



Original Article

STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC LITERACY THROUGH READING INSTRUCTION: A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR INDONESIAN LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This socialization activity aimed to provide students of the Indonesian Language Education Study Program with an understanding of the implementation of reading instruction as an effort to improve reading skills and academic literacy. Reading is one of the essential language skills that supports the learning process in higher education. However, some students still experience difficulties in comprehending texts, identifying main ideas, and applying appropriate reading strategies in academic activities. Therefore, this socialization activity was conducted to introduce the concept of reading instruction, the types of reading, and reading strategies that can be applied in academic learning. The activity was carried out through material presentations, interactive discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and reading practice involving active student participation. Throughout the activity, students demonstrated high enthusiasm, actively participated in discussions, and showed a good understanding of the materials presented. They were also able to apply reading strategies to comprehend texts and identify important information during the practice sessions. Furthermore, the activity provided students with meaningful learning experiences that encouraged them to become more active readers, improve their comprehension of various types of texts, and strengthen their academic literacy. Overall, the implementation of this reading instruction socialization activity made a positive contribution to enhancing students' understanding of reading instruction and encouraging the effective application of reading strategies in academic learning.

Keywords: Reading, Reading Instruction, Types of Reading, Reading Strategies, Student Literacy

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most fundamental language skills in education because it enables learners to acquire knowledge, construct meaning, and develop critical thinking through interaction with written texts. In higher education, reading extends beyond the ability to recognize written words; it represents a complex cognitive process that requires students to interpret, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information obtained from various academic sources. Consequently, reading competence has become an indispensable academic skill that directly influences students' learning achievement, research productivity, and lifelong learning capacity. For students enrolled in Indonesian Language Education programs, reading proficiency is particularly essential because it supports not

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only their academic success but also their future professional responsibilities as language educators who will guide learners in developing literacy competencies.

Reading is widely recognized as an active and purposeful process through which readers construct meaning from written language. According to [Tarigan \(2015\)](#), reading is a process undertaken by readers to obtain the message conveyed by the writer through written language [Aniati et al. \(2025\)](#). This definition emphasizes that reading involves much more than decoding written symbols; rather, it requires readers to actively engage with the text, interpret ideas, and integrate new information with their prior knowledge. Similarly, [Dalman. \(2017\)](#) describes reading as a cognitive activity aimed at discovering explicit and implicit information contained within a text. Through this process, readers establish meaningful connections between textual information and their existing knowledge structures, thereby facilitating deeper understanding and critical interpretation.

The importance of reading in higher education has become increasingly evident as university students are expected to engage extensively with textbooks, scientific journals, research articles, and other scholarly publications. Academic reading enables students to acquire disciplinary knowledge, evaluate research evidence, develop analytical reasoning, and communicate ideas effectively in both written and oral forms. As noted by [Soedarso. \(2010\)](#), reading is a multifaceted activity involving observation, memory, reasoning, concentration, and comprehension. These interconnected cognitive processes enable learners to expand their intellectual horizons while enhancing their ability to analyze complex issues encountered in academic and professional contexts. Likewise, [Nurhadi. \(2016\)](#) argues that effective reading results from continuous interaction between readers' prior knowledge and the information presented within a text, making reading an active meaning-construction process rather than passive information reception.

Despite the recognized importance of reading, many university students continue to experience difficulties in comprehending academic texts. Challenges frequently include identifying main ideas, distinguishing essential information from supporting details, interpreting implicit meanings, and selecting appropriate reading strategies for different reading purposes. These challenges often reduce students' efficiency in processing academic literature and may ultimately affect their academic performance. [Rahim \(2018\)](#) further explains that reading comprehension depends upon the integration of visual perception, cognitive processing, psycholinguistic knowledge, and metacognitive awareness. Consequently, insufficient mastery of effective reading strategies may hinder students' ability to understand increasingly complex academic materials.

One important approach to improving students' reading competence is the implementation of systematic reading instruction that introduces various reading techniques according to different learning objectives. Contemporary reading instruction recognizes that different reading purposes require different cognitive strategies. [Fatmawan et al. \(2023\)](#) explain that skimming enables readers to obtain a general overview or identify the main idea of a text efficiently, whereas scanning is primarily used to locate specific information quickly without reading every sentence in detail. In addition, intensive reading emphasizes careful and detailed comprehension of relatively short texts, while extensive reading encourages broader reading experiences that foster vocabulary growth, reading fluency, and positive reading habits [Masduqi et al. \(2021\)](#). Mastery of these complementary reading strategies enables students to approach academic texts more effectively while adapting their reading behavior to different learning objectives.

Although reading strategies have been widely discussed in language education, observations conducted among students of the Indonesian Language Education Study Program at Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar indicated that many students still relied primarily on conventional reading practices without consciously selecting strategies appropriate for different types of academic texts. Most participants were unfamiliar with the functional differences among skimming, scanning, intensive reading, and extensive reading, limiting their ability to process academic materials efficiently. These conditions suggested the need for a structured educational activity capable of introducing practical reading strategies while simultaneously strengthening students' academic literacy.

In response to this need, a reading instruction workshop was organized as a community engagement program designed to familiarize students with the fundamental concepts of reading instruction, various types of reading, and effective reading strategies applicable to university learning. The workshop combined theoretical explanations with guided practice, interactive discussions, and reflective learning activities to encourage active student participation. Rather than merely introducing theoretical concepts, the program emphasized practical application of reading strategies through authentic academic texts, enabling students to experience how different reading techniques can improve comprehension efficiency and academic performance.

This study therefore aims to describe the implementation of the reading instruction workshop and examine students' responses, participation, and learning experiences throughout the activity. By documenting the implementation process and participants' perceived learning outcomes, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on academic literacy development in higher education. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for lecturers, curriculum developers, and higher education institutions seeking to strengthen students' reading competence through structured literacy-oriented instructional programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

READING AS A FUNDAMENTAL LANGUAGE SKILL

Reading is widely recognized as one of the most essential language skills because it serves as the foundation for acquiring knowledge, developing critical thinking, and supporting lifelong learning. Unlike the passive recognition of written symbols, reading involves an active cognitive process through which readers construct meaning by integrating textual information with their existing knowledge and experiences. [Tarigan \(2015\)](#) defines reading as a process undertaken by readers to understand the messages conveyed by writers through written language [Irwansyah et al. \(2025\)](#). This definition highlights that successful reading requires both linguistic competence and higher-order cognitive processing.

In higher education, reading plays an even more significant role because students are expected to engage with increasingly complex academic materials, including textbooks, scientific articles, research reports, and scholarly journals. Effective reading enables university students to identify essential information, evaluate arguments critically, and synthesize knowledge from multiple sources [Sitepu et al. \(2026\)](#). Consequently, reading competence directly influences students' academic achievement and their ability to participate successfully in scholarly activities.

Furthermore, reading contributes to the development of other language skills. Students who read extensively generally possess broader vocabulary knowledge, better grammatical awareness, and stronger writing competence. Therefore, reading instruction should not merely emphasize decoding written texts but should also foster critical literacy, analytical reasoning, and independent learning habits.

TYPES OF READING

Reading instruction encompasses several complementary reading techniques, each designed to achieve different learning objectives. Selecting an appropriate reading strategy allows readers to process information more efficiently according to the purpose of reading.

According to [Fatmawan et al. \(2023\)](#), skimming is a rapid reading technique used to obtain a general understanding of a text or identify its main idea without reading every detail. By contrast, scanning is employed when readers seek specific information, such as names, dates, numbers, or particular facts. Both strategies enable readers to process large amounts of information efficiently while minimizing unnecessary reading time.

In addition to these rapid reading techniques, intensive reading and extensive reading serve different educational purposes. [Masduqi et al. \(2021\)](#) explain that intensive reading involves careful and detailed examination of relatively short texts in order to achieve thorough comprehension, making it particularly appropriate for academic learning [Herman et al. \(2025\)](#). Conversely, extensive reading encourages learners to read a wide variety of materials for enjoyment, general understanding, vocabulary development, and reading fluency. The combination of these reading approaches enables learners to adapt their reading behavior according to different academic and professional contexts.

READING STRATEGIES

Reading strategies refer to the deliberate cognitive and metacognitive techniques employed by readers to enhance comprehension and achieve specific reading goals [Simanjuntak et al. \(2025\)](#). Effective readers actively plan, monitor, and evaluate their reading processes rather than reading passively.

Reading strategies can generally be categorized into three stages: pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities. During the pre-reading stage, readers activate prior knowledge by predicting text content based on titles, headings, illustrations, or introductory information. During reading, learners apply strategies such as skimming, scanning, note-taking, highlighting important information, questioning the text, and monitoring comprehension. Following reading, learners consolidate their understanding by summarizing key ideas, discussing the text with peers, reflecting on newly acquired information, or critically evaluating the author's arguments.

The successful application of these strategies enables learners to become more independent readers while improving comprehension accuracy, critical thinking, and academic performance. Consequently, lecturers should explicitly introduce and model appropriate reading strategies to help students become more strategic and autonomous readers.

STUDENTS' READING COMPETENCE AND ACADEMIC LITERACY

Reading competence represents students' ability to comprehend, interpret, analyze, evaluate, and utilize information obtained from various written sources. Within higher education, this competence forms the foundation of academic literacy because nearly all learning activities require students to engage with written materials, including textbooks, journal articles, research reports, and digital resources.

Students possessing strong reading competence generally demonstrate greater academic confidence, improved problem-solving abilities, and stronger critical thinking skills. Conversely, insufficient reading competence often limits students' ability to understand academic literature, complete assignments effectively, and participate actively in scholarly discussions.

Previous observations have indicated that many university students continue to experience difficulties in understanding academic texts, primarily because of limited reading habits and insufficient knowledge of appropriate reading strategies. Consequently, structured instructional programs that introduce practical reading techniques are essential for strengthening students' academic literacy. Reading workshops and literacy-oriented instructional activities provide valuable opportunities for students to develop effective reading habits while improving their ability to process increasingly complex academic texts. Ultimately, strengthening students' reading competence contributes not only to improved academic achievement but also to their lifelong learning capacity and future professional development.

METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

This community engagement program employed a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the implementation of a reading instruction workshop and explore students' understanding following their participation in the program. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the primary objective of the activity was to document the implementation process, participants' engagement, and the educational outcomes of the workshop rather than to measure learning achievement statistically.

The data were collected through direct classroom observations, activity documentation, and participants' responses throughout the implementation of the program. These multiple sources of evidence enabled the authors to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the learning process while documenting participants' experiences during the workshop.

The program involved 17 undergraduate students from the Indonesian Language Education Study Program at Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar. The workshop was conducted on 15 July 2026 in Classroom 33. The participants were selected because they represented prospective Indonesian language teachers who require strong academic reading competence to support both their university studies and future professional responsibilities.

The implementation of the community engagement program consisted of three interconnected phases, namely preparation, implementation, and evaluation.

Phase 1: Preparation

During the preparation phase, the implementation team conducted an initial needs assessment to identify students' prior understanding of reading instruction and determine the most relevant learning materials. Based on the results of this assessment, instructional materials were developed covering the fundamental concepts of reading, types of reading, reading strategies, and the importance of reading competence for university students.

In addition, presentation slides, reading materials, classroom activities, and supporting facilities were carefully prepared to ensure the effective implementation of the workshop. Responsibilities among team members were clearly assigned, and the activity schedule was finalized before the program commenced.

Figure 1



Figure 1 Introduction of the Implementation Team

Phase 2: Implementation

The implementation phase represented the core activity of the workshop. The program began with an opening session introducing the objectives of the workshop and emphasizing the importance of reading competence in higher education. Subsequently, participants attended an interactive lecture covering the fundamental concepts of reading instruction, followed by explanations of four major reading strategies, namely skimming, scanning, intensive reading, and extensive reading. The facilitator explained the characteristics, functions, and practical applications of each strategy in academic reading contexts.

Following the theoretical presentation, participants engaged in interactive discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and guided reading exercises using carefully selected reading texts. Throughout these activities, participants practiced applying different reading strategies according to specific reading purposes while receiving immediate guidance and feedback from the facilitators. Simultaneously, the implementation team conducted classroom observations to document students' participation, interaction, and responses during the learning process.

Figure 2



Figure 2 Explanation on Reading Instruction Materials

Phase 3: Evaluation

The evaluation phase was conducted to assess the extent to which the objectives of the community engagement program had been achieved. Evaluation activities included classroom discussions, reflective question-and-answer sessions, and direct observation of participants' understanding following the completion of the workshop.

Participants were encouraged to explain the concepts they had learned, differentiate among the various reading strategies, and demonstrate their understanding through practical reading activities. They were also invited to provide constructive feedback regarding the implementation of the workshop and its relevance to their academic learning needs.

Overall, the evaluation findings indicated that participants demonstrated improved understanding of reading instruction, various reading techniques, and the effective application of reading strategies in academic contexts. These findings provide valuable input for improving future community engagement programs focusing on academic literacy development.

Figure 3**Figure 3 Reflection and Question-and-Answer Session**

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

PREPARATION PHASE

The preliminary needs assessment revealed that although most participants had been familiar with reading activities throughout their educational experiences, many had not fully understood the conceptual foundations of reading instruction or the distinctive characteristics of different reading strategies. Most students reported relying primarily on conventional reading practices without consciously selecting appropriate techniques according to specific reading objectives.

This initial finding served as the foundation for designing the workshop materials. Consequently, the instructional content focused on introducing the fundamental concepts of reading instruction, explaining the characteristics of different reading strategies, and demonstrating their practical application in academic learning. In addition, presentation materials, authentic reading texts, and guided practice activities were developed to accommodate participants' existing levels of reading competence. The careful preparation of instructional materials contributed substantially to the smooth implementation of the workshop and facilitated participants' understanding throughout the learning activities.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The implementation phase demonstrated a high level of student engagement throughout the workshop. Participants actively listened to the presentations, asked questions, contributed ideas during discussions, and enthusiastically participated in guided reading activities. During the practical sessions, students gradually developed the ability to distinguish among different reading strategies. Most participants successfully applied skimming to identify the main ideas of reading texts, scanning to locate specific information efficiently, intensive reading to analyze detailed textual content, and extensive reading to develop broader comprehension and reading fluency. Although several participants initially required additional guidance in selecting appropriate strategies for different types of texts, their confidence and competence improved progressively throughout the workshop.

The collaborative discussions also revealed that participants became increasingly aware that effective reading requires strategic decision-making rather than merely reading every text in the same manner. This growing awareness represented one of the most significant educational outcomes of the program.

EVALUATION PHASE

The evaluation phase indicated substantial improvement in participants' understanding of reading instruction following the completion of the workshop. Most students were able to explain the fundamental concepts of reading, identify the distinguishing characteristics of various reading strategies, and describe the appropriate contexts in which each strategy should be applied.

Furthermore, classroom observations suggested noticeable improvements in participants' ability to identify main ideas, locate important information, interpret textual meaning, and select appropriate reading techniques according to different learning objectives. Students also reported that the combination of theoretical explanation and practical reading exercises significantly enhanced their understanding compared with learning through theoretical lectures alone.

Participants expressed highly positive perceptions of the workshop, emphasizing that the program provided new insights into the importance of strategic reading for university learning. They also indicated that the acquired knowledge would assist them in reading textbooks, journal articles, and other academic resources more effectively. Several participants recommended that similar workshops be conducted regularly with more advanced reading materials and extended practical sessions.

Figure 4



Figure 4 Reading Practice Session

DISCUSSION

The implementation of the reading instruction workshop demonstrated that structured literacy-oriented community engagement programs can effectively strengthen university students' understanding of academic reading strategies. Throughout the workshop, participants actively engaged in theoretical discussions, collaborative learning activities, and guided reading practices, indicating that the combination of conceptual explanation and practical application provides an effective learning experience. This finding supports the view that reading competence develops more effectively when learners are given opportunities to apply reading strategies directly rather than merely receiving theoretical instruction.

One of the primary challenges encountered during the implementation was the variation in participants' reading competence. While some students were already familiar with reading academic books and scientific journals, others still experienced difficulties in comprehending academic texts, particularly those containing unfamiliar terminology and complex sentence structures. These differences required the facilitators to adjust the pace of instruction and provide additional explanations to ensure that every participant could follow the learning activities effectively.

Another challenge identified during the program was students' relatively limited reading habits. Several participants acknowledged that they obtained information more frequently through social media platforms and digital videos than through books, journal articles, or other academic literature. As a consequence, some participants experienced difficulties in maintaining concentration when reading longer academic texts and demonstrated limited familiarity with strategic reading techniques. These findings suggest that improving reading competence requires not only instructional intervention but also the cultivation of sustainable academic reading habits.

The workshop also revealed that many participants had not previously distinguished between different reading strategies. Prior to the activity, most students tended to approach every reading task using a single reading technique regardless of the purpose of reading. Through guided practice, participants gradually recognized the different functions of skimming, scanning, intensive reading, and extensive reading, enabling them to select more appropriate strategies according to specific academic tasks. This improvement illustrates the importance of explicit instruction in reading strategies within higher education.

Time allocation represented another practical limitation during the implementation. Although the workshop successfully introduced the major concepts of reading instruction, the available time was insufficient to provide extensive guided practice using a wider variety of academic texts. Consequently, several reading activities had to be demonstrated using only selected examples rather than allowing participants to practice repeatedly across multiple reading contexts.

To address these challenges, several instructional strategies were implemented during the workshop. First, the instructional materials were presented progressively, beginning with fundamental concepts before introducing more advanced reading strategies. Second, authentic examples were provided immediately following each theoretical explanation, enabling participants to observe the practical application of each reading technique. Third, collaborative discussions encouraged participants to exchange ideas and receive immediate feedback from both facilitators and peers. Finally, reflective evaluation sessions allowed participants to consolidate their understanding while providing valuable suggestions for improving future community engagement programs.

Overall, the workshop demonstrated that integrating theoretical explanation, guided practice, collaborative discussion, and reflective evaluation creates an effective learning environment for strengthening academic reading competence. The findings indicate that similar literacy-oriented community engagement initiatives can contribute significantly to improving students' academic preparedness, reading confidence, and lifelong learning skills within higher education.

CONCLUSION

This community engagement program successfully introduced the fundamental concepts of reading instruction to students of the Indonesian Language Education Study Program through a structured workshop consisting of preparation, implementation, and evaluation phases. The instructional materials covered the principles of reading, the purposes and benefits of reading, various types of reading, and practical reading strategies, including skimming, scanning, intensive reading, and extensive reading. The integration of theoretical explanation with guided practice enabled participants to develop a clearer understanding of how different reading strategies can be applied in academic contexts.

The findings indicate that the workshop contributed positively to strengthening participants' understanding of reading instruction and academic literacy. Students demonstrated improved ability to distinguish among different reading techniques, identify important information within academic texts, and select appropriate reading strategies according to specific learning objectives. Furthermore, the interactive learning environment encouraged active participation, collaborative discussion, and greater confidence in applying reading strategies during academic activities.

Although several practical challenges were encountered, including variations in participants' reading competence, limited reading habits, and restricted implementation time, these obstacles were successfully addressed through systematic instruction, authentic reading practice, collaborative learning, and reflective evaluation. Future community engagement programs are encouraged to provide longer training sessions, incorporate more diverse academic reading materials, and offer continuous follow-up activities to further strengthen students' academic literacy and cultivate sustainable reading habits.

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