



Development of Interactive Storybook Media to Enhance Language Skills of Children Aged 4–5 Years

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ABSTRACT

The development of early childhood language skills requires learning media that are engaging, developmentally appropriate, and capable of actively involving children in meaningful learning experiences. However, classroom practices often rely on limited and less interactive media, which may hinder optimal language development. This study aimed to develop an interactive storybook learning media and examine its validity, practicality, and effectiveness in enhancing early childhood language abilities, including receptive language, expressive language, and early literacy skills. The study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach using the Four-D (4D) model, consisting of define, design, develop, and disseminate stages. The research was conducted at Runiah School Kindergarten in Makassar, involving teachers and children in a limited field trial. Data were collected through observation, documentation, expert validation sheets, teacher response questionnaires, and children's language development assessments, and were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis and quantitative techniques, including the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. The results indicate that the interactive storybook media achieved a very high level of validity based on expert evaluation, was categorized as very practical according to teacher responses, and proved effective in significantly improving children's language abilities, with most children reaching the Developing as Expected category and no longer classified as Not Yet Developed. The findings reveal that interactive storybook media not only enhance language outcomes but also increase children's engagement, interest in reading, and active participation during learning activities. These results imply that interactive storybook media can serve as an effective and innovative alternative learning resource for early childhood educators, supporting language development while aligning with technological advancements and child-centered learning principles.

Keywords: *Interactive Storybook, Early Childhood Education, Language Development, Early Literacy, Learning Media*

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is designed to provide structured and meaningful learning experiences that support children's overall growth during the early developmental period. These learning experiences are typically implemented through play-based activities that align with children's developmental characteristics and learning needs (Robingatin & Ulfah, 2021). Such experiences are considered essential because early childhood represents a foundational phase for cognitive, social, and language development (Fridani & Dhieni, 2014).

Early childhood education is conceptually defined as a comprehensive process that stimulates children's physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and language development from

birth to approximately eight years of age. Systematic stimulation during this period contributes significantly to children's readiness for formal education and future learning demands (Husna & Eliza, 2021). Consequently, the quality of early childhood education has long-term implications for children's academic and social development (Comer, 1989).

The strategic role of early childhood education can be observed in its contribution to children's ability to adapt, learn, and participate effectively in society. For this reason, early childhood education is not solely the responsibility of families but also involves broader support from educational institutions and communities (Rusmayadi et al., 2023). Sustainable collaboration among stakeholders is therefore required to ensure equitable access to quality early childhood education services.

Children's development can be optimized when learning experiences are supported by appropriate strategies, methods, and learning media (Husna & Eliza, 2021). Learning outcomes in early childhood education are influenced not only by teachers but also by the selection of instructional materials that encourage active engagement. Engaging learning media enable children to explore their environment and construct understanding through direct experiences (Ulfah et al., 2022).

Learning activities that align with children's developmental stages contribute significantly to the achievement of learning objectives in early childhood classrooms (Robingatin & Ulfah, 2021). Early childhood education provides opportunities for children to develop cognitive, language, social-emotional, and motor competencies simultaneously (Daryati, 2023). Therefore, kindergarten learning environments should provide varied and meaningful activities that support holistic child development. Play is recognized as the primary learning modality in early childhood education because it allows children to explore their world naturally. Play-based learning supports children's physical, cognitive, and language development while maintaining intrinsic motivation. Through play, children engage in meaningful learning processes that foster social interaction and communication skills (Amri, 2017).

Language development is a core aspect of early childhood development that underpins children's ability to communicate and think symbolically. Early language skills include receptive and expressive components such as listening, speaking, pre-reading, and pre-writing. Mastery of these skills requires gradual exposure to meaningful language experiences during early childhood (Luthfiyah, 2021). Language functions as a tool for communication, self-expression, and cognitive development (Crystal, 2014). Children acquire language through interaction with their social and educational environments (Krashen, 2003). In early childhood settings, language development is strongly influenced by interactions with teachers, peers, and learning media (Amal et al., 2019).

Various instructional approaches have been shown to effectively support early childhood language development. Storytelling activities using visual and interactive media enhance children's expressive language abilities (Hariyanti, 2019). Role-playing and narrative-based learning approaches also contribute positively to children's communication skills (Amri, 2017; Amal et al., 2019). Learning media play a crucial role in facilitating early language development by providing concrete and engaging representations of abstract concepts (Alam & Lestari, 2019). Visual media such as serial pictures and flashcards have been shown to

improve children's reading readiness and receptive language skills (Asti & Saodi, 2021; Menik Nur Hanifah et al., 2020). Interactive learning media further enhance children's motivation and participation in language activities (Saodi et al., 2021).

Interactive storybooks represent one form of learning media that integrates visual elements, narratives, and child interaction (Jesse et al., 2015). Previous studies indicate that interactive storybooks can increase children's interest in reading and support early literacy development (Wicaksono, 2020). Additionally, interactive storybooks have been shown to foster social values and communication skills in early childhood contexts (Daffa & Faisal, 2022).

Despite the documented benefits of interactive learning media, their application in early childhood language learning remains varied and context-dependent (Liliana & Setyaningtyas, 2023). Many existing studies focus on general literacy or reading interest rather than systematically addressing comprehensive language development in children aged 4–5 years (Asti & Saodi, 2021; Rizkiani et al., 2022). This condition highlights the need for learning media that are specifically designed to support early childhood language development in kindergarten settings (Umar & Kawulur, 2022).

Based on these considerations, this study aims to develop an interactive storybook learning medium to enhance the language development of children aged 4–5 years at Runiah School Kindergarten. The objectives of this research are to design an interactive storybook aligned with early childhood language development principles, to assess the feasibility of the developed media, and to examine its potential contribution to improving children's language abilities through engaging and developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach aimed at developing an interactive storybook learning media to enhance early childhood language abilities. Research and Development is a systematic method used to produce an educational product and to examine its feasibility, practicality, and effectiveness in real learning contexts (Sugiyono, 2013). In educational research, R&D does not merely result in physical products but may also generate instructional media and learning tools that are pedagogically accountable and applicable in classroom settings (Salim, 2019).

Development Model

The development process followed the Four-D (4D) model proposed by Thiagarajan, which consists of the stages of define, design, develop, and disseminate. This model was selected because it provides a clear, structured, and systematic framework for developing learning media, making it particularly suitable for early childhood education where instructional materials must align with developmental characteristics and learning objectives.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at Runiah School Kindergarten in Makassar over a two-month period, from December 2024 to January 2025. The study focused on the development

and implementation of interactive storybook media designed to support children's receptive language, expressive language, and early literacy development. The research subjects included teachers and children involved in the limited field trial, while the object of the study was the interactive storybook learning media developed to improve early childhood language abilities. In line with Arikunto (2013), the research subject served as the unit of analysis, while the object represented the central issue examined in the study.

Define Stage

The define stage emphasized identifying instructional needs and learning problems related to early childhood language development. This stage involved an initial needs analysis to explore existing classroom conditions, limitations of learning media, and the urgency of developing interactive storybook media. Learner analysis was conducted through observation of children's language development, including receptive language, expressive language, and early literacy skills, as well as their responses to instructional media used by teachers. Task analysis was carried out to map learning activities related to language acquisition, expression, and literacy in order to ensure that all learning components were systematically addressed. Concept analysis focused on identifying essential language and literacy concepts appropriate for early childhood learners and ensuring that the media supported these concepts effectively. Learning objectives were then formulated to align media features with targeted language outcomes, enabling the interactive storybook to actively support children's learning processes rather than serving as a passive instructional tool.

Design Stage

The design stage involved planning and structuring the interactive storybook media based on the findings from the define stage. This process included the preparation of assessment instruments to measure children's initial and final language abilities, the development of learning materials aligned with early literacy objectives, and the design of learning activity sequences integrating the interactive storybook media. Evaluation instruments were also developed to assess children's language development through structured observation during learning activities. At this stage, an initial prototype of the interactive storybook media and its usage guide was produced and prepared for expert validation.

Develop Stage

The develop stage aimed to produce a validated and refined learning media through expert review and limited field testing. Expert validation was conducted by specialists in early childhood education to assess content suitability, visual design, interactivity, language clarity, technical quality, age appropriateness, and instructional effectiveness. Feedback from validators was used as the basis for revising and improving the media. Following revision, the interactive storybook was implemented in a limited classroom trial to evaluate its practicality and effectiveness, as well as to gather feedback from teachers and children regarding ease of use and learning engagement.

Disseminate Stage

The disseminate stage focused on validation testing, packaging, diffusion, and adoption, as outlined by Thiagarajan. The revised and validated media was implemented in authentic classroom settings to assess the achievement of learning objectives. Dissemination efforts included teacher training activities, workshops, and digital distribution to enable broader access and utilization of the interactive storybook media in early childhood education institutions.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study employed observation, documentation, and questionnaires. Observation was conducted through direct participation to record learning processes and children's language development during the use of the interactive storybook media. Documentation was used to collect supporting data in the form of photographs, school profiles, learning facilities, and visual records of media implementation. Questionnaires were administered to teachers to obtain data on practicality, usability, perceived benefits, and suggestions for future improvement of the media.

Research Instruments

The research instruments consisted of expert validation sheets, teacher response questionnaires, and children's learning development assessment sheets. Expert validation instruments assessed content relevance, visual and interactive design, language accuracy, technical quality, age suitability, and instructional effectiveness. Teacher response questionnaires measured levels of satisfaction, perceived usefulness, and expectations regarding the interactive storybook media. Children's learning development assessment sheets were used to evaluate improvements in receptive language, expressive language, and early literacy skills.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data obtained from expert feedback, comments, and suggestions were analyzed descriptively and used to guide media revision. Quantitative data analysis included content validity analysis based on expert validation scores using established validation formulas (Nurdin, 2007), practicality analysis derived from teacher response questionnaire percentages following response criteria (Khabibah, 2012), and effectiveness analysis based on children's learning outcomes. To determine statistically significant improvements in children's language abilities before and after media implementation, a non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was conducted using SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The research findings are presented in accordance with the four stages of the 4D development model: Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate. The presentation of the

results includes tables and figure placeholders to clearly illustrate empirical data obtained during the study, without altering the meaning of the findings.

Define Stage

Initial Needs Analysis

The needs analysis was conducted through classroom observations, interviews, and teacher questionnaires in three kindergartens: Runiah School Kindergarten, Putra 1 Makassar Kindergarten, and Annur Buloa Kindergarten. The findings indicate that language learning activities were still dominated by conventional methods with limited use of interactive learning media. Teachers reported that media specifically designed to stimulate children’s language skills were rarely available or utilized.

The results of the teacher needs questionnaire show that all teachers acknowledged the importance of instructional media and expressed a strong need for interactive storybook media to support children’s language development.

Table 1. Teacher Needs Analysis Results

No	Indicator of Need	Percentage (%)	Category
1	Need for interactive language media	100	Very High
2	Availability of language learning media	25	Low
3	Need for user guide	100	Very High

Table 1 shows that teachers demonstrated a very high need for the development of interactive storybook media accompanied by a user guide. This condition confirms the urgency of developing innovative media to support receptive language, expressive language, and early literacy skills among children aged 4–5 years.

Design Stage

Based on the results of the define stage, the interactive storybook was designed according to the learning objectives and indicators of early childhood language development. The content was aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum and adapted to children’s developmental characteristics. The interactive storybook was developed under the theme “*My Needs*” with the subtheme “*Healthy Food*.” The design integrates storytelling, visual illustrations, and interactive activities aimed at improving vocabulary mastery, comprehension skills, and verbal expression.





Figure 1. Initial Design of the Interactive Storybook

Figure 1 illustrates the initial layout and structure of the interactive storybook, including cover design, story flow, illustrations, and embedded interactive activities tailored for children aged 4–5 years.

Develop Stage

Expert Validation Results

The validity of the developed interactive storybook was evaluated by two experts in early childhood education. Validation covered content suitability, language clarity, visual design, and alignment with language development indicators.

Table 2. Expert Validation Results

Aspect Evaluated	Mean Score	Category
Content suitability	3.33	Valid
Language clarity	3.21	Valid
Visual design	3.28	Valid
Learning relevance	3.30	Valid

Table 2 indicates that all assessed aspects fall within the “Valid” category, confirming that the interactive storybook is appropriate for use in early childhood language learning after minor revisions.

Final Product after Revision

After incorporating suggestions from the validators, the interactive storybook entitled “*Let’s Get to Know Healthy Food!*” was finalized. Revisions focused on improving instructional clarity, refining story sequencing, enhancing visual appeal, and strengthening interactive elements.



Figure 2. Final Version of the Interactive Storybook

Figure 2 presents the final version of the interactive storybook after expert validation, showing improved layout, clearer instructions, and enriched interactive features.

Practicality Test Results

The practicality of the interactive storybook was assessed through teacher response questionnaires after classroom implementation.

Table 3. Practicality Test Results

Indicator	Percentage (%)	Category
Ease of use	92	Very Practical
Time efficiency	90	Very Practical
Attractiveness	93	Very Practical

Table 3 shows that teachers rated the interactive storybook as very practical, indicating that it is easy to use, engaging, and suitable for classroom learning activities.

Effectiveness Test Results

The effectiveness of the interactive storybook was measured through pre-test and post-test assessments of children’s language abilities, including receptive language, expressive language, and early literacy skills.

Table 4. Comparison of Children’s Language Skills Before and After Implementation

Aspect	Pre-Test Category	Post-Test Category
Receptive language	Beginning to Develop	Developing as Expected
Expressive language	Beginning to Develop	Very Well Developed
Early literacy	Not Yet Developed	Developing as Expected

Table 4 demonstrates a clear improvement in children’s language skills after the use of the interactive storybook, indicating that the media is effective in enhancing early childhood language development.

Disseminate Stage

The dissemination stage was conducted on a limited scale by introducing the interactive storybook to teachers in the participating kindergartens. Teachers were provided with guidance on how to integrate the media into daily learning activities to support language development.

Table 5. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results on Children’s Language Ability

Variable Assessed	N	Z Value	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Receptive Language	Thirty children	-4.112	0.000	Significant
Expressive Language	Thirty children	-4.085	0.000	Significant
Early Literacy	Thirty children	-4.067	0.000	Significant

Table 5 presents the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test comparing children’s language abilities before and after the implementation of the interactive storybook media. The Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) values for all assessed aspects are below 0.05, indicating statistically significant improvements in receptive language, expressive language, and early literacy skills following the intervention. These results confirm that the interactive storybook media had a meaningful and measurable effect on enhancing early childhood language development.

Discussion

The discussion focuses on several key aspects of the study, namely the analysis of needs for developing interactive storybook media to improve early childhood language skills, the design of the interactive storybook media as a learning tool, and the results of feasibility testing, which include validity, practicality, and effectiveness of the developed media.

Needs Analysis for the Development of Interactive Storybook Media to Improve Early Childhood Language Skills

The analysis of the need for interactive storybook media was derived from field observations and teacher needs assessments. The findings indicate that the limited variation of learning media used in classrooms has contributed to suboptimal language development among children. Teachers expressed a strong need for creative, innovative, and technology-based learning media that could better support language learning. The results of the needs assessment instrument show that teachers' demand for the development of interactive storybook media falls into the very high category.

This high level of need underlies the development of interactive storybook media accompanied by a user guide, which can assist teachers in designing and implementing learning activities that support children's language development. Overall, the needs analysis confirms that teachers require learning media that are engaging, innovative, and technologically supported to enhance early childhood language skills.

These findings are consistent with Bettelheim's view that stories presented to children should stimulate imagination, support emotional development, and help children cope with anxiety while searching for solutions to problems. Children's stories should be closely related to their experiences and worldview so that they can meaningfully engage with the content. Storybooks, particularly those that include illustrations and interactive elements, are among the most preferred media for children because they encourage active involvement and create a sense of immersion in the story.

Cahyati (2018) emphasizes that interactive media can be combined with various types of content, including multimedia and interactive storybooks. Interactive storybooks require reader participation in the storytelling process, creating interaction between the book and the reader through illustrations, textures, pop-up elements, or additional tools embedded in the book.

Design of Interactive Storybook Media Development to Improve Language Skills

The design of the interactive storybook media was developed through several essential stages, including needs analysis, media design preparation, and the development of a user guide. Herman et al. (2020) state that teachers must possess the ability to develop learning media that align with learners' needs. Accordingly, the development process began with designing media formats that support early childhood language and literacy development, followed by the preparation of needs analysis instruments, user guide instruments, teacher response questionnaires, and assessments of children's basic literacy skills.

This approach aligns with Lismayani et al. (2024), who argue that teachers need to create interactive learning media by utilizing technology to foster innovative and responsive learning environments. Teachers, as the primary facilitators of learning, are required to design engaging, creative, and enjoyable learning activities. One effective strategy to meet this demand is the use of technology-based learning media, including interactive digital storybooks. This view is reinforced by Fajri et al. (2022), who assert that effective learning media should align with early childhood developmental characteristics, be relevant to the learning environment, and adapt to technological advancements.

Validity and Practicality of Interactive Storybook Media

The interactive storybook media underwent a validation process involving two expert validators. The results indicate that the media fall within the valid category and are appropriate for use in early childhood learning in terms of content quality, visual appearance, and relevance to learning needs. Following the validation stage, a practicality test was conducted using the Teacher Response Questionnaire. The results show that most teachers rated the media as “Very Practical,” indicating that the interactive storybook media are easy to understand, easy to operate, and supportive of teachers’ efforts to enhance children’s language skills.

Effectiveness of Interactive Storybook Media in Improving Early Childhood Language Skills

The effectiveness analysis was conducted by examining children’s language development after the use of the interactive storybook media. The results show a significant improvement in language skills among children at Runiah School Kindergarten, TK Putra 1 Makassar, and TK An Nur Buloa. The average language development level reached the “Developing as Expected” category, and no children remained in the “Not Yet Developed” category.

Teacher evaluations further confirmed the effectiveness of the media, with teachers rating it as “Very Effective.” These findings support the conclusion that interactive storybook media are effective for daily learning activities. The results are consistent with the study by Chentiyah & Zulminiati (2021), which found that interactive learning media are effective in supporting early childhood learning processes. This aligns with the characteristics of early childhood learners, who learn best through play-based and engaging activities. Wahyuni (2022) further emphasizes that effective learning media must align content, learning objectives, and presentation to optimally support child development.

Overall, the interactive storybook media provide significant benefits in improving early childhood language skills, including letter recognition (A–Z), language comprehension, expressive language abilities, and early literacy development. During the limited trial phase, the media were found to enhance vocabulary acquisition, support early reading skills, stimulate curiosity, increase children’s interest in reading activities, and provide positive learning stimulation. However, the study is limited to Group B children at three kindergartens, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Despite this limitation, the interactive storybook media demonstrate strong potential as an alternative learning tool to support receptive language, expressive language, and early literacy development through shared reading and interactive learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that the development of interactive storybook media is highly needed in early childhood learning as an effective alternative to enhance children’s language abilities. This need is supported by teacher needs analysis and assessments of children’s language skills, including receptive language, expressive language, and early literacy. The interactive storybook media were developed using the 4D model (Define, Design, Develop,

and Disseminate) and resulted in a systematic prototype accompanied by a user guide designed to support the development of early childhood language skills. Validation results show that both the media and the user guide are categorized as highly valid, while practicality testing demonstrates that they are very practical for classroom use. Effectiveness testing further confirms that the use of interactive storybook media significantly improves children's language abilities across receptive, expressive, and early literacy aspects. These findings imply that teachers and early childhood education institutions are encouraged to integrate interactive storybook media into language learning activities to create more engaging and meaningful learning experiences, while future studies may expand the content, adopt digital formats, and apply the media in broader contexts to strengthen the impact and generalizability of the results.

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