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The Use of the Storytelling Method to Improve the Expressive Language Ability of Group B Kindergarten Children

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa ekspresif anak usia 5–6 tahun Kelompok B di TK Taman Harapan Jambi School melalui penerapan metode bercerita (storytelling). Latar belakang penelitian adalah rendahnya kemampuan anak dalam mengungkapkan ide secara lisan, keterbatasan kosakata, serta kurangnya keberanian tampil bercerita. Penelitian menggunakan desain Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) model Kemmis dan McTaggart yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus, masing-masing terdiri atas dua pertemuan, pada Semester II Tahun Ajaran 2025/2026. Subjek penelitian berjumlah 11–12 anak. Tindakan pada Siklus I berupa bercerita dengan media gambar/buku cerita disertai tanya jawab sederhana, sedangkan Siklus II berupa bercerita interaktif menggunakan boneka/alat peraga disertai kegiatan menceritakan kembali. Data dikumpulkan melalui lembar observasi terhadap delapan indikator bahasa ekspresif dengan empat kategori capaian (BB, MB, BSH, BSB) dan dianalisis secara deskriptif persentase. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan rata-rata skor dari 1,88 (kategori Mulai Berkembang) pada Siklus I menjadi 3,31 (kategori Berkembang Sesuai Harapan) pada Siklus II. Kategori Belum Berkembang menurun dari 13% menjadi 0%, sementara ketuntasan klasikal kategori BSH dan BSB meningkat dari 0% menjadi 83,3%, melampaui ambang keberhasilan 75%. Seluruh delapan indikator pada Siklus II mencapai sekurang-kurangnya kategori Berkembang Sesuai Harapan, sesuai milestone perkembangan anak usia 5–6 tahun. Disimpulkan bahwa metode bercerita efektif meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa ekspresif anak; bercerita interaktif berbantuan boneka/alat peraga memberikan dampak lebih kuat dibanding media gambar.

Kata Kunci: Metode Bercerita; Storytelling; Bahasa Ekspresif; Anak Usia Dini

Abstract

This study aims to improve the expressive language ability of Group B children aged 5–6 years at TK Taman Harapan Jambi School through the application of the storytelling method. The study was motivated by children's low ability to express ideas orally, limited vocabulary, and lack of confidence in narrating in front of others. A Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following the Kemmis and McTaggart model was conducted in two cycles, each comprising two sessions, during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The subjects consisted of 11–12 children. The Cycle I intervention used picture media/storybooks accompanied by simple questioning, whereas Cycle II employed interactive storytelling with puppets/props followed by retelling activities. Data were collected through an observation sheet covering eight expressive-language indicators with four achievement categories (BB,

MB, BSH, BSB) and analyzed using descriptive percentages. The results show an increase in the average score from 1.88 (Beginning to Develop) in Cycle I to 3.31 (Developing as Expected) in Cycle II. The Not-Yet-Developing category fell from 13% to 0%, while classical mastery of the BSH and BSB categories rose from 0% to 83.3%, exceeding the 75% success threshold. All eight indicators in Cycle II reached at least the Developing-as-Expected category, consistent with the developmental milestones for children aged 5–6 years. It is concluded that the storytelling method effectively improves children's expressive language; interactive storytelling assisted by puppets/props has a stronger effect than picture media.

***Keywords**: Storytelling Method; Expressive Language; Early Childhood*

Introduction

Language is one of the most important aspects of development in early childhood because it is the primary means by which children communicate, think, and interact with their environment. Children's language ability is divided into receptive language, namely the ability to understand the language they hear, and expressive language, namely the ability to convey thoughts, ideas, feelings, and needs orally. Good mastery of expressive language becomes the foundation for successful communication, early literacy, and children's learning readiness at subsequent levels [1], [2].

Field reality shows that the expressive language ability of Group B children at TK Taman Harapan Jambi School, Kota Baru District, Jambi City, has not developed optimally. Based on initial observation, most children still had difficulty answering questions about the content of a story in their own sentences, were not yet able to retell a story they had heard in sequence, were limited in using new vocabulary, and lacked the confidence to speak in front of friends and teachers. This condition is marked by a still-low class mean, namely at the Beginning-to-Develop category. For children aged 5–6 years, however, the developmental milestone expected under the Child Development Achievement Level Standards (STPPA) is that they can express ideas orally in complete sentences and retell a story in sequence—that is, attainment at the Developing-as-Expected level.

One learning strategy relevant to stimulating children's expressive language is the storytelling method. Through storytelling, children gain a rich model of oral language, are encouraged to listen, imitate, and then produce utterances, while also gaining the opportunity to express ideas and feelings in an enjoyable atmosphere [3], [4]. A number of studies show that the storytelling method assisted by interactive media is effective in improving children's language ability. Storytelling using hand puppets has been shown to affect children's expressive language and emotion [5], as has storytelling using finger puppets [6]. In a broader context, storytelling techniques in extratextual activities support the development of children's expressive language skills [7], while digital storytelling has proven beneficial in language learning and vocabulary mastery [8], [9]. Storytelling is also recognized as an effective means of transferring knowledge contextually [10].

The advantages of the storytelling method need to be supported by the selection of appropriate media and the teacher's active role as a facilitator. The use of attractive media, such as pictures, storybooks, puppets, and props, can increase children's engagement [11], and the teacher's competence in planning and implementing learning also determines the success of stimulation [12]. Unlike a number of prior studies that generally applied a single type of media, this study designs the action in tiers: Cycle I uses picture media/storybooks with simple questioning, and Cycle II advances to interactive storytelling assisted by puppets/props accompanied by retelling activities. This tiered design aims to observe the contribution of increasing media and interaction complexity to children's

expressive language development in the local context of Jambi City.

Based on the above, this study aims to improve the expressive language ability of Group B children at TK Taman Harapan Jambi School through the application of the storytelling method, while also describing the extent of the improvement in children's achievement in each cycle. The research framework is presented in Figure 1.

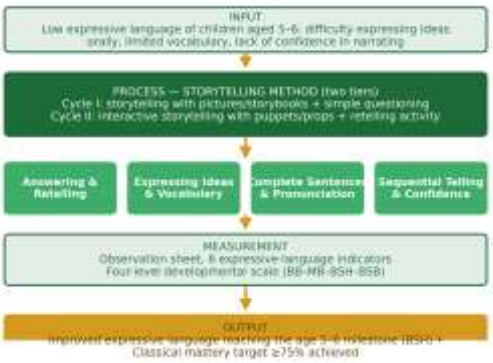

Figure 1. Research Framework
Source: Processed by the researcher (2026)

Research Method

This study used Classroom Action Research (CAR) with the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral model, which consists of four stages in each cycle, namely planning, action, observation, and reflection [13]. This design was chosen because it allows the teacher to improve learning practice directly and gradually based on the reflection of each cycle [14]. The study was conducted in two cycles, each of two sessions. The research flow is shown in Figure 2.

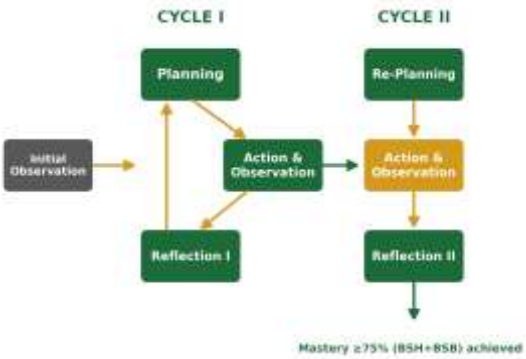

Figure 2. Classroom Action Research Flow of the Kemmis and McTaggart Model

Source: Adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart [13]; processed by the researcher (2026)

Subjects and Setting

The research subjects were Group B children (TK B) at TK Taman Harapan Jambi School, Kota Baru District, Jambi City, in the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, with an attendance of 11–12 children per session. The study was conducted collaboratively: the researcher acted as the implementing teacher, while the observation was carried out by an observer (Imroatusolekha).

Action

The Cycle I action consisted of storytelling with picture media/storybooks accompanied by simple questioning to prompt children to restate the content of the story. The Cycle II action was enhanced into interactive storytelling using puppets/props, accompanied by retelling activities by the children to give wider room for language production.

Instruments

The main instrument was an observation sheet containing eight indicators of expressive language ability (Table 1). Each indicator was assessed using four developmental categories with score weighting of 1–4 (Table 2). The categories correspond to the developmental milestones expected of children aged 5–6 years, where the Developing-as-Expected (BSH) level represents attainment of the age-appropriate milestone.

Table 1. Indicators of Expressive Language Ability

No	Indicator
1	Answering simple questions about the content of a story in their own sentences
2	Retelling the content of a story that has been heard
3	Expressing ideas, feelings, and opinions orally
4	Using complete sentences (subject–predicate) when speaking

5	Adding and using new vocabulary from the story
6	Speaking with clear and accurate pronunciation and intonation
7	Narrating in sequence according to the order of events
8	Daring to speak / perform a story in front of friends and the teacher

Source: Processed by the researcher (2026)

Table 2. Assessment Categories and Score Weighting

Category	Score	Description
BB	1	Not Yet Developing — the child has not yet shown the ability on the observed indicator.
MB	2	Beginning to Develop — the child shows the ability with the teacher's help or guidance.
BSH	3	Developing as Expected — the child shows the ability independently and consistently.
BSB	4	Developing Very Well — the child shows the ability independently, consistently, and can help friends.

Source: Processed by the researcher (2026)

Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using descriptive percentages. The class mean score was calculated by dividing the total score of all indicators by the number of indicators, while the category percentage was calculated from the frequency of each category divided by the total number of assessments times 100%. The success indicator was set at a minimum of 75% of children reaching the Developing-as-Expected (BSH) or Developing-Very-Well (BSB) category. The achievement of each cycle was compared to assess the improvement.

Findings and Discussion

Cycle I Results

Cycle I was conducted in two sessions, on 6 April 2026 (12 children present) and 9 April 2026 (11 children present). The action consisted of storytelling with picture media/storybooks accompanied by simple questioning. The observation results of both sessions are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Observation Results of Expressive Language in Cycle I

Indicator	Session 1	Session 2	Mean Score
Indicator 1	MB	MB	2.0 (MB)
Indicator 2	MB	MB	2.0 (MB)
Indicator 3	BB	MB	1.5 (MB)
Indicator 4	MB	MB	2.0 (MB)
Indicator 5	BB	MB	1.5 (MB)
Indicator 6	MB	MB	2.0 (MB)
Indicator 7	MB	MB	2.0 (MB)
Indicator 8	MB	MB	2.0 (MB)
Cycle Mean			**1.88 / 4.00**

Source: Researcher's observation data, 2026.

In Cycle I, the class mean reached 1.88 of a 4.00 scale. The category distribution showed that 13% of children were in the Not-Yet-Developing (BB) category and 88% in the Beginning-to-Develop (MB) category, while the BSH and BSB categories had not yet been reached (0%). The weakest indicators were indicator 3 (expressing ideas, feelings, and opinions orally) and indicator 5 (adding and using new vocabulary), which in the first session were still in the BB category. The observer's notes in the first session mentioned that some children still had difficulty expressing ideas and vocabulary, while in the second session it was noted that some children still had a limited attention span while listening to the story. Based on the reflection, the follow-up plan for Cycle I focused on reviewing vocabulary that children found

difficult to pronounce and using more interactive media.

Cycle II Results

Cycle II was conducted on 20 April 2026 and 23 April 2026, with 12 children present at each session. The action was enhanced into interactive storytelling using puppets/props, accompanied by retelling activities by the children. The observation results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Observation Results of Expressive Language in Cycle II

Indicator	Session 1	Session 2	Mean Score
Indicator 1	BSH	BSB	3.5 (BSB)
Indicator 2	BSH	BSH	3.0 (BSH)
Indicator 3	MB	BSB	3.0 (BSH)
Indicator 4	BSH	BSB	3.5 (BSB)
Indicator 5	MB	BSB	3.0 (BSH)
Indicator 6	BSH	BSH	3.0 (BSH)
Indicator 7	BSH	BSB	3.5 (BSB)
Indicator 8	BSH	BSB	3.5 (BSB)
Cycle Mean			**3.31 / 4.00**

Source: Researcher's observation data, 2026.

In Cycle II, the class mean rose to 3.31. The Not-Yet-Developing category was eliminated (0%), the Beginning-to-Develop category fell to 16.7%, the Developing-as-Expected category reached 50%, and the Developing-Very-Well category emerged at 33.3%. Thus, classical mastery of the BSH and BSB categories reached 83.3%, exceeding the 75% success criterion. Crucially, all eight indicators attained at least the Developing-as-Expected category, meaning every targeted expressive-language skill reached the developmental milestone expected of children aged 5–6 years. The most prominent improvement appeared in indicator 1 (answering questions about the story) and indicator 4 (using complete sentences), which reached the Developing-Very-Well category, as well as indicators 7 and 8 (sequential narration and confidence to perform), which rose to Developing Very Well in the second session. The observer's notes in the first session mentioned that some children still found it difficult to convey a story fully, but in the second session children had begun to dare to narrate confidently in front of friends and the teacher. Because the results exceeded the success criteria, the action was stopped at the end of Cycle II.

Between-Cycle Comparison

The comparison of achievement between cycles is presented in Table 5 and visualized in Figure 3 (category distribution) and Figure 4 (mean score of each indicator).

Table 5. Recapitulation of the Between-Cycle Comparison of Achievement

Cycle	Mean	BB	MB	BSH	BSB	Mastery
Cycle I	1.88	13%	88%	0%	0%	0%
Cycle II	3.31	0%	16.7%	50%	33.3%	83.3%
Increase	**+1.43**	**−13%**	**−71.3%**	**+50%**	**+33.3%**	**+83.3%**

Source: Researcher's observation data, 2026. Mastery = combined BSH and BSB categories.

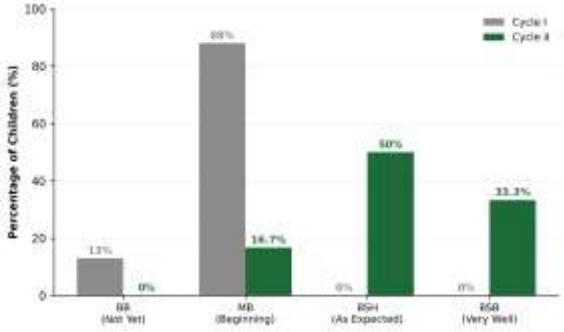

Figure 3. Distribution of Expressive Language Categories Between Cycles
Source: Researcher's observation data, 2026

Figure 3 shows the marked shift in category distribution: the Not-Yet-Developing and Beginning-to-Develop categories that dominated Cycle I were largely replaced in Cycle II by the Developing-as-Expected and Developing-Very-Well categories. The per-indicator improvement is visualized in Figure 4.

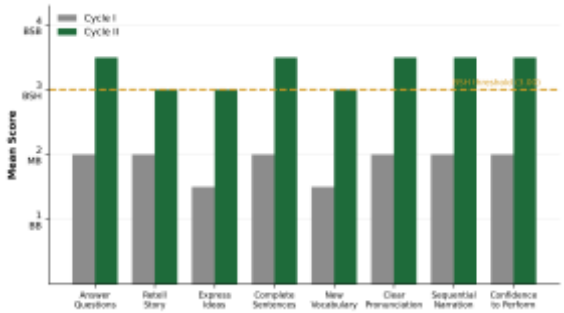

Figure 4. Improvement of the Mean Score of Each Indicator Between Cycles

Source: Researcher's observation data, 2026. The dashed line marks the Developing-as-Expected threshold (score 3.00).

Figure 4 confirms that in Cycle I no indicator reached the Developing-as-Expected threshold (score 3.00), with two indicators—expressing ideas and new vocabulary—at the lowest point. In Cycle II, all eight indicators reached or exceeded that threshold, bringing every expressive-language skill up to the age-appropriate milestone, with five indicators attaining the Developing-Very-Well level.

Discussion

The findings show an upward trend in children's expressive language ability from Cycle I to Cycle II, both in the mean score (1.88 to 3.31) and in the category distribution, marked by the disappearance of the Not-Yet-Developing category and the rise of classical mastery to 83.3%. This finding aligns with a number of studies concluding that the storytelling method is effective in optimizing the language ability of young children [4], [15].

The sharper increase in Cycle II is strongly related to the change in media and interaction pattern. In Cycle I, picture media/storybooks accompanied by simple questioning were more receptive in nature, so children's language production was still limited. In Cycle II, the use of puppets/props combined with retelling activities gave children room to produce utterances actively. The puppet served as a trigger that lowered performance anxiety while strengthening children's emotional engagement. This is consistent with the finding that hand-puppet storytelling affects children's expressive language and emotion [5], and that finger-puppet storytelling effectively improves expressive language [6]. A similar classroom action research applying hand-puppet media also reported a gradual improvement in the expressive language of Group B children in each cycle [15].

Theoretically, this result can be explained through a sociocultural perspective: language develops through social interaction and adult scaffolding within the child's zone of proximal development. Interactive storytelling positions the teacher as both a language model and a facilitator who guides the child from merely listening toward independent utterance production. Extratextual activities in storytelling—such as questioning, predicting, and retelling—have been shown to support the development of expressive language skills [7], and the selection of attractive media increases children's engagement and motivation to speak [11].

An important point of this study is that the tiered design enabled every indicator to reach the developmental milestone expected of children aged 5–6 years. The two indicators that had lagged in Cycle I—expressing ideas orally (indicator 3) and using new vocabulary (indicator 5)—reached the Developing-as-Expected category in Cycle II after the introduction of vocabulary pre-teaching, the more interactive puppet media, and the wider opportunity to produce language through retelling. This shows that expressive-language skills, although they develop at different paces, can all be brought up to the age-appropriate milestone through a well-structured, gradually intensified intervention. The strongest gains appeared in answering questions, using complete sentences, sequential narration, and confidence to perform, which reached the Developing-Very-Well category—indicating that the children not only met but,

in several skills, exceeded the expected milestone.

The practical implications for teachers include continuing to enrich storytelling with interactive media, providing wide opportunities for children to narrate independently, conducting vocabulary pre-teaching (introducing difficult words before storytelling), keeping story duration appropriate with varied props to maintain attention, and giving consistent positive reinforcement. These strategies are relevant to the recommendations of prior research regarding the importance of children's active involvement, the teacher's full commitment in delivering the story, and the provision of rewards [6], [15]. Further research can expand the number of subjects and add pre-cycle data to strengthen the analysis of improvement.

Conclusion

The application of the storytelling method can improve the expressive language ability of Group B children at TK Taman Harapan Jambi School, Kota Baru District, Jambi City. The improvement is shown by the increase in the mean score from 1.88 in Cycle I to 3.31 in Cycle II, the disappearance of the Not-Yet-Developing category (from 13% to 0%), and the rise of classical mastery of the BSH and BSB categories from 0% to 83.3%, so that the 75% success criterion was met at the end of Cycle II. By the end of the study, all eight indicators had reached at least the Developing-as-Expected category, consistent with the developmental milestones expected of children aged 5–6 years. Interactive storytelling assisted by puppets/props combined with retelling activities had a stronger effect than storytelling with picture media/storybooks. It is recommended that kindergarten teachers make use of varied, tiered, and interactive storytelling, reinforced with vocabulary pre-teaching and consistent positive reinforcement, in order to optimally stimulate the expressive language development of young children. Further research can expand the number of subjects and add pre-cycle data to strengthen the analysis of improvement.

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