

Reframing Reading Pace as a Learning Strategy: Classroom Evidence of Speed Reading Practices in Indonesian Primary Education

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ABSTRACT

Background: Many primary students in Indonesian language classes read too slowly to keep up with lesson demands, which can weaken understanding and reduce achievement. This study treats reading pace as an instructional target by applying structured speed reading practice.

Methods: The study used classroom action research conducted in one fourth grade class in Indonesia over two cycles. Twenty students and their teacher participated. Evidence was gathered from reading speed measures, comprehension tests, observation notes, interviews, and classroom documentation. Quantitative patterns were summarized with descriptive comparisons and percentage gains, while qualitative information was used to describe shifts in participation and learning behavior during reading activities.

Result: After the intervention, students read more efficiently while maintaining stronger understanding of texts. Mean reading speed increased from 120 to 180 words per minute, and comprehension scores improved from 65 percent to 85 percent. Across cycles, progress was sustained, with cycle indicators showing reading speed improvement reaching 80 percent and learning outcomes rising to 80 percent by the second cycle. Classroom observations and interviews also pointed to greater engagement, improved confidence, and more active involvement in reading tasks.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that speed reading can be positioned as a practical classroom strategy to build reading fluency without undermining comprehension. Embedding short, structured speed reading routines in Indonesian language instruction may help students process texts more effectively and support better learning performance.

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Introduction

The urgency of strengthening reading ability in primary education has become increasingly evident as early literacy skills strongly influence students' future learning capacity (Chuang & Jamiat, 2023; Shaaban & Mohamed, 2024). In Indonesian language classrooms, many students are able to read texts accurately but require excessive time to do so (Nurkamto et al., 2021). This slow reading pace often limits students' understanding of lesson content within constrained classroom schedules. When students struggle to keep up with reading demands, learning activities become less effective. Over time, this condition can reduce motivation and weaken academic confidence. Reading then shifts from a meaningful learning tool to a demanding task. Such patterns suggest that reading problems at the primary level extend beyond comprehension alone. They highlight the need to address reading pace as a core component of literacy development.

Reading fluency plays a central role in enabling students to interact productively with written texts (Bilge & Kalenderoğlu, 2022; Hossain, 2024). Fluency allows learners to process information smoothly and maintain attention on meaning rather than mechanical decoding. In many primary classrooms, however, fluency receives less instructional focus than accuracy (Gliksman et al., 2022; Schurz et al., 2022). Students who read slowly often expend significant cognitive effort on word recognition. This leaves limited capacity for understanding ideas and relationships within the text. As a result, reading tasks may be completed without meaningful learning. This challenge becomes more pronounced as texts grow longer and more complex. Developing fluency is therefore essential for supporting effective language learning in primary education.

Instructional practices in Indonesian primary schools frequently emphasize repetition and correctness in reading (Nurkamto et al., 2021; Widiati et al., 2023). While these practices support basic literacy, they do not always promote efficient reading habits. Students who read correctly but slowly still face difficulties in managing classroom tasks. Time-limited activities such as exercises and assessments become particularly challenging for them (Cagliero et al., 2023; Stamatakis et al., 2021). Teachers may notice that these students fall behind despite understanding the material. Instructional time constraints often prevent teachers from addressing fluency explicitly. Consequently, reading pace remains underdeveloped across grade levels. This situation calls for instructional strategies that can be implemented within existing classroom routines. Speed reading offers one approach that may respond to this instructional need.

Speed reading is often associated with increasing reading rate, sometimes raising concerns about superficial comprehension (Andrews & Veldre, 2021; Kukkonen, 2021). In educational settings, this perception can discourage its use with young learners. However, structured speed reading activities are designed to balance speed and understanding (Goldhammer et al., 2021; Klimovich et al., 2023). By training students to read more efficiently, such practices can reduce unnecessary pauses and hesitation. This efficiency supports better allocation of attention during reading. In classroom contexts, speed reading can be adapted to students' developmental levels. When applied gradually, it can strengthen reading habits rather than undermine comprehension. Despite this potential, speed reading is rarely positioned as a learning strategy in primary classrooms. This gap between potential and practice merits closer examination.

Classroom-based research provides a valuable lens for studying instructional change (Cohen et al., 2022; Darwin & Barahona, 2023). Unlike large-scale experimental studies, classroom research captures the complexity of everyday teaching and learning. Teachers can observe students' responses directly and adjust instruction accordingly. Classroom action research, in particular, emphasizes reflection and improvement through iterative cycles (Davison et al., 2021; Rabgay & Kidman, 2023). This approach aligns well with efforts to enhance reading instruction. It allows instructional strategies to be tested, refined, and evaluated within real learning environments. Speed reading, when examined through this framework, can be assessed for both effectiveness and practicality. Such evidence is especially relevant for primary education contexts. It supports pedagogical decisions grounded in classroom realities.

Literacy development in Indonesian primary schools remains uneven across regions and contexts (Wijaya et al., 2025). Differences in instructional quality and learning environments contribute to varying reading outcomes. Students who read slowly may struggle to meet academic expectations as curricular demands increase. Without targeted support, these students risk falling further behind their peers (Picton et al., 2022; Rets et al., 2021). Reading fluency is often overlooked amid pressures to complete curriculum content. This oversight can perpetuate learning gaps within classrooms. Addressing fluency early may help prevent long-term academic difficulties. From this perspective, reading pace becomes an issue of educational equity. Instructional interventions that support fluency are therefore of strategic importance.

Student engagement is another critical dimension of reading development (Yulian, 2021). Young learners are more likely to engage with texts when reading feels achievable and rewarding. Slow reading pace can make reading tasks exhausting and discouraging. Students may lose interest or avoid reading activities altogether. Improved fluency, in contrast, can foster a sense of competence and enjoyment (Tsang & Dewaele, 2024). Engaged readers tend to participate more actively in discussions and assignments. Classroom experiences show that instructional methods influence students' attitudes toward reading. Speed reading activities can introduce clear goals and structure into reading practice. This connection between fluency and engagement deserves systematic investigation.

Considering these factors, examining speed reading as a classroom-based learning strategy is both relevant and necessary. Existing research has often treated reading speed and comprehension as separate outcomes (Korinth & Nagler, 2021; Mézière et al., 2023). Fewer studies explore their relationship within

primary language instruction. Moreover, evidence from Indonesian primary classrooms remains limited (Beatty et al., 2021; Dharmawan & Suryadarma, 2021). Understanding how speed reading operates in real instructional settings can inform teaching practice. This study responds to that need by situating speed reading within classroom action research. It focuses on both reading fluency and learning outcomes as interconnected dimensions. Such an approach offers practical insight for improving literacy instruction in primary education.

Reading fluency is widely treated as the operational link between decoding and comprehension, so improvements in rate and smoothness are expected to free attention for meaning-making, and this is why fluency assessment is positioned as a core diagnostic element by van der Velde et al. (2025). Evidence from school-aged samples also suggests that reading efficiency is not a cosmetic skill but a practical constraint on classroom learning, as D’Almeida Souza et al. (2025) indicate when documenting how reading speed shapes students’ capacity to complete text-based tasks within limited time. Within this broader conversation, speed reading is best understood as a structured instructional routine rather than a shortcut, and the arguments in Kim (2024) together with Korinth & Nagler (2021a) support the claim that acceleration can coexist with comprehension when instruction keeps meaning in focus. Classroom-oriented findings further reinforce this instructional stance, because Afifah et al. (2023) show that fluency-focused practice can coincide with stronger engagement, while Sinaga et al. (2023) report measurable gains in quick reading ability under guided learning arrangements. In work connected to Indonesian language development, Kirana et al. (2025) draw attention to learner variability in language processing, implying that any fluency intervention must be responsive to differences in students’ reading readiness. Assessment and technology trends also point to new monitoring possibilities, as Thuan (2025) illustrates the use of an AI-powered Reading Progress tool to support pronunciation-related reading practice. At the same time, the Scopus landscape shows that reading-related performance is examined across diverse contexts, including tactile-based rapid Braille recognition systems by Zheng et al. (2025) and speech-related clinical assessment frameworks by Ranucci et al. (2026). Although these latter studies sit outside Indonesian primary language instruction, their inclusion usefully signals that reading speed and performance are measurable constructs across domains, which strengthens the rationale for classroom-based testing. Taken together, this literature supports a cautious but defensible expectation that reading pace is teachable and that improved fluency can plausibly translate into better learning outcomes, providing a clear basis for examining speed reading in Indonesian primary classrooms through iterative cycles of improvement.

Efforts to improve reading instruction in primary education cannot be separated from how students actually process texts in classroom practice. In Indonesian language learning, reading success is commonly judged by accuracy in pronunciation and the ability to answer questions, while reading pace is rarely treated as an explicit instructional goal. As a result, many students are able to read correctly but require excessive time to understand written material. This inefficiency reduces effective learning time and often limits students’ active involvement in classroom activities. Speed reading becomes relevant not as a shortcut to comprehension, but as a structured learning strategy that gradually develops reading fluency. When reading pace is intentionally fostered, students may allocate more cognitive resources to meaning construction. Classroom-based implementation allows teachers to observe students’ responses directly and adjust instruction as needed. Therefore, examining speed reading within authentic classroom contexts is essential for assessing its pedagogical value realistically.

Although research on reading fluency and speed reading has grown, significant gaps remain, particularly in primary education contexts. Much of the existing literature focuses on secondary education, foreign language learning, or controlled experimental settings, offering limited insight into the use of speed reading in Indonesian primary language classrooms. Studies that do address elementary learners often examine reading speed or comprehension in isolation, without connecting these improvements to broader learning outcomes and classroom engagement. Moreover, classroom action research approaches that document iterative instructional improvement are still relatively scarce in this

area. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence that demonstrates how speed reading functions as a classroom-based learning strategy under real teaching conditions. This lack of practice-oriented research restricts the availability of concrete guidance for primary school teachers. Addressing this gap requires studies grounded in everyday classroom realities. The present study is designed to respond directly to this need.

The purpose of this study is to examine the implementation of speed reading as a learning strategy for improving reading fluency and learning outcomes among fourth-grade students in Indonesian language instruction. Specifically, the study seeks to identify changes in reading speed, reading comprehension, and student engagement following the structured application of speed reading practices. Using a classroom action research approach, the study explores how this strategy operates through iterative instructional cycles in a real classroom setting. It is hypothesized that the systematic integration of speed reading will enhance students' reading fluency without compromising comprehension. It is further expected that improved fluency will contribute to more active participation and greater confidence in learning activities. In this way, speed reading is positioned as a pedagogical support strategy rather than a purely technical skill. The findings are expected to provide classroom-level evidence to inform reading instruction in primary education.

Method

Research Design

This study adopted a classroom action research approach to address practical reading problems encountered in an Indonesian language classroom. The design was chosen to allow instructional improvement through a cyclical process of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The research was carried out in two consecutive cycles, each informed by the outcomes of the previous stage. Rather than testing a fixed intervention, the design emphasized responsiveness to students' learning conditions and classroom dynamics. Speed reading instruction was introduced, evaluated, and refined across cycles based on observed classroom evidence. The procedural flow of the research, from problem identification to data analysis, is presented in Figure 1. This design enabled the study to capture both instructional processes and learning outcomes in a natural classroom setting. The focus was placed on pedagogical improvement rather than experimental control.

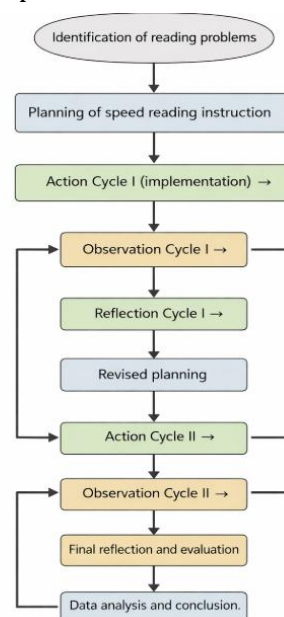


Figure 1. Flowchart of Classroom Action Research Procedures for Implementing Speed Reading

Participants

The participants were 20 students enrolled in a fourth-grade Indonesian language class at a public primary school in Indonesia. The class was selected because students showed difficulty related to slow reading pace during regular instruction. All students in the class participated to preserve authentic classroom conditions and avoid disruption to normal learning routines. One Indonesian language teacher was involved as a collaborative practitioner, particularly during the implementation and reflection stages. The participants represented a typical range of reading abilities commonly found in primary classrooms. No grouping or exclusion of students was applied during the intervention. Instruction took place during regular class hours as part of routine learning activities. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school and classroom teacher prior to implementation.

Instrument

Data collection relied on multiple sources to document changes in reading performance and classroom learning processes. Reading speed assessments were used to record changes in students' reading rate across instructional cycles. Reading comprehension tasks were administered to examine students' understanding of the texts used during instruction. Classroom observations were conducted to document student engagement, participation, and observable reading behaviors during speed reading activities. In addition, reflective interviews with the teacher and selected students were carried out to capture perceptions of the learning experience. Instructional documents such as lesson plans, student work, and assessment records were also collected. These instruments were selected to reflect both outcomes and processes of learning. Using varied instruments allowed the study to triangulate findings and strengthen credibility.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted by combining descriptive quantitative procedures with qualitative interpretation. Quantitative data from reading speed and comprehension assessments were examined through comparisons across cycles and percentage-based improvements. These results were used to identify patterns of change following the implementation of speed reading instruction. Qualitative data from classroom observations were analyzed to describe shifts in engagement and reading behavior during learning activities. Interview data were reviewed to identify recurring themes related to confidence, difficulty, and perceived usefulness of the instruction. Findings from different data sources were compared to ensure coherence across evidence. The analysis emphasized instructional meaning and classroom improvement rather than statistical generalization. This analytic approach aligns with the reflective nature of classroom action research.

Results and Discussion

Results

The implementation of speed reading instruction across two classroom action research cycles produced observable and consistent improvements in students' reading performance. Rather than showing abrupt change, the results indicate a gradual adaptation process, with clearer gains emerging after instructional refinement in the second cycle. Quantitative changes in reading speed and learning outcomes are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Changes in Reading Speed and Learning Outcomes Across Research Cycles

Indicator	Initial Condition	Cycle I	Cycle II
Average reading speed (words per minute)	120	156	180
Increase in reading speed (%)	–	30%	80%
Reading comprehension score (%)	65	75	85

Learning outcome achievement (%)	–	40	80
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As shown in Table 1, students’ reading speed improved steadily from the initial condition to Cycle I, indicating early responsiveness to the speed reading activities. Although the gains in Cycle I were moderate, they suggest that students were beginning to adjust their reading habits while still maintaining comprehension. In Cycle II, improvements became more pronounced, reflecting increased fluency and more efficient text processing. Reading comprehension scores followed a similar upward pattern, indicating that faster reading did not come at the expense of understanding. These parallel improvements suggest that fluency and comprehension developed in tandem rather than in competition. The results also reflect the impact of reflective revisions made after Cycle I, which helped align instructional pacing with students’ reading readiness. Overall, the findings demonstrate that structured speed reading practices contributed to meaningful improvements in reading fluency and learning outcomes within the classroom context.

Discussion

The present study demonstrates that reading pace can be improved through deliberate instructional design rather than incidental exposure to reading tasks. The gradual improvement observed across the two cycles indicates that fluency development requires time, consistency, and structured practice. This finding reinforces the position of van der Velde et al. (2025), who argue that fluency is not a byproduct of comprehension but an instructional variable that can be systematically developed. In this study, improvements emerged progressively as students became familiar with speed reading routines. The absence of abrupt change suggests that fluency gains are cumulative rather than immediate. This pattern supports the pedagogical value of sustained fluency-oriented instruction. It also highlights the importance of aligning instructional expectations with students’ readiness. As such, reading pace should be addressed as part of long-term literacy development.

A key outcome of this study is that increased reading speed did not undermine comprehension. This finding directly addresses a common concern surrounding speed reading in primary education. Consistent with the arguments advanced by Kim (2024) and Korinth & Nagler (2021), the results indicate that reading acceleration can coexist with understanding when instruction emphasizes meaning rather than mere speed. Students in this study did not simply read faster; they demonstrated improved efficiency in processing text. Reduced hesitation and smoother pacing appeared to free cognitive resources for comprehension. This suggests that speed reading, when structured appropriately, supports rather than disrupts meaning-making. The findings challenge the assumption that speed and comprehension are inherently competing goals. Instead, they point to a complementary relationship between the two.

Student engagement emerged as an important dimension of the observed improvement. As reading tasks became more manageable, students showed greater willingness to participate in classroom activities. This pattern aligns with the findings of Afifah et al. (2023), who report that fluency-focused instruction can positively influence learners’ involvement. In the present study, engagement was particularly evident during the second cycle, when students appeared more confident and less hesitant during reading tasks. Improved fluency seemed to reduce the cognitive and emotional burden associated with reading. When students perceived reading as achievable, their participation increased. This suggests that fluency development may indirectly support motivation and classroom interaction. Engagement should therefore be considered an important outcome of reading instruction.

The cycle-based improvement pattern highlights the significance of reflective instructional practice. While Cycle I produced noticeable gains, the results were uneven and required further refinement. Reflection on these outcomes informed adjustments that strengthened implementation in Cycle II. This process echoes the conclusions of Sinaga et al. (2023), who emphasize the role of guided practice and instructional adaptation in enhancing speed reading effectiveness. The classroom action

research framework allowed instructional decisions to be shaped by evidence rather than assumption. Such flexibility is essential in addressing diverse learner needs. The findings underscore that speed reading is most effective when treated as an evolving practice. Reflection and adjustment were central to its success.

Contextual factors related to Indonesian language learning also shape the interpretation of these findings. Kirana et al. (2025) highlight variability in language processing among learners, which influences reading performance. The present study demonstrates that speed reading instruction can accommodate such variability when applied progressively. Rather than enforcing uniform speed targets, the instruction allowed students to adapt gradually within a shared structure. This flexibility likely contributed to the maintenance of comprehension. The findings suggest that sensitivity to learner differences is critical in fluency-focused instruction. Speed reading should therefore be adapted to classroom context rather than applied rigidly. This contextual responsiveness strengthens its pedagogical relevance.

Assessment practices played a formative role in guiding instructional decisions. Repeated measurement of reading speed and comprehension provided ongoing feedback across cycles. This approach aligns with the perspective of (van der Velde et al., 2025), who emphasize fluency assessment as a tool for instructional insight rather than mere evaluation. In this study, assessment results informed reflection and revision, supporting continuous improvement. The dynamic use of assessment allowed changes in reading behavior to be tracked meaningfully. It also helped clarify the relationship between speed and comprehension over time. Such formative assessment practices are particularly valuable in primary classrooms. They support instruction that is responsive rather than prescriptive.

Although grounded in classroom practice, the findings resonate with broader research on reading performance across domains. Studies by Zheng et al. (2025) demonstrate that reading efficiency is a meaningful performance indicator even in tactile reading contexts. Similarly, clinical research by Ranucci et al. (2026) underscores the role of fluency-related measures in understanding reading and speech processes. While these studies differ in scope and population, they collectively reinforce the conceptual validity of reading pace as a measurable construct. Their relevance lies not in direct comparison but in theoretical support. They suggest that fluency improvement is a legitimate instructional goal across contexts. This strengthens the conceptual foundation of the present study.

The study also offers an alternative perspective to technology-driven reading interventions. While Thuan (2025) highlights the potential of AI-assisted tools for monitoring reading progress, the present findings demonstrate that teacher-led strategies can yield meaningful gains without reliance on advanced technology. This does not diminish the value of digital tools but underscores the centrality of instructional design. In contexts where technological resources are limited, structured classroom strategies remain essential. Speed reading routines in this study relied on clear guidance, practice, and reflection rather than digital mediation. This highlights the continued relevance of pedagogical skill. Teacher agency remains a key factor in literacy development.

Taken together, the findings indicate that speed reading functions most effectively as part of a broader instructional approach rather than as a standalone technique. Improvements in fluency were accompanied by gains in comprehension and engagement, suggesting interconnected learning processes. This supports the view that reading pace is not merely a technical skill but a pedagogical concern. The classroom action research framework proved effective in revealing these relationships. By focusing on process as well as outcome, the study offers a nuanced understanding of fluency development. Speed reading should therefore be integrated thoughtfully into reading instruction.

In conclusion, this study contributes classroom-based evidence to ongoing discussions on reading fluency in primary education. It addresses existing research gaps by examining speed reading within authentic instructional settings. The findings demonstrate that reading pace can be developed without compromising comprehension when supported by reflective teaching practice. While context-specific, the results offer insights that may inform similar classrooms. The study reinforces the importance of

treating fluency as an instructional priority. Ultimately, it positions speed reading as a viable strategy for enhancing reading effectiveness in primary education.

Implications

The results of this study indicate that reading fluency, particularly reading pace, deserves explicit instructional attention in primary language classrooms. Treating reading speed as a learnable aspect of literacy may help students manage reading tasks more efficiently and engage more actively in classroom learning. The findings also demonstrate that classroom action research can function as an effective framework for improving instructional practice, as it allows teachers to evaluate and refine strategies based on concrete classroom evidence. From a pedagogical perspective, the study suggests that fluency-focused instruction does not need to rely on complex technology, but can be implemented through carefully structured routines and consistent guidance. At a broader level, the study encourages curriculum designers and teachers to view fluency, comprehension, and accuracy as interconnected rather than separate components of reading instruction. Such an integrated perspective may support more balanced and meaningful literacy development in primary education.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. The research was conducted in a single classroom, which means that the results reflect a specific instructional context and group of learners. The relatively short duration of the intervention, limited to two action research cycles, may not fully capture longer-term patterns of reading development. In addition, the use of descriptive analysis aligns with the purpose of classroom action research but limits the ability to draw broader statistical inferences. Changes in students' reading performance may also have been influenced by contextual factors such as increased teacher attention or repeated exposure to reading tasks. These limitations do not undermine the findings but suggest that they should be understood as exploratory and context-bound. Caution is therefore needed in applying the results to different educational settings.

Suggestions

Future studies may build on this research by involving multiple classrooms or schools to examine whether similar patterns of improvement emerge in different contexts. Extending the duration of implementation could provide insight into the sustainability of reading fluency gains over time. Further research might also explore how speed reading strategies interact with other aspects of literacy development, such as vocabulary growth or writing ability. For classroom practice, teachers are encouraged to implement speed reading gradually and adapt it to students' reading readiness rather than applying uniform targets. Continuous observation and reflection are recommended to ensure that improvements in reading speed remain aligned with comprehension. Such efforts may help strengthen the role of fluency-oriented instruction in supporting effective reading development at the primary level.

Conclusion

This study concludes that speed reading, when embedded within a classroom action research framework, can function as an effective instructional strategy in primary Indonesian language learning. Across two reflective cycles, students gradually developed greater reading fluency, as indicated by steady gains in reading speed accompanied by consistent improvement in comprehension, showing that efficiency and understanding can develop in parallel rather than in conflict. The iterative process of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection allowed instructional adjustments that responded to students' actual classroom needs, resulting in more confident participation and more efficient use of learning time. These findings suggest that slow reading pace is not merely a learner limitation but an instructional issue that can be addressed through deliberate pedagogical design. By treating reading pace as a teachable component of literacy, teachers can support more effective text processing without relying on complex technology. Although grounded in a specific classroom context, the study provides practical

evidence that structured speed reading routines can strengthen reading fluency and overall learning outcomes in primary education.

Author Contributions Statement

Hana Nurul Afifi was responsible for the conceptualization of the study, conducting the research, collecting data, and analyzing the results. She also drafted the manuscript and contributed to the final revisions of the paper. Misrodin provided guidance on the research design, methodology, and data analysis.

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