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Improvement of the Ability to Recognize the Letters A-Z with the Letter Detective Method in Raudlatul Athfal

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to improve the ability to recognize letters in children in group B of RA Hidayatul Islam Bendo by applying the letter detective method. This study uses a classroom action research design (PTK), with research subjects consisting of 12 children. Data collection is carried out through three main techniques, namely observation, performance, and documentation, which aims to obtain comprehensive information related to the development of literacy skills in children. The data analysis techniques used involve quantitative and qualitative descriptive analysis. The success of this study was measured by the criterion that at least 85% of the children who were the subjects of the study could know the letters well. The results of the study showed that the use of the letter detective method, which was equipped with the media of letter cards, significantly improved the ability to recognize letters in children. In the pre-cycle stage, only 33% of children are able to recognize letters well. However, after the application of the letter detective method, there was a gradual increase, with a result of 50% in cycle I, 67% in cycle II, and reaching 92% in cycle III. Thus, this method has proven to be effective in improving letter recognition in children, and can be used as one of the interesting and interactive teaching strategies in letter recognition learning at the early childhood education level.

Keyword:

getting to know
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A. Introduction

Kindergarten (TK) education is a form of early childhood education that is on the path of formal education, designed for children aged 4-6 years. At this stage, children are in a sensitive period that is very important for the development of their potential. This period is a good opportunity to optimize all aspects of development (Hesti Wulandari and Edi Purwanta, 2021), such as moral and religious values, cognitive, social-emotional, physical motor, and language. One of the important aspects in language development is the ability to recognize letters. This ability is a critical stage in which children transition from not knowing to recognizing the relationship between shapes and sounds of letters. At this stage, children begin to be able to recognize the

shape of the letters and understand their meaning. This process not only helps them in mastering reading skills in the future, but also strengthens their foundation for more complex language skills (Cerika Rismayanthi: 2013). Therefore, letter recognition is an important component in kindergarten education, which supports children's overall literacy skills. With the right approach, children can develop the ability to recognize letters effectively and enjoyably, which will help them communicate and learn more.

In group B at RA Hidayatul Islam, Bendo Village, Sluke District, Rembang Regency, in the 2022/2023 school year, children's ability to recognize letters has not developed well. Although some children can recognize their own names, when asked to name the letters that make up the name, they have a hard time (Muhammad Azis and Nadia Safirawati Adila, 2020). They are more likely to recognize popular symbols or words, such as the name of the character "Upin-Ipin." However, when faced with the challenge of recognizing and mentioning letters one by one, many of them are not yet able to do it well. This phenomenon suggests that children are more familiar with visual shapes or symbols than with individual letter recognition. On the other hand, there are also some children who are able to say numbers well, but do not yet have a deep understanding of letters. This condition shows that there is a gap in the early literacy development of children, especially in the recognition of letters which is very important as the basis for reading skills. More intensive teaching efforts and varied learning approaches are needed to improve children's ability to recognize letters, so that they can achieve optimal development according to their age and learning stage.

The application of the letter detective method using letter card media is an effective learning strategy to help children develop creativity in composing new words.¹ In this method, children are given pieces of letters that they must arrange into words that have a variety of meanings. This process trains children's ability to recognize letters, construct syllables, and finally compose new words. Tantra Nurandi (2008:31) states that the letter detective method provides an opportunity for children to build syllables and words from the letters that have been provided. Not only that, but children will also learn to construct simple sentences consisting of two, three, or even more words. This is in line with the opinion of Otib Satibi (2005:28), who emphasized that this method uses a real and fun learning approach, where children can learn while playing and feel happy through word exploration (Heldanita, 2018). Thus, the letter detective method not only stimulates children's cognitive abilities, but also creates a fun and encouraging learning atmosphere, making children more enthusiastic and motivated in the process of learning to read and write.

The use of letter card media is one of the effective ways to help children learn languages faster. Through this media, children can easily recognize letters, syllables, words, and form simple sentences. According to Hasanudin (2016:1), the media of letter cards allows children to learn language faster because they are encouraged to string letters into simple words and sentences. This process also involves children in

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interactive and fun activities, which can increase their interest in learning. In addition, the application of the letter detective method, in which children are invited to find and string the letters in the cards into meaningful words, has been proven to improve early childhood language skills. With this method, children not only know the shape of the letters, but also understand how the letters form syllables and words. Letter card media also helps children's cognitive development, especially in honing their critical and logical thinking skills when they try to connect the existing letters (Andi Agusniatih and Jane, 2019). Overall, the use of letter card media and the letter detective method is an effective combination in supporting language learning in children, especially in the early childhood period, which is an important phase in the development of their language skills.

B. Theoretical Framework

According to Carol Seefelt and Barbara A. Wasik, the ability to recognize letters is the ability to recognize signs or characteristics of characters that represent the sounds of language. The Great Dictionary of Indonesian Language defines letters as an alphabet that symbolizes sounds, with language sounds generally divided into vowels and consonants. Letters are secondary symbols of language, and children only interpret letters when they are needed in the context of their language life (Liza & Juju., 2013). Letter recognition is inseparable from the development of children's reading and writing. Bromley and his colleagues divided children's writing development into several stages, namely the scribe stage, linear repetitive stage, random letter stage, and phonetic writing. The standard for achieving the development of children aged 5-6 years, according to the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 137 of 2014, includes the ability to recognize letter symbols, the initial sound of objects around them, to reading and writing their own names.

One method that can be used to help children recognize letters is through letter detective games. The game is designed to solve problems or cases through investigation, exploration, and critical thinking. In this game, children are invited to look for hidden objects related to certain letters in the neighborhood. This game has several important benefits for early childhood, such as improving critical and analytical thinking skills (Zakiyatul Imamah and Muqowim, 2020), practicing social skills, as well as fostering imagination. In addition, this game also encourages cooperation in groups and children's ability to recognize their classmates, as well as fostering creativity and concern for others.

Letter detective games usually use learning media in the form of letter cards, which also act as visual aids. Cards are included in the printed learning media and are rectangular in shape, with letter symbols on each card. According to Etianingsih, letter cards are a learning medium that helps children recognize the shape of letters through the symbols listed on the cards. This game invites children to not only know letters (Wulandari Retnaningrum and Inayatul, 2020), but also arrange the letters into words. With this method, children can learn to recognize letters and words through fun and interactive activities, which in turn strengthens their literacy skills at an early age.

C. Methods

This study uses the Classroom Action Research (PTK) approach, which is a practical research model to improve the learning process in the classroom. PTK aims as a problem-solving strategy by using real actions through an innovative development process that is carried out continuously to detect and solve existing problems. In PTK, there are four stages that are passed, namely action planning (Hasan Syahrizal and Putri Nova, 2024) implementation, observation, and reflection. This research was carried out on group B

children at RA Hidayatul Islam Bendo in December 2022 for approximately one month. Researchers focus on the assessment of practical problems that arise in the learning process and use the research cycle to find solutions and improvement actions.

This research process consists of various stages, starting from learning planning by teachers. At the planning stage, teachers prepare improvement plans, prepare daily activity plans, and prepare materials and learning media such as word cards. After that, at the implementation stage, learning activities follow the Learning Implementation Plan which consists of an introduction, core activities, and closing (Miratul Hayati, Masroro Diah Wahyu Lestari, and Chikita Rahayuni, 2022). Observations are carried out by researchers with the help of collaborators to observe the course of learning. After observation, the reflection stage is carried out to assess the results of the learning process and determine improvements in the next cycle. In the process of reflection, researchers look for solutions to problems that arise to ensure improvements in each cycle.

The data collection techniques used in this study are observation, performance tests, and documentation. The success criteria of this study are measured by the improvement of the ability to recognize letters in children, where success is measured if there is an increase of 75% of the number of children who show good ability. Data analysis was carried out using qualitative and quantitative descriptive techniques. Based on curriculum standards, classical learning completeness is considered to be achieved if 85% of students in the class achieve at least 65% absorption. To calculate the percentage of learning completion, a calculation formula is used by comparing the number of children who complete learning with the total number of children.

D. Research Results

1. Pre-Cycle Research Results

Before conducting the research, the researcher made observations to find out the initial condition of the ability to recognize letters in group B children at RA Hidayatul Islam Bendo. The results of pre-action observation can be seen through the following table;

Table 1. Results of Precycle Actions of Letter Recognition Ability

Category	Number of children	Presented (%)	Information
Very Well Developed (BSB)	1	8	Complete
Developing as expected (BSH)	3	25	Complete
Start Growing (MB)	5	42	Incomplete
Undeveloped (BB)	3	25	Incomplete
Sum	12	100	
Number of children completed			4
Number of completed child percentage			33 %
Number of incomplete children			8
Number of incomplete percentage of children			77%

The table above illustrates that the percentage of children's learning completion is 33%. This means that only 33% or 4 children out of 12 children in Group B RA Hidayatul Islam Bendo, Sluke District, Rembang Regency for the 2022/2023 school year were declared incomplete in school. Therefore, the completeness has not reached 85%, so classroom action research is needed.

2. Results of Cycle I Research

The results of the Cycle I study of letter tree media to improve the ability to recognize letters in group B children at RA Hidayatul Islam Bendo can be seen in the following table:

Table 2. Results of Cycle I Actions Ability to Recognize Letters

Category	Number of children	Presented (%)	Information
Very Well Developed (BSB)	3	25	Complete
Developing as expected (BSH)	3	25	Complete
Start Growing (MB)	3	25	Incomplete
Undeveloped (BB)	3	25	Incomplete
Sum	12	100	
Number of children completed			6
Number of completed child percentage			50 %
Number of incomplete children			6
Number of incomplete percentage of children			50%

Based on the table above, it shows that with the ability to recognize the letters A-Z with the letter detective method with letter card media in group B RA Hidayatul Islam Bendo, the increase is as follows: there are 3 children with Very Good Dreams (BSB) with a percentage of 25%, 3 children with Expectations (BSH) with a percentage of 25%, there are 3 children Still Developing (MB) with a percentage of 25%, there are 3 children who are not yet developed (BB) with a percentage of 25%.

3. Results of Cycle II Research

The results of the Cycle II study of letter tree media to improve the ability to recognize letters in group B children at RA Hidayatul Islam Bendo can be seen in the following table:

Table 3. Results of Cycle I Actions Ability to Recognize Letters

Category	Number of children	Presented (%)	Information
Very Well Developed (BSB)	4	33	Complete
Developing as expected (BSH)	4	33	Complete
Start Growing (MB)	3	25	Incomplete
Undeveloped (BB)	1	9	Incomplete
Sum	12	100	
Number of children completed			8
Number of completed child percentage			67 %
Number of incomplete children			4
Number of incomplete percentage of children			33%

Based on the table above, it shows that with the ability to recognize the letters A-Z with the letter detective method with letter card media in group B RA Hidayatul Islam Bendo, the increase is as follows: there are 4 children with Very Good Achievement (BSB) with a percentage of 33%, 4 children with Expectations (BSH) with a percentage of 33%, there are 3 children Still Developing (MB) with a percentage of 25%, there is 1 Undeveloped child (BB) with a percentage of 9%.

4. Results of Cycle III Research

The results of the Cycle III study on letter tree media to improve the ability to recognize letters in group B children at RA Hidayatul Islam Bendo can be seen in the following table:

Table 4. Results of Cycle I Actions Ability to Recognize Letters

Category	Number of	Presented (%)	Information
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	children		
Very Well Developed (BSB)	6	50	Complete
Developing as expected (BSH)	5	42	Complete
Start Growing (MB)	1	8	Incomplete
Undeveloped (BB)	0	0	Incomplete
Sum	12	100	
Number of children completed			11
Number of completed child percentage			92 %
Number of incomplete children			1
Number of incomplete percentage of children			8 %

Based on the table above, it shows that with the ability to recognize the letters A-Z with the letter detective method with letter card media in group B RA Hidayatul Islam Bendo, the increase is as follows: there are 6 children with Very Good Dreams (BSB) with a percentage of 50%, 5 children with Expectations (BSH) with a percentage of 42%, there is 1 child Still Developing (MB) with a percentage of 8%, there are 0 children who are not yet developed (BB) with a percentage of 0%. Based on the results of the third cycle of action, it has reached the success category of 65-80%, so thus the implementation of the action in cycle 3 has been completed and this study is said to be successful.

E. Discussion

At first, children's ability to recognize letters has not developed optimally. There are still children who have difficulty distinguishing letters that have similar shapes. This ability is crucial because it is a must-have foundation to facilitate effective communication. By understanding letters, children can begin the process of learning to read, which is an essential skill for communicating with others (Ni Luh Putri, 2013). The ability to recognize letters is the main foundation that supports the development of children's literacy skills, and therefore, efforts to improve these skills should be a priority in children's early education.

To improve the ability to recognize letters, it is necessary to provide appropriate stimulation. One effective method is to use the letter detective method in learning. This method involves the use of learning media that can attract children's interest in learning (Ajeng Rizki Safira, 2020). Sadiman (2006: 10) mentioned that media is any form that can be used to convey information from the sender to the receiver, so that it can stimulate thoughts, feelings, attention, and interest. The media used in letter learning can make the learning process more interesting and interactive for children, which in turn can increase the effectiveness of learning.

The results of the analysis from the pre-cycle showed that the ability to recognize letters in Group B children at RA Hidayatul Islam, Bendo Village, Sluke District, Rembang Regency for the 2022/2023 academic year was still very low. The percentage of learning completeness only reached 33.00%, of which only 4 children were declared complete, while 67.00% or 8 children still did not reach completion. This condition indicates that there are problems in the learning process that need to be handled, so research is carried out to find effective solutions.

In cycle I, there was an increase in learning outcomes, although it had not achieved maximum results. The percentage of learning completion increased from 33.00% in the pre-cycle to 50.00% in the first cycle, where 6 children were declared complete. However, this increase still does not meet the minimum target of learning completeness set at 85%. Therefore, the research needs to be continued to cycle II to continue to improve learning outcomes. In the second cycle, the percentage of learning completion increased to 67.00%,

but it was still below the expected target. The research will continue to cycle III to achieve better results. In cycle III, an increase was achieved with a percentage of learning completeness of 92.00%, exceeding the minimum limit of completeness set.

F. Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the letter detective method through letter card media is effective in improving the ability to recognize the letters A-Z in Group B RA Hidayatul Islam, Bendo Village, Sluke District, Rembang Regency for the 2022/2023 Academic Year. The study showed a significant increase in children's learning completeness from cycle I to cycle III. In the first cycle, the learning completeness reached 50% or as many as 6 children, while in the second cycle it increased to 67% or 8 children. The highest achievement occurred in cycle III with learning completion of 92% or 11 children, exceeding the minimum limit of learning completeness set at 85%. The application of this letter detective method not only improves students' understanding of letters but also increases their enthusiasm in participating in learning. Thus, the results of this study provide a practical reference in overcoming the problem of suboptimal letter recognition skills in kindergarten. The letter detective method through letter card media has proven to be effective and can be applied to improve the ability to recognize letters in children in group B RA Hidayatul Islam Bendo, as well as provide positive benefits for the learning process in the future.

Although the research on "Improvement of A-Z Letter Recognition Ability with Letter Detective Method in Group B of Raudlatul Athfal" makes a valuable contribution in understanding the effectiveness of this method, the main drawback lies in the limited scope of the study to a single study. Research that focuses only on one group or one location can ignore the variability that may exist in a variety of other educational contexts. To get a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the Letter Detective method in improving letter recognition skills in early childhood, more than one study with a more diverse sample and under various conditions is needed. By conducting additional research in various educational settings, such as in areas with different characteristics or by involving a larger number of participants, the results can be obtained with more generalized and accurate data. In addition, further research can explore the factors that influence outcomes and may help in tailoring the method to the specific needs of different groups of children. Therefore, continuing and expanding this research is very important to ensure that the Letter Detective method can be applied effectively and provide optimal benefits for improving the ability to recognize letters in various educational settings.

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