

## THE USE OF THE METHOD USING HAND PUPPET MEDIA IN IMPROVING THE SPEAKING SKILLS OF CHILDREN AGED 5-6 YEARS IN RA YUSRIAH

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### Abstract

This study aims to improve the speaking skills of children aged 5-6 years through storytelling methods assisted by hand puppet media at RA Yusriyah. The background of this study is based on the results of initial observations that show the low speaking ability of children, especially in terms of articulation, intonation, and vocabulary mastery. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach in the form of Class Action Research (PTK) which is carried out in two cycles. Data was collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The results of the pre-action study showed that most children were still in the starting developing category (MB). After the application of hand puppet media in storytelling activities during five meetings in Cycle I, there was a significant increase; 24 children reached the category of developing according to expectations (BSH), and 3 children were in the category of developing very well (BSB). Improvements can be seen in the aspects of vocabulary mastery, sentence composition, voice intonation, and courage to speak. Hand puppet media has been proven to be effective in creating a fun, interactive learning atmosphere and facilitating children to be more confident in expressing ideas. This study recommends the use of hand puppet media as a fun language learning strategy in early childhood education.

**Keywords:** Speaking Ability, Early Childhood, Hand Puppet Media, Storytelling Methods, Early Childhood Education (PAUD)

### INTRODUCTION

Childhood is the most decisive early phase in shaping a person's character and abilities in adulthood. It is during this period that children begin to develop their basic potentials, both cognitively, socially, emotionally, and linguistically. Education provided from an early age can be a strong foundation for the formation of children's personality, values, and basic skills. Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a concrete form of attention to this developmental phase, and includes children aged 0 to 8 years (Slamet Suyanto, 2005:23).

Early childhood education cannot be equated with other levels of formal education because children at this age have unique characteristics, such as quick catch, high curiosity, and a dominant way of learning through play. Therefore, learning methods and media that are in accordance with their stages of development are needed. Early childhood needs to be facilitated with a holistic and fun approach so that they are able to absorb the values and skills that are instilled optimally (Ni Luh Prihanjani et al., 2016:56).

One of the important aspects of early childhood education is the development of speech skills. Speaking is a form of verbal communication that is the basis for children to interact socially. According to Suhendar, speaking is the process of changing thoughts or feelings into a form of speech that can be understood by others (Suhendar, 1992:20). With good speaking skills, children can convey their ideas, desires, and emotions effectively.

Speaking is also the embodiment of thinking ability. As expressed by Mulyana, speaking is the process of pouring out ideas in the form of speech, where the speeches that arise come from ideas that have been formed in the mind (Mulyana, 2001:42). Therefore, speaking skills are not only a linguistic aspect, but also a cognitive one.

In practice, the development of speaking skills in early childhood can be done in a variety of ways. One of the methods that is considered effective and interesting is the storytelling method. Through stories, children not only listen, but also learn to compose sentences, enrich vocabulary, and hone their ability to convey information sequentially. The story also contains moral values that can shape children's characters slowly but deeply.

Learning media that supports storytelling methods is also an important factor in its success. Hand puppets are one of the media that are effectively used in telling stories to children. Hand dolls have an attractive shape, are easy to make, and are able to stimulate children's imagination and attention. By using hand puppets, teachers or educators can more easily convey messages and invite children to be actively involved in storytelling activities (Yusnita et al., 2012:32).

Children aged 5–6 years are at a stage where they begin to be able to follow instructions, understand symbols, and show interest in storytelling. They can listen to stories carefully, reframe stories, and develop stories based on their own imagination. Therefore, at this age it is very important to facilitate them with methods that can increase confidence and courage in speaking (Slamet Suyanto, 2005:23).

However, the reality is that in the field there are still many early childhood children who are not able to retell the stories they heard. Based on initial observations at RA Yusriah, the children were still passive when asked to tell stories again after listening to the teacher's story. No child is able to repeat the story in its entirety. This shows a lack of courage, vocabulary, and the ability to compose sentences orally.

Seeing this reality, a media that is able to bridge the gap between children's potential and actual abilities is needed. The use of hand puppet media in the storytelling method is believed to provide a more fun and interactive learning experience, so that children can more easily understand and reveal stories again. In addition, this media can also foster confidence and form a positive character of children.

Based on the above explanation, this study aims to examine in depth the use of storytelling methods using hand puppet media in improving the speaking skills of children aged 5–6 years in RA

Yusriah. This research is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to the world of education, especially in the aspects of language development and early childhood communication.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the Classroom Action Research (PTK) method. The goal is to find out how the use of hand puppet media can improve early childhood speaking skills, especially children aged 5–6 years in RA YUSRIAH. This research is carried out systematically through direct observation in the field, by describing and interpreting the data found to obtain a real picture of the learning process that occurs.

The research was carried out at RA YUSRIAH, located at Jl. Gaperta Ujung, Gang Wakaf No. 7, Medan Helvetia, Medan City, North Sumatra. The subjects in this study were 28 children in group B aged 5–6 years, consisting of 13 girls and 15 boys. The object of this research is children's speaking skills developed through storytelling activities using hand puppet media in learning.

The PTK method used in this study consists of two cycles, and each cycle has four main stages, namely: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. At the planning stage, researchers and teachers jointly develop the required learning plans and media. At the implementation stage, teachers apply storytelling learning using hand puppets. Observations are made to record the child's response and participation, while reflection aims to evaluate the results and correct the deficiencies in the next cycle.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from direct observation of the teaching and learning process, interviews with teachers, principals, and parents of children. Meanwhile, secondary data is in the form of school documents, journals, and scientific articles that are relevant to the research topic. This information is collected to reinforce the accuracy and validity of findings in the field.

The data collection techniques in this study include participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher is active in learning activities to observe the process of using hand puppets. Face-to-face interviews are conducted to get the views of teachers and parents on children's development. Documentation such as photos, videos, and learning diaries were also collected to support the observation results.

Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In addition, to measure the development of children's speaking skills, a percentage formula was used with the following assessment criteria: excellent (75–100%), good (50–74.99%), fair (25–49.99%), and less (0–24.99%). The results of this analysis are then used as a basis for reflection to determine the success of actions and improvement steps in the next cycle.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the research findings from pre-action and cycle I in the research on improving the speaking ability of children aged 5-6 years through the medium of hand puppets at RA Yusriyah:

This study began with the observation of the initial condition of the speech ability of children aged 5-6 years at RA Yusriyah. The results of observations showed that most children had difficulty speaking, both in terms of articulation, intonation, and mastery of polite and contextual vocabulary. Of the 28 children, only 4 showed development as expected (BSH), while the rest were still in the early stage of development (MB). This suggests that children need more stimulus in order to be able to speak confidently and clearly in public.

The researcher then carried out the initial action through the medium of hand puppets which were conveyed in the form of interesting and easy-to-understand prophetic stories. This method aims to attract attention and trigger a verbal response from children. Children were invited to dialogue and given questions to explain what they heard from the story. This process is carried out gradually in several cycles to see the progressive development in their speaking ability.

In the implementation of Cycle I which consisted of five meetings, the method used still carried the media of hand puppets but was developed with a combination of interactive stories and simple games. Children begin to show an increase in the courage to speak, especially because the classroom atmosphere is made more fun and interactive. Teachers and researchers work together to ensure that all children have the opportunity to speak and receive positive encouragement when answering.

The results of Cycle I showed a significant improvement compared to the pre-action. It was seen that 24 out of 28 children managed to move up to the expected development category (BSH), and 3 children entered the very well developed category (BSB). This shows that the approach using hand puppet media is quite effective in improving children's speaking aspects, especially in the use of vocabulary, word structure, and intonation when speaking.

Some of the most prominent indicators of improving speaking skills include clarity in conveying vocabulary, the ability to understand the content of stories, and the ability of children to adjust tone of voice (intonation) when speaking. Children also begin to be able to convey opinions or answers sequentially and coherently. Changes in sitting positions, light physical activity before learning, and enthusiasm instilled by teachers also help increase children's confidence when speaking.

Overall, the results of the research in cycle I provide an idea that the use of hand puppet media can be a fun and effective learning alternative to improve early childhood speaking skills. Although there are still some children who are in the category of starting to develop, in general there is a significant positive increase. This provides a solid foundation for researchers and teachers to move on to the next cycle with some adjustments to achieve more optimal results.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of the pre-action show that early childhood speaking skills in RA Yusriyah are still relatively low. The majority of children are in the category of starting to develop (MB), only a small percentage of achieving development as expected (BSH). This condition indicates the need for more interesting and communicative learning methods to stimulate their speaking skills, especially in the aspects of articulation, intonation, and the use of relevant and polite vocabulary.

The actions carried out in this study use the media of hand puppets with an interactive approach to the story of the prophet's story. The use of stories as a learning medium has been shown to be effective in attracting children's attention as well as increasing their verbal engagement. Children not only become passive listeners, but also actively dialogue, answer questions, and express opinions related to the content of the story, so that their speaking skills begin to be honed.

In the implementation of Cycle I, the hand puppet method was further developed with the addition of games and a fun classroom atmosphere. The results are quite encouraging; Most children show an increase in confidence and verbal participation. The active involvement of teachers and researchers in creating a supportive environment is one of the key factors for the success of this cycle.

Quantitative data showed that out of 28 children, 24 children managed to reach the BSH category and 3 children rose to the level of excellent development (BSB). This increase is proof that hand puppet media is effective as a stimulus in learning to speak. Improvements are seen in various aspects, such as vocabulary mastery, the ability to compose sentences, and the courage to speak in front of friends.

The indicators that experienced the most prominent development included the child's ability to pronounce words clearly, understand the content of the story, convey opinions in sequence, and adjust voice intonation. This shows that children's speaking skills are not only increased in terms of quantity (the number of words), but also in terms of quality (language structure and expression). An approach that involves light physical activity and a positive atmosphere before learning also contributes to building children's confidence.

In general, the implementation of cycle I shows that the hand puppet-based learning strategy has a positive impact on improving early childhood speaking skills. Although there are still a small number of children who need further attention, the results obtained provide a solid basis to proceed to the next cycle with method adjustments. This also reinforces that media that is appropriate to the child's world can be an effective and fun learning aid.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Research conducted at RA Yusriyah shows that the use of storytelling methods with hand puppet media is significantly able to improve children's speaking skills. This media attracts children's attention, makes it easier for them to receive lessons, and creates a fun learning atmosphere. The storytelling process was carried out for 30 minutes with the topic of the Prophet's story, accompanied by appropriate music, followed by a question and answer session and story practice by the children. The success of this method is supported by the availability of easy-to-obtain media and parental involvement. However, there are still obstacles from some parents who are less active in supporting children's speech development.

### Suggestion

- School: It is recommended to limit the number of students in a class to a maximum of 10–12 children so that the learning process is more effective and children are more focused.
- Next Researcher: It is recommended to be more intensive in the approach so that children can understand the teaching material more easily.
- Parents: It is expected to actively support the child's learning process so that learning at school runs more optimally because the child has received an initial stimulus at home.

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