



THE INFLUENCE OF LOOSE PART MEDIA ON THE ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE LETTERS IN CHILDREN AGED 4-5 YEARS

Wafa Aerin¹, Rirsdianto Hermawan², Aprilia Yahyuning Fitri³ Ardila Laeli Isnaeni⁴

Universitas Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama Kebumen¹²³⁴

nandaairin03@gmail.com¹

Abstract

This research was motivated by the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari Village which still needs improvement. This research is experimental research with a pre-experimental design carried out in pre-test, treatment and post-test stages. The population in this study were children aged 4-5 years with a total population of 40 children at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari. The number of samples is 30 children. The results of the study showed that the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years had changed after treatment. Thorough recognition of letters using loose part media has an influence on the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari Village. Children's ability to recognize letters during the pre-test shows that they still need improvement. Next, the child or respondent is given treatment using loose part media for 2 times, then the child is observed again using a post-test to find out the difference between the pre-test and the results after the treatment. The results of the post-test showed better changes in the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years, which means that the use of loose part media had an effect on the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years.

Keywords: media; loose part media; ability to recognize letters; child language development; early childhood

Introduction

Language development in early childhood is influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include birth traits, the first language acquired from the mother, and the influence of language use within the family. External factors are influenced by the child's educational scope, the environment around the house, or interactions with peers. According to Jean Piaget, language is not a separate scientific characteristic, but rather one of several abilities that originate from cognitive maturity. One of the goals of the language development aspect is the ability to recognize letters to make it easier for children to understand the concept of words and sentences in the future (Alfiana & Kuntarto, 2020, p. 1).

Activities to optimize language development in early childhood must use appropriate and interesting media. Learning media is an introduction or intermediary that arises from the sender to the recipient of the message. Media with forms that can be used in a fun way is expected to improve children's ability to recognize letters. One of these media is loose part media which can be used as educational teaching material, information media and entertainment media for children (Istim et al., 2022, p. 8574).

The use of loose part media can affect the ability to recognize letters using used goods and natural materials such as stones, pebbles, seeds, ice cream sticks or other materials which are then arranged into the shape of a letter. The term loosepart was discovered by architect

Simon Nicholson, by considering in detail the objects and environment that form a connection (Syafi'i & Dianah, 2021, p. 108). This media is able to help young children to explore aspects of child development, such as materials for solving simple problems, training concentration skills, developing children's language or literacy, and other developments.

Understanding the concept of recognizing letters in early childhood can be applied through activities carried out at early childhood education institutions. This can be implemented using appropriate and fun methods so that children are interested and do not feel bored. The ability to recognize letters is useful for children in communicating, understanding other people's speech, and can be a condition for students' acceptance into further education (Siregar & Nadiroh, 2017, p. 55). The new curriculum at each level of education emphasizes children's freedom to be creative which is supported by utilizing modern technology as well as existing technology or second-hand goods at each PAUD institution.

This research was conducted at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 which is located at Mekarsari Village, Dukuh Duduhan, RT.01 RW.03, Kutowinangun District, Kebumen Regency. The total number of children is 40 children consisting of 30 children aged 4-5 years and 10 other children aged 5-6 years. Children aged 4-5 years consist of 12 boys and 18 girls who come from lower middle class families. Apart from that, the children live in the same village environment, namely Mekarsari Village.

Based on the results of observations at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari, loose part learning media has never been implemented. This institution still uses classical and monotonous media. Some children in group B1, who are on average 4-5 years old, do not yet know the shape of vowels because the institution uses worksheets more often than varied educational games so that children are less able to explore their ability to recognize letters. The use of worksheet media is more likely to make children feel bored, so that the material taught by educators cannot be absorbed well by children. It is known that of the population of children at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 with a total of 40 children, only 10 children have been able to master the ability to recognize letters, while 30 children have not yet mastered it.

Apart from the problems that existed at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari Village, a similar thing also happened in research conducted by (Monintja et al., 2023) at a GMIM Sion Koyawas Kindergarten, West Langowan District. In this study, it was said that there were 23 children whose ability to recognize letters was still low. This is due to the lack of varied learning media and less than optimal teacher methods. Therefore, research was carried out using loose part media as a teaching material to find out more about children's ability to recognize letters (Monintja et al., 2023).

Accurate use of learning media using loose parts gives children freedom in choosing the tools used for learning, so that it has a big influence on children's intellectual abilities and ability to recognize letters (Faujiah et al., 2022, p. 57). This is in line with research conducted by (Monintja et al., 2023) which shows that the use of loose part media is able to increase the ability to recognize letters in early childhood.

Therefore, researchers want to find out more about the influence of loose part media on children aged 4-5 years at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.7.08 Mekarsari. This research aims to enable

researchers to find out the advantages and obstacles of loose learning media when applied to an early childhood education institution.

Literature Review

The development aspect of language is a means of communication both through words and writing which are structured according to the rules of various variations and combinations. Children's language development is influenced by several factors such as intelligence, genetics, gender, economic conditions, culture and environment. The scope of language development according to Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014 includes understanding receptive language, expressing language and literacy (Mardiyah et al., 2020).

According to Elizabeth B. Hurlock, early childhood language development is carried out in a systematic way and develops together with increasing age. Children experience the same stages of development but the differences include family social, intelligence, health, encouragement, relationships with other people or the surrounding environment. A good environment will also influence the child's development well, but if the environment is not good it will have a bad influence on the child. This can be a benchmark or basis for whether or not children of a certain age can speak (Firdaus et al., 2021, p. 53).

Language includes every means of communication by symbolizing thoughts with feelings to convey meaning to other people (Soetjningsih, 2012, p. 95). Apart from this definition, language is the ability to communicate with other people. Language is a form of verbal, written, sign communication, which is based on a system of symbols. Language consists of words used by society along with rules for arranging various variations and combining them (Sukmaningsih & Hermawan, 2023, p. 508).

Language development in early childhood is influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include birth traits, the first language acquired from the mother, and the influence of language use within the family. External factors are influenced by the child's educational scope, the environment around the house, or interactions with peers (Fitri & Ummah, 2022). According to Jean Piaget, language is not a separate scientific characteristic, but rather one of several abilities that originate from cognitive maturity. One of the goals of the language development aspect is the ability to recognize letters to make it easier for children to understand the concept of words and sentences in the future (Alfiana & Kuntarto, 2020, p. 1)

Loose part-based teaching materials are media that come from materials that can be engineered, moved, and played according to the child's wishes (Syafi'i & Dianah, 2021, p. 104). This media is able to help young children to explore aspects of child development, such as materials for solving simple problems, training concentration skills, developing children's language or literacy, and other developments. The term loose part was discovered by architect Simon Nicholson, by considering in detail the objects and environment that form a connection (Alam et al., 2023).

There are various kinds of materials that can be used as loose part media, namely natural basic materials such as rocks, gravel, leaves, wood and bamboo. Apart from that, there are

plastic materials, metal materials, glass and ceramic materials, yarn, fabric and packaging that are no longer used (Imamah & Muqowim, 2020, p. 80). This media is used as a game in an early childhood education institution or at home. This will attract the child's attention so that the child does not feel bored.

Good activities for early childhood must be created by providing opportunities for children to be able to explore their own abilities with the help of materials available in the surrounding environment (Ridwan et al., 2022, p. 105). The use of loose part media can be an appropriate media choice for young children that suits children's characteristics and needs, namely critical thinking, communicative, creative and collaborative. Loose part media supports imaginative play and a way that does not direct opportunities and play, but this media allows children to develop their own ideas so that children are able to explore their world (Syafi'i & Dianah, 2021, p. 108).

According to Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 146 of 2014, indicators for mastering early literacy recognition are that children are able to show the shape of letter symbols, children are able to create a picture from several scribbles or writings that have become letters or words, children are able to write their own names using letter symbols. According to Cochrane Efal, in each stage and process of a child's development of reading, the child will experience several stages, such as the imagination stage, the stage of forming his self-concept, the stage of reading pictures, the stage of getting to know reading, and the stage of reading. So that when the process of recognizing a child's letters from the initial stage to the final stage has gone well, the child will be said to be able to read according to the procedure (Mislahusnika, 2016, p. 15).

Based on the description above, researchers can conclude that the ability to recognize letters is a child's ability to do things or activities by recognizing the characteristics and signs of a character in writing which is part of the letter symbols which will represent the sounds of language. Good stimulation for teaching letter sounds and letter symbols to young children can be done by combining each sound using movements that are easy for children to remember. Early childhood children do not yet have the ability to do abstract things, so introducing letters to children must be done concretely.

Methods

This research uses a quantitative approach as a method for finding problems and obstacles in the subject under study. The type of research used in this research is pre-experimental design. This research adheres to experimental research because the research method used is related to finding the effect of certain treatments on others under controlled conditions (Sugiyono, 2013, p. 6).

This research uses a One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. In this design there is a pretest before being given treatment. The results of the treatment can be known more accurately because it can be compared with the situation before the treatment was given.

O ₁ X O ₂

O₁ = pretest score (before treatment)O₂ = posttest score (after being given treatment)

In this design there are two groups, each of which is chosen randomly (Sugiyono, 2015: 15). The first group was given treatment (X) and the other group was not. The group that is treated is called the experimental group and the group that is not treated is called the control group.

The population in this study were children aged 4-5 years with a total population of 40 children at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari. The data collection technique used to collect data in this research is the observation and documentation method. The data analysis technique aims to calculate the increase in the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari Village using the normality test, homogeneity test, and one sample T test.

Result/Findings

Requirements Analysis Test Results

The research results were obtained from pre-test, treatment and post-test data at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari. The data collected and analyzed was data on the ability to recognize letters obtained from research subjects totaling 30 respondents with specifications for children aged 4 to 5 years. Before being given treatment, an observation was carried out on the respondent's ability to recognize letters. After the observation was carried out, the respondent was given treatment twice and again carried out a test called a post-test or also called a final test to determine whether there was an influence of loose part media or not. Regarding a more complete explanation, the researcher describes the process of carrying out the research that has been carried out as follows:

Observation

Before carrying out the treatment, respondents were given a pre-test or initial test in the form of observation first with the aim of determining their previous ability to recognize letters. The pre-test was carried out on Saturday 2 March 2024 during the core learning activities. The pre-test was carried out in the form of observations of each child, namely 30 children/respondents aged 4 to 5 years. This observation was carried out by introducing basic letters such as consonants and vowels assisted by picture media. The pre-test assessment was carried out on one group taken at random using a lottery to determine 30 respondents from 40 children. Analysis of descriptive test results in the pre-test obtained a maximum value of 22, a minimum of 14 with an average value of 18.30.

**Table 1. Pre-Test Score
Ability to Recognize Letters**

Statistics	Pre-test
N	30
Total	549
Average	18,30
Maximum Score	22
Minimum Score	14
SD	1.950

Treatment

The treatment given to Pertiwi Kindergarten children 14.07.08 Mekarsari was the application of loose part learning media for children aged 4 to 5 years. The treatment was carried out twice after the pre-test and before the post-test and was carried out for one hour during the core learning activities. The first thirty minutes of opening activities are carried out, the next fifteen minutes are carried out before starting the loose part activities, namely ice breaking, strengthening theory, introducing media, explaining the theme and rules of the activity. Thirty minutes later, play activities using loose parts are carried out to determine the child's letter skills according to the directions. The last fifteen minutes of playing experience, activity evaluation and closing activities.

Meeting 1

The first day of treatment was given on Monday, March 4 2024. The activity began guided by the class teacher with a line outside the classroom, praying and stepping before studying, then continued with memorizing letters and prayers according to habit, ice breaking and continued by the researcher, namely playing using loose part in core activities. This research was conducted for a total of 30 children/respondents. This treatment is carried out for one hour.

The activity of recognizing letters by playing using loose part media on the first day begins with basic activities, namely remembering the letters of the alphabet, identifying consonants and vowels. The treatment is carried out by showing the child a drawing paper containing the letters of the alphabet, then the children are identified one by one. Then the researcher gave directions for playing using loose parts to form several consonant letters chosen by the child, namely "B, M, H, J, N" and vowel letters "A I U E O – a i u e o". Children made the basic shapes of the letters using loose part media provided by the researchers, namely used Yakult bottles, cotton seeds, ice cream sticks, bottle caps, straws, colorful stones.

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Each child takes media according to his wishes. This also follows from the independent curriculum system, that children can freely use teaching media for play activities while learning. Activities are carried out with enthusiasm, this is because children like new things and real objects to play with. At first the children still did not understand the use of these objects, but after being given directions and given examples by the researchers, the activities were able to run well and still needed guidance.

After 30 children/respondents received treatment activities, in the last 10 minutes the researcher directed the children to tidy up the media that had been used for playing so that the classroom was neat and clean again. Then the researchers continued recalling activities related to the activities that had been carried out on that day. In the closing activity, the children were again guided by the class teacher and completed the day's activities in accordance with the institution's SOP.



Picture 1. Activities to recognize letters by playing using loose part media

Meeting 2

The second day of treatment was carried out on Friday, March 8 2024. The activity started with a line outside the classroom, praying and stepping before studying, then continued with memorizing letters and prayers according to habit, ice breaking and continued by the researcher, namely playing using loose parts on core activities. The activities were carried out almost the same as the first treatment, but

the only difference was that in the second treatment the focus was on the researcher, and the class teacher only helped to put the children in order.

Play activities using loose part media on the second day began with recalling activities, namely remembering activities that had been carried out on the previous day. The activities on that day adhered to the theme of the universe with the sub-theme of rain. The researcher explains the theme that will be implemented, then the researcher provides a picture of rain and writes the words "H, U, J, A, N" using drawing paper. Then the child identifies the words, the letters "H, J, N" are consonant letters, and the letters "U, A" are vowel letters.

The researcher made examples of letter shapes using ice cream sticks to form the vowels "A, I, U, E, O". Then each child said the shape that the researcher had made. Then the researcher arranged the letters into the words "H, U, J, A, N" and then each child imitated them.

The next activity is for children to arrange the letters into the words "H, U, J, A, N" according to the directions. Each child chooses the media they like. On the second day of treatment, changes were shown. There are some children who no longer need help from researchers or other people, and there are some who are capable but still need guidance. Children carry out activities enthusiastically and without feeling bored.

The final activity is evaluated by reviewing the activities that have been carried out. Researchers provide directions for tidying up the media again and carrying out closing activities. Researchers asked children how they felt during play activities. After the activity was completed, the researcher carried out an evaluation and shared with the class teacher and related institutions the research that had been carried out.



Picture 2. Second Day Treatment Arranging Letters into Words using loose part media

Final Test

Results of descriptive analysis of post-test data after treatment was given using loose part media to children aged 4 to 5 years. Pre-test descriptive analysis of Pertiwi Kindergarten children 14.07.08 Mekarsari Village aged 4-5 years obtained a maximum score of 22, a minimum of 14, with an average score of 18.30. Meanwhile, the post-test analysis obtained a maximum value of 24, a minimum of 19, with an average value of 21.27. Next, a data normality test was carried out between the pre-test scores and the post-test scores.

Table 2. Post-Test Score
Ability to Recognize Letters

Statistik	Pre-test
N	30
Total	638
Average	21,27
Maximum score	24
Minimum score	19
SD	1.143

Data is considered reliable if the significant value is > 0.05 . Meanwhile, if the significance value is < 0.05 then the residual value is not normally distributed. In this study, the data normality test produced a significance value of 0.671. From these descriptive data, it can be concluded that the ability to recognize children's letters at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari Village showed changes in the post-test, namely the test carried out after being given treatment to recognize the ability to recognize letters using loose part media.

Table 3. Summary of Normality Test

Instrument Items	Sig	Conclusion
Children can recognize letters A-Z using loose part media	0,199	Normal
Children can name the forms of vowel symbols from the researcher's instructions using loose parts	0,202	Normal
Children can group vowels and consonants using loose parts created by researchers	0,72	Normal
Children can imitate letter shapes according to the instructions from researchers using loose part media	0,065	Normal
Children can arrange letters into a word (HUJAN) using loose part media	0,064	Normal
Children can understand a noun when researchers explain the	0,107	Normal

benefits and how to use loose part media		
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Effectiveness Test Results

The paired sample t-test was used to compare the difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores. See whether or not there is a difference in children's ability to recognize letters before and after being given treatment with loose part media. The analysis carried out in this research used IBM SPSS Version 26. The test results can be seen in the table below:

Table 4. Paired Sample T-Test Results

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre	18.30	30	1.950	.356
	post	21.27	30	1.143	.209

This table shows that there is a difference in the mean between the pre-test and post-test, this difference can be seen as an increase in the average score of the pre-test of 18.30 while the post-test increased to 21.27.

Table 5. Different Tests for the Ability to Recognize Letters

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pre - post	-2.967	1.810	.330	-3.642	-2.291	-8.979	29	.000

The effectiveness test was carried out using the One Sample T Test. Based on the table data above, the results of the pre-test and post-test show a significance of 0.000. Referring to the basis for making a decision where the significance value is $0.000 < 0.05$, there is a difference in the results of the pre-test value and the post-test value. Thus H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. So it can be concluded that there is an increase in children's ability to recognize letters after being given treatment or treatment using loose part media.

Hypothesis Test Results

Based on the explanation above, which shows that there is an influence on increasing the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4 to 5 years using loose part media, it can be concluded that the results of the hypothesis test are H_a , there is an influence on the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years in Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari Village.

Discussion

Based on the results of observations from pre-test to post-test, there are differences in the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari. In the pre-test observations, it was seen that children's ability to recognize letters still needed improvement. This is because the learning media is not varied and still relies on student worksheets. Children will tend to get bored and will not have many opportunities to explore various media to learn to recognize letters. Based on this, researchers want to know how loose part media influences children's ability to recognize letters.

Loose part media is learning media in the form of loose objects that can be manipulated, redesigned, put back together in various ways. Materials that can be used as loose part media are natural basic materials such as rocks, gravel, leaves, wood and bamboo, plastic materials, metal materials, glass and ceramic materials, yarn, fabric and unused packaging. This media is easy to obtain because it can be found in the surrounding environment and can be used according to the theme and all learning methods (Syafi'i & Dianah, 2021, p. 98). In the independent curriculum, the use of teaching materials for children is freer and it is better to reduce activities in the form of sheets of paper, for example using loose part teaching materials by utilizing materials or objects in the surrounding environment. This aims to ensure that children can freely choose the media they will use for playing while learning.

The use of loose part media in this research was adapted to the theme that had been prepared by previous researchers. This activity is carried out during the core learning activities. Researchers carry out activities while still following SOP procedures according to the institution being studied. During the treatment, the researcher was assisted by the class teacher by providing support, supervision, encouragement and necessary learning facilities. At the end of each activity, the teacher provides a recall of the activities that have been carried out today, and conveys the activities that will be carried out the following day.

Treatment is carried out on two consecutive days within a period of three weeks. This research was carried out in the initial stage, namely a pre-test, then two treatments were carried out one week later, then one week later a post-test was carried out. Implementation of play activities using loose part media begins after the initial activity, namely after the foothold activities before learning and prayer activities. This treatment is carried out in 6 stages, namely recognizing letters A-Z, mentioning the shape of vowel symbols, grouping vowels and consonants, imitating letter shapes, arranging letters into a word, understanding a noun. When this treatment was given, changes began to be seen in the child's ability to recognize letters.

The ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years refers to an indicator of the child's language development achievements. Indicators of achieving this development are that children can recognize early literacy, children can name the shapes of letter symbols, children can classify vowels and consonants, children can imitate letter shapes, children can arrange letters into words, children can understand words in a story (Kuniawan et al., 2024).

The results of statistical analysis show that there are differences in the effects before and after being given treatment. This is proven by the calculated significance value in the pre-test and post-test effectiveness test being less than 0.05 (sig, <0.05), namely 0.000. Based on the results of experimental research that has been carried out, loose part media influences the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion of the results of experimental research with a pre-experimental design, it can be concluded that there is an influence on the application of loose part learning media on the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari Village.

The implication obtained after conducting research on the influence of loose part learning media on the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years at Pertiwi Kindergarten 14.07.08 Mekarsari Village is that we know the influence of the use of learning media on the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years. Based on research that has been conducted, loose part learning media has an influence on the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years according to procedures for early childhood. Clearly, children's ability to recognize letters increases after using loose part learning media.

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