

Development of Contextual Hijaiyah Flashcards to Enhance Early Childhood Quranic Literacy at RA Bait Qur'any

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Abstract

This study aims to develop "Contextual Hijaiyah Cards"—a learning medium that is valid, practical, and effective—to enhance early childhood Quranic literacy at RA Bait Qur'any. Early childhood Quranic literacy encompasses the ability to recognize Hijaiyah letters, name the letters, articulate their sounds simply, distinguish between letters with similar shapes, and recall previously learned letters. Preliminary observations indicated that students' Quranic literacy skills were low because instruction tended to rely on conventional methods with limited media, resulting in a lack of engagement and an inability to optimally foster children's learning involvement. The study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach using the Four-D (4D) model, comprising the define, design, develop, and disseminate stages. The research subjects were 20 children from Group B at RA Bait Qur'any. Data were collected through observations, interviews, questionnaires, and Quranic literacy tests, then analyzed using descriptive and quantitative methods, specifically N-Gain analysis and paired t-tests. The results demonstrated that the developed medium achieved a practicality rating of 98% and led to a significant, high-level improvement in the children's Quranic literacy skills within the context of this study. This improvement was evidenced by the significant difference between pretest and posttest scores. Thus, Contextual Hijaiyah Cards are suitable for use as an innovative learning medium to support the development of Quranic literacy in early childhood education.

Keywords

Quranic literacy, learning media, contextual Hijaiyah cards, early childhood.



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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is a fundamental stage in establishing the foundations of cognitive, socio-emotional, moral, linguistic, and spiritual development. During this phase, the foundations of character and learning patterns begin to develop significantly. In the context of Islamic education, strengthening Qur'anic literacy is an important component in shaping children's religious identity from an early age (Muchasin & Anshori, 2025). Qur'anic literacy is not merely understood as the ability to recognize Hijaiyah letter symbols, but also includes the

ability to pronounce them correctly, understand their basic meanings, and develop an emotional connection with the holy scripture.

Various studies have shown that religious experiences during childhood contribute to the development of spiritual and moral values as well as social attitudes in later developmental stages (Agustina et al., 2024; Kuusisto, 2022). Religious education in early childhood serves as a foundation for developing religious awareness and cultural identity (Mutholingah & Handoko, 2025). Therefore, Qur'anic learning needs to be systematically designed in accordance with the developmental characteristics of young learners.

From the perspective of cognitive development, children at the preoperational stage more easily understand concepts through concrete and visual experiences than through abstract explanations (Piaget, 1952; Berk, 2021). Social interaction and teacher support also play an important role in helping children construct meaning from the symbols they learn (Vygotsky, 1978). The implication of these theories is that Hijaiyah letter instruction requires an approach that is contextual, interactive, and consistent with the children's world.

At the policy level, strengthening religious character education has become part of the national strategic agenda. The Holistic Integrative Early Childhood Education Program emphasizes balanced development across intellectual, social, and spiritual dimensions (Kemendikbudristek, 2024). In addition, Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 450 of 2024 stipulates that learning in Raudhatul Athfal should be implemented thematically, contextually, and enjoyably. Children are expected to gradually recognize and pronounce Hijaiyah letters according to their developmental stages.

Nevertheless, the reality of learning practices in the field does not yet fully reflect these principles. Preliminary observations conducted by the researcher at RA Bait Qur'any indicate that most students still experience difficulties in recognizing letter forms, distinguishing similar characters, and retaining previously learned letters. Learning tends to be conducted in a one-way manner with limited use of instructional media, causing Hijaiyah letters to be perceived as abstract symbols without connections to children's concrete experiences.

To obtain an objective picture of the students' initial abilities, the researcher conducted an initial assessment together with the classroom teacher. The results of the assessment are presented in Table 1.1 below.

The initial assessment of Qur'anic literacy among Group B children at RA Bait Qur'any covered five aspects. First, in terms of recognition of Hijaiyah letters, the indicator was that children should be able to consistently recognize Hijaiyah letters. The teacher's assessment result was categorized as low because children could recognize only some letters and frequently confused and forgot them. Second, in terms of pronunciation of Hijaiyah letters, the indicator was that children should be able to pronounce Hijaiyah letters using basic makhraj. The assessment result was low because children could imitate the teacher, but their pronunciation was not yet stable and errors frequently occurred. Third, in terms of memory of Hijaiyah letters, the indicator was that children should be able to remember previously learned letters. This aspect was also categorized as low because children quickly forgot letters when new letters were

introduced. Fourth, in terms of learning interest and enthusiasm, the indicator was that children should demonstrate interest when learning Hijaiyah letters. This aspect was categorized as low because children appeared bored and passive. Fifth, in terms of active participation, the indicator was that children should actively answer, imitate, and interact during learning activities. This aspect was categorized as low because learning tended to be conducted in a one-way manner.

The initial assessment results indicate that most aspects of children's Qur'anic literacy remain in the low category. Children continue to experience difficulties in recognizing Hijaiyah letters, pronouncing the letters accurately, and retaining previously learned letters.

Several previous studies have developed Hijaiyah letter learning media, including flashcards, puzzles, and interactive visual media (Aisyah et al., 2023; Irmawati, 2024; Aziz et al., 2025). The findings indicate improvements in letter recognition abilities. However, most of these studies have focused primarily on symbol identification and have not specifically integrated a contextual approach that connects letters with children's everyday experiences. In addition, the aspects of retention and emotional engagement in learning have not been extensively explored.

International findings also indicate that learning based on cultural contexts and real-life experiences can significantly increase learner engagement and comprehension (Chen et al., 2021). This strengthens the urgency of developing instructional media that emphasizes not only memorization but also meaningful understanding.

Based on this analysis, a research gap needs to be addressed, namely the development of contextual Hijaiyah letter learning media that is systematically designed and empirically tested for effectiveness. Therefore, this study aims to develop Contextual Hijaiyah Cards through the Four-D model introduced by Thiagarajan, Semmel, and Semmel. The model consists of four main stages: defining needs (*define*), designing the product (*design*), developing and validating the product (*develop*), and implementing or disseminating the product (*disseminate*). The resulting product will not only be validated by experts but will also be tested for practicality and effectiveness in improving students' Qur'anic literacy abilities.

Thus, this research has both academic and practical significance because it seeks to provide a scientifically grounded solution to problems in Qur'anic learning at the early childhood education level while supporting the implementation of more contextual and meaningful Islamic education policies.

The development of Hijaiyah letter learning media at the early childhood education level has attracted the attention of a number of researchers in recent years. Research has generally focused on improving children's ability to recognize letter symbols through visual media and play-based activities. Nevertheless, the approaches employed and the abilities measured have varied considerably.

In general, previous studies can be categorized into three main trends. First, studies that emphasize the use of simple visual media, such as flashcards and letter cards, to improve symbol identification skills. Second, studies that develop game-based or manipulative media, such as puzzles and spiderweb learning, to increase children's interest and participation. Third, studies

that utilize contextual approaches, although these have generally been limited to thematic integration without a systematic development model.

Several relevant studies can be summarized as follows. Aisyah et al. (2023) developed flashcards focusing on letter recognition and found that the media improved children's letter identification abilities, although the study did not examine retention and pronunciation. Irmawati (2024) developed Spiderweb Learning with a focus on learning engagement and found increased child participation, but the study did not specifically focus on the contextual aspects of Hijaiyah letters. Aziz et al. (2025) developed Hijaiyah puzzles focusing on symbol recognition and found increased learning interest, although the effectiveness was not statistically tested. Mursal Aziz et al. (2024) developed handmade media focusing on early reading abilities and found improvements in basic abilities, but the media was not developed using a systematic development model. Chen et al. (2021) examined contextual learning with a focus on culturally based engagement and found improved meaningful understanding, although the study was not specifically related to Hijaiyah letters.

Based on these previous studies, it can be concluded that most research has successfully demonstrated that the use of visual media and games can improve children's ability to recognize Hijaiyah letters. However, several limitations can still be identified. First, some studies place greater emphasis on symbol identification without integrating a contextual approach that connects letters with children's everyday experiences. Second, not all studies employ systematic development models such as 4D or ADDIE in designing their products. Third, effectiveness testing is often limited to descriptive analysis without being supported by inferential statistical tests.

In addition, the aspects of memory retention and emotional engagement in Hijaiyah letter learning have not been comprehensively explored. In fact, based on contextual learning theory and cognitive development theory, meaningful experiences play an important role in strengthening children's memory and understanding (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978).

Therefore, this study has novelty in several aspects. First, it develops contextual Hijaiyah card media that connects letters with children's real-life experiences. Second, it systematically applies the 4D development model, from needs analysis to effectiveness testing. Third, it tests product effectiveness using statistical analysis. Fourth, it assesses not only letter recognition but also retention and learning engagement.

Thus, the novelty of this research lies in the development of contextual Hijaiyah card media that connects letter symbols with children's real-life experiences. Unlike previous studies that have primarily emphasized the visual recognition of letter symbols, this study integrates the context of children's everyday experiences to strengthen memory retention and student learning engagement.

Through this approach, the study is expected to address the limitations of previous research while contributing to the development of more comprehensive Qur'anic literacy learning media at the early childhood education level..

METHODS

This study aims to develop instructional media in the form of Contextual Hijaiyah Cards that can be used in Qur'anic literacy learning for early childhood students. The development of this media is conducted through a Research and Development (R&D) approach using the Four-D (4D) development model. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) describe the initial conditions of Qur'anic literacy learning among early childhood students at RA Bait Qur'any; (2) identify the needs of teachers and students for Hijaiyah letter learning media that are more contextual and appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood learners; (3) develop Contextual Hijaiyah Cards through the stages of the 4D development model; (4) determine the validity of the media based on assessments by material experts and media experts; (5) determine the practicality of the media in learning activities based on the responses of teachers and students; and (6) determine the effectiveness of Contextual Hijaiyah Cards in improving Qur'anic literacy skills among early childhood students..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To determine whether the increase in the pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The paired sample t-test is appropriate when the same participants are measured under two different conditions, such as before and after the implementation of an instructional intervention (Rahmani et al., 2025). This statistical procedure allows researchers to determine whether the mean difference between two related measurements is statistically significant. In pretest-posttest educational research, the analysis of difference scores provides an appropriate basis for evaluating changes following an intervention (Brogan & Kutner, 1980).

The formula used for the paired sample t-test was based on the mean difference between the posttest and pretest scores, the standard deviation of the differences, and the number of participants. The mean difference between the posttest and pretest scores was 6.95, the standard deviation of the differences was 1.19, the sample size was 20, and the square root of the sample size was 4.47. Based on these values, the t-value was calculated to determine whether the observed improvement was statistically significant.

The calculation resulted in a t-value of 26.10, with a p-value of 0.00000000000000024, which is approximately 0.000. Since the p-value is lower than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis can be rejected. Therefore, the results of the paired sample t-test indicate a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. The magnitude of the calculated t-value further indicates that the difference between the two measurements was substantial within the context of the sample.

The results demonstrate that there was a significant improvement in children's Qur'anic literacy skills following the implementation of Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that the use of letter-card media can improve

young children's ability to recognize and read Hijaiyah letters (Syarifah & Tanjung, 2023). Similar findings have also been reported in studies using multimedia-based learning, which demonstrated significant improvements in young children's Hijaiyah reading abilities following instructional treatment (Hidayah et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the statistical findings of the present study should be interpreted within the limitations of its research design because no control group was employed. Consequently, the findings demonstrate improvement among the participants involved in this study and should not be interpreted as evidence that the intervention alone caused the improvement or as a basis for broad population-level generalization.

D. Discussion

This study aimed to develop Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media that can be used to improve Qur'anic literacy skills among early childhood students. The media was developed using the Four-D (4D) development model, consisting of the define, design, develop, and disseminate stages. The 4D model is widely used in educational product development because it provides a systematic sequence beginning with needs analysis and continuing through product design, development, validation, and dissemination (Thiagarajan et al., 1974). Previous development research has also demonstrated that the 4D model can produce instructional products that meet criteria of validity, practicality, and effectiveness (Amir & Parumbuan, 2018).

1. Development of Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media

The results indicate that the development of Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media through the stages of the 4D model produced instructional media that is appropriate for Qur'anic literacy learning among early childhood students. At the needs analysis stage (define), it was found that Hijaiyah letter instruction in the classroom was still predominantly conducted through conventional methods with limited use of instructional media. Such conditions may make learning less engaging and can create difficulties for children in recognizing Hijaiyah letters and distinguishing letters with similar visual characteristics. Recent studies have similarly identified the need for more interactive and developmentally appropriate media for early childhood Hijaiyah learning (Adzawiyah et al., 2026; Qadariyah et al., 2026).

Based on the needs analysis, the researcher designed Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media at the design stage. The cards present Hijaiyah letters accompanied by illustrations associated with children's everyday experiences. The purpose of this design is to help children understand letter symbols through concrete visual associations rather than relying solely on abstract memorization. Research on early childhood learning supports the importance of connecting instructional experiences with familiar objects and experiences because meaningful concrete experiences can facilitate children's construction of knowledge (Baroody, 2017).

The use of visual and contextual instructional media is also consistent with the developmental characteristics of young children, who benefit from learning experiences that involve concrete objects, images, interaction, and familiar contexts. Multimedia learning

research indicates that combining words and images can support learning more effectively than presenting verbal information alone when the instructional design is appropriately constructed (Mayer, 2021). In the context of Hijaiyah learning, the combination of letter symbols and meaningful visual representations can therefore provide children with additional cognitive cues for recognizing and remembering the letters.

The findings are also consistent with recent research on Hijaiyah learning media. Syarifah and Tanjung (2023) found that letter-card media had a positive effect on children's ability to read Hijaiyah letters. Irmawati (2024) also reported that Spiderweb Learning media improved the recognition and reading of Hijaiyah letters among early childhood learners. Furthermore, Zara et al. (2024) demonstrated the potential of game-based media to support children's recognition of Hijaiyah letters. These findings collectively suggest that instructional media incorporating visual, interactive, and playful elements can support early Qur'anic literacy development.

2. Media Feasibility Based on Expert Validation

The expert validation results indicate that the Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media developed in this study achieved a very high level of feasibility. The material expert assessment resulted in a feasibility percentage of 100%, while the media expert assessment also resulted in a feasibility percentage of 100%. These results indicate that the developed media met the feasibility criteria in terms of instructional content and learning media design.

Expert validation is an important component of educational research and development because it enables researchers to evaluate whether the content, presentation, visual design, and instructional characteristics of a product are appropriate before implementation. The 4D development framework places validation within the development stage to ensure that revisions can be made before the product is tested with users (Thiagarajan et al., 1974). Similar development studies in early childhood Hijaiyah learning have reported high feasibility scores for newly developed media. For example, Afrilliany (2025) reported a 100% media expert feasibility score and 92.85% material expert feasibility score for the Smart Little Board (HIJMALIB), indicating that appropriately designed media can achieve strong expert acceptance.

The 100% validation results obtained in this study therefore suggest that the Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media is considered appropriate in terms of its learning content and visual presentation. The result also strengthens the argument that instructional media designed according to the characteristics and learning needs of young children can provide an appropriate learning resource for early Qur'anic literacy.

3. Practicality of the Media in Learning

In addition to being considered highly feasible by experts, the Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media demonstrated a very high level of practicality based on teacher responses. The teacher response questionnaire produced a practicality score of 98%, which falls within the very practical category. This finding indicates that the media can be used relatively easily during

classroom learning and can assist teachers in presenting Hijaiyah letter materials in a more engaging manner.

The high practicality score is important because an instructional product should not only be theoretically valid but also feasible for actual classroom use. Practical learning media should be easy to operate, understandable for teachers and children, appropriate to the available learning environment, and capable of supporting learning objectives. Previous research on Hijaiyah learning media has likewise demonstrated that appropriately designed visual and interactive media can receive high usability and feasibility assessments from teachers and users (Afrilliany, 2025; Sinta et al., 2025).

The use of cards accompanied by illustrations can also increase children's attention and encourage greater interaction during learning. Recent research indicates that monotonous instructional approaches may contribute to children's difficulties in learning Hijaiyah letters, whereas more interactive media can create a more stimulating learning environment (Mawaddah et al., 2025). Consequently, the practicality of Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media is not limited to ease of teacher use but also relates to its potential to facilitate more active classroom interaction.

4. Effectiveness of the Media in Improving Qur'anic Literacy

The effectiveness test indicates that Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media improved the Qur'anic literacy skills of the early childhood participants. This improvement is demonstrated by the difference between the pretest and posttest scores following the implementation of the instructional media. The N-Gain analysis also indicated improvement in Qur'anic literacy skills within the moderate to high categories. Furthermore, the paired sample t-test demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores.

The findings are supported by previous research on Hijaiyah learning media. Syarifah and Tanjung (2023) found that letter-card media contributed to improvements in children's Hijaiyah reading abilities. Irmawati (2024) similarly reported the effectiveness of Spiderweb Learning media in improving Hijaiyah letter recognition among early childhood learners. More recent research by Hidayah et al. (2025) found that multimedia-based learning significantly improved the ability of children aged 5–6 years to read Hijaiyah letters, with the analysis showing a statistically significant improvement between pretest and posttest scores. These studies provide empirical support for the broader proposition that well-designed instructional media can facilitate early Qur'anic literacy development.

The effectiveness of the Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media may not be explained solely by its visual characteristics. An important feature of the media is the connection between Hijaiyah symbols and children's concrete experiences. A contextual approach allows children to associate unfamiliar symbols with familiar objects and situations, thereby creating meaningful learning experiences. Concrete experiences can be particularly valuable when they are connected to children's existing knowledge and developmental readiness (Baroody, 2017). This principle is also consistent with constructivist perspectives, which emphasize the active construction of knowledge through meaningful interaction and experience (Fosnot, 2013).

The use of contextual and visual associations may also support memory retention. When children encounter a Hijaiyah letter together with a familiar visual representation, they receive multiple cues that can assist recognition and recall. According to multimedia learning principles, appropriately integrated verbal and visual information can facilitate the construction of meaningful mental representations (Mayer, 2021). Therefore, the findings suggest that contextualization may provide an additional pedagogical advantage beyond simple repetition or memorization of Hijaiyah symbols.

The findings also reinforce the importance of developmentally appropriate learning experiences in early childhood education. Young children learn effectively when instructional activities correspond to their interests, experiences, developmental levels, and ways of interacting with their environment. Recent research on Hijaiyah learning has emphasized the value of visual media, interactive games, multimedia, and concrete learning activities in supporting children's recognition and reading abilities (Adzawiyah et al., 2026; Qadariyah et al., 2026; Zara et al., 2024).

5. Implications of the Research Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that innovative and contextual instructional media can make a positive contribution to improving Qur'anic literacy among early childhood students. Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media can therefore serve as an alternative instructional resource for teachers when introducing and reinforcing Hijaiyah letters. The combination of letter symbols, visual illustrations, and familiar contexts provides opportunities for children to learn through recognition, association, interaction, and repetition.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that Qur'anic literacy learning should not rely exclusively on memorization and teacher-centered explanation. Instead, learning can incorporate visual, contextual, interactive, and child-centered activities that are consistent with early childhood developmental characteristics. This perspective is supported by recent research showing positive outcomes from letter cards, interactive games, multimedia, and other visual learning media for Hijaiyah instruction (Syarifah & Tanjung, 2023; Mawaddah et al., 2025; Hidayah et al., 2025).

From a research and development perspective, this study also demonstrates that the R&D approach can produce instructional products that are systematically designed, expert-validated, practically implemented, and empirically evaluated. The use of the 4D model provides a structured process through which researchers can identify learning needs, design an appropriate product, revise the product based on expert evaluation, and examine its implementation outcomes (Thiagarajan et al., 1974). Similar development studies have demonstrated the usefulness of systematic development procedures in producing educational media that meet validity, practicality, and effectiveness criteria (Amir & Parumbuan, 2018).

Nevertheless, the interpretation of the effectiveness findings should remain cautious because the study employed a pretest-posttest design without a control group. Although the statistically significant increase indicates that participants performed better after the intervention, factors other than the instructional media may also have contributed to the

observed improvement. Therefore, future research should consider using a control or comparison group, larger samples, and longer intervention periods to provide stronger evidence concerning the effectiveness of Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media. Such research would also allow comparisons with other instructional approaches, including multimedia, game-based learning, and alternative Hijaiyah learning media.

Overall, the findings indicate that Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media has considerable potential as an instructional medium for early Qur'anic literacy. Its high validity, high practicality, and statistically significant improvement in learning outcomes indicate that the media can support teachers in creating more meaningful, engaging, and developmentally appropriate Hijaiyah learning experiences for young children..

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and data analysis conducted through the stages of the Four-D development model, several main findings can be concluded that are directly related to the research questions. First, the development of Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media was carried out through the Four-D (4D) development model, consisting of the **define**, **design**, **develop**, and **disseminate** stages. At the **define** stage, a learning needs analysis was conducted, indicating that children's Qur'anic literacy skills still needed to be improved and that more attractive and contextual instructional media were required. At the **design** stage, the researcher designed card media containing Hijaiyah letters accompanied by illustrations related to children's experiences. The **develop** stage involved validation by material and media experts as well as product revisions based on the suggestions provided, resulting in the final Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media model that was ready for use in learning activities. Second, the feasibility of the Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media based on expert validation results showed a very high level of validity. The material expert assessment resulted in a feasibility percentage of 100%, while the media expert assessment also resulted in a percentage of 100%, indicating that the developed media met the feasibility criteria in terms of both instructional content and learning media design. Third, the practicality of the Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media based on the teacher assessment showed that the developed media was easy to use in learning activities. The teacher response questionnaire resulted in a practicality score of 98%, which falls into the very practical category, indicating that the media can be effectively used by teachers in Qur'anic literacy learning activities. Fourth, the Contextual Hijaiyah Card Media demonstrated potential for improving early childhood Qur'anic literacy skills within the context of this study. This improvement was demonstrated through a comparison of pretest and posttest scores, an N-Gain analysis that fell into the high category, and the results of the paired sample t-test, which indicated a statistically significant difference..

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