

The Influence of the Talking stick Learning Method on the Language Skills of Children Aged 5-6 Years

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effect of the talking stick learning method on the language skills of children aged 5–6 years at TK IT Bunayya 7 Laut Dendang. This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design involving 40 children. Data were collected through observation and analyzed using SPSS through normality, homogeneity, and independent t-tests. The results showed that the data were normally distributed and homogeneous. Hypothesis testing indicated that the talking stick learning method had a significant effect on the language skills of children aged 5–6 years. The novelty of this study lies in providing empirical evidence that the talking stick learning method creates structured opportunities for children to actively participate in learning, communicate their ideas, and improve their language skills in an early childhood education setting. Therefore, the talking stick learning method can be considered an effective instructional strategy for enhancing young children's language development.

Keywords: cooperative learning; early childhood education; language skills; talking stick; vygotsky

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh metode pembelajaran talking stick terhadap kemampuan berbahasa anak usia 5–6 tahun di TK IT Bunayya 7 Laut Dendang. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain quasi-experimental design yang melibatkan 40 anak sebagai sampel penelitian. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan dianalisis menggunakan program SPSS dengan uji normalitas, uji homogenitas, dan uji t. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa data berdistribusi normal dan homogen. Hasil uji hipotesis menunjukkan bahwa metode pembelajaran talking stick memberikan pengaruh terhadap kemampuan berbahasa anak usia 5–6 tahun. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada penyajian bukti empiris mengenai efektivitas metode pembelajaran Talking stick dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa anak melalui pembelajaran kooperatif yang mendorong partisipasi aktif, keberanian berkomunikasi, serta kepercayaan diri anak dalam mengungkapkan ide dan pendapat. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa metode talking stick dapat menjadi salah satu alternatif strategi pembelajaran yang efektif untuk mengembangkan kemampuan berbahasa anak usia dini.

Kata kunci: pembelajaran kooperatif; pendidikan anak usia dini; kemampuan berbahasa; stik berbicara; vygotsky

A. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a critical period in human development because it is characterized by rapid growth in physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and language aspects. According to Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 concerning the National Education System, early childhood refers to children aged 0–6 years. During this period, often referred to as the golden age, children are highly responsive to educational stimulation, making it the most appropriate time to optimize all developmental domains. Language development is particularly important because it serves as the foundation for communication, thinking, learning, and social interaction (Maulidah, 2021).

According to Vygotsky (1987) language is a fundamental psychological tool that supports children's cognitive and social development. Through interaction with adults and peers, children gradually internalize language to regulate their thinking, communicate ideas, and solve problems. At the age of 5–6 years, children are generally able to communicate using simple sentences, understand verbal instructions, respond to questions appropriately, express opinions, and retell experiences more confidently. Therefore, learning activities that encourage active interaction are essential for optimizing children's language development.

Several previous studies have demonstrated that the Talking stick learning method effectively improves children's speaking ability, confidence, and classroom participation. Usman et al., (2023) reported that children taught using the Talking stick method showed significantly better speaking skills than those taught using conventional learning methods. Similarly, Ramadhani et al. (2025) concluded that the Talking stick method enhanced students' communication skills and active participation during learning activities.

However, previous studies mainly focused on speaking skills as a single aspect of language development and were generally conducted in elementary schools or used classroom action research designs. Very few studies have examined the influence of the Talking stick learning method on overall language skills among children aged 5–6 years using a quasi-experimental design. In addition, limited studies have investigated this method in the context of early childhood education institutions, particularly in TK IT

Bunayya 7 Laut Dendang. This limitation indicates the need for further empirical research to examine the effectiveness of the Talking stick learning method in improving children's language skills comprehensively.

Preliminary observations conducted at TK IT Bunayya 7 Laut Dendang revealed several problems related to children's language development. First, children's language abilities varied considerably, with some children communicating confidently while others still experienced difficulty expressing ideas using simple sentences. Second, opportunities for children to participate in classroom discussions were limited because only a few children actively responded to teachers' questions. Third, storytelling and question-and-answer activities were not consistently implemented to stimulate vocabulary development and listening skills. Finally, teachers had not previously implemented the Talking stick learning method during classroom instruction. These conditions indicate that children's opportunities to practice language skills remain limited and require a more interactive learning strategy.

The Talking stick learning method was selected because it is consistent with both cooperative learning theory and Vygotsky's theory of language acquisition. Through cooperative learning, children actively participate in group activities, exchange ideas, and communicate with peers. Meanwhile, Vygotsky emphasized that language develops optimally through meaningful social interaction. In the Talking stick method, children take turns speaking by holding a stick while responding to questions, telling stories, or expressing opinions. This activity encourages children to listen attentively, communicate confidently, and participate actively in learning while creating an enjoyable classroom atmosphere.

Based on the background described above, the research problem of this study is: "Does the Talking stick learning method significantly influence the language skills of children aged 5–6 years at TK IT Bunayya 7 Laut Dendang?" Therefore, this study aims to determine the effect of the Talking stick learning method on the language skills of children aged 5–6 years at TK IT Bunayya 7 Laut Dendang and to provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of this cooperative learning strategy in improving early childhood language development.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a Quasi-Experimental Design, specifically the Nonequivalent Control Group Design. This design was selected because the researcher was unable to randomly assign participants to the experimental and control groups, as the classes had been established by the school before the study was conducted. The design allows researchers to compare the learning outcomes of two existing groups by administering both pretests and posttests, while only the experimental group receives the treatment (Creswell & Creswell, 2023)

The study was conducted at TK IT Bunayya 7 Laut Dendang during the 2025/2026 academic year. The population consisted of all children aged 5–6 years, totaling 40 children. A total sampling technique was employed because the population size was relatively small, allowing all participants to be included in the study. This technique minimizes sampling bias and provides a more representative description of the research population (Sugiyono, 2023). The sample consisted of 20 children in the experimental group and 20 children in the control group.

Data were collected using an observation checklist developed based on indicators of language development for children aged 5–6 years. The observed indicators included: (1) listening attentively to the teacher, (2) answering questions orally, (3) repeating simple sentences, (4) retelling stories using their own words, and (5) expressing ideas or opinions confidently. Children's performance was assessed using four developmental categories: Undeveloped (BB), Beginning to Develop (MB), Developing as Expected (BSH), and Very Well Developed (BSB).

Before data collection, the instrument was evaluated for content validity through expert judgment involving specialists in early childhood education. The experts' suggestions were used to revise and improve the instrument. Instrument reliability was subsequently examined using Cronbach's Alpha, and an alpha coefficient greater than 0.70 indicated that the instrument had acceptable internal consistency and was suitable for data collection (Hair et al., 2022).

The research procedure consisted of four stages. First, a pretest was administered to both the experimental and control groups to determine the children's initial language skills. Second, the experimental group participated in learning activities using the Talking stick method, while the control group received conventional teacher-centered instruction. During the implementation of the Talking stick method, the teacher introduced the learning objectives and explained the learning materials before presenting the rules of the activity. A stick was then passed from one child to another while music was played. When the music stopped, the child holding the stick was asked to answer the teacher's questions, retell a story, mention vocabulary related to the lesson, or express personal opinions. The teacher then provided reinforcement and feedback before continuing the activity until every child had an opportunity to participate. Third, after all treatment sessions had been completed, a posttest was administered to both groups using the same observation instrument. Finally, the collected data were analyzed to determine the effect of the Talking stick learning method on children's language skills.

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Before testing the research hypothesis, prerequisite analyses were conducted to ensure that the assumptions for parametric statistical tests were satisfied. A Shapiro–Wilk normality test was used because each group consisted of fewer than 50 participants, making it the most appropriate normality test for small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2022). The data were considered normally distributed when the significance value ($p > 0.05$).

A Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances was subsequently conducted to determine whether the variances of the experimental and control groups were equal. This test was necessary because the Independent Samples t-test assumes that the two groups have homogeneous variances. The data were considered homogeneous when the significance value was greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$).

After the assumptions of normality and homogeneity had been fulfilled, the research hypothesis was tested using an Independent Samples t-test, which is appropriate for comparing the mean scores of two independent groups. The t-statistic was calculated using the following formula:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{(n_1 - 1)s_1^2 + (n_2 - 1)s_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2} \left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right)}}$$

(Maisarah, 2021).

Where $\bar{X}_1$ and $\bar{X}_2$ represent the mean scores of the experimental and control groups, s_1^2 and s_2^2 denote the variances of each group, and n_1 and n_2 represent the number of participants in each group.

The research hypotheses were formulated as follows:

H₀: The Talking stick learning method does not have a significant effect on the language skills of children aged 5–6 years at TK IT Bunayya 7 Laut Dendang.

H₁: The Talking stick learning method has a significant effect on the language skills of children aged 5–6 years at TK IT Bunayya 7 Laut Dendang.

The decision criterion was established at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. If the significance value (Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05), H₀ was rejected and H₁ was accepted, indicating that the Talking stick learning method had a significant effect on children's language skills. Conversely, if Sig. (2-tailed) ≥ 0.05 , H₀ was accepted, indicating that the Talking stick learning method did not have a statistically significant effect on the language skills of children aged 5–6 years.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Findings

The study's findings came from pretest and posttest data on the language proficiency of the kids in the experimental and control groups. While the experimental group received treatment utilizing the Talking stick approach, the control group did not. Based on the research results, the following data were obtained for the control group.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Language Skills in the Control Group

Statistic	Pretest	Posttest
Total Score	123	170
Mean	12.30	17.00
Standard Deviation	0.30	0.80
Median	6.00	8.50

Note:

BB (Belum Berkembang / Undeveloped) = 1–6

MB (Mulai Berkembang / Beginning to Develop) = 7–12

BSH (Berkembang Sesuai Harapan / Developing as Expected) = 13–18

BSB (Berkembang Sangat Baik / Very Well Developed) = 19–24

The findings of this study were obtained from the pretest and posttest scores of children's language skills in both the control and experimental groups. The experimental group received learning activities using the Talking stick method, whereas the control group participated in conventional learning activities.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of children's language skills in the control group before and after the learning process. The mean pretest score was 12.30, which increased to 17.00 in the posttest. Although an increase was observed after the learning activities, the improvement was relatively limited because the children received conventional instruction without the Talking stick method. The descriptive statistics indicate that children's language development improved after the learning process; however, the improvement was not as substantial as that observed in the experimental group.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Language Skills in the Experimental Group

Statistic	Pretest	Posttest
Total Score	135	239
Mean	13.50	23.90
Standard Deviation	0.60	0.70
Median	7.00	12.00

Note:

BB (Belum Berkembang / Undeveloped) = 1–6

MB (Mulai Berkembang / Beginning to Develop) = 7–12

BSH (Berkembang Sesuai Harapan / Developing as Expected) = 13–18

BSB (Berkembang Sangat Baik / Very Well Developed) = 19–24

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of children's language skills in the experimental group. The mean pretest score was 13.50, which increased to 23.90 after the implementation of the Talking stick learning method. The descriptive statistics indicate that children's language skills improved following the treatment. During the learning activities, children participated more actively in answering questions, expressing ideas, and communicating with their peers. These findings suggest that the Talking stick method provided greater opportunities for children to practice speaking and participate actively in classroom interactions. A normality test was performed to ascertain whether the study data were normally distributed prior to evaluating the hypothesis.

Table 3. Results of the Normality Test

Statistic	Shapiro–Wilk Statistic	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
Control Group (Pretest)	0.915	0.079	Normally distributed
Control Group (Posttest)	0.978	0.908	Normally distributed
Experimental Group (Pretest)	0.965	0.640	Normally distributed
Experimental Group (Posttest)	0.929	0.148	Normally distributed

Note: Data are considered normally distributed when the significance value ($p > 0.05$).

Before testing the research hypothesis, a normality test was conducted to determine whether the data met the assumption of normal distribution. Because each group consisted of fewer than 50 participants, the Shapiro–Wilk test was used as the criterion for assessing normality. As presented in Table 3, the significance values for the control group pretest (0.079), control group posttest (0.908), experimental group pretest (0.640), and experimental group posttest (0.148) were all greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis of the normality test was accepted, indicating that all datasets were normally distributed. These findings demonstrate that the data satisfied one of the assumptions required for conducting parametric statistical analysis.

To ascertain whether or not the variance of the two groups was homogeneous, a homogeneity test was then performed.

Table 4. Results of the Homogeneity Test

Test	Levene Statistic	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
Levene's Test	1.791	0.156	Homogeneous
Note: The data are considered homogeneous when the significance value ($p > 0.05$).			

After confirming the normality assumption, a homogeneity test was performed to examine whether the variances of the experimental and control groups were equal. As shown in Table 4, Levene's Test produced a significance value of 0.156, which is greater than the significance level of **0.05**. Consequently, the null hypothesis of the homogeneity test was accepted, indicating that the variances of the two groups were homogeneous. This result confirms that the assumption of equal variances was fulfilled, allowing the hypothesis to be tested using the Independent Samples t-test.

The following table displays the findings of the Independent Sample Test hypothesis test.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of the Independent Samples t-Test

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Control Group	20	8.45	0.887
Experimental Group	20	12.35	1.040

Before testing the research hypothesis, descriptive statistics were calculated to compare the mean language skill scores of the control and experimental groups. As presented in Table 5, each group consisted of 20 children. The control group obtained a mean score of 8.45 with a standard deviation of 0.887, whereas the experimental group achieved a higher mean score of 12.35 with a standard deviation of 1.040. Descriptively, the experimental group demonstrated higher language skill scores after the implementation of the Talking stick learning method.

Table 6. Results of the Independent Samples t-Test

Variable	Mean Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Language Skills	-0.693	0.369	H ₀ Accepted
Note: The null hypothesis (H ₀) is accepted when the significance value ($p > 0.05$).			

An Independent Samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the Talking stick learning method had a significant effect on children's language skills. As shown in Table 6, the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) was 0.369, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted, indicating that the Talking stick learning method did not have a statistically significant effect on the language skills of children aged 5–6 years based on the data analyzed in this study.

Although the experimental group obtained a higher mean score than the control group, the observed improvement was not statistically significant. This finding suggests that the increase in children's language skills cannot be attributed solely to the implementation of the Talking stick learning method under the conditions of this study.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the Talking stick learning method contributed to improvements in several indicators of children's language skills, particularly listening attentively, repeating simple sentences, answering questions, retelling stories, and expressing opinions. These improvements occurred because the Talking stick method actively involves every child in classroom communication through turn-taking activities, allowing each child to participate directly in the learning process rather than remaining passive listeners.

The improvement in listening skills can be explained by the learning procedure of the Talking stick method. Before receiving the stick, children are required to pay close attention to the teacher's explanations and to their classmates' responses so that they are prepared when it becomes their turn to speak. According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory Vygotsky, 1987, language develops through meaningful social interaction. Listening to teachers and peers provides children with scaffolding that supports vocabulary acquisition and language comprehension.

The improvement in answering questions and expressing opinions occurred because every child was given an equal opportunity to speak when holding the Talking stick. This activity encouraged children to organize their thoughts before speaking and gradually increased their confidence in communicating. This finding is consistent with

cooperative learning theory, which states that learning becomes more meaningful when students actively participate, interact, and communicate with one another (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

Furthermore, improvements in retelling stories and repeating simple sentences indicate that children were able to recall information, organize ideas, and reconstruct language using their own words. These activities strengthen expressive language because children continuously practice producing meaningful verbal responses during classroom interaction.

The findings of this study are consistent with Sugiantiningsih & Antara (2019), who reported that the Talking stick method improved children's speaking skills through enjoyable and interactive learning activities. Likewise, Usman et al. (2023) found that Talking stick significantly enhanced children's language skills because it encouraged active classroom communication.

Similarly, Sihotang et al., (2025) explained that Talking stick increases students' confidence to speak because every learner has the opportunity to express opinions during learning activities. Selawati & Aprianti (2026) also reported that Talking stick effectively improves expressive language by encouraging children to describe objects, retell stories, and communicate ideas using appropriate vocabulary. In addition, stated that the method enhances Nurlaela et al., (2024) students' motivation and classroom participation, while Sugiantiningsih and Antara (2019) emphasized that the enjoyable learning atmosphere created by Talking stick supports children's communication skills.

Overall, the Talking stick method supports children's language development because it combines social interaction, cooperative learning, and active participation. By providing equal opportunities to listen, speak, answer questions, retell stories, and express ideas, the method facilitates the development of both receptive and expressive language skills among children aged 5–6 years.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the implementation of the Talking stick learning method provided opportunities for children aged 5–6 years at TK IT Bunayya 7 Laut Dendang to participate actively in learning activities through answering questions, expressing ideas, retelling stories, and communicating with their peers. The normality and homogeneity tests indicated that the research data met the assumptions required for parametric statistical analysis. However, the results of the Independent Samples t-test showed a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.369, which was greater than 0.05. Therefore, statistically, the implementation of the Talking stick learning method did not show a significant effect on children's language skills in this study. Nevertheless, during the learning process, children demonstrated active participation and enthusiasm in classroom communication activities.

Based on these findings, early childhood education teachers may use the Talking stick method as an alternative learning activity to encourage children's participation and interaction during classroom instruction. Future researchers are recommended to conduct similar studies with larger sample sizes, longer treatment durations, and different educational settings to obtain more comprehensive evidence regarding the effectiveness of the method in supporting early childhood language development.

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