

Paired Story a Fun Way to Improve Early Reading Skills in Indonesia Language Lessons

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Abstract

This study was motivated by the low early reading skills of first-grade students, as reflected in their difficulties recognizing letters, forming syllables, reading words, and constructing simple sentences. The research aimed to improve students' early reading achievement through the implementation of the *Paired Story Telling* method. Conducted at SDK Ignatius Slamet Riyadi 1 East Jakarta, the study involved 25 first-grade students during the second semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. Using the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model by Kemmis & McTaggart, the study was carried out in three cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. Data were collected through learning outcome tests, observations, and documentation, and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The results showed that the *Paired Story Telling* method effectively enhanced students' early reading performance, with the average score increasing from 64 (pre-cycle) to 72 (cycle I), 77 (cycle II), and 83.2 (cycle III). Learning mastery also improved from 48% to 88%. The students demonstrated better fluency in recognizing letters, reading words, and forming complete sentences. In conclusion, the *Paired Story Telling* method significantly improved early reading achievement while fostering an interactive, enjoyable, and cooperative learning atmosphere for young learners.

Keywords: *Early Reading, Learning Outcomes, Paired Storytelling*

1 INTRODUCTION

Early reading skills are the main foundation in the mastery of literacy of elementary school students, especially at the lower grade level. Reading is not just about recognizing letters and stringing them into words, but also involves the ability to understand the meaning of written language symbols (Resnick, 2024). At this stage, students are required to recognize letters, spell syllables, read words, and string simple sentences fluently. Research shows that early reading ability has a significant correlation with future academic achievement and students' self-concept as readers (Xiao, 2023).

Students who master beginning reading well will have a greater chance of understanding text-based subject matter and developing high-level thinking skills. On the other hand, students who lag behind in early reading skills will experience difficulties in understanding the content of reading and are hampered in the learning process in other subjects (Bressane et al., 2024). In addition to being the key to academic success, initial reading skills also play an important role in shaping students' learning character. Based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development, elementary school-age children are at a concrete operational stage, where the learning process requires hands-on experience, interaction, and meaningful activities (Bakhtiarvand et al., 2025). Through initial reading activities,

students not only learn to recognize letters, but are also trained to concentrate, think logically, and be diligent in completing tasks (Hoffman et al., 2024). Therefore, the mastery of early reading is not only a condition for success in learning the Indonesian language, but also the foundation for the development of more complex literacy at the next level of education.

However, the reality is that early reading skills among low-grade students have not been optimally developed. The results of observations in several elementary schools in Indonesia show that most students still have difficulty in recognizing letters, spelling syllables, and understanding simple words and sentences. This condition is in line with the findings Alneyadi et al. (2023), which suggests that low initial reading skills are often due to conventional teaching methods that do not involve interactive activities. Other factors that also affect are the lack of support from parents, the lack of reading activities at home, and the limitations of teachers in providing individual guidance to students who have low abilities (Ding et al., 2024). As a result, students who have not completed reading tend to be passive, easily bored, and experience obstacles in understanding the teacher's instructions.

Seeing the low initial reading ability of grade I students of SDK Ignatius Slamet Riyadi 1, innovation is needed in learning strategies that are more interactive and able to overcome the limitations of conventional methods. The learning process, which is still dominant using lectures and reading together, makes it difficult for teachers to monitor the reading progress of each individual (Ulfa et al., 2023).

Based on this description, the purpose of this study is to improve student learning outcomes in Indonesian learning of initial reading materials through the application of *the Paired Story Telling* method. This study is directed to describe the process of applying *the Paired Story Telling* method in beginning reading activities in grade I SDK Ignatius Slamet Riyadi 1 and measure its effectiveness in improving student learning completeness. Thus, this study is expected to provide an empirical picture that the use of interactive, cooperative, and fun learning methods can be a solution in overcoming low initial reading skills as well as contributing to the development of Indonesian learning strategies in elementary schools.

2 RESEARCH METHODS

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the Paired Story Telling method in improving the learning outcomes of early reading in grade I students of SDK Ignatius Slamet Riyadi 1 East Jakarta. The research uses the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral model Class Action Research which includes the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research subjects amounted to 25 students in the even semester of the 2023–2024 school year, selected based on pre-cycle results that showed low reading ability, where completeness only reached 48%.

The research was carried out for three months in three cycles, two meetings each. Each lesson is designed for students to read simple texts in pairs, record key words, and retell the content of the reading to practice comprehension and fluency in reading. Data was collected through learning outcome tests, observations, field notes, and documentation, then analyzed descriptively, quantitatively, and qualitatively. The success of the action is determined through KKM 70 with a target of completion of at least 80% of students. The validity of the data was strengthened through triangulation techniques by comparing test results, observations, and documentation.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

The results of preliminary research conducted through interviews with classroom teachers and observations at SDK Ignatius Slamet Riyadi 1 show that the initial reading ability of grade I A students is still relatively low. Teachers tend to use lecture methods and read together, making it difficult to identify students who are really able to read correctly. From the student side, most of them still have difficulty in arranging syllables and stringing letters into words, plus the lack of reading guidance at home due to the busy parents. Pre-cycle data showed that out of 25 students, only 12 students (48%) achieved learning completion with an average score of 64, the highest score of 85, and the lowest score of 35, while the other 13 students (52%) were incomplete. The distribution of grades shows the majority of students

3.1.1 Results of Cycle I Research

3.1.1.1 Planning Stage

In the planning stage of the first cycle, the researcher and fellow teachers as collaborators prepared all the necessary research tools to support the implementation of learning with the Paired Story Telling method. The preparation includes the preparation of teaching modules, the selection of reading materials that are in accordance with students' abilities, as well as the preparation of student worksheets (LKS) and evaluation questions by considering input from class teachers. In addition, the researcher also prepared two types of observation sheets, namely observation of teacher activities and observation of student activities, which were used to compare the suitability of the implementation of learning in the classroom with the plan that had been prepared.

3.1.1.2 Stage of Action Implementation

The implementation of actions in cycle I will be carried out on Monday, July 8, 2024, and Thursday, July 4, 2024 in class I A SDK Ignatius Slamet Riyadi 1 with a focus on the content of Indonesian subjects, especially initial reading skills. Teachers start learning by presenting reading materials through simple reading texts that contain vowels and consonants as the basis for reading exercises. After the pairs reading activity is completed, students are asked to retell the content of the text in front of the class with the help of the keywords given by their partners. In this presentation activity, the couple in charge of listening re-recorded the content of the story conveyed by their friend, then they exchanged roles. The following is a table of the results of the initial reading evaluation of Cycle I.

Table 1. Results of the Recapitulation of the Beginning of Cycle I Reading Results

Information	Number of Students	Percentage
>70	20	80%
<70	5	20%
TOTAL	25	100%
Average	77	
Highest Score	90	
Lowest Score	45	

Student learning outcomes in the first cycle showed an increase compared to the pre-cycle with an average score of 72, the highest score of 90, and the lowest score of 40. Of the 25 students, as many as 16 students (64%) have achieved learning completion, while 9 students (36%) are still below the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM). The distribution of scores showed that most of the students were in the range of 73–83 as many as 10 students (40%), followed by 7 students (28%) in the range of 62–72, and 5 students (20%) in the range of 84–94. Meanwhile, 3 students (12%) were still in the low range of 40–50. This data shows that the application of the Paired Story Telling method has begun to have a positive impact on students' initial reading skills, although the achievement of results is not even because some students are still passive and teachers have not been optimal in utilizing learning methods and media.

3.1.1.3 Observing Stage

In the observation stage of cycle I, researchers and peer teachers made direct observations of the learning process using the *Paired Story Telling method*, starting from the beginning to the end of the activity. Observations were carried out using an assessment format that had been prepared, so that the data obtained included qualitative and quantitative aspects. Qualitative data is in the form of an overview of student activity during activities, such as involvement in reading, recording keywords, and having the courage to retell the content of reading in front of the class.

3.1.1.4 Reflection Stage

In the reflection stage of the first cycle, the researcher and fellow teachers evaluated the results of the implementation of the action and found several shortcomings that needed to be corrected in the next cycle. Reflection shows that although the *Paired Story Telling method* is able to increase the involvement of some students, there are still a number of students who are less active, passive, and even seen playing alone and chatting with their friends during the learning process. This condition indicates that teachers have not fully succeeded in maximizing the application of methods and classroom management.

3.1.2 Results of Cycle II Research

3.1.2.1 Planning Stage

In the planning stage of cycle II, researchers and colleagues rearranged the learning plan based on the results of reflection in cycle I. This planning still uses a cooperative method of the *Paired Story Telling* type, but it is equipped with additional actions to correct weaknesses found in the previous cycle. The steps taken include compiling new teaching modules, preparing more interesting learning media, and improving research instruments such as observation sheets on the implementation of methods, observation sheets for student activities, interview guidelines, and documentation.

3.1.2.2 Stage of Action Implementation

The implementation of the action in cycle II will be carried out on Monday, July 15, 2024, and Thursday, July 18, 2024 in class I A SDK Ignatius Slamet Riyadi 1 with a focus on initial reading skills and arranging words into sentences through Indonesian reading texts. Learning activities in general still follow the steps in cycle I, but with the addition of actions to improve previous weaknesses. The teacher presents the reading text, then the students are divided into heterogeneous groups in pairs. Each pair received a different reading text, and students were asked to read the text in turn, while their partners recorded the key

words from the readings heard. The following is a table of the results of the reading evaluation at the beginning of Cycle II.

Table 2. Results of the recapitulation of the results of the reading at the beginning of cycle II

Information	Number of Students	Percentage
>70	20	80%
<70	5	20%
TOTAL	25	100%
Average		77
Highest Score		90
Lowest Score		45

Student learning outcomes in cycle II showed an increase compared to cycle I with an average score of 77, the highest score of 90, and the lowest score of 45. Of the 25 students, as many as 20 students (80%) have achieved learning completion, while 5 students (20%) are still below the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM). The distribution of grades showed that most students were in the high score range of 85–94 as many as 11 students (44%), followed by 6 students (24%) in the range of 75–84, and 5 students (20%) in the range of 65–74. Meanwhile, 2 students (8%) were in the 55–64 range, and 1 student (4%) was in the low range of 45–54.

3.1.2.3 Observing Stage

In the observation stage of cycle II, the researcher and the observer directly observed the course of the Indonesian learning process using a cooperative method of *the Paired Story Telling type*. Observations were carried out to assess the implementation of learning, teacher activities, and student participation during the activity. The results of the observations showed that student involvement increased compared to cycle I; Students are more focused when reading texts, are more enthusiastic about taking notes on keywords, and show greater courage when retelling the content of the reading in front of the class.

3.1.2.4 Reflection Stage

In the reflection stage of cycle II, researchers and peer teachers evaluate the results of the implementation of actions and observations that have been carried out. Reflection shows that the application of *the Paired Story Telling method* is able to significantly improve student learning outcomes compared to cycle I, with a completion percentage of 80%. However, the research success target set, which is at least 85% of students achieve KKM, has not been fully met.

3.1.3 Results of Cycle III Research

3.1.3.1 Planning Stage

At the planning stage of cycle III, the researcher and fellow teachers prepare a learning plan based on the results of the reflection of cycle II. This planning still uses a cooperative method of *the Paired Story Telling type*, but with the addition of actions to correct the weaknesses found earlier, while emphasizing that cycle III will be the final stage of research if the success target has been achieved. The steps taken include the preparation of more

varied teaching modules, the selection of more interesting learning media, and the improvement of research instruments such as observation sheets on the implementation of methods, observation sheets for teacher and student activities, interview guidelines, and documentation. With this more careful planning, cycle III is expected to be able to achieve the set success indicators, namely at least 85% of students achieve KKM.

3.1.3.2 Stage of Action Implementation

The implementation of actions in cycle III will be carried out on Monday, July 15, 2024, and Monday, July 22, 2024 with a focus on initial reading skills through reading texts entitled "*Bima and Lisa Activities*". The learning process is basically similar to cycle II, but it is given additional actions to overcome previous weaknesses, especially in motivating students to be more active and focused. The teacher starts the activity by presenting the reading text, then the students are divided heterogeneously in pairs. Next, students were asked to retell the content of the reading in front of the class with the help of keywords given by their partners, accompanied by a change of roles in turn. Table 3. Results of the Recapitulation of the Initial Reading Results of Cycle III

	Number Students	of	Percentage
>70	22		88%
<70	3		12%
TOTAL	25		100%
Average		83,2	
Highest Score		95	
Lowest Score		45	

3.1.3.3 Observing Stage

In the observation stage of cycle III, the researcher and the observer again observed the course of Indonesian learning using a cooperative method of *the Paired Story Telling type*. Observations are focused on the implementation of learning, student activity, and the role of teachers in managing the classroom. The results of observations showed that students seemed more enthusiastic and active compared to the previous cycle, both in reading the text, recording keywords, and retelling the content of the reading in front of the class.

3.1.3.4 Reflection Stage

At the reflection stage of cycle III, the researcher and fellow teachers concluded that the implementation of actions with *the Paired Story Telling* method had shown optimal results according to the research target. Student learning outcomes have increased significantly compared to the previous cycle, with the majority of students achieving minimum completeness. Even so, there are still three students who are only able to recognize letters but are not fluent in reading, writing, or arranging letters into solid words. These findings suggest that the methods used are effective in improving the initial reading skills of most students, but for students with very low basic abilities, individualized guidance and specific strategies are still needed.

3 Discussion

The results of the study at the pre-action stage showed that the initial reading ability of grade I students of SDK Ignatius Slamet Riyadi 1 was still relatively low, with an average score of 64 and only 48% of students achieved completeness. This condition reflects that

the learning method used by the previous teacher has not been able to optimize students' basic reading skills, especially in arranging letters into words and words into simple sentences.

In cycle I, learning began using the *Paired Story Telling*, where students are engaged in pairs to read, record keywords, and retell the content of the reading. The results showed an increase in learning outcomes with an average score of 72 and completeness reaching 64%. This improvement shows that the *Paired Story Telling* able to foster student motivation and involvement, as expressed by Silva et al. (2021), that cooperative learning can improve interaction between students and build a sense of responsibility in small groups. However, there are still 9 students who have not completed it, which shows that the application of this method needs to be maximized so that learning outcomes can be evenly distributed.

In cycle II, the application of the *Paired Story Telling* again continued with the improvement of strategies based on the reflection of cycle I. The classroom atmosphere looked more conducive and students were more enthusiastic in participating in reading activities, although there were still a small number of students who lacked focus. The average learning outcome increased to 77 with 80% completeness. This is in line with the opinion Hortigüela Alcalá et al. (2019), which emphasizes that cooperative learning can increase student motivation and learning outcomes due to positive interaction and social support between peers.

The results in cycle III showed a more significant improvement, with an average score of 83.2 and a completeness rate of 88% or 22 students out of 25 students managed to surpass the KKM. This increase is due to the *Paired Story Telling* able to create more interesting, interactive, and foster students' confidence in reading and reconveying the content of the text. These findings are in line with research that states that the use of storytelling strategies in pairs can improve language skills while motivating students to be more active in the learning process (Liu et al., 2018).

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded that the application of traditional clogs games is consistently able to improve early childhood social skills, especially in the aspects of cooperation, communication, sportsmanship, and self-control. The increase in the number of children who showed good social skills from 66.67% in the first cycle to 91.67% in the second cycle proves the effectiveness of learning strategies that integrate play activities with social habits, teacher examples, and positive reinforcement. These findings confirm that traditional games not only function as a means of entertainment, but also as a meaningful educational medium in shaping children's social character from an early age.

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