



The Effect of Picture Word Card Media on Early Reading Ability of Children at Teratai Kindergarten, State University of Makassar

*Andi Aqiilah Khansa Anisya Arsyad¹, Muhammad Yusri Bachtiar¹, Herman¹

¹Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

 andiaqiilahkhansa@gmail.com

Abstract

This study employed a quasi-experimental design aimed at examining the effect of using picture word card media on children's early reading skills at Teratai Kindergarten, State University of Makassar. The research specifically focused on comparing children's reading abilities before and after the treatment, as well as evaluating the significant impact of the media on Group B students. The independent variable in this study was the use of picture word cards, while the dependent variable was children's early reading ability. The study involved a total population of 49 children, with 10 selected as samples through purposive sampling—5 in the experimental group and 5 in the control group. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests. The findings revealed that the use of picture word card media had a significant effect on improving early reading ability among young children at Teratai Kindergarten, UNM.

Keywords: Learning, Picture Word Card Media, Early Reading Ability, Early Childhood.

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INTRODUCTION

The early years are often described as the most valuable stage of development, commonly referred to as the "Golden Age," a crucial phase that determines children's future growth (Bachtiar et al., 2022). At the age range of 0–6 years, stimulation across all aspects of development is essential. This is also emphasized in the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 5 of 2022, which states that the standard indicators of early childhood development include religious and moral values, Pancasila values, physical-motor, cognitive, language, and socio-emotional development.

According to Law Number 20 of 2003, early childhood education (ECE) is a form of guidance for children aged 0–6 years by providing stimulation that supports their growth and development, preparing them to continue to the next level of education. Bachtiar (2016) adds that although early childhood education is not the only factor determining future success, this stage significantly influences children's development across various aspects.

Language is one of the key aspects that must be stimulated from an early age. According to Vygotsky (in Arif, R., 2021), language is a tool to express ideas, concepts, and patterns of thought. Early reading ability is an important indicator of language development

in early childhood. Hakim (2021) explains that early reading is the stage of recognizing letters, syllables, and simple symbols. Meanwhile, Asmiati (2019) emphasizes that the main goal of early reading instruction is for children to be able to understand and articulate simple sentences accurately and naturally.

Several factors influence children's reading abilities, including physiological, intellectual, environmental, socio-economic, and psychological aspects (Teni, 2021). Therefore, teachers need to create engaging learning strategies, such as learning through play using appropriate instructional media. Bachtiar (2020) highlights the importance of a supportive learning environment where children feel comfortable and can develop their potential. One suitable medium is picture word cards, which contain simple images and text to help children recognize vocabulary (Arsyad, 2011). According to Hartawan (2018), picture word cards are effective for enhancing children's memory and improving their language skills.

Preliminary observations at Teratai Kindergarten, UNM, showed that some children had not yet recognized letters properly and often confused similar-looking letters. This may be due to monotonous and less varied teaching methods. Previous studies, such as those by Choiriyah (2019) and Andi Nurlaisa (2017), have shown that picture word cards are effective in improving early reading skills.

Based on this problem, this study is directed toward the use of picture word card media as a learning tool to improve early reading skills of children aged 5–6 years at Teratai Kindergarten, UNM.

METHOD

This study was conducted using a quantitative approach based on a quasi-experimental design. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for comparing learning outcomes between groups that receive specific treatments and those that do not (Sugiyono, 2019). In this way, the researcher was able to determine the extent to which the chosen learning media influenced the early reading skills of young children.

The research participants were divided into two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group received treatment using picture word card media, while the control group was taught using a letter-and-word snakes and ladders game. This division aimed to identify the differences in early reading ability between children who learned with picture word cards and those who used more conventional learning media (Arsyad, 2011; Hartawan, 2018).

Data were collected through three techniques: observation, testing, and documentation. Observation was used to monitor the learning process and children's responses during activities. Tests were employed to measure children's early reading ability before and after the treatment, while documentation supported the findings by providing relevant records and archives. This combination of techniques ensured that the data obtained were more comprehensive and reflective of the actual conditions (Creswell, 2014).

The sample of this study consisted of 10 children selected using purposive sampling, based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives (Bungin, 2017). The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to present the initial and final conditions, as well as the Wilcoxon test as a non-parametric analysis to determine whether there were significant differences between the experimental and control groups (Santoso, 2014).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The distribution of early reading ability in the experimental group, which received learning using picture word card media, can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Early Reading Ability of Children in the Experimental Group (Pre-test)

Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Category
6-10	3	60%	Not Yet Developed (BB)
11-15	1	20%	Beginning to Develop (MB)
16-20	1	20%	Developing as Expected (BSH)
21-24	0	0%	Well Developed (BSB)
Total	5	100%	

From the table above, it can be seen that before the treatment, most children in the experimental group were in the *Not Yet Developed* (BB) category, namely 3 children (60%). Meanwhile, 1 child (20%) was in the *Beginning to Develop* (MB) category, and 1 child (20%) had already reached the *Developing as Expected* (BSH) category. No children fell into the *Well Developed* (BSB) category. This low achievement was reflected in indicators such as distinguishing letters, classifying pictures, and pronouncing simple vocabulary, which were still not optimal.

Table 2. Early Reading Ability of Children in the Experimental Group (Post-test)

Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Category
6-10	0	0%	BB
11-15	0	0%	MB
16-20	2	40%	BSH
21-24	3	60%	BSB
Total	5	100%	

The post-test results show a significant improvement. None of the children were in the BB or MB categories. Two children (40%) were in the BSH category, while three children (60%) reached the BSB category. In other words, the indicators of distinguishing letters, classifying pictures, and pronouncing simple vocabulary developed as expected.

Table 3. Early Reading Ability of Children in the Control Group (Pre-test)

Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Category
6-10	0	0%	BB
11-15	4	80%	MB
16-20	1	20%	BSH
21-24	0	0%	BSB
Total	5	100%	

In the control group before the treatment, the majority of children (80%) were in the MB category, and 20% of children were in the BSH category. None of the children were in the BB or BSB categories. This indicates that initially, most children in the control group were at the beginning-to-develop stage in reading ability.

Table 4. Early Reading Ability of Children in the Control Group (Post-test)

Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Category
6-10	0	0%	BB
11-15	0	0%	MB
16-20	2	40%	BSH
21-24	3	60%	BSB
Total	5	100%	

The post-test results of the control group show some improvement. Two children (40%) were in the BSH category and three children (60%) in the BSB category. Similar to the experimental group, no children were found in the BB or MB categories. In general, both the experimental and control groups showed progress; however, the experimental group demonstrated more substantial improvement.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Pre-test and Post-test Scores in the Experimental and Control Group

Group	Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Experimental Group	Pre-test	5	11.0	4.35890	7.0	18.0
	Post-test	5	21.2	2.04939	19.0	23.0
Control Group	Pre-test	5	13.2	1.78885	12.0	16.0
	Post-test	5	20.4	1.81659	18.0	22.0

The mean score of the experimental group increased from 11.0 to 21.2, showing an improvement of 9.8 points. This indicates that picture word card media made a significant contribution to enhancing children’s early reading ability. The control group also showed an increase in the mean score, from 13.2 to 20.4, an improvement of 7.2 points. Although both groups experienced progress, the average score of the experimental group was higher than that of the control group.

Table 6. Results of the Wilcoxon Test for Early Reading Ability in the Experimental and Control Groups

Test	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Post-test vs. Pre-test Control	-2.032b	0.042
Post-test vs. Pre-test Experimental	-2.041b	0.041

The Wilcoxon test showed that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value was less than 0.05 in both groups, which means that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results. Nevertheless, the improvement in the experimental group was greater than that in the control group.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the use of picture word cards is more effective in improving children’s early reading skills compared to word snake media. This is evident from the difference in mean score increases between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group’s mean score rose by 9.8 points, while the control group increased by only 7.2 points. Such differences indicate that picture word cards make a stronger contribution to stimulating early literacy development in young children.

Children in the experimental group showed greater enthusiasm during the learning process because picture word cards present attractive, colorful illustrations that are closely related to their daily experiences. Visualization in the form of images makes it easier for children to recognize letters and vocabulary. Dale (1969) emphasized that learning becomes more meaningful when children can see, hear, and experience concrete media. This principle aligns with more recent work by Nurhayati (2020), who found that visual media significantly enhanced preschoolers’ ability to recognize linguistic symbols.

Beyond improving motivation, picture word cards also foster a joyful learning atmosphere that prevents children from feeling bored. Vygotsky (1978) argued that social interaction and the use of mediating tools are central to cognitive development. In this context, picture word cards function as a mediational tool bridging children’s understanding of letters and words. Al-Mansyur (2021) similarly reported that children

exposed to image-based media displayed significant language gains compared to those taught using traditional methods.

Statistical analysis further supports these results, revealing a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group. This means that picture word card instruction not only increased children's motivation but also measurably improved their early reading skills. Piaget (1952) noted that children aged five to six are in the preoperational stage, where they learn best through symbols and visual representations. This aligns with findings by Putri and Rachmawati (2022), who showed that interactive visual media significantly improved preschoolers' early reading performance.

Early reading ability in this study was assessed through indicators such as letter recognition, picture categorization, and simple word pronunciation. These indicators are consistent with Clay's (1991) view that emergent reading involves letter recognition, understanding letter-sound relationships, and developing basic vocabulary. This finding also supports Susilawati's (2019) study, which found that flashcards enhanced children's ability to recall letter shapes while simultaneously linking them to sounds and meanings.

Furthermore, the use of picture word cards is in line with the principle of learning through play. Montessori (1964) highlighted that young children learn most effectively through activities that involve direct, sensory, and playful experiences. With picture word cards, children not only practice recognizing letters but also engage their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains simultaneously. Supporting this, Zhang and Lin (2021) demonstrated that image-based media significantly improved preschoolers' attention span and accelerated basic vocabulary acquisition.

In conclusion, picture word cards are highly effective in stimulating early reading skills in young children. Their advantages extend beyond cognitive outcomes, encompassing motivational and affective aspects that make learning more meaningful. These findings strengthen classical theories regarding the importance of visual media in education while contributing new empirical evidence from contemporary research. Consequently, early childhood educators are strongly encouraged to maximize the use of picture word cards in literacy instruction at preschool level.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of picture word card media has a positive impact on the early reading ability of children aged 5–6 years at Teratai Kindergarten, State University of Makassar. The experimental group showed a greater improvement compared to the control group. Therefore, picture word card media is considered appropriate to be applied as an alternative approach to language learning in early childhood education.

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