Improving Students' Letter Recognition Abilities Through The Mystery Box Game At Pembina Dewi Kayangan Kindergarten In The 2024/2025 Academic Year

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Article Info	Abstract
  	This study aims to improve students' ability to recognize letters through a mystery box game at TKN Pembina Dewi Kayangan in the 2024/2025 academic year. This is a classroom action research study, with the subjects being 13 children in Group A, consisting of 10 boys and 3 girls. This classroom action research uses the research model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart. The data collection techniques employed include observation, documentation, and interviews. The criteria for this study are individual achievement of 70% and class achievement of 80%.The results of this study indicate that the use of the Mystery Box media game is effective in improving letter recognition skills among children in Group A at TKN Pembina Dewi Kayangan. This is evidenced by the improvement in children's learning outcomes from the pre-cycle stage to Cycle I and a significant increase in Cycle II. In the pre-cycle stage, the classical achievement rate was only 23.07% (3 out of 13 children). After the intervention in Cycle I, mastery increased to 53.8% (7 out of 13 children), and in Cycle II, it increased significantly to 84.6% (1 out of 13 children), indicating that the success indicator had been achieved.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The use of interesting and effective learning media should be the right solution to improve the ability to recognize letters in early childhood, one of the media that attracts children is certainly media that makes children's curiosity aroused and excited to play it. The Mystery Box game is one game that can be a solution to improve the ability to recognize letters in children because children will be provoked by their curiosity and enthusiasm to know what is inside the box. In addition, this mystery box game also requires children to look for letters, describe objects that match the beginning of the letter and sort the letters in order. However, the lack of teacher creativity in creating interesting learning media makes researchers interested in applying the mystery box media in improving early childhood letter recognition skills.

According to Soenjono Darjowidjojo, the ability to recognize letters is one of the stages of child development, where children who initially do not know, can finally understand the relationship between the shape and sound of letters, so that they can recognize the shape of letters and give meaning to them (Novalina, 2023).

The letters that children have known will help them remember each letter in the alphabet. In addition, recognizing the sound of each letter will also make it easier for children to understand and distinguish the sounds of the letters of the alphabet.

According to Suyanto, introducing children to letters should be done gradually, starting with the letters a to m, then continuing with the letters n to z. Anggraini stated that the ability to recognize letters includes the skill of pronouncing vowels and consonants. On the other hand, Rasyid also believes that introducing letters through the child's name or surrounding objects by emphasizing the

first letter can help children recognize letters. The process of learning to read needs to be done gradually, starting from recognizing letters one by one, then forming syllables, until it becomes a simple word. For children to be able to read well when entering elementary school, they need to first recognize the sound and name of each letter in the alphabet. (Safitri and Ana Nur, n.d.)

One way to improve children's letter recognition skills is through mystery boxes. This tool allows children to memorize, independently arrange letters, and form words, supporting their language development. Using mystery boxes also helps children understand letters concretely and provides a more memorable learning experience (Novitasari et al., 2023).

In line with Sri Wulan's opinion, mystery boxes can motivate children and increase their enthusiasm for learning to recognize letters. This game falls into the descriptive category, which trains children in finding words, speaking clearly, and describing objects, thus helping develop their thinking skills. (Pitaloka, 2024)

Media as a learning aid is a crucial part of early childhood education (PAUD) learning management planning. This aligns with the opinion of Purwani et al., who stated that media cannot be separated from the learning process because it serves as a means of conveying messages from teachers and materials to students.

From Hasting et al. adding that learning media is needed by both teachers and students. Effective media will make it easier for educators to deliver material, and can be combined with various strategies, approaches, and learning methods to improve children's understanding. (September, 2021)

The Mystery Box is a game-based learning medium designed to increase children's engagement in the learning process. It's cube-shaped and can be adjusted to suit individual needs. It's called a "mystery" because children don't know what's inside, sparking curiosity and a desire to participate (Hikmah, 2024).

Based on observations and interviews on Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at the TKN Pembina Dewi Kayangan Kindergarten, it was discovered that some children still have difficulty recognizing letters. This is due to the lack of varied learning media and the still-conventional learning methods. The learning process at this school still uses a daily, repetitive method with media such as theme books, magazines, and a blackboard. The teacher writes on the blackboard, then the children are asked to spell the word. However, some children do not pay attention and are instead busy playing by themselves. This method is less effective because it does not actively involve children in the learning process. In addition, the methods used at this school include singing, question and answer, storytelling, and giving assignments. However, these methods still need to be combined with more innovative learning media to make children more interested and involved in the learning process.

Based on the data obtained, 13 children at the Dewi Kayangan Kindergarten (TKN Pembina Dewi Kayangan) experienced difficulties in recognizing letters. These difficulties were characterized by an inability to distinguish letters, difficulty pronouncing letter sounds correctly, and difficulty recognizing the first and last letters of the names of objects around them. Therefore, researchers sought to find ways to improve children's letter recognition skills through more innovative learning media. Learning in kindergarten requires stimulation that is appropriate to the child's developmental aspects.

The researchers chose this topic due to the low letter recognition skills of children at the school, compounded by the lack of implementation of Mystery Box media in learning. Conventional methods are also less effective in developing children's letter recognition skills, necessitating more engaging and interactive learning strategies.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This research was conducted using the classroom action research method. Classroom action research is practical research designed to improve classroom learning (Parnawi, 2020). Classroom action research is conducted because of a problem that requires an answer or because the student wants

to prove something that has long existed or wants to prove something that has long existed by inserting a new method that has not been used in that setting.

The data collection techniques used were observation, interviews, and documentation. The research design used the research procedures developed by Kemmis and Mc. Taggart. Research procedures are the stages in the research process. The research process includes various research steps (Sugiyono, 2020). The type of research used by the researcher was classroom action research (CAR), where the indicator is the achievement of improved student learning outcomes. Classroom action research is conducted by teachers in their own classrooms by designing, implementing, and reflecting on actions to improve teacher performance and thus improve student learning outcomes (Nada, 2020).

The classroom action research procedure is carried out in a continuous cycle of activities, consisting of two cycles, each cycle consisting of four main activities, namely: planning(planning stage), acting (taking action),*observing* (data collection) and *reflecting* (reflection). The data analysis technique uses a formula used to determine individual completeness, namely as follows (Ratnawulan, 2013):

$$NA = \frac{SP}{SMI} \times 100$$

Information:
THAT   : Final score
SP   : Score Obtained
SMI   : Ideal Maximum Score

The formula used to determine classical completeness is as follows (Ratnawulan, 2013):

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

Information:
P : Percentage to be searched for/Classical completeness
f : Number of Students Who Completed
N : Total Number of Students

3. RESULTS

Based on the results of observations and interviews on Wednesday, February 19, 2025 at TKN Pembina Dewi Kayanagan, it was found that there are still children who have difficulty recognizing letters. This is caused by the lack of varied learning media and methods that are conventional. Based on the data obtained, there are 13 children at TKN Pembina Dewi Kayangan who have difficulty recognizing letters. These difficulties are characterized by the inability to distinguish letters, difficulty pronouncing letter sounds correctly, and less able to recognize the first and last letters of the names of objects from their surroundings.

Based on the results of the research conducted, children's letter recognition abilities gradually increase from pre-cycle, cycle I, to cycle II. In addition to comparing learning outcomes, this discussion also examines the effectiveness of media use.*Mystery Box*in improving children's cognitive abilities in the aspect of letter recognition. The following explanation is based on

observations, reflections on actions, and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data during the implementation of classroom action. This can be seen in the following table:

Table 01. Recapitulation of Letter Recognition Ability from Pre-Cycle to Cycle II

No	Child's Name	Score	KI Pra Cycle	Score	KI Siklus I	Score	KI Siklus II	Category	Information
1	BILAL	29	72,5	33	82,5	35	87,5	BSB	Completed
2	PASSWORD	28	70	31	77,5	33	82,5	BSB	Completed
3	STICK	28	70	31	77,5	33	82,5	BSB	Completed
4	SYFA	25	62,5	30	75	32	80	BSB	Completed
5	ZARA	23	57,2	28	70	30	75	BSH	Completed
6	AIDA	23	57,2	28	70	30	75	BSH	Completed
7	ONLY	20	50	23	57,5	29	72,5	BSH	Completed
8	BRILLIANT	20	50	23	57,5	28	70	BSH	Completed
9	LATE AFTERNOON	16	40	22	55	28	70	BSH	Completed
10	IBO	16	40	22	55	25	62,5	MB	Not yet finished
11	SHEVA	23	57,2	29	72,5	31	77,5	BSH	Completed
12	Saffron	20	50	23	57,5	27	67,5	MB	Not yet finished
13	KENZO	22	55	25	62,5	30	75	BSH	Completed
CLASSICAL COMPLETENESS		23,07%		53,8%		84,6%			

In the pre-cycle stage, initial conditions indicated that most children were not yet able to recognize letters well. Of the 13 children observed, only 3 (23.07%) had achieved learning completion. The other 10 children still had difficulty naming letters, pronouncing letter sounds, and associating letters with familiar words or objects. Previous learning methods tended to be monotonous and did not actively engage children, resulting in low learning interest. This is in line with the opinion of (Avissany, 2022) who stated that minimal active participation of children in learning activities results in a lack of letter recognition ability.

To overcome this, in cycle I, learning with games was implemented. *Mystery Box.* The results showed an increase in learning completion to 7 children (53.8%). Children began to show interest and involvement in learning. They appeared enthusiastic when taking letters from the box and trying to name and associate the letters with familiar objects or names. Despite this improvement, reflections showed that some children still had difficulty distinguishing similar letters (such as "b" and "d"), and some children still lacked confidence

in naming letters in front of friends. This is in accordance with the opinion (Novalina, 2023) that the process of recognizing letters requires gradual practice, repetition, and strategies that combine visual, auditory, and tactile aspects.

In cycle II, learning is carried out by improving strategies based on previous reflections. Changes made include:

1. Adding variations in color, size, and shape of letters in *Mystery Box* to make it more interesting.
2. Small group division to maximize mentoring by teachers.
3. Providing intensive verbal motivation to build children's self-confidence.
4. Reinforcement of learning through songs and repetition games.

The results of the second cycle showed significant progress. Of the 13 children, 11 (84.6%) successfully achieved learning completion. The children appeared more confident, were able to name and differentiate letters more accurately, and were able to arrange letters into simple words, such as the names of animals or their own names. This significant improvement in learning outcomes is supported by theories in early childhood education. According to **Sri Moon**in (Wahyuningrum and Linda Anna Kartika Dwiyanti, 2022),*Mystery Box*is a learning medium that can actively and creatively enhance children's abilities through a play-while-learning approach. This game not only trains speaking skills but also encourages logical thinking and letter recognition in a fun way.

In line with Jean Piaget's theory (Sujiono, 2016), cognitive development is a general term encompassing all modes of understanding, namely perception, imagination, meaning-making, judgment, and reasoning. Cognitive reasoning is not merely the result of an organism's maturation, nor is it the influence of the environment, but rather the interaction between the two. Cognitive abilities can be categorized into cognitive development of general knowledge and science, cognitive development of concepts of shape, color, size, and pattern. Cognitive development encompasses children's ability to think, understand, solve problems, and develop knowledge about the world around them.

Furthermore, **Soenjono Darjowidjojo**(Asiah, 2020) explains that the process of learning to recognize letters requires continuous visual and auditory stimulation. Through *Mystery Box*, children see, feel, and name letters, all integrated into one fun activity. This accelerates the process of letter recognition and mastery. Meanwhile, **Shofi** (Pitaloka, 2024) emphasized that children will learn letters more quickly if learning is direct, concrete, and fun. This principle is the foundation of the play approach in early childhood learning.

In other words, the improvement that occurred in cycle II reflects the effectiveness of the play-based learning approach through *Mystery Box* in building children's early literacy readiness. In addition to letter recognition (cognitive aspect), improvements are also seen in affective aspects, such as:

1. The child's self-confidence increases, as shown by the child's willingness to appear to say letters.
2. Active participation, shown by children's involvement in games, both individually and in groups.
3. Learning motivation increases, because children feel that learning is fun and not stressful.

This is in line with the principles of early childhood education according to Montessori in (Chou, 2017), that children will learn optimally when they are directly involved, feel happy, and have the freedom to explore.

4. .CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that the use of the Mystery Box media game has proven effective in improving the ability to recognize letters in children in group A of TKN Pembina Dewi Kayangan. This is indicated by the increase in children's learning outcomes from the pre-cycle stage to cycle I and increased significantly in cycle II. In the pre-cycle stage, classical completeness was only 23.07% (3 out of 13 children). After the action in cycle I, completeness increased to 53.8% (7 out of 13 children), and in cycle II it increased significantly to 84.6% (1 out of 13 children), which means that the success indicator has been achieved.

This Mystery Box media game can increase children's active engagement, curiosity, and confidence in recognizing letters. Children demonstrate high interest, enthusiasm, and courage in naming letters, their sounds, and associating them with familiar words. The learning process becomes more enjoyable and meaningful because children learn concretely through play.

The gradual implementation of strategies, small group divisions, and reinforcement through songs and verbal motivation have a positive impact on learning success. This strategy helps children recognize letters in their entirety—through visual, auditory, and fine motor skills—in line with the developmental characteristics of early childhood.

Thus, this study shows that the application of game media*Mystery Box*is a relevant and effective method in improving the ability to recognize letters in early childhood.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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