

The Effect of Reading Aloud on Students' Reading Comprehension at GKPS 13 Sibarou Junior High School

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Article Info

Article history:

Received October 22, 2025
Revised November 18, 2025
Accepted December 23, 2025

Keywords:

Problem Based Learning,
Reading Comprehension,
Narrative Text, Reading Aloud,
Junior High School

ABSTRACT

This research investigates how effective the Problem Based Learning (PBL) method is at improving students' understanding of reading through narrative texts in SMP GKPS 13 Sibarou. The study was motivated by the finding that numerous eighth-grade students struggled with grasping text organization and main concepts in their reading materials. To tackle this challenge, the teacher adopted PBL techniques by offering students real-world problems related to narrative text analysis, which they addressed collectively through reading aloud, discussions, and presentations. The research included 14 students who were paired up, and it utilized worksheets, observation forms, reading comprehension assessments, and documentation as tools. Activities were crafted to encourage students to recognize the organization of narrative texts, apply past tense verbs, and derive meaning through guided inquiry. The reading aloud method aided learners in enhancing their pronunciation, fluency, and understanding of the texts. The findings indicated a significant improvement in students' narrative text comprehension, along with heightened confidence, involvement, and critical thinking skills. The incorporation of PBL encouraged teamwork and a more profound engagement with the content. This method is advantageous for English educators looking to develop meaningful, student-focused learning experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

In the swiftly changing world of education today, the skill to read, evaluate, and thoughtfully respond to information has become increasingly vital. Education now encompasses more than just the memorization of facts; it must also equip students to think critically, collaborate effectively, and communicate well in practical situations (Barrows & Tamblyn, 2018, 2020; Dolmans et al. 2019; Sianturi et al., 2024; Aniati et al., 2025). Consequently, the function of teaching has transformed from simply delivering information to facilitating students in building knowledge through engaging learning activities (OECD, 2020).

In Indonesia's junior high school curriculum, English stands as a fundamental subject that is crucial for developing these capabilities, especially through reading (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan [Kemendikbud], 2021). Reading acts as an essential language skill and a pathway to lifelong learning.

Nonetheless, many students face difficulties with comprehension in practical classroom settings, particularly with narrative texts that demand an understanding of story structure, context-based vocabulary, and critical analysis (Fitriani & Yuliasri, 2019; Sulistyo & Widiati, 2018; Damanik and Herman, 2021; Purba et al., 2023; Herman et al., 2025). These obstacles frequently result in a lack of interest and poor academic performance (Putri et al., 2021; Asnawi et al., 2025).

To tackle this issue, contemporary teaching practices should incorporate technology and media to create more captivating and interactive learning experiences (Kusumawati & Fatimah, 2021; OECD, 2020). Utilizing Information and Communication Technology, such as digital literature, multimedia presentations, and online cooperative tools, has become vital in teaching strategies that cater to varied learning preferences and enhance access to genuine reading resources (Widodo, 2019, 2020). However, in numerous schools, reading instruction continues to be predominantly focused on the teacher, resulting in limited student engagement and exploration (Fitriani & Yuliasri, 2019).

This scenario indicates a need for a shift in teaching methods. Educators are now urged to transition away from conventional approaches and embrace student-centered, inquiry-driven learning models that foster active participation and advanced thinking (Barrows & Tamblyn, 2018; Dolmans et al., 2019). One effective method is Problem-Based Learning (PBL), which immerses students in scenarios where they must address real or simulated challenges through teamwork, investigation, and self-reflection (Barrows & Tamblyn, 2020; Ningsih & Fauziati, 2020). When applied to English language education, PBL can be particularly impactful with narrative texts, as these pieces inherently include conflicts, event sequences, and resolutions that reflect the essence of solving problems (Utami & Mulyani, 2021).

Narrative texts are well-suited for PBL initiatives since they enable students to examine character development, story arcs, and overarching themes. Utilizing narrative texts in a PBL context improves students' abilities to make predictions, evaluate cause-and-effect relationships, and articulate their interpretations with greater confidence (Widodo, 2020; Sirait et al., 2020). These activities push learners to explore the deeper meanings of the text instead of merely understanding surface details. Moreover, the technique of reading aloud can complement PBL to strengthen language acquisition. Reading aloud aids students in enhancing their pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension skills (Siregar & Manurung, 2022; Yulianti & Rahmawati, 2023). It also establishes avenues for verbal engagement, peer feedback, and a stronger connection with the material. When reading aloud is merged with PBL, it evolves into a significant collaborative task rather than a mundane exercise, fostering collective inquiry and group contemplation, both essential aspects of active learning (Fitriani & Yuliasri, 2019; Putri et al., 2021).

This research took place at SMP GKPS 13 Sibarou and centered on a class of eighth graders participating in group reading exercises using narrative literature. Utilizing the Problem-Based Learning method, students were motivated to delve into questions such as: What is the primary issue in this tale? How is it resolved? What is the organization of the text? These inquiries were examined through collaborative discussions, reading together, analyzing the text, and giving presentations (Ningsih & Fauziati, 2020; Utami & Mulyani, 2021).

The purpose of this study is to examine how effective it is to blend Problem-Based Learning with the strategy of reading aloud to enhance students' understanding of narrative texts. Additionally, this research seeks to foster a more thoughtful, cooperative, and technology-integrated English learning setting that is in line with the ideals of the Pancasila Student Profile, which highlights the importance of independence, critical analysis, and teamwork (Kemdikbud, 2021).

METHOD

Design

This qualitative descriptive study aimed to examine how the reading aloud strategy supports students' understanding of narrative texts by observing their participation, responses, and comprehension development.

DataSource

The research involved 14 eighth-grade students from SMP GKPS 13 Sibarou, divided into 7 pairs. Data were gathered from student worksheets, comprehension tests, observations, and researcher notes.



Phase 1: Preparation

The class commenced in a welcoming and respectful environment. The teacher initiated the session by greeting the learners and asking one student to guide the class in a brief prayer. This action contributed to establishing a serene and focused atmosphere conducive to learning. After checking attendance, the teacher reminded students to gather all necessary supplies, including notebooks, pens, English textbooks, and the learner worksheet (LKPD) to be utilized during the lesson.

With everything set, the teacher revealed the day's focus: examining narrative texts. Students were informed about the objectives they were expected to meet, such as recognizing the structure of a story and grasping essential elements like past tense and time expressions. The teacher also described the learning method: students would pair up, read aloud, analyze stories together, and exchange insights in group discussions. These tasks were aimed at enhancing their understanding while also fostering confidence and communication skills.

To help students engage with the subject, the teacher posed some simple yet meaningful questions:

- "Have you heard the tale of Jack and the Beanstalk?"
- "What types of stories do you enjoy?"
- "Why do you think people find joy in reading or hearing stories?"

These inquiries ignited curiosity and encouraged students to contemplate their own experiences with stories. They had the opportunity to have brief conversations with their neighbors and exchange thoughts with the class, making the learning process more relatable and interesting.

To set the stage for the main topic, the teacher presented a real-life learning challenge:

- "How can we grasp the message and structure of an English story, particularly when we might be unfamiliar with certain vocabulary or grammar?"

This query marked the beginning of the students' educational journey. It prompted them to think critically and work collaboratively, which are fundamental aspects of the Problem Based Learning approach. By the end of this segment, students were paired up and prepared to tackle the problem collectively in the next part of the lesson.



Figure 1. Documentation among the principal and English teachers at SMP GKPS 13 Sibarou

Phase 2: Implementation

During the implementation phase, the teacher applied the read-aloud strategy through a structured activity centered on the story "Jack and the Beanstalk." The session began with a PowerPoint presentation introducing the concept of narrative texts, including their purpose (to entertain or inform), structure (orientation, complication, resolution, and optional re-orientation), and types (fairy tales, biographies, legends, etc.). Students also learned about the typical language features, such as the use of the simple past tense, time conjunctions, and first- or third-person perspectives.

After the explanation, the class was divided into six pairs. Each pair received a worksheet (LKPD) containing the story and read it aloud together, focusing on pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. This activity aimed to increase engagement and deepen understanding of the text's structure and language.

Following the reading, students completed comprehension tasks including analyzing the story's structure and answering True/False questions. They were given 15 minutes to finish. The teacher then led a class discussion to review the answers and clarify misunderstandings. Each group was later asked to prepare and present a short analysis and retelling of the story. During this process, the teacher monitored group work and provided guidance.

To conclude, the teacher conducted a formative assessment, evaluating students' speaking skills and comprehension based on their pronunciation, fluency, expression, and ability to identify key elements in the narrative. This phase helped enhance both their reading comprehension and speaking confidence through active and collaborative learning.

Phase 3: Evaluation

During the assessment phase, the focus was on helping students consolidate their understanding and reflect on what they had learned. The teacher led a group review, revisiting key concepts especially the structure of narrative texts and how reading aloud can support comprehension. This recap helped ensure that everyone had a clear grasp of the lesson. Students were encouraged to ask questions and share any confusion they had, creating an open and supportive space for clarification. A short reflection session followed, where both the teacher and students gave feedback on the activities what worked well and what could be improved next time. To wrap up, the teacher assigned a simple follow-up task, explained the next topic, and ended the class with a prayer and a warm farewell. This thoughtful closing helped students leave the session feeling heard, supported, and ready to keep learning.

RESULTS

Phase 1: Preparation

1. The learning session began with a warm greeting from the teacher, followed by a short prayer led by a student, setting a respectful and focused tone for the class. The teacher took attendance and ensured that all students were prepared with the necessary materials, such as notebooks, pens, and textbooks.
2. Once the class was ready, the teacher introduced the topic narrative texts and explained the learning objectives, expected skills, and teaching methods. The lesson focused on using the reading aloud strategy to improve both reading comprehension and speaking abilities. Competencies from the curriculum were emphasized, including identifying narrative structures, understanding past tense verbs, and responding to comprehension questions. Students were informed that they would work in pairs or small groups, engage in discussions, and present their ideas. This clear guidance helped students understand what to expect and encouraged active participation.

To activate prior knowledge and engage students, the teacher asked several open-ended questions related to personal experiences with stories, such as:

- "Have you ever read or heard the story of Jack and the Beanstalk?"
- "What kinds of stories do you enjoy?"
- "Why do people like reading stories?"

These questions helped students relate the lesson to familiar ideas, stimulating curiosity and preparing them mentally for the learning process.

Facilities and Materials Used:

1. Tools: Computer, projector, internet, pens, books, Bluetooth speaker.
2. Materials: English textbook, LKPD (student worksheets), PowerPoint slides.
3. Pancasila Student Profile Integration.

Phase 2: Implementation

1. Building Background Knowledge through Story Familiarization

The teacher commenced the essential learning segment by conducting an apperception to direct the students' attention to the day's topic. To spark the students' interest and prepare them, the teacher showcased a PowerPoint presentation that offered a brief introduction to narrative texts, highlighting their purpose, format, and language characteristics. The teacher clarified that narrative texts aim to either entertain or inform an audience by narrating a story. The typical format of narrative texts, which includes orientation, complication, resolution, and optionally re-orientation, was clearly presented with examples. Furthermore, the teacher highlighted specific language characteristics found in narrative texts, such as the use of the simple past tense, time conjunctions (e.g., once upon a time, then, after that), as well as specific participants and descriptive language. To simplify the idea, the teacher shared relatable story examples,

like popular fairy tales or folk tales that the students might know (e. g, Cinderella, Timun Mas). This approach aimed to activate students' prior knowledge, allowing them to connect new information with stories they were already familiar with. The use of visual aids, such as images and key terms on the slides, further clarified abstract concepts and maintained students' engagement. As part of the apperception exercise, the teacher invited several students to read a sample narrative text aloud, paragraph by paragraph, in front of the class. This provided students an opportunity to practice their pronunciation, gain confidence, and begin interacting with the structure and rhythm of narrative texts. This phase was essential for establishing the lesson's tone and direction, ensuring that all students had a common understanding before moving on to group activities.



Figure 2. Explaining about the example of Narrative Text

2. The students were organized into seven groups, each consisting of two learners, to promote peer cooperation and active participation.
3. Each group received a Learners Worksheet (LKPD) featuring a narrative text named "Jack and the Beanstalk."
4. The groups read through the story and examined its basic structure (orientation, complication, resolution). They then filled out a series of True/False statements and identified the appropriate past tense forms for different sentences taken from the text. The teacher set aside 15 minutes for students to finish the comprehension exercises, urging them to work together efficiently.
5. After completing the activities, the entire class came together to discuss the answers. The teacher facilitated the discussion to clear up any misunderstandings and reinforce important concepts.
6. **Student Group Work**
Each group would present their analyses to the class, covering the text's structure and language use. During their preparation time, the teacher walked around the classroom, observing each group, aiding, and ensuring that every student was actively involved.
7. **Ice Breaking session**
Before moving on to the reading presentations, the teacher initiated a fun ice-breaking game called "Clap-Boom-Candy" to energize the class and help them stay alert. This cooperative activity required students to respond to specific cues: "Clap" involved clapping their hands, "Boom" required them to hit the table, and "Candy" meant racing to grab a piece of candy placed in front of them. This exercise not only uplifted their mood but also promoted teamwork and attentiveness.
8. After the ice-breaking session, each team showcased their work sequentially. Students were evaluated on four main criteria of speaking performance: pronunciation, intonation, fluency, and precision.



Figure 3. Students' Performance in Reading Aloud Activity in the class

9. Formative assessment during this phase indicated that students were not only developing reading comprehension but also showing positive attitudes toward group work and problem-solving. They supported each other during presentations and were proud to share their findings.

Phase 3: Evaluation

The evaluation phase served as a critical opportunity for both the teacher and students to consolidate their understanding and reflect on the learning process. At the end of the session, the teacher facilitated a comprehensive review of the key elements discussed throughout the lesson. Particular attention was given to the structure of narrative texts, including the components of orientation, complication, resolution, and re-orientation, as well as the language features commonly found in narrative writing, such as the use of past tense, time conjunctions, and specific participants. The teacher also emphasized the importance of the reading aloud strategy in enhancing reading comprehension and oral fluency.

To help students internalize the lesson content and engage in self-reflection, the teacher posed several open-ended, reflective questions, such as:

- "What material did you learn today?"
- "Which part of the lesson did you enjoy the most?"
- "Which parts of the material did you find difficult to understand?"

These questions encouraged students to evaluate their own learning experience, recognize areas where they succeeded, and identify aspects that still required improvement. Additionally, the teacher provided space for students to ask clarifying questions about any content that remained unclear. This not only fostered open dialogue but also promoted an environment of inquiry and active participation. The session continued with a collective reflection, where both the teacher and students discussed what aspects of the lesson were effective and which areas could be improved for future sessions. This reflective practice allowed students to become more self-aware learners and offered the teacher insight into instructional effectiveness.

Before concluding the session, the teacher gave a follow-up assignment related to the narrative text to reinforce the concepts discussed in class. The teacher also briefly explained the plan for the next lesson, helping students understand the continuity of their learning. Finally, the session ended with a prayer led by a student, followed by a respectful and warm farewell, bringing closure to the day's learning in a meaningful and structured way.



Figure 4. Photo with students at the end of the PKM program

DISCUSSION

Challenges in Implementing Reading Aloud Strategy

During the execution of the read-aloud approach in the classroom, various difficulties arose that influenced both the process and results of the educational activity. These difficulties ranged from individual student challenges to issues with managing the classroom. Here are the key issues faced:

1. Low Student Assurance and Reading Fluidity
A significant number of students felt insecure while reading aloud. They tended to speak softly, pronounce words incorrectly, or display uncertainty, which impacted the clarity and smoothness of the reading session.
2. Skewed Contribution in Group Activities
In certain groups, one student often took control of the task while their partner stayed inactive. This discrepancy diminished the teamwork aspect that is crucial in Problem Based Learning (PBL), where balanced participation and mutual responsibility are vital. Given that PBL focuses on student-driven exploration and collaboration, unequal involvement restricted the chances for every learner to engage with the issue and add significant insights to the group's comprehension. This issue underscored the necessity for more defined role assignments and guidance approaches to make sure that all students were equally engaged in the process of solving the problem.
3. Restricted Vocabulary and Pronunciation Abilities
Students found it challenging to deal with unfamiliar terms and had trouble with accurate pronunciation, particularly with longer or irregular words commonly found in narrative literature.
4. Challenges with Time Management
Some groups required more time than anticipated to finish the reading and understanding tasks, leading to delays in class presentations and conversations.
5. Insufficient Practice of Spoken English
Students seldom engaged in spoken English in their everyday educational setting, which made reading aloud a tougher and more daunting task.

These obstacles illustrate the frequent challenges encountered when teaching English reading skills in junior high. Identifying and comprehending these problems is crucial for enhancing future teaching methods and ensuring more inclusive, engaging, and effective learning experiences.

Steps to Overcome the Challenges

To guarantee the effective application of the reading aloud approach despite facing challenges, several practical measures were enacted. These approaches aimed to tackle obstacles and improve students' learning experiences during reading activities. The subsequent measures were implemented:

1. Offering Demonstrations and Supervised Practice
The teacher demonstrated how to orally read a text with proper pronunciation, expressiveness, and intonation. This example aided students in comprehending the expectations. Moreover, the teacher conducted brief pronunciation exercises to prepare students before starting group tasks.



Figure 5. Students Learning Key Vocabulary before Reading Aloud

2. Designating Specific Tasks Within Groups

To promote fair involvement, each student in a group was given a distinct role, such as reader, analyst, or presenter. This approach ensured that all group members were engaged and actively participated in the task at hand.

3. Establishing a Supportive and Accepting Atmosphere

The teacher frequently reminded the students that errors are an essential aspect of the learning journey. This practice fostered a nurturing classroom culture, allowing students to practice their reading skills comfortably without the anxiety of making mistakes.

4. Implementing Time Restrictions and Visual Timers

The teacher established time constraints for each task and incorporated visual timers to help students stay on schedule. This tactic effectively organized class time and motivated students to maintain focus and structure during activities.

5. Introducing Vocabulary Support Prior to Reading

Before commencing the reading, the teacher presented and clarified important vocabulary found in the narrative texts. This vocabulary supports equipped students with better preparation, lessened interruptions while reading, and contributed to a more fluid reading experience.

Through these methods, the obstacles that initially obstructed the educational process were progressively reduced. Students grew more engaged, self-assured, and accountable in their designated roles, resulting in more efficient and enriching reading experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study found that combining Problem-Based Learning (PBL) with reading aloud effectively enhanced students' reading comprehension and speaking skills in narrative texts. Faced with real learning challenges like understanding stories despite grammar and vocabulary difficulties students were encouraged to think critically, collaborate, and explore text structures through discussion and shared reading. Throughout the phases of preparation, implementation, and evaluation, students showed increased confidence, better understanding of narrative structure, and greater willingness to participate in group work and presentations. The learning process became more meaningful, interactive, and student-focused true to the spirit of PBL. Engaging activities such as group reading and simple games helped create a safe, fun learning environment, where students felt free to make mistakes and learn from one another. The teacher acted more as a guide, supporting reflection and deeper engagement. In short, this approach not only strengthened academic skills but also fostered independence, teamwork, and motivation. English teachers are encouraged to adopt this method to make reading more engaging, relevant, and student-driven.

Thank You Note

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to SMP GKPS 13 Sibarou for allowing me to conduct my research at the school. My special thanks go to the principal for the support and permission provided throughout the process. I am also deeply thankful to the eighth-grade English teacher for the guidance, encouragement, and cooperation during the study. Your openness and support made this research possible and meaningful.

Lastly, I truly appreciate the students of class VIII for their enthusiastic participation. Your involvement played a key role in the success of this project. Thank you all for the warm welcome and the opportunity to learn together.

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