



Using Picture Media to Improve Reading Skills of Elementary School Students

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Abstract: Language learning plays a crucial role in the intellectual, social, and emotional development of students, as well as their success across all subjects. In the context of education in Indonesia, the subject of the Indonesian Language aims to enhance students' communication skills, both orally and in writing, while fostering a love for literary works. Reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills are integral components of the curriculum, with reading ability being a fundamental skill that elementary school students must master. The inability to read can lead to difficulties following lessons across all subjects and understanding information from various sources. This study employs Classroom Action Research (CAR) to improve the reading skills of first-grade students at SD Negeri 5 Metro Timur through visual media. The results indicate that the use of visual media significantly enhances student motivation and participation, as well as their reading abilities. In the first cycle, the average student score increased from 58% to 70%, and in the second cycle, it rose to 86.7%, with 86.7% of students meeting the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM). These findings demonstrate that visual media effectively improves reading skills and should be integrated into teaching strategies in elementary schools.

Abstrak: Pembelajaran bahasa memiliki peran penting dalam perkembangan intelektual, sosial, dan emosional siswa, serta keberhasilan mereka di semua mata pelajaran. Dalam konteks pendidikan di Indonesia, mata pelajaran Bahasa Indonesia bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan komunikasi siswa, baik lisan maupun tulisan, serta kecintaan terhadap karya sastra. Keterampilan membaca, menyimak, berbicara, dan menulis diajarkan dalam kurikulum, di mana kemampuan membaca menjadi keterampilan dasar yang harus dikuasai siswa di jenjang Sekolah Dasar (SD). Ketidakmampuan membaca dapat mengakibatkan kesulitan dalam mengikuti pembelajaran di semua mata pelajaran dan memahami informasi dari berbagai sumber. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) untuk meningkatkan keterampilan membaca siswa kelas I di SD Negeri 5 Metro Timur melalui penggunaan media visual. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan media visual secara signifikan meningkatkan motivasi dan partisipasi siswa, serta kemampuan membaca mereka. Pada siklus pertama, rata-rata nilai siswa meningkat dari 58% menjadi 70%, dan pada siklus kedua meningkat menjadi 86,7%, dengan 86,7% siswa mencapai Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa media visual efektif dalam meningkatkan keterampilan membaca dan harus diintegrasikan dalam strategi pembelajaran di sekolah dasar untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih menarik.

A. Introduction

The main objective of the Indonesian language subject is to develop students' language skills, both orally and in writing, as well as to foster an appreciation for literary works. Language is a system of symbols in the form of arbitrary sounds used by society to communicate and establish social relationships. Thus, mastery of language skills is important for every individual to be able to socialize well. These skills should be introduced from an early age through the introduction of letters associated with things close to students' lives, such as themselves, their families, their surroundings, or objects they like. Furthermore, language plays a central role in the intellectual, social, and emotional development of students (Oktaviyanti et al., 2022; Hyun et al., 2020).

Language is also a supporting factor for success in studying all fields of study. We expect students to recognise themselves, understand their culture, and appreciate the culture of others through language learning. In addition, they can express ideas and feelings, actively participate in society, and use their analytical and imaginative abilities. Without realizing it, language becomes important for achieving effective communication goals (Hapsari, 2019). In Indonesia's education context, language learning plays an important role in supporting student success in all subjects. The Indonesian language subject aims to improve verbal and written communication skills and foster a love of literary works. As an arbitrary sound-symbol system, language is the main means of building relationships between individuals. Noermanzah emphasized that every individual needs to master language in order to be able to communicate well in their social environment (Masitoh et al., 2023; Satinem et al., 2023). Therefore, language proficiency is crucial for anyone who wants to interact effectively in society.

According to Widodo et al (2020a) early reading skills play an important role in determining students' future academic success. Therefore, effective interventions are needed to ensure that every student masters this basic skill. The main focus on developing early reading skills needs to be emphasized, especially in the early grades of elementary school. By strengthening the foundation of reading from an early age, students will find it easier to access and understand more complex subject matter at the next level.

As part of the curriculum, language skills include reading, listening, speaking, and writing. At the elementary school level, reading skills are one of the basic skills that must be mastered. The inability to read can hinder students from participating in the learning process in various subjects and limit their ability to understand information from various sources. This shows that reading is the main foundation for successful learning in all fields of study.

Early reading skills are usually taught in grades I and II and significantly impact advanced reading skills. Therefore, teachers are responsible for striving for various learning strategies that can help students develop good reading skills. The communicative approach, for example, is considered effective because it emphasizes interaction between teachers, students, and fellow students. Through this active involvement, it is hoped that students can understand and master reading skills more optimally. However, based on the

observations in grade 1 of SD Negeri 5 Metro Timur, it was still found that most students were not yet fluent in reading. Of the total 18 students, consisting of 10 boys and eight girls, only one student was already reading fluently, while five students were still spelling, two were recognizing letters, and 10 could not read at all. This condition not only hinders the development of students who cannot yet read but also slows down the progress of students who are already fluent because they have to wait for their friends. As a result, teachers need more time to complete learning because they have to provide additional guidance to students who are left behind.

The reading difficulties experienced by many students are a serious challenge that teachers must immediately overcome. If left unchecked, this obstacle can reduce students' interest and motivation to learn to read, ultimately affecting their overall academic achievement. Therefore, early intervention is crucial so students can overcome these challenges and improve their reading skills.

The initial reading learning process, especially in grades I and II, is the foundation that influences reading skills at a later stage. Teachers must pay special attention to students' early reading development because deficiencies at this stage will impact more complex reading difficulties (Masitoh et al., 2023; Widyaningrum & Hasanudin, 2019).

In overcoming differences in student characteristics and learning styles, the use of learning media is an effective solution. However, this media will only have a positive impact if teachers are able to use it appropriately and according to student needs. One of the media that can be used is picture media, which has been shown to increase students' interest and understanding in reading (Dunda, 2021). With the use of the right media, the learning process will be more interactive and help students develop reading skills optimally

According to Gogahu & Prasetyo, learning media includes everything teachers use to convey messages, aiming to attract attention and direct the minds of message recipients to achieve learning goals effectively (Oktaviyanti et al., 2022). However, in practice, the results often do not meet expectations because teachers use rigid and monotonous lecture methods (Messakh, 2020). This condition is exacerbated by the lack of teacher training in mastering the material, lack of classroom control, and ignorance in utilizing teaching aids, causing students to have difficulty focusing and understanding the lesson. As a result, student learning achievement decreases. One way teachers can use attractive image media is to overcome this. Visual media makes it easier to convey messages from teachers to students so that the material is easier to understand (Safitri & Kabiba, 2020). In line with this, Rangkuti et al (2024) shows that the use of appropriate learning media, combined with interesting methods, can help students understand complex concepts and increase their motivation to learn

Early reading skills are an important foundation in developing ideas and understanding basic concepts, which later support advanced reading skills. Therefore, awareness and the need to read independently must be emphasised so students can learn more effectively (Kaffah et al., 2023). In this context, classroom action research becomes a tool for teachers to evaluate students' absorption, curriculum, teaching methods, and

academic results (Utomo et al., 2024). At the elementary school level, Indonesian language learning plays a crucial role because language is the main and basic communication tool for continuing higher education (Mubarak et al., 2023). Elementary school students must master reading skills as a basic skill; failure to master this skill can hinder understanding of the material in all lessons. Teaching early reading in grades I and II has a significant impact on reading skills at the next level (Masitoh et al., 2023).

Given the importance of reading skills, teachers must strive for effective learning methods. One is using visual media to increase student motivation and participation in learning. As stated by Gogahu and Prasetyo, learning media conveys messages that attract students' attention, thus supporting learning objectives (Oktaviyanti et al., 2022). Previous studies have shown that visual-based media, such as picture cards, effectively improve students' early reading skills. Widodo et al (2020a) found that picture letter card media can increase student participation in recognizing letters and words effectively.

Jasiah et al (2023) also revealed that using this media could foster students' interest, make them more focused, and increase reading motivation. Most previous studies have focused more on recognizing letters and words without delving deeper into the potential of visual media in improving overall reading comprehension. In addition, picture cards have not been consistently implemented in grade I of elementary school, so the opportunities for optimal use have not been widely explored. Based on this, this study aims to test the effectiveness of picture letter card media in improving early reading skills in a sustainable manner, especially in elementary schools with low levels of learning completion. As a follow-up to this focus, this study specifically investigates using visual media to improve the reading skills of first-grade students at SD Negeri 5 Metro Timur.

Through a classroom action research (CAR) approach, this study is expected to produce accurate data on the effectiveness of visual media in reading learning. The results of this study are expected to contribute positively to formulating more efficient learning strategies in elementary school environments. In this context, using visual media designed to attract students' interest is a potential solution for effectively improving their reading skills.

B. Method

This study uses the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method, an approach used by educators or researchers to understand the learning process in the classroom and evaluate the impact of actions taken on students (Rahayu, 2020). This study began by identifying problems in the classroom and solving them through a series of planned and structured actions. Furthermore, CAR is designed to improve the quality of the learning process through four main stages: planning, implementing actions, observing, and reflecting (Febrillaa et al., 2023). The main objective of this study is to overcome obstacles in learning and gradually improve the quality of the ongoing learning process (Sukardi, 2022) as shown in Figure 1, researchers conducted CAR research with several stages, including planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting systematically to achieve optimal results.

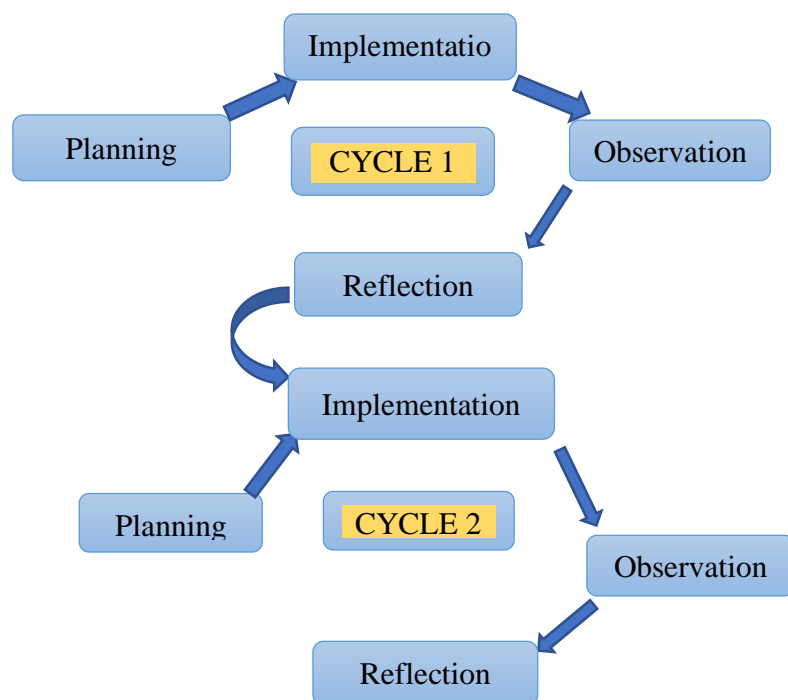


Figure 1. Classroom Action Research Implementation Design

This study used qualitative and quantitative methods simultaneously to obtain a more comprehensive understanding. The qualitative method utilized image media to improve student reading skills in Indonesian language learning. Meanwhile, the quantitative method was applied to measure changes in students' understanding and performance before and after using image media. The main focus of this study was to improve the reading skills of first-grade students by utilizing visual media, which was chosen because of its ability to provide effective visual stimulation. It is hoped that through this media, students can develop their reading skills through interactive activities that involve matching words with images. Researchers and observers began by observing the learning process to collect relevant data. These observations included interactions between teachers and students, the level of student participation, and the overall dynamics in the classroom when image media was used. The next stage involved interviews with teachers and students to dig deeper into their experiences during the learning process and measure the development of students' reading skills. After that, researchers conducted direct trials involving students using image media.

The research planning stage begins with the preparation of systematic learning steps. This step includes designing materials, selecting tools, and appropriate media to support improving reading skills. The plan's implementation is carried out in stages in two cycles of action. In each cycle, an evaluation is carried out to identify deficiencies so that improvements can be applied in the next cycle to maximize results. This research was conducted in class I of SD Negeri 5 Metro Timur, involving teachers and students as research subjects. Interviews with teachers aimed to understand their perspectives on the design and

effectiveness of visual media in the learning process. Meanwhile, interviews with students were conducted to reveal their views on using these media.

Observations were used to analyze student interactions with visual media and their impact on improving reading skills. In addition, documentation was collected in the form of Teaching Modules and relevant student work results. To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher applied triangulation by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. Additional validation was done through direct confirmation with teachers and students, ensuring that the collected data reflected their experiences. Discussions with colleagues were also conducted to obtain input and strengthen the validity of the analysis. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and qualitative approaches. Data is reduced to highlight relevant information, then presented in narrative or graphic form that facilitates interpretation and identifies important patterns. The results of this analysis become the basis for planning corrective actions in the next cycle. This study consists of two cycles covering the planning, implementation, observation, and reflection stages. The first cycle aims to identify problems and implement initial actions, while the second cycle focuses on refining previous steps and evaluating results.

Data analysis was carried out using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach uses descriptive methods to assess numerical data, such as the number of students who achieve the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM). In contrast, the qualitative approach analyzes student participation during the learning process. The success of this study was measured based on student academic achievement, with a minimum benchmark of 80% of students achieving a KKM score of 70 and a class average of 80. The results showed that image media significantly improved student understanding and learning performance in class I of SD Negeri 5 Metro Timur. In addition, the results of observations and experiments were expressed in percentage form and then described in sentence form. The target of the success of this study is the achievement of academic success or classical student completeness of 80% or more. In addition, students must also have achieved or exceeded the KKM, which is 70, then adjusted to the KKM standard for grade 1 Indonesian Language Subject at SD Negeri 5 Metro Timur. Each learning cycle is also intended to increase students' average achievement and learning success. This study was conducted in November of the 2024/2025 school year in grade 1 of SD Negeri 5 Metro Timur. This study aimed to improve reading skills in grade I students.

C. Result and Discussion

Results

Learning and Teaching Implemented Before implementing Classroom Action Research, teachers used the lecture teaching method, which emphasized the role of the teacher with low student participation. Puput & Sobry explain lectures as a way of teaching that involves conveying knowledge orally to students who usually follow passively (Messakh, 2020). This ineffective learning method causes students to lose interest in the lesson, creates a noisy classroom atmosphere, and makes it difficult for them to understand

the material. This condition has a negative impact on the understanding of Grade I students at SD Negeri 5 Metro Timur, especially in the Indonesian Language subject. Before starting Cycle I, researchers were directed to collect initial data from the previous cycle, which indicated that many students had not met the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM).

The results of the analysis showed that from Class I, out of 18 students who could read fluently, 1 student could spell, five could recognise letters, and 10 could not read at all. The Indonesian language class's highest score was 73, while the lowest score was 50. The average student score was 58, which is still below the KKM of 70 set by the school. Therefore, further corrective actions must be taken, and the investigation will continue in Cycle I. In Cycle II, using more varied images and interactive learning methods increased the average student score to 86.7%, with 86.7% of students achieving the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM). This improvement is in line with the findings stating that more interesting media can increase student interest and motivation. Using image media, students are trained to think critically and can relate the images they learn to everyday life. This allows them to meet the demands of contextual learning (Widodo et al., 2020b).

Description of Cycle I

In the first cycle, the researcher integrated visual media into reading learning. Before the cycle began, initial data showed that the average reading ability of students was at 58%, with the highest score reaching 62. The researcher conducted observations to identify problems and plan improvement steps, including using visual media in the teaching and learning process. After implementing Cycle I, the assessment results significantly increased, with the average student score reaching 70%. However, the highest score in cycle I was only 75. This increase shows progress, but the researcher continues to reflect on the shortcomings in the actions in Cycle I.

1. Planning:

- a. Arrange learning using image media. This plan includes learning objectives, materials to be taught, and methods to be used.
- b. Arrange observation sheets to assess student activities and reading assessment sheets.
- c. Prepare teaching materials in the form of interesting and relevant images.

2. Implementation:

- a. The teacher delivers learning using picture media. In this stage, the teacher shows a picture and gives students directions to complete the words that match the picture shown.
- b. Students are asked to read words or simple sentences in the picture.
- c. The teacher gives the task of reading words or short sentences based on the picture provided. Example: Picture of "cat" accompanied by the word "___cing" to be read.

3. Observation:

- a. Observe student activities during the reading process.

- b. Record student activities throughout the learning process. Observations are made to assess the level of student involvement in learning activities.
- c. Assess student reading skills based on predetermined success criteria.

Table 1. Assessment Instrument for Reading Ability of Grade I Students

Student Reading Ability Assessment					
No.	Student Name	Value Before PTK	Percentage Before PTK (%)	Cycle I Values	Percentage of Cycle I (%)
1	Student 1	55	55%	68	68%
2	Student 2	60	60%	72	72%
3	Student 3	58	58%	70	70%
4	Student 4	50	50%	66	66%
5	Student 5	62	62%	74	74%
6	Student 6	56	56%	69	69%
7	Student 7	59	59%	71	71%
8	Student 8	54	54%	67	67%
9	Student 9	60	60%	73	73%
10	Student 10	57	57%	70	70%
11	Student 11	55	55%	68	68%
12	Student 12	58	58%	70	70%
13	Student 13	52	52%	65	65%
14	Student 14	53	53%	67	67%
15	Student 15	59	59%	72	72%
16	Student 16	60	60%	74	74%
17	Student 17	55	55%	69	69%
18	Student 18	57	57%	71	71%
Average	-	58	58%	70	70%
The highest score	-	62	62%	75	75%

4. Reflection:

- a. Analyze the results of the first cycle. The results of the assessment and observation were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of using image media.
- b. The results of the first cycle showed that 70% of students achieved the success criteria in reading ability.

Description of Cycle II

Based on the results of reflection and observation conducted during the first cycle, the researcher improved in the second cycle to correct errors found in the first cycle. In this stage, the researcher focused more on student interaction with visual media and improving learning strategies. The assessment results at the end of Cycle II showed very satisfactory development, with the average student score increasing significantly to 86.5%. The highest rating achieved by students in Cycle II was 92, reflecting significant progress in students' reading skills after using visual media in the learning process.

1. Planning:
 - a. Improve the learning plan based on the reflection findings in the first cycle.
 - b. This improvement includes adding variations of images and interactive activities.
2. Implementation:
 - a. The teacher continues the learning with a more interactive approach. In the second cycle, the teacher uses a more creative method to attract students' attention.
 - b. Students read a picture-based short story and complete the missing words.
 - c. The teacher gives a short story reading assignment supported by a series of pictures as a guide. For example, a story about fruits, where students have to read sentences such as "A fruit is my favorite," with the help of a picture of an apple
3. Observation:
 - a. Observe the increase in students' interest and participation in reading. Observations are made to record changes in students' attitudes and involvement.
 - b. Measure students' reading ability with the same assessment tool.

Table 2. Assessment Instrument for Reading Ability of Grade 1 Students in Cycle II

No.	Student Name	Cycle II Values	Percentage of Cycle II (%)
1	Student 1	85	85%
2	Student 2	88	88%
3	Student 3	90	90%
4	Student 4	84	84%
5	Student 5	89	89%
6	Student 6	87	87%
7	Student 7	86	86%
8	Student 8	85	85%
9	Student 9	92	92%
10	Student 10	88	88%
11	Student 11	86	86%
12	Student 12	87	87%
13	Student 13	84	84%
14	Student 14	85	85%
15	Student 15	89	89%
16	Student 16	92	92%
17	Student 17	86	86%
18	Student 18	88	88%
Average	-	86,5	86,5%
The highest score	-	92	92%

4. Reflection:
 - a. Analyze learning outcomes. The results of the assessment and observation were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of using image media in the second cycle.

- b. The results of the second cycle showed that 86.7% of students achieved the success criteria in reading ability.

Discussion

In the first cycle, the researcher implemented visual media in reading learning. Based on the results of observations and assessments, there was a significant increase in students' reading ability, with an average student score reaching 70%. Although there was progress, some students still had difficulty connecting images with the correct words. According to Khotimah, it shows that although visual media is effective, a more varied approach is still needed to maximize student learning outcomes, as also suggested by a variety of media to maintain students' interest in learning (Mubarok et al., 2023).

The results of the study indicate that the use of image media significantly impacts the reading ability of grade 1 students. In cycle I of classroom action research (CAR), the average student score reached 70 with a completion percentage of 70%. Although these results show progress compared to the conditions before the implementation of CAR, many students still had difficulty recognizing words related to the images used in the learning process. This obstacle is caused by the effectiveness of vocabulary recognition, which is not yet optimal, so students need more practice and guidance.

On the other hand, students' responses to using visual media in learning were very positive. Visual media has been proven to attract students' attention and encourage them to learn more. Based on the results of reflection from Cycle I, improvements were made in Cycle II by introducing variations of images and more interactive learning methods. This aims to increase student engagement and improve weaknesses found in the first cycle. In Cycle II, picture-based short stories have been proven effective in improving students' reading skills. The results showed that the average student score increased significantly to 86.7%, with the highest score reaching 92%. In addition, 86.7% of students achieved the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM), which shows that the improvements improved reading learning quality.

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A comparison of the first and second cycles showed a significant increase, according to data analysis, with an average increase reaching 16.7%. Visual media makes it easier for students to understand and remember new vocabulary, increases their motivation to learn,

and helps develop early reading skills that are important for the next stage of learning. This increase reflects the effectiveness of using visual media in learning to read. This study also confirms that productive teachers implementing PTK can be more effective in dealing with learning problems (Mubarok et al., 2023). Visual media provides stimulation, making it easier for students to understand and remember new vocabulary. In addition, various learning approaches make learning more interesting and interactive. This allows students to be more involved and motivated, and these findings confirm that visual media should be included in learning, especially in subjects that require an understanding of symbols and meanings, such as reading.

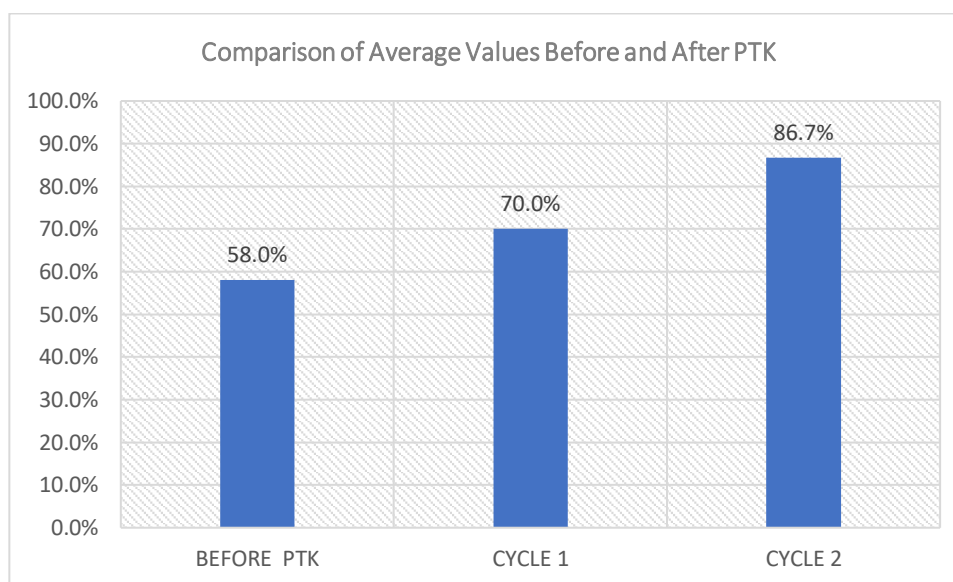


Figure 2. Instrument for Improving Reading Ability of Grade I Students

The use of visual media in reading learning has been proven effective in improving the reading skills of grade 1 students. The average student score increased from 70 in the first cycle to 86.7 in the second cycle, with the completion percentage increasing significantly from 70% to 86.7%. Visual media has been proven to provide effective stimulation to increase student motivation and participation in learning. Based on the data obtained, using images in learning makes students more involved and motivated to learn. This can be seen from the significant increase in average scores and completion between the first and second cycles, with an average increase of 16.7%. Udju stated that this media, such as images, can improve students' understanding, vocabulary recommendations, motivation and participation. Good reading skills are important for academic achievement and the development of students' cognitive and social abilities (Sulikhah et al., 2020). Therefore, visual media should be included as an integral part of the learning strategy. Based on these results, using visual media should be included in teaching methods, especially in lessons that require word recognition and meaning, such as reading. More creative and varied methods that involve students more actively have been shown to improve their understanding.

D. Conclusion

This study's results can conclude that innovative image media has proven effective in overcoming reading difficulties, improving reading comprehension, and encouraging active student participation in interactive and enjoyable learning. The average student score increased from 70 in the first cycle to 86.7 in the second cycle, with an increase in completion percentage from 70% to 86.7%. The implications of this learning media research can support the learning process, provide positive benefits for students, and assist teachers in delivering Indonesian language learning materials.

This study recommends that students utilize this image media in Indonesian language learning because the media has been designed to be easy to use. In addition, teachers can also use it when students start to feel bored with learning in class because this media can help increase student learning motivation. Thus, the learning atmosphere in the classroom becomes more enjoyable, and the learning process can run more optimally.

Suggestions are also addressed for further research, but the shortcomings can be improved from this study. There are still many media that can be made to overcome similar problems studied in this study, and there are still other media that may be tried to be developed so that teachers and students are more helped to overcome existing learning problems so that the results obtained are more optimal than before. Hopefully, this study can be a guide or reference for further research.

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