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## **Children's Knowledge of the Letter as the Beginning of Literacy in Yogyakarta**

**Martha Christianti** ✉

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Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia

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### **Abstract**

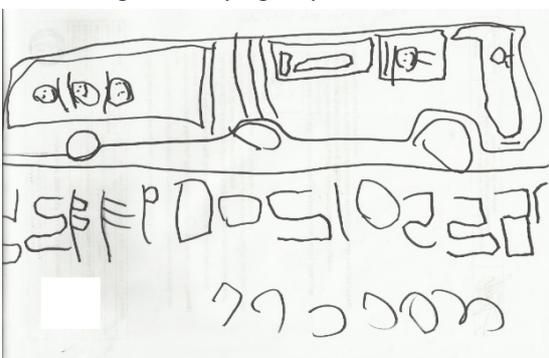
The development of literacy is evolving naturally like motor development, cognitive, and language. One characteristic of early childhood literacy is aware of the child recognize letters. This study aims to determine the knowledge of letters in children associated with the name of the letter. Results of the research survey conducted on children at random in five districts in Yogyakarta (n = 630) showed that 72% of children aged 4-6 years have knowledge of letter names. The results showed that; 85% of the study subjects children recognize letters O. Knowledge of the letter O is the most widely known to the child at the age of 4-6 years. This was followed by the letters A, C, and so on until the lowest is letter Q. Some of the things that affect children's knowledge of letter name associated typeface known in lowercase or uppercase letters, form letters are almost the same as visually, the difference mention of the letter, and the mention of the letters in sequence.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Reading and writing is an activity that cannot be separated from the child, although such activities are not the same as reading and writing in adult children in a literally translate writings. Reading and writing for children is referred to as early literacy. Activity literacy beginning in children is shown naturally in everyday life, for example, children guess the name of a food product or beverage that is often consumed, or the children learn to read a book to see images and translate them according to the perception of children to images (Lukie et al 2014; Morrow 1993). The child's awareness of the forms of letters and drawings called literacy awareness. Martha (2013) says that there are various forms of awareness of literacy that comes naturally to children, for example, children enjoy listening and discussing storybooks (Howard & Wallace, 2016), the notion that writing carries a message, identifying labels and signs in the environment around the child, participating in rhythmic wordplay, getting to know some letters and match it with the sound, and using letters or shapes to represent written language (Gage et al, 2015). One characteristic of a conscious child literacy are knowing some letters both the shape and sound, and using letters and forms are to write something (Heath, et al, 2014). Results of research literacy in children named Casey with interactive media shows that Casey increasingly recognize letters after the CD will play continuously (Martha 2015). Knowledge of letters on Casey increases, he is not only able to name the letter but also can write. The child are more interested in getting to know the letters when they grow up. The development of knowledge about the letter thrives in children aged 5-6 years. The letters were known to the child, usually used in literacy activities such as writing starters. Here is an example of the writing of Casey age 4 years.



**Figure 1.** Casey Writing Age 4 Years (Source: personal documents)

In the picture visible shapes that resemble letters. Based on interviews researchers against children, indicates that the sequence of letters that means “this is a big bus car, there was his bed. Casey, and mas Lintar bed behind “. The letters are “read” by the child based on his imagination. At the age of 5 years Casey showed an increase in knowledge about the letter. This is evident from the drawings and writings. Here are images and writings Casey at the age of 5 years.



**Figure 2.** Casey Writing Age 5 Years (Source: personal documents)

Casey knowledge of the letter is increasing, and results from inadvertently writing can be read by others. At the age of 5 years have started asking recited Casey is related to what was written. He did not want to translate his writings as in the age of 4 years. When asked to “read” his writing, he refused and said “Casey can not be read, please read out”. Casey had regained consciousness and was able to distinguish the form of letters and shapes instead of letters. He was ecstatic when writing out the results can be read by others, namely “imisaca”. He commented “yuhu.....this is imisaca’s air, hand made by Casey”.

Results of research on literacy development occurs is not the same in every child (Sawyer, et al, 2013). Here are portraits of children knowledge about the letter in Yogyakarta. Zahra, aged 5 years already knows 24 name letters. Unlike the Zafik, age 5, are new to know the 10 name letters. Vino, 6 years old, recognize 23 name letters. While Maulana, age 5, is already familiar with 25 name letters. Ifa, age 4, recognize 10 name letters. While Lintang, the same age of 4 years, already

knows 22 name letters. The knowledge gaps encourage researchers to conduct research related to knowledge of the letter in children aged 4-6 years in Yogyakarta. The study was conducted as a preliminary study to describe the child's knowledge of letters which occur in children in Yogyakarta, to know the letters of the most easily recognized by children and levels, as well as how a knowledge of the letter to develop in children. Reading in children by Mayesky (1990) is the activity of interpreting symbols. Morrow (1993) divides the early reading activities for children into three stages. The first stage is a child realizes meaningful words and close to the child's life. This stage is shown in a child's reading behavior when reading food labels favorite, read his name, read the signs on the road, and read some of the names of restaurants frequented by children. At this stage also, the child does not actually "read". They estimates the words or writings were observed, and translation word by looking at the picture on the label (Brewer 2007). This stage is called the stage of literacy roots. The second phase early reading activities is stage children begin to realize forms of writing and read it. This stage occurs after the child process to "read" the previous stage (Ecalte 2008, Evans 2009). At this stage, children really know the details of the name letters so that the child can distinguish the goods with his name as his own or not his belongings (Treimen 2007). Kids can give a name to the letter and determine the relationship of form letters and sounds. At this stage of the development of knowledge about the letter in children is growing rapidly. The third stage is the stage of child literacy in reading through activities to identify and use grammar writing. At this stage the child understands that writing is read from left to right, and aware that the word is composed of several letters are strung and have meaning.

Children knowledge about the letter is usually seen in the results of his writings (Hoff 2009). Therefore, in the development of language, the ability to read and write cannot be separated. Morrow (1993) is divided into six stages of children's writing. The first stage is the stage of children's writing in the form of images. Kids draw shapes to represent writing. A child see the pictures as a specific communication tool and carry the message. Usually the child who wrote in with the image can be read images as writing. The second stage is the stage of a child writes with scrawling. At this stage the child exhibit behaviors such as writing with the writing that is to draw a line in the form like writing from left to right. According to scribble child is writing and

implies. This stage arises because many children do pay attention to adults in writing activities. The third stage, the stage of writing children by making shapes like letters. At this stage the child create forms which he is the letter. The fourth stage, namely stage by producing a child write letters. Kids wrote numerous letters he knew. At this stage of the development of knowledge about the letter in children is growing very rapidly. Kids sometimes random write letters familiar to convey the message. The fifth stage is the stage of the child write letters correspond to the name of the letter. This stage is shown a child by writing a letter that he heard in writing. Kids create their own spelling in accordance with the pronunciation or sound. The letters are written sometimes lost or even overlapping. The sixth stage is the stage of the child writes fluently. Kids at this stage able to write with the same spelling are heard. The letters were written children are able to read a whole by an adult and be recognized as a word or a series of sentences.

Research suggests that child literacy development in reading and writing can be stimulated with activities beginning to play while learning naturally in activities of daily living (Tan, 2015). Knowledge of children to develop with his letters literacy development process naturally. This development supports the child's readiness to enter the next level of formal education. Based on the study, children who have literacy experiences that many of its environment will not be problems in reading and writing in the stage of further education (Maher & Bellen, 2015).

## METHOD

Subjects in this study that children aged 4-6 years are scattered in the city of Yogyakarta and 4 districts namely, Bantul, Sleman, Kulon Progo, and Gunung Kidul, with total research subjects totaling 630 children. The research method used is survey. Data collection technique used observation. Data analysis techniques carried out in the form of qualitative and quantitative descriptive. Qualitative data is to keep track of things happening associated data retrieval. Quantitative data obtained from the observation of the introduction of the alphabet in the form of numbers. Score 1 for children who are able to answer the letters designated by the researcher. Score 0 for children who are not able to answer the letters designated and can answer but the answer or the wrong child.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in the city of Yogyakarta and 4 districts in Yogyakarta, namely Sleman, Bantul, Kulon Progo, and Gunung Kidul. Results of research on children's knowledge of letters in Yogyakarta showed that 73% of the 630 children already recognize letters. The introduction of children to letters obtained from literacy experiences that took place during the classroom and at home. Literacy activities in the home can be programmed specifically by parents in the form of a fun play activities. Pugh and Rohl (2015) in his research indicates that literacy programs at home received a positive response from parents, especially mothers. In the classroom, children can also learn from the simple to develop literacy in the activities of conversing or reading together (Manske & McCrain, 2015). Here is a table that describes the knowledge of letters to children in Yogyakarta in percent.

**Table 1.** Knowledge Letters on Children in Yogyakarta

No.	District	Children Knowledge of Letters in Percent
1	Kota Yogyakarta	71%
2	Sleman	69%
3	Bantul	73%
4	Kulon Progo	66%
5	Gunung Kidul	91%
	Total Skor	73%

The results showed that there are letters very well known by children in Yogyakarta. The letter O is capitalized most widely known to the child. Some 85% of children from the research subjects knew the letter O. This means that 536 children recognize the letters O and the rest are not familiar with the letter O. The second letter of the most widely known by the survey in Yogyakarta, the letter A and the letter C. Letters rarest known children aged 4-6 years is the letter V and the letter Q. The letter V is known amount of 53% of children and the letter Q is known only some 50% of children only. Here are the results of research on children's knowledge of letters associated with the letters highest and lowest known in Yogyakarta.

**Table 2.** Rating The Best Known by The Children's Name Letter

Rating	Letter	%
1	O	85
2	A, C	83
3	I	82
4	S	79
5	B, E, K	78
6	Z	74
7	H, U	73
8	D, N, T	72
9	J, M, R	71
10	G, L,	70
11	Y	68
12	F, P	67
13	X	65
14	W	64
15	v	53
16	Q	50

The same study conducted Piasta (2014) letter of the easiest to remember is the letter O, according to the letter O is the name of the letter is the easiest to remember, while the letter A and the letter C letter sounds the easiest to remember. The most difficult letter names to remember are the letters U and V, while the letter U and Y are the sounds of the letters are hard to remember. This indicates that children have the same difference difficulty in recognizing letters. For children in Yogyakarta, the name of the most difficult letters to keep in mind is the letter V and Q. The reason is that the little use of the letters in the daily communications to interact socially in Bahasa.

The results of the research data showed differences in children's knowledge of the uppercase and lowercase letters. The letters in the observation sheet given researchers in children is lowercase. Some children recognize the letters in the form of uppercase letter (Ecalte 2008). The study is limited to the knowledge of the lowercase letters on the child. Lowercase letters hard

to remember because there are some letters that shape looks visually almost identical (Piasta, 2014). Turnbull et al (2010) says that the knowledge of the child first begins with uppercase letter. Uppercase letters often contained in children name. Knowledge of lowercase to follow the child's development to uppercase. So the child will recognize lowercase if the child is already familiar with a uppercase letter. Here is a picture of letters used to identify letters when gathering data on the letter knowledge in children.

<b>a</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>c</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>e</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>g</b>
<b>h</b>	<b>i</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>k</b>	<b>l</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>n</b>
<b>o</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>q</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>s</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>u</b>
<b>v</b>	<b>w</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>y</b>	<b>z</b>		

**Figure 3.** Observation Sheet for Children

Observations of researchers in making the data obtained; first, the shape of the letter in the research looks almost similar to other letters. Observations on the child, the child has not seen precisely identify the letter V. This happens because the letter V on the picture is almost similar to the letter U. The choice of a model letter when doing research must be validated in order not to obscure the concept of the letter itself. But the increasing age of the child, the child is able to distinguish the shape of the letters that look the same but have different names letters. This behavior occurs because the 4-6 year olds still in a period egocentric. Egocentrism is a gesture that is only capable of thinking according to their own perspective. Piaget said that after the concrete preoperational period elapses, the child's experience grows, then the child's knowledge of the letter is also increasing. Children are able to think that shape can vary but with the same name as adults later.

Second, each child has a difference in mentioning the letter. As Tita said the letter B, with "beh", says the letter D, with "deh". Tita said letters correspond to sounds heard. But there are also children who mention the letter corresponding to the shape that is the letter B, with B, the letter D, with d. The mention of the name of a different letter on each child is strongly influenced by the perception of the child to name the

letter. Perception about the name of the letter woke how parents teach letters are in children. A child imitate the way their parents or adults in mimicked (Heath et al, 2014).

Third, children surveyed also say the letters are the same form with the same name. The mention of the same letter to the letters b, d, p, and q. Comments child is "it is the same letters, just rotated". The child has the ability to translate the letters in their own way (Sawyer et al, 2013). This capability is referred to as problem-solving skills. The ability to solve problems is one factor in the ability to prepare children recognize letters. This capability is included in the readiness of cognitive by Mayesky (1990).

Fourth, the child can name all the letters because it is done by rote. This knowledge is formed of a child's experience in singing the alphabet song (Piasta, 2014), and an alphabet book (Evan & Landry, 2009). Researchers asked children sorted names of letters by the letters A to Z. Children can name all the letters correctly and completely. However, when researchers randomly assigned a list of letters, the letter mentions child is wrong or inappropriate. Kids even asked investigators about the name of the letter to convince. Children knowledge about the letter is not considered a consistent knowledge acquisition. Learning is done while playing for introducing these letters can be done by educators (Soderman & Farrell, 2008). Letter recognition through play and done in a fun and done repeatedly can make this knowledge consistently settled in memory. If knowledge of the letters already settled consistent sequence of letters is encrypted, the child can still mention the letter appropriately.

## CONCLUSION

On average children in Yogyakarta already recognize letters. Most known letter is the letter O. Children recognize letters influenced by several things. The results showed that; a) there is a difference in children's knowledge of letters in Yogyakarta influenced by the form of capital and non-capital. Some children have great knowledge in the form of letters, b) shape almost the same with another typeface. Perception of children about letters affect the knowledge of letters (the shape and sound), c) children in the pronunciation of different letters states. The difference in pronouncing the letter because it is influenced by the realization phonology parents, d) child name the same letter in the form of letters that look the same, e) children have the knowledge of the letters in sequence. The mention of the letter can be

done properly if the letter in question carried out sequentially. Knowledge of letters on the child as the beginning of literacy in children in Yogyakarta is very varied and growing very individual depending on the stimulation provided by the environment to the child.

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