# Utilization of 'Counting Box’ Media in Addition and Subtraction Word Problems for First Grade Elementary School Students 

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#### Abstract

This research aims to describe the effect of using counting box media in addition and subtraction story questions on the ability to understand concepts in grade 1 students at UPT SD Negeri 29 Gresik and the obstacles to its use. This study used descriptive qualitative method. Data collection in this research was carried out by interviews with class teachers and class 1 students, observations, concept understanding tests and also documentation. The data was analyzed in 3 stages, namely data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions. Testing the validity of the researcher's data uses technical triangulation and source triangulation. The results of this research show that the use of counting box media can have a positive effect on grade 1 elementary school students. The effect can be seen from the results of students' ability tests which have increased compared to before using the counting box media, students' enthusiasm becomes high when learning mathematics using the counting box media. This media also makes it easier for students to solve story problems on addition and subtraction of numbers 1-10. However, there were 2 obstacles experienced by students when using counting box media, including the container for holding objects that was not large enough, the cartoon image used as a marker of the subject's identity in the questions was vulnerable to falling off the glass.


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## INTRODUCTION

A human right whose ownership is absolute for all humans is education. Education is one of children's human rights which they obtain from the moment they are born as human beings (Jatiningsih et al., 2021). Without education, society will have difficulty developing and become backward. Through education, people can become better and more skilled. education will continue to be provided because education knows no time and time is a process that lasts throughout human life. A very important discipline in everyday life and in the fields of science and technology is mathematics. Mathematics must be studied to communicate with other fields (Amelia et al., 2022). Mathematics also makes it possible to study structures and patterns ranging from undefined to complex elements. Every element in mathematics is interconnected and is an important component from basic to advanced level (Suwijaya \& Denpasar, 2021).

Learning mathematics requires efforts to provide a general overview of the importance of learning mathematics, such as providing wider access for students to see things in everyday life that apply the
principles of mathematical theory (Suwijaya \& Denpasar, 2021). Another point of view states that the use of mathematics as a means of presenting and applying theory in learning (Gagne, 1970). Based on the Minister of Education and Culture's regulation number 22 of 2016, one of the objectives of learning mathematics is to solve problems, which includes the ability to understand the problem, build a solution model, and complete the model with the correct solution. In this case, mathematics can develop and train human thinking abilities logically, structured and analytically (Suwijaya \& Denpasar, 2021). Implementation of mathematics from certain fields and theories that can be optimized through mathematics learning in elementary schools.

Understanding a concept is also needed in learning mathematics (Nisa' \& Sari, 2022). The ideas involved in the study of mathematics are all interconnected. When students learn one concept, they must also learn other concepts. This is referred to as computational connections, and refers to students' ability to connect one concept to another (Kenedi et al., 2019). Mathematics is the source of all knowledge and is a very important form of learning, because almost every day the application of basic concepts in mathematics is often used. Studying concepts must be the main thing in studying mathematics, because concepts are the basis that students must understand. According to Andamon \& Tan (2018) students want to know about the relationship between mathematical concepts and learning. Therefore, the role of teachers, government and students is very necessary and considered so that the objectives of mathematics learning can be conveyed to students without any misconceptions.

In reality, there are several obstacles that students face when learning a concept. The root of the problem is not only a lack of intelligence or failure in learning mathematics, one of the causes is the application of the wrong learning method. This has a big influence on students' low competence, for example in understanding concepts. According to (Al-Mutawah et al., 2019) teaching reforms are needed to increase conceptual understanding among students and reduce memorizing information or formulas. Learning methods that do not involve students in constructing their knowledge using real objects (media), students experience difficulty in understanding mathematical concepts (Isnaniah \& Imamuddin, 2020). Students should actively construct their knowledge through the use of concrete objects (media). If some of the problems found are not immediately addressed, an imbalance will occur which is associated with impaired cognitive processes, making it more difficult for students to digest and receive knowledge or information (Luttenberger et al., 2018). In elementary schools, this problem must be addressed immediately so that it does not have an impact on the next level, because mathematics plays a very necessary role in daily activities.

Based on observations and interviews conducted by researchers at UPT SD Negeri 29 Gresik, there are several first-grade elementary school students who face difficulties in solving mathematical problems 110 in the form of story problems. The results demonstrate that $52.9 \%$ of the total students in Grade I scored $\leq$ 60 , indicating that the students' understanding of the concepts in story problems related to addition and subtraction is still relatively low. Students still struggle to comprehend the words used in story problems, hence, both teachers and researchers must utilize everyday language when presenting story problems to facilitate easier comprehension among students. It would be more beneficial if the implementation of addition and subtraction concepts is presented through tangible objects so that conceptual understanding can be effectively applied. This is supported by the use of varied teaching methods to enhance learning effectiveness and creativity, resulting in greater student learning outcomes (Nugroho \& Shodikin, 2018). On the other hand, students also exhibit low interest in learning mathematics. Despite the crucial role of mathematics, some students perceive it as one of the most challenging subjects (Octavyanti \& Wulandari, 2021). Further examination reveals that students' interest significantly influences their learning efforts. Suboptimal learning efforts can lead to a decline in mathematical abilities across all aspects. Research by Rambe \& Afri, 2020) reveals Indonesia's performance, based on data from Puspendik (2016), scored 379. According to a study conducted by (Nisa' \& Sari, 2022), based on Trends in International Mathematics and

Science Study (TIMSS) data from 2015, Indonesian students performed poorly in mathematics, ranking 45th out of 50 countries.

Based on this data, it can be concluded that mastery of the subject of mathematics in Indonesia is still relatively low. This is attributed to various factors, both from teachers and students. There is a need for actions or efforts to prevent mathematics from being underestimated by some students, as mathematical learning is applied or implemented almost daily. Mathematics teaching must undergo changes in strategies and methods to create an enjoyable learning environment for students. Therefore, teachers must innovate in the teaching system, such as using instructional media, which can be utilized as one of the variations in the teaching system.

The use of effective, innovative, and creative instructional media is believed to enhance student learning outcomes and interests, as well as change students' perceptions that mathematics is difficult and uninteresting (Nurrita, 2018). There are several types of instructional media, including visual, auditory, and audiovisual media (Rahma, 2019). Furthermore, the utilization of instructional media is believed to assist students in mastering the subjects offered (Witanta et al., 2019). This is also supported by Baroditus \& Bahtiar (2019) stating that to create enjoyable and inspiring learning, teachers must adopt new teaching methods, one of which is using innovative teaching approaches and creative instructional media. The use of instructional media as a supporting tool in the learning process can enhance students' conceptual understanding, thus altering students' perceptions of mathematics as a difficult subject. Therefore, the selection of instructional media must be tailored to students' characteristics to ensure their needs are met, and instructional materials are effectively conveyed.

Several studies have been conducted, such as one by Komar Sapto Rini in 2021 titled "Application of Question Card Method in Improving the Ability to Solve Mathematical Story Problems for Grade VI Students of SDN Tuggulrejo Gabus Grobogan," which found that playing question cards can enhance learning activities and the ability to solve mathematical story problems. Additionally, a study by Agustin Arianti Uswatun Kasanah and Hanik Yuni Alfiyah in 2023 titled "Development of Instructional Media 'Counting Box' to Improve Mathematics Learning Outcomes on Addition and Subtraction Story Problems for Grade III MI/Elementary School" concluded that the Counting Box instructional media, containing story problems, is suitable for use as a learning aid. Furthermore, research by Ikhwatul Mujahadah in 2021 titled "Development of Comic Instructional Media to Improve Mathematics Learning Outcomes and Interest for Grade III Students of SD Muhammadiyah Malawili" stated that the developed Comic Mathematics instructional media for mathematics learning is suitable for use.

Other researchers focusing on the topic of "counting boxes" as instructional media have also demonstrated its advantages. These include the ability to learn while playing to create enjoyable activities and stimulate all aspects of children's development (Sari \& Aryani, 2023). Explaining in his research that counting box media can improve student learning outcomes. Uswa \& Alfiyah (2023). Apart from that, the counting box learning media is very good and contemporary because the media used makes it easier for students to calculate addition and subtraction, the media used is in concrete form (Kartini, 2021). This aligns with the notion that counting box instructional media for story problems are suitable for use as support in the learning process, meeting students' needs in critical thinking, problem-solving, and integrating knowledge with experience (Kasanah \& Alfiyah, 2023). Previous studies have illustrated the validity of using instructional media and its impact on enhancing students' learning interest and outcomes, yet challenges in its usage have not been extensively explored.

Given this background, this research aims to describe the influence of using counting box media on story problems related to addition and subtraction concepts on the comprehension abilities of Grade I
students at UPT SD Negeri 29 Gresik and the challenges in its usage. Through this research, empirical evidence supporting the use of counting box media as an effective instructional strategy in the context of elementary school mathematics education is hoped to be uncovered.

## Implementation of Counting Box Media in Learning

When using the counting box media, students will first watch a learning video prepared by the teacher regarding addition and subtraction of numbers 1-10. This is also in line with research from Basori (2019) that videos that have positive values can indirectly influence children's thinking patterns and encourage them to apply positive concepts. Videos can also increase learning interest and imagination. Learning materials can help children develop their imagination. After watching the learning video, the next activity is for students and the teacher to review the video that has been watched. Then the teacher also gives students the opportunity to ask questions if there is something they don't understand. Question and answer activities can help students improve creative and critical thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Hasanah, 2022). After that, students listened again to the teacher's explanation regarding examples of using counting box media.

The teacher appealed to students to gather and listen to how to use the counting box media so that when operating it there would be no mistakes in the process of using it. After listening to the teacher's explanation with a duration of approximately 5 minutes, the next stage is that students gather in groups that have been divided by the teacher. The number of students who took part in the research was 14 students. In the research, learning was divided into 5 groups in groups 1 to 4 with each number of members being 3 students, but group 5 consisted of 2 group members with the aim of learning from each other. Group activities allow students to actively interact with the surrounding environment and their peers, and are a means of expanding students' knowledge siswa (Isminiati, 2008)


Picture 1. Counting Box Media
When using small group and individual teaching skills, teachers can pay attention to various student needs and assist groups or individuals in participating in learning activities using teaching skills (Anitah, 2013). After everyone has gathered with their group, each group representative is encouraged to take one counting box media. and also 1 parcel which contains concrete objects, namely candy, marbles and pencils which have been prepared by the teacher. Lower grade students have a more concrete understanding, so studying
concepts in abstract form will make it more difficult for them to understand them. Therefore, it is better to teach using real or concrete objects or props (Ninawati et al., 2022).

Then the teacher distributes worksheets to each group. After that, students pay attention to the instructions given by the teacher before starting to work on questions on the counting box media. And the teacher informs that the processing time for each question is 3 minutes. The next stage is that students work on the first number of questions by discussing with their group. This is a way to encourage students to learn together and be guided by peers in sharing knowledge, helping each other, and creating a comfortable environment in the learning process to express opinions and ask questions when experiencing difficulties (Munthe \& Naibaho, 2019). So in answering questions Each group must go through two processes, namely first the answer is written in the answer box, then the sticky note is torn off and pasted on the group worksheet.

When answering questions, students also apply their understanding of the concepts of addition and subtraction through concrete objects in accordance with story problem number 1. For example, in question number 1 on the group worksheet, "Rudi had 4 pencils, then bought 3 more pencils. How many pencils does Rudi have now?" To answer question number 1, the first step taken by students is to read the story questions first, then students take the pencils that are available in each group. If the question indicates the subject is Rudi, students take 4 pencils and then put them in Rudi's glass. The next sentence in the story question states that if Rudi bought 3 more pencils, it means the students took 3 pencils back to put in Rudi's glass. Then, when finished, the students counted the number of pencils in Rudi's glass. After knowing the answer, students can write the results of the discussion on the answer in the answer box or paper on the counting box media. Finally, after writing their answers, students tear off the sticky note paper and then stick it on a group worksheet.

After completing the 3 minute duration of answering questions, students show the results of their work to the teacher. Then the teacher checks the results of each group's work. And the teacher also assesses the score obtained on the first question. After completion, each group is invited to answer question number 2 with the same duration and method of using media. After that, the teacher checks the results of each group's answers again and gives an assessment. Then, after completion, each group works on questions number 3-5.

## The Influence of Counting Box Media

When using counting box media, the influence of the media used by students can be said to have a positive effect. Students who initially found it difficult to understand the meaning of addition and subtraction questions in story form became more helpful. Learning media can inspire children to learn and interact with their environment and reality, which leads to positive outcomes (Vikagustanti et al., 2014). On the other hand, students' responses to using the counting box were also good. This can be seen when learning begins. When students listened to the teacher delivering learning material accompanied by the use of aids/displays such as counting boxes, students responded with high enthusiasm. This is proven by the research and development carried out by Restari (2023) that the average result of the large group of student response questionnaires was $89 \%$, which means that the Counting Box media was categorized or received very good responses from students.

The class teacher in his interview also said that class 1 students prefer and are more enthusiastic about learning when using learning media, especially when the learning media used is concrete media so that it can increase students' understanding. This is also in line with research conducted by Setyowati (2023) that the use of concrete media can effectively improve students' understanding of mathematics. This means they can practice directly how situations occur in real conditions. Students no longer think about abstract things but students can think logically.

Then during the media the counting box was opened and shown to all students. Students began to ask what the media was used for, how to use it and other questions expressed as a form of their curiosity about the counting box media that would be used. Learning activeness refers to student involvement in the learning process, including asking questions, expressing opinions, completing assignments, responding to teacher questions, and collaborating with friends and other students (Harsanti \& Lathifah, 2023). When the teacher explains the use of counting box media, all students begin to observe and begin to understand what the teacher has conveyed. Before students work in groups, the teacher gives students examples of questions that will be practiced. The examples of questions used are almost the same as the student worksheets that students will work on later. The number of questions given by the teacher to students is 2 questions.

Next, before starting work, the teacher asks if there is anything that the students don't understand or don't understand. After that, students gather in groups that have been divided by the teacher, there are 5 groups that have been prepared with the aim that these groups can be evenly distributed, meaning students can learn with their group members. Then when they started working by discussing with their groups, the students looked more challenged when the working time was given a limit ( 3 minutes duration for each question), but before the time ended each group had finished the questions. So, according to students, the answer to this question can be done through discussion, which ultimately makes it easier and more exciting for students to answer the question. This is also consistent with research from Sarjiyati (2017) which shows that when there is a question, group members compete to answer it. Group members compete to answer questions. Group members motivate passive students to act and share ideas.

For every question, the teacher will check each group's answer regarding understanding of the concept of addition and subtraction which is implemented through concrete objects such as pencils, candy and marbles. While checking each answer, the teacher also fills in the student worksheet assessment sheet which is carried out in groups. This is done so that each question that has been completed can be given a grade and if someone makes an error, an answer will be given at the end of the lesson. However, the answer key is not given directly to students, but waits for the group to present the answer correctly. This opinion is also in line with research from Asri \& Noer (2015 which states that students must use the tools and information provided by the teacher to solve problems or learn new concepts, foster creativity and gain new knowledge. This aims to anticipate incidents if there are several groups who are not correct in answering, they can see the results of the correct answers by looking at the work process of the groups that have presented the correct answers.

Each group must work on the LKPD that has been distributed, which consists of 5 questions in it. After all questions have been answered, the group representative collects the group worksheet to the teacher. After looking at the group test results, the results were very satisfactory, namely all groups got a score of 100. This means that all groups had completed the answers and understood the concepts with the help of concrete objects correctly. This is also supported by research by Sari \& Aryani (2023) that counting activities using counting box learning aids can help students improve their understanding of counting, or numbers.

From the results of the LKPD work, the effect of using counting box media was proven again by the post-test results with a higher percentage of scores compared to the pre-test. Based on data obtained from the results of the concept understanding test which was taken by 14 grade 1 elementary school students, of which there were 7 male students and 7 female students on Thursday, January 11 2024. The following are the results of the pre-test and also the post-test Class 1 students' understanding of concepts when using counting box media:

Table 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

| No | Student's Name | Result | Pre Test |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  | 100 | Post test |
| 1. | AGPAM | 40 | 80 |
| 2. | AAR | 60 | 100 |
| 3. | ASR | 80 | 80 |
| 4. | APR | 60 | 80 |
| 5. | ADS | 60 | 80 |
| 6. | ART | 60 | 80 |
| 7. | DPS | 60 | 80 |
| 8. | MRAP | 40 | 60 |
| 9. | NAAC | 100 | 100 |
| 10. | NFA | 80 | 80 |
| 11. | RPA | 100 | 100 |
| 12. | KAI | 80 | 100 |
| 13. |  | 60 | 60 |
| 14. |  | $\mathbf{6 0}$ | 80 |
| Modus |  | $\mathbf{7 7 , 1 \%}$ | $\mathbf{8 0}$ |
| Persenta |  |  | $\mathbf{8 8 , 5} \%$ |
| ge |  |  |  |

Based on the table data on the results of the scores obtained from the pre-test and also the post-test on the understanding of concepts in story questions on addition and subtraction material by class 1 students above, it can be seen that when carrying out the pre-test the lowest score obtained by students was 40 , the highest score obtained by students namely 100 , while the mode or score most often obtained by students is 60 , meaning that students in terms of understanding the concept of addition and subtraction material are still relatively low. Then, when the post test was carried out, there were several students who experienced a decrease, stability and also an increase. The lowest score obtained by students after taking the post-test was 60 , then the student who got the highest score was 100. Meanwhile, the mode or score most often obtained by students after taking the post-test was 80 , which means that the score obtained was students' understanding of concepts in addition and subtraction material. experienced an increase after using the counting box media. So, it can be concluded that the use of counting box media can have a positive effect on story questions on addition and subtraction material. Positive influence means that the counting box media used can have a good impact or positive impact on students, especially in addition and subtraction of numbers 1-10. Uswa \& Alfiyah (2023) Explain in their research that counting box media can improve student learning outcomes. This is also in line with research by Kartini (2021) that the media used makes counting addition and subtraction easier for students, helps students because the discussion of counting is detailed and easy to understand, and allows students to focus on counting because it is not too complicated.

## Obstacles and Solutions in the Implementation of Counting Box Media

Based on the results of observations and interviews, there are several obstacles that occur when using counting box media in addition and subtraction story questions. The obstacles experienced by students include the container holding objects that are not large enough, as a result, when students put large objects, such as candy, into the container (paper cup), the candy cannot fit completely. The second obstacle lies in the fact that the cartoon image used as a marker of the subject's identity in the question is prone to coming off the glass, this is because the adhesive is not compatible with slippery marker images. Even though there were
several obstacles, the learning process continued as it should. Students continue to answer questions from the group LKPD by discussing with each other. In line with research Riskawati (2020), achieving learning objectives can be hampered by factors such as human resources, materials, equipment and procedures that hinder teachers and students in processing knowledge, skills and attitudes during implementation.

Obstacles that occur can be overcome well, because learning can proceed according to plan. However, the notes above can be used as a reference for later use of counting box media. So in conclusion, there are several obstacles that occur when learning about the use of counting box media in addition and subtraction story problems. However, the obstacles above can be overcome with several solution options. The first solution is related to the first obstacle, namely if the candy cannot all fit into the glass, the solution given is by enlarging the container or by stacking the candy in an upward layer. The second obstacle, namely cartoon images that are not attached to each glass, can be overcome by providing additional adhesive or providing adhesive that is more compatible with several cartoon images.

From several obstacles that occur when using counting box media, it can be concluded that several of these obstacles require solutions to overcome them. The solutions designed have also been implemented well when overcoming obstacles when they occur. so that learning can run as it should and students can also continue activities carried out together with their groups.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the use of counting box media can have a positive effect on grade 1 elementary school students. The effect can be seen from the results of students' ability tests which have increased compared to before using the counting box media, students' enthusiasm becomes high when learning mathematics using the counting box media. This media also makes it easier for students to solve story problems on addition and subtraction of numbers 1-10. However, there are several obstacles experienced by students when using counting box media, namely the container for holding objects that is not large enough, as a result, when students put large objects, such as candy, into the container (glass), the candy cannot enter completely. The second obstacle lies in the cartoon image used as a marker of the subject's identity in the question of being vulnerable to falling out of the glass, however both obstacles can be overcome and learning continues effectively.

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