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READING STORYBOOKS ALOUD TO FACILITATE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS' ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Pronunciation is often recognized as one of the most challenging aspects of English learning and requires instructional approaches that provide interactive and meaningful practice. Reading storybooks aloud offers opportunities for young learners to develop pronunciation through contextualized language use and repeated exposure to spoken English. This study aimed to explore the learning process and students' responses to learning English pronunciation through reading storybooks aloud. The participants were fourth-grade students at an elementary school in West Java, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that students' pronunciation learning through reading storybooks aloud occurred through several interconnected stages. These included pre-reading activities, in which students engaged with storybook covers, titles, illustrations, and key vocabulary; teacher-led reading aloud that provided pronunciation models; guided repetition of sentences; story retelling to reinforce understanding; and pronunciation rehearsal through group and individual reading aloud accompanied by immediate teacher feedback. These stages facilitated students' engagement with English pronunciation in a meaningful and supportive learning environment. The results indicate that reading storybooks aloud was implemented effectively and created an enjoyable learning atmosphere. Most students demonstrated improved pronunciation accuracy and responded positively to the activities, particularly when using illustrated storybooks. However, a small number of students experienced pronunciation difficulties due to limited focus and insufficient practice. Overall, the study suggests that reading storybooks aloud is a beneficial pedagogical approach for supporting English pronunciation development among elementary school students.

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INTRODUCTION

Intelligible pronunciation is a key component of effective oral communication, as it enables speakers to convey information clearly and ensures that listeners can accurately understand the intended message. Effective communication does not only depend on what speakers wish to express, but also on how well their message is received and interpreted by others. As stated by Yusriati and Hasibuan (2019), pronunciation is one of the main elements of spoken language that greatly affects clarity in communication. In simple terms, pronunciation refers to how a person produces speech sounds during conversation. Pronunciation ability is therefore a crucial element in English, particularly in oral communication, because every sound, stress pattern, and intonation carries meaning. For non-native English speakers, speaking English requires careful attention to pronunciation, as even minor pronunciation errors may lead to misunderstanding. Consequently, mastering accurate pronunciation similar to that of native speakers is essential for achieving effective communication. Producing different speech sounds involves coordinating the muscles of the mouth, tongue, and lips to control mouth shape and airflow. For this reason, English pronunciation is often regarded as one of the most difficult language skills to acquire, and learners need substantial time and practice to improve it (Gilakjani, 2016).

Students frequently encounter difficulties in pronouncing English words, particularly during the early stages of learning. These pronunciation challenges may hinder students' ability to express ideas clearly and can negatively affect their confidence in speaking English. Therefore, teachers need to emphasize key pronunciation elements such as vowels, consonants, diphthongs, and monophthongs. It is essential for teachers to recognize the importance of good pronunciation and to motivate students to improve their pronunciation skills. One effective instructional strategy is reading aloud, in which students read texts aloud repeatedly while being listened to by teachers and peers in order to improve pronunciation. Ninsuwan (2015) found that reading aloud can enhance students' confidence in pronouncing unfamiliar words and strengthen their ability to memorize vocabulary, as observed through classroom activities and students' responses in assessments. Reading aloud also provides opportunities for learners to understand the relationship between spelling and pronunciation, practice stress and intonation, and explore sound patterns within connected speech. These aspects can be effectively developed through reading aloud activities that are both engaging and enjoyable.

Reading aloud has long been recognized as an important component of English language instruction. Huang (2010) argues that reading aloud plays a significant role in comprehensive education and English teaching, as it allows

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students to evaluate their own pronunciation accuracy. When errors occur, teachers can easily provide immediate feedback and correction. Huang further notes that reading aloud is an effective and interesting method for improving students' overall English proficiency. Similarly, Rianti (2025) explains that reading aloud involves pronouncing words with appropriate intonation, tone, stress, inflection, and pauses to convey the author's intended meaning accurately. In addition, reading aloud enables students to listen to well-constructed texts that are delivered with accurate pronunciation, appropriate expression, and suitable pacing (Annika & Johanna, 2025).

Although numerous studies have examined the benefits of reading aloud, there remains a need for more focused and detailed investigation, particularly in relation to pronunciation learning. This study therefore focuses on students' English pronunciation learning through reading storybooks aloud at the elementary school level. While previous research has largely explored reading aloud to support vocabulary development or examined its general benefits, this study specifically seeks to investigate how reading aloud facilitates the process of learning English pronunciation among elementary school students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Reading Storybooks Aloud as a Foundation for Early Literacy and Oral Language Development

Reading is a fundamental language skill that involves recognizing written symbols, understanding meaning, learning correct pronunciation, and extracting information from texts (Kozak, 2011). For early-grade students in primary school, reading proficiency is a crucial developmental goal, as learners are expected not only to decode written language but also to comprehend texts meaningfully. Because early reading development shapes later literacy and language outcomes, teachers must design instruction carefully to support students' reading and oral language growth (Annika & Johanna, 2025).

Reading aloud, particularly through storybooks, plays a significant role in supporting language and literacy development among young learners. It exposes children to authentic language input, especially through illustrated texts, demonstrates fluent and expressive reading, and fosters positive attitudes toward reading (Fox, 2001). In both school and home contexts, reading aloud functions as a shared literacy practice that strengthens interaction between adults and children. Gibson (2008) highlights several pedagogical benefits of reading aloud, including improved reading fluency, pronunciation monitoring, reduced speaking anxiety, support for writing development through exposure to intonation patterns, and opportunities for language practice beyond the classroom. Importantly, reading aloud allows students to articulate English sounds repeatedly, helping their speech

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organs become more familiar with English phonological patterns and supporting pronunciation development through repetition and memory.

Reading aloud also enhances students' motivation and engagement with texts. By making reading an enjoyable activity, it increases students' interest while simultaneously supporting comprehension, vocabulary development, and accurate word pronunciation (Febrianti, Marta, & Aprinawati, 2022). Mahartika and Dewantoro (2017) define reading aloud as a technique in which texts are read clearly and audibly to improve students' concentration and attention. This approach not only supports comprehension and retention but also creates an interactive learning environment that encourages active student participation.

Reading Aloud as a Pedagogical Strategy for Developing English Pronunciation

Pronunciation plays a vital role in oral communication, as clear and accurate articulation and enables speakers and listeners to establish shared understanding in socially interactive contexts. Reed and Levis (2015) emphasize that good pronunciation is the foundation of effective communication because it allows cooperation between speakers and listeners in constructing meaning. When pronunciation is unclear, communication becomes inefficient and prone to misunderstanding. Similarly, Yusiarti and Hasibuan (2019) argue that clarity in pronunciation enables listeners to capture meaning accurately, whereas poor pronunciation can obscure the speaker's intent.

Mastering English pronunciation is widely recognized as one of the most challenging aspects of language learning and requires sustained practice and learner commitment (Gilakjani, 2016). Pronunciation difficulties often stem from learners' need to shift deeply internalized sound patterns from their first language to those of English (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Despite its importance, pronunciation is frequently marginalized in language instruction (Algethami & Al Kamli, 2025) in favour of reading and writing skills that are perceived as more exam-oriented. However, pronunciation carries significant social value, as it influences perceptions of competence, credibility, and identity, particularly for learners in EFL contexts such as Indonesia, where English is not used as a daily language.

Reading aloud offers a meaningful instructional bridge between reading and speaking, allowing pronunciation practice to occur naturally within literacy activities. Pronunciation development is influenced by internal factors such as age, motivation, attitude, and first-language interference, as well as external factors including exposure to the target language and instructional context (Gilakjani, 2012; Szalkowska-Kim, 2014). Through consistent reading aloud, students receive increased exposure to spoken English, strengthen sound–spelling relationships, and gain opportunities to practice pronunciation in a structured yet supportive environment (Gilakjani, 2012).

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From a linguistic perspective, pronunciation consists of segmental and suprasegmental features (Goodwin, 2014). Segmental features include consonants and vowels, while suprasegmental features involve stress, pitch, and intonation that shape meaning in connected speech (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2011). Reading aloud supports both aspects simultaneously: students practice producing individual sounds while also attending to stress and intonation patterns modelled by the teacher. Vowels are produced through variations in tongue and lip position (Hisasmaria. (2023), and learners often struggle with unfamiliar English sounds. Likewise, stress and intonation, defined as variations in loudness, duration, and pitch (Underhill, 2005; Kelly, 2000), are reinforced when students read sentences and stories aloud with expression.

Reading Aloud and Young Learners' Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Development

Young learners, generally defined as children aged three to twelve, are in critical stages of cognitive development. According to Piaget's developmental framework, as discussed by Pinter (2017), elementary school students typically fall within the concrete operational stage, during which logical thinking begins to emerge. However, children's development is uneven, as learners progress at different rates cognitively, emotionally, and socially (Nunan, 2005). These developmental differences present challenges for teachers, who must adapt instruction to accommodate varying learning needs.

Reading storybooks aloud is particularly suitable for young learners because it aligns with their developmental characteristics. Shared reading experiences encourage interaction, discussion, and emotional engagement, which support both language development and social bonding. Ustianingsih and Riwayanti, (2016) emphasize that reading aloud creates opportunities for children to exchange ideas, discuss content, and develop cooperative learning behaviours. Trelease (2017) further explains that reading aloud serves multiple purposes, including building vocabulary, associating reading with enjoyment, providing background knowledge, modelling positive reading behaviour, and cultivating a lifelong love of reading.

To implement reading aloud effectively, teachers must attend to key pedagogical principles. These include understanding individual learner differences, utilizing students' natural tendency to interact socially, fostering critical and creative thinking, and providing constructive feedback that supports motivation (Prihlaksono, 2109). Additionally, teachers should distinguish between physical participation and meaningful mental engagement, as genuine learning occurs when students actively think, respond, and reflect during reading aloud activities.

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METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design. According to Moleong (2016), qualitative research utilizes specific methods to understand social phenomena in natural settings. A qualitative approach was chosen for several reasons: it allows researchers to engage with multiple realities, facilitates direct interaction between the researcher and participants, and is sensitive and adaptable to contextual and value-based influences. In this study, data were collected through classroom observations of four meetings and interviews to address the research questions: (1) how the process of learning English pronunciation through reading aloud was implemented among fourth-grade elementary school students, and (2) how students responded to the use of reading aloud in facilitating their pronunciation learning. The participants consisted of 39 fourth-grade students from an elementary school, with one of the researchers had a role as the English teacher during the research process. Data analysis followed the procedures proposed by Creswell and Creswell (2018), which involve organizing, coding, and interpreting data to generate meaningful findings. Therefore, the qualitative research design was considered appropriate and relevant for achieving the objectives of this study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Process of Learning English Pronunciation through Reading Storybooks Aloud

Based on classroom observations and interviews, students' English pronunciation learning through reading storybooks aloud occurred through several structured stages. The reading aloud activities were implemented across four instructional sessions, with one storybook used over two meetings. Each stage played a distinct role in facilitating students' pronunciation development.
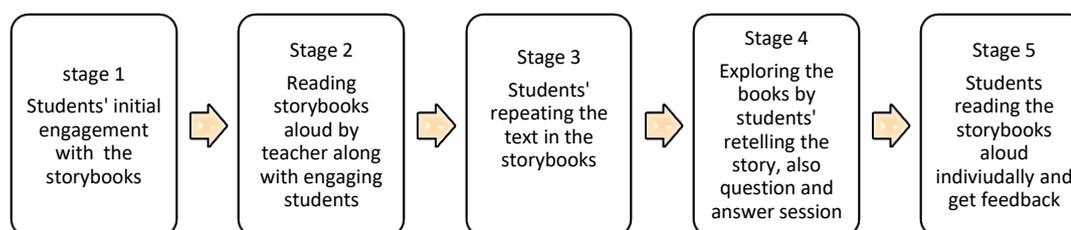

Figure 1
Stages of Reading Storybooks Aloud for Prononciation Learning

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The first stage involved students' initial engagement with the storybooks, which functioned as a pre-reading activity. During this stage, students were encouraged to observe and discuss the storybook cover, including pictures, titles, and characters. This activity introduced students to key vocabulary and pronunciation in a meaningful context. This finding aligns with Kozak's (2011) view that reading involves not only decoding written symbols but also learning correct pronunciation and meaning simultaneously. By connecting visual elements with spoken language, students were exposed to pronunciation input in a contextualized and comprehensible manner. Furthermore, the teacher's modelling and students' repetition of key words reflect Fox's (2001) emphasis on reading aloud as a means of exposing children to authentic and expressive language input, particularly through illustrated texts.

The second stage constituted the main reading aloud activity, during which students listened to the teacher read the storybooks aloud while engaging with the content. The teacher frequently paused to ask questions, draw attention to pictures, and encourage students' responses. This interactive process provided students with pronunciation models while simultaneously supporting comprehension. This finding supports Reed and Levis's (2015) argument that clear pronunciation is foundational to meaning-making and shared understanding in oral communication. At the same time, the activity reflects Gibson's (2008) claim that reading aloud supports pronunciation monitoring and reduces speaking anxiety through guided and supported practice.

The third stage involved choral repetition, where students repeated sentences after the teacher. This stage focused on intensive pronunciation practice through repetition. Consistent with Gilakjani (2016), sustained and repeated pronunciation practice is essential for developing accurate articulation, especially for young EFL learners. Through collective repetition, students practiced English sounds in a low-anxiety environment, which also supports Gilakjani's (2012) emphasis on exposure and instructional context as external factors influencing pronunciation development.

In the fourth stage, students retold the story content with teacher guidance. Students described characters and events, such as animals and their characteristics, using vocabulary from the story. This activity strengthened pronunciation through meaningful language use, as students were able to pronounce words they clearly understood. This finding reflects Gilakjani and Ahmadi's (2011) view that pronunciation learning becomes more effective when learners are supported in restructuring sound patterns within meaningful contexts rather than isolated drills. Additionally, this stage aligns with Annika and Johanna's (2025) assertion that early literacy instruction should integrate comprehension and oral language development.

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The final stage emphasized pronunciation rehearsal through individual and group reading aloud. The story text was displayed on a large screen to increase visibility and engagement. Students received immediate oral feedback from the teacher, which helped them refine their pronunciation. This practice directly supports Goodwin's (2014) framework that pronunciation consists of both segmental and suprasegmental features, as students practiced vowel and consonant sounds while also attending to stress and intonation modelled by the teacher. The role of immediate feedback aligns with Kristanto's (2007) emphasis on constructive feedback as a key pedagogical principle in meaningful learning. Overall, this stage demonstrated that structured reading storybooks aloud has strong potential to improve elementary students' English pronunciation skills. However, a small number of students who were less focused continued to mispronounce certain words, indicating individual differences in learning progress.

Students' Responses to the Use of Reading Storybooks Aloud in Learning English Pronunciation

Findings from classroom observations revealed that students initially showed confusion when introduced to reading aloud, as they were unfamiliar with the technique. However, as the activities progressed, students began to respond positively, particularly during the pre-reading stage when they were shown picture storybook covers. Their enthusiasm reflects Febrianti et al's (2022) finding that reading aloud increases motivation and engagement while supporting vocabulary and pronunciation development. Although some students used Indonesian when responding, their active participation and repetition of the teacher's pronunciation models indicate positive engagement with the learning process.

During the main reading aloud activity, most students demonstrated focused attention and responded actively to the teacher's prompts. A few students showed limited attention during the first meeting; however, their engagement improved when the story text was displayed on a large screen. This supports Gibson's (2008) claim that reading aloud effectiveness is influenced by learning conditions and instructional support, including media and classroom environment. The increased student participation suggests that appropriate visual support can enhance attention and pronunciation practice.

Students also responded positively during the pronunciation rehearsal stage, both in group and individual reading aloud. While students displayed varying levels of pronunciation mastery, most were able to pronounce words accurately with teacher feedback. This finding supports Gilakjani's (2012) assertion that exposure to spoken language and corrective feedback enhances learners' awareness of phonological rules and pronunciation accuracy. Interviews further confirmed

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students' positive perceptions, as they described reading storybooks aloud as enjoyable and helpful in improving their pronunciation.

Nevertheless, a few students continued to experience difficulty, particularly during individual reading aloud. This finding corroborates Gilakjani and Ahmadi's (2011) explanation that adapting to new pronunciation patterns requires time and effort due to deeply internalized first-language sound systems. These students were also identified as having limited focus and practice. Intensive guidance and continuous encouragement were found to be beneficial in addressing these challenges.

Beyond pronunciation improvement, reading storybooks aloud also contributed to students' confidence and willingness to perform in front of peers. This aligns with Trelease's (2017) view that reading aloud fosters emotional bonding, confidence, and positive attitudes toward language learning, making it especially suitable for young learners. Overall, the findings suggest that reading storybooks aloud is a beneficial and developmentally appropriate strategy for facilitating English pronunciation learning while creating an enjoyable and supportive classroom environment.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the process and students' responses to learning English pronunciation through reading storybooks aloud in an elementary school context. The findings indicate that structured reading aloud activities, implemented through pre-reading engagement, teacher modelling, guided repetition, story retelling, and pronunciation rehearsal, supported students' pronunciation development. Reading storybooks aloud provided students with meaningful and contextualized exposure to English sounds, enabling them to practice pronunciation while simultaneously developing comprehension and vocabulary. Most students demonstrated improved pronunciation accuracy and increased confidence, particularly when supported by visual media, teacher modelling, and immediate feedback. Additionally, students generally responded positively to the use of picture storybooks, perceiving reading aloud as an enjoyable and motivating learning experience.

Despite these positive outcomes, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted in a single classroom with a limited number of participants, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Second, the research relied primarily on qualitative data from observations and interviews, without incorporating quantitative measures such as pre- and post-tests to objectively assess pronunciation improvement. Third, the duration of the intervention was relatively short, which may not fully capture long-

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term pronunciation development or retention. Moreover, individual differences among students such as motivation, focus, and prior exposure to English, were observed but not examined in depth.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse participant groups across different school settings to enhance generalizability. Longitudinal studies are also suggested to investigate the sustained impact of reading storybooks aloud on pronunciation development over time. Additionally, future studies could employ mixed-methods designs by integrating quantitative pronunciation assessments with qualitative classroom data. Further research may also explore the use of digital storybooks, big books, or multimodal reading aloud strategies, as well as examine how individual learner factors influence pronunciation and other language skills. Through such investigations, a more comprehensive understanding of reading aloud as a pedagogical strategy for English learning can be achieved.

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