



## An Analysis of Factors Contributing to Reading Comprehension Difficulties among Grade V Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the types of reading comprehension difficulties experienced by Grade V students at SD Negeri 3, Sorong Regency, and to identify the factors contributing to those difficulties in Indonesian language learning. A qualitative approach with a case study method was employed. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Research subjects comprised five Grade V students identified as experiencing reading difficulties, selected from a class of 20. Data analysis followed the qualitative interactive model encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the overall reading ability of Grade V students at SD Negeri 3, Sorong Regency, is categorized as adequate, with 5 out of 20 students demonstrating low reading ability. Three categories of reading comprehension difficulty were identified: (1) failure to observe punctuation marks, manifested in 3 out of 5 students; (2) non-fluent oral reading, which prevents adequate processing of text meaning; and (3) inability to comprehend text content, identified in 4 out of 5 students and closely associated with limited word recognition, low reading fluency, and inadequate vocabulary. Two interacting categories of factors contribute to these difficulties: (1) psychological factors, including low reading motivation, limited reading interest, and poor

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self-confidence; and (2) school environment factors, including classroom noise due to proximity to a busy road and the use of predominantly lecture-based instructional methods. The teacher's responsive efforts include employing effective instructional strategies (discussion and demonstration methods), building student self-confidence through positive reinforcement, and implementing reading remediation programs.

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension constitutes one of the most foundational competencies within the Indonesian language curriculum at the primary school level. It is not merely a decoding skill but an active process of constructing meaning from text, requiring the simultaneous coordination of word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and higher-order inferencing abilities (Nuraini, 2021; Wahidin, 2019). Reading comprehension enables students to access information, engage with academic content, and develop intellectual capacities; without it, the entire process of schooling is impeded. The importance of reading comprehension is especially acute at the upper primary level (Grades 4–6), where students transition from learning to read towards reading to learn, and where content demands on comprehension intensify markedly.

Despite its centrality, reading comprehension difficulties remain prevalent at the primary school level in Indonesia. Research on reading difficulties consistently identifies a range of manifestations, including slow reading pace, inattention to punctuation marks, non-fluent oral reading, limited vocabulary, and inability to comprehend or retell text content (Wahidin, 2019; Surfin Yawu et al., 2020; Nuraini, 2021). These difficulties are classified across three interrelated components: word recognition, fluency, and comprehension, with weaknesses in foundational components (word recognition and fluency)

directly constraining the development of comprehension (Yawu et al., 2020). At the international level, profile analyses of elementary students with reading comprehension difficulties confirm that struggling readers exhibit distinct deficits across literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension dimensions and require targeted instructional interventions to progress (Lee et al., 2025).

The factors contributing to reading comprehension difficulties are broadly categorized into internal (or psychological) factors and external (or environmental) factors (Abdurrahman, 2019; Mulyadi, 2010). Internal psychological factors include low motivation to read, limited reading interest, poor self-confidence, and inadequate emotional self-regulation during reading tasks. External environmental factors encompass family context, school physical environment, instructional approach, and community influences. Research consistently demonstrates that psychological factors, particularly motivation and self-confidence, play a particularly critical role in shaping reading development at the primary school level (Wahidin, 2019; Surahman et al., 2020). The physical school environment, including classroom noise levels, ventilation, and facility quality, has also been shown to significantly influence student motivation and reading concentration (Ariani et al., 2024).

At SD Negeri 3, Sorong Regency, preliminary observations conducted on 13 February 2025 confirmed that while the majority of Grade V students demonstrated adequate reading ability, five students exhibited distinct patterns of reading comprehension difficulty. These students were identified as reading slowly, failing to observe punctuation marks, and being unable to comprehend the content of texts despite teacher support. The school's location adjacent to a busy road further compounds the environmental challenges to reading concentration. This study provides a systematic qualitative account of the types of reading comprehension difficulty experienced by these students and the psychological and environmental factors that underlie those difficulties, offering an empirical basis for targeted instructional intervention in a West Papua primary school context.

## METHODS

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Sugiyono (2016) defines qualitative research as a methodology grounded in post-positivist philosophy, used to investigate phenomena in natural conditions without experimental manipulation. A case study method was adopted, consistent with Luthfiyah's (2017) definition of a case study as an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection involving multiple evidence sources. The case study approach was selected because the study sought to document and understand the specific, contextualized reading comprehension difficulties of a small number of identified students in depth, encompassing the multifactorial influences on their reading performance.

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 3, Sorong Regency, West Papua Province, in February 2025. The research subjects comprised five Grade V students (coded DAW, MFH, SAP, ANP, and APL) identified by the classroom teacher as experiencing reading difficulties, selected from a class of 20 students. The Grade V classroom teacher was also interviewed as a key informant. Data were collected through three complementary techniques: (1) classroom observation of reading activities during Indonesian language instructional sessions, conducted on 13 February 2025; (2) semi-structured interviews with the five identified students and the classroom teacher, exploring reading difficulty manifestations, perceived causes, and teacher responses; and (3) documentation comprising students' daily assessment records and relevant school documents. The researcher served as the primary research instrument (Gulo, 2000). Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive qualitative model, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was verified through source and technique triangulation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Types of Reading Comprehension Difficulty

Based on the observation conducted on 13 February 2025 and the subsequent

interview data, the Grade V classroom teacher at SD Negeri 3, Sorong Regency, confirmed that out of 20 students in the class, 5 students demonstrate low reading ability and persistent reading comprehension difficulties. The overall reading ability of the class is categorized as adequate. The five students with reading difficulties were identified and their reading profiles documented through observation and interview. Their reading difficulty profiles are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Types of Reading Comprehension Difficulty Identified among Grade V Students with Low Reading Ability

No.	Student Code	Type(s) of Reading Difficulty	Summary
1	DAW	Slow oral reading; fails to observe punctuation marks, and difficulty comprehending text content	3 types of difficulty
2	MFH	Slow oral reading; difficulty comprehending text content	2 types of difficulty
3	SAP	Slow oral reading; difficulty comprehending text content	2 types of difficulty
4	ANP	Fails to observe punctuation marks; difficulty comprehending text content	2 types of difficulty
5	APL	Fails to observe punctuation marks; difficulty comprehending text content	2 types of difficulty

As shown in Table 1, the reading difficulties documented across the five students cluster around three overlapping categories: (1) failure to observe punctuation marks (3 students: ANP, APL, DAW); (2) non-fluent oral reading characterized by slow pace and word-by-word decoding (3 students: DAW, MFH, SAP); and (3) inability to comprehend text content or retell text meaning (4 students: ANP, APL, MFH, SAP). Student DAW presents with all three difficulty types, indicating the most complex reading profile. These findings are consistent with Wahidin's (2019) identification of slow reading pace, inattention to punctuation marks, irregular intonation, and text comprehension failure as the primary reading difficulty manifestations among primary school students.

The student interview data provided further detail on the nature and experience of these difficulties. The profiles documented through student interviews are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Reading Comprehension Difficulty Profiles Based on Student Interviews

No.	Student	Summary of Reading Difficulty Profile
1	ANP	Frequently skips punctuation; does not pause at commas or full stops; has difficulty understanding teacher-read texts and self-read passages because of poor oral reading fluency.
2	APL	Skips punctuation marks during oral reading; does not pause at sentence boundaries; cannot comprehend text content because reading is not fluent enough to enable meaning construction.
3	DAW	Reads slowly; skips punctuation marks; has great difficulty comprehending text content even after multiple readings; cannot retell the gist of passages.
4	MFH	Reads slowly; does not consistently observe punctuation; struggles significantly to understand the meaning of what has been read; reading is characterized by letter-by-letter decoding.
5	SAP	Reads slowly, has difficulty comprehending text content, cannot summarize or answer comprehension questions from passages, and relies on the teacher to explain meaning.

The interview data corroborate and contextualize the observation findings. A consistent pattern emerges: students who do not observe punctuation marks (ANP, APL, DAW) tend to read text as a continuous undifferentiated stream, preventing sentence-level comprehension. Students who read slowly (DAW, MFH, SAP) direct disproportionate cognitive resources to letter-by-letter decoding, leaving insufficient capacity for meaning construction. These findings align with international research confirming that word recognition accuracy and oral reading fluency are foundational prerequisites for reading comprehension development (Lee et al., 2025; Nuraini, 2021).

### Factors Contributing to Reading Comprehension Difficulties

Based on the integrated analysis of observation, interview, and documentation data, two interacting categories of factors were identified as contributing to the reading comprehension difficulties of Grade V students at SD Negeri 3. These are organized in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Factors Contributing to Reading Comprehension Difficulties: Psychological and School Environment

Factor Category	Identified Manifestations	Associated Learning Impact
Psychological	Low motivation to read and engage with Indonesian Language texts; limited reading interest	Students who struggle with attention regulation and emotional control during reading

	independent of instruction; reduced self-confidence when reading aloud or retelling text content.	tasks, difficulty concentrating on sustained text, and a tendency to focus on letter recognition rather than meaning.
School Environment	Classroom location adjacent to a busy road generates persistent ambient noise that disrupts student concentration during reading activities; limited instructional variety (predominantly lecture and discussion methods).	Absence of reading-supportive classroom design features; limited access to varied and motivating reading materials; reduced opportunity for independent, self-selected reading practice.

The psychological factors, particularly low reading motivation, limited reading interest, and poor self-confidence, are the most prominently identified contributors to reading comprehension difficulty in this study. Students who approach reading tasks with low motivation tend to read passively and superficially, focusing on letter recognition rather than meaning construction, and are more likely to abandon comprehension efforts when encountering difficulty. This finding is consistent with research documenting that psychological factors, including motivation, interest, and self-confidence, are among the primary determinants of reading difficulty in Indonesian primary school students (Abdurrahman, 2019; Nuraini, 2021). At the international level, case study research with fifth-grade struggling readers confirms that targeted reading intervention that addresses motivation, confidence, and comprehension strategies simultaneously produces the most robust improvements in reading level (Irmak & Durmuşoğlu-Saltalı, 2022).

The school environment factor identified in this study, namely the proximity of the school building to a busy road generating persistent ambient noise, deserves particular attention. Research on the physical school environment confirms that environmental noise levels directly impact student concentration and motivation during learning activities (Ariani et al., 2024). In the context of reading comprehension, which requires sustained attention and active mental engagement with text, ambient noise constitutes a significant instructional hazard. The classroom teacher's observation that *suara bising kendaraan* (vehicle noise) disrupts student comfort during reading activities

reflects a structural constraint on reading engagement that cannot be remedied through instructional strategy alone.

The teacher's instructional responses to identified reading difficulties include the following: (1) employing diversified teaching methods, combining demonstration (the teacher reads text aloud to model fluent reading) with discussion (collaborative meaning-making from text); (2) building student self-confidence through consistent positive reinforcement and refraining from attributing reading difficulty to student failure; (3) implementing targeted reading remediation activities for the five identified students outside regular class time. These responses are aligned with evidence-based recommendations for reading comprehension intervention at the primary level, which consistently identify confidence-building, motivation support, repeated reading practice, and teacher modeling as effective approaches (Lee et al., 2025; Irmak & Durmusoglu-Saltali, 2022).

This study contributes empirical evidence on reading comprehension difficulties in the contextually specific setting of a primary school in Sorong Regency, West Papua, with implications for targeted reading support programs, classroom environmental management, and teacher professional development in reading instruction within geographically isolated Indonesian school contexts. The findings highlight the importance of addressing both the psychological dimensions of reading difficulty (through motivational support and confidence-building) and the physical school environment (through noise reduction and classroom design improvements) in order to create the conditions in which reading comprehension can develop optimally.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the reading comprehension difficulties experienced by Grade V students at SD Negeri 3, Sorong Regency, manifest in three primary forms: (1) failure to observe punctuation marks during oral reading, identified in 3 of 5 students; (2) non-fluent, slow oral reading that limits meaning construction, identified in 3 of 5 students; and (3) inability to

comprehend or retell text content, identified in 4 of 5 students. The two categories of factors contributing to these difficulties are: (1) psychological factors, encompassing low reading motivation, limited reading interest, and poor self-confidence during reading tasks; and (2) school environment factors, primarily the ambient noise generated by the proximity of the school building to a busy road, which disrupts student concentration. The classroom teacher's responsive strategies, including the use of demonstration and discussion methods, positive reinforcement to build reading confidence, and the provision of individual reading remediation, represent contextually appropriate responses to the identified difficulties. It is recommended that the school prioritize the development of structured reading motivation programs, explore classroom noise mitigation measures, and provide teachers with professional development focused on differentiated reading comprehension instruction and targeted reading remediation strategies. Future research should examine the effectiveness of specific reading interventions for Grade V students with reading comprehension difficulties in comparable primary school contexts in eastern Indonesia.

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