



## The Effect Of Implementing Whole Language Approach To Improve Third-Grade Elementary Students' Early Reading Skills

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## Pengaruh Penerapan Pendekatan Whole Language Untuk Meningkatkan Keterampilan Membaca Awal Siswa Kelas Tiga SD

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### ABSTRACT

**Abstract:** Early reading is the initial level in the process of learning to read. Early reading skills play an important role in developing advanced reading skills. The study aims to determine the effect of applying the whole language approach by using picture storybooks to improve elementary students' early reading skills in grade III. The research was conducted in Cipinang Besar Selatan. The research applied an experimental study with Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design. Data were collected using 20 multiple-choice question-item tests. Data were analyzed through normality, homogeneity, and paired sample t-test tests. The hypothesis test results indicate  $t = 3.162$  with  $p_{value}$  of 0.006. The conclusion of the research is that there is a significant positive effect of the whole language approach on third-grade elementary students' early reading skills. Learning using the whole language approach can be used as an alternative to improving third-grade elementary students' early reading skills. Picture storybooks make students more interested in reading and picture illustrations help students more easily understand the reading content in the learning material.

**Keywords:** whole language, early reading skill, elementary students

**Abstrak:** Membaca permulaan merupakan tingkat awal dalam proses belajar membaca. Kemampuan membaca permulaan berperan penting dalam mengembangkan kemampuan membaca lanjutan. Penelitian bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh penerapan pendekatan Bahasa secara keseluruhan menggunakan buku cerita bergambar untuk meningkatkan kemampuan membaca permulaan pada siswa kelas III sekolah dasar. Penelitian dilakukan di Kelurahan Cipinang Besar Selatan. Penelitian menerapkan kajian eksperimen dengan Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan tes pilihan ganda 20 soal. Data dianalisis menggunakan uji normalitas, homogenitas, dan paired sample t-test. Hasil uji hipotesis diperoleh  $t = 3,162$  dengan  $p_{value} = 0,006$ . Kesimpulan penelitian adalah terdapat pengaruh positif pendekatan Bahasa secara keseluruhan yang signifikan terhadap kemampuan membaca permulaan pada siswa kelas III sekolah dasar. Pembelajaran menggunakan pendekatan Bahasa secara keseluruhan dapat dijadikan sebagai alternatif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca permulaan siswa kelas III SD. Buku cerita bergambar membuat siswa lebih tertarik membaca dan ilustrasi gambar membantu siswa lebih mudah memahami isi bacaan yang ada pada materi pembelajaran.

**Kata Kunci :** Bahasa secara keseluruhan, kemampuan membaca permulaan, sekolah dasar

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is very important in human life. Education can develop the ability or potential of individuals that occurs in a planned and structured manner, both in formal and informal contexts (Suryadi, 2015). The educational process takes place at school as well as outside the school. School education is education that a person obtains in school regularly, systematically, stratified, and by following clear and strict requirements (starting from kindergarten to college) (Hasbullah, 2013). Out-of-School Education (PLS) is an educational program that is carried out outside the formal education path or ordinary school, such as tutoring, computer courses, and others.

One of the lessons learned in school is Indonesian, covering basic skills that students must have, one of which is reading. Reading is a critical-creative reading processing process carried out by readers to gain a thorough understanding of the reading followed by an assessment of the situation, value, function, and impact of the reading (Nurhadi, 2016). Reading allows individuals to increase intelligence, access information, and deepen knowledge in a person (Handayani & Puji, 2020). The ability to read begins when children enjoy exploring books by holding or flipping through books.

Students at the primary school level who do not have the ability to read will face difficulties in continuing higher education because the higher the level of education, the greater the comprehension required by the student. For this reason, early reading skills need to be trained in early elementary school (Irdawati, 2014). The ability to read is a must that must be mastered by students. Mastering the ability to read early is considered one of the important steps because reading is recognized as the key to open the entrance to broader insight (Towilah, 2013).

Beginning reading is the initial level in the process of learning to read. This beginning reading is only given to lower grade students in elementary school. The first ability that must be pursued and mastered by the reader is reading the beginning (Dalman, 2014). This is in line with the opinion of Taufina (2016) who states that the initial reading learning activity is a process to master writing techniques or procedures as a visual description of language which is often referred to as learning to read. Then, according to Krissandi et al. (2018), beginning reading is a teaching that emphasizes the recognition of letter language symbols, namely word recognition. The purpose of this beginning reading learning is for students to be able to read letters, words, and simple sentences fluently and precisely. So that early reading learning is important to be given to lower grade students. However, students' initial reading skills are still low, including students who are less able to recognize letters (Hasanah & Lena, 2021). This is in line with the research of Nadia et al. (2022) that there are students who do not recognize letters of the alphabet. Nadia added, when reading a word, students often omit certain letters, so students have difficulty in reading simple sentences and texts.

Factors that can hinder the reading ability of grade III elementary school students, namely: (1) some students in grade III still do not know letters, they face difficulties in remembering information, making it difficult for them to accept or respond to lessons taught by the teacher; (2) lack of parental guidance and support in the learning process at home, especially if the parents' education level is low, can hinder the development of children's reading skills; (3) lack of motivation from parents to encourage children to learn or engage in activities that can improve reading skills also affects children's motivation in reading at an early stage. This is in line with Windrawati's research (2020) that some children have weak memory, so they have difficulty accepting or responding to what is taught by the teacher. Windrawati added that lack of parental support in the learning process and low levels of education can hinder children's learning progress.

Various approaches are applied in the language learning process, including the *whole language approach*. Some researchers who use the *whole language approach*, including Aisyah et al.

(2020) develop initial reading skills through a whole language approach in elementary schools with the help of videos. They concluded that *video-assisted whole language* can improve beginning reading skills. However, this study has not applied the use of language in accordance with the EYD. Furthermore, Hasim et al. (2022) conducted an experiment by applying *whole language* using textbooks without images. They concluded that reading can be improved using a *whole language* approach. However, they have not used interesting picture story books as a medium. Then, Zatalini and Muhammadi (2021) conducted classroom action research through a *whole language* approach using theme 7 learning. It can be concluded that the ability to read the beginning of cycle II has increased from cycle I. However, in research only using thematic books. Have not implemented varied and fun learning media for students.

*Whole language* has eight components that are directly connected to other language skills. Whole language components, *namely* Reading Aloud, Sustained Silent Reading, Journal Writing, Shared Reading, Guided Reading, Guided Writing, Independent Reading, and Independent Writing (Krissandi et al., 2018). This approach has characteristics, *namely*: (1) developing through stages according to development; (2) engage in social interaction throughout the day; (3) share responsibility in their learning; (4) feel happy to try and practice reading and writing without fear of criticism; (5) evaluate their progress as a natural part of all learning experiences.

According to Alamsyah (2007), there are several advantages of *the whole language* approach, *namely*: (1) students' abilities and skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, can be developed operationally and comprehensively. In addition, students' interest in reading has been fostered as early as possible. Similarly, it is related to other language skills that ultimately students can communicate, both through spoken and written language; (2) engage the student's real environment and experience; (3) integrate all language skills and linguistic components (sound, form, sentence, and meaning) as well as the use of multimedia. Meanwhile, the disadvantages of *the whole language approach*, *namely*: (a) *Change to a whole language class* takes a long time because changes must be done carefully and slowly so that the results are as desired. (b) In the application of *whole language*, teachers must first understand the components so that learning can be carried out optimally.

Many studies have been found that discuss the approach *whole language* to improve reading skills, but only use the medium of theme books or textbooks without images. The novelty in this study is the application of the approach *whole language* by using picture storybooks. Picture storybook media makes students interested and picture illustrations help students more easily understand the reading content in the learning material. If the student has the ability to read the beginning, then the student will be easy to read further. Therefore, this study aims to determine the effect of applying the approach *whole language* to improve beginning reading skills in grade III elementary school students.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The study population was all students in South Cipinang Besar sub-district, Jatinegara sub-district. The research sample was selected by technique *cluster random sampling* and selected grade III students of SDN Cipinang Besar Selatan 20. Participants consisted of 34 students (class IIIA with a total of 17 students as an experimental class and IIIB a total of 17 students in the control class). The study time starts on March 15 to April 15, 2023. Research involves the subject matter of the main idea in a picture storybook. The research was carried out for 7 meetings.

The method taken uses quantitative types using experimental methods and *Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design*. The variables consist of a *whole language* approach independent variable and a variable tied to initial reading ability. In its implementation, the experimental class was treated using a *whole language* approach and reading picture story books. Meanwhile, the control class uses a

lecture method with theme book media. In both classes, *pretest* and *posttest* will be given.

The research instrument to be used is a multiple-choice test of 20 questions with five dimensions, namely: (1) recognizing letters; (2) reading syllables; (3) determine the sentences of questions, invitations, commands, and suggestions appropriately; (4) constructing sentences; (5) Fluency of beginning reading. This is used to determine the improvement of beginning reading skills by applying *a whole language approach* in the classroom.

Research data analysis techniques through data prerequisite tests and hypothesis tests. Data prerequisite test, i.e. normality test using *Shapiro-Wilk* and homogeneity test using F test. Then, test the hypothesis by using the test *Paired Sample t-Test*. Data processing using JASP 0.17.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Activities in this study began with learning observations in subjects Indonesian grade III SDN Cipinang Besar Selatan 20 for the 2022/2023 academic year. Observations were made to find problems with students' initial reading skills. Based on Observation, the teacher uses only Thematic books as a learning medium. Have not implemented varied and fun learning media for students. This causes the learning process to become monotonous and students are less accustomed to reading. Students become bored and lose focus in following learning. Results of pre-test and post-test data of experimental and control class of grade III students (Table 1).

**Table 1. Deskripsi Data Pre-Test then Post-Test**

	Ex-Loan	Counter- Pre	Eks-Post	Kont-Post
Mean	42.353	38.765	78.118	71.412
Std. Deviation	15.684	12.945	7.219	7.281
Variance	245.993	167.566	52.110	53.007
Range	53.000	45.000	23.000	25.000
Minimum	20.000	20.000	65.000	60.000
Maximum	73.000	65.000	88.000	85.000

The difference between *experimental* and *control pre-tests* is relatively small. The experimental class's *pre-test mean score* ( $mean = 42,353$ ) was greater than the control class ( $mean = 38,765$ ). The experimental class's *mean post-test score* ( $mean = 78,118$ ) was greater than that of the control class ( $mean = 71,412$ ). Thus, it can be stated that the experimental class has better initial reading skills than the control class. Then, Data analysis requirements test is performed. First, test normality to find out the data obtained is normally distributed. The normality test is performed by test *Shapiro-Wilk* (Table 2).

**Table 2. Normality Test (*Shapiro-Wilk*)**

		In	p
Eks-Post	- Kont-Post	0.900	0.069

*Note. Significant results suggest a deviation from normality*

The results of the normality test in this study obtained values, namely  $W = 0.900$  and  $Pvalue = 0.069 > 0.05$ . This proves that the data of this study are normally distributed.



Secondly, the homogeneity test is performed using *uji-F Two Sample For Variance* assisted *excel* with a signification level of 5% or  $\alpha=0.05$ . Based on the results of the homogeneity test using *post-test* in control class and experiment class (Table 3)

**Table 3. Homogeneity Test**

	<i>Control</i>	<i>Experiment</i>
Mean	71.41176471	78.11764706
Variance	53.00735294	52.11029412
Observations	17	17
Df	16	16
F	1.017214618	
P(F<=f) one-tail	0.486595207	
F Critical one-tail	2.333483627	

Based on the results obtained in the homogeneity test, it can be seen that  $F_{\text{calculate}} = 1.017 < F_{\text{table}} = 2.333$  means that the data in this study has homogeneous variances. After normality and homogeneity tests, Hypothesis testing is carried out using *Paired Samples T-Test*. Based on the study, the following hypothetical results were obtained (Table 4).

**Tabel 4. Paired Samples T-Test**

Measure 1	Measure 2	T	df	p
Eks-Post	- Buttocks-Post	3.162	16	0.006

*Note. Student's t-test.*

Based on Table 4, obtained  $t = 3.162$  with  $p\text{value} = 0.006 < 0.05$ . So it can be concluded that  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted, meaning that the hypothesis on the data obtained is that there is an effect of application *whole language* able to improve the initial reading skills of students in grade III elementary school.

Results of applying the approach *whole language* In improving reading skills, beginnings showed a significant difference. The ability to read early as a basis for advanced reading skills, for this reason, special attention is needed from the teacher so that there are no problems with reading difficulties because if children have difficulty in the early reading period, children have difficulties at the next level (Hasanah, 2020). Learning activities Indonesian using an approach *whole language* In the classroom it creates a new atmosphere because the center of learning is on the students. Students not only listen to stories, but are also given the opportunity to read, listen, write, and speak according to the language skills component. In line with Hartati and Cuhariah (2015) approach *whole language* is an approach to developing language teaching that is implemented thoroughly including: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Application of the approach *whole language* Done using picture storybook teaching materials. Picture storybooks have visuals that captivate the eye to enjoy the image and are able to provide comfort in reading short texts about the explanation of the image. Picture story books designed with attractive and colorful looks have a special appeal for children, which motivates them to have enthusiasm in following lessons. The role of picture story books when used in the classroom is to

arouse students' enthusiasm and interest in reading books. Then, make it easier for students to recognize the vocabulary and punctuation marks in each sentence and encourage students' courage to express their opinions in front of the class. The role of picture story books is relevant to Loh's (2016) opinion stated when story and picture topics are combined, it can inspire students to develop creative ideas and expand their imagination. Paramita et al. (2022) concluded that the existence of picture story books can make students more active, interested, and have a positive impact on students' learning interests, especially in the field of reading. Paramita added that picture story books are also able to increase students' courage in speaking in front of the class without feeling embarrassed or afraid of making mistakes.

Unlike learning that is carried out conventionally and usually uses a goal approach, students are only glued to textbooks and teachers focus on learning objectives. This makes students bored because teachers do not have innovations that provide opportunities for students to understand a reading and must master the material for one semester. Based on the results of the study showed that the experimental class was treated with the approach *Whole Language* obtained better results than the control class that received conventional treatment. Thus, it can be concluded that the initial reading ability of students in grade III elementary school has improved using the approach *Whole Language*.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on results and pembahasan can conclude that the approach *whole language* able to improve the initial reading skills of students in grade III elementary school. Approach *whole language* In Indonesian learning, especially in the reading aspect, apply four language skills, namely listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The advantages of this approach involve the environment and real experiences experienced by students, integrate all language components, and use media which can make it easier for students to improve beginning reading skills. Furthermore, reading with picture storybooks gives appeal because there are colorful illustrations and few sentences. Making it easier for students to read, recognize vocabulary, and punctuation.

Teachers are advised to provide facilities for picture story books that can support the learning process, especially in reading so that students are more interested in learning to read. Teachers should also be more creative and innovative in learning through approaches *whole language*, Especially Indonesian lessons with appropriate material.

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