



Improving Expressive Language Skills Using Characterized Hand Puppets

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Abstract: There are four language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Kindergarten-aged children only need to hear and speak correctly and according to their age development. According to Departemen Pendidikan Nasional (2003), the fiction of language development for early childhood is as a means of communication with the environment, as a tool for developing children's innate, actual abilities, as a tool for developing children's expression, and as a tool for expressing feelings and thoughts to others. This study aimed to improve early childhood expressive language skills using character hand puppets in group B1 TK ABA Wonosari IV as many as 15 children. Data collection through observation and documentation. The results showed an increase in indicators in the pre-cycle conditions of 13% and 60% in the first and 93% in the second cycles. The power analysis results concluded that using character hand puppet media could improve expressive language in group B1 TK ABA Wonosari IV. The researcher suggests that teachers use character puppet media to improve children's expressive language skills.

Abstrak: Ada empat keterampilan berbahasa, yaitu menyimak, berbicara, membaca, dan menulis. Anak usia taman kanak-kanak hanya perlu mendengar dan berbicara dengan benar dan sesuai dengan perkembangan usianya. Menurut Departemen Pendidikan Nasional (2003), fungsi pengembangan bahasa bagi anak adalah sebagai alat komunikasi dengan lingkungan, sebagai alat mengembangkan kemampuan intelektual anak, sebagai alat untuk mengembangkan ekspresi anak, sebagai alat menyatakan perasaan dan buah pemikiran kepada orang lain. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah Untuk meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa ekspresif anak menggunakan media boneka tangan berkarakter pada kelompok B1 TK ABA Wonosari IV semester II tahun ajaran 2022/2023 sebanyak 15 anak. Pengambilan data melalui observasi dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan indikator pada kondisi pra siklus 13% dan siklus I 60% dan pada siklus II 93%. Berdasarkan hasil analisis data diperoleh kesimpulan penggunaan media boneka tangan berkarakter dapat meningkatkan bahasa ekspresif pada kelompok B1 TK ABA Wonosari IV. Saran peneliti hendaknya para guru menggunakan media boneka tangan berkarakter untuk meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa ekspresif.

A. Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECED) aims to encourage the growth and development of children holistically to develop the child's potential as a whole. Kindergarten (TK) is a children's educational institution that organizes the educational program for children aged 4 to 6 years, and this is a sensitive period for laying the first foundation for the development of physical, cognitive, linguistic and socio-emotional abilities, self-image, discipline, independence, morality and religious values. Nursery schools offer all children the opportunity to develop their skills fully. Therefore, kindergartens should offer various activities that can develop learners' full potential. The ability to communicate well, correctly and effectively is demanded. Language skills for children in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing are very important for them to continue their lives because sound can produce communicative conversations to connect the giver and the message receiver.

One of the important aspects to be developed in early childhood is language development because human life cannot be separated from the use of language and language acquisition. Language can be spoken language, written language or language with sign language, all intended for communication (Sudaryanto, 2021). Language is a very complex skill. Using language feels natural because babies grow up with their language without learning anything. This shows that kindergarten is an important means of developing children's potential. Language is a means of communication by converting thoughts and feelings into symbols so that the meaning can be given to others (Alfin et al., 2020).

The National Association For The Education Young Children (NAEYC) states that "Early Childhood" is a child aged zero to eight years. This period is a process of growth and development in various aspects of the human life span. The learning process in children must pay attention to the characteristics possessed in the child's development stage (Suparman, 2022). The early age period in human life is important for brain growth, intelligence, personality, emotions, and other aspects of development. This means that inhibition of growth and development at this time can lead to inhibition in the future (Hemah et al., 2018).

The early age period in human life is important for brain growth, intelligence, personality, emotions, and other aspects of development. This means that inhibition of growth and development at this time can lead to inhibition in the future (Sarayati, 2019). Early childhood is an individual who experiences a process of rapid growth and development. Even this phase can be said to be the golden age, a very valuable age compared to later ages (Hanna, 2016). In early childhood, language development is very rapid. Starting from babies who cannot yet speak to 3-year-olds who can begin to express their thoughts and feelings. Children's language is not just a small version of the adult language but has its characteristics.

The function of language development in early childhood is to communicate with the environment to develop children's intellectual abilities, develop children's expression, and express feelings and thoughts to others (Abdullah, 2022). Language development has 4

components: understanding, developing vocabulary, and composing words into speech sentences. The four developments have an interrelated relationship, which is unity. These four abilities must be trained in early childhood because, with these abilities, children will learn to communicate with others.

Language skills in kindergarten aim to improve children's ability to communicate correctly and precisely in Indonesian. There are four language skills in a language, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. By the mental development of children, kindergarten-age children only need to be able to listen and speak correctly and by their age development (Sarayati, 2019). All this is achieved on the one hand by teaching good language skills in kindergarten.

Expressive language learning in early childhood is one way of communicating with others. Children can express their thoughts through language so that others can understand what the child is thinking. Communication between children can also be established to enable them to form social relationships, so it is unsurprising that language indicates a child's success. Language has two main functions: as a means of communication and as a cultural tool that unites human groups who use the language (Isna, 2019).

Based on the need to optimize early childhood development, learning for early childhood is carried out on the following approaches: a). Oriented to the Needs of Children Learning activities in early childhood must always be oriented to the needs of children to get education, health and nutrition services, which are carried out in an integrative and holistic manner. b). Learning Through Playing; Playing is an approach to carrying out early childhood education process activities using interesting strategies, methods, materials and media that are easy for children to follow. Children are invited to explore, discover and utilize objects around them through play. c). Creative and Innovative; The creative and innovative process can be done through interesting activities, arousing children's curiosity, and motivating children to think critically and discover new things. d). Conducive Environment; The environment should be created in an interesting and fun way while still paying attention to the safety and comfort of children in playing. e). Using Integrated Learning; Integrated learning models that depart from themes that attract children (Centre of interest) are intended so that children can recognize various concepts easily and clearly so that learning becomes meaningful to children (Anggraini et al., 2019). Developing Various Life Skills; Developing life skills can be done through various habituation processes. This is intended so that children can help themselves, be independent, be responsible and have self-discipline, socialize and acquire basic skills useful for survival. g). Using Various Media and Learning Resources; Media and learning resources can come from the surrounding natural environment or deliberately prepared materials (Kurnia, 2019).

Hand puppet media can improve children's abilities in various aspects, namely cognitive, emotional (feelings), and social relationships. Hand puppet media provides facilities in the learning process (Remer & Tzuriel, 2015). In addition, hand puppets facilitate dialogue and communication with children aged 4-6 years. With hand puppets, children can

answer questions well. In this case, the sarong puppet media is used as a medium or tool to convey messages in interviews with children.

Hand puppet media is a puppet used as a medium or tool in learning activities. The type of doll used is a doll made of pieces of cloth. Hand puppets are larger, and hands can be inserted to support the movement of the doll's hands and head. Hand puppets are imitations of human or animal forms, specifically how to use them, namely by using hands to give the impression of life when played (Suradinata & Maharani, 2020).

Characterized hand puppets are hand puppets with various characters. This hand puppet is made of various patchwork fabrics that are put together and formed into a hand puppets of various sizes. Form a character by drawing and designing Characterized Hand Puppets according to a person's character. For example, grandmother, father, mother, and sister. By playing with character hand puppets, it is hoped that children will be able to develop expressive language (Novira & Jaya, 2021). Characterized hand puppet games can be played in various ways. This character hand puppet game can be played individually or in groups. It can also be played for puppet theatre. The size of these character hand puppets varies from small to large.

B. Method

Research on improving early childhood expressive language skills through learning using characterized hand puppets media in group B1 TK ABA Wonosari IV semester II uses a qualitative research approach. The type of research used is classroom action research developed by Kemmis and Taggart. The model is spiral-shaped from one cycle to the next. Classroom action research steps such as (1) Pre-research, (2) planning, (3) action, (4) observation, and (5) reflection (Aqib & Chotibuddin, 2018). The research cycle is shown in the picture, where these activities are carried out in 2 cycles of the same activity.



Figure 1. Research Flow

The subjects in this study were 15 students of ABA Wonosari IV Semester II Kindergarten, and the sampling method used was total sampling (Rosdiana, 2019). Data collection was carried out by observing children's expressive language skills. The measurement was carried out three times, namely at the beginning of the study, after completing one cycle of class action and at the last stage after the second cycle of class action.

This study aims to prove that the efforts of characterized hand puppet games can be played individually, both in pairs and in groups, and it can improve expressive language skills in kindergarten children.

C. Result and Discussion

Result

The results of this study showed students' ability in three stages, namely the initial stage before research, the second stage after class research in one cycle and the last stage after the second cycle of research. The results of the analysis of 15 respondents at each stage are as follows:

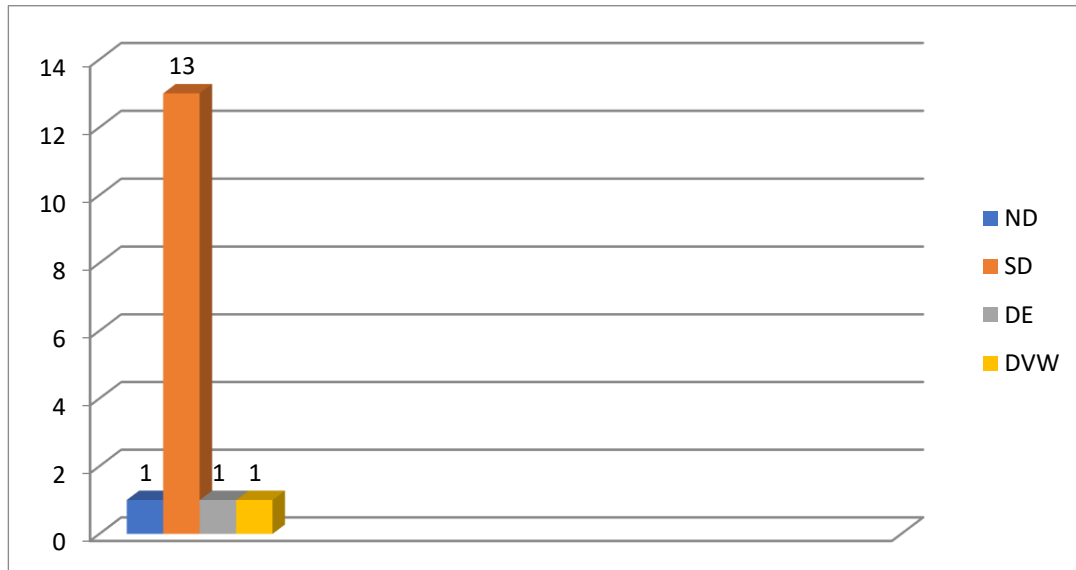


Figure 2. The Initial Condition of Kindergarten Children's Initial Abilities

From the picture above, we can see that 1 child is reaching New Development (ND), 13 children are Starting to Develop (SD), 1 child is Developing as Expected (DE), and 1 child is Developing Very Well (DVW).

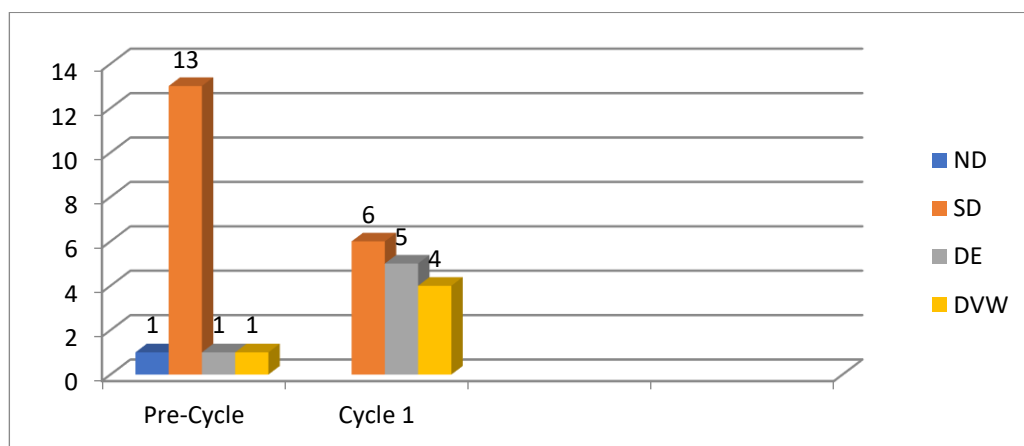


Figure 3. Graph Of Improvement In Children's Expressive Language Skills After Cycle I

The picture above shows the results of the cycle I research, 6 children are starting to develop (SD), 5 children are developing according to expectations (DE), and 4 children are

developing very well (DVW). It can be seen that the ability of children who are just developing and starting to develop has decreased, and there is an increase in the ability of children to develop as expected and develop very well.

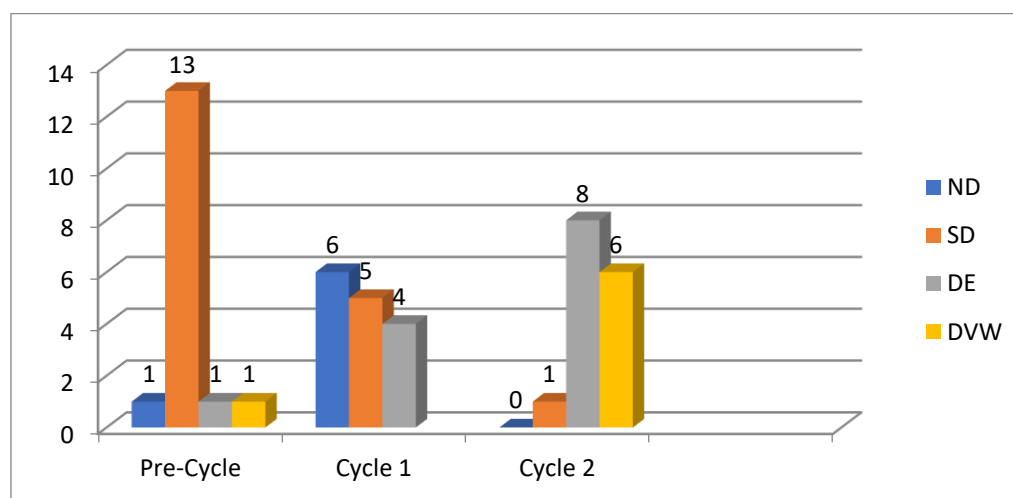


Figure 4. Graph of Research Results After Cycle 2

The learning results in cycle II provide the following results: 1 child started to develop (SD), 8 children developed as expected (DE), and 6 children developed very well (DVW). It can be seen that the ability of children who are just developing and starting to develop has decreased, and there is an increase in the ability of children to develop as expected and develop very well. With these results above, the completeness in the learning process using characterized hand puppets media reaches more than 75% of children with increased expressive language skills.

Discussion

Analysis of Research Data per cycle This class action research (PTK) was conducted at ABA Wonosari IV Kindergarten Semester II of the 2022/2023 school year, with the research subject being group B1 with 7 boys and 8 girls. The implementation of this class action was carried out in two cycles. The stages of implementation were planning, implementation of action, observation and reflection. Initial conditions show that 15 children still have low expressive language skills, with a percentage of completeness of 13%. From the results of observations of initial conditions obtained data that there was 1 child reached New Developing (ND), 13 children Started Developing (SD), 1 child Developed as Expected (DE), and 1 child Developed Very Well (DVW). From the indicators of children's expressive language abilities, such as; expressing desires, feelings and opinions with simple sentences in communicating with children or adults, showing the behaviour of enjoying reading books to books he knows, expressing feelings and ideas with appropriate word choices when communicating, and retelling the contents of the story is still very lacking. This is in line with previous research that it is necessary to conduct an initial assessment of

children's ability to communicate expressively to detect learning difficulties in children (Saadah, 2018).

The learning process in cycle I was carried out for 2 meetings. The first stage was the planning stage. At this stage, the researcher prepared a Learning Implementation Plan (LIP), including indicators, learning objectives, learning materials, learning tools and resources, evaluation and reflection. Then, made student observation sheets. The next stage in cycle I was to carry out the first cycle activities by taking basic competencies. Children were able to improve expressive language through characterized hand puppet media. In this learning activity, the teacher provided an apperception to children by reading a story using a book. Children were allowed to choose the hand puppet media they had made to retell the story they had heard. The observation was carried out in conjunction with teaching and learning activities to determine the level of success of children in participating in the learning process using hand puppet media (Maliki & Erwinsyah, 2020). The observation showed that the children were enthusiastic about playing with the hand puppets they made themselves. Some children started talking by themselves, some in groups, but some were still soft and quiet when they were talking.

Reflection on cycle I obtained information: 1) the hand puppets provided by the teacher were less interesting, and 2). Teachers gave restrictions only to retell the contents of the story, 3) children were less enthusiastic in learning using character hand puppets, 4) stimulation that teachers gave to children needed to be improved, 5). There must be different learning media to attract children's interest. In cycle I activities, many shortcomings must be improved again in the next cycle.

The results of observations in cycle I showed an increase in children's expressive language skills. Six children began/started to develop (SD), 5 children developed according to expectations (DE), and 4 children developed very well (DVW). It can be seen that the ability of children who were developing and starting to develop has decreased, and there has been an increase in the ability of children to develop as expected and develop very well. In the learning process in cycle II, in the planning stage, researchers prepared learning tools. This planning stage referred to revisions in Cycle I so that the errors or deficiencies in Cycle I did not occur again in Cycle II. In implementing this cycle II learning, the teacher added puppet theatre stage media to attract and focus children's learning.

The implementation of observation was carried out during the implementation of learning. In cycle II, the activities given to children allowed them to choose character hand puppets according to the size and shape they liked. Telling stories on the puppet theatre stage provided by the teacher gives children the freedom to tell what they want. In this lesson, children actively told their experiences before their friends. This can be seen when children were willing to queue to wait for their turn to play dolls on the puppet stage. They recounted events they had experienced at home and school. At the end of the lesson, children were invited to reflect on today's learning and express their feelings during class. Almost all children expressed pleasure and were asked to play puppet theatre using characterized hand puppets again. In the reflection activity of cycle II, we obtained

information that: 1) during the learning process, children were actively involved so that the development of children's expressive language is very visible, 2) students were active in telling stories, asking questions or actively communicating in learning, 3) deficiencies in cycle I, learning have been improved, 4) learning outcomes carried out in cycle II reached completeness. The revision in cycle II is a little. However, some things need to be considered for further action, namely maximizing and maintaining what has been implemented so that the teaching and learning process to develop children's expressive language can be done by modifying hand puppets with more varied characters to attract children's interest in learning.



Figure 5. Character Hand Puppets

Some other things that were done in the improvement of learning in cycle II gave the following results: 1 child began/started to develop (SD), 8 children developed as expected (DE), and 6 children developed very well (DVW). It can be seen that the ability of children who are just developing and starting to develop has decreased, and there is an increase in the ability of children to develop as expected and develop very well. With the above results, the completeness in the learning process using characterized hand puppets reached more than 75% of children who improved their expressive language skills of both receptive and expressive languages. Receptive language is listening and reading the information, while expressive language is speaking and writing down information (Cendana & Suryana, 2022).

The National Standards for Early Childhood Education explains that language consists of (a) understanding receptive language, including the ability to understand stories, commands, rules, and like and appreciate reading, (b) expressing language, including the ability to ask questions, answer questions, communicate orally, retell what is known, learn the pragmatic language, express feelings ideas, and desires in the form of scribbles; and (c) literacy, including understanding the relationship between letter shapes and sounds, imitating letter shapes, and understanding words in stories (Abdullah, 2022).

The results of the research conducted, it showed that the use of characterized hand puppets could improve children's expressive language skills. The results showed that children's activeness in expressing ideas, desires and communication with simple language

increased from pre-cycle to cycle II. In cycle II, we can see that children's completeness in improving children's expressive language skills increased as seen in pre-cycle 13%, cycle I 60% and cycle II 93%. This indicates that children's learning completeness can be achieved well.



Figure 6. Children Playing Characterized Hand Puppets

Based on the data analysis, it was obtained that the improvement of children's learning outcomes in expressive language skills also has an impact on improving teachers' ability in teaching and learning activities in group B1 at ABA Wonosari IV Kindergarten. With children's increasing vocabulary and communication skills, it can also affect how teachers present interesting learning and provide motivation to improve children's abilities. Learning innovations must always be done to increase children's interest, and learning is made to be interesting for children in the teaching and learning process. Using interesting learning media allows the teacher to manage a more conducive class to achieve the planned learning objectives (Prastiyanti & Fachrurrazi, 2020).

The results of data analysis showed that student activeness in the learning process using a characterized hand puppet media provokes student activeness in developing expressive language skills. This can be seen in some children who were always passive during the question & answer process in class or telling wishes or ideas. Using hand puppet media, children who were originally passive have started telling stories, starting to be able to express their minds and ideas and having desires to talk to friends or adults.

In addition to the ability of students to tell stories using this characterized hand puppet media, children also can capture some of their friends' expressions, such as happy, joyful, sad, annoyed or angry expressions. This can be seen when the teacher gave several dolls with different facial expressions. In addition to choosing dolls with different expressions in classroom activities, children could know their friends' expressions while learning. Some children often said some were sad, and some were angry. Likewise, when children were asked why they were sad and angry, they could express their feelings to the teacher or classmates who were beside them. Children could also refuse if they did not want to do things they did not like. Children can describe their feelings in various forms of work, such as making hand puppets with various media, making various masks from used materials, and drawing the feelings they were experiencing.

In addition to increased student activeness, teacher activeness has also increased. This can be seen in the innovations made by the teacher in making various kinds of dolls with various characters so that children will choose the dolls they like. With independent learning, the teacher allows children to choose the characters they like to develop children's expressive language (Suyitno, 2019). In addition, teachers also provide various teaching materials to express children's feelings, minds or ideas and communicate these various works to friends or adults in their language. This is in line with the previous research that uses this characterized hand puppet media, and teachers are also required to make activities using the media creatively, not monotonous only between children or between groups (Chrisyarani, 2018). Another study found that character hand puppet media can be made into activities that use puppet theatre stages or the surrounding environment according to teacher creativity (Izzati & Yulsyofriend, 2020).

In using this character hand puppet media, the emphasis is on children's skills in the process, namely by using this character hand puppet media, children can understand the process of communication with others. Children can express their desires, ideas or ideas they have. In this learning process, children can retell what they hear and retell experiences they have done at school and home, and children understand and know how to express their desires and ideas.

D. Conclusion

Using characterized hand puppet media can improve expressive language skills in early childhood. This can be seen from the increase in various indicators of children's ability to express language or expressive language. This can be seen in the increase in student completeness when learning from pre-cycle (13%), cycle I (60%), and Cycle II (93).

The use of hand puppet media stimulates children's imagination to express ideas, tell stories, express their desires and can communicate both with friends and with older people using simple language. The increase in expressive language skills in children is marked by the increasing ability to express desires, feelings and opinions with simple sentences in communicating with children or adults. It shows the behaviour of enjoying reading books to books he knows, expressing feelings and ideas with appropriate word choices when communicating, and simply retelling the story's contents.

As for suggestions for researchers, it is hoped that the results of this study will be the starting material for further research that is more specific by examining certain doll characters with specific stories on children's expressive language skills.

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