

THE USE OF LETTERLAND METHOD IN TEACHING READING AT EARLY YEAR LEVEL TO PRE-SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AN INFORMAL EDUCATION IN BANDAR LAMPUNG

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ABSTRACT- Letterland method was phonics based system that children learned about the correct sounds in English text. In every Letterlander had a story, action trick, singing a song and several activities thus it would make children improve their interest and encourage them in reading. This research also aimed at knowing the process of children learning in reading to early stage of reading and to know the way Letterland method would help children to be able to read. The subjects of this research were 3 to 9 years old in Bandar Lampung. They were purposefully selected as the data resource because they were in appropriate Letterland level. The instrument in conducting this research were observation and documentation from students worksheets. The results of the research concluded that the use of Letterland method to early year level would help and develop children learning process in reading.

Keyword: Letterland, Letterland method, phonics, letter shapes and letter sounds, action trick.

1. INTRODUCTION

Letterland is provided for young learners from 3 to 8 years old who have got difficulties in reading. Wendon created Letterland for helping young learners in starting early stage of reading. Therefore, it is suitable to use this method for early stage of reading because it uses phonics as the basis of learning. Phonics becomes an important part in learning because there are so many researchers believe that phonics is very important part in the early stage of reading (Graham and Kelly 2008). Adams (1994) stated that phonics is the best way to teach young learners to read in the word level. Therefore, phonics is the effective approach to teach the alphabetic and also helping young learners in decoding unknown words.

Letterland method can be used not only to teach reading to young learner but also to teach others skills such as listening, speaking, phonics, and whole word recognition (Wendon (1987) as quoted in Yeverbaum, 2003). In developing listening, young learners may be accustomed to hear the real words in letters. For example, the letter 'k' in Letterland there will be a character such as 'Kicking King'. He represents this letter and he helps young learners remember the 'k' sound by simply starting to say his name. During speaking activities, they may utter the letters correctly from what they heard. During listening and speaking activities, they are able to recognize the whole of the words and they are going to produce all of the sounds correctly.

Letterland can be used for young learners for 3 to 8 years old where the emphasis is on having fun, thus young learner may absorb learning naturally. Most of young learner got difficulties in reading. When a child found the difficulty on comparing the letters then Letterland comes to provide the easy way. It gives a unique mark on every character such as the pictures that explain each letter and also sing a song, thus, it makes easier for young learner to remember the letters.

Besides, during learning process using Letterland method, young learners may get several advantages in learning to read. Letterland method helps young learners to learn all of the letters. By using Letterland method, young learners are facilitated with fun and enjoyable learning situation by experiencing learning with hidden objects in each letter that begin with the character's sound. For example, on Golden Girl's there is a goat, grapes, gate, geese, green house and lots more. There is also a short narrative about the character, using lots of words beginning with her sound. This is very suitable to be used in teaching to young learners where the learning is very creative and colourful, thus, it makes young learner interested since it provides enjoyable and comfortable learning situation. After joining the whole learning process, young learners should be able to compare the letters and produce the sounds properly.

Letterland method helps both language learners who learn English as a second language and those who learn it as a foreign language to practice English reading more easily. As stated by Yaverbaum (2003) Russian children had been taught of reading by using Letterland method in learning for their foreign language. It becomes successful in teaching reading to young learners and it will develop an effective foundation to develop EFL teaching program.

Referring to the previous explanation, this research is intended to investigate how Letterland method is applied in teaching early stage of reading to young language learners. It is also aimed at providing help for young learners in their early stage for reading by applying Letterland method. From all of the problems described above young learners will possibly get improvement in reading skill since they experience learning using Letterland method. So, using Letterland as a teaching method to teach young learners will help them to be able to read because Letterland provides the easy way in reading since it invites them to recognize things they familiar with and thus, it is easy for them to memorize the words. Therefore, to create a

successful and fun learning, the writer chooses Letterland method as an appropriate teaching method to use in teaching reading to young learners. From the problem above the writer proposes the research entitled: "The Use of Letterland Method in Teaching Reading at Early Year Level to Pre-school students in an Informal Education in Bandar Lampung".

1.2 IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

The problem formulation of this research deals with the use of Letterland method in teaching early stage reading to young learners. The writer wants to know how Letterland facilitates young learners in the early stage of reading. In reference of the background above, the problem can be formulated as follows:

How does the use of Letterland method facilitate teaching the early stage of reading to young learners?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

In this research, Letterland is a method used for children in learning English. Learning English with Letterland may provide children fun learning and make them easy to remember all of the alphabets. In relation to the problem formulated above, the objectives of the classrooms action research is to find out how Letterland method is used and to what extent Letterland facilitates teaching reading to young learners.

1.4 LIMITATION OF THE PROBLEMS

The problem limitation of this research is to find out the use of Letterland method to teach reading to the early stage of reading. Helping the students in the early stage of reading, Letterland method provides the students a simple way in overcoming reading difficulties. This research is intended to help them in improving reading skills. Letterland was designed to help the teachers clarify the intricacies of reading in English and it focuses on Letterland letters from a to z, learning sounds and shapes, learning capital shapes, and long vowels in order to avoid confusion over similar shape and sound letters. Besides, this research will be conducted in the level of pre-school. It is because of the budget and the time to find the children in that level are limited. Therefore, in conducting this research the writer chooses young learners of pre-school level. The condition of the learning process is based on Letterland curriculum that was made by the British educator.

1.5 BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

The implementation of Letterland concept may give the influence into several objects, it will be explained as follow:

1. For the students

Letterland can give students the ease of reading and understanding of reading and fun learning. It can improve students' participation during teaching learning process.

2. For the teachers

Letterland is as an appropriate method to young learners of pre-school level in order to facilitate the teachers in teaching learning process and improve student ability in English.

3. For the writer

The writer hopes that it will be useful in the development of English teaching learning especially for children in pre-school level and from this research the writer will get many benefits from Letterland method because she must learn how to treat young learners in teaching learning in order that children do not feel bored in their learning.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The characters that will be given to the children from the characters of Clever Cat, Annie Apple, Dippy Duck, Harry Hat Man, Munching Mike, Talking Tess, Sammy Snake, Impy Ink and Noisy Nick. It was because those characters will easy to make a word, such as the word of 'it', 'is', 'cat' and etc.

The research method that was used in this research is qualitative method. Qualitative research is as the method in implementing the action research. Bell, (2005:4) defined Action research is inquiry or research which focused on the efforts to improve the quality of organization and its performance.

This type of research is being chosen because it is very appropriate in improving items in measurement instruments, as the object of this research is to develop a measurement that will assist in conducting the research, the writer is going to see the phenomenon of problem in her area research object by participating as an observer in the use of Letterland method in teaching reading to early stage of reading in Sukabumi, Bandar Lampung, Lampung.

Meanwhile, qualitative research is the researcher's description of what participants do or say about themselves and their activities in an educational setting (Cresswell, 2012).

However, the researcher will try to analyze the development of early stage of reading for 3 to 5 years old in reading activities by using Letterland method which is doing at early year of reading level. This observation placed on JIPulauButon, Palmsville Residence Blok AB, JagaBaya 2, Sukabumi, Bandar Lampung, Lampung, Indonesia. The home belongs to Indonesia's Letterland trainer. The trainer's name is IndaAriestiya. She is also the lecturer of Bandar Lampung University.

In order to find out more detail information of this research the researcher have gained the ethical approval from the university and also obtained permission from Letterland trainer of Indonesia to conduct an observation in early year level of reading. Thus, the research will be conducted by doing observation or field note and giving some documentation. Then the data from those is going to be analyzed. The result of the analyses is going to be reported.

2.1 RESEARCH SUBJECT

The subject of the research was the children who have not been able to read. Letterland provides early year level that the level is from 3 to 5 years old. This research was conducted to children around 3- 9 years old. To measure on the level relates to this research children were allowed to follow Letterland method because they are lack in reading. All of children come from PulauButon Street, Sukabumi, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia and they stay around teacher's house. For the purpose of the research, the researcher took 7 children as the sample to be observed. They are, Kayla (3 years old), Ocha (7 years old), Ajeng (4 years old), Satria (6 years old), Madi (7 years old), Juan (9 years old), and Una (6 years old).

2.2 DATA COLLECTING TECHNIQUE

There are many ways to collect data, information, and test both the data and information. The ways to collect the data are by using interview, issuing questionnaire, observing and even by using literature research (Miles and Huberman, 1994). So, the researcher used two instruments in gathering the information or data. They were observation and documentation.

In observation, the writer will take a note about what is happening through the use of Letterland method in teaching reading in the learning process, especially in the early stages of reading. Then in documentation, the writer was going to take a recording on the whole activities during the learning process.

2.3 INSTRUMENT

In selecting the instrument, it should be considered whether or not they could provide the data that contribute to answer the research question. The present research applies qualitative analysis. Thus, there were two research instruments used observation and documentation.

Observation or field note that describe the teaching and learning process, and documentation from the students worksheet that described the students learning achievements in using Letterland method.

The first instrument explored about the teaching and learning process of using Letterland to young learners, especially in reading activities in the classroom. The second one explored the students' activeness during learning process. The activeness can be imitating the teacher's utterances and any other participation during learning process as the evidence to support the research project.

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

In this research, the writer is going to use the analyzing of data includes data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification.

2.4.1 Data reduction

Data reduction is in which the writer summarize the result of data observation and documentation. They are classifying into categories to get the main data.

2.4.2 Data display

After the data reduction, the data were synthesized into displays to choose whether the data is important to be studied or not. In qualitative research, data display is the form of short description, sketch or plan, flowchart, etc.

2.4.3 Conclusion drawing/verification

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the last step in data analysis of qualitative research is conclusion drawing/verification.

It uses to describe all of the data into conclusion, which is easy to be understood by the writer and other. Qualitative research has a purpose to analyze and to interpret the data which needs creativity and of course critical thinking. In qualitative research, the data is usually analyzed descriptively. Besides, when getting the data (by observing) about the use of Letterland method, the writer will find the accurate data by using documentation in childrens' worksheet.

In analyzing the data, the writer will combine all of data both from the observation and documentation. For observation, the writer is going to explain all of the process activities in teaching and learning by using Letterland method in developing reading skill for young learners. Besides, for documentation the writer will record the activities in the class which focuses on Letterland method in reading activities.

2.5 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

In conducting this research, the researcher identified and selected research problem, after that she decided the research subject to classify the subject to be more specific. Next, she selected the concept term for research problem. To specify the research topic the researcher limited and formatted problem of the research. Then, she determined and arranged research instrument to give several evidences during the research. For getting the evidence in conducting the research, she collected and interpreted all of data by analyzing the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 RESULTS

3.1.1 Teaching Reading by using Letterland method for Early Year Level

The research was conducted from March 15th until April 4th, 2015. The opportunity that was given by the university for doing this research about a month then the research would be conducted in six times. The research was conducted in Letterland trainer's house. It was informal school. It is because the schools which use Letterland method were rarely in Lampung province.

In order to gain the information of using Letterland method for developing children reading, the trainer and also as the teacher would give nine characters of Letterland. They were, Clever Cat, Annie Apple, Dippy Duck, Harry Hat Man, Munching Mike, Talking Tess, Sammy Snake, Impy Ink and Noisy Nick.

The lesson was started by praying together. Under the teacher guidance, teacher asked one of child that would lead to pray together. It means that the children would have the sense of leadership.

After that, it was continued with singing a song together entitled 'welcome to Letterland' to introduce Letterland characters. It means that this activity invites the children to come to Letterland world. Letterland

characters might help children to decode the letters that may help children were confused about the letters. In Letterland world, children would meet so many friends with their familiar characters to introduce the sounds. It would be delivered by fun stories and action trick. Actually, children might not be able to decode the plain letter of 'a' but they might be able to remember the character that represented as the letter of 'a' like 'Annie Apple'. Teacher then asked the children's readiness to learn, in order that children would absorb the material of Letterlanders character easily.

In the post lesson, teacher gave a simple story about Letterland character. In Letterland, there could be a hundred stories that it was provided by Letterland related to the letters. When the letters came together with the story that could be explained the sounds of the letters.

Before learning process, children were going to be introduced several words related to the Letterland characters. For example, in introducing the letter of Letterland in a word of letter 'a' the teacher introduced the character name of the letter in order to invite the children to get accustomed to the word of 'a'. Letterland provides 'Annie Apple' character representing for the letter of 'a'. Because in Letterlanders that every character of the letter sound always starts with the same letter sound and also the second character repeats the beginning of the sound of the letter.

To avoid children boredom in learning process, there were always full with many activities, such as playing puzzle, playing magnet, making a hat, sticking the apples on the tree, and so on. All of the activities were depended on the type of the letter itself.

After finishing introducing the letters, children needed to do a worksheet to measure that children ability in understanding the material. Children might write the answer in their worksheet paper after teacher explanations about the worksheet activity.

Giving oral speaking or praiseworthy such as "Good Job", "good", "nice", "excellence" and "well done" was necessary to do. Those rewarding words were given by teacher to the children who did the work very well, like answering question correctly, making good behaviour and so on. Sometimes, the researcher took a role in teaching Letterland by guiding from Letterland trainer. There were several Letterland characters that the researcher taught like the characters of *Annie Apple*, *Harry Hat Man*, *Sammy Snake*, *Impy Ink* and *Noisy Nick*.

Before going home, teacher tried to remind the children about the materials they had learned before and it's about the letters names and sounds of the characters and also the action trick for each character. After finishing the learning, teacher asked one of them to lead a pray.

Based on the researcher's observation, she found that in teaching reading by using Letterland method, the first activity that the teacher did was explaining about the letter characters to children. The teacher told the children about Letterland alphabet letters. Then the

teacher explained each Letterlander by using story. In Letterland, the Story became the emphasis of learning after phonics. To facilitate the children who like to hear stories therefore Letterland had around a hundred stories related to the characters.

Then after recognizing Letterland letters, children were going to be introduced about letter sounds by using action trick. Action trick may help children who learn well visually. So, when children were familiar with the character of Letterland or just called Letterlander, children might be introduced several vocabularies around them which had the same sounds. After all of the activities were done, children were going to be given a worksheet. It was related to the character that children learned. After finishing doing their worksheet, they would have another activity, like fishing, making a hat and so forth.

Letterlanders had been given such as 'Annie Apple', 'Clever Cat', 'Dippy Duck' 'Harry Hat Man', 'Munching Mike', 'Talking Tess', 'Sammy Snake', 'Impy Ink', and 'Noisy Nick'. The names of those characters represented the letter sounds of c, a, d, h, m, t, s, i, and n.

The first day of the research was that the children would meet new friends, they were Clever Cat and Annie Apple. Before introducing a new friend, teacher will give them several clues related to the character and children may explore their knowledge. These kind of sentences might possible used in the short story "let's look at this card. Do you see who is this? She is a cat, because she lives in Letterland she has a name, her name is Clever Cat. Let's say together who is she? She is Clever Cat. She likes to cook a cake and she also likes to see the beautiful cloud from her castle. Do you know why is Clever Cat has a car? It is because Clever Cat's hobby is to travel in all over the world. Commonly cat says 'Miaow' but this cat is so clever that she makes special sound, like this, 'ke...'ke...'ke...'. After they recognized the character of the letter from the short story they would have a worksheet.

The first meeting was introducing two characters; they were Clever Cat and Annie Apple. Before introducing Clever Cat, children felt enthusiasm because they would meet new friends and they had meet this character before, and then, the teacher told several things related to Clever Cat, for example her favourite foods or hobbies and so on. Children should guess the characters after teacher told all the characteristics of the character. After children knowing the Letterlander, the teacher told that Clever Cat would have special sound and the sound like this /ke/. By using action trick to link the entire alphabet it may help the children to remember with their multi-sensory.

Continuing to the next character was Annie Apple. The action trick that the teacher might give was pretending by eating apple. Apple had already been common to them. When introducing this character made children soon recognized it and guessing what the character was. After they were already known, the teacher gave them several words that linked to the letter of 'a' such as 'arrow', 'ant' and 'apple'. There

would be several times to repeat if the time was enough.

The second meeting was introducing two characters they were Dippy Duck and Harry Hat Man. The first character that would be introduced was Dippy Duck. Before starting the lesson the teacher gave the warming up activity such as singing “banana, banana yellow or green, banana, banana full of vitamins, banana, banana so soft and sweet, banana, banana, It’s good to eat, One two three four”. The children were happy and enjoyed the warming up. Then, when the teacher introduced the character, she gave a story like “today we are going to meet our new friend, and he likes playing drum, and then let’s plays your drum”. When children were interested to the lesson, they might pay attention and feel happy during learning process. By the end of this learning, children would have dinosaurs puzzle. It became an activity that it was another activity which replaced doing worksheet.

Next turn was introducing the character of Harry Hat Man. When the teacher introduced Harry Hat Man, teacher would begin the lesson if the children had already been quiet and no one was speaking at all. It was because the character Harry Hat Man would feel horrible headache if he heard noises. Harry Hat Man had special sound just whisper /heh/. For the action trick, children should put they hand in front of their mouth then blew it on to their hand. If it was felt warm then children had succeed to produce correct sound. The activity of this letter was making a hat.

In the third meeting three friends were introduced, they were Munching Mike, Talking Tess and Sammy Snake. Before starting the lesson the teacher gave instruction to children that the activity they would take was playing magnet, and then she asked the children to pay attention, and they were not allowed to disturb other friends and to make a noisy. Then, they agreed to the statements of the teacher. As Wening (2013) stated that children agreement is very important in order that children would be able to be consistent to their commitment. The teacher introduced Munching Mike. The character represented the letter sound of ‘m’. This Letterlander has also special sound, he said /me/. The words had introduced some sound liked to the character were milk, map and mountain.

After finishing the first character, the teacher was going to introduce Talking Tess and she said /teh/. The children then were invited to meet Talking Tess as their new friend. They would go to their friend’s house by pretending to use train in order to get Talking Tess’ house. After coming to their destination, they would have several things connected to the character like toy and tree. It would be easy to memorize if the children saw the object immediately. The activity used was a train’s puzzle.

The last friend for this meeting was Sammy Snake. He said /ss/. Then, the teacher would always the guide children in their activity while learning process. After all of characters were delivered, teacher would like to review the material to check that the children remembered the characters that had been given. Before going home, they would have fishing activity.

The material that the teacher used was papers, magnet and also paper clips. The papers were cut and form into fishes and then sticked by clip paper on it. They felt happy and enthusiastic when the teacher asked them to queue in order to get their turn to fish the paper fishes. It represented the letter of Munching Mike.

The forth meeting was meeting the characters Impy Ink and Noisy Nick. Children would meet two friends. He said /n/. These letters were explained by the researcher. For the first was Noisy Nick. The researcher tried to explain what kind of food that Noisy Nick likes because he stands for the letter of ‘n’ then noodle became his favourite food. From Noisy Nick’s picture there were 3 kinds of words represented the letter ‘n’ such as newspaper, nut, and noodle.

Impy Ink was the last friend that they met. The researcher showed Letterlander picture to children in order that children were able to recognize the shape and Impy Ink’s picture. Impy Ink had spesial sound, his sound like /i/. There were several things in the picture such as insect, ink, ink pen, iguana, and invitation.

The fifth meeting was reviewing all the characters of Letterlanders. Children were able to remember all Letterlanders together. Teacher taught by using videos of Letterlanders. There would be singing a song of each Letterlanders, it made children wanted to follow the song happily. When they had felt bored the teacher gave them several things to do, like ringing her laptop by pushing the button of laptop until several children took their turn. They felt more enjoyable in learning because they met Letterlanders in different ways.

The sixth meeting was trying to blend the letters. They would find harder to blend the characters. The words learnt were ‘it’, ‘is’, and ‘cat’. The teacher taught children to read ‘it’. First, teacher showed a flashcard of the letter of ‘i’, it represented the picture of Impy Ink. Next, teacher asked children to decode the letter one by one. Teacher reminded the children each sound of the letters by doing action tricks, such as giving them the picture of the Letterlander of Impy Ink, pretending to have a telephone (to remind the children the sound of Talking Tess). Then, the teacher gave the examples of how to blend the letters /i/t/ into it. Teacher said /i...i...i...t..t/, children were imitating teacher’s sound slowly until they could form the word of ‘it’.

After that, teacher taught to read the word ‘cat’ in a similar way. The teacher asked the student the name of Letterlanders and how to produce the sounds. With slowly teacher taught the children how to blend the letters into word until they were able to blend perfectly. The children really felt cheerful and joyful during learning process.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the teaching learning process of reading has nine parts that had been done in the learning. It purposed that nine letters were the easiest to make a lot of words. The teacher has ‘Annie Apple’, ‘Clever Cat’, ‘Dippy Duck’, ‘Harry Hat Man’, ‘Munching Mike’, ‘Talking Tess’, ‘Sammy Snake’, ‘Impy Ink’, and ‘Noisy Nick’.

which several important parts in learning to read in every activity in the learning process. It also aimed at making the children master the material given.

3.1.2 Children's Difficulties and Achievement in Reading

During learning process, the students had an achievement and the difficulty in their learning by using Letterland method. It was easier for them to remember Letterland characters because it was friendly and familiar to children. Moreover, the difficulty of children by using Letterland method was different difficulty, such as some of them only remember the action trick and some of them remember the characters name.

The researcher had observed and taken worksheets as documentation. It showed that children were very attractive in learning and doing worksheets. They would feel bored more easily than adult learning. There should be more activities to avoid children boredom. Making children aware of the characters the teacher would have Letterlanders character which was colorful, friendly and easy to memorize and it was used by introducing the letter sounds by using action trick. The children were expected to be able read in the early stage from Letterland method learning, and also automatically applied those beginning rules in the early year level. By the end of their learning, children should become a good reader independently and produce the fluent reader as a native alike.

Based on the researcher's observation in the field of research, the teacher got difficulties in determining an appropriate technique for the children who had low ability to catch Letterland method, choosing an activity that could encourage and attract children's attention and arranging the activities which were going to be used in the learning process.

There are several children's name who joined learning process by using Letterland method: Ocha, Satria, Ajeng, Kayla, Juan, Una and Madi

3.2 DISCUSSION

Based on the result of observation and worksheets, the researcher found that the children had been taught by Letterland method will have courage in reading English as well. It is because the characters are easy to memorize and friendly for the children thus, it also makes the children enthusiastic in learning. When the teacher guided them to sing a song or to take a part in learning they would be happy to do it.

However, all children were happy and excited to learn about the materials by using Letterland method. Whenever the children were introduced new characters with song and action trick they would pay attention, but when the learning was too long the children might feel bored and lazy to answer the question that the teacher gave. The teacher would give reward to children who still pay attention and could answer the question correctly. It also stated by Roth (1998) as cited in Ariestiya (2010) that reward is one of the strategies to get children attention. Learning process to the children like playing, because children might feel bored and happy during learning process however it depended on the teacher whether or not the

teacher bring the learning process could be entertaining or boring.

To be more specific, the researcher discussed the use of Letterland method for the early stage of reading in early year level that taught by the teacher's trainer of Letterland. Letterland method would help children in recognizing the letters easily because the letters were alive in Letterland. Thus, it makes the children were able to remember the characters easily.

Based on the result of the children's achievement and difficulty by using Letterland method, the researcher found that there were two children who were difficult in focusing the learning, they were Ajeng and Una. They need more time to identify Letterlanders character. For the other children they were in the same range when they were having difficulty to learn the letter sounds by using Letterland method.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research result, the researcher concluded that in using Letterland method related in teaching reading had given the influence to the early stage of reading. Actually, the teaching learning process of reading by using Letterland method had nine letters that was done in the learning process. After having six meetings, most of the children could remember the letters' sounds, Letterlanders' characters' names from nine letters that had been taught.

The teacher had introduced nine Letterland characters and introduced the sounds of letters. Moreover, the teacher had some strategies in reading by using Letterland method such as stories, songs, action tricks, and also flash card. The teacher needs to see children's reading development because the students need to have achievement during learning process. The teacher gathered the information about children learning that would inform about the teaching process that it helps children to learn more.

Based on the observation, the researcher also agree with Ariestiya's opinion (2010) stated that children will not look bored when they learned to read but they looked excited in learning. Children may get easy to imitate to what the teacher said.

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