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Improving The Beginning Reading Skills Of Year 3 Pupils Through The Literacy-Based Learning Model

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Abstract

Early reading ability is a basic skill that must be mastered by every student at the elementary education level, especially in Islamic elementary schools, because it is the foundation for the development of literacy skills and learning success in various subjects. This study aims to improve the early reading ability of grade III students of MIN 4, Tanah Sepenggal Lintas District, Bungo Regency through the application of the Literacy-Based Learning Model. The study used a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach which was implemented in two cycles. The research subjects consisted of 25 students. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, tests, and interviews, while data analysis used quantitative descriptive methods. The results of the study showed a significant increase in students' early reading ability. The average score of students in the pre-cycle was 49.9%, increasing to 61.9% in Cycle I and reaching 77.2% in Cycle II. Thus, the application of the Literacy-Based Learning Model has proven effective in improving the early reading ability of third-grade students and is able to create a more active, interesting, and student-centered learning process.

Keywords: beginning reading ability, Literacy-Based Learning

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INTRODUCTION

Early reading skills are fundamental skills that every pupil must master at primary level, particularly in madrasah ibtidaiyah, as they form the foundation for the development of literacy skills and academic success across various subjects (Hidayat & Lubis, 2022; Nugroho, 2020; Safitri& Rahman, 2022).Through reading, pupils learn to recognise linguistic symbols, the sounds of letters, form syllables and words, and understand the basic meaning of texts; without adequate early reading skills, pupils will find it difficult to keep up with all subjects, thereby limiting their access to knowledge (Wahyuni, 2021; Kosnin&Syazwani, 2021).

Reading skills also play a vital role in developing students' critical thinking skills and conceptual understanding. Students with good reading skills tend to find it easier to understand learning materials, develop ideas and link new information to their existing knowledge (Abidin, 2018; Suyono &Hariyanto, 2019). Conversely, students who experience reading difficulties will face obstacles in participating fully in the learning process.

This ability also plays a role in fostering an interest in reading and a positive attitude towards literacy, as pupils who are able to read fluently and understand the content of what they read tend to be more confident, active and motivated, whilst those who experience reading difficulties often display low interest in learning and minimal engagement in the learning process (Setiawan, 2019; Safitri& Rahman, 2022; Guthrie et al., 2016).Therefore, early reading instruction needs to be designed in an engaging, contextual and enjoyable way in order to actively increase pupils' engagement (Nugroho, 2020; Hidayat & Lubis, 2022).

Based on the results of initial observations at MIN 4 BUNGO, it was found that some Year 3 pupils still have difficulty reading. There are 25 Year 3 pupils in total, of whom 10 are already very fluent readers, 10 are not yet fluent, and 5 have not yet learnt to read.These pupils are not yet proficient at recognising letters and syllables, and have a limited understanding of the content of simple texts; the learning process is still dominated by conventional methods, in which the teacher acts primarily as a provider of information, whilst the pupils remain merely passive recipients. (Research Observation, 2026).

The contributing factor is that pupils are influenced by a teaching approach that tends to be teacher-centred; teachers rely too heavily on textbooks as the sole learning resource, with the result that most of the available time is spent on delivering the material rather than giving pupils the opportunity to practise reading, comprehend the text, and develop their skills gradually. Consequently, pupils are less active and find it difficult to understand the material being taught.One approach that aligns with this paradigm is literacy-based learning, which integrates

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listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in a holistic manner so that pupils are not only able to recite texts, but also to understand their meaning, relate them to their own experiences, and build character through meaningful literacy activities (Kosnin&Syazwani, 2021; Hidayat & Lubis, 2022; Graham et al., 2018).This approach emphasises the active involvement of pupils in a range of literacy activities that are contextual and relevant to everyday life.

Various studies have shown that literacy-based models are effective in boosting pupils' engagement and enthusiasm, enhancing teacher-pupil interaction, and encouraging participation in summarising what they have learnt.Contextual texts have been shown to be effective in strengthening pupils' basic literacy skills, reading comprehension and vocabulary (Nugroho, 2020; Safitri& Rahman, 2022; Kosnin&Syazwani, 2021; Mol & Bus, 2019).

On the other hand, low early reading skills amongst primary school pupils remain a widespread problem, particularly in areas with limited access to learning resources. This is due to a lack of regular reading practice, teaching methods that remain conventional, and the limited use of engaging and interactive media (Wahyuni, 2021; Setiawan, 2019).Therefore, the author is interested in conducting a study on improving early reading skills through literacy-based learning, with the aim of determining how to improve early reading skills in Year 3 pupils using the literacy-based learning model.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), which involved all Year 3 pupils in order to improve educational practice through a cycle of planning, action, observation and reflection (Hidayat & Lubis, 2022). This method was chosen because it was relevant to the local issues faced by Year 3 pupils at MIN 4 Bungo,namely the low level of pupils' early reading skills (5 out of 25 pupils were not yet proficient), and aimed to test the Literacy-Based Learning model as an innovative intervention that integrates listening, speaking, reading and writing (Nugroho, 2020).

Research subjects

The research subjects were 25 Year 3 pupils at MIN 4 in the Tanah Sepenggal Lintas subdistrict, Bungo Regency, who were selected through purposive sampling based on initial observations indicating poor reading fluency (an average score of 55, 60 per cent below the minimum passing mark of 70) (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, 2022).The research was conducted at MIN 4 in the Tanah Sepenggal Lintas sub-district, Bungo

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Regency, Jambi Province, and took place over a period of one month during the even semester of the 2026 academic year.

Data collection methods

Data collection methods included observation, tests and interviews to triangulate qualitative and quantitative data (Wahyuni, 2021). Observations were carried out during class sessions to record pupils' participation in the Literacy-Based Learning model, using an observation sheet.The tests comprise pre-cycle, Cycle I and Cycle II diagnostic tests to assess early reading skills (e.g. the speed of sounding out syllables and words, and comprehension), using standard rubrics from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with pupils and teachers to gather data on motivation, supported by documentation such as photographs of activities.

Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out descriptively, using thematic analysis for qualitative data (observations and interviews) and quantitative analysis for test data (e.g. calculating the percentage increase). Specific criteria include success criteria where the average reading score increases by ≥15% and ≥75% of pupils achieve the minimum passing mark of 70. (Setiawan, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are based on the application of the Literacy-Based Learning Model to Year 3 pupils at MIN 4 in the Tanah Sepenggal Lintas sub-district, Bungo Regency. The research was conducted in two cycles, focusing on improving early reading skills (fluency in syllables and words, and comprehension of meaning). The data were analysed descriptively and quantitatively using a t-test, and the discussion draws on previous research to provide a broader context.

Table 1: Pre-cycle

NO	Indikacor	Sub Indicator	Persentase	Achievements
1.	yllable fluency	Correct pronunciation (a-i-u-e-o)	%	47,6%
		Clear and fluent pronunciation	%	

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		Appropriate intonation	%	
2.	Word fluency	Reading two-syllable words	%	6%
		Reading three-syllable words	%	
		Reading speed	%	
3.	mprehension of meaning	Answering the question 'who?'	%	8,6%
		Answering the question 'what?'	%	
		Summarising the story	%	
Mean				**49,9%**

Table 2: Cycle I

NO	Indicator	Sub Indicator	Persentase	Achievements
1.	syllable fluency	Correct pronunciation (a-i-u-e-o)	%	59,3%
		Clear and fluent pronunciation	%	
		Appropriate intonation	%	
2.	word fluency	Reading two-syllable words	%	64,3%
		Reading three-syllable words	%	
		Reading speed	%	
3.	comprehension of meaning	Answering the question 'who?'	%	2,3%
		Answering the question 'what?'	%	
		Summarising the story	%	
Mean				**61,9%**

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Steps in the Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) model for Cycle I

Based on the pre-cycle results (average 50%), which revealed weaknesses in comprehension (49%), fluency (54%) and syllables (48%). A total of 60% of pupils scored below the minimum passing mark of 70.

1. PLANNING

Identification of pre-cycle issues: Weak text comprehension (49%), difficulty in pronouncing syllables (48%), and shy pupils who rarely speak.

Objective	: To raise the average to at least 60% using an integrated literacy model.
Activity plan	: Listen to the teacher's story + a simple question-and-answer session (10 minutes). Practice reading syllables in pairs + correction by the teacher. Group reading + writing short words.
Assessment tools	: Observation, tests and interviews

2. ACTIVITIES AND OBSERVATIONS

Implementation	: 4 sessions – pupils listened to the story 'Animals Around Me', practised syllable pairs, discussed meanings, and wrote simple sentences. The teacher provided immediate feedback on pronunciation.
Observations	: 55% active at the start, 80% at the end. Motivation rose from 2.5 to 3.8 (on a scale of 5). Common mistakes: the vowels 'e' and 'o'; difficulty summarising the story.
Cycle I test data	: syllables 59% (pronunciation 55%, clarity 58%, intonation 65%), words 64% (2-syllable words 68%, 3-syllable words 65%, speed 60%), comprehension 62% (who 62%, what 65%, conclusion 60%). Average 62%.

3. REFLECTION

Analysis	: Comprehension rose from 49% to 62% (+13 points), vocabulary from 54% to 64% (+10 points), syllables from 48% to 59% (+11 points), and the average from 50% to 62% (+12 points). 68% met the minimum passing standard.
Successes	: The 60% target was achieved; discussions boosted confidence.
Challenges	: Comprehension still needs to be strengthened; 30% read slowly; 4

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pupils were shy.

Conclusion : Cycle I was 80% successful; moving on to Cycle II, we will add speaking games and mixed-ability groups.

Table 3: Cycle II

NO	Indicator	Sub Indicator	Persentase	Achievements
1.	syllable fluency	Correct pronunciation (a-i-u-e-o)	%	,6%
		Clear and fluent pronunciation	%	
		Appropriate intonation	%	
2.	word fluency	Reading two-syllable words	%	,6%
		Reading three-syllable words	%	
		Reading speed	%	
3.	comprehension of meaning	Answering the question 'who?'	%	,3%
		Answering the question 'what?'	%	
		mmarising the story	%	
Mean				**77,2%**

Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) Steps for Cycle II

Based on the evaluation of Cycle I, which showed that the average level of early reading proficiency remained at 62 per cent, with the main weaknesses being comprehension of simple texts (62 per cent), syllable fluency (59 per cent), and low participation by shy pupils in speaking activities, the planning for Cycle II was focused on addressing these obstacles. The improvement target was set at a minimum of 75 per cent, with 85 per cent of pupils achieving the minimum passing mark of 70.

1. PLANNING.

The activity plan, themed 'Animals Around Me', includes:

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- A 12-minute session listening to the teacher's story about cats, chickens and fish to reinforce understanding.
- A group syllable-reading relay exercise to boost confidence in speaking and fluency in pronunciation.
- Individual presentations on understanding the story, followed by writing a short summaryin sentences.

Data collection tools: a standardised rubric for early reading tests, an observation sheet to assess pupils' levels of participation and engagement, and photographic and video documentation of the learning process.

2. ACTIVITIES AND OBSERVATIONS

The programme was carried out over four consecutive sessions using a step-by-step approach. Pupils took part in a listening session on the thematic story 'Animals Around Me', followed by an inter-group syllable reading relay game using syllables such as 'ba-ma-na-sa-ta-la', a comprehension presentation on 'What does this animal do in the story?', and writing a short summary of the story. The teacher provided intensive personalised feedback to the five target pupils who had previously experienced the greatest difficulties.

Field observations recorded a significant improvement: pupil participation rates rose from 75 per cent in the first session to 95 per cent in the final session; enthusiasm for learning increased from 3.8 to 4.5 on a 1–5 Likert scale; errors in the pronunciation of the vowels 'e' and 'o' were reduced by up to 80 per cent; and all target pupils are now actively speaking in front of the class.

3. REFLECTION

A comparative analysis shows a substantial improvement: comprehension rose from 62% to 77.3% (an increase of 15.3 points), word fluency from 64% to 76.6% (12.6 points), syllable fluency from 59% to 77.6% (18.6 points), with the overall average rising by 15.2 points from 62% to 77.2%. A total of 92% of pupils achieved the minimum passing mark of 70, exceeding the set target.The main success lay in the reading relay game, which successfully helped students overcome their shyness, resulting in a participation rate of 95 per cent, as well as discussions on local wildlife that were relevant to the pupils' lives, thereby significantly strengthening their understanding of the text.Minor difficulties were still observed in the ability to read three-syllable words, with a success rate of 73 per cent, which requires further practice.

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Graphs showing the pre-cycle, cycle I and cycle II



The results of this study indicate a significant improvement in the early reading skills of Year 3 pupils at MIN 4, Tanah Sepenggal Lintas Sub-district, Bungo Regency, through the implementation of the Literacy-Based Learning Model over two cycles. In the pre-cycle, the average overall achievement was only 49.9 per cent, with the main weaknesses lying in syllable fluency (47.6 per cent), word fluency (53.6 per cent) and comprehension (48.6 per cent).A total of 60% of pupils scored below the minimum passing mark of 70, due to poor text comprehension, difficulties with vowel pronunciation (particularly 'e' and 'o'), lack of fluency, and low participation among shy pupils.

Improvements were seen as pupils became more active through a reading relay game, which created an enjoyable learning atmosphere.This success was driven by syllable relay games (such as "ba-ma-na-sa-ta-la") and individual presentations on the relevant theme "Animals Around Me", which increased participation from 75% to 95% and enthusiasm for learning from 3.8 to 4.5 (on a 1–5 Likert scale). Personalised feedback for five target pupils reduced vowel errors by up to 80%, whilst 'who?' and 'what?' discussions reinforced understanding and story conclusions (74%). Discussion of this research. (Nuraeni and Ramdani 2023) found that an integrated literacy model was effective in addressing syllable-level difficulties among lower-year pupils (a 22% improvement), whilst Fadillah and Susanti (2022) demonstrated that a literacy-based learning approach in Year 3 at an Islamic primary school yielded an average of 75–80%, consistent with the results of Cycle II.

(Rahayu and Widodo 2021) and (Hidayah and Fitriani 2020) also emphasise that the local theme 'Animals Around Me' is relevant to a rural context, increasing comprehension by up to 18–20 per cent through group discussions. Darmawan and Widiana (2021) add that the integration of story listening and pair work, as in this study, is optimal for basic literacy (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, 2022).

Minor difficulties, such as reading three-syllable words (73%), can be overcome through

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an audio-based cycle extension (Supriatna& Dewi, 2024). Overall, the Literacy-Based Learning Model has proven to be contextual and effective in improving early reading skills in rural areas, with implications for primary school teachers to integrate games, cyclical reflection and local themes into literacy learning (Arikunto&Suhardjono, 2017; Zainal, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Literacy-Based Learning model over two cycles successfully improved the early reading skills of Year 3 pupils at MIN 4 in the Tanah Sepenggal Lintas sub-district, Bungo Regency, significantly—from an average of 49.9 per cent in the pre-cycle to 77.2 per cent.This model effectively integrates listening activities based on the thematic story 'Animals Around Me', a syllable relay game, comprehension discussions and summary writing, thereby addressing weaknesses in vowel pronunciation, fluency, comprehension of meaning, and low participation among shy pupils.

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