Implementation of the Flashcard Method in Improving Children's Language Skills with Speech Delay

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Abstract

This study aims to be able to see the use of the flashcard method in improving language skills in early childhood who are indicated to have speech delay. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative approach with observation, interview, and documentation data collection techniques. The study subjects were 2 people in the age range of 3 to 5 years who were indicated to have speech delay in the Tebing Tinggi Gembira play group. The learning activity using flashcard media was carried out for four weeks, with a duration of 30 minutes per session. The results of the study showed that there was an increase in language skills in the aspects of vocabulary, language comprehension, and the ability to compose simple sentences. Children who were originally passive began to be able to name objects, answer questions, and compose sentences of three to four words. In addition, the use of flashcards also increases children's interest in learning through an attractive visual approach.

Keywords: Flashcard, Speech Delay, Language Ability

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2nd International Conference on Islamic Community Studies (ICICS)
Theme: History of Malay Civilisation and Islamic Human Capacity and Halal Hub in the Globalization Era
https://proceeding.pancabudi.ac.id/index.php/ICIE/index

Introduction

Children are one of the successors of the golden generation who can be one of the investments to help the nation's progress in the future (Rozana et al., 2024). Early childhood is a very rapid stage of development, this is because at this stage the child is in the golden age or golden age. During this period, the intelligence of the child's brain in receiving stimuli or stimulation from the environment develops very optimally. This stimulation can be obtained by children through formal, informal and non-formal education, where teachers and parents are responsible for providing stimulation and guidance (Widya et al., 2024). For this reason, parents need to make more incentive observations on children's development, both mentally and physically, during the growth period, especially the golden ages (Munisa et al., 2022). One of the stages of early childhood development that can currently be the basis for social interaction is language development. Language skills in early childhood have a great influence on the success of children's social interactions, stimulation of the environment, and cognitive development in children. Knowledge of language development in early childhood is very helpful in achieving the learning of good basic language skills. For parents and teachers, understanding early childhood language development is very helpful in improving the development of children's language skills (Isna, 2019). This is because language is the main tool for humans to communicate, express what they are thinking, and be able to understand the world and its surroundings. But in reality, not all children experience optimal language development. Some children face barriers in speaking and understanding language, which can have an impact on children's social and academic abilities. One of the problems that often arise in early childhood is speech delay or often referred to as speech delay. Speech delay refers to developmental disorders that generally occur in children who are between the ages of 3 and 5 years. This can manifest as difficulty maintaining focus, slow response to questions given by the teacher or being unable to understand the commands given (Ritonga et al., 2024). Children with speech delay often have difficulty understanding verbal expressions, understanding simple instructions, and interacting with peers. This problem is often a factor of despair in children and parents, and children become insecure to carry out social interactions with their peers.

The reality that happens in the field is that many speech delayed children have difficulty understanding simple verbal instructions. This is what triggers frustration for children and parents because the communication carried out is considered less effective. Some children exhibit behaviors such as crying, getting angry, or withdrawing from social environments due to their inability to express themselves verbally. In addition, children with speech delay often experience obstacles in social interaction. According to several previous studies, children who experience social isolation and difficulty in building relationships with peers due to their limited verbal communication (Conti-Ramsden & Durkin, 2012). Another problem that often arises is the delay in academic development. Children with speech delays tend to have difficulty understanding the concepts of language used in formal learning. These difficulties can impact their cognitive development, ultimately affecting the ability to read, write, and understand teachers' instructions in school. Based on the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (2022) explains that there are 7-10% of early childhood in Indonesia who suffer from speech delays, this is a risk of hindering their academic development if they do not get the right intervention.

There are several factors that can cause speech delay in children to occur, namely environmental factors such as lack of language stimulation at home to biological factors such as hearing loss or neurological developmental delays. The lack of two-way communication between children and parents is also one of the factors often found in the field, where children receive more passive communication than active communication (Ritonga et al., 2024). At KB Gembira Tebing Tinggi, it was found that there were several children who were 4 to 6 years old who had speech delays. Children show limitations in expressing their thoughts and feelings verbally, and even composing simple sentences requires extra effort. In learning activities, they

often have difficulty following complex oral instructions and tend to choose to communicate through facial expressions or facial expressions. This causes obstacles in their social interaction with peers, as well as reduces active participation in classroom activities that require language skills, such as storytelling or conducting discussions. This condition is of special concern for teachers because language development at an early age greatly affects children's readiness to enter the next level of education. Therefore, effective strategies are needed to help children with speech delay develop their language skills. The flashcard method is one of the solutions that can be applied to provide better visual and verbal stimulation, so that children can more easily recognize, remember, and use words in daily communication. This method is based on visual repetition and reinforcement that helps children with speech delay understand words and language concepts better. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the flashcard method in improving the language skills of children with speech delay.

Literature Review Early Childhood

Early childhood refers to the age range of 0-6 years which is a golden period in children's physical, cognitive, social, and language development (Santrock, 2019). At this stage, children experience very rapid growth and need optimal stimulation so that their development runs well. The stages of development that occurred during this period were very decisive for the next development. If children succeed in completing their developmental tasks well in childhood, then they will be better prepared to face the demands of development in the later stages. Therefore, it is important to provide proper development and stimulation at an early age so that children can develop well and be ready for the next developmental tasks (Munisa et al., 2024). According to Bronfenbrenner (2020), children's development is greatly influenced by the surrounding environment, including family, school, and community. Therefore, intensive interaction with parents and educators is an important factor in supporting early childhood development. Early childhood characteristics include high curiosity, a tendency to learn through hands-on experience, and a reliance on adults to understand the world around them (Karim et al., 2022). In addition, they have a strong memory of stimuli that are given repeatedly and are visual. In the context of language development, early childhood is very responsive to interesting and interactive learning methods such as the use of flashcards. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the flashcard method in improving the language skills of children with speech delay.

Theory of Language Development

Language development is one of the most important aspects that must be improved from an early age, this is because it is the main tool in interacting and communicating with others (Parapat et al., 2023). Language development in early childhood is a gradual process that includes understanding, expression, and the use of language in daily communication. According to Owens (2020), language development consists of several main aspects, such as phonology (language sounds), morphology (word structure), syntax (sentence structure), semantics (word meaning), and pragmatics (the use of language in social contexts). Hoff (2019) also emphasizes that language development is influenced by internal factors, such as cognitive development and neurological readiness, as well as external factors, such as social interaction and the child's learning environment.

Factors that influence language development include environmental stimulation, social engagement, and biological factors (Rowe & Weisleder, 2020). Children who receive consistent language stimulation tend to develop speaking skills and understand language more quickly. In addition, optimal language development has great benefits, including improving children's communication skills, confidence, and academic readiness (Johnson & White, 2023).

According to Buhler (1930), children's language development occurs gradually and is an integral part of the overall process of children's psychological development. Charlotte Buhler

explained that language develops through four main stages of child development, namely: (1) The vegetative stage (0-3 months) the child begins to make sounds such as tangules and other reflex sounds as a form of basic communication; (2) The Lalling or Cooing stage (3-6 months) begins to emit words such as oo, aa; (3) The Babbling stage (6-12 months) begins to combine sounds into simple syllables such as ba-ba, ma-ma; and (4) The Holophrase and sentence stage (1 year and above) children begin to be able to say one word to express one intention.

1. Speech Delay in Early Childhood

Speech delay is a disorder that occurs in early childhood in language development, this can be caused by several things that make it difficult for children to interact with friends around them (Ritonga et al., 2024). Furthermore, speech delay is a delay in speech ability that can be affected by environmental, biological, or cognitive factors. According to research by Rescorla (2021), about 10% of early childhood experiences speech delay and requires appropriate interventions so that it does not impact their social and academic development. Factors such as lack of verbal interaction with parents, delayed cognitive development, and hearing loss can be the main causes of speech delay in early childhood (Leonard, 2022).

The factors that hypnotize children's speaking skills are intelligence, discipline, birth order, number of families, social status, economy, ethnicity, language culture, and gender (Luen, 2015). In addition, there are also exit factors that rarely encourage children to do twoway communication so that children only listen, then socioeconomic factors, families at the lower levels tend to have low speaking interaction, this can be interpreted as the influence of racial background, and gender (Rosida et al., 2023).

2. Flash Card Method in Language Learning

Flashcards are visual aids that are used to help children recognize words and language concepts in an interesting way. This method utilizes the principle of repetition and visual stimulation to accelerate language understanding (Smith & Taylor, 2020). According to research conducted by Johnson & White (2023), regular use of flashcards can improve children's language skills with speech delay by 30% faster than other conventional methods. The use of attractive and colorful pictures also helps children focus more on learning a new language (Harris et al., 2022). Flashcards are visual aids that are used to help children recognize words and language concepts in an interesting way. This method utilizes the principle of repetition and visual stimulation to accelerate language understanding (Smith & Taylor, 2020). According to research conducted by Johnson & White (2023), regular use of flashcards can improve children's language skills with speech delay by 30% faster than other conventional methods. The use of attractive and colorful pictures also helps children focus more on learning a new language (Harris et al., 2022). Here are examples of flash cards that can be used, which are as follows:

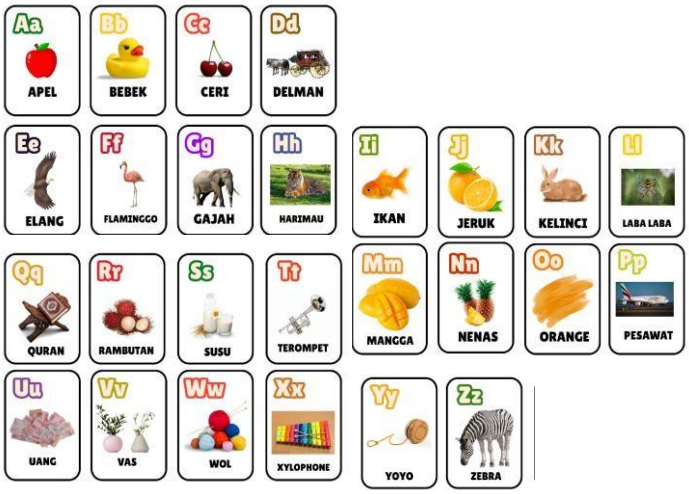

Figure 1. Flash Card Example

Research Methodology

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method, which aims to be able to describe in depth the implementation of the flashcard method in improving the language skills of children who experience speech delay. This method prioritizes understanding the phenomenon based on data collected through observation, interviews with teachers and parents, and documentation during the process of implementing the activity. With this approach, research can provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of the flashcard method as well as the factors that affect its success.

This research will be carried out at KB Gembira located in Tebing Tinggi. The reason the researcher chose this institution as the location of the research was because there were 3 children who were experiencing speech delay. So in this study, the research subjects are 2 children who attend KB Gembira.

Data is analyzed using qualitative descriptive techniques with several main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2019). Data reduction is carried out by sorting, filtering, and simplifying data from observations, interviews, and documentation to obtain relevant information. After that, the reduced data is presented in the form of a narrative description that describes the main patterns or findings of this study. Furthermore, the conclusion stage is carried out by interpreting data based on the patterns found to understand the effectiveness of the flashcard method in improving children's language skills with speech delay. Data triangulation is also used to improve the validity of research by comparing observations, interviews, and documentation (Creswell, 2020).

Results

This research was conducted in the Gembira Tebing Tinggi Family Planning Play Group, and focused on my group B class where the average age of children in group B is 3-5 years old. This play group has an inclusive program that provides services for children with special needs, including speech delay. The number of children in group B was 10 people, with 3 of them indicated to have speech delay based on initial observations and interviews with teachers and counselors at the school. The main subjects of this study were 2 children who were indicated to have speech delay which in this study were initialed A and B. In addition, the researcher also involved a classroom teacher and two parents of the child who was the subject of this study.

Table 1. Conditions of Language Development of Research Subjects

Yes	Child Initials	Age	Gender	Speech Delay Conditions

1	A	3,2	L	Slow response, often pointing without mentioning a word and pronouncing 1-2 words.
2	B	4,2	P	Vocabulary is limited, it is difficult to pronounce the name of objects, and it is not possible to compose simple sentences.

Observation was carried out in a participatory manner for 4 weeks, and continued with separate interviews with teachers and parents. The activity was carried out for 3 weeks with a frequency of 2 times per week. Each session lasts for 30 minutes with the following stages: 1. Opening (5 minutes): Where the researcher invites children to sing and play light games.

2. Core Activity (20 minutes): Use of flash cards, displaying picture cards and mentioning the name, color, and function of objects.
3. Repractice (5 minutes): Children are asked to repeat the vocabulary that has been taught.

After learning with the use of flash cards, the researcher made an observation on the development of language skills in this research subject. The results of the observation after the action was given are as follows:

Table 2. Observation Results of Language Skill Development

Yes	Child Initials	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
1	A	● Response is still slow 2 ● Can call objects	● Naming 5 objects and colors	● Starting to be able to follow the teacher's words	● Compose a simple sentence (2 words)
2	B	● Say 1 word	● Say 4 words ● Starting to be able to follow the teacher's words	● Answer simple questions	● Describe the image ● Mention the function of the image

From the results above, it shows a significant increase in children's receptive skills and language expression. In addition to making observations, researchers also conducted interviews to obtain valid information from parents and teachers. The results of the interview are as follows:

Table 3. Interview Results

Yes	Informants	Interview Results
1	Classroom Teacher	Children are very enthusiastic about flash card media. Child A, who is usually silent and busy with his own world, has now begun to dare to mention the name of objects. This is an extraordinary development.
2	Parent A	Since participating in activities using flashcards at school, my son has started to mention the names of objects at home, even though he used to just point. And I also continue to use flashcards at home to continue to increase my child's language development.

3	Parent B	Usually my child only answers with one word, now he can say and combine two words and sometimes even up to 4 words. I continue to defend myself with flashcard media at home.

The results of this study are in line with Vygotsky's theory of language development which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and visual media in accelerating language development. One of the media that can be used to help language development is the flashcard. The purpose of using this flashcard media is as follows:

1. Strengthen the connection between images and words.
2. Stimulate children's ability to recognize and name objects.
3. Increase children's confidence in communication

With a consistent and interactive method, flashcards help children with speech delay to enrich vocabulary and improve language structure in early childhood.

The results of this study are in line with previous research, namely Gayatri et al. (2020) which concluded that play therapy with the flashcard Effectively improve speech, vocabulary, and verbal responses in children with speech delays. Thus also with research conducted by Hauri et al (2024) which emphasizes that the media flashcard Able to improve children's vocabulary which is a prerequisite for more complex speaking skills. This success is supported by the theory that early childhood, especially those who are experiencing speechdelay, requires repetitive and structured visual stimulation to strengthen the neural pathways responsible for word association and meaning. The interactive nature of the activity uses flashcards followed by singing, light play, and re-exercises, ensuring that the child is actively engaged, not just passive. Not only on problems speechdelay but Flash Card can also help communication in autistic children, which the results of research explain that Flash Card provide encouragement of two-way interaction between children and companions so as to create a more interactive and fun learning atmosphere, so as to strengthen social skills in autistic children (Suyanti, 2025)

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the implementation of the flash card method is effective in improving language skills in children who are indicated to have speech delay. There was an increase in vocabulary (naming), language understanding (receptive), the ability to compose sentences (expressive), and the courage to communicate. In addition, this activity is very interesting so that it is very liked by children. In the first child, the male sex is already able to say 5 nouns and colors and can follow what the teacher says even if it is slow. Meanwhile, in girls, development occurs rapidly where children can say 4 nouns, follow the teacher's words, can answer the teacher's questions, and explain the function of objects appointed by the teacher.

As for the advice that I can give to teachers to continue to integrate the use of flashcards in routine learning activities, especially for children who experience language barriers. Furthermore, parents need to continue stimulation at home in a similar way so that children get a consistent language experience.

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