



The Role of Teachers in Implementing the Reading Literacy Program on students' Comprehension in Grade III of State Elementary School

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Abstract

This study aims to address the main research question: How do teachers play a role in implementing literacy programs to improve the reading comprehension of third-grade students at Plumbon 1 State Elementary School? The research focuses on three aspects: teachers' roles, learning strategies employed, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in literacy program implementation. A qualitative case study approach was employed, involving 15 third-grade students (6 boys and 9 girls) along with their classroom teacher. Data were collected through systematic observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed descriptively. Findings reveal that the literacy program, implemented for 1.5 years, had a positive impact: 80% of students showed high enthusiasm; reading comprehension improved in explicit meaning (73%) but remained low in implicit meaning (47%). Teachers assumed multidimensional roles as facilitators, models, individual guides, evaluators, and collaborators, applying 14 instructional strategies including a daily 15-minute reading routine, differentiated instruction, and the creation of text-rich environments. While the study provides in-depth insights, its limitations include the small sample size and the single-case design, which restrict the generalizability of findings. Nevertheless, the results emphasize that literacy program success requires systemic support from schools, teachers, parents, and home environments. The study implies that other elementary schools can adapt this literacy model by considering contextual factors and student characteristics. Furthermore, it offers a foundational reference for policymakers to enhance systemic support for the School Literacy Movement (GLS), including teacher training, resource allocation, and strategies for parental engagement.

Keywords: Elementary School, Learning Strategies, Literacy Program, Reading

Introduction

Reading is widely recognized as a fundamental skill that underpins intellectual growth and lifelong learning. Globally, literacy is viewed not only as a basic ability but also as a foundation for critical thinking, communication, and participation in society. In the Indonesian context, however, challenges in reading literacy remain significant. According to the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Indonesian students scored 359 in reading, a decline of 12 points from 2018, placing the country 72nd out of 77 participating nations (Muhammad, 2023). Teachers play an essential role in implementing literacy programs.

Through strategies such as reading habituation, modeling, and integrating literacy into lessons, teachers can help students improve their reading comprehension skills (Yasmin, & Asyiah, N. 2022). This result highlights the urgent need to strengthen literacy education, particularly at the primary school level where foundational reading skills are most effectively developed. Teachers act as facilitators who create a fun learning atmosphere, provide direction, and motivate students to be active in literacy activities so that reading comprehension can develop well (Karim, A. et al, 2024).

To address this issue, the Indonesian government launched the Gerakan Literasi Sekolah (GLS) through Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 of 2015. The policy promotes a daily 15-minute reading activity to cultivate reading habits and moral values through exposure to diverse texts (Fath, Sholina, Isma, & Rahmawan, 2018). Teachers play an important role in literacy programs. By using strategies such as encouraging reading habits, providing examples, and creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere, teachers can help improve students' reading comprehension (Asyiah, N., & Permana, J. 2025).

Empirical studies have consistently confirmed the positive impact of such literacy initiatives. Research in Bali demonstrated that GLS significantly improved reading comprehension and motivation in primary schools (Anjani, Dantes, & Artawan, 2019), while other studies showed that literacy habituation enhanced comprehension and academic performance (Gunardi & Sahiyah, 2021). A common thread across this research is the emphasis on the crucial role of teachers (Hermawan, Rumaf, & Solehun, 2020), who act not only as facilitators but also as models, guides, and evaluators in fostering a reading culture. For instance, Yulianti (2023) showed that literacy-based teaching interventions significantly improved grade III students' comprehension skills, suggesting that early intervention is key.

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' character and literacy skills.

The success of a literacy program is determined not only by learning strategies but also by how teachers serve as role models, mentors, and facilitators, creating a conducive learning environment. Therefore, the role of teachers is a key factor in improving elementary school students' reading comprehension. Kulkarni, S., & Karim, A. (2022). Teachers play an essential role in supporting students' learning. Beyond delivering lessons, they act as guides, motivators, facilitators, and role models. Through these roles, teachers can foster students' interest in reading and help them improve their reading comprehension skills (Asyiah, 2021).

This study is grounded in the theoretical perspective of Vygotsky's (1978) scaffolding theory, which posits that learning is maximized when students are supported by a more knowledgeable other within their zone of proximal development (Slavin, 2009). This framework is complemented by concepts of emergent literacy (Clay, 1966), which highlight the importance of early exposure to text, and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which underscores the role of modeling. Together, these theories provide a foundation for understanding why teacher strategies are pivotal in bridging the gap between students' current abilities and higher-order comprehension. Teachers play an important role not only as teachers, but also as facilitators and examples. This role determines the success of the reading literacy program because through guidance and example, teachers are able to cultivate motivation and form a positive attitude of learners (Karim. A et al, 2023).

Despite these advances, challenges persist in Indonesian classrooms, including limited access to varied reading materials, inconsistent parental support, and curriculum overload. Preliminary observations at Plumbon 1 State Elementary School revealed that although literacy programs such as weekly book reading had been introduced, many third-grade students still struggled with comprehension. Teachers noted issues such as reluctance to engage in literacy activities and difficulties in understanding implicit meanings, suggesting that program implementation has not yet fully met students' needs.

This study addresses a specific research gap by moving beyond quantitative outcomes to qualitatively explore the implementation of literacy programs in the under-researched context of grade III. While previous studies have established the importance of GLS and teacher roles, there is a lack of in-depth, qualitative analysis focusing on the lower primary levels. This research aims to fill that void by investigating the multidimensional roles of teachers, the specific strategies they employ in a real-world setting, and the contextual challenges and supports that ultimately shape program success. Specifically, it aims to (1) analyze the role of teachers in literacy program implementation, (2) identify the strategies used to enhance students' reading comprehension, and (3) examine supporting and inhibiting factors in practice. By doing so, the study contributes a more nuanced

understanding of literacy implementation at the foundational education level and provides practical insights for policymakers and practitioners to refine literacy interventions in Indonesian schools.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with a case study approach to deeply understand the implementation of literacy programs in elementary schools and their relationship to students' reading comprehension skills (Cresswell, 2018). The qualitative approach was chosen to explore experiences, interactions, and emerging meanings in the classroom context (Sugiyono, 2013).

Sampling Justification and Participants

The study was conducted at Plumbon 1 State Elementary School, Cirebon Regency, which was selected purposively because the school had already implemented the literacy program for over one year but student reading comprehension remained relatively low. This made the site relevant for examining both program effectiveness and challenges. The participants consisted of 15 third-grade students (6 boys and 9 girls), aged 8–9 years, and their classroom teacher. Most students came from middle to lower socioeconomic backgrounds, with parents working in farming, trading, or informal sectors. These demographics provide an important context for understanding literacy development.

Instruments and Data Collection

The instruments included observation guidelines, interview protocols, and documentation analysis. The observation guidelines focused on literacy routines (e.g., 15-minute daily reading), student engagement, and teacher strategies. For example, criteria observed included students' participation, reading fluency, and ability to retell texts. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended but structured questions, such as: "What strategies do you use to help students understand implicit meanings in texts?" and "What challenges do you encounter in sustaining student motivation?" Documentation included lesson plans, student reading journals, school records, and photographs.

Timeline of Data Collection

Data were collected over a six-week period in the even semester of the 2025 academic year. Observations were conducted twice weekly for a total of 12 sessions, covering morning reading activities and literacy-related lessons. Interviews were held with the classroom teacher (two sessions, each 45–60 minutes) and with six selected students (15–20 minutes each).

Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical research standards. Informed consent was obtained from the school principal, classroom teacher, and parents of participating students. Students were given verbal assent and assured that their participation was voluntary and that pseudonyms would be used in reporting to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis and Validity

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. To strengthen validity, the study used methodological triangulation (observations, interviews, documentation), member checking by confirming interpretations with the participating teacher, and peer debriefing with fellow researchers to cross-validate findings and minimize bias. Through this method, the study sought to provide a rich description of how the literacy program was implemented, the roles and strategies of teachers, and the extent to which the program influenced students' reading comprehension skills.

Results***Literacy Program Implementation***

Based on classroom observations, the literacy program in grade III is implemented consistently every morning for 15 minutes before lessons begin, in line with the School Literacy Movement guidelines. Reading is conducted both individually and in groups through silent reading, read-aloud sessions, and short discussions. One teacher emphasized, "When I read together with the students, their enthusiasm increases; they feel that reading is not only an obligation but also a shared activity."

Table 1. Implementation of the Literacy Program in Class III of State Elementary School 1 Plumbon

Literacy Program Aspects		Implementation in Class III
15-minute activity	reading	Held daily before class begins
The role of teachers		<u>Teachers</u> act as facilitators, reading models, guides, evaluators, and collaborators
Literacy tools		Classroom reading corners, non-textbook collections, daily reading journals
Student engagement		80% of students (12 out of 15) demonstrated high enthusiasm for participating in literacy activities
Major obstacles		4 students still experience basic reading difficulties; limited book collection

Table 1 summarizes the implementation of the program. While the table provides a structured overview, narrative descriptions reveal more detail: 80% of students (12 out of 15) actively participated, showing enthusiasm especially during interactive read-alouds. However, four students continued to struggle with basic reading, such as spelling and recognizing simple sentences, requiring targeted intervention.

Teacher Strategies in Implementing the Literacy Program

Teachers applied at least 14 literacy strategies, including guided reading, think-aloud, graphic organizers, interactive storytelling, questioning strategies, and differentiated instruction. For example, in the think-aloud strategy, teachers verbalized their own thought process while decoding a passage: "When I see this word, I try to connect it with what happened before in the story." This helped students model metacognitive processes. Meanwhile, graphic organizers such as story maps enabled students to visualize characters and plot, making comprehension more concrete. Unexpectedly, the use of simple digital media, such as displaying illustrated stories through a projector, significantly increased participation among students who were usually passive. This indicates that even minimal integration of technology can spark engagement. For example, differentiated instruction was applied by providing different level of texts to students; advanced readers received short stories with more complex plots, while beginners worked with illustrated picture books containing simple sentences. Questioning strategies were tiered, starting from literal questions ("what", "who", "where") for all students, to more inferential questions ("why", "how", "what if") aimed at stimulating critical thinking for students who were ready.

Students' Reading Comprehension Skills

Students' reading comprehension was assessed using three indicators: understanding words/phrases, explicit meaning, and implicit meaning.

Table 2. Reading Comprehension Ability of Grade III Students at State Elementary School
1 Plumbon

Reading Comprehension Indicators	Percentage of Students Achieving the Good Category
Grasping the meaning of words/phrases	53%
Understanding explicit meaning	73%
Understanding implied meaning	47%

Table 2 shows that while 73% of students succeeded in identifying explicit information (e.g., "Who is the main character?"), only 47% could infer implicit

meaning (e.g., moral messages). The “good” performance category was defined as achieving at least 70% correct responses in comprehension exercises. Some students who struggled with abstract vocabulary (e.g., “justice,” “hope”) were unable to reach this threshold, highlighting the need for scaffolded vocabulary instruction. The assessment was conducted through a set of written comprehension exercises and oral questioning based on the texts read during the literacy sessions. Students' answers were scored, and those who achieved a score of 70% or higher were categorized as having 'good' comprehension for that indicator. The "good" performance category was defined as achieving at least 70% correct responses in comprehension exercises. Some students who struggled with abstract vocabulary (e.g., "justice," "hope") were unable to reach this threshold, highlighting the need for scaffolded vocabulary instruction. The disparity between explicit and implicit comprehension is further illustrated in Figure 1 below.

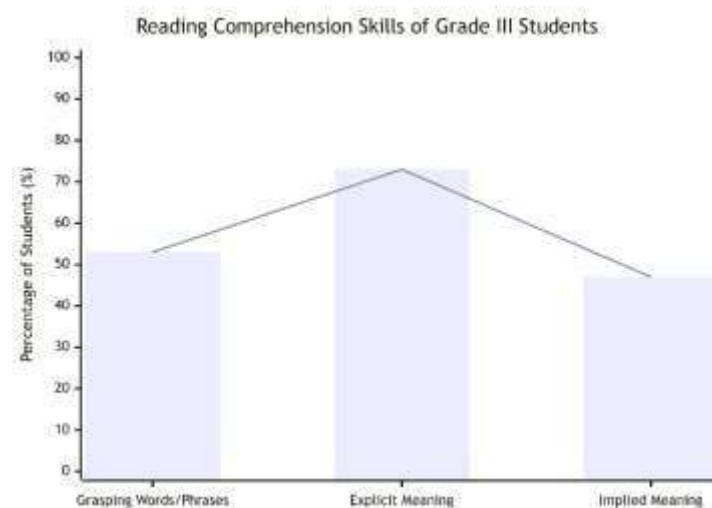


Figure 1. Comparison of Percentage of Students Achieving the 'Good' Category in Three Reading Comprehension Indicators

This bar chart visually underscores the significant gap between students' ability to understand explicit meaning (73%) and implied meaning (47%), as detailed in Table 2.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Teacher interviews highlighted several supporting factors: principal support, availability of a classroom reading corner, teacher enthusiasm, and parental involvement. As one teacher stated, “When parents also encourage their children to read at home, the progress is clearly faster.” Obstacles included students with weak basic reading skills, a limited collection of books, and home environments without strong reading habits. Additionally, a crowded curriculum restricted teachers from

extending literacy activities. These constraints, if not addressed, risk slowing the progress of students with the greatest needs.

Discussion

Literacy Program Implementation

The results indicate that the 15-minute daily literacy activity has successfully fostered enthusiasm among most students, with 80% actively participating. This shows that embedding literacy into school routines is effective in cultivating intrinsic motivation. However, the persistence of four students with basic reading difficulties suggests that program implementation alone is not sufficient; rather, it must be complemented with remedial interventions. This contrast highlights that literacy development is not uniform and depends on students' initial skills, family support, and exposure to print-rich environments (Rahim, 2008). Furthermore, the contradictory finding—where a generally successful program still left a subset of students behind—warrants deeper analysis. Simply implementing the routine was insufficient for these four students who struggled with basic decoding. This suggests that the program's strategies, while effective for fostering habit and comprehension for most, may not adequately address fundamental gaps in phonological awareness and word recognition skills that some learners bring to the classroom. It underscores the critical need for literacy programs to incorporate robust diagnostic assessments and tiered interventions (e.g., Response to Intervention - RTI models) to identify and support struggling readers from the earliest grades, rather than assuming uniform progress through habitual activities alone.

Teacher Strategies in Implementing Literacy Programs

Teachers' use of strategies such as think-aloud, guided reading, and graphic organizers reflects their central role as facilitators and models. These approaches encourage metacognitive awareness and help students structure their understanding of texts. While this aligns with Vygotsky's scaffolding theory (Slavin, 2009), the findings also reveal that scaffolding alone does not fully address difficulties in inferential comprehension. Broader theoretical perspectives, such as Schema Theory, emphasize that prior knowledge significantly influences comprehension outcomes. Students who lacked sufficient background knowledge or vocabulary struggled to infer implicit meanings, even with teacher support. The application of 14 diverse strategies underscores the importance of differentiated instruction to cater to various learning styles and needs, as suggested by theories of multiple intelligences (Gardner).

Students' Reading Comprehension Skills

The fact that 73% of students could grasp explicit meaning but only 47% could infer implicit meaning suggests a gap between literal and higher-order comprehension skills. This discrepancy is consistent with Somadayo's (2011) argument that comprehension requires analytical and evaluative abilities, which develop more slowly. The limited progress in inferential skills may be attributed to insufficient exposure to higher-level questioning or critical reading tasks during literacy sessions. This underscores the need for teachers to gradually shift from literal questioning to open-ended, inferential, and evaluative discussions. This progression is essential for developing critical thinking skills, a core goal of national education.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Support from principals, teachers, and classroom facilities proved to be crucial enablers. Nevertheless, barriers such as limited book collections, lack of parental involvement, and curriculum overload significantly hindered effectiveness. These findings confirm Rohim and Rahmawati's (2020) assertion that literacy cannot thrive without family engagement and adequate resources. In particular, the limited availability of diverse reading materials reduced opportunities for students to practice inferential comprehension, as texts often lacked complexity and variety. The study's findings resonate with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, highlighting that a child's development is influenced by multiple interconnected systems, from the microsystem (home, classroom) to the exosystem (school policy, community resources).

Implications and Future Directions

Practically, these findings suggest that schools should strengthen literacy programs by not only sustaining daily reading but also diversifying reading materials, training teachers in higher-order questioning, and involving parents more actively in reading activities. Other schools with similar socio-economic contexts could adapt this model by creating text-rich environments and designing collaborative literacy initiatives with families. From a policy perspective, this study underscores the need for the government to not only mandate the GLS but also provide adequate support, including funding for diverse books, professional development for teachers on advanced literacy strategies, and public campaigns to increase parental awareness. The limitations of this study restrict the generalizability of findings. Future research should employ mixed-methods designs to quantify the program's impact while retaining qualitative depth. Expanding to multiple schools and including larger student populations would enhance external validity. Longitudinal studies are crucial to track the sustained impact of literacy programs on comprehension skills over time. Further investigations could also

integrate critical thinking and writing components, offering a more comprehensive picture of how literacy programs affect broader academic competencies.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research that has been conducted regarding the effect of implementing a literacy program on the reading comprehension skills of third-grade students at Plumbon 1 State Elementary School, it can be concluded that the literacy program has a significant contribution in improving students' reading skills. Teachers play an important role as facilitators, guides, evaluators, as well as learning models that are able to encourage active student involvement through various literacy strategies. The research findings show an increase in enthusiasm and reading comprehension skills in the majority of students, although there are still some students who experience difficulties in basic reading aspects. A consistent literacy program, support from teachers, principals, and parental involvement have proven to be supporting factors for success, while limited reading books, an unsupportive home environment, and a dense curriculum are inhibiting factors. This case study demonstrates that effective literacy implementation is a multifaceted endeavor requiring commitment from all stakeholders. The teacher's role transcends instruction to include modeling, environmental design, and community collaboration. Thus, it can be concluded that the research objective of determining the effect of implementing a literacy program on reading comprehension skills has been achieved, although this study has limitations in the relatively small number of subjects and the research context that only focuses on one school, so generalization of the results needs to be done carefully.

Suggestion

Based on the research findings and existing limitations, it is recommended that teachers continue to develop diverse literacy strategies to address the needs of all students, especially those still experiencing basic reading difficulties. Schools are expected to strengthen literacy programs by increasing the variety of reading materials and creating a supportive learning environment. Parental involvement also needs to be increased through more intensive collaboration with schools. For school districts and policymakers, it is recommended to develop a structured framework for implementing GLS, including standard monitoring and evaluation tools, guaranteed funding for library resources, and mandatory teacher training on evidence-based literacy strategies. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct research with a broader scope, a larger number of subjects, utilize mixed-methods or longitudinal designs, and attention to other aspects related to literacy, such as critical thinking and writing, over a longer period of time for more

comprehensive results.

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