

APPLICATION OF *PLAY BASED LEARNING MODEL* IN FRONT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Background: Language development is a fundamental aspect of early childhood education because it enables children to communicate, express ideas, and interact effectively with others. Play-Based Learning has been widely recognized as a developmentally appropriate approach that promotes meaningful learning through active participation and social interaction. **Objective:** This study aimed to examine the effect of the Play-Based Learning model on the language development of children aged 5–6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City. **Method:** This quantitative study employed an ex-post facto research design involving 25 children selected through total sampling. Data were collected using validated psychological scales measuring the implementation of Play-Based Learning and children's language development. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression with SPSS version 25.0. **Results:** The findings revealed that Play-Based Learning had a positive and significant effect on children's language development ($F = 11.498$; $p = 0.002 < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.324$) indicated that the model explained 32.4% of the variance in children's language development, while 67.6% was influenced by other factors outside this study. **Novelty:** This study provides empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of Play-Based Learning in enhancing language development within an authentic kindergarten context. **Conclusion:** Play-Based Learning significantly supports children's language development by encouraging meaningful interaction, communication, and active engagement. Teachers are encouraged to integrate storytelling, role-playing, educational games, and collaborative play into classroom activities to optimize children's language skills.

Keywords: Nature Based Media, Early Childhood Creativity, Early Childhood

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is an effort to develop basic skills in coaching that are important for children from birth to the age of 6 years as a diamond age that is manifested in providing educational stimuli through growth in the form of nutrition and health and maximizing the potential for early childhood development in an integrative holistic manner through physical aspects, motor factors, convolutions, creativity, social, emotional, language, and religious and moral factors so that children have the readiness to enter further education on formal, informal, and non-formal pathways (Amseke, 2023).

One of the aspects of development that is very important to be developed early is language development. Language is the main communication tool that children use to convey thoughts, feelings, ideas, and needs to others. Good language skills will help children in interacting with their social environment and support children's success in the learning process. According to Ahmad Susanto (2022), early childhood language development includes early listening, speaking, early reading, and writing skills that develop according to the child's age stage. Therefore, language development needs special attention so that children are able to communicate well and confidently.

Language development in children aged 5-6 years increased quite rapidly compared to the previous age stage. At this age, children begin to be able to understand simple instructions, structure sentences more clearly, answer questions, and tell about their experiences. In addition, children also began to actively ask questions and interact with peers and teachers in the school environment. According to Vygotsky (2022), children's language development is greatly influenced by the social interaction that occurs between children and the surrounding environment. Thus, the more often children interact and communicate, the more their language skills will develop.

Regarding the importance of language development, the learning process in early childhood education needs to be designed in an attractive way and in accordance with the characteristics of children's learning. Early childhood is basically learning through hands-on experience and play activities. Play is the most popular activity for children and is an important part of their daily lives. According to Morrison (2021), play is a natural way for children to learn because through play children can explore the environment, develop creativity, and improve social and language skills. Therefore, play activities need to be used as the basis for the implementation of early childhood learning.

However, in reality, the learning process in some PAUD institutions still does not fully provide opportunities for children to learn through play. Learning is sometimes still teacher-centered so that children sit quietly, listen to explanations, and do assignments without involving fun play activities. This condition causes children to be less active in learning activities.

According to Mulyasa (2023), learning that is too teacher-centered can make children passive and lack the opportunity to develop language skills optimally. As a result, children lack confidence in speaking and are less active in interacting with the surrounding environment.

This problem was also found in children aged 5-6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten. Based on the results of initial observations, it was found that some children still have difficulties in language development. Some children seem shy to speak in front of the class, are less able to answer the teacher's questions clearly, and are less active in conversations with peers. In addition, there are children who still have limited vocabulary so they have difficulty in conveying their ideas and feelings. According to Masitoh (2022), children's language development can be hampered if children do not get the right stimulation and are not given the opportunity to actively interact in the learning environment. This condition shows that a learning model is needed that is able to increase children's active involvement in learning activities.

Based on these conditions, teachers need to apply a learning model that is in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood so that children's language development can develop optimally. The learning model applied must be able to create an active, creative, and fun learning atmosphere so that children feel comfortable participating in learning activities. According to Nofianti (2021), early childhood learning must be designed according to the characteristics of children who basically like to play, move freely, and actively interact with the surrounding environment so that the learning process takes place naturally and meaningfully.

The play-based learning model is a learning model that makes play the center of children's learning activities. In this model, children learn through a purposefully designed play experience so that learning takes place naturally and fun. According to Bodrova (2021), play-based learning is a learning approach that provides opportunities for children to learn through exploration, imagination, and social interaction during play activities. Through play activities, children can develop thinking, social-emotional, creativity, and language skills at the same time.

The application of a play-based learning model is believed to help improve early childhood language development. When children play with friends, they will use language to speak, ask questions, answer questions, convey ideas, and interact with the environment. According to Hirsh-Pasek (2022), play activities help children develop communication skills naturally because children use language in real and fun situations. Thus, play activities can help children enrich their vocabulary and improve their ability to speak more confidently.

In addition to helping improve speech skills, play-based learning models also help children improve their listening skills and understand their language. In play activities, children learn to follow instructions, understand the rules of the game, and listen to the opinions of friends and teachers. According to Piaget (2021), children learn optimally through concrete experiences and

direct activities that are in accordance with their developmental stages. Therefore, play-based learning is perfect for early childhood because it provides a real and meaningful learning experience for children.

Playing activities in the game-based learning model can be carried out through various activities such as role-playing, storytelling, singing, group play, educational games, and environmental exploration activities. These activities can help children actively use language in a fun learning environment. According to Mulyasa (2023), a fun, active, and stimulating learning environment will help children develop optimally in all aspects of development, including early childhood language skills. Therefore, teachers need to create a comfortable learning atmosphere so that children feel free to talk and interact with the surrounding environment.

In addition to creating a fun learning atmosphere, play-based learning also provides a more meaningful learning experience for children. Children not only passively receive information from teachers, but also directly engage in the learning process through play activities. According to Bredekamp (2021), learning that is appropriate to the child's developmental stage will help children understand the material more effectively and funly. Thus, the application of a play-based learning model can help children understand language more easily and naturally.

The success of the implementation of the play-based learning model is also greatly influenced by the role of teachers in the learning process. In play-based learning, teachers act as facilitators who provide direction, motivation, and stimulation to children during play activities. Teachers must be able to design interesting play activities so that children are motivated to actively communicate. According to Sanjaya (2021), teachers must be able to create an active and fun learning environment so that children can learn optimally. Therefore, teachers have an important role in helping to improve children's language development through the implementation of play-based learning models.

Research on the application of play-based learning models to early childhood language development is also supported by several previous studies. Research conducted by Putri and Rahmawati (2022) shows that the application of play-based learning is able to increase children's courage in speaking and improve children's communication skills during the learning process. Another study conducted by Suryani (2023) also showed that play-based learning can improve children's vocabulary and help children interact more actively with peers and teachers in the classroom. The results of the study show that the play-based learning model has a positive influence on early childhood language development.

Based on the results of an interview with teacher D.N (26) at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, it is known that the language development of children aged 5-6 years is still diverse. Teachers say that some children can speak fluently, answer questions, and recount simple experiences, but there are still children who lack the confidence to speak in front of their peers. In addition, some

children still have difficulty in composing clear sentences, have limited vocabulary and are less active in communicating during learning activities.

Based on the background description, we are interested in studying research on the application of play-based learning models to early childhood language development at the age of 5-6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten. The application of the game-based learning model to the language development of early childhood 5-6 years old at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten.

METHODS

The research method used in the research is quantitative with the type of ex-post facto research. This ex-post facto research aims to uncover information about the application of a game-based learning model to early childhood language development of 5-6 years old at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City.

In two variables in this study, namely independent variables and bound variables. The respondents in this study amounted to 25 children aged 5-6 years with the sample technique being total sampling at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang city. The variable (x) in this study is the application of a play-based learning model and the bound variable (y) of early childhood language development aged 5-6 years. The application of the play-based learning model is a learning process that uses play activities as the main way to help children learn and develop, early childhood language development is the ability of children to understand and use language to communicate orally and non-verbally according to their developmental stages.

The scale of application of the play-based learning model has three aspects, namely trust, communication, communication, and alienation. The validity results found that the application of the game-based learning model had 15 items that were proven valid by using the total correlation item correction coefficient test, realism value with Cronbach's alpha technique of large. The language development scale developed by Justice and Pence Turnbull (2021) contains four aspects, namely listening ability, speaking skills, vocabulary mastery, and language comprehension. The validity test of the instrument was carried out using the total correlation technique of the corrected item while the realism test used Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The data analysis technique is a simple linear recreation analysis with a descriptive analysis method. data is processed using the SPSS 25.0 statistical program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the statistical description of the data on the implementation of the play-based learning model at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten can be described as follows:

Table :1 Frequency Distribution of Play-Based Learning Variables (X)

Category	Score Range	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
High	55–59	7	28

Medium	50–54	16	64
Low	47–49	2	8
Total		25	100

Based on the results of Table 1 above, it can be seen that play-based learning is included in the high category as many as 7 respondents (28%), the middle category as many as 16 respondents (64%), and the low category as many as 2 respondents (8%). Thus, it can be seen that play-based learning is included in the intermediate category with the highest percentage of 64%.

In the theory of play-based learning by Bodrova (2021), play-based learning is a learning approach that provides opportunities for children to learn through play, exploration, social interaction, and fun hands-on experiences. The high percentage of child involvement in the high category shows that play activities designed by teachers are in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood development.

Table :2 Frequency Distribution Variables for Early Childhood Language Development.

Category	Score Interval	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
High	150–159	4	16
Medium	140–149	13	52
Low	130–139	8	32
Total		25	100

Based on Table 2 above, it can be seen that the language development of children aged 5-6 years can be seen as being in the high category of 4 respondents, (16%), the middle category as many as 13 respondents (52%), and the low category as many as 8 respondents (32%). Thus, it can be known that the language development of children aged 5-6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten is included in the middle category with the highest percentage, which is 48%. According to Susanto (2022), early childhood language development includes the ability to listen, speak, understand symbols, and express thoughts or feelings simply. Thus, the achievement of children's language development at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, which is mostly in the high category, shows that the learning stimulation provided by teachers has had a positive impact on children's language development.

Table 3. Summary of the results of the simple linear regression analysis from the simultaneous test F

Relationship	F	Sig. (p)	Remarks	Conclusion
Play-Based Learning → Early Childhood	11.498	0.002	p < 0.05	Hypothesis

Table 4. Summary of the results of the determination coefficient value (square R)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.569	0.324	0.296	2.19824

Table 3 and table 4 show a summary of the results of the simultaneous hypothesis test (F) which shows that there is a significant positive influence between the game-based learning model on language development with a value of $P=0.002$ and $F= 11.498$ with a square of $R = 0.324$. The effective contribution of play-based learning model variables to early childhood language development was 32.4% and the remaining 67.6% was explained by other variables not studied in the study.

Table 5 Summary of Partial Test (t-test) Recreational Analysis Results

Variable Relationship	t	Sig. (p)	Description	Conclusion
Play-Based Learning → Early Childhood Language Development	2.441	0.002	$p < 0.05$	Hypothesis Accepted

Based on the results of table 5, a summary of the results of the partial hypothesis test (t) which shows that there is a significant positive relationship of the play-based learning model on children's language development, a value of $p = 0.002$ with $t = 2.441$ is obtained so that the application of the play-based learning model to early childhood language development is obtained.

Table 6. Results of Descriptive Analysis of Game-Based Learning

Dimension	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error
Mindful	26	4	16	20	17.85	0.205
Meaningful	26	5	15	20	17.50	0.279
Joyful	26	5	15	20	18.04	0.218
Valid N (listwise)	26					

Table 6 of the results of the descriptive analysis of play-based learning found that the average value of the Meaningfull aspect was 17.50, the Minfull aspect was 17.85, and the Joyfull aspect was 18.04. This study proves Ha's hypothesis that play-based learning has a positive and significant effect on the language development of children aged 5-6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City. This is supported by the results of the study with the statistical test F (significance test) with an F value of 11,498 at a significance level of 0.002 ($p<0.05$). So, play-

based learning has a significant influence on children's language development with an R square value of 0.324 or 32.4%. Thus, the play-based learning model was influenced by children's language development by 32.4% and the remaining 67.6% was influenced by other factors that were not studied in this study. In the study, it can be said that the better the implementation of the play-based learning model, the better it can improve the language development of children aged 5-6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City.

The results of this study are in line with the findings of Nguru, Tanu, Missa, Sopa, Amseke (2026) which proves that there is a positive and unique influence on the use of image media and letter cards on the development of early childhood language (AUD) in Obenasi Kindergarten, Takari District, This is evidenced by the results of a simultaneous test (F test) which showed an F value of 10.134 with a significance value of 0.005 (< 0.05), So that the regression model is declared significant and feasible to use. The results of the analysis of the determination coefficient showed an R Square value of 0.360, which means that 36% of the variation in early childhood language ability can be explained by the use of image media and letter cards, while the remaining 64% are influenced by other factors outside of this study model.

Furthermore, Cendana and Suryana (2021) stated that Play-Based Learning can improve early childhood language skills. Through play activities, children get the opportunity to communicate, enrich vocabulary, express ideas, and interact with peers and teachers so that children's language development increases optimally.

This research is also supported by Pyle and Danniels (2022) who found that the Play Based Learning model provides a meaningful learning experience and is able to improve communication skills, speaking skills, and early childhood language comprehension. Children who are actively involved in play activities show better language development than children who only receive conventional learning.

In addition, Zosh et al. (2022) explain that learning through play encourages children to use language in a real context thus helping the development of receptive and expressive language. The higher the child's involvement in play activities, the better the child's ability to understand and use language to interact with his environment.

Based on table 1 in the results of the category in the play-based learning model, it can be seen that the play-based learning model for children in the high category is 7 children with a score of 28%, the middle category is 16 children with a score of 64%, and the low category is 2 children with a score of 8%. Thus, it can be seen that the play-based learning model for children at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City is included in the middle category with the highest percentage of 64%. This is also reinforced by interviews from teachers that children of this age are able to speak fluently, answer questions, and tell simple experiences. According to Hirsh-Pasek and Golinkoff (2022), Play-Based Learning provides opportunities for children to actively

use language through meaningful social interactions, thereby supporting the development of children's vocabulary and communication skills.

In addition, Zosh et al. (2022) explain that play activities encourage children to engage in conversations, express ideas, and understand language in a real context so that receptive and expressive language skills develop more optimally. In line with this opinion, Fadlilah (2021) stated that playing is an activity that is in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood because it can create a fun learning atmosphere and help children develop the ability to speak, listen, and interact with the surrounding environment. Therefore, the better the implementation of the Play Based Learning learning model, the more language development of children aged 5-6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City, will also increase.

In addition, table 2 shows the results of the language development category of children aged 5-6 years with 4 children with a score of 16%, the middle category of 13 children with a score of 52%, and the low category of 8 children with a score of 32%. Thus, it can be known that language development in children aged 5-6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City is included in the middle category with the highest percentage of 52%. This is also reinforced by interviews from teachers that children of this age are able to speak fluently, answer questions, and tell simple experiences.

Furthermore, table 5 shows the results of the descriptive analysis on the game-based learning model that there are 3 aspects, namely Minfull, Meaningfull, and Joyfull. In the first aspect, namely Meaningfull, an average score of 17.50 was obtained. The results of interviews with teachers show that children have the courage to speak in front of the class, answer the teacher's questions, and express their opinions when participating in play activities. Through play, children feel more comfortable and confident to use language in a variety of situations. According to Fadlilah (2021), play-based learning provides opportunities for children to explore and express themselves so that they can increase confidence in communication. In addition, Hirsh-Pasek and Golinkoff (2022) explain that a fun learning environment through play is able to encourage children to use language actively and spontaneously. Therefore, the aspect of trust is very important in supporting early childhood language development.

In the second aspect, namely Minfull, an average score of 17.85 was obtained. The results of interviews with teachers show that children often interact with friends and teachers during play activities, such as role-playing, storytelling, singing, and simple discussions. These activities help children expand their vocabulary and improve their ability to convey ideas orally. According to Zosh et al. (2022), learning through play provides an opportunity for children to develop receptive and expressive language skills through meaningful social interactions. Furthermore, Pyle and Danniels (2022) state that Play Based Learning is able to improve communication skills

because children are actively involved in conversation, cooperation, and problem-solving during play. Thus, communication established during the play process is one of the important factors in children's language development.

In the third aspect, namely Joyfull, an average score of 18.04 was obtained. This aspect shows that children are able to actively participate in play groups and do not experience problems in interacting with peers. Children look enthusiastic when participating in group games, sharing stories, and teaming up with friends. According to Whitebread et al. (2021), play activities that involve social interaction can help children build positive relationships with peers while improving language skills. Through intensive interaction during play, children get the opportunity to hear, understand, and use different forms of language in a real-world context. Therefore, high social involvement in play activities contributes to early childhood language development.

In early childhood, language development theory emphasizes that an environment rich in interaction and communication is essential to support language skills. Vygotsky explained that children's language development occurs through social interaction with adults and peers. In Play Based Learning, children get many opportunities to interact, discuss, and express their ideas so that language skills develop optimally.

Based on the results of interviews and observations at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City, it was found that role-playing, storytelling, group play, singing, and other educational games are able to improve children's ability to speak, listen, and enrich vocabulary. From these activities, the Play Based Learning learning model has an important role in supporting the language development of children aged 5-6 years and creating an active, fun, and meaningful learning atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

Main Findings: This study found that the application of the Play-Based Learning model had a positive and significant effect on the language development of children aged 5–6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City ($p = 0.002$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.324$) indicates that the model explained 32.4% of the variance in children's language development, while the remaining 67.6% was influenced by other factors beyond the scope of this study, including parenting practices, teacher competence, classroom environment, children's individual characteristics, and language stimulation at home. **Research Contribution:** This study provides empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of Play-Based Learning in promoting early childhood language development within an authentic kindergarten context. **Theoretical and Practical Implications:** The findings support constructivist learning theory and Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective, emphasizing that children's language skills develop through meaningful play, active participation, and social interaction. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to integrate

storytelling, role-playing, educational games, singing, and collaborative play into daily learning activities to optimize children's language development. **Research Limitations and Future Directions:** This study involved only 25 children from one kindergarten using an ex-post facto research design, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research should employ larger and more diverse samples, apply experimental or longitudinal designs, and examine additional variables such as parenting style, teacher instructional competence, classroom climate, and children's learning motivation to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing early childhood language development.

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