Research Article

Implementation of Role Play to Stimulate the Expressive Language Skills of 5-6 Year Old Children at Ngariboyo 2 Kindergarten, Magetan Regency

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Abstract: This study aims to describe the effectiveness of role-playing as a method to stimulate expressive language skills in children aged 5–6 years in Ngariboyo 2 Kindergarten, Magetan Regency. The research method applied was qualitative descriptive with a total of 16 research subjects in group B, consisting of 9 boys and 7 girls. Information was obtained through participatory observation, interviews with teachers and principals, and collection of activity documents. Observations were made three times with different themes, namely traditional markets, hospitals, and post offices, to observe the gradual development of children's expressive language. The results showed that role-playing activities can improve various aspects of children's expressive language, such as the ability to express new vocabulary, compose sentences from simple to more complex, and the courage to ask questions and answer in relevant social contexts. Children can also make use of intonation and facial expressions according to the characters being played, as well as improvise in dialogue without completely relying on the teacher's instructions. Key elements that support the success of this activity include a fun learning environment, the availability of appropriate props, and teacher innovation in determining themes related to children's daily experiences. In conclusion, role-playing not only serves as a means of entertainment, but it has also proven to be successful as a contextual learning method that can encourage the development of expressive language in early childhood. This activity should be done regularly as part of learning in kindergarten so that children can become more confident, creative, and active in interacting.

Keywords: Early childhood; Expressive language; Role-playing

1. Introduction

Expressive language is a crucial skill that needs to be cultivated from an early age because it provides the foundation for children to express their ideas, emotions, and hopes to others. This ability not only supports children in social interactions but also serves as a foundation for cognitive development and self-confidence [1], [2]. In children aged 5–6 years, the stages of expressive language development show significant differences between individuals, so contextual and enjoyable learning strategies are important. One method often considered successful in supporting this development is role-playing activities, which provide opportunities for children to learn to speak through direct experiences and situations similar to everyday life [3].

Role-playing creates a dynamic learning atmosphere, where children can explore various vocabulary, practice sentence-building skills, and increase their confidence in speaking [4]. Through direct involvement as actors in specific situations, children are encouraged to verbally express ideas and feelings in more authentic social contexts. This is crucial because stimulating expressive language depends not only on the content taught but also on learning

methods that provide opportunities for hands-on practice. In the context of early childhood education, teachers function as facilitators who can create diverse role-play themes aligned with children's everyday experiences, so that children feel more connected and motivated to actively participate [5], [6].

Even though the role-playing method has become popular, there are still challenges in its implementation, especially when children have low self-confidence, limited vocabulary, or a learning environment that is not fully supportive [2], [7]. This situation prompts the need for further research focused on the actual implementation of role-playing activities in several educational institutions to gain a deeper understanding of the method's effectiveness. This study was conducted at Ngariboyo 2 Kindergarten in Magetan Regency, an early childhood education institution that regularly integrates role-playing activities into its teaching process to stimulate the expressive language of children aged 5–6 years.

This study aims to explain how role-playing activities can improve children's expressive language skills, particularly related to speaking confidence, using new vocabulary, constructing simple sentences, and participating in meaningful dialogue. This study also aims to highlight the role of teachers in designing appropriate role-playing themes, thus serving as a best practice example for other early childhood education institutions. By understanding the process and results of implementing role-playing, it is hoped that readers will be able to evaluate and consider this method as a relevant learning strategy to support the development of expressive language in early childhood without referring to existing research.

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

Expressive language in early childhood is one of the main signs of good and ongoing communication development. This ability extends beyond just pronouncing words, but also includes the courage to express opinions, feelings, and ideas both verbally and non-verbally. Children aged 5-6 years experience an important phase, where encouragement from their surroundings greatly influences their vocabulary stock and skills in forming simple sentences [8]. In the context of early childhood education, strengthening expressive language not only aims to improve academic readiness but also supports social-emotional development and builds children's confidence in interacting in various social situations.

One learning method considered effective in stimulating expressive language in early childhood is role-playing. Role-playing provides children with the opportunity to learn through real-life experiences by imitating or acting out specific characters in both regular and impromptu social contexts. This activity can help children apply new vocabulary, understand sentence structure, and increase their confidence in speaking in front of a group [3]. Furthermore, role-playing activities help children express feelings and ideas in a safe and fun environment, allowing the learning process to occur naturally and contextually.

The use of role-playing as a teaching strategy is also highly relevant to Vygotsky's constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in children's cognitive and language development [9]. In a recent study, it was revealed that the consistent use of role-playing methods can increase children's verbal participation by up to 35% better than traditional learning methods [10]. These findings are supported by research results which revealed that more than 80% of intervention programs using role-playing methods showed significant improvements in the ability to speak confidently and fluency in using new vocabulary [11]

The role of the educator is also crucial to the success of role-play activities. The teacher acts as a facilitator, not only developing themes according to students' interests but also providing stimuli in the form of prompting questions, aids, and related conversation examples. The success of stimulating expressive language through role-play depends heavily on the teacher's skill in presenting a variety of themes and creating a collaborative learning environment [12]. When children feel valued and safe, they are more motivated to express ideas and ask questions, thus fostering language development.

In this way, this theoretical research emphasizes that role-play is not merely a recreational activity but also a strategic pedagogical method for enhancing expressive language in early childhood. Through social interaction, the use of props, and appropriate teacher guidance, children are motivated to speak more actively, expand their vocabulary, and practice

constructing sentences appropriate to the situation. This method can be implemented in daily school learning activities. As proposed by [13], it can be a concrete step towards maximizing children's overall communication potential. Therefore, it is crucial for educational institutions and educators to continually develop innovative role-play models that are contextually appropriate to children's developmental needs.

3. Proposed Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing primarily on gaining an in-depth understanding of the implementation of role-playing activities as a strategy to stimulate expressive language skills in children aged 5–6 years. The research process was conducted over approximately three months, in April, May, and June 2025, at Ngariboyo 2 Kindergarten, Magetan Regency. The study subjects consisted of 16 children in group B, including 9 boys and 7 girls. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with the class teacher and principal, and documentation in the form of photographs and daily diaries of the activities. Observations were conducted three times, with different role-playing themes: a traditional market, a hospital, and a post office, to observe the gradual progress of children's expressive language skills in diverse social contexts.

The available data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification [14]. The analysis process was carried out simultaneously from the beginning of data collection until the results were deemed sufficient and reached saturation point. In the data reduction process, researchers sorted and directed data in accordance with the research objectives; then the data was presented descriptively for easier interpretation; and finally, conclusions were drawn about the effectiveness of role-playing activities in stimulating children's expressive language use. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, namely by matching the results of observations, interviews, and supporting documents so that the research results were credible and could be scientifically accounted for.

4. Results and Discussion
Enhancing Vocabulary and Sentence Structure Through Role Playing

Initial observations on the theme "Traditional Market" showed that children were beginning to demonstrate courage in naming items such as "carrots," "bananas," or "tomatoes." They also began using simple questions like "How much is this, Ma'am?" although still limited to short phrases. These results align with research that suggests role-playing motivates children to use contextual vocabulary relevant to the theme, thus making the learning process more natural[15]. Role-playing activities support children in connecting real-life experiences with the new vocabulary they have mastered.

Gradually, children also demonstrate the ability to construct simple sentences, such as "I want to buy two tomatoes, Mom," reflecting progress in sentence structure. The development of sentence structure is closely linked to children's confidence in speaking in front of their peers. When the classroom atmosphere is created to resemble a market with various props, children become more active and motivated to discuss. The authenticity of the atmosphere and these props contribute to the emergence of more expressive language [13].

In this study, children who were previously only able to say one word began to try to convey meaning with two to four words. It was emphasized that the addition of children's vocabulary and sentences often occurred when they were involved in social interactions that had a specific purpose, such as shopping at the market. Observations also noted that the teacher's function as a director was crucial in guiding discussions so that children did not just repeat words, but tried to construct new, more meaningful sentences [16].

While progress varies among children, most show improvements in vocabulary and sentence use. Several studies have shown that the use of role-playing methods can effectively increase the number of words and sentence length used by children [8], [11]. Similar to previous research, at Ngariboyo 2 Kindergarten, a fun atmosphere, freedom to choose roles, and active peer participation were crucial elements supporting this progress.

Therefore, role-playing not only supports children's understanding of new words but also trains them to construct sentences appropriately in context. This activity provides a safe

space to practice, make mistakes, and refine their communication skills, which is a crucial foundation for subsequent expressive language development..

Increasing Children's Courage and Active Participation

The second observation, which focused on the theme "Hospital," showed significant progress in children's confidence in speaking and actively participating in conversations. Children began to adopt basic medical terms such as "fever," "check," or "medicine," and began to assume the roles of doctor, patient, and parent in more complex situations. Hidayat's research reinforces these findings by demonstrating that themes related to children's daily experiences are crucial for fostering confidence in speaking [16].

The children's active participation was also evident in the long dialogues, spanning three to five sentences, such as the interactions between a doctor, a patient, and the patient's parents. This situation aligns with Afriyanti's research [17], which showed that children's engagement increases when teachers are able to design narratives and media that stimulate curiosity. In these situations, educators not only provide instructions but also provide opportunities for children to be creative.

Furthermore, observations noted changes in the use of intonation and facial expressions as the children performed their roles. This phenomenon is significant because Nduru stated that children's ability to adapt intonation and expression to suit their roles is an indicator of their growing understanding of the communication context [18]. In other words, children are not simply copying words but also understanding the role of language as a tool for expressing intent and emotion.

The study also showed an increase in the number of children willing to speak. While only six children participated in the first observation, in the second observation, an increasing number of children were willing to initiate conversations. The sense of togetherness within the group, guidance from the teacher, and the use of real-life props such as toy stethoscopes and doctor's coats played a role in motivating this courage. These results align with Rusdiani's emphasis on the importance of teaching aids in supporting children's confidence in speaking [19], [20].

Overall, the hospital theme serves as an effective tool for fostering children's language confidence. The collaborative learning environment encourages them to not only answer the teacher's questions but also ask their peers questions, making communication more dynamic and meaningful.

Development of Dialogue and Improvisation in Role Playing

In the third observation, themed "Post Office," there was a marked increase in the children's expressive language skills. The children began to construct more complete sentences, such as "I want to send the item to the buyer" or "Yes, where would you like the item sent?" These research findings align with Maisyaroh's statement that role-playing gradually allows children to develop dialogue that is not only reactive but also proactive [4].

Significant progress was also evident in the children's ability to improvise. Children like Dinda and Arya began to ask spontaneous questions, such as "When will the item arrive?", and answer with simple sentences, without requiring teacher guidance. Improvisation shows that children are beginning to understand the structure of communication and the purpose of discussion, not just memorizing words or sentences [21], [22].

Teachers function as facilitators, occasionally providing vocabulary support when children experience difficulties. This pattern aligns with research by Suaidah and Rahman, which found that educators who provide freedom and trust for children to communicate can foster the development of verbal creativity [23], [24]. As a result, children not only answer questions but also begin to create their own storylines and dialogue.

This activity also helps children adjust their intonation according to the context, such as when playing the role of a ticket counter clerk who speaks more formally, or a courier who speaks more casually. Rohliana emphasized that the ability to adapt speaking style is an important indicator of expressive language development, often seen in conventional role-playing activities [3]. Thus, the post office theme provides opportunities for children to practice using new vocabulary, constructing complete sentences, and creating longer conversations. As a result, children do not simply passively follow the flow but actively plan

dialogue relevant to the context, which is the culmination of expressive language stimulation through role-playing.

The advancement of dialogue and improvisation in role-playing exercises is a vital educational process that enhances both language skills and creative thinking [25]. In educational settings, especially in language acquisition and drama-oriented teaching, dialogue acts as the core structure for engagement, whereas improvisation acts as the active process that allows for flexibility and adjustment . In role-playing, dialogue creation often starts with scripted or partially scripted interactions, facilitating learners' familiarity with particular vocabulary, grammatical frameworks, and communication techniques. This preliminary support is crucial, as it fosters a feeling of safety and diminishes performance anxiety, particularly for those who might be reluctant to speak off the cuff. As learners build confidence and proficiency with language aspects, improvisation is slowly integrated to promote spontaneous language use and adaptability in various situations [26]. Improvisation demands that participants think swiftly, react to unexpected signals, and create meaning in the moment, reflecting genuine communicative contexts [27]. The transition from structured conversation to spontaneous improvisation is advantageous for language learning as well as for nurturing soft skills like empathy, perspective-taking, and problem-solving.

Beyond linguistic and cognitive advantages, dialogue and improvisation in role-playing play a crucial role in enhancing socio-emotional development [11]. When participants collaboratively develop dialogues, they take part in negotiation, compromise, and co-creation of meaning, which enhances teamwork and mutual respect. Improvisation further develops these traits by necessitating attentive listening, rapid adjustment to others' input, and the capacity to acknowledge and expand on various concepts, principles frequently referred to in improvisational theater as the "yes, and" principle [28]. Additionally, improvisation during role-play aids participants in handling uncertainty, as they need to maneuver through unfamiliar situations without depending only on prewritten scripts. This ability is especially important in professional training settings like business negotiations, healthcare simulations, and intercultural communication workshops, where flexibility and interpersonal awareness are crucial

6. Conclusions

Based on the findings of a study conducted through three observations of role-playing activities themed around a traditional market, a hospital, and a post office at Ngariboyo 2 Kindergarten in Magetan Regency, it was concluded that direct role-playing can improve the expressive language skills of children aged 5–6 years. Children showed significant progress, from speaking confidently in front of friends, expanding their vocabulary based on the theme, to constructing clearer and more meaningful simple sentences. Furthermore, children also became more adept at actively participating in discussions, adjusting their tone of voice, adapting facial expressions to suit the role they were playing, and even improvising in conversations without relying entirely on teacher instructions. This success was supported by a pleasant learning environment, the use of appropriate props, and teacher innovation in managing themes related to the children's experiences, so that communication took place naturally and contextually. Overall, role-playing activities not only functioned as a means of entertainment, but also proved to be an effective and strategic learning method for stimulating the development of expressive language in early childhood, as well as increasing their confidence in social interactions.

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