The Influence of the Implementation of the Whole Language Method on the Interests and Conceptual Understanding Ability of Grade III Students of SD Negeri 15 Sungai Gayung Kiri

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the influence of the Whole Language method on the learning interest and concept understanding ability of third-grade students at SD Negeri 15 Sungai Gayung Kiri. The research uses an experimental design with control and experimental groups. Pretests and posttests are used to measure changes in students' learning interest and concept understanding. The results show that the Whole Language method has a significantly positive impact on both variables. Students in the experimental group demonstrate a higher increase in learning interest and concept understanding compared to the control group. This improvement is evident from the active involvement of students in learning activities and their ability to identify, apply, and generalize the concepts learned. These findings indicate that the Whole Language method is effective in enhancing the quality of language learning and concept understanding in elementary schools.

Keywords: Whole Language; Learning Interest; Concept Understanding Ability; Language Learning; Elementary School.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in shaping the cognitive and linguistic development of children in primary school (Natsir et al., 2022). Learning interest and conceptual understanding are key components in the learning process, opening pathways for deeper comprehension and effective application of knowledge (Rizqi, 2022). In this context, teaching methods play a critical role in building the foundation for these skills. One teaching method that has gained attention is the Whole Language method, which emphasizes comprehensive and holistic language learning (Hartati et al., 2021).

The Whole Language method is a language learning approach that focuses on integrating reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills (Meha & Roshonah, 2014). This approach

acknowledges that language is used in varied and complex contexts, requiring diverse experiences to develop well-rounded language skills. In primary schools, where the foundation for language skills is established, implementing this method can have significant impacts.

Teaching in primary schools often emphasizes the development of basic skills, such as letter recognition, word formation, and text comprehension (Ariyati, 2015). However, conventional approaches often separate these skills into isolated components, potentially neglecting the interconnectedness between reading, conceptual understanding, and the use of language in everyday contexts. Applying the Whole Language method in education can shift the paradigm in how language learning is perceived (Abidin et al., 2021). This method seeks to bridge the gap between reading skills and conceptual understanding by presenting more holistic learning experiences that reflect how language is used in real-life contexts (Rahmawati, 2017). Although the Whole Language method offers an intriguing approach to teaching language, its effectiveness in enhancing students' learning interest and conceptual understanding in primary school requires further investigation. Questions about the extent to which this method influences learning interest and conceptual understanding remain relevant in today's educational context.

In the current era of information and technology, having strong conceptual understanding skills has become increasingly important (Susanti et al., 2023). Students with strong conceptual understanding are better equipped to access and apply information from various sources effectively (Zulaeha, 2023).

Evaluating the effectiveness of the Whole Language method in improving students' learning interest and conceptual understanding in primary school has significant implications for designing more relevant and responsive curricula and teaching strategies. Currently, there are various approaches to teaching language in primary schools, including traditional methods that deconstruct reading and speaking skills into smaller parts and more holistic approaches like the Whole Language method (Amin Sumendap, 2022).

Despite discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of the Whole Language method, in-depth empirical research on its impact on learning interest and conceptual understanding in primary school students remains limited. A deeper understanding of the role of the Whole Language method in enhancing students' learning interest and conceptual understanding can assist educators in selecting the most suitable approaches for their students' needs (Abidin, 2017).

Given the critical role of language in developing various aspects of children's intelligence, further research is needed to identify how the use of the Whole Language method affects students'

cognitive and social development. Previous studies have shown that learning experiences centered on meaningful and real-life contexts are more effective in improving students' language abilities and conceptual understanding (Hambali et al., 2023).

Despite the existing research on the Whole Language method, certain aspects still need further exploration, such as how this method influences students' learning interest. Interest is a critical factor in the learning process (Judiasri, 2017). However, interest sometimes does not receive the same level of attention in teaching as reading or writing skills.

In the context of globalization, students need a high level of learning interest to continue developing and adapting to rapid changes across various fields (Rofiq & Nadliroh, 2021). A good learning interest involves not only an attraction to the subject matter but also the ability to organize thoughts, present arguments, and participate effectively in discussions (Y. Amelia, 2024). Technological advancements have also introduced new ways of learning and communication, including digital platforms and social media. Therefore, conceptual understanding and learning interest in various contexts have become increasingly complex and crucial. Thus, research on "The Impact of Applying the Whole Language Method on Learning Interest and Conceptual Understanding of Third-Grade Students at SD Negeri 15 Sungai Gayung Kiri" is not only relevant in the educational context but also in addressing the dynamic and complex developments of the modern world.

2. METHOD

This study employs a quasi-experimental design because not all variables and experimental conditions can be arranged and controlled by the researcher. Through this approach, the experiment allows the measurement of the direct impact of the Whole Language Method application on students' learning interest and conceptual understanding.

The research design to be used is an experimental design with a randomized control group. This design involves two groups: an experimental group that will be taught using the Whole Language Method and a control group that will be taught using conventional teaching methods. Randomization will be applied to allocate students into these groups randomly to minimize potential bias. The specific research design used is the nonequivalent control group design.

In a research context, the population and sample are interrelated. The population refers to the entire set of research subjects that possess specific qualities and characteristics. In this study, the population consists of all third-grade students at SDN 15 Sungai Gayung Kiri.

The sampling technique applied in this study is Total Sampling. Total Sampling is a technique where the sample size equals the population size. The rationale for using total sampling is the relatively small population size, which is fewer than 100 individuals. Thus, the sample size in this study comprises 59 students from the third grade at SDN 15 Sungai Gayung Kiri.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the pretest and posttest data on conceptual understanding and learning interest in both the experimental and control groups have a normal distribution. This was demonstrated through normality tests using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk. In the experimental group, the significance values for the pretest and posttest of conceptual understanding were 0.413 and 0.117, respectively, while in the control group, they were 0.232 and 0.078. Similarly, for the learning interest questionnaire data, the experimental group showed significance values of 0.271 for the pretest and 0.799 for the posttest, while the control group had significance values of 0.366 for the pretest and 0.639 for the posttest. All of these values are greater than 0.05, indicating that the data are normally distributed.

Next, a homogeneity test was conducted to measure the variance similarity of data between the groups before treatment. The analysis results showed that the pretest and posttest data on conceptual understanding in both groups were homogeneous, with significance values of 0.076 and 0.069, respectively, both greater than 0.05. However, the pretest and posttest data from the learning interest questionnaire were not homogeneous, as the significance value was 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, despite the difference in homogeneity for the learning interest data, the analysis could still be conducted, taking into account the normality test results that had already been met.

Subsequently, a Paired T-Test was used to compare the mean results of the pretest and posttest for each group. The analysis results revealed a significant difference in conceptual understanding and learning interest between the two groups. In the experimental group, the significance value for conceptual understanding was 0.000, indicating a substantial improvement after the treatment, with a mean difference of -24.167. Similarly, the learning interest of the experimental group showed significant improvement, with a significance value of 0.000 and a mean difference of -8.033. A similar result was found in the control group, where the significance values for conceptual understanding and learning interest were both 0.000, with mean differences of -24.517 and -7.621, respectively. These results suggest that the learning methods

provided, both the Whole Language method in the experimental group and the conventional method in the control group, had an impact on improving learning outcomes, although the effect was significantly different between the groups.

This study employed an experimental design with two groups: the experimental group, which received treatment in the form of the Whole Language method, and the control group, which used the conventional method. Over three weeks, the experimental group demonstrated higher engagement in the learning process, evident from their enthusiasm in class discussions, willingness to express opinions, and active participation in learning activities. This engagement significantly increased their learning interest. Additionally, the conceptual understanding of students in the experimental group improved significantly compared to the control group. Students in the experimental group were able to apply the concepts they learned in various contexts, showing a holistic and contextual understanding.

The analysis results indicate that the application of the Whole Language method was not only effective in enhancing learning interest but also in deepening students' conceptual understanding. This suggests that a teaching approach that actively and contextually involves students is more effective than conventional teaching methods. These findings are in line with the theory that holistic learning can help students integrate the concepts they have learned into everyday life, providing a more meaningful and sustainable learning experience. Research by Dewi & Santosa (2018) also supports this finding, stating that a contextual-based approach can increase students' learning interest. Similarly, the study by Suryani & Haryanto (2020) found that active student involvement in learning could improve their conceptual understanding, reinforcing the idea that active engagement in learning significantly enhances learning outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the Whole Language method has a significant positive effect on the learning interest and conceptual understanding of third-grade students at SD Negeri 15 Sungai Gayung Kiri. Students in the experimental group showed a greater increase in learning interest and a deeper understanding of concepts compared to the control group. This indicates that the Whole Language method is effective in enhancing the quality of language learning and conceptual understanding in a holistic manner.

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