

## The Importance of Visual Learning Media Innovation in Facilitating the Ability to Recognize Letters of the Alphabet for Children Aged 4-5 Years

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### Abstract

A person in early childhood is at a fundamental age, and children need to be properly stimulated in a number of areas of development. One aspect of development that needs to be stimulated is the aspect of language development and one of the language skills is reading. One of the basic aspects of reading skills that needs to be stimulated in early childhood is the ability to recognize letters of the alphabet as a basis for learning to read at an early stage. In this regard, research was carried out using descriptive qualitative methods at RA Assidiqiyah and RA PUI Al-Fatwa. The research was intended to find out educators' understanding of the importance of visual learning media innovation in facilitating the ability to recognize letters of the alphabet, the ability of children aged 4-5 years to recognize letters of the alphabet, and the use of learning media to facilitate the ability to recognize letters of the alphabet for children aged 4-5 years. From the research that has been done, it is found that the media used is still not innovative, even though educators understand the importance of visual media innovation very well.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood, Alphabet Letters, Learning Media Innovation



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### INTRODUCTION

Early childhood can be interpreted as an individual or someone who is in a process of fundamental development with various aspects of development that need to be stimulated optimally and well so that aspects of development in children. According to Sujiono (2013), states that early childhood is a child who is in the process of developing fundamentally and also progressing rapidly for the next life. Therefore, aspects of development in early childhood need to be properly stimulated so that children can develop and grow optimally according to the child's age level. So we need a good and appropriate education for early childhood. Early Childhood Education Institutions (PAUD) are a forum for early childhood to improve various aspects of development according to their age level, outside of education carried out by parents of children in the family environment.

PAUD (Early Childhood Education) can be held in a formal or non-formal form. One of the formal Early Childhood Education (PAUD) includes Kindergarten (TK), Raudatul Athfal (RA), as well as other PAUD institutions where these institutions are equivalent for children aged four to six years. When a child enters an early childhood education institution, of course educators must be able to develop various aspects of development in children according to their age level. From various aspects of child development that need to be improved and stimulated, one of them is language development.

In language development, there are 4 language skills including skills in writing, then skills in reading, speaking and also listening. Of the four types of language skills, one type of

language skill that needs to be developed is reading skills. The ability to read in early childhood is the child's ability to carry out the process of translating alphabetic symbols into pronunciation and connecting spoken words with these symbols (Rakimahwati et al., 2018). Reading activities for children aged 4 years and children aged 6 years have the goal of making it easier for children to learn to recognize letters and learn to recognize letter symbols by simplifying letters or words. Therefore, in the process of learning to read in early childhood, especially for children who are at the age of 4 to 5 years, one of them is learning to recognize the letters of the alphabet.

Getting to know the letters of the alphabet in children who are at the age of 4-5 years is one of the basic things, it is intended that children can more easily learn to read to the next stage. After the child knows the shapes and names of the letters of the alphabet, this will make it easier for the child to learn to read syllables, simple words and the child will be better prepared in the process of learning to read fluently. In line with Glen (in Susanto) states that the introduction of letters must be the basis for teaching children to read, followed by the introduction of syllables, words, and the ability to recognize sentences. In introducing letters of the alphabet to children aged 4-5 years, of course, you have to use media and do it in stages without any coercion. Knowing letters for children will not grow by itself, but guidance is needed by honing these skills so that children are able to recognize letters of the alphabet and enter the stage of fluent reading (Nawafilaty, 2017).

Media in introducing letters of the alphabet to early childhood can be in the form of visual media, in the form of audio media, or in the form of audio-visual media. In PAUD institutions, the majority of the media used to help children aged 4 to 5 years learn to recognize letters is visual. Therefore, so that children do not quickly feel bored or bored in learning to recognize letters of the alphabet, the media used must be interesting and innovative. This is also related to visual media which is often only focused on pictures of letters that are less attractive. Therefore, it is very important for educators to consider the use of the media used and always update the media with the innovation process carried out. The media used is expected to be more ideal considering the availability of innovative learning media, especially visual-type media that helps recognize letters of the alphabet in children aged 4-5 years. The ideal learning media is media that is creative and innovative, which means that the media can attract interest in learning and arouse students' curiosity (Farida et al., 2018).

Research has been conducted at two PAUD institutions, namely RA Assidiqiyyah and RA PUI Al-Fatwa in Majalengka Regency regarding the importance of visual learning media innovation in facilitating the ability to recognize letters of the alphabet in children aged 4-5 years. The purpose of this research is to learn about learning media that is used to help children aged between four and five years in learning to recognize letters of the alphabet, and how well teachers understand the importance of innovation in facilitating alphabet recognition in visual learning media for children between the ages of 4 and 5 and innovations being carried out for visual learning media.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Literature Review**

The Latin word "media", which means "intermediary", "introduction", or "center", can be interpreted as "middle" (Azhar Arsyad, 2017). Therefore, media can be described as a tool that functions as an intermediary for transmitting messages to recipients. Learning media is a tool for educators so that they can realize processes in teaching and learning activities that

are more effective, fun and can help teachers deliver material more easily and make it easier for students or students to understand and receive material (Setiawan et al., 2022) . Learning media is one aspect that is so important that teaching and learning activities can achieve learning goals optimally and will make it easy for children to understand the things being learned (Hamidah et al., 2021). In addition, learning media functions as a means or tools to assist in teaching and learning activities so that educators can effectively and efficiently achieve educational or learning goals and make the meaning of the message they want to convey easier to understand.

Learning media are of course different and differentiating learning media can be analyzed based on several things, one of which is seen from its type. As for the types of learning media according to Zaman & Eliyawati (2010) states that there are three types, including:

1. Visual Media. Visual media is media that can help educators to help students understand the concepts being studied and can only be seen. Visual media is further divided into two types, namely media in the form of dead or still/non-moving images, models, realia media, and graphic media which are examples of visual media that cannot be projected. Regarding the notion of "visual media that can be projected", the term refers to media that can be seen on a screen thanks to the use of a projection device or projector by educators. Visual media that can be projected can be in the form of still/non-moving images and can be in the form of moving images (video).
2. Audio Media. Audio media, also known as audio-assisted media, is a type of media that can only be heard. Has the ability to increase a child's willingness to learn material or themes as well as feelings, focus, and thoughts. Some examples of audio media include radio, CD, and so on. The purpose of using audio in learning activities in PAUD is to train aspects of language skills in the form of listening by listening.
3. Audio Visual Media. Audio-visual media is a type of media that combines audio and visual elements known as audio-visual media or see-see media. This type of media is said to be complete in the process of conveying learning to children. This is because the presentation of material or theme content will be presented more fully and also optimally. Educators do not really play a role when delivering audio-visual media, because educators only need to be facilitators so that they can provide convenience to children during the learning process.

Of the three types of learning media that have been described previously, one type of media that is often used in introducing letters of the alphabet to early childhood is visual media. Visual media can continue to be developed with an innovation. With regard to innovation, there are two interrelated terms, namely invention in the form of discovering something completely new from the results of human creations and discovery which means the discovery of something that already existed before. According to Suryani (in Haris, pp. 141-142) that innovation can be interpreted in a broad concept, one of which can be in the form of a way, ideas, can even be an object prepared by someone as something new and not limited to a product. Therefore, innovation can be defined as an idea, method, idea or object developed by someone to create something new or improve something that already exists. So that learning media innovation is a process of creating media with innovations that are really new or developing existing media into something new and can be used as one of the expected learning objectives is to help children between the ages of 4 and 5 years recognize letters. alphabet.

Reading in early childhood is often discussed by experts, especially regarding the importance of reading for early childhood, including Montessori (in Herlina, 2019) states that children aged four and a half to six years are in a sensitive period to learn to read because children already have readiness in reading or an emerging interest in reading. So, at that age is the best time for children to start being stimulated, one of which is in the aspect of language development, namely reading. Reading in early childhood is the prefix or initial reading stage. Reading the prefix or beginning stage is one of the initial reading stages before entering the next reading stage. I Gusti Oka (in Herlina, 2019) suggests that the process of moving a child's eyes from left to right, then the ability to compose letters with the sounds or sounds of the language they represent, then reading simple words and sentences is the first step in beginning reading. Several stages of reading in children according to Solehuudin et al. (in Herlina 2019) there are four stages, namely: (1) beginner reading stage; (2) the reader's growing stage; (3) early reading stage; (4) expert reader stage.

In the early stages of learning to read, the ability to recognize letters is one of the basic skills for children in learning to read. Letter recognition skills must be mastered by early childhood because this is one of the initial assets for children in aspects of language development in the form of reading skills (Siregar, 2019). Therefore, the introduction of letters of the alphabet is an important thing that must be done for early childhood, so that it is easier for children to learn to read. In order for children to read easily, they must first memorize the letters of the alphabet, both uppercase and lowercase (Triana et al., 2020). Some visual type learning media to facilitate the ability to recognize alphabet letters for children aged 4-5 years, with an innovation including:

1. Smart Box. A smart box is a type of learning media that is used as a tool to convey information in a square shape which has two sections containing pictures and letters (Rahyuningsih et al., 2019). Having the ability to create a fun learning environment and increase a child's concentration is one of the advantages of a smart box. Other advantages include increasing children's creativity and learning outcomes.
2. Pop up books. Media in the form of pop-up books, namely learning media designed in three-dimensional shapes and in a variety of forms, images that are interesting and unique so that they give the impression of being alive in pictures or images that can move when the pages of the book are opened (Jannah et al., 2020). Using pop-up book media to recognize letters can help children learn to read and in turn expand their vocabulary.
3. Explosion Box. Media explosion boxes are the contents of three-dimensional media which are usually used as surprise boxes for special gifts on important or special days, which can be in the form of photos, images, or text packaged with a distinctive expression and appearance (Husnah et al., 2021) . However, with human creativity, media that previously functioned as prizes were developed into learning media. One of them is media to introduce letters to early childhood. In this media, there are materials related to the introduction of letters of the alphabet.
4. Sandpaper Letters. andpaper letters or raba letters are visual type media made of square wood with a thickness of 1cm and the use of sandpaper paper to introduce letters of the alphabet to children (Ramadani et al., 2019). This media is one of the learning media in the Montessori method which begins by introducing vowels and then introducing consonants. In addition, sandpaper letter media is one of the media that can develop skills in recognizing letters of the alphabet which has a function for children to be able to feel letter symbols, train children and build children's muscle mechanisms for holding, and so on (Hasanah et al., 2020 ).

5. Puzzles. Media puzzle is a medium that attracts interest for children to learn. Letter puzzle media is a type of visual media with various designs. It is made up of individual letters which can be rearranged into strings of words based on how the letter puzzle is arranged (Amalia & Patiung, 2021).
6. Flash Chards. Flash cards are a type of media in the form of letter cards in a visual form and are used as a tool in the form of alphabet cards with a variety of pictures, letters, and symbols used by educators by showing and reminding children of letter shapes (Andini & Mubin, 2022). The advantages of flash card media include cheap; easily accessible by all groups; no need to use special equipment; flexible in nature; easy to understand; and in its use it can be used in a flexible place and time.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

A descriptive qualitative research method was used for this study, and data was collected through observation and interviews at RA Assidiyyah and RA PUI Al-Fatwa, Bantarujeg, Majalengka district (West Java). Children aged four to five years (group A) became the research subjects.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of research by interviewing several teachers Raudathul Athfal (RA) in Bantarujeg sub-district, Majalengka district, West Java, specifically group A teachers RA Assidiyyah and RA PUI Al-Fatwa, the result was that the use of learning media, especially to facilitate children in recognizing letters of the alphabet, was still limited. or still minimal. As for the media used in visual form, on average they use reading books 1 to 3 which completely do not have a variety of colors and images.

Another fact, the teachers who were interviewed stated that children often get bored easily because the full contents of the book are only text, not illustrated and not very interesting. Supposedly, in order to increase children's motivation to learn alphabet letters, it is necessary to use media that is attractive to children so that children are motivated to want to learn alphabet letters without getting bored or bored easily and easily understood by children. This is in line with the statement by Guslinda & Kurnia (2018) that in PAUD, it is necessary to use learning media that can distract children so that they remain involved in activities for a longer period of time and prevent them from getting bored.

Based on the results of the interviews it was also found that by using reading books 1 to 3, when children entered group B (age 5-6 years) on average they were not able to recognize the letters of the alphabet according to their symbols. Some children who have started to be able to recognize the letters of the alphabet are only able to recognize the letters of the alphabet in the first order. Even though in reality, there are children who are able to read fluently, in general, children are still confused in recognizing the letters of the alphabet according to the letter symbols. Whereas for children aged 4-5 years, children should have started to know the letters of the alphabet and when they enter group B, children are able to recognize letters of the alphabet.

In line with (Aulina, 2012) that children aged 5-6 years should be at the stage of introducing reading or beginning reading and reading fluently based on the stages of reading development according to the Jamaris division. Meanwhile, Jamaris (2006) divides the development of reading in early childhood into 4 stages, namely: (1) stages of the emergence of a child's awareness of writing, (2) stages of children reading pictures, (3) stages of the process of introducing reading, (4) stages of reading fluently.



The use of media to support children in recognizing letters of the alphabet, at RA Assidiqiyyah and RA PUI Al-Fatwa, apart from books, also always uses media that has long been made or uses alphabet letter cards pasted on the classroom walls. In addition, interspersed with the introduction of letters of the alphabet using blackboard media. For media made by the teacher, it will only be replaced if the media seems almost unfit for reuse. One of these media is letter cards with various shapes of animals or others that are affixed to the classroom walls in 2D shapes, essentially only having length and width.

Based on the results of interviews related to an understanding of the importance of visual learning media innovations to facilitate the ability to recognize letters of the alphabet in children aged 4-5 years, the results show that teachers understand enough about the importance of these innovations. However, educators are more focused on teaching reading to children using books that are already available. So that the innovations made by teachers on visual learning media in facilitating children aged 4 to 5 years in introducing letters of the alphabet are very minimal, even though the teacher already understands the importance of innovation in these learning media.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that RA Assidiqiyyah and RA PUI Al-Fatwa use reading books, letter cards, and the use of blackboards as media to help children aged 4-5 years recognize the letters of the alphabet. Even though teachers have a very good understanding of the importance of learning media innovation, it can be said that visual learning media innovation is still lacking.

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