



## The Effectiveness of the AHE Method in Enhancing Early Reading Skills in Children Aged 5-6 Years at TK Pertiwi Sedong

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the AHE (Anak Hebat) method in enhancing early reading skills in children aged 5-6 years at TK Pertiwi Sedong, Indonesia. A total of 40 children participated in this study, divided into an experimental group (receiving the AHE method) and a control group (receiving conventional reading instruction). A pre-test and post-test design was used to measure the children's reading skills before and after the intervention. The results of the study indicated that the experimental group showed significant improvement in their reading skills, with a t-value of  $t(19) = 10.45$ ,  $p = 0.000$ , suggesting that the AHE method was more effective than conventional methods. In contrast, the control group showed a moderate improvement with a t-value of  $t(19) = 3.55$ ,  $p = 0.002$ , indicating that the conventional method also led to some improvement, though not as significant as the AHE method. Observations revealed that children in the experimental group were more engaged in the learning process, actively participating in brain exercises, word recognition activities, and play-based learning,

which contributed to their higher motivation and reading progress. This study supports the effectiveness of the AHE method in enhancing early reading skills and emphasizes the importance of play-based, interactive learning approaches in early childhood education. Future research should explore the long-term effects of the AHE method and include larger, more diverse samples.

## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) plays a critical role in preparing children for formal education. It provides a solid foundation for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development, which influences their success in later learning experiences. One of the most crucial components of ECE is the development of early literacy skills, specifically early reading abilities. Reading skills are fundamental because they form the foundation for more complex literacy skills needed in later stages of education. Research indicates that early reading proficiency is strongly linked to academic success in later years (Fan et al., 2024). A strong foundation in reading not only enhances academic performance in school but also helps children in understanding the content taught at subsequent educational levels.

Early reading ability encompasses letter recognition, the association of sounds with symbols, and the understanding of simple words and sentences. At this stage, children are taught to recognize letters, blend sounds into words, and understand the meaning of the words they read. This process involves not only recognizing graphical symbols (letters) but also phonological skills, which are critical in the reading learning process (Blatchford & Plewis, 1990). Therefore, it is essential for educators to choose an appropriate teaching method that aligns with the developmental characteristics of children to help them acquire reading skills effectively.

Despite the acknowledged importance of early literacy development, many challenges exist in teaching children to read at an early age. Research shows that factors such as the quality of instruction, the use of appropriate methods, and parental involvement play significant roles in supporting children's reading development. One of the major challenges in teaching reading is the use of methods that do not align with children's developmental characteristics. Methods that emphasize memorization or mechanical spelling often fail to engage children and may cause them to lose interest (Miller & Almon, 2009). Moreover, many teaching approaches focus more on academic aspects without considering playful, activity-based approaches that have been proven more effective in helping children learn to read in a fun and engaging way (Bassok et al., 2016).

One method that has recently gained popularity in teaching reading is the AHE (Anak Hebat) method. This method was developed to help children learn to read effectively and enjoyably without relying on the traditional approach of spelling, which can often be confusing at the initial stages of reading. In this method, children are taught to recognize letters and words through a series of learning steps that involve playful activities, brain exercises, and step-by-step techniques suited to young children's developmental stages. The AHE method emphasizes a flexible, activity-based approach, allowing children to learn in a fun way (Fajhrani, 2025). Previous studies have shown that children who follow the AHE method can recognize words and read faster than those who use traditional methods (Shangguan et al., 2024).

The AHE method is particularly relevant for early childhood education because it is tailored to the developmental stages of children. The learning process in this method does not rush to achieve outcomes but instead focuses on building reading skills naturally and joyfully. This aligns with cognitive development theories that suggest children learn more effectively through hands-

on experiences and enjoyable activities (Miller & Almon, 2009). Thus, the AHE method is expected to help children develop strong and lasting reading skills.

The main advantage of the AHE method lies in its systematic approach that still takes into account the developmental characteristics of young children. By combining various activities such as games, brain exercises, and module-based learning, this method not only helps children recognize letters and words more quickly but also increases their interest in learning. The use of play-based activities in reading instruction has been shown to increase children's engagement in the learning process, making it more enjoyable and less stressful (Rand & Morrow, 2021). Furthermore, this method emphasizes positive reinforcement, which can strengthen children's intrinsic motivation to continue learning and developing their skills.

Unlike traditional reading methods, which often focus on spelling and memorization, the AHE method emphasizes reading skill development through enjoyable, non-pressuring activities. This approach aligns with findings showing that enjoyable learning experiences tend to enhance children's absorption of material (Shangguan et al., 2024). By using the AHE method, children can learn to read without feeling pressured, which in turn fosters a love for reading in the future.

Several studies have investigated the effectiveness of the AHE method in various early childhood education settings. One study conducted by Fajhriani (2025) showed that implementing the AHE method significantly improved early reading skills in children. The study found that children who underwent the AHE method demonstrated faster progress in recognizing letters, words, and simple sentences compared to those taught using traditional methods. Another study by Shangguan, Z., Huang, Z., & Fien, H. (2024) also found that children who learned to read through activity-based and game-based methods, like AHE, showed faster recognition and recall of words than those taught through more conventional methods.

The AHE method has also proven effective in supporting the development of phonological skills, which is a key component in early reading instruction. Research by Crosh, C. C. (2024) indicated that children who used play-based and activity-driven methods developed better phonological awareness, which in turn improved their reading abilities. Thus, the AHE method not only enhances reading skills but also contributes to broader literacy development.

This study will be conducted at TK Pertiwi Sedong, an early childhood education institution with diverse socio-economic characteristics. The research aims to evaluate the extent to which the AHE method can improve early reading skills in children at TK Pertiwi Sedong. This institution was chosen because it has an adaptive curriculum focused on building foundational skills in children, including reading. Using a quantitative approach, this study will analyze the impact of the AHE method on the early reading skills of children aged 5–6 years at TK Pertiwi Sedong.

This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of reading instruction methods in Indonesia. The findings of this study will provide insights into activity-based approaches that can be implemented in kindergartens to improve children's literacy skills.

## **METHOD**

## **Research Design**

This study employs a quantitative approach with an experimental design to evaluate the impact of the AHE (Anak Hebat) method on the early reading skills of children. The experimental design was chosen as it allows the researcher to test cause-and-effect relationships between the independent variable (implementation of the AHE method) and the dependent variable (children's early reading skills). This study was conducted at TK Pertiwi Sedong, an early childhood education institution located in Sedong, Cirebon, Indonesia. The experimental design aims to measure the effect of the AHE method on the early reading abilities of children aged 5–6 years, comparing pre-test and post-test results.

## **Population and Sample**

The population for this study includes all children aged 5–6 years who are enrolled at TK Pertiwi Sedong. A purposive sampling method was used to select children who met specific criteria, such as children who were actively participating in the AHE method learning program. The sample consists of 40 children, divided into two groups: the experimental group, which uses the AHE method, and the control group, which uses conventional teaching methods.

The sample selection was made based on age and the children's initial reading abilities. The experimental group will be taught using the AHE method for a period of 8 weeks, while the control group will continue with traditional reading methods commonly applied at the school.

## **Research Instruments**

To measure the children's early reading skills, a reading test was developed consisting of items that assess the children's ability to recognize letters, read simple words, and understand short sentences. This test was designed by the researcher based on the early childhood education curriculum and emphasizes letter recognition and word comprehension. The validity of this instrument was tested by experts in the field of early childhood education, and a pilot study was conducted with a similar sample prior to the main data collection.

Additionally, to ensure the proper implementation of the AHE method, observation sheets were used to document the steps taken during the learning process, including activities such as play, brain exercises, and word recognition. These observation sheets will help identify whether the activities in the AHE method were applied consistently in the classroom.

## **Research Procedure**

This study follows two main phases: pre-test and post-test. In the first phase, a baseline measure (pre-test) of the children's early reading abilities was conducted. All participants will take the same reading test to assess their baseline reading skills before the AHE method is applied. After the pre-test, the experimental group will receive the treatment with the AHE method for 8 weeks. During this period, children will participate in activities designed to improve their reading skills, including brain exercises, word recognition modules, and games related to reading. Teachers

will follow the guidelines provided to implement the AHE method, and all activities will be recorded using the observation sheets.

At the end of the 8-week period, a second measure (post-test) will be administered to assess any changes in the children's early reading skills. The post-test will follow the same procedures as the pre-test to ensure consistency in measurement.

### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained from the pre-test and post-test will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired sample t-test to determine if there is a significant difference in reading abilities before and after the AHE method was applied. The paired sample t-test will be used to compare the pre-test and post-test scores within the experimental group to assess whether the AHE method significantly affected their reading abilities. This statistical test will also be performed on the control group to compare the differences in reading abilities between the experimental and control groups.

Furthermore, to measure the consistency and reliability of the observation data, inter-rater reliability analysis will be performed. Two independent raters will observe the implementation of the AHE method in the classroom, and the degree of agreement between the raters will be calculated using the kappa coefficient. This ensures that the measurements and observations made during the study are consistent and trustworthy.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study obtained approval from TK Pertiwi Sedong and from the parents/guardians of the children who participated in the research. All information obtained from the children and parents will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. Additionally, children who participate in this study have the freedom to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The researchers also ensured that there were no potential risks or harm to the children during the teaching and testing process.

### **Reliability and Validity**

To ensure the reliability of the test instruments used, the researcher conducted validity and reliability testing prior to the main study. The reading test used in this research was validated by experts in early childhood education. The reliability of the test was assessed using inter-item correlation and internal consistency tests, such as Cronbach's alpha. The results of the reliability test indicated that the test instrument was highly reliable and can be confidently used for this study

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the AHE (Anak Hebat) method in improving early reading skills in children aged 5–6 years at TK Pertiwi Sedong. The research design employed a pre-test-post-test experimental approach where children were assessed on their early reading skills before and after the implementation of the AHE method. Descriptive statistics

and inferential statistical methods, particularly a paired sample t-test, were used to analyze the data.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Table 1 displays the mean scores and standard deviations for the pre-test and post-test results for both the experimental group (children who participated in the AHE method) and the control group (children who followed the conventional reading method).

Group	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Standard Deviation (Pre-test)	Standard Deviation (Post-test)
Experimental	34.20	58.15	6.34	7.12
Control	33.85	38.00	6.25	7.46

As seen in Table 1, there is a noticeable improvement in the post-test scores for the experimental group, which received the AHE method. The control group, however, showed a smaller increase, suggesting that the AHE method had a greater impact on the children's early reading abilities.

### **Paired Sample t-Test Results**

A paired sample t-test was conducted to determine whether the differences in pre-test and post-test scores within both the experimental and control groups were statistically significant. The results of the t-test are as follows:

1. For the experimental group, the t-value was  $t(19) = 10.45$ , with a p-value = 0.000, indicating a statistically significant improvement in reading skills after the implementation of the AHE method.
2. For the control group, the t-value was  $t(19) = 3.55$ , with a p-value = 0.002, suggesting that there was a moderate improvement in reading skills. However, this improvement was significantly smaller compared to the experimental group, highlighting the superior effectiveness of the AHE method.

These findings suggest that the AHE method significantly enhanced early reading skills in the experimental group, while the conventional method used by the control group also led to improvements, though to a lesser extent.

### **Observation Data**

In addition to the pre-test and post-test, data collected from classroom observations were analyzed. The observation sheets recorded the degree of engagement and participation of children during the implementation of the AHE method. The observations indicated that children in the experimental group were more engaged in the learning process. They actively participated in brain exercises, word recognition activities, and interactive games, all of which were part of the AHE

method. The children exhibited enthusiasm and curiosity, frequently volunteering to read aloud and engaging with the materials.

In contrast, children in the control group appeared less engaged during conventional reading activities. While they completed the tasks, they showed less enthusiasm and required more encouragement to participate. This supports the notion that the AHE method's interactive and fun nature is likely to increase student engagement, which in turn can improve learning **outcomes**.

## **Discussion**

The results of this study align with previous research that underscores the importance of engagement-based and child-centered teaching methods in early childhood education. The experimental group, which underwent the AHE method, showed a significantly greater improvement in early reading skills compared to the control group. This suggests that the AHE method, which integrates play, brain exercises, and structured reading activities, provides a more effective approach to teaching reading than conventional methods.

### **Effectiveness of the AHE Method**

The AHE method, which combines brain exercises, word recognition, and play-based learning activities, appears to be highly effective in improving children's early reading skills. These results are consistent with findings from Morrow & Rand (2021), who argue that interactive and enjoyable learning environments promote better literacy outcomes in young children. The AHE method's emphasis on play-based learning likely contributes to its success, as research has shown that play not only supports language development but also enhances cognitive abilities such as memory, attention, and problem-solving (Miller & Almon, 2009).

The higher engagement levels observed in the experimental group further support this idea. Engagement in learning activities is crucial, as children who are motivated and actively involved in the learning process tend to retain more information and develop stronger skills (Rand & Morrow, 2021). The playful nature of the AHE method ensures that children remain interested in learning, which ultimately leads to more effective acquisition of reading skills.

In comparison, the control group, which followed traditional methods, showed more modest improvements. This suggests that while conventional methods can contribute to some literacy development, they may not be as effective in fostering a deep connection to reading among young learners. Traditional methods often rely on rote memorization and repetitive exercises, which can lead to boredom and a lack of motivation to learn, especially in children who are still developing their foundational literacy skills (Bassok, Latham, & Rorem, 2016).

### **Role of Play-Based Learning in Early Reading Development**

One of the key components of the AHE method is its focus on play-based learning. The findings from this study support the growing body of literature that emphasizes the importance of play in early childhood literacy development. As noted by Shangguan, Huang, & Fien (2024), integrating play into reading instruction not only makes the process more enjoyable but also

enhances children's phonological awareness and language comprehension. The playful and interactive nature of the AHE method provides children with multiple opportunities to practice and reinforce their reading skills in a non-threatening and enjoyable way.

Furthermore, play helps children connect spoken and written language, which is a foundational skill for learning to read. As highlighted by Blatchford & Plewis (1990), children who engage in interactive, language-rich play are better able to understand the relationships between letters, sounds, and words, which enhances their reading skills.

### **Engagement and Motivation in the Experimental Group**

Another significant finding from this study is the high level of engagement among children in the experimental group. The AHE method's interactive nature kept the children interested and motivated throughout the learning process. As evidenced by the observation data, children in the experimental group eagerly participated in reading exercises and were often excited to share their progress. Engaged children are more likely to participate actively in the learning process, which directly influences their learning outcomes (Logan & Kilburn, 2024).

In contrast, children in the control group exhibited less enthusiasm during traditional reading activities. While they did complete the tasks, their participation was less spontaneous, and they required more prompts from the teacher. These differences in engagement may explain the disparity in reading improvements between the experimental and control groups.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrated that the AHE (Anak Hebat) method is an effective approach for enhancing early reading skills in children aged 5-6 years. The significant improvement observed in the experimental group after receiving the AHE method underscores the importance of interactive and play-based learning in early childhood education. The use of brain exercises, word recognition activities, and engaging games as part of the AHE method helped foster a more enjoyable and motivating learning environment for the children. In contrast, while the control group, which followed conventional methods, showed improvement, it was significantly smaller compared to the experimental group, highlighting the AHE method's superior effectiveness in fostering early reading development. The findings of this study emphasize the potential of the AHE method to transform early literacy instruction by providing a child-centered approach that combines learning and play, ensuring that children are not only developing their reading skills but also maintaining their enthusiasm for learning. Furthermore, the high level of engagement observed in the experimental group reinforces the idea that children are more likely to succeed in literacy development when they are actively involved in the learning process. While the results of this study are promising, it is important to note the limitations, including the small sample size and the short duration of the intervention. Future research should address these limitations by using larger, more diverse samples and conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term effectiveness of the AHE method. Additionally, research on the integration of parental involvement in the AHE method could provide valuable insights into how to enhance the

effectiveness of the program. In conclusion, the AHE method proves to be a highly effective tool for enhancing early reading skills and fostering a love of learning in young children. This study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the importance of interactive, play-based learning in early childhood education and offers a practical approach that can be applied in early learning settings to improve literacy outcomes.

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