



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STORYTELLING ACTIVITIES USING HAND PUPPETS IN IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSES OF FIFTH-GRADE STUDENTS AT SDN 101784

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the effectiveness of storytelling activities using hand puppets on speaking skills and emotional responses of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 101784 Mabbar. The study used a quantitative approach with an experimental method. The research design employed a pretest-posttest model to compare students' speaking skills and emotional responses before and after the implementation of hand puppet storytelling activities. Data were collected through speaking performance tests, observation sheets, and emotional response questionnaires. The results indicated that storytelling activities using hand puppets improved students' speaking skills, particularly in aspects of fluency, pronunciation, confidence, and idea expression. In addition, students showed positive emotional responses during the learning process, such as increased enthusiasm, participation, and self-confidence. It can be concluded that hand puppet storytelling activities are effective in supporting speaking skill development and positive emotional engagement in elementary school students.

Keywords: *hand puppet, storytelling, speaking skills, emotional response, elementary students*

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the fundamental language skills that should be developed during elementary education because it enables students to communicate ideas, express feelings, and interact effectively with others (Purnamaningwulan, 2024; Hien & Phuong, 2023; Nurzama et al., 2019). Beyond verbal communication, speaking competence contributes to students' self-confidence, social interaction, and cognitive development. Therefore, learning activities designed to improve speaking skills should be meaningful, interactive, and aligned with the developmental characteristics of elementary school learners (Hidayah & Prasetyo, 2020; Arroba & Acosta, 2021; Khanh, 2021). Furthermore, effective speaking instruction encourages students to organize their thoughts logically while

communicating ideas confidently in various social contexts (Sabilla et al., 2023; Matondang et al., 2020; Mustamir, 2024).

Despite its importance, many elementary school students still encounter difficulties when expressing their ideas orally in classroom settings. Some students tend to be shy, lack confidence, hesitate to speak for fear of making mistakes, or struggle to communicate their thoughts coherently. Such challenges are often associated with teacher-centered instructional approaches that provide limited opportunities for students to actively participate in speaking activities. Consequently, teachers need to employ innovative learning strategies and engaging instructional media that create an enjoyable learning atmosphere while encouraging students to participate actively in classroom

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communication (Made & Kristiantari, 2023; Hutajulu et al., 2023; Jin, 2023).

Storytelling has been recognized as one of the most effective instructional methods for enhancing students' speaking competence (Elkot et al., 2024; Robin, 2019; Radaideh et al., 2020). Through storytelling, learners practice pronunciation, vocabulary usage, sentence organization, fluency, and expressive communication in authentic situations. Abidah Idrus et al. (2023) reported that the implementation of the Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) method significantly improved elementary students' speaking abilities because storytelling activities provided meaningful language exposure and increased students' confidence in oral communication. Likewise, Hernawati et al. (2024) found that storytelling supported by instructional media effectively enhanced elementary school students' speaking performance by creating enjoyable and interactive learning experiences.

One instructional medium that complements storytelling activities is the hand puppet. Hand puppets provide concrete visual representations that attract children's attention, stimulate imagination, and facilitate role-playing during storytelling sessions. When students use hand puppets, they are encouraged to focus on the characters they portray rather than on their own anxiety, thereby reducing nervousness and increasing their willingness to speak in front of classmates. In addition, storytelling with hand puppets allows students to practice pronunciation, intonation, articulation, facial expressions, gestures, and voice modulation in a more natural and enjoyable manner. Storytelling-based learning has also been shown to improve speaking competence because it provides opportunities for students to express ideas creatively while interacting with peers (Made & Kristiantari, 2023; Lega, 2021; Larsari et al., 2024).

Besides improving speaking skills, storytelling activities using hand puppets

may also foster positive emotional responses among students. Emotional responses, including feelings of enjoyment, enthusiasm, comfort, confidence, and motivation, play an essential role in determining learning effectiveness. Students who experience positive emotions during learning activities are generally more willing to participate, communicate, and engage actively in classroom discussions. According to Mustika and Kustiarini (2022), storytelling contributes to the development of students' emotional intelligence because it encourages empathy, emotional expression, and self-awareness through meaningful narratives. Similarly, Hartati (2023) and Tazkia and Damayanti (2024) emphasized that positive social-emotional development supports students' academic achievement and interpersonal communication in elementary schools.

This study was conducted at SD Negeri 101784 Mabar, located in Medan Deli District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra Province, focusing on fifth-grade students. The selection of fifth-grade participants was based on the consideration that students at this level have acquired sufficient basic language competencies to engage in more structured oral communication activities. Moreover, they are at a developmental stage where social interaction, emotional regulation, and communication skills continue to develop rapidly, making them appropriate participants for investigating the effectiveness of storytelling with hand puppets.

Considering the importance of developing both speaking competence and positive emotional engagement, this study seeks to examine the effectiveness of storytelling activities using hand puppets in improving students' speaking skills and emotional responses. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence regarding the instructional value of hand puppet-assisted storytelling as an innovative learning strategy for elementary school

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language instruction and to offer practical recommendations for teachers seeking to create more engaging and emotionally supportive classroom environments.

2. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using an experimental method to examine the effectiveness of storytelling activities assisted by hand puppets in improving students' speaking skills and emotional responses. The research adopted a pre-experimental design, specifically the one-group pretest-posttest design, which enabled the researcher to compare students' performance before and after the implementation of the instructional treatment (Neuman, 2019; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023; Rogers & Revesz, 2019). This design is appropriate for measuring changes resulting from a single intervention administered to one group of participants (Ardiansyah et al., 2023).

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 101784 Mabar, located in Medan Deli District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The participants were fifth-grade students enrolled in one classroom. The study population consisted of all fifth-grade students at the school, while the research sample was selected using the sampling technique specified in the research proposal. The final sample comprised [insert the exact number of students] fifth-grade students who participated throughout the entire research process.

The research procedure consisted of three sequential stages. The first stage was the pretest, which was administered to assess students' initial speaking skills before the instructional treatment. The second stage involved the implementation of the treatment through a series of storytelling learning sessions using hand puppets. During these sessions, students listened to stories, interacted with the hand puppets, and practiced storytelling individually and collaboratively. The final stage was the

posttest, which measured students' speaking performance after the intervention and evaluated their emotional responses toward the learning activities.

Data were collected using three research instruments: speaking tests, classroom observations, and questionnaires (Susanto et al., 2023; Mauliddiyah, 2021; Anufia, 2019). The speaking test was designed to assess several dimensions of oral communication, including fluency, pronunciation, intonation, confidence, and the ability to organize and deliver stories coherently. Classroom observation was conducted to document students' participation, engagement, and interaction during the learning process. In addition, a questionnaire was administered to measure students' emotional responses, including enjoyment, enthusiasm, self-confidence, and comfort experienced during the storytelling activities. The use of multiple instruments enabled the researcher to obtain comprehensive data regarding both students' speaking performance and their emotional engagement throughout the intervention (Ardiansyah et al., 2023).

Prior to data collection, all research instruments were developed based on the indicators representing the research variables to ensure content relevance. The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the research findings through measures such as the mean, minimum score, maximum score, standard deviation, and percentage distributions. Inferential statistical analysis was subsequently performed to determine the effectiveness of the storytelling intervention. The analysis included a normality test to examine the distribution of the data, followed by a homogeneity test when required. Finally, the research hypotheses were tested using a paired-samples t-test to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the pretest and posttest scores. Statistical significance was determined based on the probability (p-value), with a

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significance level of 0.05 used as the criterion for hypothesis testing.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

Prior to hypothesis testing, the normality of the data was examined using the

Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests. The results indicated that both the pretest and posttest scores were normally distributed, as all significance values exceeded the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, the assumption of normality was satisfied, allowing the use of a parametric paired-samples *t*-test.

Table 1. Results of the Normality Test

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
pretest	.148	21	.200 [*]	.948	21	.308
posttest	.154	21	.200 [*]	.956	21	.442

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The hypothesis was subsequently tested using a paired-samples *t*-test to determine whether storytelling activities using hand puppets significantly improved students' speaking skills. The analysis revealed a mean difference of **-18.048** between the pretest and posttest scores, indicating that students achieved substantially higher scores after receiving the instructional treatment. The calculated *t*-

value was **-7.832** with **20 degrees of freedom**, and the significance value was **0.000 ($p < 0.001$)**. Since the probability value was lower than the significance level of **0.05**, the null hypothesis was rejected. These findings demonstrate that storytelling activities using hand puppets had a statistically significant positive effect on the speaking skills of fifth-grade students.

Table 2. Results of the Paired-Samples *t*-Test

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pretest - posttest	-18.048	10.559	2.304	-22.854	-13.241	-7.832	20	.000

The statistical findings indicate that students' speaking performance improved significantly after participating in storytelling

activities using hand puppets. The observed improvement suggests that the instructional

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intervention successfully enhanced students' oral communication skills.

Classroom observations further supported the quantitative findings. During the learning process, students became increasingly willing to participate in storytelling activities, demonstrated greater confidence when speaking in front of their classmates, and expressed stories with improved fluency, pronunciation, intonation, and facial expressions. In addition, questionnaire responses indicated that most students experienced positive emotional reactions throughout the learning activities. They reported feeling enthusiastic, comfortable, motivated, and confident while participating in storytelling sessions using hand puppets.

Discussion

The findings suggest that hand puppet-assisted storytelling is an effective instructional strategy for improving elementary school students' speaking skills. The significant improvement identified through the paired-samples *t*-test indicates that integrating storytelling with attractive learning media creates opportunities for students to communicate more confidently and naturally. Hand puppets reduce students' anxiety because learners tend to focus on the puppet characters rather than on themselves, thereby minimizing feelings of embarrassment and fear of making mistakes. Consequently, students become more willing to express their ideas orally in front of others.

These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Abidah Idrus et al. (2023), who reported that storytelling-based instruction significantly enhanced elementary students' speaking skills by increasing opportunities for meaningful oral communication. Likewise, Hernawati et al. (2024) concluded that storytelling supported by engaging instructional media effectively improved students' speaking competence by promoting active participation during classroom learning.

The present findings also support the research of Made and Kristiantari (2023), who found that storytelling activities encourage students to communicate more fluently while simultaneously developing creativity and confidence. Similarly, Lega (2021) demonstrated that storytelling provides authentic opportunities for students to practice organizing ideas, speaking coherently, and improving oral communication performance.

In addition to enhancing speaking skills, the storytelling activities generated positive emotional responses among students. Observation and questionnaire data revealed that students were enthusiastic, actively engaged, and enjoyed participating in the learning activities. Positive emotions contribute substantially to learning effectiveness because students who feel comfortable and motivated are more likely to participate actively in classroom discussions and speaking practices. This finding aligns with Mustika and Kustiarini (2022), who argued that storytelling contributes to the development of students' emotional intelligence by fostering empathy, confidence, and emotional expression. Furthermore, Hartati (2023) and Tazkia and Damayanti (2024) emphasized that positive social-emotional development plays an essential role in supporting children's learning achievement and communication abilities.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results demonstrate that interactive instructional media such as hand puppets can serve as an effective alternative for Indonesian language instruction in elementary schools. The learning process not only promotes cognitive achievement through improved speaking skills but also nurtures students' affective development by creating an enjoyable and emotionally supportive classroom environment. Therefore, integrating storytelling with hand puppets can help teachers establish student-centered learning experiences that simultaneously foster oral communication competence and positive emotional engagement.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that storytelling activities using hand puppets are effective in improving the speaking skills of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 101784 Mabur. The statistical analysis demonstrated a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores ($t = -7.832$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the instructional intervention successfully enhanced students' oral communication abilities. After participating in the storytelling activities, students showed greater confidence, improved fluency, more accurate pronunciation and intonation, and a better ability to organize and present stories orally.

In addition to improving speaking performance, the use of hand puppets generated positive emotional responses among students. Classroom observations and questionnaire results revealed that students were more enthusiastic, actively engaged, comfortable, and confident throughout the learning process. These positive emotional experiences contributed to a more supportive learning environment and encouraged students to participate more actively in speaking activities.

The findings suggest that hand puppet-assisted storytelling is an effective and engaging instructional strategy for elementary language learning because it promotes both cognitive and affective development. Therefore, elementary school teachers are encouraged to integrate storytelling with interactive learning media, such as hand puppets, to enhance students' speaking competence while simultaneously fostering positive emotional engagement. Future research is recommended to employ larger sample sizes, include control groups, and investigate the long-term effects of hand puppet-assisted storytelling on various aspects of language development.

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