

The Use of Storytelling Methods to Develop Language Skills in Early Childhood Aged 5-6 Years: A Case Study at Aisiyiah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten in Makassar

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ABSTRACT

Research into the use of storytelling methods to develop language skills was conducted using the classroom action research method, with the aim of determining the outcomes of language skill development in pupils through the application of storytelling. The research involved 19 pupils and was carried out over two cycles and four stages: planning, action, observation and reflection. Data collection was carried out through planning, action, observation and reflection by applying several indicators of success in language skills, including listening, understanding the content of the story, vocabulary, confidence in speaking, and the ability to retell the story after the learning process had taken place. Quantitative descriptive data analysis was applied by calculating the percentage of children's language skill achievement in each cycle. The research findings indicate that children's language skills in Cycle I of the learning process, with the 'developing very well' success indicator, stood at 72.59%, and improved in Cycle II to 87.06% in the 'developing very well' category. A summary of the results from Cycle I and Cycle II indicates that the children's language skills have exceeded the success criteria set as the benchmark for measuring the level of development of children's language skills, which stands at 85%. Consequently, research employing the storytelling method is effective in developing pupils' language skills, and can generate engaging, active and consistent learning experiences for the development of pupils' abilities.

Keywords: Development; Use; Storytelling Methods; Language Skills; Early Childhood.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Storytelling is the act of recounting an event or a series of events, told directly with the aim of sharing a story or concept that can contribute to a child's language development (Cifre & Coblijn, 2025). In the context of early childhood education, providing learning experiences through storytelling is undoubtedly easier and makes for a more enjoyable learning experience for children (Yusuf et al., 2022). Teachers can certainly help children focus on their studies by using storytelling methods and are able to develop their listening skills throughout the learning process (Rusdiansyah et al., 2025).

To stimulate children's language skills, a method is needed that facilitates the learning process. Storytelling is an effective method for helping children develop their vocabulary from an early age (Parellada-Vendrell et al., 2023). This method provides a more meaningful learning experience as it simultaneously engages the imagination, emotions and verbal interaction in language development (Lopez et al., 2025). Previous research has shown that storytelling activities can improve children's vocabulary, listening skills, speaking skills and comprehension of language meaning through story contexts that are relevant to their daily lives (Salvas et al., 2025). Storytelling also encourages pupils to retell stories in their own words, thereby strengthening their receptive and expressive language skills (Özçelik & Elverici, 2024). Language learning takes place through the interactive use of language in communication (Ansari et al., 2025). The language learning process is based on a number of principles, which are then put into practice through various activities and serve as a guide for teachers in delivering more effective learning experiences (Surakka et al., 2025).

Conceptually, the improvement in pupils' speaking skills depends on the relationship between biological and socio-cultural factors (Ştefan & Dănilă, 2025). In studies of child development focusing on memory and problem-solving, children aged five to six are at a stage where they are already capable of thinking using reasoning (Asfaw et al., 2026). Their symbolic thinking skills develop very rapidly (Yuan et al., 2024). Language serves as the primary tool for expressing experiences and constructing meaning, acting as a therapeutic tool for children in developing their language skills from an early age (Brunk et al., 2026). In storytelling activities, pupils do not merely focus on listening to a sequence of words; rather, they are able to link linguistic symbols to the concrete experiences within the story, thereby ensuring that the processes of cognitive assimilation and accommodation take place optimally (Lenhart et al., 2020).

Language skills are a key element in the fundamental development of pupils aged 5–6 years, who are in the 'golden age' of cognitive and linguistic development (Hazaymeh & Khasawneh, 2025). At this stage, learners begin to be able to express ideas verbally, understand more complex linguistic structures, and interact communicatively with their social environment (Premo et al., 2023). Various research findings indicate that appropriate and structured language stimulation in early childhood has a significant impact on children's readiness to progress to the next stage of education, particularly in terms of early literacy, symbolic thinking skills, and social-emotional competencies (Anatoli, 2025).

Furthermore, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory regards language as the primary instrument in a child's mental development (Videla-Reyes et al., 2023). The concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) explains that a child's potential for communication can be maximised when they receive support (scaffolding) from a more competent family and wider social environment (Jiang & Lau, 2025). The storytelling method provides an opportunity for close verbal interaction between the teacher and the children, such as through prompting questions, dialogue during the story, and retelling activities (Heidlage et al., 2020). Such interaction enables educators to play a more active role as facilitators or mediators, providing learners with opportunities to develop their interpersonal skills and enhance their communication abilities (Hadley & Mendez, 2021). Storytelling is an effective form of language acquisition support as it presents repetitive linguistic structures, meaningful intonation and a social context that encourages children to engage actively in communication (Du et al., 2025). Stories told in a consistent and structured manner can help children understand sentence patterns, the sequence of events, and the meaning of words within a coherent context (Yuan et al., 2024).

According to several studies by [Chall \(1983\)](#) and [Clark and Clark \(1997\)](#), the primary source of language development is acquired naturally and is influenced by environmental factors ([Carmiol et al., 2022](#)). This is evidenced by the fact that in developed countries such as Finland and Japan, children as young as five have already achieved a high level of development and are able to further develop their abilities in areas ranging from pronunciation to the mastery of thousands of words, which are incorporated into their vocabulary [Zou et al. \(2025\)](#). In fact, they are able to develop the syntactic structure of language components ([Teepe et al., 2019](#)). Children's language skills develop easily if the learning approach is tailored to their age group ([Park et al., 2025](#)). Vocabulary acquisition also has a significant impact on a child's abilities and will continue to develop throughout their life ([Ren et al., 2019](#)). Language development depends on a child's abilities and is continually influenced by an environment that supports learning ([Luo et al., 2022](#)).

Kindergartens are institutions that play a strategic role in consistently laying the foundations for children's development from an early age, encompassing religious and moral values, physical and motor skills, cognitive development, social-emotional development, the arts, and language ([Diprossimo & Cain, 2026](#)). At this stage, children are going through a period of rapid development and therefore require educational stimulation that is appropriate, targeted and suited to their stage of development ([Turnbull et al., 2022](#)). A nursery school is not merely a place for childcare ([Saadiyah Kummin et al., 2022](#)), but also serves as a systematic learning environment designed to optimise children's potential through learning activities that focus more on play-based learning ([Ayala et al., 2026](#)).

2. METHODS

Classroom action research was chosen as a tool to directly improve the quality of learning in the classroom ([Anatoli, 2025](#)). The main focus is on improving children's language skills in communication through the use of storytelling techniques ([Bruno & Iruka, 2022](#)). Classroom action research is highly relevant to research aimed at developing pupils' potential, as it focuses on pupils' direct experiences through the practical actions undertaken by teachers in the classroom, whilst also providing an opportunity for reflection on the effectiveness of those actions ([Bermudez et al., 2023](#)). The stages of classroom action research are as follows:

- a. Planning: at this stage, the researcher (teacher) designs the actions to be taken to address learning problems, with the main activities being the identification of problems in the classroom, the setting of research objectives, the drafting of lesson plans or learning scenarios, and the development of assessment tools.
- b. Implementation of actions: at this stage, the focus is on putting the plan into practice, with the main activities being the delivery of storytelling lessons in accordance with the lesson plans drawn up based on the children's language proficiency indicators, and the application of the storytelling methods that have been designed.
- c. Observation: at this stage, direct observation of the process and outcomes of the activity is carried out. The main activity at this stage is to observe directly the learning process involving the use of the storytelling method by the teacher and pupils, and to record all the processes taking place during the storytelling activity.
- d. Reflection: at this stage, the focus is on evaluating the actions taken, with the primary task being to analyse the results of the observations and proceed to the next cycle (Cycle II) as a follow-up, should any improvements identified in Cycle I require further action.

The sample consisted of 19 pupils from Group B at the Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Daya Makassar Nursery School, using a rating scale of 1-4, namely:

- a. BB = Not yet at scale (1)
- b. MB = Beginning to expand in scale (2)
- c. BSH = Developing in line with expectations (3)
- d. BSB = Developing very well in scale (4)

To obtain accurate results in this study, the classroom action research method was employed. The researcher used percentage analysis to determine the extent to which pupils' language skills improved through reasoning using the storytelling method (Gao et al., 2025). The results of the data analysis were obtained through the classroom learning process, in which the teacher, acting as a facilitator, assessed the two stages of the cycle that were implemented. In this study, a child's learning achievement is considered successful if the results achieved by the child reach 85% in the 'developing as expected' category, with the percentage calculated as follows.

$$\text{Final Score} = \frac{\text{Score Obtained}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100\% \quad (1)$$

This research cycle was carried out in two phases, namely Cycle I and Cycle II, which were structured based on a review of the literature on classroom action research, involving the planning and implementation of activities for the children, followed by observations carried out by the teacher (Zheng & Zhang, 2026). Subsequently, the success of the research was interpreted using storytelling methods involving storybooks, flannel boards, wayang puppets and hand puppets, as shown in figure 1.

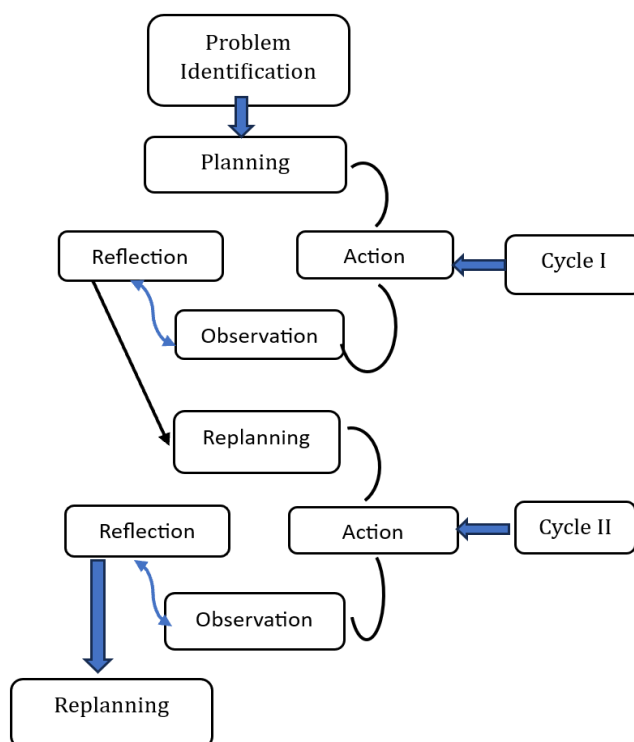


Figure 1. Research Flow for Developing Children's Language Skills Through The Storytelling Method

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

Based on the results of the research conducted, there are four types of intervention activities that have been implemented for the students, namely: (a) Continuing the story that has been told; (b) Reading picture cards; (c) Relates to the photo provided; and (d) Telling a story using pronouns such as you, i and they. The pupils' learning progress was analysed through storytelling activities carried out during Cycle I and Cycle II, with the aim of assessing the extent of the pupils' communication development through the reasoning involved in storytelling. The results of the analysis of student learning, which was carried out according to the schedule in Cycle I, are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Data on Students' Language Proficiency through Storytelling Activities

No	Language Proficiency Indicator	Number of Children	Category	Percentage
1	Able to continue the story that has been told	5	BSB	26,32%
2	Able to describe the pictures provided	6	BSH	31,58%
3	Telling stories using introductions such as you, me and them	5	MB	26,32%
4	The child is able to read picture cards	3	BB	15,78%

Table 1 shows that the total score analysis results obtained by students in the class reached 331 out of a maximum score of 456, with a percentage of 72.59%. These results indicate that the achievement of children's language development has not met the established success criteria, which is 85%. Several children are still in the average category, especially in indicators of the ability to retell the story content and confidence in speaking. Therefore, improvements are needed in learning in the next stage by optimizing storytelling activities, using more engaging visual aids, and providing more intensive stimulation and motivation to children. The explanations and findings from Cycle I indicate that the children's engagement remains low, particularly in the activity of retelling stories; therefore, further activities are required. This necessitates a re-planning of the learning process for Cycle II, involving the revision of the action plan to incorporate a more interactive storytelling technique. The results of the learning analysis from the activities carried out in Cycle II, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Data on Students Learning Development from Storytelling Activities

No	Language Proficiency Indicator	Number of Children	Category	Percentage
1	Able to continue the story that has been told	10	BSB	52,63%
2	Able to describe the pictures provided	7	BSH	36,84%
3	Telling stories using introductions such as you, me and them	2	MB	10,53%
4	The child is able to read picture cards	0	BB	0%

Table 2 shows that the percentage of children's language proficiency in Cycle II reached 87.06%, which exceeds the criteria for success in improving language proficiency through the storytelling method. The majority of pupils fell into the 'developing very well' category (52.63%) and the 'developing as expected' category (36.84%). The pupils appeared to be more active in

listening to stories, were more confident in expressing their opinions, and were able to retell the story in a more coherent manner. Consequently, the learning activities carried out in Cycle II using the storytelling method were deemed successful.

3.2 Discussion

The data analysis carried out in each cycle of the study clearly illustrates the development of the pupils' language skills acquired through storytelling activities; a achievement rate of 72.59% was recorded in Phase I, rising to 87.06% in Phase II. These results indicate that the teaching and learning processes implemented in both Phase I and Phase II yielded significant outcomes regarding the improvement of children's learning in terms of the development of communication skills through storytelling activities among pupils at Aisiyiah Bustanul Athfal Daya Kindergarten in Makassar. These results can be analysed and understood through the perspective of Vygotsky's learning theory, which places greater emphasis on children's active engagement with their peers throughout the learning process. Comparison of the results of Phase I and Phase II regarding the use of storytelling activities in developing student potential, as seen in Figure 2.

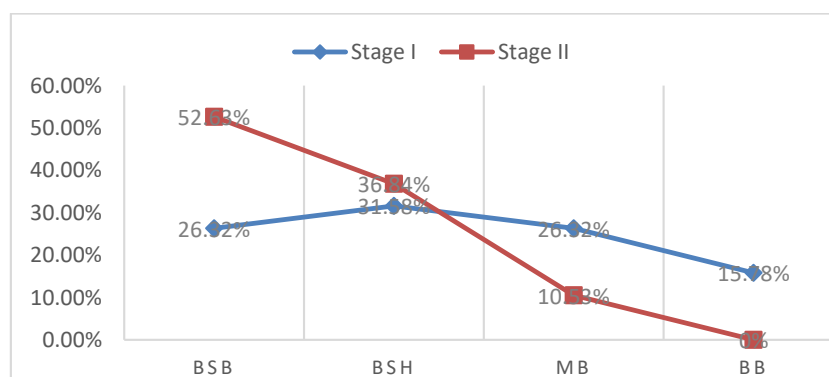


Figure 2. Comparison chart of stage I and stage II

Figure 2 shows that Cycle I results from activities designed to develop children's language skills through storytelling have not yet reached the maximum achievement level according to the specified standard ($\geq 85\%$). Several students have not shown significant improvement and lack confidence, particularly regarding indicators of confidence in speaking and the ability to retell a story. This situation indicates that when conveying their ideas independently, they are still highly dependent on adult assistance. Therefore, at this stage, children need support to further develop their abilities to the maximum. Consequently, the use of storytelling methods in Cycle I has not yet provided learners with the full support they require. Verbal interaction between teachers and children remains very limited, and some children have not received sufficient encouragement to participate actively in learning activities, particularly storytelling sessions. This has resulted in children's language skills not developing to their full potential, particularly in terms of expressive language.

Consequently, the second cycle focused on improving learning, with efforts to enhance the quality of social interaction and provide structured scaffolding to ensure that every pupil had equal opportunities to participate independently in learning activities-in particular, equal opportunities to retell stories with the teacher's assistance. This activity demonstrated a significant increase in children's language proficiency, reaching 87.06%, which exceeded the success criteria for the second cycle. The majority of improvements in children's development, as

evidenced by this reasoning, showed excellent progress and aligned with the assessment criteria, indicating their level of confidence and fluency in communication. Through the storytelling method, the teacher also acts as a mediator in helping children internalise language structure and meaning in storytelling. Consequently, the support provided can be gradually reduced as the children's language skills improve.

4. CONCLUSION

The percentage obtained in the study on the use of storytelling methods to develop children's language skills in Cycle I-72.59% in the 'developing very well' category-rose to 87.06% in Cycle II. The improvement in children's language skills reflects progress at each stage of the process in every cycle. The predetermined success criterion of 85% indicates that the learning intervention has been deemed successful in accordance with the specified achievement categories. This study confirms that a storytelling method, when designed and implemented systematically and in line with children's developmental characteristics, can serve as a guide for educators in developing learning materials, particularly for language development.

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