

Analysis of Literacy Skills of Grade II Elementary School Students in Bengkulu City

Ratna Sari¹, Anugrah Agung², Muhammad Habib Ramadhani³, Adinda Asri Ramadhanti⁴

Primary Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Bengkulu,
Jl. WR. Supratman, Kandang Limun, Bengkulu, Indonesia. Tel. +62-812-72545740, Fax. +62-736-22105

Corresponding author

rsari@unib.ac.id

Abstract: This study aims to analyze the literacy skills of Grade II elementary school students in Bengkulu City in understanding, interpreting, and using information from various simple reading texts. The background of this research is based on the importance of mastering basic literacy skills at the elementary level as a fundamental foundation for developing critical thinking and achieving learning success at higher levels. This study employed a descriptive study method using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research subjects consisted of 60 Grade II students from several elementary schools in Bengkulu City. Data were collected through reading comprehension tests, classroom observations, and interviews with class teachers. The results showed that students' literacy skills were generally at a moderate level. Students were able to read and recognize words well but still faced difficulties in deeply understanding the content of texts and drawing conclusions. Factors influencing literacy skills included reading habits at home, availability of reading materials, parental support, and teaching methods used by teachers. The study concludes that improving the literacy skills of elementary school students in Bengkulu City requires collaboration among schools, families, and communities through continuous and engaging literacy activities for students

Keywords: literacy skills, elementary school students, descriptive study, Bengkulu City.

Introduction

Literacy skills represent a foundational pillar of formal education, particularly at the elementary level, which constitutes a critical phase for the development of students' cognitive, linguistic, and learning competencies. Elementary education functions not only as an instructional stage but also as a formative period in shaping students' habits, attitudes, and academic dispositions that will influence their subsequent educational trajectories (Wiratman et al., 2019). One of the essential habits that must be systematically cultivated at this level is literacy engagement, achieved through sustained and meaningful literacy practices.

Contemporary perspectives emphasize that literacy extends far beyond the ability to decode written symbols. Fitriani (2021) asserts that literacy encompasses higher-order competencies, including comprehension, analysis, evaluation, and the

application of textual information in authentic contexts. In response to increasingly complex social and academic demands, literacy development has evolved toward a multiliteracy framework, integrating scientific literacy, numeracy, reading and writing literacy, financial literacy, digital literacy, and cultural-civic literacy (Wiratsiwi, 2020). These dimensions are considered instrumental in fostering students' character development and lifelong learning capacities.

The enhancement of reading literacy requires a systematic and progressive instructional approach. Early reading instruction should prioritize letter recognition, phonological awareness, and foundational vocabulary acquisition, while gradually introducing strategic reading behaviors such as previewing texts, predicting content, drawing inferences, and formulating questions to deepen comprehension. Reading fluency and accuracy at the early stages are particularly crucial,

as deficiencies in foundational reading skills may impede students' ability to engage in more complex comprehension processes at later stages. Consequently, insufficient mastery at the early level often results in persistent reading difficulties throughout formal schooling.

At the second-grade level of elementary school, basic literacy skills serve as a critical determinant of students' academic success across disciplines. Literacy proficiency enables students to comprehend instructional materials, solve mathematical problems, engage with scientific texts, and interpret social phenomena. Accordingly, literacy functions as a key transversal competence within the 21st-century learning framework. Sholeh et al. (2021) conceptualize literacy as an integrated ability involving reading, writing, speaking, and interpreting meaning, closely linked to individuals' cognitive development. Within this context, reading emerges as a central activity underpinning educational attainment.

Despite sustained national efforts to improve literacy outcomes, empirical evidence indicates persistent challenges. National and international assessments reveal that a substantial proportion of Indonesian students remain at a basic literacy level, particularly in higher-order reading comprehension skills such as inference-making and critical interpretation (UNESCO, 2021). Supporting this finding, Putri and Hidayat (2023) report that elementary students in Indonesia frequently struggle to identify main ideas, synthesize information, and interpret implicit meanings within texts.

In Bengkulu City, various literacy enhancement initiatives have been implemented, including the School Literacy Movement (*Gerakan Literasi Sekolah*), the establishment of classroom reading corners, and the institutionalization of 15-minute daily reading activities prior to instruction. However, literacy achievement remains uneven, especially among lower-grade students who are transitioning from early decoding skills to meaning-based reading comprehension. This transitional phase is particularly vulnerable, as insufficient instructional support may result in stagnation at the technical reading level.

Given this context, the present study focuses on second-grade elementary school students in

Bengkulu City to provide an in-depth analysis of their literacy competencies. The study aims to (1) examine students' literacy skill profiles, (2) identify instructional, familial, and institutional factors influencing literacy development, and (3) propose evidence-based recommendations for literacy improvement involving schools, families, and relevant stakeholders. By offering empirical insights into early-grade literacy conditions, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on foundational literacy development in Indonesian elementary education.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore literacy phenomena in their natural educational context. Qualitative inquiry was selected to enable an in-depth understanding of literacy practices, challenges, and supporting factors as experienced by participants. According to Herdiansyah (2019), qualitative research emphasizes meaning-making processes through intensive interaction between researchers and the studied phenomena.

The research was conducted in three public elementary schools in Bengkulu City, selected using purposive sampling based on their literacy program implementation. Participants consisted of 60 second-grade students, six second-grade classroom teachers, and three school principals.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through multiple techniques to ensure methodological triangulation:

1. **Reading comprehension tests**, designed to assess students' ability to comprehend simple narrative and informational texts. The test consisted of three narrative texts and two informational texts with varying levels of complexity.
2. **Classroom observations**, conducted to examine literacy instructional practices during Indonesian language lessons and the implementation of the 15-minute reading activity.
3. **Semi-structured interviews**, conducted with teachers and school principals to explore literacy

instruction strategies, institutional support, and perceived challenges.

Data Analysis

Data trustworthiness was established using four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ulfatin, 2015). Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018), comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification.

Results and Discussion

The literacy skills of second-grade students in Bengkulu City reflect the general pattern of national literacy competence, characterized by strength in technical reading skills but weakness in deeper comprehension (UNESCO, 2021; Putri & Hidayat, 2023). At the second-grade level, students are expected to enter the second stage of reading development, which involves understanding meaning and engaging in simple reflection. However, the findings indicate that most students have only mastered early reading skills. Although second grade is still categorized as early reading, students should have progressed to a more advanced level. This suggests that students are not yet accustomed to reading activities that demand higher-order cognitive skills, such as analyzing text content, connecting information, drawing inferences, identifying moral messages, and recognizing the author's intent. These skills can only develop through consistent exposure to meaningful reading activities.

Table 1. Results of Literacy Skills Test

No	Measured Aspect	Percentage
1	Ability to read basic words and sentences	36%
2	Ability to answer literal questions	28%
3	Ability to draw conclusions	16%
4	Ability to understand implicit meanings	12%

5	Ability to relate text content to personal experience	8%
---	---	----

The data indicate that second-grade elementary students' reading abilities are uneven, with most students only able to read individual words. Therefore, their literacy skills are considered low. Literacy improvement requires engaging learning approaches that also foster students' reading motivation, supported not only by schools but also by families.

Classroom observations revealed that teachers in the three observed schools predominantly employed conventional and monotonous teaching methods, resulting in low student engagement in literacy learning. Teachers mainly used strategies such as turn-taking reading, simple question-and-answer sessions, and repetitive exercises. Furthermore, the 15-minute reading activity was not implemented consistently. The lack of instructional strategies directly impacted students' reading comprehension development. Teachers should adopt more engaging and innovative approaches. In line with Aini and Sari (2020), teachers are encouraged to apply active and collaborative literacy learning strategies, such as storytelling, shared reading, guided independent reading, reading journals, and reflective reading activities.

Interviews with principals revealed limited school involvement in literacy enhancement efforts. One school that consistently implemented a 15-minute reading activity before lessons demonstrated higher literacy performance, particularly in understanding implicit meanings. This highlights clear differences between schools that implement structured literacy routines and those that do not. Other inhibiting factors included uninteresting library collections and limited instructional time. These challenges should be addressed by schools, as emphasized in the Ministry of Education and Culture regulation (2019), which promotes literacy culture through classroom reading corners, literacy posters, shared reading activities, storytelling sessions, and school book exhibitions. Without institutional support, students' literacy development will remain limited.

Parental involvement is also essential. Interviews with students revealed that most students in Bengkulu City lack reading habits at home. Identified causes include limited parental time, insufficient reading materials at home, low parental awareness of literacy importance, and excessive screen time. These conditions hinder literacy development, highlighting the importance of family involvement. Parents should be educated by schools or government institutions to encourage daily reading habits, such as reading at least one page of a storybook per day. Research by Lestari and Wulandari (2022) supports this finding, demonstrating that students with regular home reading habits exhibit higher literacy levels.

Beyond school and family factors, collaboration among schools, families, and communities is crucial for literacy improvement. The findings indicate that without such collaboration, literacy development efforts will not be optimal. Collaborative initiatives may include family reading programs, community reading gardens, school-community literacy activities, parental mentoring, and the provision of culturally relevant reading materials. UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that literacy improvement requires a multisectoral approach involving all stakeholders.

Overall, the findings indicate that second-grade students' literacy skills in Bengkulu City are at a moderate level, influenced by various factors, particularly limited facilities and ineffective management. Family environments that do not support consistent literacy practices further contribute to this condition. Therefore, literacy improvement in Indonesia requires systemic reform, beginning at the foundational level by cultivating early literacy awareness among children.

Conclusions

The findings indicate that the literacy skills of second-grade elementary school students in Bengkulu City remain at a moderate level. While most students demonstrate basic technical reading abilities, significant difficulties persist in higher-order comprehension processes. These limitations are influenced by multiple interrelated factors,

including limited home reading routines, predominantly conventional instructional methods, inadequate school literacy facilities, and insufficient parental engagement.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and collaborative strategy. Innovative and student-centered literacy instruction, strengthened school-family-community partnerships, and sustained government support through systematic and contextually relevant literacy policies are essential to enhancing foundational literacy outcomes. Early intervention at the elementary level is critical to ensuring equitable and sustainable literacy development.

References

- Aini, N., & Sari, M. (2020). Development of reading literacy skills among elementary school students. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Indonesia*, 5(1), 45–56.
- Arianto, H., & Pramesti, D. (2019). Factors influencing students' reading literacy skills. *Jurnal Literasi dan Bahasa*, 4(2), 112–120.
- Harahap, D. G. S., Nasution, F., Nst, E. S., & Sormin, S. A. (2022). Analysis of elementary school students' literacy skills. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 6(2), 2089–2098.
- Pujiati, D., Basyar, M. A. K., & Wijayanti, A. (2022). Analysis of the School Literacy Movement in elementary schools. *Pedagogik: Journal of Islamic Elementary School*, 5(1), 57–68.
- Fitriani, R. (2021). Literacy instruction in the early stages of elementary education. *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 40(3), 623–635.
- Ministry of Education and Culture. (2019). Guidelines for the School Literacy Movement. Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia.
- Lestari, P., & Wulandari, S. (2022). The role of parents in improving literacy skills of school-age children. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 7(2), 77–88.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2018). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- OECD. (2020). *PISA 2018 results (Volume I): What students know and can do*. OECD Publishing.
- Putri, D., & Hidayat, A. (2023). Implementation of elementary school literacy programs in Indonesia. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Nusantara*, 8(1), 12–22.
- Wiratsiwi, S. C., Wiratsiwi, W., & Widiyanti, I. S. R. (2023). Analysis of early reading literacy skills of lower-grade elementary school students in Tuban Regency. *Jurnal Ilmiah Aquinas*, 6, 157–165.

- Susanto, A., & Mulyadi, E. (2024). Challenges of literacy education in elementary schools. *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan*, 9(2), 150–162.
- UNESCO. (2021). *Global Education Monitoring Report 2021/2022: Non-state actors in education*. UNESCO.