

Teachers' Teaching Strategies in Teaching Reading at Elementary Level

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Abstract

Reading instruction at the elementary school level plays a crucial role in establishing students' literacy foundation and developing their ability to comprehend texts independently. To achieve this goal, an effective teaching strategy is needed, which not only helps students recognize words, but also builds understanding of the reading content. This study aims to examine and describe the strategies used by elementary school teachers to improve young learners' reading comprehension. Using classroom-based qualitative approach, this study involved two English teachers as participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method. The theoretical foundation refers to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes how the process of teaching reading is mediated through social interaction and teacher support. The results revealed that teachers applied a variety of strategies, such as scaffolding techniques through vocabulary building, read-aloud, semiotic mediation, chunked text, collaborative learning, questioning, and repetition. These strategies facilitated students' transition from dependence to independence in comprehending the text.

Keywords: *reading comprehension, teachers' strategy, teaching reading, young learners*

Sari

Pengajaran membaca di tingkat sekolah dasar memainkan peran penting dalam membangun fondasi literasi siswa dan mengembangkan kemampuan mereka untuk memahami teks secara mandiri. Untuk mencapai tujuan tersebut, diperlukan strategi pengajaran yang efektif, yang tidak hanya membantu siswa mengenali kata-kata, tetapi

juga membangun pemahaman terhadap isi bacaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji dan mendeskripsikan strategi yang digunakan oleh guru sekolah dasar untuk meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis kelas, penelitian ini melibatkan dua guru bahasa Inggris sebagai partisipan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis dengan menggunakan metode analisis tematik Braun dan Clarke. Landasan teori mengacu pada Teori Sosiokultural Vygotsky, yang menekankan pada bagaimana proses pengajaran membaca dimediasi melalui interaksi sosial dan dukungan guru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru menerapkan berbagai strategi, seperti teknik perancah melalui pengembangan kosakata, membaca nyaring, mediasi semiotik, teks yang dipotong-potong, pembelajaran kolaboratif, pengajuan pertanyaan, dan pengulangan. Strategi-strategi ini memfasilitasi

Kata kunci: *pemahaman membaca, strategi guru, pengajaran membaca, pelajar muda*

Received 2023/02/26

accepted 2023/03/26

published 2023/05/26

APA Citation: Ilmani, D. A. N., Saputra, Y., & Ramdani, J. M. (2023). Teachers' Teaching Strategies in Teaching Reading at Elementary Level. *Research and Innovation in Language Learning*, 6(2), 76-98. <http://dx.doi.org/10.33603/rill.v6i2.10806>

Introduction

Reading instruction has become a focus of attention in education globally, particularly at the elementary level. In many countries, students still face challenges in achieving deep comprehension of reading texts, a skill that is essential for academic success and everyday life (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). According to Shea and Ceprano (2017), reading comprehension is not only limited to the ability to accurately recognize and pronounce words or what is known as decoding, but also includes critical thinking skills. However, many students around the world continue to struggle to meet expected reading comprehension standards.

This challenge is clearly illustrated in the results of the The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2023) which showed that only 25% of 15-year-old Indonesian students – mostly at the junior high school level, were able to achieve a minimum level of reading proficiency. Meanwhile, the remaining 75% failed to demonstrate adequate comprehension, including in the skills of identifying main ideas or interpreting information from long texts. These findings indicate that the problem is likely to be rooted in the early stages of education, particularly in elementary school, when fundamental reading skills should be built. Without effective reading instruction and

adequate comprehension support at this level, especially in high grades such as Grade 6, students are at risk of continuing to struggle in reading.

These concerns are reinforced by Ardana's (2025) findings which confirm that reading skills from the primary school level play an important role in cognitive development, academic achievement, and long-term learning success. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), this challenge becomes even more complex as students are required to understand texts not only in their native language, but also in English that is rarely used in everyday life, with vocabulary and language structures that are still unfamiliar to them. Many students in the upper grades of elementary school still struggle to go beyond literal comprehension in Bahasa Indonesia, indicating their limitations in understanding English texts. This condition emphasizes the importance of implementing effective reading teaching strategies that are aligned with the needs of EFL learners. Given that reading comprehension skills are highly influential to success in various subjects, the role of primary school teachers in building English reading skills is vital.

In practice, teachers face a variety of obstacles that hinder optimal reading learning. One of the biggest challenges is low student motivation and engagement. Many students view reading as a boring activity and are reluctant to engage in discussions or read aloud, which ultimately has a negative impact on their overall language skills (Novianti et al., 2021). In addition, limited vocabulary and pronunciation errors are also inhibiting factors. The lack of vocabulary makes it difficult for students to understand the content of the text, while incorrect pronunciation further worsens the learning process (Khan et al., 2020). Differences in reading ability in the classroom are also a challenge; teachers often struggle to adjust the pace of teaching because they have to balance the needs of slow students with maintaining the interest of more advanced students (Adao et al., 2023). This condition causes the learning process to be less than optimal for both groups of students.

In an effort to improve reading comprehension, teachers utilize cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies, such as asking questions, summarizing, and clarifying, help students construct meaning and draw conclusions from the text (Ali & Razali, 2019). Teachers also guide students to identify important information and relate it to prior knowledge (Widiati et al., 2023). Meanwhile, metacognitive strategies are

practiced by encouraging students to monitor and adjust their approach while reading, for example by rereading or slowing down to deepen comprehension (Dolba et al., 2022). Teachers explicitly model certain techniques, such as recognizing text structure and synthesizing information, so that students understand when and how to apply them appropriately. This repeated practice fosters students' independence and effectiveness as readers (Ali & Razali, 2019; Widiati et al., 2023).

However, research specifically addressing strategies for teaching reading comprehension to primary school students is still limited, as most previous studies have focused on the secondary or tertiary level (Dolba et al., 2022; Widiati et al., 2023). Ardana (2025) asserted that many primary school students, especially in the high grades, still struggle to go beyond the literal comprehension stage even in Indonesian, which suggests that their ability to understand English texts as a foreign language is relatively low. However, little research has so far examined how primary school teachers in EFL contexts design strategies to overcome these barriers.

Methods

This study applied a qualitative approach with a classroom research design to explore the teaching strategies teachers use in learning to read in primary schools. The study was conducted in one of the primary schools in Tasikmalaya involving two English teachers who teach sixth grade students. The research participants were selected using purposive sampling technique, which is selection based on certain criteria aligned with the research objectives (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). The criteria included a minimum of five years of experience teaching English in primary schools, active involvement in teaching sixth grade, and a habit of applying various reading strategies in learning. Five years of teaching experience was considered sufficient to reflect the maturity of pedagogical practice as well as the ability to reflect on the strategies applied. The focus on grade six was chosen because students are at a transitional phase towards higher education, where they begin to be required to understand texts with a greater level of complexity. As such, this stage is crucial for observing the reading teaching strategies implemented.

This study employed classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, but observations were hindered by the Ramadan period, when schools prioritized religious subjects such as Akhlak and Aqidah, limiting normal English instruction. Consequently,

the researcher relied on semi-structured interviews to complement and explore teachers' experiences more deeply, allowing flexibility for emerging themes (Bryman, 2016). Eleven interview questions were designed based on the four main concepts of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory concepts – scaffolding, semiotic mediation, internalization, and appropriation (Arshad & Chen, 2009). All interviews were conducted via Zoom in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure clarity and comfort, as it is the official instructional language though not the everyday conversational language for most people (Pesau et al., 2023) thereby preserving data accuracy and authenticity.

All data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, a method that, according to Braun and Clarke (2022), is flexible and accessible for identifying and presenting themes that emerge in qualitative data. This approach was chosen because of its ability to be applied to various types of data and theoretical frameworks, as well as its ease of understanding for novice researchers. The analysis process followed the six stages outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022), namely: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data through repeated readings of the transcripts; (2) generating initial codes by marking relevant segments of data; (3) grouping these codes into main themes that represent patterns in the data; (4) reviewing and refining themes to ensure their appropriateness, clarity, and consistency with the coded data; (5) defining and naming each theme to reflect its central meaning and relevance to the research question; and (6) compiling a final report containing a detailed description of the findings, accompanied by data quotations, and linked to relevant theory and literature.

Results and Discussion

The findings were derived from classroom-based qualitative data, specifically teacher interview transcripts, which were analyzed using thematic analysis. Drawing on the core constructs of Sociocultural Theory—such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding, semiotic mediation, internalization, and appropriation—the researcher identified four main themes: (A) Scaffolding, (B) Internalization, (C) Appropriation, and (D) Independent Reading.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is structured support provided by teachers within the framework of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to help students understand texts, with

assistance gradually reduced until they become independent readers. In line with Vygotsky's principles, teachers act as more knowledgeable parties who guide students' cognitive development through meaningful social interaction. The interview results indicate that scaffolding strategies in reading activities are applied systematically and tailored to students' development, including vocabulary introduction, semantic mediation, use of text excerpts, reading aloud, asking questions, collaborative learning, and repetition of material. These strategies will be described in more detail in the following section, along with examples of their application in the classroom and their relevance to the literature.

Vocabulary Building

The initial strategy used by P1 and P2 in applying scaffolding was vocabulary introduction, which involved introducing difficult words before students read the main text. This step aimed to help students understand the reading material more easily so that they would not experience confusion because they already knew the meanings of important vocabulary words in the text.

Excerpt 1

Participants	Excerpt
P1	Usually, at this stage, I will <i>introduce new vocabulary</i> that is considered important and relevant to the text, often assisted by visual media such as pictures and videos. (Interview transcript, March 18th 2025. Translated by the author)
P2	I have <i>prepared vocabulary</i> that might be difficult for students... I will make it in a form like <i>PowerPoint or slides</i> ... (Interview transcript, March 25th 2025. Translated by the author)

Based on excerpt 1, it can be seen that the research participants applied different but complementary strategies in introducing vocabulary before reading. One participant used a casual and contextual method, such as showing pictures, playing videos, and assigning students to watch English-language films to discover new vocabulary. Another participant chose a more structured approach, which was to prepare a list of difficult vocabulary in the form of a presentation grouped by word type. Students were then asked

to mark words they did not understand and match them with the list. Both methods helped students understand the text with more confidence and reduced their feelings of overwhelm when reading.

This strategy reflects two key principles in vocabulary scaffolding, namely creating meaningful learning through engaging contexts and providing clear and structured guidance. Although the approaches used are different, both have proven effective in preparing students to understand the material.

These findings align with the research by Chowdhury and Ara (2021), which states that introducing vocabulary before reading can enhance student engagement and help them build meaning. In line with this, Mulatu and Regassa (2022) emphasize that skipping the pre-reading stage can hinder comprehension, especially for students with low reading abilities. Thus, the pre-reading vocabulary teaching strategies implemented by the participants are an important element in scaffolding towards reading independence.

Semiotic Mediation

The second one, they proceed to the semiotic mediation stage by utilizing multimodal media such as images, videos, audios, and real objects to help students construct meaning.

Excerpt 2

Participants	Excerpt
P1	<p>...both usually understand <i>visuals, both live images and media images. Media can also be in the form of original forms</i>, for example, procedure text about making pencil cases. So students are told to bring <i>the original object</i>.</p> <p>(Interview transcript, March 18th 2025. Translated by the author)</p>
P2	<p>Sometimes I also give <i>texts that have audio and visuals</i> at the beginning of the reading lesson.</p> <p>(Interview transcript, March 25th 2025. Translated by the author)</p>

Based on excerpt 2, it is known that participants utilize various media as a form of semiotic mediation to help students understand the reading material. The media used

include images, videos, real objects, and infographics relevant to the topic, both to enrich vocabulary and build context before reading. The selection of media is done in a targeted manner, tailored to the learning objectives and needs. For example, students are asked to bring real objects such as writing instruments or product packaging to class so that they can observe and relate visual information to the text content. This approach makes reading activities more concrete, interesting, and relevant to students' daily lives.

These findings are in line with practices in various countries, such as Kazakhstan, where audiovisual media is used to develop abstract thinking skills from an early age (Bagila et al., 2019), and Indonesia, where the use of educational videos has been proven to improve students' understanding and motivation to learn (Putu et al., 2021). Research by Resti and Rachmijati (2020) also shows that elementary school teachers can effectively connect material to students' experiences through simple media such as pictures, food, and books.

However, the success of semiotic mediation is largely determined by teachers' awareness and readiness to use it. A study in Pakistan by Hussain and Khan (2022) found a gap between the potential of visual media available in textbooks and its application in the classroom. Many teachers tend to ignore visual elements and rely more on memorization and verbal explanations, resulting in less contextual learning.

This finding indicates that without adequate pedagogical understanding, media tends to function only as a passive supplement, not as an active learning tool. Thus, the results of this study confirm that learning media plays a crucial role as part of semiotic scaffolding. When used appropriately and in context, media not only reinforces understanding but also helps students internalize meaning through social, visual, and symbolic learning experiences, in line with the principles of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory.

Chunked Text

The next stage found in the reading learning process is the use of chunked text. The chunked text strategy is a very effective approach to help students digest complex information.

Excerpt 3

Participants	Excerpt
P1	Oh I often see students who are confused if they are given a lot right away. So I usually explain slowly. <i>We start from the main idea first. After that, we go a little bit deeper.</i> If there are questions, I answer them directly, or I give other examples. After that, we move on to the next part. (Interview transcript, March 18th 2025. Translated by the author)
P2	I usually <i>break the text into smaller parts, for example, up to a certain sentence or paragraph.</i> (Interview transcript, March 25th 2025. Translated by the author)

Based on quote 3, it was identified that participants applied a gradual approach to teaching reading by breaking the text into smaller, more understandable parts. One participant divided the text into paragraphs or even sentences, then discussed it with students through question-and-answer sessions to ensure understanding before moving on to the next section. This strategy allows students to process information gradually without feeling overwhelmed. Another participant demonstrated a similar practice, although they did not explicitly refer to it as “chunking.” They delivered the material at a slow pace, introducing one main idea at a time, then pausing to provide explanations, examples, or answer students' questions. This approach allows students to fully understand one piece of information before moving on to the next idea.

This text-breaking strategy reflects teaching principles that support the comprehension process, especially for elementary school students. These findings align with Abejuela et al. (2023), who demonstrated that breaking information into smaller units can significantly improve reading comprehension. By being given time to understand each paragraph and repeat it in their own words, students are able to absorb the text's content more effectively. The study also found a significant improvement in learning outcomes among students taught using this strategy compared to those who did not use it.

Thus, the step-by-step approach used by the participants can be seen as a form of scaffolding, which not only prevents excessive cognitive load but also allows students to build deeper understanding systematically.

Read Aloud

The next stage in the application of scaffolding is read aloud, which the teacher used to help students understand the content of the text while improving their oral reading skills.

Excerpt 4

Participants	Excerpt
P1	<p><i>I usually give examples of how to read so that the students first know how to pronounce the words correctly and understand their meaning. After that, they will be asked to try reading in front of their classmates.</i></p> <p>(Interview transcript, March 18th 2025. Translated by the author)</p>
P2	<p><i>I don't always read directly, sometimes there are students who want to offer to read in front of their classmates. Sometimes, I often play audio recordings of texts with proper pronunciation and intonation. Well, the recording works exactly like me reading aloud, providing students with a live model of how a text should be read correctly. After they have listened to the audio, we then go into a question-and-answer session and discussion to deepen their understanding of the text.</i></p> <p>(Interview transcript, March 25th 2025. Translated by the author)</p>

Based on excerpt 4, it is known that participants utilize the read-aloud strategy to support the development of students' reading skills. One form of its application is that teachers read texts aloud in front of the class while demonstrating proper pronunciation, intonation, and expression, accompanied by explanations of the reasons for using certain emphases or expressions. Teachers also show how to find the main idea and answer questions based on the content of the reading. After that, students take turns reading the text, which helps improve pronunciation, confidence, and understanding of the text content through direct experience. Other participants apply a similar approach by playing audio recordings of the text being read correctly, then engaging students in discussions to

understand the content of the reading. Although not done directly by the teacher or students, this method still provides a good reading model and encourages active student involvement in understanding the text.

These findings are consistent with Sajid and Kassim (2019), who showed that reading aloud is more effective than silent reading in improving fluency and literal comprehension, especially for second language learners. Additionally, Nurzaman (2024) emphasizes that an interactive and collaborative interactive reading aloud model in elementary schools can help students understand the text content, answer questions, and summarize the reading more actively and meaningfully.

Thus, the application of scaffolding through reading aloud, either directly or using audio media, has been proven effective in helping students internalize reading strategies, improve pronunciation, and strengthen their understanding and interest in reading activities.

Questioning

In addition to the previous strategy, the questioning strategy plays a crucial role in guiding students’ understanding of the reading text.

Excerpt 5

Participants	Excerpt
P1	<p>I usually use <i>5W1H questions</i>, like what, who, when, where, why, and how, to check if they understand the content of the text.</p> <p>(Interview transcript, March 18th 2025. Translated by the author)</p>
P2	<p>Then, I ask questions that encourage the students to think about that part of the text. For example, <i>who is the main character of the text</i></p> <p>(Interview transcript, March 25th 2025. Translated by the author)</p>

Based on excerpt 5, participants utilized questioning strategies to improve students' reading comprehension by actively applying 5W1H questions (what, who, when, where, why, how). These questions were used to check comprehension, explore main ideas, understand cause-and-effect relationships, and encourage deeper thinking

about the text. In practice, questions are posed orally during or after the reading process, allowing teachers to immediately identify parts that are not understood and provide the necessary explanations. This approach makes reading activities more interactive and reflective. Some participants also ask questions after students read texts that have been divided into small sections, allowing them to focus on local details before moving on to the next section. This strategy helps build understanding gradually and systematically, while facilitating the integration of information from one section to another.

This finding is in line with Blything et al. (2020), who assert that high-level questions such as “why” and “how” can enrich the complexity of students' linguistic responses, enhance critical thinking, and deepen text comprehension. The approach of asking questions after reading each section is also consistent with the Directed Reading and Thinking Activities (DRTA) strategy and the PQ4R method, which have been proven effective in improving reading comprehension (Ardhian et al., 2020). Additionally, Kesik and Bas (2022) emphasize that the systematic application of 5W1H questions can help students explore important information while better understanding text structure.

Thus, the questioning strategy used by participants not only reflects the principles of social interaction in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory but is also empirically proven to be effective in strengthening deep and gradual reading comprehension in elementary school students.

Collaborative Learning

After individualized strategies, teachers engage students in collaborative learning to strengthen understanding through social interaction. This is very much in line with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory which emphasizes that optimal learning occurs within the ZPD, an area where students can reach their learning potential with the help of teachers as more knowledgeable others.

Excerpt 6

Participants	Excerpt
P1	... after reading together, I ask the students to discuss in small groups... <i>Students with a higher level of comprehension help their friend understand difficult words or explain parts that are not yet understood.</i>

(Interview transcript, March 18th 2025. Translated by the author)

P2 *I usually ask the students who have better comprehension to help their friends.*

(Interview transcript, March 25th 2025. Translated by the author)

Based on excerpt 6, participants actively facilitate collaborative learning through peer support. After reading aloud or in small groups, more proficient students voluntarily help their peers who are experiencing difficulties, such as understanding vocabulary or the content of the reading material. In some situations, a peer tutoring system is implemented, where students who have already understood the text act as “mini-tutors” for their peers. Such interactions create an inclusive, supportive, and stress-free learning environment, while encouraging students to ask questions, provide explanations, and discuss main ideas and plot lines. This collaboration not only strengthens text comprehension but also develops social skills such as cooperation and communication.

These findings are consistent with the results of research in various international contexts. In Thailand, Yawiloeng (2021) found that peer scaffolding can improve reading comprehension through various forms of support tailored to students' abilities, ranging from explanations to procedural assistance. In Iran, Abdel-Al Ibrahim et al. (2023) demonstrated that student collaboration can reduce reading anxiety while enhancing motivation and understanding of English texts. In Indonesia, strategies such as Scaffolded Reading Experience (SRE) and Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) are implemented through group work during the pre-reading, reading, and post-reading stages (I. P. Lestari & Anugerahwati, 2022). Although the participants' practices in this study were not always structured, students remained actively engaged, helping one another, and learning together through discussions and negotiations of meaning.

Thus, the application of scaffolding through peer collaboration has proven effective in improving reading comprehension, both cognitively and socio-emotionally. This approach reinforces Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where social interaction serves as a bridge for students to reach their optimal learning potential.

Repetition

As the final stage, repetition is given to strengthen comprehension and reading skills. Repetition emerged as one of the important strategies in strengthening comprehension of reading texts.

Excerpt 7

Participants	Excerpt
P1	<p>If there are difficulties, <i>I can re-read</i> the text directly to the students or provide certain exercises to clarify the meaning.</p> <p>(Interview transcript, March 18th 2025. Translated by the author)</p>
P2	<p>I always divide the reading into small chunks. For example, we read one sentence first, understand it until the students really catch it. If necessary, <i>we briefly repeat the previous sentence, then move on to the next sentence.</i> So, they focus on just one ‘chunk’ of info, repeating each chunk, until it's complete. This makes them understand gradually, like putting together a puzzle.</p> <p>(Interview transcript, March 25th 2025. Translated by the author)</p>

Based on excerpt 7, participants applied repetition strategies to strengthen students' reading comprehension, albeit with different approaches. One participant explicitly provided additional exercises such as rereading texts, answering questions, and reorganizing information, especially for students who were struggling, with the aim of familiarizing them with understanding content through a gradual repetition process. These exercises serve as a form of ongoing support that helps students correct mistakes while strengthening their mastery of the text content. In contrast, another participant applied repetition implicitly through the chunked text strategy, which involves dividing the text into small sections that are discussed one by one. Students read and discuss each section in depth before moving on to the next, giving them the opportunity to reflect on the content and repeat their understanding if necessary.

Although the term “repetition” is not always used directly, this structured and gradual learning pattern still reflects the principle of repetition, where reading activities are carried out by adjusting to the students' learning pace and allowing space for gradual

mastery of the material. Both approaches demonstrate that repetition does not have to take the form of literal rereading, but can also be achieved through gradual exposure, review, and deep reflection on the text. These strategies not only strengthen understanding but also help students develop more accurate and automatic reading skills.

These findings are in line with the research by Nasir et al. (2022), which shows that repeated reading significantly improves comprehension, particularly in identifying main ideas and summarizing text content, as well as with the results of the study by Gedik and Akyol (2022), which found that repetition can improve reading errors and fluency, including for students who experience difficulties. LaBerge and Samuels' theory also emphasizes that repeated practice allows students to shift their focus from the decoding process to understanding the meaning of the text. Therefore, both explicit and implicit repetition applied by participants proved effective in helping students internalize reading skills while improving overall reading ability.

Internalization

In Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, internalization refers to the process whereby external social interactions—such as support from teachers or peers—are transformed into independent thinking skills in students. In reading instruction in elementary school, this process is crucial because reading is not just about recognizing words, but also about deeply understanding the meaning of the text. Teachers play a central role in ensuring that the strategies taught are truly integrated into students' cognitive structures, so that they are able to read independently and effectively. The following are the results of interviews with the participants.

Excerpt 8

Participants	Excerpt
P1	Initially, the students needed to be guided to find the main idea in the reading text. <i>But after some practice with my guidance, they were able to find the main idea by themselves even without help.</i> Sometimes they mumble to themselves, ‘What is this?’ This means that this way of thinking has become a ‘voice’ in their heads, they can do it on their own.

(Interview transcript, March 18th 2025. Translated by the author)

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- P2** At first, I had to help them a lot when reading the text – for example, telling them which is the main content of the paragraph. *But after a lot of practice, now they've started to understand on their own. If I give them a new text, they can immediately mark the main idea, sometimes they even discuss it with their friends to confirm their understanding.* I see that as progress, because they don't wait for instructions all the time, but start to think and make their own decisions when reading.

(Interview transcript, March 25th 2025. Translated by the author)

Based on excerpt 8, it can be seen that the internalization process in reading learning occurs when students who were initially very dependent on the help of teachers or peers begin to shift towards the ability to read and understand texts independently. In the early stages, participants explained that students needed guidance to find the main ideas and understand the structure of the text. However, through consistent practice, they began to be able to identify the main ideas themselves and discuss them with friends as a form of verification of understanding. This change shows a shift from dependence to independence, where strategies that were initially taught explicitly have become part of their thinking process.

This finding aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which asserts that cognitive abilities develop through social interaction before being internalized as individual skills. Reading strategies that were initially guided by teachers are gradually used independently by students, illustrating a genuine process of internalization. Young (2019) also asserts that internalization can be accelerated through well-designed guided reading. Once strategies are mastered, teachers begin to reduce assistance and provide higher challenges, in line with the gradual release model. Thus, the participants' practices demonstrate that structured, socially supported reading instruction can shape students into reflective and independent readers.

Appropriation

In the context of this study, appropriation is defined as the stage when students are able to apply reading strategies independently after receiving social guidance and learning experiences. Referring to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, appropriation is

achieved when students not only imitate the strategies provided, but also begin to select and adapt them to their personal learning styles. After going through the process of scaffolding and internalization, they can understand the text and convey the results of their reading independently. The emphasis on this theme is important for assessing the extent to which the teacher's teaching strategies are effective in encouraging the transition from dependence to reading independence.

Excerpt 9

Participants	Excerpt
P1	<i>...there are students who prefer to make small notes when reading... while there are also those who prefer to underline key words when reading.</i> (Interview transcript, March 18th 2025. Translated by the author)
P2	I make it a habit to use the 5W1H questions after every reading – like who is the character, why did he do that, and so on. <i>Now, some students have even started to come up with their own questions when reading, and then they ask their friends during group discussions. They already know what questions can help them understand the text more deeply. That, to me, shows that they have chosen this strategy because they feel suitable, not because they were told to.</i> (Interview transcript, March 25th 2025. Translated by the author)

Based on excerpt 9, several students who began to use their own strategies, such as taking notes or marking important vocabulary, showed that these strategies were no longer simply imitated but had been integrated into their thinking processes. This indicates that they understood the strategies taught and were able to adapt them to their individual learning styles – a clear indicator of mastery.

In addition, questioning strategies such as 5W1H, which were initially guided by teachers, began to be used independently by students in discussions. They not only provided answers but also formulated their own questions to explore the meaning of the text more deeply. This condition shows that these strategies have been truly mastered and applied flexibly in social interactions.

These findings are in line with Leon and Player (2021), who assert that students build unique understandings when they have space to express themselves and interact socially. Thus, mastery can be understood as a process in which strategies initially acquired through social guidance are transformed into part of personal, reflective, and sustainable literacy practices.

Independent Reading

Independent reading occurs when students take responsibility for their own understanding, without relying on the teacher. This can be seen in their efforts to find the meaning of words, understand the text, and convey the results of their reading, which encourages motivation and long-term independence in learning.

Excerpt 10

Participants	Excerpt
P1	...later on, if there are vocabulary words that they don't know, <i>they know how to find the meaning.</i>
(Interview transcript, March 18th 2025. Translated by the author)	
P2	...my students are also <i>asked to find texts from the internet, then they find out what the text means</i> and present it to their friends in front of the class.
(Interview transcript, March 25th 2025. Translated by the author)	

Based on quote 10, both participants emphasized the importance of encouraging students to read independently. P1 revealed that students began to get used to looking up the meanings of new words using dictionaries or the internet without immediately relying on teachers, reflecting an increase in confidence and responsibility in learning. Meanwhile, P2 assigns students to find reading texts, understand their content, and then present them, thereby making them more active, motivated, and engaged in the learning process.

These findings align with Mackenzie (2025), who states that independent reading can enrich vocabulary, enhance understanding, and strengthen students' self-confidence. Research by H. Lestari et al. (2022) and Rivera and Aggabao (2020) also shows that training students to understand and convey the content of reading independently has a

positive impact on their reading ability and learning awareness. Thus, encouraging independent reading not only hones skills but also shapes students into lifelong learners.

Conclusion & recommendation

This study explores teachers' strategies in teaching reading in elementary schools using Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory framework. The analysis shows that teachers apply interactive and gradual strategies, such as reading aloud, dividing texts, asking questions, and using visual and audio media to help students understand texts and develop toward reading independence. These strategies encourage internalization, where students begin to understand the text independently without direct guidance. The success of implementation depends on the teacher's ability to adjust assistance according to students' readiness, making learning active, reflective, and aligned with the principles of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

This study has limitations, including the absence of classroom observations because data collection coincided with the month of Ramadan and the enrichment period for sixth-grade students, so data was only obtained through teacher interviews. The number of participants was also limited, with only two teachers from one school, making the findings contextual and not generalizable. Additionally, the use of a descriptive qualitative approach does not allow for direct measurement of the impact of the strategy on student learning outcomes. Therefore, further research is recommended to be conducted outside of special periods such as Ramadan or exam periods, involving more teachers from various schools, and using a mixed-method approach to ensure more comprehensive results that can be implemented in the development of reading instruction strategies in elementary schools.

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