

# Early Reading Skill Development Early Children Through Letters Board Games

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**Abstract.** Early childhood reading skills can be developed through play activities. One game that has an important role in developing early childhood reading skills is a letter board game. For this reason, this study aims to find and describe the development of early reading skills at an early age by playing letter board activities. This research was conducted on the basis of document description, namely research that examines and analyzes documents in the form of journal articles and reference books that discuss letter board games and early childhood reading skills. The data is collected through critical reading activities which are then studied based on certain scientific angles. The results of his research are that letter board games are fun games and are carried out by early childhood with various steps that are based on the introduction of letters and words in early childhood. The development of initial reading skills that occur in early childhood when playing with letter games are picture reading skills, narration skills, letter reading skills, and syllable and word reading skills.

**Keywords:** Early reading, Letter board game, Early childhood

## 1. Introduction

Physiologically, when children are born, they have 25% brain weight, which indicates that the weight of a child's brain at birth is not greater than the weight of an adult's brain. At the age of 3 years, a child's brain will develop up to 90%, and by the age of 6 years the child's brain weight will reach 100%. Experts reveal that children's brains will experience optimal development at the age of 0-5 years, which is usually called the golden age [1]. Where at this age, young children can easily accept and understand everything they hear, see and observe in their surrounding environment. Therefore, there are four aspects of development experienced by children, one of which is language development. Own language is a child's ability to communicate with other people. In the development of this language, there are various models used when communicating, expressing thoughts and feelings expressed in the form of symbols.

According to Piaget (2020), in the concrete operational phase children can start learning, because in this phase they can think in a structured manner. Meanwhile, according to critics, when a child turns 3 years old, that is the best time for children to develop their social skills, therefore parents must provide a place for children to interact with other people. One activity that can optimize children's socialization abilities is reading activities, where reading activities are carried out in a way that is fun and not boring for children, so that children will be interested in doing this activity. [2]. There are two aspects of language skills, namely the receptive aspect and the expressive aspect. The receptive aspect is the child's ability to read and listen, because receptive language is an activity of obtaining symbols verbally and visually. For example, children listen and read from an early age. Meanwhile, the expressive aspect is the skill of early childhood in expressing their opinions, which begins when the child has not yet started talking and communicating with facial expressions. For example, children's activities are talking and writing things to communicate with other people. From this it can be understood that early childhood reading is a receptive aspect [3].

Reading skills are very important skills for children, because from these reading skills it will be easier for children to master and understand various sciences. Lack of reading skills in early childhood will certainly hinder their academic and even mental achievements. This of course makes children easily discouraged, lack self-confidence and lack enthusiasm for learning. Therefore, early childhood reading skills play an important role in children's reading skills in further education. Where initial reading skills in early childhood become the basis for subsequent skills, therefore there needs to be more attention from teachers and parents [4]. The development of reading for children is divided into the following stages: the imagination stage, the self-concept formation stage, the picture reading stage, the introduction to reading stage, the reading fluency stage. Early childhood education does not demand that children can immediately read fluently, but at least at that age children have been introduced to early reading, understanding the shapes and sounds of letters to make it easier for them to read further. Learning activities in early childhood education units always use various kinds of games. One way that can be done to create exciting learning activities is with games. Children certainly like activities that are not boring, from this the activities carried out will be easier for children to understand when done with games, and to create learning that is varied and not boring, you can use game media.

The learning process carried out in PAUD institutions must be accompanied by games, one of which is using letter boards as a learning medium to optimize children's early reading skills. Where by using this letter board game it is hoped that it can develop children's potential. Learning using this letter board can be played by all children, so educators can monitor the children who are involved in learning activities. by using letter boards as a learning medium, the children look happy and enthusiastic, this is shown by the children who are starting to be able to read two syllables combined, apart from that there are also children who are starting to be able to read one sentence.

One indicator of the achievement of language development, namely (literacy) contained in the 2010 curriculum is "connecting and mentioning simple writing with symbols that represent it". These learning activities can be carried out by children through playing activities using various tools or media. The function of the tool or media is to stimulate children's thinking skills so that children can recognize various kinds of knowledge. In building knowledge for children, it is inseparable from the role of the teacher, namely the teacher as a model, playmate, as a motivator,

and as a facilitator. For this reason, in order to achieve these learning objectives, professional and creative teachers are needed.

Every teacher must realize and understand correctly that reading is a complex skill, which includes a series of smaller skills as an outline. According to Broughteen, two important aspects of reading are mechanical skills which are considered to be on a lower order, these aspects include: letter recognition, linguistic elements recognition (phonemes, words, phrases, clause patterns, sentences, etc.), recognition correlation between sound spelling patterns (skills for voicing written material), and graded reading speed; comprehension skills that are considered to be of a higher order. This aspect includes: understanding simple meanings (flexible, grammatical, rhetorical), understanding the intent or meaning of the author, evaluating judgments (content and form), flexible reading speed that is easily adapted to circumstances, and to achieve goals [5]. Thus, the aspect used in early reading skills is the first aspect which includes letter recognition, word recognition and spelling recognition because the second aspect is more concerned with reading aloud.

Aspects of language, one of which is reading, that is, children as readers must become active readers, be able to know the meaning of reading, be able to develop the knowledge they get from reading, not only for themselves but useful for others. When teaching children to read, don't just introduce letter symbols, but teach children to think further by reasoning about the meaning of the reading, such as reading a story book, tell the meaning contained in the story book, therefore the child can not only read, but the child knows the contents of the reading . Reading can gain a lot of understanding about a text, reading must have a goal. Someone who has the goal of reading will have awareness to read [6].

To optimize early childhood language skills, educators use letter board games made using flannel. Where before children start playing using the letter board, educators practice and provide understanding to children about pre-reading activities, namely introducing symbols related to spoken and written language, this is done so that children can understand more easily and activities can be enjoyable. The steps taken to play with the letter board are that the educator shows the letters that have been provided from flannel material, then the letters are pasted on the letter board, after all the letters are arranged into a syllable, then the educator then introduces the children to the letters. which have been arranged into syllables.

Playing the letter board can develop early childhood reading skills, there are many ways to do it with methods that are liked by children and not directly, usually starting with singing related to the letters of the alphabet, such as the number "a" like what, the number "b" like what and so on. Apart from singing, they also used a letter guessing game such as vowels (a, i, u, e, o) to be paired on the letter board provided. Parents and teachers often use books with lots of pictures to develop children's early reading skills so that children can learn to read by looking at the pictures. This is where it is important to study and research the development of early childhood reading skills by using letter board games.

## **2. Research Methods**

This research is a document-descriptive research, namely research on documents that discuss letter board games and early childhood development related to early reading skills. Here research is carried out by reviewing and analyzing documents to obtain information that will be

studied using early childhood play and reading theory [7]. The focus of his research is on documents in the form of reference books and articles published in journals that discuss letter board games and early or early childhood reading skills [8]. On this basis, the method used is a qualitative method that focuses on description, study, and analysis of data or information related to the development of early or beginning reading skills in early childhood [9]. For this reason, the locus of this research is on documents that will be used as research data sources [9] in the form of reference books and journal articles that discuss letter board games and early childhood early reading skills which are descriptive qualitative in nature [10].

Data collection techniques as a strategic step in research are carried out using intensive reading, namely reading carefully and critically on data sources by making systematic recording of the information to be studied [11]. Meanwhile, data analysis was carried out using content analysis [11], namely examining information related to letter board games and early childhood reading skills based on theory and research results [7]. With this study, any information on research findings can be studied in the context of a particular theory and scientific point of view so that it will produce comprehensive findings from the results of this research.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

The substance of reading activities carried out by early childhood is skills in reciting language sound symbols to understand the meaning and information of a simple text. From this it can be identified that early childhood reading is an activity that involves five important components, namely: *pronunciation, language sound symbols, language meaning, reading information, and text as a reading resource*. These five aspects are important components in understanding and positioning early childhood reading skills and skills. That way, reading for early childhood is an activity to understand the symbols of sound in the heart to understand and understand the meaning and knowledge of a complex text or what is often called discourse [12]. On the other hand, early childhood learning activities are fun learning activities based on games. Therefore, to develop early childhood early reading activities with the scope previously described requires media. One of the media that can be used is a letter board game.

#### **3.1 Description of Letter Board Game**

Playing is an effort made by early childhood to get pleasure from every activity they do. Play always using game tools. For early childhood, game forms and tools must have educational values, in order to be a means of developing children's potential [13]. One of the children's play tools is a letter board. Lilis Madyawati (2013) defines a letter board game as a game with a board covered in flannel or furry cloth, then on top of it is given a place to place pieces of pictures or other symbols [14]. Flannel board media is an effective graphic medium for presenting certain messages as well. This flannel-coated board can be folded so it's practical. The images to be presented can be installed and removed easily so that they can be used many times, in addition to pictures, in early elementary school or kindergarten classes. This flannel board can also be used to attach letters and numbers [15].

The character board game is a two-dimensional device that can be installed and removed easily. The letter board itself is made using flannel cloth mounted on a board, then cutting a different piece of felt to put behind the picture. To make it easier to use the letter board, this board is designed to be foldable. By using this letter board, the attached images will be easy to install

and remove so they can be used repeatedly. This tool can be used to paste letters and numbers. The presentation of this cute and interesting letter board makes children more interested in playing with it [6]. According to Sadiman et al (2015), letter board media is a very effective graphic medium for presenting certain messages to certain targets [15]. Meanwhile, according to Mulyani Sumantri (2015) and Johar Permana in Anggraeni (2015) stated that board media is learning media with boards as the main raw material which can be designed as desired. Flannel board is a board covered with flannel to put something on it. According to Sudjanan and Rivai, Letter board media is a board covered with flannel or furry cloth where later on the board are placed pieces of pictures or other symbols [16].

The letter board is a flannel-covered board, so that the images to be presented can be attached, folded and removed easily and can be used many times. The flannel board media usually consists of two parts which include: 1) the letter board which serves as the base for placing items made of flannel. 2) flannel items that function as delivery tools in the form of letter symbols. Dina Indriana stated that letter boards are board media whose surface is covered with flannel or hairy cloth so that they can be used to present pictures and writing that are easy to stick and easy to remove. The pictures and text that are pasted are called items. Flannel board items are an integral part of flannel board media [17].

This letter board media is generally used in learning in kindergartens or low grade elementary schools. Letter board media is often used in early learning such as the introduction of letters, numbers, animal names, the concept of addition, to means of transportation. Early reading activities using letter board media are media used to develop early childhood early reading skills. The purpose of using flannel as a base for the board is to make it easier for children to be able to put on and take off the pictures and symbols that have been prepared. Apart from pictures and symbols, letter boards can also be used to attach letters and numbers. The benefits of using the letter board media are that it can be used to develop vocabulary and introduce colors to early childhood.

The characteristics of this letter board media are rectangular boards with a size of about 70 cm x 90 cm. This flannel board uses plywood to make it more durable and then covered with green flannel (back and forth). The items to be affixed to the letter board are letters made of flannel. These items are brightly colored (flag red, dark green, dark blue, dark yellow, dark pink, orange, purple). Rita Maryana stated that children like media that has contrasting and striking colors. Letters with striking colors are photographically stored in the child's brain. In addition, children focused more on the items that were pasted, to glue the items that were attached, the researchers used white or black clothing adhesive. The following is an example of flannel board media to develop early reading skills.



### **3.2 Development of Early Childhood Reading Skills**

Early reading is the initial stage in learning to read which is focused on recognizing symbols or signs related to letters so that it becomes the foundation so that children can continue to the advanced reading stage. Some modern experts argue that early reading is a skill that children absolutely must have from an early age because by reading a person can follow lessons at school and by reading a child can also open a window of knowledge and the world that becomes a provision for them in facing teaching and learning activities at school and for everyday life in the future.

Early childhood always likes to use letter board games to develop early reading skills in children. The most frequently used letter board game media. Teachers and parents design learning to read early with letter board media well so that they can cultivate reading habits as something fun. The purpose of starting reading with this letter board game is to help young children to be able to understand and interpret the contents of the reading. Learning to read early is designed as well as possible so that children can easily learn to read. Good reading competence is necessary and a prerequisite for being able to read and understand a variety of other subject literature. Letter board game stimulation that can develop early or early childhood reading skills can be identified as follows.

### **3.3 Image Reading Skills**

Children are mostly able to read pictures. Reading pictures is one of the basic skills that children need to read. This is in accordance with the opinion of Martini Jamaris (2020) which states that basic reading skills can be seen through children's skills in discriminating visually. Visual discrimination skills are the basis for distinguishing letter shapes. So, the child is able to read the picture well. Board games with letters will make children have good picture reading skills because this game relies on pictures and letters as the basis for reading skills in early childhood [18].

### **3.4 Narrative Skills**

The basic development of early reading skills in early childhood has five stages, including: the fantasy stage (*magical stage*), the level of self-concept formation level (*self concept stage*),

picture reading level (*bridging reading stage*), reading recognition level (*take-off reader stage*), fluent reading level (*independent reader stage*). Reading and narrating stories is included in the self-concept formation stage. Children at this stage begin to like reading, for example picture story books, and children will carry books they like anywhere. Teachers and parents can work together to stimulate the development of this stage by reading stories or reading and providing reading material to children. The books used are picture books so that children can easily understand them and can help develop their imagination. So, children are able to read or narrate picture story books. This skill can be acquired by playing letter board games.

### **3.5 Identifying Letters**

Letter board games done by early childhood can develop children's skills in reading letters. Milawati stated that vowel sounds are distinguished by the high and low position of the tongue, the moving parts of the tongue, the structure, and the shape of the lips [19]. Early childhood will read letters fluently when playing letter board games. Bowles (2020) states that the letters on the letter board that have visual similarities will enable children to identify well so that children will be able to read well.

### **3.6 Reading Syllables and Words**

Through playing activities with letter board games, early childhood is conditioned in a fun way to read syllables and words. From this game, early childhood will immediately be able to read syllables. Early childhood will also be able to spell one letter at a time with the help of the teacher to combine the sounds of the letters the child has spelled. Letter board games develop early childhood reading skills. Beginning reading is not only limited to the introduction of vowels and consonants, children also need to be taught the concept of syllables, this is in line with Thahir's opinion which states that the concept of syllabi (syllables) needs to be introduced to early childhood after understanding phonetic aspects. Children are able to read a few simple syllables.

## **4. Conclusion**

Based on the research that has been done, developing early reading skills in children can be done through letter board games. The letter board game is a fun game and is carried out by early childhood with various steps that are based on the introduction of letters and words in early childhood. By focusing on letter and word recognition, letter board games can develop early reading skills in early childhood. The development of initial reading skills that occur in early childhood when playing with letter games are picture reading skills, narration skills, letter reading skills, and syllable and word reading skills.

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