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# TEACHER STRATEGIES IN OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES IN REMEMBERING LETTERS IN CHILDREN AGED 5–6 YEARS

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**ABSTRACT**

The ability to recognize and remember letters is a critical foundation in the early literacy development of children aged 5–6 years. However, individual variations in visual-auditory memory and environmental barriers often trigger difficulties in recognizing alphabet symbols. This qualitative research aims to deeply analyze teacher strategies in detecting, planning, intervening, and evaluating children who experience difficulties in remembering letters. Based on 10 main indicators of qualitative learning and the theoretical foundation of relevant journals, data were collected through structured interviews, observations, and assessment documentation. The results show that teachers apply multisensory methods, concrete pictorial media, individual remedial approaches, positive psychosocial reinforcement, and intensive synergy with parents as strategies to help children remember letters.

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of literacy in children aged 5–6 years marks a crucial stage in readiness for learning at the primary level. According to the National Standards for Early Childhood Education (Permendikbud No. 137 of 2014), children in this age range are expected to be able to recognize alphabetic symbols and differentiate the sounds and shapes of letters A to Z. The ability to recognize letters acts as a primary predictor in the mastery of emergent literacy. The inability to master the concept of initial letters can be an early indicator of prolonged literacy delays.

In reality, not all children experience aligned literacy development. Many students show obstacles when processing abstract letter symbols. Children often experience slow memory recall, confusion between similarly oriented letter shapes (mirror letters) such as b with d or p with q, and difficulty connecting the visual representation of letters with their phonemic sounds.

Learning difficulties in recognizing letters are generally triggered by the interaction between internal factors (such as heterogeneity in memory capacity) and external factors (lack of repetition and early letter recognition in the family environment due to parents' busyness). In facing these obstacles, the role of the teacher as a pedagogical facilitator is vital. This article holistically discusses how teachers formulate and implement pedagogical strategies to address the difficulties in remembering letters in children aged 5-6 years.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a single-case study design. This approach was chosen to deeply explore the natural phenomenon of a teacher's pedagogical strategies in dealing with children who have difficulty remembering letters in class.

The subjects of this research consist of one classroom teacher who assists children aged 5-6 years in one of the early childhood education centers in the Ciparay area. Data collection techniques were carried out through three main instruments: structured interviews based on 10 research indicators, participatory observation of daily interactions in teaching and learning, and children's responses during letter recognition, as well as documentation in the form of Daily Learning Implementation Plans (RPPH), teaching media, reading guidebooks (60 Smart Reading Hours), and daily assessment instruments.

Data analysis was conducted referring to the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which consists of four main activities: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2014).The data condensation stage is realized through the extraction of verbatim quotes from the original interviews with informants, the arrangement of meaning unit codes, categorization grouping, and alignment with early childhood literacy theories from reputable journals.(Setiawan, 2024).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of research results is organized in a structured manner based on 10 structured indicators. Table 1 shows the thematic coding matrix from the original interviews with informants, while Table 2 presents an in-depth scientific interpretation of the findings.

**Table 1. Thematic Coding Matrix of Teacher Interviews**

| No | Research Indicator | Verbatim Quotes from Primary Interviews (Field Data) | Unit Meaning Code | Thematic Categorization | Supporting Theoretical Foundations (Literature) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Identification of Difficulties** | *"It usually becomes apparent when the child is asked to point out or name letters, often confusing similar shapes like the letters 'b' and 'd', or 'p' and 'q', and sometimes completely forgetting the sounds of the letters."* | Confusion of similar-oriented letters (b-d, p-q) & forgetting sound articulation | Identification & Early Detection of Letter Difficulties | Stage of letter recognition and visual-sound signals (Mason, 1980). |
| 2 | **Analysis of Causal Factors** | *"The main factor may be because they just started school, and at home, they are not stimulated beforehand, not introduced to the alphabet first. Then their parents are busy working."* | Lack of initial stimulation at home and parents' busy work | Analysis of Internal & External Factors | Internal factors (physiological/psychological ) & non-social external factors (Mulyadi, 2010; Setiawan, 2024). |
| 3 | **Lesson Planning (RPPH)** | *"In our RPPH, we include special strategies, such as mandatory activities before the children write their names at least so they know what letters are in their names. Then reading with a reading guide book (60 Smart Reading Hours) or what we usually call the morning journal."* | Modification of materials & special strategies in RPPH | Differentiated Learning Planning | Learning is adjusted to the unique needs and conditions of the child (Setiawan, 2024). |
| 4 | **Use of Learning Methods** | *"We often use a multisensory method, combined with singing to group vowel and consonant letters, giving 2-3 letters per week and repeating every day."* | Multisensory combination, vocal-consonant music/songs, and daily repetition | Interactive Learning Methods | Visual-verbal association learning & phonemic awareness (Warmington & Hulme, 2012; Ehm et al., 2019). |
| 5 | **Utilization of Learning Media** | *"Most often using illustrated letter cards and educational props (APE) letter stickers"* | Use of concrete props | Utilization of Concrete Learning Media | The existence of adequate concrete media and sensory tools (Astuti et al., 2021; Setiawan, 2024). |

| No | Research Indicator | Verbatim Quotes from Primary Interviews (Field Data) | Unit Meaning Code | Thematic Categorization | Supporting Theoretical Foundations (Literature) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | **Individual Approach** | *"Once the classical learning is finished, we provide personal guidance to children who are still lagging behind during break time or free time."* | Remedial personal one-on-one outside of classical hours | Individual & Remedial Approach | Visual attention and focused guidance for children who are falling behind (Helal & Weil-Barais, 2015). |
| 7 | **Providing Motivation & Reinforcement** | *"Every child who successfully names a letter correctly, we give appreciation with applause, praise 'great' for example 'Alhamdulillah Arya can now recognize the letter A, being patted and given verbal encouragement'"* | Appreciation of verbal praise, applause, & emotional reinforcement | Motivation & Psychosocial Reinforcement | The role of internal-external motivation triggers interest in learning (Anderson, 2003; Pratiwi et al., 2020). |
| 8 | **Learning Evaluation** | *"Daily assessments are recorded based on the progress of the reading book pages completed by the child. Later, all development records will be accumulated into the semester learning outcome report (report card)."The criterion is when a child no longer memorizes rigidly (rote memorization), but is able to remember and recognize the shapes and sounds of letters quickly, accurately, and independently."* | Assessment based on the achievements of reading book pages and report card accumulation | Authentic Learning Evaluation | Qualitative assessment of early childhood development (Miles et al., 2014; Setiawan, 2024). |
| 9 | **Collaboration with Parents** | *"Teachers regularly communicate with parents during drop-off/pick-up times, and hold special one-on-one counseling sessions during report card distribution to encourage parents to review reading material with their children at home. ."* | Direct communication, sometimes via WA groups/contact books & repetition at home | School & Parent Partnership | Synergy between teachers and parents in limiting gadgets & training focus (Setiawan, 2024). |
| 10 | **Constraints and Solutions** | *"The challenge lies in the varying levels of children's comprehension. The solution is to add extra patience and modify the games to make them more interesting."* | Variations in comprehension are addressed through game adaptations & patience | Pedagogical Constraints & Adaptive Solutions | Addressing learning obstacles through a fun play world (Setiawan, 2024). |

Table 1 contains the coding results from interviews with teachers based on 10 research indicators. From the collected verbatim quotes, it is evident that teachers are usually aware that children experience difficulties when asked to point to or name letters. Children often confuse letters that look similar, such as b with d and p with q, and some even forget the sounds of the letters entirely. According to the teachers, there are two causes: the varying memory capacities of children and the lack of repetition at home due to parents being busy with work.

To address this, the teacher prepares lesson plans with simpler material for children whose letter memory is still low. During the learning process, the teacher uses a multisensory method combined with singing and card games so that the children do not get bored quickly and can remember more easily. The teacher also often uses picture letter cards and concrete teaching media that can be directly handled by the children. Children who still lag behind after classical learning receive personal guidance during breaks or free time. Each time a child successfully names a letter correctly, the teacher gives praise and applause to keep the child's spirit up and prevent them from feeling inferior. The children's progress is monitored periodically through daily assessments recorded based on the progress of the reading book pages completed by the children, which will later be accumulated into the semester learning outcome report (report card). Cooperation with parents sometimes involves direct communication when parents drop off or pick up their children or through WhatsApp groups and communication books so that children continue to practice recognizing letters at

home.The main obstacle faced by the teacher is the varied comprehension levels of the children, which is addressed with extra patience and modifications to the games to make them more engaging.

**Table 2. Matrix of Qualitative Data Interpretation and Pedagogical Implications**

| No | Main Indicators | Qualitative Meaning (Interpretation of Field Findings) | Pedagogical Implications & Classroom Practices |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Identification of Difficulties** | Children's difficulties in distinguishing similar letters (mirror image) indicate an immature visual-spatial discrimination development. | Teachers need to provide spatial orientation stimulation and separate the introduction of similar letters in different learning sessions. |
| 2 | **Analysis of Causal Factors** | Difficulty in remembering letters is triggered by a lack of early stimulation in alphabet recognition at home due to parents' busyness. | Repetition of letter concepts consistently reinforced at school to cover the limitations of stimulation at home. |
| 3 | **Learning Planning** | Well-prepared lesson plan ensures that material differentiation is ready before the teaching and learning process begins. | Avoiding equal treatment and adjusting the difficulty level of letter materials for groups of slow children. |
| 4 | **Learning Methods** | The multisensory approach activates various sensory channels (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) to enhance long-term memory retention. | The integration of tone/song and physical movement reduces cognitive overload in early childhood. |
| 5 | **Learning Media** | Concrete media transforms abstract letter symbols into real objects that can be touched and manipulated directly by children. | Children become active subjects in learning, accelerating the association of symbols with letter names. |
| 6 | **Individual Approach** | Classical teaching often overlooks children with slow learning speeds, making personal guidance absolutely necessary. | Short guidance sessions during breaks provide emotional reinforcement and remediation without disturbing the child's psychology. |
| 7 | **Motivation Provision** | Verbal reinforcement mitigates children's disappointment and prevents the emergence of learned helplessness. | An emotionally safe classroom environment encourages children to try again even after making mistakes. |
| 8 | **Learning Evaluation** | Progress in memory is authentically measured from the achievement of book pages (60 Smart Reading Hours) and then summarized in the report card. | Natural process-based assessments avoid the burden of formal test anxiety on children. |
| 9 | **Parental Cooperation** | Direct communication during pick-up and drop-off maintains the continuity of learning between school and home. | Parents are directed to accompany their children in reviewing 1-2 letters every day at home. |
| 10 | **Obstacles & Solutions** | Differences in children's learning speeds stimulate emotional resilience (patience) and flexibility in teachers. | The gradual repetition of vowels to consonants is carried out consistently. |

Table 2 explains the meaning of the findings as well as their implications for classroom practice. Children who confuse similar letters (mirror image) show immature shape discrimination (visual-spatial discrimination), so similar letters should be taught in separate sessions. Difficulties in remembering letters are also influenced by the child's memory and lack of stimulation at home, so the repetition of letter concepts needs to be reinforced more in school. In terms of planning, differentiated lesson plans help teachers avoid equal treatment for all children.

The multisensory method and concrete media make children more active because abstract letters turn into real objects that can be touched, allowing children to connect symbols with their letter names more quickly and not easily become bored. Personal guidance and praise from teachers make children more willing to try again even after making mistakes, and assessment through reading book progress does not create a burden like formal tests. Finally, a child's success in remembering letters requires consistency between learning at school and habituation at home, along with flexible and patient teachers in dealing with diverse classes. These findings are discussed further in the following description.

### 1. Early Detection and Analysis of Factors Affecting Letter Recall

The research results show that teachers detect children's difficulties through direct observation when children are asked to point to or name letters. The most dominant errors are the confusion of symmetrically oriented letters, such as the letters b and d, or p and q, as well as the inability to remember the sounds of letters.

According to Mason's (1980) reading development theory, young children begin the reading stage through three phases: letter and signal recognition, word analysis, and knowledge of letter sounds. The

obstacles found in children aged 5-6 years at the research location are at the first stage. Children have not yet achieved full synchronization between the visual representation of letters, the names of letters, and their sounds. The phenomenon of letter confusion (mirror letters) occurs because children's visual attention span is still limited. As explained by Bosse and Valdois (2009), visual attention capacity plays an important role in the success of distinguishing visual symbol shapes before children can connect them with phoneme sounds.

On the other hand, the analysis of causal factors indicates an interaction between internal and external factors. Internal factors stem from the heterogeneity of working memory capacity and children's interests. External factors are triggered by the lack of parental support at home due to busy work schedules. Therefore, the learning obstacles for young children at the research location are more dominated by the lack of habituation and repetition in the family environment.

**2. Planning and Implementation of Multisensory Methods**

In facing the differences in students' memory capacity, teachers prepare a Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH) based on differentiation. Teachers include specific material adjustments that are more friendly to children with low memory capacity. This step confirms the arguments of Jamaris (2014) and Setiawan (2024), which state that early childhood education should be designed flexibly according to each student's unique learning pace.

In the implementation stage, teachers integrate multisensory methods that combine visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements through singing activities and games. Learning is not conducted abstractly on the blackboard alone, but is wrapped in letter recognition songs and movements. Theoretically, this strategy aligns with the mechanism of visual-verbal association acquisition (Ehm et al., 2019; Warmington & Hulme, 2012). When children see letter symbols (visual), sing their sounds (auditory), and move their bodies (kinesthetic), the brain forms stronger neural connections. This combination prevents cognitive overload and facilitates the transfer of information from short-term memory to long-term memory.

**3. The Utilization of Concrete Media and Individual Approaches**

The use of concrete teaching aids has become an important pillar of the teacher's strategy. Teachers use picture letter cards and actively engage children to hold, show, and match these media in front of the class. According to Astuti et al. (2021), the presence of concrete media is positively correlated with the improvement of children's early reading skills. Direct sensory involvement when holding the media clarifies children's mental representation of letter shapes. Conversely, as found by Setiawan (2024), the absence of educational media during home learning is one of the main triggers for children's failure to recognize letters.

To reach children who are still lagging behind after classical learning is completed, teachers apply an individual approach. Teachers utilize free time or break hours to provide one-on-one personal guidance. This step is a tangible manifestation of differentiated instruction. Through a personal approach, teachers can slow down the teaching pace, revisit complex letter shapes, and provide focused attention without distractions from classmates. Helal and Weil-Barais (2015) emphasize that the individual attention of teachers directly stimulates children's visual attention abilities, which were previously fragmented in a large group setting.

**4. Motivation, Authentic Assessment, and Cooperation of the Tri Center for Education**

The emotional and affective dimensions play a key role in the learning process of early childhood. Teachers consistently provide positive reinforcement in the form of verbal praise ("great"), applause, and emotional encouragement every time a child successfully recognizes letters. According to Anderson (2003) and Pratiwi et al. (2020), learning motivation is the main driver that stimulates children's interest in mastering new material. Providing positive reinforcement directly increases children's self-efficacy and prevents the occurrence of learning anxiety or feelings of inferiority (learned helplessness).

Related to the aspect of learning evaluation, field findings show that teachers apply individual criterion-based assessments of daily achievement. Evaluation does not burden children through formal tests, but is systematically measured from the progress of children's reading ability and letter memory through supplementary reading books (such as the 60 Smart Reading Hours method). These daily development records are continuously accumulated by teachers as the basis for compiling semester learning outcome reports (report

cards). The success criteria of the teacher's strategy are indicated when children no longer merely memorize forms rigidly (hafal cangkem), but are able to recognize and connect visual symbols and letter sounds independently, accurately, and spontaneously.

Finally, the success of the teacher's strategy is supported by intensive communication with parents through WhatsApp message groups and a communication book. The teacher directs parents to continue practicing letter repetition at home and to limit access to gadgets. This synergy between school and home creates continuity in learning. In facing the challenges of varying student comprehension, the teacher responds with pedagogical flexibility: modifying game media to keep it engaging and managing emotions with extra patience. This proves that the teacher's strategy in overcoming difficulties in remembering letters is an integration of the art of teaching, emotional management, and social partnership.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and in-depth discussion, it can be concluded that the teacher's strategy in overcoming difficulties in remembering letters in children aged 5–6 years is implemented through a holistic approach integrated into 4 main pillars:

1. Early Detection, Factor Analysis, Planning, & Multisensory Methods
   The teacher detects children's difficulties early at the visual-sound signal stage, understands the child's internal factors as well as external barriers from gadgets, which are then anticipated through the preparation of differentiated lesson plans and the application of multisensory methods (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and singing to strengthen memory.
2. Utilization of Concrete Media & Individual Remedial Approach:
   Teachers concretize abstract letter symbols through illustrated letter cards to engage children actively, and provide one-on-one personal guidance during breaks to embrace children who learn at a slower pace.
3. Strengthening Motivation, Continuous Authentic Evaluation, & Partnership Synergy:
   Teachers provide positive reinforcement to build children's self-confidence, record daily learning progress based on reading achievement that is accumulated into semester reports, and establish intensive communication with parents.
4. Pedagogical Flexibility & Emotion Regulation:
   Facing classroom ability heterogeneity and field constraints, teachers demonstrate flexibility in strategies by modifying enjoyable educational games and emotional resilience with extra patience.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Rira Iswah Hasanah, Pipit Sundari, Rima Nurhalimah, Syifa Dwi Tama Nurjaman, and Tepi Mulyaniapi collaboratively formulated ideas and determined the research focus on teachers' strategies in overcoming difficulties in remembering letters in children aged 5–6 years. All authors contributed to the development of research instruments based on 10 indicators, data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as analysis of research results. The authors also collaborated in reviewing supporting theories, discussing findings, drawing conclusions, and completing the writing of the article. All authors have discussed and contributed to the preparation of the final manuscript.

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