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Bedtime Stories and the Development of Language Skills in Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE INFO
Traditional games play a vital role in developing children's motor skills, particularly in a family environment. This article examines the influence of traditional games on gross and fine motor skill development through a qualitative approach combining literature review and family case studies. Traditional games such as jump rope, <i>congklak</i>, and <i>egrang</i> enhance coordination, balance, strength, and agility in children. Observations reveal that children engaged in these games demonstrate better motor development than those who are not. Parental involvement in traditional games strengthens family bonds, provides a supportive environment, and enhances children's social skills. The article concludes by emphasizing the importance of integrating traditional games into children's daily routines to promote motor skill development and encourages further research on their broader impact on child development.	Article History: Submitted 08 Aug 2024 First Revised 05 Oct 2024 Accepted 08 Nov 2024 First Available online 01 Feb 2025 Keyword: <i>Bedtime stories, Language skills, Early childhood.</i>
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1. INTRODUCTION

Bedtime stories have long been an integral part of storytelling traditions in various cultures around the world (Sulastri and Yuliansyah, 2021). According to Alfira and Siregar (2024), bedtime stories not only serve as entertainment but also have great potential in developing various aspects of language skills in early childhood. This study aims to explore the impact of bedtime stories on the development of early childhood language skills and to identify the mechanisms underlying this process. According to Rambe, Sumadi, and Meilani (2021), storytelling helps children develop listening skills, understand narrative structures, and enrich their vocabulary. In addition, Sophya (2018) stated that regular bedtime stories can improve children's language skills through meaningful interactions between parents and children.

At an early age, children are in a very critical stage of language development (Saputri and Katoningsih, 2023). Verbal interactions carried out in the context of storytelling can provide the linguistic stimulation needed to enrich vocabulary and improve communication skills. Green and Brock (2000) emphasized that narratives delivered verbally can shape children's thinking patterns, teach values, and improve their narrative abilities. This study also highlights the importance of the role of parents as storytellers. According to Bodrova and Leong (2024), active participation of parents in storytelling activities can strengthen emotional bonds and create an environment that supports children's language development. In addition, research conducted by Isbell et al. (2004) showed that children who were exposed to fairy tales regularly showed significant improvements in their language comprehension and production abilities compared to children who were not exposed.

This study will discuss how bedtime stories influence the vocabulary development of early childhood, and whether there are significant differences in language skills between children who regularly listen to bedtime stories and children who do not. This study will also discuss the influence of the role of parent-child interaction in the storytelling process on children's language development. Furthermore, this study will examine the role of bedtime stories and narratives in shaping the narrative abilities of early childhood, what factors influence the effectiveness of bedtime stories in developing early childhood language skills, and how parents and educators can maximize the potential of bedtime stories to develop language skills in early childhood.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Approach

This study used quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the relationship between bedtime stories and the development of language skills in early childhood. The research methodology consists of several stages, namely research design, population and sample, research instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis. In this study, quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to explore the relationship between bedtime stories and the development of language skills in early childhood. The design of this study was experimental, where the experimental group received a bedtime story intervention every night for three months, while the control group did not receive any intervention (Effendi, 2013). This approach was chosen to allow researchers to measure the direct impact of the intervention on children's language skills (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

The study population consisted of children aged 4-6 years in several kindergartens in Semarang, with samples selected purposively by considering the willingness of parents and children to participate in the study. The total sample consisted of 60 children divided into

two groups, namely the experimental group of 30 children who received bedtime story intervention. The control group of 30 children who did not receive bedtime story intervention.

The data collection procedure involved several stages, including pre-test, intervention, observation, interview, and post-test. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. As explained by [Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña \(2014\)](#) thematic data analysis allows researchers to identify and analyze important patterns in qualitative data. This study used an experimental design with a control group. The study was conducted for three months to see the impact of bedtime stories on the development of early childhood language skills.

The instruments used in this study include the following: first, questionnaires. According to [Jailani \(2023\)](#), questionnaires are used to collect data through pre-constructed questions. In this study, the questionnaire was utilized to gather demographic data and initial information about parents' storytelling habits. Second, observation, which involves pre-designed observations with predetermined variables ([Novianti, 2012](#)). Observations in this study were conducted to monitor the interactions between parents and children during storytelling sessions and to assess language skills. Third, testing, which was adapted from standardized language development tests that cover aspects such as vocabulary, sentence comprehension, and narrative ability. Lastly, interviews, which involve collecting data through direct communication with respondents ([Shobariyah, 2018](#)). In-depth interviews were conducted with parents and teachers to obtain qualitative information about the changes observed in children during the study period. According to [Silverman \(2006\)](#), this combination of methods provides richer data and allows for triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity of the study's findings.

2.2. Research Procedure

The data collection procedure was conducted in several stages. The first step involved preparation, which included an initial meeting with parents and teachers to explain the objectives of the study and obtain consent. Next, a pre-test was administered to all children to measure their language skills before the intervention. Following the pre-test, the intervention phase was implemented, wherein the experimental group received bedtime storytelling sessions read by parents every night for three months. Parents were given brief training on effective storytelling techniques. Observations were conducted periodically to monitor the storytelling process and parent-child interactions. Interviews with parents and teachers were conducted after the intervention period. Finally, a post-test was administered to assess the development of children's language skills following the intervention.

2.3. Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained from the language skills tests were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. According to [Yuniarti \(2022\)](#), descriptive and inferential statistics are two branches of statistics used to analyze data. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the data, while inferential statistics are used to draw conclusions about the population. In this study, both techniques were employed to examine significant differences between the experimental and control groups.

Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. Thematic analysis aims to identify patterns or themes within the data collected by the researcher ([Braun and Clarke, 2006](#)). In this study, thematic analysis was used to

identify patterns and themes related to the impact of bedtime storytelling on children's language development.

By utilizing this methodology, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of bedtime storytelling on the development of language skills in early childhood and offer practical recommendations for parents and educators.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

This study involved 60 children aged 4–6 years, divided into two groups: the experimental group (30 children) who received the bedtime storytelling intervention and the control group (30 children) who did not receive the intervention. Data collection was conducted through language skills tests administered before and after the intervention. The test results were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Before the intervention, the pre-test results indicated no significant differences between the experimental and control groups in language skills. The average pre-test score for the experimental group was 55.2, while the control group scored 54.8. After the three-month intervention, the post-test results showed a significant improvement in the language skills of children in the experimental group compared to the control group. The average post-test score of the experimental group increased to 78.5, while the control group showed only a slight increase to 58.4.

An independent t-test was used to examine the differences in average post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. The results of the test indicated a significant difference between the two groups ($t(58) = 6.85, p < 0.001$). This demonstrates that bedtime storytelling has a significantly positive impact on the development of language skills in early childhood.

Qualitative data were collected through observations and in-depth interviews with parents and teachers. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key themes and patterns within the data. Parents reported that children who listened to bedtime stories showed significant improvements in vocabulary. One mother stated, "My child has started using new words they heard from bedtime stories." Teachers observed that children in the experimental group were better able to retell stories in the correct sequence and with greater detail. "These children can retell stories more completely and clearly," noted one teacher.

The interaction during storytelling also strengthened the emotional bond between parents and children. One father shared, "The bedtime storytelling moment has become a valuable time for us to connect and talk about the story." Additionally, children who listened to bedtime stories exhibited a greater interest in books and other reading activities. "My child now always asks to be read a book before bedtime," revealed one mother.

The thematic analysis revealed that bedtime storytelling not only enhanced language skills but also had a positive impact on parent-child relationships and children's interest in reading. The interaction patterns observed during storytelling provided the linguistic stimulation necessary for early childhood language development.

The findings of this study indicate that bedtime storytelling has a significantly positive impact on the development of language skills in early childhood. The quantitative approach demonstrated a significant improvement in language skill scores following the intervention, while the qualitative approach revealed enhancements in vocabulary, narrative ability, parent-child interaction, and interest in reading. This study underscores the importance of

bedtime storytelling in language development and provides practical recommendations for parents and educators to utilize storytelling as an effective educational tool.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that bedtime storytelling has a significant impact on the development of language skills in early childhood. An independent t-test used to analyze the differences in average post-test scores between the experimental and control groups revealed significant results ($t(58) = 6.85, p < 0.001$). These findings confirm that the bedtime storytelling intervention substantially improved the language skills of children in the experimental group compared to those in the control group.

The increase in the average post-test score from 55.2 to 78.5 in the experimental group demonstrates that children who regularly listened to bedtime stories experienced significant development in their language skills. This is consistent with previous findings, which state that storytelling helps children develop listening skills, understand narrative structures, and enrich their vocabulary (Rambe, Sumadi, and Meilani, 2021). In contrast, the control group, which did not receive the intervention, showed only a small increase in the average post-test score, from 54.8 to 58.4. An independent t-test revealed a significant difference between the two groups ($t(58) = 6.85, p < 0.001$), indicating that this difference was not due to chance but rather the tangible effect of the bedtime storytelling intervention.

Similar findings were reported by Dong (2020), who showed that regular bedtime storytelling could improve children's language skills through meaningful parent-child interactions. The mechanism behind the improvement in language skills can be explained through several aspects identified in the qualitative data. The interaction during storytelling creates a language-rich environment where children hear and learn new words, understand sentence structures, and develop narrative abilities (Wulansari *et al.*, 2023). Green and Brock (2000) explain that verbally delivered narratives can shape children's thought patterns, teach values, and enhance their narrative skills.

In-depth interview results indicate that active parental participation in storytelling plays a crucial role in children's language development. Bodrova and Leong (2024) state that active parental involvement in storytelling activities can strengthen emotional bonds and create an environment that supports children's language development. This interaction not only enhances language skills but also deepens the emotional connection between parents and children, creating more meaningful learning experiences (Almaghfiroh *et al.*, 2024). Qualitative data also reveal that children exposed to bedtime stories exhibit a greater interest in books and reading activities. This suggests that bedtime storytelling can foster an early literacy culture, which has a positive impact on the long-term development of language skills.

This discussion confirms that bedtime storytelling has a significantly positive impact on the development of language skills in early childhood. These findings align with the existing literature and demonstrate that bedtime storytelling can be an effective tool to enhance children's language abilities. Therefore, it is recommended that parents and educators incorporate bedtime storytelling as part of daily routines to support the language development of young children.

The results of this study show that bedtime storytelling has various positive effects on the development of language skills in early childhood. Qualitative data collected through observations and in-depth interviews with parents and teachers revealed several important findings. Observations and interviews indicate that children who routinely listen to bedtime

stories develop better storytelling abilities. They are able to retell stories in the correct sequence and use a richer vocabulary. Children accustomed to listening to stories demonstrate better narrative skills compared to those who do not (Bodrova and Leong, 2024). This suggests that listening to stories not only enriches vocabulary but also helps children understand narrative structures, which are essential for their storytelling abilities.

Vocabulary enhancement is one of the most significant benefits of bedtime storytelling. Children who regularly listen to stories demonstrate faster and greater mastery of new words compared to those who do not. Through storytelling, children are exposed to new words and their contextual usage, which enriches their vocabulary (Fadilah and Aziz, 2024).

The interaction that occurs during storytelling sessions strengthens the emotional bond between parents and children. Parents reported that storytelling time became a valuable moment to interact and communicate with their children. "Storytelling activities create opportunities for parents to engage emotionally with their children, strengthening their relationship," stated Dong (2020).

Furthermore, children who listened to bedtime stories showed a greater interest in books and other reading activities. They frequently asked to be read to and displayed high enthusiasm for stories. In the study by Green and Brock (2000), children who regularly listened to stories demonstrated an increased interest in books and other reading activities, forming an essential foundation for future literacy.

The findings of this study also indicate that bedtime storytelling not only benefits children's language development but also enhances parent-child relationships and increases children's interest in reading. According to Silverman (2011), the interaction during storytelling provides the linguistic stimulation necessary for early childhood language development and strengthens the emotional connection between parents and children.

This discussion reaffirms that bedtime storytelling has a significantly positive impact on the development of language skills in early childhood. The qualitative findings revealed improvements in storytelling ability, vocabulary, the emotional bond between parents and children, as well as interest in books and reading activities. Therefore, bedtime storytelling can be regarded as an effective tool for enhancing children's language and literacy skills while also strengthening the emotional relationship between parents and children.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored the impact of bedtime storytelling on language skill development in early childhood using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings revealed that bedtime storytelling has a significant positive effect on children's language skills. Quantitative analysis through an independent t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the experimental group, which participated in a three-month storytelling intervention, and the control group ($t(58) = 6.85, p < 0.001$). The experimental group demonstrated greater improvements in language skill scores compared to the control group.

Qualitative data from observations and in-depth interviews with parents and teachers supported these results, highlighting key benefits of bedtime storytelling. These included improved storytelling ability, enriched vocabulary, stronger parent-child emotional bonds, and increased interest in books and reading activities, fostering early literacy. Children who regularly listened to stories were better at retelling narratives in proper sequence, used more varied vocabulary, and showed faster mastery of new words. Additionally, storytelling sessions provided quality time that strengthened emotional and linguistic development.

In conclusion, bedtime storytelling not only significantly enhances language skills in early childhood but also promotes emotional bonding and early literacy. Parents and educators are encouraged to incorporate bedtime storytelling into daily routines as an effective educational tool for language and literacy development in young children.

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