

Use of Whole Language – Based Initial Reading Assessment Modules in Early Grade Students : Study Effectiveness In Elementary School

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Abstract

This paper attempts to investigate use of the reading assessment modules based on whole language in early grade students. This research is experimental with a pretest-posttest one group research design. The sample was 150 low-grade students at the State Elementary School in Karang Asem Regency, Bali. Based on the hypothesis testing conducted, it shows that there are differences in students' reading scores after the module is given an initial reading rating compared to before the module was given. So, this module is very appropriate to be used in early reading learning for lower grade students. The results of this study can motivate teachers to always innovate and be creative in developing teaching materials to create quality learning. In addition to having an impact on students and teachers, this research product can also overcome the problem of local people's literacy reading which is still low, especially in ASEAN countries.

Keyword : *Early reading assessment module, whole language*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an important skill that everyone has. Someone is able to get a lot of important information and new experiences through the reading process. In addition, reading can also enhance the sharp power of one's mind, expand knowledge and train our analytical power in interpreting a text. This reading skill is not only able to recite writing, but the reader has experienced visual activity, thought processes, and linguistic processes (Rosalie, J.; Kirk, D.; King, 2005). Reading as a linguistic process, the reader's schemata help build meaning while the phonological, semantic, and syntactic features help it communicate and interpret messages (Kitagawa, 2007). Reading includes thinking processes because it involves analytical skills, synthesis, problem solving, relationship determination, and critical evaluation of what is read. Quality reading is determined by how much meaning is obtained by the reader (Welsh, Nix, Blair, Bierman, & Nelson, 2010). (Welsh, Nix, Blair, Bierman, & Nelson, 2010).

Based on statistical data from UNESCO, Indonesia is the country with the second lowest literacy rate in the world in the list of 61 measured countries after Botswana (Unesco, 2018). Looking at cross-regional literacy, we know that southern Asia is home to almost half of the global illiterate population. Based on the data above, reading literacy is very important to be developed because it becomes a benchmark in the progress of the country. Reading skills are the foundation for mastering the entire content of the lesson. By reading, students are able to develop their reasoning, creativity, and get a lot of important information. This skill needs to be trained from an early age. If a primary school age child does not master reading skills, he will have difficulty understanding other content. In reading, there are terms that are often used to provide the basic components of the reading process, namely: recording, decoding, and meaning. Recording refers to words and sentences and then associates them with the sounds in accordance with the writing system used while decoding is the process of translating a series of graphics into words. The emphasis on reading at the recording and decoding stage is the process of changing a series of letters into sounds of language which are often referred to as beginning reading while the meaning is more emphasized in the high class. In applying the 2013 curriculum, the government has a National Literacy Movement (GLN) on the Growth

of Characteristics. In this movement, literacy reading focuses on students' skills in processing and also understanding information when doing reading or writing activities.

In elementary school, reading is divided into two groups, namely reading the beginnings learned by students in grades 1 and 2, and reading comprehension learned by students since grade 3. Reading these beginnings studied in grades 1 and 2 have a goal that students have the ability to understand and voice writing with intonation right. In addition, reading the beginning as a basis for further reading. Beginning reading learning has a very important role for elementary school students especially for low grade students. This reading skill is certainly always applied to the content of learning. If students are not yet proficient in reading, of course they have difficulty understanding the intentions of other learning content. The purpose of this initial reading learning is so that students can read letters, words and simple sentences smoothly and precisely. Theoretically, the process of beginning reading is carried out through three stages. The first stage is called Visual Memory (VM). At this stage letters, syllables, words and sentences are seen as graphic symbols. The second stage is called Phonological Memory (PM). At this stage, the graphic symbol sounds will be recorded at the VM stage. The third stage is called Semantic Memory (SM). At this stage there is a process of understanding words and sentences.

Beginning reading learning in elementary school can apply a whole language approach. This approach presents integrated language learning (Bergeron, 1990) (Morreale, Valenzano, & Bauer, 2017). Integration in learning Bahasa includes four language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking which are packaged in integrated thematic learning. In learning, the teacher acts as a facilitator and students actively explore to shape knowledge through various planned activities such as discussion activities, interviews, peer tutors and so on. In the application of whole language (Kitagawa, 2007), (Wang, 2011) (Brady et al., 2009), (Maddox, 2013) describing language skills are taught in an integrated way as students practice writing what they see and practice telling what is he reads as well as the others are related to each other. This approach is very compatible with the characteristics of elementary school-age students who are still at the concrete operational stage and always look at things in their entirety and are not separate. By applying the whole language approach, the process of learning to begin reading for elementary school students becomes easy and fun.

In a whole language class, learning is full of printed matter. Students can learn to read through models or media that are deliberately designed to motivate them to read. This contrasts with the reality that is happening on the ground. Based on pre-observation, the process of learning to start reading in primary schools, especially in the Bali region is still limited to textbooks. Most of the beginning reading media do not pay attention to the development of student language as a whole. Even though the existence of this media is needed by elementary school teachers in terms of minimizing the diversity of students' initial reading skills. The reason is teachers pay less attention to completeness in reading the beginning of their students so that it is feared that students have not mastered the skills of beginning reading to the next class. According to Yovanoff and Tindall, an assessment of mastery of early reading skills for students is needed. the goal is that the teacher can measure students' reading skills. The assessment instruments developed must be valid and in accordance with student needs (Yovanoff & Tindal, 2007). This statement shows the need for a learning assessment to read the beginning that has been validated and evaluated so that it can be used as a reference to measure the completeness of students in reading the beginning in several countries.

Based on the description above, the needs of the field with research and development in reading are very high. To overcome this problem, researchers have developed an initial reading assessment module based on whole language. This module is made by paying attention to the language development of early grade students. This module was created to minimize the diversity of early elementary students' reading skills. Some studies that are used as a reference for researchers include research Victoria and Dennish. They have examined a measurement tool that is suitable for the development of the reading abilities of preschool

children. This screening tool is like GRTR. (Yovanoff & Tindal, 2007). This initial reading assessment module consists of exercises in reciting letters, words to reading simple texts. The writing presented is adjusted to the characteristics of early grade students. Based on research conducted by Green and Terry shows that children with first-year class experience the greatest progress in print awareness and recognize uppercase letters. Therefore, this module is very suitable to be a beginning reading companion book for low grade students. (Green, Terry, & Gallagher, 2014) This research is used as a reference for researchers in developing the initial reading evaluation module.

Some of the studies that are used as a reference for researchers include (Jones, 2013) (Wanzek et al. , 2018) (Wankoff & Cairns, 2009) (Morgan, Fuchs, Cordray, & Fuchs, 2016), (Puranik, Phillips, Lonigan, & Gibson, 2018), (Merdian & Warrior, 2015) However there are some differences from What is on Researcher's assessment for the initial reading assessment module made include (1) a module that is made paying attention to the development of students' language, (2) in this module there are various exercises for beginning reading and pronunciation of vowels and consonants, (3) in this module there is also text simple based on a whole language approach by paying attention to students' daily lives and (4) this module pays attention to components of student reading skills such as phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and (5) this module can be used as a teacher's reference to measure completeness students in beginning reading.

However, to measure the success of the module needs to be proven by the effectiveness test. It aims to see the extent to which these modules have high utilization and usability for the general public. With the effectiveness test, the module will get recognition so that it can be used as a reference for elementary school teachers both domestically and abroad. "Therefore, the researcher intends to conduct research on" the development of an early reading ability assessment model for early elementary school students in the Karang Asem District based on whole language learning in an effort to minimize the diversity of students' early reading abilities ". The formulation of the problem in this study includes: how is the useness of the model of early reading ability assessment of elementary school early grade students in the Karang Asem Districts, Bali based on whole language learning?

METHOD

This study was a pre-experimental design using one group pre-test and post-test, O1 X O2. The O1 is the pretest score, X represents the initial reading assessment module and O2 is the post-test score. The procedure for conducting this research includes (1) determining the research sample to be used (2) providing a pretest to determine the child's early ability to read early in the early grades in elementary school. (3) providing treatment that is, the researcher applies the beginning reading assessment module to students and (4) does a posttest. The initial reading skills test consists of 1 simple story text (narrative form), with the following indicators: (1) Phonological and Phonemic Awareness, (2) Phonics, (3) Fluency, (4) Vocabulary, (5) Comprehension. Scoring is done using assessment guidelines adapted from Jordan, Kirk, and King's research on Early Reading and the Early Reading Diagnostic Assessment™, Second Edition (Rosalie, J.; Kirk, D.; King, 2005), (Huff, Dancer , Evans, & Skoch, 2006).

Data on students' initial reading skills that have been collected and analyzed using paired t-test and normalized gain calculation (N-gain). Paired t-test was used to analyze whether there was a difference between pretest scores and post-test scores significant at = 5%; N-gain is used to determine the level increase in initial reading skills after using the whole language-based beginning reading module. The analysis in this study aims to determine the effectiveness of the use of the whole language-based early reading skills assessment module. Results can be explained as follows:

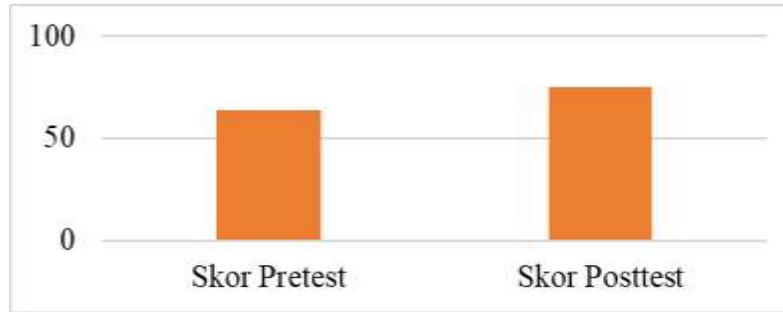


Figure 1. The score graph of the beginning reading before and after the whole language-based early reading assessment module is given.

Next, the researcher conducts a T test that aims to find out whether the final hypothesis. The table for the results of hypothesis testing is as follows:

Table 1. Paired t-Test Scores Pre-test and Post-test Students Grade I

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Skor Pretest - Skor Posttest	-11,487	5,076	0,414	-12,306	-10,668	-27,714	149	0,000

The score above proves that there is an average difference between the students' initial reading scores before and after they are taught using the beginning reading module. The use of the initial reading assessment module has quite a high effectiveness for elementary school students. Most students find it easier to practice reading beginning by using modules developed by researchers. This is reinforced by the results of posttest students who generally get above average scores. In addition, the facts in the field show that when the research is finished, students have shown various elements of initial reading skills such as recognizing sentence elements, recognizing word elements, recognizing letter elements, arranging letters into syllables, arranging syllables into words.

The beginner reading assessment module developed by the researcher is based on the student beginning reading indicator according to Jordan, Kirk and King. The key to reading success can be measured through five components. These components are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. (Rosalie, J.; Kirk, D.; King, 2005), (Wankoff & Cairns, 2009), (Harper & Pelletier, 2008). The phonological awareness in question is one's sensitivity to the sound structure of the words spoken in one's language. For example, a child with high phonological awareness will realize that the words "eat" and "not" have the same final syllable. At a higher level, children can realize that the sound "kan" is a unified sound of the phonemes "k", "a" and "n" in sequence. Through this module, students become trained to distinguish words that have syllables that are same at the beginning, end or have the same initial letter in front (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997), (Shanahan et al., 2008). In addition, the phonics aspect, amounting to, the eloquent aspect amounted to, the vocabulary aspect amounted to. can be caused by the contents of the module that is very concerned about the competence of beginning reading, the structure of the contents of this module consists of ten topics that begin with the pronunciation of vowels and consonants, single

phonemes, spelling, combining letters, separating words into syllables until getting to know simple text stories based on approaches whole language All topics contained in this module are contextual to the daily lives of students, in addition, this module is equipped with interesting images that foster growth motivate students to practice beginning reading. Thus the aspects of phonics, fluency, and vocabulary of students will increase. The following table illustrates the pretest and posttest scores in detail based on aspects of beginning reading.

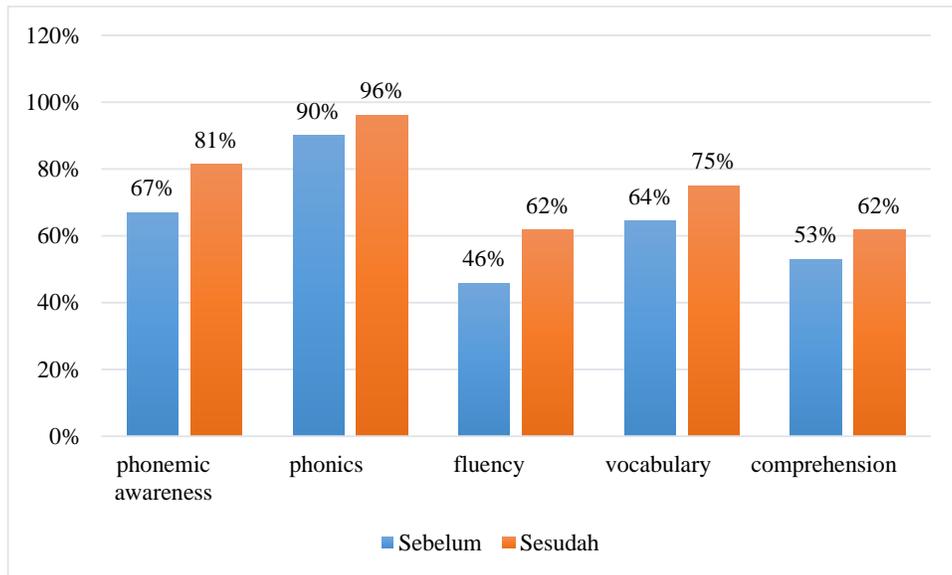


Figure 2. Compare The Pretest and Posttest Score for Each Components

In the reading process, students will practice verbalizing the words that they write with clear sounds in accordance with their phonemes. This aims to make him accustomed to verbally reading material or written material correctly. After the pronunciation is correct, learning continues on understanding the meaning of the reading material. Fluency is also dependent upon a child's knowledge of word meaning (Rosalie, J.; Kirk, D.; King, 2005). Constructing meaning from the text is not an easy activity. This ability needs to be trained from an early age on an ongoing basis. With this module, the teacher can provide an interesting reading learning experience for elementary school students.

This initial reading assessment module is very helpful for students in mastering initial reading skills. This module is equipped with reading material that is contextual to the daily lives of students and learning that is adapted to the development of students' languages. This is consistent with Steinberg's opinion that states that the ability to read the beginning is at the stage of reading recognition, at this stage children can use three language systems, such as phonemes (letter sounds), semantics (meaning of words), and syntax (rules of words or sentences) together (Riley & Reedy, 2005), (Motallebzadeh, 2018), (van de Ven, de Leeuw, van Weerdenburg, & Steenbeek-Planting, 2017). If students are already interested in reading material, then they begin to recall the shapes of letters and their context and recognize the signs that are on objects in their environment. With interesting teaching materials will make it easier for students to master the process of beginning reading.

When learning to read using this module, students are very motivated in reading practice. During the early school years, the students will learn more words and begin to understand how the sounds within the language work together. He'll also become a better storyteller, as he learns to put words together in different ways and build different types of sentences. These skills also let him share ideas and opinions. By eight years, he'll be able to have adult like conversations (Sim-smith, nd). Diagnosing a child's reading ability is

essential to providing effective instruction. By accurately determining a child's reading strengths and weaknesses, a classroom teacher can develop an instruction strategy that best serves the child's needs (Karademir & Ulucinar, 2016). Therefore, this module can be used as a reference for teachers to identify the ability to begin reading for lower grade students.

In the future, researchers want to develop an initial reading skills assessment module that is able to adapt to 21st century developments such as being easily accessed on the internet so that this module is not only applied in Indonesia, but can be used throughout the country. Besides being useful for elementary school students, this module can also overcome the problem of low public reading literacy.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, based on the research that has been done it can be said that the use of the whole language-based early reading evaluation module has high effectiveness. This has been proven by the results of the T test and the average early reading score using the module is higher than the score before the early reading assessment module is given. The results of this study can contribute theoretical and practical implications. In accordance with Belmont's description of the requirements of the early reading task, it shows that a good assignment is a task that describes the delineation of the competences children must develop in order to cope successfully with that task (Belmont, 1974). In addition, the results of this study can also be used as a reference and input for teachers to minimize the diversity of early students' reading skills in early grades that have not been noticed by teachers. In addition to having an impact on students and teachers, this research product can also overcome the problem of local people's literacy reading which is still low, especially in ASEAN countries. Thus the existence of this study illustrates how important it is to teach reading skills from an early age. The ability to read and comprehend language is fundamental to all academic learning. By teaching clearly the five components of reading, teachers provide students with the necessary tools to build a solid foundation for learning.

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