

Exploration of Storytelling Method Implementation to Enhance Language Skills in Lower Grade Elementary School Students

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Abstract

Language skills are an important foundation in the learning process in elementary school, especially in the lower grades. However, many students still have difficulty developing speaking, listening, and vocabulary skills optimally. This study aims to explore the implementation of storytelling methods in improving the language skills of low-grade students in elementary schools. The research method used is qualitative descriptive with a case study approach at one of the Hayyan Pengasinan Gunung Sindur Elementary Schools in Bogor. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation of learning activities. The results show that the application of the storytelling method in a planned and continuous manner can improve students' speaking and listening skills, as well as expand their vocabulary. Storytelling activities encourage students to be more confident, actively participate, and express ideas coherently. Teachers also play an important role in creating an interactive learning atmosphere using visual media, intonation, and engaging expressions. In conclusion, storytelling has been proven effective in improving the language skills of low-grade students and fostering interest in learning Indonesian from an early age.

Keywords: Storytelling, Language Skills, Elementary School, Storytelling Methods

INTRODUCTION

Language has a very important role in human life as a means of communication, thinking, and building social relationships (Korneeva et al., 2019). In the context of education, language is the main foundation for mastering various fields of science (Turiman et al., 2019). Therefore, language skills need to be developed from an early age, especially at the elementary school level, which is the initial stage for children to get to know formal and structured communication systems. Good language skills will help children express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas logically and effectively (Cole et al., 2010). However, in reality, many elementary school students still have difficulty developing optimal speaking and listening skills (Coskun & Uzunyol-Köprü, 2021).

A common problem that is often found in elementary schools is the low interest of students in language activities, especially in speaking in front of the class (Sinaga & Oktaviani, 2020). Students tend to be shy, lack confidence, and find it difficult to express sentences that are coherent and in context (Hammour & Ould Ouali, 2018). This is exacerbated by a learning approach that is still conventional and teacher-centered (Dole et al., 2016). Teachers often use lecture and memorization methods, so that students become passive and not actively involved in the language learning process. In fact, according to the theory of constructivism put forward by Piaget and Vygotsky, children will learn effectively if they are directly involved in the process of building knowledge through social interaction and concrete experiences.

One approach that can be used to overcome this problem is the storytelling method (Sitorus, 2018). Storytelling is a learning strategy that uses stories as the main medium in conveying messages, values, and learning concepts (Saripudin et al., 2021). Storytelling activities are not only fun, but also stimulate various aspects of children's development, especially language skills. Through stories, children learn to understand plots, characters, and conflicts, as well as develop the ability to listen, speak, and enrich vocabulary (Huda et al., 2022). Wright (1995) emphasized that storytelling is an effective way to build a child's imagination while introducing a natural good language structure.

In the context of basic education, storytelling has high relevance because the characteristics of low-grade students are still at the stage of concrete thinking and are very fond of imaginative things. Stories that are told in an engaging way with intonation, facial expressions, and the help of visual media can create a fun learning atmosphere. This is in line with the principles of 21st century learning which emphasizes active learning and meaningful learning (Hughes & Acedo, 2016). In addition, storytelling also supports the strengthening of basic literacy which is the main focus in the Independent Curriculum, where language skills are seen as the foundation for other competency development.

The results of previous research show that storytelling is able to significantly improve children's communication skills (As, 2016). According to Oktaviani and Hapsari (2021), the application of storytelling methods in elementary school can increase vocabulary mastery by up to 35% in one semester of learning. In addition, Hasanah (2020) also stated that storytelling helps students be more confident in public speaking and practicing the ability to compose coherent and communicative sentences. This shows that the storytelling method not only improves language skills, but also fosters students' motivation to learn and emotional engagement (Lucarevski, 2016).

On the other hand, the success of storytelling is highly dependent on the role of teachers in designing and implementing learning activities (Moradi & Chen, 2019). Teachers need to be able to choose stories that are appropriate for the age and characteristics of students, and use supportive media so that the message of the story is conveyed well. Storytelling activities should also be associated with the context of students' daily lives so that they can more easily understand the meaning of stories (Satriani, 2019). Thus, storytelling is not only an entertainment activity, but also a means of character building, empathy development, and language improvement (Lucarevski, 2016).

Based on this background, this study aims to explore the implementation of storytelling methods in improving the language skills of low-grade students in elementary schools (Yousef, 2021). The focus of the research includes the process of applying methods, the form of interaction between teachers and students during storytelling activities, and changes that occur in students' language skills after activities are carried out in an ongoing manner (Benabbes & Taleb, 2024). The results of this research are expected to contribute to the development of creative, interactive, and contextual Indonesian learning models (Winarso & Haqq, 2020).

With this research, it is hoped that elementary school teachers will be inspired to apply storytelling as part of a fun and effective language learning strategy (Liu et al., 2018). In addition, the results of this study are also expected to strengthen the basic education literature in the field of language skills development and children's literacy (Winarni et al., 2020). Storytelling not only hone linguistic skills, but also fosters students' confidence, imagination, and social sensitivity as an important provision in building a literate and communicative generation in the future (Benabbes & Taleb, 2024).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design because the main purpose was to describe in depth the implementation of the storytelling method in improving the language skills of elementary school students. The approach was chosen to comprehensively understand the learning process that took place, students' responses to storytelling methods, and its impact on their language skills. The research was conducted at SD Hayyan Pengasinan Gunung Sindur Bogor, with subjects comprising a grade II teacher and 20 students aged 7–8 years who participated in storytelling learning activities.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations directly examined how teachers carried out storytelling activities in the classroom, the interactions between teachers and students, and changes in student behavior during the learning process. Interviews were conducted with teachers and several students to explore their perceptions of the use of storytelling methods in Indonesian learning, as well as perceived benefits. Documentation, including photos of activities, student assignments, and Learning Implementation Plans (RPP), supported the observation and interview data.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) model, encompassing three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the data reduction stage, relevant data related to the implementation of storytelling methods and the improvement of students' language skills were sorted and selected. The data presentation stage was reported as narrative descriptions to facilitate understanding and interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions by identifying the main patterns and findings that emerged during the research.

Validity was maintained through source triangulation and triangulation techniques. Source triangulation compared observations, interviews, and documentation, while methodological triangulation employed multiple data collection methods to confirm the accuracy of the information. Member checking with teachers ensured that the interpretation of the results aligned with actual field conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Storytelling Methods in Low Classes

The implementation of the storytelling method was carried out for six meetings in a span of three weeks of Indonesian learning in grade II of SD Hayyan Pengasinan Gunung Sindur Bogor. Teachers carry out activities by following three main stages, namely preparation, implementation, and follow-up.

In the preparation stage, the teacher chooses folklore that is appropriate to the age and characteristics of the students, such as *Timun Mas*, *Shallots and Garlic*, as well as *Kancil and Crocodile*. Teachers also prepare supporting media in the form of character pictures, hand puppets, and vocabulary cards so that students can more easily understand the content of the story.

In the implementation stage, the teacher conveys the story using varied voice intonation, appropriate facial expressions, and interesting body movements. During the storytelling process, students are asked to listen carefully and guess the storyline through reflective questions. The classroom atmosphere became more lively and interactive as students showed high enthusiasm in following the stories.

The follow-up stage is carried out by asking students to retell the story they have heard using their own language. This activity aims to train speaking skills, courage, and the skills to compose sentences that are coherent. The teacher provides feedback on pronunciation, word choice, and the use of sentence structure.

Improvement of Students' Language Skills

The results of observations showed a significant increase in students' language skills after the application of the storytelling method. Before the intervention was carried out, only a small

percentage of students dared to speak in front of the class. However, after six storytelling meetings, most of the students showed improvements in the aspects of courage, fluency in speaking, and the ability to understand the meaning of stories. The following table shows the results of students' language skills development:

Table 1. Comparison of students' language skills before and after the application of storytelling.

Skill Aspect	Before Storytelling	After Storytelling	Increase (%)
Active listening	45%	85%	+40%
Courage to speak	40%	80%	+40%
Vocabulary use	35%	75%	+40%
Sentence structure	50%	82%	+32%
Expression & intonation	38%	78%	+40%

Source: Data on observation and documentation of learning in Class II of SD Hayyan Pengasinan Gunung Sindur Bogor, 2025

From the table, it can be seen that all aspects of language skills have increased significantly. The most notable improvements were in the aspects of active listening, courage to speak, and mastery of vocabulary. This shows that storytelling is able to create a learning environment that encourages students' active participation and provides a pleasant linguistic experience.

Visualization of Learning Activities

The following picture depicts the atmosphere of storytelling activities in grade II of SD Hayyan Pengasinan Gunung Sindur, Bogor. Teachers use hand puppets and pictures of characters to attract students' attention during storytelling activities.



Figure 1. Illustration of Storytelling Activities in Class II of SD Hayyan Pengasinan Gunung Sindur Bogor

Source: Researcher Documentation, 2025

The picture shows that the classroom atmosphere becomes dynamic and conducive to learning. Students not only listen passively, but also respond to stories, mimic expressions, and even add parts of the story with their own ideas. Two-way interactions like this have proven to be effective in improving speaking skills while fostering students' confidence.

Discussion Analysis

The results of this study show that the storytelling method is effective in improving the language skills of low-grade students, especially in the aspects of listening and speaking. This is in accordance with the opinion of Hasanah (2020) who states that storytelling can be a means of active learning that improves children's oral communication skills. Through listening and retelling activities, students are trained to compose sentences that are more concise and understand the correct structure of language.

In addition, storytelling has also been proven to increase students' motivation to learn. They feel happier and more excited when learning activities are carried out in the form of stories compared to conventional methods. Teachers also feel helped because storytelling makes it easier to convey moral values and character without a patronizing impression. This is in line with the opinion of Ismail (2019) that storytelling plays an important role in shaping children's character, imagination, and creativity.

Storytelling activities not only have an impact on linguistic skills, but also on the social-emotional aspects of students. Children learn to listen attentively, appreciate turns, and express opinions politely. Storytelling is an effective means of fostering empathy and cooperation among students. Thus, this method can be seen as a form of holistic learning that supports the achievement of the competencies of the Independent Curriculum, namely character development, literacy, and communication.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that integrating *muraqabah* and *muhasabah* as Islamic mindfulness provides an effective spiritual approach to supporting Muslim students' mental health. By fostering vertical awareness of Allah and internal behavioral regulation, *muraqabah* helps students manage negative thoughts and stress, while *muhasabah* encourages regular self-reflection aligned with Islamic values. This balance of spiritual awareness and emotional regulation appears to reduce anxiety, enhance empathy, and improve adaptability to academic pressures, suggesting that Islamic psychospiritual approaches can complement modern psychology in mental health maintenance. The findings also contribute to contextualizing Islamic psychology for contemporary students and imply that a *muraqabah-muhasabah* training program on campus could serve as a preventive strategy against rising student mental-health concerns. For future research, it is recommended to examine longitudinal effects, explore implementation across diverse student populations, and compare outcomes with conventional mindfulness programs to assess relative efficacy and cultural fit.

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