Implementation of Language Games Through Pictured Letter Cards in an Effort to Improve The Beginning Reading Skills of Grade I Students at State Elementary School UPT 060837

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of a picture card-based language game in improving the early reading skills of first-grade students in the UPT SD Negeri 060837, Medan Barat District. This study also identifies the obstacles faced and the solutions implemented during the learning process. This type of research used a qualitative field research approach. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques used were data reduction, data display/presentation, and conclusion/verification. The research method used was classroom action research (CAR), which consists of two cycles with stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The research subjects were first-grade students, and data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study showed that the use of language games with picture cards significantly improved students' motivation and early reading skills. Students' activity and enthusiasm increased, as evidenced by their improved ability to recognize letters, syllables, and words. The identified challenges included limited media, teachers' lack of experience in using this method, and students' low self-confidence. The implemented solutions include teacher training, increased creativity in media use, and support for a conducive learning environment. In conclusion, the application of language games through picture card media is an effective method for improving the early reading skills of first-grade students. With the right approach, this game not only improves reading skills but also creates a fun and interactive learning atmosphere.

Keywords: Language, Strengthening, High School Students, Word Spinner

I. INTRODUCTION

Early reading skills are a crucial foundation for elementary school students. Early reading lays the foundation for mastering other literacy skills such as reading comprehension, writing, and critical thinking. Through these skills, students can access a variety of information that supports their learning process. However, in practice, many first-grade students still experience difficulties in early reading. This is often because of a lack of interest, limited engagement in learning media, and teaching methods that are not fully suited to the characteristics of early childhood.

One way to address this issue is to implement language games that use visual media. This approach aims to create a fun and engaging learning environment for the students. Language games supported by visual media not only increase learning motivation but also help students understand and remember letters, syllables, and simple words. Furthermore, the use of visual media can maximize student engagement in learning activities, making the learning process more effective and meaningful.

This research was conducted at UPT SD Negeri 060837, West Medan District, Medan City, on first-grade students in the 2025-2026 academic year. Based on initial observations, most first-grade students at this school demonstrated poor early reading skills. Therefore, intervention through the implementation of picture-based language games is required to improve students' early reading skills.

According to Akbar et al. (2016:166-167), language is a communication tool used to convey thoughts, feelings, and information. Language also plays a crucial role in students' cognitive development, particularly in shaping cognitive structures, influencing ways of thinking, and helping students appropriately evaluate and express opinions. This significantly supports the development of critical thinking skills, and serves as a bridge between individuals. Therefore, language plays a crucial role in social life and education, and is an aspect of students'

language skills that needs to be developed effectively and taken into account in the learning process (Sadun, 2016).

Reading instruction in schools includes beginner reading and reading comprehension. Elementary grades utilize beginner reading instruction to develop comprehension skills and the ability to pronounce written text with appropriate intonation, as well as to provide a foundation for reading comprehension. Higher grades utilize reading comprehension instruction.

According to Sri Wahyuni (2010:8), early reading skills are fundamental skills that elementary school students must master. These skills included recognizing letters, spelling words, and understanding sentences. This is crucial because it lays the foundation for further reading and supports students' learning in school (Wahyuni, 2010).

According to Khanifatul (2013:15), teachers play an important role in learning, including helping students develop their potential by selecting effective methods to achieve learning goals (Khanifatul, 2013).

Several methods can be used by teachers to help students learn to begin reading, including phonics, global, and mixed methods. The phonics method focuses on teaching the letters and sounds used to form words. Students were taught how to spell the sounds used in words and then put them together to form words. The global method focuses on teaching words in context to recognize words in sentences or text that are read, whereas the mixed method combines both phonics and global methods to spell the sounds used in words and recognize words in context. Apart from that, there is one method that can be applied at the beginning of reading learning for Class I, namely language games. Teachers can use fun games to help students learn how to read. Examples include cross-word puzzles, word games, and spelling games.

Games for lower-grade students make students more fun and interactive because they are more interested in learning and easier to focus on in class. In addition, games can help lower grades more easily learn language and strengthen the skills needed to develop positively. Play for students has a fun and refreshing character in helping them develop physical skills, social skills, creativity, understanding concepts, and increasing self-confidence. Play is also like nutritional needs because it is an important part of students' physical and mental development to maintain health and develop their skills.

Krissandi et al. (2018:35) stated that language games not only serve to evaluate and practice language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but also to create enjoyable learning and improve students' language skills, especially in reading and writing. The interaction between games and learning can provide a very important and new learning experience for students. Games can also help improve students' memory and imagination in learning vocabulary and sentence structure, and increase self-confidence in reading skills.Thus, it is hoped that effective ways can be found to improve students' language skills and make learning more enjoyable (Sagita Krissandi et al. 2018).

According to Aulia (2011:37), early reading skills in children should be developed by combining learning-while-playing and playing-while-learning activities to create a fun and effective atmosphere. Elementary students, on average, aged 6-8, still need a world of play to help foster their understanding. At this age, they are still in a very important developmental stage and require interaction with the world of play to help them pursue understanding, develop skills, and foster creativity and imagination (Aulia, 2011).

Play also helps build self-confidence, socialization, and emotional development. Students at this age can easily become bored and tired of learning in class if they are removed from the natural world of play. Therefore, teachers need an active, fun, and relevant learning approach. Classroom learning should focus on experiences and interactions, not simply on transferring information from teachers to students. Teachers can use a variety of learning methods such as group discussions, hands-on activities, and games. This helps to maintain students' interest and motivation in learning. As the interaction between games and learning can provide valuable and novel learning experiences for students, games can also help improve memory and imagination in learning.

In the learning process, to attract students' interest in early reading skills in Indonesian language learning, teachers must choose appropriate methods and complement them with the learning media. Teacher creativity in determining appropriate learning methods and media is crucial for smooth implementation of learning, especially in early reading. The teacher's attention in implementing learning for first-grade students is to support reading skills in the next stage. This is because first-grade students are starting to read and form their reading foundations. With teacher support, students will become more motivated and have a strong reading foundation.

Before applying the language game method in Class I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-2026 academic year, errors in reading and writing were still found in students when they began reading learning activities. The errors experienced by students were in recognizing letters, syllables, and reading sentences based on spoken and written sounds. Therefore, efforts made by teachers in lass I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-

2026 academic year. In improving students' reading skills, methods that can attract students are used, one of which is the language game learning method.

The language games implemented in the first grade aimed to improve early reading skills, particularly in thematic Indonesian language learning. They create enjoyable interactions and aid the development of language skills. Students became more enthusiastic and easily recognized the shapes of letters, syllables, and sentences presented by the teacher.

Language games can be helped with letter cards and syllables as well as pictures and reading technique books. With language games applied to learning, students can read simple words or sentences fluently and precisely.

II. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative field research approach. Qualitative research emphasizes deductive and inductive data collection processes as well as analyzing the dynamics of the relationships between observed phenomena using scientific logic (Azwar, 2010).

Meanwhile, Denzin and Lincon, as quoted by Andi Prastowo in their book "Qualitative Research Methods and Perspectives on Research Design," explain that the word qualitative means emphasizing processes and meanings that are not precisely studied or measured (Prastowo, 2011). Qualitative words emphasize meaning and processes rather than rigid measurements and testing, as in quantitative research.

Qualitative research can produce and process descriptive data by transcribing interviews, drawings, photographs, field notes, etc.. In this qualitative research, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of closeness to the people and situations so that later researchers can gain a clear understanding of the reality that occurs (Beni, Ahmas Saebani, 2009).

Moloeng (in Arikunto, 2006: 12) also stated that qualitative research methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data (Arikunto, 2006).

in the form of written and spoken words from people and observable behavior. Thus, this research will produce descriptions of the observed symptoms, not necessarily numbers.

The results of this study used a qualitative descriptive research method because the problems discussed in this study are not related to numbers, but rather to describing, outlining, and depicting the role of teachers and students in analyzing the application of language games to improve students' initial reading skills in Class I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-2026 academic yearin real conditions.

The research subjects in this study were 20 lower-grade teachers who implemented the language game method, namely, class 1A teachers with 20 students. The selection of these subjects was motivated by the aim of this study, namely to determine how the application of language games in Class I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-2026 academic yearand what are the obstacles and solutions to implementing language games to improve reading skills in lower grades.

Data collection in this research object is in Class I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-2026 academic yearThe reason is because the language game learning model has been implemented in lower grades, one of which is in class 1A. This made researchers interested in conducting research in this area.UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan for the 2025-2026 academic yearrelated to how the implementation of language games in the school is implemented and what obstacles and solutions are implemented by teachers in improving reading skills in grade 1.

The research was conducted over a period of approximately one month, namely from August 4, 2025, to August 25, 2025, in the 2025-2026 academic year. On July 30, 2025, research permission was obtained from the Head of the Department.UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan for the 2025-2026 academic year. Permission interviews with the class teacher were conducted on August 8, 2025, namely class 1A. Before conducting the study, the researcher conducted an interview observation regarding the letter card game on August 11-12, 2025. The learning process was then continued using letter cards in Class 1A on August 18-23, 2025.

Data collection techniques are the processes of gathering information and data through various methods and techniques. Some commonly used data collection techniques are surveys, interviews, observations, focus groups, literature studies, and secondary data analysis. The choice of technique is influenced by the objectives, type of data required, and available resources. Each technique has distinct advantages and disadvantages, and must be carefully selected according to the specific objectives and conditions of a research or project.

The data collection techniques used in this study were conducted in a natural environment (natural conditions) with primary data sources, namely, data sources that provide data directly to data collectors. Furthermore, non-participatory monitoring was used, in which researchers investigated what data sources did and did not do.

After comprehensive information was gathered from the literature and fieldwork, the next step was analysis. Data analysis is the process of systematically searching for and organizing information from various sources,

classifying data into categories described in bullet points, and drawing conclusions so that readers can easily understand the data.

Data analysis techniques are the methods used by data collectors to extract information from the data they receive so that they can be more easily understood and interpreted. In short, data analysis simplifies data into a form that is easy to read and understand.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in the Class I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-2026 academic year. Permission interviews with the class teacher were held on August 8, 2025, namely Class 1 A and Class 1 B. Before conducting the research, the researcher conducted interview observations regarding the letter card game on August 11-12, 2025. The learning process was then continued by using letter cards for Class 1 A and Class 1 B on August 18-23, 2025.

This study aimed to examine how to improve the initial reading skills of first-grade students in Indonesian language subjects using language games. As stated in the problem formulation, the author discusses the application of language games, obstacles, and solutions when using language games to improve the initial reading skills of Grade 1 students in Indonesian language content (Attanwir, 2018).

In UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan for the 2025-2026 academic year, teachers have found that the beginning reading skills of first-grade students are still not optimal. Therefore, they decided to implement language games to improve students' beginner reading skills in class. In this process, teachers create an interactive and enjoyable learning environment, so that students are more motivated to learn.

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The language games chosen by the teachers involved various activities such as pointing out vowels in a word related to me and my new friend, pronouncing vowels in a word related to me and my new friend, and bolding various letter shapes. The purpose of this diversity of language games is that by listening to the teacher's example, students can sing the song "a, b, c" correctly, after singing and practicing, students can name the letters, students can write the letters, and after listening to the teacher's explanation, students can bold various letter shapes.

Early reading skills play a crucial role in the school learning process. The sooner students can read fluently, the greater their chances of understanding and mastering lessons. As educators, teachers play a crucial role in improving students' reading skills.

According to Arifin, games are symbolic activities that present reality in the form of assumptions, for example, what if or what if, which are full of meaning. In this case, games can connect pleasant or exciting experiences; even when students are involved in games seriously and tensely, voluntary nature and motivation come from within the students themselves spontaneously. Games have the following characteristics: (1) the existence of a set of explicit knowledge that must be heeded by the players and (2) the existence of goals that must be achieved by the players or tasks that must be performed.

Based on the observations conducted by the researcher in class 1 A, the researcher saw that the teacher implemented the Letter Card Language game by showing the cards to the students, and then the teacher said the name of the letter and the students repeated it. Students looked cheerful and enthusiastic about following learning. Then, the teacher said the sound while asking what letter sounded; this stage was done without showing the letter card. The researcher saw that the students were interested in the letter cards, so they were curious about the cards their friends got. Next, the teacher wrote and explained the letter shapes in the form of words or sentences on the board, traced the children with their fingers, and copied them. The teacher then asked the children to write words or sentences by bolding the letters they had learned. This is in accordance with an interview with Kholis Wirayanti; Students were very cheerful, enthusiastic, and interested in the letter cards, so they were curious about the cards their friends got (Sukarto, 2020).

Based on observations in Class 1 B, the teacher also implemented a letter card language game by showing the cards to students; then, the teacher said the name of the letter and the students repeated it. The students seemed

very enthusiastic about participating in learning. Then, the teacher said the sound while asking what letter sounded; this stage was done without showing the letter card. This stimulated curiosity in students so that active student involvement during learning would make students want to know more, and students are interested in the letter cards. Next, the teacher wrote and explained the letter forms in the form of words or sentences on the board, traced the children with their fingers, and copied them. The teacher then asked the children to write words or sentences by bolding the letters they had learned. The teacher will provide appreciation and motivation to students who have difficulty learning to read beginnings, so that they show interest, increase participation, and confidence in being able to read beginnings. This is in accordance with interviews with class teachers who provide appreciation and motivation to students who have difficulty learning to read.

For students, play is a fun activity; however, it also has serious aspects. Through play, students can explore various activities and understand the world surrounding them. Play is a tool that helps students gain a new understanding, moving from ignorance to knowledge and from inability to ability.

Before beginning the learning process, teachers need to develop learning methods appropriate to the material to be taught and students' specific needs. This ensures that the material presented is effective, efficient, and easily understood by the students.

As a teacher, one must have the ability to plan and implement learning. If teachers plan and implement learning effectively, learning objectives can be easily achieved. Learning planning is one aspect of learning. When choosing a learning method, teachers must consider the objectives, student characteristics, abilities, and materials to be presented. Having the right learning method can help students learn successfully.

The application of the language game method is an effort to improve the students' initial reading skills. Applying the game method to first-grade students is considered appropriate given their preference for playing rather than studying. Language games are a form of play aimed at providing enjoyment and practicing language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In language games that use colored cards, including letter, syllable, and picture cards, students become active learning subjects who participate in group activities and present their results to the class.

The use of language games makes the learning environment more engaging and makes students more enthusiastic about their participation. This method was also used by students. Class I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-2026 academic year. This is done through games using letter cards. Letter cards are a set of cards used as a learning tool for reading by observing and memorizing letter shapes and images, accompanied by written descriptions of their meanings. Letter cards are alphabet cards containing pictures, letters, and symbols that enhance or guide children in their understanding of these symbols.

To encourage students to learn to read and serve as a means for teacher monitoring, students with the highest reading scores will receive recognition in the achievement book. Rewarding motivated them to learn to read.

Mastering early reading skills is essential for lower-grade students. Early reading is a phase of human development in which someone who previously could not read successfully learns and becomes able to read. In the early reading process a person understands the relationship between letters and sounds in language by converting written symbols, such as sequences of letters or words, into corresponding sounds. Early reading skills provide the foundation for students to progress to reading comprehension. By mastering early reading skills, students can easily follow the learning process and develop their reading skills, enabling them to better understand and implement reading techniques effectively.

It is hoped that involving students in language games using letter cards will contribute to improving their early reading skills. The language game learning process also requires facilities to facilitate smooth teaching and learning.

Thus, it can be concluded that the application of language games that use letter cards as media to improve students' initial reading skills in Indonesian language learning in Class I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-2026 academic year. It was successful with the initial evidence that students did not have any knowledge about their initial reading ability level; by playing language games using letter cards, students became interested in reading. Students felt more like it, increased their desire to read, and were enthusiastic about learning while playing the activity.

In every learning process that uses a particular learning method, obstacles are inevitably encountered. Based on data collected by researchers, it was found that there were several obstacles to the implementation of Language Games to improve the initial reading skills of grade 1 students in Indonesian Language content in Class I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-2026 academic year. Some of these obstacles are as follows.

1) Media Limitations

When implementing a language game to improve students' early reading skills using colored flashcards, some students accidentally tore one of the cards, while others suddenly asked for the card the teacher had given them. Unfortunately, the teacher did not have similar replacements. This became one of the obstacles faced in the language game to improving students' early reading skills.

2) Time Limitation

The time allocated for language games in Indonesian language content is one day to complete one lesson on that theme. When teachers use language games, they naturally require more time than when using other learning methods.

3) Lack of Courage from Students

The students play a central role in the learning process. The use of language games prioritizes students as primary actors in learning activities. Language games train students to read in front of class, even when accompanied by their group. Students who are not accustomed to reading in front of the class may feel shy when asked to come forward, whereas students who are accustomed to reading will be more confident in reading in front of the class.

Solutions can be implemented in every learning process that uses a particular learning method. Based on the data collected by the researchers, it was analyzed that there are several solutions. Application of language games to improve the initial reading skills of grade 1 students in learning language games for Indonesian language content in UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan for the 2025-2026 academic year. The results of research conducted in Class I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-2026 academic year, the class teacher provides several solutions that can support the successful implementation of thematic learning of Indonesian language subjects by using language games to improve the initial reading skills of grade 1 students. The solutions are as follows:

The role of teachers is crucial in determining the learning process to be carried out in a classroom with students. Therefore, the teaching profession requires specialized skills, which are prerequisites for becoming a teacher. Most teachers who teach in Class I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-2026 academic year. Having a bachelor's degree (S1) educational background, the educational qualifications held by these teachers enable them to manage their classes and learning processes well.

Before beginning the learning process, a teacher needs to develop an appropriate learning method according to the material to be taught and students' conditions. This aimed to ensure that the material presented was effective, efficient, and easy for students to understand. When selecting a learning method, the teacher must understand the stages of using language games. When adopting language games to improve initial reading skills in Indonesian language subjects, teachers must understand the steps well which will make the method more efficient and effective and help achieve the desired learning objectives.

Understanding the stages. The application of this language game is one of the solutions to achieving learning success in the Class I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-2026 academic year.

To develop student engagement, one step that can be taken is to utilize learning media. Media are an important tool in the learning process, serving as a means of conveying messages to students. Media is an integral part of learning; without them, learning would feel incomplete. When selecting media, teachers should consider the following criteria.

a) It is important to choose the right media according to the desired learning objectives you want to achieve.

b) Harmonization between the media used and the learning content is important, namely, ensuring that the media chosen is appropriate for the material to be delivered.

c) When selecting media for learning, accessibility is an important consideration. Media should be easy to create, readily available, inexpensive, and simple for teachers to use.

d) The teacher's ability to operate media is important because with good skills in using it, any media used will help the teacher in presenting learning.

e) It is necessary to pay attention to the availability of learning time when selecting the media to be used so that the media chosen is in accordance with the planned time allocation.

f) The suitability of media to students' level of thinking is important when choosing media, so that the media is appropriate to students' level of thinking and is easy for them to understand.

The letter card media used in language games to improve students' initial reading skills in Indonesian has been adapted to the material presented and is sufficient for the number of students or groups in the class.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of research and analysis conducted by researchers regarding ""Implementation of Language Games Through Picture Letter Cards in an Effort to Improve the Early Reading Skills of First Grade Students of UPT SD Negeri 060837, West Medan District, Medan City, 2025-2026 Academic Year", then it can be concluded as follows In overcoming students who have difficulty reading, improving initial reading skills is very necessary, namely by implementing language games for grade 1 students in Indonesian language content. UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan for the 2025-2026 academic year. This is evident when learning Indonesian language through language games using letter cards creates a fun, enthusiastic, and interactive learning environment. The learning process consisted of three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. In planning, teachers first develop a teaching module and then proceed to the implementation phase. During implementation, there is a learning process that includes preliminary activities, namely, apperception and learning objectives. Next comes the core activity, where the teacher simulates the game to be played to stimulate students' curiosity and implements a language game assisted by letter cards. The students were invited to play while learning the cards. The teacher and the students then evaluated the learning process. Improvements in students' initial reading skills through the language game began to be observed during the lesson, and after the lesson, students' desire to read increased, supported by the use of the letter card language game. Obstacles and solutions for the application of language games in improving the initial reading skills of Grade 1 students in Indonesian language content. There are obstacles encountered in the learning method process that become obstacles in the implementation of the application of language games in improving the initial reading skills of grade 1 students in Indonesian language content in UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan for the 2025-2026 academic year. Some of the obstacles faced include limited media, limited time, and lack of courage from students. The solution implemented by the homeroom teacher Class I UPT SD Negeri 060837 Medan, 2025-2026 academic year in addressing the obstacles encountered in the process of implementing language games to improve the initial reading skills of first-grade Indonesian language students, the aim is to support the successful implementation of this learning method. The following solutions are available: teacher skills, media, and provision of additional hours.

Ethical Compliance

All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Data Access Statement

A Data Access Statement is a section in a scientific publication or research report that explains how the data used or generated in a study can be accessed by readers or other researchers. This statement aims to promote transparency, support research reproducibility, and comply with open-access policies, where applicable.
Common Elements in a Data Access Statement:
1. Data Location: Specifies where the data are stored, such as in online repositories (e.g., Zenodo, Dryad, or institutional repositories).
2. Access Instructions: Provides information on how to access the data, such as direct links, digital object identifiers (DOI), or contact details.
3. Data Availability: Indicates whether the data are publicly accessible, available upon request, or restricted due to ethical, legal, or privacy considerations.
4. Data Licensing: If the data are open, specify the applicable license (e.g., Creative Commons).
Examples of Data Access Statements:
1. Open Data:
   o "The data supporting this study are openly available in Zenodo at [DOI:10. xxxx/zenodo.xxxx]."
2. Restricted Data:
   o "The data that support the findings of this study are available upon request from the corresponding author. Due to privacy concerns, the data are not publicly available."
3. No Data Available:
   o "No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study."

4. Conditional Access:
   o "The data supporting this study are available under restricted access and can be obtained upon reasonable request to the corresponding author and with the permission of the ethics committee."

Purpose of a Data Access Statement:
- Reproducibility: Enables other researchers to replicate or verify the findings.
- Collaboration: Encourages further collaboration by sharing data.
- Compliance: Adheres to the policies of funding agencies or journals that require open access to data.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

No Conflict of Interest.

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