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Strategies to Improve Reading Literacy of Grade VIII Students of SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit

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Abstract

The problem in this study is that students do not understand the meaning and benefits of literacy, reading facilities and infrastructure are very minimal, and the lack of interest in reading students results in a low literacy culture. And the researcher has the goal of analyzing strategies to improve reading literacy of class VIII students of SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit. This research is included in the type of qualitative descriptive research that is widely used in socio-cultural research, in addition to starting from naturalistic thinking, it is also based on phenomenological understanding that is widely used in the social sciences. The objects in this study are class VIII students of SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit. Data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. And this study uses data analysis techniques that can be done with Data Collection (Data Collection), Data Reduction (Data Reduction), Data Display (Data Presentation), Verification (Conclusion). From the research results, it can be concluded that there are several strategies for increasing reading literacy at SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit, namely getting students used to reading for 15 minutes before starting learning, adding interesting reading books, repeating readings that have been read at the end of literacy activities and developing literacy skills with reading corners and literacy huts.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Reading literacy is a fundamental skill that is crucial for student learning success. Reading literacy encompasses not only the ability to recognize words but also the comprehension, interpretation, and evaluation of reading texts.

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As children move into junior high school (SMP), behavioral changes are felt to be distinct from those experienced in elementary school. The period after elementary school and into middle school (SMP) is when students begin to enter early adolescence. Adolescence carries a wide range of implications; some say it's like any other developmental period. During early adolescence, junior high students begin to experience rapid cognitive development, so reading literacy skills need to be enhanced to support critical and reflective text comprehension.

The literacy movement strategy in schools involves several stages of implementation, including the availability of facilities and infrastructure, the capacity of the school community, and the capacity of stakeholders. The literacy strategy is implemented by increasing student motivation and understanding of the importance of reading, supported by infrastructure and the active participation of all members of the school community. The strategy is supported by facilities and infrastructure to support the literacy movement in schools (Perdana and Suswandari 2021).

The Problem of The Study

At SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit, one effort to improve students' literacy skills is through a 15-minute reading session before class begins. This activity is held daily and involves all classes, including eighth graders. Students are asked to read a variety of reading materials, including storybooks, popular articles, and general knowledge books, under the guidance of their homeroom teacher or the first-period teacher.

Data shows that literacy activities have been running routinely and are carried out daily before the start of classes. Teachers consistently accompany students during literacy activities and implement various strategies to maintain student focus, such as asking students to understand the content of reading texts and asking questions after the literacy session is over. However, literacy implementation is still not running optimally. This is evident from several indicators, such as students not fully understanding the meaning and benefits of literacy, limited reading facilities and infrastructure available at school, and low interest in reading among students. These conditions have resulted in a culture of literacy in schools that has not developed significantly.

Research's State of the Art

Furthermore, this situation indicates that some students view literacy activities as merely a daily routine without truly understanding the content of the reading. The lack of a variety of engaging reading materials and the absence of follow-up programs

to motivate students to read independently outside of class hours also pose challenges.

Novelty, Research Gap, & Objective

Therefore, stronger innovation and collaboration between schools, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders are needed to build a more meaningful and sustainable literacy ecosystem for eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit.

METHOD

Type and Design

The research method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method (Sugiyono, 2010), namely a research method that attempts to describe an object as it is. Descriptive research is conducted with the main goal of systematically describing the facts and characteristics of the object or subject being studied accurately.

The research used a qualitative descriptive method or descriptive approach (Fitriani, Dewi, & Furnamasari, 2021). The descriptive approach emphasizes notes with detailed, complete, and in-depth sentence descriptions that depict actual situations to support data presentation. This is in accordance with the title chosen by the researcher, namely "Strategies to Improve Reading Literacy of VIII-grade Students at SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit." The data obtained were then collected, compiled, explained, and analyzed to obtain a clear picture so that the research objectives were achieved as planned.

Data and Data Sources

The subjects in this study were the principal as the person responsible for implementing the school literacy program, the Indonesian language subject teacher, and the homeroom teacher as the supervisor of school literacy activities related to students' reading interests, as well as one of the class VIII students at SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection techniques in qualitative research are conducted in natural settings, using primary data sources, and primarily rely on observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Therefore, the data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Yin, 2003).

Data Analysis

The data obtained is then collected, arranged, explained, and analyzed, to obtain a clear picture so that the research objectives are achieved as planned.

RESULTS

This study discusses strategies to improve reading literacy of eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit. The data in this study were obtained from the results of observations, interviews with the principal, eighth grade teachers, and students as well as documentation in the form of reading literacy activities in Elementary Schools that take place from Monday to Friday, starting from 06:45-07:00 WIB. The study aims to determine how the school's strategy is in developing students' reading literacy skills. In this chapter, the data will be presented in the form of results that researchers obtained at the research location, namely SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit, namely the principal, eighth grade teachers, and students.

This research was conducted in the odd semester of the 2024/2025 academic year which took place on September 9, 2024. This research collected data by means of classroom observation during reading literacy activities which were classroom observations regarding how teacher strategies improve reading literacy, interviews were conducted with class VIII teachers, principals and class VIII students to obtain data in the form of written data. and documentation to obtain data in the form of photos during reading literacy activities which will be attached.

Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and photo documentation. Observations showed that the teacher had implemented the pre-reading, reading, and post-reading stages effectively. During the pre-reading stage, the teacher asked students about their readiness. During the reading stage, the teacher guided students through the reading process in an orderly manner. During the post-reading stage, the teacher asked students to retell the content of the reading. This is consistent with the finding that "the teacher asked students to retell the content of the reading orally" (Interview, September 9, 2024).

Interviews with teachers supported the observation findings. Mrs. Ernawati, an Indonesian language teacher, explained: "I usually ask random questions about the reading material to determine their understanding." She also added that students' reading interest remains low: "The problem is the same, Ma'am. Children's reading interest is still low. They lack enthusiasm... Furthermore, the number of reading books available is also very limited and lacks variety."

From the results of student interviews, it was clear that there were still obstacles to reading interest. One student, Aurlia, said: "Sometimes I enjoy it, especially if the book is interesting. But sometimes I get bored because the books are always the same and the themes are not exciting." However, students also feel the benefits of literacy, as Aurlia said: "I think this activity makes me learn more new things. So my knowledge increases, especially if I read knowledge books or articles."

a. Strategies to improve reading literacy of grade VIII students

1. Planning reading literacy activities. Before carrying out reading literacy activities, students are free to choose the books they wish to read. Then, the teacher provides input on the meaning of carrying out reading literacy activities every day.
2. Implementation of reading literacy activities. Students are required to read for 15 minutes and the teacher always supervises when literacy activities take place. And the teacher makes several strategies to improve reading literacy in grade VIII, namely in the following ways: Habituation by getting students used to reading books every day for 15 minutes to make students grow a reading culture from an early age, and make students gain knowledge, add interesting books to read, In addition, the teacher also develops students' literacy skills by creating reading corners and literacy huts, and visiting the library.
3. Evaluation of reading literacy activities. At the end of the reading literacy activity, students are asked to come forward and repeat what they have read for 15 minutes. Repeating what students have read is one of the teacher's strategies so that students do not play during reading literacy activities and read seriously. From the statements above, it can be concluded that the strategy for improving students' reading literacy is planning reading literacy activities, implementing reading literacy activities, and evaluating reading literacy activities.

b. Inhibiting factors and supporting factors for reading literacy activities.

The existence of reading literacy activities at SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit certainly has inhibiting and supporting factors, namely, inhibiting factors; lack of interest or willingness of students to read, lack of interesting books for reading, parents have not fully accompanied students to get students used to reading books at home. Supporting factors include; adequate school facilities and infrastructure that support reading literacy activities, good cooperation between teachers and the school to increase reading literacy, student enthusiasm in participating in reading literacy

activities, good cooperation between the school and parents in increasing students' reading literacy although not all parents.

It can be concluded that the inhibiting factors and supporting factors for reading literacy activities are the inhibiting factors, namely the lack of interest in reading or the students' willingness to read and the supporting factors, namely adequate school facilities and infrastructure that support reading literacy activities.

c. Efforts to improve inhibiting factors in strategies to improve reading literacy in grade VII students

Teachers strive to motivate students with creative approaches. Mrs. Ernawati said: "I usually provide motivation, such as promising small prizes to students who read diligently or who can retell the book well." Another effort is to involve parents in guiding their children's reading at home. This is important because parental involvement supports reading habits outside of school.

Based on the results of data analysis on strategies to improve reading literacy at SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit, what the seventh grade teacher did to improve reading literacy was to provide input on the meaning and benefits of literacy activities carried out every day, getting students used to reading for 15 minutes every day before starting learning, adding reading books, reading in the library, creating reading corners and literacy huts.

Based on research conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit involving several sources including the principal, class VIII teachers, and class VIII students of SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit, planning, implementation, and evaluation in reading literacy activities will be discussed.

The primary goal in improving reading literacy is to familiarize students with it and repeatedly explain the meaning and benefits of literacy so that they remember it and remember it. This aligns with Fadhli's (2019) opinion that Indonesian students' reading literacy is relatively low, especially when it comes to reading and understanding texts. This provides an overview of how to improve reading literacy.

DISCUSSIONS

Based on the results of the researcher's analysis, it can be concluded that one strategy to increase students' interest in reading is to explain and illustrate the meaning and benefits of reading literacy repeatedly. Learning strategies are activities that maintain consistency and integration of each teaching component, not only at the planning stage, but also at the implementation and evaluation stages. Teaching and

learning strategies include several main things, namely: first, setting specific teaching objectives; second, a description of the expected changes in student behavior and personality; third, selecting a teaching and learning approach system that is considered the most effective for achieving goals; fourth, determining appropriate teaching and learning procedures, methods, and techniques; and fifth, determining criteria for the success of the teaching and learning process as a reference for evaluation (Selegi, FS, 2023).

The results of the study show that teachers have implemented several strategies to improve students' reading literacy, including:

- (1) Get into the habit of reading for 15 minutes before learning begins. This activity is carried out in a pleasant atmosphere as part of the School Literacy Movement (GLS), so that students become more enthusiastic and motivated (Wulanjani & Anggraeni, 2019).
- (2) Schools provide a variety of interesting books and reading materials to foster students' interest in reading, as well as carrying out supporting activities such as providing enrichment books and textbooks (Widodo, 2020).
- (3) Literacy skills development is also carried out through various activities in the school library, providing class reading corners, reading corners, reading carts, and screening short films as literacy support media (Sadli, 2019).

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that strategies to improve students' reading literacy must be able to capture their interest and cultivate reading habits from an early age. Repeated reading activities are beneficial for broadening and deepening students' understanding of the text. Discussions with peers also help students gain deeper understanding (Muhith, 2019).

Thus, literacy evaluation activities are crucial to increasing students' interest in reading. Encouraging students to share information with their peers after reading makes them more committed to reading from beginning to end. Strategies implemented to improve reading literacy in eighth-grade students include encouraging 15-minute reading sessions before class, providing engaging books, reviewing reading material at the end of literacy activities, and developing supporting facilities such as reading corners and literacy carts.

The results of this study support previous research that emphasized the importance of developing reading habits and providing literacy resources to increase students' interest in reading. These findings can also inform the development of

literacy strategies in other schools. The practical implication is the need for ongoing support from teachers, schools, and parents in creating a learning environment that fosters a culture of literacy among students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the strategy to improve reading literacy of class VIII students at SMP Negeri 2 Kelapa Kampit is carried out through three stages: (1) planning literacy activities by giving students the freedom to choose books and providing an understanding of the importance of literacy, (2) implementing a 15-minute reading habit before learning with teacher supervision, providing interesting reading books, developing facilities such as reading corners, literacy huts, and library visits, and (3) evaluation through repetition of reading content by students. It is hoped that the school, teachers, and parents can continue to collaborate to create a sustainable literacy culture and support the improvement of student learning outcomes.

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