

The Implementation of Role-Playing Activities to Enhance the Language Skills of Children Aged 5–6 Years

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ABSTRAK

This study aims to improve the language skills of children aged 5–6 years at TK IT Permata Hati during the 2024/2025 academic year. The research was conducted using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, which comprised two cycles, namely Cycle I and Cycle II. Each cycle involved four stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, allowing for continuous assessment and refinement of teaching strategies. The study focused on 18 children in Group B at TK IT Permata Hati, Wanasaba District, consisting of 4 boys and 14 girls. Data were collected through direct observation, performance assessment, and documentation, providing a comprehensive view of the children's language development. The findings revealed significant improvement in children's language skills following the implementation of the role-playing method. In Cycle I, the achievement percentage based on observation sheets was 72.2%, which increased to 78% in Cycle II, reflecting a 5.8% improvement. Similarly, the class average score increased from 62.4 in Cycle I to 73.15 in Cycle II. These results indicate that the role-playing method effectively fosters language development in young learners by providing an engaging, interactive, and contextually meaningful learning environment. Children were observed to participate more actively, communicate with greater confidence, and demonstrate an increased ability to construct sentences and express ideas. Overall, the study highlights that integrating role-playing activities into early childhood education can significantly enhance language skills, supporting both cognitive and social development. The positive outcomes suggest that such methods can be applied more broadly in similar educational settings to optimize language learning for preschool-aged children.

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is an educational institution that plays a crucial role in developing the full potential of young children (Junanto & Kusna, 2018; Sum & Taran, 2020). Early childhood is widely regarded as a formative period of significant importance, as it represents the foundation for children's future development (Khoiruzzadi et al., 2020; We & Fauziah, 2020). Success in guiding and nurturing children from an early age reflects the level of progress that shapes their future, whereas the inability to provide proper guidance, attention, and direction may lead to developmental setbacks later in life (Agustin, 2020; Meilanie, 2020).

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Children at an early age are naturally capable of interacting with peers, parents, and teachers. They enjoy sharing their experiences and often create imaginary friends due to their developmental stage, which aligns with the pre-operational phase. These imaginary companions gradually disappear as children enter the concrete operational stage.

Current issues show that children with limited social interaction are often not supported by teachers to engage in play with peers (Izza, 2020; Yuniarni, 2016). Such children tend to spend break time with parents rather than classmates (Mardiah & Ismet, 2021; Pebriana, 2017). Peer interaction, which begins as early as age two, serves as a foundation for developing communication skills (Ramadhani & Fauziah, 2020).

Language is the primary medium through which children express thoughts and acquire knowledge. As a communication tool, language plays an essential role in supporting intellectual, social, and emotional development. Language growth is closely related to cognitive development, meaning that intellectual factors significantly influence children's language acquisition. As children grow and begin to comprehend their surroundings, their linguistic abilities develop from simple forms to more complex structures. Accelerated language development emerges as a result of symbolic functioning, enabling children to solve problems and learn through verbal communication (Hasanah, 2023).

The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014 on the Standard of Child Development Achievement (STTPA) states that developmental milestones represent the expected growth and abilities of children at particular age levels. For children aged 5–6 years, receptive language indicators include: (1) understanding multiple instructions simultaneously, (2) repeating more complex sentences, (3) understanding rules in games, and (4) enjoying and appreciating stories. Expressive language indicators include: (1) responding to complex questions, (2) identifying groups of images with similar sounds, (3) engaging in oral communication with adequate vocabulary and recognition of symbols for early literacy and numeracy, (4) constructing simple but complete sentences (subject–predicate–object), (5) using vocabulary to express ideas, (6) continuing parts of a story that has been read to them, and (7) demonstrating comprehension of concepts in storybooks.

Preliminary observations at TK IT Permata Hati Wanasaba indicated that most children in Class B had not yet developed adequate language skills. Many children were reluctant to speak during learning activities unless called upon directly by the teacher. They had difficulty answering simple questions, preferred responding only with nods or “yes/no,” and struggled to convey messages verbally. Based on preliminary data from the pre-cycle assessment of 18 children, 4 were in the “Not Yet Developed” (BB) category, 6 in the “Beginning to Develop” (MB) category, 5 in the “Developing as Expected” (BSH) category, and only 3 in the “Developing Very Well” (BSB) category. These results demonstrate that many children were unable to process verbal information effectively and lacked the vocabulary needed to respond concretely. Vocabulary is essential for language development because it serves as the foundation for effective communication (Maududi, 2018; Elviza et al., 2013). Several children also struggled with phoneme articulation and had difficulty expressing ideas clearly during interaction.

One of the methods considered effective for enhancing children's language skills is role-playing. Role-playing activities offer meaningful opportunities for children to imitate characters, memorize dialogues, and practice new vocabulary within context. As children reenact stories, they acquire a broader range of vocabulary, which supports faster language development. Furthermore, role-playing helps strengthen communication skills and builds children's confidence.

In light of these challenges, the role-playing method is expected to stimulate language development by providing children with opportunities to explore characters, use new vocabulary, and engage confidently in communication with others.

METHOD

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR), which is a form of action research conducted by teachers in their own classrooms through systematic reflection with the goal of improving teaching performance and enhancing student learning outcomes (Wardani & Wihardit, 2023, p. 1.7). Action research serves as a systematic inquiry carried out by teachers, principals, or school counselors to gather information about their practices. This information is then used to improve understanding and develop reflective practices that positively impact school processes, including student learning outcomes (Mills, 2000 in Wardani & Wihardit, 2023, p. 1.7).

Based on these definitions, Classroom Action Research can be understood as a reflective and collaborative effort conducted by teachers—either independently or in collaboration with others—to design, implement, and evaluate actions aimed at improving the quality of classroom learning.

This study was carried out in two cycles, following four general phases:

1. Planning — designing the intervention to be implemented;
2. Action — implementing the planned learning activities;
3. Observation — observing children's language development;
4. Reflection — analyzing strengths and weaknesses to determine necessary improvements.

The research subjects were 18 children in Group B at TK IT Permata Hati, Wanasaba District, consisting of 4 boys and 14 girls. Data collection techniques included direct observation, performance assessment, and documentation.

RESULTS

Pre-Cycle

Based on the preliminary study conducted, it was found that out of 18 students, 8 children had demonstrated adequate developmental progress, while 10 children had not yet met the expected competency level. Among these 10 children, 4 were categorized as “Not Yet Developed” (BB) and 6 were categorized as “Beginning to Develop” (MB). These findings indicate that during the pre-cycle stage, the majority of children still required further guidance to reach optimal language proficiency. The results from each subsequent cycle are presented below.

Cycle I

Planning

In this phase, the researcher prepared all materials required for the learning process, including the following:

1. Developing the Daily Lesson Plan (RPPH), which served as the instructional guide for implementing learning activities—particularly those related to delivering content using the role-playing method.
2. Preparing instructional media, specifically images of communication tools that would support role-play activities.
3. Preparing observation sheets and assessment instruments to evaluate children's participation and language performance during role-playing activities.

Implementation

During the implementation phase, learning activities were carried out in accordance with the previously developed lesson plan. The role-playing method was integrated into two meeting

sessions within the cycle to support the development of children’s language skills. Each session was aligned with the daily lesson plan (RPPH) to ensure that the instructional objectives related to language development were systematically addressed.

Observation

Observation results were recorded using the observation sheet based on predetermined indicators. During the learning process, children attended to the teacher’s explanations regarding the role-playing activities. The observations revealed that out of 18 children, 10 were able to perform their assigned roles effectively and showed improvement in their language skills, while 8 children were still unable to carry out their roles and remained in the “Not Yet Developed” category.

The observation findings indicate that the learning process in Cycle I did not fully meet the expected outcomes. Several challenges were identified, including a lack of student engagement, which affected participation and language performance. The results of language ability assessment in Cycle I through role-playing are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Language Ability Results in Cycle I

Category	BB	MB	BSH	BSB
Cycle I	3 (17%)	5 (28%)	6 (33%)	4 (22%)

Based on the data presented in Table 1 above, the number of students who achieved mastery was 10 out of 18 children (55%), consisting of 6 children in the BSH category (33%) and 4 children in the BSB category (22%). Meanwhile, 8 children (45%) had not yet achieved mastery, consisting of 3 children categorized as BB (17%) and 5 children categorized as MB (28%). These results indicate that the overall percentage remains below the minimum competency standard of 80%. Nevertheless, the implementation of Cycle I, conducted over three meetings, shows an improvement compared with the pre-cycle results.

Reflection

Based on the findings regarding children's language abilities during role-playing activities, the researcher conducted a reflection on the actions implemented in Cycle I. The evaluation served as the basis for improvements in Cycle II. Several obstacles encountered during the learning process included:

1. Limited variety of instructional aids used during role-playing activities.
2. Insufficient initial explanation regarding the role-playing activity, which caused some children to feel confused when receiving new material delivered through this method; therefore, this issue required greater attention in Cycle II.
3. Low student participation when performing their roles due to shyness, resulting in children remaining silent when asked by the teacher to perform a task.
4. Inadequate delivery of lesson conclusions, which affected students’ comprehension of the material.

Cycle II

Planning

The learning process in Cycle II began by addressing the shortcomings identified during the evaluation. Before implementing role-playing activities, the teacher provided clear instructions to ensure children focused on their assigned roles and performed them to the best of their ability. The teacher also emphasized the importance of paying attention to each part of the story being enacted so that students could better understand the learning material.

Improvements made during the planning stage included:

1. Completing the set of teaching aids needed for role-playing activities.

2. Enhancing the clarity of instructional delivery to ensure children understood the learning material more easily.
3. Providing closer guidance to children who felt shy when asking questions.
4. Improving the clarity of lesson conclusions and ensuring vocabulary choices were age-appropriate and easy to comprehend.
5. Preparing observation sheets and assessment instruments for evaluating children’s language abilities through role-playing in Cycle II.

Implementation

During the implementation stage, learning activities were carried out in accordance with the revised lesson plan. This ensured that the Cycle II learning process was more organized, structured, and focused on addressing the deficiencies identified in Cycle I.

Observation

Observation results were recorded using the prepared observation sheets. During the learning process, children paid attention to the teacher’s explanations of the role-playing activities. The results indicated that 15 out of 18 children were able to perform their assigned roles effectively and showed improved language abilities. However, 3 children remained in the “Beginning to Develop” category, as they were still learning to perform their roles and their language skills showed gradual progress.

Overall, the observations demonstrated that the learning process met the expected outcomes. The activities in Cycle II were more active, and the role-playing sessions ran effectively. Students were able to perform their roles well, contributing to a smoother and more productive learning process. Observation results were obtained through the researcher’s direct assessment using the language skill observation sheet. The results of children’s language ability assessments in Cycle II are presented in Table II.

Table II. Language Ability Results in Cycle II

Category	BB	MB	BSH	BSB
Cycle II	1 (5.4%)	2 (11%)	5 (28%)	10 (56%)

From Table II above, it can be seen that the results of the observation on children's language abilities in Cycle II increased from 55% in Cycle I to 84%. A total of 15 out of 18 students met the mastery criteria, with 5 students (28%) achieving the *BSH* (Developing as Expected) category and 10 students (56%) achieving the *BSB* (Developing Very Well) category. These results indicate that the level of mastery is classified as very good. Therefore, it can be concluded that the children’s language abilities improved through the use of the role-playing method during the learning process, and the expected mastery criteria were successfully achieved.

DISCUSSION

This study was motivated by the limited language abilities of children aged 5–6 years. Based on preliminary observations, it was found that most children in Class B at TK IT Permata Hati Wanasaba were not yet able to use language effectively. Many children were not confident enough to speak when the teacher asked direct questions related to the learning material. Children tended to speak or express their ideas only when specifically appointed by the teacher. They also struggled to answer simple questions, often responding merely by nodding or giving yes/no answers, and were unable to convey messages clearly. This initial condition was further described in percentage form during the pre-cycle stage. Out of the total 18 children, 4 were categorized as *Not Yet*

Developed (BB), 6 as *Beginning to Develop (MB)*, 5 as *Developing as Expected (BSH)*, and 3 as *Developing Very Well (BSB)*.

In Cycle I, the results showed that most children demonstrated improvement. Out of 18 children, 10 were able to carry out the assigned roles, and their language abilities increased. However, 8 children were still unable to perform the roles assigned by the teacher, and their language abilities remained in the *Not Yet Developed* category. Several factors contributed to this issue, including the limited variety of visual aids used during role-playing activities, insufficient initial explanation related to the role-play activities and learning materials, low student activeness, children’s reluctance and shyness in performing their roles, and children’s tendency to remain silent when instructed by the teacher. Additionally, many students were noisy and inattentive during the teacher’s instructions, causing the learning process to be less effective. Therefore, Cycle II was necessary to achieve better outcomes.

In Cycle II, the children’s language abilities increased significantly from 55% in Cycle I to 84%. A total of 15 out of 18 students met the mastery criteria, with 5 children (28%) in the *BSH* category and 10 children (56%) in the *BSB* category. These results indicate that the level of mastery in Cycle II is classified as very good.

Table III. Comparison of Language Ability in Pre-Cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II

Cycle	Number of Students Meeting	Mastery Percentage
Pre-Cycle	8	45%
Cycle I	10	55%
Cycle II	15	83%

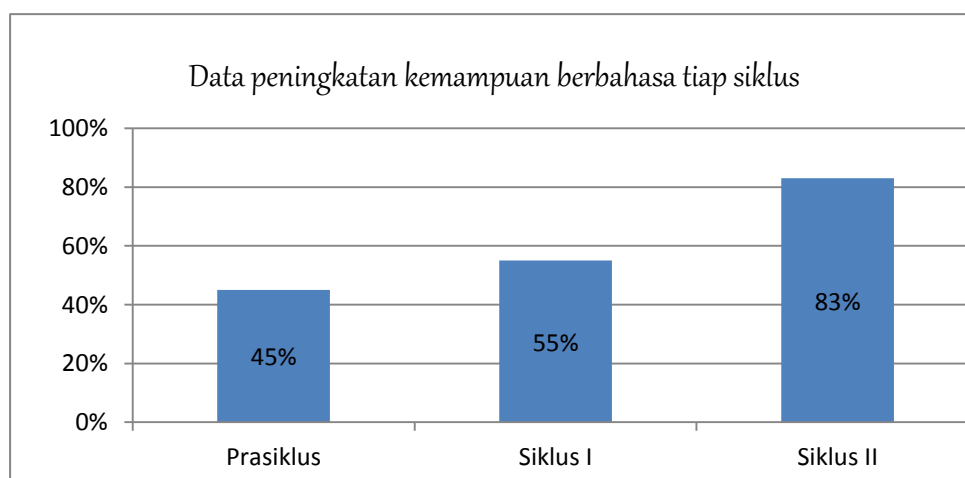


Figure1. Comparison Data and Improvement in Children’s Language Ability

Based on the data in Table III above, the initial percentage of children’s language ability was 45%. In Cycle I, 10 out of 18 students achieved the mastery criteria, resulting in a mastery percentage of 55%, indicating an improvement of 10% with an average score of 62.04. In Cycle II, children’s language ability further increased, as shown by the rise in the number of students who achieved mastery—an increase of 28%, resulting in an overall mastery percentage of 83% with an average score of 73.15. Based on these observations, the children were categorized as *Developing Very Well*. Thus, the use of the role-playing learning method effectively improved the language ability of Group B students at TK IT Permata Hati, Wanasaba District.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion above, it can be concluded that the implementation of the role-playing learning method successfully improved the cognitive abilities of children in Group B at TK IT Permata Hati, Wanasaba District, in the 2024/2025 academic year. This improvement is evident from the learning outcomes in Cycle I, where 55% of students (10 children) achieved mastery, while 45% (8 children) did not, largely due to several limitations during the learning process. These results increased in Cycle II, with the number of students achieving mastery rising by 5 children (28%), resulting in 15 children (83%) meeting the criteria, while only 3 children (17%) did not. Therefore, it can be concluded that delivering learning materials using the role-playing method effectively enhanced children's learning outcomes, enabling the researcher to achieve the targeted mastery percentage of 83%. Based on the results of the study, the researcher proposes several recommendations for educators. Educators should be able to facilitate and stimulate children's development according to their developmental stages and continuously improve the quality of the learning process. It is also recommended that educators use varied teaching aids during role-playing activities to increase children's interest and engagement.

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