

The Emergent Literacy Activities Through the Storytelling Method with Flashcard Media for Early Childhood Education

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Abstract: Teachers have an important role in the development of children's language at school. The study period at Early Childhood Education is an excellent opportunity to improve literacy skills when children are experiencing a sensitive language learning period. Language skills have a role in improving social aspects and developing emotional and cognitive aspects. Children aged 2-4 years go through a concrete learning period. Using storytelling teaching methods with flashcard media can create a fun learning atmosphere and encourage children to learn optimally. This study aims to look at the application of the flashcard storytelling method to the language skills of children aged 2-4 years in support of an emergent literacy program.

Keywords: Emergent Literacy, Storytelling Method, Flashcard Media

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is one of the competencies listed in the 21st Century skill (Direktorat Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, 2020). This skill is essential to be aimed by everyone to perform and face challenges in society, called society 4.0 (Yulia & Eliza, 2021). However, literacy is one of the basic skills that must be mastered early on (Zati, 2018). This is because young children will learn many things early, from cognitive and motoric to language development (Amalia et al., 2019). Literacy is closely related to communication skills (Basyiroh, 2017). This communication ability will equip individuals to live better lives (Anggraini & Irszalinda, 2021). However, tragically, Indonesia ranks in the 60th, according to the announcement of literacy research conducted by UNESCO (Restiawati et al., 2021).

One way to increase literacy is through emergent literacy (Hidayatullah et al., 2021). Programs that help children have readiness in the world of literacy include the ability to read, listen, hear, speak, and write. Research in the field of literacy explains that at the age before school, children begin to develop literacy skills and are aimed at communicating, even briefly. The process of language development in early childhood has been widely studied abroad in various language contexts, such as English (Johnston, 2010). Several studies have also been conducted on children's research subjects using Indonesian as their mother tongue (Astuti, 2014; Fajriyah & Puspitasari, 2022). Significant results have also been applied in early childhood language development using storytelling (Fajriyah & Puspitasari, 2022).

Storytelling is one of the best methods of teaching young children. Storytelling gives learning experiences with stories told verbally. There are some techniques in storytelling, such as direct storytelling from a book, flannel board, hand puppets, and role-playing (Moeslichatoen, 2018). There are more techniques for doing so, but the method should interest the children.

The study was held in a Pre-School in the Surabaya area during the university community service. This study aims to provide an in-depth description of the application of the storytelling

method using flash cards as the medium. Although the storytelling method is not new, combining storytelling and flashcard methods in teaching Indonesian is a reasonably new application. This study was inspired to provide creative ideas for early childhood educators to carry out exciting and creative learning. As it is well known, learning in early childhood requires many concepts that can entice students to learn new things without stressing them. The teacher, as a facilitator, plays a vital role in facilitating fun learning. As explained above, the research question of this study is how the implementation of teaching storytelling with flashcards provides an alternative for emergent literacy activity in ECE.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to [Amalia et al. \(2019\)](#), language development consists of the ability to listen, speak, read, and write. The ability to master language enables humans to survive ([Hidayat, 2012](#)). Humans easily express thoughts and feelings through language ([Devianty, 2017](#)). It can be concluded that language is essential and critical for human interactions. There are approximately 6000 languages worldwide ([Ibrahim, 2011](#)), and language development is essential for early childhood ([Isna, 2019](#)). Thus, The Indonesia Ministry of education and Culture put language development in the spotlight in ECE, as cited in their laws number 137 of 2014 ([Husna & Eliza, 2021](#)). Even so, language is a familiar aspect of humans since language existed when a human was born ([Isna, 2019](#)).

Early childhood is the best time for children to develop their potential ([Salsabila, 2021](#)). Stimulation of the surrounding environment can support children's language development. Developing children's language and vocabulary can nurture children to interact with a broader world ([Permata et al., 2022](#)). It also affects their emotional and cognitive aspects ([Basyiroh, 2017](#)). Storytelling is one way to create a fun environment for children to develop their literacy skills ([Rambe et al., 2021](#)).

Storytelling is a kind of face-to-face communication and can be delivered through vocal qualities, facial expressions, and hand and body movements ([Salsabila, 2021](#)). This activity could elevate children to develop their imagination, learn new things, improve communication skills, practice thinking skills, and train their ability to adapt ([Asmawati et al., 2020](#)). For this study, we integrated a storytelling method using flashcards as the teaching medium. Flashcard is a learning support tool to enhance children's motivation ([Kusumawati & Mariono, 2016](#)). It is an efficiently designed tool with features such as easy to carry, educative, full of pictures, and fewer words. Storytelling using flashcards nurtures children's characters through the moral value inserted in the story ([Purnamasari, 2019](#)).

METHOD

This study applies a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. This activity was part of the university community service through classroom practice. The participants in this study were 12 students aged 2-4 years at a school for early childhood in a big city in East Java, Indonesia. There were four boys and eight girls in the classroom. According to the school policy, children under four belonged to the toddler group and were gathered into one class. In this toddler group, parents were allowed to sit near them because some children still did not want to participate in the activities apart from their guardians. On the other hand, this allows us to gather information from parents about our class. There are two teachers, both of them are in their mid-fifties and have served in this school for about five years. These teachers initially were full-time mothers, and now they dedicated their time to establishing this ECE initiated by the city government. This school is a form of informal learning initiated by the city government and carried out by volunteers who were originally part of the health cadres. The volunteers are full-time mothers who long to contribute to the world of ECE. At first, the mothers were involved in this education system with a firm determination to pay attention to the development of toddlers in their area. As the government bureaucracy becomes more mature, mothers as educators receive training and provision to teach

ECE. Some mothers also receive the opportunity to enroll in the undergraduate degree for early childhood education programs with full scholarships from the city government.

The teaching and learning process was carried out in a multipurpose building located at the community hall. The 15 by 10-meter building is used three times a week for ECE from seven to ten in the morning, and at night it was used as a badminton court for residents. Sometimes this multipurpose building was even converted into a wedding party room for local residents. The condition was not ideal; these volunteers had to prepare the multipurpose room into a ready classroom. They arranged carpets and prepared wooden planks as a barrier between the two study groups but not completely covering them. The students were the children of local residents, and there was no compulsory school fee, but they were free to contribute as much as they could afford.

As part of the university community service, researchers worked closely with two instructors to conduct research. After obtaining permission and agreement to conduct initial observations and interact with students, the researchers developed a learning plan adapted to the children's needs. The teaching process lasted for four weeks, from observations to the teaching. During teaching, the second and third researchers also made observations and took notes for analysis. Data were gathered through observation and interviews. To triangulate the data, we conducted interviews with parents and teachers. We applied data collection, display, reduction, and conclusion drawing for analyzing the data. The finding is presented in the findings section to support our primary goal, which is to describe the implementation of emergent literacy through storytelling using flash cards as media.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Storytelling with Flashcard Media in Emergent Literacy

Teaching literacy in early childhood requires awareness that children's literacy skills can be taught through fun activities. In this section, the researcher explains in detail the procedures for teaching literacy and positive responses from students, teachers, and parents involved in the learning process. The learning activities were divided into three main parts. First, the opening part began with a greeting from teachers such as "Good morning", then the teacher asked how the students were doing, and the answer was "Thank God, Allahu Akbar, it is amazing, yes, yes yes.". Teachers always used this uplifting cheer to build the children's mood so they were ready to join.

Second, teachers invited students to make a circle while holding hands and forming a circle. Teachers used a song while giving instruction. Here is the song lyric "Big circle small circle, Big circle, small circle, Big circle, The bigger, the bigger, the greater it i.". Then, the second song, "Who Makes the Flowers," continued, later becoming the main activity. The second song lyric is "Who makes flowers; I cannot, who makes flowers, Only God." After singing the second song, the teacher starts to tell the story with flashcards (see image 1 for the flashcards). The story title was Meena's Funny Little Pet which has been translated into Indonesian. Below is the storyline:

Meena has a dog named Fluffy. Fluffy is a cute little dog. Fluffy likes the game of hide and seek. One day, Fluffy was not was note. Meena went looking for him. "Where are you hiding, Fluffy?" asked Meena. "Are you hiding in the toy place?" Meena asked again while opening the toy box, "Are you hiding in the basket?", "Are you hiding behind the curtain?" Meena continues searching. It turns out Meena found Fluffy while she was playing in the park. Fluffy is chasing butterflies and playing in the mud. Fluffy is now dirty, and Meena wants to bathe her. "I am not going to take a shower woof woof woof," said Fluffy as he barked and ran away. While running, Fluffy meets Meena's father, who is watering the plants. Fluffy keeps running around the garden. While running, he saw a very fragrant flower, namely jasmine. Fluffy also notices that a flower has thorns. Fluffy is afraid to go through it. It turns out it was a rose. Fluffy ran again and saw a flower floating near the pond. The flower is a lotus flower. Fluffy turns out to have been splashed by Meena's father, and Fluffy is wet from the water. "I am not going to take a shower woof woof woof," said Fluffy barking again. Finally,

Meena picks up Fluffy and says, "My cute Fluffy, you are now clean. So, you do not need to take a shower anymore."

The third activity was the wrap-up. After telling the story, the teacher asked some questions related to the story that had been told, such as: Who created flowers? What is Meena's pet name? What flowers did Fluffy pass? As Fluffy was running, she saw a flower with thorns. What flower is it? There were two ways of interacting between students and teachers in this stage. Then, it followed by introducing flowers, which were tulips and cherries. The teacher also showed students how to care for plants by applying fertilizer and watering them.



Figure 1. Craft Activity to Make Flowers

Benefits of Applying Storytelling with Flashcard Media in Emergent Literacy

Emergent literacy has been proven to increase literacy skills in the English Language Study (Castro & Barrera, 2019). Especially in ECE learning, there are a lot of exciting methods to introduce emergent literacy. Storytelling is one of the methods that can be used. Kieren Egan (in van Brummelen, 2006) wrote that children aged 0-8 are in the myth stage. In this stage, they learn abstract concepts through stories. This study proves that integrating storytelling using flashcard media is an exciting method and is easily implemented by teachers in the classroom.

We received some parents' feedback after the class. A parent said that her three-year-old daughter is still in the bubbling stage. She could not fully communicate one single word. She partially said words such as "tar" for guitar, "ndi" for shower (the original word in Bahasa is "mandi"), and "aca" for mirror (the original word in Bahasa is "kaca"). Children aged 2-3 years can grasp language by using the telegraphic language of 2-3 words (Zubaidah, 2004). Telegraphy is the pronunciation of two-word sentences (Palupi, 2015).

Another parent also admitted that she often gave her child a cell phone when she was at home. She said it was easier to calm down her child by giving her a gadget. She acknowledged that her decision influenced her child's ability to communicate; however, she did it due to her busy schedule. Gadgets could cause a destructive visual disturbance and hinder speaking ability (Fitri et al., 2022).

Another positive feedback is derived from the teacher; she mentioned that due to the limited financial support to purchase teaching props, she often used her budget to buy children's magazines. In one of the research's field notes, we achieved this:

"I am so touched listening to her story. She (teacher) spent her own money to buy a children's magazine so children could experience fun learning by reading stories from it". (Field notes 1, day 1)

This excerpt depicts the actual condition of local ECE with their limited funding to provide teaching materials. Our idea to use flashcards that are easy to make and reusable for many stories can be the answer to this challenge. Teachers can make flashcards from available pictures online and print them. Later, these pictures can be combined for storytelling with various ideas. We were amazed by these teachers' dedication to giving time and energy to teach. We hope we can bring inspiration through our involvement in their classroom.

These days, many parents are filling their time with work responsibilities, which cannot be denied due to financial conditions. This creates a dilemma that they do not have time for reading with their child while they understand the importance of it. Now, many parents put literacy responsibility on schools. They expect that a child will be able to read and speak through schooling activities (Guru & Al-Hilal, 2022). This phenomenon gives a strong reason for ECE educators to put more effort into emergent literacy.

Even though it cannot be denied that parental participation in the development of children's literacy is crucial, research shows that parents who are actively involved and continue to monitor children positively impact the child's literacy skills. Teachers and parents are essential in stimulating children's language development (Rezieka, 2021). This study proves that the storytelling method with flashcard media is a varied teaching method that can attract children's attention to be actively involved in the learning process by responding to questions given by the teacher in the form of answers or body movements. Using varied storytelling methods can attract children's attention to understand stories and improve their language skills. Getting used to literacy activities early will better prepare children to enter formal education (Astuti, 2014).

The results and discussion above show that emergent literacy is vital in early childhood. This prepares children for success in their literacy-related skills in the future (Castro & Barrera, 2019; Piasta et al., 2020). Therefore, teachers need props that can attract children's attention and improve language skills, namely flashcards and storytelling methods to optimize children's language development. The media will help children learn a lot of vocabulary and articulation in language. Also, flashcard is an affordable teaching aid that can be used by the teacher (Kusumawardhani, 2020; Nuryani & Fadloeli, 2021)

CONCLUSION

Early childhood education is a critical stage in preparing children to be ready to enter elementary school. Recently, the Indonesian minister of Education agreed to include ECE as part of formal schooling and will become part of the Indonesian compulsory education system. This light gave us hope that our children would perform better in their developmental aspects than the previous generation. As emergent literacy is a critical activity in ECE, it is a foundation for later life skills. Research on how emergent literacy can be implemented using various method need to be conducted more in the Indonesian context. A good thing would inspire others to repeat the good deeds. This study was initially designed to improve the education quality in our neighborhood community. Still, we also aimed to encourage all Indonesian ECE educators to be more creative in conducting similar research.

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