THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE READING ALOUD METHOD IN IMPROVING FIFTH-GRADE STUDENTS' SHORT STORY READING SKILLS

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill that must be mastered by elementary school students, particularly in understanding literary texts such as short stories. However, classroom practices in elementary schools often reveal persistent challenges, including students' limited ability to comprehend texts, identify narrative elements, and retell story content effectively. This study aims to examine the effect of the reading aloud method on improving short story reading skills among fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 2 Tiakur. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design was employed by implementing the reading aloud method in reading instruction. The research subjects consisted of fifth-grade students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a short story reading skills test and analyzed through inferential statistical techniques. The findings indicate that the reading aloud method has a significant effect on enhancing students' reading skills, particularly in terms of reading comprehension, pronunciation accuracy, intonation, and the ability to retell story content. These results suggest that reading aloud not only improves technical aspects of reading but also fosters students' cognitive and affective engagement in the learning process. Therefore, the reading aloud method is recommended as an effective instructional strategy for improving short story reading skills in elementary school settings.

Keywords: *Reading Aloud, Reading Skills, Short Stories, Elementary School Students, Indonesian Language Learning*

Abstrak

Keterampilan membaca pemahaman merupakan kompetensi dasar yang harus dikuasai siswa sekolah dasar, khususnya dalam memahami teks sastra seperti cerita pendek. Namun, pada praktik pembelajaran di sekolah dasar masih ditemukan berbagai permasalahan, antara lain rendahnya kemampuan siswa dalam memahami isi bacaan, mengidentifikasi unsur cerita, serta mengungkapkan kembali makna teks secara lisan maupun tertulis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh metode reading aloud terhadap peningkatan keterampilan membaca cerita pendek pada siswa kelas V SD Negeri 2 Tiakur. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain eksperimen semu (quasi experiment) melalui penerapan metode reading aloud dalam pembelajaran membaca. Subjek penelitian adalah siswa kelas V yang dipilih secara purposive. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes keterampilan membaca cerita pendek dan dianalisis menggunakan teknik statistik inferensial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan metode reading aloud memberikan pengaruh signifikan terhadap peningkatan keterampilan membaca siswa, terutama pada aspek pemahaman isi teks, pelafalan, intonasi, dan kemampuan mengungkapkan kembali cerita. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa metode reading aloud tidak hanya berperan dalam meningkatkan aspek teknis membaca, tetapi juga mendorong keterlibatan kognitif dan afektif siswa dalam proses pembelajaran. Dengan demikian, metode reading aloud direkomendasikan sebagai salah satu strategi pembelajaran efektif untuk meningkatkan keterampilan membaca cerita pendek pada siswa sekolah dasar.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a process designed to influence students to adapt optimally to their environment and produce behavioral changes that benefit social life. Education serves not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a vehicle for developing basic skills that support the sustainability of individual and social life (Hamalik, 2017). The goal of Indonesian national education, as stated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, is to advance the nation's intellectual life, which demands the provision of quality and equitable education for all citizens. However, fundamental problems remain in the world of education, particularly regarding expanding access and equalizing the quality of education between urban and rural areas (Hakim, 2016).

One fundamental aspect of basic education is language proficiency. Language is a unique human characteristic that functions as a communication system and a core part of culture. Language is not only a tool for conveying ideas but also plays a crucial role in the formation and development of human culture (Devianty, 2017). In learning Indonesian, there are four interrelated and inseparable language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are a unified whole that must be developed in a balanced manner so that students can communicate effectively (Tarigan, 2015).

Reading is one of the basic skills that elementary school students must master because it allows them to acquire information, broaden their horizons, and develop their reasoning and imagination. Reading is not only interpreted as the act of pronouncing written symbols, but also as a process of deeply understanding the meaning of a text (Snow, 2002). However, the reality on the ground shows that students' reading skills have not yet fully developed optimally. Based on initial observations conducted on February 24, 2025, at SD Negeri 2 Tiakur, it was found that the majority of fifth-grade students still experienced difficulty comprehending reading material, particularly short stories, and were unable to retell the story coherently and clearly. This situation indicates that students' reading skills still need to be improved through the implementation of appropriate learning strategies.

One factor contributing to students' low reading skills is the lack of variety in teaching methods used by teachers. Conventional reading instruction tends to make students passive and less actively involved in the reading process. Therefore, learning methods are needed that can increase student engagement cognitively and affectively. The reading aloud method is considered an effective strategy for improving elementary school students' reading skills. Fisher et al. (2004) explain that reading aloud is a reading activity that can help students focus attention, build understanding, raise questions, and stimulate discussion during the learning process. Through reading aloud, students not only see the words but also pronounce them, thereby strengthening the connection between sound, word, and meaning.

This opinion is supported by Smith (2002), who stated that reading aloud can improve reading comprehension because students are actively involved in processing the text. The activity of

reading aloud allows students to grasp the language structure, intonation, and meaning of the text more deeply. In the context of learning literature, particularly short stories, the reading aloud method provides a more vivid and meaningful reading experience. Short stories, as a form of literature, are characterized by simple language yet rich in meaning, making them highly suitable for practicing elementary school students' reading comprehension skills.

Rasinski's (2010) research, published in The Reading Teacher, shows that reading aloud can improve students' reading fluency, pronunciation, and retention of reading content. Furthermore, reading aloud also contributes to increasing students' self-confidence and their ability to re-express the content of the text they read. Therefore, implementing the reading aloud method in teaching short stories is expected to address the reading skill challenges experienced by fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 2 Tiakur.

Based on this description, this study is important to conduct empirically to assess the effectiveness of the reading aloud method in improving fifth-grade elementary school students' short story reading skills. The results are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of language learning strategies.

METHOD

This research used a quantitative approach with an experimental method. Experimental research aims to test the causal relationship between variables by administering a specific treatment to the experimental group and comparing it with the control group (Creswell, 2014). The design used was a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test, post-test, control group design, as randomization of subjects was not possible.

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 2 Tiakur in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The study population was all 52 fifth-grade students. The sampling technique used limited sampling (total sampling), so the entire population was sampled. The sample was divided into two classes designated by the school: class VA as the experimental group and class VB as the control group.

The experimental group was given treatment in the form of short story reading using the read-aloud method, while the control group received reading instruction using the conventional method (lecture). Reading skills were measured before and after the treatment (pre-test) and after the treatment (post-test).

Research Design

Table 1. Quasi-Experimental Design (Pretest–Posttest Control Group Design)

Group	Pretest	Treatment	Posttest
Experimental	O_1	X	O_2
Control	O_3	–	O_4

Notes:

O_1, O_3 = Pretest of reading skills

X = Treatment using the reading aloud method

O_2, O_4 = Posttest of reading skills

Research Variables

The independent variable in this study was the reading aloud method, while the dependent variable was students' short story reading skills.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data collection was conducted through reading skills tests and observations. The tests were administered twice, a pre-test and a post-test, using the same instrument to avoid differences in question difficulty. The tests aimed to measure students' ability to comprehend the content of short stories. Observations were used to support the quantitative data by observing student engagement during the learning process.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics using IBM SPSS version 24. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the average scores and distribution of the pre-test and post-test results. Inferential statistics were used to test the research hypotheses using the Independent Sample t-test.

Prior to hypothesis testing, prerequisite tests were conducted, including a Shapiro–Wilk normality test and a homogeneity test. Data were declared normally distributed and homogeneous if the significance value was >0.05. Hypothesis testing was conducted with the following conditions: if the Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05 then H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, which means there is an influence of the reading aloud method on students' reading skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study used a quasi-experimental design involving two classes: Class VA as the experimental group implementing the reading-aloud method, and Class VB as the control group using conventional learning. The study began with a pre-test administered to both classes, followed by three sessions of teaching, and concluded with a post-test to determine the effect of the treatment.

Before use, all research instruments, including lesson plans, pre- and post-tests, and observation sheets, were validated by experts from the Elementary School Teacher Education Department of the Southwest Maluku PSDKU and declared suitable for use.

Implementation of the Reading-Aloud Method

Observations on the implementation of the learning showed an improvement in the quality of the reading-aloud method implementation at each meeting. In the first meeting, implementation reached 60%, categorized as quite effective. In the second meeting, implementation increased to 75%, categorized as effective, and in the third meeting, it reached 85%, categorized as very effective. This indicates that teachers and students are becoming more familiar with the stages of the reading-aloud method, resulting in a more optimal learning process.

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Table 2. Implementation of the Reading Aloud Method

Meeting	Percentage	Category
Meeting 1	60%	Moderately Effective
Meeting 2	75%	Effective
Meeting 3	85%	Very Effective

Short Story Reading Skills

The results of the descriptive post-test analysis showed a significant difference between the experimental and control classes. In the experimental class, the average post-test score reached 80.40, with the majority of students in the good to excellent category. In contrast, the control class achieved an average score of 46.85, with the majority of students in the fair to poor categories.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Post-Test Scores

Group	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Experimental Group	25	80.40	70	95
Control Group	27	46.85	30	60

The distribution of scores showed that 71.42% of students in the experimental class were in the excellent category, while in the control class, 78.57% were only in the fair category. These findings indicate that the reading aloud method has a positive impact on students' short story reading skills.

Prerequisite Test and Hypothesis Test

The results of the Shapiro–Wilk normality test showed that the post-test data in both classes were normally distributed (Sig. > 0.05). The homogeneity test also indicated that the data were homogeneous (Sig. = 0.442). With the prerequisite tests met, the hypothesis was tested using an Independent Sample t-Test.

The results of the hypothesis test showed a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05, meaning H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. Thus, there is a significant difference between the reading skills of students learning using the reading aloud method and those learning using the conventional method.

Discussion

The research results show that the implementation of the reading aloud method had a positive impact on improving the short story reading skills of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 2 Tiakur. This finding aligns with the view that reading aloud is an effective learning strategy for developing phonological aspects, reading fluency, comprehension, and oral language skills (Rasinski, 2012; Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2008). Through reading aloud, students not only act as readers but also as active listeners engaged in the collective process of understanding the text, thereby making learning more meaningful (Snow, 2002).

The improvement in learning implementation, from fairly effective in the initial meeting to very effective in the third meeting, demonstrates that the reading aloud method is able to create a conducive and participatory learning environment. This aligns with social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of interaction and active student involvement in constructing knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). When students read text aloud and discuss the content, they are in the context of the zone of proximal development, which allows for optimal reading development through the guidance of teachers and peers. Empirically, the experimental class's post-test scores were higher than those of the control class, indicating that the reading-aloud method is more effective than conventional learning. This finding supports previous research suggesting that reading aloud can improve elementary school students' reading fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and reading comprehension (Alshumaimeri & Almasri, 2012; Lane & Wright, 2007). Anderson et al. (1985) also emphasized that meaningful reading experiences from an early age contribute to long-term literacy development.

The reading-aloud method also plays a role in enriching students' vocabulary and improving their ability to understand the context of a story. When students listen and read text simultaneously, they acquire models of correct pronunciation, intonation, and expression, which indirectly strengthens semantic and syntactic understanding (Nation, 2009; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). This is evident in the increased number of students achieving excellent grades in the experimental class compared to the control class.

From a cognitive perspective, reading aloud helps students integrate visual and auditory processes simultaneously, thereby improving memory and comprehension of the reading content (Ehri, 2005; Rasinski, Reutzel, Chard, & Linan-Thompson, 2011). Summarizing stories and expressing opinions after reading also fosters higher-order thinking skills, such as analyzing and evaluating information obtained from the text (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

In contrast, the relatively low results in the control class indicate that conventional reading instruction tends to position students as passive recipients of information. This aligns with the findings of Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), who stated that low student engagement in reading can impact motivation and learning outcomes. Without read-aloud activities and discussions, students miss out on opportunities to develop optimal reading fluency and comprehension. Thus, the results of this study reinforce previous findings that confirm that the reading aloud method is an effective learning strategy in improving elementary school students' reading skills, both in terms of reading techniques and reading comprehension (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017; Mol, Bus, de Jong, & Smeets, 2008). The application of this method is also relevant to the demands of 21st-century learning that emphasizes activeness, collaboration, and strengthening students' basic literacy.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussions that have been conducted, it can be concluded that the application of the reading aloud method in learning to read short stories can significantly improve the reading skills of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 2 Tiakur. Learning with this method encourages active student involvement in reading, listening, and understanding the text, so that the learning process becomes more interactive and meaningful. The difference in learning outcomes between the experimental class and the control class shows that the reading aloud method is more effective than conventional learning in improving reading fluency, reading comprehension, and student participation. Therefore, the reading aloud method can be used as an alternative reading learning strategy recommended for use by elementary school teachers in an effort to improve the quality of literacy learning.

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