

Developing Children's Expressive Language Skills

Using the Storytelling Method

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ABSTRACT

Expressive language skills play a crucial role in early childhood development; however, many children still struggle to express ideas, use vocabulary, and construct simple sentences. This study aims to describe the development of children's expressive language skills through a storytelling method utilizing profession-themed picture cards. The research hypothesis posits that the storytelling method using these cards positively influences the improvement of children's expressive language skills. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, involving 28 children from Group B at TK Pertiwi 32 Pakintelan. Data were collected through observation, documentation, recordings, and the transcription of children's speech, utilizing the simak (listening) method—specifically the sadap (eavesdropping/listening-in), simak libat cakap (participatory listening), rekam (recording), and catat (note-taking) techniques. Data analysis followed the Miles

and Huberman model, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that all children participated in four learning sessions and demonstrated progress in expressive language skills, evidenced by increased confidence in expressing opinions, an improved ability to answer questions, an expanded vocabulary, and the ability to construct simple sentences. Therefore, the storytelling method using profession-themed picture cards serves as a viable instructional alternative to support expressive language development in early childhood.

Introduction

Language skills constitute an essential aspect of early childhood development because they serve as a primary means of communication, expressing ideas, and interacting with the surrounding environment (Mailani et al., 2022). One of the most important language domains to be developed during early childhood is **expressive language**, which refers to children's ability to communicate ideas, desires, and feelings orally as well as through various other forms of expression (Sururin et al., 2023).

However, the expressive language abilities of young children have not yet developed optimally. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbud, 2022) reported that many children continue to experience difficulties in expressing opinions, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and narrating stories coherently. This condition is influenced by limited vocabulary, low self-confidence, and

insufficient exposure to engaging learning stimulation (Fitriani & Suryana, 2023). Therefore, instructional methods and learning media that actively encourage children to communicate verbally are required.

One instructional approach that can be employed is the **storytelling method**. Through storytelling activities, children are able to enrich their vocabulary, practice speaking skills, and retell experiences or story content using their own language (Susanti, 2018; Latifah & Fitria, 2020). Preliminary observations conducted at TK Pertiwi 32 Pakintelan revealed that storytelling had not been implemented optimally because classroom instruction was still dominated by oral explanations without the support of varied instructional media. Consequently, many children experienced difficulties expressing their opinions, answering teachers' questions, and retelling stories (Susanti, 2018).

Agustina (2021) found that tactile box games, picture arrangement activities, and storytelling using puppets effectively improved children's expressive language through a one-group pretest–posttest design. Nevertheless, the study did not investigate the use of **profession-themed picture cards** as storytelling media. Likewise, Febrianti et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of expressive language in supporting children's communication skills. However, their study focused primarily on general language development, whereas the present study specifically investigates the development of children's expressive language through storytelling using profession-themed picture cards.

Hananik and Adelia (2023) demonstrated that serial picture media combined with the **Talking Stick** learning model effectively enhanced children's language abilities. In contrast, the present study utilizes profession-themed picture cards within storytelling activities to describe the development of children's expressive language through the interactions and verbal expressions that emerge during the learning process. Furthermore, Fitriani and Suryana (2023) reported that appropriate stimulation significantly influences the development of young children's speaking abilities. Nevertheless, their study did not specifically explain the process of developing children's expressive language through storytelling using profession-themed picture cards.

Based on these previous studies, it can be concluded that research specifically describing the process of developing children's expressive language through storytelling using profession-themed picture cards remains limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to describe the development of children's expressive language during storytelling activities utilizing profession-themed picture cards.

Accordingly, the research question addressed in this study is: **How is children's expressive language developed through the storytelling method using profession-themed picture cards at TK Pertiwi 32 Pakintelan?** The research hypothesis proposes that the storytelling method employing profession-themed picture cards has a significant effect on improving the expressive language skills of Group B children at TK Pertiwi 32 Pakintelan. Therefore, this study focuses on describing

the process of developing children's expressive language through storytelling activities utilizing profession-themed picture cards.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the development of children's expressive language skills through storytelling activities using profession-themed picture cards. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of children's language development processes within naturally occurring learning situations (Moleong, 2017; Sugiyono, 2019).

The study was conducted at TK Pertiwi 32 Pakintelan, involving 28 children from Group B as the research participants. The participants were selected using a total sampling technique, whereby all children in Group B were included as research subjects to enable the researcher to obtain a comprehensive description of the development of children's expressive language skills throughout the learning activities.

The research instruments consisted of observation guidelines, documentation, and guidelines for recording children's utterances during storytelling activities. Data were collected using the simak (observational listening) method, employing the sadap (non-participatory listening) technique as the primary technique, supported by simak libat cakap (participatory listening), recording, and note-taking as supplementary techniques. Observations were conducted throughout the learning process to obtain data regarding children's abilities to express ideas, answer questions, use vocabulary, and

construct utterances. Documentation in the form of activity photographs and audio recordings of children's utterances was used as supporting data (Sugiyono, 2019; Moleong, 2017).

The research procedure consisted of four stages: (1) the preparation stage, which included developing research instruments, obtaining research permission, and coordinating with the school; (2) the implementation stage, during which learning activities were conducted using the storytelling method supported by profession-themed picture cards; (3) the data collection stage, which involved observation, documentation, audio recording, and transcription of children's utterances throughout the learning activities; and (4) the data analysis and conclusion-drawing stage based on the research findings.

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which comprises three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2020). During the data reduction stage, the collected data were selected and categorized according to their relevance to the development of children's expressive language skills. Subsequently, the data were presented in the form of **narrative descriptions** supported by excerpts from children's utterances. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the patterns identified throughout the research process.

Prior to the implementation of the study, research permission was obtained from the Principal of TK Pertiwi 32 Pakintelan. All children's data were kept confidential and used solely for research purposes in

accordance with research ethics principles, including maintaining participants' confidentiality, obtaining approval from the school, and ensuring that all research activities caused no harm to the participating children (Azizah et al., 2025).

Result and Discussions

The research data were obtained through observations, documentation, audio recordings, and transcripts of children's utterances collected during four learning sessions designed based on the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (Rencana Pelaksanaan Harian/RPH). The analysis focused on children's ability to express ideas, answer questions, recount experiences, use vocabulary, and construct simple sentences, as observed through both their verbal utterances and nonverbal responses. Lubis et al. (2025) stated that children's expressive language ability is reflected in their capacity to express ideas or opinions, answer questions, recount experiences, use vocabulary appropriately, and construct simple sentences during learning interactions.

The observational findings revealed that the children's expressive language abilities varied considerably. Some children were already able to express their wishes and personal experiences orally; however, several children still produced sentence structures that were not yet grammatically appropriate and therefore required further stimulation and guidance from the teacher.

First Learning Session (O1)

The first learning session employed profession-themed picture cards featuring *air transportation*, particularly the profession of a pilot. The activity began with the children watching a video entitled "Getting to Know a Pilot", which served as a visual and audiovisual stimulus to capture their attention (Siahaan et al., 2020; Yus & Saragih, 2023). Afterwards, the teacher invited the children to discuss the content of the video and introduced a picture card depicting the profession of a pilot.

Conversation O1

Teacher: *"Earlier we watched a video about airplanes and pilots. Who remembers it?"*

Children: *"I do, Teacher!"*

Teacher: *"Who wants to become a pilot when you grow up?"*

Child: *"I want to be a pilot."*

(While stretching both arms out like airplane wings and pretending to fly.)

The child's utterance indicates that the child was able to comprehend the content of the story and relate it to a personal aspiration. The accompanying nonverbal response—stretching out both arms like an airplane—reinforced the meaning of the utterance, demonstrating that communication occurred through both verbal and nonverbal expressions. This finding suggests that visual media integrated with the storytelling method can encourage children to express their ideas more confidently (Nurviani & Jamain, 2023; Sururin et al., 2023).

From a *morphological perspective*, the utterance *"I want to be a pilot"* consists of the pronoun *I*, the modal verb *want*, the verb phrase *to be*, and the noun *pilot*. In the original Indonesian utterance (*Aku mau menjadi pilot*), the verb *menjadi* is a derived form created through the affixation of the prefix *meN-* to the root word *jadi*, resulting in a verb that expresses a change of state. This morphological structure demonstrates that the child was able to use an affixed word appropriately when constructing a simple sentence with a clearly identifiable subject–predicate relationship.

Second Learning Session (O2)

The second learning session employed picture cards depicting various professions. The teacher initiated the activity through a question-and-answer session, followed by movement and singing activities featuring the songs **"Gerak Profesi" (Professional Movements)** and **"Menanam Jagung" (Planting Corn)**. Subsequently, the children were invited to observe picture cards illustrating doctors, police officers, farmers, and several other professions.

Conversation O2

Teacher: *"Take a look at this picture. What picture is this?"*

Child: *"That's the doctor who examined me when I was sick yesterday."*

(While holding his arm.)

Teacher: *"Oh, Fandy has been examined by a doctor, right? That's correct. A doctor examines people who are sick."*

Teacher: *"What picture is this?"*

(Showing a picture card of a police officer.)

Child: "A police officer, Teacher!"

Teacher: "Very good. What does a police officer do?"

Child: "Keeps the roads safe!"

This conversation demonstrates that the child was not only able to recognize different professions but also relate them to personal experiences. Such interaction indicates that the learning process provided opportunities for children to develop language through authentic experiences (Susanti, 2018).

From a **morphological perspective**, the utterance "*That's the doctor who examined me when I was sick yesterday*" consists of the demonstrative *that*, the noun phrase *the doctor*, the relative marker *who*, the verb *examined*, the pronoun *me*, and the adverbial phrase *when I was sick yesterday*. In the original Indonesian utterance (*Itu Pak dokter yang memeriksa aku waktu sakit kemarin*), the child successfully combined several morphemes into a coherent sentence, allowing the conveyed information to become more complete and easier to understand.

Third Learning Session (O3)

The third learning session utilized picture cards based on the theme "**My Dream Career**." The teacher introduced various professions, invited the children to trace the word **ASTRONAUT**, color pictures, and subsequently discuss the professions presented in the learning materials.

Conversation O3

Teacher: "Children, what picture is this?"

(Showing a picture card of a flight attendant.)

Child: "The one who works on airplanes, Teacher."

Teacher: "Yes, that's right. This is called a flight attendant. Where does a flight attendant work?"

Child: "On an airplane, Teacher."

The child's response indicates that the child was able to recognize the profession based on its defining characteristics that had previously been learned. Although the child was not yet able to produce the specific lexical item *flight attendant*, the child successfully described the profession by referring to its workplace. This finding suggests that conceptual understanding had developed even though vocabulary acquisition was still in progress.

Furthermore, Adelia and Hananik (2023) explained that storytelling activities integrated with picture media provide meaningful stimulation that helps children understand concepts while simultaneously enriching their vocabulary.

From a *morphological perspective*, the utterance "The one on airplanes, Teacher" reflects the use of the relative marker *yang* ("the one who/that"), the preposition *di* ("on/in"), and the reduplicated noun *pesawat-pesawat* ("airplanes"). The reduplication of the noun demonstrates that the child had begun to acquire the morphological process of **reduplication**, although its usage was still influenced by the characteristics of spoken language commonly found in early childhood.

Fourth Learning Session (O4)

The final learning session utilized profession-themed picture cards under the topic "**Occupations and My Future Aspirations.**" The teacher began the lesson with singing activities and a profession-themed clapping game, followed by a profession card guessing game. The children were asked to observe the pictures, explain the responsibilities associated with each profession, and relate them to experiences or prior knowledge they had acquired.

Conversation O4

Teacher: *"Children, everyone look over here. This person's job is to deliver the news. Who do you think this is?"*

Child: *"It's like when a tiger entered someone's house."*

Teacher: *"That's right. When something happens, such as a tiger entering a house, someone reports the event so that other people know about it. What is that person's job called?"*

Children: *"The one on TV?"*

Teacher: *"Exactly. That profession is called a journalist or reporter. Their job is to deliver the news."*

The conversation demonstrates that the child was able to associate the teacher's question with previously acquired experiences and knowledge. The child expressed an idea based on personal understanding, after which the teacher provided reinforcement by introducing the appropriate professional term. This finding indicates

that the use of appropriate instructional methods can facilitate children's comprehension of learning materials (Andriani et al., 2018).

From a *morphological perspective*, the child's utterance "*It's like when a tiger entered someone's house*" consists of the demonstrative *itu* ("that"), the comparative marker *kaya* (a colloquial spoken form of *seperti*, meaning "like"), the relative marker *yang* ("that/who"), and the verbal phrase *harimau masuk rumah* ("a tiger entered a house"). This utterance demonstrates that the child was capable of combining several morphemes into a meaningful sentence, although the construction remained influenced by everyday spoken language and relatively simple syntactic structures.

Based on the observational findings, the implementation of the storytelling method using profession-themed picture cards provided children with opportunities to participate actively in classroom learning, express personal experiences, communicate their opinions, and expand their vocabulary. Across the four learning sessions, improvements in expressive language development were evident through children's increased confidence in speaking, their ability to relate pictures to real-life experiences, their broader vocabulary repertoire, and their improved ability to construct clearer utterances.

These findings are consistent with Day (2023), who argued that the quality of interaction and responsive linguistic input provided by adults plays a crucial role in encouraging children to participate actively in conversations, expand their vocabulary, and develop the ability to use

language effectively within communicative contexts. This indicates that the interactions occurring throughout the storytelling activities provided meaningful stimulation that supported the development of children's expressive language skills.

Furthermore, the morphological analysis of the children's utterances revealed progressive development in their use of *word formation, affixation, reduplication, and morpheme organization*. Accordingly, the storytelling method utilizing profession-themed picture cards effectively supported the development of early childhood expressive language through meaningful interaction and authentic communication experiences.

Conclusion

The storytelling method utilizing profession-themed picture cards effectively supported the development of children's expressive language skills at **TK Pertiwi 32 Pakintelan**. This development was reflected in the children's increasing confidence in expressing ideas, recounting personal experiences, using a wider range of vocabulary, and constructing simple sentences throughout the learning activities. Furthermore, the morphological analysis revealed progressive development in the children's use of linguistic forms within their utterances. Learning activities that integrated profession-themed picture cards with movement, songs, clapping activities, and question-and-answer interactions created an interactive learning environment. Consequently, this instructional approach can serve as an effective

alternative for stimulating the expressive language development of young children.

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