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Victa Sari Dwi Kurniati¹, Adhi Kusuma², Ima Widyastuti³

¹²³Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia

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Developing Early Childhood Education Students' Learning

Victa Sari Dwi Kurniati¹, Adhi Kusuma², Ima Widyastuti³

¹²³Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia

¹victasari@ustjogja.ac.id

Article Info

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Abstract

The COVID-19 forced all of the education's level to adapt and assist their students virtually as it is the best alternative for keeping schools poses a safety risk for the students. This sudden shift also affects the children at the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) level. This research aims to help find solutions to problems faced when assisting the children to study at home during the pandemic and to develop a portfolio for early childhood/ Kindergarten students as their learning media. This research involved PAUD/ Kindergarten which is located in Yogyakarta. The researchers collected data by identifying existing problems through document study and interviews with PAUD/ Kindergarten teachers as well as parents. This study adopted the qualitative research method. The researchers identified problems faced by the parents while assisting their children in English learning. The researchers carried out 4 stages in development research by adding an assessment column for the activities that had been completed. The consent to the assessment was done by giving a colorful stamps and/or stickers with animated images and motivational words. Thus it considered as form of positive reinforcement which attracts and buildup student motivation.

Keywords: Learning Media, Portfolio, English for Children

Introduction

In accordance with the government regulation, the teaching and learning activities will continue to start on July 13, 2020 while still paying attention to health protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic. For junior high school and above, health protocols will be easy to implement considering that the students already understand the protocol. Unlike the above levels, the level of PAUD, Kindergarten and Elementary School has a slightly different protocol. For Elementary School, the safety distance enforced is 1.5 meters with a maximum of 15 students in one class of the 28 average number of students per class. Meanwhile, the distance between PAUD/Kindergarten students is 3 meters with a maximum number of 5 children per class.

As a rule, the health protocol is good, but somehow it does not consider the children's character as an active being. When in the classroom, students may still be controlled by the teacher. However, during class breaks, it is possible for students to interact more closely with their friends. Especially at the PAUD/Kindergarten level, children begin to enter the preoperational cognitive stage. At this time, the stimulus for his cognitive development was crucial.

Given the gap between the rules and the character and habits of these students, some schools choose to do the online learning. The government has also prepared a tool to facilitate this online learning using the applications like Edmodo which involves parents in children's learning process. This application can be installed or operated online. Unfortunately, for parents who live in rural areas, online learning is troublesome.

Though most of the parents of PAUD/Kindergarten students who live in rural areas use android devices, the material provided in these applications often uses a large file capacity, so the materials often fail to download. Moreover, in order to use this application, parents must provide a sufficient quota. Whereas, many parents are experiencing financial difficulties during this pandemic.

Therefore, it is needed media developments that is easier to reach by the parents of PAUD/Kindergarten in assisting their children studying at home.

Method

Research Stages

This research is a development research aimed to develop educational product and validate these product. There were 10 stages of research carried out, namely: (1) research information gathering, (2) planning, (3) initial product development, (4) initial product trial, (5) product revision, (6) product trial, (7) product operational revision, (8) product operational trial, (9) product final revision, and dissemination and implementation (10) (Borg & Gall, (1983)).

In this research, the team would summarize it into 4 stages without omitting the essence of these 10 stages. This simplification aimed to facilitate the process of this research activity. Here are the steps that would be passed:

1. Stage 1: Data Gathering

In this stage, the researchers identified the problems through:

- a. Conducting observation to PAUD/Kindergarten regarding the Semester Activity Plans (SAP), Weekly Activity Plans (WAP), and Daily Activity Plans (DAP) used,
- b. Interviewing the teachers about English material usually used,
- c. Studying literature about English for PAUD/Kindergarten and the development of PAUD/Kindergarten students.

2. Stage 2: Planning

The researchers arranged the initial draft of media product would be used in PAUD/Kindergarten based on observational data, and the result of interview and literature study on stage 1.

3. Stage 3: Product Development

This stage was a summary of stages 3-7 in theory (Borg & Gall, (1983)), namely initial product development, initial product testing, product revision, product testing, and product operational revision.

a. Making a Draft

The drafting was based on Phase 2 taking into account input from a team of experts and practitioners.

b. Perform Initial Validation

This validation was carried out by a team of experts and practitioners. This validation was needed to provide an assessment of the suitability of the product with the needs both in theory and practice.

c. Revise the product

After getting initial validation, the researcher revised the product by taking into account input from a team of experts and practitioners.

4. Stage 4: Final Product Validation

- a. The validation team provides product validation
- b. Product design launching process

Data Collection Technique

To obtain the data, the researchers used observation and interview techniques. In observation activity, the researchers observed the communication model between the teacher and students and the teacher and the parents of the students. In addition, the researchers also made observations about documents in PAUD/Kindergarten such as curriculum, syllabus and lesson plans. The second technique used by the researchers was interviews. This interview activity was carried out in writing. The researchers asked several questions. Participants in this study then responded to these questions by sending written answers via Whatsapp.

Data Analysis Technique

The data obtained were analyzed using five steps of analyzing qualitative data, namely 1) data collection, 2) data reduction, 3) data presentation, 4) data verification, and 5) drawing conclusions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Data obtained from observations and interviews were then grouped according to needs. The final data was then displayed in table. In the data verification process, researchers communicated through Whatsapp with PAUD/Kindergarten teachers who were involved in this research. In the final stage, the researchers concluded the final data as material for analysis.

Results and Discussion

Problems Faced by Students' Parents

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the role of parents was very important because parents had to carry out dual functions, as parents and teachers. This task required parents to be able to become teachers as well as be able to accompany them during learning process and helped children to complete some of the tasks given by the school teacher. However, since the beginning the study at home policy was enforced by many parents who had difficulty accompanying their children in the learning process from home. From the interview process, the problems faced by the parents of early childhood/kindergarten students in general were learning conditions, learning facilities and subject matter.

Learning Condition

In the current condition of stay at home, students' parents had to become teachers for their children fully. For parents who were accustomed to giving up their children's teaching and learning activities at school, it was not easy to take over the role of the teacher at home. This role should be faced by the students' parents in PAUD/Kindergarten that were working or not working, both working from home and still having to go to work as usual. For parents who did not work outside the home, apart from helping to assist their children during online learning and doing assignments from school, parents also had to do household chores such as cooking and cleaning the house. For parents who worked outside and are required to do work from home, they had to continue to work from home while assisting their children to school from home and completing their school assignments. This became more difficult for parents who still had to work. Therefore, they had to be able to divide their time as well as possible so that their children could still learn. This was conveyed by one respondent who said that he had difficulty assisting his daughter to study because she had to work.

R1: *"Masalahnya saya juga kerja di rumah, kerja pakai laptop dan hape, belum rapat video. Jadi ya saya susah juga kalau harus bantu anak saya mengerjakan tugas"*.

R2: *"Harus kerja ndak bisa kalau nemeni belajar"*

Conditions when studying at home were a challenge, apart from the fact that parents had a lot of things to do at home, but in terms of learning there were children who trust their teachers more than their parents. This caused children not to take their studies seriously. People who previously were not accustomed to teaching children were required to be their teacher during learning at home. For parents this required a separate adjustment, especially for children of pre-school age.

R1: *"Anak saya itu susah diajak belajar kalau diajarin sebentar aja sudah minta berhenti"*

Learning conditions at home were different from schools that have scheduled learning hours, the presence of teachers and friends that certainly made children enthusiastic about learning. Meanwhile, when studying at home, children faced a different ambience, so it often made children's concentration easily distracted, especially when the children were bored. In addition, children quickly felt bored and tended to be more courageous in arguing with their parents when accompanied by learning. In this case, of course, parents also found it was difficult to discipline children, provided understanding or understanding of the subject matter. In addition, if children asked questions that sometimes made it even more difficult for parents to deal with their children, this then required parents to find strategies so that learning became something fun and effective.

Learning Facilities

In addition to learning conditions, parents might also be able to provide facilities for learning from home. The learning facilities meant here were not only computers, cellphones or tablets, but also internet quota (phone's credit), proper internet networks and materials that facilitate and support parents in helping children learn. Technology, in this case, became an obstacle, especially for children who came from vulnerable families who had limited facilities. During almost 6 to 7 months of learning from home, it was widely known that there were parents who could not meet all of their children's online learning needs. Various reasons were the cause. This also happened to the respondents in this study.

R2: *"Anak-anak belum saya beri hp sendiri, masih dengan hp saya, kalau saya kerja, ya hpnya saya bawa"*.

R3: *"Anak yang besar sering kebanyakan tugasnya. Hp nya jadi suka nge-hang"*.

Apart from the gadget problem, the internet network was also often a problem. A respondent complained about the difficult internet network at home so that the online learning process was hampered.

R3: *“Internet ditempat saya itu jelek. Jadi susah kalau mau donlot-donlot, kalau dikirimi pelajaran saya harus cari sinyal yang bagus dulu”*.

The supporting facilities existence was very crucial factors to the success of online learning. If the students could not be facilitated with supporting equipment, such as cellphones, laptops, computers, or even a good internet network, either with WiFi or internet quota, the students would find it difficult to follow the lessons. However, in reality not all parents were able to support their children when studying online. This could happen because less smartphone usage required more quota and funds to buy it. As stated below.

R2: *“Yaa... kalau untuk membeli kuota ada, tapi ya terbatas”*.

The above statement showed that there were respondents who, because in this situation, had their income decrease, so they could not buy a large quantity of quota. Economic difficulties during this pandemic could seriously hinder students' online learning.

Subject Matter

The subject matter was also a separate obstacle for parents of students. Mainly because the PAUD/Kindergarten students who were the objects of this research were schools that apply the use of two languages in their learning process. Language was another obstacle for parents in replacing the role of teachers for their children. So far, the PAUD/Kindergarten had helped facilitate by providing books that could be used in the learning process. However, time constraints, limited knowledge of the parents' language made the subject matter that should be given to the children an additional obstacle. When doing assignments, parents provided instructions in the form of homework questions that children had to complete, without interaction between teachers and students online. Therefore, sometimes parents felt less optimal in helping children learn. This indicated that parents had to be ready regarding insights and knowledge to support the children's learning process.

Children Concentration

As mentioned above, the conditions of learning that were carried out at home greatly affect children's concentration while studying. Children often did not focus on learning because there were many more interesting things to do at home, for example: watching TV, playing games on gadgets, or playing with other children at home or neighbors' children. In addition, the situation was comfortable because the conditions for learning that were carried out at home caused children not to be triggered to want to know about learning materials when there was nothing that interested them. Material that is usually only contained in books, writing and pictures would often make children quickly bored.

To minimize the children's boredom, a medium was needed that could make students interested in continuing to work on learning material without them knowing it. In this case, the PAUD/Kindergarten in this study already had a book compiled by the PAUD/Kindergarten teachers themselves to support the online learning process carried out. This book was made in the form of a portfolio to help both teachers and parents of students control the learning process carried out by children. However, along with the problems that occurred in the online learning process, it was necessary to develop an existing portfolio. This needs to be done so that students could master the material that had been designed by the school.

For that, development was needed in accordance with learning needs. In this case the need to raise students' curiosity about the material being studied. In order to help overcome all the problems previously mentioned by providing learning facilities that were more attractive to children in learning.

Development of Media Portfolio for PAUD/Kindergarten Students

From the observations it was found that many parents had difficulty assisting their children in the period of learning at home. This difficulty could be helped by the teacher by providing practical instructions and various ideas for fun activities that parents could do with their children at home, then children could choose activities according to their interests and creativity. So that students during the period of learning at home were not bored or felt overwhelmed. On the contrary, students still felt happy and free to study at home.

For this reason, schools were expected to be able to support parents in understanding what the basic needs of children were during the learning period at home. Children at the PAUD/Kindergarten level were at the pre-operational cognitive stage. At this level, children had shown cognitive activity in dealing with things outside themselves. His thinking activity did not yet have an organized system. Children were able to understand the reality in their environment by using signs and symbols.

In this case, this PAUD/Kindergarten already had a portfolio compiled by PAUD/Kindergarten teachers. This portfolio was useful as a tool for recording every learning activity carried out by students, recording every activity to stimulate student development. However, this portfolio required development so that children were more interested in learning at home. Following were the developments carried out in this research.

Design

In accordance with the results of the need analysis, this study focused on the media portfolio used by teachers and parents as a control book for student learning development. Previously, this media portfolio could only be read and understood by parents and teachers because this book only included recording dates, learning materials and teacher or parent observations. The following was a display of the portfolio that has been used:

Picture 1. Old Portfolio

In order to make the portfolio could also be read by students and can foster students' curiosity, this book needed additional additions to show what students have done. The researchers provided additional rightmost column that was used to provide assessments to students. This assessment column was provided with the aim of providing motivational stimulation of students in participating in any planned learning process. The assessment column was given by providing stickers with various stars or other animations. In addition to stickers, you could also stamp various motivational colored writings such as good, well done, and excellent.

The picture below was a display after adding columns to your portfolio, stickers and motivational stamps:

Picture 2. New Portfolio Display



Picture 3. Shape/Writing on a Stamp







Picture 4. Sticker

Validation

The validation was carried out by the lecturers of the development program in EFC and teachers in PAUD/Kindergarten in Prambanan. The table below were the validation results:

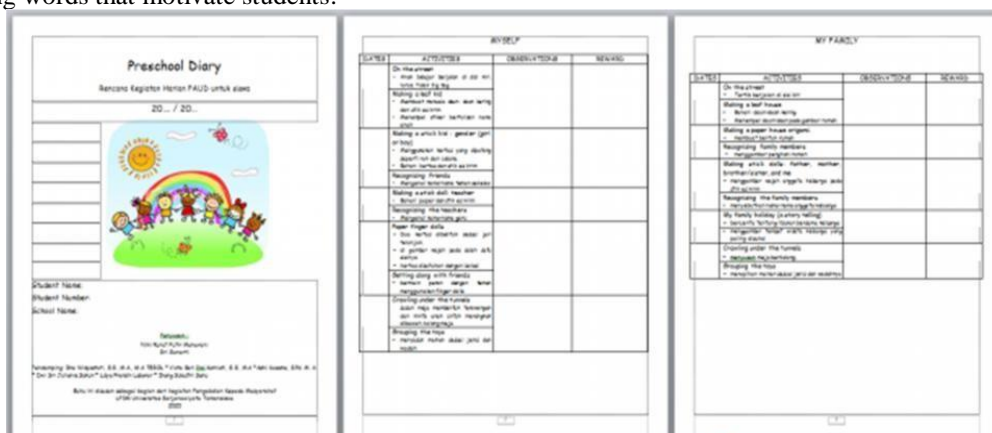
Topic	Description	Teachers	Lecturer
Language Material	Language in a Stamp Portfolio Additional Column	Quite Clear Good	Good OK
Graphic and Presentation	Stamp and motivational sticker 1. Stamp writing 2. Picture 3. Variety 4. Material	The form of writing is not stiff Children prefer cartoons Varies Interesting sticker	Need to be more colorful Cartoon but it should fits the material Adjusted to the learning material. For example, the theme is 'my country', a motivation sticker in the form of an image of the Indonesian flag. No need for print stickers, you can vary it by making your own, namely with wrapping paper and then affixed with double-sided tape.

Revision

Description	Old Display	New Display
1. Stamp Writing		
2. Sticker		
3. Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Postmark writing Animated stickers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing stamp accompanied by animated image Stickers with various colorful animations accompanied by reward words such as: well done, excellent, super, brilliant
4. Material	Cromo	HVS

Final Product

After going through the validation stage, here was the product display in the portfolio, stickers and stamps containing words that motivate students:



Picture 5. Portfolio Final Display



Picture 6. Stamp Final Display



Picture 7. Final Sticker with Animated Image Display

The additional column for the rewards, either in the form of stamps or stickers, for the completed task was a form of positive reinforcement to increase children's motivation in learning. This was in accordance with what was stated in the theory of Behaviorism. According to the theory of Behaviorism, learning is a change in behavior as a result of the interaction between stimulus and response experienced by students (Hendy Hermawan, 2010). Behaviorism learning theory is oriented towards measurable and observable results. With the development of this portfolio, it was hoped that both teachers and parents would be able to more easily follow and prepare material according to what had been arranged in the portfolio. As well as having the same guidelines when accompanying their children in learning (Hendy, 2010).

Conclusion

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the role of teachers in schools was replaced by parents of students. The students' parents were very important, because parents might be able to carry out multiple functions, both as parents and as teachers. This then required parents to be able to master the subject matter in school. However, many parents encountered difficulties in running the war. This happened in almost all levels of learning, including at the PAUD/Kindergarten level.

From the interview process, it was found that the problems faced by parents of early childhood/kindergarten students were caused by several factors, namely learning conditions, learning facilities and subject matter. This condition ultimately affected the concentration of children while learning. Children got bored quickly and were not interested in learning without any visual stimulants that were attractive to them. For that, development was needed to arouse students' curiosity about the material being studied.

In this research, the researchers then developed a portfolio that was already in this PAUD/Kindergarten. The researchers carried out 4 stages in development research. In the portfolio, an assessment column was added for activities that have been completed. The granting of the assessment was done by giving a stamp that contains words to motivate and/or stickers with animated images that also contained words that provided motivation. This was a form of positive reinforcement that could increase student motivation.

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Authors Information

Victa Sari Dwi Kurniati

Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa
Jl. Kusumanegara 157 Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Contact:
E-mail Address: victasari@ustjogja.ac.id

Adhi Kusuma

Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa
Jl. Kusumanegara 157 Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Ima Widyastuti

Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa
Jl. Kusumanegara 157 Yogyakarta, Indonesia
