Magic Box: Optimizing Children's Ability to Recognize Letters

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Abstract

Improving the ability to recognize letters in early childhood in schools has been implemented well, but the learning media is less varied in learning to introduce letters. Various research and concepts show that many media can be used to develop the ability to recognize letters in early childhood, one of which is the magic box. This research aims to measure the effectiveness of the magic box in improving the ability to recognize letters in early childhood. From various previous studies, the magic box has been proven to be able to develop children's language. It has been proven to improve the ability to recognize letters in early childhood. This research method uses classroom action research (PTK) using the Kemmis and MC Taggart models. The research involved one experienced teacher and 12 students. To see the development of the ability to recognize letters in young children, data was collected using in-depth observations of the learning process carried out by the teacher in 8 meetings in 2 cycles, with a duration of 90 minutes for each observation (during the learning process). Data collection techniques were used with observations with students in RA at-taqwa group B, 12 children, interviews with 1 class teacher, and documentation. The research results show that the ability to recognize letters in early childhood generally develops well (BSB) through the magic box. This development can be seen gradually in Cycle I and II (16.6% in Cycle I and 83.3% in Cycle II). The development of the ability to recognize letters in early childhood in this study is assumed to be successful because it has reached a success standard of above 75%. The latest results from this research illustrate that the magic box can be used as a medium of choice in developing the ability to recognize letters and develop language in early childhood. So this game has an important role in developing language, cognitive and physical motor skills, religious and moral values, and social-emotional development.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to recognize letters is an important part of a child's language development and needs to be developed by providing optimal stimulation from an early age (Asthiningsih & Muflihatin, 2018; Romiyati, 2021; Udjir & Watini, 2022). Tadkirotun Musfiroh revealed that stimulating letter recognition stimulates children to recognize, understand and use written symbols to communicate (Ana et al., 2021; Dewi Vortuna, Ratiyah, 2019; Widyastuti, 2018). Children need to know and understand letters because, in their daily lives, children will encounter many things related to letters (Shayne B. Piasta & Richard K. Wagner, 2014; (P.F De Jong & Olson, 2004; Satya Yoga et al., 2015).

Letter recognition is a key form of symbolic knowledge that has been widely studied and contributes directly to children's understanding of letter-sound correspondences. (Khara L Pence Tumbull, Ryan P.Bowles,Lori E. Skibbe, Laura M. Justice, 2010; Permanasari, 2016; Sophia Oktavia Balimulia & Siti, 2020). In the United States, learning to recognize letters and differentiate shapes and sounds is essential to recognizing letters (Ansori, 2015; Baroroh &

Rahmawati, 2020; Francis L. Huang & Invernizzi, 2014). Learning letters is traditionally considered a critical kindergarten academic task in North America. Although relatively little research has been conducted on children's acquisition of alphabet knowledge and the factors that may influence it. However, there is literature that clearly shows that letter knowledge is a strong predictor of starting to read (Burges and Christopher J. Loning 1998; Morag Stuart and Coltheart 1988)(Afnida & Suparno, 2020). Letters do not behave similarly when categorized by type of name or when compared in upper and lower case form (Asnola et al., 2022; Mary Ann Evans, Michelle Bell, Deborah Shaw, Shelley Moretti, 2006; Zaim, 2015).

Games that are suitable for children can improve their thinking abilities. According to Catron and Allen (1999), play is necessary for a child because it has a big influence on their development. The play has a goal: maintaining children's development or growth through a play approach that is creative, interactive, and integrated with the child's play environment (Irman, 2017; Lubis, 2019; Nurhasanah, 2019). The emphasis of play is on the development of creativity, which is very individual and varies from one child to another (Rahayu, 2013; Sumarni, 2022; Uswatun Hasanah, 2019). Apart from that, through natural play, children develop potential in children, not only physically but also in cognitive, language, social, emotional, and creative development (Khasanah et al., 2012; Velga Yazia Dkk, 2022; Wiwik Pratiwi, 2017). Learning is fun and has the uniqueness of this magic box and has been widely used by previous research in Indonesia (Adawiyah, 2022; Laili Hajriah Simamora DKK,2019 Genoveva Dua Eni 2021; Depi Novita Sari, 2022; Veryawan Veryawan Dkk, 2021).

Therefore, it is very important to use this magic box to improve the ability to recognize letters in early childhood to make it easier for children to learn about letters. This research aims to measure the effectiveness of the magic box in improving the ability to recognize letters in early childhood.

Based on the Scopus database, in general, the keywords related to knowledge of the alphabet of early childhood are as shown in Figure 1 below:
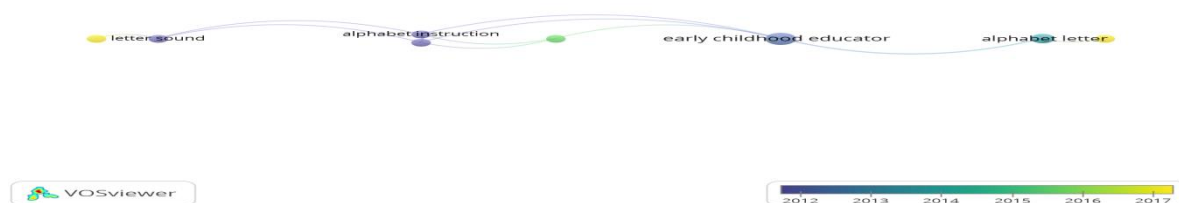

Figure 1. Several Keywords That Refer to Early Childhood Knowledge of Alphabet Letters (Scopus Database)

Based on the picture above, research on the early childhood alphabet was found, totaling 60 documents in various countries worldwide. Based on the Scopus database, there are several keywords for recognizing letters in early childhood, which was analyzed on February 15, 2023, at 14.30 WIB. Research was found regarding the development of knowing the letters of the alphabet in early childhood. Early age) amounting to 1 document (Kaye & Lose, 2019). Research on recognizing letters in early childhood consists of two documents (Rivera Ibaceta et al., 2022; Scliar-Cabral, 2014). Research on recognizing alphabet letters in early childhood consists of 3 documents (Roberts et al., 2020; Shidler & Harrigan, 2010; Wehry, 2003). Research related to kindergarten alphabet letter development consists of eight documents (Carr et al., 2020;Tortorelli et al., 2017; Shaw, 2011; Elliott & Olliff, 2008; Ritchey &

Speece,2006; Papadopoulos Timouhy, CharalambousnAthena, Kanari Androniki, 2016; Mcbride-chang, 2016; Hoffman & Norris, 2015).

Several studies that link the keyword ability to recognize letters in early childhood with knowledge of the alphabet, seen from 2016-2020, found several countries, namely the US, Denmark, Mexico, Australia, UK, Ireland, Singapore, and Chile. As shown in figure 2 below:
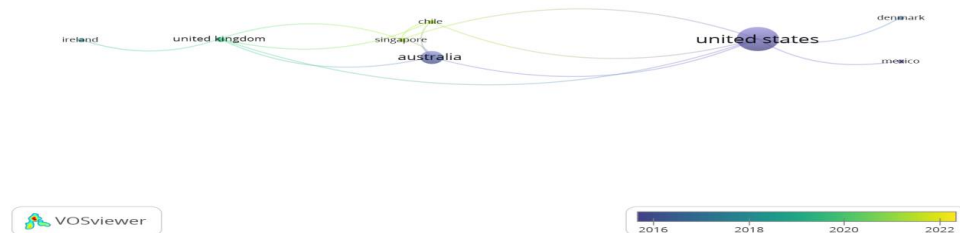

Figure 2. Research in Several Countries Related to Alphabet Management in Early Childhood

Based on previous research using keywords about improving the ability to recognize letters, it has had a lot of up-to-date using various kinds of learning media (Siregar 2019; (Anggi Handayani & Nurhafizah 2019; Agus Sumitra Dkk 2019; Dewi Vortuna, Ratiyah 2019; Citra Dewi Rosalina & Risma Nugrahani 2019; Sheila Septiana Rahayuningsih, Tritjahjo Danny Soesilo 2019; Putri Zahara dkk 2023).

In Indonesia and other countries, research has not linked magic boxes to improve the ability to recognize early childhood letters.

METHODS

This study employed the classroom action research methodology with Kemmis & Mc' Taggart model (Ida Ayu Dian Pramatika, 2019). Classroom action research examines learning activities in the form of an action that is deliberately held and occurs in the classroom simultaneously designed using cycles. One cycle consists of four steps: planning, implementing action, observing, and reflecting (Moch. Bahak Udin By Arifin, 2018). As seen in the picture below, the study was conducted in two cycles:
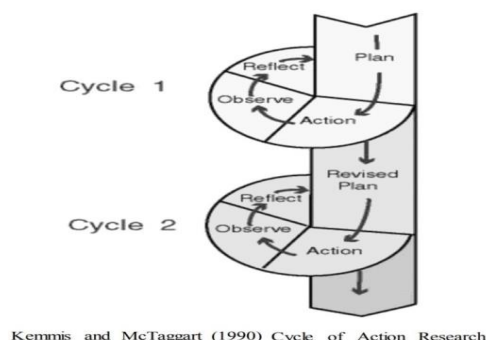

Kemmis and McTaggart (1990) Cycle of Action Research

Figure 3. Research Cycles

At the precycle planning stage, the researchers prepared everything related to the theme and sub-theme of learning. The planning in precycle research was as follows: formulating

plans to conduct learning, preparing the media to be used to adjust the lesson plan, making observations and assessments, and compiling observation sheets to learn the learning process.

The learning implementation was based on each cycle's lesson plan (RPPH). First, in the initial activities, teachers greeted and prayed to facilitate learning. Next, the teachers divided students into groups and introduced the themes and subthemes. The teachers coordinated students and ensured students received learning. Second, the core activities consisted of delivering material according to the theme, preparing the magic box, discussing the rules of the game, and seeing whether or not it was appropriate to arrange the letters according to the pictures taken. Third, the closing activities are evaluating today's activities, inviting children to review the learning, giving awards or appreciation to students properly and correctly, and t closing learning activities by saying *Hamdallah* and greetings.

In the observation stage, the researchers observed the ongoing activities. The aspects observed were learners in learning activities, the activities of learners in groups, each child's understanding of mastery of learning material (recognizing letters) that has been designed by the objectives, and things that must be improved so that the actions taken achieve the desired goals; the learning outcomes of recognizing letters per day each cycle.

Reflection on what has been produced or that has not been completed with corrective actions taken. The result of this reflection is to determine further steps to achieve the goal.

Within two cycles, the research was conducted in group B of Ra AT-Taqwa Way Kanan on January 17, 2022. Each cycle consisted of four meetings with a total of eight days. Data was collected through observation, interviews, and documentation analysis. The study involved one experienced teacher and 12 students. Data was collected using in-depth observation of the teacher's learning process in 90 minutes (during the learning process) to see the development of the ability to recognize letters at an early age.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
A. RESULTS

Based on the analysis, the magic box can improve the ability to recognize letters of group B children of RA AT-Taqwa. The ability to recognize letters using a magic box in each aspect achieved the minimum completeness criterion (KKM) of 75% based on the level of child development from each cycle that continues to increase.

For more details, the results of data analysis are described as follows:

Table 1. The Percentage of Achievement in Developing the Ability to Recognize Letters through Magic Box in Early Childhood

		The Results of Improving Children's Letter Recognition Skills								
Cycle	Meeting	BB		MB		BSH		BSB		Total
		Number of Children	%	Number of Children	%	Number of Children	%	Number of Children	%	
Precycle		6	50%	3	25%	3	25%	-	-	12 children
Cycle 1	1-6	2	16,6%	4	33,3%	4	33,3%	2	16,6%	12 children
Cycle 2	1-6	-	-	-	-	2	16,6%	11	83,3%	12 children
Percentage		100%		100%		100%		100%		100%

Based on the analysis of the initial condition, no children were in the very good development category (BSB), three children were in the developing according to expectations category (BSH), three children were in the beginning to develop category (MB), and six children in the undeveloped category (BB).

The results of cycle 1 showed that two children were in the undeveloped category (BB), four children were in the beginning to develop category (MB), four children were in the developing according to expectations category (BSH), and two children were in the developed very well category (BSB).

Cycle 2 increased children's ability to recognize letters. No children were in the undeveloped category (BB), no children were in the beginning to develop category (MB), two children were in the developing according to expectations category (BSH), and ten children were in the developed very well category (BSB).
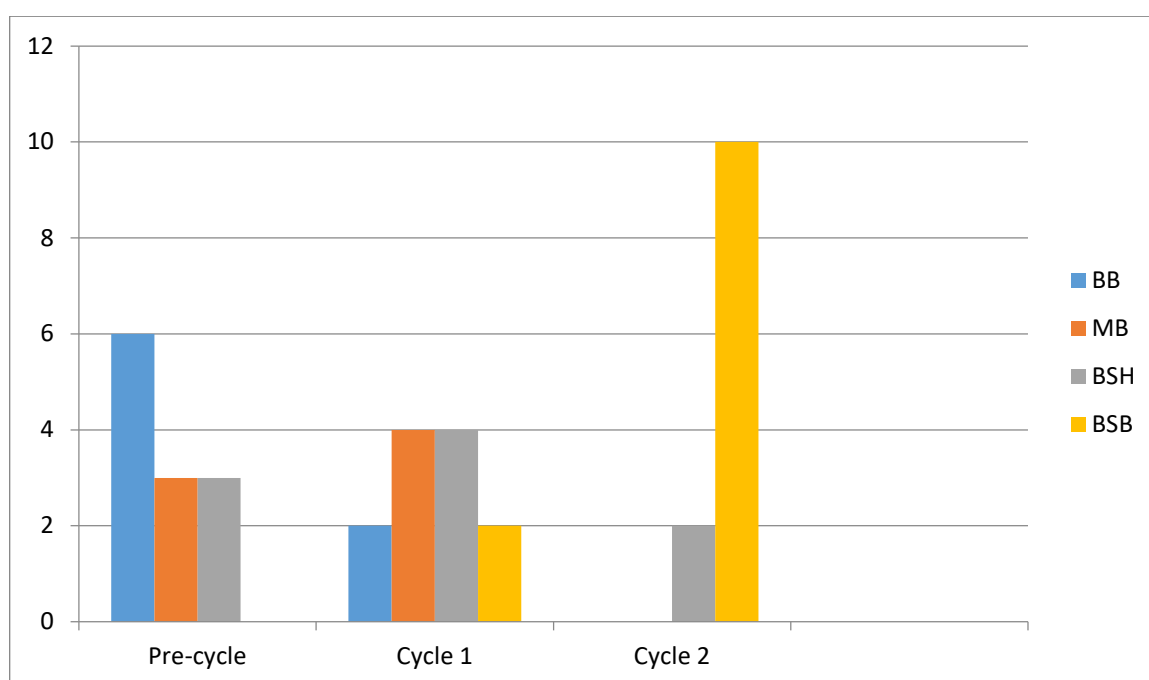

Figure 4. The Achievements in Developing the Ability to Recognize Letters through Magic Box in Early Childhood

B. DISCUSSION

In the precycle, no children were in the very good development category (BSB), three children were in the developing according to expectations category (BSH), three children were in the beginning to develop category (MB), and six children were in the undeveloped category (BB). In cycle 1, of the 12 children, two children were in the undeveloped category (BB), four children were in the beginning to develop category (MB), four children were in the developing according to expectations category (BSH), and two children were in the developed very well category (BSB). Then, in cycle II, most of the students of group B of RA AT-Taqwa Way Kanan experienced an increased ability. No children were in the undeveloped category (BB), no children were in the beginning to develop category (MB), two children were in the developing according to expectations category (BSH), and ten children were in the developed very well category (BSB).

In improving children's development in the learning process, special strategies are needed to support achievement (Isma, 2022; Sanusi et al., 2020; Setianingrum & Azizah, 2021). The ability to recognize children's letters is very good, and it improves the ability to recognize letters; this can be seen from the assessment carried out at the time of evaluation. The assessment is seen by looking at the criteria carried out by several experts covering several aspects so that it looks like children who are capable in every learning as well as very good, good(Adawiyah, 2022; Amidjaja et al., 2021; Asiah, 2020). As children can say the various letters of the alphabet from A, children can tell the letters that children get in the magic box game; children can stick the same letters on posters, unite the letters with the shapes and pictures, group each letter that matches the picture, write the letters correctly. The improvement of children's letter recognition skills seems to have developed very well. This can be seen when teachers and writers give assignments to students. The interest and motivation of students in following learning has increased; this can be seen in the enthusiastic instruction of students in following learning. Children's enthusiasm for learning is higher by being used in letter recognition activities in the magic box because, in applying this magic box activity, they not only learn but also play and observe the shapes of the letters of the alphabet and the corresponding pictures on the letters.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of research and discussion through interviews, observations, and documentation. So, the researchers concluded that improving the ability to recognize letters can use the magic box in group B children in RA AT-Taqwa, which is carried out in as many as two cycles. This study illustrates that the magic box can be used as one of the media of choice in developing the ability to recognize letters and develop language in early childhood.

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