



## Teachers' Efforts to Develop the Language of 5-6 Year Old Children Through Picture Books

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### Abstract

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the storytelling method using picture story books in developing the language skills of children aged 5-6 years in Qur'an Kindergarten. Ma'arif Sumber Rezeki Mataram. The study was conducted in the form of Classroom Action Research (CAR) for two cycles, each consisting of three meetings. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation, with a focus on five indicators of language skills: speaking well, writing names, communicating with teachers and friends, asking and answering questions. The results showed a significant increase in language skills. The average score of children increased from 7.6 (Not Developing) in the pre-cycle, to 16.0 (Developing as Expected) in the first cycle, and reached 23.5 (Developing Very Well) in the second cycle. Learning with picture books has been proven to be able to create a pleasant learning atmosphere, stimulate children's verbal expression, and facilitate understanding of vocabulary and sentence structure. This study recommends the use of picture storytelling methods as an effective strategy for early childhood education teachers in improving children's language development as a whole.

**Keywords :** Picture Books, Language Skills, Early Childhood Education

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## INTRODUCTION

Childhood is a critical phase in human development. Early childhood, particularly between 0–6 years, is often referred to as the golden age. age because it is during this period that all aspects of a child's development—physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and linguistic—experience very rapid growth. Language, as a means of communication, plays a vital role in helping children express their thoughts and feelings, and foster social interactions. (Anugerah & Damanik, 2023) . Therefore, stimulating language development from an early age is a fundamental aspect of early childhood education (PAUD). In this context, teachers play a central role as facilitators who design effective and enjoyable learning strategies to optimally develop children's language skills (Apriatin et al., 2021).

Language skills in early childhood do not develop automatically but require appropriate stimulation through meaningful experiences. Children's language develops from simple to more complex sentence structures. As emphasized in language development theory, the role of social interaction is crucial in determining children's language

achievement. Therefore, learning approaches that actively involve children, such as storytelling, dialogue, or exploration of visual media, are highly recommended (Ardiana, 2021) . One medium proven effective in developing children's language is picture books. This type of book combines text and engaging visuals that can stimulate the imagination, enrich vocabulary, and facilitate children's verbal expression of ideas (Astuti & Ramdhani, 2023) .

However, in practice, obstacles are still found in children's language development in early childhood education units. Based on the results of initial observations conducted by researchers at the Qur'an Kindergarten Ma'arif Sumber Rezeki Mataram, found that the language skills of children aged 5-6 years are still relatively low. Of the 13 children observed, most showed indicators of suboptimal language development. The assessment categories used refer to four levels of developmental achievement, namely Not Yet Developing (BB), Starting to Develop (MB), Developing as Expected (BSH), and Very Well Developing (BSB). The observation results showed that five children were in the Not Yet Developing (BB) category, namely not yet able to listen to stories, not yet able to respond to questions appropriately, and not yet demonstrating basic communication skills such as saying their own name or understanding simple instructions. The other eight children were in the Starting to Develop (MB) category, characterized by being able to respond in a limited way, but still inconsistent in their listening, speaking, and writing skills.

One of the most dominant indicators that has not been achieved is children's ability to answer questions verbally and retell stories (Fitri et al., 2022) . Furthermore, some children still have difficulty understanding letter symbols or writing their own names. This indicates that aspects of language development, particularly listening, speaking, and vocabulary comprehension, still require special attention. This low achievement indicates the importance of intervention through more effective and enjoyable learning methods, such as the use of picture books that are appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood.

Picture storybooks were chosen because they offer several advantages (Fatimah et al., 2024) . First, they visually capture children's attention and aid in understanding the story. Second, they verbally present simple, contextual, and easily understood language. Third, they encourage interaction between teachers and children through questions and answers, discussions, and other verbal expressions (Dini, 2022). These advantages support a participatory and enjoyable learning process. With this approach, children not only listen but also actively respond and reconstruct the story based on their understanding, ultimately enriching their language skills.

Based on this background, the focus of this research is directed at teachers' efforts to develop the language skills of 5-6-year-old children through picture books. The research was conducted at the Qur'an Kindergarten. Ma'arif Sumber Rezeki Mataram, Central Lampung, involving teachers and students in group A. This research is based on pre -survey findings that indicate the need for more creative language learning interventions that are in accordance with children's characteristics.

To strengthen the research foundation, the author reviewed several relevant previous studies. Azhari (2021) , in his article entitled "Stimulating Early Childhood Language Through Storytelling Methods," concluded that storytelling activities are effective in stimulating children's language aspects, especially when adapted to the digital world that is starting to penetrate early childhood education. This study is relevant because it also highlights the importance of storytelling activities, but its approach emphasizes the method rather than the media. Another study conducted by Ningtyas (2022) examined "The Effect of Using Picture Storybooks on the Language Development of Group B Children." The results showed that the use of picture storybooks had a 66.76% effect on improving children's language skills. The main difference between this study lies in its quantitative approach

with a quasi-experimental design, while the author's study used a descriptive qualitative approach with observation and classroom action techniques.

Based on the gaps in previous research, this article offers a more contextual approach by applying a classroom action cycle to observe children's language development. This is intended to ensure that the learning process is adaptive and responsive to field conditions. Therefore, this study not only evaluates the results but also describes the learning process in depth and reflectively. The research problem is formulated as follows: How is the language development of children aged 5–6 years in Qur'an Kindergarten? Ma'arif Sumber Rezeki Mataram after implementing learning using picture books? This formulation serves as the basis for developing research designs, selecting methods, and developing achievement indicators that align with early childhood learning objectives.

In line with the problem formulation, the purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the use of picture books influences the improvement of the language skills of children aged 5–6 years. This objective includes observing changes in children's abilities in listening, speaking, understanding, and responding verbally to messages after receiving treatment through picture books. This study is expected to contribute theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, the results of this study enrich the scientific literature on early childhood language development strategies, especially those based on visual and narrative media. This study can also strengthen the view that learning with a fun and interactive approach is the key to successful early childhood education. Practically, the findings of this study can be used as a reference for teachers in designing more effective learning to stimulate children's language skills. In addition, parents can also gain an understanding that picture books are an important tool in developing children's communication at home.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a primary focus on teachers' efforts to develop the language skills of 5–6-year-old children through picture books (Arikunto, 1983) . This approach was chosen because it is suitable for describing phenomena in depth in a natural context, without variable manipulation. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore the meaning and experiences of subjects directly, by exploring narratives, activities, and interactions that occur in real-life learning situations. The aim of this approach is to provide a complete picture of the ongoing learning process and the changes that occur in children as a result of the use of picture books.

This type of research is participatory classroom action research (CAR), where researchers are directly involved in the learning process and implementation of actions (Prihantoro & Hidayat, 2019) . CAR in this context is used to identify real problems faced by teachers in language learning, while simultaneously implementing problem-solving strategies through picture book-based learning interventions. The research was conducted in two cycles, each encompassing the planning stage, action implementation, observation, and reflection. With this cycle model, researchers can observe children's development gradually and make improvements to learning strategies from the first cycle to the next.

This research was conducted at Qur'an Kindergarten Ma'arif Sumber Rezeki, located in Bandar Mataram District, Central Lampung Regency. This location was chosen purposively because the researcher had previously conducted field experience practice (PPL) at the institution and was familiar with the characteristics of students and the dynamics of learning in the classroom. The research was conducted for three months, from February to April 2025. The research process included pre-cycle activities, implementation of cycle I, and implementation of cycle II, with each cycle carried out for three days each week.

The data sources in this study are divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. (Dalman, 2012) . Primary data was obtained directly through interaction

with research subjects, namely teachers and students in class A of Qur'an Kindergarten. Ma'arif. Interviews with class teachers served as the primary source of information regarding the strategies used, obstacles encountered, and forms of interaction during the learning process using picture books. Meanwhile, other primary data were obtained from direct observations of children's behavior, responses, and language development achievements during the activities. Secondary data were obtained from various supporting documents such as the curriculum, daily lesson plans (RPPH), attendance records, classroom activity documentation, and relevant literature or scientific journals to strengthen the theoretical basis of the research.

Data collection techniques were carried out through three main methods: observation, interviews, and documentation (Imam, 2013) . Observations were used to record student activities during the learning process using picture books. Researchers used a checklist -style observation sheet containing indicators of children's language development, such as the ability to listen to stories, ask questions, answer questions, and re-express the story's content. Observations were conducted simultaneously by researchers and classroom teachers to obtain objective and accurate data.

Interviews were conducted with the classroom teacher, who served as the primary informant. The interviews were semi-structured, with flexible question guides allowing the informant to provide more freedom and depth. Some of the questions asked included: what methods are used to develop children's language, how to select appropriate picture books, the extent to which children are actively involved during storytelling activities, and any obstacles and solutions implemented during the process. These interviews aimed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the learning process and the teacher's response to the implementation of the new method.

Documentation methods were used to supplement data from observations and interviews. Documents collected included photos of activities, learning videos, child development notes, and student work. Documentation also included recordings of teacher evaluations, both daily and based on action cycles. All documents were analyzed to provide a visual and contextual overview of the learning process.

In this study, researchers observed children's language development data before and after interventions. In the pre -cycle phase, researchers found that most children were still in the Not Yet Developing (BB) and Beginning to Develop (MB) categories in terms of language skills. Based on the initial analysis, only a few children were able to listen to stories, respond to questions, or retell information coherently and clearly. This formed the basis for planning an intervention using picture books as a learning tool.

Actions in cycle I focused on getting children used to listening to picture stories and responding to questions from the teacher. Activities were conducted in a fun, interactive, and visually stimulating atmosphere. The teacher read the story with expression, pointed to pictures, and asked open-ended questions that encouraged children to think and speak. After cycle I, there was an improvement in children's language skills, although not yet significant; some children began to show interest in the story and were able to express their opinions verbally.

Furthermore, actions in cycle II were carried out by reinforcing interactive storytelling techniques, such as asking children to retell the story, create simple sentences from pictures, and role-play based on book characters. At this stage, language skills improved significantly. Children began to respond actively, demonstrated courage to speak in front of peers, and began to understand simple sentence structures. This change was reflected in the shift in developmental achievement categories, with the majority of children falling into the Developing as Expected (BSH) and Developing Very Well (BSB) categories.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques, which process data into narrative form based on specific categories, patterns, and themes. Data from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed through the stages

of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by filtering relevant information that aligns with the research focus. Data presentation was carried out in a structured and systematic narrative form. Conclusions were drawn by examining the consistency of findings from various data sources and comparing them with the objectives and problem formulation.

To ensure data validity, researchers conducted source and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. Method triangulation, meanwhile, involved using more than one data collection technique to obtain a more complete picture. Furthermore, researchers conducted member checks with class teachers to ensure the accuracy of the data and interpretations.

Overall, this research method is designed to provide a deep and comprehensive understanding of the process of developing children's language skills through picture books. The research not only describes initial conditions and final results but also documents the process of change that occurs through reflective, participatory, and contextually designed learning.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Initial Conditions for Language Development in Children Aged 5–6 Years

This research begins with a pre-cycle stage to identify the initial conditions of the development of children's language abilities in the Qur'an Kindergarten A class. Ma'arif Sumber Rezeki Mataram. Observations were conducted on 13 children aged 5–6 years. The assessment was based on five main indicators of language ability, namely: (1) being able to speak well, (2) being able to write one's name, (3) being able to communicate with friends and teachers, (4) being able to ask questions about learning, and (5) being able to answer questions. Each indicator was assessed using a four-level development scale which included Not Yet Developing (BB), Starting to Develop (MB), Developing According to Expectations (BSH), and Developing Very Well (BSB) (Hoerudin, 2023).

Observations show that most children have not yet reached optimal developmental levels. Based on a summary of each child's scores for the five indicators, the following data was obtained:

**Table 1. Observation results**

No	Child's Name	A	B	C	D	E	Total Score	Information
1	Almira Adiba	1	1	1	1	1	5	BB
	Mulyaningsih							
2	Attaya Abi Srinarendra	1	1	1	1	2	6	BB
3	Aulia Putri Salsabila	2	1	1	1	1	6	BB
4	Aqila Kanza Azzahra	1	1	1	1	1	5	BB
5	Clarisa Aurelifia	2	2	1	1	1	7	MB
6	Diana Ika Syafitri	2	2	1	1	1	7	MB
7	Inka Salsabila Rahmadani	1	1	1	1	1	5	BB
8	Khanif Fatur Rohma	1	1	2	1	1	6	BB
9	Mr. Al- Fattih Ahmad	1	1	1	1	1	5	BB
10	M. Maimun Zubair Al	1	1	1	1	1	5	BB
	Haris							
11	Meyrisa Qeiza Azzahra	1	2	1	1	2	7	MB
12	Muhammad Azril Ilham	1	1	1	1	1	5	BB
13	Shintiya Marantika Sari	1	2	1	2	1	7	MB

**Indicator Description:**

A = Speaking well | B = Writing name | C = Communicating | D = Asking | E = Answering  
Total Score Assessment Range: ≤50 (BB), 51–75 (MB), 76–93 (BSH), 94–100 (BSB)

The results show that 5 children are in the Not Yet Developing (BB) category, while 8 others are in the Beginning to Develop (MB) category. No children are yet in the Developing as Expected (BSH) or Very Well Developing (BSB) categories. The average total score for all students is 7.6, which is in the Not Yet Developing category. This achievement indicates that, in general, the language skills of children aged 5–6 years in this class are still in the early stages of development.

Analysis by indicator also supports this conclusion. The average score for the speaking ability indicator was 1.6; writing one's name 1.7; communicating with peers and teachers 1.4; asking questions 1.4; and answering questions 1.5. All of these indicators averaged in the Not Yet Developing (BB) category. This indicates that children are not yet able to respond to complex commands, are not yet accustomed to constructing simple sentences, and have not yet shown a strong interest in speaking or intensive listening activities.

In addition to the observation results, an interview with the class teacher, Fajar Istikomah, S.Pd., provided an overview of the learning methods currently being implemented. The teacher stated that the approach used mostly involved direct instruction, singing, or small experimental activities when the children seemed bored. While these activities were sometimes effective, their impact was short-lived. Children easily reverted to passive patterns or were reluctant to respond verbally. This aligns with Erikson's theory of developmental ups and downs, which emphasizes that early childhood often experiences rapid progress but also easily regresses if there is a lack of consistent stimulation.

From the overall findings of this pre-cycle, it was concluded that the learning methods used were not yet strong enough to stimulate children's sustainable language development. Children require a more systematic, interactive, and contextual approach, especially in language activities. Therefore, it is necessary to implement new methods that not only introduce children to vocabulary but also stimulate them to listen, speak, ask questions, and answer questions within the context of an engaging story. In this case, picture books are considered an appropriate solution because they combine visual and verbal elements simultaneously.

All data and reflections from this pre-cycle stage provide a strong foundation for designing interventions in the next cycle. Recognizing the low baseline, subsequent learning strategies will focus on improving language skills through storytelling and picture books. This is expected to address the learning challenges in the Qur'an Kindergarten A class. Ma'arif Sumber Rezeki Mataram in a more effective and enjoyable way.

**Implementation of Learning Using the Picture Story Book Method**

The learning process using picture storybooks was carried out in two cycles: Cycle I and Cycle II. Each cycle consisted of three meetings designed based on the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH), with a thematic approach and focused on developing children's language skills. Cycle I raised the theme "Water Animals," while Cycle II took the theme "Air Animals." Each implementation involved initial activities, core activities, and closing activities, as well as evaluation through direct observation and assessment of children's responses and development. The storytelling method with picture books was chosen because it was able to integrate visual and verbal elements that are appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood.

In Cycle I, activities were carried out for three days, starting from 17 to 19 February 2025. The teacher started the activities with an opening such as praying, ice breaking, and conditioning the learning atmosphere. Children were directed to sit neatly and focus on listening to the story. The teacher read a picture story book about the etiquette of knocking

before entering the house, related to the sub-theme of Aquatic Animals. The story was read expressively, interspersed with questions and answers, and the children were invited to discuss the message in the story. After that, the activity continued with introducing aquatic animals such as crabs and doing fine motor skills activities, namely cutting and sticking pictures of crab body parts from origami paper.

responses in the first cycle showed an increased interest in storytelling. Children began to show interest in the pictures and stories presented, although verbal participation was still limited. Most children lacked the confidence to answer questions or retell the story. However, they began to listen better and were able to provide simple responses such as naming characters or repeating sentences from the story. Teachers and researchers noted that children's engagement in reading and storytelling still needed to be improved through a more active and interactive approach.

In Cycle II, learning took place on March 3–5, 2025. The theme used was Aerial Animals with the subtheme " Butterflies and Their Development." The teacher repeated the activity stages as in the previous cycle, but with a more exploratory approach. The story read this time focused on the etiquette of maintaining personal hygiene, which was linked to bathroom habits. Children were challenged to restate the story's content and discuss good behavior in everyday life. In addition, skills activities were carried out by arranging pictures of the stages of butterfly metamorphosis in sequence, cutting, and pasting the pictures on cardboard as project media (Jannah, 2021) .

During cycle II, significant behavioral changes were observed in the children. They were more enthusiastic, actively engaged in listening to stories, and began to express their opinions or answer questions using longer, more structured sentences. The teacher provided stimulation using the reading aloud technique. aloud ), pointing to pictures clearly, making eye contact, and allowing pauses for children to think and respond. This strategy is very helpful in building two-way communication that had not previously developed optimally. Researchers also provided opportunities for children to convey the moral message in the story and engage in simple role-plays based on the story's characters.

The criteria for selecting picture storybooks are crucial for the success of this method (Khoiriyah & Jaya, 2021) . Teachers choose books with attractive illustrations, simple, age-appropriate stories, and themes relevant to everyday life. Selecting the right media encourages active child engagement and facilitates their understanding of the story's message. With this approach, children not only listen but also process information, express their understanding, and relate the story's content to their personal experiences. Teachers believe this method provides space for children to develop comprehensively, not only in terms of language but also in moral values, social skills, and fine motor skills (Kotijah et al., 2024) .

### **Reflection on Learning Outcomes per Cycle**

Implementing learning using the picture storybook method through two cycles provided in-depth data on the language development of children aged 5–6 years. In Cycle I, learning was carried out by introducing the children to picture books, a medium that had not previously been used in learning. Children's responses to this method showed positive changes, although not yet fully optimal. Children appeared to be enthusiastic about listening to the story, but not all were able to express their understanding verbally. Teachers and researchers noted that in this cycle, children still needed guidance in following the rules of the activity, including listening to the story, answering questions, and retelling the story content.

At the end of Cycle I, observation results showed an increase in scores for each language development indicator compared to the pre -cycle. Children who had previously not developed began to show progress. Quantitative data showed that the indicator "able to speak well" obtained an average score of 3.2 (BSH), "writing names" 2.9 (BSH),

"communicating with friends and teachers" 3.2 (BSH), "asking about learning" 3.1 (BSH), and "answering questions" 3.5 (BSH). The total average score was 16.0, which is in the category of Developing According to Expectations (BSH). Although the improvement was quite good, teachers still encountered obstacles such as a lack of time to guide children individually, as well as significant variations in ability between students.

Reflection on the implementation of Cycle I became an important basis for designing more effective strategies for Cycle II. Teachers recognized the need to increase two-way interaction in the storytelling process, as well as the need to provide more opportunities for children to express their opinions and express the content of the story. Furthermore, supporting activities such as role-playing and arranging story pictures also needed to strengthen children's understanding. Therefore, in Cycle II, the learning strategy was expanded, not only focusing on listening activities but also developing activities that integrate fine motor skills, logical thinking skills, and strengthening the moral values of the stories told.

In the implementation of Cycle II, the results of the reflection showed significant improvements. Children appeared more confident and enthusiastic in participating in learning activities. Based on the observation results, the indicator "able to speak with good language" reached an average score of 5.0 (BSB), "writing names" 4.8 (BSB), "communicating with friends and teachers" 4.8 (BSB), "asking about learning" 4.3 (BSB), and "answering questions" 4.8 (BSB). The overall average total reached 23.5, with an interpretation of Very Well Developed (BSB). This achievement is evidence that the strategy developed based on the previous cycle's reflection is very effective in improving children's language skills.

The improvement in children's abilities not only occurred in cognitive and verbal aspects, but also in their attitudes and character during learning. Children began to demonstrate new habits such as listening quietly, waiting their turn when speaking, and respecting the opinions of their peers. This aligns with the essence of the storytelling method, which not only conveys information but also instills positive values through characters and storylines. With consistent guidance, the teacher successfully created a pleasant learning atmosphere and built an emotional bond between teacher and students. Furthermore, the success of this cycle demonstrates that the picture book-based learning method can facilitate comprehensive language development.

The final reflections from the two cycles indicate that learning using picture books has significant potential for continued development in early childhood education. Teachers must continuously adapt, develop contextual lesson plans (RPPH), and actively involve children through interactive methods. Furthermore, collaboration between teachers, parents, and schools is crucial in providing quality learning media. (Latief et al., 2022) . Based on the results obtained, the implementation of the actions in Cycle II was deemed successful, so there was no need for further cycles. These results serve as recommendations for implementing similar methods in language learning at other early childhood education levels.

### **Changes in Children's Language Achievement**

The improvement in children's language skills at the Ma'arif Qur'an Kindergarten Sumber Rezeki Mataram was seen significantly after learning through the storytelling method with picture books was implemented for two cycles. Each cycle consisted of three meetings. Data collected at the pre-cycle stage, cycle I, and cycle II showed gradual development in each indicator of children's language skills, namely: speaking with good language, writing names, communicating, asking questions, and answering questions. Changes in children's abilities were assessed quantitatively using assessment scores and interpretations categorized into four levels: Not Yet Developing (BB), Starting to Develop (MB), Developing According to Expectations (BSH), and Developing Very Well (BSB).

The assessment results in Cycle I are presented in the following table:

**Table 2. Results of Cycle I Assessment**

No	Nama Anak	A	B	C	D	E	Total Score	Keterangan
1	Almira	3	2	2	2	3	12	BSH
2	Ataya	3	2	2	2	3	12	BSH
3	Aulia	3	3	2	2	3	13	BSH
4	Aqila	3	2	3	2	3	13	BSH
5	Clarisa	3	2	3	3	3	14	BSH
6	Diana	2	3	2	3	2	12	BSH
7	Inka	3	3	3	2	3	14	BSH
8	Khanif	3	2	3	2	2	12	BSH
9	Fattih	3	3	2	3	3	14	BSH
10	Haris	2	3	3	2	3	13	BSH
11	Meyrisa	3	2	3	2	2	12	BSH
12	Azril Ilham	3	3	3	3	3	15	BSH
13	Shintiya	3	2	3	2	3	13	BSH

Average per indicator in Cycle I:

- Speaking : 3.2
- Writing name: 2.9
- Communicating : 3.2
- Ask : 3.1
- Answering questions: 3.5

**Total average: 16.0**

**Interpretation : Developing as Expected (BSH)**

The increase occurred again across the board in Cycle II, as seen in the table following :

**Table 3. Results of Cycle II Assessment**

No	Child's Name	A	B	C	D	E	Total Score	Information
1	Almira	3	3	4	3	4	17	BSH
2	Ataya	4	3	3	3	3	16	BSH
3	Aulia	4	3	3	3	3	16	BSH
4	Aqila	3	3	3	3	4	16	BSH
5	Clarisa	4	4	4	3	4	19	BSB
6	Diana	4	4	4	4	3	19	BSB
7	Inka	4	4	3	3	4	18	BSB
8	Khanif	4	3	4	3	3	17	BSH
9	Fattih	4	4	4	4	4	20	BSB
10	Haris	4	4	4	3	4	19	BSB
11	Meyrisa	4	3	4	3	4	18	BSB
12	Azril Ilham	4	4	4	4	4	20	BSB
13	Shintiya	4	4	4	4	4	20	BSB

Average per indicator in Cycle II:

- Speaking : 5.0
- Writing name: 4.8
- Communicating : 4.8

- Ask : 4.3
- Answering questions: 4.8

**Total average: 23.5**

**Interpretation: Very Well Developed (BSB)**

The comparison of the total average shows a significant improvement. In the pre-cycle, the average score was only 7.6 (BB), then increased to 16.0 (BSH) in Cycle I, and increased again to 23.5 (BSB) in Cycle II. This improvement demonstrates the effectiveness of the picture storybook method in developing children's language skills. Each indicator shows progress, especially in the aspects of expressing opinions and answering questions, which were previously obstacles in the pre-cycle.

Qualitatively, teachers observed that children who were initially quiet and passive now showed behavioral changes, such as actively asking questions, daring to tell stories, and being able to construct simple sentences to answer questions. Children also showed a greater interest in reading and listening activities. This indicates that children are developing not only cognitively, but also socially and emotionally. Listening to stories, engaging in dialogue, and role-playing provide space for children to express themselves (Marlinawati, 2013).

This achievement also reflects the alignment of the applied method with the developmental characteristics of early childhood. Picture books not only present attractive images but also convey meaningful stories that children can easily understand. In this context, teachers successfully facilitate a fun and motivating learning process, while simultaneously encouraging gradual and directed language development. The learning experience provided through this method has proven to be memorable, as children are able to retell the story, relate the message to everyday life, and imitate the behavior of the characters.

Overall, the changes in children's language proficiency from pre-cycle to cycle II demonstrate the success of the method used. This strategy has an impact that is visible not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. Teachers need to maintain and develop this approach in subsequent language learning, adapting materials to the local context and children's needs. The picture book method can be used as a sustainable learning model for early childhood education, particularly in fostering children's interest in reading, communication, and critical thinking skills from an early age (Ningtyas, 2022).

### **Challenges and Solutions in Implementation**

During the learning process using the picture story book method at the Qur'an Kindergarten Ma'arif Sumber Rezeki Mataram, identified various challenges, both from the perspective of students, teachers, and limited learning media. The first major challenge is children's low interest in reading and concentration. As children aged 5–6, most students still show fluctuating interest in storytelling activities. When stories are not presented expressively or activities are too monotonous, they tend to lose focus and become passive. This presents a challenge, considering that listening and attending activities are the initial foundation for developing spoken language.

The second challenge is the significant variation in language skills among students. Some children already possess basic speaking and listening skills, while others struggle to respond to questions or repeat story content. This disparity requires teachers to provide differentiated attention to each child to ensure activities are not unequal. Interviews with classroom teachers revealed that children who are less able to convey messages often become quiet and unwilling to actively participate in class activities, even when using picture books.

The next challenge is the limited number and variety of picture story books. Most of the books available at the Qur'an Kindergarten Ma'arif is a donated or homemade book that doesn't meet the standards for engaging illustrations and age-appropriate stories. Some books feature only black-and-white images without supporting text, or, conversely, excessively long texts without adequate images. As a result, teachers struggle to select teaching materials that capture attention while simultaneously imparting the necessary educational and linguistic values.

Facing these challenges, teachers and researchers have developed various practical solutions. To address low reading interest, teachers have shifted their approach to a more interactive and engaging approach, incorporating read-aloud techniques, role-playing based on the story's content, and creating art projects based on the story's characters. Teachers also use expressive voices, eye contact, and slowly point out pictures while asking children for their opinions. These techniques help capture attention and maintain children's engagement throughout the learning process.

Addressing the varying abilities of children is achieved through individual mentoring and small group work. Children who are quicker to grasp the material are encouraged to partner with slower-paced children, fostering collaborative learning. Teachers also provide differentiated stimuli, such as illustrated multiple-choice questions for passive children and open-ended questions for active speakers. Furthermore, teachers keep a daily record of each child's language development, allowing learning strategies to be adjusted based on their individual progress.

Due to media limitations, teachers have implemented various innovations, including creating simple picture books from recycled materials, such as colored paper, magazines, and printed images from the internet. These books, featuring short stories and engaging illustrations, are read aloud to the class. Teachers also involve parents by asking them to bring children's storybooks from home to read together at school. Furthermore, schools are advised to allocate a dedicated budget for the procurement of picture books as a mandatory early childhood education tool. In this way, media constraints can be addressed creatively, efficiently, and sustainably. These efforts have successfully created a conducive learning environment and supported optimal language development.

### **Implications of Findings for Early Childhood Education**

The results of this study confirm that the use of storytelling methods with picture storybook media has a significant impact on the language development of early childhood, especially in children aged 5-6 years in Qur'an Kindergarten. Ma'arif Sumber Rezeki Mataram. The quantitative increase in achievement from the Not Yet Developed (BB) category to Very Well Developed (BSB) shows that story-based visual media not only enriches children's vocabulary but also facilitates oral expression, constructing simple sentences, answering questions, and the ability to understand narrative content. From an early childhood education (PAUD) perspective, this finding reinforces the importance of a narrative, fun, and contextual story- and image-based learning approach.

The main implication for early childhood education teachers is the importance of innovating language learning strategies. Teachers cannot rely solely on lectures, singing, or free play without clear direction. Storytelling with picture books has been shown to provide stronger stimulation for children's language skills, as it engages children in three aspects simultaneously: visual (pictures), auditory (listening to the story), and verbal (retelling). Therefore, teachers need to prepare media-rich lessons, have storylines that are easy for children to follow, and incorporate local moral and cultural values into the narrative to make it more grounded and relevant.

Furthermore, this research has practical implications for schools and early childhood education institutions. Educational institutions need to support the regular provision of picture storybooks. Books don't have to be expensive, but they should have

engaging illustrations, simple language, and themes relevant to children's lives. Schools need to have classroom libraries or comfortable reading corners where children can interact with books independently or with teachers. These implications also include teacher training in storytelling techniques, expressive reading (*reading aloud*), and the use of visual media as interactive tools in the classroom.

This research also contributes to parents as educational partners. The results show that children who are accustomed to listening to stories and viewing picture books at school demonstrate a higher interest in reading and a tendency to retell stories at home. Therefore, a further implication is the importance of parental involvement in supporting early literacy activities at home. Parents can read storybooks before bed, provide a simple reading space at home, or read stories while engaging in light dialogue. This will strengthen children's habit of using language as a means of expression and communication in everyday life. From an educational policy perspective, the results of this study can serve as a basis for developing early childhood education curricula and learning policies based on visual and narrative literacy. The early childhood education curriculum should provide ample space for the use of picture storybooks, integrating reading, listening, discussion, and role-playing activities. (Setiawati et al., 2023) . This aligns with the Independent Curriculum, which prioritizes a holistic approach and student-centered learning. Thus, teachers target not only academic achievement but also aspects of children's language development, social-emotional development, and moral values.

Finally, the findings of this study open up opportunities for further research. The theoretical implications provide a basis for further study of how elements in picture books (color, character traits, narrative form, or moral values) influence the types of language skills that children develop. This research also inspires exploration of other learning models that combine storytelling with technology, such as interactive e-books or educational animations. All of this aims to provide enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences for early childhood during their golden age, particularly in developing literacy skills as a foundation for the future.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of classroom action research conducted in three learning cycles using the picture story book method in Qur'an Kindergarten Ma'arif Sumber Rezeki Mataram, concluded that there was a significant increase in the language development of children aged 5–6 years. Before the intervention, children's language skills were mostly in the Not Yet Developed (BB) category, with an average score of 7.6. After applying the storytelling method with picture books on the theme of animals for nine meetings, the results showed that in Cycle I the average score increased to 16.0 with the interpretation of Developing According to Expectations (BSH), and in Cycle II it increased again to 23.5 with the category of Developing Very Well (BSB). This increase was seen evenly across the five observed indicators: speaking skills, writing names, communicating with friends and teachers, asking questions, and answering questions. Picture book media has proven effective because it combines visual, verbal, and affective elements that are appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood. In addition, this method creates a pleasant learning atmosphere, strengthens listening skills, and encourages children to participate more actively in class activities.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that early childhood educators be more active in using varied and engaging learning methods, such as picture storybooks, to develop children's language skills. Teachers need to be trained to select and utilize storytelling media that are appropriate to the learning theme and the child's developmental level. Furthermore, teachers are expected to incorporate moral values and positive habits into each story they tell. For educational institutions, it is crucial to provide supporting facilities such as an adequate collection of picture storybooks and comfortable

reading corners in the classroom. Institutional support significantly impacts the sustainability of innovative learning strategies. For researchers or students wishing to conduct further studies, it is recommended to expand the scope of research objects, add a longer evaluation cycle, or combine storytelling methods with interactive digital technology. This research can serve as a reference in developing language learning models based on visual literacy and storytelling in the realm of Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD), while also addressing the need for a relevant and effective approach to educating the next generation during their golden age of development.

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