

**ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH READING SKILLS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS:  
A STUDY IN MUHAMMADIYAH 1 BENGKULU ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**Solehan<sup>1</sup>, Finessa Salsabila<sup>2</sup>**

**<sup>1</sup>Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu, <sup>2</sup>Universitas Indonesia**

**Correspondence**

Email: [solehbk1390@gmail.com](mailto:solehbk1390@gmail.com),  
[finessasalsabila@gmail.com](mailto:finessasalsabila@gmail.com)

**AbstraK**

This research endeavor seeks to critically examine the English reading competencies of elementary school learners enrolled at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Bengkulu. The investigation delves into the levels of reading proficiency exhibited by students, the obstacles they encounter, the methodologies they adopt, and the contributions of educators and guardians in facilitating the advancement of English literacy. A qualitative research methodology is employed in this study, encompassing classroom observations, comprehensive interviews with students from grades 4 through 6 and their English instructors, alongside the analysis of relevant documents such as instructional materials, lesson plans, and student evaluation outcomes. Participant selection is executed utilizing purposive sampling methods, with criteria established for students who have engaged in English studies for no less than two years, exhibit diverse proficiency levels, and possess parental authorization. Data is subjected to thematic analysis, which encompasses familiarization with the dataset, coding, theme identification, reviewing and refining themes, as well as naming and defining these themes. This study adheres to ethical research tenets, which include informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, protection against harm, the entitlement to withdraw, and reciprocal benefits. The anticipated outcomes of this research are expected to yield comprehensive insights into the intricacies of teaching English reading at the elementary level, identify efficacious practices to bolster EFL students' reading competencies, and provide recommendations for the enhancement of more effective English programs at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Bengkulu and other analogous elementary institutions.

**Keywords:** EFL Reading Skills, Elementary School

**Introduction**

Reading constitutes a crucial competency within the domain of language acquisition, particularly for individuals engaged in the pursuit of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The capacity to read not only functions as a conduit for the absorption of information but also establishes the essential framework for the advancement of supplementary linguistic proficiencies. Within the Indonesian context, the instruction of the English language has commenced at the primary

educational tier; nevertheless, a significant number of students continue to encounter various obstacles in the cultivation of effective reading abilities. This research concentrates on the reading proficiency levels of EFL learners at Muhammadiyah 1 Bengkulu Elementary School, a pedagogical institution that has incorporated an English language program into its educational framework.

The importance of reading proficiency in English at the elementary level is increasingly recognized, as it allows students to access a vast amount of information and knowledge disseminated in an international language (Singh, 2022). However, a significant amount of research shows that EFL students in Indonesia often struggle to comprehend English texts due to limited vocabulary, inadequate grammatical understanding, and a lack of language exposure outside the educational environment (Octavia et al., 2024). These factors can have a significant impact on students' learning motivation and their overall academic progress.

Elementary School 1 Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, respected as a leading primary education institution in Bengkulu, has endeavored to create a comprehensive English curriculum. However, there has been little rigorous investigation assessing the effectiveness of this program, particularly regarding the improvement of students' reading skills. Collaborative learning initiatives implemented in various educational institutions have demonstrated the capacity to enhance students' understanding and learning motivation (Rubtsova et al., 2023). However, the implementation of such methodologies at Elementary School 1 Muhammadiyah Bengkulu has not undergone systematic oversight. Furthermore, the role of educators and parents in fostering students' English literacy requires further examination, considering that parental involvement is empirically linked to students' reading proficiency (Demir, 2024).

This research effort aims to examine the English reading competence of students enrolled at Elementary School 1 Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, with a specific focus on evaluating the level of reading proficiency, the challenges faced, the strategies employed, and the contributions of educators and parents in facilitating students' literacy development. By using a qualitative methodological approach, this study seeks to generate comprehensive insights into the dynamics of English reading pedagogy in the context of primary education and to identify effective practices that can enhance the reading proficiency of EFL students at the elementary level.

## **Research Methodology**

The participants in this study are students in grades 4-6 at SD 1 Muhammadiyah Bengkulu who are learning English as a foreign language, along with English teachers and the students' parents. Participants are selected using purposive sampling, where the researcher intentionally chooses individuals who can provide rich information about the phenomenon being studied. Inclusion criteria for students include: (1) having studied English for at least two years, (2) possessing varying levels of English proficiency, and (3) obtaining parental consent to participate in the research. The research location is SD 1 Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, a private primary school that has implemented an English programme in its curriculum. This location was chosen based on the consideration that the school has a structured English programme and students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, thereby providing a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied. Data collection techniques of this research are Observation, Depth Interviews, Document Analysis, and Reflective Notes.

## **Finding and Discussion**

### **Finding**

#### **Teacher Barriers in Teaching EFL**

In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, educators serve as a fundamental foundation that influences the effectiveness of the educational process. However, this vital role is often obscured by a series of intricate challenges, similar to those faced by Septi Lestari, M.Pd., a committed instructor at Muhammadiyah Elementary School 1 in Bengkulu. To gain deeper insights into these obstacles from the students' perspectives, a series of qualitative interviews were conducted with Daffa Adzriel (Year 4), Nayla Izzatunnisa (Year 5), and Amina Salwa (Year 6). The purpose of these interviews is to identify and classify specific barriers, including difficulties related to the use of instructional media, challenges in understanding educational content, and obstacles in achieving set learning objectives. By elucidating the students' perspectives, it is anticipated that more effective and relevant interventions can be designed to enhance the overall quality of EFL instruction.

#### **Using Teaching Media**

1. Internet connection unstable
2. One of the main obstacles significantly affecting the effectiveness of the online pedagogy managed by Septi Lestari is the issue of inconsistent internet connectivity. Septi articulated, "In reality, the limitations lie in the internet infrastructure. Sometimes, during the

educational process, the internet connection suddenly deteriorates, disrupting the learning experience". Fluctuations in network performance not only hinder the smooth transmission of instructional content but also create frustration among students. They face difficulties in accessing learning platforms, actively engaging in virtual class discussions, and obtaining essential online educational resources, which ultimately has a negative impact on their overall learning experience.

3. Not all student can access the media  
*"Limited access to digital learning resources is a significant issue for Septi Lestari. She observed that, 'For Zoom itself, only about 30% [of students can access it], because not all students have a good internet connection.' This statistic highlights a tangible digital divide among students, where only a small fraction have sufficient internet connectivity to engage with educational activities through platforms like Zoom. Such circumstances necessitate innovative and adaptive strategies from educators to identify and implement alternative learning resources that are more inclusive and accessible to all students, without exception, ensuring that no learner is excluded from the educational experience".*
4. Low Video Quality  
*"Alongside access issues, substandard media quality emerges as an additional concern for Septi Lestari. She articulated that, "There are several instances when students' voices are not heard clearly, even when using headphones." This scenario illustrates that, although students manage to connect to online classes, their educational experience remains disrupted by inadequate audio-visual quality. Such lower media quality can create gaps in understanding the material, where students may overlook important information or face challenges in processing verbally delivered information, ultimately reducing the overall effectiveness of learning".*
5. Choosing the Right Media  
Furthermore, Septi Lestari articulated that the process of selecting appropriate learning media is complex and requires careful consideration. "Many factors must be assessed when determining media, including students' ability to access and utilise it," she emphasised. This underscores the idea that choosing media regarded as 'modern' or 'advanced' does not inherently ensure the effectiveness of the learning experience. Poorly considered media selection, which fails to account for the availability of necessary infrastructure, students' technological proficiency, or their individual learning preferences, has the potential to be counterproductive, hindering rather than enhancing the educational process.

### **Barriers in Teaching Materials**

1. Students' Misunderstanding of Material  
"One significant challenge identified by Septi Lestari is students' misunderstanding of English learning material. She observed that, 'Many obstacles are faced by students when learning online, such as not understanding certain terms that I did not explain in the video.' This statement highlights the importance of providing comprehensive and contextual explanations, especially in online learning where face-to-face interaction is limited. Furthermore, these findings indicate an urgent need to create greater space and opportunities for students to ask questions, clarify doubts, and actively participate in discussions, enabling them to build a deeper and more solid understanding of the material being taught."
2. Difficulty in Providing Feedback  
"Septi acknowledges that delayed feedback in online learning has become a challenge. Reliance on chat forums and Zoom sessions to answer students' questions means that feedback cannot be given immediately, which can affect the effectiveness of learning".

### **Barriers to Achieving Teaching Goals**

1. Indirect Evaluation  
"One difficulty experienced by Septi is the limitation in providing direct assessments of students' abilities. This situation, exemplified by the inability to provide real-time evaluations during the presentations of Daffa Adzriel, Nayla Izzatunnisa, and Amina Salwa, has implications for the teacher's ability to monitor and measure students' learning progress comprehensively".
2. Insufficient Student Understanding of Material  
"Septi realises that many of her students struggle to understand the material being taught. According to her, students' misunderstanding is a major obstacle in the learning process. To address this, a more interactive and supportive approach is greatly needed".

"The challenges faced by Septi Lestari, M.Pd., in the context of EFL teaching online highlight the complexity of the issues inherent in this teaching method. Various factors, ranging from technical constraints such as internet connection stability to difficulties in providing meaningful feedback and conducting accurate assessments, collectively affect the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the development of comprehensive and effective solutions is crucial to overcoming these barriers and improving the quality of English learning at Muhammadiyah Elementary School 1 in Bengkulu."

## **Barriers for Students in Engaging with the Reading Process in the EFL Context.**

To gain deeper insights into the difficulties students face when reading in English as a foreign language (EFL), a series of interviews were conducted. The interviewees included English teacher Septi Lestari, M.Pd., as well as three students from different grade levels: Daffa Adzriel (Grade 4), Nayla Izzatunnisa (Grade 5), and Amina Salwa (Grade 6). Through these interviews, a variety of perspectives on the reading challenges faced by each individual were obtained.

### **Teacher's Perception**

*Septi Lestari, M.Pd., highlights that the main barrier for students in reading is their limited vocabulary. According to her, many students struggle to understand texts due to their restricted vocabulary. Furthermore, she also observes a lack of motivation as a hindering factor. She states that some students are less enthusiastic about reading, possibly due to a lack of confidence or a disinterest in the material presented.*

### **Student Perspective from Grade 4: Daffa Adzriel**

*Daffa Adzriel expresses that he often feels confused by the complex material. He finds it difficult to follow the teacher's explanations due to the many new terms he is not familiar with. Additionally, Daffa highlights the lack of opportunities to ask questions in the online class, making it challenging for him to clarify things he does not understand immediately.*

### **Student Perspective from Grade 5: Nayla Izzatunnisa**

*Nayla Izzatunnisa points to the issue of accessibility to reading materials as a frequent barrier she faces. She explains that internet connectivity issues often hinder her ability to access the books or materials provided. Furthermore, Nayla also believes that the technology used sometimes does not support the learning process. She cites poor video quality as an example, which makes it difficult for her to hear clearly.*

### **Student Perspective from Grade 6: Amina Salwa**

*Amina Salwa articulates a significant challenge in effectively allocating her time for the purpose of reading. The substantial demands imposed by multiple academic subjects frequently result in a deficit of time available for comprehensive reading. Furthermore, Amina underscores the critical role of encouragement from her parents and educators in fostering her motivation to engage in reading activities. She experiences a diminished sense of motivation in the absence of her parents' participation in her educational journey.*

Drawing from the interviews conducted with the participants, it can be inferred that the difficulties encountered by students in their reading



endeavors within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are exceedingly intricate and diverse. Factors such as a restricted vocabulary, insufficient motivation, and issues related to the accessibility of reading resources pose significant challenges that require thorough examination and resolution. It is anticipated that a comprehensive understanding of these multifaceted viewpoints can provide a robust basis for the formulation of more effective strategies aimed at enhancing the reading proficiency of students at Muhammadiyah Elementary School 1 in Bengkulu.

## **Discussion**

This research effort aims to elucidate the limitations faced by students at Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School in Bengkulu in the area of reading English as a Foreign Language (EFL), while also evaluating current educational resources and objectives. The main challenges faced by learners, as articulated by Septi Lestari, M.Pd., relate to understanding instructional content and the availability of educational materials. This statement is supported by empirical studies showing that a lack of effective instructional resources and pedagogical methodologies can significantly hinder students' reading proficiency. Additionally, the element of motivation, in relation to environmental support, is recognised as an important factor influencing the reading acquisition process. Hu et al., (2022) It states that vocabulary constraints and understanding of grammatical structures can significantly hinder learners' capacity to engage with reading materials. Daffa Adzriel and Nayla Izzatunnisa further highlight the need for comprehensive explanations of complex terminology, emphasising the important role of additional support in the instructional presentation of content.

Teaching materials must always be relevant and engaging. Amina Salwa suggests the use of visual and interactive media. Riset Du, (2024) It demonstrates that the integration of technology and media in teaching can enhance student interest and understanding. Furthermore, the learning targets focus on improving basic reading skills, text comprehension, and vocabulary usage. Clear targets help students have direction in their learning. However, regular evaluations are necessary to ensure that the targets are achieved and remain relevant to student development.

The role of the teacher is crucial in addressing students' challenges. Septi emphasises the importance of interactive approaches and personal support. Engagement in classroom discourse and providing constructive feedback can facilitate students in overcoming challenges (Aslam et al., 2023). These findings have important implications for EFL teaching. A more flexible and adaptive approach is needed to accommodate the diverse learning needs of students. Implementing new pedagogical strategies

and incorporating student feedback can enhance the effectiveness of teaching and the quality of educational outcomes (Hense, 2022). Thus, this discussion aims to generate more effective strategies to enhance reading abilities among students at Muhammadiyah 1 Elementary School in Bengkulu, as well as to address the challenges in learning English as a foreign language.

## **Conclusion and Suggestion**

### **Conclusion**

This research conducts an in-depth analysis of the English reading abilities of students at Muhammadiyah Elementary School 1 in Bengkulu. The aim is to understand the extent of students' reading skills, the difficulties they face, the strategies they employ, and the roles of teachers and parents in enhancing students' reading abilities. This research is important because, despite English being taught from elementary school in Indonesia, many students still struggle to read effectively.

The study employs a qualitative method with various data collection techniques, such as classroom observations, interviews with students, teachers, and parents, analysis of relevant documents, and reflective notes. The collected data is analysed using thematic analysis, which involves understanding the data, coding it, identifying emerging themes, reviewing and clarifying the themes, and naming and defining them.

Students from grades 4 to 6 at Muhammadiyah Elementary School 1 who are learning English, along with their teachers and parents, are selected as participants using purposive sampling to ensure that the information gathered is in-depth and relevant. Thus, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the process of learning to read English in elementary school and to discover effective ways to improve EFL students' reading abilities.

### **Suggestion**

The results of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for developing better English teaching programmes that meet the needs of Muhammadiyah Elementary School 1 in Bengkulu and other elementary schools.

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