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Improving Reading Fluency Of Fourth-Grade Elementary Students Through Structured Reading Materials

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the improvement of elementary school students' reading fluency through the use of structured reading materials. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design conducted at the Grase Tutoring Center. The research subjects consisted of five fourth-grade elementary school students who experienced difficulties in reading fluency. Data were collected through observation, oral reading tests, interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed qualitatively through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

The results indicate that the implementation of structured reading materials effectively improved students' reading fluency. Improvements were observed in reading accuracy, reading speed, smoothness without unnecessary pauses, and reading intonation. The average reading fluency score increased from 58.4 in the pre-test to 78.4 in the post-test. In addition, students demonstrated increased self-confidence and higher engagement during the reading instruction process. These findings suggest that structured reading materials can serve as an effective alternative instructional strategy to enhance the reading fluency of elementary school students, particularly those who still experience reading difficulties.

Keywords: *Reading Fluency; Structured Reading Materials; Elementary School Students;*

Case Study

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the fundamental skills in education. At the elementary school level, particularly in the fourth grade, students are expected to be able to read fluently in order to support their comprehension of other learning materials. However, based on preliminary observations in several elementary schools, many fourth-grade students still experience difficulties in achieving reading fluency. These difficulties are characterized by slow reading speed, frequent mispronunciation of words, and a lack of expressive reading. Such conditions

may be attributed to the limited variety of engaging and well-structured instructional materials, which often results in monotonous and less effective reading instruction.

Reading ability serves as an essential foundation in students' learning processes, especially at the elementary level, as it functions as a primary gateway to accessing more complex information and knowledge (Rijal & Egok, 2019). Without adequate reading fluency, students are likely to encounter difficulties in comprehending learning materials comprehensively, which may, in turn, hinder their overall academic achievement (Sari, 2023). This is consistent with previous studies indicating that strong reading skills are positively correlated with students' academic performance (Annaningsih et al., 2025). Nevertheless, empirical evidence from classroom contexts reveals that a considerable number of fourth-grade elementary school students continue to struggle with reading fluency, a condition that requires serious attention given the critical importance of this stage in literacy development (Ulfi et al., 2023).

Field observations further indicate that fourth-grade students generally demonstrate relatively low levels of reading fluency. Many students experience difficulties in reading sentences smoothly and accurately, even though, at a glance, they may appear to read adequately as a group (Fadillah et al., 2024). Some students are only able to read syllables or rely on spelling, while others still require intensive guidance from teachers (Fadillah et al., 2024). This phenomenon is exacerbated by instructional materials that lack attractiveness and innovation, causing reading activities to become tedious for students. As a result, students tend to show low engagement in reading activities and are easily distracted by other tasks (Rijal & Egok, 2019). Such conditions lead to low reading interest and limited comprehension of reading content among fourth-grade students, as evidenced in SDN Karang Tengah 12 Tangerang, where students' reading interest remains low and many students struggle to understand texts after a single reading (Salsabillah et al., 2023). Therefore, this study focuses on the development of structured reading materials specifically designed to improve the reading fluency of fourth-grade elementary school students, while simultaneously fostering their interest in reading and enhancing their comprehension of texts.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was selected because the research focused on an in-depth examination of the process and

outcomes of improving students' reading fluency through the implementation of structured reading materials within a real and limited instructional context, namely the Grase Tutoring Center. The case study design enabled the researchers to understand the phenomenon holistically, contextually, and naturally, in accordance with the characteristics of the research subjects.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at Grase Tutoring Center, a non-formal educational institution that provides tutoring services for elementary school students. The research participants consisted of five fifth-grade elementary school students selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria:

1. Experiencing difficulties in reading fluency (e.g., halting, slow reading, or frequent mispronunciation),
2. Actively participating in learning activities at the Grase Tutoring Center, and
3. Obtaining consent from parents or guardians to participate in the study.

Research Focus

The focus of this study was the improvement of students' reading fluency, which encompassed the following aspects:

1. Reading accuracy (accuracy of word pronunciation),
2. Reading speed,
3. Reading smoothness (minimal pauses and repetitions), and
4. Reading intonation and expression.

Data Collection Techniques

Research data were collected using the following techniques:

1. Observation

Observation was conducted directly during the reading instruction process using structured reading materials. The researchers observed students' reading behaviors, engagement in learning activities, and changes in reading fluency over time.

2. Oral Reading Test

Oral reading tests were administered before and after the implementation of structured reading materials. These tests aimed to identify changes in students' reading fluency levels based on predetermined indicators.

3. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and tutors to obtain supporting data regarding learning experiences, students' responses to the instructional materials, and tutors' perceptions of students' reading development.

4. Documentation

Documentation included learning records, reading assessment sheets, photographs of learning activities, and the structured reading materials used during the study.

Research Design and Approach

The research instruments consisted of:

1. Observation sheets for assessing students' reading fluency,
2. Rubrics for evaluating oral reading tests,
3. Interview guidelines, and
4. Learning documentation formats.

All instruments were developed based on reading fluency indicators and adjusted to the characteristics of elementary school students.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive qualitative approach comprising the following stages:

1. **Data reduction**, involving the selection and focus on data relevant to the research objectives;
2. **Data Display**, presented in the form of narrative descriptions and tables illustrating students' reading fluency development; and
3. **Conclusion drawing**, by interpreting changes and improvements in students' reading fluency following the implementation of structured reading materials.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, triangulation of data collection techniques

and data sources was applied.

Trustworthiness of the Data

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through:

1. Triangulation (observation, tests, interviews, and documentation),
2. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation, and
3. Member checking, by confirming the research findings with the tutoring instructors

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

This study aimed to describe the improvement in reading fluency of elementary school students following the implementation of structured reading materials at the Grase Tutoring Center. The research findings were obtained through observations, oral reading tests, interviews, and documentation conducted throughout the instructional process.

1. Initial Condition of Students' Reading Fluency

This study aimed to describe the improvement in reading fluency of elementary school students following the implementation of structured reading materials at the Grase Tutoring Center. The research findings were obtained through observations, oral reading tests, interviews, and documentation conducted throughout the instructional process. These initial findings indicate that the students required instructional materials that not only focused on reading texts but also provided structured, gradual, and repetitive reading practice.

2. Implementation of Learning Using Structured Reading Materials

The implementation of structured reading materials was carried out in stages, beginning with the introduction of words, phrases, and simple sentences, and gradually progressing to short paragraphs. Each instructional session was designed with a consistent sequence of activities, including guided reading, shared reading, and independent reading.

Throughout the instructional process, students appeared more focused and directed in participating in reading activities. The systematically organized materials helped students understand the flow of reading tasks and reduced confusion when encountering texts. In addition, tutors found it easier to provide feedback, as indicators of reading

fluency were clearly integrated into the instructional materials.

3. Improvement in Students' Reading Fluency

The results of the oral reading tests administered after the implementation of structured reading materials revealed improvements across all research participants. Students were able to read more fluently, demonstrated increased reading speed, and showed a significant reduction in pronunciation errors. Furthermore, the frequent pauses observed prior to the intervention decreased, and students' reading intonation became more natural.

From a qualitative perspective, improvements in reading fluency were also evident in changes in students' reading behavior. Students appeared more confident, showed less hesitation when pronouncing words, and demonstrated greater interest in reading activities.

4. Students and Tutors Responses

From a qualitative perspective, improvements in reading fluency were also evident in changes in students' reading behavior. Students appeared more confident, showed less hesitation when pronouncing words, and demonstrated greater interest in reading activities.

Table 1. Results of Students' Reading Fluency Test Before and After the Implementation of Structured Reading Instructional Materials

No.	Student Initial	Pre-Test Score	Pre-Test Category	Post-Test Score	Post-Test Category	Improvement
1	S1	55	Less Fluent	75	Moderately Fluent	+20
2	S2	60	Less Fluent	78	Moderately Fluent	+18
3	S3	58	Less Fluent	80	Fluent	+22

4	S4	62	Moderately Fluent	82	Fluent	+20
5	S5	57	Less Fluent	77	Moderately Fluent	+20
Mean	-	58.4	Less Fluent	78.4	Moderately- Fluent	+20.0

Table 1 demonstrates an improvement in reading fluency scores across all research participants following the implementation of structured reading instructional materials. The students' mean score increased from **58.4** in the pre-test to **78.4** in the post-test. This improvement indicates that structured reading instructional materials are effective in enhancing students' reading fluency in terms of **accuracy, reading speed, and intonation.**

The following figure presents students undertaking a reading test using **structured reading book media.**



Figure 1. Students reading using structured reading book media

Figure 1 illustrates the implementation of a reading training session using structured reading book media. The results of the training indicate an improvement in students' reading performance compared to their previous reading ability.

DISCUSSIONS

Structured reading instructional materials enable students to engage in repeated reading practice with gradually increasing levels of difficulty. This pattern helps students develop reading automaticity, allowing the word decoding process to become faster and more accurate. As reading accuracy and speed improve, students' overall reading fluency also increases.

In addition, a consistent instructional structure provides students with a sense of security and clarity during the learning process. This condition contributes to increased student confidence in reading, which is a critical factor in the development of foundational literacy skills. The improvement in confidence is reflected in a reduction in hesitation and reading errors when students engage with texts.

The findings of this study also emphasize that non-formal educational institutions, such as tutoring centers, play a strategic role in supporting the development of elementary school students' literacy skills. With appropriate instructional approaches and structured teaching materials, reading instruction can be conducted more effectively, even in small-group learning settings.

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that structured reading instructional materials can serve as an alternative instructional solution for improving elementary school students' reading fluency, particularly for students who continue to experience difficulties in reading.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the use of structured reading instructional materials is effective in improving the reading fluency of elementary school students, particularly those who experience reading difficulties. The improvement is evident in key aspects of reading fluency, including accuracy, reading speed, and reading prosody. Through structured and continuous literacy intervention, students are able to develop better reading skills as well as increased confidence in reading activities.

Overall, these findings highlight the importance of selecting instructional materials that are aligned with students' learning needs as an effective literacy intervention strategy in elementary education. Structured reading materials can serve as an alternative instructional resource for teachers to support students who have not yet achieved adequate reading fluency.

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