



EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE COURAGE TO SPEAK IN EARLY CHILDREN THROUGH THE STORYTELLING METHOD WITH HAND PUPPETS

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Abstract

This study aims to improve early childhood speaking confidence through the storytelling method using hand puppets. This research is a Classroom Action Research (CAR) conducted in two cycles, namely Cycle I and Cycle II, which include the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The subjects of this study were early childhood learners in a classroom group who experienced problems in speaking confidence, such as lack of self-confidence, passivity, and shyness in expressing ideas verbally. Data were collected through observation and documentation using an observation sheet of children's speaking confidence. The results showed an improvement in children's speaking confidence after the implementation of the storytelling method using hand puppets. In Cycle I, children's speaking confidence was categorized as "fair" with a percentage of 60%, while in Cycle II it increased to 85% and was categorized as "good". This improvement indicates that the use of hand puppets in storytelling creates a fun, engaging, and interactive learning environment that encourages children to become more active and confident in speaking. Therefore, the storytelling method using hand puppets is effective in improving early childhood speaking confidence.

Keywords: speaking confidence, early childhood, hand puppets, storytelling method, Classroom Action Research

Introduction

Early childhood education is a crucial stage in developing various aspects of a child's development, including language skills. During early childhood, children experience a golden age, characterized by rapid brain development. Therefore, any stimulation provided significantly impacts their cognitive, social, emotional, and language development. Therefore, education at this stage plays a strategic role in establishing a foundation for children's abilities before they enter the next level of education. (Dewi and Eliza, nd) Language skills are the primary means for children to express their thoughts, feelings, and needs, and interact with their surroundings. In

early childhood, the development of speech skills requires special attention, as it lays the foundation for later social, emotional, and academic development. However, in practice, many children still lack the confidence to speak in front of peers or teachers, limiting their participation in learning activities.

Language skills in early childhood include listening, speaking, early reading, and early writing. However, the most dominant and first-to-develop aspect is speaking. Speaking is a crucial indicator of language development because it allows children to express their thoughts, feelings, and needs to others. Furthermore, speaking skills also form the basis for building social interactions within their environment.

In the learning process at early childhood education (PAUD), language development cannot be done formally as at higher levels of education. Instead, it must be done through fun, contextual activities that are tailored to the child's characteristics. Early childhood learns most effectively through play, storytelling, singing, and activities that involve hands-on experience. Therefore, teachers need to use creative and innovative learning methods to engage children and engage them actively in the learning process.

The problem of children's lack of courage to speak is not only seen in the classroom, but is also closely related to their daily lives at home and in the community. Children who are less accustomed to speaking in class generally also show similar tendencies at home, such as being reluctant to tell their parents about school activities, having difficulty expressing their desires, or only answering questions briefly. This shows that speaking skills are not only an academic skill, but also an important part of the social skills children use in everyday interactions.

In everyday life, speaking skills play a crucial role in building children's social relationships with family, peers, and the surrounding environment. Children who are accustomed to engaging in dialogue at home, for example through simple conversations at mealtimes, bedtime stories, or recounting play experiences, tend to develop the courage to speak more easily. Conversely, children who lack opportunities for two-way communication at home tend to be more passive and tend to rely on adults to express their desires.

Furthermore, in play environments, children who lack confidence in speaking often struggle to join in group conversations, express opinions during play, or express ideas in role-play. As a result, children can become quieter, less engaged in social activities, and even potentially withdraw from social circles. This condition can certainly impact a child's social-emotional development, as early childhood

interactions with peers are an important means of learning to cooperate, share, and understand others.

In this context, the role of parents and the environment is crucial in supporting the development of children's speaking skills. Simple stimulation, such as engaging children in discussions, providing opportunities for them to share daily experiences, and responding positively to every attempt to speak, can help boost their confidence. This way, speaking skills not only develop at school but are also consistently practiced in everyday life.

If this condition is considered comprehensively, it can be concluded that children's low speaking confidence is an interconnected problem between the school environment and the home environment. Therefore, synergy is needed between teachers and parents so that children have sufficient opportunities to practice speaking in various situations, so that their courage and communication skills can develop optimally and sustainably. Speaking confidence is an important aspect in early childhood language development that is not only related to the ability to convey words, but also reflects psychological aspects such as self-confidence, courage, and social skills. Speaking confidence can be defined as a child's ability to express thoughts, feelings, opinions, and experiences verbally to others clearly, boldly, and without excessive fear of error or judgment from others.

This ability is the main foundation for building effective communication from an early age. According to (Almaghfiroh et al. 2024) Early childhood language development encompasses listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, which develop gradually through social interactions and learning experiences. Children who possess strong speaking skills tend to adapt more easily to their environment, have self-confidence, and are able to establish positive social relationships. Furthermore, speaking skills can also be understood as a child's ability to overcome fear, embarrassment, and awkwardness when communicating in front of others. Children who possess strong speaking skills are usually not only able to answer teacher questions, but also dare to express ideas, ask questions when they don't understand something, and are able to relate personal experiences coherently. This shows that speaking skills are not only related to linguistic aspects, but also involve the child's emotional and social aspects.

Based on the opinions of (Putri & Lestari, 2023) and (Ningsih, 2022), it can be understood that early childhood speaking confidence is the result of the interaction between the child's internal abilities and external environmental support. Self-

confidence is the primary factor that encourages children to express themselves verbally, while a positive learning environment acts as a reinforcement, ensuring children feel safe and free from fear of making mistakes when speaking.

In the context of classroom learning, teachers play a crucial role in creating a pleasant and non-pressuring atmosphere for children. Providing equal opportunities for each child to speak, appreciating each child's efforts, and avoiding negative responses to language errors can help foster children's confidence in speaking. This aligns with the view that communication skills develop not only through language acquisition but also through direct speaking experience in real-life social situations. In everyday life, confidence in speaking significantly impacts children's social development. Children who are confident in speaking tend to adapt more easily to new environments, are able to establish positive relationships with peers and adults, and are more active in various activities. Conversely, children who lack the confidence to speak often have difficulty expressing their needs and feelings, which can hinder social interaction and the development of self-confidence.

Based on observations in early childhood education settings, some children still exhibit passive behavior during learning activities. They tend to remain silent when the teacher asks questions, are shy about expressing their opinions, and are reluctant to speak in front of the class. This condition can be caused by a lack of engaging stimulation and opportunities for children to express themselves. Therefore, learning methods are needed that can create a pleasant learning atmosphere and encourage children to be more active in speaking. One method that can be used to increase children's speaking skills is storytelling with hand puppets. Storytelling is an activity that conveys stories orally with the aim of providing meaningful learning experiences for children. According to (DHMPd 2025) Storytelling activities can develop children's language skills, imagination, creativity, and communication skills. Using hand puppets as a supporting medium can capture children's attention, increase their interest in learning, and create a more interactive atmosphere that makes them feel comfortable speaking.

Hand puppets are a learning medium that can be used to convey messages and stories in an interesting way. (Rakhman et al. 2024) states that the use of appropriate learning media can increase student motivation and engagement in the learning process. This demonstrates that learning media not only serves as a means of conveying material but also as a means of creating a more active, engaging, and meaningful learning process, especially for young children who are still learning through direct

experience.

In early childhood education, the use of concrete and fun media such as hand puppets is highly appropriate for children's developmental characteristics. Through hand puppets, children can interact directly with story characters, making it easier for them to engage in learning activities. This interaction helps children become more confident in speaking, answering questions, and retelling the story in their own words. Furthermore, hand puppets can help reduce children's shyness and fear of communicating in front of others. This is because hand puppets create a more relaxed, enjoyable, and non-pressurizing learning environment, so children don't feel directly "judged" when speaking. In this environment, children find it easier to express themselves without fear of making mistakes, as their attention is drawn to the engaging and interactive medium of the puppets.

This pleasant learning environment makes children feel more comfortable and confident in speaking. When children feel comfortable, psychological barriers such as awkwardness, shyness, and lack of self-confidence can gradually diminish. Teachers who use hand puppets can also build warmer two-way communication with children, so they feel more valued and listened to. This is crucial in the early childhood learning process because emotional security is a key factor in supporting children's courage to speak. Furthermore, hand puppets also provide opportunities for children to actively participate in learning activities. Children are not only listeners but can also play a role in the story by answering questions, imitating dialogue, or even acting out characters using the puppets. This active involvement gradually builds children's confidence in using spoken language in front of others.

Several previous studies have shown that storytelling is effective in improving the language skills of early childhood. Research conducted by (DKMPd S. Pd, nd) Studies have shown that storytelling activities can improve children's oral communication skills and participation in the learning process. This is because storytelling activities provide children with the opportunity to listen, understand the storyline, and respond verbally to the content of the story conveyed by the teacher. Another study by (Sofi and Praheto 2023) found that the use of hand puppets can increase children's confidence in speaking and interacting with peers. Hand puppets are considered effective because they create a fun and relaxed learning environment, allowing children to express their ideas and feelings more confidently without fear of making mistakes. Furthermore, this medium also helps create two-way interaction between teachers and children, which supports optimal language development.

Furthermore, research by (Sasurya et al. 2025) also concluded that the storytelling method using hand puppets can improve children's speaking skills and their courage to speak in front of the class. This improvement is evident in changes in children's behavior, from previously passive to more active, confident, and enthusiastic in participating in learning activities. This indicates that hand puppets not only serve as storytelling aids but also as a stimulus that encourages children to be more confident in verbal communication.

Based on this description, the storytelling method with hand puppets is seen as an effective alternative for increasing speaking confidence in early childhood. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine how to increase speaking confidence in early childhood through the storytelling method with hand puppets, thereby increasing children's communication confidence and active participation in learning activities.

METHODS

This study used the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method with a qualitative approach that aims to improve the speaking skills of early childhood children through storytelling with hand puppets. CAR was chosen because it is suitable for improving the learning process continuously through real actions in the classroom, as well as allowing teachers to reflect on the ongoing learning process. The subjects of the study were early childhood children in certain learning groups who showed problems in speaking skills, such as lack of confidence, shyness, passivity in question and answer activities, and not being able to express ideas or opinions verbally well. This study was conducted in two cycles, namely Cycle I and Cycle II, each of which consisted of the planning stage, action implementation, observation, and reflection. Each cycle was designed to correct the shortcomings of the previous cycle to obtain more optimal results.

Data collection techniques in this study were conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly observe the activities and development of children's speaking skills during the learning process. Interviews were conducted with class teachers to obtain additional information regarding changes in children's behavior before and after the intervention was given. Meanwhile, documentation was used to support the research data in the form of photographs of learning activities and notes on children's development outcomes. The research instrument used was an observation sheet for children's speaking skills that contained

several indicators, such as the courage to answer questions, the courage to ask questions, the ability to convey ideas, and the ability to retell stories. In addition, field notes were used to record important findings during the learning process.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach, with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by sorting and summarizing observational data relevant to the research focus. Data presentation was done in the form of tables and narrative descriptions to facilitate understanding of the changes that occurred in each cycle. Furthermore, conclusions were drawn to determine the extent to which children's speaking skills increased after the implementation of the storytelling method with hand puppets. Thus, this research method emphasizes not only the final results but also the gradual process of improvement that occurs through learning improvement actions in the classroom.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This study is a Classroom Action Research (CAR) that aims to improve the speaking skills of early childhood children through storytelling with hand puppets. CAR was chosen because it is considered appropriate for improving the learning process directly in the classroom through concrete actions carried out gradually and continuously. This research was conducted in two cycles, namely Cycle I and Cycle II, each consisting of the stages of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. Each cycle is designed to observe changes that occur in children while correcting deficiencies in the previous cycle to obtain more optimal results. In the planning stage, the teacher prepares learning materials that include storytelling activity scenarios, hand puppet media, and observation sheets to measure children's speaking skills. Furthermore, in the action implementation stage, learning is carried out by integrating the storytelling method using hand puppets as the main medium to attract attention and increase children's participation.

The observation phase was conducted to directly observe children's behavior and responses during the activity, particularly regarding their speaking skills. Meanwhile, the reflection phase was conducted to evaluate deficiencies and determine improvements for the next cycle. Before the intervention, children's speaking skills were still relatively low. They tended to be passive, shy, and lacked confidence in expressing their opinions verbally. This was evident in their minimal participation in question-and-answer activities, their lack of courage to speak in front of the class, and their tendency to remain silent or give very brief answers when asked questions. These conditions

indicate that children still need appropriate stimulation to optimally develop their speaking skills.

Children's low speaking confidence can also be influenced by a lack of variety in teaching methods used by teachers. Less engaging learning tends to quickly bore children and demotivate them to actively participate. Therefore, learning innovations are needed that can create a fun, interactive learning environment that aligns with the developmental characteristics of early childhood. One alternative used in this study is the storytelling method with hand puppets, which is expected to increase children's interest, attention, and speaking confidence.

Comparison Table of Results of Cycle I and Cycle II

Cycle	Learning Activities	Observation Results	Percentage	Category
Cycle I	Learning using storytelling methods with hand puppets	The child is starting to be interested, but is still hesitant to speak and answer questions.	60%	Enough
Cycle II	Learning is improved by involving children in the use of hand puppets.	Children are more active, confident, and brave to speak in front of the class.	85%	Good

The table above shows a comparison of the observation results of children's speaking confidence in Cycle I and Cycle II through the application of the storytelling method with hand puppets. There is an increase from 60% in Cycle I, categorized as "sufficient," to 85% in Cycle II, categorized as "good," resulting in a 25% increase.

**Table 2. Data on the Results of the Courage Evaluation
Talking about Early Childhood Cycle I and Cycle II**

Information	Cycle I	Cycle II
Total Score	1200	1700
Average	60	85
The highest score	75	100
Lowest Value	45	60

Completed Child (Dare to Speak)	12 children	18 children
Unfinished Child	8 children	2 children
Completion Percentage	60%	85%

The table above shows the results of the evaluation of early childhood speaking skills through the storytelling method with hand puppets in Cycles I and II. Improvements were observed across all assessment aspects. The average speaking skills increased from 60 in Cycle I to 85 in Cycle II. The completion rate also increased from 60% to 85%, while the number of children who did not complete the task decreased. This indicates that the storytelling method with hand puppets is effective in increasing early childhood speaking skills.

The research results show that the storytelling method with hand puppets is effective in increasing the speaking confidence of young children. This improvement is not only visible quantitatively but also through changes in children's behavior, leading to them becoming more active, bold, and confident in communicating in the classroom. Children who previously tended to be passive and hesitant to speak began to demonstrate courage in answering questions, expressing their opinions, and retelling stories in simple language to the best of their ability.

This finding can be explained through several theoretical foundations. According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, children's language development occurs through social interaction.(Nai and Degeng 2017)In the context of this research, the interaction between teachers, children, and hand puppets is the primary stimulus for developing children's speaking skills. Hand puppets serve not only as storytelling aids but also as a medium that creates a more lively and enjoyable communication situation. When teachers use hand puppets, children feel as if they are communicating directly with the story characters, thus encouraging them to provide spontaneous verbal responses.

Furthermore, the interactions that occur during storytelling activities also provide space for children to learn through scaffolding, which is temporary assistance from the teacher that is gradually reduced as the child begins to speak independently. This helps children build confidence in communication because they feel supported throughout each conversation.

Thus, the use of hand puppets in storytelling not only enriches children's learning experiences but also creates a social environment that supports optimal language development. This aligns with Vygotsky's view that language learning develops optimally when children engage in active, meaningful, and sustained social interactions.

Furthermore, according to Piaget, early childhood is in the preoperational stage, a stage of cognitive development characterized by the ability to think symbolically but with limited understanding of abstract concepts. At this stage, children learn more easily through concrete objects that can be seen, touched, and experienced directly. Therefore, the use of tangible learning media is crucial to helping children better understand learning materials.

Hand puppets, as a visual and concrete medium, are highly suited to the developmental characteristics of children at this stage. Through hand puppets, the teacher's story concepts are more easily understood because they are visualized in the form of engaging and lively characters. Children not only hear the story verbally but also observe the puppets' expressions and movements, which helps them develop an understanding of the storyline.

Furthermore, hand puppets also play a role in stimulating children's ability to express ideas verbally. When children see and interact with puppets, they are encouraged to respond, ask questions, or even retell the story in their own words. This process helps develop children's language skills naturally because it occurs in a fun and non-pressurizing environment.

Thus, the use of hand puppets in learning not only helps children understand the material concretely but also supports the development of their speaking skills. This aligns with Piaget's theory, which emphasizes the importance of direct experience and concrete media in early childhood learning to optimally develop cognitive and language skills.

According to Moeslichatoen, the storytelling method is an effective strategy in developing children's language skills because it can foster imagination, attention, and courage to speak.(Susanti, nd)The use of hand puppets enhances the story's appeal, making it easier for children to actively engage. The use of hand puppets in storytelling further enhances the story's appeal. Hand puppets can visually and concretely represent the characters, making it easier for children to understand the story. Furthermore, this medium creates a more lively, enjoyable, and engaging learning environment. As children's attention increases, they will be more likely to actively engage in learning activities, such as answering questions, imitating conversations, or retelling the story in their own simple language.

From a behaviorist perspective, hand puppets can be understood as a stimulus provided by the teacher during the learning process. This stimulus elicits a response in the form of actions from the child, particularly in the form of speaking courage and

active engagement in question-and-answer sessions. Children who previously tended to be passive, quiet, or shy to speak began to show more active responses when presented with the stimulus of an engaging story with the help of hand puppets.

Furthermore, teacher reinforcement, such as praise or positive encouragement, also helps children respond more confidently to speaking. Gradually, this habit will build children's confidence in communicating with others. Thus, the combination of storytelling and the use of hand puppets not only increases children's interest in learning but is also effective in building speaking confidence through a consistent stimulus-response process.

In addition, the Developmentally Appropriate Practice approach emphasizes that early childhood learning must be appropriate to developmental stages and carried out through fun play activities.(Nabilah and Silmi 2024)The storytelling method with hand puppets fulfills the principles of DAP because it creates an interactive, fun, and relaxed learning environment. Hand puppets bring storytelling to life, making children feel as if they are interacting directly with the characters. This situation encourages children to respond more actively, whether through questions, answers, or retelling the story. Thus, learning is not solely teacher-centered but also provides ample space for children to participate actively according to their abilities and developmental stage.

In addition to increasing children's engagement, the use of hand puppets also helps foster a sense of psychological security. Children don't feel formally "judged," allowing them to speak more confidently without fear of making mistakes. This is crucial for developing speaking confidence, as young children need a supportive, friendly, and non-intimidating environment for language learning.

Furthermore, according to Çelik et al., presenting data in the form of graphs and tables is very helpful in clarifying changes in research results and facilitating understanding of developments that occurred during the intervention. In this study, the use of tables and graphs showed a consistent increase between Cycle I and Cycle II, both in terms of the percentage of children's speaking courage and changes in children's behavior in the classroom. This strengthens the finding that the intervention provided through the storytelling method with hand puppets has a positive impact on improving the speaking skills of early childhood in a gradual and measurable manner.

Overall, the use of hand puppets in storytelling activities has a significant positive impact on increasing early childhood speaking confidence. Through this medium, the learning process becomes more engaging, interactive, and tailored to the child's characteristics, enabling them to act not only as passive listeners but also as

active participants in the learning process.

Children become more confident because the learning environment is not stressful. Hand puppets bring the story characters to life, making them feel closer to the story and more emotionally engaged. This encourages children to confidently respond to teacher questions, express their opinions, and try speaking without fear of making mistakes. Gradually, this confidence develops as children frequently have opportunities to speak in front of their peers.

Furthermore, children become more active in responding to each storytelling activity. Activities such as answering simple questions, imitating characters' conversations, and interacting with hand puppets familiarize them with using spoken language in enjoyable situations. These habits indirectly develop fluency and enrich their vocabulary according to their developmental level.

Furthermore, children are also able to retell the story's content in their own simple language. This ability demonstrates development in both story comprehension and verbal expression. Children not only understand the storyline but are also able to retell it in their own way, albeit in simple sentences.

Thus, it can be concluded that the storytelling method with hand puppets not only increases speaking confidence but also supports the development of overall language skills. This demonstrates that appropriate, engaging, and child-friendly learning media plays a crucial role in creating an effective and meaningful learning process in early childhood education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that the storytelling method with hand puppets is effective in increasing speaking confidence in early childhood. This is evidenced by the results of the two cycles, which showed a significant increase, from 60% in Cycle I to 85% in Cycle II, a 25% increase.

In addition to quantitative improvements, qualitative changes also occurred, with children becoming more active, confident, and more willing to express their opinions during learning activities. The use of hand puppets also created a more enjoyable, interactive learning environment, and suited to the characteristics of early childhood.

Thus, the storytelling method with hand puppets can be used as an effective learning alternative to increase the speaking courage of early childhood children in PAUD educational institutions.

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