

Type Improving Listening Skills through Paper Puppets for Fifth-Grade Students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency

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ABSTRACT

This classroom action research (CAR) was conducted to determine whether the use of paper puppet media could improve the listening skills of fifth-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency, in Indonesian language learning. The study followed the Kemmis and McTaggart model, comprising two cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, conducted during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. At the outset, only **62.97%** of the 27 students demonstrated adequate listening skills. Following the implementation of paper puppet media, classical mastery of listening skills increased progressively across meetings, from 33% to 44%, then 59%, and finally reaching **78%** by the end of Cycle II, exceeding the $\geq 75\%$ success criterion. Among the four listening indicators assessed, identifying the main information in a story showed the most substantial improvement, while sustaining concentration remained the most resistant to change. As this study used a single-group, reflection-based CAR design rather than an experimental design, these findings indicate that paper puppet media supported measurable improvement in listening skills within this classroom context.

Keywords : Listening Skills, Paper Puppets, Ability

INTRODUCTION

Learning is a process of interaction between teachers and students aimed at achieving predetermined educational objectives. According to (Pulukadang, 2021, p. 6), learning is essentially an interaction process among children, between children and learning resources, and between children and educators. The learning process is not merely the transfer of knowledge from teachers to students; it also involves the development of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. In its implementation, effective learning requires the support of various interconnected components, including appropriate teaching methods, instructional media, and learning strategies, to ensure that the teaching and learning process is carried out optimally.

Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level plays a crucial role in developing students' language skills from an early age. Indonesian serves as the language of instruction in education and encompasses four primary language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Among these skills, listening is a fundamental component in developing students' language competence. In line with the view of (Sofiah et al. 2021, p. 268), listening plays a vital role in daily life because it enables individuals to obtain the information they need.

Through listening, students gain access to a wide range of insights, knowledge, and experiences that support the development of other language skills. Listening is an essential language skill because.

Listening is a fundamental aspect of everyday life because it enables individuals to understand the meaning of orally conveyed information. This ability helps prevent miscommunication resulting from misunderstandings. Therefore, the primary purpose of listening is to ensure that the information received can be understood and utilized appropriately, both for personal benefit and for the benefit of others (Gusnesti, 2020, p. 3).

The primary objective of Indonesian language learning in elementary schools is to equip students with the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately, both orally and in writing. In addition, it aims to enhance students' thinking skills and broaden their knowledge. Students are also expected to comprehend information presented both explicitly and implicitly. Based on the 2013 Curriculum, listening is one of the essential competencies that students, particularly those in Grade 5 of elementary school, are required to master. Students are expected to listen to information from various sources, identify the main ideas, and communicate the information back using clear, accurate, and simple language.

Based on an interview with the Grade 5 homeroom teacher, it was found that the students' listening difficulties were reflected in several indicators: (1) students were unable to answer simple questions about the story they had listened to; (2) students experienced difficulty in retelling the story in a logical sequence, including at least three essential elements such as the characters, setting, and events; (3) students were unable to identify the main information presented in the text, including the main character and the moral message of the story; and (4) students had difficulty maintaining focus during listening activities, as indicated by an attention span of less than 10 minutes. Several factors contributed to the students' low listening proficiency. Field observations further revealed that listening ability remained a significant challenge. Based on a preliminary observation conducted in Grade 5 at SDN 3 Tabongo in May 2025, only 17 out of 27 students (62.97%) demonstrated satisfactory listening skills, while the remaining 10 students (37.03%) continued to experience difficulties in several aspects of listening comprehension.

The low level of students' listening ability can be attributed to several factors. First, students show limited interest in listening activities delivered directly by the teacher, causing them to merely hear the information rather than actively comprehend the lesson. Second, students have difficulty understanding the vocabulary related to the learning material, which often leads to distraction and off-task behavior during classroom activities. In addition, the learning process tends to be monotonous and lacks instructional variety. Another contributing factor is the limited use of engaging instructional media that can capture students' attention, largely due to inadequate facilities and infrastructure to support the teaching and learning process.

The Grade 5 teacher at SDN 3 Tabongo stated that various efforts had been made to improve students' listening skills, including reading stories aloud with expressive intonation and using printed visual illustrations. However, these approaches had not produced optimal results. To enhance students' interest and motivation in learning, the selection of appropriate instructional media is essential. The media used should effectively support students' understanding of the learning material. Furthermore, the rapid development of technology

calls for greater efficiency and effectiveness in the teaching and learning process. Instructional media serve as a means of conveying messages from the teacher to the learners. One traditional instructional medium with considerable potential to improve listening skills is paper puppets. This medium integrates visual images, oral narration, and movement, making it highly compatible with the learning characteristics of fifth-grade elementary school students.

Although several studies have documented the benefits of puppet-based media for listening instruction, most of this evidence comes from quasi-experimental designs that compare a treatment group with a control group at a single point in time (Kurniawati, n.d.; Walha, 2025). Comparatively little is known about how such media perform when embedded in an iterative, reflection-driven process of the kind used in classroom action research, where the teacher deliberately revises the intervention between meetings based on observed weaknesses. Doludea and Nuraeni (2018) examined paper puppets with early-childhood learners (ages 5–6) in a non-classroom setting, while Rahmawati's (2021) and Kurniawati's studies used cartoon-style puppets rather than paper puppets and did not disaggregate listening skill into distinct cognitive indicators. The present study addresses this gap by tracking four specific listening indicators — answering questions, retelling a story, identifying main information, and sustaining concentration — across four consecutive meetings with fifth-grade students, thereby showing not only whether paper puppet media improves listening as a global outcome, but which components of listening respond to the intervention, and at what point in the cyclical process.

Paper puppet media provides substantial support for the learning process in several ways. First, it captures students' interest through the visual representation of story characters. Second, it helps students understand the storyline by using puppet movements to depict events in the narrative. Third, it enhances students' concentration, as they are required to listen attentively while simultaneously observing the movements of the puppets. Finally, it creates an enjoyable learning.

In a study conducted by (Doludea, 2018), the use of puppet media in Indonesian language learning was found to increase students' interest in and understanding of the instructional material. The study concluded that students' listening skills improved significantly after the implementation of storytelling activities using paper puppets. This improvement was reflected in positive changes in students' behavior, as they became more attentive to the teacher, maintained visual focus on the presenter, and were less likely to be distracted by their classmates, such as by chatting or moving from their seats. Furthermore, students demonstrated better comprehension by identifying the characters and their roles in the story, retelling the sequence of events coherently, and responding appropriately to the story by expressing their likes or dislikes. They were also able to answer questions at the end of the activity and identify the moral message conveyed in the story.

Based on the findings from the preliminary observations and interviews described above, the researcher was motivated to conduct a classroom action research study entitled "Improving Students' Listening Skills through the Use of Paper Puppet Media in Grade 5 at SDN 3 Tabongo." This study is expected to provide a practical solution to address the problem of

students' low listening proficiency through the use of engaging instructional media that are appropriate to the learning characteristics of fifth-grade elementary school students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is grounded in two main concepts: listening skills and the use of paper puppet media as an instructional medium for teaching listening in elementary schools.

Listening Skills

Listening is a receptive language skill that serves as the foundation for the development of other language skills. Students' listening skills can be assessed through four indicators: (1) the ability to answer simple questions about the content of a story (Nurgiyantoro, 2018); (2) the ability to retell a story in a logical sequence, including its characters, setting, and events (Nurgiyantoro, 2018); (3) the ability to identify key information, such as the main characters and the moral message of the story

From a cognitive perspective, listening is not a passive act of hearing but an active process comprising several sequential stages. Within this framework, the four indicators used in the present study can be mapped onto specific cognitive demands: answering simple questions (A1) and identifying main information (A3) draw primarily on the parsing and utilization stages, since they require the listener to extract and organize propositional content; retelling the story in sequence (A2) additionally requires the listener to reconstruct a coherent mental model of the narrative, integrating characters, setting, and events; and sustaining concentration (A4) reflects the perceptual-attentional stage that underlies the other three, because without sustained attention, the acoustic input needed for parsing and utilization is incomplete or degraded. Framing the four indicators within this comprehension model, rather than treating them as an ad hoc checklist, clarifies why difficulties in one indicator (e.g., low concentration) can be expected to constrain performance on the others.

Paper Puppet Medium

Paper puppet media are two-dimensional instructional tools made of paper in the form of story characters and equipped with handles that allow them to be moved while conveying messages or narrating stories to students. (Sadiman 2016, p. 23) defines instructional media as anything that can be used to deliver messages from the sender to the receiver in a way that stimulates students' thoughts, feelings, attention, and interest during the learning process. As a form of graphic media, paper puppets enhance the clarity of message delivery while attracting students' attention through the combined use of images, colors, and movement (Sadiman et al., 2016, p. 17).

The use of paper puppets in the learning process offers several educational benefits. (Arsyad 2020, p. 25) states that visual media, such as paper puppets, can enhance students' motivation and interest in learning, facilitate the understanding of abstract concepts through concrete representations, and improve long-term information retention. (Kurniawan 2025) found that the use of paper puppets creates an engaging and enjoyable learning environment, encouraging students to participate more actively and enthusiastically. Similarly, (Walha, 2025) demonstrated that paper puppets incorporating folktales are effective in improving the

listening skills of fifth-grade elementary school students. Nevertheless, (Ngafifatul, 2021) noted that the successful implementation of this instructional medium requires a high level of creativity in its design and presentation, as well as teachers' skill in manipulating the puppet characters to ensure that the intended messages are communicated effectively.

Beyond describing the physical characteristics of paper puppets, it is important to clarify the pedagogical mechanism through which this medium is expected to influence listening outcomes. Two features appear central. First, the synchronized pairing of spoken narration with a corresponding visual-motion cue (the moving puppet) provides an external anchor for attention: as long as students continue to track the puppet's movement, their attention is more likely to remain coupled to the ongoing narration, which directly supports the concentration indicator (A4). Second, because each character and event in the story is represented by a distinct, memorable visual form, paper puppets are expected to strengthen the encoding of the narrative's structural elements — who did what, where, and in what order — which in turn supports the retelling (A2) and main-information (A3) indicators. In other words, the visual and narrative elements of paper puppets are not merely decorative; they are hypothesized to operate on attention allocation and on the organization of narrative memory, the two cognitive components most closely tied to the listening indicators measured in this study.

Theoretically, the suitability of paper puppet media for elementary school students can be explained through children's cognitive development. Piaget (as cited in Santrock, 2021, p. 318) explains that children aged 7–11 years are in the concrete operational stage, during which they learn most effectively through concrete objects and visual representations. Paper puppets provide a tangible visual representation of story characters and plot, making them well suited to the cognitive characteristics of students at this developmental stage. This view is supported by the findings of (Doludea and Nuraeni, 2018), who reported that storytelling using paper puppets significantly improved children's listening skills, as evidenced by both higher test scores and more positive listening behaviors during classroom instruction.

Relevant Research

Several prior studies provide relevant points of comparison for the present research, while also revealing gaps that this study seeks to address. Rahmawati (2021) investigated the improvement of fifth-grade students' fairy-tale listening skills at SDN Mangunsari, Semarang, using the Paired Storytelling model combined with cartoon puppet media, and reported teacher activity increasing from 57.5% to 87.5% across two cycles. This study is similar to the present one in its use of a classroom action research design and cyclical improvement in teacher performance, but it combined the puppet medium with a specific cooperative storytelling model, making it difficult to isolate the contribution of the puppet medium itself. Kurniawati (n.d.), examining the effect of cartoon puppet media on story-listening skills among third-grade students at MI Jam'iyatul Khair, East Ciputat, used a quasi-experimental design with a control group and reported a statistically significant treatment effect ($t = 2.657 > t\text{-table} = 2.0017$, $p = 0.010$; experimental mean 88.13 versus control mean 80.03). Unlike the present study, that design isolates the medium's effect through between-group comparison at a single time point, but it does not show how the medium's effectiveness develops or is refined across successive teaching cycles, nor does it

examine fifth-grade learners. Doludea and Nuraeni (2018) reported that storytelling with paper puppets improved listening-related behavior among early-childhood learners (ages 5–6) in a non-classroom, non-cyclical setting, which differs from the present study's use of curriculum-embedded, cyclical classroom action research with fifth-grade students. Taken together, these studies consistently indicate a positive association between puppet-based media and listening outcomes, but they differ from the present study in research design (experimental versus action research), age group, and the specific puppet format used (cartoon puppets versus paper puppets). The present study is distinguished by combining a reflection-driven, multi-cycle CAR design with a fine-grained, four-indicator assessment of listening skill among fifth-grade students, allowing it to show not only whether paper puppet media is associated with improved listening, but which specific listening components respond most readily to the intervention and which remain resistant across cycles — a level of diagnostic detail that the group-comparison studies above do not provide.

Conceptual Framework and Action Hypothesis

Based on the theoretical review and the findings of previous relevant studies, paper puppet media are considered a promising response to students' low listening skills, which the preliminary observation associated with limited active engagement, insufficient vocabulary mastery, and a lack of visual support in conventional instruction. Figure 1 summarizes the conceptual framework guiding this study: paper puppet media, delivered through a teacher-led learning process, are hypothesized to strengthen students' attention and active engagement, which supports the underlying listening-comprehension processes (perception, parsing, and utilization), which in turn are reflected in the four observable listening indicators (A1–A4) and, cumulatively, in classical listening mastery. The dashed arrow in the figure represents the cyclical reflection built into the Kemmis and McTaggart model, whereby the outcome of each meeting informs adjustments to the subsequent learning process. Therefore, the action hypothesis proposed in this study is that the implementation of paper puppet media can improve the listening skills of fifth-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo in Indonesian language learning.

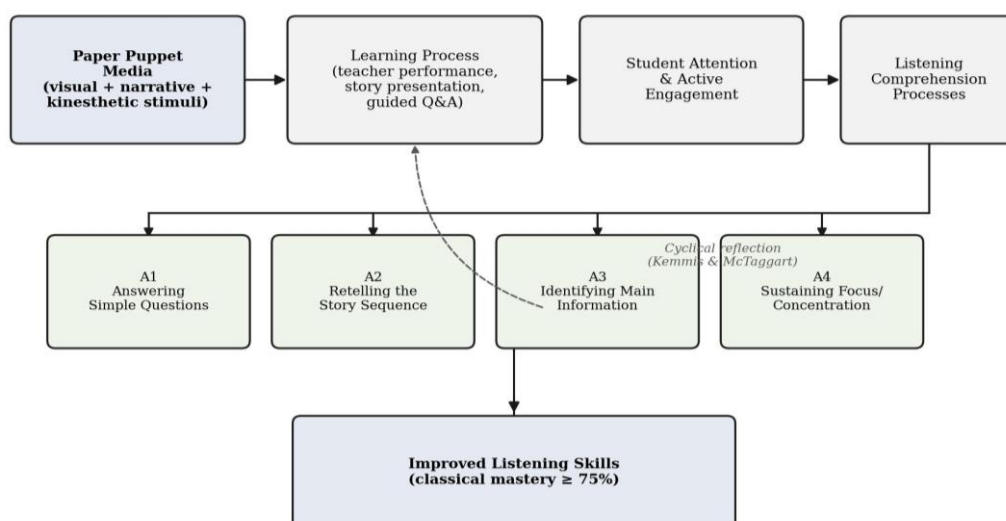


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Linking Paper Puppet Media to Listening Skill Indicators

METHODS

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach aimed at improving the listening skills of fifth-grade students in Indonesian language learning through the implementation of paper puppet media. The research design was based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which consists of four stages in each cycle: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. These stages were carried out repeatedly until the predetermined indicators of success were achieved.

Research Setting and Subjects

The study was conducted at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency, Gorontalo Province, during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. This school was selected because classroom instruction was still predominantly based on conventional and monotonous teaching methods. In addition, the instructional media used were insufficiently engaging and interactive, students' participation in classroom activities remained low, their ability to sustain attention for extended periods was limited, and their listening skills—particularly in understanding and recalling story content—were still underdeveloped. The research participants consisted of all fifth-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo.

The 27 participating students (14 boys and 13 girls, aged 10–11 years) represented the entire fifth-grade cohort at SDN 3 Tabongo, taught by a single homeroom teacher who also served as the collaborating teacher in this study. Prior to the intervention, students' listening ability was documented through a preliminary observation conducted in May 2025 together with an interview with the homeroom teacher. This preliminary assessment showed that only 17 of the 27 students (62.97%) demonstrated adequate listening skills, while the remaining 10 students (37.03%) exhibited difficulties in at least one of the four listening indicators, most commonly in identifying main information and sustaining concentration. Classroom instruction prior to the intervention relied primarily on teacher-led verbal storytelling without dedicated visual media, which the teacher reported using inconsistently due to limited instructional materials at the school. This initial profile — a single intact class with heterogeneous but generally below-target listening ability, and no prior structured use of visual storytelling media — provided the baseline against which the paper puppet intervention was implemented and evaluated.

Research Variables

This study involved an independent variable, namely the use of paper puppet media in listening instruction, and a dependent variable, namely students' listening skills. The dependent variable was assessed using four indicators: the ability to answer questions, retell the content of a story, identify the main information, and maintain concentration throughout the listening activity.

Research Procedure

The study was conducted in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of two meetings and following the four stages of Classroom Action Research (CAR). During the planning stage, the researcher prepared lesson plans based on the use of paper puppet media, developed the

instructional media and supporting materials, designed the assessment instruments and observation sheets, and administered a pre-test to assess students' initial listening skills. During the acting stage, the teacher presented a story using paper puppet media with appropriate intonation and puppet movements that matched the storyline. This was followed by group discussions and the completion of students' worksheets (LKPD). During the **observing** stage, the researcher and the collaborating teacher observed both teacher and student activities throughout the learning process using the prepared observation sheets. A post-test was also administered at the end of each cycle to measure students' listening skills. Finally, during the reflecting stage, the observation and test results were analyzed to determine whether the predetermined success indicators had been achieved or whether the research should proceed to the next cycle with improvements to the action plan.

To reduce subjectivity in scoring the teacher and student activity observation sheets, both instruments were completed using pre-defined behavioral descriptors rather than global impressions: each of the 18–20 teacher-activity items and 11–12 student-activity items was written as a specific, observable action (e.g., "the teacher introduces the puppet characters before beginning the story" or "the student maintains eye contact with the puppet during the performance") rather than a general quality judgment. Observations were conducted jointly and in real time by the researcher and the collaborating teacher, positioned so that both had an unobstructed view of the class, and each rated the same lesson independently before comparing results at the end of each meeting; any discrepancy in the recorded score for a given item was resolved through discussion referring back to the descriptor and, where available, the documented photographs or video of the lesson. This dual-observer procedure, together with the item-level behavioral descriptors, was intended to minimize impressionistic scoring and to increase the consistency of the observation data used to track teacher and student activity across meetings.

Data collection technique

Data were collected using three techniques: observation, tests, and documentation. Observation was conducted to monitor the teacher's implementation of paper puppet media, as well as students' activities and responses during the listening instruction. Tests were administered to assess students' listening skills following the implementation of the paper puppet media. The assessment covered students' ability to answer questions about the story, identify the characters, explain the sequence of events, infer the moral message, and retell the story in their own words. Documentation, including photographs and videos of classroom activities, students' work, and lesson plan (RPP) documents, was collected as supporting evidence of the implementation of the classroom action.

Research Instrument

The research instruments consisted of a teacher activity observation sheet, a student activity observation sheet, and a listening skills test. The teacher activity observation sheet assessed the implementation of the introductory, core, and closing stages of the lesson using a Yes/No rating scale. Meanwhile, the student activity observation sheet employed a four-point rating scale—very good, good, fair, and poor—across eleven observation indicators. The listening

skills test was evaluated based on four aspects: answering questions, retelling the story, identifying the main information, and maintaining concentration during the listening activity. Each aspect was scored on a scale ranging from 1 (unable) to 3 (able).

The listening skills test was developed based on the four theoretical indicators described in the Literature Review (answering questions, retelling the story, identifying main information, and sustaining concentration) so that each test item corresponded directly to a specific indicator, providing content validity. The instrument was further reviewed by the collaborating teacher and examined against the guidance of the study's academic advisors to confirm that the language, item difficulty, and scoring rubric were appropriate for fifth-grade students before it was used in Cycle I. Scoring consistency was supported by the use of an explicit three-level rubric (score 1–3) with descriptive criteria for each level of each indicator (see the assessment rubric in the Research Instrument section), which both the researcher and the collaborating teacher used independently when scoring student worksheets; scores were then compared and discussed to resolve discrepancies, a procedure intended to approximate inter-rater consistency given that a formal inter-rater reliability coefficient was not computed in this study. This is acknowledged as a methodological limitation, and future replications of this instrument are encouraged to report a formal reliability estimate (e.g., Cohen's kappa for rater agreement).

Data Analysis Techniques

The research data were analyzed at the end of each cycle using descriptive quantitative analysis. Individual listening skill scores were calculated by dividing the score obtained by the maximum possible score and multiplying the result by 100%. Classical learning mastery was determined by dividing the number of students who achieved mastery by the total number of students and multiplying the result by 100%, with a minimum criterion of 75% for class mastery. The percentages of teacher and student activities were calculated by comparing the number of completed aspects or obtained scores with the total number of aspects or maximum possible scores, and were then classified into the following qualitative categories: very good (87–100%), good (75–86%), fair (65–74%), and poor (<64%). The study was considered successful when the predetermined criteria for the learning process, student learning outcomes, and teacher performance were achieved by the end of Cycle II.

The success criteria adopted in this study — a minimum of 80% active student participation, classical listening mastery of at least 75% of students scoring ≥ 75 , and a minimum teacher performance score of 75 (categorized as good) — follow the classroom action research convention established by Arikunto, Suhardjono, and Supardi (2012), who define classical mastery of $\geq 75\%$ as the threshold at which a classroom intervention can be considered pedagogically successful and eligible for discontinuation of further cycles. This threshold is also consistent with the Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) policy commonly applied in Indonesian primary schools, under which a class is considered to have achieved mastery of a competency when at least 75% of students reach the minimum passing score for that competency. Anchoring the study's success criteria in this established convention, rather than an arbitrarily chosen cutoff, situates the present study's benchmark for success within both

the classroom action research literature and standard Indonesian elementary assessment policy.

RESULTS

This classroom action research was conducted with 27 fifth-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency, focusing on improving students' listening skills in Indonesian language learning through the use of paper puppet media. Data were collected over two action cycles, each consisting of two meetings (Cycle I: Meetings 1 and 2; Cycle II: Meetings 1 and 2), using three research instruments: (1) a teacher activity observation sheet, (2) a student activity observation sheet, and (3) a written listening skills test covering four assessment aspects: A1 (the ability to answer simple questions about the story), A2 (the ability to retell the story in the correct sequence), A3 (the ability to identify the main information in the text), and A4 (students' focus and concentration during listening activities). The success criterion was established at $\geq 75\%$ of students achieving a score of ≥ 75 (classical learning mastery).

The data were analyzed descriptively and presented as percentages for each meeting. The results were then compared across meetings to identify trends in improvement, which served as the basis for determining whether the intervention should be continued to the subsequent cycle. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 1 and Figure 2.

Table 1. Recapitulation of Teacher Activity, Student Activity, and Listening Skills Mastery at Each Meeting

Stages	Teacher Activities (%)	Student Activities (%)	Students who have mastered the material (n)	Students who have mastered the material (%)	The students have not yet mastered the material. (n)
Cycle I, Meeting I	64	52	9	33%	18
Cycle I, Meeting II	72	68	12	44%	15
Cycle II, Meeting I	94	89	16	59%	11
Cycle II, Meeting II	97	98	21	78%	6

Note: The criterion for classical learning mastery was set at $\geq 75\%$ of students achieving a score of ≥ 75 .

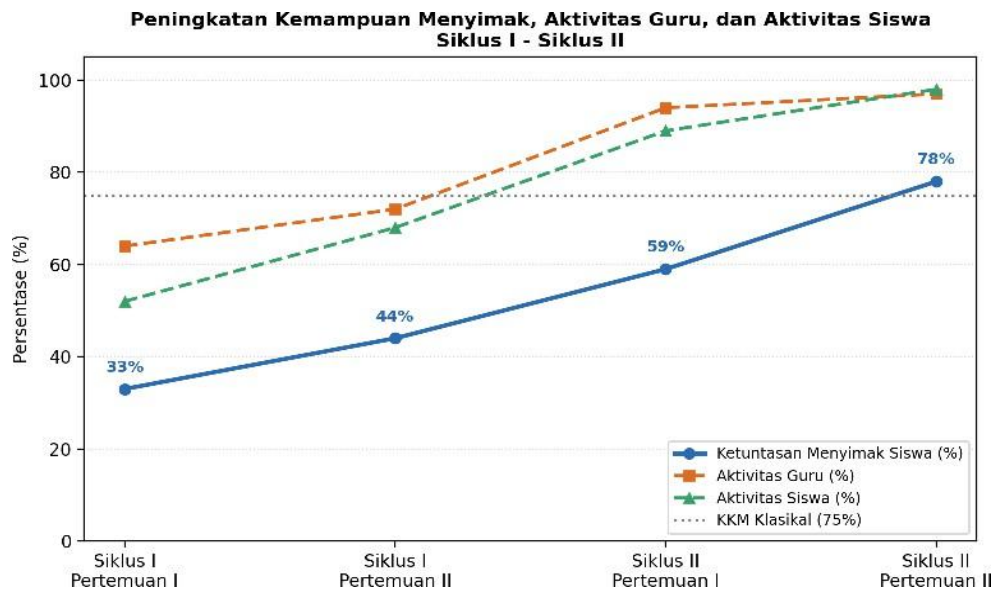


Figure 2. Improvement in Listening Skills, Teacher Activity, and Student Activity from Cycle I to Cycle II

Table 1 and Figure 2 show that all three observed variables improved consistently across each meeting. The percentage of students achieving listening mastery increased from 33% (9 students) in Cycle I, Meeting 1 to 44% (12 students) in Cycle I, Meeting 2, then rose to 59% (16 students) in Cycle II, Meeting 1, and finally reached 78% (21 students) in Cycle II, Meeting 2. This final result exceeded the predetermined criterion for classical learning mastery ($\geq 75\%$ of students achieving a score of ≥ 75). Therefore, the intervention was considered successful, and no further action cycles were conducted.

A similar pattern of improvement was observed in teacher and student activities. Teacher activity increased from 64% to 97%, while student activity improved from 52% to 98%. These concurrent improvements across all three indicators suggest a positive relationship between the quality of instructional implementation by the teacher, students' active engagement in the learning process, and the achievement of learning outcomes.

This concurrent pattern is consistent with, though not sufficient on its own to establish, a causal relationship between instructional quality and listening outcomes. Two pieces of within-study evidence make this interpretation more defensible than a coincidental co-occurrence. First, the timing of the sharpest gain in listening mastery (from 44% to 59% between Cycle I, Meeting 2 and Cycle II, Meeting 1) directly followed the largest single-meeting increase in teacher activity (from 72% to 94%), which in turn followed a specific reflective change — the introduction of guiding questions during the storytelling rather than only afterward. Second, the aspect most directly dependent on teacher-led questioning (A3, identifying main information) showed its sharpest increase in that same meeting, while aspects less dependent on real-time teacher facilitation (A1, A2) had already been improving in earlier meetings. This alignment between a specific pedagogical change, its timing, and the specific indicator it would be expected to affect provides more targeted support for a instructional-quality-to-outcome link than the overall correlation of the three trend lines

alone, although a controlled comparison would be required to rule out alternative explanations such as maturation or repeated testing.

The results for each listening skill aspect (Table 2) indicate that the four assessed aspects exhibited different patterns of improvement.

Table 2. Percentage Achievement for Each Listening Skill Aspect at Each Meeting

Aspect	S1 P1 (%)	S1 P2 (%)	S2P1 (%)	S2P2 (%)		Aspect Description	
A1	68			77	88	93	Answering simple questions
A2	53			72	88	93	Reconstructing the story
Aspect	S1 P1 (%)			S1 P2 (%)	S2P1 (%)	S2P2 (%)	Aspect Description
A3	51			63	69	91	Identifying key information
A4	56			64	73	63	Focus/concentration while listening

Aspects A1 (answering simple questions) and A2 (retelling the story in the correct sequence) demonstrated the most consistent improvement, with both reaching 93% at the final meeting. Aspect A3 (identifying the main information) recorded the lowest achievement during the first three meetings (51%, 63%, and 69%, respectively) before increasing sharply to 91% in Cycle II, Meeting 2. In contrast, Aspect A4 (focus and concentration during listening) was the only aspect that did not exhibit a monotonic improvement. After increasing from 56% to 73% over the first three meetings, it declined to 63% at the final meeting, although the overall criterion for classical learning mastery was still achieved. This finding is noteworthy because it differs from the overall upward trend observed in the other listening skill aspects.

Interpreted through the listening-comprehension stages discussed in the Literature Review, this pattern suggests that the parsing-level indicators — A1 (answering questions) and A2 (retelling the story) — responded earliest and most consistently to the paper puppet intervention, plausibly because the synchronized narration-and-movement format of the puppets gave students a concrete referent for tracking who did what in the story from the very first meeting. Aspect A3 (identifying main information), which requires the additional utilization-level step of abstracting a moral message or central idea rather than simply recalling stated facts, lagged behind A1 and A2 for three consecutive meetings before improving sharply once the teacher began asking guiding questions during, rather than only after, the storytelling (introduced in Cycle II, Meeting 1). This suggests that A3 was less a function of the visual medium alone than of the accompanying questioning strategy, indicating that paper puppets are more effective when deliberately combined with active in-story questioning rather than used as a stand-alone stimulus.

The decline in Aspect A4 at the final meeting warrants closer scrutiny rather than a purely descriptive note, because it runs counter to the pattern shown by every other indicator. Two

competing explanations can be distinguished analytically. The first is a content-driven explanation: the final meeting used a more procedurally complex text (an environmental observation report) that required students to track a longer sequence of information, plausibly exceeding the attentional capacity that a subset of students had built up over the previous three meetings. The second is a fatigue-driven explanation: because all four meetings were compressed into a three-and-a-half-week period, cumulative fatigue toward the end of the cycle may have reduced sustained attention independent of content difficulty. The data available in this study cannot fully separate these two explanations, since content complexity and meeting sequence were confounded by design; however, the fact that A1, A2, and A3 continued to improve in the same meeting makes a purely fatigue-driven account less likely to be the sole explanation, since general fatigue would be expected to depress all four indicators rather than concentration alone. This pattern instead points toward a content- or task-specific attentional demand as the more plausible primary driver, a distinction discussed further in relation to cognitive load theory in the Discussion section.

An individual-level analysis revealed that 6 of the 27 students (22%) had not achieved mastery by the end of Cycle II, Meeting 2, with final scores ranging from 50% to 58%. An examination of these six students' performance patterns indicated two recurring areas of difficulty: Aspect A4 (focus and concentration during listening) and Aspect A3 (identifying the main information or moral message of the story), both of which consistently remained within the fair to low performance categories throughout the intervention.

A closer examination of the six students who had not reached mastery shows that their final scores were not uniformly low across all four indicators; rather, each of the six showed relatively stronger performance on A1 and A2 (scores in the "fair" range) alongside persistently weak scores specifically on A3 and A4. This selective rather than global weakness suggests that these six students were not simply less engaged overall, but were more specifically limited by (a) difficulty sustaining the ≥ 10 -minute attention span required by A4, and (b) difficulty moving from literal recall (A1, A2) to the more abstractive task of identifying a central idea or moral message (A3). Both of these difficulties were also identified as pre-existing concerns in the preliminary observation and teacher interview reported in the Introduction, suggesting that the paper puppet intervention narrowed but did not fully close gaps that were already present before the study began, and that these six students may benefit from a more individualized follow-up — for example, shorter guided-listening segments or additional scaffolding for identifying a story's central message — rather than continued exposure to the same whole-class format that was sufficient for their classmates.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to improve the listening skills of fifth-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency, in Indonesian language learning through the implementation of paper puppet media in a two-cycle classroom action research design. The primary contribution of this study lies in providing cyclical empirical evidence, rather than merely a pretest–posttest comparison, demonstrating how a local culture-based visual–narrative medium can progressively enhance the teaching and learning of listening skills in upper elementary

classrooms. In addition, the study identifies which aspects of listening skills were the most responsive and which were the most resistant to the intervention.

Overall, the findings support the action hypothesis that the use of **paper puppet media** can improve students' listening skills. Classical learning mastery increased progressively from 33% to 78%, exceeding the predetermined success criterion of $\geq 75\%$. This improvement was accompanied by consistent increases in both teacher and student activities, indicating that the success of the intervention was not achieved in isolation but was supported by continuous improvements in the overall instructional process. These findings are consistent with the nature of classroom action research, which emphasizes the improvement of teaching practices rather than focusing solely on learning outcomes.

These findings are consistent with previous studies on the use of paper puppet media to improve listening skills in elementary schools. A classroom action research study conducted at SDN Margahayu Bekasi also reported improvements in students' story-listening skills following the implementation of paper puppet media. Similarly, a quasi-experimental study at SDN 42 Mataram found that students in the experimental group who learned through paper puppet media achieved significantly higher listening comprehension scores than those in the control group. The consistency of findings across different research designs—both classroom action research and experimental studies—strengthens the evidence that the effectiveness of paper puppet media in enhancing listening skills is not merely context-specific but represents a replicable pattern in upper elementary school settings.

At the same time, simply confirming that paper puppet media "worked" in this setting, as in the studies cited above, offers limited theoretical traction unless the boundary conditions of that success are also specified. The present findings suggest at least two such boundary conditions. First, the medium's effectiveness was not uniform across listening indicators: it corresponded most directly with gains in factual recall and sequencing (A1, A2), but the gain in identifying main information (A3) required an additional pedagogical ingredient — in-story guided questioning — rather than exposure to the visual medium alone (see Results). This qualifies the common claim that puppet media are broadly effective for "listening skills" as a single construct, and instead points to a more specific claim: paper puppets are effective for the perceptual and sequencing components of listening, while higher-order interpretive components appear to depend on how the medium is paired with teacher questioning. Second, the medium's effectiveness on the concentration indicator (A4) was time-limited within the study itself, declining at the very meeting when the classical mastery target was reached, which suggests that "effectiveness" reported in a single post-test snapshot, as in the quasi-experimental studies discussed above, may not generalize to sustained use across multiple sessions.

However, not all findings followed a uniform pattern of improvement. As shown in Table 2, Aspect A4 (students' focus and concentration during listening) declined at the final meeting, decreasing from 73% to 63%, in contrast to the other three aspects, which continued to improve. This deviation from the overall upward trend should be reported explicitly because it has important implications. It suggests that improvements in the cognitive dimensions of listening skills—such as answering questions, retelling stories, and identifying the main

information—do not necessarily correspond to improvements in students' attentional capacity.

One possible explanation is that the learning material used in the final meeting, Observation Report Texts, involved a longer listening duration and more complex paper puppet props than those used in previous meetings, thereby requiring a longer attention span that some fifth-grade students had not yet fully developed. Another plausible explanation is the effect of learning fatigue toward the end of the intervention, as the four instructional meetings were conducted within a relatively short period (9 February–4 March 2026), which may have reduced students' ability to sustain their attention despite improvements in other aspects of listening performance.

The final meeting's environmental-report text plausibly carried higher intrinsic load than the narrative stories used in earlier meetings, because it required students to track a longer, less character-centered sequence of information; at the same time, the more elaborate puppet props used in that meeting may have added extraneous load by introducing additional visual detail unrelated to the core listening task. Under cognitive load theory, when intrinsic and extraneous load rise together, less working-memory capacity remains available for sustaining attention over time, which offers a theoretically motivated account for why A4 declined even as A1–A3 continued to improve. This interpretation also carries a practical implication consistent with the recommendation below: instructional designers using paper puppet media for more complex texts may need to simplify the visual presentation or shorten the listening segment to keep extraneous load low enough for young learners to sustain attention.

Consistent with this pattern, the six students who had not achieved mastery by the end of the study exhibited recurring difficulties in **Aspect A4** (focus and concentration) and **Aspect A3** (identifying the main information). These findings suggest that, although **paper puppet media** was effective at the overall (classical) level, it has limitations in supporting students with lower attentional capacity or limited basic vocabulary. Therefore, these students may require additional individualized instructional support to complement the use of paper puppet media and to address their specific learning needs.

From a practical (managerial and pedagogical) perspective, these findings suggest that elementary school teachers may consider paper puppet media as an alternative instructional tool for teaching listening skills because it is relatively inexpensive, easy to produce, and adaptable to local cultural contexts. However, the effectiveness of this medium appears to depend largely on teachers' competence in managing the storytelling performance—including voice intonation, classroom interaction, and the use of guiding questions—as reflected in the substantial improvement in teacher activity from 64% to 97%. Therefore, teachers should intentionally incorporate brief question-and-answer sessions throughout the storytelling process and limit the duration of each listening segment to help maintain students' attention, rather than relying solely on the visual appeal of the paper puppets.

It is also important to acknowledge that factors other than the instructional medium itself may have contributed to the observed improvement. Because the same 27 students were assessed repeatedly across four meetings without a comparison group, part of the gain may reflect testing familiarity, in which students became more accustomed to the test format and scoring expectations over successive meetings, independent of any change in underlying listening

ability. Novelty may also have played a role: paper puppets were a new medium for these students, and some of the early gains, particularly in student activity and engagement, may partly reflect heightened interest in a novel medium rather than a stable improvement in listening skill, an effect that would be expected to diminish with repeated exposure. In addition, the teacher's own growing familiarity with storytelling techniques and classroom management of the medium across the four meetings — reflected in teacher activity rising from 64% to 97% — represents a form of practitioner learning that is conceptually distinct from, though intertwined with, the effect of the medium itself. Distinguishing the specific contribution of the medium from these co-occurring factors would require a design with a comparison condition, which is beyond the scope of a single-class action research study but is noted here as an important qualification on the strength of the causal claims that can be drawn from the present findings.

For future research, a promising direction would be to examine interventions specifically designed to improve students' focus and attention, such as shorter listening segments or the incorporation of interactive pauses during storytelling, as this aspect proved to be the most resistant to improvement in the present study. Further studies may also investigate whether the observed inconsistency in students' concentration occurs across different grade levels or subject areas, or whether it is specific to learning materials with greater narrative complexity. Taken together, this study contributes to Indonesian language teaching practice in three concrete ways. First, it offers elementary teachers a low-cost, culturally grounded alternative to commercial audio-visual media for listening instruction, requiring only paper, simple handles, and a rehearsed storytelling performance rather than electronic equipment or internet access, which is particularly relevant for schools with limited facilities such as SDN 3 Tabongo. Second, it offers a diagnostic tool for teachers: because the four listening indicators responded differently to the intervention, teachers can use a similar indicator-based observation approach to identify which specific aspect of a student's listening — factual recall, sequencing, interpretation, or concentration — needs targeted support, rather than treating "listening skill" as a single undifferentiated target. Third, by documenting that concentration did not improve monotonically, this study gives teachers a concrete, evidence-based reason to pair visual storytelling media with deliberate pacing strategies (e.g., shorter segments, interactive questioning) rather than assuming that an engaging medium alone will sustain attention throughout a lesson.

CONCLUSION

This classroom action research demonstrates that paper puppet media, implemented across two reflection-driven cycles, can improve the listening skills of fifth-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency, in Indonesian language learning, with classical mastery rising from 33% to 78% and exceeding the $\geq 75\%$ success criterion. Beyond this overall result, the study's principal contribution is diagnostic rather than merely confirmatory: it shows that the four components of listening skill did not improve uniformly, with factual recall and story sequencing responding earliest to the medium itself, main-information identification depending additionally on in-story teacher questioning, and sustained concentration remaining the most resistant component, declining even as the classical mastery target was

met. This pattern indicates that paper puppet media should not be treated as a single, uniformly effective intervention for "listening skill" in general, but rather as a medium whose benefits are indicator-specific and whose limits — particularly regarding sustained attention — call for deliberate pairing with pacing and questioning strategies.

The primary contribution of this study to the teaching of listening in elementary schools is therefore twofold: it provides Indonesian language teachers with a low-cost, culturally grounded medium for listening instruction, and it offers an indicator-based diagnostic lens for identifying which specific component of a student's listening ability needs support, rather than treating listening as a single, undifferentiated skill. Teacher and student activity also improved consistently across the intervention, from 64% to 97% and from 52% to 98% respectively, indicating that the improvement in listening outcomes was accompanied by a parallel improvement in the quality of instructional delivery and student engagement, though, as discussed above, this association should be interpreted with appropriate caution given the study's single-group design.

The use of paper puppet media made the learning process more engaging, interactive, and enjoyable, thereby increasing students' motivation and active participation in listening activities. The visual representation of story characters and the movements of the paper puppets helped students understand the story more concretely, making the learning experience more suitable for the cognitive development of elementary school students. In addition, teacher activity improved consistently from 64% in Cycle I, Meeting 1 to 97% in Cycle II, Meeting 2, while student activity also increased steadily and reached the very good category by the end of the study. Therefore, the findings demonstrate that paper puppet media is an effective instructional medium for improving the listening skills of fifth-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings:

1. This study employed a classroom action research (CAR) design conducted in a single class with a sample of 27 students and did not include a control group. Therefore, the observed improvement in students' listening skills cannot be attributed solely to the use of paper puppet media, as it may also have been influenced by other factors, such as students' natural development (maturation), prior learning experiences, and the effects of repeated testing throughout the intervention cycles.
2. The study was conducted over only two cycles comprising four instructional meetings; therefore, the observed effectiveness of the paper puppet media reflects only its short-term impact. Consequently, this study does not provide evidence regarding the sustainability of improvements in students' listening skills if the media were implemented over a longer instructional period.
3. The assessment of listening skills focused on four aspects: answering simple questions, retelling a story in the correct sequence, identifying the main information, and maintaining focus or concentration during listening activities. Other important aspects of listening comprehension, such as making inferences, evaluating the content of a story, and critically

analyzing the information presented, were not included in the assessment conducted in this study.

4. The findings revealed that the concentration aspect (A4) was the most difficult to improve and even declined during the final meeting. This finding suggests that the use of paper puppet media was not sufficient to fully address differences in students' attention spans. Therefore, the effectiveness of this instructional medium may have been influenced by individual learner characteristics, which were not examined in depth in the present study.

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