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THE USE OF LETTER PUZZLE MEDIA IN IMPROVING READING ABILITY AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LOWER GRADES AT STATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 02 BANGLARANGAN

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Abstract. This research aimed to enhance the reading abilities of elementary school lower-grade students through the utilization of letter puzzle media at SD Negeri 02 Banglarangan. The method employed in this study was the classroom action research method, based on the issues faced by the lower-grade teachers at State Elementary School 02 Banglarangan. The research was conducted from March to June 2023. The results of this study showed an increase in students' reading skills seen from pre-cycle data which showed only 62.7% of low grade students had good reading skills, but after cycle 1 it increased to 74.4% of low grade students who had good reading skills. In cycle 2 it increased again so that 90.6% of low grade students had good reading skills. Based on this data, it can be said that the use of letter puzzle media can improve reading skills in low grade students. Through applying letter puzzle media, students found it easier to recognize letters, construct words, and read. Additionally, students exhibited heightened enthusiasm and motivation due to the media's engaging, colorful, illustrated, and tactile nature. This hands-on approach allowed students to engage directly in learning.

Keywords: Media, Letter Puzzle, Reading Abilities

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Education Number 20 of 2003, Article 1, Paragraph 1 states that education is a conscious effort of humans to develop their own potential through the learning process (1). Through the education process, individuals are expected to develop their potential and become active, creative, independent, and possess useful knowledge for life. The purpose of education is to realize and develop the existing human potential in the context of diversity, morality, individuality/personality, sociality, and culture comprehensively and integratively (2). Education is a process of receiving and providing information to develop one's potential, implemented using various models, methods, and

media to achieve objectives. Educational goals will be achieved if students are able to understand the knowledge provided, to understand a knowledge well students must have good reading skills as well.

Reading is an activity of comprehending something through the content of the text. Reading is a process carried out to obtain a message conveyed through spoken or written words (1). In reading, it is important for students to understand the meaning of each word in the text so that information can be received correctly and effectively. However, not all students can have the ability to read quickly, as each student has different characteristics and abilities, especially in elementary school students. At this stage, students still find it difficult to comprehend things independently, so the role of teachers and the methods used significantly influence the learning process. It is crucial for teachers to understand the abilities of each student in comprehending and participating in the learning process, as not all students have the same abilities, both in the cognitive and psychomotor domains. There are several ways to assist children in improving their reading abilities, and one of them is through the use of appropriate and engaging media.

Educational media is an interconnected part of teaching methods and strategies within the learning system. The role of media is crucial in the learning process, as educational media serves as an intermediary to convey information in a way that is easily comprehensible and understandable for students. According to Sadiman (2003), cited in Tarigan, D & Saigian, S (2015), the functions or uses of media include: (1) clarifying message presentation that is too verbalistic, (2) overcoming limitations of time, space, and sensory capacity, (3) addressing passive attitudes in children, (4) utilizing the unique nature of each medium to overcome differences in environment and experiences. Media plays a significant role in the learning process, especially in elementary education, where students greatly benefit from media as tools to comprehend the provided information. Furthermore, educational media also helps enhance students' abilities to engage with various topics, including fundamental skills such as letter recognition and reading. One influential medium in improving reading skills among elementary school students is letter puzzle media (3).

Letter puzzle media is commonly found in schools, yet many teachers still haven't fully utilized its potential in the classroom. Letter puzzle media provides letter pieces along with corresponding images, which can be arranged to form words and matching images. The use of letter puzzle media involves inviting students to arrange the letters to create words that correspond to the provided images. Letter puzzle media engages students, combining focus and stimuli to make decisions within a play-and-learn format. In the cognitive domain, the use of puzzle media is essential; it not only brings enjoyment to students through play but also helps them memorize and recall events through the puzzle game (4).

Based on the discussion above, this aligns with the issues faced by some lower-grade teachers at State Elementary School 02 Banglarangan. Specifically, several lower-grade students still lack letter recognition and reading skills. According to data obtained from teachers of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades, totaling 43 students, there are 16 students who haven't acquired reading skills. This poses a significant obstacle to the learning process. In response to these challenges, the researchers who are part of the 5th batch of the student teaching program at State Elementary School 02 Banglarangan have undertaken efforts to enhance reading skills. They are accomplishing this by implementing the use of letter puzzle media to improve the reading abilities of lower-grade students at State Elementary School 02 Banglarangan.

2. METHOD

The method used in this research is applying the Classroom Action Research (*Penelitian Tindakan Kelas*) method, referring to Kurt Lewin's model, which consists of 2 cycles and has a total of 4 stages comprising planning, action, observation, and reflection.

2.1. Subjects and Research Location

The subjects of this study were 16 students consisting of grade 1, grade 2 and grade 3 students who did not have the ability to read. This research was conducted at SDN 02 Banglarangan which is located at Jl. Banglarangan, Kec. Ampelgading, Kab. Pemalang, Central Java.

2.2. Research Techniques and Instruments

In this study, to obtain information, several techniques were used in data collection, including: interview techniques, observation and observation, and documentation studies. The interview technique was carried out to explore information through grade 1, grade 2 and grade 3 teachers at SDN 02 Banglarangan, besides that the researcher also made observations and observations of students who did not have the ability to read in accordance with the data generated from interviews with teachers.

Reading Ability Instrument

Variables	Subvariables	Indicators
Cycle I Beginning Reading	Recognise symbols and letter shapes	Able to mention the given letter symbol
		Able to show the location of the letter symbol mentioned
Cycle II Literal Reading	Read and compose words according to the picture	Able to arrange words according to the pictures on the puzzle board
		Able to read the word arranged on the puzzle board

2.3. Criteria for Success

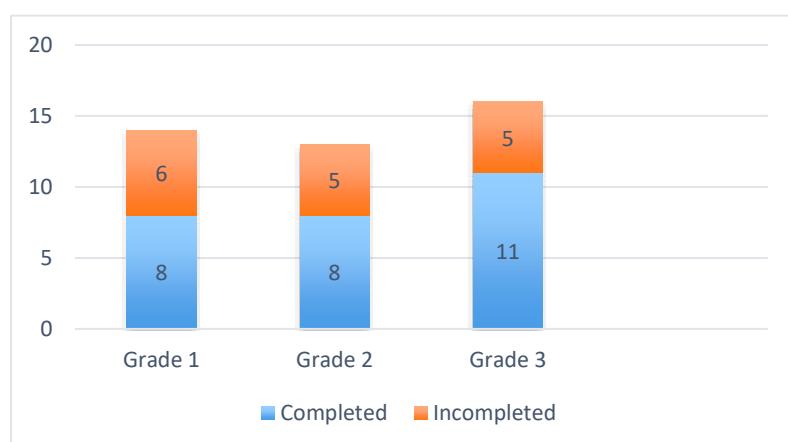
The success criteria in this study are indicated by the ability of students to achieve instrument indicators in cycle I and cycle II.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

The results of this study reveal that the letter puzzle media is capable of enhancing reading proficiency among elementary school students in Class 2 at State Elementary School 02 Banglarangan. The implementation of the letter puzzle media over a period of 3 months through 2 cycles resulted in positive outcomes, as evidenced by a reduction in the percentage of students lacking reading proficiency from an initial 37.2% to 9.3%.

Chart 1. Pre-cycle



Cycle 1

During the first cycle, the utilization of letter puzzle media involved introducing each letter segment to the students, followed by requesting the students memorize each letter's names and forms. This cycle yielded results where the number of students lacking reading proficiency reduced from 16 students to 11 students.

Chart 2. Cycle I**Table 1. Cycle 1 Results**

March-April				
No	Name	Class	Action	Result
1.	B. A	1	Introduced letters through letter pieces in the letter puzzle media.	Only able to memorize vowel letters (a, i, u, e, o)
2.	F. I.	1		Can memorize letters but not fluent yet
3.	F.S	1		Only able to memorize vowel letters (a, i, u, e, o)
4.	R.N	1		Already recognizes letters and understands how to compose letters into words.
5.	F.N	1		Already recognizes letters and understands how to compose letters into words.
6.	Y.F	1		No result yet
7.	S.F	2		Can memorize letters but not fluent yet
8.	A.B	2		Already recognizes letters and understands how to compose letters into words
9.	F.N	2		No result yet
10.	F.H	2		Can memorize letters but not fluent yet

11.	A.A	2	Can memorize letters but not fluent yet
12.	A.G	3	Already recognizes letters and understands how to compose letters into words.
13.	P.A	3	Can memorize letters but not fluent yet
14.	H.R	3	Can memorize letters but not fluent yet
15.	F.R	3	Already recognizes letters and understands how to compose letters into words.
16.	N.L	3	Can memorize letters but not fluent yet

Cycle II

In the second cycle, the utilization of letter puzzle media involved guiding the students to assemble letters into words according to the images presented in the puzzle media. In this second cycle, the number of students lacking reading proficiency decreased to 4 students.

Chart 3. Cycle II

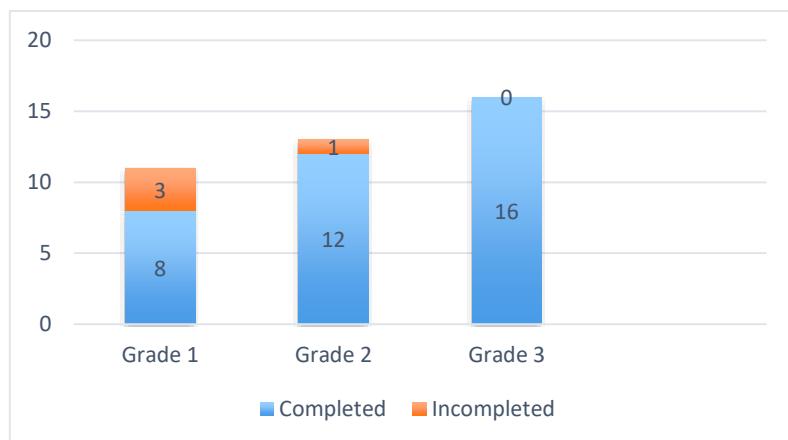


Table 2. Cycle 2 Results

May-June				
No	Name	Class	Action	Result
1.	B. A	1	Constructing words based on Pictures provided in the letter puzzle media	Unable to construct words yet and still in the phase of memorizing letters
2.	F. I.	1		Can construct words based on pictures accurately
3.	F.S	1		Unable to construct words yet and still in the phase of memorizing letters

4.	R.N	1	Can construct words based on pictures accurately
5.	F.N	1	Can construct words based on pictures accurately
6.	Y.F	1	Unable to construct words yet and still in the phase of memorizing letters
7.	S.F	2	Can construct words based on pictures accurately
8.	A.B	2	Can construct words based on pictures accurately
9.	F.N	2	Can construct words based on pictures accurately
10.	F.H	2	Unable to construct words yet and still in the phase of memorizing letters
11.	A.A	2	Already able to read sentences fluently
12.	A.G	3	Can construct words based on pictures accurately
13.	P.A	3	Can construct words based on pictures accurately
14.	H.R	3	Can construct words based on pictures accurately
15.	F.R	3	Can construct words based on pictures accurately
16.	N.L	3	Can construct words based on pictures accurately

The outcomes of the combined actions in the two cycles undertaken by the researcher demonstrate that the utilization of letter puzzle media is indeed effective in enhancing reading proficiency among lower-grade students at State Elementary School 02 Banglarangan.

In addition to its impact on reducing the number of students with insufficient reading abilities, the utilization of letter puzzle media also contributes to an increase in student learning motivation. By incorporating letter puzzle media into learning, students' learning activities are enhanced as they actively engage in assembling words and writing them directly. This engagement occurs both cognitively and physically, as the playful and enjoyable elements of the puzzles stimulate their participation (4).

3.2. Discussion

The results of this study are in line with research conducted by Sari, H. P. A., Purnomo, H. (2023) entitled The Use of Letter Puzzle Media in Improving Reading Skills. The Beginning of Elementary School Level 1 Learners. The study states that letter puzzle media is considered to be able to solve the problem of students' initial reading difficulties because this media is an innovative, interesting and fun media for grade 1 elementary school students. Playing using letter puzzle media is

one of the approaches that is suitable for the characteristics and development of children. In addition, the results of the study showed an increase in beginning reading skills by using letter puzzle media in grade 1 elementary school students around the researcher's environment(5)

In cycle 1, the activity was carried out by engaging students in recognizing letter pieces within the letter puzzles. Students were asked to mention the letter pieces ranging from A to Z, then arrange them in order and memorize them. The activities in cycle 1 were conducted for 1.5 months, specifically from mid-March to April 2023. By the end of this cycle, students were capable of recognizing and memorizing the letters sequentially and accurately. As a result, the intervention proceeded to cycle 2.

In cycle 2, the activity was conducted by guiding students to assemble the letter pieces into words based on the assistance of images displayed on the puzzle board. Cycle 2 took place for 1.5 months, specifically from early May to mid-April 2023. By the end of cycle 2, students were capable of reading words and sentences quite proficiently, and some students could even read sentences fluently.

4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to assist teachers in enhancing the reading abilities of low-grade students at State Elementary School 02 Banglarangan using letter puzzle media. Letter puzzle media is a tool that provides letter pieces along with corresponding images, which can then be arranged to form matching words and images. The utilization of letter puzzle media has been proven effective in improving the reading abilities of low-grade students at State Elementary School 02 Banglarangan. This is evidenced by the decrease in the number of students lacking reading skills, from an initial 37.2% to only 9.3%. In Cycle 1, the number of students lacking reading skills decreased from 16 students to 11 students, and by Cycle 2, this number was further reduced to only 4 students. Conducted over a span of 3 months through 2 cycles, this research not only yielded results in terms of improved reading abilities but also saw an increase in student motivation and engagement. The use of letter puzzle media heightened student enthusiasm and facilitated easier recognition and arrangement of letters to form words.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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