

## **21st-Century Learning Innovation: Flashcard-Assisted Syllable Method as a Breakthrough in Enhancing Children's Early Reading Ability**

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### **Abstract**

Indonesian language plays a vital role in elementary education as it develops students' literacy skills, particularly in reading and writing. Reading ability is an essential foundation for students' academic success. This study aims to enhance the beginning reading skills of grade IC students at Al-Amal Islamic Elementary School during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year through the implementation of the flashcard-assisted syllable method. The study was motivated by students' low reading proficiency, caused by limited alphabet recognition, difficulty combining syllables, and confusion in distinguishing similar letters. The research employed the Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach using the Kemmis and McTaggart model, conducted in two cycles consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The results showed significant improvement in students' reading skills. Learning mastery increased from 24% in the pre-cycle to 43% in the first cycle and reached 86% in the second cycle. These findings demonstrate that the flashcard-assisted syllable method is effective in improving students' early reading abilities. Therefore, this method can serve as an innovative and engaging learning strategy for teachers to help students recognize letters, understand syllables, and read simple words and sentences more effectively in Indonesian language learning.

Keywords: beginning reading, elementary school, flashcard media, syllable method, PTK

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Indonesian plays a crucial role in developing student literacy at the elementary school level. As a subject, Indonesian contributes to developing reading and writing skills, which serve as the primary foundation of the learning process. Strong literacy skills enable students to understand various disciplines, absorb information effectively, think critically, and express ideas clearly and in a structured manner.

Indonesian in elementary schools focuses not only on the cognitive aspect but also encompasses the affective and psychomotor aspects. The cognitive aspect encompasses learning grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. The affective aspect relates to developing a positive attitude toward the Indonesian language and culture, including awareness of the importance of preserving the national language. Meanwhile, the psychomotor aspect encompasses good writing skills and reading with appropriate intonation and appreciation. Therefore, learning Indonesian in elementary schools plays a crucial role in developing reading and writing skills as a foundation for understanding other subjects.

Reading is one of the keys to success in learning other subjects and the main provision for entering the world of information in the future (Utomo, B. 2021) This shows that reading ability is the main basis for gaining broader knowledge where there are processes of activities such as recognizing letters, and words connecting sounds and meanings in the

reading and drawing conclusions in the reading read. In education reading has an important role in improving the quality of learning and mastery of student knowledge in reading students are encouraged to develop existing abilities within themselves such as critical thinking skills, and creativity this process is not only limited to understanding the content of the reading but requires students to be able to connect the information obtained with the experience gained. Reading ability is an important thing that every student has. Low reading ability of students can have a negative impact on students' mental and academic achievement (Ariyati, T. 2015) weaknesses that students have in reading ability can have a negative impact on students and their academic achievement therefore reading is a basic skill that must be mastered to support success in the learning process in various fields of study.

One of the initial stages in mastering reading is beginning reading, a learning process aimed at helping students understand the writing system and acquire good reading skills. At this stage, students are introduced to the letters of the alphabet (A-Z) along with their shapes, names, and sounds, then trained to connect them to words. Beginning reading involves two aspects: skills and cognitive. The skills aspect focuses on recognizing letters and their sounds, while the cognitive aspect involves understanding the meaning of words to be able to construct meaningful sentences. This stage is an important foundation for the development of further reading skills. Beginning reading is generally taught to lower grades, namely students in grades I and II of elementary school. Reading at this level is an activity of learning to recognize written language, such as learning to master and pronounce letters, both consonants and vowels. Through writing, students are expected to sound out the symbols of language sounds to acquire reading skills..

Based on the results of interviews conducted by the class IC teacher of Al-Amal Islamic Elementary School on October 16, 2024, it was found that out of 21 students, 16 students still had difficulty in reading, while 5 other students were able to read. In addition, the results of observations carried out showed that there were several main factors that caused students' difficulties in understanding reading seen during learning activities. These obstacles were caused by several factors, including not fully recognizing all letters of the alphabet, difficulty in combining syllables, and confusion in distinguishing letters that have similar shapes, such as "b" with "d", "p" with "q", or "m" with "n". In addition, students also tend to read words discontinuously, which hinders understanding of the content of the reading. These factors cause low initial literacy skills in some students, so more effective learning strategies are needed to improve their reading skills.

Early reading learning is often faced with various difficulties experienced by students. Some common difficulties include (1) not being able to read paired letters, such as diphthongs (ai, au) and double consonants (ng, ny), (2) difficulty in reading complete sentences (3) reading haltingly or discontinuously, (4) not being able to spell words fluently, (5) quickly forgetting words that have just been spelled (6) often adding or replacing words while reading, (7) easily reversing the pronunciation of the same letters such as (b and d) (Nurani, R. Z., Nugraha, F., & Mahendra, H. H. 2021). One solution to overcome these problems is to use the syllable method assisted by Fleschard media in early reading. This syllable method can help teachers in solving educational problems, namely students' lack of reading fluency. The syllable method can be an effective strategy for teachers in overcoming the problem of reading delays in students.

This method emphasizes gradual reading learning, starting from letter recognition, combining them into syllables, and forming whole words. With this method, students more easily understand the relationship between letters and sounds, thus making reading more fluent. The syllable method also helps reduce errors in differentiating similar letters such as "b" and "d" or "p" and "q" because students are taught to recognize syllable patterns systematically. This method begins with the introduction of syllables such as ba, bi, bu, be, bo or ca, ci, cu, ce, co, which are then arranged into meaningful words without having to recognize the letters one by one (Mustikawati, R. 2015).

In this study, researchers added flashcard learning media as an aid to make it easier for students to memorize and understand letters and syllables such as ca, ci, cu, ce, co

visually, not only through sound. Flashcards as concrete media are able to stimulate sight, hearing, and touch, thereby strengthening students' memory and understanding. Learning media plays an important role in the success of the syllable method, because it helps convey material more easily understood and supports the achievement of reading learning objectives effectively. Flashcard learning media is one of the effective tools to support reading learning, especially with the syllable method. Flashcard learning media is a simple media that can be used by teachers. Flashcards are one of the learning media in the form of small illustrated cards, usually made using photos, symbols, or images attached to the front side and the back side contains a description in the form of words or sentences from the flashcard image (Hasibuan, R. I., Saputra, R., & Saputri, J. 2024).

Flashcard media is considered a medium that can provide enjoyment for students in learning because this flashcard is a learning medium as well as an educational game in the form of cards containing images and words to develop memory and train independence from the problems above, the researcher wanted to try to improve students' Beginning Reading Skills through the syllable method with the help of flashcard media. Therefore, the researcher wanted to prove whether the application of the syllable method with the help of flashcard media can improve the ability to read beginning.

Thus, it is hoped that the application of the syllable method assisted by flashcard media can be an effective learning strategy to improve students' beginning reading skills, while making the learning process more fun, interactive, and meaningful.

## **2 RESEARCH METHODS**

This research is a type of qualitative research with a classroom action research approach. Classroom action research is a research activity carried out by teachers in the classroom in the form of self-reflection through actions carried out in a planned, systematic, and repeated manner in each cycle. Classroom Action Research (CAR) is a form of improving the quality of the learning process where the activity must be seen to be more efficient, creative, effective and innovative than previous activities. Classroom action research is an effort to identify a problem in a class so that it can provide solutions to solve the problems that occur (Ni'mah, Z. A. (2017). The CAR process involves a series of steps, such as problem analysis, diagnosis, action planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. All of these steps are interconnected and create a link between teacher self-evaluation and professional development.

Classroom action research in general aims to improve and enhance the quality of education. Classroom action research provides opportunities for teachers to analyze, design, implement, and evaluate certain actions aimed at overcoming problems in learning. According to Fauziah, the purpose of Classroom Action Research is to understand and improve practices in the learning process, analyze, understand and improve situations in institutions where learning practices take place, analyze educational problems through self-reflection to improve or resolve problems in the learning process (Fauziah, A. 2021). To conduct classroom action research, researchers (teachers) need to follow established procedures so that research activities can be carried out systematically.

The focus of activities in implementing classroom action research includes planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. These activities form a problem-solving cycle: Cycle One, Cycle Two, and so on. If one cycle has been implemented but has not shown any improvement or quality enhancement, then the second cycle is continued, and so on, until the problem being studied is successfully resolved (Mufidah, L. 2021). In this study, the author used a research model that refers to the research implementation process proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart. In this study, the planning uses a spiral system of self-reflection, which begins with the planning stage, acting, observing, and reflecting (Meli, N. 2020). Classroom action research is conducted in at least two consecutive action cycles. Information from the previous cycle significantly determines the form of the subsequent cycle. Therefore,

the second, third, and subsequent cycles cannot be designed before the first cycle has occurred. The results of the reflection must be used as material.

### **3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This research was conducted in class IC of SD Islam Al-Amal in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The purpose of the research was to improve the ability to read beginning through the syllable method assisted by flashcard media. The research design used the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model of Kemmis and McTaggart which was implemented in two cycles, each through the stages of planning, implementation of action, observation, and reflection. The results of this study were obtained through the application of the syllable method assisted by flashcard media in learning to read beginning. Data were collected from the results of observations, reading ability tests, and documentation during the learning process. The results showed an increase in students' initial reading ability after the application of the syllable method assisted by flashcard media. This increase was evident from the results of observations of learning activities that showed more active student involvement during the learning process. Students seemed more enthusiastic about participating in activities, dared to read in front of the class, and were able to arrange syllables into words more quickly and accurately. The reading comprehension test results also showed progress in several areas, including letter recognition, syllable pronunciation, word fluency, vocal clarity, intonation, and comprehension of the meaning of words. Documentation during the learning process showed that the use of flashcards provided an engaging and interactive visual stimulus, making it easier for students to memorize letter shapes, recognize syllables, and understand the words they read.

#### **3.1 Research Results on Early Reading Ability**

This research was conducted at Al-Amal Islamic Elementary School, Jalan Rawa Indah No. 60, Jaticempaka, Pondokgede, during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. This school's vision is "Cultivating a Qur'anic, Islamically Moral, and High-Achieving Generation," which is realized through professional learning, practicing Islamic teachings, and instilling Islamic values. The curriculum used is the 2013 Curriculum for grades 3 and 6, and the Independent Curriculum for grades 1, 2, 4, and 5. School culture includes the habituation of 5S (Smile, Greeting, Greeting, Polite, Courteous), One Day One Word/Sentence program for English language improvement, as well as Al-Amal Peduli social program which includes humanitarian activities. This school is supported by 26 teachers and 6 educational staff, with adequate learning facilities, a clean, safe environment, and routine religious activities such as congregational prayer, tadarus, duha prayer, and Ummi learning. A conducive school environment, competent educators, and support facilities are supporting factors for the success of this research in improving students' early literacy skills. However, based on the results of the initial test (pretest) of early reading skills conducted on 21 students of class IC of Al-Amal Islamic Elementary School, it was found that students' reading skills were still relatively low from the results of the Pre-research only 5 students or 23.81% who were able to read while 16 students or 76.19% still experienced difficulties. The level of learning completion also shows that only 5 students achieved a score of  $\geq 75$  and were declared complete, while the rest obtained a score of  $< 75$ . The distribution of scores shows that most students (57.1%) are in the low category with scores below 64, while the other 42.9% are in the medium category with a score range of 65–79. No students reached the high category (80–100), which indicates the need for more effective learning strategies to improve early reading skills. The results of pre-research observations on October 16, 2024 revealed several obstacles faced by students, including the inability to recognize all letters of the alphabet, difficulty combining syllables into words, confusion in differentiating similar letters such as "b" and "d" or "p"

and “q,” and a tendency to read words disjointedly which hinders reading fluency and comprehension.

Based on the ability grouping, the majority of students (57.1%) were in the “Sufficient” category with scores of 56–70, 28.6% were in the “Needs Improvement” category with scores <55, and only 14.3% were in the “Good” category with scores of 71–85. No students achieved the “Very Good” category (86–100). These findings indicate that appropriate, systematic, and engaging learning interventions are needed to help students overcome early reading barriers. These findings align with research conducted by (Yunita, Sudjoko, & Ulfa, 2021) which used the “Kata Lembaga” method with the aid of flashcards at SDN Jatisampurna 1 Bekasi. The study demonstrated an increase in students' average grades from 65.76 in the pre-action phase to 75 in cycle III, with an increase in the completion percentage from 39.3% to 84.8%. The similarity between the two studies lies in the use of flashcards as a visual aid that attracts students' attention and facilitates the process of recognizing and remembering vocabulary. The difference with the research conducted by (Yunita, Sudjoko, & Ulfa, 2021) lies in the learning method used. In this study, the researchers used the “Kata Lembaga” method, which emphasizes the process of recognizing and combining syllables into complete words. Meanwhile, the research by Citra Yunita et al. used the “Kata Lembaga” method, which directly introduces complete words to students. Despite their different approaches, both methods have proven effective in improving early reading skills because they both utilize visual media to aid memory and facilitate the process of learning to read.

Thus the research conducted at Al-Amal Islamic Elementary School and the research of Citra Yunita et al. (2020) both prove the effectiveness of early reading learning strategies adapted to students' cognitive developmental stages. The differences lie in the approach and use of media, where the research at Al-Amal Islamic Elementary School combined the syllable method with flashcards, resulting in a faster and more significant increase in learning completion compared to the syllable method without additional media, as in the research by Suyadi & Riska. Meanwhile, the research by Citra Yunita et al., which used the word institution method assisted by flashcards, also showed almost equivalent improvements, confirming that the use of interactive visual media can increase learning motivation, facilitate the recognition of language elements, and accelerate the beginning reading skills of elementary school students.

### 3.1.1 Description of Cycle I Results of Beginning Reading Skills

From the test results that have been carried out by 21 students in class 1C of SD ISLAM AL-Amal, the test completion can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Test Completion  
Beginning Reading Ability

Completion Category	Number of students	Presentation
Complete ( $\geq 75$ )	9 student	42,8 %
Not Completed ( $< 75$ )	12 student	57,2 %
Amount	21 student	100 %

Based on the data in table 4.5, it is known that out of a total of 21 students, 9 students or 42.8% have reached the complete category with a score of  $\geq 75$ . Meanwhile, 12 other students or 57% are still in the incomplete category because they obtained a score below 75. This shows that most students have not met the learning objective completion criteria (KKTP) so that further learning efforts and more effective strategies are needed to improve students' overall learning achievements.

#### Student Activity Observation Results

Observations were conducted on 21 students in grade 1C of Al-Amal Islamic Elementary School, who served as the subjects of this study. Each student was assessed based on six assessment aspects: enthusiasm, participation in activities, pronunciation, fluency, clarity of voice, and intonation. This was done to obtain a clearer picture of student activity during the first cycle of learning. The observation results are presented in the table below: Hasil Observasi Aktivitas Siswa

Table 2. Results of Student Activity Observations

Predicate	Value Interval	Number of Students	Presentation
Very good	86 – 100	0 Student	0 %
Good	71 – 85	19 Student	90,4 %
Pretty good	56 – 70	2 Student	9,6 %
Needs Improvement	≤ 55	0 Student	0 %

These results show that most students are in the Good category, namely 19 students or around 90.4% and there are 8 students or 38.1% who are in the Need Improvement category. These results show that the majority of students have reached the fairly good category but still need to be improved so that many students enter the very good category and give special attention to students who are in the Less category in order to improve maximum results. In the second cycle of research, improvements need to be made through more varied and interesting learning strategies, such as increasing syllable combination exercises, providing more intensive and repeated pronunciation models, and utilizing flashcard media that are more varied and contextual to the student's environment.

### 3.1.2 Description of Cycle II Results of Beginning Reading Skills

The test results that have been carried out by 21 students in class 1C of SD ISLAM AL-Amal, the test completion can be seen in the table below:

Table 3. Test Completion  
Beginning Reading Ability

Completion Category	Number of students	Presentation
Complete ( $\geq 75$ )	18 student	86 %
Not Completed ( $< 75$ )	3 student	14 %
Amount	21 student	100 %

Based on student learning completion data, it is known that out of a total of 21 students, 18 students (86%) have reached the completion category with a score of  $\geq 75$ . Meanwhile, only 3 students (14%) are still in the incomplete category because they obtained a score below 75. These results indicate that most students have demonstrated good mastery of initial reading skills through the syllable method assisted by flashcard media.

#### Results of Observations of Student Activities in Cycle II

The results of observations of student activities in cycle II showed an increase in student participation and involvement in the learning process of beginning reading using the syllable method with flashcard media. Observations were conducted on 21 students of class 1C of SD Islam Al-Amal who were the subjects in this study. Each student was assessed based on six assessment aspects, namely: student enthusiasm, participation in activities, pronunciation, fluency, clarity of voice, and intonation to obtain a clearer picture of student

activities during learning in cycle II. The results of the observations are presented in the table below:

Table 4. Results of Observations of Student Activities in Cycle II

Predikat	Interval Nilai	Jumlah Siswa	Presentase
Sangat Baik	86 – 100	19 Siswa	90,4%
Baik	71 – 85	2 Siswa	9,6 %
Cukup Baik	65 – 70	0 Siswa	0 %
Kuran	≤ 55	0 Siswa	0 %

These results indicate that the majority of students have shown enthusiasm and improved reading skills compared to the previous cycle. This improvement occurred from the use of the syllable method assisted by flashcard media which helps students more easily recognize and combine letter sounds into words. Interesting flashcard media also makes students more enthusiastic and focused when learning to read. In this way, students can learn more actively and enjoyably so that their reading skills continue to improve. Thus, the research in Cycle II showed significant improvements compared to Cycle I. The syllable method with flashcard media effectively improved students' initial reading skills. The classroom atmosphere was more conducive, students were more focused and enthusiastic, and learning outcomes achieved the set indicators. Thus, Cycle II was declared successful and did not need to be continued to the next cycle because the learning targets had been achieved.

### 3.2 Discussion of Research Results on Beginning Reading Ability

#### 3.2.1 Beginning Reading Ability

This research was conducted using the syllable method supported by flashcards to improve the beginning reading skills of students in grade 1C of Al-Amal Islamic Elementary School. Throughout the process, the researchers presented the research results to understand the relationships and meaning of the data obtained, allowing conclusions to be drawn based on test results, observations, field notes, and reflections. The discussion of the research results was presented clearly through a breakdown of student test scores in each cycle. Based on observations, documentation, and the gradual implementation of activities, the researchers found that the use of the syllable method with the aid of flashcards positively impacted the improvement of students' beginning reading skills. Thus, the learning outcomes of students in grade 1C of Al-Amal Islamic Elementary School showed improvements in line with expectations.

Table 5. Results of Beginning Reading Ability Per Cycle

Cycle	Complete	Not Completed	Average	Presentation
Prasiklus	5 Student	16 Student	61	24 %
Cycle I	8 Student	13 Student	72	38 %
Cycle II	20 Student	1 Student	79	95 %

Table 7 above describes the development of the initial reading ability of students in grade 1C of Al-Amal Islamic Elementary School through three stages of observation, namely pre-cycle, cycle I, and cycle II. This data shows the number of students who have completed and not completed reading, the average value obtained, and the percentage of success in

each cycle. It can be seen that there is an increase in the number of students who have completed and the percentage of success from pre-cycle to cycle II. These results indicate that the use of the syllable method with flashcard media has succeeded in improving students' reading ability significantly.

### 3.2.2 Results of Teacher Activity Observations

To assess the extent to which teacher activity in the learning process increased during this classroom action research, observations were conducted in each cycle. The results of the observations of teacher activity are presented in the following table:

Table 6 . Results of Teacher Activity Observations

Cycle	Total Score	Maximum Score	Presentation	Category
Cycle 1	32	45	71,1%	Good
Cycle 2	40	45	88,8%	Very good

The results of observations of teacher activities conducted showed a significant increase from cycle I to cycle II. In cycle I, the teacher obtained a score of 32 out of a maximum score of 45. If converted into a percentage, the result is 71.1%, which is in the good category. Although the teacher has carried out most of the learning activities well, although the teacher has carried out most of the learning activities well, there are still some shortcomings in their implementation. However, after reflection and improvements in cycle II, the teacher's activity score increased to 40 out of a maximum score of 45 or equivalent to 88.8%. Based on the assessment category, the percentage is included in the very good category.

### 3.2.3 Results of Student Activity Observations

To determine the extent to which student activity increased during the learning process, observations were conducted in each cycle. The results of the student activity observations are presented in the following table:

Table 7. Results of Student Activity Observations

Cycle	total score	Number of Students	Maximum Score	Presentation	Category
Pre Cycle	847	21	1.521	55,6 %	Needs Improvement
Cycle 1	1.194	21	1.521	78,5 %	Enough
Cycle 2	1.3871	21	1.521	90,1 %	Very good

The table illustrates the development of student activity from pre-cycle to cycle II. In the pre-cycle, the total score obtained by students was 847, representing 55%, categorizing as needing improvement. This indicates that student engagement in learning was still low in the initial phase. Entering cycle I, the score increased to 1,185, representing 77%, categorizing as sufficient. This improvement indicates progress in student activity, although not yet optimal. In cycle II, the score jumped to 1,325, representing 87%, categorizing as very good. This condition indicates that in the final phase, almost all students were actively involved in learning activities, resulting in very positive improvements compared to the initial phase.

Based on the results of observations and tests of early reading ability using the syllable method assisted by Fleschard media, it was proven to improve early reading ability in class IC students at Al-Amal Islamic Elementary School. It was stated that in cycle II, the research success criteria of 86% were achieved. Therefore, this study was not continued to the next cycle.

### 3.3 Image of Beginning Reading Ability Test Results Gambar

The following image shows the development of students' initial reading abilities in each cycle.

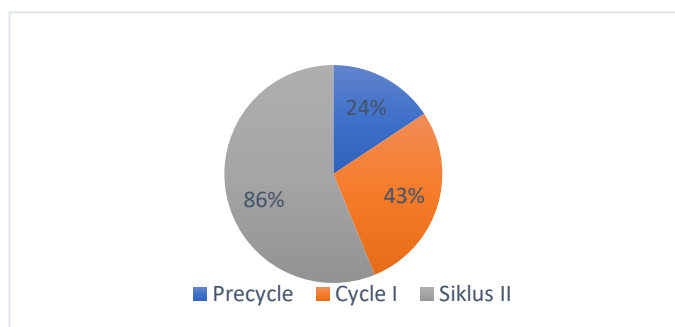


Figure 1 . Results of Increase in Initial Reading Ability Per Cycle

Based on the presented Figure Based on the presented pie chart, it can be seen that there is an increase in students' initial reading ability over time. In the pre-cycle stage, students' initial reading ability only reached 24%. Then it increased to 38% in cycle I and increased significantly to reach 95% in cycle II. This increase shows that efforts to improve initial reading ability by using the syllable method assisted by felt card media are running effectively and have a positive impact on improving students' initial reading ability.

### 3 CONCLUSION

Based on the results of classroom action research (CAR) conducted at SD ISLAM AL-AMAL in cycles I and II, it can be seen that the initial reading ability of class 1C students of SD Islam Al-Amal in the Pre-research stage is still relatively low, only 24% of students achieved learning mastery. To overcome this problem, a syllable method assisted by flashcard media was implemented for two learning cycles as an effort to improve students' initial reading ability. The implementation results showed a significant increase of 43% in cycle I and increased to 86% in cycle II. In addition, teacher activity increased from the good category (71.1%) in cycle I to very good (88.8%) in cycle II, while student activity also increased from (55.6%) needs improvement in the pre-research to 78.5 included in the good category in cycle I and (90.1%) very good in cycle II. Thus, the use of this method not only improves initial reading ability but also increases teacher and student involvement in the learning process. This proves that the syllable method with the help of flashcard media is not only effective in improving students' initial reading skills but is also able to be an appropriate learning alternative in supporting gradual and comprehensive reading mastery.

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