



STIMULATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITH THE TELLYNG STORY METHOD

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Author Correspondence.

Name: Sindy Gambella Bessie
Email: Sindybessie1@gmail.com
Phone:

Author Information

Sindy Gambella Bessie
Sindybessie1@gmail.com
Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Kupang

Noldiana Nompetus
noldinompetus@gmail.com
Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Kupang

Restimar Tanti Abanat
restiabanat25@gmail.com
Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Kupang

Feni Sefniarti Kase
kasefenia8@gmail.com
Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Kupang

Sheryl Nathasya Siktimu
kksheryl0612@gmail.com
Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Kupang

Fredericksen Victoranto Amseke
dedyamseke@iaknkupang.ac.id
Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Kupang

Abstract

Background: Language development is a fundamental aspect of early childhood growth that plays an essential role in supporting children's communication skills, vocabulary acquisition, and social interaction. However, in classroom practice, some children still show limited vocabulary, low speaking confidence, and difficulty expressing ideas.

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the effect of the storytelling method on the language development of children aged 3–4 years at TK Cemara Liliba. **Method:** A quantitative research design was employed using a purposive sampling technique involving 20 children. Data were collected through structured observation sheets and questionnaires, and analyzed using simple linear regression with SPSS. **Results:** The findings revealed that the storytelling method had a positive and significant effect on children's language development, contributing 35.4% ($R^2 = 0.354$), while 64.6% was influenced by other external and internal factors. **Novelty:** This study provides empirical evidence from an authentic early childhood setting that storytelling enhances children's active participation, listening comprehension, vocabulary enrichment, and expressive speaking skills when delivered through interactive and engaging activities. **Conclusion:** Storytelling is an effective instructional strategy to support early childhood language development and should be implemented consistently with teacher creativity and supportive learning environments for optimal developmental outcomes in early childhood education contexts settings.

Keywords: Storytelling Method, Language Development, Early Childhood

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education serves as a crucial effort to foster foundational capabilities in children from birth to age six a period often referred to as the "diamond age." This process is realized by providing educational stimulation alongside support for physical growth (nutrition and health) and by maximizing developmental potential through a holistic, integrative approach. This approach encompasses physical-motor, cognitive, socio-emotional, language, and religious-moral development, thereby preparing children to continue their education in formal, informal, and non-formal settings (Amseke et al., 2024). Furthermore, young children are individuals undergoing rapid developmental changes in physical, cognitive, language, socio-emotional, and moral domains (Amseke, 2023).

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) represents a fundamental stage in children's development because it provides the basis for lifelong learning. The period from birth to six years of age is widely recognized as the golden age, during which brain development occurs rapidly and children demonstrate exceptional readiness to receive environmental stimulation (Faizah et al., 2023; Salahudin et al., 2022). Appropriate educational experiences during this period contribute significantly to children's overall development and future academic success.

According to Amseke (2023), children aged 5–6 years are expected to achieve developmental milestones including appropriate emotional responses, responsibility, independence, discipline, confidence, and positive social interaction. These competencies reflect children's readiness to participate actively in learning activities and adapt to various social environments.

Language development is one of the essential developmental domains in early childhood because it functions as the primary means of communication through which children express ideas, feelings, needs, and experiences. According to Suyadi (2022), language development also supports children's cognitive and social development by enabling them to interact effectively with others and construct new knowledge.

Speaking ability constitutes an important component of language development. Tarigan (2022) defines speaking as the ability to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings through oral language, while Manurung (2021) explains that speaking involves both receptive and expressive communication skills. At the age of 4–5 years, children are generally able to construct simple sentences, ask questions, retell experiences, and communicate effectively with peers and adults (Papalia & Feldman, 2022).

Language competence enables children to participate confidently in classroom interactions. Conversely, children with limited speaking ability often experience difficulties expressing ideas, understanding instructions, and interacting socially. According to Aisyah (2023), inadequate language development may reduce children's confidence and participation during learning activities. Rahmawati (2024) further explains that insufficient language stimulation at home and school remains one of the primary causes of delayed language development.

One instructional strategy widely applied to stimulate children's language development is the storytelling method. Storytelling is a learning activity in which teachers convey information, experiences, and moral values through interesting stories appropriate to children's developmental stages. According to Moeslichatoen (2022), storytelling provides opportunities for children to listen attentively, understand story content, enrich vocabulary, and develop communication skills through interaction during storytelling activities.

Hasanah (2023) also reported that storytelling improves children's listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and oral communication because stories present language in meaningful and enjoyable contexts. During storytelling sessions, children actively respond to questions, retell stories, express opinions, and communicate their own experiences, thereby strengthening their expressive language skills.

Although numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of storytelling for children's language development, empirical evidence regarding its implementation in PAUD Taruna Elim remains limited. Most previous studies have focused on general language outcomes without specifically examining the effectiveness of storytelling in the context of local early childhood education settings. Consequently, further investigation is needed to provide empirical evidence regarding the contribution of storytelling to children's speaking ability in this educational context.

Based on preliminary observations conducted at PAUD Taruna Elim, several children aged 4–5 years were found to have limited speaking ability. Some children were reluctant to communicate, had difficulty expressing ideas clearly, possessed limited vocabulary, and lacked confidence during classroom discussions. Learning activities were also predominantly teacher-centered, providing limited opportunities for children to communicate actively. These conditions indicate the need for more interactive learning methods that actively stimulate children's language development.

The storytelling method was selected because it is consistent with the characteristics of early childhood, who naturally enjoy listening to stories, imagining characters, and learning through meaningful experiences. Storytelling also creates opportunities for active interaction between teachers and children while encouraging vocabulary development, verbal expression, listening skills, and self-confidence.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of the storytelling method on the speaking ability of children aged 4–5 years at PAUD Taruna Elim. The findings are expected to contribute empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of storytelling in early childhood education and provide practical recommendations for teachers in designing more interactive and child-centered language learning activities.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the storytelling method in improving the language development of children aged 3–4 years at TK Cemara Liliba. The descriptive qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to explore learning activities, teacher–child interactions, and changes in children's language abilities during the learning process. According to Creswell and Poth (2021), qualitative research seeks to understand the meanings individuals assign to social phenomena, while Moleong (2021) emphasizes that this approach provides a comprehensive understanding of social reality.

This research was conducted at TK Cemara Liliba, located in Liliba Sub-district, Kupang City, East Nusa Tenggara. The research site was selected purposively because the school consistently implements the storytelling method as part of its daily learning activities and provides a learning environment that supports children's language development. The participants consisted of the school principal, one classroom teacher responsible for children aged 3–4 years, several parents, and children in the 3–4-year-old class. Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the implementation of storytelling activities and their knowledge of children's language development. This selection procedure is consistent with Yin (2023), who states that qualitative research sites and participants should be chosen based on their relevance to the research focus.

Primary data were collected through participatory classroom observations and in-depth interviews with the school principal, classroom teacher, and parents. Secondary data consisted of Daily Lesson Plans (RPPH), children's language development records, photographs of classroom activities, and other relevant school documents. The use of multiple data sources strengthened data credibility through triangulation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020; Moleong, 2021).

Data collection was conducted in three stages. First, classroom observations were undertaken to examine how teachers implemented storytelling activities and how children responded during learning. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore teachers' instructional strategies and parents' perceptions of children's language development. Third, documentation was reviewed to verify and complement findings obtained from observations and interviews.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process to identify patterns and themes related to the implementation of storytelling in children's language development. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation were employed. In addition, ethical principles were maintained by obtaining permission from the school, informing participants about the research objectives, and ensuring the confidentiality of all participant information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Table 1. Distribution of the Storytelling Method Implementation

Category	Interval	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	54–61	8	40
Moderate	46–53	10	50
Low	38–45	2	10
Total		20	100

Based on Table 1, the implementation of the storytelling method at TK Cemara Liliba was predominantly classified as moderate. Of the 20 participating children, 10 (50%) were in the moderate category, 8 (40%) in the high category, and only 2 (10%) in the low category. These findings indicate that the storytelling method has been implemented relatively well in classroom learning activities. Storytelling provides opportunities for children to listen actively, understand story content, interact with teachers, and retell stories using their own words. Such activities create meaningful language experiences that support children's communication skills and vocabulary development.

Table 2. Distribution of Children's Language Development

Category	Interval	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	27–31	6	30
Moderate	22–26	11	55
Low	17–21	3	15
Total		20	100

Table 2 shows that children's language development was generally at a moderate level. Eleven children (55%) were classified in the moderate category, six children (30%) in the high category, and three children (15%) in the low category. These findings indicate that although most children have demonstrated adequate language development, several still require additional stimulation to improve vocabulary, comprehension, and pronunciation.

Table 3. Summary of Simple Linear Regression Analysis (Simultaneous F-Test)

Relationship		F	Sig. (p)	Interpretation	Conclusion
Storytelling Method	→ Language Development	9.843	0.006	$p < 0.05$	Hypothesis Accepted

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.595	0.354	0.318	2.520

Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate that the storytelling method had a positive and statistically significant effect on children's language development. The regression analysis produced an F value of 9.843 with a significance level of 0.006 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the proposed hypothesis was accepted. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.354$) shows that the storytelling method explained 35.4% of the variance in children's language development, whereas the remaining 64.6% was attributable to other factors beyond the scope of this study, including home literacy experiences, parental support, classroom interaction, and individual developmental differences.

Table 5. Summary of Partial Regression Analysis (t-Test)

Relationship		t	Sig. (p)	Interpretation	Conclusion
Storytelling Method	→ Language Development	3.137	0.006	$p < 0.05$	Hypothesis Accepted

The partial regression analysis also confirmed a significant positive relationship between the storytelling method and children's language development. The calculated t-value of 3.137 with a significance level of 0.006 indicates that improvements in the implementation of storytelling were associated with better language development among children aged 3–4 years.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Children's Language Development

Statistic	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Pronunciation
Valid (N)	20	20	20
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	3.15	2.90	3.05
Median	3.00	3.00	3.00
Mode	3	3	3
Standard Deviation	0.670	0.718	0.605
Range	2	2	2
Minimum	2	2	2
Maximum	4	4	4

Table 6 indicates that vocabulary obtained the highest mean score (3.15), followed by pronunciation (3.05) and comprehension (2.90). These findings suggest that storytelling activities were particularly effective in enriching children's vocabulary while also supporting pronunciation and listening comprehension. However, comprehension showed the lowest average score, indicating that

children still require more opportunities for guided discussion and interactive questioning during storytelling sessions.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the storytelling method has a positive and statistically significant effect on the language development of children aged 3–4 years at TK Cemara Liliba. The regression analysis confirmed this relationship with an F value of 9.843 ($p = 0.006 < 0.05$) and an R^2 value of 0.354, indicating that storytelling contributed 35.4% to children's language development. Although other factors accounted for the remaining variance, these findings suggest that storytelling represents an effective instructional strategy for promoting early language acquisition.

The positive contribution of storytelling can be explained by its ability to create meaningful language experiences. During storytelling sessions, children actively listen, observe illustrations, answer teachers' questions, retell stories, and communicate their own experiences. Such interactions enrich vocabulary, improve listening comprehension, strengthen pronunciation, and increase children's confidence in expressing ideas. These findings are consistent with Musfiroh (2020), who argues that storytelling supports language acquisition by integrating listening, speaking, and comprehension into meaningful learning experiences.

The present findings are also consistent with previous studies. Rahmawati (2021) reported that storytelling significantly improves children's vocabulary and oral communication skills. Similarly, Sari and Nurhayati (2022) found that storytelling enhances children's ability to communicate, construct simple sentences, and express ideas more confidently. The consistency between the present findings and previous studies strengthens the evidence that storytelling is an effective pedagogical strategy for early childhood language development.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support sociocultural learning theory, which emphasizes that language develops through social interaction. Storytelling provides a communicative learning environment in which children actively interact with teachers and peers while constructing meaning from stories. This interactive process facilitates vocabulary acquisition, language comprehension, and verbal expression through authentic communication experiences.

The descriptive analysis further revealed that vocabulary showed the highest average score among the three language components assessed. This finding indicates that repeated exposure to stories enables children to acquire new words more effectively. Meanwhile, comprehension achieved the lowest mean score, suggesting that teachers should provide additional scaffolding through questioning, discussion, and story-retelling activities to strengthen children's understanding of story content.

Although storytelling explained a substantial proportion of children's language development, other influential factors should also be considered. Family literacy practices, parental involvement,

children's developmental readiness, classroom learning environments, and teacher competence are likely to contribute to children's language acquisition. Therefore, storytelling should be integrated with other interactive language-learning activities to maximize children's language development.

Overall, this study provides empirical evidence that storytelling is an effective child-centered learning strategy for improving early childhood language development. By combining enjoyable storytelling sessions with active discussion, questioning, and opportunities for children to retell stories, teachers can create meaningful learning experiences that foster vocabulary growth, language comprehension, pronunciation, and communication skills.

CONCLUSION

Main Findings: This study found that the application of the storytelling method has a positive and significant effect on the language development of children aged 3–4 years at TK Cemara Liliba, as indicated by a significance value of 0.006 ($p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.354$) shows that the storytelling method contributes 35.4% to children's language development, while 64.6% is influenced by other factors such as family environment, parenting practices, peer interaction, and individual differences in children's language abilities. This finding demonstrates that storytelling is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing vocabulary, listening comprehension, and children's ability to express ideas and feelings in early childhood settings. **Research Contribution:** The study provides empirical evidence supporting storytelling as a meaningful and developmentally appropriate learning approach in early childhood education. **Theoretical and Practical Implications:** The findings support constructivist learning theory, emphasizing that children build language skills through active engagement and meaningful interaction; practically, teachers are encouraged to use storytelling consistently with interactive media and child-centered strategies. **Research Limitations:** This study involved only 20 children from a single institution, limiting generalizability. **Future Research Directions:** Future studies should include larger samples, control-group designs, and additional variables such as teacher competence, classroom environment, and parental involvement for more comprehensive findings.

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