



THE USE OF LETTER STICK MEDIA TO IMPROVE LETTER PRONUNCIATION SKILLS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD AT PAUD AMALIA SALSABILA, CIREBON REGENCY

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Abstract

The ability to recognize letters is an important foundation in the literacy development of early childhood. However, initial observations in Group B of PAUD Amalia Salsabila Lemahabang, Cirebon Regency, indicate that the children's ability to name letters is still relatively low. Efforts are needed to improve this ability through engaging learning media, one of which is letter stick media. This research aims to improve letter pronunciation skills in Group B children at PAUD Amalia Salsabila Lemahabang, Cirebon Regency, by utilizing letter stick media. The method used is Classroom Action Research (CAR), which is conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consists of the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The subjects of this research are 14 children from Group B at PAUD Amalia Salsabila Lemahabang, Cirebon Regency. The data collection techniques used were observation and documentation. The research results show an improvement in the ability to name letters in children of group B PAUD Amalia Salsabila Lemahabang after the use of letter stick media. In the pre-cycle, the percentage of learning completeness reached 40%. After the intervention in cycle I, the percentage of completeness increased to 65%, and in cycle II it reached 88%, indicating that the research success indicators have been met. The use of letter stick media has proven effective in improving the ability to name letters among children in group B of PAUD Amalia Salsabila Lemahabang, Cirebon Regency

Keywords: *Letter pronunciation ability, Letter stick media, Early childhood.*

INTRODUCTION

According to the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003, Article 1 Paragraph 14, early childhood education is a development effort aimed at children from birth to 6 years of age. This effort is carried out by providing educational stimulation to support the physical and mental growth and development of children, so that they are ready to enter the next level of education (Firdaus, 2019).

Maria Montessori stated that early childhood education is a dynamic process that allows children to develop according to their internal life conditions, voluntarily, in an environment that supports freedom of expression. Suyadi added that early childhood education focuses on creating a foundation for physical development (fine and gross motor skills), intelligence (thinking, creativity, emotional intelligence, and mental), as well as social and emotional (behavior and religion), language, and communication, according to the individuality and stage of development of children in childhood (Fahitah Itah & Sri Watini, 2021).

Early childhood education basically includes various efforts and actions taken by educators and parents in providing care, education, and guidance to children. The goal is to create an atmosphere and environment where children can feel and experience learning so that they can understand what they observe and do in their environment. This process involves repeated observation, imitation, and experimentation, and supports the development of the child's full potential and intelligence. (Andri Kurniawan, et al. 2023; 3)).

The purpose of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) according to Law number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that Early Childhood Education is an effort to foster children from birth to the age of six years which is carried out through providing stimulation. Child education helps physical and spiritual growth and development so that children are ready to enter further education (Pajrriyah et al., 2024).

Language development is an important aspect because language is needed in all areas of life. Every life process depends on the use and role of language in its various forms. Language functions to express thoughts and feelings, so that children can easily convey their needs and desires, and help children understand the environment around them. (Buckley, in the journal Khoirunisa Ummi Khajar, 2021).

Given the importance of the role of language in life, one of the goals of early childhood education is to encourage children's language development according to their age. Based on the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 58 of 2009 for children aged 5-6 years, language development includes three aspects: the ability to understand language, express language, and literacy. One of the language skills that needs to be developed in early childhood to make it easier for them at the next level of education is the ability to recognize and pronounce letters. This ability is included in the aspect of language development that needs to be stimulated optimally from the age of 5-6 years. Stimulation of the ability to pronounce letters can be done by encouraging children to recognize and understand the symbols of letters in the alphabet, so that when entering elementary school, children do not have difficulty in mastering basic reading skills. The results of pre-research in group B at PAUD Amalia Salsabila showed that literacy skills, especially in pronouncing letters as a basis for early reading, were still underdeveloped. Of the 14 children, only 2 were able to pronounce the letters a to z correctly. Some children often confuse letters, such as b with d, m with n, m with w, p with q, and u with n. This happens because children in group B are new students, not a continuation of the previous group, so many

still have difficulty recognizing and pronouncing letters correctly. Lack of proper stimulation and less varied learning media also affect children's low interest in the process of learning to recognize and pronounce letters.

Learning will be more interesting and able to increase children's interest in learning by using interesting media, such as letter sticks. In addition to introducing letters, letter sticks can also be used to form simple words. Based on these problems, research on the Use of Letter Stick Media to Improve Letter Pronouncing Ability in Early Childhood at PAUD Amalia Salsabila Cirebon Regency is expected to provide stimulation that encourages the development of children's abilities in recognizing and pronouncing letters.

The ability to pronounce letters is an important part of children's language development that must be developed through proper stimulation from an early age. According to Soendjono Darjowidjojo (Maria Anisia Nenu Ngole, et al., 2021), the ability to recognize letters is a stage of child development that starts from ignorance to knowledge about the relationship between sound and letter shape, so that children can recognize and interpret the shape of the letter. Early reading involves the ability to recognize and name letters one by one and combine them into simple words. To ensure that children can read well, they need to be introduced to the letters of the alphabet in stages.

The word "media" comes from Latin which means "rule". According to Gagne (Veryawan, 2020), media refers to various types of things in a child's environment that can stimulate them to learn. For teachers, media functions as a means of communication that allows them to convey messages to children. Azhar (Novita Andriani Panjaitan, et al., 2022) also stated that learning media is a tool that supports the learning process, both inside and outside the classroom.

Letter sticks are learning media used in games to form words. Children are invited to arrange letters into words based on puzzles or questions prepared by the teacher. The main focus of this exercise is the skill of spelling words. Letter sticks can be media made by factories or creatively by teachers, which are usually in the form of pieces with pictures or writing attached to the stick. This media functions to convey communication or learning stimuli to children. The letter sticks referred to in this context are sticks that are made by yourself in a rectangular shape, made of paper and ice cream sticks.

According to Ningsih (2020, in Rani Anggraini, et al., 2023), alphabet ice cream letter sticks are rectangular learning tools made of wood and given different colors. This media is designed to help early childhood recognize and name letters and colors.

Based on the explanation above, letter sticks can be understood as learning media that function as play tools to develop cognitive, psychomotor, and language and literacy skills in children. In addition, letter sticks also provide a fun learning situation for children.

METHODOLOGY

The approach used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach. The method applied is Classroom Action Research. The researcher adopted a research model developed by Kurt Lewin. According to Lewin (in Aqib, 2008:21), there are four components that must be present in the action research cycle, namely planning, action, observation, and reflection. These four processes are carried out continuously.

Data collection techniques are the methods used by researchers to collect data objectively, Margono S (Fitri Rahmadhoni, 2021). The data collected in this study were by using observation and documentation.

In this study, the data analysis technique used was to analyze all data obtained through observation. The data collected relates to the ability to recognize letters, and data analysis is carried out using descriptive methods. The results of the activities were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques, which involved comparing the results of activities in each cycle with the success criteria that had been set, as explained by Soesilo (Jurniati, 2020). This qualitative descriptive analysis aims to identify improvements in letter recognition skills in scaffolded learning activities, from the beginning to the end of the cycle..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Objective conditions of the ability to name letters of children aged 5-6 years old at PAUD Amalia Salsabila before using letter sticks

Before starting the study, the researcher conducted an initial survey to collect data on the condition of the ability to name letters in children aged 5-6 years at PAUD Amalia Salsabila, Lemahabang District, Cirebon Regency. The results of data processing showed that the ability to name letters in these children before using letter stick media was still low. Based on data obtained before the study, the ability to name letters in children aged 5-6 years only reached 40% with the category of not yet developing.

The details are as follows: in the indicator of naming letters, out of 14 children, 1 child (7%) is in the category of not yet developing, 11 children (78.6%) are in the category of starting to develop, and 2 children (14.3%) are in the category of developing according to expectations. In the indicator of arranging letters into object names, 12 children (85.7%) are in the category of not yet developing, 1 child (7%) is in the category of starting to develop, and 1 child (7%) is in the category of developing according to expectations. In the indicator of mentioning the first and last letters of the name of an object, 8 children (57%) are in the category of not yet developing, 4 children (28.6%) are in the category of starting to develop, 1 child (7%) is in the category of developing according to expectations, and 1 child (7%) is in the category of developing very well. From the pre-action results, an average value of 4.8 was obtained with a percentage of 40%.

2. Implementation of the action of using letter stick media to improve children's ability to mention letters aged 5-6 years at PAUD Amalia Salsabila

Letter stick games have proven to be an effective learning alternative to improve children's ability to mention letters. Based on data processing, the ability to mention letters in children aged 5-6 years at PAUD Amalia Salsabila showed positive development after the implementation of the letter stick game, with a percentage increase reaching 65%. The details are as follows: in the indicator of mentioning letters, out of 14 children, 6 children (42.8%) are in the category of starting to develop, 6 children (42.8%) are in the category of developing according to expectations, and 2 children (14.3%) are in the category of developing very well. In the indicator of arranging letters into object names, 8 children (57%) are in the category of starting to develop, and 6 children (42.8%) are in the category of developing according to expectations. In the indicator of mentioning the first and last letters in object names, 6 children

(42.8%) are in the category of starting to develop, 6 children (42.8%) are in the category of developing according to expectations, and 2 children (14.3%) are in the category of developing very well. The results of cycle I showed an average value of 7.9 with a percentage of 65%.

3. Results of the implementation of actions using letter stick media to improve children's ability to mention letters aged 5-6 years at PAUD Amalia Salsabila

This research is a classroom action research carried out in two cycles, with each cycle involving four stages, namely planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Cycle I and cycle II were carried out in four meetings, where cycle II was a step to fix problems that arose in cycle I, in order to achieve the desired results.

The results of the study showed an increase in the ability to mention letters in children, from the category of not developing before using the letter stick game, to developing according to expectations with a percentage of 88%. This shows a positive change after the implementation of the letter stick game. In the indicator of mentioning letters, out of 14 children, 8 children (57%) are in the category of developing according to expectations, and 6 children (42.8%) are in the category of developing very well. In the indicator of arranging letters into object names, 9 children (64.3%) are in the category of developing according to expectations, and 5 children (35.7%) are in the category of developing very well. Meanwhile, in the indicator of mentioning the first and last letters of object names, 3 children (21.4%) are in the category of developing according to expectations, and 11 children (78.6%) are in the category of developing very well. The percentage of cycle II reached 88%, which is included in the category of developing according to expectations. The average value obtained in cycle II was 10.6 with a percentage of 88%. This increase is in accordance with the hypothesis being tested, namely: If the letter stick game is implemented, the ability to mention letters in children aged 5-6 years at PAUD Amalia Salsabila will increase.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion that have been presented, it can be concluded that the Use of Letter Stick Media to Improve the Ability to Pronounce Letters in Early Childhood at PAUD Amalia Salsabila Cirebon Regency is as follows: 1. This study involved 14 children, consisting of 9 girls and 5 boys. The research model uses a cycle, where learning with letter stick game media has been proven to improve the ability to mention letters in children aged 5-6 years at PAUD Amalia Salsabila Lemahabang. The increase in the ability to mention letters can be seen from the results of each cycle, both cycle I and cycle II. 2. The increase can be seen from the results of observations. Before the action, the ability to mention letters in children showed a percentage of 40% with the criteria not yet developed. In cycle I, the percentage increased to 65%. In cycle II, the researcher made improvements to the learning process based on experience from the previous cycle. After cycle II, the ability to mention children's letters increased to 88%, with the criteria developing according to expectations and successfully achieving the predetermined success indicators. 3. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the ability to name letters in children aged 5-6 years at PAUD Amalia Salsabila Lemahabang can be improved through letter stick game activities.

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