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Development of Finger Puppet Media for Receptive Language Ability in Children Aged 4-5 Years at PAUD Puspa Kencana

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ABSTRACT

Receptive language ability in early childhood is a crucial aspect of development that supports communication skills, social interaction, and children's learning readiness at subsequent educational levels. Based on preliminary observations at PAUD Puspa Kencana, Central Lampung, it was found that some children in Group A, aged 4–5 years, still experience difficulties in understanding simple instructions, listening to stories, and retelling the content of lessons. This condition is influenced by the limited learning media used by teachers, resulting in a less engaging learning process that has not optimally stimulated receptive language abilities. This study aims to develop finger puppet media and test its feasibility and effectiveness in improving receptive language skills in early childhood. The research employed the Research and Development (R&D) method using a simplified Borg and Gall model consisting of seven stages: potential and problem identification, data collection, product design, design validation, design revision, product testing, and final product. The research subjects consisted of 18 children from Group A and one classroom teacher. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, documentation, and expert validation sheets. The results showed that the finger puppet media obtained a material expert validation percentage of 87.5%, a media expert validation of 97.5%, and an instrument validation of 96%, all in the highly feasible category. Product trials demonstrated an improvement in children's ability to listen, understand stories, and respond actively to learning. The novelty of this research lies in the development of family-themed finger puppet media based on Islamic values that are contextual to children's lives.

1. Introduction

Early childhood education is the primary foundation for building the quality of human resources from the earliest stages of life. The early years are known as the golden age because, during this phase, children's growth and development occur very rapidly in physical, motor, social-emotional, linguistic, moral, and cognitive aspects. Various studies indicate that stimulation provided during early childhood has long-term effects on learning readiness, social abilities, and intellectual development at subsequent educational levels.

Therefore, learning for young children must be designed systematically, enjoyably, contextually, and in accordance with children's developmental characteristics so that all their potential can develop optimally (Wardhani, 2023; Khadka & Das, 2026; Rhamadanty & Ulum, 2024).

One aspect of development that plays an essential role in children's lives is language development. Language is the primary tool children use to communicate, understand their environment, express ideas, and build social interactions with others. In the context of early childhood education, language development is divided into two main aspects: receptive language and expressive language. Receptive language relates to children's ability to receive, understand, and interpret information received through listening and reading activities, while expressive language relates to the ability to convey ideas orally or in writing. Receptive language ability is a crucial foundation for the development of expressive language because children must first be able to understand information before they can re-express it (Diliyanty & Mastuti, 2024; Munawaroh et al., 2024; Fernandes et al., 2024).

Receptive language ability in early childhood includes the ability to understand simple instructions, recognize vocabulary, comprehend story content, respond to questions, and grasp the meaning of verbal and non-verbal communication. According to Tika (2021), optimally developed receptive language ability helps children build good social interactions, enhance thinking skills, and support academic readiness at the primary education level. Children with good receptive language abilities generally find it easier to follow learning activities, understand teacher instructions, and participate actively in the learning process. These findings are supported by research showing that receptive vocabulary and listening comprehension are significant predictors of children's language development and academic success in the early years of education (Roch et al., 2023).

From the perspective of behaviorism theory, children's language development is influenced by stimuli and responses from the surrounding environment. Skinner explained that the ability to understand language develops through habituation and reinforcement from the child's social environment. Children learn to understand words, instructions, and linguistic meaning through repetition and interaction with adults (Herniawati & Hidayat, 2024). Meanwhile, Piaget's constructivism theory emphasizes that language development is closely related to children's cognitive development. Children construct linguistic understanding through concrete experiences and active interaction with their environment (Piaget, 1962).

In addition to behaviorism and constructivism, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory also emphasizes that language development occurs through social interaction. Vygotsky explained that children acquire language ability through communication with adults and peers in meaningful social contexts. Learning that involves concrete media, play activities, and interactive communication helps children understand language more effectively (Vygotsky, 1999). Therefore, the use of engaging and interactive learning media is essential in early childhood education.

In practice, the development of receptive language skills in early childhood still faces various obstacles. Preliminary observations conducted at PAUD Puspa Kencana, Central Lampung, showed that some children in Group A, aged 4-5 years, still have difficulty understanding stories, following simple instructions, and retelling the content of lessons. Of the 18 children observed, nine had not achieved the indicators of receptive language development appropriate for their age. Children tended to lack focus when the teacher

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explained the lesson and still struggled to understand the content of stories presented orally.

Based on interviews with the classroom teacher, it was found that the low level of children's receptive language ability was influenced by the limited learning media used during the learning process. The teacher still used lecture methods and simple media that were less able to capture children's attention optimally. This condition caused children to become easily bored and less active in listening activities. In fact, the characteristics of early childhood require concrete, visual, and play-based learning so that children can more easily understand the information presented.

Previous research has shown that the use of finger puppet media is effective in improving early childhood language skills. Research by Azmi et al. (2023) showed that finger puppet media can improve expressive language skills in early childhood through interactive storytelling activities. Sumitra et al. (2020) also found that the use of finger puppet media can improve listening skills and letter recognition in early childhood. Other research by Safitry et al. (2025) explained that hand puppet and finger puppet media can improve children's receptive language abilities because they create a more enjoyable and communicative learning atmosphere.

2. Method

This study used the Research and Development (R&D) method with the Borg and Gall development model. This model was chosen because it can produce valid, practical, and effective learning products through systematic development stages (Borg & Gall, 1983). In this study, the development stages were simplified into seven steps: potential and problem identification, data collection, product design, design validation, design revision, product testing, and final product.

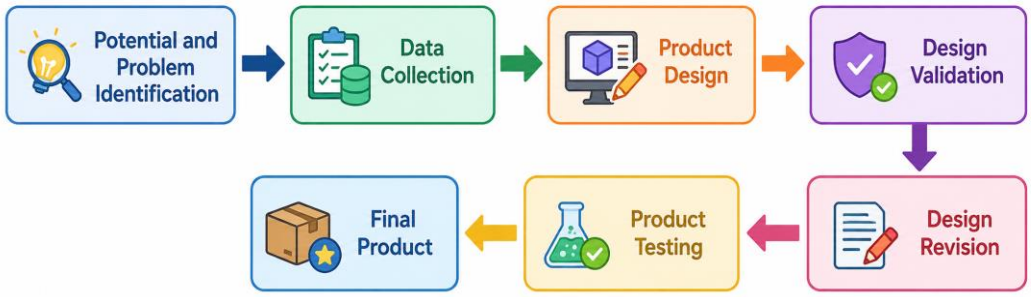

Figure 1. Product Development Flow Using the Borg and Gall Model

The research was conducted at PAUD Puspa Kencana, Punggur District, Central Lampung Regency. The research subjects consisted of 18 children from Group A, aged 4–5 years, and one classroom teacher. Subject selection was carried out purposively because this group showed problems in receptive language ability. The research was conducted during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year.

Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, documentation, and expert validation. Observation was used to determine the condition of children's receptive language abilities before and after using the media. Interviews were conducted with the teacher to obtain information about the learning process and the

obstacles faced. Documentation was used to collect supporting data in the form of activity photos and learning tools.

The research instruments consisted of media expert validation sheets, material expert validation sheets, and observation sheets for children's receptive language development. Validation assessment used a five-point Likert scale. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive quantitative analysis techniques by calculating the percentage of product feasibility scores. Data analysis was performed by calculating the percentage of validation and observation results using a percentage formula. The results were then categorized based on feasibility level and child development. This study refers to the principles of content validity and data triangulation to maintain the validity of the research results.

3. Result and Discussion

Results

The research on the development of finger puppet media began with the stage of identifying potential and problems at PAUD Puspa Kencana. Based on initial observations, it was found that some children still had difficulty understanding stories and following simple instructions. Teachers also experienced limitations in using engaging and interactive learning media, making the learning process tend to be monotonous.

The next stage was data collection through observation, interviews, and literature studies. The interview results showed that teachers needed learning media that could improve children's attention and involvement in listening activities. Based on these needs, the researcher designed family-themed finger puppet media. The finger puppet media were developed using flannel fabric with characters representing father, mother, older sibling, and younger sibling. Each character was designed with attractive colors and Islamic attributes. The stories used were adapted to children's daily lives so they were easy to understand.

Figure 2. Design of Finger Puppet Media

The validation stage was carried out by media and material experts. The results of the first validation stage showed that the media still required several improvements in terms of display and story presentation. After revisions were made, the media achieved a highly feasible category.

Table 1. Recapitulation of Expert Validation Results

Validator	Percentage	Category
Material Expert	87.5%	Highly Feasible
Media Expert	97.5%	Highly Feasible
Instrument Validation	96%	Highly Feasible

The product trial stage was conducted with 18 children in Group A. The learning activities were carried out using a storytelling method supported by finger puppet media. The children appeared enthusiastic and actively participated in the learning process. During the activities, they were able to pay closer attention to the stories compared to previous learning sessions. The children also began to answer simple questions related to the story content and follow the teacher's instructions more effectively.

Family-themed finger puppets provide significant benefits in improving the receptive language skills of early childhood learners. Through storytelling activities using family characters that are closely related to children's daily lives, finger puppet media help children focus on listening, understanding story content, and following simple instructions given by the teacher. The concrete, attractive, and colorful visual appearance of the puppets enables children to understand the storyline more easily and grasp the messages conveyed during the learning process. In addition to supporting receptive language development, finger puppets also play a role in instilling moral and social values, such as affection among family members, respect for parents, and cooperation in everyday life. Furthermore, this media encourages active interaction between teachers and children, making the learning process more communicative, enjoyable, and aligned with the developmental characteristics of young learners.

The fourth stage of this research was design validation, which was conducted to determine the feasibility level of the finger puppet media before its implementation in the product trial stage. The validation process included media validation, material validation, and validation of the research instrument in the form of an observation sheet for children's receptive language skills. Each validator conducted assessments in two stages. In the first stage of material expert validation, the media obtained a score of 25, corresponding to 55.6%, which was categorized as less feasible. Therefore, revisions were made based on the validator's recommendations. After improvements were implemented, the second-stage validation result increased to 87.5%, categorized as highly feasible. Similar results were obtained in the media expert validation, where the first-stage validation achieved 55.6%, increasing to 97.5% after revisions were completed. In addition, the validation of the research instrument obtained an average score of 96%, categorized as highly feasible. These results indicate that the developed finger puppet media met the required feasibility standards and was ready to be used in the product trial stage.

The next stage involved design revision and product testing with Group A children at PAUD Puspa Kencana. Revisions were made based on validators' suggestions, particularly by adding a puppet stage as a complementary component to make the learning activities more engaging and interactive. After the revision process was completed, the media was tested through storytelling activities using finger puppets. During the trial, the researcher observed the children's ability to listen to stories, understand story content, and retell stories in a simple manner according to their developmental stage. The observation results showed that the children were highly enthusiastic during the learning activities, more focused on listening to the stories, actively responded to the teacher's questions, and participated in interactions throughout the session. The teacher also reported that the use of finger puppet media successfully attracted children's attention and facilitated their understanding of the stories presented. These findings indicate that finger puppet media can create a more dynamic, interactive, and effective learning environment for stimulating young children's receptive language skills.

Figure 3. Product Trial

Based on the observation results, children's receptive language skills improved after the implementation of finger puppet media. The children demonstrated better understanding of story content, responded to questions appropriately, and were able to retell parts of the stories using simple language.

Table 4. Observation Results of Receptive Language Skills

Indicator	Before	After
Understanding Story Content	58%	86%
Answering Questions	55%	84%
Following Instructions	61%	88%
Listening to Stories	60%	90%

Teachers provided positive feedback regarding the use of finger puppet media. They reported that the media helped create a more engaging and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Children were able to understand the learning materials more easily because they were supported by concrete visual media.

Figure 4. Product Assessment Results Diagram

Overall, the developed finger puppet media was categorized as highly feasible and effective for use in early childhood receptive language learning.

Discussion

The results showed that the developed finger puppet media achieved a highly feasible category based on media expert validation, material expert validation, and product trial results. The high validation percentage indicates that the developed media have met the

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aspects of content feasibility, appearance, ease of use, and suitability with the developmental characteristics of early childhood. Media designed concretely and interactively proved capable of creating a more enjoyable and meaningful learning atmosphere for children. This finding aligns with Daryanto (2013), who stated that concrete learning media can increase students' attention and understanding in the learning process.

The improvement in children's receptive language ability after using finger puppet media shows that concrete media-based learning positively impacts listening and information comprehension skills in early childhood. Children appeared more focused on listening to stories, able to answer simple questions, and more actively followed the teacher's instructions during learning activities. This finding demonstrates that using learning media appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood can significantly improve the quality of the learning process. The results of this study support the research of Safitry et al. (2025), which states that hand puppet and finger puppet media can improve children's receptive language abilities by creating an interactive and communicative learning atmosphere.

Theoretically, the results of this study support Piaget's constructivism theory, which explains that children learn through concrete experiences and active involvement with their environment. Finger puppet media provides visual and kinesthetic experiences that help children understand story content more easily. Children not only hear the teacher's explanation but also see the story characters directly, making the comprehension process more optimal. According to Piaget (1962), concrete experience is an important factor in the cognitive development of early childhood.

The findings of this study are also in line with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in children's language development. The use of finger puppet media in storytelling activities creates active interaction between the teacher and students. Children have the opportunity to listen to, understand, and respond to the communication conveyed by the teacher through play-while-learning activities. This interaction helps children develop receptive language skills gradually. Vygotsky (1999) affirmed that children's language development is strongly influenced by social activities and communication occurring in the learning environment.

Furthermore, the results support behaviorism, which states that language development is influenced by environmental stimuli. Finger puppet media provides visual and verbal stimuli that attract children's attention, making it easier for them to understand instructions and story content. Repetition of vocabulary and interaction during learning activities also helps strengthen children's language comprehension. This aligns with Herniawati & Hidayat (2024), who explained that visual and verbal stimulation can help improve language comprehension in early childhood.

The results of this study are relevant to the research by Azmi et al. (2023), which stated that finger puppet media can improve early childhood language skills through engaging and communicative storytelling activities. The similarity of this study lies in the use of concrete media as a means to improve children's language skills. However, this study differs in its development focus, which is more directed at receptive language ability and the integration of Islamic values in the learning media.

Research by Sumitra et al. (2020) also shows that finger puppet media is effective in improving listening skills and language abilities in early childhood. The results of that study support the finding that young children more easily understand learning through play

activities and attractive visual media. Finger puppet media helps children maintain focus and attention during the learning process.

Research by Chrestiany & Hasibuan (2018) explained that finger puppet media can help improve children's speaking ability and interaction because the media presents a more communicative learning atmosphere. These findings support the results of this study, which show that children become more active in responding to questions and more confident during learning activities.

The integration of the family theme in finger puppet media positively impacts children's understanding of story content. Father, mother, older sibling, and younger sibling characters are figures close to children's daily lives, thus making it easier for children to understand the storyline and moral messages conveyed. Contextualization of the story is an important factor supporting the media's success in improving receptive language ability. According to Ratnasari & Zubaidah (2019), using story media close to children's lives can increase children's engagement and understanding of learning.

In addition to improving receptive language ability, finger puppet media also impacts children's social-emotional development. Children appeared more confident when interacting during learning activities. Children also learned to understand the values of cooperation, mutual respect, and affection through stories conveyed using Islamic family characters. This finding supports the research by Nirwana (2023), which states that role-playing-based learning can help improve social and communication skills in early childhood.

The use of finger puppet media also provides practical benefits for teachers in the learning process. Teachers find it easier to attract children's attention and create an active learning atmosphere. This media helps teachers deliver learning material more concretely so that children do not get bored easily during the learning process. Safira (2020) explained that engaging learning media can help teachers create effective learning that suits children's developmental needs.

Observation results showed that before using finger puppet media, some children lacked focus in listening to learning and had difficulty understanding the teacher's instructions. However, after using the media, children appeared more active and enthusiastic in participating in activities. The increase in children's attention during learning shows that visual and interactive media are essential in early childhood learning. This is supported by research by Paramita Ritonga & Suryatik (2024), which shows that finger puppet media can significantly improve children's participation and communication skills.

Research by Larassati & Alifah (2025) also revealed that finger puppet media can improve fairy tale listening skills in students because children feel more interested in stories presented through visual and movement media. These findings align with the results of this study, which show that children are more focused and easily understand stories when learning uses finger puppet media.

Furthermore, research by Revina and Azizah (2018) explained that storytelling activities can develop thinking, reading, listening, and communication skills in early childhood. Using finger puppets in storytelling activities provides space for children to understand the storyline more concretely so that receptive language skills develop more optimally. Research by Umar (2025) also explained that finger puppet media is an innovative learning medium that can increase early childhood learning motivation. Children tend to be more interested in following learning when the teacher uses attractive visual media that can be

played with directly. Therefore, the use of finger puppet media in this study positively impacted increasing children's involvement during the learning process.

Although the study showed positive results, it still has several limitations. The number of research subjects was relatively small, involving only one learning group of 18 children, so the results cannot be widely generalized. In addition, this study still used descriptive quantitative analysis without more in-depth inferential statistical tests. The practical implication of this study is that finger puppet media can be used as an alternative innovative learning medium for developing receptive language skills in early childhood. This media is relatively easy to make, uses simple materials, and can be developed according to different learning themes. Theoretically, this study reinforces the importance of using concrete and interactive media in early childhood learning. Learning that involves visual elements, movement, stories, and social interaction is proven to be more effective in helping children understand information compared to conventional lecture-based learning.

4. Conclusion

The finger puppet media developed through the Research and Development method with the Borg and Gall model were declared highly feasible for use in learning receptive language in early childhood. The results of material expert, media expert, and instrument validations indicated a highly feasible category, meaning the media meets the aspects of validity and usability. The use of finger puppet media improved the ability to listen, understand stories, and follow simple instructions in children aged 4–5 years at PAUD Puspa Kencana. This media also increased children's enthusiasm, attention, and active involvement in learning, making it a viable alternative for innovative learning media in early childhood education.

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