

Chronological Picture-Based Storytelling to Improve Understanding of Dual Simultaneous Instructions in Early Childhood

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Abstract

Purpose	: This study aimed to improve the language development of children aged 4–5 years, specifically their ability to understand and execute two simultaneous instructions, through chronological picture-based storytelling activities in Group A of TK Pertiwi VII Saruran.
Methodology	: A Classroom Action Research (CAR) design was employed, consisting of two cycles, each incorporating four phases: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The study involved 10 children (aged 4–5 years) in Group A. Data were collected through structured observation checklists using a four-point developmental scale: Not Yet Developed (BB), Beginning to Develop (MB), Developing as Expected (BSH), and Developing Very Well (BSB). Classical mastery was set at 80%.
Results	: In Cycle I, 50% of children (5 out of 10) achieved the mastery threshold. Following instructional refinements in Cycle II (simplification of instruction syntax, integration of commands into story dialogue, and progressive scaffolding), the mastery rate increased to 80% (8 out of 10), meeting the classical mastery criterion.
Conclusions	: Chronological picture-based storytelling is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing the receptive language development of early childhood students. The integration of sequential visual cues with narrative commands provides a structured, engaging, and contextually meaningful scaffold for dual-instruction comprehension. These findings contribute to early childhood language pedagogy and support the use of culturally relevant, visual storytelling as a differentiated instructional tool.

Keywords: chronological picture, classroom action research, dual instructions, early childhood language development, storytelling

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1. Introduction

Language serves as the fundamental medium through which human beings establish social bonds, communicate intentions, and transmit cultural knowledge. In the context of early childhood education (ECE), language development encompasses not only expressive competencies but also receptive capacities, including listening comprehension and the ability to process and respond to spoken instructions. These receptive language skills are foundational to children's cognitive and academic readiness (Hoff, 2014; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002).

Among the developmental benchmarks articulated in Indonesia's national ECE curriculum (Kurikulum 2013 PAUD, Permendikbud No. 137 Tahun 2014), children aged 4–5 years are expected to demonstrate the ability to understand and execute two simultaneous verbal instructions. This indicator, embedded within the language development strand, reflects broader capacities for auditory processing, working memory, sequential reasoning, and attention regulation (Gathercole & Alloway, 2008; Ulfah & Junaedah, 2018). Failure to achieve this milestone during the preschool years may have longitudinal implications for academic performance and communicative competence in formal schooling (Snowling & Hulme, 2012).

In classroom observations conducted at TK Pertiwi VII Saruran during the 2024/2025 academic year, approximately 40% of children in Group A demonstrated incomplete command comprehension. Specific challenges observed included: (1) failure to retain the second instruction; (2) inability to execute instructions without sustained teacher scaffolding; (3) difficulty processing multi-clause or lengthier instruction forms; and (4) attentional fragmentation during instruction delivery. These observations suggest that conventional instructional approaches employed by the classroom teacher since it relied on repetitive verbal commands without multimodal scaffolding and was insufficient for stimulating the targeted receptive language milestone.

Within the ECE literature, storytelling has been identified as a culturally embedded, motivationally effective, and cognitively rich medium for language stimulation (Curenton & Justice, 2004; Nicolopoulou et al., 2015). Storytelling activates children's imaginative engagement, supports narrative comprehension, and provides contextualised exposure to complex language structures (Isbell et al., 2004). In the Indonesian educational context, *dongeng* (traditional folktales) constitutes an integral component of national cultural heritage and has been documented as a meaningful vehicle for early language learning (Helvionita, 2023; Kurniawan, 2018; Zulfitria & Fadhila, 2021).

However, prior classroom action research conducted by Nurhasanah et al. (2021) indicated that storytelling alone produced modest, non-significant effects on dual-instruction comprehension, despite positively influencing children's attentional focus. This finding suggests that storytelling, when unaccompanied by explicit structural scaffolding, may not sufficiently support sequential instruction processing. To address this limitation, the present study introduces an instructional innovation in which storytelling is systematically integrated with chronological picture cards, a visual sequencing tool designed to represent narrative events in temporal order that provides children with an external representational scaffold for encoding and executing multi-step instructions.

Chronological picture sequencing has been shown to enhance narrative comprehension, causal reasoning, and sequential processing in young children (Leyva, 2022; Rowe & Goldin-Meadow, 2009). The integration of such sequencing materials into storytelling activities offers a theoretically grounded and practically implementable approach to supporting receptive language development in early childhood classrooms.

Despite the documented effectiveness of these individual components, no prior study in the Indonesian ECE context has examined their combined use within a CAR framework specifically targeting dual simultaneous instruction comprehension. This research gap motivates the present inquiry.

This study, therefore, aims to investigate the effectiveness of chronological picture-based storytelling (CPBS) in improving the ability of Group A children (aged 4–5 years) at TK Pertiwi VII Saruran to understand and execute two simultaneous instructions, as measured across two instructional cycles. The novelty of this study lies in the deliberate structuring of storytelling content to embed dual-command sequences within narrative dialogue, thereby scaffolding instruction comprehension through repeated, contextualised, and visually supported exposure

2. Methodology

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, selected on the basis that the research problem originated within the classroom context and required iterative, practice-based intervention to address identified learning deficiencies (Suparno, 2019; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). CAR is considered appropriate for educational practitioners seeking to improve specific learning outcomes through cyclical and reflective instructional adjustments (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011; Latief, 2012).

2.1. Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in Group A of TK Pertiwi VII Saruran during Semester II of the 2024/2025 academic year (May 2025). Participants consisted of 10 children aged between 4 and 5 years. All children were enrolled in the same classroom and presented with observable

difficulties in the language development indicator: “understanding and executing two simultaneously delivered instructions” as stipulated under Standar Tingkat Pencapaian Perkembangan Anak (STPPA, Permendikbud No. 137/2014). Purposive sampling was employed, targeting all children within the class cohort demonstrating this specific developmental challenge. Informed consent was obtained from parents and school administration prior to the commencement of data collection.

2.2. Instructional Intervention

The intervention, Chronological Picture-Based Storytelling (CPBS), comprised teacher-delivered oral storytelling supplemented by a sequence of chronological picture cards depicting key narrative events. Story narratives were specifically adapted to incorporate embedded dual-instruction sequences within character dialogue (e.g., a character instructing another to “pick up the card and place it on the table”). Children were subsequently prompted to execute corresponding physical actions, using the picture sequence as a mnemonic and ordering scaffold. Thematic content was aligned with the semester learning theme (Pekerjaan/Occupations) as outlined in the Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran Harian (RPPH).

The CPBS intervention was implemented across two cycles, each comprising four operational phases: (1) Planning – analysis of baseline data, development of instructional materials (RPPH, picture card sequences, story scripts), and preparation of observation instruments; (2) Implementation – classroom delivery of the CPBS intervention; (3) Observation – systematic data collection via structured observational instruments by a trained peer observer; and (4) Reflection – collaborative analysis of observational data to identify patterns, refine intervention design, and plan subsequent cycle activities.

2.3. Instrument and Data Collection

Data were collected through structured observation checklists administered by a trained peer observer during each instructional session. The observation instrument assessed children's performance across four sub-indicators derived from the target developmental milestone: (a) executing two simultaneous commands involving retrieval and placement of storytelling props (chronological picture cards and finger puppets); (b) executing two simultaneous commands using finger puppets consistent with story content; (c) generating two simultaneous commands consistent with a self-sequenced chronological picture; and (d) independently performing two simultaneous commands without teacher prompting.

Each sub-indicator was rated using a four-point developmental scale widely used in Indonesian ECE assessment (K-13, 2014): BB, score 1 – Not Yet Developed; MB, score 2 – Beginning to Develop; BSH, Score 3 – Developing as Expected; and BSB, score 4 – Developing Very Well. Classical mastery was operationally defined as a minimum of 80% of children achieving BSH or BSB in a given cycle.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive quantitative methods. The primary metric was the percentage of children achieving the classical mastery criterion (BSH or BSB) per cycle. Inter-rater reliability was ensured through a briefing protocol with the peer observer prior to data collection. Reflective analysis following each cycle was used to generate actionable recommendations for instructional improvement in subsequent cycles.

3. Results

Results are presented sequentially for the pre-cycle baseline, Cycle I, and Cycle II, in alignment with the CAR design.

3.1. Baseline Observations (Pre-Cycle)

Baseline observations conducted prior to any intervention confirmed the presence of the identified learning problem across approximately 40% of the class cohort. The majority of children exhibited at least one of the following: difficulty retaining the second instruction,

dependence on sustained teacher scaffolding, challenges with multi-clause instruction forms, and attentional fragmentation. These baseline observations established the empirical justification for the CPBS intervention. The overall mastery rates across both intervention cycles are summarised in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Percentage of children reaching mastery threshold per cycle

3.2. Cycle I Results

Following the implementation of the first CPBS cycle, observational data revealed that 5 out of 10 children (50%) achieved the mastery threshold (BSH or BSB), as shown in Table 1. Three children (SA, TA, EF) remained at the BB level, demonstrating no independent command execution. Two children (UA, BA) were rated at MB, indicating emergent but heavily scaffolded command comprehension. Five children (GY, AB, KJY, KGT, FK) achieved BSH, demonstrating emerging independent execution with minimal teacher support.

Table 1. Observational Results – Cycle I

No.	Subject	Score	Category	Status
1	SA	1 (BB)	Not Yet Developed	Not Achieved
2	UA	2 (MB)	Beginning to Develop	Not Achieved
3	EF	1 (BB)	Not Yet Developed	Not Achieved
4	TA	1 (BB)	Not Yet Developed	Not Achieved
5	BA	2 (MB)	Beginning to Develop	Not Achieved
6	GY	3 (BSH)	Developing as Expected	Achieved
7	AB	3 (BSH)	Developing as Expected	Achieved
8	KJY	3 (BSH)	Developing as Expected	Achieved
9	KGT	3 (BSH)	Developing as Expected	Achieved
10	FK	3 (BSH)	Developing as Expected	Achieved

Note. BB = Not Yet Developed; MB = Beginning to Develop; BSH = Developing as Expected; BSB = Developing Very Well. Classical mastery criterion = 80%.

Reflective analysis of Cycle I identified four primary instructional issues contributing to the 50% mastery rate: (1) narrative dialogue did not sufficiently foreground instruction sequences; (2) instruction syntax was overly complex for the 4–5-year developmental register; (3) picture card sequencing was insufficiently integrated with direct command execution; and (4) classroom environmental distractors disrupted attentional engagement. These findings informed targeted instructional refinements implemented in Cycle II.

3.3. Cycle II Results

Following intervention refinements, Cycle II results demonstrated a substantial improvement in children's dual-instruction comprehension. As shown in Table 2, 8 out of 10 children (80%) achieved the mastery threshold, meeting the pre-established classical mastery criterion. Of these, four children (GY, AB, KJY, KGT) progressed to BSB, demonstrating fully independent dual-instruction execution. Four children (SA, TA, EF, FK) achieved BSH. Two children (UA, BA) remained at MB and did not meet the mastery threshold, indicating the need for continued individualised support.

Table 2. Observational Results – Cycle II

No.	Subject	Score	Category	Status
1	SA	3 (BSH)	Developing as Expected	Achieved
2	UA	2 (MB)	Beginning to Develop	Not Achieved
3	EF	3 (BSH)	Developing as Expected	Achieved
4	TA	3 (BSH)	Developing as Expected	Achieved
5	BA	2 (MB)	Beginning to Develop	Not Achieved
6	GY	4 (BSB)	Developing Very Well	Achieved
7	AB	4 (BSB)	Developing Very Well	Achieved
8	KJY	4 (BSB)	Developing Very Well	Achieved
9	KGT	4 (BSB)	Developing Very Well	Achieved
10	FK	3 (BSH)	Developing as Expected	Achieved

Note. BB = Not Yet Developed; MB = Beginning to Develop; BSH = Developing as Expected; BSB = Developing Very Well. Classical mastery criterion = 80%.

The shift in developmental categories across cycles is illustrated in Figure 2. The number of children in the BB and MB categories declined markedly, while BSH and BSB categories increased, reflecting a broad upward trend in dual-instruction comprehension across the group.

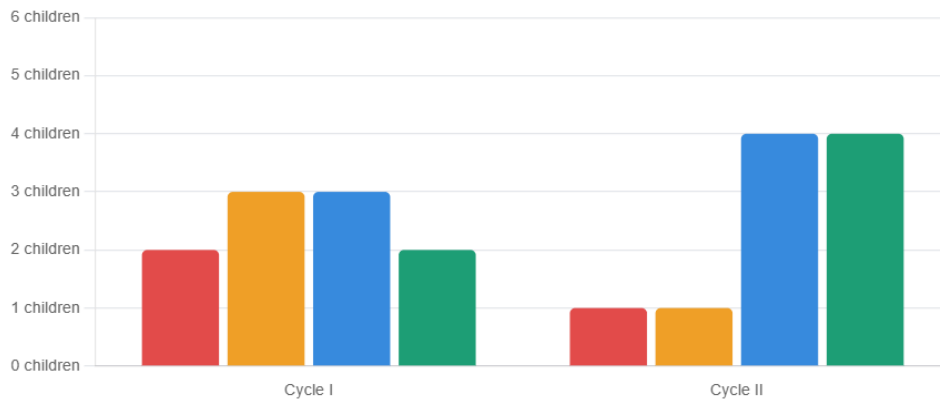


Figure 2. Distribution of developmental categories in Cycle I and Cycle II (n = 10)

The overall progression from 50% mastery in Cycle I to 80% in Cycle II represents a 30 percentage-point improvement, confirming that the refined CPBS intervention was effective in achieving the target learning outcome within the CAR framework. Individual progress across all ten children is illustrated in Figure 3.

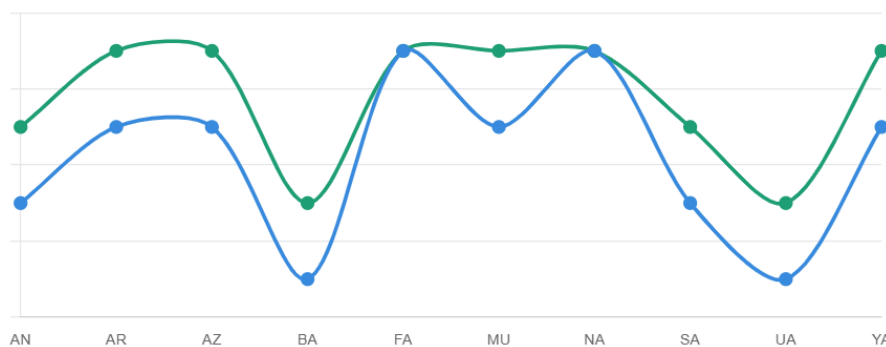


Figure 3. Individual progress of each child from Cycle I to Cycle II

Figure 3 illustrates that eight out of ten children demonstrated measurable upward movement between Cycle I and Cycle II. The most pronounced gains were recorded among GY, AB, KJY, and KGT, each of whom advanced from BSH (score 3) to BSB (score 4), indicating fully independent dual-instruction execution by the end of the intervention. SA, EF, and TA showed

notable improvement from BB (score 1) to BSH (score 3), reflecting a two-level progression within a single intervention cycle. FK maintained a BSH rating across both cycles, suggesting stable but plateaued development that may benefit from further differentiated reinforcement. In contrast, UA and BA remained at the MB level (score 2) in both cycles, representing the only two children who did not meet the classical mastery criterion. Their stagnant trajectories, visible as flat lines in Figure 3, suggest that the CPBS intervention, while effective for the majority, may be insufficient as a standalone strategy for children with more limited working memory capacity or attentional regulation at this developmental stage.

4. Discussion

The 30 percentage-point gain in mastery across two cycles indicates that combining storytelling with chronological picture cards produces a more effective scaffold for dual-instruction comprehension than storytelling alone. Nurhasanah et al. (2021) previously found that conventional mendongeng improved children's attention but had limited impact on instruction execution. The present results suggest that adding a visual sequencing component addresses precisely the gap that prior storytelling-only interventions left open, namely the children's difficulty in holding and ordering two commands in memory long enough to act on them.

This finding aligns with Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1986), which holds that information encoded through both verbal and visual channels is retained more reliably than information delivered through speech alone. When the teacher narrated a command sequence and children simultaneously viewed its chronological picture representation, two complementary memory traces were formed. The picture strip effectively externalised the serial order of the instructions, reducing the burden placed on young children's still-developing working memory (Gathercole & Alloway, 2008; Baddeley, 2003).

The cultural dimension of the intervention also merits attention. Dongeng occupies a well-established place in Indonesian family and classroom life, and its familiarity lowers the affective threshold for engagement (Helvionita, 2023; Kurniawan, 2018). Children who are already drawn into a story are more attentive to the language within it, including the embedded commands. Zulfitria and Fadhila (2021) noted similar motivational advantages in their study of dongeng-based linguistic intelligence activities. Embedding dual instructions inside character dialogue therefore exploits an existing motivational resource rather than requiring teachers to introduce an entirely unfamiliar practice.

The Cycle II refinements shed light on which instructional variables matter most. Simplifying command syntax to SPOK format and repeating the same command pairs across multiple story sessions gave children repeated, low-complexity exposure to the target structure. This is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development: when the linguistic form of the instruction was within reach and the picture sequence provided ordering support, children were able to act independently. Where the syntax remained complex or environmental distractions were present, performance faltered, underscoring that attentional regulation is a co-determining factor at this developmental stage (Diamond, 2013).

The two children who did not reach mastery by Cycle II are worth considering separately. Both UA and BA showed progress relative to their Cycle I scores yet remained at the MB level. Individual differences in phonological working memory and attentional control are known predictors of receptive language outcomes in 4-5-year-olds (Gathercole et al., 2004), and a two-cycle classroom intervention may simply be insufficient for children at the lower end of these capacities. Targeted one-to-one sessions using shortened instruction pairs and higher repetition frequency would be a logical next step for these learners, and future CAR studies might incorporate such differentiated tracks within the broader intervention design.

From a practical standpoint, the CPBS approach asks little of resource-constrained ECE settings. Picture cards can be hand-drawn or printed at low cost, reused across thematic units, and prepared within the existing RPPH planning routine. The approach does not require

specialist training beyond an orientation to the sequencing rationale. Its primary limitation is the small single-site sample ($n = 10$) without a comparison group, which makes it difficult to isolate the contribution of the picture cards from other contextual factors. Replication across multiple schools with larger cohorts, and ideally with a quasi-experimental control condition, is needed before broader recommendations can be made with confidence.

5. Conclusion

This study showed that chronological picture-based storytelling can effectively improve dual simultaneous instruction comprehension in children aged 4-5 years. Over two CAR cycles, the proportion of children reaching the mastery threshold rose from 50% to 80%. The key mechanism appears to be the visual sequencing scaffold provided by the picture cards, which supports working memory and helps children organise and execute two-step commands more reliably. The approach is low-cost, culturally appropriate, and well-suited to the Indonesian ECE context. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the storytelling content so that dual commands are embedded directly into character dialogue, repeated across sessions, and paired with simple, concrete picture sequences. Further research involving larger and more diverse samples is needed to confirm these findings and to examine how the approach performs across different age groups and cultural storytelling traditions.

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