

The Importance of Pre-Reading Ability in Early Childhood: Between Theory and Reality

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the difference between the theory and the implementation of pre-reading. The research was conducted on students in kindergarten Nurul Huda Pilangsari, Ar Ridlo, Annur, Satu Atap Kertasura, and Thola'al Badr in Cirebon Regency, West Java, Indonesia. This research uses the qualitative method (1989) to know the more accurate result. The collecting data is done through observation, interview, and documentation. Data were analyzed descriptively qualitative. The results show that there is a difference between the concept of theory and reality about pre-reading ability. In theory, it is one of the first skills that individuals should acquire in early childhood education (Ulu and Akyol, 2016), to support future academic success in children (Lonigan, 2000), parental involvement in activities literacy with children will improve early reading achievement (Jung, 2016), and early reading activities can be done with the game because through games in early reading activities, can improve the achievement of language and literacy of children (Ocei). In fact, it is known that pre-reading ability is the sole ability demanded by parents in early childhood, the parents fully surrender the achievement of the reading skill of the beginning to the teacher in the school and it is also known that the process of reading teaching is done monotonically using only the media of the book.

Key Words: *Pre-reading ability, Early childhood education, Instructional media.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of early childhood reading is influenced by internal factors and external factors. Internal factor in question is genetic that has been brought by a child since birth. While external factors relate to the environment around the child. Environment and genetic factors will jointly influence a child's early reading ability and subsequent reading development (Logan, *et.al.*, 2013, p. 2131). Referring to the results of research conducted by the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) states that learning to read and write is very important for children's success in school and later on. Although the ability to read and write continues to grow throughout the age range, the early years of childhood from birth to the age of eight are the most important periods for literacy development (NAEYC, 1998, p. 30). Reading ability can support the academic success of a child so that it can be taught early because at that time is the most important period for the development of further reading.

Reading ability is supported by several other prerequisite abilities so that reading ability can be optimally stimulated. In addition, the ability to read can support the academic success of a child. The basis for mastery of reading skills is identified, namely oral language, knowledge of the form of the alphabet, and phonological sensitivity as. In subsequent developments, reading ability can support children's academic success in the future (Lonigan, *et.al.*, 2000, p. 596).

The implementation of early childhood education is expected to be a place to provide an early foundation for reading skills in children. Learning to read at school has better effectiveness than at home. Learning in small groups in the classroom has a higher effectiveness than private tutoring programs (Piasta and Wagner, 2010, p. 8).

The common media education pre-reading in early years, such as the book, flash card, alphabet puzzle was used in the learning process at the kindergarten. Then alternative media is required to be introduced to a concept called media literacy, especially pre-reading areas, requiring users to collect, utilize, change, and produce information based on the stage of development. Children that play and joyful are very important. Optimize their ability. This means that media learning to improve pre-reading ability is very important to be realized because the learning media is tailored to the stages of child development and using the principle of playing while learning (Mostowfi, *et.al.*, 2016, p. 5453-5476). Games as a fun medium of learning include games that use boards (board games), videos and cards, can be used for different purposes in the field of education (Casbergue, 1998, p. 143-147).

One of the efforts to make reading learning early is more interesting is to make learning media to improve the ability to read the beginning that can foster interest in reading children in a fun way through play activities. Early childhood education is cheerful and dynamic, beginning reading activities can be done with games. The use of games in preliminary reading activities can improve children's language achievement and literacy (Osei, *et.al.*, p. 41). So it can be concluded that preliminary reading can be done with game activities and with games can also improve early literacy skills.

2. THE THEORY OF PRE-READING ABILITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

The ability to read is a person's ability to understand reading by involving many activities, visual and cognitive activities. As revealed by Gunizi Kartal and Treysi Terziyan, "learning to read is a business process that requires the development and coordination of complex cognitive skills." (2015). Then Einat Nevo and Irit Bar-Kochva convey that "working memory has been linked to the development of various academic skills, including reading ". Can be defined that pre-reading is closely related to the working memory.

Early childhood reading, especially at the kindergarten level, needs to be developed as it is an important part of the literacy aspect that should be developed according to the early childhood national education standard. In addition, the essence of all abilities in early childhood can develop optimally and the fulfillment of developmental tasks appropriate age that affect its development in the future. This is according to Jessica A.R Logan, *et.al.*, "Reading skills in kindergarten and first grade is often significant predictors of later reading skills, and also associated with the rate of change in reading skills." (2013). It can be defined that reading skills in kindergartens and first-grade primary schools can often predict the ability to read further and also to the extent of changing reading ability. So it can be concluded that the ability to read children at the level of kindergarten is very necessary to be developed to optimize the development of reading ability in the next level which at this age the children are still in the phase of reading the beginning.

The development of reading is divided into several stages according to the child's age level. Jamaris discloses six stages of reading development: (1) interest in books, (2) readiness reading stage, (3) initial reading stage, (4) reading skill development stage, (5) stage of skill expansion, (6) awareness of reading skills. From the reading stages, the children of kindergarten and early grade school are in the early reading phase.

Britany R. Cooper suggests, "Early prereading abilities (eg oral language, listening comprehension, phonological awareness, print skills, and alphabet knowledge) provide the foundation for learning to read and thus future academic success" (2014). The results revealed that early reading skills such as spoken language, listening comprehension, phonological awareness, writing skills, and knowledge of letters are fundamental to learning to read and academic success in the future.

Seefeldt and Barbara suggest that phonemic awareness (sound), the development of linguistic knowledge, and writing comprehension are the three essential abilities children need to achieve in order to be ready to benefit from formal reading instruction (2008). This explains that the early reading skills that must be mastered by the child are the ability to comprehend sounds, recognition of letters and understanding of writing. This basic ability is closely related to daily activities conducted by children in terms of reading, such as the name of a favorite child that food brands, the name of a favorite toy store, restaurant and so forth.

Several studies have found that early reading ability can predict reading achievement at the next level so it is necessary to target interventions appropriate to the child's developmental stage. The ability to read the beginning is an ability that must be owned by the child in understanding the environment because reading at this time is an important ability. Daily activities undertaken by the child can relate to the demands of children in understanding the symbols to be a reading.

The ability to read in children can be developed in the hope that the child will achieve the ability to read properly. Some things that need to be understood so that children can read well namely: a) knowledge of the name of the letter; b) the speed of the child mentioning the name of the letter; c) Phonemic dissection (understanding of letters); and d) reading and reading experience by others (2012). In other words to develop the reading ability in children need to pay attention to the child's ability to understand letters, sounds, and reading. It requires an environmental role in developing children's reading abilities. A child's reading experience is obtained when the child is directly involved in reading activities either as an active reader doing activities as a reader or as a passive reader who only hears readings from others.

Recent research proves that a child can be read after he reaches school age. According to Piaget, the child's language skills cannot be separated from thinking. After the language of the child grows then the mind is growing up. In terms of language researchers use the theory of Piaget the second and the third is the pre-operational level aged 18-24 months up to 6-7 years and the concrete operational level of 6-7 years old until the age of 11-12 years is due to samples taken are children aged 5-6 years where the children are at the pre-operational level and the operational level is concrete.

The contents of the two levels are as follows: The pre-operational level characteristic in this period is the development of the ability to think with a symbol (symbols) that represent a symbol object in the form of mimic, image, mental image, or word (language). At a concrete operational level having concrete thought has evidently developed. In this connection, conservation is the ability to think of more than one trait in a type and to focus on changing from one state to another.

With the development of language, children have been able to think of an object without its presence but can think of the past of other places. Thus in these periods abstract and reasoning minds have begun to develop (1990).

According to Kirk, Kliebhan, and Lerner as quoted by Mercer there are eight factors that determine the success of learning to read that is (1) Mental Maturity, (2) visual ability, (3) listening ability, (4) development speaking and language, (5), (6) motor development, (7) social and emotional maturity, and (8) motivation and interest (2001).

The above opinion suggests that the ability to read the beginning is a well-prepared name, there are several factors that support the pre-requirement capabilities that must be owned by a child to learn to read.

By providing symbol help, the child can think of an object without presenting the object. The period that is important for a child is at the age of 0-5 years. Glenn Doman in his book *How to Teach Your Baby To Read* suggests that, "What must be done during these important years is to satisfy the child's thirst for the things he wants to investigate in various ways, especially through the language both verbally and hearing or writing and reading" (2005).

In the above quotation explains that the parents give satisfaction to the child in terms of what will be investigated by this child because the time he experienced cannot reoccur again where at that time was intellectual in children. The pre-reading ability is something that is very important in modern human life. The advancement of science and technology is very rapid, encouraging people to continuously hone their knowledge and skills. The knowledge and skills are mostly obtained through reading.

According to Lonigen and Whitehurst in Jalongo express, "it is defined that the ability to read the beginning is skills, knowledge, and behaviors that are constantly developing and emerging naturally to shape the development of reading and writing, and environmental support is indispensable for the development of reading skills (2007).

As for the readiness of the environment to be conditioned, the child needs to "stepping stone" before being able to read The emergence of Perilaku mengundangi letters can be prepared with various things. Allington dkkd *Early Childhood Language Arts* put forward as follows:

- a. Demonstrating the ability to understand an oral message by listening and responding appropriately
- b. Pretending to read favorite books, poems, songs, and chants based on familiarity with the text
- c. Using the combination of drawing and writing to communicate; being able to read what you wrote, even if no one else can
- d. Learning to "track print" by pointing to the words using left-right and top-bottom conventions
- e. Knowing critical jargon related to reading and being able to identify things as well as the first words in a sentence, one letter, the first letter in a word, the longest words, and so on
- f. Recognizing the familiar words, including their own names of family members and friends, environmental print (sign, labels), specific words from favorite books, poems and songs
- g. Recognizing if words sound alike or rhyme and engaging in spontaneous language play
- h. Naming of most letters and matching words that begin with common initial sounds\
- i. Learning what language means print and conceptual understanding
- j. Gaining insights into their own processes of interacting with prints and ways of reflecting on language (2007).

Based on that opinion, the readiness of the child in reading the beginning requires effort and preparation that is from demonstrating how to read starting from reading the picture, pretending to read, then uttering the letters of this activity together with the introduction of letters (letter symbol) and voice letters can be made a game that connects letters with the name object. Know the initial letters of each word, the sentence to know your own name, friends, and relatives, followed by write in this activity the child is free to do it with watercolors, sand, and stationery.

So it can be argued that what is meant by the reading ability of a child is naturally, spontaneously with the ability of the self according to the child's development in listening, speaking, recognizing the written verbal symbol that can be understood its meaning, accept, apply through self-expression by combining new meanings and supported by the environment.

Before a child has the ability to read, there are several aspects of readiness reading ability. According to the Independent National Reading Panel there are five main aspects of reading ability: 1) phonemic awareness; 2) phonic; 3) fluency; 4) vocabulary; 5) comprehension (2007). These aspects are described as follows:

- a. Phonemic awareness, defined as the ability to hear and identify sounds in spoken words. The child understands the sounds of every letter he hears or speaks.
- b. Phonic, defined as knowledge of the rules governing language and how to compose and split words. This ability shows that the child understands the composition of words in spelling.
- c. Fluency (fluency), children fluent in speaking will have the capacity to read the text accurately and quickly.
- d. Vocabulary (vocabulary), defined as the ability of the child to master the vocabulary to communicate with others.
- e. Comprehension, defined as the ability to understand the meaning of what has been read.

Manisah Mohd. Alia and Muhammad Nazeri Saidena (2015) define reading as an active process that must be obtained at the early age of learning. Mastery of reading depends on reading familiarity with letters, words and spelling patterns. So it can be concluded that reading is a process that is done actively whose mastery can be determined by familiarity with the letters and words that are the compilers of the reading process.

Based on some aspects that have been described above, it can be concluded that the basic aspects of early reading skills in children are: sound comprehension, understanding of differences and form of letters, understanding of vocabulary, and understanding the meaning of the word.

3. REALITY OF PRE-READING IN THE KINDERGARTEN

The results showed that more than 50% of the total group B student in the kindergarten at Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia had not mastered the ability to read the earliest introduction to the letters. For children who are able to read though there are still some children who have not been able to decipher the letters of the word read and not yet able to understand the meaning of the word read.

From the results of interviews with teachers and principals note that the main media used to read the beginning of a book to learn to read other media, it can be said rarely even almost never though the media in the form of word cards available at the school. The process of reading teaching is done in private. Children are called one by one to read a book to learn to read during the learning process when children do core activities. The results of these interviews obtained information that is needed media interesting to read.

The results also show that during the teaching process of reading in early childhood has not used a variety of media. Based on the results of interviews with children it is known that in fact, they do not really like the process of learning to read that they do, the children also do not know the benefits of learning to read. when given the choice between playing or learning to read, almost all children prefer to read.

so it can be concluded that the process of teaching reading in early childhood should be done with a variety of fun activities according to the stage of child development. children should also begin to be introduced to the purpose of learning to read and the benefits to be gained if they have been able to read early on.

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