

READING ALOUD SHORT STORIES TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' LITERACY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Rommel Utungga Pasopati^{1*}, Alvina Salshabilla Linjani Putri¹, Anggraeni Ramadhani¹, Agischa Putri Agil¹, Sinta Uli Simbolon¹, Farham Nazhib Hamdani¹

¹Universitas Dr. Soetomo Surabaya, Indonesia

*Correspondence E-mail: rommelpasopati@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This community service activity aims to enhance students' literacy skills through the implementation of the *Reading Aloud* method for elementary school pupils at SDN Kapasari I, conducted by lecturers and students of Universitas Dr. Soetomo. The program was designed to foster students' reading interest and fluency in English by engaging them in expressive reading activities. The implementation consisted of three stages: initial assessment, service delivery, and evaluation. Documentation techniques were used to collect data throughout the process. Approximately fifty students participated actively in the program. They were encouraged to read selected fables both aloud and silently, record their performances, and present them before their peers. The results showed that the *Reading Aloud* activity effectively increased students' motivation, confidence, and fluency in reading English texts. In conclusion, this community service project successfully contributed to improving elementary students' literacy competence and confidence in public reading performance.

Kata Kunci:

Literasi, Reading
Aloud, Siswa
Sekolah Dasar,
Kelancaran
Berbahasa
Inggris,
Pengabdian
Kepada
Masyarakat.

Abstrak

Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan literasi siswa melalui penerapan metode *Reading Aloud* pada siswa sekolah dasar SDN Kapasari I. Kegiatan ini dilaksanakan oleh dosen dan mahasiswa Universitas Dr. Soetomo sebagai bentuk kontribusi terhadap peningkatan kemampuan membaca dan berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris. Pelaksanaan program dilakukan melalui tiga tahapan, yaitu asesmen awal, pelaksanaan layanan, dan evaluasi. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan teknik dokumentasi. Sebanyak lima puluh siswa berpartisipasi aktif dalam kegiatan ini. Mereka didorong untuk membaca dongeng pilihan secara lantang dan dalam hati, kemudian merekam dan menampilkan hasil bacaan mereka di depan teman-temannya. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa metode *Reading Aloud* efektif meningkatkan motivasi, kepercayaan diri, serta kelancaran siswa dalam membaca teks berbahasa Inggris. Dengan demikian, kegiatan pengabdian ini berhasil meningkatkan kompetensi literasi dan kepercayaan diri siswa sekolah dasar dalam performa membaca di depan umum.

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, mastering foreign languages particularly English has become increasingly essential for people across generations. Learning English allows individuals to access a broader range of global knowledge and adopt more contemporary perspectives [1], [2]. English functions as a gateway to international information and communication, bridging diverse cultural and academic contexts [3]. However, despite the growing awareness of the importance of English, literacy levels in this language remain relatively low, especially among elementary school students. This condition calls for innovative and engaging approaches to stimulate students' interest and motivation in learning English from an early age.

Reading activities play a crucial role in fostering literacy and language acquisition. One effective method to encourage students' engagement with texts is the Reading Aloud strategy, which involves reading written material aloud so that it can be heard and comprehended by oneself and others [4]. This technique not only enhances pronunciation accuracy but also helps learners grasp meaning, improve comprehension, and develop confidence in using the language. Reading Aloud can thus serve as both an instructional and recreational tool, supporting students' cognitive and emotional connection with the text [5], [6].

This community service program was implemented at SDN Kapasari I Surabaya, involving lecturers and students from Universitas Dr. Soetomo Surabaya. The program aimed to strengthen English literacy among elementary students through Reading Aloud activities. In this activity, students were encouraged to read short English stories aloud after individual reading sessions. The exercise was designed to build consistent reading habits, enhance pronunciation skills, and improve comprehension while fostering students' enjoyment of literary engagement.

Although many students at SDN Kapasari I demonstrate basic English proficiency, they still require more interactive learning opportunities to explore and master the language effectively. By integrating Reading Aloud activities into classroom practice, students are not only encouraged to use English more actively but also develop greater confidence and enthusiasm for learning. This initiative aligns with the broader mission of Universitas Dr. Soetomo to expand the reach of English literature education beyond the university environment and into the public sphere, particularly elementary schools.

Furthermore, this program contributes to strengthening literacy culture and promoting lifelong learning habits among young learners. It also provides practical insights for educators in designing engaging English reading programs that integrate language learning with character development. The outcomes of this community service are expected to serve as a reference for similar literacy-based initiatives that aim to improve students' English proficiency, reading comprehension, and self-confidence in using English in everyday contexts.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This community service activity was conducted through several systematic stages: needs assessment, program planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection [7], [8]. The methodology was designed to ensure that each stage of the activity addressed the real needs of the target community and achieved the intended objectives of improving students' English literacy through *Reading Aloud* activities.

A. Needs Assessment

The initial phase involved observation and discussion with the headmaster and teachers of SDN Kapasari I Surabaya to identify the specific challenges faced in English learning. The findings revealed that students required a more interactive and enjoyable approach to developing their English reading skills. This stage served as the foundation

for formulating a program tailored to the school's needs, emphasizing creative literacy-based activities [9], [10], [11].

B. Program Planning

Based on the results of the needs assessment, the service team from Universitas Dr. Soetomo designed a structured action plan outlining the program's objectives, target participants, learning materials, and implementation strategies. The core goal was to make English learning more engaging through the *Reading Aloud* method. English fable storybooks were selected as learning media to attract students' attention and provide moral lessons in addition to language practice.

C. Implementation

The implementation stage was carried out collaboratively by lecturers and students from Universitas Dr. Soetomo together with the teachers of SDN Kapasari I. During the sessions, students were guided to read English texts aloud in front of their peers. This activity encouraged active participation, improved pronunciation, and strengthened students' confidence in using English. The atmosphere was designed to be interactive and enjoyable, ensuring that students not only learned but also had fun throughout the process.

D. Monitoring and Evaluation

After the implementation, monitoring and evaluation were conducted to assess the effectiveness and impact of the activity [7], [8]. The evaluation focused on students' enthusiasm, pronunciation accuracy, reading fluency, and comprehension improvement. Feedback from teachers and the headmaster indicated that students became more motivated to read English texts and showed increased interest in language learning. The school also expressed the need for similar programs to be held regularly as a means of continuous language enrichment.

E. Reflection and Documentation

This article was written using a qualitative documentation approach [12], [13]. Data were collected from observations, interviews, and field documentation throughout the implementation process. The collected data were then categorized based on the stages of community service activities and analyzed using content analysis techniques to highlight the educational value and impact of the *Reading Aloud* method on students' English literacy at SDN Kapasari I Surabaya.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Significance of Reading Aloud in Literacy Development

The Reading Aloud activity conducted on June 13, 2025, serves as a pedagogical approach that combines two essential aspects of literacy: reading for oneself and reading for others. This dual focus enables students not only to improve their individual reading comprehension but also to communicate meaning effectively to an audience, such as teachers or peers. According to [1], [2], [3], the ability to articulate pronunciation, rhythm, intonation, and meaning in a clear and expressive manner represents a fundamental component of language learning.

Reading aloud requires readers to manage multiple linguistic elements simultaneously sentence structure, pronunciation, pauses, stress, tone, and emotional expression. This aligns with Anggraeni in Lamis et al. (2016), who identifies eight indicators of reading aloud proficiency: (1) audibility, (2) fluency, (3) correct pronunciation, (4) appropriate intonation, (5) adherence to punctuation, (6) positive

attitude, (7) expressiveness, and (8) comprehension of meaning. These indicators were used implicitly to observe students' performance during the community service program.



Figure 1. The Process of Group Reading by Students of SDN Kapasari I Surabaya

For elementary students, Reading Aloud is a crucial learning activity that develops linguistic, cognitive, and affective domains simultaneously [3], [14], [15]. First, it improves comprehension of diverse reading materials, especially English short stories used in this program. Second, it strengthens students' self-confidence when reading in a foreign language. Third, it provides an engaging avenue for active language learning, allowing students to interact with peers, teachers, and texts meaningfully.

Reading Aloud also enhances literacy by enriching vocabulary, reinforcing pronunciation, and fostering reading fluency [3], [14], [15], [16]. When practiced regularly, it reduces reading anxiety and prevents stuttering. Moreover, it cultivates expressiveness and emotional engagement, helping students internalize meaning rather than merely decoding words. The activity also promotes bonding and enjoyment, as students share stories that elicit laughter and empathy among peers. Such social-emotional benefits contribute to character building, empathy, and emotional regulation through shared reading experiences.



Figure 2. The Eagerness of SDN Kapasari I Surabaya's Students in Learning about Reading Aloud

B. Implementation of Reading Aloud at SDN Kapasari I Surabaya

The *Reading Aloud* program at SDN Kapasari I Surabaya was conducted as a collaborative initiative between lecturers and students of Universitas Dr. Soetomo. The activity aimed to strengthen English literacy in early education and to foster awareness of the importance of language learning in daily life. In line with the philosophical foundation of community service, the program sought to apply academic knowledge to promote human development and educational equity through English literacy [14], [15], [16].

The implementation began with a silent reading session, where approximately fifty students were given selected bilingual English–Bahasa fables to read. The chosen titles: *Finch and Canary* [17], *The Lion-Skinned Donkey* [18], *The Ostriches and The Cassowaries* [19], *Bees and Ants* [20], and *The Honest Mother Cow* [21] were specifically designed to be age-appropriate, entertaining, and rich in moral and linguistic content. These materials encouraged students to connect reading comprehension with moral reflection.



Figure 3. The Discussion Regarding the Fables between Elementary School Students and a UNITOMO Student

Students were divided into small groups of five, each facilitated by a member of the Universitas Dr. Soetomo community service team. This grouping method enabled peer learning and individualized guidance in vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension. During this stage, students received assistance in understanding literary elements such as character, conflict, setting, and dialogue, thereby linking reading activities to literary appreciation. This practical exposure strengthened their literacy awareness and cognitive engagement beyond theoretical classroom learning.



Figure 4. The Situation of Silent Reading of Fables by Elementary School Students and Community Service Team from UNITOMO

C. Enhancement of Confidence and Engagement through Reading Aloud

After silent reading, students proceeded to the *Reading Aloud* session. Each student practiced reading aloud under supervision, focusing on pronunciation, intonation, and expressiveness. This phase aimed to build confidence and public speaking skills. Some challenges were observed such as students' limited concentration and initial shyness when reading before their peers. To maintain engagement, facilitators used positive reinforcement, including simple rewards like candy and snacks. This strategy proved effective in maintaining students' motivation and associating reading with enjoyable experiences.

The highlight of the activity was the students' public performance, where they read the assigned fables aloud in pairs before an audience of peers, teachers, and facilitators. Their performances were documented using smartphones and wireless microphones for both educational and promotional purposes. The recordings served as documentation of the community service activity and as media to showcase the potential of elementary students in performing English *Reading Aloud*.



Figure 5. Two Elementary School Students are Reading Aloud while being Recorded by Wireless Microphones and Smartphones

The results indicated that students exhibited improved fluency, pronunciation, and enthusiasm for reading. Many participants expressed pride and excitement after completing their performances. Teachers also reported noticeable improvements in students' willingness to participate in English learning activities. Furthermore, the public reading component fostered a sense of achievement, collaboration, and creative expression among the students [4], [6], [22].



Figure 6. Students of SDN Kapasari I are Reading Aloud the Given Fables

D. Educational and Social Implications

The success of this program underscores the potential of *Reading Aloud* as an effective strategy for improving English literacy and promoting character development among elementary school students. The activity not only enhanced students' language proficiency but also strengthened their confidence, creativity, and empathy. Through interactive reading experiences, students learned to appreciate literature, develop communication skills, and engage emotionally with the content they read.



Figure 7. Comments from Elementary Students Teachers Regarding the Reading Aloud Event

Moreover, this program has social implications for teachers and parents. It demonstrates that early English exposure, when delivered through enjoyable and

interactive methods, can significantly improve children's literacy motivation. Teachers are encouraged to integrate *Reading Aloud* into regular classroom routines, while parents can support similar literacy practices at home. This aligns with the broader goal of community service in higher education to bridge academic knowledge and community empowerment through sustainable educational practices.

CONCLUSION

The Reading Aloud program implemented at SDN Kapasari I Surabaya has been successfully conducted and proven effective in enhancing English literacy among elementary school students. The activity not only encouraged active participation but also demonstrated clear improvements in students' reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension skills. These outcomes indicate that continuous exposure to engaging reading activities can significantly strengthen young learners' understanding, critical thinking, and enthusiasm for literacy. This community service initiative has contributed to cultivating a sustainable reading culture among students. Through Reading Aloud, learners developed greater confidence, courage, and proficiency in expressing ideas, particularly in English as a foreign language. The program also fostered social interaction and emotional growth, helping students communicate more effectively and appreciate literature as a medium for both learning and enjoyment. Beyond the classroom context, the results of this activity carry broader educational implications. Early literacy development is closely linked to the formation of essential 21st-century skills such as creativity, empathy, collaboration, and problem-solving. The success of this program demonstrates that small-scale, inclusive community-based initiatives can create meaningful impacts on educational practices and inspire a wider movement toward literacy-oriented learning environments. Furthermore, this program reflects the practical relevance of academic knowledge in empowering communities. It showcases the vital role of higher education institutions in bridging theory and practice through community engagement. By integrating university expertise with local school needs, initiatives like this can help prepare future generations to face social and academic challenges with confidence, adaptability, and insight—embodying the true essence of education for sustainable human development.

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