

# The Use of Hand Puppets as a Media for Developing Language Skills for Children Aged 4-5 Years: A Case Study at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem

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## Abstract

*Purpose:* This study aims to examine the use of hand puppets as a medium to improve language skills, social interaction, and vocabulary in early childhood through role-playing activities.

*Methodology:* The research used a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through observations, interviews with teachers, and analysis of documentation from learning activities.

*Results:* The findings show that the use of hand puppets significantly improved the language skills of children aged 4–5 years, including speaking, listening, and effective communication. The children demonstrated greater enthusiasm in participating in activities involving hand puppets and showed increased self-confidence when speaking.

*Applications/Originality/Value:* This study suggests that hand puppets are an effective, fun, and educational tool for developing early childhood language skills. Educators are encouraged to incorporate hand puppets into learning strategies to enrich children's language experiences from an early age.

## Introduction

Early Childhood is a period of rapid growth and development. Even this period is considered a leap forward in development. Therefore, early childhood is considered a golden age, where childhood is a vulnerable age between the ages of 0 to 6 years (Isnainingsih & Rohman, 2019). According to Dityatulloh & Santosa (2018), quality education will support the development of human resources to support progress in various fields. National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003, Chapter I, Article 1, Number 14 which states "Preschool education is a training effort aimed at children aged 0 to 6 years and includes the provision of educational stimuli to advance physically and spiritually. growth and mental development. so that children are ready to continue their education. Stimulation is provided in the form of education to support the growth and development of children's physical, mental, and language, so that they are ready to take part in further studies.

The latest curriculum used at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten is the Education Unit Curriculum (KSP). In this program, the school plans the learning process to achieve the school's vision and mission (Fatirul & Walujo, 2022). Stated that the curriculum as a learning plan is an educational program designed to teach students. The advantage of this curriculum is that it includes many different activities that can support the student learning process, so that there are changes and developments in student behavior and skills in accordance with the goals of education and learning (Cholilah et al., 2023).

Kindergarten Dharma Wanita Puhpelem is a school established by the Dharma Wanita organization. Kindergarten Dharma Wanita Puhpelem is located on Jl. Puhpelem, Sampung Km 1, Randukuning, Puhpelem, Puhpelem District, Wonogiri Regency, Central Java. With the status of foundation assets and B certification, this kindergarten has a private status with NPSN 69906355. One of the goals to be achieved at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten is to increase learning capacity by getting to know various types of knowledge such as social-emotional, language, physical-motor, religious, cognitive, art and independence. One of the goals is to develop early childhood language skills and perspectives on "sound" (Blaisdell et al., 2019).

Language is a system that represents sounds or speech in everyday human communication (Revita et al., 2023). For humans, language has two roles, namely as a tool for thinking and a tool for communication (Suhendi, 2017). According to Dewi & Purandina (2022), child development includes three aspects, namely (1) language acquisition, (2) language

expression, and (3) literacy skills. From an early age, children are at the fastest stage of growth and development both physically and mentally, so they are easily colored by positive things, including language. Basically, the language development of preschool children includes four stages of development: (1) listening, (2) speaking, (3) reading, and (4) writing (Anggraini, 2021).

Language skills are grouped into two categories, namely the receptive aspect and the productive aspect (Atiqoh, 2018). The receptive aspect is absorbing or receptive, seen in listening and reading activities. Meanwhile, the production aspect is the use or production of language, both oral and written, which is expressed in speaking and writing activities. Children's language development can be achieved if the language competency component is met, the language skill component that is considered is the ability to speak, read, write and listen (Baroroh & Rahmawati, 2020). These four skills are interdependent on each other. A participatory, child-centered approach is seen as helping researchers better represent children's voices, building understanding from an interactive, reflective, and participatory perspective (Coyne & Carter, 2018).

Improving a child's language skills includes many stages, depending on the child's age and developmental characteristics. According to (Ernawulan, 2021), children will gain something in terms of language skills. At the age of 4 to 5 years, children can say sentences with 4 to 5 words. Emphasized that by the end of preschool age, children in general can speak simply, speak fluently, easily understand, and have sufficient grammar, even though there are language errors (Sriyanti & Putri, 2023). According to Regulation Number 58 of 2009, the level of development that children will achieve at the age of 4-5 years is the ability to answer simple questions, express opinions to others, and be able to convey children's opinions by repeating simple sentences.

Learning media acts as a tool to attract attention and stimulate children's interest in the learning process. One of the educational tools used in this study is the use of hand puppets. The use of hand puppets can develop storytelling skills because listening to stories and speaking can train children's brains in developing language skills from an early age. As explained by (TC & Milligan, n.d.), the storytelling method is oral and storytelling. That way, the narrative must be presented in an interesting way so that children are enthusiastic about listening to it. Children will have the opportunity to ask questions and give answers after the story is read. The use of hand puppets can create a unique impression when telling stories, hand puppets are an elegant and creative storytelling medium (Khairil et al., 2020).

Based on initial observations on May 13, 2024 at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten, some of the things that will be observed are learning activities that will be demonstrated in the development of children's language skills using hand puppets. Therefore, the researcher wants to conduct a study with the title "The Use of Hand Puppets as a Media for Developing Language Skills for Children Aged 4-5 Years: A Qualitative Study at Kindergarten Dharma Wanita Puhpelem".

## Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study type to analyze the use of hand puppets as a medium for language skill development in children aged 4-5 years at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten. Qualitative research is a type of research that aims to understand the phenomena experienced by the research subject, such as behavior, perception, motivation, and action, as a whole. This research is carried out with a descriptive approach using words and language, and is carried out in a natural context by utilizing various appropriate methods (Rusli, 2021). This method is carried out with a case study approach, where data is collected through observation, interviews with teachers, and analysis of documentation of learning activities.

Hasibuan et al. (2023), observation is a data collection technique carried out through observation accompanied by recording the state or behavior of the target audience. The goal is to obtain valid and accurate information needed for an activity or research. Interview is a form of interpersonal communication where two people have a conversation in the form of questions and answers (Widiastuti et al., 2018). The effectiveness of the interview is determined by the level of information gathered. Therefore, to ensure the interviewee gets the desired important information, the interviewer should create some sort of interview guide with important questions to ask. This research was conducted at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten on May 13 to 15 of the 2023/2024 school year. The time used in this study was 2 weeks. The subject of this study is group A children with a total of 16 children. The interview was conducted with the kindergarten class teacher of group A, namely Mrs. Sri, the interview was conducted to get information directly from the resource person to find out more clearly about language development by telling stories using hand puppets in children aged 4-5 years at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten.

## Result and Discussion

### Results

This research was conducted at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten in the 2023/2024 school year. The implementation of this research is by applying the storytelling method with hand puppets to improve the language skills of

children aged 4-5 years. This research is with a case study approach by conducting observations, interviews, and documentation as follows.

### ***Results of Observation of Learning Activities Using Hand Puppets as a Media for Developing Language Skills for Children Aged 4-5 Years at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten***

This learning is carried out by the teacher preparing hand puppets neatly according to the theme of the story presented, including in planning the story the teacher has learned every story to be performed, the teacher chooses a seat on the chair so that the children can see the hand puppet and observe each story presented. The teacher opened the greeting and followed by the children answering the greeting simultaneously and continued by asking the day, asking the children who did not enter, and singing and clapping. Before the story starts, the teacher asks the children such as, "children, who knows, today the teacher is bringing the story of the hand puppet with what animal?". Simultaneously the child answered "chicken and duck, ma'am" by pointing to the hand puppet brought.

In the core learning activity, the teacher enthusiastically told a story with a hand puppet with the title "Friendship of Chickens and Ducks". In this situation, children listen to stories in an orderly manner and do not make noise or talk to other friends. In the middle of the story, the teacher provokes the child to ask a question and the child enthusiastically replies "I also have friends such as chickens and ducks", this shows that the children are enthusiastic about listening to the story and are also active in listening to the story, daring to answer, and honing the child's simple vocabulary

At the end of the story, the teacher did not forget to give the child the opportunity to tell a story with a hand puppet, "who dares to tell a story in front of friends?". Instantly the class became crowded with the screams of children who wanted to tell stories, from here it can be seen that hand puppets give an interesting impression in telling stories. Children who were initially quieter and only spoke simple words, began to speak more boldly after using hand puppets. They seem more confident because they feel that speaking through hand puppets gives them the freedom to express themselves without shame. With this, children also use expressive words such as "happy," "sad," "angry," "afraid," and "surprised," which they rarely said before.

### ***Interview Results of Learning Activities Using Hand Puppets as a Media for Developing Language Skills for Children Aged 4-5 Years at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten***

Before the use of hand puppets, classroom conditions tended to be less enthusiastic, with children who seemed passive and less enthusiastic about participating in learning activities. The vocabulary they use is not long sentences and children tend to talk on their own when the teacher tells stories not with the media. The children did not focus on the teacher's story and looked so bored before the use of the hand puppet.

Learning with the use of hand puppets as a medium for developing language skills yields excellent results, this can increase children's interest in listening and focus on listening to stories. This can also be seen in children who are initially more reserved and only speak simple words, starting to speak more boldly after using hand puppets. They seem more confident because they feel that talking through a doll gives them the freedom to express themselves without shame. Many children can only say short sentences like, "I want to drink" or "This chicken is eating." However, as time went on, the sentences they spoke began to develop, for example, "Ducks forage with chickens in the back garden, and drink into the river to meet crocodiles" or "I want to play hand puppets, who wants to come along?"

At this time, the use of hand puppets has not been fully used in every learning, this is because the use of hand puppets as a learning medium has not been routinely applied in every learning activity at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten, so that the maximum potential of this media in developing children's language skills has not been fully utilized.

### ***Results of Documentation of Learning Activities Using Hand Puppets as a Media for Language Skills Development for Children Aged 4-5 Years at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten.***

#### ***Storytelling Activities with Hand Puppet Media***



**Figure 1.** Storytelling with hand puppet media

Children are very interested in listening to stories, hand puppets are an attraction for children and reduce boredom when listening to stories, so that children can better understand the content of the stories conveyed by the teacher.

### **Ask and Answer Questions About the Content of The Story**



**Figure 2.** Asking and answering about the content of the story

Children arrange words to ask questions about the content of the story conveyed by the teacher. In this situation, the child feels confident in expressing his language. Then the teacher gives the child the opportunity to retell the story he heard before.

### **Children Try to Tell Stories with Hand Puppets**



**Figure 3.** Children tell stories with hand puppet media

The teacher gives the opportunity for children to repeat the story according to their language skills and use. Through this, children can string words to develop each child's language skills.

### **Discussion**

From the observation results, the use of hand puppets in addition to giving an interesting impression also helps children become skilled in language such as listening, speaking, and reading:

- a. Listening is a person's attitude in listening to stories well. (Abdurakhmonova & Abduvohidova, 2023) argues that listening is an aspect of language that helps communicate effectively, namely being able to receive information provided by the speaker. Speaking is a way for someone to communicate using language (Rambe et al., 2023).
- b. Speaking is a form of speech in the form of sounds produced by vocal instruments accompanied by body movements and facial expressions. According to Rambe, there are several methods that can be applied to learn to speak, namely:
  1. Repeat Method Listen to your own voice or voice recording. Then the child is asked to repeat it according to the sample of the sound he hears.

2. Question Answering Method, this method provokes students to dare to ask questions and answers.
  3. The Asking Method, the asking method can be done by asking students to ask simple questions.
  4. Storytelling Method, for example, students are invited to tell stories about experiences, memories or events that they have experienced or made-up events.
  5. Role-Playing Method, students are taught to role-play about the character's role and his speaking style.
- C. Reading is an activity or process of understanding, interpreting, and absorbing information contained in a text or text. It is reinforced by (Isaqlon, 2022) that the reading process is a process between the reader and the text that leads to meaningful context and meaning.

### ***Advantages and Disadvantages of Learning with Hand Puppet Media***

Stimulation of storytelling development at an early age, especially in kindergarten, is often stimulated without using interesting media to present lesson topics, this is one of the factors that cause children not to absorb all the story topics learned in learning. On that basis, the researcher chose hand puppet material to help children develop language skills through storytelling. The use of hand puppets is considered to have advantages and be child-friendly, because the desire to play children is very high. Hand puppets have the advantage of being very suitable for use as an educational medium, especially to develop language skills (Marwah, 2022). Reinforced by (Stafford, 2017), hand puppets provide an alternative way of communicating to help overcome communication challenges in children who may have limited language skills or shy personalities.

### ***The advantages of using hand puppet media in the development of language skills at Kindergarten Dharma Wanita Puhpelem are:***

1. Increases children's interest and concentration. Hand puppets are often an object of interest to children. Cute or unique doll characters can attract children's attention so that they increase their interest in participating in language activities such as talking, listening or telling stories. This helps them focus on the language learning process.
2. Encourages verbal expression. By using hand puppets, children are encouraged to speak more. Dolls can "talk" to the child or vice versa, thus providing an opportunity for the child to express himself in the form of dialogue, stories or questions. This helps children develop speaking and communication skills more actively.
3. Facilitates the understanding of more complex languages. When using hand puppets, children may have the opportunity to hear more complex conversations, such as conversations between two dolls or between a doll and a child. This helps children expand their vocabulary and understand more complex sentence structures.
4. Improve public speaking skills. Children who are used to talking using hand puppets can develop their ability to speak in front of others with more confidence. Dolls provide an opportunity for children to practice speaking without feeling embarrassed or afraid.
5. Improve listening skills. Hand puppets are often used in stories or conversations that involve dialogue between the doll and the children. This helps children focus more on listening and understanding the story or instructions given through the puppet. This listening skill is very important in language development.

### ***The disadvantages of using hand puppet media in the development of language skills at Kindergarten Dharma Wanita Puhpelem are:***

1. Limited materials and dolls. The use of hand puppets can become monotonous if the number or variety of dolls available is limited. This can reduce creativity in storytelling or role-playing, which ultimately reduces children's interest and motivation to participate in speaking activities.
2. Limitations in developing writing skills. Puppet media focuses more on speaking and listening skills. While important, hand puppets cannot directly support the development of writing skills and letter recognition, which also need to be started from an early age.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the analysis conducted for 2 weeks at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten, it can be concluded that the use of hand puppets can improve the language skills of children aged 4-5 years, such as the ability to speak, listen, and communicate effectively. Children also showed greater enthusiasm in participating in learning activities involving hand puppets, as well as being more confident in speaking. Hand puppets can increase children's participation in learning activities, enrich vocabulary and stimulate speaking skills and social interaction. Through interaction with dolls, children not only learn to communicate verbally, but also develop the ability to hear, imagine, and understand basic language concepts such as recognizing names, objects, and emotions. The process of using hand puppets in language learning creates a fun atmosphere, so that children are more confident when speaking in front of friends and teachers. So that the use of hand puppets as a means of language learning at Dharma Wanita Puhpelem Kindergarten shows positive results both in

oral language skills and children's social and emotional development. Therefore, we should continue to use and develop this method to maximize the potential of language development in early childhood.

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