

## Enhancing Students' Interest in Reading and Improving Their Literacy Skills through The Implementation of A Reading Literacy Program

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### Abstract

*Purpose:* In this research, the objective used is to implement a reading libration program to increase reading interest and reading skills of class VIII students at Nurul Islam Ngemplak Middle School, as well as increasing reading interest and reading skills of class VIII students through a reading libration program at Nurul Islam Ngemplak Middle School.

*Methodology:* In this research, the method used is Classroom Action Research (PTK), the concept of classroom action research according to Kurt Lewin consists of four components, namely planning, action, observation and reflection. Classroom action research is carried out to improve the conditions of a lesson that can be observed directly when learning in class. The setting of this research was carried out in class VIII of Nurul Islam Ngemplak Middle School, Ngemplak District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java. The research was carried out for two months, namely in August and September. This research was carried out in two cycles, each cycle being carried out twice.

*Results:* The results of the classroom action research that has been carried out show that in cycle II the reading interest of class VIII students has seen a significant increase, this is proven by the test scores taken. Apart from that, students' reading skills are also starting to look good and are improving as evidenced by the routine activity of reading fable texts.

*Applications/Originality/Value:* The validity test used in this research is triangulation, the researcher uses data source triangulation and method triangulation. Triangulation of data sources was obtained from several data sources, namely students, educators and school principals. And triangulation methods are used by researchers to search for data directly through field observations, interviews and tests to measure students' reading abilities.

*Keywords:* Literacy Program, Interest in Reading, Reading Skills.

### Introduction Section

Literacy is an essential aspect of education that every individual must cultivate. Unfortunately, many students do not engage in reading activities independently to broaden their knowledge. This lack of initiative suggests that students' reading habits have yet to fully develop, which can significantly impact their academic abilities. The pervasive lack of motivation to read among students is concerning, particularly in today's age of information technology where analytical, critical, and reflective thinking skills are paramount for understanding texts. Currently, literacy stands as one of the pressing issues that Indonesian society must address. In recent decades, Indonesia's competitiveness on the global stage has declined. According to Kastro and Alexander (2020), international surveys such as PIKS 2011, PISA 2009, and PISA 2012 have revealed alarmingly low levels of reading skills among Indonesian students.

Interest in reading entails a profound and enthusiastic focus on reading activities, driven by a sense of pleasure and personal desire or external encouragement (Triatma, I. N., 2016). Elendiana, M. (2020) defines it as a strong inclination or desire to read. Reading plays a crucial role in shaping the minds of the nation's youth, offering benefits such as expanding knowledge and insight. It serves as a gateway to intelligence, information access, and deepening understanding. Regular reading enhances individuals' knowledge, while infrequent reading limits it. However, reading activities are often neglected in both elementary schools and universities, hindering students' knowledge acquisition.

Reading proficiency is essential for students to comprehend the information they encounter. Genuine interest in reading drives wholehearted engagement with texts, fostering continuous reading habits that can develop into hobbies. Kiayi, Asrawatid. et al. (2022) suggest that a strong passion for reading correlates with broad knowledge and a keen interest in learning. Therefore, interest in reading is crucial for national progress, as mastery of science and technology hinges on it. Interest in reading is deeply rooted in individual personality and requires conscious cultivation.

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Achieving a high level of interest in reading entails dedicating time to reading daily, as noted by Cidenty Dea Crismonia Dwijayati and Laili Etika Rahmawati (2021). Literacy skills and awareness are fundamental for educational success and social integration. Reading forms the cornerstone of literacy practices, laying the groundwork for intellectual growth and learning across various domains.

Reading skills are paramount for students to effectively engage in the learning process. Mastery of reading enables students to access information from diverse sources (Lisnawati, L., & Muthmainah, M., 2018). In response to the aforementioned challenges, the author has developed an innovative approach to cultivate a culture of reading among all members of the school community. This initiative, known as the 'Library Literacy' reading program, is implemented within school libraries with the objective of nurturing students' interest in reading and revitalizing library activities.

The 'Library Literacy' program aims to enhance and cultivate a passion for reading among students. By engaging in various reading activities and utilizing library resources, students can develop their reading skills and expand their knowledge. It is hoped that this program will prove beneficial to both students and teachers at Nurul Islam Ngemplak Middle School, ultimately contributing to improved literacy levels and heightened interest in reading.

## **Method**

This research adopts a classroom action research approach, with Kurt Lewin's model serving as the primary framework (Setyorini, 2017: 49). Kurt Lewin is credited with introducing action research, which comprises four key components: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Classroom action research focuses on enhancing classroom conditions, directly observable during the learning process.

The study was conducted in Class VIII at Nurul Islam Ngemplak Middle School, located in Ngemplak District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java. Spanning two months, from August to September, the research comprised two cycles, each repeated twice. The objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of a reading literacy program in increasing students' reading interest and skills.

Data for the research were derived from students' reading test scores at Nurul Islam Ngemplak Middle School, with fable reading texts serving as the primary data source. Various data collection techniques were employed, including observation, reading tests, implementation of the reading program, and documentation. Reading tests were administered thrice: before the initiation of the reading program, and subsequently after the first and second cycles of implementation.

The procedure in this research was carried out in two stages, namely: 1) Initial observations, in initial observations it was found that class VIII students' reading interest and reading skills were low. Apart from their lack of reading ability, class VIII students at SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak are also less active in participating in the learning process. 2) Action implementation stage, research was carried out in two cycles where each cycle was carried out in two meetings with a time allocation of 2 x 35 minutes for each meeting, in this research the researcher carried out tests in each cycle. Researchers used fable texts as material for research. The research was carried out for two months, namely in August and September.

## **Result and Discussion**

### ***Implementation of the Reading Library Program for Class VIII Students at Nurul Islam Ngemplak Middle School***

The low reading interest among students significantly affects their performance in the learning process, often reflecting in their test scores. Reading activities are integral to the school curriculum, yet instilling a habit of reading among students poses a considerable challenge. Developing a genuine interest in reading is crucial to overcoming this challenge. According to Sari (2018), internal factors such as students' reading ability and lack of reading habits contribute to their low interest in reading. Reading ability, in particular, plays a significant role in shaping students' reading interest, as it stems from their internal capabilities.

Reading skills are the main basis, not only in the field of language teaching, but in other fields of teaching. According to Harras & Sulistianingsih (1998), in this fast-paced information and communication age, in order to become a professional who can keep up with the pace of development, we are required to have adequate reading skills or be an effective and efficient reader. Based on the explanation above, it is known that the expected ability in reading is that students are able to read and understand the content of the reading quickly, both explicitly and implicitly, so that reading activities can be cultivated, which in the end can improve the quality of junior high school students' education.

Improving students' reading skills is not an easy thing, especially since interest in reading at Nurul Islam Ngemplak Middle School is low. One effort to increase students' reading interest and reading skills is by implementing a reading libration program at Nurul Islam Ngemplak Middle School. By implementing a reading libration program using fable reading texts, students are required to be more active in their reading skills, because this libration program requires students to be more active and read more often and then improve their reading skills, so that they are automatically able to improve reading skills among these students.

In implementing the reading liberation program, research actions in cycles I and II were each carried out in two meetings. In this action, it was recorded that learning was taking place according to what had been planned. Students actively participate in learning and learning stages by implementing the reading liberation program. In the first cycle of the 1st meeting, the researcher carried out initial observations to measure students' interest and reading skills. The observations were carried out thoroughly, that is, students were asked one by one to read the fable text entitled "Praying Grasshoppers". Observations are carried out not only observing student test results. However, also the student's attitude and activeness during research. In the observations made by researchers, it was found that there were still students whose reading skills were lacking, and students' interest in reading was less visible. The results of the observations carried out showed the students' low interest and reading skills. This indicates the need for a literacy program that can improve students' reading skills.



**Figure 1.** Reading skills test

The next activity was carried out in the first cycle of the 2nd meeting. At this second meeting, the researcher prepared a reading text, namely a fable text entitled "The Story of an Ant Who Returns a Kindness". At this meeting, students were asked to group according to their seating teams. After students had read and understood the content of the fable reading text, each group was asked to come to the front of the class to retell the content of the fable text that had been read using their own language. so that they understand better the content of the fable text they have read. After all the steps were carried out, the researcher distributed questions containing several questions about the fable text that had been read, then students were asked to take a test with the aim of measuring their understanding in reading the fable text.



**Figure 2.** Group discussion



**Figure 3.** Group retells the contents of the reading text

The learning process in the first cycle of the 2nd meeting has been improved based on the results of reflection in the first cycle of the 1st meeting and in general there has been an increase in students' active learning and an increase in student learning outcomes. However, there are still several findings that must be corrected in the next learning process. Based on the results of implementing actions in cycle I at the second meeting, it was found that there were still many students whose reading skills were still lacking. Apart from that, many students seem to be lazy about reading reading texts during the learning process. Researchers have also corrected the answers to the tests that have been carried out, the results of which are that almost all eighth grade students' scores are below the KKM, meaning that some of the students have not understood the reading text carefully. Because in cycle I, the 1st meeting and the 2nd meeting, interest in reading and reading skills were not yet optimal, a series of reading libration activities were continued in cycle II. In cycle I the average reading skill score of 28 students was 58.21 with the percentage of students who got a score above the KKM of 28%, 8 students who got a score above the KKM while 20 students got a score below the KKM. percentage 72%. These data show that the reading skill scores in cycle I are still low.

Improvements to learning activities were carried out in cycle II. In cycle II, the first meeting, the researcher prepared two fable texts entitled "The Story of the Greedy Crocodile" and "The Arrogant Caterpillar". The researcher distributed two different fable reading texts randomly to all students with the aim that they would not be able to copy from one friend to another, then the students were asked to read and understand the contents of the fable text, then the researcher asked questions to the students to find out their abilities. understand students' random reading texts. In between reading activities, the researcher also filled in ice breakers to train students' concentration and entertain students. After the ice breakers were finished, the researcher distributed questions according to the reading text. This was done to measure students' understanding in reading the fable text.



**Figure 4.** Reading and question and answer skills test



**Figure 5.** Students take the test

The results of observations at the 1st cycle II meeting found that students had begun to be active in the learning process, they looked very enthusiastic in participating in learning, then the students had also started to take the initiative to read and ask questions at the 1st meeting of cycle II. Apart from that, students' reading abilities have also seen an improvement. However, there are still students whose interest in reading is low, but if we look at it as a whole, almost all of them have improved in reading. Reflections on cycle II of the 1st meeting contained several things, namely, a) learning using fable reading texts already looked active, b) students seemed to be starting to become enthusiastic in reading reading texts and question and answer discussions, c) students' interest in reading and reading skills had begun there seems to be an improvement.

Furthermore, learning in cycle II at the 2nd meeting showed an improvement at the 1st meeting, making researchers enthusiastic about continuing research. At this meeting the researcher continued literacy activities in class with a different atmosphere, an atmosphere that was conducive and looked much better than cycle I. At this second meeting the researcher prepared a fable text entitled "The Deer and the Turtle" and prepared a quiz in group. Students were asked to group according to the rows of seats, then the researcher distributed the reading text entitled "Deer and Tortoise" to all students.

Students are asked to read the text of the fable, then after reading it, students must discuss in groups carefully because there will be a crossword quiz. Next, each group worked on a crossword puzzle quiz that had been taped to the corner of the classroom in a compact manner and were not allowed to bring reading texts. This was done to measure their understanding in reading and comprehending reading texts. After the quiz was carried out, the researcher invited students to do ice breaking to cool the atmosphere during learning and this was done so that students did not feel bored in class. Next, the researcher distributed the final test in cycle II, the test was carried out to assess the extent of understanding in reading reading texts and the ability to read reading texts.



**Figure 6.** Reading and group discussion skills test



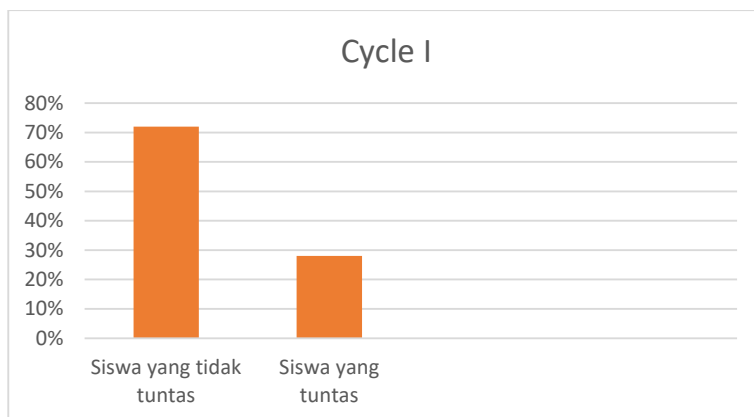
**Figure 7.** Group working on a crossword puzzle

Judging from the results of observations in cycle II of the 2nd meeting, namely: a) Learning by applying fable reading texts went smoothly, b) students' enthusiasm in participating in learning was very high, c) class VIII students' interest in reading had increased significantly, d) eighth grade students' reading skills have increased significantly, e) students' activeness in discussions and questions and answers looks better and more active than before.

In cycle II the average reading skill score of 28 students was 80 with a percentage of 89% of students having a score above the KKM, 25 students who got a score above the KKM while 3 students who got a score below the KKM with a percentage of 11%. These data show that the value of reading skills in cycle II has increased. In cycle II, the reading skill scores of class VIII students at SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak increased and were in accordance with the expected criteria. All stages in the reading libration program have been carried out well. Thus, the reading libration program was said to be successful and the research stopped in cycle II.



## ***Increasing Reading Interest and Reading Skills of Class VIII Students at Nurul Islam Ngemplak Middle School***



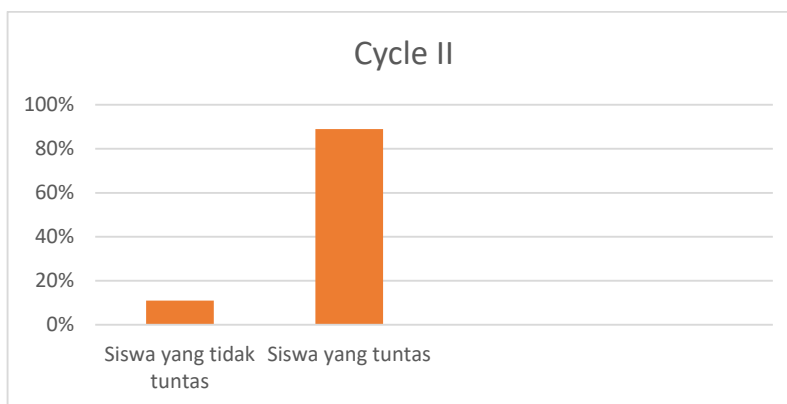
**Figure 1.** Cycle I

Average: 58.21

Number of students who did not complete: 20 students (72%)

Number of students who completed: 8 students (28%)

Judging from the table above, it is found that in cycle I the interest and reading skills of eighth grade students did not show any improvement or improvement. This can be seen from the tests carried out and it was found that out of 28 students, only 8 students completed it and 20 others did not complete it. The average score obtained for class eight is 58.21. Judging from the scores obtained, there are still many grades of eighth grade students that have not been completed, this means that the research carried out has not been optimal. Therefore, researchers need to carry out several improvement plans in order to increase students' interest and reading skills.



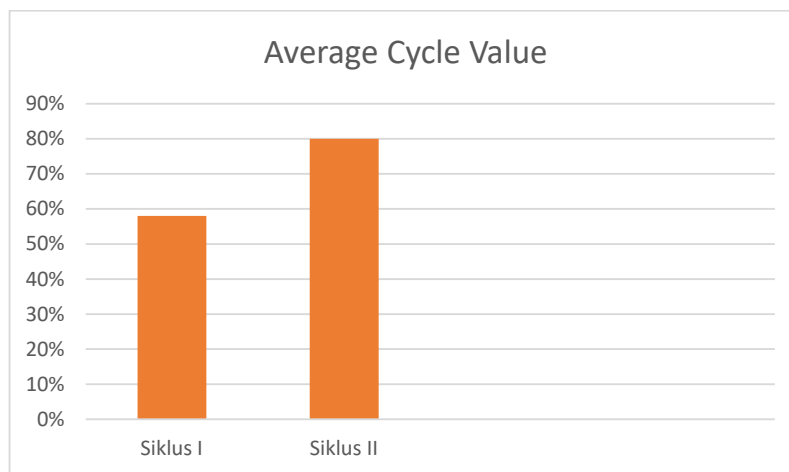
**Figure 2.** Cycle II

Average: 80

Number of students who did not complete: 3 students (11%)

Number of students who completed: 25 students (89%)

Judging from the table above, it was found that in cycle II the interest and reading skills of eighth grade students experienced a significant increase. This can be seen from the tests carried out and it was found that out of 28 students there were only 3 students who did not complete and 25 other students completed. The average score obtained for eighth grade in cycle II was 80. Judging from the scores obtained, the researcher decided to stop research in cycle II, because the interest and reading skills of eighth grade students had increased, besides that in cycle II students became more active and reading and discussing than in the previous cycle I.



**Figure 3.** Cycle Improvement

Based on the analysis of data from Cycle I, a provisional conclusion was drawn that the reading interest and skills of Class VIII students had not shown improvement, as evidenced by the average score obtained, which was 58.21. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to implement improvements and further develop the reading program in Cycle II. In Cycle II, actions were taken to enhance the learning methods used in Cycle I. Upon conducting the learning results test, it was observed that the class's average score increased to 80 in Cycle II, indicating a significant improvement in the reading interest and skills of Class VIII students at SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak.

## Conclusion

Based on the data analysis in this research, the author draws the conclusion that the interest and reading skills of Class VIII students at SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak have increased. In the first cycle, an average score of 58.21 was obtained, with 8 students completing the program and 20 students not completing it. However, in Cycle II, the average class score increased to 80, with 25 students completing the program and only 3 students not completing it. Therefore, it can be inferred that implementing the reading libration program, utilizing fable reading texts, and effectively training students' reading skills contribute to an increase in both interest and reading proficiency among students.

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