



The Implementation of POCA (Reading Corner) Literacy Program to Developed Students' Vocabulary Mastery and Their Involvement English Learning Process at Fifth Grade of Elementary School

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Received: 2025-08-11 Accepted: 2025-09-15

DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v13i2.7772

Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of the POCA (Print–Oral–Contextual–Action) literacy program to enhance vocabulary mastery and increase student involvement in English learning among fifth-grade students at SD Al-Fatih Islamic School. Using Classroom Action Research (CAR), the study was conducted in two cycles with a total of 20 students. The program focused specifically on verbs related to daily activities such as waking up, walking, eating, and going to school. Data were collected through vocabulary tests, structured classroom observations, and student interviews. Quantitative findings revealed substantial improvement in students' vocabulary scores, rising from a mean of 68.4 (pre-cycle) to 76.2 (post-test Cycle I) and 85.6 (post-test Cycle II), with 92% of students meeting the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) set at 75. Qualitative data also showed higher engagement, with students demonstrating active participation and improved confidence in using verbs contextually. These findings suggest that literacy-based learning, particularly the POCA model, is effective because It not only strengthens vocabulary acquisition but also fosters motivation and meaningful involvement in the English learning process.

Keywords: *Implementation, Literacy, Vocabulary mastery, English Learning Process, Students' Involvement.*

Introduction

Literacy is widely recognized as a foundational skill that significantly influences students' academic performance and lifelong learning capacity. In the Indonesian educational context, literacy encompasses not only the ability to read and write but also the competence to comprehend, interpret, and critically evaluate information from various sources. According to the 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, Indonesia ranked 59th out of 81 participating countries in reading literacy, highlighting persistent challenges in students' reading proficiency. Although the ranking showed a slight improvement compared to 2018, the data also indicated that many Indonesian students still struggle with vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension, particularly at the primary school level. These challenges have been further compounded by the learning disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the urgency of implementing effective literacy programs in schools.

The importance of literacy development is evident in its direct correlation with students' overall academic achievement. A well-structured literacy program not only enriches students' vocabulary but also fosters higher-order thinking skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. As Papen (2016) emphasizes, literacy skills are not confined to reading and writing alone but encompass a broader spectrum of social and cultural competencies developed through sustained engagement in literacy practices. Therefore, literacy initiatives in schools must be deliberately designed to promote active reading habits, vocabulary acquisition, and meaningful comprehension, all of which serve as critical foundations for academic success.

In the era of globalization, English has emerged as a vital life skill and a gateway to global communication, knowledge, and cultural exchange. From elementary education through higher education, English is taught as a compulsory subject in Indonesia. However, many primary school students, particularly at the upper-grade level, still perceive English as a difficult subject. Limited vocabulary knowledge is one of the main barriers to mastering the language, as it hampers students' ability to comprehend spoken and written texts, participate in class discussions, and express themselves effectively. According to Nation (2020), vocabulary knowledge is a central component of language proficiency, serving as the basis for both comprehension and communication. Without adequate vocabulary, students are likely to face difficulties in understanding even simple texts or engaging in basic conversations.

Observations conducted at SD Al-Fatih Islamic School revealed that many fifth-grade students exhibit low levels of English vocabulary mastery and minimal involvement in English learning activities. This lack of engagement often manifests in passive classroom behavior, reduced focus, and limited participation in discussions. Such disengagement has contributed to students' underachievement,

with many failing to meet the Minimum Completeness Criteria (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum, KKM) for English. In response to these challenges, the school implemented several literacy-based initiatives tailored to different grade levels, including the Kamis Membaca (KACA) program for grade 4, the Pojok Baca (POCA/Reading Corner) program for grade 5, and the Jumat Membaca (JUMCA) program for grade 6.

The POCA program, which is the focus of this study, aims to cultivate students' reading habits and expand their vocabulary through structured and accessible reading opportunities. Each fifth-grade classroom is equipped with a reading corner containing a variety of age-appropriate materials such as short stories, Islamic moral narratives, illustrated texts, and student-created booklets. The program encourages students to read both during designated literacy sessions and in their free time, thereby promoting independent learning and consistent vocabulary exposure. Research by Fitriyah (2021) supports the use of reading corners as an effective strategy for fostering informal learning, as they allow students to engage with reading materials at their own pace while gradually improving their comprehension and word knowledge.

In addition to providing diverse reading materials, the POCA program incorporates activities that connect vocabulary learning to students' everyday experiences. For example, short stories depicting daily routines—such as waking up, going to school, or helping parents—introduce practical vocabulary in a familiar context, making the words more meaningful and easier to remember. This contextualized approach aligns with the findings of Rahmawati and Wulandari (2021), who argue that vocabulary acquisition is more effective when taught through relatable situations. Moreover, the program encourages students to write short reflections or summaries after reading, further reinforcing their understanding and use of new vocabulary.

Student engagement is a crucial factor in the success of vocabulary learning. Alqahtani (2021) and Hidayati (2020) highlight that low motivation and participation often stem from uninteresting or irrelevant learning materials. By integrating enjoyable and contextually relevant reading activities, the POCA program seeks to address this issue, fostering both motivation and active involvement. The program's design also aligns with the principles of Classroom Action Research (CAR), which emphasize iterative cycles of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection to continuously improve teaching strategies and student outcomes.

Given these considerations, this study investigates the implementation of the POCA literacy program as a strategy to enhance fifth-grade students' vocabulary mastery and their involvement in the English learning process. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How can a literacy program develop students' vocabulary, particularly verbs related to daily activities? and (2)

How can a literacy program promote students' active participation in the English learning process? By exploring these questions, the study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on literacy-based vocabulary instruction and to provide practical insights for educators seeking to improve language learning outcomes in similar contexts.

Previous research on literacy programs has largely emphasized reading comprehension and general vocabulary, but few have explored structured interventions targeting verbs of daily activities—a core component of communicative competence. This gap highlights the need for a literacy-based instructional model that not only builds vocabulary but also increases learner involvement in the English classroom.

This study addressed the following questions:

1. To what extent does the POCA literacy program improve students' mastery of verbs related to daily activities?
2. How does the program foster greater involvement in the English learning process?

Method

Research Design

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR), following the cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection across two cycles. Participants: 20 fifth-grade students (11 boys, 9 girls) at SD Al-Fatih Islamic School. Focus: Vocabulary instruction centered on verbs related to daily routines (e.g., wake up, walk, eat, go, sleep).

Intervention: The POCA program integrated four components:

Print: exposure through age-appropriate reading materials and stories about daily routines.

Oral: practice via guided storytelling and retelling activities.

Contextual: exercises linking verbs to students' real lives.

Action: tasks where students enacted daily activities using target verbs.

Duration: Conducted from March–April 2025, with each cycle consisting of four sessions.

Instruments: Vocabulary tests (pre-test, post-test Cycle I, post-test Cycle II), observation checklists, and semi-structured interviews.

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to investigate the implementation of the POCA (Reading Corner) literacy program in improving students' vocabulary mastery and their involvement in the English learning process. CAR was selected because it allows for systematic, reflective, and cyclical improvement of teaching and learning practices within the classroom

context. Following Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) model, the research was conducted through iterative cycles consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Each cycle aimed to address existing learning problems, test literacy-based strategies, and evaluate their effectiveness in real classroom settings. The school has integrated literacy programs into its curriculum, making it an ideal setting for this research.

Research Procedure

The research was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of the following stages:

1. Planning

Identifying students' vocabulary difficulties and low engagement through initial observation and interviews with the English teacher. Preparing lesson plans integrating the POCA literacy program with vocabulary learning activities. Selecting and organizing age-appropriate reading materials, including short stories, illustrated texts, and thematic booklets focused on daily activities. Designing assessment tools such as vocabulary tests, observation checklists, and student questionnaires.

2. Action

Implementing the POCA literacy program in the classroom, where students engaged in independent and guided reading sessions using the reading corner. Introducing target vocabulary before reading and reinforcing it through post-reading activities such as summarizing, storytelling, and vocabulary games. Encouraging students to create short written reflections to apply newly learned vocabulary.

3. Observation

Monitoring students' vocabulary use, participation, and reading engagement through systematic classroom observation. Recording data on students' performance during vocabulary exercises and active involvement in discussions.

4. Reflection

Analyzing the collected data to determine the effectiveness of the implemented strategies. Identifying strengths and weaknesses in the cycle's implementation to inform improvements for the subsequent cycle.

Data Collection Techniques

Multiple instruments were used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data:

1. Vocabulary Tests: Administered at the end of each cycle to measure students' mastery of target vocabulary.
2. Observation Checklists: Used to record students' participation, reading engagement, and classroom behavior.
3. Field Notes: Documented the researcher's and teacher's reflections during the implementation process.
4. Questionnaires: Collected students' feedback on their learning experiences and attitudes toward the POCA program.
5. Interviews: Conducted with the English teacher to gather insights on changes in student performance and engagement.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed both descriptive quantitative and qualitative approaches:

1. Quantitative Data (vocabulary test scores) were analyzed by calculating the mean score, percentage of students meeting the KKM (Minimum Completeness Criteria), and improvement rate between cycles.
2. Qualitative Data (observations, interviews, and questionnaires) were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in students' engagement, reading habits, and perceptions of the program.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, triangulation of data sources was applied by comparing results from tests, observations, and interviews. The use of multiple instruments reduced potential bias and strengthened the reliability of the findings. Additionally, peer debriefing with the English teacher was conducted after each cycle to verify interpretations and conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the school principal and the English teacher. Students and their parents were informed about the research objectives, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Participation was voluntary, and students' identities were kept anonymous in all reports and publications.

Results

Cycle I

The implementation of the POCA (Reading Corner) literacy program in Cycle I aimed to introduce students to structured reading activities that focused on vocabulary enrichment. The pre-cycle vocabulary test showed that only 36% of students (9 out of 25) met the Minimum Completeness Criteria (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum, KKM) of 75, with a class mean score of 68.4. Students demonstrated limited vocabulary knowledge, particularly verbs related to daily activities such as “sweep,” “wash,” and “feed.”

During Cycle I, students were introduced to the reading corner and guided on how to select and utilize reading materials. Each session began with the teacher pre-teaching selected vocabulary, followed by independent or paired reading, and concluded with post-reading activities such as retelling and simple writing tasks. Observation data indicated that student engagement increased moderately, with 60% of students actively participating in discussions and responding to vocabulary exercises.

The post-test in Cycle I revealed an improvement in vocabulary mastery, with 68% of students (17 out of 25) achieving the KKM and the class mean score rising to 76.2. This represented an average gain of 7.8 points from the pre-cycle score. However, observation notes highlighted that some students remained passive, particularly those with lower initial vocabulary levels, and required more support during independent reading activities.

Cycle II

Based on the reflection from Cycle I, several modifications were made for Cycle II, including:

Increasing the use of interactive vocabulary games to boost motivation.

Assigning peer tutors to assist students with lower proficiency.

Providing more contextualized reading materials aligned with students' daily experiences.

In Cycle II, student participation increased significantly, with 88% of students actively engaging in reading, vocabulary exercises, and group discussions. The integration of vocabulary games and peer tutoring created a more collaborative learning environment. Field notes indicated that students began using new vocabulary spontaneously during classroom interactions and written tasks.

The post-test results of Cycle II showed substantial improvement. 92% of students (18 out of 20) achieved the KKM, with the class mean score reaching 85.6. This reflected an overall improvement of 17.2 points from the pre-cycle score. The number of students scoring above 85 increased from 2 students in Cycle I to 15

students in Cycle II.

Overall Improvement

The comparative results from pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Improvement in Vocabulary Mastery

Stage	Students Meeting KKM	Percentage	Mean Score
Pre-Cycle	9	36%	68.4
Cycle I	17	68%	76.2
Cycle II	23	92%	85.6

The data clearly demonstrate that the POCA literacy program had a significant positive impact on students' vocabulary mastery. The increase in both mean scores and the number of students meeting the KKM across the two cycles indicates that consistent exposure to reading materials, combined with interactive and contextualized vocabulary activities, effectively supported students' language development.

Student Engagement and Involvement

Observation checklists and field notes revealed a parallel improvement in student involvement in the English learning process. Initially, only a small portion of the class engaged in discussions and reading activities. By Cycle II, almost all students were actively involved, contributing ideas, asking questions, and participating in vocabulary-based games. Questionnaire responses confirmed that students found the reading corner appealing and that they enjoyed the variety of materials provided. Many students reported that they now read more frequently both in and outside of class, and they felt more confident in using new English words.

These findings suggest that the POCA literacy program was successful in fostering both vocabulary growth and active engagement in English learning. The combination of independent reading, collaborative activities, and vocabulary reinforcement created a supportive learning environment that encouraged consistent language use.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the POCA (Reading Corner) literacy program had a significant positive impact on both students' vocabulary mastery and their involvement in the English learning process. The steady improvement from the pre-cycle to Cycle II demonstrates that sustained exposure to meaningful reading activities, combined with interactive vocabulary exercises, can effectively address the challenges of limited vocabulary and low classroom participation.

1. Improvement in Vocabulary Mastery

The increase in the mean vocabulary test score from 68.4 in the pre-cycle to 85.6 in Cycle II reflects the effectiveness of the POCA program in enhancing students' vocabulary knowledge. This aligns with Nation's (2020) assertion that repeated exposure to words in meaningful contexts significantly boosts vocabulary retention. The use of age-appropriate reading materials allowed students to encounter target vocabulary multiple times, reinforcing their understanding and enabling them to use the words in both spoken and written forms.

Furthermore, the integration of contextual learning strategies—such as connecting new vocabulary to daily life experiences—proved to be highly effective. This finding is consistent with Rahmawati and Wulandari's (2021) study, which found that contextualized vocabulary instruction leads to higher retention rates compared to rote memorization. In this research, students were able to internalize verbs related to daily activities because they could directly associate them with familiar routines.

2. Increased Student Engagement

Student involvement showed a remarkable shift during the course of the study, with active participation rising from 60% in Cycle I to 88% in Cycle II. The incorporation of peer tutoring and vocabulary games in Cycle II created a more dynamic learning atmosphere, reducing anxiety and encouraging collaboration among students. These findings echo Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that learning is a social process and that peer interaction can enhance comprehension and skill development. The questionnaire responses and observation note also revealed that the reading corner fostered a sense of autonomy and ownership over the learning process. Students enjoyed selecting their own reading materials, which supported their intrinsic motivation to read. This aligns with Guthrie and Wigfield's (2000) concept of engagement, which highlights the role of choice, relevance, and enjoyment in sustaining students' motivation to read and learn.

3. Literacy Program as a Vehicle for Language Development

The success of the POCA program demonstrates that literacy initiatives can be effectively leveraged to strengthen language skills in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. While many literacy programs primarily target reading comprehension, this research shows that they can also serve as powerful tools for vocabulary acquisition. Similar findings have been reported by Fitriyah (2021), who observed that reading corners in primary schools not only improved reading interest but also expanded students' vocabulary repertoire.

The results also underscore the importance of combining independent reading with explicit vocabulary instruction. In this study, pre-teaching vocabulary before reading, followed by reinforcement activities after reading, ensured that students were not only exposed to new words but also given opportunities to actively use them. This two-pronged approach mirrors the recommendations of Schmitt (2010), who advocates for a balance between incidental vocabulary learning through reading and intentional instruction for deeper mastery.

4. Pedagogical Implications

From a pedagogical perspective, this study offers several practical implications. First, literacy programs like POCA should be integrated into the daily routine of English classes, allowing consistent opportunities for vocabulary exposure. Second, teachers should provide varied and engaging materials that are relevant to students' lives, as relevance enhances motivation and retention. Third, incorporating interactive elements such as games and peer collaboration can further boost engagement and make learning more enjoyable.

Finally, the cyclical nature of Classroom Action Research proved valuable in refining instructional strategies. Adjustments made in Cycle II based on the reflections from Cycle I—such as adding peer tutoring and increasing contextual activities—led to notable gains in both vocabulary mastery and student involvement. This iterative process reflects the adaptive and responsive nature of effective teaching.

The findings confirm that the POCA literacy program effectively develops both vocabulary mastery and student involvement in English learning. The program's focus on verbs of daily activities addressed a gap in previous literacy-based approaches, aligning vocabulary learning with students' lived experiences.

The improvement aligns with Nation's (2020) assertion that repeated exposure in meaningful contexts boosts vocabulary retention. Contextual learning strategies, such as linking vocabulary to students' daily routines, made learning more relevant and memorable. Furthermore, engagement increased due to interactive activities like vocabulary games and peer tutoring, supporting Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that emphasizes learning through social

interaction.

Nevertheless, the study had limitations, including the small sample size, single-classroom setting, and absence of a control group. Future research should explore longitudinal retention and broader implementation across schools.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings confirm that the POCA literacy program is a viable strategy for improving both vocabulary mastery and engagement in English learning at the primary school level. By combining accessible reading resources, contextual vocabulary instruction, and interactive learning activities, the program addressed the dual challenges of limited vocabulary and low participation. The study's outcomes support existing literature on the benefits of literacy-based instruction and contribute new insights into its application within EFL contexts.

These results underscore the potential of literacy-based learning not only as a tool for vocabulary development but also as a means of fostering sustainable student involvement in English education. For teachers, the study provides a practical framework for integrating literacy with contextualized vocabulary instruction. For policymakers, it demonstrates the value of literacy programs as part of national strategies to strengthen English proficiency among young learners.

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