

Analysis of students' reading comprehension skills in Indonesian language subject of fourth-grade students at SDN Barurambat Kota 1 pamekasan

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the reading comprehension skills of fourth-grade students at SDN Barurambat Kota 1 Pamekasan in the Indonesian language subject. The research focuses on students' mastery of reading comprehension indicators in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum, including the ability to identify main ideas, understand explicit and implicit information, interpret vocabulary in context, draw logical conclusions, and evaluate the author's purpose. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through reading comprehension tests based on ten indicators, classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and documentation. The results revealed variations in students' reading comprehension abilities. Students in the high-ability group demonstrated good literal and inferential comprehension, used active strategies such as summarizing, and showed strong motivation to read. Meanwhile, most students were in the moderate and low categories, showing difficulties in identifying implicit information, interpreting contextual vocabulary, and constructing coherent conclusions. These findings indicate that most students are still at the literal comprehension level, while inferential and evaluative skills remain underdeveloped. The study concludes that limited vocabulary mastery, low motivation, and the use of conventional teaching strategies hinder reading comprehension development. Therefore, teachers need to design contextual and student-centered learning strategies to improve comprehension skills holistically. The results of this research are expected to serve as a reference for strengthening school literacy culture and developing innovative reading instruction models

Keywords : Reading Comprehension Skills; Indonesian Language Learning; Merdeka Curriculum; Elementary School Students



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1. Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill that serves as the cornerstone of the learning process in elementary education. It is not merely the ability to recognize symbols, letters, or words, but also involves the cognitive processes necessary to comprehend, interpret, and evaluate texts critically (Afflerbach, 2021). Effective reading comprehension enables students to acquire knowledge independently, engage with various academic contents, and develop higher-order thinking skills. In the context of Indonesian language learning in elementary schools, reading comprehension is particularly crucial as it facilitates students' understanding of lesson materials, enhances their communication skills, and supports overall academic achievement (Sari & Pramono, 2022). Despite its importance, many elementary students in Indonesia still struggle to comprehend texts thoroughly, whether at the literal, inferential, or evaluative level. These challenges may hinder their ability to construct meaning, respond critically to information, and integrate knowledge across subjects.

The urgency of addressing reading comprehension difficulties is highlighted by international and national assessments. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022, Indonesia scored below the OECD average in reading literacy, reflecting a persistent challenge in developing students' reading skills (OECD, 2023). PISA results indicate that many students have difficulty understanding implicit information, identifying key ideas, and drawing conclusions from texts. This national trend mirrors the findings from preliminary observations at SDN Barurambat Kota 1 Pamekasan, where most fourth-grade students were unable to identify the main ideas, interpret contextual vocabulary accurately, or construct logical inferences based on passages. These findings suggest that current teaching strategies may not sufficiently address students' comprehension needs, thereby necessitating more effective and contextually relevant instructional approaches (Haryanto, 2021).

Several studies have investigated strategies for improving reading comprehension among elementary students. Reciprocal teaching, for example,

has been shown to enhance comprehension through collaborative strategies such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing texts (Sari & Pramono, 2022). Similarly, other studies have indicated that scaffolding strategies, including guided reading, discussion-based learning, and interactive literacy activities, significantly improve students' comprehension and engagement (Wijayanti et al., 2023). Despite these findings, the majority of studies primarily focus on evaluating the effectiveness of specific instructional interventions rather than providing a comprehensive analysis of students' reading profiles and the underlying factors influencing their comprehension skills. This research gap highlights the need for a more holistic understanding of students' reading processes and difficulties, particularly within the Indonesian elementary education context.

The novelty of the present study lies in its qualitative case study design, which integrates multiple sources of evidence, including reading comprehension tests, classroom observations, and teacher and student interviews. By combining these methods, this research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of students' reading comprehension abilities, both in terms of outcomes and cognitive processes. Unlike previous studies that primarily quantify reading performance, this study emphasizes the interplay between internal factors (such as students' prior knowledge, vocabulary, and motivation) and external factors (such as teaching methods, classroom interactions, and learning resources) in shaping reading comprehension outcomes (Kusumaningrum, 2022). This approach allows educators and researchers to gain a richer, more nuanced understanding of how comprehension skills develop and how instructional practices can be tailored to students' needs.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to analyze the reading comprehension skills of fourth-grade students at SDN Barurambat Kota 1 Pamekasan in the context of Indonesian language learning. The study seeks to provide a detailed description of students' comprehension abilities, identify the challenges they face, and explore the factors that influence their reading

processes. The expected outcomes of this research are twofold: first, to inform the design of effective, student-centered reading instruction strategies that enhance comprehension skills; and second, to contribute to the literature on reading pedagogy in elementary education by offering context-specific insights into the factors affecting students' literacy development. Ultimately, this study aims to support teachers in fostering critical thinking, metacognitive awareness, and comprehensive literacy skills among elementary students, thereby improving their overall reading performance and academic achievement.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design aimed at providing an in-depth understanding of the reading comprehension skills of fourth-grade students at SDN Barurambat Kota 1 Pamekasan. The case study approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to examine learning phenomena within a real and bounded context through multiple data sources comprehensively (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research subjects consisted of 32 fourth-grade students, with six students purposively selected for deeper analysis representing high, medium, and low levels of reading ability. The data were collected through four main instruments, namely a reading comprehension test, classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The reading comprehension test consisted of 11 essay questions developed based on ten comprehension indicators aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, including the ability to identify main ideas, understand explicit and implicit information, interpret contextual vocabulary, draw conclusions, and evaluate the content of the text. Other instruments, such as observation sheets and interview guides, were used to gather data on teachers' strategies, students' reading behaviors, and factors influencing comprehension. All instruments were validated by five experts, consisting of one lecturer specializing in Indonesian language education and four experienced elementary school teachers, using Aiken's V formula to assess content validity. A limited pilot test was also conducted in a non-sample

class to ensure reliability and item clarity. Data collection was carried out in three stages: pre-field, field, and post-field. The pre-field stage involved validation, revision, and scheduling of data collection; the field stage consisted of administering reading comprehension tests, observing Indonesian language lessons, conducting interviews with teachers and students, and collecting supporting documents; and the post-field stage included verification through member checking and triangulation among data sources. Data were analyzed interactively following the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Test results were categorized into three levels of ability (high, medium, and low), while qualitative data from interviews and observations were coded according to the ten reading indicators. The credibility of the data was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, member checks, audit trails, and researcher reflexivity to minimize bias. Ethically, the researcher obtained formal permission from the school, parental consent, and maintained the confidentiality of participants' identities by using pseudonyms or codes. This methodological approach provided a comprehensive picture of students' reading comprehension abilities while strengthening the findings through integration between test results and classroom observations.

Table 1. Research Timeline and Activities

Stage	Activities	Duration
Planning	Literature review, instrument development, expert validation	Weeks 1–3
Pre-Field	Pilot testing, instrument revision, scheduling	Weeks 4–5
Field	Administering reading tests, classroom observation, interviews, documentation collection	Weeks 6–10
Post-Field	Data verification (member checking), triangulation, coding and analysis	Weeks 11–14
Reporting	Writing findings, discussion, and conclusion	Weeks 15–16

This table presents the four-month research timeline, detailing each stage of the study, associated activities, and their respective durations. The timeline illustrates the systematic approach taken to ensure comprehensive data collection, analysis, and reporting of students' reading comprehension abilities.

This timeline provides a clear framework for executing the research in stages, ensuring reliability and validity in collecting and analyzing data regarding fourth-grade students' reading comprehension skills.

3. Result and Discussion

The results of this study revealed variations in the reading comprehension levels of fourth-grade students at SDN Barurambat Kota 1 Pamekasan. Based on the reading comprehension test consisting of ten indicators, it was found that most students fell within the medium and low categories, while only a small proportion demonstrated high levels of proficiency. Students in the high category were able to identify the main ideas, comprehend both explicit and implicit information, and draw logical conclusions using active reading strategies such as summarizing and connecting the text to personal experiences. In contrast, students in the medium and low categories experienced difficulties in interpreting contextual vocabulary, identifying implied meanings, and formulating coherent conclusions from the text. Observational data supported these findings, showing that classroom activities were still dominated by turn-taking reading and simple question-answer methods without the use of deeper comprehension strategies. Teachers tended to focus on students' final answers rather than the critical thinking processes involved in constructing meaning from the text.

Interviews with students and teachers indicated that the low level of reading comprehension skills was influenced by several factors, including limited vocabulary mastery, low reading interest, and monotonous instructional strategies. Some students stated that they often struggled with difficult words in texts and rarely read outside of school assignments. Teachers acknowledged that reading lessons were still focused on achieving basic cognitive comprehension

rather than developing analytical and evaluative skills. This situation shows that reading instruction at the elementary level remains oriented toward literal comprehension and has not optimally developed inferential and evaluative understanding.

According to Gunning (2021), reading comprehension involves an active process of connecting meaning, experience, and context. Students with high reading proficiency were found to use metacognitive strategies, such as self-monitoring comprehension and predicting text content, consistent with Snow and Sweet's (2020) assertion that comprehension requires the integration of cognitive processing and learning motivation. Conversely, students with lower ability tended to read mechanically without constructing meaning, thus failing to connect implicit information within the text. This finding aligns with Wulandari's (2022) study, which showed that elementary students generally struggled to answer inferential questions due to limited vocabulary mastery and minimal reading experience outside the classroom.

Furthermore, this study highlights that teachers play a crucial role in developing students' reading comprehension. Teachers who apply interactive strategies such as reciprocal teaching or guided reading can enhance students' engagement and help them collaboratively construct meaning. This finding is consistent with Hidayat and Sugiarti (2023), who reported that implementing small-group discussion-based reading strategies significantly improves students' inferential comprehension skills. However, in the context of this study, the teacher still relied on a traditional, teacher-centered approach, which limited opportunities for students to develop critical and reflective thinking during reading activities.

Overall, the findings of this study illustrate that most students are still at the literal comprehension stage and have not yet developed inferential and evaluative comprehension skills optimally. The main contributing factors include limited vocabulary mastery, low reading motivation, a lack of independent reading practice, and teacher-centered instructional methods that do not foster

critical thinking. Therefore, it is necessary to implement more contextual and student-centered reading strategies, such as reciprocal teaching, the use of texts based on local culture, and the integration of audio-visual media to support deeper understanding. These results not only reinforce previous research findings but also contribute new insights to the field of Indonesian language learning by emphasizing the importance of innovative reading instruction models that promote comprehensive literacy development in elementary education.

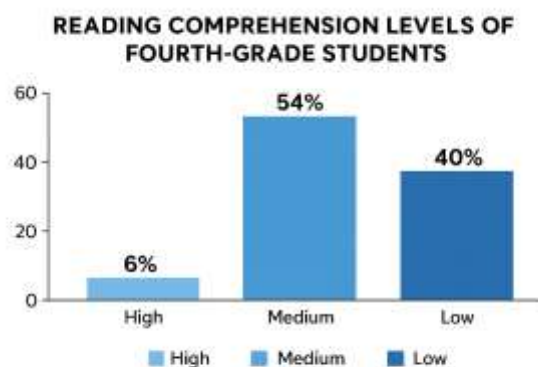


Figure 1. Reading Comprehension Levels of Fourth-Grade Students at SDN Barurambat Kota 1 Pamekasan

Based on the image above, it can be concluded that the reading comprehension skills of fourth-grade students at SDN Barurambat Kota 1 Pamekasan vary, with the distribution as follows:

- High: Only 6% of students have high reading comprehension skills, indicating that very few students are able to understand texts well.
- Medium: The majority of students, 54%, fall into the medium category, showing adequate reading comprehension skills but still needing improvement.
- Low: As many as 40% of students are in the low category, meaning that a significant number of students experience difficulties in understanding the texts they read.

These data indicate that most students' reading comprehension skills are not yet optimal, with 94% of students falling into the medium and low categories. This highlights the need for more effective teaching strategies to improve students' reading comprehension abilities.

4. Conclusion

grade students at SDN Barurambat Kota 1 Pamekasan are varied but generally remain at moderate to low levels. A small number of students demonstrated proficiency in literal and inferential comprehension, while the majority still struggled to interpret implicit meanings, understand contextual vocabulary, and draw logical conclusions from texts. The factors contributing to these difficulties include limited vocabulary mastery, low reading motivation, a lack of independent reading practice, and the use of traditional, teacher-centered instructional methods. Therefore, innovative and student-centered reading instruction is required, emphasizing contextual and interactive strategies such as reciprocal teaching, the use of culturally relevant texts, and the integration of audio-visual media to help students construct meaning more effectively. The study is expected to serve as a reference for teachers in developing Indonesian language learning models that foster critical, reflective, and literate thinking among elementary school students.

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