

The Application of the Reading Aloud Method to Improve Beginning Reading Skills in Lower Grade UPT SDN Panyirapan

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Abstract

Beginning reading skills are an important foundation in the development of student literacy. However, many elementary school students in Indonesia still struggle to master reading skills at the beginning stage. These difficulties can impact students' academic achievements and interest in learning at the next level. This research aims to explore the process of implementing the loud reading method to improve the initial reading skills of second-grade students at UPT SDN Panyirapan. The focus of this research includes the experiences of students and teachers as well as the dynamics of learning in the classroom. The approach used is a qualitative approach with a case study design. The participants in this study consisted of 35 students and teachers who were purposively selected. Data collection techniques include participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research results show that the application of the read-aloud method has a positive impact on improving students' technical reading skills, such as reading fluency, pronunciation, and intonation. In addition, this method also increases students' active participation in reading activities, fosters learning motivation, and strengthens comprehension of the reading material. Thus, the read-aloud method can serve as an effective alternative learning strategy to address beginning reading issues in elementary schools. These findings are expected to serve as a reference for teachers and education policymakers in designing more engaging and meaningful reading instruction for students.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill that forms the basis for students' academic success and lifelong learning. In beginning primary education, particularly in lower grades, beginning reading ability—referred to as emergent or beginning reading—is critical to supporting students' literacy development, including their abilities in writing, comprehension, and critical thinking (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). However, in Indonesia, many students still struggle with basic reading skills during the beginning years of school. The Ministry of Education's National Assessment Report (2023) shows that over 50% of lower-grade students have not yet achieved the minimum literacy proficiency (UNESCO, 2023). This literacy gap presents both a practical and theoretical problem in the field of elementary education, necessitating evidence-based pedagogical strategies that are both adaptive and engaging to improve reading skills at the foundational level.

Numerous studies have explored approaches to support beginning reading development, one of which is the *reading aloud* method. This method, which involves reading texts to students in an

expressive and interactive manner, has been found effective in improving children's vocabulary, narrative comprehension, and reading fluency (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007; Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). In the Indonesian context, Nurdyana (2024) demonstrated that reading aloud is particularly beneficial for students with learning difficulties, while Öksüz, Yıldırım, and Çetinkaya (2025) showed its effectiveness in Turkish classrooms for enhancing engagement and understanding through picture books. Despite these positive findings, many existing studies have focused on quantitative assessments of literacy outcomes and have overlooked the qualitative aspects of how reading aloud is implemented in real classroom settings, including teacher strategies, student responses, and the dynamics of literacy interaction.

This indicates a clear research gap. Although the method has shown promising results across different contexts, limited qualitative inquiry has been conducted in Indonesian public schools—particularly at the beginning grade level—to understand the classroom realities, constraints, and lived experiences of students and teachers during *reading aloud* sessions. Existing studies tend to measure the outcomes of reading programs without thoroughly investigating the instructional processes or the socio-emotional dimensions involved (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gambrell, 2015). Therefore, there is a need to bridge this gap by exploring how the *reading aloud* method is contextualized and enacted in Indonesian classrooms, and how it influences students' reading development from a process-oriented lens.

This study is grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and language in cognitive development. The teacher's read-aloud serves as a scaffold that enables students to internalize new vocabulary and narrative structures through mediated interaction. Unlike prior qualitative studies that primarily focused on outcomes, this research offers a process-based exploration of classroom dynamics and teacher-student discourse during reading aloud.

The present study aims to explore the implementation of the *reading aloud* method to enhance beginning reading skills among second-grade students at UPT SDN Panyirapan in Baros District, Serang Regency. Specifically, the research seeks to examine how the method influences reading fluency, word recognition, and comprehension, as well as to understand student engagement and teacher facilitation practices. By using a qualitative case study design, this research contributes to filling the existing gap by offering rich, contextual insights into the application of an internationally recognized literacy strategy in a local educational setting. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of classroom process analysis and literacy pedagogy, thereby offering both theoretical and practical contributions to beginning grade reading instruction.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design, which was deemed suitable for answering the research questions concerning the process and impact of the *reading aloud* method on beginning reading skills. This study did not employ a quasi-experimental design, but instead used a qualitative case study approach to capture in-depth classroom processes that cannot be measured through controlled experimentation. The case study design allowed for an in-depth and contextual exploration of real-life classroom practices, including teacher strategies and student engagement during reading instruction (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2014). This design was particularly appropriate to capture the natural setting of the teaching-learning process and the nuanced interactions within the classroom environment (Patton, 2015).

The participants of the study included one second-grade classroom teacher and 35 students from UPT SDN Panyirapan, Serang Regency. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, with the criteria based on student participation and the teacher's direct involvement in the implementation of the *reading aloud* method (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The teacher was chosen as a key informant due to her role as the primary facilitator, while the students were selected based on their attendance and engagement throughout the study.

Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted over the course of eight reading sessions and were aimed at recording classroom behavior, student responses, and teaching strategies. In-depth interviews were conducted with the teacher and selected students to capture their perceptions and experiences of the *reading aloud* sessions. Documentation included field notes, photographs, and short video recordings to support and enrich the primary data collected (Moleong, 2017; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). All data collection instruments were researcher-developed and guided by observational checklists and interview protocols based on the study objectives.

To ensure the validity of the data, the study employed triangulation across techniques and sources, as well as member checking with the teacher to verify the interpretation of responses. Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display in thematic categories, and drawing conclusions through pattern recognition and synthesis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection to allow for ongoing refinement of focus and inquiry.

The methods applied in this study were sufficiently detailed to allow replication. They provide a clear explanation of the research process, sampling rationale, instruments used, types of data recorded, and the logical flow of analysis. The approach emphasizes depth and meaning rather than generalizability, in alignment with the nature of qualitative research (Gambrell, 2015).

To provide a clearer overview of the research procedure, a flowchart illustrating the sequence of activities conducted throughout the study is presented below. This diagram summarizes the main steps, from the planning stage through data collection, analysis, and conclusion drawing, as explained in the preceding paragraphs.

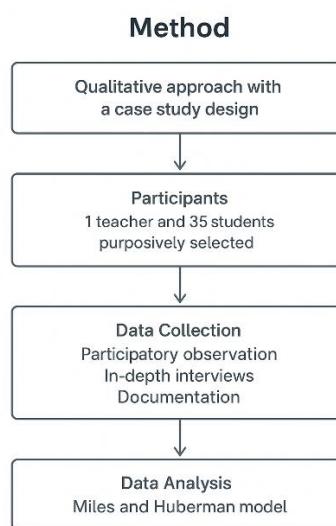


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Research Procedure

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of Reading Aloud on Students' Beginning Reading Skills

Observation results indicate a notable improvement in students' reading fluency following the implementation of the *reading aloud* method. Students who initially read hesitantly and with frequent pauses began to demonstrate greater confidence, more stable rhythm, and expressive intonation in their reading (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). The teacher also reported that students were more engaged, understood narrative structure faster, and expressed enjoyment during reading activities (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007).

In-depth interviews revealed that students felt more motivated to read when they listened to the teacher's expressive and lively reading style (Nurdyana, 2024). Some students began to mimic the

teacher's reading tone and rhythm, indicating that *reading aloud* served as an effective linguistic model (Hudson et al., 2005; McGee & Schickedanz, 2007).

The study also found that students' social interaction improved. Peer-to-peer support increased as students assisted one another with pronunciation and discussed story content collaboratively. These findings are consistent with those of Öksüz, Yıldırım, and Çetinkaya (2025), who noted that *reading aloud* fosters beginning social competencies and classroom cooperation.

Nonetheless, the implementation faced several challenges, such as disparities in students' reading proficiency and limited access to reading materials suitable for their developmental stage. To address this, the teacher grouped students strategically and selected simple, age-appropriate stories (Gambrell, 2015; Coleman & Smith, 2025).

Key factors contributing to the method's success included the teacher's expressive storytelling skills and the creation of a positive, inclusive classroom environment. Students responded more actively to lessons and participated more freely when instruction was joyful and engaging (Hudson et al., 2005; McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). While the majority of students showed improved reading fluency, a few students with severe reading difficulties did not exhibit significant progress within the short timeframe. This suggests that while reading aloud may be generally effective, its impact varies depending on the learner's prior literacy exposure and cognitive readiness.

These findings support the theoretical perspective that beginning literacy development is not merely a technical process but a socially interactive one. Meaningful interactions between teachers and students during shared reading contribute to language acquisition, emotional growth, and the development of critical thinking skills (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

However, this study did not investigate the role of home literacy environments, parental support, or the long-term effects of the *reading aloud* method. As noted by Mol and Bus (2011), repeated and consistent exposure to reading in beginning childhood significantly shapes long-term literacy achievement.

To complement the narrative findings, the following diagram presents a visual model of interaction that illustrates the teacher's role, student responses, and communication flow during *reading aloud* sessions. This visualization highlights the dynamic and reciprocal nature of beginning reading instruction, demonstrating that reading development unfolds through ongoing social interaction rather than linear progression (Gambrell, 2015; McGee & Schickedanz, 2007; Snow et al., 1998).

To visually represent the interactive process during *reading aloud* sessions, the following diagram illustrates the cyclical flow of communication and engagement between teacher and students. This model highlights the reciprocal nature of classroom literacy interaction, where teacher input leads to student engagement, which in turn elicits response, peer collaboration, and ongoing feedback.

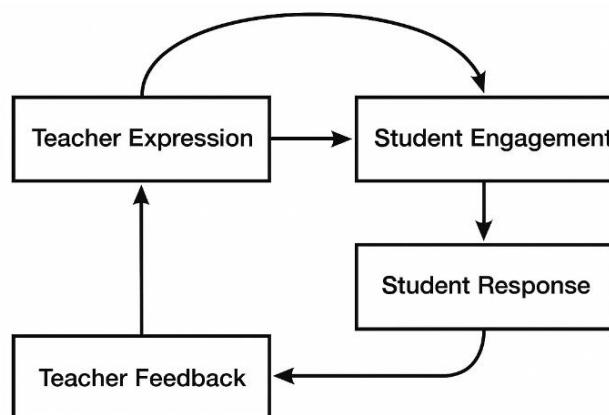


Figure 2. Interaction Flow During Reading Aloud Sessions

As illustrated in Figure 1, the interaction between teacher expression and student responses during *reading aloud* sessions forms a dynamic and reciprocal process that supports both cognitive and social aspects of early literacy. To provide further depth and evidence to this model, Table presents a summary of key qualitative findings derived from classroom observations and interviews. These findings are accompanied by direct verbatim quotes that exemplify the real experiences of students and the teacher throughout the intervention.

Tabel 2. Summary of Qualitative Findings on Reading Aloud Implementation

Aspect observed	Finding	Verbatim Quotes
Reading Fluency	Students read with improved rhythm and fewer hesitations.	"They used to read haltingly, now they're fluent and expressive." – Teacher
Pronunciation	More accurate word articulation, especially for new or difficult words	"Now I can read the word 'spell' it! It used to be hard" – Student A
Comprehension	Better understanding of text, main ideas, and characters.	"The character is Kancil; he's naughty but clever." – Student B
Motivation and Engagement	Students volunteered to read and asked for more stories.	"Miss, may I read the story again?" – Student C
Peer Interaction	Peer assistance and discussion increased.	"I helped him read because he forgot the word 'ran'." – Student D
Teacher's Facilitation	Expressive storytelling drew student attention.	"If I read flatly, they get bored. But when I use character voices, they get excited." – Teacher

Based on Table 1, which summarizes the main findings of this study on the implementation of the *reading aloud* method among second-grade students at UPT SDN Panyirapan, the results indicate a significant improvement in reading fluency, word pronunciation, and reading comprehension. Students who previously read with hesitation began to read more fluently with improved intonation. In terms of pronunciation, there was noticeable progress, particularly in articulating difficult or unfamiliar words that were often mispronounced before. Regarding comprehension, students were better able to answer simple questions about plot and characters after the intervention. These findings are supported by classroom observations and teacher interviews, which noted that students appeared more confident and were more capable of understanding story content compared to before the implementation of the *reading aloud* method.

Beyond cognitive improvements, this study also identified positive impacts on students' affective and social dimensions. Students' motivation and interest in reading increased significantly, as reflected in their enthusiasm during shared reading activities with the teacher and their desire to listen to more stories. During these sessions, students actively participated in class discussions, helped peers with word pronunciation, and confidently expressed their opinions about the content. This indicates that *reading aloud* functions not only as a strategy to enhance reading skills, but also as a medium for developing students' social and emotional competencies. The teacher played a crucial role in fostering an engaging learning environment through varied intonation, facial expressions, and gestures that maintained students' attention and interest.

However, the study also revealed several challenges in implementing the *reading aloud* method. Differences in students' reading abilities posed a significant barrier, as those with lower proficiency required more intensive support to participate effectively. Additionally, the limited availability of reading materials appropriate for students' skill levels was a constraint, necessitating the

teacher's careful selection of interesting and suitable texts. Overall, the findings underscore the critical role of the teacher as a facilitator of interactive literacy instruction and highlight the need for institutional support to provide adequate reading materials. With these supporting factors in place, the *reading aloud* method can be optimized as a strategic approach to enhance early reading skills in lower primary classrooms.

To provide a deeper understanding of the behavioral responses observed during the implementation of the *reading aloud* method, a thematic analysis was conducted based on classroom field notes. This analysis identified four recurring and interrelated themes that reflect the students' cognitive, affective, and social engagement. These themes include: (1) Engagement, seen through increased attention and enthusiasm during reading sessions; (2) Verbal Participation, marked by students' willingness to read aloud and respond to questions; (3) Collaboration, evident in peer support and shared reading activities; and (4) Emotional Expression, shown through joy, laughter, and empathetic reactions to story content.

The following figure presents these core themes in a visual format to illustrate the holistic nature of student interaction during *reading aloud* sessions:

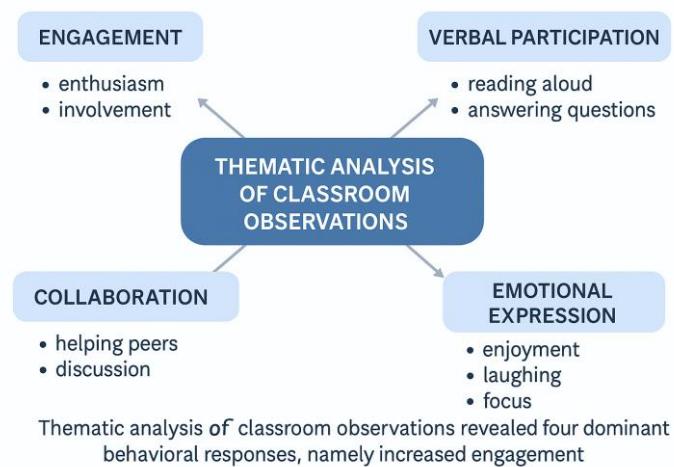


Figure 2. Thematic Map of Classroom Observation Findings

CONCLUSION

This study provides compelling evidence that the *reading aloud* method meaningfully enhances early reading abilities among lower-grade primary school students, particularly in the areas of fluency, pronunciation, and comprehension. Moreover, the method contributes significantly to students' emotional engagement and social interaction during literacy activities. These outcomes underscore that *reading aloud* is not merely a technical reading strategy but a holistic pedagogical approach that fosters affective and interpersonal development alongside cognitive growth.

Importantly, the research highlights that the success of *reading aloud* is contingent on several contextual factors, such as teacher preparedness, availability of age-appropriate reading materials, and the varying literacy levels among students. While the short-term impacts were promising, the study did not investigate the long-term sustainability of these gains or the influence of external factors such as family literacy environments. Future research may explore the integration of digital storybooks in read-aloud activities or examine the method's long-term impact on students' independent reading habits. Investigating the role of parental involvement in reinforcing reading aloud at home may also yield valuable insights. Therefore, the findings should not be overgeneralized across different educational contexts without considering these limitations. Nonetheless, the research contributes to the growing body of literature emphasizing socially interactive and expressive literacy practices in early education.

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