



Analysis of Flashcard Game Activities on Early Reading Abilities of Children Aged 4-5 Years

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Abstract

Early reading ability is a fundamental skill that must be developed in early childhood as it forms the foundation for subsequent learning stages. This qualitative descriptive study aimed to analyze the implementation of flashcard game activities and their impact on early reading abilities of children aged 4-5 years at PAUD Al Adnan, Serang City. The research employed observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques, involving 10 children in Group A (6 boys and 4 girls) and their classroom teacher. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that flashcard games significantly enhanced children's letter recognition, phonological awareness, and simple word reading abilities. The visual, auditory, and kinesthetic aspects of flashcards effectively facilitated meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences. Children demonstrated increased motivation, active participation, and improved ability to recognize letters, pronounce syllables, and read simple words. However, individual differences in concentration levels, language development, and learning pace required differentiated instructional approaches. This study confirms that flashcards serve as effective educational game media in stimulating early reading development in young children when implemented with consistent repetition, appropriate guidance, and positive reinforcement from teachers.

Keywords: Early reading; flashcard; educational media; early childhood; literacy development

Introduction

Early childhood education serves as a crucial foundation for developing various aspects of child development, particularly language and reading abilities (Usia, 2019; Mardiyani & Aulina, 2024). According to Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, early childhood education is organized for children from birth to six years old and does not constitute a prerequisite for primary education (Kemendikbud, 2022). The Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology emphasize developing all aspects of development to optimize children's potential, with language development closely interconnected with learning media in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era (Septiya, 2019).

Language development encompasses reading, writing, listening, speaking, and communication abilities (Faridah et al., 2025). Early reading ability represents fundamental skill children must possess, as it forms the basis for progressing to subsequent stages (Alwi & Aulia, 2023; Riadoh & Larasati, 2024). The Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 137 of 2013 concerning Early Childhood Education Standards specifies that literacy

development for children aged 5-6 years includes mentioning known letter symbols, recognizing initial letter sounds of surrounding objects, mentioning groups of pictures with similar initial sounds/letters, and understanding the relationship between sounds and letter forms (Darwiyanti et al., 2022; Nugraha & Octavianah, 2020).

Children aged 4-5 years typically receive early reading stimulation at kindergarten level (Nuryati & Rizadatun, 2023; Jannah & Artiningsih, 2025). During this golden age period, children experience rapid development and growth across various developmental aspects (Susanto, 2011; Su et al., 2025). Children receiving adequate reading stimulation more easily absorb information and knowledge throughout their lives. Weakness in early reading ability negatively impacts children both mentally and academically, diminishing self-confidence and reducing learning motivation (Sardi et al., 2023).

Learning media serve essential functions in simplifying complex material and enhancing children's understanding (Gunawan & Laura, 2025). Media can clarify message presentation, reduce verbalism, deepen comprehension, overcome time and space limitations, and encourage active participation (Nadira, 2023). Flashcards, as rectangular cards containing pictures and words, attract children's attention and facilitate learning (Azizah et al., 2025b; Ulfa, 2020). This visual media proves particularly effective for children aged 4-5 years who remain in the preoperational stage, learning through concrete objects (Najma Nurfand et al., 2024; Pagarra et al., 2022).

Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of various media in improving early reading abilities. While the opinion SA'ADAH, (2025) showed that literacy ladder games enhanced reading abilities in Group B children at RA Al-Baraakah. However, another opinion was expressed by Kumullah et al., (2019) found that flashcard media increased early reading skills in first-grade students at SDN Surokarsan 2 Yogyakarta, with achievement percentages rising from 41.38% pre-intervention to 82.76% in cycle II. In line with previous opinion Ramadanti & Arifin, (2021) confirmed flashcard media's significant effect on children's early reading abilities through experimental research design. Demonstrated that letter block media improved early reading abilities in Group B children at TK Negeri Pembina Bantul (Auliani & Suzanti, 2022).

Despite these findings, limited research has specifically examined flashcard implementation for children aged 4-5 years in integrating letter recognition, syllable pronunciation, and simple word reading within natural classroom settings. This study addresses this gap by analyzing flashcard game activities and their relationship with early reading ability development at PAUD Al Adnan, providing practical insights for early childhood educators.

Literature Review

Early Reading Ability Concept

Early reading ability represents the initial stage children undergo to acquire reading proficiency, encompassing skills in recognizing writing as language symbols and vocalizing those symbols (Mardiyani & Aulina, 2024). This foundational stage involves recognizing letters and symbols, connecting them with sounds, and vocalizing letters, syllables, and sentences

formed in writing (Yuswati & Setiawati, 2022). The process includes recognizing letters and words, connecting them with sounds or vocalizing letters, syllables, and sentences formed in written text into oral form (Hess, 2023).

Recent theoretical studies reinforce these foundations, such as Mardiyani & Aulina, (2024) who highlight that phonics-based instruction significantly accelerates grapheme phoneme association in early readers, particularly when combined with multimodal visual cues. Similarly, Hess, (2023) show that digital phonics applications enhance children's decoding accuracy by providing repetitive, self-paced sound letter matching activities. In addition, Azizah et al., (2025a) emphasize that integrating digital flashcards with audio prompts increases children's phonological awareness by enabling immediate auditory feedback during reading tasks.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes that children's cognitive development occurs through social interaction and cultural tools, with language serving as the primary mediator (Santrock, 2021). In early reading context, flashcards function as cultural tools facilitating the internalization of reading concepts through guided participation with more knowledgeable others, typically teachers (Morrison, 2019). This theoretical framework supports using visual media like flashcards as scaffolding devices that gradually transfer reading competence from teacher-supported to independent child performance (Azizah et al., 2025a).

Learning Media in Early Childhood

Learning media benefit children by simplifying difficult learning or reducing complexity (Hastanti, 2020). Media in the learning process can clarify message presentation, reduce verbalism during learning, deepen children's understanding of lesson material, demonstrate abstract things to more concrete forms, overcome space, time, and memory limitations, encourage children to play active roles in the learning process, recognize each child's unique characteristics in different learning processes, provide opportunities for children to review lessons, facilitate learning activities, and ease teachers' teaching tasks (Yuswati & Setiawati, 2022).

Contemporary early childhood education increasingly emphasizes multimodal learning approaches that engage children's multiple senses simultaneously (Khadijah, 2024). Flashcards exemplify this approach by combining visual elements (pictures and letters), auditory components (teacher pronunciation and child repetition), and kinesthetic aspects (card manipulation and physical interaction). This multisensory engagement aligns with constructivist learning principles, where children actively construct knowledge through concrete experiences rather than passive reception (Sujiono & Pd, 2019).

Flashcard as Educational Media

Flashcards constitute learning media helping recall and review lesson materials such as definitions, terms, symbols, foreign language spelling, formulas, and more (Rahman & Fuadaton, 2017; Ritonga & Khadijah, 2025). This media helps children recognize or know letters and their forms, differentiate letters, and attempt to arrange them into words. Letter card

games offer various advantages: they can be created with several play methods, are easy to make and simple, and provide children freedom to arrange words according to their ideas (Nadira, 2023). In reading learning contexts, flashcards can stimulate letter and word recognition visually and kinesthetically (Rosalita & Wulandari, 2023; Susantini & Kristiantari, 2021; Tannil & Ilhami, 2025).

Research on flashcard effectiveness has demonstrated consistent positive outcomes across diverse educational contexts (Nadira, 2023; Amalia et al., 2024). These studies reveal that flashcards' portability, efficiency, versatility, affordability, and capacity to make learning easier contribute to their effectiveness (Uyun, 2018). However, limitations include suitability only for small groups, children knowing only words and pictures on flashcards, and time requirements for finding pictures during production (Nurasyah et al., 2023).

Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at describing and analyzing the implementation of *flashcard* game activities and their impact on the early reading abilities of children aged 4–5 years. The qualitative descriptive method seeks to portray situations and events comprehensively through exploration, description, explanation, and prediction of social phenomena (Sugiyono, 2020). This approach is considered appropriate for addressing complex problems because it emphasizes the research process rather than merely focusing on outcomes (Warahmah & Jailani, 2023; D. A. Susanto et al., 2025). The research was conducted at PAUD Al Adnan, Serang City, from April to July 2025, chosen based on accessibility, data availability, sufficient informant resources, and consultation with academic supervisors. The participants consisted of 10 children in Group A (6 boys and 4 girls aged 4–5 years), one classroom teacher with five years of early childhood teaching experience, and the school principal as a supporting informant.

Data were collected through three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Participant observation was carried out to directly observe children's activities while using *flashcard* media, recording behaviors, responses, and early reading abilities throughout the learning process, from initial to evaluation stages (Adolph, 2016; Creswell, 2015). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the classroom teacher and the principal to gather information about *flashcard* implementation, encountered challenges, and teacher assessments of children's developmental progress. The interview guide contained questions related to syllable reading activities, stimulation strategies, reasons for media selection, implementation barriers, and effective methods (Coe et al., 2025). Documentation included photos, learning activity videos, observation notes, and administrative documents such as lesson plans and assessment sheets, serving as supporting evidence to strengthen primary data (Sugiyono, 2020; Yin, 2015).

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles & Huberman, (1992) consisting of three interrelated stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved grouping, summarizing, and focusing on essential aspects obtained from the field (Sugiyono, 2020). The reduced data were then presented clearly and

systematically through observation tables, interview transcripts, and both *open* and *thematic coding* to identify meaningful relationship patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1992). Conclusion drawing was conducted tentatively based on the analyzed data and then verified through rechecking to ensure validity and reliability (Kusumastuti et al., 2024). To ensure research quality, triangulation was applied by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation. Member checking was conducted by confirming findings with participants to ensure interpretation accuracy, while peer debriefing with supervisors and fellow researchers helped maintain objectivity and analytical depth (Auliya et al., 2020).

Result/Findings

Implementation of Flashcard Game Activities

Based on observations and interviews, flashcard game implementation at PAUD Al Adnan followed systematic stages designed to gradually develop children's early reading abilities. The teacher introduced flashcards during opening activities, showing letters and picture cards one by one. Children were invited to repeat several times over multiple days until they began recognizing letters, then progressed to introducing syllables and attempting to read them.

The teacher explained: "Usually I use them during opening activities, for example pointing to letters and children guessing pictures. Sometimes I arrange them into words, they mention them together." This approach demonstrates the teacher's strategy in creating interactive and participatory learning.

Activities included several key stages: (1) mentioning words on flashcard media, (2) introducing sound symbols of letters forming words one by one and mentioning them, (3) introducing alphabet letters with letter cards "a" to "z", (4) introducing and mentioning vowels and consonants, (5) mentioning and connecting vowels with consonants and reading them using letter cards, (6) mentioning syllables on flashcard media, (7) mentioning and connecting syllables to form simple words on flashcard media, and (8) reading pictures on flashcard media by mentioning picture names and connecting pictures according to words.

Children's Response to Flashcard Media

Observations revealed children showed high enthusiasm when participating in flashcard game activities (V. A. Lestari, 2023). They demonstrated full attention, raised hands when teachers showed flashcards, and actively mentioned letters and simple words. The teacher stated: "Children are more enthusiastic and quickly memorize letters because the form is attractive, pictorial and colorful."

Children began recognizing vowels and consonants and mentioning simple words visually through pictures on flashcards. Several children could mention letters from a picture, for example "b" for "buah" (fruit), "a" for "apel" (apple), "a" for "ayam" (chicken), "j" for "jago" (rooster). With two-letter flashcard assistance (such as bu, ah, a, pel, a, yam, ja, go), children became accustomed to mentioning simple syllables. This process was observed over three consecutive weeks and showed improvement in 9 out of 10 children.

Development of Early Reading Abilities

Observation results of children's early reading abilities after flashcard game activities. Of 10 children, 7 children (70%) reached "Very Well Developed" category in all aspects: letter recognition, syllable pronunciation, and simple word reading. Three children (30%) still required guidance in reading simple words, although they could recognize letters and pronounce syllables well.

The teacher confirmed: "Yes, very helpful. Children can recognize letters faster, some can even mention syllables and read simple words." This finding demonstrates flashcard media's effectiveness in accelerating children's early reading ability development (G. D. Lestari et al., 2023).



Figure 1. Activities using flashcard media

Challenges in Implementation

Despite showing positive results, flashcard implementation faced several challenges (Annas et al., 2024). The teacher explained: "There are challenges, such as children who are not yet focused or not yet fluent in speaking. But with repetition and motivation, they can follow." Other challenges included time limitations, where not all children received sufficient turns, and individual differences in learning pace. To overcome these challenges, teachers used repetition strategies, individual approaches when possible, and created enjoyable learning atmospheres through songs, movements, and games (Kurdi, 2023). The teacher stated: "I always start by introducing syllables one by one. Usually I read first, then children imitate together. After they begin to understand, I continue by arranging syllables into sentences." In addition, teachers implement differentiated learning by adjusting the difficulty level of flashcards to suit each child's individual abilities, ensuring that all students can participate optimally in the learning process. Teachers also use small study groups, allowing children who are struggling to receive more intensive guidance and more opportunities to practice reading without the pressure of a larger group.

Discussion

Flashcard Effectiveness in Developing Early Reading

Research findings indicate that flashcard learning media positively influenced early reading ability development in children aged 4-5 years. This aligns with Vygotsky's theory emphasizing the importance of tools (mediators) in early childhood learning (Santrock, 2017). Flashcards function as visual stimuli attracting children's attention and facilitating letter and word recognition processes (Morrison, 2015). These games also involve children's visual, auditory, and kinesthetic aspects, making learning enjoyable and meaningful (Khadijah, 2016).

Increased early reading ability was also influenced by: (1) teacher consistency in flashcard use, (2) children's involvement in games, and (3) social interaction during activities (Sujiono & Pd, 2019). Thus, flashcard game activities constitute effective methods for improving early reading abilities, especially in letter recognition, syllable, and simple word stages (Sujarwo, 2016).

Relationship with Learning Theory

These findings align with Vygotsky's theory stating that children's learning is strongly influenced by social interaction and tool use (media). Flashcards function as teaching aids (mediators) helping children construct understanding of letters and words through social activities with teachers and peers (D. A. Susanto et al., 2025).

Additionally, behaviorist theory is evident in reinforcement provided by teachers. Children receive stimuli from flashcard visual media and are reinforced with praise or positive teacher responses, resulting in expected behavior, namely ability to recognize and read simple words (Kumullah et al., 2019). Vygotsky's theory and behaviorism complement each other in play-based learning because social interaction and the use of media like flashcards help children construct meaning, while positive reinforcement from teachers ensures that expected reading behaviors emerge consistently. Thus, the process of constructing knowledge through social activities is reinforced by the stimulus-response provided during play, allowing children's early literacy skills to develop more effectively.

Comparison with Previous Research

Unlike previous research focusing only on letter recognition aspects, this study emphasizes comprehensive early reading stages, from recognizing letters, mentioning syllables to reading simple words. According to Nadira, (2023) showed student activity also increased from 59.38% in cycle I to 84.37% in cycle II. Next opinion Sayenti & Wiarta, (2024) confirmed significant flashcard media effect with $t\text{-count} < -t\text{-table} = -25.327 < -1.701$. This research strengthens previous findings while providing deeper insights into implementation processes in natural classroom settings. The following is a brief comparison table between the findings of previous research and the current research:

Table 1. Previous research and current research

Comparative Aspects	Previous Research	Current Research
Study Focus	More emphasis on letter recognition.	Covers a more comprehensive range of early reading stages: letter recognition, syllable names, and simple word reading.
Student Activity Findings	Nadira (2023): Activity increased from 59.38% (Cycle I) to 84.37% (Cycle II).	This study not only examines increased activity but also illustrates the gradual implementation of early reading activities in the classroom.
Media Effectiveness	Sayenti & Wiarta (2024): Flashcard media had a significant effect ($t\text{-test} < -t\text{-table} = -25.327 < -1.701$).	This research strengthens the effectiveness of the media while broadening the context of flashcard use in real-life learning situations.
Contribution	Provides initial evidence of the benefits of visual media for letter recognition.	It offers a novel contribution in the form of a coherent, comprehensive, and contextual mapping of early reading stages in early childhood education classrooms.

Practical Implications

This research confirms that flashcards as educational game media provide positive contributions in developing early reading abilities in early childhood. For practitioners, flashcard implementation requires: (1) variation in flashcard types according to children's developmental stages, (2) teacher consistency in using repetition and positive reinforcement strategies, (3) individual attention to children with different learning paces, and (4) creating enjoyable and interactive learning atmospheres

Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, relatively short observation duration (three months) may not capture long-term development of children's early reading abilities. Second, small sample size (10 children) limits generalizability of findings to broader populations. Third, absence of control groups makes it difficult to isolate flashcard effects from other influencing factors such as home environment and parents' literacy level.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that flashcard game activities effectively improve early reading abilities of children aged 4-5 years at PAUD Al Adnan. Flashcards as educational game media provide positive contributions in developing early reading abilities through several key mechanisms. However, implementation success requires attention to individual differences among children related to concentration levels, individual interests, and speech development speed. Therefore, differentiated learning approaches and individual support remain necessary to ensure all children achieve optimal early literacy development. Future research should consider:

(1) expanding subjects and research locations for more representative results, (2) using quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to test flashcard effectiveness statistically, (3) examining digital flashcard effects compared to conventional ones, (4) investigating long-term impacts through longitudinal studies, and (5) exploring flashcard influence on other developmental aspects such as oral language or children's memory.

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