



## The Use of Content Analysis to Assess *Letterland* Book for Kindergarten Students

Nindya Putri Ariyani✉, Abdurrahman Faridi, Fahrur Rozi

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

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### Abstract

Most of previous researches investigated the use of *Letterland* method in teaching English. However, only few researches concern with the *Letterland* book that have many differences with local story books in Indonesia. This research was aimed to find out how the quality of *Letterland* book refers to listening, reading, and vocabulary skills, language content (topic, subject content and social and culture values) and the effectiveness of *Letterland* book. Content analysis method was applied in this research. There were two instruments which are used in this research, they are : document and interview that involved teachers in Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center. This research used Cunningsworth theory as guidance to analyse the quality of *Letterland* book. The findings showed that listening, reading, vocabulary skills in *Letterland* book are categorized as good book. The language contents of *Letterland* book is qualified as good EFL book criteria. Teachers in Star Kiddy Preschool Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center stated that *Letterland* book is effective to learn English for children. However, there were problems in the implementation of *Letterland* book such as: limited time, new teachers that had not expert on *Letterland* book. Therefore, this research was expected to be the an overview of teachers that learnt English by using *Letterland* book for children.

✉Correspondence Address:  
 Kampus Pascasarjana Unnes Jalan Kelud Utara 3, Semarang  
 E-mail : nindya\_21p@yahoo.com

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## INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to children is totally different from teaching adult. It is not as simple as giving a toy to the children who are crying. It happens because children are unique in their characteristic and have a special way of learning a new thing. They learn directly from their environment not only from their peers but also from the adults. By asking, listening to people around them, and experienced things, they are able to get knowledge. Therefore, as teachers, especially English teachers should know young learners' characteristic and how they learn a foreign language.

The use of story book is method that effective to learn English for children. For some kindergartens that have new curriculum, English Language Teaching (ELT) story books play a very important role. Story book would allow children to feel, think, and experience. Another contributing factor to the attraction is the pictures in the storybooks. These pictures which are related to the text, serve as a tool for the children to understand the meaning and context of the story. They help in retaining children's attention and the big colorful pictures would build up children's interest.

One of story book in teaching EFL is in the form of *Letterland* book. Some teachers use "*Letterland*" book because they think that it was an effective approach to teach young learners. Yaverbaum (2003) insisted "*Letterland* concept is of an invisible, secret place, located somewhere in the written word and inhabited by fictional animals and people". By using *Letterland*, students will learn about sounds by a combination of alphabet letters. They will not only learn about the correct sounds of alphabets but also about how to pronounce the correct sounds in form of words. In addition, students will learn

how to read the stories which relate to the letter in "*Letterland*" and write the letters or words appropriately.

The effectiveness of *Letterland* has been proven by some researches that have been conducted for teaching English. Putri (2015) investigated teaching vocabulary through *Letterland* for Kindergarten. The research was begun by observing two teachers in Bethany Kindergarten School who teach in *Letterland* class. She observed two classes with different teachers. While observing the classes, she recorded how the teachers taught in class to find out the teaching vocabulary technique through *Letterland*. After reviewing teachers' video recording and discover the teaching vocabulary techniques, she interviewed each teacher. As the result, there were four techniques that they used to teaching vocabulary. They are picture, real object, guessing and translation.

Although *Letterland* is believed in to develop children's language skills, most of previous research investigated the using of *Letterland* method in teaching English. They just focused on the implementation of *Letterland* method for kindergartens students. However, only few researches concern with the *Letterland* book that has many differences with local story book in Indonesia. Therefore, this study is initiated to assess how the quality of *Letterland* book conduct listening, reading, and vocabulary, culture, and effectiveness for teaching English.

## METHODS

The researchers had an assumption that teachers have some problems to teach English for children. It was because English is not used in daily conversation for children. Moreover, they had not used the interesting book to introduce English for children. On the other hand, students were bored to teach English. It was because they think English is difficult and boring. In addition, *Letterland* book is written by

the author whom has different culture with Indonesia learners.

In this research, the researchers used content analysis to assess *Letterland* book which the specific thing is in the content analysis. The subject in this research focused on *Letterland* book that used by Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center. In addition, the object of this research focuses on the six points of the analysis textbook, such as: the implementation of language skills (listening, reading, vocabulary), topic, subject content, social value, the advantages and disadvantages of *Letterland* book.

The role of the researchers was as the main research instrument to collect the data. The data source was the materials covered by "Letterland", a book which is used by students in Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center. The book was written by Lyn Wendon. Since the object on this research is a book, so the researcher will do some procedures to collect data.

In collecting data, the researchers conducted some steps as follows: (1) the researcher was as the key instrument for collecting the data and gained more data from the English teacher through interview; (2) the checklists were designed by the researcher to analyze the English textbook based on Cunningsworth theory; (3) the interview guide is used to interview teacher of Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center to obtain more information about the *Letterland* book.

The procedures of data analysis were as follows: (1) analyzing the data based on Cunningsworth theory to find out how much each item of the checklist will be good story book criteria. Evaluation rating scale is chosen as the instrument because the source of the data was in the form of document material. Evaluation rating scale that is used by the researcher is Likert-Scale. Likert Scale is a kind of rating scale that is able to measure the quality of textbook based on several factors by rating it into ordinal level. Each ordinal level has specific position and scoring number

indication. The four categories are poor, fair, good, and excellent. The range of score is started from 10 up to 100. 2) matching the result of findings with the information that is obtained from teacher; (3) finding out how much each item of the checklist that confirmed good story book criteria; and (4) concluding the result of the analysis in the form of percentage which is called the level of suitability that is completed by dividing the number of criteria and fulfill by the story book with the total number of the evaluation criteria and multiply by 100%. The percentage showed whether the *Letterland* book is *Very Good, Good, Fair, and Poor*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Quality of Listening Materials *Letterland* Book for Kindergarten Students

The average of percentage obtains by *Letterland* book reached 58% for listening quality that was categorized as *good*. The highest score of listening material in *Letterland* book is 74%. It evaluates about the use made of the visual medium to provide a meaningful context and show facial expression, gesture in *Letterland* book. It is categorized as *good* score because *Letterland* book use some characters to recognize the alphabets with the sound tricks and gestures.

Meanwhile, the lowest score of listening material in *Letterland* book is 51.25%. It was about pre-listening tasks, question, etc. It could be categorized as *fair* because pre-listening or question that is found in *Letterland* book is not enough to learn listening skill for kindergarten students.

Listening aspect covers seven criteria in which the criteria adopt from Cunningsworth theory. *Letterland* book is categorized good book for Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center students. *Letterland* book is contained specific listening in the course. It also has specific listening passage. Then, *Letterland* book set in a meaningful content for listening

aspect. *Letterland* book has given the pre-listening, question, etc that can assist the students to recognize the alphabets through listening section. The recorded material on audio-cassette like in terms of: sound quality, speed of delivery, accent, and authenticity has already provided by *Letterland* book. *Letterland* book also has video material for listening section. Lastly, *Letterland* book uses the visual medium to provide a meaningful context and show facial expression, gesture.

#### **The Quality of Reading Materials *Letterland* Book for Kindergarten Students**

*Letterland* book gains 67% toward reading materials. It means that *Letterland* book is categorized as *good* book. The highest score of reading materials is 75%. It is categorized as *good* score. It is about the subject matter in *Letterland* book is appropriate for kindergartens. It shows the interesting, challenging, topical, varied, culturally, acceptable, unlikely to date reading materials for children. Meanwhile, the lowest score of reading materials for *Letterland* book is 60%. It is about the emphasis on reading for pleasure and for intellectual satisfaction. It is categorized as *fair* book because *Letterland* book do not emphasize on reading materials for pleasure or intellectual satisfaction.

Reading section got 67% that is categorized good book for Star Kiddy students. There are seven criteria which are based on Cunningsworth theory that indicate the quality of reading materials in *Letterland* book. *Letterland* book uses reading text for introducing new language items (grammar and vocabulary), consolidating language work, etc.) *Letterland* book focuses on the development skills and strategies. Then, the reading materials in *Letterland* book

is linked to other skills work. In *Letterland* book, there is emphasis on reading for pleasure and for intellectual satisfaction. *Letterland* book also has the subject matters which is appropriate (interesting, challenging, topical, varied, culturally, acceptable, unlikely to date). To help comprehension for reading section, *Letterland* book sets the scene, provides background information, and gives pre-reading question. Last, the materials in *Letterland* book involve the learner's knowledge system. *Letterland* book has not used reading text for introducing new language items (grammar and vocabulary), consolidating language work, etc.).

This is different from the result of the study about the use of *Letterland* for reading by Rochmah (2015). Actually, the researchers concluded that in using *Letterland* method related in teaching reading had given the influence to the early stage of reading. However, the researchers found that there were two children who were difficult in focusing the learning. They need more time to identify *Letterland*'s character. For the other children they were in the same range when they were having difficulty to learn the letter sounds by using *Letterland* method.

#### **The Quality of Vocabulary Materials *Letterland* Book for Kindergarten Students**

The quality of vocabulary materials in *Letterland* book obtains 54% and it is categorized as *fair* book. The highest score of vocabulary materials is 71.25%. It is about the material that can enable students to expand their own vocabularies independently by helping them to develop their own learning strategies. It is categorized *good* because *Letterland* book has pictures to help the children explore the vocabularies. Meanwhile, the lowest score of vocabulary materials is 55%. It is about vocabulary-learning material is

included in its own right. It is categorized as *fair* score.

*Letterland* book is categorized fair book for Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center students in vocabulary materials. There are five criteria from Cunningsworth theory that represented the quality of vocabulary materials in *Letterland* book. *Letterland* book includes the vocabulary-learning materials in its own right. Then, there is principle basic for selection vocabulary in *Letterland* book. *Letterland* book also has the distinction between active and passive vocabulary, or classroom vocabulary. Vocabulary materials in *Letterland* book are presented in a structured, purposeful way. Last, the materials in *Letterland* book are enable students to expand their own vocabularies independently by helping them to develop their own learning strategies.

It is supported by Isnaniah (2018) in which the researchers found that the children had been taught by *Letterland* technique will have courage in vocabulary as well. It is because the characters are easy to memorize and friendly for the children. Thus, it also makes the children enthusiastic in learning. It showed that children were very attractive in learning and children can answer the worksheet perfectly. However, the researchers also found that there were still problems in teaching by using *Letterland*. The crowded class is one of the problems, so when the teacher taught in the class there were some of students make a noisy. Though, it can be solved by giving reward to children who still pay attention, because reward is one of the strategies to get children attention.

### ***Letterland* Book Meet the Requirements of Good EFL Book Criteria in Term of Language Content (Topic, Subject Content and Social/ Culture values)**

#### **The Topic and Subject Content**

The language content of *Letterland* book in term of Topic obtains 75.25%. It could be categorized as good book. The highest score of topic is 80% that evaluates about the topics of *Letterland* book. It is categorized good score because the topics in *Letterland* book are

interesting, challenging and motivating for children. Meanwhile, the lowest score of topic is 71.25% that is grouped as good score. It is about the sufficient variety in the topic of *Letterland* book.

From the finding research, topic and subject content of *Letterland* book is categorized good for Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center students. The quality of topic and subject content in *Letterland* book is evaluated by four criteria that adopted from Cunningsworth theory. *Letterland* book has topic that relevant to the young learner's needs as English language learners. Then, topics of textbook in *Letterland* book are interesting, challenging, and motivating for Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center students. In *Letterland* book, there is sufficient variety in the topic. Lastly, *Letterland* book are organized affectively. (e.g. according to topics and skills etc).

#### **The Social and Culture Values**

The average of percentage obtained by *Letterland* book in term of social/ culture values reaches 59%. It is categorized *fair* score. The highest score of social/culture values is 70%. It is categorized as *good* score. It is about the social and cultural contexts in *Letterland* book. In *Letterland* book, the social and cultural contexts are comprehensible to the learners. Meanwhile, the lowest score of social/culture value is 52.5%. It is categorized as *fair* score. It is about women that are given equal prominence to men in all aspects of the *Letterland* book. In *Letterland* book, men are prominent to represent the characters of alphabets in *Letterland* book.

Social and value culture obtains 59% and it is categorised fair book. In this aspect, there are five criteria that indicated the quality of *Letterland* book in social and value culture. The social and cultural contexts of *Letterland* book are comprehensible to the learners. Then, learners can interpret the relationship, behaviour, intentions etc of the characters portrayed in *Letterland* book. Women are given equal prominence to men in all aspects of

*Letterland* book. The characters in *Letterland* book exist in some kind of social setting, within a social network. Lastly, social relationships are portrayed realistically in *Letterland* book.

### **The Effectiveness of *Letterland* Book for Kindergarten Students**

The following description is about the findings of the effectiveness of *Letterland* book for kindergarten students by using observation checklist and interview. This interview uses open-ended questions to explore information about the effectiveness of *Letterland* book. Based on this study, the researcher conducts the observation checklist and interview to explore detailed information about what the differences *Letterland* book from other books and the benefit of *Letterland* book for teaching English.

### **The Differences of *Letterland* Book from Others**

Mrs. Denny said that *Letterland* is more interesting than others. She said that *Letterland* book describes about characters of each letters which has different name, sound, and action trick. On the other hand, other books usually only describe about sound. Furthermore, Mrs. Farida also said that *Letterland* book is interesting. She said that in *Letterland* book, it contains/introduces letter with its characters/name in which children can know it easily. The character of the letter is also has the phonic and sound trick. The children can learn letter by phonic letter and how the letter character sound out with moving their part of body (in which children more often move around). Thus, the letter can understand easily than another letter from others book.

### **The Benefits of *Letterland* Book**

Mrs. Farida said that the benefits of teaching based on *Letterland* book are she can teach more meaningful, because the letter has name/character. It sounds with act, so the children likes to follow it (children likes to move). It means that, learning letter from *Letterland* book easier to understand or to memorize by children. Moreover, the letter has

a story in which children likes to hear the story. In addition, second teacher also said that *Letterland* is more interested than others. The children can recognize the character's name, sound, and action trick in funny way. Teachers can use various materials, sand paper, sand, flash cards and real objects. They also can conduct games to reinforce more about *Letterland*.

In order to find out the effectiveness of *Letterland* book for Star Kiddy Preschool, the researcher also observes the assessment reports of students which assessed some aspects. Those aspects are about how students say the *Letterland* character's name and letter sound in response to letters. Teachers also assess the ability of students to identify images stars with letters, arrange and pronounce the letters independently. From the assessment reports of students, most of them got good scores and it indicated that *Letterland* book assisted the students to recognize the letters.

### **The Effectiveness of *Letterland* Book for Listening Skill**

Listening is basic skill to introduce the new language for young learners. Therefore, *Letterland* book uses videos and audios to introduce letters for students. In Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center, students are recognized about letters by using video about *Letterland* story and song. After they watched the videos about *Letterland*, teachers retold the story and repeated sound tricks of letters in *Letterland* song. For example, teacher told about "Peter Puppy" that represents letter "p". Then, she shows the sound trick of letter "p" with sound "peh...peh... peh" slowly. If the students have understood the letters and sound trick in *Letterland*, teacher gives the words that relate to the letters such as "mmm...monkey" for letter "m".

### **The Effectiveness of *Letterland* Book for Reading Skill**

Basically, *Letterland* book was created by Lyn Wendon in the late 1960's as a way to help students who struggled with learning to read.

By using the unique characters with simple stories, *Letterland* book motivates students to listen, to think and to learn. The stories of *Letterland* book shows letter sounds & shapes and allow students to develop to word building, and reading. In Star Kiddy, students are introduced the characters (a-annie apple, b-bouncy bean, c – clever cat) etc. Then, teacher shows how to sound them and do the action trick. They also guide the students to sound out and imitated the action trick. After that, teacher read the story book, and encouraged students to identify words and pictures that are started with those letters such as: a; apple, ant, arrow, b; ball, boat, bunny, c; cat, cake, cow.

### **The Effectiveness of *Letterland* Book for Introducing New Vocabularies**

*Letterland* book for students in Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center can help them to enrich vocabulary for foundation stage to read can be carried out. *Letterland* book has contains of *Letterlanders* picture which colorful. Each page introduces a new *Letterland* character and repeats the character's letter sound at the start of many words. For introducing the new vocabularies, teacher in Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center shows up characters which it surroundings to everything that start with letter sound. For example, teacher tells a story about "Harry Hat Man" that likes to hammer and shows hammer picture in *Letterland* book. To explain other information about letter "h", teacher also uses the flashcard to gives other relation how the letter exists in some vocabulary outside *Letterland* book.

### **The Problems with the Use of *Letterland* Book**

The researchers also asked teachers of Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center about the problems that are faced by them when they used *Letterland* book in teaching English. Mrs. Farida said that students are confused to distinguish English and Indonesian. When they learn about letters by using *Letterland* book, they are able to understand easily. However, it does not happen when they had to spell or read letters in Indonesian. The students often use

English pronunciation to spell or read Indonesian words. In addition, students are confused to recognize the characters and sounds in *Letterland* book. Thus, teachers have to reinforce characters and sounds in *Letterland* book by using songs, stories, flash card, etc.

Mrs. Denny also said that there are problems with the use of *Letterland* book in Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center. Some teachers in Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center are one of problems with the use of *Letterland*. Some teachers are new in Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center, so they have not understood about *Letterland* book. They have not joined training *Letterland* which held by *Letterland* organization. Therefore, teaching learning process by using *Letterland* book has not effective for students.

Besides, the big problem within the use of *Letterland* book is limited time. Teachers for preschool are not as same as for Junior high school or Senior High school. Teachers have to persuade students to join the class because students often cry or feel sleepy when they go to school. Teachers need additional time to encourage them. Therefore, the use of *Letterland* book cannot be effective because of limited time.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that *Letterland* book is classified as good book for Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center. It can be seen from the level of suitability. The average of percentage obtained by *Letterland* book reaches 58% for listening quality that is categorized as good. Then, *Letterland* book gains 67% toward reading materials. It means that *Letterland* book is categorized as good book. The quality of vocabulary materials in *Letterland* book gains 54% and it is categorized as fair book. After that, the language content of *Letterland* book in term of topic obtains 75.25%. It can be categorized as a good book. Then, the average of percentage obtains by *Letterland* book in term of social/ culture values reaches 59%. It is



categorized fair score. From the interview with teachers in Star Kiddy Preschool and Learning Center, Letterland book is more interested than others. Learning letters from Letterland book easier to understand or to memorize by children. The letter has a story in which children likes to hear the story. In addition, children are able to recognize the character's name, sound, and action trick in funny way.

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