

Improving Early Reading Skills through Local Wisdom-Based Storytelling Method with Letter Card Media

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Abstract

This study aims to improve primary school students' beginning reading skills through the application of local wisdom-based storytelling methods with the help of letter card media. The research method used was Classroom Action Research (PTK) model Kemmis & McTaggart which was carried out in two cycles. The research subjects involved 18 grade II students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, tests, and documentation, then analyzed using quantitative and qualitative descriptive techniques. The results showed that the use of storytelling methods about local wisdom, such as the folktales of Keong Emas and Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, combined with letter card media, significantly improved students' beginning reading skills. The average student score increased from 67.2 in the pre-cycle to 76.7 in cycle I with a completeness rate of 77.78%, and then reached 84.77 in cycle II with a completeness rate of 88.89%. This increase shows that the combination of storytelling method and letter card media is effective in practicing letter recognition, word pronunciation, and understanding simple sentences. In addition to cognitive aspects, this approach also contributes to character building, strengthening moral values, and understanding local culture contained in folklore. Thus, this study confirms that the integration of local wisdom-based storytelling methods with letter card media is not only effective in improving early reading skills, but also relevant in building literacy that is contextual, meaningful and rooted in the nation's culture.

Kata kunci: beginning reading, letter card media, local wisdom, storytelling method.

1 INTRODUCTION

Reading ability is a basic skill that plays an important role in the learning process in elementary schools. Reading is not just a technical skill in spelling and pronouncing written symbols, but also includes the ability to understand meaning, interpret text content, and relate information to the context of life. Tarigan (2015), states that reading is a process of obtaining meaning from text actively, critically, and creatively, thus demanding the full involvement of students' cognitive, linguistic, and perceptual skills. At the primary school level, especially the lower grades, early reading skills are an important foundation for building advanced literacy skills. Students who do not have a strong reading foundation risk having difficulties in understanding learning materials, doing assignments and participating actively in class.

The results of preliminary observations at SDS Al Amal Jakarta show that around 38% of grade II students still have not reached the Learning Objective Completeness Criteria (KKTP) with a minimum score of 70. The obstacles found include difficulties in recognizing letters, pronouncing syllables, and understanding simple sentences. This finding is in line with Rahim's view (2018), that weak early reading skills are often influenced by less varied learning methods influenced by less varied learning methods and the lack of supporting media.

One strategy that can be used is the habituation method. Research by Umami, Romdanih, and Wulan (2020), shows that the habituation method effectively improves reading and writing skills of the Qur'an in elementary school students. With habituation that is carried out repeatedly and consistently, students are helped in practicing basic reading skills, so that this ability is more easily embedded in long-term memory. This concept is relevant to early reading learning in primary schools, where structured and repetitive practice is the key to success.

In addition to habituation, strengthening literacy is also closely related to student character development (Sari et.al., 2023; Silaet et.al., 2023). Saryono (2024), asserts that civic education in the era of digitalization 5.0 has a vital role in shaping a smart, tolerant, critical and characterful young generation. Literacy education not only serves to improve cognitive abilities, but also as a means of internalizing civic values and morality in the midst of global challenges. This shows that efforts to improve early reading skills can also be directed at building students' character from an early age.

Furthermore, research by Pertiwi, Mayasari and Rizaq (2023), highlighted the importance of the School Literacy Movement (GLS) in fostering students' interest in reading. The results of their study showed a significant influence between the reading literacy program and the increase in elementary school students' interest in reading. In other words, reading habituation through a structured program is able to create a positive literacy culture in schools. This reinforces the idea that the integration of storytelling methods with letter card media can be combined with school literacy strategies to produce effective and meaningful learning.

In this context, early reading learning does not only function as a technical exercise to recognize letters and words, but also as a means of character building, strengthening literacy culture, and internalizing socio-cultural values. Therefore, this study was designed to answer the question: How can the application of the local wisdom-based storytelling method with letter card media improve the beginning reading skills of grade II students of SDS Al Amal Jakarta in the 2024/2025 academic year?

2 RESEARCH METHODS

This study used the Kemmis and McTaggart model of Classroom Action Research (PTK) which was carried out in two cycles, each through the stages of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection (Atmazaki et.al., 2023). The research subjects were 18 students of class II of SDS Al Amal Jakarta in the even semester of the 2024/2025 school year. The class selection was based on the results of the pre-cycle which showed that 38% of students had not reached the Criteria for Completion of Learning Objectives (KKTP) 70.

The implementation of the research began with the pre-cycle stage, namely identifying problems and preparing learning tools in the form of teaching modules, letter card media, and choosing local wisdom-based folk stories (Keong Emas and Bawang Merah Bawang Putih) as the main material for storytelling activities. In the planning stage, the researcher worked with the class teacher to design learning steps that integrated the storytelling method with the use of letter card media. The implementation stage is carried out through learning activities in the classroom with the teacher as a facilitator who reads folk stories, followed by student activities using letter cards to recognize symbols, string syllables, to compose simple words and sentences.

Data collection was carried out through several techniques, namely observation, interviews, tests, and documentation. Observation was used to record student involvement during learning activities, while interviews were conducted with teachers and students to obtain more in-depth information related to the learning experience. Tests were given at the end of each cycle to measure students' beginning reading skills, including aspects of letter recognition, word pronunciation, reading fluency, and understanding simple

sentences. Documentation in the form of field notes, photos of activities, and student work were used as supporting data.

Data analysis was done descriptively quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data in the form of test scores were analyzed by calculating the average and percentage of student completeness compared to the KKTP. Meanwhile, qualitative data from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed to describe changes in behavior, involvement, and student responses to the applied learning methods. Data validity was maintained through triangulation techniques by comparing the results of observations, interviews, tests, and documentation. The success criteria of the study were determined if at least 80% of students had achieved a minimum score of 70 according to the applicable standards at school.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Research Results

This classroom action research was carried out in two cycles with the aim of improving the beginning reading skills of grade II students of SDS Al Amal Jakarta through the application of local wisdom-based storytelling methods combined with letter card media.

3.1.1 Initial Condition (Pre-Cycle)

The initial test results showed that the average score of students' beginning reading skills was 67.2, with classical completeness of only 50% (9 students completed out of 18 students). The main obstacles found were students' difficulties in recognizing letters, pronouncing syllables correctly, reading simple words, and understanding short sentences.

Table 1. Prasiklus Test Results

Category	Number of Students	Percentage
Completed (≥ 70)	9	50%
Not Completed (< 70)	9	50%
Average	67,2	-

3.1.2 Cycle I Results

In cycle I, learning was carried out using the storytelling method using the Golden Snail folktale followed by reading exercises through letter card media. The average score increased to 76.7 with classical completeness of 77.78% (14 students completed). This increase showed that the integration of the storytelling method with letter cards was able to stimulate students' interest and involvement. However, there were still four students who had not reached the KKTP, mainly due to lack of concentration and limited ability to pronounce words fluently.

Table 2. Cycle I Test Results

Category	Number of Students	Percentage
Completed (≥ 70)	14	77,78%
Not Completed (< 70)	4	22,22%
Average	76,7	-

3.1.3 Cycle II Results

Cycle II used the folk story Bawang Merah Bawang Putih combined with letter card media to strengthen students' ability to read simple sentences. The results showed a significant improvement, with an average score of 84.77 and classical completeness of 88.89% (16

students completed). The two students who were incomplete still experienced difficulties, although they had shown progress compared to the previous cycle.

Table 3. Cycle II Test Results

Category	Number of Students	Percentage
Completed (≥ 70)	16	88,89%

Table 4. Recapitulation of Improvement in Early Reading Score

Stage	Average Score	Percentage of Completion
Pre-cycle	67,2	50%
Cycle I	76,7	77,78%
Cycle II	84,77	88,89%

3.2 Discussion

The results showed that the application of local wisdom-based storytelling method combined with letter card media proved effective in improving the beginning reading ability of grade II students. This improvement can be explained through the following aspects:

3.2.1 *The Effect of Storytelling Method on Reading Skills*

The storytelling method helps students to understand language structures through an interesting narrative context. The folktales Keong Emas and Bawang Merah Bawang Putih were chosen because they have a simple plot, easy to understand language, and contain moral values that are close to students' lives. According to Rista et al. (2022), storytelling based on local wisdom can improve children's language skills while instilling character values. This is evident in this study, where students are more enthusiastic about learning and are able to remember vocabulary from the stories told. Miller and Pennycuff (in Nasem, 2021), also emphasize that the storytelling method can enrich vocabulary, improve reading comprehension, and strengthen children's writing skills.

3.2.2 *The Role of Letter Card Media in Reading Learning*

Letter card media provides strong visual support in the process of recognizing letters, syllables and words. By manipulating letter cards, students can interact directly with language symbols, so that the learning process becomes more concrete and multisensory. Arsyad (2016), states that letter card media is effective for stimulating visual memory and accelerating letter-sound associations. Faujiah, Mayasari, and Ulfa's (2021), research also proves that the use of word cards significantly improves elementary school students' beginning reading skills. In this study, the letter card media helped students to be more confident in stringing letters into words, so that the class average score increased in each cycle.

3.2.3 *Integration of Local Wisdom in Early Literacy*

One of the advantages of this approach is the integration of local cultural values in literacy learning. Budiyanto (2017) emphasized that local wisdom plays an important role in strengthening students' identity and character. In this study, folklore not only serves as reading material, but also a means of character education that instills the values of honesty, patience and justice. By linking the reading text with familiar cultural experiences, students feel more connected to the learning material. This supports Rapanna's (2018) opinion that local wisdom reflects community wisdom that is relevant as a guide to life, including in education.

3.2.4 *Analysis of Learning Outcome Improvement*

From the pre-cycle to cycle II results, the increase in the average score from 67.2 to 84.77 shows an increase of 17.57 points. Learning completeness increased from 50% to 88.89%. This increase indicates the effectiveness of the actions taken. According to Tarigan (2015), the success of beginning reading is influenced by students' active involvement in the learning process. The significant increase in this study reinforces this theory, because the storytelling method and letter card media encourage active participation of students, both in listening to stories and in reading practice.

3.2.5 Obstacles and Reflection

Despite showing positive results, there were still two students in cycle II who had not reached the standard of mastery. This was due to low learning concentration and limited phonetic ability. In accordance with Rahim's (2018) opinion, physiological and psychological barriers such as low motivation can affect the success of beginning reading. Reflection of this obstacle shows the need for intensive individualized guidance, as well as the use of other variations of methods such as word games or nursery rhymes to help students who are still struggling.

3.2.6 Discussion Conclusion

Overall, the results of this study support previous findings that a combination of storytelling methods and visual learning media can improve early reading skills. This is in line with the concept of early literacy according to Zubaedah (2008), which emphasizes the importance of mastering letters, words and simple sentences through a fun and contextual approach. Thus, this study strengthens the understanding that successful early reading learning depends not only on technical skills but also on pedagogical strategies that are able to link students' cognitive, affective and socio-cultural aspects.

The application of the local wisdom-based storytelling method combined with letter card media proved effective in improving the beginning reading skills of grade II students of SDS Al Amal Jakarta. The significant increase in learning outcomes in each cycle shows that this approach can be an alternative strategy for basic literacy learning that is fun, contextual, and oriented towards strengthening character.

4 CONCLUSION

Classroom action research conducted on grade II students of SDS Al Amal Jakarta showed that the application of local wisdom-based storytelling methods with the help of letter card media proved effective in improving beginning reading skills. The increase was shown from the average pre-cycle score of 67.2 with 50% completeness, increased to 76.7 in cycle I with 77.78% completeness, and reached 84.77 in cycle II with 88.89% completeness. The increase in learning outcomes confirms that the combination of the storytelling method and letter card media can overcome students' obstacles in recognizing letters, pronouncing words, and understanding simple sentences. The storytelling method presents a fun and meaningful learning atmosphere, while the letter card media provides concrete visual support that makes it easier for students to master basic reading skills. In addition, the integration of local wisdom through the folktales of Keong Emas and Bawang Merah Bawang Putih does not interfere with the learning process. This research not only strengthens literacy skills but also contributes to character building, instilling moral values and understanding local culture in students. Thus, this study confirms the importance of early reading learning that is creatively designed, contextualized and culturally based. The results of this study can serve as a reference for primary school teachers in developing early literacy strategies, for schools in enriching local culture-based curricula, and for future researchers to explore similar approaches at different educational levels or contexts

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