

The Use of Flashcard Media to Improve Arabic Vocabulary Mastery of Fifth Grade Students at MI Tiwu Lekong

Muhamad Hasyim¹

¹ Institut Agama Islam Hamzanwadi NW Lombok Timur, Indonesia

Email: hasiemmuhammad88@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to improve Arabic vocabulary (mufradat) mastery among fifth-grade students at MI Tiwu Lekong through the implementation of flashcard media. The study was motivated by the problem of low vocabulary mastery, retention, and student engagement in Arabic lessons, which stemmed from the dominance of traditional lecture-based instruction and the absence of interactive visual aids. This research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach based on Lewin's model, which consists of planning, action, observation, and reflection, conducted over two instructional cycles. The sample comprised 25 students, and data were collected through observation, interviews, performance assessments, and documentation. Findings revealed a progressive improvement in students' vocabulary mastery. In the pre-cycle phase, only 44% of students met the Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC). After the first cycle, 64% of students showed improved performance, and by the second cycle, the mastery level increased to 88%, with 28% of students achieving an "Excellent" classification. The use of flashcards not only enhanced vocabulary retention but also stimulated student motivation and participation. The results suggest that flashcard media is an effective pedagogical tool for Arabic vocabulary acquisition in elementary settings. It supports both receptive and productive language skills and aligns with young learners' cognitive styles. This study provides practical insights for Arabic language teachers, especially in rural schools, and recommends further exploration of low-cost, interactive media in language instruction.

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Correspondance Author:

Muhamad Hasyim

Jl. Raya Mataram - Labuhan
Lombok No.KM. 45, Anjani,
Kec. Suralaga, Kabupaten
Lombok Timur, Nusa Tenggara
Barat. 83659

INTRODUCTION

In the Indonesian curriculum, Arabic is one of the core subjects in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), intended not only as a language of communication but also as a tool for understanding Islamic teachings across subjects such as Qur'an-Hadith, Fiqh, and Aqidah Akhlak (Kementerian Agama RI, 2013). Therefore, the acquisition of Arabic vocabulary (mufradat) becomes crucial for students to comprehend broader religious content effectively. However, teaching Arabic as a second language presents distinct challenges, particularly when students have minimal exposure outside of formal school settings.

Language is a fundamental tool for human communication, serving as a medium through which individuals convey ideas, thoughts, and emotions in both spoken and written forms (Smith & Lee, 2018). Among the many world languages, Arabic stands out as one of the oldest and most

widely used, especially after the revelation of the Qur'an and the spread of Islam (Anderson & Yusuf, 2020). In educational contexts, language plays a vital role in the intellectual, emotional, and social development of learners, enabling them to participate actively in society and connect across cultures (Chen & Garcia, 2021; Patel & Kim, 2022). For Indonesian students, Arabic is a second language taught predominantly in Islamic educational institutions, such as Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), where its vocabulary—*mufradat*—is essential for understanding core subjects like Fiqh, Qur'an-Hadith, and Islamic History (Rahman & Williams, 2023).

Despite its importance, observations at MI Tiwu Lekong reveal that students' mastery of Arabic vocabulary remains suboptimal. The challenges stem from several factors, including the limited exposure to Arabic outside the classroom, teacher-centered instruction, monotonous teaching methods, and the minimal use of engaging learning media. This aligns with Gardner's (2011) assertion that language intelligence involves expressing complex meanings through words, requiring meaningful engagement and diverse methods of delivery. Flashcard media, known for their visual appeal and cognitive stimulation, have emerged as effective tools for vocabulary acquisition. Flashcards support both receptive and productive language skills, making them particularly beneficial for early-stage language learners (Pinker, 1994; Dor, 2015).

Classroom observations at MI Tiwu Lekong revealed that vocabulary acquisition remains limited among fifth-grade students. Most learners struggle with both receptive (reading, listening) and productive (speaking, writing) vocabulary skills. One major reason is the overreliance on conventional teaching methods such as lectures and rote memorization, which tend to reduce student engagement. Additionally, the lack of varied and interactive media further hinders learning outcomes. These conditions echo previous findings that teacher-centered instruction and limited instructional media significantly affect students' motivation and retention (Munir et al., 2023; Syamsiyah & Ma'rifatulloh, 2023).

Flashcard media have been proven effective in bridging these gaps by offering a visually engaging and memory-enhancing method to support vocabulary retention. Studies by Azahra et al. (2024) and Waruwu (2020) demonstrate significant improvement in vocabulary test scores after the use of flashcards, indicating the potential of this media as a solution to the vocabulary mastery problem. Moreover, flashcards align with students' developmental needs at the elementary level, where visual and kinesthetic learning modes are dominant.

Recent studies show that the use of flashcard media significantly enhances students' vocabulary mastery (Munir et al., 2023; Azahra et al., 2024; Waruwu, 2020). For instance, Munir et al. (2023) reported that using flashcards increased student motivation and learning outcomes, while Harlan and Hikmah (2022) demonstrated statistically significant improvements in test results using experimental methods. Furthermore, Ramadhani and Ammar (2023) highlighted higher engagement and retention when flashcards were integrated into Arabic learning.

However, there is still a lack of research focusing specifically on the application of flashcard media in rural MI settings like Tiwu Lekong. This study seeks to fill that gap by exploring how flashcard media can improve students' Arabic vocabulary mastery. Specifically, this research aims to (1) describe the process of implementing flashcard media in fifth-grade Arabic vocabulary learning and (2) evaluate its effectiveness in enhancing students' mastery of *mufradat*.

Given the increasing emphasis on meaningful and interactive language learning, this study contributes to the growing body of research on effective pedagogical strategies in Arabic language education and provides insights for educators seeking to optimize student learning outcomes in similar contexts.

METHOD

This research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach to address the problem of low Arabic vocabulary (mufradat) mastery among fifth-grade students at MI Tiwu Lekong. Classroom action research is a cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection conducted collaboratively within the classroom setting to improve teaching and learning practices (Burns, 2019). The intervention implemented in this study was the use of flashcard media in Arabic language learning.

The design of the study followed the Lewin's action research model, which consisted of four systematic stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The study was carried out in two cycles, with each cycle conducted over a period of four consecutive school days. Each cycle included lesson planning using flashcard media, implementation of the lessons, observation of student responses and participation, and reflection to improve instruction in the next cycle (Alvior, 2018).

The participants of this study were fifth-grade students of MI Tiwu Lekong during the academic year 2024/2025. The data collection techniques used in this study included observation, in-depth interviews, performance assessments, and documentation. Observation was used to monitor classroom interactions and student engagement. Interviews were conducted with teachers and students to gain qualitative insights. Performance assessments measured students' vocabulary mastery, and documentation was used to record teaching materials and students' work.

Although numerical data were collected, this study adopted a qualitative approach, as the main goal was to describe and interpret students' learning processes and improvement. The researcher functioned as the primary instrument for data collection and interpretation, which aligns with the characteristics of qualitative research (Mills & Buttrose, 2020).

The data analysis in this research involved both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed descriptively to identify patterns in students' behavior and progress. Quantitative data, such as test scores, were analyzed using mean (average), percentage, and frequency tables to determine improvement in vocabulary mastery across both cycles (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

RESULTS

1. Pre-Cycle Results

The results of the pre-cycle test administered to 25 fifth-grade students at MI Tiwu Lekong indicated varied levels of Arabic vocabulary mastery. Based on the scoring distribution, 4 students (16%) were classified as *Excellent*, 5 students (20%) as *Good*, 2 students (8%) as *Fair*, 10 students (40%) as *Poor*, and 4 students (16%) as *Very Poor*.

In terms of mastery level, only 11 students (44%) met the minimum mastery criterion (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum/KMM) of 75, while 14 students (56%) did not achieve the required competency standard. This data is summarized in the following table:

Table 1. *Pre-Cycle Student Achievement Results*

No	Score Range	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
1	90–100	Excellent (SB)	4	16%
2	80–89	Good (B)	5	20%
3	65–79	Fair (C)	2	8%
4	55–64	Poor (K)	10	40%
5	0–54	Very Poor	4	16%
Total			25	100%

This indicates that more than half of the students had not achieved the minimum standard, with 14 students requiring further support. Notably, 4 students were in the failure classification based on the 75-point benchmark.

2. Cycle I Results

After the implementation of the flashcard media in Arabic lessons during Cycle I, student achievement showed noticeable improvement. The results are presented below:

Table 2. *Student Achievement Results – Cycle I*

No	Score Range	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
1	90–100	Excellent (SB)	0	0%
2	80–89	Good (B)	10	40%
3	65–79	Fair (C)	6	24%
4	55–64	Poor (K)	9	36%
5	0–54	Very Poor	0	0%
Total			25	100%

These results demonstrate that 10 students (40%) achieved *Good* classification, while 6 (24%) were *Fair*, and 9 students (36%) remained in the *Poor* category. Although no students reached *Excellent*, none fell into the *Very Poor* category. This suggests that the use of flashcard media began to positively affect student performance, although further improvement was still needed.

3. Cycle II Results

Improvements and revisions were made based on reflections from Cycle I. In Cycle II, students showed significantly better outcomes in Arabic language learning using flashcard media. The results are presented below:

Table 3. *Student Achievement Results – Cycle II*

No	Score Range	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
1	90–100	Excellent (SB)	7	28%
2	80–89	Good (B)	10	40%
3	65–79	Fair (C)	5	20%
4	55–64	Poor (K)	3	12%
5	0–54	Very Poor	0	0%
Total			25	100%

The results from Cycle II indicate that 7 students (28%) achieved *Excellent*, 10 students (40%) *Good*, 5 students (20%) *Fair*, and only 3 students (12%) remained in the *Poor* category. No students fell into the *Very Poor* classification. This cycle achieved the desired classical mastery of **88%**, showing that the majority of students reached the expected standard.

The flashcard-based Arabic instruction effectively enhanced student performance across the cycles. From the pre-cycle to Cycle II, there was a marked upward shift in student achievement. The number of students who met the Minimum Mastery Criteria increased significantly from 44% to 88%. The use of illustrated vocabulary cards appeared to contribute positively to students' motivation and interest.

Based on observations and frequency tables across both cycles, the use of flashcard media fostered student enthusiasm and motivation. It led to noticeable behavioral and academic improvements, including: 1) Better understanding of instructional materials; 2) Improved communication with teachers and peers; 3) Increased confidence in expressing opinions; 4) High enthusiasm for Arabic lessons using flashcards; 5) Enjoyment and application of learned vocabulary in classroom settings.

The overall comparison of student achievement scores with the school's Minimum Mastery Criteria confirms that the use of illustrated flashcard media significantly improved vocabulary acquisition among fifth-grade students at MI Tiwu Lekong.

DISCUSSION

1. Analysis of Results

Regarding the first objective, the process of implementing flashcard media into fifth-grade Arabic lessons was effectively integrated into the existing curriculum structure. Teachers used illustrated vocabulary cards to introduce new mufradat, incorporating pronunciation practice and context-based usage through activities such as matching games, peer drills, and repetition exercises. These methods aligned well with the developmental needs of elementary students, whose learning styles are dominantly visual and kinesthetic—an observation that supports previous findings by Pinker (1994) and Dor (2015), who emphasized the role of visual stimuli in early-stage language learning.

Teacher reflections between cycles allowed for meaningful adaptation, including the addition of contextual storytelling and peer-based interactions in Cycle II. These enhancements helped deepen students' engagement with the vocabulary, consistent with Gardner's (2011) claim that meaningful interaction is key to fostering linguistic intelligence and mastering complex language constructs.

Concerning the second objective, the results confirm the flashcard media's effectiveness in improving vocabulary mastery. In the pre-cycle phase, only 44% of students reached the Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC), with many categorized as "Poor" or "Very Poor." However, by the end of Cycle I, there was a noticeable shift, with 40% of students achieving "Good" and no one remaining in the lowest category. In Cycle II, the mastery level surged to 88%, with 28% of students categorized as "Excellent" and 40% as "Good." These gains validate the findings of Azahra et al. (2024) and Waruwu (2020), who demonstrated that flashcards significantly improve vocabulary retention and student performance.

Moreover, these findings reinforce observations cited in the Introduction that many students struggle with receptive and productive vocabulary skills due to limited exposure to Arabic beyond the classroom and the predominance of teacher-centered, lecture-based instruction (Munir et al., 2023; Syamsiyah & Ma'rifatulloh, 2023). The current study shows that when such conventional methods are replaced or complemented by interactive media like flashcards, students' vocabulary learning outcomes improve significantly.

The successful integration and adaptation of flashcards into the classroom not only supported the acquisition of Arabic mufradat but also revitalized students' motivation, enthusiasm, and communicative competence. These findings align with national educational goals (Kementerian Agama RI, 2013) that emphasize Arabic not only as a subject but also as a means of understanding religious sciences such as Qur'an-Hadith and Fiqh. Therefore, the improved vocabulary mastery observed in this study has broader implications for students' overall success in Islamic education. The structured and reflective use of flashcards significantly enriched both the learning process and student outcomes. The analysis affirms both research objectives—showing that flashcards are an effective, developmentally appropriate, and practically implementable tool in elementary-level Arabic instruction.

2. Comparison with Previous Studies

The present study's findings are consistent with previous research that reported flashcard media as an effective tool for vocabulary acquisition. For example, Munir et al. (2023) observed a positive impact on student motivation and learning outcomes with the use of flashcards, while

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Azahra et al. (2024) demonstrated significant improvements in test scores among students exposed to similar instructional media. Additionally, Waruwu (2020) reported comparable gains in vocabulary mastery, emphasizing the potential of flashcards to transform traditional, teacher-centered instructional methods into more engaging, student-centered activities. Moreover, Ramadhani and Ammar (2023) highlighted enhanced student engagement and higher retention rates, which align with the improved outcomes observed in Cycle II of the current research. Thus, the data suggest that integrating flashcard media into the language learning process can substantially improve both cognitive and behavioral aspects of vocabulary learning.

3. Implications of Findings

The considerable improvement in student performance observed in Cycle II has several practical implications. First, the flashcard media appear to facilitate both receptive and productive language skills by offering a visual and interactive learning experience. This is particularly beneficial for young learners who rely heavily on visual and kinesthetic modes of learning. Second, the intervention helped in reducing the reliance on monotonous teaching methods such as lectures and rote memorization, thus fostering a more dynamic and engaging classroom environment. Enhanced student motivation, improved communication, and increased confidence in expressing ideas were noted through classroom observations and qualitative feedback, reinforcing the argument for integrating technology and innovative media in language instruction.

These implications not only contribute to the academic literature on language education but also provide practical insights for educators at similar educational settings. By addressing both cognitive and affective domains, the use of flashcards can be considered a viable approach to improve second language acquisition, particularly in rural educational contexts where traditional teaching methods often fall short.

4. Limitations of the Study

While the findings are promising, several limitations should be considered. First, the study was conducted in a single rural madrasah with a limited sample size of 25 students, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Second, the duration of each cycle was relatively short, lasting only four days per cycle; a longer intervention period might yield different results or further improvements. Third, although qualitative data were collected through observations and interviews, potential observer bias and the researcher's dual role as an instructor may have influenced the findings. Future research should consider larger samples, extended intervention periods, and possibly a more independent evaluation process to validate these findings further.

5. Partial Conclusions

In summary, the findings of this study indicate that the application of flashcard media significantly enhanced Arabic vocabulary mastery among fifth-grade students at MI Tiwu Lekong. The upward shift in student achievement—from 44% meeting the mastery criteria in the pre-cycle phase to 88% in Cycle II—demonstrates the effectiveness of this interactive and visual instructional medium. The study supports previous research on the benefits of flashcards in language learning and suggests that their integration can address the common challenges associated with traditional teaching methods. These results not only reinforce the theoretical framework supporting active and student-centered learning but also provide empirical evidence for educators seeking to adopt innovative teaching strategies in Arabic language instruction.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research support the conclusion that flashcard media significantly improved Arabic vocabulary mastery among fifth-grade students at MI Tiwu Lekong. Through a

structured classroom action research approach conducted over two cycles, the implementation of illustrated vocabulary cards facilitated better student engagement, understanding, and retention. The mastery level increased from 44% in the pre-cycle to 88% in the second cycle, demonstrating a substantial gain in learning outcomes. These improvements align with the research objectives: first, the process of implementation was effectively integrated into classroom instruction, with positive student responses observed during each cycle; second, the effectiveness of flashcard media was evidenced by a consistent rise in students' vocabulary test scores. Students also exhibited behavioral changes, including greater confidence in communication, enthusiasm for the subject, and increased participation.

The implications of this study are particularly relevant for Arabic language educators in rural or resource-limited settings, where traditional methods often fail to engage learners. Flashcard media offers a simple yet impactful tool to enhance vocabulary learning, meeting the cognitive and developmental needs of young students. Despite its promising outcomes, this study was limited to a single school and a small sample size. Future research is recommended to explore the long-term retention of vocabulary and to examine the integration of flashcards with digital tools or games for broader applicability. In summary, the use of flashcard media represents a practical and effective strategy for addressing vocabulary learning challenges in Arabic language education at the elementary level, offering a replicable model for similar educational contexts.

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