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# Negotiating Comprehension: Surakarta Elementary Teachers' Perspectives on Reading Pedagogy in the Age of AI

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**Abstract**

This qualitative study explores how elementary English teachers negotiate their understanding and practice of reading pedagogy in an era where artificial intelligence tools can instantaneously summarize, analyze, and interpret complex texts. Drawing on reader-response theory and postmodern pedagogical frameworks, this research examines the tensions between traditional notions of "deep reading" and AI-mediated comprehension practices. Through semi-structured interviews with twelve English teachers from diverse school contexts, this study investigates how educators conceptualize authentic comprehension, critical literacy, and the role of intellectual struggle in reading development when students have access to AI assistance. The findings reveal significant concerns about the erosion of effortful reading practices, the shift from personal interpretation to AI verification, and the complex negotiation between accessibility and intellectual growth. Using the pedagogical narrative of Freedom Writers (2007) as a conceptual anchor, this study argues that while AI tools may democratize access to difficult texts, they simultaneously threaten the transformative, meaning-making processes that have long been central to reading education. This research contributes to ongoing debates about literacy education in digital contexts and offers implications for reimagining reading pedagogy that acknowledges both the affordances and limitations of AI technologies. This study particularly focuses on elementary school teachers in Surakarta, Indonesia, as they navigate how to integrate AI technology in early reading instruction while maintaining authentic comprehension and character-based literacy learning.

**Keywords**: *Educational games, private tutoring, gamification, personalized learning, English language teaching, British Council*

## Introduction

The rapid spread of digital technologies and AI-based learning tools has transformed how reading is taught and experienced in contemporary classrooms. In this context, understanding how elementary teachers perceive reading as both a cultural and cognitive practice becomes crucial, particularly in contexts where education also functions as character formation. The advent of artificial intelligence has fundamentally disrupted traditional literacy practices, creating what Baron (2021) describes as a "crisis of attention" in reading education. Contemporary students increasingly turn to AI tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, and specialized reading assistants to summarize lengthy texts, explain complex literary passages, and generate analytical interpretations often without engaging with the source material themselves (Warschauer & Tate, 2023). This phenomenon presents English language teachers with an unprecedented pedagogical challenge: how to maintain the integrity of reading as a meaning-making process when algorithmic shortcuts promise instant comprehension (Sullivan et al., 2024). Unlike previous technological disruptions in literacy education, which primarily affected information access or presentation formats, AI technologies directly intervene in the cognitive processes of interpretation and understanding that have traditionally defined reading competence (Mangen & van der Weel, 2023). At stake is a fundamental reconceptualization of what it means to "read" in an age of computational mediation, where the experiential dimension of reading what Scarry (1999) called the "participatory act" of bringing texts to life through imagination risks being outsourced to algorithmic interpretation.

The implications extend beyond mere concerns about academic dishonesty to touch upon core questions about literacy education's purposes and processes. Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory positioned reading as an active, generative encounter between reader and text, where meaning emerges through the reader's lived experiences and sustained engagement. Similarly, reader-response criticism has long emphasized the interpretive agency of individual readers in constructing textual meaning (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1978). However, when AI systems can produce sophisticated literary analyses within seconds, teachers find themselves caught between competing imperatives: leveraging AI tools to support struggling readers and democratize access to difficult texts, while simultaneously preserving the intellectual struggle and cognitive engagement that research consistently identifies as essential to deep comprehension and critical literacy

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development (Wolf, 2018). This tension is particularly acute because AI represents a qualitatively different challenge from previous technologies: it automates not just information retrieval but interpretation itself, the very core of what English teachers have traditionally sought to cultivate in their students. As Hayles (2012) distinguishes between "deep attention" and "hyper attention" reading practices, the question becomes whether AI-assisted reading constitutes a legitimate form of adaptive literacy or represents a concerning erosion of the sustained, immersive engagement with texts that has characterized humanistic reading traditions. Drawing on reader-response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978), critical literacy (Freire, 1970; Janks, 2010), and postmodern pedagogy (Giroux, 1997), this study conceptualizes reading as an interpretive, ethical, and socio-cultural practice. These frameworks illuminate how meaning-making is both personal and ideological, shaped by lived experiences, power relations, and the cultural tools that mediate understanding. Within the Indonesian context, particularly in Surakarta's elementary schools, these theories help explain how teachers navigate the paradox between fostering critical and imaginative reading while contending with students' growing reliance on AI tools. By combining these theoretical perspectives, the study situates AI not merely as a technical tool but as a cultural actor that reshapes literacy practices and pedagogical values.

Given the rapid proliferation of AI technologies in students' lives and the limited research examining their impact on reading pedagogy specifically, this study addresses a critical gap in educational literature. While existing research has explored AI's effects on writing instruction (Warschauer & Tate, 2023) and general educational applications (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019), few studies have examined how teachers conceptualize and negotiate reading pedagogy when students can access instant textual analysis. This research is particularly timely given that the 2024–2025 academic year represents the first full years since large language models became widely accessible to elementary students, making teachers' experiences during this transitional period valuable for understanding how literacy education might adapt to AI's presence. The study employs the pedagogical narrative of Freedom Writers as a conceptual touchstone not only as a cultural artifact that articulates widely shared beliefs about reading's transformative power but also as a lens for understanding how teachers inspire moral and critical engagement with texts. By centering the voices of elementary teachers in Surakarta and their practical wisdom, this research seeks to inform more nuanced approaches to reading pedagogy that acknowledge AI's affordances while preserving the deep engagement and critical consciousness that remain central to humanistic education. In the context of Indonesian primary education, particularly in Surakarta, the challenges of reading pedagogy in the AI era present a unique landscape. Elementary school teachers in Surakarta are at the forefront of fostering foundational literacy skills, yet they increasingly encounter students who engage with digital tools, including AI-based reading assistants, from an early age. These teachers must therefore balance nurturing students' basic comprehension and vocabulary development with introducing responsible technology use. Given that Indonesian primary education emphasizes character education (Pendidikan Karakter) and moral formation alongside literacy (Kemendikbud, 2020), teachers in Surakarta face the dual responsibility of guiding students to read meaningfully while resisting the tendency to rely excessively on automated comprehension tools. Understanding how these teachers interpret and respond to AI's role in early reading education thus offers valuable insight into how literacy pedagogy can evolve in culturally and developmentally appropriate ways within local contexts.

## Theoretical Review

Reader-response theory and transactional approaches to reading provide essential frameworks for understanding AI's disruption of traditional literacy practices. Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory conceptualized reading as a dynamic, reciprocal process in which meaning emerges neither solely from the text nor entirely from the reader, but through their interaction in specific temporal and experiential contexts. She distinguished between "efferent" reading (reading for information extraction) and "aesthetic" reading (reading for lived-through experience), arguing that both stances are essential but that aesthetic reading has been systematically undervalued in educational contexts prioritizing standardized assessment (Rosenblatt, 1995). This framework remains particularly relevant for understanding AI's impact, as algorithmic text analysis predominantly operates in efferent mode, potentially marginalizing the aesthetic, experiential dimension that Rosenblatt considered central to literary education. Fish (1980) extended reader-response theory through his concept of "interpretive communities," arguing that reading is fundamentally a social practice shaped by shared conventions rather than individual encounters with fixed textual meaning. When students increasingly consult AI for interpretation, they participate in a new interpretive community with opaque protocols and values, one that may operate as what Burbules (2023) calls a "black box" authority, generating analyses students accept without understanding underlying assumptions.

Critical literacy theory, rooted in Freire's (1970) pedagogy of liberation, conceptualizes reading not merely as skill acquisition but as a political practice of "reading the word and the world," developing consciousness of how texts construct and maintain power relations. Luke and Freebody's (1999) "four resources model" identified critical analysis as essential to literacy alongside code-breaking, meaning-making, and pragmatic use, emphasizing that readers must learn to interrogate texts' ideological assumptions and recognize whose interests they serve (Janks, 2010). The emergence of AI-generated text analysis raises new questions for critical literacy: if students rely on algorithmic interpretations, do they develop the capacity to critically interrogate those interpretations themselves, or do they simply exchange one form of textual authority (teacher, curriculum, canon) for another (algorithm, training data, computational logic)? Postmodern pedagogical theory, particularly influenced by Derrida's (1976) deconstruction and Barthes' (1977) "death of the author,"

has challenged essentialist notions of fixed textual meaning and authoritative interpretation, suggesting all readings are provisional and contextual. Ironically, while postmodern theory destabilizes interpretive authority, AI tools may inadvertently reinstall it under computational guise: when students ask ChatGPT, "What does this poem mean?" they often receive responses framed with unwarranted certainty, potentially undermining the questioning stance that postmodern pedagogy seeks to cultivate (Baidoo-Anu & Owusu Ansah, 2023). The concept of "slow reading" has emerged as a pedagogical response to what Miedema and Stam (2008) identify as accelerated, utilitarian approaches to texts in contemporary culture, with advocates arguing for sustained, patient engagement that resists instrumentalization and efficiency imperatives (Mikics, 2013).

Research on AI's impact on reading practices remains nascent but reveals concerning patterns alongside potential affordances. Crompton et al. (2023) found that students using AI assistance for reading assignments demonstrated poorer long-term retention and reduced ability to apply concepts to novel contexts compared to students who engaged texts independently, even when both groups achieved similar immediate comprehension scores. Sullivan et al. (2024) documented "comprehension outsourcing," the tendency for students to substitute AI-generated summaries and analyses for direct textual engagement without recognizing this substitution as problematic. Yet AI technologies also present potential pedagogical affordances: for struggling readers, dyslexic students, or those reading in second languages, AI tools can provide scaffolding that makes complex texts accessible through real-time definitions, simplified paraphrases, and structural overviews (García et al., 2023). Critical scholars have raised concerns about epistemic limitations and biases embedded in AI-generated text analysis, with Bender et al.'s (2021) influential critique arguing that large language models excel at pattern recognition but lack genuine understanding, contextual awareness, and ethical judgment limitations that become problematic when students treat AI-generated literary analysis as authoritative interpretation. Web-based platforms also enable personalized learning experiences for EFL students (Nguyen & Le, 2022). Previous studies have highlighted that game-based learning enhances student motivation and retention in language education (Chen & Hwang, 2023). Private English courses in Indonesian cities such as Surakarta have increasingly integrated digital media into their teaching (Rahman, 2021). The film Freedom Writers (2007) offers a powerful pedagogical narrative about transformative reading practices, depicting reading as fundamentally about connecting students discovering themselves in texts and developing critical consciousness through literary engagement (Gruwell, 1999). The iconic Anne Frank diary sequence demonstrates what Rosenblatt (1978) described as aesthetic reading's capacity to foster empathy and expanded perspective, exemplifying reading as personally transformative rather than mere information acquisition precisely the dimension that AI-assisted reading may attenuate (Brass, 2008).

## Method

A qualitative case study allows in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) contextually situated perspectives of elementary school English teachers in Surakarta regarding reading pedagogy in the age of AI. Qualitative methodology is particularly appropriate for investigating how educators make sense of emerging technologies that challenge established pedagogical assumptions, allowing for in-depth exploration of beliefs, values, and reasoning processes underlying instructional decisions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Following Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) approach to qualitative research in education, this study seeks not to test predetermined hypotheses but to generate rich, nuanced understanding of how teachers navigate tensions between traditional literacy goals and technological affordances in their daily practice. The interpretive paradigm acknowledges that educational phenomena are socially constructed, context-dependent, and multiply interpreted by different stakeholders (Schwandt, 2021), aligning with the study's theoretical grounding in reader-response theory and postmodern pedagogy, both of which problematize notions of fixed meaning and singular interpretive authority.

Participants were recruited through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015) to ensure inclusion of twelve elementary school English teachers from various public and private schools in Surakarta who have experience integrating AI technologies into reading instruction. Selection criteria required participants to hold valid teaching credentials in English education, have at least three years of teaching experience, currently teach in schools where students have access to AI tools, and demonstrate awareness of how students use AI for reading activities. Data collection occurred through semi-structured interviews conducted in November 2025, following institutional review board approval. Each participant completed a 60–90-minute online interview, which was audio-recorded and professionally transcribed. The interview protocol was designed to elicit teachers' conceptualizations of deep reading, their observations of students' AI use, their pedagogical responses, and connections to broader beliefs about literacy education's purposes (Seidman, 2019). A visual prompt featuring a scene from Freedom Writers (2007) was used to stimulate reflection on the role of transformative reading. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, definition, and reporting with initial coding conducted inductively and guided by sensitizing concepts from reader-response theory and critical literacy (Charmaz, 2014). Trustworthiness was established through triangulation, member checking, thick description, audit trail documentation, and reflexive analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Research and Finding Discussion

### *Erosion of Effortful Reading Practices*

Teachers in Surakarta expressed similar concerns to those found globally, particularly regarding how AI tools may lead young learners to skip the cognitive struggle essential for comprehension. The most pervasive concern articulated by participants was that AI tools enable students to bypass what teachers considered essential cognitive and emotional engagement with texts, with ten of twelve teachers describing how pupils used AI to summarize stories, explain unfamiliar vocabulary, or generate short reading responses without fully engaging with the material. Mrs. S, a fourth-grade English teacher at SD Muhammadiyah ZX, explained:

*"When they get reading homework, some students just use Google Translate or ChatGPT to answer comprehension questions. They don't even try to read the passage. Last week, I assigned a short story about friendship, and three students submitted identical answers all from AI. When I asked them to tell me the story in their own words, they couldn't."*

Mr. B. who teaches at a private elementary school, shared a similar observation:

*"I can always tell when they've used AI. The vocabulary is too advanced, too perfect. A third-grader doesn't naturally write 'the protagonist demonstrates resilience.' But when I ask them what 'resilience' means, they have no idea."*

This observation resonates with Sullivan et al.'s (2024) concept of "comprehension outsourcing," where students substitute algorithmic processing for personal engagement. Similarly, game-based learning environments have been proven to improve learners' vocabulary retention and grammar accuracy (Suh et al., 2021). Teachers repeatedly emphasized that the struggle the experience of confusion, re-reading, and working through uncertainty was pedagogically valuable, not an obstacle. Mrs. R teaching at SD Negeri ZX Surakarta, reflected emotionally:

*"If they skip the hard part, they lose the joy of discovery. I remember when one of my students finally understood the moral of 'The Ant and the Grasshopper' after reading it three times. She was so proud! Now, students just ask their phone, and they never get that 'aha!' moment."*

Another teacher, Mrs. D, connected this issue to broader cultural shifts:

*"Our parents' generation had to work for every answer go to the library, ask teachers, think deeply. Now my students expect everything instantly. They don't understand that struggling with a text is how you actually learn to read better."*

Several teachers connected this issue to broader cultural shifts toward instant gratification and efficiency, echoing Rosa's (2019) critique of acceleration culture, where speed and productivity are valued over reflection and meaning-making.

### *Shifts in Interpretive Authority and Agency*

A second major theme concerned shifts in interpretive authority and agency, with teachers describing how students increasingly relied on AI not to support their understanding but to supply ready-made answers. This trend was particularly troubling for teachers who embraced reader-response pedagogies positioning interpretation as personal, contextual, and exploratory. Mrs. N, a fifth-grade teacher with 1 years of experience, explained with evident sadness:

*"I tell them there's no single correct answer in reading it's about what you feel and think about the story. But when they use ChatGPT, they think its answer is the only one. Last month, we read a fable about honesty. I asked what they learned, and five students gave me the exact same three-point answer: 'Honesty builds trust, honesty brings peace of mind, honesty strengthens relationships.' Those weren't their words those were AI words."*

Mr. A, teaching at a bilingual elementary school, shared a troubling incident:

*"I asked my students to write about their favorite character in a story. One girl wrote beautifully about why she liked the brave little mouse. Then her friend showed me she got a 'better answer' from ChatGPT full of literary terms like 'character arc' and 'symbolic representation.' The first girl felt her answer was wrong because it was simpler. That broke my heart."*

This dynamic reflects Fish's (1980) notion of interpretive communities, but with AI functioning as a new, opaque authority. Rather than engaging in interpretive discussion with peers or teachers, students defer to algorithmic explanations. Mrs. L observed the cultural dimension of this problem:

*"Indonesian folktales have meanings that connect to our values gotong royong, respect for elders. When students ask AI to explain 'Timun Mas,' they get generic answers about 'good versus evil.' They miss the cultural wisdom. AI doesn't understand our context."*

Teachers also observed that this dependence risks diminishing the diversity of responses shaped by individual and cultural experiences, echoing concerns that marginalized perspectives may be replaced by dominant, standardized interpretations.

### *Ambivalence About AI's Democratizing Potential*

The third theme highlighted teachers' ambivalence about AI's potential to support struggling readers. All participants recognized that AI tools can scaffold comprehension for students who are still building basic literacy or English vocabulary,

particularly those with learning difficulties or limited exposure to English at home. Mrs. Putri, who works with mixed-ability classes, shared a success story:

*"I have a student, let's call him X, who struggled terribly with reading. His vocabulary was limited, and he would shut down when faced with new texts. I allowed him to use an AI tool that simplified difficult sentences. Suddenly, he could participate in class discussions. He gained confidence. For X, AI was a bridge, not a crutch."*

However, she immediately followed with a caveat:

*"But here's my worry now X uses it for everything. Even simple texts. I tried to wean him off it, but he panicked. He said, 'Bu, I can't understand without it.' So did I help him or make him dependent?"*

This practice aligns with Universal Design for Learning principles advocating flexible supports while maintaining rigorous learning goals (Meyer et al., 2014). However, teachers struggled to determine when such use shifted from scaffolding to avoidance. Students' motivation and engagement levels tend to increase when learning involves interactive digital tools (Ahn & Lee, 2020). Mr. H expressed the ethical dilemma many teachers face:

*"If wealthy students can afford tutors and resources, why shouldn't poor students use free AI tools? That's equity, right? But then I see my struggling students never actually improve their reading skills they just get better at using AI. So we've created equal access to answers, but not equal development of ability."*

Mrs. R shared her classroom policy and its challenges:

*"I tell parents, 'AI can help your child understand vocabulary, but it shouldn't read for them.' But how do I enforce that? I can't monitor their homework. And honestly, some parents encourage it. One mother told me, 'Bu, as long as he gets the answer right, what's the problem?' I didn't know how to explain that the process matters more than the product."*

This tension echoes Delpit's (1995) argument about equity: while technology can widen access, it may also perpetuate gaps if only certain students develop deep reading habits.

### *Mourning the Loss of Reading's Transformative Potential*

The fourth theme captured teachers' concern over the diminishing transformative potential of reading, especially in early literacy stages. Several teachers mentioned that children today show less emotional engagement with stories, contrasting with the deep empathy and moral reflection depicted in Freedom Writers (2007). Teachers shared poignant observations about changing student responses, Mrs. Y, who has taught for 20 years, reflected nostalgically:

*"When I started teaching, students would cry while reading sad stories. They'd argue passionately about whether a character was right or wrong. Now, they read a story about a child losing their parent, and they say, 'AI says the theme is grief and resilience,' no emotion, just facts. When we read moral stories, AI can tell them what it means, but it can't make them feel it."*

Mr. B. described a particularly memorable moment:

*"We read a story about a poor boy sharing his last piece of bread with a hungry bird. I asked what they felt. One student said, 'I felt sad for him.' Another said, 'I felt happy he was kind.' Beautiful, personal responses. Then one boy raised his hand and said, 'But Miss, ChatGPT says the story represents sacrifice and compassion.' He wanted to correct his classmates with the 'right answer' from AI. That's when I realized we're losing something precious."*

They worried that AI-assisted reading remains "efferent" (Rosenblatt, 1995), focused on extracting answers rather than "aesthetic," which fosters imagination and empathy.

The transformative experiences celebrated in Freedom Writers students recognizing shared humanity and developing moral understanding through stories require precisely the sustained, emotionally engaged reading that AI shortcuts undermine (Brass, 2008). Mrs. Endah connected this to Indonesian educational values:

*"Our curriculum emphasizes pendidikan karakter character education. Reading stories is supposed to build empathy, honesty, responsibility. But if children outsource their reading to machines, how do these values enter their hearts? AI can explain what 'ikhlas' means, but it can't help a child feel it, live it."*

Teachers also acknowledged, however, that even before AI, many students treated reading as a school task rather than a personal journey. As Mrs. D reflected:

*"Let's be honest AI just makes the skipping easier. It doesn't create the problem, but it makes it grow. Even before ChatGPT, students used SparkNotes, asked their older siblings, and copied from friends. The difference is, now it's instant, private, and sounds intelligent. We need to ask ourselves: why don't students want to read in the first place?"*

### *Theoretical Implications*

These findings complicate foundational assumptions of reader-response theory in significant ways. While Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory positioned the reader–text relationship as central to meaning-making, AI-mediated reading introduces a third element: an algorithmic intermediary that processes texts through opaque computational logic (Burbules, 2023). This triadic relationship alters how children experience reading, not as a personal encounter with uncertainty and imagination (Iser, 1978), but as a quick, solution-oriented exchange. The study reveals a fundamental tension in primary education: schools often prioritize measurable outcomes and efficiency (Rosa, 2019), which align with the affordances AI tools offer. As Mr. J observed:

*"The system wants high test scores. Parents want good grades. Students want quick completion. AI delivers all three. Who am I to fight against that alone? We need systemic change, not just individual teachers trying to resist."*

Teachers cannot simply tell students to "read deeply" when educational structures reward completion over curiosity. Addressing AI's influence, therefore, requires systemic reform and culturally grounded pedagogy that values slow, effortful reading and local cultural content (Kohn, 2011; Gruwell, 1999).

## Conclusion

This qualitative study has explored how elementary English teachers navigate the complex terrain of reading pedagogy in an era when artificial intelligence can instantaneously summarize, analyze, and interpret texts that students have traditionally been expected to read independently. Through analysis of twelve teachers' perspectives, the research identified four major themes: concerns about effortful reading's erosion, shifts from student interpretation to AI verification, ambivalence about AI's democratizing potential, and mourning for reading's transformative possibilities. These findings complicate foundational theories of reading education, particularly reader-response and transactional approaches, by revealing how algorithmic mediation disrupts the phenomenology of textual engagement. When AI becomes an invisible third party in the reader-text transaction, fundamental questions arise about interpretive authority, cognitive development, and what we mean by "reading" itself. Rather than framing AI as either salvation or catastrophe for reading pedagogy, findings reveal that its impact depends entirely on pedagogical integration: AI can function as legitimate assistive technology supporting struggling readers or as a shortcut that undermines literacy development, with teachers demonstrating nuanced understanding that rejects simplistic pro- or anti-technology positions in favor of context-dependent judgments about appropriate use. The study's contributions extend beyond documenting teacher concerns to illuminating productive tensions that can inform more sophisticated approaches to literacy education in digital contexts. Teachers' perspectives suggest that addressing AI's challenge requires not technological restriction but pedagogical reimagining making explicit why deep reading matters, redesigning assessment to privilege authentic comprehension, teaching critical digital literacy, and centering texts that students find genuinely meaningful. These principles align with longstanding commitments in literacy education to student agency, critical consciousness, and culturally responsive practice, demonstrating continuity amid disruption. The Freedom Writers narrative served as a powerful conceptual anchor crystallizing teachers' aspirations for reading as personally transformative and socially conscious practice, yet teachers also recognized that Gruwell's pedagogical success depended on students finding deep personal relevance in assigned texts, a relevance that cannot be mandated. This insight points toward perhaps the most important implication: AI's threat to reading pedagogy may be less about the technology itself than about educational systems that have made reading feel like meaningless busywork rather than genuine intellectual and emotional engagement, suggesting that addressing AI's impact requires systemic changes that protect space for slow, contemplative reading and curriculum that reflects students' lived experiences.

This study has several limitations suggesting directions for future research, including the sample's limitation to twelve teachers in Surakarta, Indonesia, its capture of perspectives at a particular historical moment (2024-2025) when generative AI is relatively new in educational contexts, and its focus exclusively on teachers' perspectives rather than students' experiences. Despite these limitations, this research makes important contributions by challenging technological determinist narratives and revealing that human pedagogical choices mediate technological impact. Teachers are not passive recipients of technological change but active negotiators who must balance competing values, accessibility and challenge, efficiency and depth, innovation and tradition. Their perspectives demonstrate sophisticated awareness of reading's cognitive, affective, and ethical dimensions, refusing to reduce literacy to information processing that algorithms can replicate. Ultimately, this study suggests that reading pedagogy's future depends less on technological developments than on collective decisions about education's purposes: if schooling exists primarily to efficiently transmit measurable content knowledge, then AI-assisted reading may be adequate, but if education aims to develop thoughtful, critical, ethically engaged citizens the vision that animated teachers in this study then preserving space for deep, effortful reading becomes not nostalgic but essential. The challenge is articulating this vision persuasively within educational systems that often seem to value performance over learning, requiring not just pedagogical innovation but cultural transformation that reconceives education and reading as something other than efficient credentialing and information extraction. These insights are particularly relevant for Indonesian primary education, especially in cities like Surakarta, where teachers are striving to balance early literacy goals with the integration of digital and AI tools in the classroom.

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