



The Effectiveness of the Read-Aloud Approach in Improving Literal Reading Skills of Children's Stories among Students at SDN Gekbrong 1

Asti Mulyawati^{1*}, Siti Maryam², Sri Mulyanti³

¹²³Prodi Magister Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, Universitas Suryakencana, Jawa Barat, Indonesia

*E-mail: astimulyawati@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Literal reading comprehension is a fundamental literacy skill that elementary school students need to master as the basis for developing higher order reading comprehension. However, preliminary observations revealed that students experienced difficulties in identifying characters, determining settings, sequencing events, finding explicit information, identifying main ideas, and recognizing the moral values of children's stories. These problems were associated with low reading interest, limited vocabulary, and teacher-centered learning practices that provided insufficient opportunities for students to actively construct meaning from texts. This study aimed to describe the preparation and implementation of the Read Aloud approach and to examine its effectiveness in improving students' literal reading comprehension of children's stories. The study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental method with a Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design. The participants consisted of 33 fifth-grade elementary school students, including 17 students in the experimental class and 16 students in the control class. Data were collected through reading comprehension tests, classroom observations, interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality tests, homogeneity tests, paired sample t-tests, independent sample t-tests, and N-Gain analysis. The findings indicate that the Read Aloud approach significantly improved students' literal reading comprehension. Students in the experimental class achieved higher learning gains than those in the control class. Furthermore, classroom observations demonstrated that the approach encouraged active participation, classroom interaction, and deeper engagement with children's stories. Therefore, the Read Aloud approach can be considered an effective instructional alternative for improving elementary school students' literal reading comprehension in Indonesian language learning.

Keywords: read aloud, literal reading comprehension, children's stories

INTRODUCTION

Reading ability is a literacy competency that serves as the foundation for students' success in the learning process. Through reading, students acquire information, build knowledge, develop thinking skills, and broaden their horizons (Dalman, 2014; Razak et al., 2020). In the context of Indonesian language instruction in elementary schools, reading focuses not merely on the ability to pronounce words or sentences, but also on the capacity to comprehend information contained in various types of texts. Proficiency in reading supports the achievement of competencies in other

subjects, as most learning activities rely on the ability to understand written material.

A crucial aspect of reading comprehension is literal reading ability. This skill involves understanding information explicitly stated in the text without requiring deep interpretation. Students with literal reading skills can identify characters, determine settings, sequence events, locate explicit information, identify main ideas, and grasp the story's message based on the information provided in the text. These skills serve as a prerequisite for developing inferential, evaluative, and apprecia-

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tive reading abilities. Therefore, strengthening literal reading skills warrants attention in Indonesian language instruction at the elementary school level.

However, reports from both national and international assessments indicate that the reading abilities of Indonesian students still require improvement. Low comprehension levels suggest that students are not yet fully capable of constructing meaning from the texts they read. This situation is also evident in the Indonesian language lessons for Grade V at SDN Gekbrong 1. Observations and teacher interviews reveal that reading instruction is dominated by taking turns reading aloud, followed by answering questions. This instructional pattern prioritizes reading fluency over the process of constructing meaning; consequently, students have limited opportunities to discuss the content, connect information across different parts of the text, or actively identify key information. Several factors contribute to this issue. Students' low interest in reading limits the frequency of their interaction with reading materials. Furthermore, inadequate vocabulary mastery hinders students from fully comprehending the content of the stories. The reliance on teacher-centered learning strategies and a lack of variety in instructional media result in a monotonous reading instruction process. Consequently, students tend to read texts without fully grasping the information explicitly presented. This situation highlights the need for a learning approach that actively engages students throughout the reading process.

One approach considered suitable for the characteristics of elementary school students is "Read Aloud." This approach focuses not only on reading text expressively but also integrates activities such as questioning, discussing, predicting content, connecting students' experiences to the story, and identifying key information within the text. The interaction occurring during the reading activity helps students gradually build an understanding of the content, thereby making the learning process more meaningful. In Indonesian language

instruction, Read Aloud offers teachers the opportunity to model effective reading while guiding students to comprehend the story's content through targeted questioning and reflective discussion.

Various prior studies indicate that implementing Read Aloud contributes positively to improving students' literacy skills. Research reports that this approach enhances vocabulary, reading fluency, listening skills, reading interest, and reading comprehension through active interaction between teachers and students. However, most research still focuses on early literacy development, oral reading skills, or language skills among students in lower elementary grades. Studies specifically examining the effectiveness of Read Aloud in improving literal reading comprehension of children's stories among fifth-grade elementary students remain relatively limited.

The limitations of previous research reveal a research gap. First, most studies position Read Aloud as a strategy to improve reading fluency and language development, whereas research linking it to literal reading comprehension is scarce. Second, Read Aloud has primarily been implemented in early childhood education or lower elementary grades, resulting in limited empirical evidence regarding fifth-grade students. Third, the use of children's stories as the primary medium for measuring literal reading comprehension has not been a major research focus. These gaps highlight the need for research providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the Read Aloud approach within the context of teaching literal reading comprehension in elementary schools.

This study offers novelty in several aspects. First, it focuses on literal reading comprehension of children's stories as the outcome variable, rather than oral reading skills or early literacy, which are common focuses in previous studies. Second, the Read Aloud approach is applied systematically through stages of preparation, implementation, and evaluation, integrating activities such as reading, questioning, discussing, and reflecting on the story's content. Third, the study was conducted with



fifth-grade students within the context of the Independent Curriculum implementation, thereby providing empirical insight into the application of the Read Aloud approach in Indonesian language instruction at the elementary school level. Furthermore, the study integrates Pancasila values into the learning process to strengthen students' character during the reading activities.

Based on this overview, the study aims to describe the preparation and implementation of the Read Aloud approach and to analyze its effectiveness in enhancing the literal reading comprehension of children's stories among fifth-grade elementary students. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of reading instruction in elementary schools and serve as an alternative for teachers seeking a more interactive, contextual, and literacy-oriented teaching approach.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental research method to examine the effectiveness of the Read Aloud approach in improving elementary school students' literal reading comprehension of children's stories. The quasi-experimental method was selected because the researcher did not randomize the research subjects; instead, pre-existing classes were utilized as the experimental and control groups. A Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design was used, enabling the researcher to compare students' literal reading abilities before and after the intervention and to compare learning outcomes between the two groups.

The study was conducted at SDN Gekbrong 1, Cianjur Regency, West Java, during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The study population consisted of all fifth-grade students, comprising two classes with a total of 33 students. A saturated sampling technique was employed, meaning the entire population served as the research sample. Seventeen students were assigned to the experimental class, receiving instruction via the Read Aloud approach, while the

remaining 16 students formed the control class, receiving reading instruction through a conventional approach.

The independent variable in this study is the Read Aloud approach, while the dependent variable is the ability to comprehend children's stories at a literal level. Indicators of literal reading comprehension include the ability to identify characters, determine the setting, sequence events, locate explicit information, identify the main idea, and recognize the story's moral message.

The research instruments consisted of both test and non-test instruments. The test instruments comprised pretest and posttest questions developed based on the indicators of literal reading comprehension for children's stories. Prior to use, the instruments underwent content validity testing via expert judgment and empirical validity testing using Pearson's Product Moment correlation, while instrument reliability was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha. Non-test instruments included observation sheets for teacher and student activities, interview guidelines, and documentation used to gather supporting data regarding the learning process.

The research procedure began with the administration of a pretest to both the experimental and control classes to assess the students' initial abilities. Subsequently, the experimental class received instruction based on the Read Aloud approach, implemented in three stages: pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading. During the pre-reading stage, the teacher conducted an apperception activity, activated prior knowledge, introduced key vocabulary, and encouraged students to predict the story's content. In the during-reading stage, the teacher read the children's story expressively—using appropriate pronunciation, intonation, and pausing—while asking guiding questions to help students identify explicit information in the text. During the post-reading stage, students engaged in discussions, answered questions, reconstructed the story sequence, identified story elements, and summarized the

reading material. Meanwhile, the control class followed the standard reading instruction typically implemented at the school. Upon completion of the intervention, both classes took a post-test using the same instrument.

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. The initial stage of analysis involved descriptive statistics to determine the mean, maximum, and minimum values, as well as the standard deviation, for the pretest and posttest results. Subsequently, prerequisite tests were performed: a normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test and a homogeneity test using Levene's Test. Hypothesis testing was carried out using a paired-sample t-test to identify differences between pretest and posttest results within each group, and an independent-sample t-test to determine differences in learning outcomes between the experimental and control classes.

To ensure the validity of the research, all procedures were carried out in accordance with research ethics principles. The researcher obtained permission from the school, explained the research objectives to all involved parties, maintained the confidentiality of the students' identities, and ensured that the data obtained were used solely for scientific research purposes.

RESULT

Research findings indicate that the Read Aloud approach is effective in enhancing the literal reading comprehension of children's stories among elementary school students. This effectiveness is demonstrated not only by improved learning outcomes in the experimental class but also by a shift in the learning process toward one that is more active, interactive, and student-centered. Students no longer act as passive recipients of information; instead, they engage in observing, listening, discussing, answering questions, and constructing understanding based on the story content read by the teacher.

The improvement in literal reading skills occurs because the Read Aloud approach allows students to comprehend information as the reading

process unfolds. Teachers do not merely read the story with appropriate pronunciation, intonation, and expression; they also pause at specific points to ask questions, clarify vocabulary, connect the story content to students' experiences, and draw attention to key information in the text. These activities help students build a representation of meaning incrementally, leading to a deeper understanding of the story.

The improvement in literal reading skills observed in this study is primarily evident in indicators such as identifying characters, determining the setting, sequencing events, locating explicitly stated information, identifying the main idea, and recognizing the story's message. These six indicators form the foundation of reading comprehension, as they are directly linked to the ability to grasp information explicitly presented in the text. As these skills develop effectively, students gain a stronger basis for advancing their reading abilities to inferential, evaluative, and appreciative levels.

The study results also indicate that the interaction among the teacher, students, and the text is a crucial factor influencing the improvement of literal reading skills. The teacher acts as a facilitator, guiding students throughout the reading process. Through targeted questioning, the teacher helps students focus on key information, while discussion activities provide opportunities for students to verify their understanding. These findings support constructivist theory, which posits that knowledge is constructed through active interaction between learning experiences and the social environment. Instruction involving dialogue and collaboration enables students to build understanding more meaningfully than instruction focused solely on the delivery of material.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study align with the theory proposed by Duke and Cartwright (2021), which posits that reading comprehension results from the interaction among word recognition skills, language comprehension, prior knowledge,



thinking strategies, motivation, and the reader's active engagement with the text. In this study, the Read-Aloud approach successfully integrated these components through reading activities that incorporated dialogue, questioning, prediction, and reflection. Consequently, students not only grasped the explicit content of the text but were also able to connect information across different parts of the story, leading to a more holistic understanding.

These findings also reinforce the perspective presented by Jim Trelease in *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, which identifies Read-Aloud activities as an effective strategy for fostering a culture of literacy, enriching vocabulary, enhancing reading comprehension, and cultivating an interest in reading. Throughout the study, students demonstrated heightened enthusiasm when the teacher read stories expressively. The learning atmosphere became more dynamic as students actively responded, asked questions, and shared their opinions regarding the story's content. This demonstrates that the Read-Aloud approach not only improves learning outcomes but also creates an enjoyable learning experience.

From a methodological standpoint, the research results indicate that students in the experimental class achieved greater improvements in learning outcomes compared to those in the control class. This difference demonstrates that the instructional approach contributed significantly to enhancing literal reading skills. In other words, the improvement in learning outcomes was influenced not only by the students' initial abilities but also by the quality of the learning experience gained during the instructional process.

These findings align with previous studies reporting that the "Read Aloud" method enhances the literacy skills of elementary school students. Research by Endah Wredati Rahayu and Ali Mustadi demonstrated that Read Aloud improves reading literacy through interactive reading activities. Other studies have also reported that this approach contributes to gains in vocabulary, story comprehension, communication skills, and reading interest. What distinguishes the present study is

that it specifically demonstrates the effectiveness of Read Aloud in improving literal reading skills regarding children's stories among fifth-grade elementary students. Thus, this study provides new empirical evidence regarding the application of Read Aloud in upper-grade elementary education—an area that has been relatively under-researched.

The novelty of this study lies in three aspects. First, it focuses on literal reading skills regarding children's stories as the dependent variable, rather than merely on oral reading fluency or emergent literacy. Second, it describes the implementation of the Read Aloud approach—covering the preparation, execution, and evaluation stages—thereby providing a comprehensive overview of the implementation process. Third, the study was conducted within the context of the Independent Curriculum implementation, integrating Pancasila values; consequently, it focuses not only on enhancing academic skills but also on strengthening student character.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that the Read Aloud approach can serve as an alternative instructional method for Indonesian language lessons in elementary schools. Teachers can utilize children's stories that align with students' characteristics to create a learning environment that is more active, enjoyable, and meaningful. This approach can also support the strengthening of a school's literacy culture by habituating students to engage with reading materials through activities involving reading, discussion, and collective reflection on story content. Therefore, the implementation of Read Aloud is not only relevant for enhancing literal reading skills but also has the potential to support the development of broader literacy competencies.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Read Aloud approach is effective in enhancing the literal reading comprehension of children's stories among elementary school students. This effectiveness is evidenced by improvements in students' abilities

to identify characters, determine settings, sequence events, locate explicit information, identify main ideas, and recognize the story's moral message following instruction using the Read Aloud approach. Statistical analysis further reveals that the improvement in literal reading skills in the experimental class surpassed that of the control class, confirming that the Read Aloud approach positively influences student learning outcomes.

The success of the Read Aloud approach stems not only from the expressive reading of stories but also from the active interaction fostered during the learning process. Activities such as questioning, discussing, predicting story content, clarifying vocabulary, and reflecting on the reading material allow students to gradually build an understanding of the information contained in the text. These elements render the learning process more meaningful, boost student participation, and create an active, enjoyable learning environment.

The findings imply that the Read Aloud approach serves as a viable alternative for Indonesian language instruction aimed at improving the literal reading skills of elementary school students. This approach aligns well with the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, as it supports student-centered learning, cultivates a literacy culture, and fosters thinking skills through reading and discussion activities. Future research is encouraged to explore the application of the Read Aloud approach across different educational levels, text types, and reading skills to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its effectiveness in literacy education.

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