



# The effect of using illustrated alphabet card media on first-grade students' letter recognition ability at UPT SD Negeri No. 74 Bontorita II

Syamsuriyanti, Sitti Nurul Fauziah, Ayu Alfira Asis

<sup>123</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar

Email: [svamsuriyanti@unismuh.ac.id](mailto:svamsuriyanti@unismuh.ac.id) ,  
[nurulfauziah6764@gmail.com](mailto:nurulfauziah6764@gmail.com) [alfiraayu0@gmail.com](mailto:alfiraayu0@gmail.com)

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## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi pengaruh penggunaan kartu huruf bergambar terhadap kemampuan mengenal huruf pada siswa kelas I SD. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode eksperimen dengan desain *pretest-posttest control group*. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari siswa kelas I yang dibagi ke dalam kelompok eksperimen dan kelompok kontrol. Kelompok eksperimen diberikan pembelajaran menggunakan kartu huruf bergambar, sedangkan kelompok kontrol menggunakan metode konvensional sesuai praktik pembelajaran di kelas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan kartu huruf bergambar secara signifikan meningkatkan kemampuan mengenal huruf siswa melalui rangsangan visual, kegiatan permainan belajar, serta latihan pengenalan huruf yang lebih menarik. Meskipun demikian, terdapat variasi hasil belajar pada beberapa siswa, sehingga diperlukan pendekatan tambahan bagi siswa yang mengalami kesulitan. Berdasarkan temuan ini, disimpulkan bahwa penggunaan kartu huruf bergambar merupakan media pembelajaran yang efektif untuk meningkatkan kemampuan mengenal huruf siswa kelas I SD.

**Kata Kunci :** Kartu huruf bergambar, kemampuan mengenal huruf, metode eksperimen, media pembelajaran

## Abstract

*This study aims to evaluate the effect of using illustrated letter cards on the letter recognition ability of first-grade elementary school students. The research employed an experimental method with a pretest-posttest control group design. The subjects consisted of first-grade students who were divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received instruction using illustrated letter cards, while the control group was taught using conventional classroom methods. The results show that the use of illustrated letter cards significantly improved students' letter recognition skills through visual stimulation, engaging learning activities, and more appealing letter recognition exercises. However, variations in learning outcomes among several students indicate the need for additional approaches for those experiencing difficulties. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that illustrated letter cards are an effective instructional medium for enhancing letter recognition skills in first-grade elementary school students.*

**Keywords:** illustrated letter cards, letter recognition ability, experimental method, learning media

## Introduction

Primary education is a crucial stage in shaping students' foundational abilities, including letter recognition skills, which serve as the basis for reading proficiency. However, some first-grade students still experience difficulties in recognizing letters due to the use of less engaging instructional

media. Low letter recognition ability can hinder the overall learning process. Therefore, the use of illustrated alphabet cards is considered an alternative that can help improve students' letter recognition skills through visual stimulation and more enjoyable learning activities.

At UPT SD Negeri No. 74 Bontorita II, there are still students who face

difficulties in recognizing letters during the early stages of learning. One contributing factor is the limited variation in instructional media and teaching methods, which makes learning activities less engaging for first-grade students. This condition causes some students to show low enthusiasm in participating in early reading instruction. To address this issue, the use of more attractive learning media, such as illustrated alphabet cards, can serve as an alternative solution to enhance letter recognition skills through visualization and enjoyable learning activities.

The use of illustrated alphabet cards is a learning approach designed to help students recognize letters through appealing visual stimuli. This media provides opportunities for students to actively engage in learning activities such as observing, pronouncing, and matching letters with corresponding images. With visual representations on each card, students can more easily understand the shapes and sounds of letters, making the process of letter recognition more enjoyable. In addition, illustrated alphabet cards can create an interactive learning environment and increase students' enthusiasm in participating in early reading instruction. Through this engaging medium, it is expected that first-grade students' letter recognition skills will improve significantly.

Based on the background described above, this study aims to analyze the effect of using illustrated alphabet cards on the letter recognition ability of first-grade students at UPT SD Negeri No. 74 Bontorita II. This research is expected to contribute to the development of more effective learning strategies, particularly in early reading instruction, thereby helping students recognize letters more easily and enjoyably.

Early reading instruction in first-grade elementary classrooms is an essential stage in developing students' early literacy skills. At this stage, students are required to recognize letters as a fundamental requirement for effective reading. However, one of the challenges frequently encountered in the learning process is students' low interest and learning motivation, especially when the instructional media or learning materials used are not engaging.

Teachers expect every student to optimally utilize their learning potential and time to master letter recognition, so that reading skills can develop in accordance with their developmental stage. Unfortunately, these expectations are not always aligned with students' actual conditions, particularly when the instructional media fail to attract their attention. Students tend to ignore learning materials that do not interest them, resulting in a less effective learning process.

Therefore, the use of more engaging instructional media, such as illustrated alphabet cards, is highly necessary to help students recognize letters more easily and increase their enthusiasm in participating in early reading instruction. When learning materials are not interesting, students' motivation does not develop but instead tends to be neglected (Made Ardani, 2021).

Conversely, learning materials that do not attract students' interest are likely to be disregarded. If the learning materials do not align with students' interests, students will not learn optimally because there is no motivating appeal for them (Sari & Trinawati, 2021).

## Method

This study employed an experimental research method. The research design used was a pretest-posttest control group design, which allows the researcher to compare students' initial and final abilities after the treatment was administered. The experimental method was chosen because it provides an opportunity to directly examine the effect of using specific instructional media on students' abilities (Sugiyono, 2021). Experimental research aims to identify cause-and-effect relationships through the application of controlled treatments, so that the results can demonstrate the effectiveness of the instructional media used.

The subjects of this study were 20 first-grade students at UPT SD Negeri No. 74 Bontorita II, who were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The research instruments included a letter recognition ability test and an observation sheet. The data were analyzed descriptively to examine changes in

students' abilities before and after the treatment was administered.

## Result and Discussion

This study aimed to analyze the effect of the cooperative learning model on the letter recognition ability of first-grade students at UPT SD Negeri No. 74 Bontorita II after the implementation of illustrated alphabet card media. The results indicate a significant improvement in students' letter recognition abilities following the treatment. Based on the pretest, first posttest, and second posttest results, the discussion is presented as follows.

### Pretest Data Analysis

The pretest administered to first-grade students at UPT SD Negeri No. 74 Bontorita II provided an initial overview of students' letter recognition abilities prior to the implementation of illustrated alphabet card media. Of the 15 students who participated in the pretest, only 7 achieved the highest score of 80. Meanwhile, the remaining students obtained scores ranging from low to moderate levels, with several scoring below the average ( $\leq 65$ ). This condition indicates that students' initial letter recognition abilities were uneven and that most students still required more engaging instructional media that align with the learning characteristics of early-grade students. These findings serve as an important basis for implementing illustrated alphabet card media to improve students' letter recognition abilities.

### First Posttest Data Analysis

After the implementation of illustrated alphabet card media among first-grade students at UPT SD Negeri No. 74 Bontorita II, the first posttest results showed an improvement in letter recognition abilities for the majority of students. Out of 15 students, 10 demonstrated increased scores compared to their pretest results, achieving scores in the range of 70–80. Meanwhile, the remaining 5 students were still in the category requiring further improvement, with scores of 60 or below. These findings indicate that the use of illustrated alphabet card media was fairly effective in helping students improve their letter recognition skills. However, several students still

required additional guidance to achieve learning mastery.

### Second Posttest Data Analysis

In the second posttest, the results of the 10 students who were present showed greater variability. Most students obtained a score of 75 (4 students), while 1 student achieved the highest score of 80. However, there were also students whose scores declined, with 1 student scoring 45 and another scoring 40. This variation in results may be attributed to factors such as students' level of participation in group activities, individual differences in ability, and students' physical or psychological conditions during the test.

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## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the use of illustrated alphabet card media within a cooperative learning model has a positive effect on the letter recognition ability of first-grade students at UPT SD Negeri No. 74 Bontorita II. This improvement is evident from the comparison of students' performance across the pretest, first posttest, and second posttest.

The pretest results revealed that students' initial letter recognition abilities were uneven, with many students scoring below the expected mastery level. This condition supports the argument presented in the introduction that limited variation in

instructional media and less engaging learning methods can negatively affect students' early literacy development. At this stage, students require concrete, visual, and interactive learning experiences that align with their cognitive development. The low pretest scores therefore highlight the necessity of introducing more engaging instructional media, such as illustrated alphabet cards.

After the implementation of illustrated alphabet cards, the first posttest results showed a noticeable improvement in most students' letter recognition abilities. The majority of students achieved higher scores compared to the pretest, indicating that visual-based learning media can effectively support early reading instruction. Illustrated alphabet cards help students associate letter shapes with sounds and familiar images, which facilitates better memory retention and understanding. This finding aligns with learning theories that emphasize the role of visual stimuli and active engagement in enhancing young learners' cognitive processing and motivation.

The second posttest results, although showing overall improvement, also revealed score variations among students. While several students maintained or improved their performance, some experienced a decline. These variations may be influenced by multiple factors, such as differences in individual learning abilities, students' participation levels in cooperative group activities, and physical or emotional conditions during the assessment. This suggests that while illustrated alphabet cards are generally effective, consistent guidance and differentiated instruction are still required to ensure all students achieve optimal learning outcomes.

Overall, the findings of this study support previous research indicating that attractive and interactive learning media can increase students' motivation and engagement in early reading instruction (Made Ardani, 2021; Sari & Trinawati, 2021). When learning materials are aligned with students' interests and developmental characteristics, students are more likely to actively participate and achieve better learning outcomes. Thus, illustrated alphabet cards serve not only as instructional tools but also as motivational media that foster a

more enjoyable and effective learning environment.

## Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the use of illustrated alphabet card media has a positive and significant effect on the letter recognition ability of first-grade students at UPT SD Negeri No. 74 Bontorita II. The improvement observed from the pretest to the posttests indicates that this media effectively supports students in recognizing letter shapes and sounds through visual and interactive learning activities.

The findings confirm that illustrated alphabet cards can enhance students' motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes in early reading instruction, particularly when combined with cooperative learning strategies. However, variations in students' performance suggest that teachers should continue to provide guidance and adapt instruction to accommodate individual differences among learners.

Therefore, it is recommended that elementary school teachers utilize illustrated alphabet card media as an alternative instructional tool in early literacy learning. Future research may explore the long-term effects of this media, involve larger sample sizes, or combine it with other instructional approaches to further improve students' early reading skills.

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