

Application of the Reading Method without Spelling in Beginning Reading Learning

(Case Study of 1st Grade Students of MI Muhammadiyah Kedunggudel)

Suryati

STIT Muhammadiyah Tempurejo Ngawi

ukhtisuryati@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of the non-spelling reading method in early reading instruction for first-grade students at MI Muhammadiyah Kedunggudel. This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The subjects of this study were first-grade students, and the data were collected through observation, reading tests, and documentation. The data were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study showed that the students' early reading ability was initially low and dominated by spelling-based reading habits. The implementation of the non-spelling reading method was carried out gradually through daily reading activities by emphasizing the recognition of syllables and words as whole units. After the implementation, there was a significant improvement in students' reading ability, indicated by increased reading fluency, the ability to recognize words directly, and better comprehension of simple texts. In addition, students showed positive responses, such as increased enthusiasm and confidence in reading. In conclusion, the non-spelling reading method is effective in improving early reading skills of first-grade students, including reading fluency, comprehension, and students' attitudes toward reading activities.

Kata kunci: *early reading, non-spelling method, reading ability, elementary school students*

ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan penerapan metode membaca tanpa mengeja dalam pembelajaran membaca permulaan pada siswa kelas I MI Muhammadiyah Kedunggudel. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Subjek penelitian adalah siswa kelas I dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi, tes membaca, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan membaca permulaan siswa pada awalnya masih rendah dan didominasi oleh kebiasaan membaca dengan cara mengeja. Penerapan metode membaca tanpa mengeja dilakukan secara bertahap melalui pembiasaan membaca harian dengan menekankan pengenalan suku kata dan kata secara utuh. Setelah penerapan metode, terjadi peningkatan kemampuan membaca siswa, ditandai dengan meningkatnya kelancaran membaca, kemampuan mengenali kata secara langsung, serta pemahaman terhadap bacaan sederhana. Selain itu, siswa juga menunjukkan respon yang positif, seperti meningkatnya antusiasme dan kepercayaan diri dalam membaca. Dengan demikian, metode membaca tanpa

mengeja terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca permulaan siswa kelas I, baik dari segi kelancaran, pemahaman, maupun sikap terhadap kegiatan membaca.

Kata Kunci: membaca permulaan, metode tanpa mengeja, kemampuan membaca, siswa sekolah dasar

I. Introduction

The ability to read at the beginning is a very important basic skill for grade I students of Elementary School (SD)/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI). Reading is the main foundation in following the learning process, because almost all subject matter is presented in the form of texts with relatively complex language (Rahim, 2018; Tarigan, 2015). Without adequate reading skills, students will have difficulty understanding instructions, materials, and assignments given by teachers. Therefore, mastery of initial reading skills is an important prerequisite for the learning process to run optimally.

However, pre-research field data shows that the reading ability of grade I students at the beginning of the new school year is still relatively low. Various studies show that the initial reading ability of elementary school students in Indonesia still faces various obstacles, especially at the stage of combining letters into words (Suyono, 2019; Abidin, 2020). Based on my teaching experience in grade I of MI Muhammadiyah Kedunggudel, most of the students who have just entered elementary school are not able to read fluently. Although the majority of students are familiar with letters, their ability to combine letters into syllables and words is still very limited. In fact, there are some students whose reading ability is still in the very low category.

This condition shows that there is a gap between students' initial readiness and the demands of learning in the classroom. On the other hand, MI's class I learning materials currently require a fairly high reading ability. The language used in textbooks and learning materials is relatively complex, while students' reading and writing skills are still in the early stages of learning (Dalman, 2017). This situation is a challenge for classroom teachers, because the learning process will be difficult to run effectively if students are not able to read well. In practice, teachers are often faced with conditions where learning targets must still be delivered, even though some students do not have adequate reading skills. This has the potential to cause students to experience learning difficulties and are less optimal in participating in learning.

Based on these conditions, teachers view that basic reading and arithmetic skills are the top priorities for grade I students. Therefore, in daily learning practice, teachers not only focus on achieving curriculum targets, but also on ensuring that students have basic readiness in reading (Mulyasa, 2018). One of the efforts made is to carry out reading activities every day before core learning begins.

The reading activity began with the implementation of a reading test at the beginning of the school year. This test aims to determine students' initial reading ability and group students into several levels or volumes of reading according to their respective abilities. This grouping allows teachers to provide reading learning that is

more in accordance with the needs and abilities of students, so that the learning process can run more effectively and in a more directed manner (Sugiyono, 2019).

For approximately the last three years, the daily reading activity has been carried out by applying the reading method without spelling. This method was chosen based on the teacher's observation of students who previously read with the spelling method. Students who read by spelling tend to take longer, experience confusion when encountering new words, and lack focus on the meaning of reading (Abidin, 2020). In contrast, the application of the reading method without writing showed a more positive response from students. Students seemed more enthusiastic about participating in reading activities and more confident in reciting words and sentences.

Based on these conditions and experiences, this study aims to describe the application of the reading method without spelling in the beginning of reading learning for grade I students of MI Muhammadiyah Kedunggudel. This research is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the process of applying the reading method without spelling and its contribution in helping students prepare themselves to participate in classroom learning more optimally.

II. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand in depth the process of applying the non-spelling reading method in the initial reading learning of grade I students, not to measure results in the form of numbers (Sugiyono, 2019; Moleong, 2017). Case studies are used to obtain a detailed and in-depth picture of phenomena occurring in real contexts in the field.

The research was carried out at MI Muhammadiyah Kedunggudel with the research subjects being grade I students. The data collection techniques in this study include observation, simple reading tests, and documentation. Observations were made to see firsthand the process of reading activities without spelling which is carried out every day in the classroom. The reading test is used to determine students' initial reading ability and to group students based on the level of reading ability. Documentation in the form of activity records and teaching materials is used as supporting data (Arikunto, 2018).

Data analysis is carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction is carried out by sorting and simplifying the data from observation and reading tests. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of a narrative description so that it is easy to understand. The last stage is drawing conclusions to get an idea of the application of the non-spelling reading method in early reading learning (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Early Conditions of Students' Initial Reading Ability

At the beginning of the new school year, the reading ability of first grade students of MI Muhammadiyah Kedunggudel was still relatively low and diverse. Most students are familiar with letters, but are not yet able to read words and sentences fluently. This condition is in line with the opinion of Rahim (2018) who states that the ability to read at first is not only related to letter recognition, but also fluency in connecting sounds and meanings as a whole.

The results of the initial reading test showed that about 80% of students still read by spelling letter by letter. This way of reading causes the reading process to be slow and less effective, especially when students are exposed to new words. This is in line with the findings of research by Suyanto and Jihad (2017) which stated that the habit of reading by spelling can hinder students' fluency in reading in the early stages.

This condition is a challenge in learning, considering that grade I learning materials require students to be able to read well from the beginning. Therefore, a reading learning strategy that is in accordance with the characteristics and initial abilities of students is needed so that the learning process can run optimally.

The selection of the reading method without spelling in the beginning reading learning is based on the condition of students who are mostly still reading by spelling letter by letter. This way of reading makes students take longer to recognize words and often lose focus when reading. This is in line with the opinion of Snow, Burns, and Griffin (2016) who stated that reading learning in early grade should be directed to direct recognition of words and meanings so that students can read more fluently. The method of reading without spelling is seen as more in accordance with the characteristics of grade I students because it helps students read syllables and words in their entirety without having to go through the process of spelling letters one by one.

The application of the method of reading without spelling is not done instantly, but through a habituation process that is carried out gradually in daily reading activities. In the early stages, students still show the habit of reading by spelling, especially when encountering unfamiliar words or syllables. In these conditions, the teacher provides a stimulus or a lure by associating syllables with words that are familiar to students. This strategy is in line with the opinion of Santrock (2017) who states that providing stimuli that are close to the student's experience can help the process of understanding and forming new learning habits.

After the reading method without spelling is applied consistently, changes in the way students read begin to be seen. About two weeks after the application, some students began to get used to reading words directly without spelling the letters one by one. These findings support the results of Ehri (2014) research which explains that the habit of reading words in its entirety can improve reading fluency in early grade students. These changes show that the method of reading without spelling is able to

help students adapt from the habit of reading by spelling to a more fluent reading habit.

During the application of the reading method without spelling, students showed a positive response to the reading activities carried out every day. Students look more enthusiastic and brave enough to try to read without fear of being wrong. The atmosphere of reading activities becomes more enjoyable because students are no longer too burdened with the process of spelling letters one by one. This is in line with the opinion of Huda (2018) who states that fun learning can increase students' motivation and confidence in learning to read. Thus, the non-spelling reading method not only has an impact on improving reading skills, but also on students' attitudes and interest in reading activities.

Based on the results of the reading evaluation carried out after the application of the reading method without spelling, the reading ability of grade I students of MI Muhammadiyah Kedunggudel showed a significant increase. Students who previously read by spelling began to be able to read syllables and words directly. The results of the reading test showed that most students could read simple words more fluently and quickly than the initial condition. This finding is in line with the opinion of Abidin (2019) who stated that reading learning that emphasizes reading words in its entirety can improve students' reading fluency at the initial reading stage.

In addition to improving reading fluency, students' understanding of simple words and sentences has also improved. Students are not only able to pronounce words, but begin to understand the meaning of the words they read. This can be seen from the ability of students to answer simple questions related to the readings given. This condition is in accordance with the theory of initial reading put forward by Tarigan (2015) which states that the main purpose of reading is not just to recite language symbols, but to understand the meaning contained in them.

The application of the reading method without writing also has a positive impact on student involvement in learning. Students become more active in reading activities and show confidence when asked to read in front of the class. Teachers no longer dominate reading activities, but play the role of facilitators who guide and strengthen students. This is in line with the opinion of Rusman (2017) who states that the role of teachers in modern learning is more directed as a facilitator who helps students develop their potential to learn independently.

However, in the implementation of the reading without spelling method, there are still several obstacles, especially in students who have very low reading skills. These students need more intensive mentoring and a longer time to adapt to the methods applied. However, with gradual tutoring and consistent repetition, students begin to show progress. This finding is in line with the opinion of Slavin (2018) who states that differences in students' early abilities require flexible and continuous learning strategies.

Overall, the results of the study show that the non-spelling reading method is effective in improving the initial reading ability of grade I students. Therefore, the non-

spelling reading method can be used as an alternative to the initial reading learning strategy in the early grade of elementary school or madrasah ibtidaiyah.

Reasons for Choosing a Reading Method without Spelling

The selection of the method of reading without spelling in the beginning of reading learning is based on the characteristics of the initial ability of grade I students of MI Muhammadiyah Kedunggudel which is still dominated by the habit of reading by spelling letter by letter. This habit causes the reading process to be slow and hinders the understanding of the meaning of reading in its entirety. In fact, in the early stages of learning, students are expected to be able to read simple words and sentences fluently and meaningfully.

Theoretically, beginning reading is not just the ability to recognize letters, but the process of integrating the simultaneous recognition of symbols, sounds, and meanings. Rahim (2018) emphasized that effective reading learning must encourage students to recognize words as a whole, not separately through spelling, so that reading fluency and comprehension can develop optimally. Therefore, the non-spelling reading method is considered more suitable to help students switch from mechanical reading to meaningful reading.

In addition, the non-spelling reading method emphasizes the direct recognition of words and sentences through repetition, visual associations, and the context of meaning. This approach is in line with the opinion of Tarigan (2015) who states that reading learning should be presented contextually so that students can understand the relationship between words, sounds, and meanings naturally. Thus, students not only focus on pronouncing the letters, but also on understanding the content of the reading.

From the empirical side, several studies have shown that the non-spelling reading method is able to improve the reading fluency of elementary school students in the early grades. Research conducted by Suyanto and Jihad (2017) found that students who were accustomed to reading without spelling showed an increase in reading speed and accuracy compared to students who still used the spelling method. Similar findings were also reported by Wati and Kurniawan (2020) who stated that reading learning based on whole word recognition can increase students' interest and confidence in reading.

Based on the theoretical considerations and the results of previous research, the non-spelling reading method was chosen as an alternative learning strategy that is relevant to the needs and initial abilities of grade I students.

The Process of Applying the Reading Without Spelling Method

The application of the reading method without spelling in early reading learning is carried out gradually and planned. The teacher does not immediately eliminate the spelling habit in the students, but guides the students to move from reading letter by letter to reading syllables and words in their entirety. Reading activities are carried out

regularly at the beginning of learning with a duration adjusted to the ability and concentration of grade I students.

In the early stages, teachers introduce simple syllables and words that are close to students' daily lives. The teacher gave an example of reading the word directly without spelling, then asked the students to imitate it together. When students have difficulty reading certain syllables, the teacher provides a stimulus in the form of a fishing word that students are familiar with. For example, to help students read the syllable "da," the teacher associates it with the word "tie" that students are familiar with. This strategy helps students remember the sounds of syllables without having to spell the letters one by one.

As time goes by, teachers begin to gradually reduce the help so that students get used to reading independently. Students are encouraged to recognize syllable and word patterns through repetitive reading exercises with variations of simple media, such as word cards and short readings. According to Rahim (2018), reading practice that is carried out consistently and meaningfully can help students improve their reading fluency at an early stage. Therefore, the habit of reading without spelling is carried out continuously in daily learning activities.

During the process of applying the reading method without spelling, teachers also provide reinforcement and motivation to students so that they are not afraid to make mistakes when reading. The learning atmosphere is made fun so that students feel comfortable and dare to try to read words directly. This approach is in line with the opinion of Suyanto and Jihad (2017) who stated that early reading learning needs to be carried out in a conducive atmosphere so that students can develop optimally.

Response and Development of Students' Reading Ability

During the application of the reading method without spelling, students showed a positive response to reading activities that were carried out regularly. Students seem more enthusiastic about participating in reading learning than before. Reading activities that no longer emphasize the process of spelling letter by letter make students feel more comfortable and do not feel pressured easily when asked to read. This can be seen from the increase in student participation in reading activities, both together and individually.

The development of students' reading skills also began to appear after the non-spelling reading method was applied consistently. Students who initially read by spelling letters one by one began to switch to reading syllables and words directly. Some students who were previously hesitant and often stopped while reading, began to show fluency in reading simple words. These changes show that reading habits as a whole can help students recognize words more quickly and effectively.

In addition to improving reading fluency, students' confidence in reading has also improved. Students become more courageous to read in front of the class without fear of making mistakes. A more pleasant learning atmosphere and teacher support in providing reinforcement play an important role in fostering student confidence.

According to Rahim (2018), the success of early reading learning is not only determined by reading techniques, but also by affective factors such as students' motivation and confidence.

Overall, the application of the non-spelling reading method has a positive impact on the initial reading ability of grade I students. Students not only experience an improvement in reading fluency, but also show a more positive attitude towards reading activities. This result is in line with the opinion of Suyanto and Jihad (2017) who stated that the right reading learning method can help students achieve early reading skills optimally and sustainably.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussions that have been presented, it can be concluded that the initial reading ability of grade I students of MI Muhammadiyah Kedunggudel at the beginning of the school year is still relatively low. Most students still read by spelling letter by letter, so the reading process is slow and less effective. This condition is a challenge in learning because reading ability is an important basis for the success of students in participating in learning in the early grade.

The application of the reading method without spelling was chosen as an effort to overcome these problems. This method is applied gradually through daily reading habituation activities by emphasizing the recognition of syllables and words in their entirety. The results of the implementation showed a change in students' reading habits, from reading by spelling to reading without spelling. Students began to show improved reading fluency and the ability to recognize words faster.

In addition to improving reading skills, the reading method without spelling also has a positive impact on students' attitudes in reading activities. Students become more enthusiastic, confident, and dare to read in front of the class. The atmosphere of reading learning becomes more fun and does not cause pressure for students. Thus, the reading method without spelling can be used as an effective alternative to early reading learning to help improve the reading ability of grade 1 students.

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