

Teachers' Understanding towards Concepts and Processes of Children's Literacy

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First received:

June 3, 2020

Revised:

June 21, 2021

Final Accepted:

June 29, 2021

Abstract

This study aims to describe the understanding and process of implementing literacy in early childhood. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. Data collection techniques were used through observation, interviews, and documentation. The subjects were Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers in Lhokseumawe. Ten teachers were selected using purposive sampling technique from five kindergartens; Pertiwi Kindergarten, Bunayya, Safiatuddin and Ukhtani. The results showed that: (1) the understanding of ECE teachers in Lhokseumawe interpreted the concept of literacy as a basic skill that children must have in reading, writing, and speaking. Introduction of literacy for early childhood as initial preparation to master reading, writing and speaking skills so that early childhood becomes more prepared to face education at the next level, Elementary School or *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, (2) The process of implementing literacy in ECE institutions is generally carried out in various forms of play activities and children's daily habit and using various forms of methods and media or educational toys.

Keywords: Teachers' understanding, Literacy, Early Childhood Education

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a child who is undergoing a very rapid development process which is in the age range of zero to six years. According to Hartati (2007), early childhood is a group of individuals who are in the age range between 0-8 years. The implementation of early childhood education (ECE) can be carried out in the form of formal, non-formal and informal education channels. The implementation of ECE in the formal pathway is intended for children aged 4 to 6 years, including Kindergarten or Raudhatul Athfal (RA) and other similar institutions. For ECE in the non-formal way, it is organized by community groups based on the needs of the community themselves, including Daycare which serve children aged 0 to 2 years, Playgroups serving children 3 to 4 years. Meanwhile, according to the National Education System Law number 20 of 2003, it is stated that early childhood is a child who is in the age range from birth to the age of six years (National Education System Law, 2003).

Early childhood education (ECE) is also an effort to provide stimulation in education, care, and care aimed at children to develop all their potential. ECE can provide learning experiences for children through the play process so that they can optimize aspects of their life's development in a fun way. Education for children from an early age aims to develop all aspects of child development which include aspects: cognitive, physical-motor, religious and moral values, language and socio-emotional. It is because early childhood is a golden age for children's development so that it is included in a very decisive age for further development (Lecturer et al., nd). The ability to read and write is part of the aspects of language development that need to be developed in early childhood. This is intended to be a provision of basic abilities so that children are better prepared to develop other aspects. The results of Husnaini's research showed that "literacy recognition is interpreted as a process of introducing basic reading and writing in children to prepare children to continue their studies at the next level with stages, differences in children's abilities, materials and learning methods applied". (Husnaini, nd)

The ability to read and write is also termed as literacy, as in the opinion of Sumarti et al, literacy is the ability to read and write or also called literacy. (Sumarti et al., 2020). Fransman also emphasized that literacy is more about reading and writing skills (Fransman, 2017). Officialni reinforces Fransman's opinion that literacy refers to aspects of reading and writing. The introduction of literacy in children from an early age can provide basic skills in optimizing all aspects of child development (Novi Officialni, 2013).

Literacy in early childhood is part of the aspect of language development that needs to be stimulated and developed in children. The experience of children interacting with literacy from an early age will prepare children carefully to take part in learning in formal schools (Marwiyati, 2018). The concept and introduction of literacy in early childhood must adapt to the stages of child development and as contained in the ECE curriculum. Each age stage has a different concept of literacy recognition starting from the age of zero to the age of six years. Literacy in early childhood includes reading skills which include: literacy comprehension, ability to receive and express language. The results of Arsa's research concluded that "the process of early literacy in early childhood occurs through drawing,

telling experiences, counting, and reading".(Arsa et al., 2019) Besides that, the results of Gunawan's research found that "the pattern of developing language literacy in ECE can be done through asking questions about learning activities, giving quizzes, appreciating, and reflecting on children's learning activities in the form of expressions of children about the learning that has been done".(Gunawan et al., 2019)

According to the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 137 of 2014 concerning Standards for Early Childhood Education, aspects of language development in early childhood include; (1) the ability to receive language, (3) the ability to express language, and literacy. In addition, additional language skills include 4 aspects, they are: (1) listening skills, (2) speaking skills, (3) reading skills, and (4) writing skills (Early Childhood Education Standards, 2014). Then, according to the Minister of National Education Regulation number 137 of 2014 concerning the 2013 ECE curriculum, it is stated that aspects of language development which are part of the expected literacy skills in early childhood include; (1) the ability to receive language, (2) the ability to express language, and (3) literacy.

Even though teachers' understanding on school readiness related to children's readiness to enter primary school based on generally academic ability such as write, read and count (Syarifina et al., 2018), the application and introduction of literacy in early childhood is very different from literacy at the basic education level and even at the university level. This is because early age is the age of children to play, so the introduction of concepts and learning carried out at an early age must adapt to the characteristics and world of children's play. Teachers must be able to understand what literacy learning for early childhood is like and be able to understand the children they are educating thoroughly (Sari, 2017).

Early reading and writing can be said as an element that forms the basis, foundation, or provision for children to achieve good reading and writing skills (Lestari, 2013). Therefore, the introduction of the concept of reading and writing at an early age must refer to the applicable curriculum in ECE and carry out learning activities that have the principle of learning while playing. In this case, the introduction of literacy in children should be done in a fun way or method without any element of coercion, but through play activities and voluntary children.

In the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 58 of 2009 and also the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 137 of 2014 and concerning the 2013 ECE curriculum, it is stated that there are indicators regarding aspects of children's language development that can be a reference for ECE institutions in carrying out the process of introducing literacy to children. The level of early childhood in accordance with the stages of development (Early Childhood Education Standards, 2009). This article aimed to describe the understanding of the concept and process of implementing literacy in early childhood. This study focuses on aspects of literacy concepts in preparation for reading and preparation for writing.

METHOD

The approach applied in this research is qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is a research that aims to reveal the uniqueness of individuals, groups, communities, and organizations in a comprehensive, detailed, and scientifically accountable manner. Meanwhile, the method used in this research is descriptive qualitative research method. According to Kountur, descriptive research is a type of research that provides a description or description of the situation as clearly as possible without any treatment of the object under study (Ronny Kountur, 2005). Thus, this research is a qualitative research that describes the data as clearly as possible to answer questions about the concept of introduction and application of literacy in early childhood.

The subjects in this study were the ECE teachers in the city of Lhokseumawe, consists of 10 teachers who were selected using a purposive sampling technique from five schools, namely: TK Pertiwi, TK IT Bunayya, TK Safiatuddin and RA Ukhtani. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique with certain considerations (Sugiyono, 2018).

The data collection technique used in this research is through two stages of data collection techniques, namely looking for data sourced from primary data and secondary data. The purpose of this data collection is to obtain as much data as possible in order to support the research results. Secondary data obtained by using interview techniques. Interview is a data collection technique that is carried out through face-to-face and direct questions and answers between researchers and resource persons. Interviews are divided into two categories, namely structured and unstructured interviews. A structured interview is an interview where the researcher knows for sure what information he wants to extract from the informant. Researchers can also use various research instruments such as recorders, cameras for photos, and other instruments. Meanwhile, unstructured interviews are free interviews. The researcher did not use an interview guide that contained specific questions, but only contained the important points of the problem that the respondents wanted to explore.

In addition, primary data was also collected to complement and strengthen the research findings of this study related to the application of literacy in early childhood. The primary data referred to here is in the form of research documentation. Furthermore, the data analysis techniques used in this study are: doing data reduction, presenting data and drawing conclusions (Emzir, 2010).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of research that has been carried out at ECE institutions in Lhokseumawe which consists of: Pertiwi Kindergarten, Bunayya Kindergarten, Safiatuddin and Ukhtani Kindergarten, obtained the following results:

Understanding the Literacy Concept of ECE Teachers in Lhokseumawe

Understanding the concept of literacy at ECE institutions in the city of Lhokseumawe (TK Pertiwi, TK IT Bunayya, TK Safiatuddin and RA Ukhtani) obtained data that understanding literacy understood by ECE teachers is as a basic skill and ability in language which includes: reading, writing, and speaking. Literacy is also a skill that must be developed and possessed by early childhood in preparation for mastering reading, writing and speaking skills. The introduction of literacy in early childhood should adjust to the stages of child development and refer to the early childhood education curriculum. This is in line with the results of Fahmi's research that introducing literacy to early childhood must refer to indicators of child development and use various learning strategies while playing. (Fahmi et al., 2020).

The concept of literacy material that is currently being taught at early childhood education institutions in the city of Lhokseumawe consists of literacy preparation for reading and literacy preparation for writing. The concept of reading literacy material taught to early childhood includes: the ability to recognize or read symbols and pictures, recognize the letters of the alphabet, pronounce the letters of the alphabet, recognize hijayyah letters, and the ability to read one's own name. According to Basyiroh, reading is an activity of recognizing letters, words and sentences that become meaningful speech and is a physical and mental activity to find the meaning of a writing (Iis Basyiroh, 2017). Furthermore, the concept of literacy material for writing preparation includes; the ability to draw various types of lines, connect the dots, connect the dotted lines, free doodle, write the letters of the alphabet, bold letters, and the ability to write your own name. This is as the results of the study, that "scribbling activities carried out by children regardless of the media are writing activities" (Permatasari et al., 2017).

The process of implementing the introduction of literacy at ECE institutions in Lhokseumawe

Based on the research data, it can be described the process of implementing the introduction of literacy at ECE institutions in Lhokseumawe City, namely TK Pertiwi, TK Safiatuddin and RA Ukhtani, in general these ECE institutions carry out the process of implementing literacy in various forms of play activities and children's daily habituation and by using various methods or media or educational game tools. The application of the literacy teaching process must use a fun play method so that children voluntarily learn it (Karima & Kurniawati, 2020).

Literacy recognition activities are also packaged in the form of games according to the characteristics of children learning while playing, such as: storytelling, storytelling, singing activities. In addition, the process of implementing literacy recognition is supported by the use of various educational game tools and media, such as: alphabet stickers, letter puzzles, picture books series, crayons, picture story books, letter blocks of various shapes and sizes, and other media. Furthermore, the process of implementing literacy recognition at IT Bunayya Kindergarten has not adjusted to the characteristics of early childhood, namely learning while playing so that the literacy recognition process resembles learning activities at the elementary school or madrasah ibtidaiyah level. The literacy recognition

process that is applied is carried out through reading guide books, where the child is asked to write and complete the writings in the reading book. In fact, the process of introducing literacy, especially aspects of preparation for reading and writing in early childhood, takes into account the stages of child development. This is in accordance with the opinion (Rahayu, 2018) that "the provision of *calistung* (reading, writing, and counting) can already be applied to improve early childhood as long as it is according to the age level and aspects of development and is carried out through real experience. Therefore, the existence of ECE institutions, especially at the TK/RA level, can provide learning experiences for children through play so that they can optimize aspects of child development in a fun way (Elfiadi, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Based on the data from the research and discussion, it can be concluded that: The literacy understanding of ECE teachers in Lhokseumawe City is to interpret the concept of literacy as basic skills and abilities in language which include: reading, writing and speaking. The introduction of literacy for early childhood as initial preparation to master reading, writing and speaking skills so that early childhood becomes more prepared to face education at the next level; SD and MI. The concept of literacy material taught included literacy preparation for reading and writing. The concept of reading literacy material taught to early childhood included; the ability to recognize or read symbols and pictures, recognize the letters of the alphabet, pronounce the letters of the alphabet, recognize hijayyah letters, and the ability to read one's own name. While the literacy of writing preparation includes; the ability to draw various types of lines,

The process of implementing literacy in ECE institutions in Lhokseumawe City is generally carried out in various forms of playing activities and children's daily habituation and using various methods and media or educational game tools. Literacy recognition activities are also packaged in the form of games according to the characteristics of children learning while playing, such as: storytelling, talking, and singing activities. In addition, the process of implementing literacy recognition is supported by the use of various educational game tools and media, such as: alphabet stickers, letter puzzles, picture books series, crayons, picture story books, letter blocks of various shapes and sizes, and other media. In addition, there are also ECE institutions in the city of Lhokseumawe that carry out the process of implementing literacy recognition that has not adapted to the characteristics of early childhood, namely learning while playing so that the literacy recognition process resembles learning activities at the elementary school/madrasah ibtidaiyah level. The introduction of literacy is done through reading guide books, where children are asked to write and complete the writings in the book.

Based on the results of this study, it can also be found that the teacher's understanding of the concept and process of literacy in early childhood must adjust to the age level of child development and be carried out with various forms of stimulating fun activities for early childhood.

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