An Analysis of Letter Recognition Skills Through the Letter Card Box Game in Children Aged 4–5 Years

Yayuk Desti Rahayu*, Aryo Andri Nugroho, Ngatmini
Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia
*yayukdestirahayu12@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the letter card box game as an educational medium in enhancing the letter recognition skills of children aged 4–5 years at TK Mutiara Basmallah 1 Tembalang. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with data gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results reveal that the use of the letter card box game significantly improves children's abilities in identifying letter shapes, names, and phonetic sounds. The media successfully captures children's attention and fosters a joyful, engaging, and interactive learning atmosphere. By incorporating visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles, this media helps strengthen children's cognitive engagement and retention in the learning process. Furthermore, it promotes active participation and collaboration among peers during activities. However, the study also identifies several challenges, including the limited availability of the media, restricted instructional time, and difficulties encountered by some children in distinguishing visually similar letters. These obstacles can be mitigated through the application of more diverse instructional strategies and continuous collaboration among teachers, parents, and the school. Overall, the letter card box game proves to be an effective medium for developing early literacy in young children. It is therefore recommended that schools adopt this media in their curriculum and support it through teacher training programs and enhanced educational resources.

Keywords: Educational Media; Letter Card Box; Letter Recognition Skills; Early Childhood Literacy

Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves as a crucial foundation in the development of every individual. Kindergarten (TK) is one of the early childhood education institutions that falls within the formal education pathway. The National Education System Law (2003), in Article 28 Paragraph 3, states that early childhood education within the formal education pathway includes Kindergarten, Raudathul Athfal, or other equivalent forms. Based on Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 146 of 2014, early childhood education is organized based on age groups and types of services, with one of its objectives being to prepare children for entry into primary education.

At the age of 4–6 years, children are in a critical phase of development, where they begin to acquire various fundamental skills that will serve as the foundation for further development. Education at this stage must encompass various aspects such as religious and moral values, physical-motor skills, cognitive, language, as well as social-emotional development. These aspects need to be properly stimulated to ensure optimal child growth (Saputri & Sri, 2016). One essential aspect that must be stimulated in early childhood is language development. Language development in early childhood is significant as it greatly influences a child's ability to think and learn, and affects their overall educational experience (Hasanah, 2018). Kurnia et al. (2015) argue that language skills must be developed from an early age to support a child's maximum development.

Language is the primary communication tool used by humans to interact and is a product of culture that must be learned and taught (Susilaningsih et al., 2018). Human life is inseparable from language use, and language acquisition is a critical component of child development.

In the early childhood education curriculum, there are three main components in achieving language development for children aged 4–6 years: understanding language, expressing language, and literacy. At this stage, children begin to develop intuitive thinking skills and communicate through language (Ciptarja, 2008). Language skills in children are categorized into two types: receptive and productive language skills. Receptive language skills include listening and reading, while productive language skills include speaking and writing (Nuryani, 2018). During this stage, children begin to apply their receptive language skills in reading and writing activities (Defina, 2017).

At the age of 4–6 years, children also begin to develop the ability to recognize letter symbols. Letter recognition is vital as a foundation for beginning the reading and writing process. However, in daily life, children often struggle to accurately differentiate letter symbols. Children of this age are often able to name letters randomly without understanding the differences between the symbols, such as the letters 'b' and 'd' (Piaget in Nurmawati, 2014). To support the development of letter recognition skills, appropriate learning media are needed. Instructional media serve to assist teachers in communicating information to children and stimulate their interest in learning. Azar Arsyad (2013) states that media are everything used to convey ideas, thoughts, or opinions to the recipient. At TK Mutiara Basmallah, the use of game-based learning media, such as letter card box games, can be an appealing alternative to enhance children's letter recognition skills.

Based on observations conducted at TK Mutiara Basmallah, children aged 4–5 years still face difficulties in accurately recognizing letter symbols. They can pronounce letter sounds but are unable to differentiate the shapes of letter symbols, such as the letters 'b' and 'd'. Therefore, this study aims to analyze children's letter recognition skills through the use of a letter card box game at TK Mutiara Basmallah, Tembalang.

Letter recognition refers to the process in which children learn to differentiate the existing letter symbols, associate the letters with relevant sounds, and develop phonemic awareness (the ability to hear and recognize sounds within words). This process includes visual discrimination skills (the ability to distinguish different letter shapes, such as 'b' and 'd') and phonemic awareness (the ability to match letters with the correct sounds). At the age of 4–5 years, children are in a critical developmental window for these skills because their ability to recognize and remember letters largely depends on their rapidly developing brain. During this period, the brain is highly plastic, making early stimulation significantly impactful on their language development.

The age of 4–5 years is crucial for the development of letter recognition skills. At this stage, children are at a cognitive development phase that allows them to begin understanding written symbols and the relationship between sounds and letter shapes. Research shows that children who receive proper stimulation at this age are more likely to be prepared to start reading and writing at the primary education level. This aligns with Piaget's cognitive development theory, which suggests that children at this age are in the preoperational stage, where they begin to understand basic symbols such as letters (Susilawati & Astuti, 2021).

The letter card box game is chosen as an instructional medium because it enhances children's engagement in the learning process. This game provides a fun and interactive learning experience that stimulates children's interest in learning to recognize letters. By using letter cards, children can actively learn while playing, improving their concentration in recognizing letter shapes and the corresponding sounds. Furthermore, this game helps

stimulate children's thinking skills, such as problem-solving and visual memory development, which are essential for their language development (Rahman & Azizah, 2021). The main problem encountered is the difficulty children have in accurately recognizing letter symbols, particularly in differentiating similar-looking letters, such as 'b' and 'd'. Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze how the use of the letter card box game can help improve letter recognition skills in children aged 4–5 years at TK Mutiara Basmallah, Tembalang. This research aims to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of game-based learning media in enhancing letter recognition abilities in early childhood education.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at exploring in depth the issues related to the analysis of letter recognition skills through the letter card box game among early childhood learners. Qualitative research is characterized by collecting data in the form of words and images rather than numbers, as it emphasizes meaning and deeper understanding. Qualitative research gathers data in the form of spoken or written words and human actions without attempting to quantify them. The primary focus of this research is on the process rather than the outcomes, as the interrelations among components under examination become clearer when observed during the process. This type of research is a case study, in which data are gathered from multiple sources relevant to the research problem, including words and written records, which are subsequently analyzed into research findings. The research was conducted at TK Mutiara Basmallah 1 in Tembalang, specifically focusing on Class A students, comprising 13 children. The research period spanned from February 2025 until the end of the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The research steps began with the submission of a research proposal. Before field research commenced, a preliminary study was conducted with general observations of the research site. Once the proposal was approved by the academic supervisor and all prerequisites were met, the research was carried out as planned. The researcher acted as the main instrument in this study, playing a direct role in data collection. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as a participant observer, directly engaging in the observed activities, closely observing, and attentively listening. The researcher was involved throughout the entire research process, from determining the research focus and selecting the subjects to collecting the data, conducting analysis, and drawing conclusions. The primary data sources in this study included observations, interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation was conducted during the letter card box game activities between the teacher and the children, and through observing parental involvement to assess support for the ongoing activities. This direct engagement allowed the researcher to understand the context of the data and uncover findings that might not be revealed through interviews. Structured interviews were conducted using interview guidelines to explore the issues related to letter recognition skills in children aged 4–5 years. Documentation was also utilized, including records of past events, such as reports, photographs, and written materials related to the research focus, which supported data gathered from observations and interviews. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument, and once the research problem is clearly defined, additional instruments may be developed to complement the data. Data were gathered through participatory observation, interviews, and documentation. Table 3.1 presents a summary of the data collection techniques used. Data validation was carried out to ensure the credibility and reliability of the data, with proposing four criteria for validating qualitative data: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This validation process enhances the trustworthiness

of the research findings. Data analysis was conducted by organizing and categorizing the obtained data into relevant categories. Suggest three stages in qualitative data analysis: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. These stages were carried out interactively and continuously until completion.

Result dan Discussion

The analysis of documents revealed that the teaching module utilized in the learning process was systematically and purposefully designed. The module outlines clear learning objectives and supports the use of a learning media in the form of a letter card box game. The instructional sequence begins with a warm-up activity, followed by a core session incorporating the letter card game, and concludes with a reflection phase aimed at reinforcing the children's understanding. Furthermore, analysis of students' worksheets indicated notable progress in their ability to recognize letters, particularly in articulating and distinguishing letter shapes. Nevertheless, some children still struggled to associate letters with corresponding objects, suggesting a need for continued practice.

Learning documentation further demonstrated that the implementation of the letter card box game was carried out effectively. Teacher reflections highlighted the media's success in capturing children's attention and increasing their interest in letter recognition. Educators reported improvements in children's participation, confidence, and ability to maintain concentration during lessons. Photographic documentation also provided evidence of active engagement, showing children enthusiastically interacting with the letter cards. These visual records not only illustrated a joyful and interactive learning environment but also served as a useful tool for teachers to assess children's progress and provide positive feedback to those who correctly identified letters.

Overall, the letter card box game proved effective in enhancing early literacy skills among children aged 4–5 years. The activities presented through this medium created an engaging and interactive learning atmosphere, fostering greater interest in letter recognition. Supporting factors such as the teacher's role, a conducive learning environment, and parental involvement further contributed to the media's effectiveness. Nonetheless, certain challenges persisted, including limited availability of materials and difficulties in distinguishing similar-looking letters, which require the development of more varied instructional strategies.

Observations conducted on February 12, 2025, in Class A corroborated these findings. Children displayed high enthusiasm during lessons involving the letter card game. Activities began with daily routines such as morning prayers and motivational chants, followed by the teacher introducing vowel letters using the cards. The students actively held the cards and attempted to pronounce the letters they received. Some collaborated in small groups to match letters with objects found in the classroom that began with the corresponding letter. While most children demonstrated a good grasp of the material, some still had difficulty distinguishing between visually similar letters, such as "B" and "D." However, with the teacher's guidance, they continued to make efforts in completing their tasks.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that game-based learning approaches such as the letter card box media positively influence letter mastery among early childhood learners. The learning environment becomes more engaging, students participate more actively, and their motivation to learn increases significantly. Children appeared more confident and enthusiastic, even showing healthy competitiveness when identifying or matching letters with objects. The success of this approach was evident in the children's joyful expressions and increased involvement compared to traditional teaching methods.

However, not all children mastered the material at the same pace. Some still required additional support, particularly in recognizing similarly shaped letters. Therefore, training for teachers on how to effectively utilize this media is essential. Moreover, incorporating diverse instructional methods is necessary to sustain children's attention and interest throughout the learning process. With proper time management, varied teaching strategies, and support from both teachers and parents, the letter card box game can serve as a strategic and meaningful tool to enhance young children's early literacy skills in an enjoyable way.

1. The Effectiveness of the Letter Card Box Game

The use of the letter card box game as a learning medium for letter recognition has proven to be effective in enhancing the ability of 4–5-year-old children at TK Mutiara Basmallah 1 Tembalang to recognize letters. During the learning activities using this medium, the children appeared more enthusiastic and actively engaged in activities involving the letter cards. This game allowed children to identify, pronounce, and associate letters with words or objects around them. The effectiveness of this medium was evident in the improvement of children's abilities to recognize the shapes, names, and sounds of letters after participating in the learning sessions. Observation results showed that children were able to easily touch, match, and name the letters they selected, demonstrating a better understanding of letter concepts. Moreover, the use of this game-based medium contributed to the creation of an interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere, making the children more interested in participating in the learning process. Classroom observations indicated that the children were more focused and did not easily become bored during the activities, in contrast to conventional methods such as lectures or writing exercises. By using the letter card box game, children were able to learn in a fun manner that simultaneously engaged visual, auditory, and kinesthetic aspects, making it easier for them to remember and comprehend letter concepts. Learning documentation showed that the teaching modules used by the teacher had been systematically designed, including learning objectives focused on introducing letter shapes, names, and sounds, as well as associating letters with simple words.

Based on the research findings, the use of the letter card box game medium has been proven effective in improving letter recognition abilities in children aged 4–5 years at TK Mutiara Basmallah 1 Tembalang. This medium successfully attracted children's interest, created an enjoyable learning environment, and helped them interactively recognize the shapes, names, and sounds of letters. This success can be explained through the involvement of multiple learning aspects—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic—which allowed children to more easily remember and confidently articulate and arrange letters (Huda, 2019). These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Nurhadi et al. (2020), which showed that game-based learning can increase student motivation and engagement. In addition, the children were also able to associate letters with objects or words beginning with those letters, indicating a strong associative ability between letters and words.

Interviews with teachers revealed that teacher competence in managing the use of media significantly influenced the successful implementation of this medium. In line with these findings, Suyanto (2021) emphasized the importance of teachers' skills in selecting and utilizing learning media to create an interactive and effective classroom environment. Adequate teacher training is a key factor in optimizing the use of media according to children's needs. Research by Nurhasanah and Rahayu (2022) also showed that teacher support through clear instructions can facilitate students' understanding of the subject matter. Furthermore, school support in providing learning facilities and infrastructure also plays an important role in the effectiveness of this game-based medium (Mulyani, 2020)

2. Challenges and Supporting Factors

Several challenges were encountered in the implementation of the letter card box game media. The primary obstacle faced was the limited number of available letter cards, which required children to take turns using them. This led to some children losing focus and becoming impatient while waiting for their turn. Another challenge observed was the difficulty children experienced in distinguishing similar letters, such as "B" and "D", as well as "G" and "Q". Although most children were able to recognize and pronounce letters easily, some still required more intensive guidance to differentiate between similar-looking letters. Additionally, the limited duration of the learning session posed its own challenge, as some children wished to play for a longer period and felt dissatisfied with the time available.

However, there were several supporting factors that contributed to the success of this game-based media. The children's high level of enthusiasm for the game was a key factor that supported its effectiveness. The children greatly enjoyed playing with the letter card box, as evidenced by their joyful and cheerful expressions during participation. Moreover, a conducive classroom environment and strong support from the school played a significant role in enhancing the media's effectiveness. The school provided adequate learning facilities and offered training for teachers to optimize the use of the media. Parental support in assisting children's learning at home also served as an external factor that strengthened the effectiveness of the learning process.

Several obstacles were found in the application of the letter card box game media. The main difficulty encountered was the limited number of letter cards available, which required the children to take turns using them. This sometimes caused some children to lose focus and become bored while waiting for their turn. Research by Amelia (2019) also indicated that media limitations could affect the effectiveness of learning, particularly when there are not enough media resources for all students. The limited instructional time also posed a challenge, as some children wanted to play longer but had to follow the predetermined schedule. Therefore, effective time management is essential so that every child can experience the full benefits of the game (Fatimah, 2020).

Parental involvement in learning at home is also an important factor in accelerating children's understanding of letters. Research by Suriani (2021) revealed that parental support in providing learning media at home can enhance children's ability to recognize letters. Thus, it is crucial for parents to be actively involved in supporting their children's learning at home, either by providing similar media or by engaging them in simple reading activities.

3. Children's Responses to the Use of Letter Card Box Game

Children's responses to the use of the letter card box game media were very positive. The majority of children appeared enthusiastic and happy when playing with the letter cards. They became more active in recognizing letters, and most of them showed improvement in their ability to name letters after using this media. The children appeared more confident and more eager to participate, both individually and in groups. Observations showed that the children were more focused while playing with the letter cards; they paid close attention to the cards they chose and tried to pronounce the letters correctly. The success of this media in attracting children's interest was evident from their desire to continue playing even after the learning session had ended.

Nevertheless, some children still needed additional encouragement from the teacher to participate more actively, especially those who were more introverted or lacked self-confidence. This was reflected in some children who appeared hesitant to name letters or who asked the teacher questions when they encountered difficulties. However,

overall, the children who were more actively engaged in the game demonstrated improvement in letter recognition skills, as well as greater confidence in naming the letters they selected.

In addition, the use of the letter card box game media also enhanced children's social skills. Children helped one another and shared answers while playing in groups. They were observed to engage more frequently in discussions and to collaborate in identifying letters or forming words. Observational data indicated that this social interaction was one of the factors supporting a fun and effective learning process. Children who were more active in the game also became more courageous in speaking in front of their peers, which contributed to the development of their speaking skills.

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Table 1. Findings on the Effectiveness of the Letter Card Box Game

Aspect	Findings	Explanation
Effectiveness of the Media	The letter card box game was proven effective in enhancing letter recognition skills in 4–5-year-old children.	The children showed high enthusiasm, actively participated, and were able to distinguish the shapes, names, and sounds of letters after using the media. This demonstrates the involvement of multiple senses (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) in the learning process.
Success of Media Usage	The letter card box game created an interactive and enjoyable learning environment.	Children were more focused and not easily bored compared to conventional methods. This media successfully increased children's engagement in the learning process, with the use of letter cards supporting the understanding of letter concepts.

Challenges Encountered	Limited number of letter cards and difficulty distinguishing similar letters, such as 'B' and 'D'.	Children had to take turns using the letter cards, which caused some children to lose focus. Additionally, some children struggled to differentiate between similar-looking letters, requiring more intensive guidance.
Supporting Factors	Parental involvement and school support facilities.	Parental support at home and adequate learning facilities at school played a significant role in enhancing the media's effectiveness. Children who received more support from their parents learned to recognize letters faster.
Children's Responses to the Media	Children showed very positive responses to the use of the media.	Most children appeared happy, more confident, and eager to participate individually or in groups. Observations showed that the children were more focused while playing with the letter cards and paid attention to pronouncing the letters correctly.
Improvement in Children's Social Skills	The game also enhanced children's social skills.	Children helped one another and shared answers while playing in groups. Social interaction was a key factor supporting the fun and effective learning process, with more active children becoming more confident in speaking in front of their peers.

Conclusion

Based on the research conducted at TK Mutiara Basmallah 1 Tembalang, it can be concluded that the use of letter card box game media has proven effective in improving letter recognition skills in children aged 4-5 years. This media is able to create a more interactive and enjoyable learning environment, which makes children more interested in engaging in learning activities. The letter card box game helps children recognize the shapes, names, and sounds of letters more easily. The success of implementing this media is influenced by several factors, such as the teacher's ability to manage the use of media, support provided by the school, and the involvement of parents in assisting children with learning at home. However, several challenges were found in its implementation, including the limited number of available media, limited learning time, and the difficulty children faced in distinguishing similar letters, such as "B" and "D" or "G" and "Q." To address these challenges, the teacher has applied more varied teaching strategies, such as small group division, the use of multisensory methods, and variations in games. Children's responses to the use of the letter card box game media were very positive. They became more active, focused, and enthusiastic when learning to recognize letters using this media. The children showed improvement in their ability to name and recognize letters after using the game, and they became more confident in participating in learning activities. In addition, this game also encourages social interaction among children, which contributes to their social and emotional development. Based on these findings, several suggestions can be made to improve the effectiveness of the letter card box game media. For the Education Office, it is hoped that they will support the use of innovative learning media, such as the letter card box game, in early childhood literacy education. The

Education Office should also provide training for teachers on game-based learning strategies to make the implementation more effective. Additionally, assistance or subsidies for acquiring attractive and suitable learning media for early childhood needs could be provided. For schools, it is recommended to integrate the letter card box game media into the curriculum in a more systematic and sustainable way. Schools should also develop variations of similar game media to overcome the limitations of the number of cards and enhance learning effectiveness. Moreover, collaboration with parents in supporting children's literacy learning, such as through joint learning activities at home or providing similar media in the family environment, is highly recommended. For teachers, it is recommended to continue exploring and developing variations of the letter card box game to keep children interested and prevent boredom. Teachers are also encouraged to implement multisensory learning strategies to help children recognize and remember letters, especially those with similar shapes. Good classroom management, such as dividing children into small groups and applying a rotation system, is crucial to ensure that each child has the opportunity to learn optimally. Periodic evaluations should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of this game media and adjust teaching methods according to the children's needs

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