

Improving Writing Skills through “*Wayang Unggul*” Cards for First-Grade Students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve the writing skills of first-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency, using “Unggul Puppet Cards” as a learning medium. This research is a classroom action research study conducted over two cycles. Data collection techniques included observation, testing, and documentation. The implementation process comprised four stages: planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection. The research subjects were 21 first-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency. Observation results indicated that the writing skills of the first-grade students were initially low. Out of the 21 students, only 6 (29%) were competent, while 15 (71%) were not. In Cycle I, Meeting 1, only 6 students (33%) demonstrated writing competence, and in Meeting 2, only 9 students (43%) did so. In Cycle II, Meeting 1, the number of competent students rose to 11 (52%). By Meeting 2, writing skills using the “Unggul” *wayang* cards showed significant improvement, with 19 students (90%) demonstrating competence. Thus, it can be concluded that the writing skills of the first-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency, improved through the use of “Unggul Puppet Cards”.

Keywords : Writing Skills, Card Media, Wayang Unggul.

INTRODUCTION

At its core, learning is a process of interaction among children, between children and learning resources, and between children and educators. Such learning activities become meaningful when conducted in an environment that is comfortable and fosters a sense of security for the child. According to (Pulukadang, 2021). learning is defined as a system designed to facilitate the student's learning process; it comprises a series of events structured to influence and support the internal learning process of the student. In other words, learning represents a deliberate effort by the teacher to foster student learning manifested as a behavioral change whereby the student acquires new capabilities that are retained over a relatively long period as a result of this effort.

Learning activities are no longer merely routine actions; rather, they involve preparing for instruction and executing teaching procedures during face-to-face sessions. However, these activities become even more complex when implemented using varied instructional patterns and materials. Elementary school instruction encompasses a sequence of activities ranging from the opening to the closing of the lesson. These include: the initial phase, involving activating prior knowledge (apperception) and stating learning objectives; the core phase,

comprising the primary activities where the teacher facilitates learning experiences through strategies and methods deemed appropriate for the objectives and content; and the concluding phase, involving summarizing the lesson and assigning tasks or homework if necessary. In addition to the learning process itself, there are also specific components of instruction.

Components are elements of a system that play a role in the overall learning process, aiming to achieve optimal learning outcomes. Thus, these components determine the success or failure of the classroom learning process. They encompass preparing for instruction as part of the implementation of monthly and annual plans. Consequently, educators must thoroughly understand instructional objectives including how to formulate them and know how to select and determine teaching methods aligned with the desired goals. They must also understand the lesson material (adapted to the learning theme and utilizing various sources) and be able to select, determine, and use appropriate instructional media.

Indonesian language instruction encompasses four skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is a crucial skill for indirectly conveying messages and information to others; indeed, it is essential in both academic and non-academic contexts. It is one of the four fundamental language skills that students must master. The researcher focuses on students' writing skills because the low level of writing proficiency in Indonesia stems from students' inability to recognize the alphabet and arrange letters into sentences. Students often struggle with how to form letters correctly, what to write next, and how to conclude their writing.

Furthermore, students struggle to connect their ideas. One of the obstacles they face stems from the use of an unsuitable teaching method specifically, teachers relying on the lecture method. Consequently, the researcher employed the "Guided Writing" method, as it is well-suited for first-grade students who are still in the process of learning to form letters and words. This method allows students to practice writing letters correctly in a hands-on manner. According to (Sugiarti, 2024:3), guided writing is a technique or set of instructions used by teachers to help students express their ideas in writing, ensuring those ideas are clearly articulated. Guided Writing is a direct writing instruction method designed to teach factual and procedural knowledge. Writing is a crucial skill for students to master, particularly the ability to write basic vocabulary. Through writing basic vocabulary, it is hoped that students will not only improve their ability to recall syllables but also develop the skill of turning basic words into engaging sentences. Moreover, these writing skills may well prove beneficial for the students' future lives; therefore, it is important to cultivate the habit of writing from an early age.

However, findings from initial field observations indicate that many first-grade students still lack adequate writing skills. Observations conducted via interviews with a homeroom teacher revealed that, out of 21 students, only six (40%) were able to write, while the remaining 15 (60%) had not yet mastered the skill. The writing indicators assessed in this study include: 1) the ability to write letters clearly and correctly; 2) the timeliness of task completion; 3) active participation in writing activities; and 4) neatness of handwriting. Several factors contribute to this situation: (1) handwriting that is not yet clearly legible, (2) slow writing speed, (3) a lack of focus during writing activities, and (4) untidy handwriting. Furthermore, teachers have not yet optimized the use of instructional media during the learning process;

specifically, when teaching basic vocabulary writing, they do not use any media at all. Consequently, the researcher employs "*Wayang Unggul*" cards as a potential solution to be implemented in the classroom. Visually, these cards are highly appealing to children due to their colorful designs and engaging illustrations featuring animals, objects, professions, and places. Although "*Wayang Unggul*" cards are a simple medium, they significantly enhance the effectiveness of classroom instruction, particularly given that children tend to prefer concrete concepts over abstract ones.

The researcher highlights that the use of "*Wayang Unggul*" cards as a learning medium offers the following benefits: (1) stimulating active learning among children; (2) providing writing practice for students; (3) fostering healthy competition; (4) increasing student learning motivation and encouraging mutual assistance; and (5) enabling both teachers and students to utilize the cards to achieve learning objectives. Recognizing these factors, the researcher was motivated to conduct a study titled "*Improving Writing Skills through 'Wayang Unggul' Cards among First-Grade Students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency.*"

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing Skills

Writing ability is the skill of expressing ideas, thoughts, and feelings in written form that can be understood by readers (Soemitro, 2024; Lestari, 2021). As a productive language skill, writing requires mastery of various elements, ranging from accurate spelling, vocabulary selection, and effective sentence construction to the ability to structure paragraphs (Pawiati, 2021; Monoarfa, 2025). Writing is also a crucial foundational skill in elementary schools, as it supports students' academic success and their ability to communicate in social contexts. In this study, students' basic writing skills were measured using four indicators: letter clarity, timely completion, active participation in writing activities, and neatness of handwriting (Wijayanti & Utami, 2022).

Instructional Media

Instructional media are tools or means used by teachers to convey educational messages, ensuring that the meaning of the material is clear and that educational goals are achieved effectively and efficiently (Maharani et al., 2025; Azhar et al., 2023). Media play a crucial role in stimulating students' attention, interest, thought processes, and learning motivation, thereby making the learning process more dynamic and meaningful (Resti, 2024; Syawaluddin, 2022). Generally, instructional media are categorized into four types visual, audio, audio-visual, and interactive each possessing distinct characteristics and functions in facilitating the learning process (Prawesti et al., 2024). Selecting the appropriate media requires considering clarity, appeal, suitability for the target audience, and alignment with learning objectives to ensure optimal utilization.

Superior Wayang Cards

The *Wayang Unggul* Card is a visual learning medium in the form of illustrated cards featuring modified wayang (traditional puppet) characters combined with words and images that are familiar to children, such as animals, fruits, objects, and clothing. This medium is

designed to help children understand abstract concepts through concrete visual illustrations (Juwariah, 2023). The use of *Wayang Unggul* Cards offers several educational benefits, including stimulating students' active participation in learning, improving writing skills, fostering healthy competition among students, enhancing self-confidence, and encouraging collaborative learning and mutual assistance during the learning process (Pertiwi et al., 2022). The implementation of this medium is carried out through several stages: (1) preparing and introducing the cards to students, (2) identifying the names of the objects depicted on the cards, (3) practicing writing the names of the objects, (4) constructing simple sentences based on the pictures, (5) spelling the words orally, and (6) conducting evaluation and reinforcement by the teacher. Theoretically, the effectiveness of this medium for first-grade elementary school students (aged 6-7 years) is supported by Piaget's theory of the concrete operational stage (2022), which explains that children at this age understand learning materials more easily through real objects or visual representations than through abstract explanations. Therefore, the *Wayang Unggul* Cards provide concrete representations of letter and word symbols that are aligned with the cognitive developmental characteristics of children.

Relevant Research

Research by (Pertiwi et al. 2022) demonstrated that the use of letter card media improved the letter-writing skills of first-grade elementary school students, with achievement increasing from 72% in Cycle I to 85% in Cycle II. Similarly, (Anggraeni 2021) reported that the implementation of Sukuraga Wayang Cards enhanced the basic vocabulary writing skills of lower-grade elementary students, with the average achievement improving from 57% to 87%. Both studies employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach and confirmed that illustrated card media are an effective strategy for improving early writing skills among elementary school students. These findings also reinforce the present study, which applies a similar instructional medium in a different context and with a different group of participants.

METHODS

The participants in this Classroom Action Research (CAR) were the first-grade students of SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency. The class consisted of 21 students, including 11 boys and 10 girls. Each student had different characteristics and levels of writing ability. This class was selected as the research subject because the students demonstrated relatively low writing skills, as identified through preliminary observations conducted in collaboration with the first-grade classroom teacher.

The students' writing skills were considered in need of improvement through the use of the *Wayang Unggul* Card learning media. Therefore, the focus of this Classroom Action Research was to enhance the writing skills of first-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency, by implementing the *Wayang Unggul* Card media in the learning process.

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. The research was conducted in cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and

reflection. In this study, the researcher also acted as the classroom teacher during the implementation of the instructional activities.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique used in this study was observation. Observation was conducted during the teaching and learning process in the first-grade classroom of SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency. The observations focused on both students' and the teacher's activities throughout the instructional process. In addition, data regarding the school's profile were collected, including the number of students, the number of teachers, the available facilities and infrastructure, and the school's location. To observe the activities of both the teacher and the students during the learning process, the researcher used observation sheets that had been developed prior to the implementation of the study. These observation sheets were designed to systematically record the teacher's instructional activities and the students' learning activities throughout each cycle of the Classroom Action Research. A written test was used to collect data on the basic vocabulary writing skills of first-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency. Data were collected through a Guided Writing method using the *Wayang Unggul* Card learning media. During the writing activity, the researcher distributed the *Wayang Unggul* Cards to the students and instructed them to write basic vocabulary words based on the pictures displayed on the cards. This written test was administered to measure the improvement in students' ability to write basic vocabulary after the implementation of the *Wayang Unggul* Card media.

Documentation served as supporting evidence for the implementation of the research. In this study, documentation was used to provide physical evidence of the Classroom Action Research activities conducted at the research site. The documentation included photographs, field notes, and other relevant records collected during the implementation of each research cycle.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected in this study consisted of observation and monitoring results obtained using assessment sheets, which enabled the determination of minimum and maximum scores. Data analysis was conducted systematically and continuously at the end of each research cycle to evaluate the outcomes of the implemented actions and to inform improvements for the subsequent cycle.

RESULTS

The Classroom Action Research (CAR) began with a preliminary observation conducted in May 2025. This stage involved observing the teaching and learning activities of both the teacher and the students during Indonesian language lessons, particularly on writing basic vocabulary. The study was conducted at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency, focusing on the first-grade class, which consisted of 21 students, including 11 boys and 10 girls. The research was implemented through an initial observation followed by two action cycles, namely Cycle I and Cycle II. Each cycle was carried out according to a predetermined schedule that had been coordinated with the classroom teacher.

The preliminary observation conducted in May 2025 indicated that the students' ability to write basic vocabulary was still relatively low. Therefore, the researcher and the classroom teacher agreed to implement the *Wayang Unggul Card* media as an instructional intervention to improve the learning process. The results of the intervention in each cycle are presented in the following sections.

Teacher and Student Activities During Instruction

The results of the observations of teacher and student activities during the learning process at each stage of the intervention are summarized in Table 1. Table 1 shows a consistent improvement in both teacher and student activities from Cycle I, Meeting 1 to Cycle II, Meeting 2. Teacher activity increased from 33% to 94%, while student activity increased from 56% to 98%. This improvement indicates that the implementation of learning using the *Wayang Unggul Card* media became increasingly effective as instructional management was refined based on the reflections conducted after each meeting.

Table 1. Summary of Teacher and Student Activities at Each Stage of the Action

Action Phase	Teacher Activities Carried Out (%)	Student Activities (%)	Category
Cycle I, Meeting I	33	56	Not enough
Cycle I, Meeting II	44	68	Not enough
Cycle II, Meeting I	50	78	Enough
Cycle II, Meeting II	94	98	Very good

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Basic Vocabulary Writing Ability Based on Four Assessment Aspects

Students' basic vocabulary writing skills were assessed based on four aspects: handwriting clarity, timeliness of task completion, active participation in writing, and handwriting neatness. A summary of the assessment results for these four aspects is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Percentages for Four Aspects of Basic Vocabulary Writing Ability

Action Phase	Clarity of Writing (%)	Punctuality (%)	Writing Activity (%)	Neatness of Handwriting, (%)	Average (%)
Cycle I, Meeting I	60	58	51	44	53
Cycle I, Meeting II	68	74	57	59	65
Cycle II, Meeting I	84	79	62	76	62
Cycle II, Meeting II	87	90	86	77	85

Based on Table 2, all aspects of students' writing skills showed progressive improvement across each stage of the intervention. The handwriting clarity aspect increased from 60% to 87%, the timeliness of task completion improved from 58% to 90%, active participation in writing increased from 51% to 86%, and handwriting neatness improved from 44% to 77%. Among the four assessed aspects, active participation in writing demonstrated the slowest rate of improvement, although it also showed substantial progress by Cycle II, Meeting 2.

Classroom Mastery of Students' Writing Skills

The criterion for the success of the intervention was determined based on the number of students who achieved the proficient category according to the composite assessment of the four evaluation aspects. The data on classical learning mastery at each stage of the intervention are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Class Mastery of Students' Basic Vocabulary Writing Skills

Action Phase	Number of Students Who Achieved Mastery (Passed)	Number of Students Not Yet Proficient	Completion Percentage (%)
Cycle I, Meeting I	6	15	29
Cycle I, Meeting II	9	12	43
Cycle II, Meeting I	11	10	52
Cycle II, Meeting II	19	2	90

The data presented in Table 3 indicate a progressive increase in the number of students who achieved the proficiency criterion at each stage of the intervention. In Cycle I, Meeting 1, only 6 of the 21 students (29%) demonstrated proficiency in writing basic vocabulary. This number increased to 9 students (43%) in Cycle I, Meeting 2, 11 students (52%) in Cycle II, Meeting 1, and reached its highest level in Cycle II, Meeting 2, with 19 students (90%) demonstrating proficiency in writing basic vocabulary. By the end of the intervention, only 2 students (10%) had not yet met the mastery criterion, primarily due to difficulties in producing clear handwriting and slower writing speed compared with their peers.

Based on these findings, the improvement in students' basic vocabulary writing skills from Cycle I to Cycle II demonstrated significant progress in terms of teacher activity, student activity, and writing performance. Therefore, the intervention was considered successful, and the study was concluded without proceeding to a subsequent cycle.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the use of the *Wayang Unggul* card media consistently improved the basic vocabulary writing skills of first-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency, from Cycle I to Cycle II. This improvement was evident not only in the students' learning outcomes but also in the quality of the learning process itself, as reflected in the increased levels of teacher and student engagement during each meeting.

The improvement in teacher activity, from the *less optimal* category (33%) at the beginning of the intervention to the *very good* category (94%) at the end of the intervention, indicates

that the reflection conducted after each lesson was effective in improving classroom management and instructional practices. The teacher became increasingly proficient in communicating the learning objectives, demonstrating vocabulary writing using the *Wayang Unggul* card media, providing intensive guidance to students, and facilitating reinforcement and reflection activities at the end of each lesson. These findings are consistent with the principles of Classroom Action Research (CAR), in which instructional improvements are implemented through iterative cycles based on reflections from the previous cycle, thereby enabling the quality of instruction to improve progressively.

The improvement in teacher activity was accompanied by a corresponding increase in student activity, rising from 56% to 98%. The *Wayang Unggul* card media provided a concrete and engaging learning experience for lower elementary students, as they were able to observe, handle, and directly imitate the vocabulary displayed on the cards before writing it independently. This finding is consistent with the characteristics of lower-grade elementary students, who are in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development and therefore require visual and hands-on learning media to facilitate understanding and retention of the concepts being learned.

Among the four aspects of writing skills observed, the clarity of handwriting and timely task completion demonstrated the most consistent improvement, whereas students' active participation in writing developed relatively more slowly than the other aspects. This finding suggests that writing motor skills and the understanding of letter formation can be enhanced more rapidly through repeated practice using the *Wayang Unggul* card media, while active participation is more strongly influenced by students' motivation and self-confidence, which require a longer period to develop optimally.

The increase in the number of students who achieved the mastery criterion, from 29% in Cycle I Meeting I to 90% in Cycle II Meeting II, demonstrates that the *Wayang Unggul* card media is an effective instructional tool for teaching early writing skills in first grade. This media enables students to learn through simultaneous visual and motor experiences, making the process of writing basic vocabulary related to animals, objects, professions, and places more meaningful and easier for students to understand.

Nevertheless, the findings also revealed that by the end of Cycle II Meeting II, 2 out of 21 students had not yet achieved the mastery criterion. These students experienced difficulties in writing clearly and tended to require more time to complete writing tasks than their classmates. This finding indicates that, although the instructional media was effective, it could not fully address individual differences in students' abilities. Therefore, more personalized instructional approaches, such as additional guidance or remedial instruction, are needed for students who continue to experience difficulties in developing their writing skills. Overall, the findings of this study reinforce the evidence that the use of concrete and interactive instructional media, such as the *Wayang Unggul* card media, can serve as an effective alternative for teachers in improving the early writing skills of lower-grade elementary school students. This instructional media not only contributes to improved learning outcomes but also promotes a more active, enjoyable, and meaningful learning process for students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this Classroom Action Research conducted at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency, it can be concluded that the use of the *Wayang Unggul* card media effectively improved the writing skills of first-grade students. This improvement was reflected in the increasing number of students who were able to recognize letters accurately, construct syllables, form words, and write simple sentences in accordance with the basic conventions of the Indonesian language.

The use of the *Wayang Unggul* card media made the learning process more engaging and enjoyable, encouraging students to become more active and motivated in guided writing activities. This instructional media also helped students understand the learning material in a concrete manner that was appropriate to the cognitive developmental stage of elementary school children. Furthermore, the classroom atmosphere became more interactive as students actively participated in using the cards as learning stimuli. Therefore, the *Wayang Unggul* card media was proven to be effective in improving the early writing skills of first-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results:

1. This study was conducted exclusively with first-grade students at SDN 3 Tabongo, Gorontalo Regency, involving a total of 21 participants. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to students from different grade levels, with different characteristics, or in other school settings.
2. This study employed a Classroom Action Research design conducted over two cycles. Consequently, the effectiveness of the *Wayang Unggul* card media was observed only over a relatively short period. In addition, this study did not examine the long-term sustainability of students' writing skills after the completion of the instructional intervention.
3. This study focused exclusively on improving early writing skills, particularly students' ability to write basic vocabulary related to animals, objects, professions, and places. More advanced writing skills, such as writing paragraphs, compositions, or longer texts, were beyond the scope of this study and were therefore not examined.
4. The success of the instructional intervention was influenced by the teacher's role in implementing the action, the characteristics of the students, and the classroom environment throughout the learning process. Therefore, the effectiveness of the *Wayang Unggul* card media may vary when applied to different educational settings, student characteristics, or learning environments.

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