



IMPROVING HIJAIYAH LETTER RECOGNITION THROUGH LETTER CARD MEDIA AMONG GROUP B CHILDREN AT TK NEGERI PEMBINA POLI-POLIA, EAST KOLAKA

Article Information

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Abstract

Background: Recognizing Hijaiyah letters is an important foundation for early Islamic literacy. However, young children may experience difficulties identifying and distinguishing these letters, highlighting the need for engaging and developmentally appropriate learning media. **Objective:** This study aimed to improve Hijaiyah letter recognition through letter-card games integrated into a letter-train activity among Group B children at TKN Pembina Poli-Polia during the 2023–2024 academic year. **Method:** This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) involving 15 children and conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of planning, action, observation, evaluation, and reflection. Data were collected through observations of teacher performance, children's learning activities, assessments of Hijaiyah letter recognition, and documentation. Data were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative descriptive approaches, with percentages used to measure developmental achievement. **Results:** The percentage of children achieving the Developing as Expected (BSH) or Very Well Developed (BSB) categories increased from 33.33% at the pre-cycle stage to 53.33% in the second meeting of Cycle I and 80% in the second meeting of Cycle II. Teacher performance improved from 54.5% to 90.9%, while children's learning activity increased from 54.5% to approximately 90.9%. **Novelty:** This study provides practical evidence of the use of letter-card games integrated into a letter-train activity to improve Hijaiyah letter recognition through interactive, repetitive, and enjoyable learning experiences in an early childhood classroom. **Conclusion:** Letter-card games integrated into a letter-train activity improved Hijaiyah letter recognition among Group B children. This approach can serve as an alternative learning strategy for early childhood teachers seeking to create active, engaging, and enjoyable learning experiences that support early Hijaiyah literacy.

Keywords: Early Childhood, Hijaiyah Letters, Letter Cards, Letter-Train Activity, Classroom Action Research.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is an important foundation for developing basic skills, character, and readiness for subsequent levels of education. At this stage, children need stimulation that is appropriate to their developmental characteristics, learning needs, and experiences. One aspect that requires development is religious and moral values, including the recognition of Hijaiyah letters as a foundation for learning to read the Qur'an. Khadijah (2016) explains that early childhood education should consider children's developmental characteristics to ensure that the stimulation provided supports optimal growth and development.

Children aged 5–6 years are at a developmental stage that enables them to learn through observation, repetition, direct experience, and enjoyable play activities. At this age, introducing Hijaiyah letters should not rely solely on verbal explanations but should involve activities that stimulate visual and auditory perception and encourage active participation. Letter recognition involves identifying letter shapes, distinguishing one letter from another, and associating symbols with their corresponding sounds. Therefore, instruction in Hijaiyah letters should be designed in a concrete, gradual, and developmentally appropriate manner.

One approach that can support this learning process is the use of engaging and easy-to-use instructional media. Instructional media help teachers present learning materials, clarify information, and create more meaningful learning experiences. Arsyad (2017) explains that instructional media can clarify the delivery of messages and improve the effectiveness of the learning process. In early childhood education, visual media such as letter cards can be used to introduce Hijaiyah letters through activities involving observation, naming, matching, and categorizing. These activities provide children with opportunities to participate actively in learning.

Hijaiyah letter cards are an alternative instructional medium that combines symbol recognition, visual observation, and play-based activities. Each card can display a single Hijaiyah letter in a clear, easily recognizable format, with an appropriate size and attractive colors to capture children's attention. The cards can be used in activities such as finding matching letters, selecting cards corresponding to sounds pronounced by the teacher, arranging letters in sequence, and identifying differences between letter shapes. Through these activities, children can repeatedly practice letter recognition without relying solely on verbal memorization. Thus, letter cards have the potential to create more interactive learning experiences while helping teachers monitor each child's progress.

Although letter cards have the potential to support learning, their effectiveness depends on how teachers design and implement instructional activities. Teachers need to model accurate pronunciation, encourage children to observe the distinctive features of each letter, and provide repeated practice in a supportive and pressure-free environment. Aisyah et al. (2022) examined the effectiveness of flashcards in improving young children's recognition of Hijaiyah letters. Their findings

provide an empirical basis for considering cards as an engaging instructional alternative that aligns with young children's learning needs.

Previous studies have also demonstrated the relevance of card-based media for introducing Hijaiyah letters. Nurhayati et al. (2022) examined the introduction of Hijaiyah letters through picture cards, while Ramlah et al. (2021) investigated improvements in Hijaiyah letter recognition through letter cards among Group B children. These studies provide a foundation for examining the use of visual media in religious education for young children. However, the implementation of such media needs to be adapted to classroom conditions, children's characteristics, and the instructional needs of each early childhood education institution.

Based on the preliminary observations underlying this study, 9 of the 15 children in Group B at TK Negeri Pembina Poli-Polia, East Kolaka Regency, had difficulty recognizing Hijaiyah letters accurately. These difficulties were evident in their need for guidance when identifying letter shapes and distinguishing between letters with similar visual characteristics. This situation indicates the need to improve instructional activities through concrete and engaging media that provide children with opportunities to practice repeatedly according to their individual abilities.

In response to this problem, this study focuses on improving Hijaiyah letter recognition through letter cards among Group B children at TK Negeri Pembina Poli-Polia, East Kolaka Regency. The use of letter cards is expected to help children identify, name, and distinguish Hijaiyah letters through structured play-based activities. This study is important because it provides insight into the implementation of letter-card media in a specific local educational context and offers practical considerations for early childhood teachers when selecting instructional strategies that meet children's developmental needs.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive quantitative approach using Classroom Action Research (CAR) to improve Hijaiyah letter recognition through letter cards among Group B children at TK Negeri Pembina Poli-Polia, East Kolaka Regency. Classroom Action Research was selected because it enables teachers and researchers to identify learning problems, implement improvement strategies, and systematically evaluate their outcomes. The research procedure followed the Kemmis and McTaggart model, as cited in Arikunto (2011), which consists of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The study was conducted in two cycles, with improvements in subsequent actions based on reflections from the preceding cycle.

The study was conducted during the first semester of the 2023–2024 academic year at TK Negeri Pembina Poli-Polia, East Kolaka Regency. The participants were 15 children in Group B with varying levels of Hijaiyah letter recognition. Based on preliminary observations, nine children had not yet developed adequate letter recognition skills, particularly in identifying letter shapes and

distinguishing visually similar letters. These findings provided the basis for implementing instructional activities using Hijaiyah letter cards. The learning activities were designed around play-based experiences involving visual observation, letter naming, card matching, and gradual repetition in accordance with early childhood developmental characteristics.

The research was conducted in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. During the planning stage, the researcher prepared daily lesson plans (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran Harian*, RPPH), Hijaiyah letter cards, observation sheets for teacher and child activities, and an assessment rubric for letter recognition. The action stage consisted of opening, main, and closing activities. During the main activities, children were guided to recognize, name, select, and match Hijaiyah letter cards. Throughout the intervention, an observer recorded instructional activities and changes in children's abilities. The reflection stage involved identifying successful strategies and instructional challenges to inform improvements in the subsequent cycle.

Data were collected through observation, child development assessments, and documentation. Observation was used to examine the implementation of learning activities and children's engagement during letter-card activities. Children's abilities were assessed using a four-level developmental rubric: Not Yet Developed (*Belum Berkembang*, BB), Beginning to Develop (*Mulai Berkembang*, MB), Developing as Expected (*Berkembang Sesuai Harapan*, BSH), and Very Well Developed (*Berkembang Sangat Baik*, BSB), with scores of 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively. The indicators of Hijaiyah letter recognition included naming letters, identifying letter shapes, and distinguishing visually similar letters. Documentation provided supporting evidence in the form of activity photographs and records of the implemented actions. Data from these three techniques were used to describe changes in children's abilities from the initial observations through the end of each cycle.

The data were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative descriptive techniques. Qualitative analysis described teacher activities, children's engagement, instructional challenges, and improvements implemented in each cycle. Quantitative analysis involved calculating children's developmental scores and the percentage of children achieving the predetermined class-wide success criterion. A child was considered to have achieved the criterion if they were classified as Developing as Expected (BSH) or Very Well Developed (BSB). The study was considered successful if at least 75% of the children achieved either the BSH or BSB category and at least 80% of the planned instructional activities were implemented. Assessment results from each cycle were compared with the initial conditions to determine improvements in Hijaiyah letter recognition following the implementation of letter-card media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

3.1. Hijaiyah Letter Recognition Skills at the Pre-Cycle Stage

Initial observations of 15 Group B children at TK Negeri Pembina Poli-Polia, East Kolaka Regency, indicated that their Hijaiyah letter recognition skills had not yet reached the expected developmental level. Before the intervention, learning activities did not optimally provide children with concrete and engaging learning experiences. The initial assessment showed that 5 children (33.33%) were classified as Developing as Expected (BSH), 4 children (26.67%) as Beginning to Develop (MB), and 6 children (40%) as Not Yet Developed (BB). No children reached the Very Well Developed (BSB) category.

Table 1. Distribution of Hijaiyah Letter Recognition Skills at the Pre-Cycle Stage

Developmental Category	Number of Children	Percentage
Very Well Developed (BSB)	0	0%
Developing as Expected (BSH)	5	33.33%
Beginning to Develop (MB)	4	26.67%
Not Yet Developed (BB)	6	40.00%
Total	15	100%

Source: Initial observation data.

The data indicate that only one-third of the children had reached the BSH category, while the remaining 10 children were still classified as MB or BB. This condition highlights the need for instructional interventions that enable children to recognize letter symbols concretely, practice naming letters repeatedly, and distinguish between visually similar letters. These initial findings provided the basis for implementing Hijaiyah letter cards in two action cycles.

3.2. Results of the First Cycle

The first cycle was conducted over two sessions using Hijaiyah letter-card activities. During the planning stage, the researcher prepared lesson plans, letter-card media, observation sheets for teacher and child activities, and developmental assessment instruments. The learning activities included letter recognition, card grouping, symbol guessing, and arranging cards in alphabetical order. The children were divided into three groups to provide opportunities for active participation in the learning activities.

During the first session, the learning process was not yet fully effective. Observations indicated that teacher activity implementation reached 54.5%, while child activity implementation also reached 54.5%. Several challenges were identified, including the teacher's failure to clearly communicate the learning objectives, insufficient individual guidance, and limited efforts to motivate children. Some

children also had difficulty maintaining focus, identifying letter symbols accurately, and completing card-guessing and sequencing activities.

During the second session, teacher activity implementation increased to 63.64%, while child activity implementation increased to approximately 72.73%, based on eight of the eleven indicators being achieved. The assessment of Hijaiyah letter recognition showed that 8 children (53.33%) had reached the BSH category, while 7 children (46.67%) remained in the MB category. Thus, the proportion of children meeting the achievement criterion increased by 20 percentage points compared with the pre-cycle stage, from 33.33% to 53.33%.

Table 2. Comparison of Hijaiyah Letter Recognition Skills at the Pre-Cycle and First-Cycle Stages

Research Stage	Children Meeting the BSH/BSB Criterion	Percentage	Children Not Yet Meeting the Criterion
Pre-cycle	5	33.33%	10
First cycle, Session 2	8	53.33%	7

Source: Research observation and assessment data.

These results indicate that the use of letter cards began to produce positive improvements. However, the class-wide achievement rate had not yet met the predetermined success criterion of 75%. Reflection on the first cycle indicated the need to improve motivation, provide clearer instructions, offer additional guidance to children experiencing difficulties, and intensify repeated letter-recognition activities. Therefore, the intervention continued into the second cycle.

3.3. Results of the Second Cycle

The second cycle was implemented by addressing the weaknesses identified during the first cycle. The teacher provided clearer instructions, increased motivation, demonstrated card activities step by step, and encouraged children to participate actively. The learning activities continued to involve observing, naming, sequencing, grouping, and identifying Hijaiyah letters. Repeated practice was provided to give children more opportunities to recognize letter shapes and names.

During the first session of the second cycle, teacher activity implementation reached 81%, while child activity implementation reached 81.8%. These results indicated improvements in the learning process compared with the first cycle. During the second session, teacher activity implementation increased to 90.9%, while child activity implementation reached 90.91%. Improvements in instructional implementation were accompanied by better Hijaiyah letter recognition assessment results.

At the end of the second cycle, 3 children (20%) reached the BSB category, 9 children (60%) reached the BSH category, and 3 children (20%) remained in the MB category. Therefore, 12 children,

representing 80% of the total participants, achieved either the BSH or BSB category. These results indicate that the predetermined class-wide success criterion of 75% had been achieved.

Table 3. Distribution of Hijaiyah Letter Recognition Skills at the End of the Second Cycle

Developmental Category	Number of Children	Percentage
Very Well Developed (BSB)	3	20%
Developing as Expected (BSH)	9	60%
Beginning to Develop (MB)	3	20%
Not Yet Developed (BB)	0	0%
Total	15	100%

Source: Research observation and assessment data.

Table 4. Development of Class-Wide Achievement Across Research Stages

Research Stage	Children Meeting the BSH/BSB Criterion	Class-Wide Achievement
Pre-cycle	5 of 15 children	33.33%
First cycle, Session 2	8 of 15 children	53.33%
Second cycle, Session 2	12 of 15 children	80.00%

Source: Research observation and assessment data.

Descriptively, class-wide achievement increased by 20 percentage points during the first cycle compared with the pre-cycle stage, followed by a further increase of 26.67 percentage points during the second cycle compared with the first cycle. Overall, achievement increased by 46.67 percentage points from the pre-cycle stage to the end of the second cycle. The three children who had not reached the BSH category at the end of the study continued to require guidance and enrichment activities tailored to their developmental needs.

3.4. Summary of Research Findings

The main findings indicate an improvement in Hijaiyah letter recognition skills following the implementation of letter cards in Group B learning activities. The improvement was evident not only in class-wide achievement but also in the implementation of instructional activities. The teacher became more systematic in providing instructions and guidance, while the children had more opportunities to observe, name, distinguish, and sequence letters through play-based activities.

The study was concluded after the second cycle because class-wide achievement reached 80%, exceeding the predetermined success criterion of 75%. These findings support the use of letter cards as an alternative instructional medium for introducing Hijaiyah letters in early childhood education. However, the results should be interpreted within the context of classroom action research involving a limited number of participants and no comparison group. Therefore, the observed improvements cannot be directly generalized to all early childhood education institutions.

DISCUSSION

4.1. Improving Hijaiyah Letter Recognition through Letter Cards

The results showed that Hijaiyah letter recognition skills among Group B children at TK Negeri Pembina Poli-Polia improved following the implementation of letter cards over two action cycles. Class-wide achievement increased from 33.33% at the pre-cycle stage to 53.33% in Cycle I and reached 80% at the end of Cycle II. This improvement indicates that letter-card activities can serve as an alternative approach to helping children identify letter shapes, name letters, and distinguish visually similar symbols. These findings are consistent with Zara, Wulan, and Sarifah (2024), who reported that the MERIYAH game media supported Hijaiyah letter recognition among young children.

From a pedagogical perspective, letter cards provide children with opportunities to interact directly with learning materials. Letters are not introduced solely through verbal explanations but are also presented visually so that children can observe, select, move, and arrange them. These activities allow children to practice letter recognition repeatedly through play, making the learning process more active. Alfina et al. (2023), in their study on the development of a soft book for Hijaiyah letter recognition, also emphasized the importance of providing instructional media tailored to the developmental needs of young children. Although their study used a different medium, it supports the principle that letter recognition should be facilitated through learning resources appropriate to children's characteristics.

The improvement observed in this study should also be understood as the result of gradual instructional improvements rather than solely the use of cards as visual materials. During Cycle I, some children had difficulty maintaining attention, hesitated when naming letters, and struggled to distinguish symbols with similar shapes. Following reflection, the teacher improved instructional clarity, increased motivation, and provided more focused guidance during Cycle II. These improvements were accompanied by an increase in teacher activity implementation from 63.64% in the second session of Cycle I to 90.9% in the second session of Cycle II. This finding highlights the importance of combining instructional media with consistent guidance to provide children with more effective learning experiences.

4.2. The Role of Play-Based Activities in Supporting Letter Recognition

Letter-card activities provided opportunities for children to learn through direct experience, repetition, and interaction with teachers and peers. Grouping letters, guessing symbols, and arranging cards in sequence positioned children as active participants in the learning process. Through these activities, children not only received information but also practiced observing differences in letter shapes and remembering letter names. Sayidah, Hurri, and Siwiyanti (2021), in their study on developing application-based educational games for Hijaiyah letter recognition, demonstrated that presenting learning activities in a game format can provide an engaging alternative for introducing

letters. Although their medium differed from the one used in this study, their findings support educational activities that encourage children's active involvement.

Children's participation in this study improved alongside changes in instructional implementation. Child activity implementation during the second session of Cycle I reached 8 out of 11 indicators, or 72.73%, and subsequently increased to 10 out of 11 indicators, or 90.91%, at the end of Cycle II. This change suggests that a more structured learning environment and activities involving direct participation can support children's engagement during instruction. Hidayah et al. (2025) also examined multimedia-based learning to improve Hijaiyah letter-reading skills among children aged 5–6 years. Their study further supports the understanding that instructional media can facilitate letter-recognition learning when aligned with learners' needs and instructional objectives.

However, letter cards should be used with consideration for individual differences in children's abilities. The final assessment showed that 3 children, or 20%, remained in the Beginning to Develop category. This finding indicates that not all children made the same level of progress following the intervention. Teachers should provide additional practice, revisit letters that remain difficult to recognize, and offer gradual assistance without creating pressure. Therefore, letter-card activities should not focus solely on answering speed but also on accurate symbol recognition, confidence in naming letters, and each child's individual progress.

4.3. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Erni (2025), who examined the use of letter cards to improve Hijaiyah letter-reading skills among young children. That study reported improvements from the pre-cycle stage through Cycle II. These similar findings reinforce the relevance of letter cards as an alternative instructional intervention. Nevertheless, the present study has its own context, involving 15 Group B children at TK Negeri Pembina Poli-Polia, with class-wide achievement increasing from 33.33% to 80%.

The findings can also be compared with those of Dheasari et al. (2024), who investigated letter-card games to improve Hijaiyah letter-reading skills among Group B children. Their study employed a classroom action research approach involving two cycles, similar to the present study. This methodological similarity illustrates how planning, action, observation, and reflection can be used systematically to improve letter-recognition instruction. Differences in research settings, participant characteristics, and instructional implementation must nevertheless be considered when interpreting the findings of both studies.

Ramadani (2025) also reported improvements in Hijaiyah letter-reading skills through letter-card games among Group B children at TK Al-Amin. This finding is consistent with the results of the present study, particularly regarding the potential benefits of letter-card activities for learning Hijaiyah symbols. In addition, research by Uba, Arifin, and Tine on the use of a spinning wheel indicated that

variations in game-based instructional media can support children's motivation, concentration, and engagement in Hijaiyah letter recognition. Collectively, these studies suggest that letter-recognition instruction can be developed using various media, provided that the selected medium aligns with children's learning objectives and needs.

Based on these comparisons, the contribution of this study lies in documenting improvements in Hijaiyah letter-recognition instruction through two action cycles at TK Negeri Pembina Poli-Polia. The study not only recorded changes in class-wide achievement but also described changes in teacher activity implementation and children's engagement throughout the learning process. Nevertheless, because the study used a classroom action research design involving a small group without a comparison group, the findings are best interpreted as evidence of instructional improvement within the classroom studied rather than proof that letter cards were the sole cause of the observed improvement.

4.4. Research Implications and Limitations

The findings have practical implications for early childhood education teachers, particularly when designing concrete, enjoyable, and gradual learning activities for introducing Hijaiyah letters. Teachers can use cards for matching symbols, guessing letter names, grouping similar shapes, and arranging letters in sequence. These activities should be accompanied by accurate pronunciation models, sufficient repetition, and guidance tailored to children's individual needs. Teachers can also record which letters remain difficult for each child to recognize so that subsequent instruction can be more focused.

This study has several limitations, including a sample of only 15 children, implementation at a single educational institution, and the absence of a comparison group. The data also focused primarily on developmental achievement and observations of instructional activities. Future research could involve larger samples, include multiple early childhood education institutions, and develop more detailed assessment instruments to measure accuracy in identifying letter shapes, naming letters, and distinguishing Hijaiyah letters. Such efforts could strengthen the empirical evidence regarding the use of letter cards in early childhood education.

CONCLUSION

Main Findings: This study found that letter-card games through a letter-train activity improved Hijaiyah letter recognition among Group B children at TK Negeri Pembina Poli-Polia, East Kolaka. The percentage of children achieving the Developing as Expected (BSH) and Very Well Developed (BSB) categories increased from 33.33% in the pre-cycle to 80% in Cycle II, representing an improvement of 46.67 percentage points. **Research Contribution:** This study provides practical evidence that letter-card games can support Hijaiyah letter recognition through interactive, engaging, and developmentally appropriate learning activities in early childhood education. **Theoretical and Practical Implications:** The findings highlight the importance of hands-on and play-based learning

in helping young children recognize Hijaiyah letters. Teachers are encouraged to use letter cards through activities involving observation, identification, matching, grouping, and sequencing, supported by clear instructions, repetition, and individual guidance. **Research Limitations:** This study involved only 15 children from one kindergarten and used a classroom action research design without a comparison group. Therefore, the findings are context-specific and cannot be generalized broadly. **Future Research Directions:** Future studies should involve larger samples across multiple kindergartens and explore comparisons with other instructional media or play-based approaches to further examine their potential for improving Hijaiyah letter recognition in early childhood education.

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