



Optimizing Early Childhood Communication Skills Through Question Board Media

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Abstrak:

Pengembangan keterampilan komunikasi sangat penting pada anak usia dini, karena keterampilan ini merupakan salah satu kompetensi utama di abad ke-21. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi optimalisasi keterampilan komunikasi pada anak usia 4-6 tahun di RA An-Nida melalui penggunaan media papan soal dalam proses pembelajaran. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain eksperimen dengan penilaian pre-test dan post-test. Sampel penelitian terdiri dari 14 anak usia 4-6 tahun. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan rata-rata skor keterampilan komunikasi anak antara pre-test dan post-test, dengan peningkatan sebesar 14,2 poin dan nilai t sebesar 30,4 pada taraf signifikansi 0,00. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar optimalisasi keterampilan komunikasi anak usia dini melalui media pembelajaran sebaiknya dibahas pada penelitian selanjutnya.

Kata Kunci: Kemampuan berkomunikasi; Anak usia dini; Media Pembelajaran; Papan Pertanyaan

Abstract:

The development of communication skills is of utmost importance in early childhood, as these skills are one of the key competencies in the 21st century. This research aims to explore the optimization of communication skills in children aged 4-6 years at RA An-Nida through the use of question board media in the learning process. The study utilized an experimental design with pre-test and post-test assessments. The research sample consisted of 14 children aged 4-6 years. The results of the study indicated a significant difference in the average communication skills scores of the children between the pre-test and post-test, with a 14.2-point increase and a t-value of 30.4 at a significance level of 0.00. This research recommends that the optimization of early childhood communication skills through instructional media should be discussed in future studies.

Keywords: Communication Skills; Early Childhood; Learning Media; Question Board



Introduction

Communication skills are one of the most critical competencies that need to be developed in young children. Even today, communication skills are one of the skills of the 21st century (González-Salamanca et al., 2020; Kennedy & Sundberg, 2020; Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023). A lack of communication skills can have negative impacts on a child's life. In various countries, methods for assessing and enhancing communication skills in early childhood have been developed to suit their specific contexts (Ferreira & Cruz-Santos, 2021). A child's communication abilities are related to their linguistic knowledge and skills in understanding and sharing information with others effectively in social interactions. Communication skills are also marked by a child's ability to use language pragmatics within social contexts. In their social interactions, children can develop an understanding of what, where, why, and with whom they are communicating. They have also become capable of adjusting their communication style to fit different audiences or contexts. Communication abilities also involve the use of other elements, such as body language, facial expressions, reading, writing, or drawing, to communicate effectively (Aziz et al., 2024; Dennison, 2024; Owens, 2016).

In Indonesia, numerous research studies have highlighted the significance of utilizing various learning media in early childhood education settings to enhance the communication skills of young children. These media encompass a wide range of tools and resources, including flashcards (Febiola & Yulsyofriend, 2020), visual aids (Kaya, 2020), interactive videos (Ali, 2022), big books (Fitriani et al., 2019), picture series (Wahyundari & Handayani, 2021), animated videos (Ariani & Ujianti, 2021), augmented reality (Pelealu et al., 2019), traditional games (Cendana & Suryana, 2021), hand puppets (Marwah, 2022), story stages (Walyani et al., 2022), busy books (Syahputri & Sit, 2023), Android-based educational games (Hakim et al., 2022), Flipbook (Ni Komang Cintya Dewi & Luh Ayu Tirtayani, 2022), songs (Sukmawati et al., 2023), and even social media platforms (Munawaroh et al., 2022; Nurhafizah et al., 2023).

Alongside the previously mentioned traditional learning resources, digital communication learning materials have proliferated and are readily accessible in numerous nations, such as digital images (Hasanah, 2023; Hoel & Jernes, 2023), and smart tablet applications. (Konca et al., 2023). Even though there are many digital tools available for enhancing children's communication skills, there can still be limitations related to the digital skills of teachers or educators (Ong & Annamalai, 2024; Undheim & Ploog, 2023). Additionally, the availability of digital tools in schools can also be a limiting factor in effectively implementing digital methods for improving children's communication skills (Sit, 2022). This situation motivates some teachers to create various simple media to enhance the communication skills of young children, such as picture reading or using visual aids (Liu et al., 2024; Muriyatmoko et al., 2024; Satriana et al., 2022). In this research, the teachers at Raudhatul Athfal (RA) An-Nida have developed a question board as a media tool to optimize children's communication skills because they often encounter children who only respond with one to three words when asked questions or expressing



their desires. The objective of this study is to measure the optimization of early childhood communication skills using the question board media.

Method

This research utilized a pretest and posttest experimental design (Cohen et al., 2007). In RA An-Nida school, there are 2 classes with a total of 30 students. Prior to conducting the research, the researcher obtained permission from the school's principal, teachers, and parents of the students to carry out the study on children's communication skills using the question board medium. The researcher selected the sample using simple random sampling by drawing class numbers. The two classes were labeled as Class 1 and Class 2, and Class 2 was chosen as the research sample based on the draw. In this class, there are 14 students aged between 4 and 6 years, consisting of 7 boys and 7 girls. Twelve of them are aged between 5 and 6 years, and three are aged between 4 and 5 years.

The research design is described as follows:

O1	X	O2
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O1= Pretest

X = Treatment with question board media

O2 = Posttest

The research was conducted over a period of 2 weeks, involving 10 sessions. The question board was used during the opening and closing activities. The questions asked were relevant to the theme and related to the children's experiences or opinions. The measurement of children's communication skills was adapted from indicators developed by Luze et al., which state that communication skills in early childhood can be measured based on their attitude while speaking, vocalization, using one word with multiple meanings, and speaking with many words. (Luze et al., 2001). These indicators were adapted to include the following: speaking with objects and people, mimicking various sounds, using pragmatic language, and responding with sentences of more than 5 words. The four indicators were developed into 10 sub-indicators. The assessment of communication skills was conducted using an observation sheet with a score range of 1-4. The content of the observation sheet was assessed by the teacher before was used. Indicators and sub indikator as follows:



Table 1
Indicators and Measurement

No.	Indicators	sub indicators	Measurement			
			NAD (1)	BAD (2)	AAD (3)	SAD (4)
1.	Speaking with objects and people	imitate the sounds of various objects				
		greet other people				
2.	Mimicking various sounds	imitate the sounds of various objects				
		Talking with facial expressions				
		Understand the expression on a friend's face				
3.	Using pragmatic language	Use short sentences for a purpose				
		Tell the picture with 5-6 words without grammar				
4.	Responding with sentences of more than 5 words.	Explain something in 4-5 words with good grammar				
		Answer questions in 4-6 words				
		Ask in 4-5 words				

Assessment description:

NAD (Not age-appropriate development): The child is not displaying age-appropriate skills.

BAD (Beginning age-appropriate development): The child is beginning to demonstrate skills but still needs the assistance of a teacher

AAD (Age-appropriate development): The child can independently perform age appropriate tasks



SAD (Showing excellent age-appropriate development): The child can perform tasks on their own and is capable of helping their friend.

Data analysis in the research was carried out in two steps. First, descriptive statistical analysis to analyze the data obtained from the observation sheet. This includes calculating the average value, median value, mode value and standard deviation. This analysis helps in understanding the distribution of data and characteristics of children's communication abilities before and after treatment. T test: After descriptive analysis, a t test was carried out to determine the significance of the differences between children's communication abilities before and after treatment. The t test is a statistical tool used to compare two different groups of data, in this case, communication ability data before and after treatment. This test is used to assess whether the differences found in the mean scores of children's communication skills are statistically significant. By using descriptive statistics and t tests, this research can produce relevant information regarding changes in children's communication abilities after implementing treatment using question board media. A t test will help in determining whether the observed improvement in a child's communication skills is the result of the treatment or just coincidence

Result and Discussion

Learning Communication with Question Boards

Teaching communication through question boards to students at RA An-Nida is carried out by the teacher over a period of two weeks. The activities follow the standard learning format at RA, commencing with an opening session, followed by the core activity, and concluding with a closing session. During the opening session, the teacher initiates by leading the children in prayer, inquiring about their well-being, articulating the learning objectives, introducing the question board, and providing a demonstration of how to engage with the question board. In the core activity, the teacher engages the children in a game of "hompimpa" to determine the play order. The children utilize dice to select questions corresponding to the rolled number and respond accordingly, while the teacher assesses their answers. In the closing session, the teacher prompts discussions about the children's experiences and feelings during their interaction with the question board. Additionally, the teacher evaluates the children's ability to effectively communicate their experiences.



Picture 1: Introducing the Game



Picture 2: Playing with the Question Board and Assessing Children's Communication Skills



Picture 3: Reflection and Assessing Children's Communication Skills

Early Childhood Communication Skills

The pretest scores of communication skills in early childhood have been measured using speaking with objects and people, mimicking various sounds, using pragmatic language, and responding with sentences of more than 5 words with average values of 16.2, median 16.2, mode, 16.5, and standard deviation. 1.2. After the teacher used the question board as a stimulus for the children's communication skills for 10 days, a post-test was conducted. The results of the post-test for children's communication skills showed an average score of 30.4, a median of 30.6, a mode of 29, and a standard deviation of 1.8. There was an improvement in communication skills by 14.2 points during the learning process. This improvement in communication skills occurred because children had the opportunity to express their communication skills while playing with the question board. The improvement in children's language skills between the pre-test and post-test can be illustrated as follows:

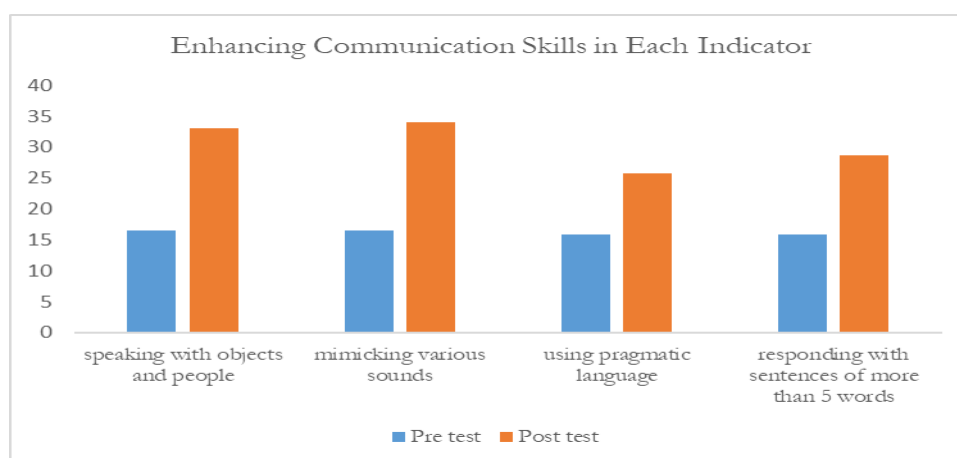
Table 2
Increasing children's communication skills scores using question board media

Number	Indicators	Pretest	Posttest	Score increase
1	speaking with objects and people	16,5	33	16,5
2.	mimicking various sounds	16,5	34	17,5



3.	using pragmatic language	15,9	25,75	9, 85
4.	responding with sentences of more than 5 words	15,8	28,7	12,9

The increase in individual scores for each child can be seen in the following histogram:



Picture 4: Enhancing Communication Skills in Each Indicator

The results of this study indicate that the communication skills of young children can be enhanced through playing with question boards. The improvement in communication skills is supported by the nature of the question board, which provides multiple-choice questions corresponding to the number obtained by the child after rolling the dice. These questions are related to the images on the board, thereby assisting children in utilizing their vocabulary to answer the questions. Additionally, in this game, children also have the opportunity to listen to their peers' answers and provide different responses or repeat their classmates' answers (Lyons et al., 2022). Listening and speaking are crucial aspects of communication development (Ducker, 2022).

This research also supports various studies that assert that various skills in children can be developed through various media within games, including communication and language development (O'Keeffe & McNally, 2023). While playing, children learn to speak and articulate their ideas to others, utilize body language or facial expressions for communication, employ pragmatic language skills, and engage in interactive question-and-answer sessions with their playmates (Luze et al., 2001). Play is an ideal form of learning for developing a child's language skills (Thunder et al., 2023). Therefore, the use of games is highly recommended in early



childhood education (Nesbitt et al., 2023). However, many parents or teachers still lack support for the use of play in early childhood education (McLean et al., 2023).

In the development of children's communication skills, learning media also play a vital role. Children are highly drawn to engaging and challenging play tools. In this study, the question board media challenge children to communicate skillfully. The improvement in communication skills through game-based media in this research aligns with studies that emphasize the role of various media in supporting language and communication skills. Furthermore, this research underscores the benefits of using board-based media for language development, such as thematic boards (Dwi Safitri et al., 2022) and flannel boards (Utami et al., 2022). This research also aligns with various research findings related to the effectiveness of media in enhancing communication skills, flashcards (Febiola & Yulsyofriend, 2020), advertisement (Loose et al., 2023), tablet, smart phone, e book, mobile apps and applications (Tatar & Gerde, 2023), visual aids (Kaya, 2020), interactive videos (Ali, 2022), big book (Fitriani et al., 2019), picture series (Wahyundari & Handayani, 2021), animated videos (Ariani & Ujianti, 2021), augmented reality (Pelealu et al., 2019), traditional games (Cendana & Suryana, 2021), hand puppets (Marwah, 2022), story stages (Walyani et al., 2022), busy books (Syahputri & Sit, 2023), Android-based educational games (Hakim et al., 2022), Flipbook (Ni Komang Cintya Dewi & Luh Ayu Tirtayani, 2022), and songs (Sukmawati et al., 2023).

In this research, children demonstrated better communication skills when interacting with others and using appropriate facial expressions more effectively than other aspects. This occurred because the teacher provided children with opportunities to speak with their peers when answering questions without commenting on their mistakes in responses. The teacher focused on the number of words the children used when responding. At one point, the teacher asked a child how to introduce oneself to a new friend. One child responded, "Give a smile and invite them to play on the swings, through the tunnel, and on the see-saw." The teacher praised, "Wow, that's absolutely correct! Does anyone else want to share how to make friends with a new friend?" Another child replied, "I don't know, maybe we can play together in class." The teacher spontaneously exclaimed, "Wow, that's fantastic! All of mommy's children can provide answers." Avoiding corrections in responses is crucial in developing children's communication skills. (Gabas et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The question board game can effectively enhance a child's communication skills because this learning medium provides an opportunity for children to use their existing vocabulary to respond to questions presented during the game. They also have the chance to listen to their peers' answers and respond to the same questions in different ways. The alignment of questions with images on the question board also aids children in



constructing vocabulary into sentences when answering questions. However, this study did not investigate factors related to the development of children's communication skills, such as gender differences, the learning experiences in communication at home, the vocabulary size of the child, the child's concentration, their responsiveness to learning, equal opportunities for children in play, and children's listening skills. These factors could be recommended for further research in the future.

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