

Improving Language Ability Through The Method Of Playing With Letters Flashcards Media

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Abstract

This study aimed to improve language skills through the method of playing with letter flashcards in group A children at TK Handayani Tiga. This study was conducted as a professional capability strengthening of teachers, which was carried out in two cycles. The subject of professional capability strengthening of teachers was carried out in two cycles. This study consisted of four stages, namely planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The subjects of strengthening were the Group A students of TK Handayani Tiga, with 20 children. Data collection in this strengthening was carried out using the technique of playing with picture cards or flashcards while studying. There were also several other techniques, namely conversation, observation, performance, assignments, and work results. The results showed that (1) there was an increase in the average percentage of student learning activeness of 20% (including the criteria of being quite active) in cycle I increased to 60% in cycle II. There was an increase in the percentage of 95%, including moderate criteria. Based on the results, it can be concluded that playing activities with the media of letter flashcards can improve language skills in group A of TK Handayani Tiga.

Keywords: Improving Language Ability; Playing; Letters Flashcards Media

Introduction

Children are tiny human beings who have potential and abilities. All the potential that children have must still be developed optimally. Thus they can develop as well as possible. Children also have their own distinctive and unique characteristics that are not the same as adults. In short, it can be said that children are human beings or individuals with their own development patterns and need different from adults. Children who live in a fairly good environment with good communication will certainly get good language development as well. But children who experience slow language development due to the opposite factors of children who experience language fluency. Children will speak fluently, if they are always invited to communicate properly and sustainably, accompanied by a touch of affection that makes them feel that language is the language to support better growth and development. Language delays experienced by children vary according to the situation and conditions in the child's growing environment. Every child experiences different language development according to the growth and development experienced by each child, along with the environmental factors around them growing. Language in early childhood usually includes the ability to express something, hear and understand and read pictures. Children who experience language delays and if they are always invited to communicate but have not yet developed as expected must be examined more deeply into the causes of these delays with a psychologist (Bawono, 2017).

The development of speech and writing is a process that uses expressive language to form meaning. The study of speech development in children is inseparable from the fact that there are differences in the speed of speech, although the quality and quantity of children in producing language. The quality and quantity of children's language are also supported by the closeness of children and parents, where parents always take a moment to joke or do activities that are easy to do together. It will improve the quality and quantity of children's language understanding and expression (Biggs & Telfer, 1987).

Early Childhood Education (ECED) has an essential role in shaping the character of children with moral or noble, creative, innovative, and competitive (Carol Wade, 2007). Early childhood education is not just about improving knowledge and skills related to scientific fields but more deeply preparing children to be able to master various challenges in the future (Crain, 2007). However, early childhood education is not only a process of instilling the brain with as much information as possible but also a process of growing, nurturing, encouraging, and providing an environment that allows children to develop their potential as optimally as possible.

Kindergarten children are generally always on the move, have curiosity, love to experiment and test, can express themselves creatively, have imagination, and are talkative. Kindergarten children cannot be asked to sit for too long. It is very hard work for them to sit quietly in a chair and pay attention to the teacher's instructions. Children need the opportunity to use their full energy to do activities that are satisfying, known as playing. Early childhood should be given direct experience both in groups and individually so that children gain real experience and knowledge. Schools or educational institutions are used as a place for children to develop their potential.

Recognizing letters through pictures is a preparatory activity for learning the language. Learning activities are adapted to the child's development stage. An early age, or Kindergarten age, is a very strategic period to introduce language because Kindergarten age is susceptible to stimulation received from the environment. Playing with letter flashcard media is one of the developments that aim to develop children's thinking skills. Thus, they can process their learning gains. Finding various alternative solutions to problems helps to develop language and reading skills. The ability to read, write, and count is a modality that must be owned by every student in learning and mastering various sciences.

A psychologist and educator said that children could be taught to write and read at 3-5 years old. Based on research concluded that, in fact, children can learn to read at 6 years old. The results showed that around 2% of children had learned to read at 3 years old, 6% at 4 years old, and around 20% at 5 years old. It has even been proven that adequate reading skills will significantly support learning abilities in the following years. (Riyanto & Handoko, 2004). However, the fact that students at TK Handayani Tiga experience difficulties in learning, such as reading or letter recognition. Further details can be seen as follows:

1. In learning activities, where predict the following sequence after seeing the shape of more than three consecutive patterns. For example: red, white, blue, red, / ABCD – ABCD children are still confused about their tasks.
2. In learning activities, where objects/pictures are arranged based on size, many children still seem confused and have not been able to sort objects/pictures in order according to their size.
3. In learning activities, children still have difficulty connecting/pairing letters with objects up to 20

Based on the three problems mentioned above, a strategy or method is required to overcome these problems. The method used is the method of playing with flashcard media to improve children's language skills. According to Santrock (2012), the playing method is something fun and has a positive value for children. In addition, it has advantages, namely as follows: it is in accordance with the developmental stage in developing all aspects of its development and will be able to encourage a child's interest in learning something. Because it becomes that he is learning something because their main focus is their interest in playing. Moreover, it is assisted by the letter flashcards media. Thus, it is expected to increase the results. The use of letter flashcards in recognition of language and letters will be able to encourage children to study more actively. Games using letter flashcards can improve language skills in children.

Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach. Research data or material objects of study were a child's life phenomena. Data analysis used descriptive analysis. Content analysis was a method of playing activities carried out by each child. In this study, informants were determined using a purposive sampling technique, namely students and teachers at TK Handayani Tiga. Data collection techniques in this study used observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. There was one open question that provided an opportunity for students to express their opinions freely about playing in the learning process in class. The data analysis technique used was data reduction by comparing the results of interviews with other data.

Results and Discussions

In the preschool period, children will feel sensitive to the sounds they hear so that they are able to pronounce them in a word/sound. After turning 3 years old, the child will experience a change in being able to pronounce all vowel sounds and most of the consonants (Menn & Stoel-Gammon, 2009). In simple terms, language can be interpreted as a meaningful and articulate sound-symbol system, which is arbitrary and conventional. It is used as a communication tool by a group of people to express feelings and thoughts (Wibowo, 2001). Language is the most complete and effective communication to convey ideas, messages, intentions, feelings, and opinions to others (Walija, 1996). In addition, language is a system that states and reports what is happening in the nervous system (Pengabean, 1981). According to some linguists, language is very important because language is a way for individuals to communicate with one another.

Language is a communication tool required to interact with each other by using the sound emitted by the speech organs in humans. Language is also a means of thinking and presenting the world to oneself. The basic premise of Berlitz's method states that second language learning should be more like first language learning: lots of active spoken interaction, spontaneous use of language, no translators between first and second languages, and little or no grammatical rules (Brown, 2008). Meanwhile, according to Vigotsky (Jamaris, 2006) reveals that language development is related to cognitive development. Cognitive factors are also determining factors that children can develop and understand in verbal language as the message is conveyed.

Navitis experts also believe that children internalize grammatical rules. Thus, they can construct various kinds of sentences without practicing, reinforcing, or imitating adult language. Furthermore, this theory reveals that to detect certain language categories, such as phonology, syntax, and semantics. Navitic theory believes that language ability is an innate ability. It is also supported by Lenneberg, who argues that language ability is an

ability possessed by a person based on initial knowledge obtained biologically (Yusuf, 2016).

According to Musfiroh (2010), children's language is a system of spoken symbols used by children. The symbol is used as a condition to express something in communication. In addition, Bromlley (Dhieni, 2006) defines language as a system of symbols regulated to transfer various ideas and information consisting of visual and verbal symbols. Meanwhile, according to Suhartono (2005), language is a series of sounds that symbolize thoughts, feelings, and human attitudes. According to Gordon Lewis and Bedson, playing roles is one type of developing early childhood language skills. Role-playing activities also have significant benefits, especially in supporting children's language development, because role-playing provides time and space for children to interact with other people.

1. Language Characteristics

It has been mentioned above that language is a system in the form of sound, which is arbitrary, productive, dynamic, diverse, and humane. From this definition, it can be concluded that the language characteristics are arbitrary, productive, dynamic, diverse, and humane.

- a. Language is Arbitrary. Language is arbitrary, which means the relationship between the symbol and the one symbolized is not obligatory, can change, and cannot be explained why the symbol conceives a certain meaning. In concrete terms, the reason "horse" represents 'a kind of quadruped that can be ridden' is inexplicable.
- b. Language is Productive. Language is productive, which means that with a large number of limited elements, speech units can be made which are almost unlimited, for example, according to *Kamus Umum Bahasa Indonesia*, compiled by WJS. Purwadarminta, Indonesian only has approximately 23.000 vocabularies. However, these 23,000 vocabularies can make millions of sentences without limit.
- c. Language is Dynamic. Language is dynamic, which means that language cannot be separated from various possible changes that can occur at any time. At any time, there may be new vocabulary that appears, but there is also old vocabulary that sinks, not used anymore.
- d. Language is Diverse. Even though language has certain rules or patterns in common, it is because it is used by heterogeneous speakers with different social backgrounds and habits.
- e. Language is Humane. Language as a verbal communication tool that is only owned by humans. Animals have no language. They are unable to learn human language. Therefore it is said that language is human.

2. Learning Media

According to Arsyad (2010), the development of science and technology is increasingly encouraging renewal efforts in the use of technological results in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the teacher must have sufficient knowledge about teaching media, which includes as follows:

- a. Media as a communication tool to make the teaching and learning process more effective,
- b. Media functions to achieve educational goals,
- c. The subtleties of the learning process,
- d. The relationship between teaching methods and educational media,
- e. Values or benefits of educational media in teaching,
- f. Selection and use of educational media,

- g. Various types of educational media tools and techniques,
- h. Media pendidikan dalam setiap mata pelajaran,
- i. Educational media in each subject,
- j. Innovation efforts in educational media (Hamalik, 1994).

3. Benefits of Media in Learning

In the teaching and learning process, two essential elements are teaching methods and teaching media. Hamalik (1994) states that using teaching media in the teaching and learning process can generate new desires and interests, generate motivation and stimulate learning activities, and even psychologically influence students.

In general, the benefits of media in the learning process are facilitating interactions between teachers and students to make learning more effective and efficient. However, more specifically, there are some more detailed benefits of media. Kemp and Dayton (1985) identify several benefits of media in learning, namely as follows:

- a. Delivery of subject material can be equated,
- b. The learning process becomes understandable and more interesting,
- c. The learning process becomes more interactive,
- d. Efficiency in time and effort,
- e. Improving the quality of student learning outcomes,
- f. Media allows the learning process to be carried out anywhere and anytime,
- g. Media can foster students' positive attitudes towards learning materials and processes,
- h. Changing the role of the teacher in a more positive and productive way.

Besides several benefits of media, as stated by Kemp and Dayton (1985), we can still find many other practical benefits. The practical benefits of learning media in the teaching and learning process are as follows:

- a. Learning media can clarify the delivery of messages and information so that it can expedite and improve learning processes and outcomes.
- b. Learning media can increase and direct children's attention so that it can lead to learning motivation, more direct interaction between students and their environment, and the possibility of students to study independently according to their abilities and interests.
- c. Learning media can overcome the limitations of the senses, space, and time.
- d. Learning media can provide students with similar experiences about events in their environment and allow direct interaction with teachers, the community, and their environment, for example, through field trips, where they can visit museums or zoos.

4. Letter Flashcards

Flashcards at Education Card are picture cards with words introduced by Glenn Doman, a brain surgeon from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Pictures on the flashcards are grouped into series, such as animals, fruits, clothes, colors, number shapes, and others. These cards are played by being shown to the child and read aloud quickly, taking only 1 second for each card. This method aims to train the right brain's ability to remember images and words so that children's vocabulary and reading skills can be trained and improved from an early age (Faujiah, Septiani & Putri, 2022).

The success of the educational process at school can be shown by the increase in student achievement. Student learning outcomes are strongly influenced by two factors, namely factors that come from within students and factors that come from outside or environmental factors. Factors that come from within students are ability, motivation to

learn, study habits, and physical and psychological factors. In contrast, factors that come from outside are something that affects student learning outcomes at school, namely the quality of learning (Sudjana, 2005).

According to Sadiman (1996), the advantages of image media are concrete and more realistic in raising the subject matter when compared to verbal language. In addition, it can overcome the limitations of space and time, can overcome the limitations of our observations, clarify the problem of any field, and the price is cheap and easy to obtain and use. According to Rahadi (2003), the disadvantages of image media only display eye sense perception, the size is limited, it can only be seen by a group of children, images are interpreted personally and subjectively, and presented in small sizes. Thus, it is less effective in learning.

5. Research Procedures

In this classroom action research, the second supervisor and second assessor was Dewa Ayu Tari, a teacher at TK Handayani Tiga, who is a colleague of the author. The duties of the second supervisor, who is also assessor 2, were (a) Provide advice in determining problem identification, problem analysis, problem formulation, and improvement objectives, (b) provide advice on making improvement activity plans in the design of one cycle for cycle I and cycle II, (c) guide making Daily Activity Plan (DAP) for each cycle, namely 5 DAP/cycle, (d) guide in making improvement scenarios, (e) assess the teaching practice, (f) guide the conducting and making reflection, (g) assess on the last day of each cycle. Information about the procedure of development activities in each cycle, both cycle I and cycle II, is contained in the improvement scenario, which includes development activity I in the opening stage, development activity II in the core stage, and development III in the closing stage, which each of them contains title activities, classroom management, and improvement steps.

6. Observation and Data Collection Plan

Observation is an important activity in this action research. In order to accurately capture the data observed, the research prepared observation sheets for teachers and children. During implementation and observation, the research observation was assisted by a peer teacher. For children, the observed things were their participation in the learning process, the frequency of active responses that arise when facing actions in learning, and their enthusiasm to carry out block games so that they understand various concepts related to children's language development through letter flashcards.

To be able to observe children's learning activeness in the learning process, the researcher filled out the observation sheet in the I (Inactive) and A (Active) columns, using certain references. For the aspect of children's learning outcomes, the criteria used were * for children who have not yet developed/BB (less), ** for children who begin to develop/MB (sufficient), and *** for children who develop as expected/BSH (good).

7. Research Results

a. Cycle I

Based on the results of improving learning in group A of TK Handayani Tiga in the 2021/2022 academic year, totaling 20 people, in cycle I, the data obtained from improving learning results are as follows:

1) Data Regarding Activeness in Learning

From the results of Daily Activity Plan (DAP) 1 to DAP 2, there was an increase of 10%, from DAP 2 to DAP 3 by 10%, from DAP 3 to DAP 4 by 10%, and from DAP 4 to DAP 5 again an increase of 10%.

2) Learning Outcome Data

The data on learning outcomes also showed an increase in the acquisition of 1 star (*) and 2 stars (**) to 3 stars (***)/good category, namely from DAP 1 to DAP 2 by 10%, from DAP 2 to DAP 3 by 5%, from DAP 3 to DAP 4 by 5%, and from DAP 4 to DAP 5 by 5%.

Based on the description of the first cycle, it is not optimal because there are still children who get * or belong to the category of less. Therefore, it is necessary to make improvements so that there are no students classified as less in the learning actions of each aspect.

b. Cycle II

Based on the results of improving learning in cycle II, it showed that out of 20 children in group A of TK Handayani Tiga in the 2021/2022 academic year, data on the results of learning improvement are obtained as follows:

1) Data Regarding Activeness in Learning

From the results of DAP 1 to DAP 2, there was an increase of 5%, from DAP 2 to DAP 3 by 10%, from DAP 3 to DAP 4 by 5%, and from DAP 4 to DAP 5 again an increase of 10%.

2) Learning Outcome Data

Learning outcome data also showed an increase in the acquisition of 1 star (*) and 2 stars (**) to 3 stars (***)/good category, starting from DAP 1 to DAP 2 by 10%, DAP 2 to DAP 3 by 5%, DAP RKH 3 to DAP 4 by 15%, and from DAP 4 to DAP 5 by 15%.

Based on this description, it seems that the actions taken in cycle II have improved from cycle I because the percentage of children classified as inactive from the aspect of learning activeness is reduced. Meanwhile, from the aspect of learning outcomes, there are no longer children with learning outcomes in the less category.

Based on the discussion results of each cycle above, it can be seen that the results obtained from playing colored geometry blocks with the assignment method to improve language skills in group A children of TK Handayani Tiga in the 2021/2022 academic year are good. Children's language skills are increasing, as seen from the quantitative and qualitative increase in children with active and good categories of learning outcomes. The increase is inseparable from the teacher's efforts in optimizing the planning and implementation of learning related to the reflection results of each DAP for each cycle. Efforts related to cycle I from DAP 1 to DAP 2 through the preparation of better development activities stage in the next lesson.

From DAP 2 to DAP 3, namely by providing more learning resources for children so that they feel satisfied when they want to communicate their abilities through their work. From DAP 3 to DAP 4 through implementing more authentic and appropriate evaluation of learning activities. From DAP 4 to DAP 5, through improving students' coordination in various development activities. Whereas in cycle II, from DAP 1 to DAP 2 by taking into account the comparison between the available time and the development activities carried out, both from the time requirements and the number of various activities. From DAP 2 to DAP 3 through better preparation of development activity scenarios. From DAP 3 to DAP 4, through adjusting the difficulty level of the development activities offered to children and from DAP 4 to DAP 5, maximizing the provision of stimulus to develop aspects of child development optimally in accordance with the objectives of the improvements made.

Conclusions

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the method of using letter flashcards can improve children's language skills in recognizing letters in group A children at TK Handayani Tiga. It can be seen from the improvement results in cycle I to cycle II, where at the beginning of cycle I, the number of children was 38% and children obtained 3 stars by 14%. At the end of cycle II, active children became 90%, and learning outcomes increased to 90% by obtaining 3-star learning outcomes. Based on the discussion on the improvement results, Kindergarten Teachers in activities are expected to pair pictures with letter symbols to stimulate child development consistently. It aims to improve children's thinking skills and train children to recognize the concept of letters, which is useful for children to continue their education to further levels.

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