Improving Listening Skills Through Storytelling Methods with Digital Storybooks in Early Childhood

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Abstract

This study aims to enhance the listening comprehension skills of 5-6-year-old children at TK Mutiara Hati Ngantang through the storytelling method using digital storybooks. The research method employed is Classroom Action Research (CAR) with the spiral model of Kemmis and McTaggart, consisting of two cycles, each with two meetings. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles & Huberman data analysis model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show a significant improvement in the children's listening comprehension after the implementation of the digital storybook storytelling method. In the initial observation, only 33.3% of children were categorized as emerging. However, in cycle 1, the first meeting showed a 40% improvement, and the second meeting reached 53.3%. Cycle 2 showed even greater progress, with the first meeting achieving 66.6% and the second meeting reaching 86.6%. These results indicate that the use of digital storybooks effectively helps children comprehend the story content, retell the story in the correct sequence, and follow more complex instructions. In conclusion, the storytelling method using digital storybooks is proven to be an effective tool in improving listening comprehension skills in 5-6-year-old children. The significant improvements in listening comprehension, along with the children's increased enthusiasm and focus, highlight the potential of digital storybooks as an engaging and interactive learning medium for early childhood education.

Keywords: Classroom Action Research, Digital Storybook, Early Childhood Education, Listening Comprehension, Storytelling Method.

1. Introduction

Early childhood education (PAUD) plays a very important role in developing basic aspects of child development, including language abilities. One of the fundamental skills in language is listening ability. Listening ability is a receptive language skill that serves as the foundation for developing other language skills, such as speaking, reading, and writing (Pamuji & Setyami, 2021). This ability becomes key to accelerating children's language development at an early age, because children at this stage are absorbing various information that can support their intelligence.

According to Howard Gardner, linguistic intelligence is one of nine human intelligences, and listening becomes an integral part of this intelligence (Zulkarnain, 2024). Children with strong linguistic intelligence generally show better listening abilities and enjoy storytelling activities. Gardner also states that children who have good listening abilities tend to be more capable of communicating and absorbing information more effectively (Ambarita & Simanullang, 2023). Furthermore, Vygotsky also emphasizes the importance of social interaction in improving children's cognitive abilities, which can be achieved through

communication activities, such as storytelling (Davydov & Kerr, 1995). In this context, listening can function as a primary tool for cognitive development and the formation of new concepts in children.

In Indonesia, the government through Minister of Education Regulation No. 137 of 2014 concerning National Standards for Early Childhood Education stipulates that children aged 5-6 years should already be able to: 1. Retell story content in correct sequence, 2. Understand story content, 3. Answer more complex questions. However, initial observations conducted at TK Mutiara Hati Ngantang show that the listening abilities of children aged 5-6 years still require improvement. Of 15 children observed, only 5 children had listening abilities in the "beginning to develop" category, while the other 10 children were still in the "not yet developed" category, where children still lacked focus and enthusiasm in listening activities, especially in story listening activities.

The main cause of these children's low listening abilities is less innovative learning methods and lack of use of attractive learning media (Nainggolan et al., 2024). Generally, teachers still use conventional methods, such as lectures or monotonous storytelling, which makes children easily bored and lose focus (Maula et al., 2023). This has implications for children's lack of understanding of stories being read, so their listening abilities do not develop optimally. Therefore, a more interactive and attractive approach is needed to improve these children's listening abilities.

One alternative that can be used is the storytelling method with digital storybooks. Digital storybooks offer special features of high interactivity, multisensory capabilities, and the ability to adapt according to children's needs. The use of digital storybooks not only involves children's hearing through audio, but also attractive visualization through images or animations, which can increase children's focus and memory of stories. According to Fitria (2021), digital media can provide space for early childhood to learn in a more enjoyable way, where they not only listen to stories but can also observe and interact directly with the material being taught.

Through this research, it is hoped that the storytelling method with digital storybooks can become a solution to improve listening abilities in children aged 5-6 years at TK Mutiara Hati Ngantang. This research not only aims to measure the extent to which this method can improve listening abilities, but also to provide new insights for PAUD educators about how to integrate technology in early childhood learning. By paying attention to children's characteristics and their learning needs, this method is expected to create a more enjoyable, interactive, and effective learning environment, so as to improve the quality of early childhood education in Indonesia.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Listening Ability in Early Childhood

Listening ability is one of the important aspects in early childhood language development. According to Sinta (2023), listening is an activity of listening to other people's words with full attention, which is not only limited to hearing, but also understanding and interpreting received information. This ability is the foundation for developing other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, listening ability becomes the main key in language learning, especially in early childhood who are still at the stage of absorbing information.

At ages 5-6 years, children should already begin to be able to understand stories being read and retell those stories in correct sequence according to Minister of Education Regulation

No. 137 of 2014 (Hidayat & Nurlatifah, 2023). This indicates the importance of developing listening skills in early childhood through various effective learning methods. According to Anderson (Sanulita et al., 2024), listening is not only limited to the listening process, but also includes recognition and understanding of oral symbols being conveyed. Therefore, activities that can stimulate children to actively listen, such as storytelling, are very important in early childhood learning.

2.2. Digital Storybooks in Learning

With technological development, learning media has also undergone innovation. Digital storybooks (digital storytelling) are one innovation now widely used in early childhood education. Digital storybooks offer special features not possessed by conventional storybooks, namely high interactivity and multisensory capabilities that can attract children's attention (Sanjaya, 2023). Digital storybooks combine visual, audio, and text elements, which allow children to not only listen, but also see and interact with the material being taught.

According to Atikah et al. (2023), digital storybooks can help children develop their vocabulary because they are equipped with images, animations, and sound effects that clarify word meanings and story context. This can increase children's understanding of stories and make them more focused and motivated in learning. Furthermore, the use of digital storybooks allows children to learn in a more enjoyable and interactive way, which can increase their interest in listening and language activities. Research by Khotimah et al. (2021) also shows that using storytelling with digital audio media can improve listening and speaking abilities in early childhood. Digital media offers a more attractive approach for children who tend to be more familiar with technology, so they are more interested in following learning that uses this media.

2.3. Previous Research

Previous research has shown that digital media, particularly digital storybooks, are effective in improving listening abilities and early childhood literacy. For example, Khotimah et al. (2021) in their research showed that storytelling with digital audio media assistance can improve listening and speaking abilities in early childhood. Additionally, research by (Atikah et al, 2023) shows that digital books can improve children's language abilities, especially in terms of listening and understanding stories.

Other research by Rahmawati et al. (2024) reveals that using interactive e-books in storytelling activities can help children focus more and be able to retell story content better. Furthermore, Amirah (2023) in their research using a one-cycle Classroom Action Research (PTK) approach, shows that digital storytelling can help children understand story content and foster interest in listening activities. However, most previous research is still limited to listening aspects in general without paying attention to more detailed indicators, and tends to use one-way experimental designs without reflection stages and continuous improvement typical of the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral PTK model.

Based on this gap, this research presents advantages because it combines storytelling methods with digital storybook media in real learning environments through a two-cycle PTK approach at TK Mutiara Hati Ngantang. The novelty also lies in using more comprehensive listening indicators, namely including the ability to retell story content sequentially, understand story content, and carry out complex commands related to stories. This approach not only assesses passive aspects of listening, but also active and reflective aspects, as well as the combination of visual, audio and text in digital storybooks that has not been widely discussed in previous studies. Thus, this research makes a real contribution in filling gaps in previous studies and provides new directions for developing technology-based language

learning strategies for early childhood, particularly in improving listening skills. Therefore, digital storybooks are expected to become effective media for improving listening abilities of children aged 5-6 years at TK Mutiara Hati Ngantang.

3. Methods

This research uses Classroom Action Research where according to Arikunto, Classroom Action Research is research that describes both the process and results conducted by teachers to improve the quality of learning in their classes (Ujud et al., 2023). This classroom action research uses the Kemmis-Mc Taggart (1998) spiral model which has four stages which are planning, action, observation, and reflection (Febrian et al., 2024).

In this research, data collection procedures used are through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis used in this research uses data analysis from Miles & Huberman, with 3 flows: data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing. In this research, data validity uses triangulation techniques by collecting data from various sources (principals, teachers and students) and various method sources (observation, interviews and documentation) (Miles et al., 2014). Following is the observation grid for listening abilities based on Minister of Education Regulation No.137 of 2014.

Table 1. Observation Outline

No	Indicator	Sub-indicator
1	Retelling heard information in correct sequence	a. Children can remember story essence or general story overview b. Children can convey sequence of events in story chronologically c. Children retell with clear and easily understood sentences
2	Understanding story content	a. Children can mention characters, setting, and objects in story b. Children can explain plot or story sequence c. Expressing feelings and opinions about story d. Showing attention and interest during story
3	Carrying out more complex commands according to activity rules	a. Following activity rules b. Showing independence in carrying out commands

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Results

4.1.1. Pre-Action Activities

Based on initial observation results conducted before implementing improvements, the initial condition of listening abilities of group B children in storytelling activities at TK Mutiara Hati Ngantang showed that most children experienced listening difficulties among the 15 children in the class. Researchers together with group B teachers acting as collaborators discussed methods and teaching materials attractive to children to improve children's listening abilities, namely using digital storybook media.

Before action was taken, to determine children's listening levels through story methods, children were invited to listen to stories demonstrated by teachers using storybooks.

Observation results were conducted using assessment rubrics including Not Yet Developed (BB), Beginning to Develop (MB), Very Well Developed (BSB), Developed as Expected (BHS).

Table 2. Initial Observation

No	Listening Indicator	BB	MB	BSB	BSH
1.	Retelling heard information in correct sequence	66,7 %	33,3 %	0 %	0 %
2.	Understanding story content	66,7 %	33,3 %	0 %	0 %
3.	Carrying out more complex commands according to activity rules	66,7 %	33,3 %	0 %	0 %

Initial observation results show that the majority of children (66.7%) have not yet shown development of their listening abilities, namely of 15 children, 10 children are not yet developed and 5 children are beginning to develop. It can be said that in initial observation, children's listening abilities at TK Mutiara Hati are quite low and have not been able to develop optimally, so they need to be improved.

4.1.1. Action Implementation

1) Cycle I

Cycle 1 consists of 2 actions implemented on June 12, 2025 and June 14, 2025 presented with lesson plans. Cycle 1 implementation time:

Table 3. Cycle 1 Implementation Plan

Meeting	Theme	Sub-theme	Activities	Media
1/ 12 June 2025	Good/Bad Deeds	Not Greedy	a. Listening to stories b. Answering simple questions (characters, names, setting, story content)	Digital Storybook "Kera dan Pohon Pisang"
2/ 14 Junie 2025	Good/Bad Deeds	Likes to Help	a. Listening to stories b. Answering simple questions (characters, names, setting, story content)	Digital Storybook "Dina Si Anak Hebat"

In Cycle 1, children were invited through several activity steps including opening activities where teachers invited children to line up, exercise, wash hands before entering class and follow opening SOPs. In core activities, teachers delivered today's material and children were invited to listen to stories with digital storybooks titled "Kera dan Pohon Pisang" and "Dina Si Anak Hebat" and then invited to simple question and answer sessions related to heard stories and retell content of heard stories.

1)   Cycle 1 Observation Results

Table 4. Cycle 1 Observation

No	Listening Indicator	BB	MB	BSB	BSH
1.	Retelling heard information in correct sequence	7 (46,7 %)	8 (53,3 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)
2.	Understanding story content	7 (46,7 %)	8 (53,3 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)
3.	Carrying out more complex commands according to activity rules	7 (46,7 %)	8 (53,3 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)

2) Cycle 1 Reflection

There was a 20% increase from initial observation in listening ability to 53.3% where of 15 children, 8 children began developing their listening abilities and 7 other children were not yet developed, and children began to be enthusiastic in listening to stories and answering simple questions. However, several obstacles were still found including:

a. Some children were still hesitant in answering questions related to story content so still needed help

b. Still needed guidance and help in understanding story content, some children still needed guidance in understanding story content

c. Some children needed time to adapt to digital storybooks as new media, because previously they were more accustomed to conventional methods. So the next cycle was needed to optimize children's listening abilities.

2) Cycle II

Cycle 2 consists of 2 actions implemented on June 19, 2025 and June 21, 2025 presented with lesson plans. Cycle 2 implementation time:

Table 5. Cycle 2 Implementation Plan

Meeting	Theme	Sub-theme	Activities	Media
1/ 19 June 2025	Good/Bad Deeds	Brave	a. Listening to stories b. Answering simple questions (characters, names, setting, story content)	Digital Storybook "Petualangan Kiko Si Kelinci Pemberani"
2/ 21 June 2025	Good/Bad Deeds	Good Friends	a. Listening to stories b. Answering simple questions (characters, names, setting, story content)	Digital Storybook "Teman Baru Di Taman Kupu – Kupu"

In Cycle 2, children were still invited in the same activities, namely listening to stories, answering questions and retelling heard stories in proper sequence according to stories with digital storybook titles "Petualangan Kiko Si Kelinci Pemberani" and "Teman Baru Di Taman Kupu – Kupu"

1) Cycle 2 Observation Results

Table 6. Cycle 2 Observation

No	Listening Indicator	BB	MB	BSB	BSH
1.	Retelling heard information in correct sequence	2 (13,3 %)	6 (40,0 %)	5 (33,3 %)	2 (13,3 %)
2.	Understanding story content	2 (13,3 %)	6 (40,0 %)	5 (33,3 %)	2 (13,3 %)
3.	Carrying out more complex commands according to activity rules	2 (13,3 %)	6 (40,0 %)	5 (33,3 %)	2 (13,3 %)

2) Cycle 2 Reflection

There was significant improvement from cycle 1 to cycle 2 where the "not yet developed" category decreased to 13.3%, showing only few children still experienced difficulties. The "beginning to develop" category dominated at 40% and the "very well developed" category rose drastically to 33.3% and the "developed as expected" category appeared at 13.3%. This

indicates most children began understanding stories. Therefore, the total improvement percentage in cycle 2 was 86.6% and shows children's listening abilities have reached and exceeded the completeness threshold of >75%. This improvement was due to:

a.   Children began to be familiar and comfortable with digital storybooks
b.   Most children had understood story content well
c.   Children were able to sequentially convey heard stories
d.   Children followed commands very well
e.   Children could even relate stories to their own experiences

However, obstacles still existed including:

a.   Time limitations, where when children told stories, time was limited to convey complete story content due to learning time allocation
b.   Need for teacher innovation to create digital storybooks suitable for children's character and needs

The following is a graph showing improvement in children's listening abilities from pre-action to cycle 1 and cycle 2:
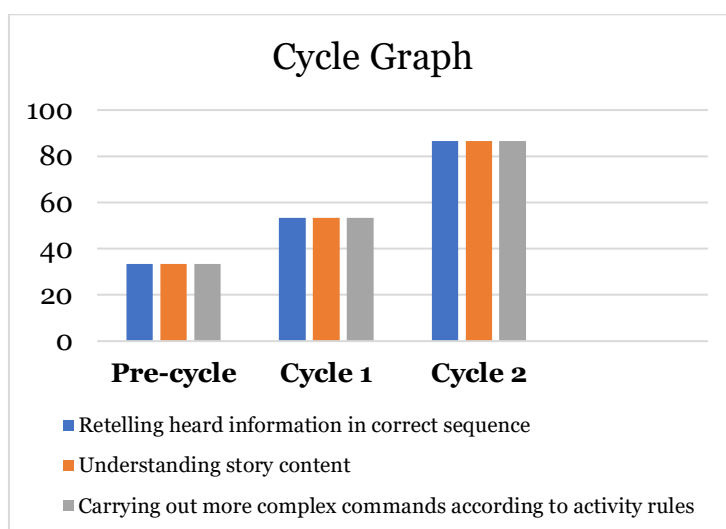

Figure 1. Improvement in Children's Listening Abilities from Pre-Action to Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

4.2. Discussion

Based on observation results and action implementation with two cycles where each cycle had two meetings, it shows improvement in listening abilities through storytelling methods with digital storybooks for children aged 5-6 years at TK Mutiara Hati Ngantang. Listening ability was measured from indicators: 1. Retelling story content in correct sequence, 2. Understanding story content, and 3. Carrying out complex commands according to rules.

In pre-action conditions, there were only 5 children beginning to develop with 33.3% percentage in listening ability, and the rest were still not developed. This shows conventional storytelling learning methods were not yet effective in improving listening abilities of children aged 5-6 years. After action using digital storybook media, there was significant improvement of 20% in cycle 1, reaching 53.3%. This shows digital media influences children's focus and enthusiasm in storytelling.

More significant improvement was seen in Cycle II activities, where children's abilities increased 33.3% from cycle 1, reaching 86.6%. This means storytelling methods using digital

storybooks are very effective in improving listening abilities of children aged 5-6 years. Children were not only able to remember story plots, but also able to understand and relate stories to personal experiences.

This improvement aligns with Howard Gardner's theory on linguistic intelligence, which emphasizes that children with high linguistic intelligence will find it easier to understand language, listen to stories and retell heard information sequentially. Through digital storybooks combining visual, audio, and text elements, children's linguistic abilities develop more because stimulation received is more abundant and interactive. Additionally, according to Vygotsky's view supporting this development, namely the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where children can complete certain tasks with help from adults, peers or their environment. In listening activities, teachers act as scaffolding through guidance, prompting sentences and narrative repetition, so children are better able to understand and reconstruct stories.

Furthermore, Vygotsky also emphasizes social interaction occurring during storytelling activities as an important aspect. When children interact in answering questions or responding to stories, language understanding processes occur that accelerate their cognitive development, especially in listening and logical thinking.

Although research results show significant improvement, this research has limitations, such as limited number of subjects, time constraints, and not yet maximum assistance. Therefore, research results need to be followed up with broader and deeper studies.

5. Conclusion

Based on data analysis results conducted through several actions, namely from cycle 1 and cycle 2 actions and based on all discussion results, it can be concluded that storytelling methods using digital storybooks can improve listening abilities of children aged 5-6 at TK Mutiara Hati, seen from pre-action observation results showing only 33.3% then rising to 53.3% in cycle 1 and increasing to 86.6% in cycle 2. Using digital storybook media can improve three listening indicators: retelling story content in correct sequence, understanding story content, and carrying out more complex commands according to rules. Using digital storybook media is proven to attract children's enthusiasm so children can become more focused, more concentrated and able to convey information related to story content sequentially and respond to stories by relating them to their personal experiences.

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