

THE USE OF LETTER CARD MEDIA IN IMPROVING BEGINNING READING SKILLS OF GRADE II STUDENTS AT MIS AL-ANWAR PRIVATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MEDAN

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve the beginning reading skills of Grade II students at MIS Al-Anwar Private Elementary School Medan through the use of letter card media. Letter card media was chosen because it can attract students' attention, help them recognize letters, and enable them to form words into meaningful reading. This study uses a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consists of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection stages. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and students' reading tests. The results of the study show that the use of letter card media effectively improves students' beginning reading skills. At the end of the second cycle, there was a significant improvement in students' reading ability compared to the pre-cycle. In addition, students demonstrated higher motivation and interest in learning to read. Thus, letter card media is proven to be an effective and engaging tool in the process of teaching beginning reading skills.

Keywords: Beginning Reading, Letter Card Media, Reading Ability

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill that is essential for students in acquiring information and expanding knowledge. Through reading activities, students not only understand written language but are also able to recognize themselves, their environment, and their culture as well as that of others. Tarigan states that reading is a process carried out by readers to obtain messages conveyed by the writer through written language (Herlina & Waedarrita, 2020). Thus, reading is not merely pronouncing words but involves understanding the meaning of words, sentences, and discourse comprehensively.

At the elementary school level, especially in lower grades, beginning reading skills serve as the primary foundation for the development of other language skills. However, based on observations and interviews with the Grade II teacher at MIS Al-Anwar Medan, students' beginning reading skills are still low. Students experience difficulties in recognizing letters, spelling, pronouncing words correctly, and understanding simple sentences, which impacts their comprehension of learning materials.

Observations conducted on March 10, 2023, showed that the average reading ability of Grade II students was 59.9. Out of 15 students, only about 40% achieved the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) of 65, while the majority had not yet met the standard. This condition indicates the need for appropriate learning media to improve students' beginning reading skills.

One of the learning media that can be used is letter card media. Letter card media is a visual medium that helps students recognize letters, arrange syllables, and read

words and simple sentences gradually. The use of visual media can increase students' interest in learning and facilitate understanding because it is concrete and engaging (Diana & Purbaning, 2017). Therefore, the use of letter card media is considered effective in improving the beginning reading skills of lower-grade students at MIS Al-Anwar Medan.

2. METHOD

This study uses a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach aimed at improving students' beginning reading skills through the use of letter card media. The CAR model applied is the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which consists of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted in two cycles, with each cycle aimed at improving the weaknesses identified in the previous cycle.

The research subjects were 15 Grade II students at MIS Al-Anwar Medan. The study was conducted in the second semester of the 2022/2023 academic year. The object of this research is students' beginning reading skills, including the ability to recognize letters, spell words, pronounce words correctly, and read simple sentences.

Data collection techniques used in this study include observation, interviews, and tests. Observations were conducted to monitor teacher and student activities during the learning process using letter card media. Interviews were conducted with the classroom teacher to obtain initial information about students' reading abilities. Tests were used to measure improvements in students' beginning reading skills in each cycle.

The data obtained were analyzed using both qualitative descriptive and quantitative analysis. Qualitative analysis was used to describe the learning process and student activities, while quantitative analysis was used to determine improvements in reading outcomes based on test scores and the percentage of students achieving the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This classroom action research was conducted in Grade II at MIS Al-Anwar Medan during the even semester of the 2024 academic year, aiming to improve students' beginning reading skills through the use of letter card media. The study was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. In Cycle I, beginning reading instruction using letter card media was implemented. Observation results showed that the teacher's activity in managing the learning process reached 84%, categorized as good. Student activity reached 72%, categorized as sufficient. Although the media attracted students' attention, some students were still less active, hesitant to use the media, and lacked confidence in reading.

The results of the reading test in Cycle I showed that only 6 students (35%) achieved mastery, while 11 students (65%) had not yet reached the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM). The average reading ability was still in the low category, indicating that improvements were needed in the next cycle.

In Cycle II, improvements were made based on reflections from Cycle I, particularly in classroom management, motivation, and guidance in using the letter card media. Observation results showed significant improvement, with teacher activity reaching 95% (very good) and student activity increasing to 87% (very good). Students appeared more active, enthusiastic, and confident in arranging and reading words using letter cards. The reading test results in Cycle II also showed significant improvement. A total of 14 students (82%) achieved mastery, while only 3 students (18%) did not. The average

reading score increased to 76%, categorized as good. This indicates that the use of letter card media effectively improves students' beginning reading skills.

The improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II shows that letter card media helps students recognize letters, arrange syllables, connect words, and read more fluently. It also increases students' motivation and engagement in the learning process. These findings are consistent with the view that visual media can enhance understanding because it is concrete and engaging.

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the use of letter card media in beginning reading instruction has a positive impact on improving both learning activities and reading skills of Grade II students at MIS Al-Anwar Medan.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the classroom action research conducted on Grade II students at MIS Al-Anwar Medan, it can be concluded that the use of letter card media contributes positively to improving students' beginning reading skills. This study shows that the use of appropriate learning media tailored to the characteristics of lower-grade students greatly influences the success of reading instruction.

The results indicate a significant improvement in teacher activity in managing the learning process. Teachers were able to plan and implement lessons systematically, create a conducive learning environment, and provide guidance and motivation to students. Teacher activity reached 89%, categorized as very good, indicating that letter card media helps teachers deliver material more effectively.

Student activity also showed positive improvement. Students became more active, enthusiastic, and directly involved in reading activities. Student activity reached 87%, categorized as very good, demonstrating that letter card media increases learning interest and confidence in recognizing letters, spelling words, and reading simple sentences.

Students' reading ability also improved significantly after the implementation of letter card media. A total of 14 students (82%) achieved mastery, showing improved ability in recognizing letters, pronouncing words correctly, and reading words and simple sentences more fluently compared to before the intervention.

These results indicate that letter card media is an effective learning tool for lower-grade elementary students. It is concrete, engaging, and easy to use, helping students understand basic reading concepts. Additionally, it creates a more enjoyable and less monotonous learning environment, increasing students' motivation to learn.

Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of letter card media not only improves students' reading skills but also enhances the overall quality of the learning process. Therefore, letter card media is recommended as an alternative instructional tool for teaching beginning reading in lower elementary grades and can be further developed in future research to improve students' language skills continuously.

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