The Reading Ability of Islamic Religious Education Textbook and Student's Character

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyse the reality of the ability to read the beginning of the text of Islamic religious education and character in elementary school students in Salotungo, Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with many participants, as many as 10 people consisting of the schoolmaster, teachers and students. Data sources consist of primary and secondary data with data collection techniques obtained through observation, interviews and library research. The data is analysed through the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation and withdrawal, verification or conclusion. Research findings indicate that early reading skills have different stages of cognitive development. Therefore, early reading skills have differences, and reading materials must be adapted to develop optimally. Reading the beginning is very influential on reading the text, so reading the beginning requires serious attention. Nevertheless, students have a firm basis for reading the beginning of Islamic religious education books and student characters at this stage. Another finding is that the reality of early reading ability is determined mainly by professional teachers, primarily Islamic religious education and character education, because there are differences in the language of the *Qur'an* that are not shared with other textbooks. Improving the ability to read the beginning of Islamic Religious Education and Character Education textbooks in elementary schools can be done by providing class comfort, building student learning concentration with read-repeat-speech techniques and improving the learning system with more varied methods.

Keywords: Reading Ability, Islamic Religious Education, Student's Character.

1. Introduction

Reading activity is a general activity that humans do to get information according to the content of their writing. Reading is a communication process that is carried out indirectly from the message's source to the message's recipient through written media. Reading activities are significant to do and get used to getting a lot of information and adding to one's insight. Good reading requires abilities and skills that have been taught to students starting from elementary school. The original reading is a stage in the process of learning to read for elementary school students. Students learn to acquire skills and

master reading techniques and understand the content of reading well. Therefore, teachers must design reading learning well so that they can cultivate reading habits as something fun.

According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, grade I elementary school students are included in the concrete operational stage (concrete operational stage), which lasts from 7 to 11 years. At this stage, most children make dramatic rapid progress in maintaining and controlling attention. Attention is one of the cognitive functions involved in the reading process. Cognitive function plays a significant role in children's psycholinguistics (Siti Soraya Lin Abdullah Kamal, 2021). Children aged 7 years are a very potential age in forming character or behaviour in language caused by interactions through their way of thinking. In addition, at the age of 7 years, children experienced an increase in short-term memory, although it did not last as long as the preoperational age of children (ages 2-7 years). In reading, the short term helps remember letter sequences and letter sounds and spelling words. Thus, according to its development, students can master reading skills well (John W. Santrock, 2004).

Reading skill is a vital skill because it helps students' learning process (Sari et al., 2018), so teachers must have strategies for reading (Adıgüzel, 2013) not to experience difficulties in learning. The fluency and accuracy of children's reading at the initial learning stage are influenced by the teacher's activeness and creativity. Therefore, teachers play a strategic role in improving students' reading skills (Fajri et al., 2019; Hariandi, 2019). The role strategy concerns the teacher's role as a facilitator, motivator, learning resource, and organiser in the learning process. Highly competent teachers will be able to carry out tasks to educate the nation, develop the Indonesian human personality as a whole and form scientists and experts.

The results of observations made at public elementary school (SDN) 7 Salatungo show that 56 students are in grade 1. Some of them are still unable to read the text of the Islamic religious education package and character because the text of the Islamic Religious Education and character textbook with other textbook texts. In the text of the Islamic religious education and character education package, there is the hijaiyyah alphabet. In other words, there are Arabic writings (Qur'an) that students are not familiar with. So that the student is still not able to string the alphabet into a word and words into sentences. The reading experience experienced by these students makes students less interested in learning.

The factors that cause students to be low in reading texts are very diverse. One of the obstacles in learning is that many students are not interested in learning to read. In addition, the cause of the low reading ability of students is the negative impact of the development of electronic media (Ray & Jat, 2010). This requires serious handling so that the implementation of the learning process can run well (Wahyuni, 2015). Another factor is the teacher's lack of understanding of the process, stages, and methods of initial learning in elementary schools, making reading learning low, both in skills and student interest. This can be revealed through research data conducted by Srie in USAID Prioritas that the research conducted on fourth-grade students of SD/MI in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), which is an international study in the field of reading in children around the world—achieved by The International Association for the Evaluation Achievement. The study results show that, on average, Indonesian children are fourth from the bottom of 45 countries in the world (USAID Priorita, 2015).

Reading is an essential ability of students to gain learning success in elementary school and as a tool for students to find out the meaning of each lesson learned in school. Seeing the importance of reading

skills for students in elementary schools, all efforts to improve reading skills need to be made continuously. To optimise early reading learning in elementary schools, techniques or methods can be used. Fun learning can be done by using ways to stimulate students to be active and enthusiastic in knowledge. Beginning reading skills are a provision or key to student success in education at school. Beginning reading is given to lower grade students, namely for grade I and II elementary school students. In this case, students can change written symbols into meaningful sounds. If students have difficulty in reading the beginning, then students will also experience obstacles in other subjects. In other words, preliminary reading skills will affect other topics because early reading is the basis for students to master various fields of study and reading skills at the next level. Based on this, the low reading ability in students, as a teacher, must play a role in instilling reading skills in students; they must know where students experience the reading ability problems because the problems encountered by students are very diverse. It would be better if the ability to read the text of the Islamic Religious Education and Character Education package were detected early.

2. Significance of The Study

Reading is an essential ability of students to gain learning success in elementary school and as a tool for students to find out the meaning of each lesson learned in school. Seeing the importance of reading skills for students in elementary schools, all efforts to improve reading skills need to be made continuously. To optimise early reading learning in elementary schools, techniques or methods can be used. Fun learning can be done by using ways to stimulate students to be active and enthusiastic in knowledge. Beginning reading skills are a provision or key to student success in education at school. Beginning reading is given to lower grade students, namely for grade I and II elementary school students. In this case, students can change written symbols into meaningful sounds. If students have difficulty in reading the beginning, then students will also experience obstacles in other subjects. In other words, preliminary reading skills will affect other topics because early reading is the basis for students to master various fields of study and reading skills at the next level. Based on this, the low reading ability in students, as a teacher, must play a role in instilling reading skills in students; they must know where students experience the reading ability problems because the problems encountered by students are very diverse. It would be better if the ability to read the text of the Islamic Religious Education and Character Education package were detected early. The significance of this research is to explain the importance of early reading for students in studying Islamic religious education books and the character of students in improving students' abilities.

3. Review of Related Studies

Researches on students' reading ability are more likely to examine aspects of understanding the meaning of literacy (Lee, 1999; Shara et al., 2020; Wahyuni et al., 2018), while research on early reading skills in relatively low texts was conducted. The importance of teaching reading skills has a positive impact on increasing interest in reading (Kirby et al., 2010), and improving understanding and mastery of vocabulary (Simanjuntak et al., 2015). Based on this description, reading initial texts in students needs to be done as early as possible in the early classes so that it is not too late to make improvements with the correct handling of students. The factors that cause problems in reading the factors experienced by each student are internal factors in the child and external factors outside the

child. Internal factors in children include physical, intellectual and psychological factors. The external factors outside of the child have the family and school environment (Farida Rahim, 2005).

4.Objectives of The Study

- To find out the reality of students' ability to read the beginning of the text of the book on Islamic Religious Education and Morals?
- To find out the factors supporting and inhibiting the ability to read from the text of the Islamic religious education package and students' character
- To find out efforts to grow the ability to read the beginning of the text of the Islamic Religious Education and Student Character.

5. Design

The research approach used is descriptive qualitative. Alternatively, a qualitative approach is one approach that primarily uses a knowledge paradigm based on a constructivist view (Emzir, 2014). Syamsuddin and Vismaia stated that the primary purpose of a qualitative approach is to describe, study, and explain phenomena (Syamsuddin dan Vismaia S. Damianti, 2009). This phenomenon can be obtained by describing and exploring it in a narrative. Qualitative descriptive research describes the conditions as they are, without giving treatment or manipulation to the object under study. Sugiyono explained that the qualitative research method is a naturalistic method because the research is carried out in natural conditions; the data collected is analyse more qualitatively (Sugiyono, 2015). This method seeks to explain the problem based on qualitative data, adapted to the objectives and formulation of the research problem. Therefore, the researcher will analyse the research data descriptively regarding reading the beginning of the Islamic Religious Education and Characters Education students.

6. Participants

In qualitative research, it is not directed at a large number of samples but in typical cases according to the specificity of the problem (Poerwandari, 2005). For this reason, the researcher did not take a large number of samples in this study but instead focused on the depth of the information obtained). From the participants so that they can answer the existing problem formulations. The researcher divided the participants into two categories in this study, namely core participants and additional participants. The participants in this study were teachers from elementary school students 7 Salatungo, Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The number of participants in this study was 10 people as 1 principal, 2 teachers of religious and character, and 7 students. The questions given to all participants have in common to determine students' ability in reading the initial stage. In addition to the core participants, other subjects become sources of information in the data collection process. The presence of these sources of information is not just to check the truth or info error information provided by the core participants but also increases the researcher's understanding of the data that has been collected. The subject who became the source of information in this study was the principal.

7. Data Collection Instruments

Interviews are used as a data collection technique if the researcher wants to conduct a preliminary study to find problems that must be investigated and if the researcher wants to know things from

respondents who are more in-depth and the number of respondents is small. This interview can be done in a structured manner and can be done face-to-face or by telephone. The interview technique used by researchers in the field is to use unstructured interview techniques because of some constraints on the informants. The selection of this unstructured interview technique was to avoid the inconvenience of the informant.

Research instruments are selected and used by researchers in their activities of collecting data from these activities to be systematic and facilitated by them. In this study, the author is the main instrument. This is following the principle of qualitative research proposed by (Sugiyono, 2013) that the researcher is an instrument for collecting primary (main) data. As the main instrument in this research, it conducts direct data collection, analyses it, and directly reflects the results of data analysis. In addition, researchers build an in-depth and in-depth understanding of the object under study. Then, in research activities, researchers will compile research reports.

8. Data Analyse

Data analyse in qualitative research is carried out before entering the field and after finishing in the area. Therefore, data analysis is more focused during the field process along with data collection. In this data analysis, the researcher uses Miles and Huberman's data analysis; namely, the activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out interactively and continuously until complete so that the data is saturated (Sugiyono, 2015). Activities in data analysis, namely reduction data, display data, and conclusion drawing/verification.

9. Findings

Research findings based on observations and interviews, especially in grade 1, show that students' reading skills seen from recognising the alphabet, reading words, reading words that have no meaning, and fluency in reading aloud and reading comprehension show positive things during learning. Nurhayati said that all teachers at SDN 7 Salotungo already have learning media because media can positively impact learning (Nurahayati, Personal Communication, April 4, 2021). For example, when the Islamic Religious Education Teacher and Character show the *makharajat* alphabet in front of students in class, this can be seen. The students felt happy, and one by one, they were assigned to read in front of their friends.

Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that students in grade I have different stages of cognitive development. The initial reading ability is also other; some are slow to read, and some are fluent, reading subject must be adapted to their development to increase optimally. The ability to read the beginning is very influential on the ability to read the next start. So reading the beginning requires earnest attention from a teacher so that at this stage, the child has a firm basis for reading the beginning of the text of the Islamic Religious Education and Student Character Education package; it is vital to note because reading the front is the basis for making it easier for students at the advanced reading stage. However, not a few students still lack reading skills. Therefore, beginning reading must require teachers' attention, especially PAIdBP teachers, who can be responsible for the learning delivered to students because it will affect students' level of understanding at the initial reading stage.

The reality of the initial reading ability of students in grade 1 SDN 7 Salotungo based on observations requires teachers who are truly professional in their fields because reading Islamic Religion and

Characters Education textbooks is not the same as reading other books. The textbook for Islamic Religious Education and Character contains the language of the *Qur'an*, which is not available with other texts. Religious education is very central in the formation of student character. According to Islamic values, research (Azwar et al., 2018) acts as an agent of character building for commendable, honest, and brave students. Therefore, the primary delivery strategy for students to start learning is essential to make it easier for students to understand the subject matter presented by the teacher. The research findings align with research (Ni'mah, 2018) that applying strategies in learning plays a vital role in increasing students' attractiveness in learning. Students' initial learning strategies in learning activities can be carried out by using suitable media to understand the subject matter quickly, so it is hoped that reading will not become a burden in learning to absorb the learning carried out in the classroom soon. Furthermore, strategies can improve students' understanding of a text (Khalaf et al., 2021). In this case, one alternative so that reading can be fun and easy to understand is to use a complete and supportive library, such as Textbooks on Islamic Religious Education and Character Education.

Imron's opinion states that the teaching profession is not just a common type of work (vocation), but a special job with the characteristics of expertise, responsibility, and a sense of camaraderie and teaching abilities and skills. The teaching ability reflects the teacher's mastery of his competence (Ali Imron, 1995). In the Qur'an, several verses provide instructions on how a teacher should act and behave to carry out their duties, including in Q.S. an-Nah l/16:125. The meaning of the verse is that the teacher's responsibility is a mandate that must be carried out as well as possible, full of sincerity and hoping for the pleasure of Allah SWT. The teacher's job demands ability in many ways. Being a teacher figure is not as easy as another profession because it must also inspire individual talents and skills and be a profession. Some of the competencies that teachers, namely, must master; cognitive competence, attitude competence, and religious development (Nana Sudjana, 2009); these three areas of competence do not stand alone but are interconnected and influence each other. This can be described as follows:

1. Cognitive competence, meaning intellectual abilities, such as mastery of subjects, knowledge of teaching methods, knowledge of learning and individual behaviour, knowledge of guidance and counselling, knowledge of classroom administration, knowledge of assessing student learning outcomes, knowledge of society and other general knowledge.

2. Competence in the field of attitude, which means the teacher's readiness and willingness to various matters relating to his duties and professionalism, for example, an attitude of respect for his work, love and feelings of pleasure towards the subjects he fosters, an attitude of tolerance towards fellow professionals, having a strong will to improve results her job.

Religious guidance is closely related to social life such as empathy Behavioral/performance competence, meaning the ability of teachers in various skills/behaviours, such as teaching skills, guiding, assessing, using teaching aids, communicating with students, skills to foster students' enthusiasm for learning, skills in preparing teaching planning preparations, skills in carrying out classroom administration, and others. The difference with cognitive competence lies in its nature.

10. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the results of observations and interviews in the teaching and learning process of Islamic Religious Education and Characters in schools, Islamic Religious Education Teachers and Budi Pekerti hope that their students can achieve the best learning outcomes. Many students in the class I are showing symptoms of not completing the expected learning outcomes. Some students are still not fluent in reading the beginning. Growing reading skills is essential, especially for educators. These educators are part of the government that educates their students to become superior generations who can contribute to the nation, religion, and state. The student is in the present to be given an educational stimulus, one of which is to embed a love of reading from an early age. Cultivating an interest in reading is a step to make students love reading (Jain & Othman, 2019; Ni'mah, 2018) so that this interest in reading becomes a habit of daily life. If the task has become a necessity, a reading culture will be realised. This means that Islamic religious education teachers and Budi Pekerti combine several methods in their learning activities to introduce the alphabet in a fun way, teach children to recognise syllables, invite children to read varied syllables.

Based on the researcher's observations in students reading Islamic Religious Education and Characters in the classroom, religious teachers guide students to read word for word with various methods used in learning, such as the spelling method. The spelling method is learning to read, starting with spelling letter by letter. The approach used in the spelling method is literal. First, students are introduced to letter symbols. Learning the Spell method consists of recognising the alphabet of the alphabet A to Z and recognising the sounds of the alphabet or phonemes. Our method is based on the word approach, which teaches reading and writing beginning by displaying words. Using the spelling method approach can please students because it does not make it difficult for students to absorb it. Research (Ocal & Ehri, 2017) states that the spelling method can improve skills in reading the words encountered, if implemented, more effectively and efficiently and does not require more complicated facilities and means.

The variety of techniques raised by Islamic Religious Education teachers and Budi Pekerti is carried out so that students in reading texts are not boring. This is following the results of research (Demir & Ersöz, 2016; Satriani, 2018), which states that the delivery of more varied learning methods so that students do not experience boredom in learning when the teacher only uses one way (monotonous), in addition, so that the teaching that is read can have meaning. This follows Purbaningrum's opinion that learning in the early grades is oriented to the DAP (Developmentally Appropriate Practice) approach, which refers to several principles, one of which is meaningfulness (Purbaningrum, 2009). The principle of meaningfulness means that learning should be meaningful by creating many manipulative processes while playing. This can be seen from the early reading techniques, such as using the beginning reading technique with the type of read-re-speech technique. These techniques can make the learning process meaningful with a manipulative approach from teachers of Islamic Religious Education and character and games in learning to read that do not deviate from the sub-topics. The use of various techniques by Islamic Religious Education teachers and characters to provide learning that is not boring and learning to read has meaning. This technique based on students' characteristics is very varied.

The most often used by Islamic Religious Education Teachers and Budi Pekerti is the beginning reading technique with the type of repeat-reading technique. The frequent use of this preliminary reading technique shows that Islamic Religious Education Teachers and Budi Pekerti want students to learn in a relaxed, fun way and be under the teacher's guidance. This can be seen from the teacher's varied forms of bringing up the initial reading technique. The teacher adjusted the selection of the initial reading technique to the approach used in learning to read in the early grades; namely, the teacher tried to liven up the class and involved himself with the students in the learning process to end the learning meaningful. Another finding was that Islamic Religious Education and Budi Pekerti teachers at SDN 7 Salotungo used reading while singing techniques to make students happy and interested in starting a reading. With this reading, while singing activity, students are very enthusiastic about participating in the lesson and can develop early reading skills for students in grade 1 of SDN 7 Salotungo, Soppeng Regency. Ning Setio Wati that, by listening to songs, students are stimulated to improve their language skills (Wati, 2018).

According to Wasty Soemanto, education is essentially not just a cultural inheritance and the result of human civilisation, but more than that, it is an effort to help humans obtain a prosperous life (Wasty Soemanto, 2002). Education aims to create individuals who can help themselves or others for the welfare of life, achieve this goal, and education seeks to assist so that humans experience personal development. Teacher competence has a lot to do with efforts to improve learning processes and outcomes. Grouped into four abilities, namely:

a. Planning teaching and learning programs,

b. Implement and lead or manage the teaching and learning process,

c. Assessing the progress of the teaching and learning process,

d. Mastering the subject matter in learning the field of study or subjects he holds or fosters.

The four abilities above are abilities that professional-level teachers must fully master.

11. Suggestions

Improving reading the beginning of Islamic Religious Education and Characters Education textbooks in elementary schools can provide class comfort. A comfortable class can have a positive influence on students' initial reading activities. Such as the cleanliness and tidiness of the tables and chairs in the classroom. Generating students' enthusiasm for learning; encouraging students to read the beginning of the text of the Islamic Religious Education and Character package is one of the efforts made to improve early reading skills; they are giving more or special attention to students who are already bored and tired of reading. Alphabet is used as singing material; by introducing the alphabet and the *hijaiyyah* alphabet by singing, students will quickly memorise them.

Building students' learning concentration with read-repeat-speech techniques; Teachers can train students' attention by ensuring that when learning takes place, students' total engagement is to listen to the words read by the teacher and write them down into the correct alphabet. Growing students' interest in reading with various methods; The variety of raised techniques means combining several learning activities to foster interest in the fun early reading for students, teach children to recognise syllables, invite children to read varied words. Fluency in reading aloud and reading comprehension; reading the

writing with their voice lifts to be heard by other friends. The benefits of reading aloud are giving students an example of a positive reading process, exposing students, enriching their vocabulary, and providing students with new information and giving praise in the form of a big pat and giving a thumbs up, is usually assigned when students can answer questions from the teacher or when students can read well and enthusiastically. With the praise given by the teacher, students will feel happy and more enthusiastic in learning to read and write. Cooperation between teachers and parents; teachers and parents work together to guide students.

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