

Analysis of Strategies for Improving Fifth-Grade Students' Literacy Skills in Civic Education

Indah Wijaya Lase^{1*}, Susi Fitria Dewi¹, Junaidi Indrawadi²

¹Department of Elementary Education, Universitas Nias, Gunungsitoli 22812, Indonesia

²Department of Civic Education, Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang 25713, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: indahwijaya@unias.ac.id

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Abstract: This study aimed to evaluate the strategies used to improve the literacy skills of fifth-grade students in Civic Education at SD Negeri 075083 Siheneasi. The principal problem identified was students' low level of literacy, which limited their understanding of Civic Education content. Initial data showed that, of 28 students, 18 (64.3%) demonstrated low literacy skills, as indicated by difficulties in comprehending reading passages and answering text-related questions. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and an initial assessment. The instructional strategies included interactive media, contextual teaching and learning, and guided reading integrated into Civic Education lessons. The findings showed a substantial improvement in students' literacy skills. Following the implementation of the strategies across three cycles, the number of students demonstrating good literacy performance increased to 24 (85.7%). Students became more actively engaged in learning, demonstrated a stronger ability to comprehend and summarize texts, and achieved better outcomes in Civic Education. These findings indicate that literacy-focused instructional strategies are effective in supporting elementary school students' understanding of civic concepts.

Keywords: *literacy skills; Civic Education; instructional strategies; elementary school; fifth grade*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a process through which individuals develop their potential, skills, knowledge, and character while also fostering creativity and innovation to solve problems and create new possibilities. High-quality education requires a relevant curriculum and appropriate teaching methods. Its implementation therefore demands deliberate planning by all parties involved in the education system, including teachers, students,

and those responsible for facilities and infrastructure. Strong preparation and coordination are necessary for the system to function optimally. Education is institutionalized through schools, which organize learning processes to realize their educational objectives and bear responsibility for educating their students. Reading comprehension literacy among elementary school students is an essential foundation for successful learning across subjects, including Civic Education. In the context of Civic Education, literacy extends beyond reading a text; it involves understanding meaning, interpreting national values, and relating the content of a text to concrete experiences as a citizen (Kemendikbud, 2016). However, preliminary observations at SD Negeri 075083 Siheneasi indicated that most fifth-grade students experienced difficulty understanding Civic Education texts. Of the 28 students, 18 (64.3%) were classified as having low literacy skills, which contributed to Civic Education achievement below the minimum mastery criterion.

This condition made learning less meaningful, encouraged student passivity, and positioned the teacher as the primary source of information. Difficulties in understanding basic concepts such as rights, obligations, deliberation, and the value of unity also impeded the development of civic character. If left unaddressed, these difficulties may hinder the principal aims of Civic Education, namely the development of democratic attitudes, critical thinking, and active participation in social life (Hosnan, 2014). As a response, this study designed strategies for improving literacy skills within Civic Education instruction. These strategies included guided reading, Contextual Teaching and Learning, interactive instructional media, and collaborative discussion. They were implemented through Classroom Action Research conducted in three cycles, each comprising planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

The study aimed to: (1) describe the initial literacy profile of fifth-grade students in Civic Education; (2) explain the implementation of literacy-enhancement strategies; (3) analyze improvements in literacy following the intervention; and (4) evaluate the effects of the strategies on students' active participation and learning outcomes. Theoretically, foundational literacy at the elementary level includes the ability to identify main ideas, understand implicit meanings, and relate the content of a text to everyday life (OECD, 2019). In Civic Education, deeper literacy is required to understand abstract concepts and internalize national values. Guided reading enables students to read purposefully with teacher support, whereas contextual learning relates instructional content to real-life situations to facilitate understanding. Visual media and collaborative discussion further strengthen active engagement and support the construction of shared understanding.

This study is important because low student literacy may impede the achievement of both affective and cognitive objectives in Civic Education. It is also expected to provide a reference for teachers in developing adaptive and contextual literacy strategies and to support the School Literacy Movement (Gerakan Literasi Sekolah, GLS) as part of efforts to strengthen character education and the quality of elementary education (Kemendikbud, 2016). One contemporary educational concern is the limited quality of teaching. Of particular concern is the presence of teachers who have not yet developed sufficient professionalism to perform their duties, including the design of Civic Education instruction that improves students' literacy skills. Literacy is a fundamental competence that is essential to elementary school students' academic success and overall development. It encompasses reading, writing, and comprehension, whereas numeracy involves understanding and using numbers in different contexts. These abilities are important not only for academic achievement but also for everyday tasks and

problem-solving. The development of strong literacy skills from an early age can establish a solid foundation for future learning and success at school. Students should therefore be provided with broad opportunities to practise and improve literacy within elementary Civic Education so that they can develop confidence and competence in these fundamental areas. Accordingly, this study identifies strategies that may be used to improve students' literacy skills.

An effective strategy for improving literacy in elementary Civic Education is to integrate hands-on activities and examples from real life into instruction. Engaging students in interactive learning experiences, including group projects, experiments, and simulations, can help them recognize the practical application of these skills in everyday life. Such activities not only make learning more interesting and relevant but also help students develop a deeper understanding of key concepts. Integrating literacy across subjects such as science, social studies, and the arts can further help students recognize relationships among these skills and understand how they can be applied in various contexts. Through a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach, educators can help students develop a broader set of competencies that will benefit them in the long term. In science lessons, for example, students may use literacy skills to read and analyze scientific articles while applying numeracy skills to interpret data and graphs. This interdisciplinary approach strengthens both their understanding of scientific concepts and their appreciation of the importance of literacy in real-world situations.

The integration of technology into the classroom may also serve as a valuable means of improving literacy, particularly in Civic Education. Online resources, educational applications, and interactive games can provide personalized learning experiences that address individual needs and learning styles. By using technology in this manner, educators can create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment that promotes the development of essential skills. Ultimately, investment in the literacy development of elementary school students can prepare them for future academic and professional achievement. These skills are also important for success in the workplace, where tasks often require individuals to read instructions, analyze data, and solve complex problems. Educators should therefore prioritize the development of literacy among elementary school students so that they are better prepared to succeed in both academic and professional life.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach in the form of Classroom Action Research, with the aim of improving students' literacy skills through the implementation of instructional strategies in Civic Education. The study was conducted at SD Negeri 075083 Siheneasi, Lahewa District, North Nias Regency, from February to April 2025. The participants were all 28 fifth-grade students. The research was conducted in three cycles, each comprising planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. Data were collected through observations of learning activities, interviews with the teacher and students, literacy assessments administered before and after the actions and supporting documentation. Qualitative analysis was used to describe the action process, while quantitative analysis used the percentage of students attaining mastery on the literacy assessment. The action was considered successful when at least 85% of students achieved a score of 70 or higher.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study focused on improving the literacy skills of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 075083 Siheneasi through literacy-based instructional strategies in Civic Education. The findings are presented according to each classroom-action cycle. At baseline, students' literacy remained low. Of the 28 students, only 10 (35.7%) achieved a score of 70 or higher on a literacy assessment covering reading comprehension, the ability to draw conclusions, and responses to analytical questions. The principal difficulties were understanding Civic Education texts and restating information in the students' own words.

Following the implementation of the instructional strategies in Cycle I, students became more engaged in reading and discussion. Sixteen students (57.1%) achieved a score of 70 or higher. Nevertheless, some students continued to depend on teacher guidance and were not yet accustomed to answering questions independently. In Cycle II, the strategies were strengthened through guided reading and the use of visual media. The results showed that 21 students (75.0%) were able to understand the texts, prepare summaries, and participate more actively in discussions. Observations also indicated greater student independence in identifying the meanings of difficult words and drawing conclusions.

In Cycle III, the instructional strategies were supplemented with individual reflection and contextualized practice questions. Twenty-four students (85.7%) achieved a score of 70 or higher. Students also demonstrated greater confidence in reading and expressing their opinions, as well as a deeper understanding of Civic Education content. Interview findings reinforced these results: students reported that the texts were easier to understand because instruction was delivered gradually and contextually. **Figure 1** presents the improvement in the literacy skills of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 075083 Siheneasi from baseline through Cycle III.

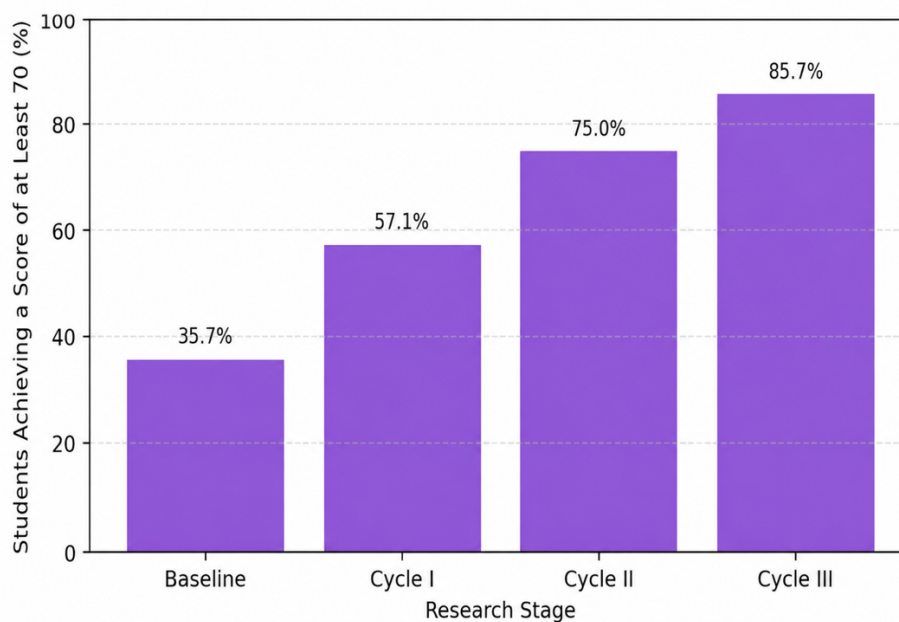


Figure 1. Percentage of students achieving a literacy score of at least 70 at each research stage.

The findings demonstrate that systematic, contextual, and literacy-based instructional strategies can gradually improve students' literacy skills in both the cognitive domain, particularly reading comprehension, and the affective domain, including interest and engagement in reading. Literacy improved consistently through a combination of guided reading, visual media, group discussion, and

individual reflection. These findings are consistent with Vygotsky's emphasis on the importance of social interaction in learning and Ausubel's theory of meaningful learning, which highlights the connection between instructional content and real experience. The implemented literacy strategies therefore not only improved literacy skills but also supported the School Literacy Movement and may be further developed as a contextual, literacy-based approach to Civic Education.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that literacy is an individual's ability to understand, evaluate, use, and communicate through different types of texts in various contexts. It encompasses reading, writing, speaking, and listening with adequate comprehension. Literacy involves not only recognizing letters and words but also understanding the meanings underlying texts, interpreting information, and connecting it with existing knowledge. Numeracy is an individual's ability to use numbers, mathematical symbols, and basic mathematical concepts to solve problems encountered in everyday life. Strategies for improving students' literacy and numeracy include: (1) reading aloud; (2) managing and using a classroom reading corner; (3) implementing a 15-minute literacy activity; (4) managing student reading spaces outside the classroom; (5) using a snakes-and-ladders instructional game; (6) using a snake game for sequencing numbers; and (7) using numeracy crossword puzzles. Supporting factors include teachers' classroom-management capacity, the school's role in providing facilities and infrastructure for literacy and numeracy programs, and the government's role in supplying relevant reading materials and serving as a stakeholder in the School Literacy Movement. Inhibiting factors include students' limited understanding of mathematical concepts and insufficient supervision of literacy and numeracy practices.

Data Availability The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Ethical approval All procedures performed in the study followed the ethical standards.

Consent for publication All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Consent to participate Consent to participate was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Informed consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Data were reported anonymously in the study.

Conflict of interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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