Strengthening Early Childhood Literacy Through Storytelling Activities

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Abstract. The early childhood literacy strengthening program through storytelling activities is aimed at supporting the basic fundamental quality of early childhood in Kindergarten. The object of this program is a Kindergarten of ‘Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal (ABA) Ngentak, Pringinan, Tirtorahayu, Galur, Kulon Progo. Preliminary observations indicate the need to improve the quality of fundamental literacy through structured and measured storytelling activities. Therefore, the community development team strengthened fundamental literacy through storytelling activities using Gagne's event instructional design to focus students on storytelling activities. Afterward, students will be brought to discuss the stories and followed up with developing activities in the form of structured individual and class projects. Pre-test and post-test are given before and after the implementation of the storytelling activities targeting the components of alphabet knowledge, print awareness, and students' socio-emotional skills. The result shows that this program succeeded in improving the socio-emotional skills of students. This program has also succeeded in increasing students' interest in the letters of the alphabet and the print words listed in the book.

Keywords: Literacy, Early Childhood, Storytelling, Gagne's Event

1 Introduction

Literacy is the gate of a country's advancement (Jatnika, 2019, Kharizmi, 2015, Syofyan & Amir, 2019). Thus, literacy needs to be encouraged early (Inten, 2017; Okan & WHO, 2019; Fadhilah, Arsanti, & Hasanudin, 2023; Hidayat et al, 2021). Moreover, schools for early childhood as a locus of education play a significant role in fostering literacy among students through structured implementation and measurement of literacy activities to improve children's literacy activities at home and in the community (Crim et al, 2008; Jackson et al, 2006; Kotaman, 2020; Tohara, 2021).

Kindergarten ‘Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal (ABA) Ngentak, Pringinan as part of the early childhood education institution is also part of the fundamental literacy locomotive for early childhood. Fundamental literacy includes reading and writing (Fauzi et al., 2020). Based on the situation analysis, with two teachers, this school operates one class consisting of 15 students. In the focus group discussion activities carried out with residents around the kindergarten, the submission of learning assistance in the kindergarten received support as part of the community development program in that environment. Besides, in Pringinan Hamlet, Tirtorahayu village, Galur, and Kulon Progo, Kindergarten is also the center of the Qur'an Education for Children. After all, the Qur'an Education for Children at the nearby mosque has not been run since the pandemic subsided.

Various meaningful learning activities have been obtained at Kindergarten ABA Ngentak, only the structuring of learning activities needs to be improved. The learning

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structure means the structure of the delivery and measurement of the impact of the activities carried out.

The map of the location of the ABA Pringinan Kindergarten can be seen in Figure 1.

Based on the situation analysis at kindergarten ABA, Ngentak, Pringinan, the community development team identified several partner problems as follows:

1. Kindergarten ABA Ngentak, Pringinan, requires assistance with teaching and learning activities, especially through fun learning activities for students.
2. The kindergarten requires assistance with the structure and measurement of learning outcomes, especially in aspects of fundamental literacy which is the main locus of the institution.
3. The kindergarten requires assistance with technology adaptation that supports learning activities.

After examining the situational analysis, the team focused on a combination of teaching and learning assistance as well as structuring and measuring the teaching and learning assistance. This focus was chosen because it is the most suitable for reviewing its progress in a limited time. Apart from that, support from residents as well as permission and willingness of the kindergarten ABA, Ngentak administrators were also part of the selection of the focus of the community development program being carried out. The program is called Strengthening Early Childhood Literacy Through Storytelling Activities.

In summary, this program implements science and technology in 5 aspects, specifically the urgency of fundamental literacy for early childhood, development of alphabet knowledge for early childhood, development of print awareness in early childhood, socio-emotional skill development for childhood, and Gagne's event instructional design for focus the child in listening to the story.

2 Methodology

The Strengthening Early Childhood Literacy Through Storytelling Activities program was operated from January 4 until February 15, 2023. It was accomplished through these methods:

1. Preliminary Observations
Apart from visiting schools directly, the community development team also tries to take community aspirations regarding empowerment activities that can be carried out at local schools.

2. Activity Arrangement

The design of activities is performed by reviewing various resemblant literature and research to be applied to kindergarten by adjusting the necessary modifications and innovations. The experimental research regarding storytelling in early childhood conducted by Maureen, Der Maij, & De Jong (2018) is one of the main references by modifying several things according to partner conditions and available local resources. Partnership with teachers is made in this phase as a community development partner.

3. Pretest

This activity is an assessment that gives a score from 0 to 4 on the aspects of alphabet knowledge, print awareness, and socio-emotional skills of the students.

4. Implementation of Activities

The series of activities carried out consisted of telling stories, discussing stories, and following up activities. In this session, teachers are also involved so that storytelling activities with measurable structures and impacts can be executed in a sustainable manner.

5. Posttest

The procedure for this activity is the same as the pre-test. The literacy assessment rubric could be seen in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Key Skills</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Alphabet letter recognition</td>
<td>Needs clues to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>identify the letters in the story sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Print awareness</td>
<td>Needs help reading the words on the story sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Socio-emotional skill</td>
<td>Passive in responding to questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Student Literacy Assessment Rubric (Pre-test & Posttest)

6. Evaluation

This activity is put through reviewing the suitability of program implementation with planning. This is accomplished with the teacher discussing together what is lacking and needs to be revised in the next storytelling or other community development activity.

3 Results And Discussion

The observation results during the post-test showed that aspects of alphabet knowledge, print awareness, and socio-emotional skills of students had increased. The series of main
activities of the early childhood literacy strengthening program through storytelling activities have been completed. The series of activities are as follows:

1. **Pre-test**

   The pre-test was executed while introducing the principal and teachers as well as providing assistance with teaching and learning activities. The pre-test was conducted on 15 students. The observation results show that the students have shown good skills in alphabet letter recognition. Even so, some students still need more effort in the aspect of print awareness. The students also still have difficulty following all the etiquettes/rules when listening to storytelling.

2. **Storytelling**

   The storytelling activity was accomplished in a classical manner. The community service team leader tells the story and follow-up activities from the story. Meanwhile, team members helped enliven storytelling activities while observing students fill out post-test sheets to see aspects of alphabet knowledge, print awareness, and socio-emotional skills shown by students.

   Before telling the story, the storyteller introduces herself and the team. Then, the students were also asked to introduce themselves. Afterward, the storyteller, all teams, and students are given a name tag. It is to make it easier for the storyteller to manage the class as long as the storytelling activity is carried out. In addition, this is also to ease for students to interact with team members. Giving name labels is also done as an initial step to invite students to read in a fun way because they can choose the color of the label they like and stick it where they like too. An example of placing a name tag can be seen in the following figure.

   ![](image1.png)

   **Figure 2. Students put name tags and listen to storytelling activities and Figure 3. Storyteller deliver the story**

   Subsequently, the storyteller proposes 3 simple rules as long as the storytelling activity is carried out. These etiquettes or rules are as follows:  
   a. Students listen to stories while sitting in an orderly manner  
   b. Students raise their hands when they want to interrupt  
   c. Students submit questions or comments politely

   After that, the storyteller started telling stories about the Prophet Muhammad PBUH using a storybook. Stories are done interactively. Students may respond by raising their right hand first as a form of permission to speak or if the storyteller points them to speak. Students may speak after being invited by the storyteller.

   In the middle of the activity, the storyteller pointed out some letters to test the students' alphabet recognition skills. Besides, the storyteller also pointed out and showed some words to test students' print awareness skills. The storytelling activity could be seen in the figure below.

   ![](image2.png)
This storytelling activity also involves role-play activities. There is a storytelling team and students who act as characters in story scenes spontaneously. Storytelling also involves singing together to liven up the atmosphere.

3. Discussing Story
At this phase, the storyteller discusses the sequences and lessons that can be drawn from the story being told. Students were still asked to follow the rules of storytelling. The storyteller combines "the profession" theme which is the theme of class learning that day. Therefore, because the students have listened in an orderly manner, the storytellers distribute whistles as a reward to affirm the students as police officers who must be disciplined in following the storytelling rules.

Fig 4. Storytelling activity was adapted to the theme of class learning

The students' level of patience was tested by only allowing them to blow the whistle if they wanted to ask a question or respond to a discussion. Giving this whistle is also a stimulus so that students are moved to participate actively in the discussion since with that they can blow their own whistle.

4. Follow up Activities
In this aspect, the storyteller confirms the story and the success of the students in following the story and discussion in an orderly manner. This success is expected to be repeated by students in the next related learning activities with the teacher. As the final prize, the community development team gave away books to stimulate the students' fundamental literacy growth.

5. Post-test
When the storytelling day with the community development team arrived, the weather was pouring rain. Therefore, many students were not attending the class. Thus, each student receives direct assistance from the community development team in observing three matters regarding alphabet letter recognition, print awareness, and socio-emotional skills
The results show that all students' socio-emotional skills increase where after half of the storytelling activity, they get used to following the rules in an orderly manner. The students also looked enthusiastic in observing the letters and words shown. In addition, the students were also enthusiastic about participating in the discussion.

Even so, the aspects of alphabet letter recognition and print awareness among some participants still did not show significant results in storytelling activities that were carried out only once. Thus, it is necessary to repeat storytelling activities to provide significant technical results in both aspects.

4 Conclusions
Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the Strengthening Early Childhood Literacy Through Storytelling Activities program using Gagne's event
instructional design succeeded in improving the socio-emotional skills of students. This program has also succeeded in increasing students' interest in the letters of the alphabet and the print words listed in the book. Even so, aspects of alphabet letter recognition and print awareness still need to be improved to get significant results.

Therefore, the community development team recommends that the next similar program do a repetition of storytelling activities. This is intended so that students DO NOT show improvement in aspects of socio-emotional skills, but also in technical aspects of reading. In addition, storytelling activities are proven to be able to increase students' enthusiasm for books and stories.

REFERENCES