

# TEACHER-STUDENTS' RELATIONSHIP IN TEACHING AND LEARNING READING THROUGH ALPHABET CUBE TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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## ABSTRACT

The research aims at describing teacher's process in building teacher-students relationship in teaching and learning reading through alphabet cube to 15 young learners 5-6 years old and a teacher as the sample at RA AL-Barokah Jenggawah. This is a descriptive-qualitative research with data collection through observation, interview and documentation. In building teacher-students relationship in teaching and learning reading through alphabet cube, building a sense of community within the classroom and creating consistent routines and procedures were the highest frequency among all with 95 % and 93 % implementation. On the contrary, the use of humor, create consequences for behavior together and show courtesy were the lowest implementation by the teacher with 30 % and 47 % implementation. Other components implemented by the teachers included giving attention, motivation, sense of togetherness, individual assistance, proximity, feedback and using praise indicated the average percentage implementation from 63%-89%. It can be concluded that most of the activities in thirteen components in building teacher-students relationship in teaching reading using alphabet cube to the students at RA Al-Barokah Jenggawah were implemented above fifteen percent by the teacher.

*Keywords: teacher-students relationship, teaching reading, alphabet cube, young learners*

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of letter recognition and reading concepts needs to be embedded in early childhood education to help children prepare to join primary school. According to the 2003 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) research (Lemke, Williams, Roey, Smith, Kastberg, Jocelyn, & Ferraro, 2006:7), it illustrates that good reading skills may improve children's self-concept, which in turn will motivate them to learn.

When teaching in the classroom, the problem that the lack of average reading ability of RA AL-BAROKAH students/students can be caused by several

factors, such as the lack of availability of general reading books or interesting textbooks to read and less variation in the use of media used by teachers. Generally, teachers only use manuals or notebooks, so that children are less interested in participating in activities. These problems need to be solved by developing various teaching techniques that can foster children's motivation in reading ability. One way to form habits and hobbies of reading through the media, for example, the letter block game with the aim of children can be interested in reading interest from an early age.

The alphabet cube is a game tool made of a box (cigarette packs) wrapped in paper with attractive colors and the learning activities themselves consist of composing. This game must be made in order to improve reading skills in children, so that it takes an interesting method of playing with letters, and involves the active role of children in playing. In teaching and learning reading through alphabet cubes, it is important to also observe the relationship between the teacher and his students. It is because to reach the goals together and doing the process well, there must be a good relationship between the teacher and the students. Moreover, Hamre & Pianta (2001:627) stated that the maintenance and the building of positive bond between them may create supportive and comfortable atmosphere on the learning environment. In this research, some detail investigation was executed to find out more information about the implementation of teacher's activities in building teacher-student relationship so that some future progress will be achieved.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Teaching Reading to Young Learners**

Young learners have some special characteristics physically, socially, morally etc. According to Hasnida (2014:180), young learners characteristics including 1) high curiosity, 2) unique personality, 3) love to fantasize and imagine, 4) potential time to learn, 5) showing egocentric character, 6) short-term memory and 7) part of social creature. The characteristics show that early age of children is appropriate and valuable time to learn knowledge including learning language.

One of the important skills among the four skills is reading. Reading is a difficult skill to learn. However, reading activity for young learners can be started from reading the alphabets. According to Steinberg in Susanto (2011: 83), early reading is reading that is taught programmatically to preschoolers. This program focuses on intact words, meaningful in the personal context of children and materials provided through interesting games or activities as intermediaries for learning.

### **Teachers-Students' Relationship**

According to Downey (cited in Gablinske, 2014:22) "students need teachers to build strong interpersonal relationships with them, focusing on strengths of the students while maintaining high and realistic expectations for success". In teaching and learning activities, teachers held a determined factor for students to reach success in process and in the end. Psychological motivation from teachers may uphold students' internal condition to strengthen their will in learning since teaching is not only to improve the scores but also build their characters.

In teachers-students' relationship there is an active participation which is important for students because it is important to learn and use the language in the classroom. Although active participation is not the key variable in successful classroom, it is a prerequisite for interaction and communication (Pica, Young and Doughty in Sibley, 1990:9).

The next point is teachers' feedback. This is the method of response to students' answers through praise, appropriate acceptance responses, comments and criticism (Sibley, 1990:16). In giving feedback, teachers should be students' partner who can put their position among students. Be friendly teachers and problem solvers.

When teachers maintain and build the positive bounds with students, classroom becomes supportive spaces where students may engage in academically and socially productive ways (Hamre&Pianta, 2001:628). Students with positive relationships with the teachers use them as something where students can explore the classroom and school both academically and socially.

Finally, the result of maintaining and make a good relationship between teacher and students may affect some future progress. A good and positive bound may improve students' motivation and desire to learn which are beneficial to reach a better outcome in the learning objectives.

### **Alphabet Cubes**

Alphabet cubes are one of teaching media in form of cube which is written with alphabet on its surface. The cubes contain 28 alphabets and can be arranged to make a word. They can be modified in colors to make it more attractive to students.

Alphabet cubes application aim at introducing letters or alphabet to students, raising motivation and interest when arranging the cubes into words and read them (Syamsuardi, 2012: 64). The game let students to take each alphabet and try to say it. Then, they are allowed to arrange the alphabets into words based on the pictures. By doing those activities, students may learn to read in mind and orally.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This is a descriptive-qualitative research using observation list, interview and documentation to collect the data. The sample of the research was a teacher and 15 students at RA AL-BAROKAH Jenggawah which were treated in a classroom action research by the application of alphabet cubes to improve their reading skill.

The observation list and sheetas well as interview list were adapted from Gablinske (2014) from Marzano's protocol (category I and III) and the TESA Interaction Model. Furthermore, the data were analyzed descriptively to through identification, classification, reduction, description and conclusion.

## FINDING

The data obtained from three cycles in a classroom action research of teaching reading alphabet through Cube Alphabets. The observation lists were created from the adaptation of Marzano's category I and III, and TESA Interaction Model section Personal Regard, as follow.

**Table 1.** Components of Teacher's Process in Building Teacher-Students Relationship

| Components                                | Activities  | Average (%) |
|---|---|-------------|
| Give attention to students                | 1. Greeting and checking attendance lists<br>2. Checking students' readiness to study   | 89 %        |
| Personal discourse                        | 1. Give the example and a chance to the students who do not understand the material.<br>2. Asking and sharing about the material<br>3. Build and maintain the relationship with students , e.g by tell the personal stories to the students | 75 %        |
| Motivate students                         | 1. Pre-teaching motivation<br>2. Whilst-teaching motivation<br>3. Mention the purpose of the activities   | 68 %        |
| Build sense of togetherness               | 1. Greeting and singing together<br>2. Let students to cooperate with partners or other students  | 87 %        |
| Create consistent routines and procedures | 1. Let students to observe the media  | 93 %        |

|   |   |      |
|---|---|------|
|   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Ask students to arrange the cubes</li> <li>3. Ask students to read the alphabets</li> <li>4. Play the game in order</li> </ol>              |      |
| Create consequences for behavior together       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Give punishment for not obeying the rules</li> <li>2. Give a warning to the students for the mistakes</li> </ol>                            | 30 % |
| Build a sense of community within the classroom | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Doing reading activity through Alphabet Cube game</li> <li>2. Clapping hands and singing before going home</li> </ol>                       | 95 % |
| Use of praise                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Express some compliments to students' correct answers</li> <li>2. Give compliment to the student/group who finish the game first</li> </ol> | 85 % |
| Individual assistance                           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher assistant to play the game</li> <li>2. Give helps to finish arranging the alphabet</li> </ol>                                       | 63 % |
| Show courtesy                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use expression of courtesy</li> </ol>   | 47 % |
| Give feedback by affirming and/correcting       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Listen to students about their problems</li> <li>2. Pay attention to students to determine what they need to learn</li> </ol>               | 67 % |
| Use of humor                                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State some jokes to relieving the situation</li> </ol>  | 30 % |
| Proximity to students                           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approach the students intensely</li> <li>2. Walk around the class</li> </ol>  | 73 % |

The 13 components above were made to show the description of teacher's process in building teacher-students relationship in teaching and learning reading through alphabet cube to 15 young learners 5-6 years old and a teacher as the sample at RA AL-BarokahJenggawah. The observation was done in three cycles in a classroom action research in improving students' alphabet reading skill.

Each component listed some activities in describing teacher-students relationship which were possible to implement in teaching and learning reading. There were various percentages which indicated the average implementation of activities to build teacher-students relationship. Creating consistent routines/procedures and building a sense of community within the classroom were the most implemented activities that the teacher did with 93% and 95%

implementation. The description included students and teacher activities in having regular routines and procedures in doing the activities in order and playing the games based on the right procedures.

The lowest activities deal with create consequences for behavior together and use of humor with 30% and showing courtesy with 47%. According to the interview, teacher was difficult to give the consequences related to the disciplines of students. It was also hard to state some jokes because the teacher did not really understand to joke. The teacher also seldom showed the courtesy to be friendlier to the students because she thought that it was not really necessary.

In giving attention to students, there were some activities such as checking students' attendance list and readiness as well as greet the students before the lesson begun. The teacher did these as the routine before start the lesson. The effort showed 89% in the implementation.

The second component is personal discourse. Personal discourse means the way a teacher build and maintained the relationship with the students in sharing something personal to the students. Thus the students might feel important for teacher's part of life (Gablinske, 2014:87). There are three activities in this component such as 1) giving the example and a chance to the students who do not understand the material, 2) asking and sharing about the material and 3) building and maintaining the relationship with students, e.g. by tell the personal stories to the students. Those activities may describe about how teacher took a personal feeling in creating and maintaining a closer relationship which made the students felt comfortable, enjoyable and intimate to the teacher and his teaching activities.

The third component described the ways the teacher described his activities to motivate the students in pre and whilst activities as well as stating the purpose of teaching and learning. The implementation, however, only 68% which indicated medium implementation of motivating and stating the learning purpose.

The fourth component is building sense of togetherness which described the activities of greeting and singing together as well as letting the students to cooperate with partners or other students. The implementation of the activities showed 87% of the average implementation. The percentage indicated that the activities might strengthen the bond among students and teacher by doing the activities together.

The fifth component was one the best activities that the teacher did in maintaining and building teacher-students relationship, namely, creating consistent routines and procedures. The activities were the done based on the whilst activities in reading the alphabet through alphabet cubes. It was indicated by 93% implementation. Therefore, the activities showed the regular implementation and gave the chances to the students to observe the media, arrange the alphabet, read the alphabet and play the game in order.

Component 6 and 12 showed similar percentage on the implementation for 30%. According to the interview, the lowest percentage occurred because the teacher was difficult to making some jokes and sometimes cannot handle the troublesome condition. The discipline needs some improvements.

The seventh component was building a sense of community within the classroom. These activities are done to elevate the sense of belonging within the group of learning. The activities are playing the game together and singing and clapping together.

The eighth component was the use of praise. Based on the observation list, the teacher was doing the praise well and indicated by the percentage 85%. Giving compliment is necessary for students who do correct answer and action. In his teaching, the teacher stated the compliment for students' correct answers and the group who finished the game first.

In individual assistance, the teacher showed the implementation for 63% which means medium. According to the interview, the teacher was difficult to handle the students who finished the games and not finish the game yet. Therefore, the attention was split and not all of the students received fair assistance.

The next component also indicated teacher's difficulty to show the courtesy to the students. It was indicated by 47% average. The teacher showed just a few expression of courtesy sometimes. There was the expression used but just a few times.

In handling the class, the teacher seemed a little bit overwhelmed. This was the weakness of the teacher in the building teacher-students relationship. The component in the activity was giving feedback by affirming and/correcting with 67% implementation. Beside, as Sarason (1999:9) stated that a teacher should know more about the minds and hearts of the learners. Apart from difficulties in handling the class, the teacher did the proximity to students by walking around the class but not intensely approaching the students closely.

The implementation for all 13 components occurred in the activity but did not spreading evenly. Using humor and creating consequences for behavior together were the lowest implemented by the teacher because of the difficulty in doing these. The teacher said that not all of the people were easy to state funny expression. The teacher just be able to said the cheerful expression to get into the children nature. Dealing to the consequences for behavior together was not occurring in some steps in teaching.

## **DISCUSSION**

One of the important skills among the four skills is reading. Reading is a difficult skill to learn. According to Steinberg in Susanto (2011: 83), early reading

is reading that is taught programmatically to preschoolers. This program focuses on intact words, meaningful in the personal context of children and materials provided through interesting games or activities as intermediaries for learning. Therefore, applying games or other attractive activities are essential to reach teaching reading objective.

However, in teaching and learning building, maintaining and reviewing teacher-students' relationship are also needed to have a psychological bound. Psychological motivation from teachers may uphold students' internal condition to strengthen their will in learning since teaching is not only to improve the scores but also build their characters. According to Downey (cited in Gablinske, 2014:22) "students need teachers to build strong interpersonal relationships with them, focusing on strengths of the students while maintaining high and realistic expectations for success". For example, a teacher must state the magic word such as 'excellent' or 'good' to students when they do something as the token of appreciation. This may improve students' self confidence in learning. As supported by Sibley (1990:16), this is the method of response to students' answers through praise, appropriate acceptance responses, comments and criticism.

The research used three cycles in a classroom action research of teaching reading alphabet through Cube Alphabets. The observation lists were created from the adaptation of Marzano's category I and III, and TESA Interaction Model section Personal Regard. It focused on 13 components of teacher's process in building teacher-students' relationship in teaching reading by using Cube Alphabets to 15 young learners 5-6 years old and a teacher.

Each component considered to represent the items that have to describe correspond to the problem of the research. It has different result after the data analysis was conducted. Overall the application of the listed activities were implemented well as proved by the percentage. It means the teacher attempted to create and maintain a conducive learning as well as psychological bound to the students.

Some statements indicated that the application of the activities were poor, such as stating some jokes and handle troublesome condition. Due to these things, probably it was hard to state some funny words but it can be covered by the friendliness of the teacher to the students as stated in the finding previously. The teacher was the type of a person who could not overcome the chaos in the classroom due to the lack of firmness. As Amir (2011:54) states that a teacher must to be firm in teaching, especially to students who break the rules. Therefore, these points can be as a consideration for the teacher to improve the performance and the way to have a better relationship in the future.

## CONCLUSION

The process of the activities in building teacher-students relationship is essential to describe because maintaining and creating a good relationship between teacher and students may affect some future progress in reaching the targeted goals. The result finally showed that most of activities have already implemented well enough by the teacher to maintain and build teacher-students' relationship in teaching and learning reading alphabet using alphabet cubes to the young learners at RA Al-Barokah Jenggawah Jember. The highest component application were building a sense of community within the classroom and creating consistent routines and procedures were the highest frequency among all. On the other hands, the use of humor, create consequences for behavior together and show courtesy were the lowest implementation by the teacher. Therefore, the three lowest components implementation need to be improved by the teacher in teaching and learning reading alphabet by using alphabet cubes to the young learners.

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