

Improving Language Skills and Instilling Character Values in Children Through Storytelling

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explain the storytelling method in improving language skills and at the same time instilling character values in children. Character issues in the younger generation are still often encountered both in society and through the news on social media. One solution is to include character values from an early age in kindergarten learning by applying the storytelling method. By taking inspirational stories from characters that contain good character values, children can learn both language skills and character values. The research method used was the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method. Analysis and presentation of data used a qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The result of the study showed that the use of storytelling methods in early childhood to improve language and instill character values had a significant effect. The ratio of the pre-test and post-test results showed a significant improvement, it was from 61% to 96%. Character changes in a positive direction appeared such as being honest, responsible, independent, polite, and following parental orders. Furthermore, children were also motivated to learn in improving their language skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing which then affected the child's formal language. Thus, the use of the storytelling method in the learning process not only improved language skills but also affected the child's character because presenting true stories from human life provides a good and ideal example for children to instill good character in themselves.

Keywords: Language Skills, Character Values, Storytelling

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan metode *storytelling* dalam meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa dan sekaligus menanamkan nilai karakter pada anak. Persoalan karakter pada generasi muda masih sering dijumpai baik di masyarakat maupun melalui berita di media social. Salah satu solusinya ialah dengan memasukkan nilai karakter sejak usia dini pada pembelajaran TK. Hal itu dapat dilakukan dengan penerapan metode *storytelling* yaitu dengan mengambil cerita inspiratif dari tokoh yang mengandung nilai karakter yang baik. Metode penelitian yang digunakan ialah metode Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK). Analisis dan penyajian data menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi, wawancara dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan penggunaan metode *storytelling* pada anak usia dini untuk meningkatkan bahasa dan menanamkan nilai karakter berpengaruh efektif. Perbandingan dari hasil pretest dan posttest menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan dari 61% menjadi 96%. Perubahan

karakter ke arah yang baik muncul seperti jujur, tanggungjawab, mandiri, sopan dan mengikuti perintah orang tua. Lebih lanjut, anak juga termotivasi belajar dalam meningkatkan kemampuan bahasanya seperti berbicara, mendengar, membaca dan menulis yang nantinya akan berpengaruh pada bahasa formal anak. Jadi, penggunaan metode *storytelling* pada proses pembelajaran selain meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa juga berpengaruh pada karakter anak. Hal itu disebabkan karena dengan menampilkan kisah nyata dari kehidupan manusia memberikan contoh yang baik dan ideal bagi anak dalam menanamkan karakter yang baik pada dirinya.

Kata Kunci: Kemampuan Bahasa, Nilai Karakter, *Storytelling*

INTRODUCTION

Children's growth from the age of 0-6 years has developed very rapidly. It is necessary to provide a stimulus to optimize a child's physical and spiritual abilities (Ita et al., 2020). Newborns cannot yet communicate with language. However, with a period of about 5 or 6 years, the development of children is extraordinary. The development of children's language, character, intelligence, and emotions increases significantly from time to time. That is certainly influenced by the role of the closest people and environmental factors. Parents are important players in influencing and developing the potential development of children as well as being the closest environment for children (Nuzula Apriliyana, 2020; Kusumawati & Rachmawati, 2017; Manurung, 2020)

Children begin to learn to speak simply, generally at the age of 2 years, then the longer the amount of vocabulary in speaking increases. Children at the age of 4-5 years have several obstacles in their language ability, including the child's lack of courage in saying words, the child low level of spoken ability, the child's lack of vocabulary arrangement, and the lack of speaking logically and systematically. To overcome these obstacles, parents or teachers need to facilitate and improve children's language skills, for example through telling stories or fairy tales (Kory & Breazeal, 2014). In addition, it is also possible to utilize the media or even electronic media to educate children's language to develop their language ability optimally.

Based on the results of the study, children aged 4 years have started to be able to assemble around 1000-1500 words that they can pronounce fluently. Along with its growth, the words used to communicate will continue to grow. Children at that age can hear and carry out orders (Ribeiro et al., n.d.). Whatever is heard will be imitated and what is ordered will be done, whether it is a positive or negative word or command. Therefore, the age of the child at that time is categorized as The Golden Age. The golden age will not be replaced in the future. It is proven from the results of neurological research which suggests that around 50% of a child's intelligence is formed in the first 4 years of age, then at 8 years of age a child's

intelligence is formed reaching 80%, and at the age of 18 years, a child's intelligence is formed 100% (Hayati et al., 2021).

Experts say that the development of children's character from the age of 5-7 years goes rapidly, children learn with concrete life experiences that are oriented and have momentary goals, and children learn through spoken language by saying and defining names of objects, pictures, and moving objects in their surroundings. Children also need a clear and specific structure of activities. Therefore, at this age children develop not only language but also their character which is influenced by their environment (Agbaria, 2020). For instilling children's character values, teachers should teach and train children to have good manners, responsibility, honesty, independence, and so on from an early age. If this is instilled in children from an early age, it will show a major effect on the child's future. As has been stated that character education carried out during the golden age will affect character building in the future and it is important to notify that the golden age will not be repeated in the future (Mei-Ju et al., 2014).

Many moral issues occur in Indonesia dealing with character or moral values. These issues can be found on television which are almost present daily such as cases of rape, sexual abuse, brawls, and other criminal acts that cause casualties, both injuries, and deaths. In addition, most of the perpetrators of these cases are still at the student status level. Therefore, the best alternative solution is to develop children's language skills as well as instill character values in children (Hayati et al., 2021). Several studies have been conducted related to language and character learning through fairy tales (animal fairy tales, ordinary dog stories, ancient people's fairy tales, local fairy tales, religious fairy tales, funny anecdotes, and so forth).

Maureen (2018) stated their findings that early childhood language learning by using the storytelling method was proven effective. In addition, the use of the storytelling method also utilized existing media, for example, digital media from the internet or special videos for children that presented fairy tales or interesting displays then displayed to children. This digital storytelling media could improve children's speaking ability from 40% to 80% after two cycles of learning. This

means that there is a significant improvement in children's language skills after learning the storytelling method (Maureen et al., 2018).

Wright (2019) added that children's speaking ability improved after using the storytelling learning method. Previously, when the pre-test was carried out, it showed that the children's language skills were still relatively low. Then the storytelling method treatment was carried out. After the treatment and the post-test were carried out, it could be seen that there was a significant improvement in children's language ability (Wright & Dunsmuir, 2019). Before the treatment, children in the classroom tended to be silent when asked, they tended to be shy to express any words. After the treatment, the atmosphere of the class changed, and children became active in expressing words. They were not shy to ask questions and were active in having a dialogue. The method showed that children not only produced vocabulary but also looked happy and interested and finally they could express themselves in dialogue.

Kidd (2008) suggest that the storytelling method not only improves the language in early childhood but also improves critical thinking. This can certainly bring out bright ideas in children because children's minds are critical, and free to express any words without any negative influence from their surroundings although the way children think during dialogue shows the influence of stimulation from the surroundings (Kidd et al., 2008).

Based on the findings of experts, the storytelling method has an important and decisive role in improving early childhood vocabulary acquisition, fostering imagination and creativity, training verbal and language expression skills, improving speaking skills, and stringing sentences that children use to communicate and convey their thoughts. This is because the method is appropriate and liked by children, especially when the method is implemented by using media such as pictures, flannel boards, storytelling pictures, and others (Papadimitriou et al., 2013). Children at an early age like something new in form of pictures and the like. Those media can make them happy which then stimulate them to talk, even the child's tone of speech will be higher even without prior stimulation from the teacher.

In addition, technology is currently developing rapidly with the appearance of internet technology that penetrates the boundaries of space and time. Almost everyone has a gadget or smartphone. By the availability of this technology, children are sometimes also affected. They will watch YouTube videos by using their or their parents' smartphones. This certainly has positive and negative impacts on children. Although there is a positive impact which can foster children's imagination and creativity if it is not accompanied by assistance from their parents, children's character will tend to become selfish, arrogant, unstable, and selfish (Aswadi & Lismayanti, 2019; Paridawati et al., 2021). Thus, the role of parents when at home will determine the character of the child in the future, either good character or bad character, depending on the parents in educating them (Fariq et al., 2021). Furthermore, Nasser (2020) also said that addiction to gadgets or smartphones will affect the character and brain development of children. This is because the excessive production of the hormone dopamine or the child's pleasure hormone will interfere with the development of the maturity of the prefrontal cortex function which controls emotions, self-control, responsibility, and others. As a result, children continuously hold gadgets or smartphones, they will be at risk of distraction and hyperactivity at pre-school age (Nasser et al., 2020).

The role of teachers at school is very important in shaping children's character because teachers who have educator figures can nurture, care for, and provide training to help children get knowledge and shape their character. All children's activities at school are strictly supervised and accompanied by teachers so that children's conditions are controlled from coming to leaving school (Su'aidi & El, 2021; Kirschenbaum, 2000). Moreover, they are also not allowed to bring mobile phones to school to focus on school activities. The success and failure of character cultivation at school will give a positive impact on children's character shaping at home.

The early childhood education institution, Al-Firdaus Kindergarten, is one of the institutions that provide human development from an early age. In its educational practice, the curriculum uses an integrated approach that collaborates

between the government curriculum and the boarding school curriculum. Al-Firdaus Kindergarten is the only A-accredited kindergarten in the area so it attracts a lot of interest from parents who want to register their children at the kindergarten. Many parents from outside the sub-district enroll their children at Al-Firdaus Kindergarten. This can be proven by the students who come from Plosoklaten sub-district and Wates sub-district. The advantage of Al-Firdaus Kindergarten is that the curriculum and learning model are designed with Islamic nuances to produce graduates with Islamic character. In learning activities, Al-Firdaus Kindergarten also uses several strategies as used in other kindergartens but the strategies used are designed with the insertion of character values in children.

One of the lessons at the school also uses storytelling where the storytelling material is taken from the stories of Prophets, companions, scholars, religious figures, national figures, and others. The character values are taken from those stories and then delivered with simple language or child language. It is hoped that by using the storytelling method, either the development of children's language skills or children's character values will be improving. Some previous works including Karlina (2018), Aspiana (2021), Anggraini (2020), and Rambe (2021) have discussed children's learning by using the storytelling method, however, the stories used are fairy tales or folklore which are fictitious (Karlina, 2018; Aspiana et al., 2021; Anggraini et al., 2020; Rambe et al., 2021).

Maria Montessori in Busyro (2021) does not recommend giving fantasy stories such as fairy tales, cartoons, and the like to children. She recommends using real stories and the reality of life to educate children to be creative and to have high imagination and the expected character (Sarah Busyra & Nur Azizah, 2021). Furthermore, research which emphasizes early childhood learning by using storytelling methods such as the stories of the Prophet, companions, and Islamic figures in character building does not yet exist. Therefore, the title of this article is improving children's language skills and instilling character values through storytelling using reality-based stories (stories of Prophets, companions, and Islamic figures) which is aimed to provide solutions related to children's problems

while adding to Islamic wealth and references for kindergarten teachers as a strategy to instill Islamic character values for children. The purpose of this research is to find out the storytelling learning strategy, steps, evaluation, and its effect on the development of language skills and character values of students in B2 class of 26 children.

METHOD

The research used classroom action research method (CAR). According to Arikunto (2010), CAR is research conducted by researchers together with a teacher in the classroom where learning activities take place by emphasizing in improving the process of learning or improving the learning praxis (Suharsimi Arikunto, 2010). Kurt Lewin in Saputri (2015) added that classroom action research activities include planning, action, observation, and reflection (Vicky Agus Saputri & Purwadi, n.d.). This research reveals obstacles or problems and then looks for solutions for early childhood language learning in the interaction of teachers and students (in this research, the students are children) through the storytelling method. Furthermore, Lofland (in Moleong, 2013: 157), explains that the primary data sources in qualitative research are in the form of actions and writings, coupled with documents and others (Lexy J. Moleong, 2013). Data collection used were interview, observation, and documentation techniques. Data analysis and presentation used qualitative descriptive techniques. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman technique, namely data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data validity test or data verification used credibility, validity, and reliability tests. The object of research was the 2nd-grade kindergarten group with a total of 26 students. The interview participants were the head of the kindergarten (Mrs. Asmaul Husna, S.Pd), teachers (Mrs. Dania Aptiningsari, S.Pd, and Ulfa Anna Akmalia), and student guardians (Mrs. Atik Makrifat). The location of this research is at Al - Firdaus Kindergarten which is located in East Blimbing village, Gurah District, Kediri Regency. The media used in learning were books

containing stories, pictures of characters, blackboards, small sticks, tables and chairs, props, electronic devices (optional), and others.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Based on observations, Al-Firdaus Kindergarten is an early childhood Islamic education institution that is in great demand by the community. In addition, it is the only kindergarten that is accredited by A in the area. Many parents from outside Gurah sub-district enroll their children at Al-Firdaus Kindergarten. This is proven by the presence of students who come quite far from the school area, namely Plosoklaten District, and Wates District, registering at the kindergarten.

The vision of Al Firdaus Kindergarten is "Being the Best", while the mission is "Think Smart and Work Smart". The school uses an integral approach, which means that the school collaborates the government curriculum with the boarding school curriculum. Teaching and learning activities at the school are conducted six days a week. It starts from Monday to Saturday from 07:30 WIB - 12:00 WIB. At this time, namely in 2022, the number of students at Al-Firdaus Kindergarten is 145 children who are divided into 2 levels, namely Kindergarten A which totals 71 children and Kindergarten B totals 74 children with details of Kindergarten A is divided into 3 classes, namely class A1 consisting of 25 children, class A2 consisting of 23 children, and A3 consisting of 23 children. Meanwhile, Kindergarten B is also divided into 3 classes, namely class B1 consists of 27 children, B2 consists of 26 children, and B3 consists of 21 children.

To improve children's language skills, appropriate strategies are needed so that learning objectives are quickly achieved. One of the strategies used is storytelling. The goal of the storytelling strategy is children will easily develop language skills through fun learning. Hurlock (1995) argues that language is a means of communication through symbols that exist in one's thoughts and feelings which are then conveyed to others. Therefore, language skills are considered important and need to be taught to children from an early age.

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the learning steps in the storytelling method at Al-Firdaus Kindergarten are as follows:

a. Choosing a title or theme that will be told in learning

The selection of the title of the story that the teacher will tell is taken from the story of friends, religious figures, fable stories, daily stories at school, at home, or others. Then, the story is taken based on the character values that have been determined. For example, the teacher will instill the character value of generosity and shyness, then the story of the generosity of Usman bin Affan r.a. and Abdurrahman bin Auf r.a. and so on is taken.

b. Conducting the children to really listen to the story

c. Starting the story with several stages, such as.

- Asking about readiness to hear the story
- Delivering a summary of the content of the story
- Explaining the characters in the story
- Starting to tell the story by describing the place, time, and expression.

d. When telling the story, the following stages should also be followed:

- Encouraging the students to respond by asking questions about vocabulary that they do not understand.
- Stimulating the children with questions which use new or unknown vocabulary
- Inviting the children to make presumptions, about what will happen later
- Providing opportunities to share presumptions or predictions about the continuation of the story
- Translating vocabulary that is still not understandable by the children

e. The end of the story is used as a closing and evaluation which has the following stages:

- Conducting a question-and-answer session about the intrinsic elements of the story. So that later positive lessons can be taken in the story as well as imitation of character values and their implementation in life.

- Providing opportunities for students to retell the story in their own language and giving rewards to students who want to tell stories.

Observations were conducted with researchers and teachers on early childhood language learning by using the storytelling method and carried out in B2 class of Al-Firdaus Kindergarten. The first observation was made before the storytelling method was applied and the second observation was made after the storytelling method was applied. The indicators of language success include four abilities, namely speaking, writing, listening, and reading. The indicators of speaking success are being able to retell the story told by the teacher, being able to mention the moral message, and being able to answer the teacher's questions. Indicators of writing success are being able to understand and recognize the shape of numbers and letters and draw free patterns. The indicators of listening success are being able to repeat a little of the core of the story, responding quickly to teacher commands, and being able to mention the characters in the story. Indicators of reading success are being able to understand symbols, spell their own names and characters in the story, and name the shape of the picture.

The implementation of the storytelling method was carried out in 2 cycles. The first cycle was conducted over three days and the second cycle was conducted over five days. The method of implementation is by retelling and adding a little new story. Previously, a pretest was conducted on children's language skills. It was known that children's language skills in Group B 2 were still very low at 61%. It means that on average, only 16 children have good language skills compared to the total number of students in one class is 26 students. As a response to this, the storytelling method was applied in the first cycle. The results obtained were quite increasing, it was 77%. This means that 20 children have succeeded in developing their language skills well. Furthermore, after the implementation of the second cycle the improvement reached 92%. It means that 24 children have been able to develop language skills well. Based on the result of the first cycle and the second

cycle, it was proven that there was a high improvement after applying the storytelling method.

Furthermore, the assessment of language skills development includes four activities, namely speaking, writing, listening, and reading. The following is the percentage after applying the storytelling method according to the data of each cycle at Al-Firdaus Kindergarten:

- a. Speaking. In the first cycle, the percentage of children who could retell the story increased to 17 children or 65%. The percentage of children who can mention the moral message in the story increased by 18 children or 69%. Furthermore, in the second cycle, the percentage of children who can retell stories increased by 21 children or 81%. The percentage of children who can mention the moral message in the story increased by 23 children or 88%. The percentage of children who can answer questions well also increased by 21 children or 81%.
- b. Writing. In the first cycle, the percentage of children who can understand letter shapes is increasing by 18 children or 69%. The percentage of children who recognize the shape of numbers increased by 85%. The percentage of children who can draw free pattern shapes increased 70%. Meanwhile, in the second cycle, the percentage of children who can understand letter shapes is 22 children or 85%. The percentage of children who recognize the shape of numbers is 23 children or 88%. The percentage of children who can draw free pattern shapes is 24 children or 92%.
- c. Listening. In the first cycle, the percentage of children who repeat a little of the core of the story increased by 16 children or 61%. The percentage of children who quickly respond to teacher commands is 21 children or 77%. The percentage of children who can mention the characters in the story is 21 children or 81%. Additionally, in the second cycle, the percentage of children who repeated a little of the core of the story increased by 21 children, or 81%. The percentage of children who immediately respond to teacher commands 24

is children or 92%. The percentage of children who can mention the characters in the story is 25 children or 96%.

- d. Reading. In the first cycle, the percentage of children who can understand symbols is 18 children or 69%. The percentage of children who can spell their own names and the names of characters is 21 children or 81%. The percentage of children who can read the names in the form of pictures is 20 children or 76%. Then in the second cycle, the percentage of children who can understand symbols is 21 children or 81%. The percentage of children who can spell their own names and the names of characters is 25 children or 96%. The percentage of children who can read the names in the form of pictures is 24 children or 92%.

The effect of this method on children is not only on language but also on children's character. Parents' interview results showed that the child's character had changed to be better which makes them feel happy and satisfied with the changes in their children's character. In educating children, some parents have limitations either due to the busyness of parents who must earn a living or because parents' knowledge in educating children is limited. In addition, some children aged 4-7 years have appeared stubborn when they are told or advised by parents. This happens because sometimes children's wishes are not always fulfilled by parents. Parents sometimes also do not set a good example when communicating with children, for example, when parents tell the children they tell them in harsh language. This has an impact on children's development because they will imitate what they see and hear, whether it is positive or negative. Children will absorb and imitate the way their parents speak and communicate, which will indirectly shape their character.

Based on observations, the application of the storytelling method by including stories of prophets, scholars, righteous people, and public figures has a direct effect on children. Some character messages conveyed in the story have appeared in children's characters. Among the characters that have appeared are honest,

independent, and responsible. Honest character is seen in children when parents motivate children to give alms from some of their pocket money at school as the character told by the teacher in the story of the virtue of alms. As a result, children want to follow what their parents motivate them to do. Furthermore, an independent character is seen when children return home from school, by immediately removing their uniform and putting the bag in place before playing with friends.

This can certainly be categorized as a positive change for early childhood when many children at that age after returning from school immediately play without changing clothes first. During the evaluation, the teacher explained to the parents that besides telling stories, the teacher also advised children to be good. He educated them to put everything in its place. This is exemplified in the story of the wise Islamic preacher character he told. Next, the character of responsibility appears in children when prayer time arrives. When azan or prayer time comes, the child automatically takes the ablution water and prays at home or the nearest mosque. In addition, children's manners also appear when returning from school, children will say greetings and shake their parents' hands. This awareness began to emerge after being told by the teacher about the story of good manners exemplified by the companions of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

This turns out to be a special attraction for parents or society because teachers at Al-Firdaus Kindergarten educate children's character well and seriously. In addition, the process of character building in children is designed so that religious-based characters can grow and be embedded in the child's soul. Thus, the enthusiasm of the society to send their children to Al-Firdaus Kindergarten is increasing because the education process is good indeed and following what is needed. In addition, the education service also satisfies society, both in terms of administration and the learning process. Thus, it is not surprising that people prefer Al-Firdaus Kindergarten as the main choice for their children's education over other schools. It is proven this is evidenced by the large number of students who come from outside the sub-district and register there.

Based on the result of interviews, the curriculum applied at Al-Firdaus Kindergarten is an integrated curriculum that combines the government's K-13 curriculum with the boarding school curriculum. The K-13 curriculum is modified but does not eliminate the substance and standards of the government. It prioritizes children's character education from an early age. As data obtained, Al-Firdaus Kindergarten which is institutionally under the Al-Firdaus El Husen Islamic Education Foundation is based on a boarding school curriculum that applies the design of religious-based character education.

Thus, the success point of the application of the combined curriculum is the fulfillment of formal education according to government standards while successfully shaping children's character based on religion. Indicators of success can be seen from the report sheet scores, all of which are above the minimum standard and showing children's self-awareness of honesty, independence, responsibility, and courtesy at school or at home. This is a hallmark of Al-Firdaus Kindergarten's early childhood education institution to provide the best educational services according to the needs of society.

Discussion

The storytelling method is one of the most classic methods, but it is still an effective method to apply. Storytelling is the activity of talking orally about events or actions that have occurred in the past. The purpose is to share knowledge and experience with others (Nair & Yunus, 2021). In addition, storytelling is always an interesting activity for everyone, whether they are children or adults. Children will happily listen to stories told by someone.

Storytelling turns out to be very effective for teachers to use in learning at the basic education level (Kindergarten, Early Childhood Centre, or Elementary School). The storytelling method is also done as an effort to develop children's language skills despite the fact shows that it not only improves children's language skills but also shapes children's good character values through the moral messages

conveyed in the story (Barnes, 2015). Therefore, this storytelling method is used by teachers in learning to improve language skills at Al-Firdaus Kindergarten.

The result of the pretest where the storytelling method had not been applied showed that there were 40% of students who were still experiencing language delays. If children experience delays in the development of language skills, it will trigger delays in their cognitive aspects. This will certainly interfere with the child's learning process. The child has difficulty speaking and communicating with the teacher, which influenced the understanding of the material delivered by the teacher (Heath, 1982; Zulhi Amalia & Sa'diyah, 2015). Therefore, the storytelling method can be a solution to develop children's language skills. After the method was carried out with two cycles, it was proven that children's language skills increased significantly from previously around 16 children or 60% to 25 children or 96%. This means that almost all children can improve their language skills, hence, it can be evidence of the success of learning activities with the storytelling method. In addition, the factor that influences the speed of improvement in children's language is the teacher. In telling stories, the teacher's ability to present stories, to use the language, to play the intonation, and others will affect the learning atmosphere. Therefore, the teacher's ability in telling a story affects the enthusiasm of students for learning and language development (Ribeiro et al., n.d.).

Language development is one of the themes that is always interesting to discuss and study, therefore, there are several opinions and theories from experts who examine language development in early childhood. They research and study intensely, hence, children's language development can be known in detail. Many factors influence the improvement of children's language from birth to teenager. In general, the influences are divided into two, namely internal and external factors. There are certainly differences of opinion and views among experts. However, each expert's reasons and arguments have provided theoretical references to children's language development. Those theories include nativist theory, behavioristic theory, cognitive development theory, interactionism theory, and functional theory (Kapsala & Mavrikaki, 2021).

Nativist theory believes that the growth of children's language ability is an innate ability from birth, so it is the role of linguistic evolution that makes individuals linguistic beings. Furthermore, the behavioristic theory believes that speaking and understanding language is obtained from environmental stimuli. Then cognitive theory argues that the thinking process is needed as a prerequisite for humans to be able to speak. Later, children's language develops because of experience and reasoning. Then there is also interactionism theory which argues that the acquisition of children's language skills is obtained from the interaction between the language environment and the child's psychological abilities. Finally, there is a functional theory which states that language emerges from the manifestation of children's cognitive and affective abilities and the surrounding environment. Thus, this theory reinforces the narrative theory which is still general (Dewi et al., 2020; Muradi, 2018).

Based on several indicators found from the educational process at Al-Firdaus Kindergarten, the application of the storytelling method is more inclined to apply from behavioristic theory because the storytelling method is a teacher learning method in developing children's language skills through providing environmental stimuli and imitation stimuli. Thus, the process of language development occurs after stimulus and response from the environment in the form of stories told by teachers in early childhood (Yusuf, 2013).

In this research, the application of the storytelling method not only develops children's language skills but also directly affects the improvement of children's morals and character. Based on research, children will pay attention, appreciate, and even imitate the moral and character messages described in the story. The main character in the story told by the teacher will become a temporary ideal figure in the child's mind who becomes a dream and is imitated as closely as possible. Then, the determination of the story (the story of the facts of life) that will be conveyed by the teacher in improving character needs is chosen carefully as purposed that the moral message and character conveyed by the story will be embedded in children later (Yunistianingsih & Husain, 2022).

Moral and character issues are still a problem that cannot be fully overcome such as brawls, theft, rape, harassment, murder, or even violence that they imitate from television media. It means that while giving a positive effect, the development of sophisticated technology also gives a negative impact. Furthermore, the role of parents in accompanying children to play with gadgets sometimes is not done properly because they must divide their time both taking care of their children and working to make ends meet. Whereas parents, especially mothers, have a very important role in educating and guiding children in their character development (Fauzi & Hosna, 2022). The cultivation of character is very necessary from an early age so that later it is truly embedded in their souls. The success of character cultivation when children are still early will shape the character and future of children when they grow up (Nuraeni et al., 2019; Sumarni et al., 2019)

The improvement of language development through the storytelling method has been proven to be effective and the story that is told shapes the character of the child slowly. If the story told is about nationalism, it will give a message of nationalism which then the character embedded is also nationalist. If the story told is about the story of local customs or culture, the embedded character is also under the moral message conveyed (Barton & McCully, 2005; Malang, 2012). Thus, the stories told during learning with the storytelling method will affect children's language and character development. It depends on what kind of story designed to determine the type of moral value and its story as much as possible is taken from real life, not fictitious stories (Khomaeny & Habibie, 2020; Yuniarti et al., 2021). Thus, improving language development and character cultivation through storytelling has proven to be effective. The chosen story that is told to the children must be able to become a role model for children or students to build their character.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

One of the effective solutions to overcome language delays in early childhood and during rampant character issues is the storytelling method. The preferences of

the stories taken from real life (stories of Prophets, companions, scholars, public figures) were giving the impact based on the role model that will be exemplified. This method is proven not only effective in improving children's language skills but also effective in instilling children's character according to the moral and character values contained in the story. This method was successfully applied at Al -Firdaus Blimbing-Gurah-Kediri Kindergarten.

The application of the storytelling method at the school is using two cycles. The results show that the storytelling method can improve both children's language and character. The character turned out to be embedded in the moral value of the story told by the teacher. Therefore, parents or societies feel happy with the development of their children who school at Kindergarten - Al-Firdaus. The school curriculum which is designed in collaborating between the government curriculum and the boarding school curriculum gives a special attraction for the parents or societies.

Suggestion

Research related to the storytelling method is always interesting to discuss and study. Some information from the research is that the storytelling method is still effectively used by teachers to develop early childhood language. However, the selection of character values is still limited to the values of honesty, independence, responsibility, and courtesy. Some character values such as patience, mutual respect in having different opinions with others, also need to be instilled. Those also important to instill, to avoid a selfish character so that children will appreciate others more. Therefore, the suggestion for future researcher is to conduct research related to the storytelling method in developing children's language which include more varieties of character values contained in the story told by the teacher.

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