Reading Box Media Improves Early Reading Skills in Preschool Students

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Abstract. General Background: Early reading skills are a fundamental component of literacy development in early childhood education, requiring engaging and developmentally appropriate learning approaches. Specific Background: In RA Ar Rochmah Lumajang, students aged 5–6 years demonstrated low initial reading ability, characterized by difficulties in recognizing letters, distinguishing sounds, and low learning interest due to limited instructional media. Knowledge Gap: There is limited practical evidence on the application of interactive, play-based media such as reading boxes within classroom action research settings to address early literacy challenges. Aims: This study aims to examine the use of reading box media in supporting early reading skills among 5–6-year-old students. Results: Using a classroom action research design involving 18 students, findings showed progressive improvement from 1% in the pre-cycle to 33.34% in cycle I and 77.78% in cycle II, indicating increased ability in letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and syllable reading, alongside higher student engagement. Novelty: The study presents a structured implementation of reading box media integrating visual, phonetic, and play-based activities within iterative learning cycles. Implications: The findings suggest that interactive and experience-based learning media can support early literacy development and provide practical guidance for teachers in designing engaging reading instruction for young learners.

Keywords: Early Reading Skills, Reading Box Media, Classroom Action Research

1 Introduction

Every student born into this world has unique potential, talents, and abilities that can be optimally developed through appropriate stimulation. The tendency to explore new things and enthusiasm for various sensory stimuli—such as visual, auditory, and emotional—are part of the natural potential that has been possessed since birth.[1] . Students have their own learning methods and styles with their own characteristics. Therefore, the most effective learning method for students is through play and exploration of their surroundings. Introducing early reading to students should also be made very enjoyable. In learning to read, students' language skills and mastery are also fundamental, as language mastery will make it easier to learn to read. Beginning reading is a process of gradually recognizing letters, letter sounds, number symbols, reading letters, syllables, and sentences. The stages of learning to read require structured program planning and the provision of systematically designed stimuli in a

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pleasant learning atmosphere. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), reading is a process of understanding the meaning of a written text, either through oral pronunciation or through internal understanding in the reader's mind.[2] .

The ability to recognize letters is the most important basic foundation that must be mastered and is a prerequisite for students to learn to read, Ehri & Mc.Cormick in Nurbaeti, 2022. Learning the alphabet is the most important component and a basic skill that must be possessed, as well as a foundation for students that will later be used in learning to write and read[3] . Recognizing letters and their pronunciation, starting with vowels and consonants, can be done through songs, letter cards, or games. These are commonly found and present in their surroundings, and they should be able to pronounce letters A through Z correctly and fluently, connect sounds with letters, recognize letter sounds, and pronounce them correctly [4].

The indicator can be achieved if early childhood students are able to recognize letters correctly, understand letter symbols or signs, and analyze the visual characteristics of letters that have similar shapes in order to distinguish and recognize them correctly, for example "b and d", "p and q", or "h and g". In addition, understanding the initial sounds of letters, phonetic skills in reading syllables and constructing them into words, and reading single syllables are important aspects that must be mastered. This mastery includes the ability to recognize the structure of syllables and combine them with prefixes and suffixes to form complete words.[4] The objectives of early reading align with the 2013 curriculum. Developing a solid literacy foundation through an attractive, contextual approach that aligns with students' development, as reflected in the mastery of basic competencies, appropriate learning processes, and indicators of initial reading and writing skills[5] .

The beginning of reading skills possessed by students is demonstrated by their ability to recognize letters, understand letter sounds, and interpret the arrangement of letters in a word and communicate it clearly through the use of simple words[6] . The process of developing these early reading skills requires a strong foundation in literacy, as preparation for understanding more complex texts in the next stage of development. In addition, literacy also helps develop listening, speaking, reading, concentration, memory, and cognitive skills, and encourages logical thinking[7] . Literacy can basically start at home with the help of parents using toys or household items. The knowledge gained at home can then become a foundation for students at school. Literacy experiences at school also gradually foster competitiveness among friends. When they see their friends surpassing them, students will naturally feel challenged. Literacy is the ability to understand written text and communicate effectively. Literacy is the initial foundation of knowledge used for letter recognition in beginning reading for students.

The target of the study is said to have been achieved if the students have mastered the basic competencies well, such as distinguishing letters, recognizing letter symbols, analyzing letter sounds, distinguishing letter sounds, and recognizing writing, properly and correctly. When students have reached this stage, they will find it easier to learn to write and read fluently. Reading fluently is the ability of students to read syllables and simple sentences correctly. Reading is an active process of receiving, understanding, and interpreting information from texts, symbols, or images that have meaning. The reading process is not just about seeing letters and recognizing them, but also about beginning to think deeply. Therefore, the role of teachers in helping to provide motivation, support, and praise for students who have recognized and understood letters

well is highly recommended[8] , in order to encourage students to be more confident in developing their abilities.

Lamb and Arnold mention several indicators that influence students' ability to read at the beginning, including mental readiness, age, and physiological condition, while the most influential factor that can hinder students from learning to read is their intellectual ability[9] . Other factors that hinder students' success in learning to read are parenting patterns, teaching facilities, and support from the surrounding environment[10] . Students' reading ability reaches its maximum level with steps and approaches that are in line with each student's learning style, which differs from one individual to another. By directly involving students in reading activities, it will be possible to attract their interest in developing their early reading skills[11] . Hamalik 1986. The use of appropriate learning media in the teaching process can influence the expected learning outcomes, because media can help make learning active and student-centered. Teachers are expected to always innovate and be creative in developing media as a teaching tool so that it can stimulate and increase students' interest in discovering new things, as well as provide opportunities to interact with their peers, which can improve students' abilities[12] . However, in the real conditions at RA AR Rochmah school, the researcher found that some students still lacked basic reading skills. There were still some students who were unable to distinguish letters properly, pronounce letter symbols correctly, and tended to lack interest in learning to read. The students seemed bored and indifferent when taught to read. After observing the students and discussing with other teachers, it was mentioned that the factor triggering the students' lack of interest in learning to read at school was the lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure to support learning, such as the absence of visual media, pictures, or other materials. The learning pattern used by teachers in teaching early reading is still contextual, namely using a blackboard or simply writing in the students' notebooks, which makes students feel bored and less motivated to learn.

Therefore, one way to improve teaching in order to achieve the desired results is to use learning media that is enjoyable for students. To stimulate all aspects of efforts to improve early reading skills, the use of learning media such as real media, audio, visual, and environmental media at RA Ar Rochmah can be applied as a tool to assist in the learning process so that learning activities run effectively and in line with expectations[13] .

Learning media are various tools, materials, or technologies to support learning activities to be effective and enjoyable. Using the right learning media can increase the effectiveness of delivering material comprehensively in a clear, easy, and interesting way, as well as optimizing active interaction among students and facilitating the understanding of abstract concepts through visualization[14] .

A reading box is a box-shaped medium (made of cardboard, plastic, or recycled materials) that contains various short readings, word cards, or literacy challenges. Its purpose is to encourage exploration, active reading, and reflection. The alphabet is a series of symbols or letters that are arranged systematically and used to represent sounds in spoken language. In the context of the Indonesian language, we use the Latin alphabet, which aims to introduce letter symbols and letter writing, as well as to introduce each sound in each letter symbol that has different spellings but the same sound, for example, the capital letter "G" and the lowercase letter "g," Q and q," and so on. It also reinforces students' understanding of symbols or characters and their ability to recognize letter sounds correctly. The reading box also contains pictures and letters that can be arranged to form words that can be read[15] . Reading boxes usually display

pictures and words simultaneously. This helps students associate letter symbols with their sounds and meanings in a concrete way. The reading box is a fun and interactive literacy method, often used in classrooms to increase students' interest in reading and comprehension. How to play: 1) The teacher/student takes a card with a picture of an everyday object (e.g., apple, eye, wheel). 2) The teacher or facilitator asks students to name the picture. 3) Discuss the initial sound of the word (e.g., "Apple starts with the sound /r/"). 4) Guess the First Letter: Students guess the first letter of the word in the picture. "What is this picture?" For example, a card with a picture of a "WHEEL" helps students recognize the letter R and its sound. 5). Match Pictures and Letters: Match the pictures with the corresponding letters of the alphabet.After that, students are asked to arrange the letters to form the word RODA. 6) Arrange Picture Words: For students who are more prepared, arrange the letters into words based on the pictures and once again ask students to say them aloud. This is done so that students understand that the word RODA is made up of several letters, such as R, O, D, and A. After that, ask students to write it themselves. This activity aims to help students remember and understand that the words they arrange and write have the same meaning. If students successfully say and arrange the letters and write them correctly, praise them. If students still have difficulty, give them another chance to repeat the activity. This activity is carried out to help students associate letter symbols with their sounds and the concrete meaning of letters. By saying the words they have arranged, students also learn to distinguish the sounds in words (phonemes), which is an important foundation for beginning to read. Therefore, it is hoped that through the use of the "reading box" media, students can understand and distinguish the sounds of each letter or word and be motivated to increase their interest in early reading. In previous research conducted by Nur Kholifah, the reading ability of students increased significantly, from 11 students with an ability of 33.45% to 78.45% by using the BABA reading box[16] . Similarly, in research conducted by Irdawati, Yunidar, and Darmawan, introducing early reading through image media resulted in 73.07% with an average score of 71.8[17] . Likewise, in research by Nur Vita Sari,in "Improving early reading skills through smart box media in group B students at Suryodiningratan Kindergarten," it can be seen based on the percentage increase from 0% before the intervention to 7.96% in cycle one and 76.93% to 84.62% in cycle two with the criteria of Very Good Development[18] . Based on the above background, the researcher will also apply the Reading Box media as a learning medium for students at RA Ar Rochmah, which is expected to improve students' reading skills.

2 Method

The method used is classroom action research (*CAR*). According to Hari Bambang Utomo, classroom action research is research intended to review the quality of learning with the aim of obtaining maximum learning outcomes in the classroom[19] . PTK allows teachers to identify problems, obstacles, and challenges in the learning process by trying new solutions or strategies, then evaluating and trying to replace new strategies to find out if there is a significant improvement after the new strategy is implemented[20] . Classroom teachers act as implementers, researchers, and observers, allowing them to directly observe any changes that occur in real-time during the learning process[21] . This research was conducted in cycles, meaning that the research process would continue if the objectives were not optimally achieved. This was done

with the intention of assessing early reading skills in early childhood students using the Kotak Baca learning media. The implementation process for each cycle was designed to be adjusted and improved gradually until the expected results were achieved in accordance with the research objectives.

This study is specifically aimed at improving early reading skills in young learners. The research was conducted at RA Ar Rochmah, Jalan Sutoyo, Keboanan Hamlet, Gesang Village, Tempeh Subdistrict, Lumajang Regency. The subjects in this study were 18 students aged 5-6 years, consisting of 13 male students and 5 female students aged 5 to 6 years.

The research was conducted in four main stages. The first stage was planning, in which the researchers developed a focused and systematic action plan. The cycle began with 1) planning, which included objectives, strategies, and evaluation. This was followed by 2) implementation and 3) observation to see the impact of the actions on the learning process and the students' responses. The final stage is reflection to assess success and design improvements. Techniques used in data collection include questionnaires, observation sheets, or interview guides with instruments appropriate to the research subject, field notes, and documentation[22] . This research is considered successful if the research subjects experience a minimum improvement of 75%, with reference to the assessment indicators that have been formulated . The success standard for this research is if the students are able to recognize and distinguish letter sounds well and correctly, developing well at 75% of the predetermined indicators. The use of the following percentage formula is intended to identify the results of improving the early reading skills of students.

$$P\frac{F}{N} \times 100\% \quad (1)$$

Explanation:
P: Percentage
F: Score obtained by the student
N: Number of subjects

3 Results and Discussion

In this stage, the implementation plan will undergo two cycles of improvement, namely cycle I and cycle II. The steps taken in each cycle are planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. 1) The planning stage is organized with actions that explain what, why, when, where, by whom, and how the actions are carried out by the participants. 2)The implementation stage is the realization of the previously designed actions. The steps that must be taken by teachers are to focus on the applicable curriculum. With the hope of increasing the effectiveness of fellow researchers in order to sharpen the reflection and evaluation that has been carried out in the classroom, here the researcher carries out learning activities in accordance with the scenario that has been designed in the previous planning stage, with a focus on introducing letters through the reading box media that has been prepared. 3) Observation stage: Data collection is carried out simultaneously with the implementation of the action. Peers observe the teaching and learning process and record everything that needs to be included in the report during the learning process. The data that needs to be collected at this stage is data containing the implementation of the planned actions and their

impact on the process and results. The data that can be collected includes learning outcomes, tests, presentations, and assignment scores that describe the students' activity, creativity, enthusiasm, quality, and so on. 4) Reflection stage, which is an effort made by researchers related to the action research carried out by the students. In this final stage, the researcher analyzes the learning process that has been carried out by the participants, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the classroom teacher in delivering material using the reading box media.

3.1 Pre-Cycle

Before intervention was carried out in the learning process, the purpose of this initial observation was to obtain an overview of the development of 4-5 year old students' abilities in recognizing letters, so that it could be used as a basis for designing appropriate actions. The researchers identified the students' initial needs and abilities in early reading for specific learning objectives (e.g., recognizing letters, syllables, or simple words). The researcher found that the initial problem encountered in learning was that students quickly became bored and were not very interactive during the learning process because the learning was still contextual and there were no media that could attract the students' interest, so the students appeared bored and lazy. In addition, the researcher also found that many students still had low abilities in recognizing and distinguishing letter symbols. recognizing and distinguishing letter sounds, with many still making mistakes and feeling confused, such as distinguishing between the letters b and d, p and q, l and i. This can be seen in the data on the mastery of early reading skills of early age students (5-6 years old) at RA Ar Rochmah (Pre-cycle) in the following table 1.

Table 1. Observation Results of Early Reading Development in the Pre-Cycle

Subject	Observation Indicator				Number (S)	Maximum Score (N)	Percentage (%)	Description T / BT
	Recognizing letters	Distinguishing mentioning symbols letters correctly	Recognizing and distinguishing letter sounds	Reading syllables				
Adam	1	2	1	1	5	16	31.25 %	BT
Afi	1	1	1	1	4	16	25.00 %	BT
Afifah	1	2	1	2	6	16	37.50 %	BT
Aufar	2	2	1	2	7	16	43.75 %	BT
Bilal	2	2	2	2	8	16	50.00 %	BT
Fillio	2	2	2	2	8	16	50.00 %	BT
Gibran	1	2	2	1	6	16	37.50 %	BT
Habibi	1	2	2	2	7	16	43.75 %	BT

Continue **Table 1**.

Subject	Observation Indicator					Maximum Score (N)	Percentage (%)	Description T / BT
	Recognizing letters	Distinguishing mentioning symbols letters correctly	Recognizing and distinguishing letter sounds	Reading syllables	Number (S)			
Hamdan	2	3	2	2	9	16	56.25 %	BT
Haqi	2	3	2	2	9	16	56.25 %	BT
Hisyam	1	2	1	2	6	16	37.50 %	BT
Jamilah	1	2	1	1	5	16	31.25 %	BT
Melira	1	2	2	1	6	16	37.50 %	BT
Naka	2	2	2	2	8	16	50.00 %	BT
Rafif	2	2	2	2	8	16	50.00 %	BT
Rafiq	2	2	2	2	8	16	50.00 %	BT
Vina	1	2	1	1	5	16	31.25 %	BT
Zahroh	2	1	2	2	7	16	43.75 %	BT
Achievement Presentation							1	

Explanation:

$$Total\ Maximum\ Score\ Obtained = Maximum\ score\ of\ indicator\ items\ x\ number\ of\ indicators\ observed \quad (2)$$

$$Percentage\ of\ Student\ Achievement = \frac{Total\ score\ achieved\ for\ each\ indicator\ x\ 100}{Maximum\ Score} \quad (3)$$

$$Success\ rate: \frac{Number\ of\ successful\ children \times 100\%)}{Total\ number\ of\ children} \quad (4)$$

KKM Description:
T : Complete
BT : Not yet completed

The table 1 shows that the early reading skills of students are still low, with only 1% achieving the desired results. This indicates that many students are still confused and find it difficult to distinguish between the sounds of letters and the symbols themselves. This is due to contextual learning and the lack of facilities or media used in the learning process or teaching tools that can stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning to read.This shows that new steps or methods are needed so that their early reading skills can develop optimally. Therefore, the researcher tried to provide reading boxes as a

medium to attract children's attention in learning to read using the box medium in the next stage in the repetition of cycle I.

3.2 Cycle I

In cycle 1, researchers will continue the steps that have been designed based on the findings in the pre-cycle, with corrective actions that have been designed and implemented in 4 days, in accordance with the RPPH that is in line with the curriculum, which is equipped with observation sheets and improvement scenarios.

The first day of cycle 1 is Monday, September 22, 2025. It began with an opening, greetings, reading prayers before learning, attendance, singing the song "Lihat Kebunku" (Look at My Garden), writing the letters B and b. The closing session consisted of a question and answer session about objects that begin with the letter B. On the first day of cycle 1, the researcher introduced reading boxes as a means of introducing letters to students. This activity began by creating a classroom atmosphere that supported concentration so that the students could focus and be optimally involved. The reading box used was square in shape, displaying letter symbols combined with illustrations of objects, animals, and plants, and equipped with the names of each image. This approach was designed to stimulate the curiosity of the students and associate letter symbols with meaningful visual experiences, making the process of letter recognition more enjoyable and contextual.

The second meeting in cycle 1 was held on September 23, 2025. The activity began with the researcher directing the students to sit in their respective chairs and creating a calm atmosphere so that the students were ready to participate in the lesson. As part of the routine of reciting prayers before learning, making class agreements, and conducting light discussions to build closeness and emotional readiness before entering the main activity**.** Preparation of the Reading Box as a means of improving students' interest in reading, so that the classroom remains safe and controlled before starting the lesson, the researcher divided the students into 3 groups, each consisting of 6 students. The researcher explained how to play and provided guidance on playing with this reading box media: 1) Introduce the reading box to the students. The researcher takes a card with a picture of an everyday object, for example, a wheel. 2) The researcher or facilitator invites the students to name the picture. 3) The researcher discusses the initial sound of the word (for example, "wheel starts with the sound /r/"). 4) Guess the First Letter: the students guess the first letter of the word in the picture that was chosen earlier. Example: "What picture is this?" For example, the card with the picture "WHEEL" helps students recognize the letter R and its sound. 5). Then match the pictures and letters: match the pictures with the correct letters of the alphabet. After that, students are asked to arrange the letters to form the word RODA. 6) Arrange Picture Words: For students who are more prepared, arrange the letters into words based on the pictures and once again ask students to say them aloud. This is done so that students understand that the word RODA is composed of several letters, such as the letters R -O- D, and A. After that, the students are asked to write it/rearrange the letters independently. At the end of the lesson, the researcher will conduct a recall of understanding and reinforce the students' learning by asking the same questions as in the lesson, asking the students to name objects that begin with the letter R.

The third meeting in cycle 1 was held on September 24, 2025. The learning activity began with an opening prayer and a light discussion to create a comfortable and conducive atmosphere. Next, the researcher reintroduced the reading box media to the

students and invited them to take turns choosing cards. Each card was read together, and the students were asked to identify the letters and words in the pictures. This activity took place in a fun atmosphere, accompanied by praise and motivation to boost the students' enthusiasm for learning.

In the fourth meeting, the researcher once again acted as a facilitator and active observer in the learning process. The activity began with welcoming the students in front of the class, accompanied by warm greetings to build emotional closeness. After all the children had gathered, they were invited into the classroom and began the activity with a prayer together, followed by asking how they were doing and checking on their friends' attendance.To create a fun and exciting learning atmosphere, the researcher invited the students to sing along to familiar educational songs. This activity also served as a transition to the main learning session. Entering the main session, the researcher again divided the students into groups based on their level of understanding, which had been identified in the previous cycle. These groups allowed the researcher to provide more targeted assistance, especially to children who still had difficulty composing and reading syllables correctly. As the core activity, the researcher asked each student to write their name, then arrange the letters of their name using reading boxes. This activity was designed to strengthen the students' phonetic and visual skills in recognizing letters and forming simple words.During the process, researchers continued to observe the responses, participation, and development of the students' early reading abilities. The activity ran smoothly and showed an increase in active involvement from the students, especially in arranging and recognizing syllables. At the end of the study, the students' achievement levels can be seen in the following table 2.

Table 2. Results of Observation of Early Reading Development in Cycle I

Subject	Indicator				Number (S)	Maximum Score (N)	Percentage (%)	Description T / BT
	Recognizing letters	Distinguishing mentioning symbols letters correctly	Recognizing and distinguishing letter sounds	Reading syllables				
Adam	3	2	2	1	8	16	50.00 %	BT
Afi	3	3	2	2	10	16	62.50 %	T
Afifah	4	3	2	2	11	16	68.75 %	BT
Aufar	2	1	2	2	7	16	43.75 %	BT
Bilal	3	3	2	2	10	16	62.50 %	BT
Fillio	3	3	2	2	10	16	62.50	T
Gibran	4	3	2	2	11	16	68.75 %	BT
Habibi	3	3	2	2	10	16	62.50 %	BT
Hamdan	4	4	3	3	14	16	87.50 %	T

Haqi	4	4	3	3	14	16	87.50 %	T

Continue **Table 2**.

Subject	Indicator					Maximum Score (N)	Percentage (%)	Description T / BT
	Recognizing letters	Distinguishing mentioning symbols letters correctly	Recognizing and distinguishing letter sounds	Reading syllables	Number (S)			
Hisyam	3	2	2	1	8	16	50.00 %	BT
Jamilah	3	3	2	2	10	16	62.50 %	BT
Melira	3	2	2	2	9	16	56.25 %	BT
Naka	3	2	2	1	8	16	50.00 %	BT
Rafif	4	3	3	2	12	16	75.00 %	T
Rafiq	3	2	2	1	8	16	50.00 %	BT
Vina	3	2	1	1	7	16	43.75 %	BT
Zahroh	4	4	3	3	14	16	87.50 %	T
Achievement Presentation							33.34	

Based on the table 2, the researcher obtained data showing that of the 18 students, 6 children showed improvement in their ability to recognize letters and distinguish letter sounds correctly, while the other 12 children still experienced difficulties. However, compared to the observation results in the pre-cycle stage, which showed a success rate of 1%, Cycle I saw an increase to 33.34%. Nevertheless, this achievement did not meet the success indicator set by the researcher, which was 75%.

The failure to achieve the targets in cycle I was due to several obstacles identified during the learning process. First, some students still had difficulty finding the symbols that corresponded to the letters requested. Second, some children were unable to distinguish the sounds of the letters . Third, during the game, some students were still confused and lacked enthusiasm. In addition, the children felt that they were not free to play due to time constraints. Seeing these obstacles, the researcher realized the need for improvements in the next cycle. Therefore, in cycle II, the researcher designed follow-up actions by adding rewards or praise to children who were able to complete the task correctly, providing intensive assistance and additional stimuli to students who still had difficulties in using the reading box media, extending the time for using the box , and using peer tutors for more interactive communication. so that it is hoped that children will feel happier and more enthusiastic, making it easier for them to play using this reading box media.

3.3 Cycle II

The steps taken in cycle II are not much different from cycle I, with the implementation period running from Wednesday, October 1, 2025, to October 4, 2025. The first step is

to determine and select themes in accordance with the lessons, sub-themes, and achievement indicators in the preparation of the daily lesson plan (RPPH). Next, prepare reading boxes as learning aids and observation sheets as research instruments to record events that will occur or the results of this learning. Don't forget to prepare tools to document each activity, such as *mobile phones* to take photos and videos. The steps taken by students in cycle II are a continuation of efforts to improve various obstacles identified through reflection in cycle I, with the main objective of improving students' ability to recognize and distinguish letter sounds through the use of reading boxes. In the first meeting of cycle II, the researcher began the activity with a routine, such as saying a prayer and asking about the students' condition and activities before leaving for school. The researcher then explained to the students what the activity for that day would be. Next, the researcher returned to the students and explained what the activity for that day would be. The researcher began the activity with a routine such as saying a prayer, asking about the students' condition and activities before leaving for school, then explaining again to the students what our activities would be for the day. Next, the researcher reintroduced the reading box media to the students and asked them to choose their own alphabet letters and ask them to say what letters they had chosen.After that, the researcher asked the students to name objects that start with the letter D.Students who could correctly name more than one object with the chosen letter were given rewards and praise, while those who were still unable to do so or had difficulty were given assistance in the form of stimuli. At the end of the lesson, the researcher conducted a review of the lesson to determine the level of understanding of each student in recognizing the first letter of an object.

During the second meeting in cycle II, the researcher once again welcomed the students in front of the class with a warm greeting as an initial approach. After all the children had gathered, the activity began with a prayer together, " " (In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful), to create a positive learning atmosphere. The researcher then asked about their news and gathered information about friends who were absent that day, as an effort to build closeness and social awareness.To create a more lively and conducive classroom atmosphere, the researcher invited the students to sing together. This activity also served as a transition to the core learning. In the main session, the researcher again divided the students into groups based on their level of understanding, which had been identified in the previous meeting. The purpose of this division was so that the researcher could provide more intensive assistance to students who still had difficulty forming syllables correctly. As part of the learning activity, the researcher asked each student to write their name. Next, they were asked to arrange the letters of their name using reading boxes, which were designed to help the process of visual word recognition and formation. Students who successfully arranged or wrote the letters correctly were given stars as a form of appreciation. Meanwhile, for children who still experienced difficulties or whose results were not perfect, the researcher provided direct assistance to help them. Towards the end of the learning session, the researcher conducted a reinforcement activity (re-colling) by asking the students to arrange letters based on pictures selected by the researcher. For students who have demonstrated the ability to arrange and read words independently, the researcher gives them an additional challenge in the form of a syllable that they must read aloud.

Complete data on these achievements can be seen in the following cycle II observation results table, as part of efforts to improve students' early reading skills.

Table 3. Results of Observation of Early Reading Development in Cycle II

Subject	Indicator				Number (S)	Maximum Score (N)	Percentage (%)	Description T / BT
	Recognizing letters	Distinguishing naming symbols letters correctly	Recognizing and distinguishing letter sounds	Reading syllables				
Adam	4	2	2	2	10	16	62.50 %	BT
Afi	4	4	3	2	13	16	81.25 %	T
Afifah	4	3	3	2	12	16	75.00 %	T
Aufar	3	3	2	1	9	16	56.25 %	BT
Bilal	4	4	3	2	13	16	81.25 %	T
Fillio	4	4	3	3	14	16	87.50 %	T
Gibran	4	3	3	3	13	16	81.25 %	T
Habibi	4	3	3	2	12	16	75.00 %	T
Hamda	4	4	3	3	14	16	87.50 %	T
Haqi	4	4	4	3	15	16	93.75 %	T
Hisyam	4	3	2	1	10	16	62.50 %	BT
Jamilah	4	4	3	2	13	16	81.25 %	T
Melira	4	4	2	2	12	16	75.00 %	T
Naka	4	4	2	2	15	16	75.00 %	T
Rafif	4	4	4	3	15	16	93.75 %	T
Rafiq	4	3	3	2	12	16	75.00 %	T
Vina	4	2	2	2	10	16	62.50 %	BT
Zahroh	4	4	4	3	15	16	93.75 %	T
Achievement Presentation							77.78	

From the table 3, there was an increase in enthusiasm and active participation, as well as greater confidence due to the support and rewards given for the children's success. The students were also able to use the reading box media independently and with their friends.as seen from the students' ability to recognize letters, distinguish and name letter symbols, as well as their ability to recognize and distinguish letter sounds, which showed very significant progress. When viewed in the achievement table, starting from the pre-cycle, which was only 1%, it increased in cycle I at the beginning of the introduction of

the reading box as a learning medium, reaching a level of 33.34%, and at the end of cycle II, there was a very encouraging increase of 77.78%. In cycle II, there were even several children who were able to read a syllable well and fluently. This indicates that the children's achievement in early reading skills has exceeded the minimum completion rate of 75%.

The development of early reading skills in these students is based on Guntur's principle, which outlines the stages of language development in students, from the pre-linguistic to the linguistic stage. These stages indicate the readiness of students to begin recognizing symbols and meanings, including early reading ,[23] . The figure 1 visualizes a consistent recapitulation of the early reading skills of students from pre-cycle, cycle I to cycle II.

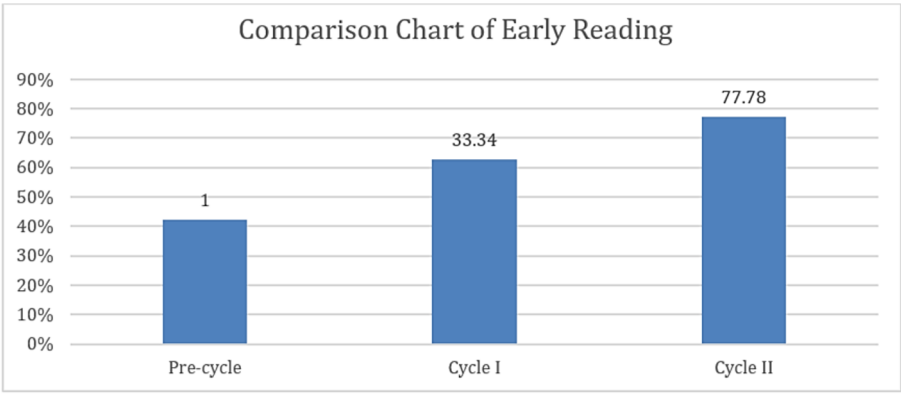

Fig. 1. Comparison Chart of Beginning Reading Skills of Students in Pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II

The figure 1 shows that Group B students achieved 77.78% proficiency in early reading. This figure was achieved through various scenarios, one of which was the use of learning media with a play-based approach. The reading box media was designed to be attractive and make students enjoy playing with it and not feel bored. The uniqueness of this reading box, apart from being fun, is that it is an innovative medium for introducing the symbols and sounds of each letter, making learning more enjoyable for students and making it easier for them to recognize letters, distinguish between letters, and distinguish between letter sounds.Improving early reading skills in students at RA Ar Rochmah through this reading box media has had a significant impact in cycle II, reaching 77.78%. Research on efforts to improve early reading skills through the use of reading boxes is also supported by previous research conducted by Nur Kholifah, as discussed in the previous chapter. Namely, efforts to significantly improve the reading skills of students, which initially started with 11 students who had a skill level of 33.34% and increased to 77.08% with the use of BABA reading boxes [16]. Similarly, the results of the research conducted at RA Ar Rochmah showed a significant increase, especially in the phonological and letter recognition aspects. Another study conducted by Nur Vita Sari in "Improving early reading skills through flannel board media in group B students" based on the results of the study, data was obtained that the early reading skills of students had increased significantly after the application of smart box media. At the pre-action stage, there were no students who met the criteria for

development with a percentage of 0%. After the intervention in cycle I, early reading skills increased to 7.96%, and in cycle II, they increased significantly again to 84.62%. The final results showed that the students' early reading skills were in the Very Good Development category.

The implementation of reading boxes at Ra Ar Rochmah Lumajang has also had a significant impact on efforts to improve early reading skills among students at Ra Ar Rochmah Lumajang.As seen from the graphs and tables obtained in the pre-cycle, cycle I, and cycle II, in the use of this reading box media, students appear to be more enthusiastic, more focused, and show great interest during the learning process using this media. Students' abilities to read fluently, using good and correct pronunciation, intonation, and clarity of voice have improved. Based on these results, the students' initial reading skills in Cycle II have reached the target set by the researcher, which is 75%, so there is no need to conduct the next cycle, and the research is considered complete.

4 Conclusion

From the results of research conducted by researchers in collaboration with colleagues in PTK at RA Ar Rochmah Lumajang, it was found that the use of reading boxes significantly improved the reading skills of 5-6 year old children. This media was applied through a play-based approach ( ), in which the researcher asked the children to name the initial letters in the pictures and then asked them to arrange the words in the pictures correctly and read the words they had arranged aloud. In cycle II, the researchers developed the method by adding activities of cutting and pasting letters according to the pictures using prepared worksheets. This activity was intended to increase focus and deepen children's mastery of arranging words correctly.The results showed a gradual improvement in children's abilities, from 1% in the pre-cycle stage, increasing to 33.34% in cycle I, and reaching 77.78% in cycle II. With an achievement above the 75% success threshold, this study was declared successful and did not require a follow-up cycle. Therefore, reading boxes combined with play activities can be said to not only make children more happy, active, and enthusiastic in learning, but also provide good effectiveness in introducing letters and early literacy in an effort to improve early reading skills in early childhood.

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