

Enhancing Children's Storytelling Skills Through a Picture Story Approach

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of storytelling methods supported by visual media to enhance storytelling skills in early childhood. The research was conducted at KB Aurora, Latta, Indonesia, using a classroom action research design consisting of two intervention cycles, involving 11 children aged 5–6 years. In each session, theme-based storytelling was combined with the use of visual media to support the learning process. The results showed a significant improvement in the children's storytelling skills. Before the intervention, more than half of the participants were categorized as "Not Yet Developed," but after the intervention, 90.9% of the participants achieved the category "Developing as Expected" or higher. Visual media proved effective in enriching vocabulary, improving fluency and coherence of stories, and encouraging active participation and self-confidence in children. This study emphasizes the importance of integrating storytelling methods with visual media in the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) curriculum as a practical and effective approach to support the development of children's language skills.

Keywords: Storytelling Skills, Storytelling Method, Visual Media

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penerapan metode bercerita dengan dukungan media bergambar dalam meningkatkan keterampilan bercerita pada anak usia dini. Penelitian dilaksanakan di KB Aurora, Latta, Indonesia, dengan desain penelitian tindakan kelas yang terdiri dari dua siklus intervensi, melibatkan 11 anak usia 5–6 tahun. Dalam setiap sesi, bercerita berbasis tema dikombinasikan dengan penggunaan media visual untuk mendukung proses pembelajaran. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan dalam kemampuan bercerita anak. Sebelum intervensi, lebih dari separuh peserta berada pada kategori "Belum Berkembang", namun setelah intervensi, 90,9% peserta berhasil mencapai kategori "Berkembang Sesuai Harapan" atau lebih. Media bergambar terbukti efektif dalam memperkaya kosa kata, meningkatkan kelancaran dan koherensi cerita, serta mendorong partisipasi aktif dan rasa percaya diri anak. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi metode bercerita bergambar dalam kurikulum Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD) sebagai pendekatan yang praktis dan efektif untuk mendukung pengembangan keterampilan bahasa anak.

Kata Kunci: Keterampilan Bercerita, Metode Bercerita, Media Bergambar

INTRODUCTION

Storytelling ability is one of the key indicators of expressive language development in early childhood (Isbell et al., 2004; Jannah et al., 2023; Warmansyah et al., 2023). Through this activity, children not only learn how to construct sentences but also develop imagination, narrative structure, and the ability to convey ideas coherently (Mulyanti & Bayan, 2022; Yus et al., 2025). At the preschool stage, storytelling becomes a primary medium for children to express experiences, emotions, and fantasies verbally (Churiyah & Hasibuan, 2025; Farista & Priyanti, 2023). In this sense, strong language skills serve as a crucial foundation for children's socialization and learning in subsequent education levels (Ristiliana et al., 2025; Salmiah et al., 2025; Syarfina & Warmansyah, 2025; Wulandari et al., 2025; Yulia et al., 2025). Therefore, fostering storytelling ability is an integral part of improving the quality of early childhood education.

Previous research has shown that storytelling plays a vital role in developing children's language proficiency. Nicolopoulou et al. (2015) emphasized that interactive storytelling supports the construction of narrative structure and vocabulary enrichment. Isbell et al. (2004) found that children demonstrate greater enthusiasm and creativity when prompted to construct stories based on visual cues. Similarly, Rahiem, (2021) noted that storytelling significantly improves memory retention and overall verbal communication competence. Thus, storytelling is not merely a recreational activity, but a pedagogical strategy rich in educational value.

In practice, however, many early childhood education institutions (PAUD) still struggle to develop children's storytelling abilities. A major obstacle lies in the limited use of engaging, developmentally appropriate media. Research by Khotimah & Sari (2025) indicates that visual aids improve children's narrative coherence and engagement. Lotfi et al. (2023) further emphasized that visual storytelling enhances cognitive processing by helping children link abstract ideas to concrete visuals. Ekaningsih & Haq (2022) asserted that visual involvement helps children form structured sentences when retelling stories. Despite its advantages, the use of visual media as a central component in storytelling is still underutilized, especially in religious-based ECE institutions with limited resources.

This condition is also evident at Aurora Playgroup in Latta, where children often appear passive, lack self-confidence, and have difficulty composing stories in a structured manner. Initial observations revealed that storytelling activities were still conventional, lacking integration with visual aids. Consequently, language learning objectives were not optimally achieved. Fauziah & Ramadhan, (2023) affirmed that storytelling enriched with visual elements bridges abstract comprehension into more tangible experiences, allowing children to build connections between images and language.

As a solution, the use of structured visual aids in storytelling should be promoted. Visual media such as illustrated story cards and simple digital visuals have

been proven to improve children's attention span and memory (Fauziah & Ramadhan, 2023; Rafiola et al., 2022; Smith, John, 2024; Triatna, 2024). By using images, children can better imagine the story's plot, understand the sequence of events, and link words to their meanings in a contextualized manner. Asifudin et al.,(2025) also demonstrated that visual-based storytelling using natural materials such as leaf pounding in ecoprint helps enhance early childhood language and fine motor coordination simultaneously.

Another approach is the use of visual scaffolding strategies. Images are presented progressively from single illustrations to full story sequences allowing children to gradually build narrative complexity. Caesar et al.,(2025) supported this technique as a way to activate progressive narrative thinking through visual stimulation. In such methods, the teacher serves as a facilitator who guides the child in developing stories based on available images. These findings align with those of Cahyati et al., (2022), who emphasized the role of visual aids in supporting children's expressive skills when tailored to their developmental level.

Furthermore, visual storytelling activities can be optimized through collaborative techniques. Teachers and children can co-construct stories based on images, which the children then retell in their own words. Insani et al. (2024) found that collaborative storytelling significantly boosts children's speaking ability by expanding opportunities for verbal expression in supportive classroom settings. Such methods also foster creativity, confidence, and classroom interaction.

Although much research has been conducted on general storytelling practices, few studies have explored structured visual storytelling implementation in religious-based early childhood institutions, particularly those in resource-limited settings. Most visual storytelling research has focused on well-equipped schools, leaving a gap in practical application for more constrained environments. Moreover, many studies have yet to analyze how visual aids function not just as supplementary materials, but as central pedagogical tools that shape narrative development (Aisyah, 2021; Ekaningsih & Faiz Haq, 2022; Insani et al., 2024).

This study addresses the identified gap by offering a pedagogical innovation in the form of structured visual storytelling tailored to the sociocultural context of a faith-based PAUD institution. The novelty of this research lies in its use of progressively designed visual aids implemented across two classroom action cycles to stimulate early narrative competence. Beyond its practical contribution, the study also extends theoretical insight into culturally sensitive and resource-aware storytelling methods. The main objective of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of visual media in improving early childhood storytelling skills and to assess children's engagement and responses during the implementation process.

METHODS

Research Design and Setting

This study adopted a classroom action research (CAR) approach based on Kurt Lewin's cyclical model, which involves iterative stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The purpose of this research was to enhance early childhood storytelling skills by implementing a storytelling strategy utilizing visual aids. The study was conducted at Aurora Kindergarten, located in Latta Village, Indonesia, and involved 11 children aged 5 to 6 years from a total of 27 enrolled students.

Implementation Timeline and Procedures

The research was carried out over the course of one month, from July 25 to August 25, 2022, consisting of two action cycles, each comprising three structured learning sessions. During the planning phase, researchers collaborated with classroom teachers to develop illustrated learning materials and daily lesson plans (RPPH) aligned with themes such as "Myself" and "My Senses." In the action phase, children were engaged in storytelling activities where they were encouraged to retell stories using sequential picture prompts. The observation phase involved detailed monitoring of student performance and engagement by both the teacher and researcher. Finally, the reflection phase was used to evaluate outcomes and collaboratively revise the instructional approach before proceeding to the next cycle.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through three complementary methods: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observational data focused on three core indicators of storytelling skills: vocabulary usage, narrative fluency, and coherence between visual prompts and spoken content. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, the classroom teacher, and selected students to gain deeper insight into the learning process and participants' experiences. Supplementary documentation—including photographs of classroom activities, teaching plans, and samples of student work was also gathered to support triangulation and analysis.

Data Analysis Strategies

A mixed-method analysis was employed to interpret the data. Qualitative data from interviews and observation field notes were examined thematically through coding, pattern identification, and interpretation. Quantitative data were derived from developmental assessment scores based on a 4-point scale, ranging from "Not Yet Developing" to "Very Well Developed." The scores were analyzed using a percentage formula: $NP = (R / SM) \times 100$, where NP represents the percentage score, R is the total score obtained by each child, and SM is the maximum possible score.

Success Criteria and Ethical Considerations

The study was considered successful if at least 75% of the participating children reached the “Developing as Expected” or “Very Well Developed” categories in their storytelling performance. Ethical procedures were followed rigorously, including obtaining formal approval from school authorities, securing informed consent from parents or guardians, and ensuring confidentiality of all participant data. Acknowledging the limitations of the study, such as a small sample size, short implementation period, and potential observer bias, the researchers applied triangulation of techniques and data sources to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This classroom action research was conducted at KB Aurora Latta, involving 11 children aged 5–6 years. The study aimed to improve children's storytelling skills through the use of thematic picture-based media. The learning intervention was implemented in two reflective action cycles, with assessments carried out at three stages: pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II. Evaluation referred to four categories of language development as per national PAUD standards: Not Yet Developed (BB), Emerging (MB), Developing as Expected (BSH), and Very Well Developed (SB).

Table 1. Recapitulation of Children's Storytelling Abilities from Pre-Cycle to Cycle II

Phase	BB	MB	BSH	SB	Total Children	% BSH + SB
Pre-Cycle	6	4	1	0	11	9.1%
Cycle I	2	5	4	0	11	36.4%
Cycle II	0	1	7	3	11	90.9%

In the pre-cycle stage, the majority of children showed underdeveloped storytelling abilities. A total of 6 out of 11 children (55%) were classified as *Not Yet Developed*, while 4 children (36.4%) were in the *Emerging* category. **Only** 1 child (9.1%) reached the *Developing as Expected* level, and none had achieved *Very Well Developed*. These findings indicate that children were struggling to formulate stories independently, with limited vocabulary, lack of fluency, and difficulties in structuring narrative sequences. Observations also revealed that most children were passive and heavily dependent on teacher assistance when asked to retell stories.

Following the implementation of picture-based media in **Cycle I**, a shift in developmental distribution was observed. The number of children in the *Not Yet Developed* category decreased to 2 children (18.2%), and 5 children (45.5%) moved to the *Emerging* stage. Furthermore, 4 children (36.4%) had successfully achieved the *Developing as Expected* level. Although progress was evident particularly in terms of vocabulary use and storytelling participation no child had yet reached the *Very Well Developed* category, and some children still required scaffolding from the teacher during storytelling.

A more substantial improvement was recorded in Cycle II, after adjustments to the learning media and pedagogical strategy were made. In this final stage, 7 children (63.6%) reached the *Developing as Expected* level, while 3 children (27.3%) progressed to *Very Well Developed*. **Only** 1 child (9.1%) remained in the *Emerging* category, and no child was classified as *Not Yet Developed*. Overall, 10 out of 11 children (90.9%) had achieved the expected level or higher, confirming that the storytelling intervention using picture-based media had a highly positive impact on children's narrative skills.

This outcome was reinforced by qualitative observations and documentation, which noted improvements in vocabulary richness, narrative structure, and confidence in speaking before peers. Children also demonstrated the ability to organize story sequences logically based on visual cues from the provided images. These findings affirm that visual media not only facilitated comprehension of story content but also supported the development of concrete associations between images and the stories created by the children.

These results align with the findings of Nicolopoulou et al. (2015), who highlighted that narrative and play-based activities foster expressive language growth in preschoolers. Similarly, Isbell et al. (2004) found that storytelling using picture prompts enhanced oral language complexity and story comprehension. Rafiola et al., (2022) emphasized that visual aids help children construct more cohesive and logical narratives.

The study also underscores the critical role of teachers as facilitators in cultivating a learning environment that nurtures narrative development. By providing visual prompts and scaffolding the story-building process, teachers not only enhanced children's linguistic structure but also fostered confidence and initiative in verbal expression. These findings echo those of Cahyati et al., (2022), who reported that integrating visual art into storytelling strengthens children's emotional engagement and personal meaning-making.

Beyond linguistic development, the visual storytelling approach also supported social and emotional growth. Children collaborated in small groups, listened actively to peers, and freely expressed emotions and imagination. Insani et al. (2024) support this, noting that the use of audiovisual media in storytelling enhances children's self-confidence in communication. Altogether, the method provided an engaging, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate learning experience.

In terms of practical implications, the research highlights the importance of integrating picture-based storytelling into early childhood education curricula. Teachers should be trained to design and implement interactive and theme-based storytelling sessions using visual media. This strategy not only promotes language development but also reinforces cognitive and socio-emotional competencies. Limitations of this study include a small sample size and a short implementation period. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve larger cohorts over longer durations, possibly incorporating digital storytelling tools for broader application.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of picture-assisted storytelling as a learning strategy has proven to be an effective approach to enhance young children's narrative abilities in early childhood education settings. This study affirms that integrating visual media into storytelling activities can stimulate vocabulary development, improve fluency, and build children's confidence in oral expression. Furthermore, the active role of teachers in facilitating structured storytelling sessions contributes significantly to optimizing children's language development. This method is especially relevant in resource-limited contexts, offering a meaningful, engaging, and developmentally appropriate learning experience that supports holistic language acquisition.

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