

Improving Children's Language Development Aspects through Role Playing at Mutiara Hati Kindergarten

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Abstract

This classroom action research (CAR) aimed to enhance children's language development through role-playing at Mutiara Hati Kindergarten in Solok Selatan. Language skills are crucial for early childhood communication, cognition, and socialization, yet many schools prioritize literacy and numeracy over holistic development. The study involved 10 children and one teacher across two cycles, using observation (based on Indonesian Ministry of Education benchmarks) and documentation. Results showed significant improvement: while Cycle I saw most children at "Beginning to Develop" (MB) or "Developing as Expected" (BSH), Cycle II achieved 75% in BSH or "Very Well Developed" (BSB), aligning with Vygotsky's and Bruner's theories on social interaction and contextual learning. The findings confirm role-playing as an effective method, with recommendations for thematic variety, teacher scaffolding, and parental involvement. Further research could integrate storytelling or multimedia for optimal outcomes.

Keywords: Classroom action research, early childhood, kindergarten, language development, role-playing.



INTRODUCTION

Language development is a crucial aspect of a child's growth and development (Etnawati, 2022; Muh. Zuhdy Hamzah et al., 2023), particularly during early childhood, as this stage is when the foundations of communication skills are intensively formed (Muh. Zuhdy Hamzah et al., 2023). Language serves as a tool of communication that enables children to interact with their environment, express themselves and their thoughts (Jailani, 2018), and develop systematic thinking skills. Through language, children not only learn to convey their needs and emotions but also understand new concepts, expand their knowledge, and build logical thinking structures. Moreover, strong language skills help children establish positive social relationships with others (Almaghfiroh et al., 2024; Devianty, 2019; Jurkic et al., 2023; Siregar, 2015) and increase their confidence in participating in daily activities (Koeswanti, 2021).

One effective method to enhance children's language development during early childhood is role-play (Maisyaroh et al., 2022; Yuniati & Rohmadheny, 2020). Role-play allows children to use language (Eka Yuliana & Ilfan Tufail, 2025), foster creativity (Rapiatunnisa, 2022), and improve social skills (Musthofiyyah et al., 2025). Unfortunately, some early childhood education institutions, especially those in South Solok, have not yet maximized the development of the six developmental aspects. There are still schools that focus more on teaching early reading, writing, and arithmetic skills rather than providing stimulating educational experiences to support children's physical and emotional growth in an effort to develop all six aspects of child development.

Although numerous studies have explored early childhood language development, several gaps remain. First, many studies emphasize cognitive and motor aspects (Riha Adatul'aisy et al., 2023), without focusing on language development. Second, research on early childhood language development often relies on methods such as loose parts-based learning (Nur et al., 2023), storytelling (Azhari, 2021; Hemah et al., 2018), observation, and testing (Novianti, 2013), without incorporating active intervention methods. Third, current research still lacks practical and measurable solutions to improve children's language development.

This study focuses on the aspect of language development in early childhood using the role play method at TK Mutiara Hati, Jorong Sungai Padi, and aims to offer practical and measurable solutions to enhance children's language development. Based on the background and focus described above, this research intends to improve children's language development at TK Mutiara Hati, Jorong Sungai Padi, through the role play method. Therefore, it is expected that this study will contribute significantly to efforts aimed at enhancing language development in early childhood at TK Mutiara Hati and serve as an inspiration for other educational institutions to implement role play methods in their learning practices.

METHOD

This research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach aimed at improving the quality of both the learning process and outcomes through continuous improvement within the classroom. The study was conducted at TK Mutiara Hati Jorong Sungai Padi, Sangir Sub-district, Solok Selatan Regency, during the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. The research

subjects consisted of one teacher and ten children from class B-1, comprising six girls and four boys. The study was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of two meetings, following the CAR stages proposed by Arikunto: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection.

The instruments used in this study included observation and documentation. The observation technique was implemented using a checklist based on indicators of children's language development as outlined in the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 146 of 2014, which categorizes development into four levels: Not Yet Developed (BB), Beginning to Develop (MB), Developing as Expected (BSH), and Very Well Developed (BSB). Observational data were supported by documentation in the form of photos and videos that recorded the children's role-playing activities during the learning process. These instruments were used to assess the children's individual and group performance in language development.

Data collection was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods, by calculating the average percentage of children's learning activity achievements using the percentage formula developed by Sudijono and the teacher performance assessment formula from Sigit et al. The results of the analysis were utilized to evaluate and design actions for the subsequent cycle. The study was considered successful if $\geq 75\%$ of the children reached the BSH and BSB categories in language development, based on the predetermined indicators. The research activities were implemented according to a predetermined schedule, starting from July 31 to August 10, 2023, covering all phases within the two action cycles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cycle I Description Results

Cycle I - Meeting 1

During the core activity, the teacher invited the children to engage in storytelling and discussions related to the day's learning theme. The theme for the day was "My Family," with the sub-theme "Family Members" and the sub-sub-theme "Father." The teacher then informed the children that the activity for the day would be role-playing.

First, the teacher explained the techniques of role-playing to the children. Next, the main topic was determined according to the sub-sub-theme, "Father." The teacher guided the children in selecting role players and preparing their roles. The teacher also prepared the audience. After all preparations were complete, the role-playing activity was conducted, with the children acting out the role of a father.

Table 1. Observation Results of Language Development Aspects of Mutiara Hati Kindergarten Children, Jorong Sungai Padi Cycle I Meeting 1

Child's Initial	Language Development Aspects											
	Child Can Engage in Two-Way or Multi-Way Conversation in Role-Playing				Child Can Arrange 3-4 Word Sequences Correctly				Child Can Repeat Heard Sentences			
	BB	MB	BSH	BSB	BB	MB	BSH	BSB	BB	MB	BSH	BSB
AZN			✓				✓				✓	

APK		✓				✓				✓			
AMS		✓				✓			✓				
FGG	✓			✓				✓					
HRR	✓			✓				✓					
NSR		✓				✓			✓				
MAP			✓					✓			✓		
QF	✓			✓				✓					
SF			✓					✓			✓		
SMP		✓				✓			✓				
Total		3	4	3	0	3	3	4	0	3	3	4	0

Note: BB = *Belum Berkembang* / Not Yet Developed (NYD), MB = *Mulai Berkembang* / Beginning to Develop (BD), BSH = *Berkembang Sesuai Harapan* / Developing as Expected (DE), BSB = *Berkembang Sangat Baik* / Very Well Developed (VWD).

Based on the Table 1 above, for the indicator of children being able to engage in two-way or more conversations during role play, the number of children in each developmental category is as follows: Not Yet Developed (NYD) - 3 children, Beginning to Develop (BD) - 4 children, Developing as Expected (DE) - 3 children, and Very Well Developed (VWD) - none. For the indicator of children being able to arrange 3-4 words in the correct order, the number of children is as follows: Not Yet Developed (NYD) - 3 children, Beginning to Develop (BD) - 3 children, Developing as Expected (DE) - 4 children, and Very Well Developed (VWD) - none. For the indicator of children being able to repeat sentences they have heard, the number of children is as follows: Not Yet Developed (NYD) - 3 children, Beginning to Develop (BD) - 3 children, Developing as Expected (DE) - 4 children, and Very Well Developed (VWD) - none.

The finding reflect the gradual nature of early childhood language development, which is strongly influenced by environmental stimulation, social interaction, and opportunities provided for verbal expression. According to Vygotsky's theory of language development, children's language skills grow through meaningful social interactions with adults and peers (Dewi & Oktapiani, 2024), where language functions as a primary tool for thinking (Putrantijo et al., 2024) and understanding the world (Hidayat, 2015). The absence of children in the *Very Well Developed* (VWD) category may indicate a need to enhance learning strategies that are more communicative and contextual in order to optimally support the development of both expressive and receptive language abilities.

Cycle I - Meeting 2

During the core activity, the teacher invited the children to share stories and have conversations related to the theme of the day, which was "My Family," with the sub-theme "Family Members," and the sub-sub-theme "Mother." Before proceeding to the role-play activity, the teacher and the children engaged in a hands-on activity – cooking fried noodles – since cooking is considered one of a mother's roles at home. This hands-on cooking activity aimed to help the children better understand the role of a mother.

Afterward, the teacher informed the children that the day's activity would be role-playing. First, the teacher explained the techniques of role-playing to the children. Then, the teacher defined the main topic based on the sub-sub-theme, which was "Mother." The teacher guided the

children in selecting characters, preparing their roles, and organizing the audience. Once everything was prepared, the role-play activity was carried out, focusing on acting out the role of a mother. Below are the observation results regarding the children's language development.

Table 2. Observation Results of Language Development Aspects of Mutiara Hati Kindergarten Children, Jorong Sungai Padi Cycle I - Meeting 2

Child's Initial	Language Development Aspects											
	Child Can Engage in Two-Way or Multi-Way Conversation in Role-Playing				Child Can Arrange 3–4 Word Sequences Correctly				Child Can Engage in Two-Way or Multi-Way Conversation in Role-Playing			
	BB	MB	BB	BSB	BB	MB	BB	BSB	BB	MB	BB	BSB
AZN			✓				✓					
APK							✓					
AMS		✓				✓			✓			
FGG		✓				✓			✓			
HRR		✓				✓			✓			
NSR			✓				✓				✓	
MAP			✓				✓				✓	
QF		✓					✓				✓	
SF			✓				✓				✓	
SMP			✓				✓				✓	
Total	0	4	6	0	0	3	7	0	0	3	7	0

Note: BB = *Belum Berkembang* / Not Yet Developed (NYD), MB = *Mulai Berkembang* / Beginning to Develop (BD), BSH = *Berkembang Sesuai Harapan* / Developing as Expected (DE), BSB = *Berkembang Sangat Baik* / Very Well Developed (VWD).

Based on the Table 2 above, for the indicator of children being able to engage in two-way or more conversation during role play, no children were in the *Not Yet Developed* (NYD) category, 4 children were in the *Beginning to Develop* (BD) category, 6 children were in the *Developing as Expected* (DE) category, and none were in the *Very Well Developed* (VWD) category. For the indicator of children being able to arrange 3–4 words in the correct sequence, no children were in the *Not Yet Developed* (NYD) category, 3 children were in the *Beginning to Develop* (BD) category, 7 children were in the *Developing as Expected* (DE) category, and none were in the *Very Well Developed* (VWD) category. For the indicator of children being able to repeat sentences they had heard, no children were in the *Not Yet Developed* (NYD) category, 3 children were in the *Beginning to Develop* (BD) category, 7 children were in the *Developing as Expected* (DE) category, and none were in the *Very Well Developed* (VWD) category.

This outcome aligns with the theoretical perspective of Vygotsky, who emphasized that language development in early childhood is a socially mediated process shaped through guided participation and meaningful interactions with adults and peers (Mahn & Fazalehaq, 2020). The role-play activity designed around the theme "Mother" provided a contextual and emotionally relevant scenario that supported the development of expressive and receptive language skills. The absence of children in the *Very Well Developed* (VWD) category indicates that while progress is evident, continuous and enriched linguistic stimulation – through activities like storytelling,

role-play, and hands-on experiences—is essential to further enhance children's verbal competencies and scaffold them toward higher developmental levels.

Cycle II Description Results

Cycle II - Meeting 1

In the core activity, the teacher invited the children to tell stories and engage in conversations related to the theme of the day's lesson. The theme for Cycle II, Meeting 1 was *My Family*, with the sub-theme *Family Professions* and the sub-sub-theme *Police*. The teacher then informed the children that today's activity would be role-playing.

First, the teacher explained the role-playing technique to the children. Then, the teacher identified the main issue based on the sub-sub-theme of the lesson, which was *Police*. The teacher guided the children in choosing the characters, assisted them in preparing their roles, and prepared the audience. Once all preparations were complete, the role-play activity began, with the children acting out the role of a police officer. Below is the observation result for the children's language development.

Table 3. Observation Results of Language Development Aspects of Mutiara Hati Kindergarten Children, Jorong Sungai Padi Cycle II - Meeting 1

Child's Initial	Language Development Aspects											
	Child Can Engage in Two-Way or Multi-Way Conversation in Role-Playing				Child Can Arrange 3-4 Word Sequences Correctly				Child Can Engage in Two-Way or Multi-Way Conversation in Role-Playing			
	BB	MB	BB	BSB	BB	MB	BB	BSB	BB	MB	BB	BSB
AZN			✓					✓				✓
APK			✓				✓					✓
AMS			✓				✓					✓
FGG			✓				✓					✓
HRR			✓				✓					✓
NSR			✓				✓					✓
MAP	✓				✓				✓			
QF			✓					✓				✓
SF			✓				✓					✓
SMP			✓			✓				✓		
Total	1	0	9	0	1	1	6	2	1	1	8	0

Note: BB = *Belum Berkembang* / Not Yet Developed (NYD), MB = *Mulai Berkembang* / Beginning to Develop (BD), BSH = *Berkembang Sesuai Harapan* / Developing as Expected (DE), BSB = *Berkembang Sangat Baik* / Very Well Developed (VWD).

Based on the Table 3 above, for the indicator of children being able to engage in two-way or more conversations in role play, 1 child was at the *Not Yet Developed* (NYD) stage, none were at the *Beginning to Develop* (BD) stage, 9 children were *Developing as Expected* (DE), and none were at the *Very Well Developed* (VWD) stage. For the indicator of arranging 3-4 words in correct order, 1 child was at the NYD stage, 1 child at the BD stage, 6 children at the DE stage, and 2 children at the VWD stage. For the indicator of repeating sentences heard, 1 child was at the NYD stage, 1

child at the BD stage, 8 children at the DE stage, and none at the VWD stage. In the core activity, the teacher again invited the children to tell stories and engage in conversations related to the day’s learning theme, which was *My Family*, with the sub-theme *Family Professions* and the sub-sub-theme *Merchant*. The teacher informed the children that the activity for the day would be role-playing. To start, the teacher explained the technique of role-playing. Then, the teacher defined the main issue according to the sub-sub-theme, which was *merchant*. The teacher guided the children in choosing their roles and helped them prepare. The teacher also prepared the audience. Once everything was ready, the role-play was carried out with the children playing the role of merchants. The following is the observation result of the children’s language development aspect.

The observation results from Cycle II, Meeting 1 demonstrate a notable improvement in children’s language development, particularly in the aspect of engaging in two-way conversations during role play, where the majority of children reached the *Developing as Expected* (DE) stage. This suggests that the implementation of contextual and interactive learning methods, such as role-playing based on familiar themes like family professions, has a positive influence on children’s expressive and receptive language abilities (Heidlage et al., 2020). According to Bruner’s theory of language development, social interaction and the use of language in meaningful contexts are crucial in facilitating linguistic growth (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2018), as they allow children to construct meaning and develop verbal competence through active participation. Furthermore, Vygotsky emphasizes the role of guided participation and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), wherein children develop higher-order language skills through scaffolded interactions with more knowledgeable others. The increase in children achieving the DE and VWD levels across various indicators indicates that role-playing not only supports language acquisition but also encourages cognitive engagement and social-emotional learning within developmentally appropriate practices.

Cycle II – Meeting 2

Table 4. Observation Results of Language Development Aspects of Mutiara Hati Kindergarten Children, Jorong Sungai Padi Cycle II - Meeting 2

Child’s Initial	Language Development Aspects											
	Child Can Engage in Two-Way or Multi-Way Conversation in Role-Playing				Child Can Arrange 3-4 Word Sequences Correctly				Child Can Engage in Two-Way or Multi-Way Conversation in Role-Playing			
	BB	MB	BB	BSB	BB	MB	BB	BSB	BB	MB	BB	BSB
AZN				✓				✓			✓	✓
APK												✓
AMS			✓				✓					✓
FGG			✓				✓					✓
HRR			✓					✓				✓
NSR			✓				✓					✓
MAP			✓				✓					✓
QF			✓				✓					✓
SF			✓				✓					✓
SMP			✓				✓					✓

Total	0	0	9	1	0	0	8	2	0	0	9	1
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Note: BB = *Belum Berkembang* / Not Yet Developed (NYD), MB = *Mulai Berkembang* / Beginning to Develop (BD), BSH = *Berkembang Sesuai Harapan* / Developing as Expected (DE), BSB = *Berkembang Sangat Baik* / Very Well Developed (VWD).

Based on the Table 4 above, for the indicator of children being able to engage in two-way or more conversations during role play, there were no children in the *Not Yet Developed* (NYD) or *Beginning to Develop* (BD) categories. There were 9 children in the *Developing as Expected* (DE) category and 1 child in the *Very Well Developed* (VWD) category. For the indicator of children being able to arrange 3–4 words in the correct order, there were no children in the *Not Yet Developed* (NYD) or *Beginning to Develop* (BD) categories. There were 8 children in the *Developing as Expected* (DE) category and 2 children in the *Very Well Developed* (VWD) category. For the indicator of children being able to repeat sentences they have heard, there were no children in the *Not Yet Developed* (NYD) or *Beginning to Develop* (BD) categories. There were 9 children in the *Developing as Expected* (DE) category and 1 child in the *Very Well Developed* (VWD) category.

CONCLUSION

The research findings demonstrate that the implementation of role-playing methods based on contextual themes (family and professions) significantly enhances the language development of early childhood students at Mutiara Hati Kindergarten. In Cycle I, most children were in the *Beginning to Develop* (BD) and *Developing as Expected* (DE) categories, with none reaching the *Very Well Developed* (VWD) level. However, by Cycle II, a significant improvement was observed, with the majority of children achieving DE and some even reaching VWD. This aligns with Vygotsky's and Bruner's theories, which emphasize the importance of social interaction, guided participation, and meaningful contexts in language development. These findings prove that well-designed role-playing activities can serve as an effective medium for enhancing children's expressive and receptive language skills.

To further optimize children's language development, educators are advised to: (1) diversify role-playing themes to reflect children's daily lives, thereby expanding vocabulary and contextual understanding; (2) increase teacher-child interactions during activities using scaffolding techniques such as open-ended questions and positive feedback; and (3) involve parents in supporting language stimulation at home through similar activities. Future research could explore integrating other methods, such as storytelling or multimedia, to maximize language development outcomes.

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