20 SIBALUNG explaining as follows:

“Storytelling can help improve speaking skills in early childhood in several ways. First, storytelling introduces children to a variety of vocabulary and sentence structures that are important in the language. Through hearing and repetition, children can expand their vocabulary. In addition, storytelling also actively involves children in the speaking

process, either through answering questions, having dialogues with teachers or classmates, or even playing the role of characters in stories. This helps them practice using language in a fun and challenging context."

Then we asked the teacher again, about what are the main benefits of storytelling activities in early childhood learning? The teacher also replied

"The main benefit of storytelling activities in early childhood learning is that they improve their overall language skills. In addition, storytelling can also improve children's listening skills, comprehension, and imagination. They can learn about moral values, expand their knowledge of the world, and develop social skills through interacting with stories and classmates."

From the above explanation, it can be concluded that the existence of fairy tale reading activities for RA Masyithoh 20 Sibalung students can improve several student skills, including listening skills, comprehension skills, and also children's imagination skills. Fairy tales are one of the effective ways to develop cognitive (knowledgeable), affective (feeling), social, and conative aspects (appreciation) (Bhakti 2019).

This is in accordance with the theory put forward by Jean Piaget, Jean Piaget is a developmental psychologist who posited that through listening to and following stories in fairy tales, children can develop their language skills and understanding of abstract concepts (Munari 1994).

Penfield explained that during the first years of a child's life, his brain forms "language units" that record everything he hears. These units are interconnected with other nerve cells that regulate motor activities, thinking and other intellectual functions. One of the characteristics at that time is that children have experienced a lot of development in terms of knowledge, behavior, emotions, social development, language skills, and so on, so that what becomes a habit is not always accepted by their environment. Therefore, through various forms of training and development techniques, children are expected: a. Have the ability to convey thoughts to others, b. Having a fairly broad vocabulary of language and covering names and objects in their environment, c.

Have the ability to catch the conversation of others, and d. Have the courage to express opinions (Penfield 1953).

Discussion

This study shows that storytelling has a significant role in improving speaking skills in early childhood. The proof is that various studies highlight the effectiveness of storytelling in the context of language education. For example, a study by Isbell et al. (2004) found that children who were active in storytelling activities experienced significant improvements in their oral language skills compared to those who did not engage in similar activities. Storytelling sessions have also proven to be an effective way to introduce new vocabulary to children in contextualized contexts, aiding them in the retention and comprehension of new words better than conventional learning methods.

Listening to stories also plays an important role in enriching children's understanding of sentence structure, grammar, and the nuances of language that are fundamental to the development of strong speaking skills. Thus, storytelling is not just a fun activity, but also has a deep impact on the child's language learning process (Aulia, R., & Normaliza 2024).

Theoretical Implications

Theories such as Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Bruner's Constructivist Theory provide a strong theoretical foundation for the role of storytelling in early childhood education. According to Vygotsky, social interaction is a key element in cognitive learning, where storytelling provides a platform for children to engage in meaningful conversations with their peers. This not only facilitates language development, but also supports the development of social and emotional skills (Vygotsky 1987).

The concept of scaffolding introduced by Bruner is also relevant in the context of storytelling, where adults or educators can guide children through complex narrative structures, gradually expanding their speaking abilities. Thus, storytelling is not only a way to tell a story, but also a structured educational process to build children's language skills systematically (Laksana et al. 2021).

Practical Implications:

Educators can benefit from these findings by integrating storytelling activities into the daily curriculum. Techniques such as the use of visual props, puppets, or interactive digital technology can make storytelling sessions more engaging and effective for children. However, it is important for educators to choose stories that are not only engaging, but also relevant to students' cultural backgrounds and life experiences in order to maximize their learning (Turyani, Sugiarto, and Naam 2024).

Challenges and Recommendations for Further Research:

While storytelling has proven to be effective in a variety of contexts, there are still some challenges that need to be addressed. For example, the importance of choosing culturally relevant stories, adapting to the needs of children from different backgrounds, and facing technical challenges in implementing interactive and effective storytelling sessions (Sirait et al. 2023).

Further research may expand its scope by focusing more on the long-term impact of storytelling on language development. This study can provide deeper insights into how storytelling can affect children's speaking and communication skills in the long run.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that storytelling is not only an ordinary storytelling activity, but also a powerful educational tool in improving speaking skills, enriching language comprehension, and supporting early childhood social-emotional development. The integration of storytelling into children's education can be an effective strategy for educators to facilitate holistic and immersive learning. Future research is expected to continue to explore and expand this knowledge to improve early educational practices centered on storytelling.

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