

The Effect of the Open Syllable Method on Improving Early Reading Skills at Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School in Muntilan

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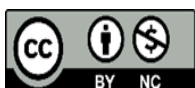
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Abstract: Early reading skills are a fundamental component of literacy development in the first grade of elementary school. However, observations at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Muntilan showed that some students had not achieved the predetermined learning criteria, particularly in reading syllables, words, and simple sentences. Previous studies have examined syllable-based methods and classroom action research, but few have specifically tested the effect of the open syllable method using an experimental design with a control group. This study aims to examine the effect of the open syllable method on the early reading skills of first-grade students by comparing an experimental class with a control class. This quantitative study employed a quasi-experimental method with a non-equivalent control group design. The participants were 49 first-grade students, consisting of 24 students in the experimental class and 25 students in the control class. Data were collected through pretests, posttests, observation sheets, and documentation. The data were analyzed using independent samples and paired-samples t-tests. The experimental class obtained a mean score of 80.63 on the pretest and 91.25 on the posttest, while the control class obtained 87.00 and 90.40, respectively. The independent samples t-test showed a significant difference between the two classes ($p = 0.005$), while the paired-samples t-test showed a significant improvement in the experimental class ($p < 0.001$). The findings indicate that the open syllable method significantly improved students' early reading skills through gradual practice from recognizing consonants and vowels to reading syllables, meaningful words, and simple sentences.

Keywords: open syllable method; early reading skills; elementary school.

Abstrak: Kemampuan membaca permulaan merupakan bagian penting dalam pengembangan literasi siswa kelas I sekolah dasar. Namun, hasil observasi di SD Muhammadiyah 1 Muntilan menunjukkan bahwa sebagian siswa belum mencapai kriteria pembelajaran yang ditetapkan, terutama dalam membaca suku kata, kata, dan kalimat sederhana. Penelitian sebelumnya telah mengkaji metode berbasis suku kata dan penelitian tindakan kelas, namun penelitian yang secara khusus menguji pengaruh metode suku kata terbuka melalui desain eksperimen dengan kelas kontrol masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh metode suku kata terbuka terhadap kemampuan



membaca permulaan siswa kelas I dengan membandingkan kelas eksperimen dan kelas kontrol. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain kuasi eksperimen berbentuk *non-equivalent control group design*. Subjek penelitian berjumlah 49 siswa yang terdiri atas 24 siswa kelas eksperimen dan 25 siswa kelas kontrol. Data dikumpulkan melalui pretest, posttest, lembar observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan *independent samples t-test* dan *paired-samples t-test*. Kelas eksperimen memperoleh nilai rata-rata pretest 80,63 dan meningkat menjadi 91,25 pada posttest, sedangkan kelas kontrol memperoleh rata-rata 87,00 pada pretest dan 90,40 pada posttest. Hasil *independent samples t-test* menunjukkan perbedaan yang signifikan antara kedua kelas ($p = 0,005$), sedangkan *paired-samples t-test* menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan pada kelas eksperimen ($p < 0,001$). Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa metode suku kata terbuka berpengaruh signifikan terhadap peningkatan kemampuan membaca permulaan melalui pembelajaran bertahap dari pengenalan konsonan dan vokal hingga membaca suku kata, kata bermakna, dan kalimat sederhana.

Kata kunci: metode suku kata terbuka; kemampuan membaca permulaan; sekolah dasar.

Introduction

Strengthening literacy is one of the focal points of Indonesia's basic education policy, including through the School Literacy Movement (GLS), which was launched in 2015 and integrated into the Merdeka Curriculum (Ullia & S, 2026; Masrurah dkk., 2024; Mahdavi dkk., 2025). However, fostering a reading habit in school can only be effective if students have mastered early reading skills namely, the ability to recognize letters, spell, and combine syllables into words. Therefore, early reading skills in first-grade students serve as the foundation for all literacy activities in subsequent grades. At this stage, the choice of teaching method is crucial. The open syllable method introduces consonant vowel syllable patterns (e.g., ba, bi, bu) before students read words, and this pattern aligns with the structure of the Indonesian language, which frequently uses open syllables.

Literacy is implemented through pre-reading activities a series of activities designed to motivate readers followed by independent reading in a quiet environment, and post-reading activities involving writing and retelling the content of the text (Suyono dkk., 2017; Afriyani dkk., 2023). To strengthen the School Literacy Movement (GLS), it is important to provide reading corners, develop learning materials to support reading and writing skills, organize mobile libraries, share books, and so on (Cholifah, 2024). The diverse activities and services of the literacy movement serve as effective support in fostering a culture of reading. On the other hand, the GLS not only increases interest in reading but also promotes holistic literacy by involving parents, teachers, and the community in the character-building process.

Literacy is essential in all subjects at the elementary school level because reading allows students to access the information they need, which in turn impacts their academic performance (P. A. P. Sari, 2020). The heterogeneity of the student body underscores the urgency of literacy as a key foundation across all subjects, as strong reading skills enable students to effectively acquire information at their own individual levels (Mawardi dkk., 2024). The Indonesian language subject holds a special place in the development of reading skills, as it plays a role in students' ability to read, analyze, and provide feedback on a wide variety of texts (Saharani & Setiyaningsih, 2024)

In the context of pursuing knowledge, Indonesian language education is closely linked to the transmission of knowledge, critical thinking, communication, reasoning, and as a means of fostering unity and culture (Aufa dkk., 2020; Alfin & J, 2018). Indonesian language learning is conducted as an interactive process between teachers and students and through practice opportunities within the school setting, with the aim of improving Indonesian language proficiency (Dini A K, Rizka A, 2023). Possessing language proficiency means mastering other skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, because language ability must be nurtured and improved so that a person can describe situations, even when they are presented in text form (Oktradiksa dkk., 2018; Syatauw dkk., 2020). The teaching of the Indonesian language serves as a bridge to broaden horizons, facilitate social interaction, and foster sound thinking. Therefore, reading proficiency must be a priority so that students can process a variety of texts logically and reflectively.

Reading proficiency is a complex process that involves cognitive, linguistic, and visual skills, as the eyes are used to perceive written symbols and the brain processes and interprets the information (Wulandari dkk., 2025; Aufa dkk., 2021). Reading involves various principles, including the interpretation of written symbols and the conveyance of ideas derived from the author's thoughts (Kusmayanti, 2019). The reading process involves deriving meaning from the text by connecting it to prior knowledge; this plays a crucial role in reading ability as a step toward personal development (Khaerawati dkk., 2023). Starting in the early grades of elementary school, students receive reading instruction specifically in early reading which includes letter recognition, reading words and sentences, and reading single words (Sepyantari dkk., 2021). In elementary school, reading proficiency is divided into two stages: basic-level reading, which is taught in first and second grade, and advanced-level reading, which is taught in third grade and above (Natasya Rey Fadila, Chandra, 2025). Reading ability is a skill that develops gradually and serves as the primary foundation for students' learning and knowledge growth.

Based on observations at Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School in Muntilan, Magelang Regency, there are still students whose learning outcomes in Indonesian language have not met the predetermined assessment criteria. It was found that, based on reading practice scores, 12 out of 24 students in one class did not meet the learning objective achievement criteria (KKTP). The reading practice involved reading two syllables, reading affixes and nasal sounds, and reading simple sentences. The average score for that class was 68.12, while the KKTP set as the student competency standard was 70.

Various previous studies have examined efforts to improve early reading skills from several perspectives. First, studies focusing on syllable-based methods or open-syllable methods have shown that these approaches are effective in gradually introducing sound patterns to students (Dewi dkk., 2022). However, most of these studies were conducted on a single group without a control class or did not measure long-term retention. Second, studies using a classroom action research (CAR) design on the topic of early reading tend to emphasize cyclical improvements in teaching practices but are generally not designed to test cause-and-effect relationships in a controlled manner, as in experimental designs (Moy Kahi Leba dkk., 2024; Suyadi dkk., 2021). Third, studies on early reading instructional materials such as word cards, illustrated worksheets, or digital media report an increase in students'

interest in reading; however, these materials are not systematically integrated with specific phonics or syllabic methods (Aqilah Naurah dkk., 2025; Hulyatul Auliya Arisma dkk., 2023). From this mapping, it appears that previous studies have tended to examine the open-syllable method, action research, and instructional media separately, and have rarely used experimental designs with control groups to test the specific effects of the open-syllable method on first-grade students. This is the gap that remains unaddressed: there has not been much research that specifically tests the effectiveness of the open syllable method through an experimental design (experimental class vs. control class) in the context of first-grade elementary school students, particularly in a school environment with characteristics similar to those of SD Muhammadiyah 1 Muntilan.

Based on this gap, this study aims to address it by examining the effect of the open-syllable method on the early reading skills of first-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Muntilan through an experimental design, while also comparing the results with those of a class using the conventional method. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of the open syllable method on the early reading skills of first-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Muntilan by comparing the achievements of the experimental and control classes as well as the students' achievements before and after the implementation of the method.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design in the form of a non-equivalent control group design, which aims to measure the extent of a phenomenon while testing the relationships among variables by applying a specific treatment to the research subjects (Sugiyono, 2022). The study was conducted at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Muntilan in Magelang Regency and lasted for two full months, from March through April 2026. In accordance with the design, the sample consisted of two classes: Class 1C, the experimental class with 24 students who received the treatment using the open syllable method; and Class 1B, the control class with 25 students who used the conventional method.

Data collection in this study was conducted using three techniques: tests, observation sheets, and documentation. The test technique was used as the primary instrument to measure student learning outcomes through the administration of a pretest and a posttest, with objective test items developed based on learning achievement indicators; data from this technique formed the basis for quantitative analysis to test the effect of the open syllable method. Observation sheets were used to identify teacher and student activities during the learning process, in both the experimental and control classes, to ensure that instruction was carried out in accordance with established procedures. Documentation was used to supplement supporting data in the form of photographs of learning activities, student work samples, or grade sheets, which strengthened the evidence of the study's implementation.

Content validity testing is conducted to confirm that the content of the research instrument aligns with the research objectives and is carried out by experts to assess the relevance, appropriateness, and clarity of the instrument's items. Subsequently, the Kappa statistic (inter-rater reliability) is used as a measure to test the agreement between two individuals (raters/observers) on categorical variables. If there are more than two raters, the multi-rater Kappa technique can be used. The statistical measure of interrater reliability is Cohen's Kappa, which generally ranges from 0 to 1.0 although negative values are possible.

A higher value indicates better reliability, while a value close to or less than zero suggests that agreement is due to chance alone. Kappa analysis is performed using SPSS under the “Crosstabulation” menu. In addition, score rubric reliability is assessed to evaluate a piece of work based on the total score across various criteria. Rubrics are divided into two types: holistic rubrics and analytical rubrics. A holistic rubric is one that comprehensively evaluates a process without breaking it down into separate elements, whereas an analytic rubric is used to evaluate a process by assessing each component separately and then combining the scores for the final result. According to Guilford and Fruchter, the categories of content validity score levels are based on the mean content validity score intervals (Widyawati dkk., 2025)

Table 1. Content Validity Test Criteria

Value Range Average Content Validity	Validity Category
0,80 – 1,00	Very High
0,60 – 0,80	High
0,40 – 0,60	Moderate
0,20 – 0,40	Low
0,0 – 0,20	Very Low

Based on the criteria in the table, the interpretation of the instrument’s content validity results must take into account the score categories obtained. If there are items with low scores, they should be removed from the instrument, as this indicates a high degree of disagreement among raters regarding the relevance and clarity of the items in relation to the construct being measured.

To calculate the content validity coefficient, use Aiken’s V formula, which is based on the assessment results of a panel of n experts regarding a particular item, based on the extent to which that item represents the measured component. The formula proposed by Aiken is (Hendryadi, 2017):

$$V = \sum s / [n(C-1)]$$

$$S = r - lo$$

Lo = the lowest score (e.g., 1)

C = the highest score (e.g., 4)

R = the score given by the evaluator

The results of the expert evaluation were analyzed using Aiken’s V and interpreted according to the content validity criteria proposed by Guilford and Fruchter. The content validity criteria table classifies levels of content validity based on mean value intervals. The instrument validation results were obtained through content validity calculations, which are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Content Validity Results

Item	Rater		S ₁	S ₂	Σs	V	Notes
	I	II					
Items 1 - 11	48	52	37	41	78	0.886	Very High

Based on the table, the content validity coefficient (V) of 0.88 falls within the range of 0.80–1.00, thus falling into the category of very high validity according to Guilford and Fruchter's criteria. These results demonstrate that, in terms of content, the developed instrument aligns with the measured indicators of early reading ability and is deemed suitable for use in research. Kappa analysis was performed using SPSS under the Crosstabulation menu (Hendryadi, 2017).

Table 3. Results of the Cohen's Kappa Calculation

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.029	.227	.128	.898
N of Valid Cases		11			

The results of analyzing the questionnaire data using Cohen's kappa based on 11 statements by Evaluator 1 and Evaluator 2 showed $K = 0.029$. This value can be compared using the following Cohen's kappa interpretation table:

Table 4. Interpretation of Cohen's Kappa Values

Kappa Value	Strength of Agreement
$\leq 0,20$	Very Low
0,21 – 0,40	Low
0,41 – 0,50	Moderate
0,61 – 0,80	Good
0,81 – 1,00	Very Good

Based on the Cohen's kappa interpretation table, the questionnaire data indicate a low level of agreement, with a K value of 0.029. Thus, it can be concluded that there is no agreement between Rater 1 and Rater 2 on the 11 statements tested. This study used the Shapiro-Wilk test to assess normality, with a sample size of < 50 . The Shapiro-Wilk test measures how well the data follow a normal distribution by comparing the order of the observed data with the expected values from a normal distribution (Sonjaya dkk., 2025). The basis for decision-making in the normality test is that if the significance value is > 0.05 , the data are normally distributed, whereas if the significance value is < 0.05 , the data are not normally distributed.

Before conducting the hypothesis test, this study first collected data on early reading skills through pretests, posttests, and observation sheets in the experimental class (Class 1C) and the control class (Class 1B) at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Muntilan. All data were then analyzed using SPSS version 21. Data analysis began with a normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which was chosen because the sample size in each group was less than 50 students. This test aimed to ensure that the pretest, posttest, and observation sheet data for both groups were normally distributed, as this is a prerequisite for the use of parametric statistics.

After the data were confirmed to be normally distributed, a test of homogeneity of variances was conducted using Levene's test to determine whether the variances between the

experimental and control classes were equal. This homogeneity test was conducted in conjunction with an independent-samples t-test, because the significance value of Levene's test listed in the test output indicates whether the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met (a significance level > 0.05 indicates homogeneous data). The subsequent hypothesis test was conducted using an independent-samples t-test to test for differences in the mean initial reading ability between the experimental and control classes. This test was chosen because the study compared two independent groups with interval-scaled data that met the assumptions of normality and homogeneity.

After confirming that the data met the assumptions of normality and homogeneity, the analysis continued using the independent samples t-test. This test was conducted on the pretest and posttest scores, as well as the classroom observations for the experimental and control groups, which had been entered into SPSS 21 for Windows via the Analyze → Compare Means → Independent Samples t-Test menu. The posttest scores were entered into the "Test Variable" column, while the experimental and control classes were placed in the "Grouping Variable" column. The output generated consisted of group statistics, and the independent samples t-test was used to determine whether there was a difference in the mean initial reading ability between the two groups. This study also analyzed changes in the initial reading ability of students in the experimental class before and after receiving instruction using the open syllable method. The pretest and posttest data for the experimental class, which had been entered into SPSS 21 for Windows, were analyzed using the Analyze → Compare Means → Paired-Samples t-Test menu. The pretest and posttest scores were paired as measurement pairs, so the output consisted of paired-samples statistics, paired-samples correlations, and paired-samples t-tests.

Results and Discussion

Result

This study was conducted from March to April 2026 in Class 1C at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Muntilan. To obtain the research results, data collection was carried out twice: data was collected before the intervention (pretest) and after the learning process was completed or after the intervention (posttest). The purpose of data collection was to determine whether there were differences before and after the intervention. The pretest and posttest consisted of five questions; each question contained three letters, syllables, words, or sentences that students had to read in accordance with the five indicators of the open syllable method, and their validity and reliability were tested. The pretest scores were obtained from the results of reading practice conducted by students before the treatment using the open syllable method. The following are the pretest scores for the experimental class:

Table 5. Pretest Scores for the Experimental Class

Category	Pretest	Percentage
Passed	7	29,2 %
Failed	17	70,8 %
Highest Score	100	
Lowest Score	60	
Average Score	80,6	

Based on the table above, in the experimental class, the students' average score was 80.6, with a highest score of 100 and a lowest score of 60. Seven students met the proficiency criteria, representing 29.2%, while 17 students did not meet the criteria, representing 70.8%. This demonstrates that some students were not yet fully proficient in basic reading skills before being taught the open syllable method in the experimental class.

Data were collected to determine the effect of implementing the open-syllable method, specifically using the posttest scores. In the experimental class, students took the posttest after receiving instruction using the open-syllable method. The posttest was designed to measure the extent of change in students' early reading skills after participating in the Indonesian language learning process. The following are the posttest scores obtained from the experimental class:

Table 6. Posttest Scores for the Experimental Class

Category	Pretest	Percentage
Passed	18	75 %
Failed	6	25 %
Highest Score	100	
Lowest Score	75	
Average Score	91,2	

Based on the table above, the experimental class achieved an average score of 91.2 on the posttest, representing a 45.8% increase from its previous average of 80.6, with a highest score of 100 and a lowest score of 75. A total of 18 students (75%) met the proficiency standard, while 6 students (25%) did not. These results indicate an improvement in early reading skills in the experimental class following the implementation of the open syllable method.

The researchers obtained the pretest scores from the students' reading practice results before the intervention that is, the use of the conventional method. The following are the pretest scores for the control class:

Table 7. Pretest Scores for the Control Class

Category	Pretest	Percentage
Passed	12	48 %
Failed	13	52 %
Highest Score	100	
Lowest Score	65	
Average Score	87	

Based on the table above, with a highest score of 100 and a lowest score of 65, 12 students achieved mastery (48%), while 13 students did not (52%). Based on the data obtained, the average pretest score for the control class was 87, indicating that their early reading skills were already quite good.

In the control class, the posttest was administered after the treatment, which involved the use of conventional methods. The posttest was administered to measure the extent of change in students' early reading skills at the end of the instruction period. The following are the posttest scores obtained from the control class:

Table 8. Posttest Scores for the Control Class

Category	Pretest	Percentage
Passed	18	72 %
Failed	7	28 %
Highest Score	100	
Lowest Score	75	
Average Score	90,4	

Based on the table above, the average score obtained by students in the control class on the posttest was 90.4, indicating a 24% increase from the previous average of 87, with a highest score of 100 and a lowest score of 75. A total of 18 students met the proficiency standard, representing 72%, while 7 students did not meet the standard, representing 28%. In the control class, the posttest results showed an improvement in students' early reading skills after the learning process, although the increase was not very significant compared to the experimental class that used the open syllable method.

The results of the statistical analysis aim to determine whether there is an improvement in early reading skills through the open syllable method. The calculations for this analysis were performed using SPSS 21 for Windows. Before conducting the hypothesis test, it was necessary to perform classical prerequisite tests, including the normality test and the homogeneity test, to ensure that the data met the basic assumptions of parametric statistical analysis. Then, once the prerequisite tests were satisfied, the hypothesis test was conducted to identify significant differences between the experimental class, which used the open syllable method, and the control class, which used the conventional method, in improving students' early reading skills.

Normality tests were conducted on the data from the experimental and control classes across three types of data based on the data collection methods: pretest, posttest, and observation sheets. The purpose of the normality tests was to determine whether the data from each class followed a normal distribution, so that appropriate statistical tests could be selected to analyze the differences between the experimental and control classes. This normality test used the Shapiro-Wilk test, based on the sample sizes in each class: 24 students in the experimental class and 25 students in the control class. The results of the normality test are presented in the table below.

Table 9. Results of Normality Tests for Pretest and Posttest Items

		Tests of Normality					
Class		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Results	Experimental Pretest	.108	24	.200*	.960	24	.446
	Experimental Posttest	.177	24	.049	.919	24	.055
	Control Pretest	.133	25	.200*	.937	25	.124
	Control Posttest	.194	25	.016	.927	25	.074

Based on the results of the normality tests for the pretest and posttest, the experimental class showed significance values of 0.446 and 0.55, while the control class's

pretest and posttest results showed significance values of 0.124 and 0.74. In accordance with these results, all significance values for the pretest and posttest data in both the experimental and control classes were > 0.05 . Based on the decision criteria for normality tests discussed in the previous chapter, the pretest and posttest data are normally distributed because their significance values are greater than 0.05. Therefore, the data from both classes satisfy the assumption of normality, allowing for the use of parametric analyses—such as the independent samples t-test in hypothesis testing to determine differences in outcomes between the experimental and control classes.

Table 10. Results of the Normality Test for the Observations

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Experimental Class Observations	.155	24	.140	.927	24	.084
Control Class Observations	.139	24	.200*	.919	24	.055

The normality test was conducted on the students' observational data using the Shapiro-Wilk test, since the sample size for both classes was less than 50 students. Based on the normality test, the significance level for the experimental class's observational results was 0.84, and that for the control class's observational results was 0.55. Both classes had significance levels greater than 0.05. Therefore, the results of the normality test indicate that the observational data from both classes are normally distributed. However, the observational data on early reading ability in both classes met the assumption of normality, so they could be included in the statistical analysis to determine the differences between the two classes. Before conducting a test to determine differences between the experimental and control classes, a homogeneity test must first be performed. The homogeneity test aims to determine whether the variances of the two groups are equal or homogeneous. The homogeneity test used in this study was Levene's Test.

Tabel 11. Hasil Uji Homogenitas *Posttest*

		Test of Homogeneity of Variance			
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Result	Based on Mean	.279	1	47	.600
	Based on Median	.254	1	47	.617
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.254	1	47.000	.617
	Based on trimmed mean	.246	1	47	.623

Based on the results of the homogeneity test using Levene's Test in the table above, a significance value of $0.600 > 0.05$ was obtained. It can be concluded that the variances of the data between the experimental and control groups are homogeneous. This means that the two groups have comparable data, and the conditions for conducting an independent samples t-test have been met. A homogeneity test was conducted to determine whether the observed data from the two classes or groups had equal variances. Determining the

appropriate type of statistical analysis for comparing these two test groups is relevant to this study. The homogeneity test in this study was conducted using Levene's Test for Equality of Variances with the assistance of SPSS 21 for Windows. The following table presents the results of the homogeneity test:

Table 12. Results of the Test of Homogeneity of Observations

Test of Homogeneity of Variance					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Observation Results	Based on Mean	2.817	1	47	.100
	Based on Median	2.634	1	47	.111
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.634	1	43.418	.112
	Based on trimmed mean	2.772	1	47	.103

Based on the table above, the significance value (sig.) obtained from Levene's Test for "Based on Mean" is $0.100 > 0.05$; therefore, it can be concluded that the observational data are homogeneous. Consequently, the data meet the requirements for conducting a hypothesis test using the independent samples t-test. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the experimental class, which applied the open syllable method, and the control class, which used conventional instruction, in terms of students' early reading skills. Before testing the hypotheses, prerequisite tests namely, the normality test and the homogeneity test were first conducted. The results of the prerequisite tests indicated that the data were normally distributed and homogeneous; therefore, the analysis proceeded using the parametric Independent Samples t-test. Since both groups had equal variances, the calculations were based on the "Equal variances assumed" row.

The basis for reaching a conclusion in this Independent Sample t-Test is as follows: if the Sig. (2-tailed) value is < 0.05 , this indicates a significant effect or difference, so H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. If the Sig. (2-tailed) value is > 0.05 , this indicates no significant difference or effect, so H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected. For heteroscedastic data, the decision is based on the results of the "Equal variances not assumed" test. For homoscedastic data, the results of the "Equal variances assumed" test are used. The following are the results of the Independent Sample t-Test data analysis using SPSS 21 for Windows:

**Table 13. Results of the Independent Samples t-Test
Experimental Class and Control Class**

Group Statistics					
	Class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Results	Experimental Class	24	91.25	1.035	.211

	Control Class	25	90.40	.978	.196
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Based on the table above, the experimental class, consisting of 24 students, achieved an average (mean) learning score of 91.25 with a standard deviation of 1.035 and a standard error of the mean of 0.211, while the control class, consisting of 25 students, achieved an average score of 90.40 with a standard deviation of 0.978 and a standard error of the mean of 0.196. These data show that, descriptively, the average learning achievement of the experimental class is higher than that of the control class, with a difference of 0.85 points. The relatively small standard deviations in both groups also indicate that the distribution of student learning achievement data in each class tends to be homogeneous or not very variable. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the open-syllable method applied in the experimental class had a positive impact on students' early reading skills. The higher average scores and the relatively even distribution of scores indicate that this model not only improved academic performance but also provided a meaningful learning experience for the students. After determining that there was a difference in posttest average scores between the experimental and control classes, further analysis was conducted using an independent samples t-test to determine whether the difference was statistically significant. The results of the independent samples t-test are presented in the table below.

Table 14. Independent-Samples t-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Results	Equal variances assumed	.279	.600	2.956	47	.005	.850	.288	.272	1.428
	Equal variances not assumed			2.953	46.547	.005	.850	.288	.271	1.429

Based on the Independent Sample t-Test table above, it can be seen that the p-value for Levene's test for equality of variances is 0.600, meaning that $0.600 > 0.05$. This indicates that the data have homogeneous variances, so the "Equal variances assumed" row is used as the basis for interpreting the t-test results. The calculated t-value is 2.956 with a significance level (Sig., 2-tailed) of 0.005, where $0.005 < 0.05$. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the posttest scores of the experimental class and the control class. However, the open-syllable method applied to the experimental class had a significant impact on the students' early reading skills. Furthermore, the mean difference of 0.850 supports these results, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.272 to 1.428. Since all values within the interval are above zero and positive, it can be concluded that the posttest

mean scores of the experimental class were consistently higher than those of the control class. The results of the Independent Samples t-test analysis using SPSS 21 for Windows are presented in the following table:

Table 15. Results of the Independent Samples t-Test

Group Statistics					
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Results	Experimental Class	24	43.50	1.208	.247
	Control Class	25	42.76	1.115	.223

Based on the table above, the results of the descriptive analysis of learning observation scores using the open syllable method show that the mean score in the experimental class was 43.50 with a standard deviation of 1.208, while the control class had a mean score of 42.76 with a standard deviation of 1.115. The higher mean score in the experimental class indicates that learning using the open syllable method has an effect on students' early reading skills. Meanwhile, the larger standard deviation in the experimental class suggests that the data is more variable, whereas the control class has more evenly distributed scores. This difference in mean scores indicates that there is a difference in average learning outcomes between the two groups. However, to confirm the significance of this difference, further tests such as a test for homogeneity of variances and an independent samples t-test are required, which will be presented in the following section.

Table 16. Independent-Samples t-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Results	Equal variances assumed	.343	.561	2.229	47	.031	.740	.332	.072	1.408
	Equal variances not assumed			2.225	46.317	.031	.740	.333	.071	1.409

Based on the table above, the F-value is 0.343 with a significance level (Sig.) of 0.561, meaning that $0.561 > 0.05$. Therefore, the variances of the two classes are homogeneous, so the interpretation of the t-test focuses on the "Equal variances assumed" row. In the t-test under the "Equal variances assumed" row, the calculated t-value is 2.229 with 47 degrees of freedom (df) and a significance level (2-tailed) of 0.031. Since the significance level is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the experimental

class and the control class. The mean difference between the experimental and control classes is 0.740, which means that the scores in the experimental class are higher than those in the control class. Based on these data, the results support the research hypothesis that the use of the open syllable method has a significant effect on improving students' early reading skills compared to conventional instruction.

Based on the results of the normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test, the significance values for the pretest and posttest data were 0.446 and 0.55, respectively, which are greater than 0.05. This indicates that the data are normally distributed. Thus, the data met the requirements for a paired-sample t-test as a prerequisite for further analysis to determine differences in early reading ability before and after the application of the open syllable method. The basis for decision-making in the paired-sample t-test is to compare the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) with the significance level of 0.05. If the Sig. 2-tailed value is < 0.05 , then H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, meaning there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. However, if the 2-tailed Sig. value is greater than 0.05, then H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected, meaning there is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. Based on the results of the prerequisite tests that were conducted, the data met the assumptions, so the analysis proceeded with a paired-sample t-test using SPSS 21 for Windows:

Table 17. Results of Descriptive Statistics for the Pretest and Posttest

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	80.63	24	11.355	2.318
	Posttest	91.25	24	6.469	1.320

The results show that the pretest had an average score of 80.63 and the posttest had a score of 91.25. The standard deviation for the pretest was 11.355 and for the posttest was 6.469. The standard error of the mean was 2.318 for the pretest and 1.320 for the posttest. The scores above show that the pretest scores were lower than the posttest scores. Next, to determine whether there is a significant difference, it is necessary to interpret the results of the paired-sample t-test.

Table 18. Results of the Pretest and Posttest Correlation Tests

Paired Samples Correlations				
		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest & Posttest	24	.847	.000

The results of the correlation test above show a correlation coefficient of 0.847 between the pretest and posttest, with a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This correlation coefficient indicates a very strong and significant relationship between the pretest and posttest scores, meaning that students with higher pretest scores tend to achieve higher posttest scores as well, and vice versa.

Table 19. Results of the Paired-Sample t-Test

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-10.625	6.807	1.389	-13.499	-7.751	-7.647	23	.000

The results of the Paired Sample T-Test in Table 15 show a mean difference (pretest–posttest) of -10.625 with a t-value of -7.647 , $df = 23$, and a significance level (two-tailed) of $0.000 (< 0.05)$. This negative difference indicates that the posttest score was 10.625 points higher than the pretest score, since the SPSS calculation was performed using the formula “pretest minus posttest.” Thus, there was a significant improvement in students’ initial reading skills after the open syllable method was implemented, compared to the conditions before the method was applied. Furthermore, the significance value of $0.000 (< 0.05)$ indicates that this improvement was not due to chance but rather a real effect resulting from the implementation of the open syllable method.

Discussion

Significant differences in early reading ability between the experimental class, which used the open-syllable method, and the control class, which used the conventional method

Based on the results of the descriptive statistical analysis of the experimental and control classes, the pretest and posttest scores and observation sheets were obtained. Before conducting the independent samples t-test, normality and homogeneity tests were performed. The results of the normality test for the pretest and posttest items showed a Shapiro-Wilk value > 0.05 . Based on these results, it can be concluded that the items are normally distributed. Following the normality test, the homogeneity test was conducted on the posttest questions and observation sheets. Based on the table of pretest and posttest homogeneity test results, the Sig. Based on Mean value was $0.805 > 0.05$; therefore, it can be concluded that the variances of the posttest results for both classes are homogeneous. Furthermore, the table of homogeneity test results for the observation sheets shows a Sig. Based on Mean value of $0.100 > 0.05$, so it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in variance between the two classes; therefore, the observation sheets for the two classes have homogeneous variances. In accordance with these results, the independent samples t-test was used for the pretest questions and the observation sheets.

The final stage was the independent samples t-test. The t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the two groups or classes. The effect of the open syllable method on students’ early reading skills could be compared using the formulated hypotheses, namely the null hypothesis (H_0): there is no significant difference in improving students’ early reading skills using the open syllable method. Alternative hypothesis (H_a): There is a significant difference between the class using the open syllable method and the class using the conventional method.

Based on the table of independent sample t-tests for post-test results, the t-test results in a calculated t-value of 2.956 with a significance level (Sig., 2-tail) of 0.005. According to the decision rules, if the calculated Sig. is < 0.05 , H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. In addition, in the independent sample t-test table for t-test results assuming the same variance, the t-value is 2.229 with a degree of freedom (df) of 47 and a significance level (2-tail) of 0.031, which is less than 0.05. Based on the decision-making criteria, if the calculated significance level (Sig.) is < 0.05 , H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. From these results, it can be concluded that there is an improvement in students' early reading skills through the open-syllable method. However, the open syllable method produced a statistically significant difference in initial reading skills between students in the experimental class and the control class after the application of the open syllable method. This is in line with the research of Nabila et al who used the Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design design and the Independent Sample t-test analysis stated that the syllable method had a significant effect on the initial reading skills of grade I students of SD Negeri 139 Palembang (Nabila dkk., 2026).

The research results show that the application of the open syllable method made a significant difference in improving the early reading skills of students in Class 1C (the experimental class) compared to Class 1B (the control class). This contrasts with the conventional method, which tends to rely on examples or the teacher's instructions, thereby limiting opportunities for independent reading practice. Meanwhile, the open syllable method provides stimulation through repetitive and structured reading activities. The impact of using the syllable method can be seen not only in improving learning outcomes, but also in the development of students' ability to recognize letters, read syllables, string syllables into words, and read simple sentences. These stages show that the syllable method helps students understand the reading process gradually, starting from recognizing written symbols to pronouncing more complex language units (Suyadi dkk., 2021; Mariana dkk., 2024). Students are not immediately introduced to a variety of words or sentences, but first learn to recognize open syllable patterns consisting of consonants or vowels. According to Pertiwi, open syllables are consonant-vowel (CV) patterns that are easier for early-grade students to recognize because their pronunciation is simple and does not require the combination of complex sounds (Pertiwi & A. D, 2016). This is consistent with research findings showing that students find it easier to read syllables or simple words after using the open syllable method. Consequently, students' early reading skills can develop more optimally.

These findings are consistent with the theory proposed by I. S. Wardani, which states that the use of the open syllable method has been proven effective in helping students recognize simple sound patterns consisting of consonants and vowels, such as ja, ji, ju, je, and jo (Wardani & I. S, 2020). Furthermore, according to Suyadi & Sari, the learning process is carried out in stages, starting with introduction, combination, processing, arrangement, sequencing, and analysis of letters, syllables, words, and simple sentences, making it easier for students to understand as they begin learning to read (Suyadi & Sari, 2021). During lessons, students seem to be more active in reading the syllables composed by the teacher on the board. Students also find it easier to combine syllables into words than before. This condition is in line with the characteristics of the syllabic method that provides learning to read gradually, starting from the introduction of syllables, combining them into words, to the

formation of simple sentences (Syamsiyah, 2020). In addition, students seem more confident and willing to come to the front of the class to read, because they have received systematic and step-by-step reading exercises (Panjaitan dkk., 2026). Repeated reading helps students memorize reading patterns, thereby improving their reading skills. Students do not only memorize texts; they also understand how to pronounce simple syllables, words, and sentences (E. N. Sari dkk., 2026).

From a psychological perspective, lower-grade students generally have a limited attention span so learning needs to be presented through structured activities and in accordance with their developmental characteristics (Asprilia dkk., 2020). This is consistent with Pratiwi, who states that students' motivation and readiness to learn can influence their success in early reading (Pratiwi & C. P, 2020). The use of the open syllable method, which involves continuous pattern repetition, can increase student engagement in the learning process. The results of this study are consistent with those of (Wathoni, 2020), who found that the open syllable method can influence students' reading development, particularly by helping students who struggle to combine consonants and vowels into syllables and simple words. This is consistent with research findings showing an improvement in students' early reading skills after using the open syllable method. These findings align with those of (Hanisah & S, 2022; Asmadi, 2024), who state that according to the theory of early reading skills, during the initial stage when students become familiar with letters and read with clear, fluent pronunciation and appropriate intonation, they are able to understand the content of the text well. If reading skills develop well, students will find it easier to follow the learning process and understand various subject materials. The research found that after implementing the open syllable method, students read more clearly and no longer hesitated.

The findings of this study are also supported by Sulfiana's, research, which shows that the syllable method can improve the early reading skills of elementary school students (Rosita, 2021; Sulfiana dkk., 2023; Suyadi & Sari, 2021). The results indicate an improvement following the implementation of the open syllable method. Syllable-based learning helps students recognize letters, associate letters with sounds, and read simple words more easily than conventional learning methods. However, there is a difference between the study by previous studies who used a classroom action research (PTK) design that focused on improving the learning process through several cycles of action and examined the syllable method in general. Meanwhile, this study used a quasi-experimental design with an experimental class and a control class, thereby statistically testing the effect of the open syllable method by comparing the two groups.

The open-syllable method serves as an efficient learning alternative for creating a more active and enjoyable learning environment, thereby making students more enthusiastic about participating in reading activities (Semuruk dkk., 2025). Therefore, the implementation of the open-syllable method can make a positive contribution to supporting the development of students' basic literacy skills. Although most students have shown improvement in their reading skills, there are still some who have not yet achieved proficiency. This situation is influenced by differences in students' initial abilities, interest in reading, and the intensity of their reading practice.

Differences in the early reading skills of first-grade Class 1C students before and after the implementation of the open syllable method at Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School in Muntilan

Based on the output table for the paired-sample t-test, the Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.000 < 0.05; therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. These results indicate that there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores; thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This means that the application of the open-syllable method has a significant effect on students' early reading skills. However, when examining the mean difference in the table, a negative value of -10.625 is observed. This mean difference of -10.625 occurs because SPSS calculates the difference based on the pretest-posttest sequence. The negative sign indicates that the posttest scores are higher than the pretest scores, meaning there was an improvement in students' early reading skills after the intervention was administered. Nevertheless, the results of the statistical tests still show a significant difference between the pre- and post-treatment periods. This is supported by the 95% confidence interval, which lies entirely below zero, ranging from -13.499 to -7.751. This indicates that the observed difference is not due to sampling chance alone but reflects a statistically significant change. Thus, the open-syllable method has been shown to influence student learning outcomes, particularly in early reading skills.

However, some students still have difficulty recognizing letters and reading simple words and sentences. In addition, some students still read by sounding out words and pause for quite a long time when reading simple words or sentences. As a result, students lose confidence in their abilities, causing them to hesitate when reading out of fear of making mistakes. In fact, this can hinder the learning process and result in academic scores that fall short of the KKTP (Learning Objective Achievement Criteria). This situation indicates that the students' initial reading skills, prior to receiving intervention, still need to be improved. In line with Suyadi and Sari, during the learning process, teachers use the open syllable method by introducing consonants and vowels, then combining them into syllables (Suyadi & Sari, 2021). Once students are able to read syllables, they proceed to combine syllables into meaningful words and simple sentences. This method is implemented gradually and repeatedly; students do not immediately read entire sentences but start with simple texts, allowing their reading skills to develop gradually.

After receiving instruction using the open syllable method, the students' early reading skills improved. This was evident from the posttest results, which showed that students could read syllables, meaningful words, and simple sentences fluently. Previously, some students had stuttered while reading, but they eventually became fluent without having to sound out each letter individually. This is in line with Tarigan Sya'bani, who states that self-confidence is one of the indicators that influence reading fluency and performance (Sya'bani & L, 2018). Furthermore, the students' self-confidence increased, making them more willing to read in front of the class and able to pronounce simple words or sentences with more appropriate intonation.

This situation reflects that students are still in the early stages of literacy, where their reading process has not yet become automatic. According to Havisa et al, early reading ability involves the skills of recognizing phonemes, vowels, and consonants, as well as combining

them into syllables or words (Havisa dkk., 2021). At the beginning of the study, it appeared that some students were still in the stage of learning to recognize letters and sounds and were not yet fluent in combining these elements into syllables and words correctly. Therefore, students need guidance from teachers through appropriate teaching methods so that their early reading skills can develop optimally. This explains that students' early reading skills are still highly dependent on external stimuli from educators (Magitasari & Wiarsih, 2024).

Conclusion

Based on the research results, there was a statistically significant difference in the posttest scores for early reading skills between the experimental and control classes. This was demonstrated by the results of the Independent Samples t-Test, with a p-value (2-tailed) of $0.005 < 0.05$; the experimental class's posttest mean was 91.25, while the control class's was 90.4. The results of the Paired-Sample t-test for the experimental class showed a p-value (Sig., 2-tailed) of $0.000 < 0.05$, with the mean score for early reading skills increasing by 10.625. Thus, there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental class following the implementation of the open syllable method.

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