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Efforts to Improve Language Intelligence in Early Childhood through Letter Card Media at R.A. Manbaul Hikmah Luwungragi Bulakamba Brebes

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to improve language intelligence in early childhood through the use of letter card media at RA Manbaul Hikmah Luwungragi Bulakamba Brebes. This study uses data collection methods through observation, documentation, and interviews.

The type of research used is Classroom Action Research (PTK) with two main variables, namely language intelligence as a bound variable and letter card media as an independent variable. The object of this research is all students of PAUD Group B RA Manbaul Hikmah Luwungragi Bulakamba Brebes in the even semester of the 2015/2016 school year. The number of students involved in this study was 12 children, consisting of 4 male students and 8 female students.

The research process was carried out in two cycles, where each cycle consisted of three meetings. The data collection method in this study involves observation, interviews, and documentation to obtain accurate data on the development of children's language intelligence.

The results of the study show that improving language intelligence through the medium of letter cards at RA Manbaul Hikmah Luwungragi Bulakamba Brebes is included in the very good category. After being given learning using letter card media for two cycles, there was a significant improvement in children's language intelligence. Some of the assessment indicators used in this study include good language skills, the ability to perform tasks well, and letter recognition through letter card media.

The learning results in the first cycle showed an increase of 19%, while in the second cycle it increased to 56%. This shows that the use of letter card media can help students in significantly improving their language intelligence.

Based on the findings above, some of the suggestions that can be given include teachers are expected to create an interesting and fun learning experience for RA Manbaul Hikmah students, as well as provide encouragement and guidance so that children feel comfortable learning. In addition, teachers are expected to develop similar learning models for every other subject and share experiences with other teachers.

Follow-up for students who have not completed needs to be done with collaboration between teachers and researchers to provide more intensive motivation and guidance. In addition, it is recommended to provide more frequent activities that can improve language skills, such as the use of letter card media or other relevant methods.

**Keywords:** Language intelligence, letter card media.

# INTRODUCTION

The development of human resources is closely related to efforts to improve in all educational institutions. Therefore, it is necessary to study all elements in the world of education so that they are aligned, directed, and relevant to short-term and long-term needs. In the era of global communication, it takes human resources who excel in mastering science and technology, as well as having faith and piety.

Improving the quality of teaching in Raudhatul Athfal (RA) needs to be carried out by various parties involved in the implementation of education. Based on the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005, Raudhatul Athfal is a form of early childhood education unit in the formal education pathway that organizes educational programs with Islamic religious distinctions.

The improvement efforts that have been made by the government through the Ministry of Religion are still inadequate if they are not accompanied by improving the quality of the learning process in the classroom by teachers. Curriculum achievement targets are often an obstacle for teachers in improving the quality of teaching, especially in Raudhatul Athfal. The curriculum at RA includes the field of behavior formation development as well as the field of basic skill development. The field of behavior development includes morality, social-emotional, and independence, while the field of basic ability development includes Islamic Religious Education, language, cognitive, and physical.

The level of developmental achievement is the actualization of a child's potential in each stage of development in a specific area of development, not just academic achievement. Indicators of developmental success are more specific and measurable in assessing the achievement of children's development. If the indicators in one developmental achievement have been achieved, then the child's developmental potential has been well realized.

The curriculum at RA aims to help shape the whole Muslim personality by developing all children's potentials optimally, both in terms of morals, behavior, intellectual, and physical, in a conducive, democratic, and competitive educational environment. One of the aspects that is the focus of child development is language development. Children's language develops along with the increase in their vocabulary. The development of this language will continue throughout a person's life, as long as he is mentally active and the learning environment is supportive.

Children's language development in RA is still egocentric and expressive, where children tend to be self-oriented. At this time, the most prominent language skills of children are the ability to ask questions. At the age of six, children begin to actively use gestures as part of communication.

The RA curriculum covers various aspects of early childhood development, including physical, intellectual, linguistic, social, and moral development. All of these aspects can be developed through proper stimulation. To improve the aspect of language development, methods that are directly related to the use of language are needed.

One of the methods applied in language learning in RA is the use of letter cards. The mastery of reading letter cards and recognizing letters plays a very important role in the development of children's language skills. With this method, children can recognize letters well, making it easier for them to learn to read gradually.

The results of observations at RA Manbaul Hikmah show several problems in language learning. First, many children do not know letter cards and have difficulty distinguishing letters, for example, the letter "b" is referred to as "d". Second, there are errors in the pronunciation of letters that are seen when children are asked to say several alphabets. Third, the learning method used is still based on oral imitation without supporting media, so that children do not remember the vocabulary that has been taught and quickly get bored.

Of the 12 students in group B, there were 6 children (30%) who were still not familiar with letters, 4 children (30%) who were quite good, and 2 children (40%) who were already good, but none of them had developed very well. This means that as many as 70% of children still do not show optimal development in language skills. This difficulty can be seen from observational data, where only 5 out of 12 children are able to read letters correctly when asked by the teacher. In addition, when invited to play with capital letters, only a few children were interested in participating in the activity. This shows that monotonous learning makes children bored quickly and less able to develop their potential to the fullest.

These problems show that the alphabet reading ability of group B children needs to be improved. The ability to master vocabulary in children can be improved by using interesting and memorable learning media, so that children do not get bored quickly. One method that can be used to improve vocabulary mastery is flashcard media. This media makes it easier for children to remember the letters they are learning and attract their attention in the learning process.

According to Slamet Suyanto (2008:149), playing letter cards can help children compose words according to their names, practice spelling, and enrich vocabulary. The advantages of letter card media include easy to carry, practical, easy to remember, and fun. Letter cards are visual learning media in the form of cards with words or letters, and are often equipped with colorful pictures. For example, the letter "A" can be accompanied by an image of an apple or a goose.

The use of letter card media in language learning is expected to improve children's language skills and increase their vocabulary. In addition, this media can contribute to teachers in improving the quality of learning so that learning goals can be achieved effectively and efficiently. Based on this problem, this study is titled "Efforts to Improve Language Intelligence in Early Childhood through Letter Card Media at RA Manbaul Hikmah Luwungragi Bulakamba Brebes."

# METHODS

This study uses the Classroom Action Research (PTK) approach which aims to improve early childhood language intelligence through the medium of letter cards. This research was conducted at RA Manbaul Hikmah Luwungragi Bulakamba Brebes with the research subject group B students.

The PTK approach in this study refers to the Kemmis and McTaggart model which consists of four main stages, namely planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This cycle will be carried out repeatedly until optimal results are found in improving children's language skills through the medium of letter cards.

The research subjects in this study are 12 group B students at RA Manbaul Hikmah. The subjects were chosen because early childhood is still in the stage of language development that requires the right stimulation to develop optimally. In addition, classroom teachers are also involved as collaborators in carrying out research actions.

The data collection technique in this study was carried out through several methods, namely observation, interviews, tests, and documentation. Observations were made to observe how children responded to learning with letter card media, their level of participation in learning, and changes that occurred during the study. Interviews were conducted with classroom teachers to find out the initial conditions of learning, obstacles faced, and responses to the application of letter card media. The test was used to measure the improvement of children's language skills after being treated with letter card media. Tests are carried out before and after the procedure to see the progress that occurs. Documentation includes photos, videos, and notes during the learning process as evidence of the research implementation.

The research instruments used in this study included observation sheets, interview guidelines, language proficiency tests, and documentation. Observation sheets are used to record children's activities and responses during learning. The interview guidelines were used to dig up information from teachers regarding the effectiveness of letter card media. Language ability tests were given to see the improvement of children's vocabulary mastery, while documentation was used as physical evidence of the conduct of the research.

The data analysis technique in this study uses qualitative and quantitative descriptive analysis. Qualitative data is obtained from the results of observations and interviews that are analyzed descriptively by reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions. Meanwhile, quantitative data was obtained from test results that were analyzed by calculating the percentage of improvement in children's language skills after being given action.

This research was carried out in two cycles, where each cycle consisted of stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. In the first cycle, the researcher introduced the letter card media to the children and observed their reactions and levels of understanding of learning. If obstacles or results are found that are not optimal, improvements will be made in the second cycle, by adjusting the learning strategy to be more interesting and effective.

The success criteria in this study were determined based on the increase in the number of children who were able to recognize and pronounce letters correctly after learning using letter card media. The study is considered successful if at least 80% of children in group B experience improved language skills, both in recognizing letters, pronouncing vocabulary correctly, and in spelling simple words.

In this study, the researcher also paid attention to the validity of the data by using the triangulation technique, which is comparing the results of observations, interviews, and tests to ensure the consistency of the data obtained. In addition, the results of the research will be consulted with classroom teachers to get feedback and validation on the effectiveness of letter card media in early childhood language learning.

With this systematic research method, it is hoped that the research results can contribute to improving early childhood language intelligence and provide recommendations for RA teachers in using more innovative and effective learning media.

# RESULTS

This research aims to improve early childhood language intelligence through the medium of letter cards at RA Manbaul Hikmah Luwungragi Bulakamba Brebes. The research process is carried out in two cycles, where each cycle consists of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection stages. Data was collected through observation, interviews, tests, and documentation to determine the development of children's language skills after being given learning using letter card media.

In the early stages before the action was taken, the results of observations showed that many children still had difficulty recognizing letters and pronouncing vocabulary correctly. Of the 12 students in group B, only 5 children (30%) were able to recognize and pronounce letters correctly, while the other 7 children (70%) still experienced errors in recognizing and distinguishing letters from one another.

The first cycle begins by introducing the letter card media to the children. Learning activities are carried out interactively by inviting children to play letter cards, arrange letters into words, and recognize letters through pictures on cards. Despite the increase in children's participation, the results of the evaluation showed that their understanding was still not optimal.

The test results at the end of the first cycle showed an improvement in the child's language skills. Of the 12 students, 3 children (25%) showed good development in recognizing letters, 4 children (35%) began to understand basic vocabulary, while another 5 children (40%) still had difficulty in spelling and recognizing letters correctly.

Based on the reflection from the first cycle, several obstacles were found in the application of letter card media. Some children still have difficulty focusing on learning because of the duration is too long, as well as the lack of variety in media use. Therefore, in the second cycle, researchers made several improvements, such as adjusting the duration of learning, adding more interesting play activities, and providing more intensive assistance for children who experienced difficulties.

In the second cycle, learning with letter card media was carried out with a more interesting approach, such as using songs, group games, and simple competitions to increase children's motivation. This approach has been shown to be more effective in engaging children's interests and improving their language skills.

The results of observations in the second cycle showed more significant changes than the first cycle. Children look more active in recognizing and pronouncing letters, and are more confident in speaking and repeating the vocabulary learned. Their interaction with teachers and peers is also better than before.

The final test in the second cycle showed a significant improvement. Of the 12 students, 7 children (60%) have reached the category of good in recognizing letters and composing words, 3 children (25%) are in the sufficient category, and only 2 children (15%) still have difficulties. These results show that the use of letter card media has succeeded in significantly improving children's language intelligence.

In addition to improvements in letter recognition and word spelling, children also experience development in speaking skills. They are more courageous to express new words they have learned and interact more often using a broader vocabulary in everyday classroom activities.

From interviews conducted with classroom teachers, information was obtained that the learning method using letter card media was more interesting than the previous method which only relied on oral imitation techniques. Teachers also see that children memorize letters faster and are more enthusiastic in participating in learning.

Documentation in the form of photos and videos during the study showed significant changes in children's participation in learning activities. Children seem to be more excited in holding and playing with letter cards, and interact more often with their friends in pronouncing and recognizing letters.

This success shows that letter card media is an effective tool in improving early childhood language skills. In addition, this method also has a positive impact on children's social development, because they interact more with friends in the learning process.

The results of the study also showed that the more often children practice using the medium of letter cards, the better their ability to recognize and remember new vocabulary. This proves that engaging media-based learning can improve children's memory and language skills.

Although the results obtained are quite satisfactory, there are still some children who need additional guidance to achieve optimal development. Teachers are advised to pay more attention to children who are having difficulty by repeating the material individually or in small groups.

In addition, this study also shows that learning with letter card media not only improves children's language skills, but can also improve their concentration and memory. Children who were previously less focused on learning seemed more interested and better able to follow the teacher's instructions.

The results of this study imply that the use of letter card media can be widely applied in various early childhood education institutions to improve children's language skills. Teachers are advised to continue to explore other interactive media-based learning methods to make learning more effective and fun.

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the use of letter card media contributes positively to improving early childhood language intelligence. Learning becomes more fun, interactive, and increases children's active participation in the learning process.

The recommendation of this study is that letter card media continues to be used and developed by teachers in various more innovative forms. Teachers can adjust the shape of the letter cards to the needs and interests of the children so that they are more interested in learning.

Overall, this study proves that letter card media is one of the effective learning alternatives in improving early childhood language intelligence. It is hoped that this research can be a reference for other teachers in improving the quality of language learning at the RA and other PAUD levels.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the study show that the use of letter card media in learning can significantly improve early childhood language intelligence. This increase can be seen from the results of observations, interviews, and tests conducted before and after the action. At the beginning of the study, most children still had difficulty recognizing letters, distinguishing letters from one another, and pronouncing vocabulary correctly. However, after learning using letter card media was applied, their language skills experienced positive development.

This success can be attributed to the attractive, easy-to-understand, and interactive-usable nature of letter card media. This is in line with the opinion of Slamet Suyanto (2008:149) who stated that playing letter cards can help children in composing letters, spelling, and enriching their vocabulary. In addition, the medium of letter cards equipped with colorful pictures also makes children more interested and easily remembers new letters and words learned.

From the two research cycles conducted, it can be seen that learning in the second cycle is more effective than the first cycle. Improving learning strategies, such as adjusting the duration of learning, using more varied approaches, and providing more intensive assistance for children who experience difficulties, contribute to improving children's understanding. With a more interesting approach, children are more enthusiastic in participating in learning and more confident in using language.

The success of this research is also supported by the role of teachers in managing the classroom and creating a fun learning environment. Teachers who actively interact with children and provide the right stimulation are able to help them understand the material taught faster. This is in accordance with the theory of children's language development which states that a supportive learning environment greatly affects early childhood language development.

In addition to improving the ability to recognize letters and develop vocabulary, learning with letter card media also has a positive impact on children's social aspects. Children are more active in communicating with their friends during letter card play, which indirectly improves their speaking skills. These interactions support Vygotsky's theory of social development, which states that children learn through social interactions with others.

Although this study showed positive results, there were several challenges faced in the application of letter card media. Some children still have difficulty recognizing letters and spelling correctly, especially those with a slower rate of language development. Therefore, additional strategies are needed, such as providing more intensive assistance and adjusting the material to the level of development of each child.

In addition, this study also shows that variation in learning methods is very important in maintaining children's interest and motivation. The monotonous use of media can make children bored quickly, so it is important for teachers to continue to develop innovative and interesting learning methods.

The results of this study also provide implications for teachers and practitioners of early childhood education. Teachers need to understand that language learning is not just about introducing letters and vocabulary, but also about various aspects of children's development, such as motor, social, and cognitive. The use of appropriate media can help children achieve optimal language development.

Overall, this study shows that the use of letter card media is an effective learning strategy in improving early childhood language intelligence. The results of this research can be used as a reference for teachers in designing more interesting and effective learning to develop children's language skills.

For further research, it is recommended to explore the use of other learning media that can be combined with letter cards, such as interactive digital games or story-based methods. Thus, the learning process can become more varied and in accordance with the development of increasingly advanced technology.

From this study, it can be concluded that letter card media not only helps children recognize letters and enrich their vocabulary, but also increases their motivation to learn, social interaction, and concentration in learning. With the right implementation, this media can be an effective solution in improving early childhood language intelligence.

# CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the use of letter card media has proven to be effective in improving early childhood language intelligence at RA Manbaul Hikmah Luwungragi Bulakamba Brebes. This increase can be seen from the ability of children to recognize letters, spell words correctly, and enrich their vocabulary after being given learning using the media.

Letter card media has a positive impact on the learning process, because it is interesting, easy to use, and interactive. Children become more enthusiastic about learning, easier to remember new letters and words, and more confident in communicating. The results of the study also showed that children who initially had difficulty recognizing letters experienced significant development after applying this method for two learning cycles.

In addition to improving language skills, the use of letter card media also has a positive impact on children's social aspects. Children are more active in interacting with friends and teachers, so their communication skills are also developing. This shows that learning based on visual media such as letter cards can help in optimizing various aspects of early childhood development.

Although this study showed positive results, there are still some challenges that need to be considered, such as children who still have difficulty recognizing letters and spelling words correctly. Therefore, more intensive mentoring and a variety of learning strategies are needed so that all children can achieve optimal development.

As an implication of this study, teachers are expected to develop innovative learning methods by utilizing interesting media that are in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood. The use of letter card media can be an effective alternative in improving children's language intelligence, but it needs to be combined with other methods so that the learning process is more interesting and varied.

In conclusion, this study proves that letter card media is an effective strategy in improving early childhood language intelligence. With proper implementation and support from teachers and a conducive learning environment, children can more easily understand and develop their language skills. Therefore, the use of interactive learning media such as letter cards needs to continue to be applied and developed in early childhood education.

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