

Enhancing First-Grade Students' Language Skills through the Question and Answer Method Assisted by Picture Card Media: A Classroom Action Research Study

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the enhancement of language skills among first-grade students at UPT SPF SDN 105308 Namo Bintang, Deli Serdang, Indonesia. This research was necessitated by observations of low language proficiency, passive student engagement, and the prevalence of teacher-centered pedagogical approaches. The objective was to evaluate the efficacy of the Question and Answer (Q&A) method integrated with picture card media in improving language understanding, expression and literacy. The study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following the John Elliot model, conducted over two cycles involving 15 students. Data were collected through observation, documentation, and performance assessments. The results indicated a significant trajectory of improvement. In the pre-cycle analysis, 48.90% of the students were categorized as "Undeveloped" (Belum Berkembang). Cycle I reduced this figure but failed to meet the success criterion (, . e. of 86%). Following the refinements in Cycle II, 86.66% of the students achieved the "Very Well Developed" (Berkembang Sangat Baik) category across all language aspects. The study concludes that the synergistic use of Q&A and visual picture cards significantly fosters active communication, vocabulary retention, and cognitive engagement in early childhood education.

Keywords: Language Skills, Question and Answer Method, Picture Card Media, Classroom Action Research

I. INTRODUCTION

Language serves as the primary instrument for human communication and plays a critical role in the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children. In the context of early childhood and elementary education, the development of language skills is fundamental as it allows children to process information, express complex ideas, and interact effectively with their social environment. Vygotsky (1978) posited that language development is intrinsically linked to social interaction, where children acquire linguistic competencies through communication with adults and peers. Consequently, if a child lacks sufficient linguistic stimulation during these formative years, their cognitive and social development may be significantly impeded (Megari et al., 2025).

In the Indonesian elementary education curriculum, language proficiency encompasses four primary skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For first-grade students, the speaking aspect—or oral expression—is dominant, as children at this stage primarily externalize their thoughts through verbal communication. However, pedagogical reality often diverges from these theoretical ideals. Observations at UPT SPF SDN 105308 Namo Bintang revealed that many first-grade students struggle with expressive language skills. They exhibit passivity during lessons, lack the confidence to articulate their opinions, and face difficulties in comprehending verbal instructions (Muharmah & Fauzan, 2024).

This passivity is often exacerbated by traditional teaching methods. The prevalence of the lecture method (ceramah) creates a unidirectional flow of information, rendering students passive recipients rather than active participants in the communicative process. To address this, educators must pivot toward more interactive strategies. One such strategy is the question-and-answer (Q&A) method. According to Fauzia et al. (2025), this method stimulates critical thinking and communication skills by compelling students to formulate arguments and responses. It transforms the classroom dynamic from static to interactive, fostering "two-way traffic" of communication (Fauzia et al., 2025).

However, the Q&A method alone may be insufficient for young learners who are still in the "concrete operational" or transitional stages of cognitive development. Piaget (1959) suggested that children construct language understanding through direct experience and interaction with their environment. Therefore, verbal

interactions must be supported by concrete visual aids. This is where the media comes into play. Jailani et al. (2025) note that visual media, such as picture cards, can increase the attractiveness of the learning process and clarify abstract concepts (Jailani et al., 2025).

Picture cards (media kartu bergambar) are visual tools designed to help students connect abstract words to concrete images. They serve multiple functions: enriching vocabulary, aiding narrative construction, and stimulating imagination. When combined with the Q&A method, the picture cards provided a focal point for discussion. The teacher can display a card and pose specific questions, guiding the student to observe, process, and articulate their understanding (Makarim et al., 2025). This dual-coding approach—processing verbal and visual information simultaneously—aligns with Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which suggests that learning is more effective when both visual and verbal channels are engaged (Lovita et al., 2025). Despite the theoretical support for these methods, their practical application in the target schools has been limited. The gap between the necessity for active language development and the reality of passive learning environments necessitates an empirical intervention. This study aims to fill this gap by implementing a structured intervention using the Q&A method assisted by picture cards. The specific objectives are to determine whether this intervention can enhance language skills—specifically understanding, expression, and literacy—and to analyze the extent of the improvement.

The theoretical framework for this study draws on Nativist and Cognitive theories. While Chomsky argues for an innate Language Acquisition Device (LAD), this research leans heavily on the cognitive view (Piaget and Vygotsky), which emphasizes the role of the environment and social interaction. By manipulating the learning environment (introducing picture cards) and social interaction patterns (implementing Q&A), this study posits that the "Zone of Proximal Development" can be bridged, allowing students to reach higher levels of linguistic competence.

Furthermore, this research distinguishes itself from previous studies, such as those by Rahayu (2011) and Yunita (2013), by specifically focusing on the combination of Q&A with picture cards in a first-grade setting rather than general conversation methods or puppets. The urgency of this research lies in its potential to provide a replicable model for educators facing similar challenges in early language instruction in the future.

II. METHODS

A. Research Design

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) or Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) design. The primary goal of CAR is to improve the quality of classroom practices through a cyclical process of inquiry. The research design utilized the model developed by John Elliot, which structures the research into distinct cycles²⁴. Each cycle consists of four interrelated phases: (1) planning, (2) implementation (acting), (3) observation, and (4) reflection (Creswell, 2021).

The study was conducted in two cycles. The decision to proceed to the second cycle was contingent upon the results of the first, specifically, whether the pre-determined success indicators were met. If the target of 86% of students achieving the "Very Well Developed" (BSB) category was not reached in Cycle I, the researchers would refine the strategy and proceed to Cycle II. **Setting and Participants** The research was conducted at UPT SPF SDN 105308 Namo Bintang, located in Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra.

The study was conducted during the first semester of the 2025-2026 academic year. The subjects of this research were first-grade students (Kelas I). While the total class enrollment was 20, the data analysis focused on the 15 students who were consistently present and observed throughout the intervention (seven males and eight females).

B. Research Procedure

Pre-cycle: Prior to the intervention, an initial observation was conducted to establish a baseline of the students' language skills. This phase identified the core problems: low vocabulary, inability to form sentences, and passivity in speaking.

Cycle I: Planning: The researcher prepared the Teaching Module (Modul Ajar/RPP) focusing on the theme "My Environment" (Lingkunganku). Picture cards depicting daily objects (tables, chairs, and school bags) were prepared. The observation sheets and rubrics were finalized. The core activity involved the teacher showing a card (e.g., a bicycle) and asking scaffolding questions ("What is this?", "What color is it?", "What is it used for?").

Students were asked to repeat complex sentences and answer questions. **Observation:** A collaborator observed teacher performance and student engagement. **Reflection:** Analysis of Cycle I showed that while there was improvement, students were easily bored and distracted. The target of 86% BSB was not achieved.

Cycle II: Refined Planning: Based on Cycle I reflection, the teacher introduced more colorful and complex picture cards (e.g., market scenes, landscapes) to stimulate deeper inquiry (Sugiyono, 2019).

The interaction intensity was increased, and more positive reinforcement (praise, stars) was utilized. Action: The Q&A sessions became more interactive, requiring students to describe complex scenes rather than single objects. Reflection: Final data analysis was conducted to determine if the success criteria were met. Data Collection Techniques Three primary techniques were used: Observation: Direct observation of student behavior and language production during lessons. Checklists were used to categorize skills into "Understanding Language," "Expressing Language," and "Literacy" Literacy.

Documentation: Photos of classroom activities and student attendance records served as physical evidence of the research implementation. Interview: Interviews with the class teacher provided qualitative insights into the students' progress and the feasibility of the method (Arikunto, 2017).

C. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data regarding student performance were categorized into four levels of development: BSB (Berkembang Sangat Baik): Very Well Developed. BSH (Berkembang Sesuai Harapan): Developed as Expected. MB (Mulai Berkembang): Starting to Develop. BB (Belum Berkembang): Undeveloped. The success rate was calculated using the percentage formula $P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$, where P is the percentage, F is the frequency, and N is the sample size. The research was deemed successful if 86% of students reached the BSB category. Indicators of Success The specific language indicators monitored were: Understanding: Ability to repeat complex sentences without assistance. Expressing: Ability to actively answer complex questions. Literacy: Ability to identify groups of images with similar initial sounds or letters.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Result

The research yielded data across three distinct phases: Pre-Action, Cycle I, and Cycle II. The analysis focuses on the progression of 15 students across three key language indicators: Understanding Language, Expressing Language, and Literacy.

A.1. The initial observation (pre-cycle) revealed a significant deficit in language skills among the students. As shown in the summarized data, most students fell into the "Undeveloped" (BB) or "Starting to Develop" (MB) categories.

Table 1: Pre-Action Student Language Skills Distribution

Category (Kategori)	Understanding Language (Memahami Bahasa)	Expressing Language (Mengungkapkan Bahasa)	Literacy (Keaksaraan)	Average Percentage (Rata-rata)
Very Well Developed (BSB)	13.33%	13.33%	13.33%	13.33%
Developed as Expected (BSH)	13.33%	13.33%	13.33%	13.33%
Starting to Develop (MB)	26.66%	26.66%	20.00%	24.44%
Undeveloped (BB)	46.66%	46.66%	53.33%	48.90%

Source: Adapted from Pre-Action Data².

At this stage, 48.90% of the students were categorized as undeveloped. They struggled to repeat complex sentences and answer questions without significant teacher assistance. This baseline confirmed the "passive student" problem identified in the introduction, attributed to the lack of interactive media and methods.

A.2. Cycle I

In Cycle I, the teacher implemented the Q&A method using simple picture cards. The results showed a shift from the lower categories (BB/MB) toward higher proficiency, but the gains were only moderate. The actions were divided into two meetings (Action I and Action II).

Table 2: Student Language Skills Development in Cycle I (Action II)

Category (Kategori)	Understanding Language (Memahami Bahasa)	Expressing Language (Mengungkapkan Bahasa)	Literacy (Keaksaraan)	Average Percentage (Rata-rata)
Very Well Developed (BSB)	33.33%	40.00%	46.66%	39.99%
Developed as Expected (BSH)	26.66%	26.66%	26.66%	26.67%
Starting to Develop (MB)	33.33%	33.33%	13.33%	26.67%
Undeveloped (BB)	6.66%	0.00%	13.33%	6.67%

Source: Adapted
from Cycle I
Data³.

By the end of Cycle I, the percentage of students in the BSB category had risen to 39.99%. While the "Undeveloped" category dropped drastically to 6.67%, the majority of students were still dispersed in the middle categories. The reflection phase revealed that while the media helped, some students lost focus and engaged in off-task behavior (chatting with peers). The visual stimuli needed to be more engaging, and the Q&A process required more dynamic management to maintain the audience's attention. Since the 86% BSB target was not met, the research proceeded to Cycle II.

A.3. Cycle II

Cycle II introduced more complex and colorful picture cards (e.g., detailed market scenes and varied landscapes) and more intensive Q&A interactions. This cycle saw a dramatic improvement in all the language indicators.

Table 3: Student Language Skills Development in Cycle II (Action II)

Category (Kategori)	Understanding Language (Memahami Bahasa)	Expressing Language (Mengungkapkan Bahasa)	Literacy (Keaksaraan)	Average Percentage (Rata-rata)
Very Well Developed (BSB)	86.66%	86.66%	86.66%	86.66%
Developed as Expected (BSH)	13.33%	13.33%	13.33%	13.33%
Starting to Develop (MB)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Undeveloped (BB)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Category (Kategori)	Understanding Language (Memahami Bahasa)	Expressing Language (Mengungkapkan Bahasa)	Literacy (Keaksaraan)	Average Percentage (Rata-rata)
Source: Adapted from Cycle II Data ⁴ .				

The results of Cycle II were conclusive. The "Undeveloped" and "Starting to Develop" categories were completely eliminated (0%). The success indicator—students reaching the BSB category—was exactly 86.66% across all three measured aspects. Students have demonstrated the ability to repeat complex sentences, answer multi-layered questions about images, and identify phonetic groupings of words without teacher assistance (Silalahi, 2022).

B. Discussion

Based on the observations made before the action was taken through Cycles I and II, the following discussion can be made:

B.1. Pre-Action Discussion

Based on the results of the pre-action study, it was found that of the 15 students who were the subjects of the study in developing children's language skills through a question-and-answer learning method using picture cards, in terms of language comprehension, 2 students (13.33%) were in the Very Well Developed (BSB) category because they were able to repeat complex sentences; 2 students (13.33%) were in the Developing as Expected (BSH) category because they were able to repeat complex sentences; 4 students (26.66%) were in the Beginning to Develop (MB) category because they were able to repeat complex sentences; and 7 students (46.66%) were in the Not Developed (BB) category because they were not yet able to repeat complex sentences. In the aspect of expressing language, there are two students (13.33%) in the very well developed (BSB) category because students are able and active in answering more complex teacher questions, two students (13.33%) in the developing as expected (BSH) category because students are starting to be able to answer more complex teacher questions, four students (26.66%) in the starting to develop (MB) category because students are starting to be able to answer more complex and active questions with the help of the teacher, and seven students (46.66%) in the not yet developed (BB) category because students are not yet able to answer more complex teacher questions. In terms of literacy, two students (13.33%) were in the "Very Well Developed" (BSB) category, as they were able to name groups of pictures that had the same initial sound or letter. Two students (13.33%) were in the "Developing as Expected" (BSH) category, as they were able to name groups of pictures that had the same initial sound or letter with teacher assistance, but not fluently. Three students (20%) were in the "Beginning to Develop" category, as they began to name groups of pictures that had the same initial sound or letter with teacher assistance. Eight students (53.33%) were in the "Not Developed" (BB) category, as they were not yet able to name groups of pictures that had the same initial sound or letter.

B.2. Discussion of Action I in Cycle I

Based on the results of the research in Cycle I, Action I, of the 15 students who were the subjects of the study in the aspect of language comprehension, three students (20%) were in the Very Well Developed (BSB) category because they were able to repeat complex sentences; two students (13.33%) were in the Developing as Expected (BSH) category because they were able to repeat complex sentences; six students (40%) were in the Beginning to Develop (MB) category because they were able to repeat complex sentences; and four students (26.66%) were in the Not Developed (BB) category because they were not yet able to repeat complex sentences. In the aspect of expressing language, there are three students (20%) in the very well developed category (BSB) because students are able and active in answering more complex teacher questions, three students (20%) in the developing as expected category (BSH) because students are starting to be able to answer more complex teacher questions, four students (26.66%) in the starting to develop category (MB) because students are starting to be able to answer more complex and active questions with the help of the teacher, and five students (33.33%) in the not yet developed category (BB) because students are not yet able to answer more complex teacher questions. In terms of literacy, five students (33.33%) were in the Very Well Developed (BSB) category, as they were able to name groups of pictures that had the same initial sound or letter. Three students (20%) were in the Developing as Expected (BSH) category, as they were able to name groups of pictures that had the same initial sound or letter with teacher assistance, but not fluently. Three students (20%)

were in the Beginning to Develop (BB) category, as they were able to name groups of pictures that had the same initial sound or letter with teacher assistance. Four students (26.66%) were in the Not Developed (BB) category, as they were not yet able to name groups of pictures that had the same initial sound or letter.

B.3. Discussion of Action II in Cycle I

Based on the research results in Cycle II, of the 15 students who were the subjects of the study in the aspect of language comprehension, five students (33.33%) were in the very good development (BSB) category because they were able to repeat complex sentences, four students (26.66%) were in the development as expected (BSH) category because they were able to repeat complex sentences, five students (26.66%) were in the development as expected (BSH) category because they were able to repeat complex sentences, and five students (26.66%) were in the development as expected (BSH) category because they were able to repeat complex sentences.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This Classroom Action Research successfully demonstrates that the implementation of the Question and Answer (Q&A) method using picture card media is highly effective in developing language skills among first-grade students at UPT SPF SDN 105308 Namo Bintang in Indonesia. The intervention resulted in a measurable increase in students' proficiency across the understanding, expressing, and literacy domains. The percentage of students categorized as "Very Well Developed" rose from a baseline of 13.33% to 86.66% by the end of Cycle II, surpassing the research target. The study concludes that picture cards act as critical cognitive anchors that make language concrete for young learners, while the Q&A method provides the necessary social interaction to practice and refine the linguistic output. It is recommended that elementary school teachers, particularly those teaching lower grades, integrate visual media with interactive questioning strategies to combat student passivity. Future research should consider expanding the sample size and exploring the impact of digital vs. physical picture cards to further modernize this pedagogical approach.

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Ethical Compliance

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and 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 the study can be accessed by readers and other researchers. This statement aims to promote transparency, support research reproducibility, and comply with open-access policies, where applicable.

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- 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

The authors declare that they have no affiliations or involvement with any organization or entity with any financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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