



BUILDING CHILDREN'S READING INTEREST THROUGH INTERACTIVE APPROACHES: EMBRACING EDUCATION BASED ON CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE LITERACY

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Abstract: Low reading interest among children is a significant educational challenge in today's digital era. This study aims to explore innovative and interactive strategies that can improve children's reading interest. The method used in this study is a qualitative case study conducted in a kindergarten in Gorontalo, where various interactive teaching approaches are applied, such as storytelling with expressive techniques and the use of visual aids. The results showed that these interactive methods were successful in increasing children's engagement and enthusiasm for reading. In addition, interviews with parents revealed an awareness of the importance of reading, despite challenges such as limited time and access to quality reading materials. This study also emphasized the importance of parental involvement and a supportive environment in shaping children's reading habits. By integrating existing literacy theories, such as Vygotsky's contribution to interactive learning, the findings of this study indicate that social interaction during the reading process is very beneficial for children. Therefore, to create a sustainable impact on children's reading habits, a variety of reading materials and increased parental involvement are needed.

Keywords: Reading Interests, Interactive Education, Gamification, Literacy, Reading Environment.



INTRODUCTION:

Literacy is a key foundation in children's cognitive development and plays an important role in shaping their critical thinking, communication, and creativity skills [1]. However, the low interest in reading among children is becoming an increasingly complex challenge, especially in the digital age that offers various forms of instant entertainment that are more engaging than conventional reading materials [2]. Some studies show that children are more interested in interactive digital media compared to traditional printed books [3]. Therefore, an innovative approach is needed that can combine elements of creativity and technology to increase their reading interest [4].

Interest in reading is an important factor in improving an individual's literacy skills and understanding of various aspects of life. Some recent studies show that low interest in reading among students is a major challenge in education. For example, the research of Aini et al. (2025) reveals that gamification approaches in differentiated learning can improve students' critical reading skills in a more engaging and interactive way [5]. In addition, the role of the environment and parents is also very influential in forming reading habits from an early age. Kasanah (2025) in the journal Literasiana emphasized that reading together and literacy discussions can help increase children's interest in books[6].

The strategies used in increasing reading interest are also diverse, one of which is by providing quality books and applying the reading aloud method, as discussed in the research of Prajayana et al. (2025) which found that this method is effective in increasing the reading interest of elementary school students [7]. On the other hand, community-based literacy programs such as "Semarak Reading and Berkarya (SEBAYA)" developed in Central Java also showed a positive impact in increasing the number of visits to libraries and building a more active reading culture [8]. Thus, innovative approaches that involve technology, the family environment, and the community can be an effective solution in increasing the interest in reading among the community.

Literacy education based on interaction and innovation has been proven to be effective in attracting children's attention and increasing their involvement in the reading process [9]. Interactive approaches such as the use of e-books, gamification, and augmented reality (AR) technology in learning have had a positive impact on children's reading comprehension and interest [10]. In addition, experiential learning methods and active participation are able to strengthen children's intrinsic motivation in reading [11].



Technology-based interventions in literacy education not only improve reading skills, but also help children develop critical and analytical thinking skills from an early age [12]. Studies show that children who are exposed to innovative literacy methods have higher levels of reading comprehension compared to those who rely only on conventional methods [13]. Therefore, learning strategies that adopt creative and innovative approaches should be widely implemented in the education system to ensure that children have a fun and meaningful literacy experience [14].

With the rapid development of educational technology, various digital tools have been designed to improve children's literacy through more interesting and interactive methods [15]. The use of artificial intelligence (AI)-based reading applications, interactive digital books, and gamification-based educational platforms has been proven to increase children's interest and involvement in reading [16]. Therefore, this study aims to explore the effectiveness of interactive approaches in building children's reading interest through creativity-based strategies and innovation.

Low interest in reading among children is a global challenge that requires innovative and evidence-based solutions [17]. If left untreated, a lack of reading habits can have an impact on children's future academic and social development [18]. Therefore, this research has a high urgency in identifying and developing interactive literacy methods that can help increase children's involvement in reading, especially in an increasingly competitive digital era.

Several previous studies have highlighted the benefits of interactive approaches in increasing children's interest in reading. For example, research conducted by Haq et al. (2024) shows that the use of educational applications based on digital technology can increase children's involvement in reading [2]. Another study by Romba and Ampa (2024) found that combining digital technology with creative learning methods can improve children's reading comprehension [1]. However, these studies have not specifically examined how a combination of different interactive methods can have a long-term impact on children's reading habits. Therefore, this study fills the gap by proposing a more comprehensive strategy based on creativity and innovation.

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of interactive approaches in building children's reading interest by adopting strategies based on creativity and innovation. In particular, this research will explore the role of digital technology, gamification, and experiential learning methods in increasing children's involvement in literacy activities. The results of this research



are expected to provide new insights for educators, parents, and policymakers in designing literacy strategies that are more effective and attractive to children in the modern era.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY:

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type, which aims to understand in depth how an interactive approach can build an interest in early childhood reading in Kindergarten in Gorontalo [19]. The case study was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the phenomenon thoroughly in a natural environment, involving various parties such as students, teachers, parents, and principals.

This research was conducted at Kindergarten in Gorontalo, which has implemented an interactive literacy-based learning method. This school was chosen because it has an innovative literacy program and is supported by supporting facilities such as reading corners and digital learning media.

The population in this study included 60 students, 10 teachers, and 50 parents involved in reading learning in Kindergarten, with an additional 1 principal responsible for education policy. From this population, samples were selected using purposive sampling techniques, where research subjects were selected based on certain criteria relevant to the study. The sample taken consisted of 15 students who were active in interactive literacy activities, 5 teachers who applied interactive methods, 10 parents who supported children's reading habits at home, and 1 school principal who had a role in the development of literacy policies.

To obtain accurate and in-depth data, this study uses several data collection techniques, namely observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were made directly in classroom reading activities to see how children responded to the interactive methods applied. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, parents, and principals to obtain information about strategies, challenges, and the impact of interactive methods on children's reading interests. In addition, documentation in the form of photos of activities, teaching materials, and learning notes was also collected to strengthen the results of the research [20].

The data obtained was analyzed using the Miles & Huberman model, which consisted of three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing [21]. In the first stage, the data collected is selected and grouped based on key themes, such as interactive learning strategies and their impact on children. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, and interview excerpts to provide a clearer picture. Finally, conclusions are drawn by comparing the research findings with existing interactive literacy theories.



To ensure the validity of the data, this study applied source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing information obtained from various respondents, while method triangulation is carried out by combining observations, interviews, and documentation to make the research results more valid and credible.

This research is carried out in several stages, starting from the preparation stage, which includes research licensing and instrument preparation. Furthermore, the data collection stage is carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. After that, the data analysis stage is carried out by grouping and compiling data systematically. Finally, at the stage of preparing the report, the results of the research are interpreted and outlined in the form of a comprehensive narrative.

RESULTS AND THEIR ANALYSIS

Importance of Pragmatic Competence in Teacher Development

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of interactive approaches in increasing early childhood reading interest in Kindergarten in Gorontalo. Data was collected through direct observation, interviews with teachers, students, parents, and principals, and documentation of learning activities. The results of the study showed that the interaction-based learning method applied by teachers succeeded in increasing students' enthusiasm in reading.

Observation Results

Observations were made during several learning sessions in group B classes. Most students seem enthusiastic and active in participating in learning, although some students still tend to be passive and less participatory.

In addition, teachers also use auxiliary media such as hand puppets, illustration pictures, and word cards to enrich students' reading experience. The use of these visual aids has been proven to increase students' understanding of the stories being read. However, the challenge faced is maintaining students' focus over a longer period of time as well as the limitations of the vocabulary that children have.

The involvement of parents in building reading habits at home is also a factor that affects children's reading interests. From the interviews conducted, it was revealed that most parents are aware of the importance of reading, but not all have the habit of reading with their children regularly.



Results of Interviews with Teachers

Interviews with five teachers of Kindergarten in Gorontalo revealed that the interactive approach has a positive impact on increasing students' interest in reading. One of the teachers conveyed,

"I see that children are more enthusiastic when they are involved in reading activities. For example, when I tell stories using hand puppets and various voice expressions, they are immediately interested and want to participate. Children often even ask to listen to the same story over and over again."

However, teachers also acknowledge that there are some challenges, such as children's short attention spans and a lack of variety of reading books in the classroom. Therefore, teachers try to adapt the method to the child's condition, for example by using interesting sound intonation, inserting elements of surprise in the story, and inviting children to imitate the voice of the characters in the story so that they stay focused.

Teachers also emphasized the importance of parental involvement in building reading habits at home. One of the teachers argued,

"I often ask my parents to read books at home. Unfortunately, not all parents can make time for it. In fact, children who are often read books by their parents at home are usually more active in participating in reading activities at school."

Results of Interviews with Students

A total of 15 students of group B were interviewed simply to find out their responses to reading activities in the classroom. Most students (10 out of 15 children) stated that they really enjoyed reading books, especially if they were accompanied by interesting pictures.

When asked about the most preferred part of the reading activity, some students answered:

"I like it when Bu Guru uses a funny voice when telling a story!" (Student A, 5 years old)

"I'm happy if I can participate in the story, for example pretending to be a lion or a rabbit."
(Student B, 6 years old)

However, there are also some students who state that they are only interested in reading books with attractive pictures, while books without illustrations are less appealing to them. In addition, reading habits at home still vary. From the interviews, it was found that 6 students often read with their parents, 5 students only read occasionally, and 4 students rarely read at home.



Results of Interviews with Parents

Interviews with 10 parents of students showed that most parents are aware of the importance of reading for their child's development. However, not all parents can take the time to read a book to their child every day.

One of the parents revealed,

"I always try to read a book before going to bed. My son got used to it and often asked for new books. But I also see that there are other parents who don't have this habit because of busyness."

Meanwhile, other parents stated,

"I want to read books more often, but sometimes it's hard because children are more interested in watching television or playing gadgets."

In addition, limited access to reading books is also a challenge for some parents. They hope that schools can provide recommendations or lend interesting books so that children are more interested in reading.

Results of Interview with the Principal

The principal of Kindergarten in Gorontalo emphasized that the school has tried to support literacy activities by providing a reading corner in every classroom, holding a "Reading Week" program, and training teachers in applying interactive methods.

However, the principal also acknowledged that there are several challenges that need to be overcome. In his interview, he said,

"We want to increase the collection of reading books so that children have more choices. In addition, we also hope that parents can participate more actively in building reading habits at home." The school also plans a program of visits to regional libraries as part of efforts to increase students' interest in reading.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the interactive approach in reading learning has a positive impact on increasing early childhood reading interest. The methods used, such as storytelling with voice expressions, word play, story discussion, and the use of visual aids such as hand puppets and illustrated pictures, have been proven to increase children's involvement and enthusiasm in reading.



These findings are in line with the theory of interactive learning developed by Vygotsky (1978), which emphasizes that children learn more effectively in environments that encourage social interaction and communication [22]. In this context, reading learning carried out through dialogue, games, and visual stimulation creates a more enjoyable and meaningful learning experience for children. Vygotsky also emphasized the importance of the proximal developmental zone (ZPD), where children need help from adults or peers to achieve higher understanding. The results of observations in this study show that teacher guidance in interactive reading activities is very helpful for children in understanding the content of stories and building new vocabulary.

In addition to Vygotsky's theory, the results of this study are also in line with research conducted by Wasik & Bond (2001), which found that children who engage in dialogue-based reading activities are more likely to develop early literacy skills than those who only listen to passive reading [23]. In this study, the story discussion method applied at Kindergarten in Gorontalo encouraged children to ask questions, express opinions, and understand the content of the story better. In an interview, one of the teachers stated:

"Children become more active in asking questions and reacting when we use puppet media or role-playing. They are quicker to remember the story told through interaction."

However, this study also revealed some of the challenges faced in the implementation of interactive learning, especially the lack of variety of reading books, the short attention span of children, and the limited involvement of parents in building reading habits at home. The results of the interviews show that although many parents understand the importance of reading, not all are able to take the time regularly to read books to their children. This is in line with research conducted by Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini (1995), which found that children who were read books frequently by their parents had better literacy development than those who did not receive literacy stimulation at home [24].

In addition, research conducted by Mol, Bus, de Jong, & Smeets (2008) also emphasized that the availability of interesting reading materials greatly affects the frequency and quality of children's interaction with books [25]. In the context of Kindergarten in Gorontalo, the limited collection of books is one of the obstacles in increasing children's interest in reading. This shows that in addition to an interactive approach, the availability of books with interesting illustrations and diverse themes also plays an important role in encouraging children to read.

In response to these challenges, strategies that can be applied to increase the effectiveness of interactive approaches in reading learning include:



1. Adding a variety of reading materials with more diverse and interesting books, both in terms of stories, illustrations, and related to children's daily experiences.
2. Increase parental engagement by providing simple training or guidance in supporting reading habits at home.
3. Using technology and digital media such as storytelling videos or interactive reading apps to attract the attention of children who have short focus ranges.
4. Integrate literacy-based play methods in reading activities to make the reading experience more enjoyable and immersive.

By implementing these strategies, interactive approaches can be more optimal in fostering children's interest in reading, both through learning at school and reading habits in the family environment.

CONCLUSION

By adopting a creative approach that combines technology and community involvement, as well as support from parents, it is hoped to build a stronger reading culture among children. This study shows that while interactive methods are very beneficial, success in increasing reading interest also depends on the diversity of reading materials and the active participation of parents. To increase children's interest in reading, it is recommended that schools, parents, and communities work together to create an environment that supports reading activities. The provision of different types of reading materials, including picture books and engaging digital applications, is essential. In addition, parents are expected to spend more time reading with their children, so that they can strengthen reading habits at home.

Further research is needed to explore new methods of increasing children's interest in reading, particularly those involving the latest technologies and digital platforms. Longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impact of interactive approaches on children's literacy skills would also be invaluable. In addition, research involving more variables, such as socioeconomic background and access to reading resources, can provide deeper insights into the factors that affect a child's interest in reading.

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