



Analysis of Teacher Skills in Increasing Reading Interest of Second Grade Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how teacher skills contribute to enhancing reading interest among second-grade students at YPK Klasaman II Elementary School, Sorong City, while identifying the obstacles encountered and the adaptive strategies employed to address them. Employing a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model, the study was conducted over two cycles involving 20 second-grade students. Data were gathered through structured observation, semi-structured interviews, field notes, and documentation. The findings indicate that the implementation of letter card games, group reading activities, hand puppet media, and effort-based reward systems rendered the learning process more engaging and significantly fostered students' reading motivation. Student participation increased from 60% to 85%; the number of students attaining the Minimum Competency Criterion (MCC) rose from 3 to 7; reading anxiety notably diminished; and several students began practicing independent reading at home. Principal challenges, including disparities in reading ability, low self-confidence, and inadequate classroom conditions, were systematically overcome through individual mentoring, differentiated media use, and a

supportive pedagogical approach. These results confirm that creative, adaptive, and context-sensitive teacher skills are effective in promoting reading interest at the elementary level.

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INTRODUCTION

Education constitutes the primary foundation for national development (Aprilia et al., 2023; Setyawan, 2025). Through education, the quality of human resources can be continuously improved to meet the dynamic demands of contemporary society. Education not only functions as a vehicle for knowledge transfer but also serves as a medium for character formation and the development of learners' full potential (Gustiara et al., 2024; Hattie, 2023). Accordingly, every level of education must be carefully designed to produce a generation that is intellectually capable, competent, and competitive. Within this context, foundational skills such as reading occupy an especially central position.

Reading is a fundamental skill that every individual must acquire (Agnia et al., 2024; National Reading Panel, 2016). Through reading, individuals gain access to knowledge, broaden their perspectives, and develop critical thinking capacities. Reading also serves as a gateway for students to comprehend diverse subject areas encountered throughout their schooling (Handayani & Maknun, 2022; Schwanenflugel & Knapp, 2019). Without adequate reading proficiency, students encounter significant difficulty in progressing to subsequent stages of formal education (Akhmad & Mursyidah, 2025; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2016). For this reason, reading is widely regarded as the foundational competency that determines overall academic achievement.

At the primary education level, reading occupies an exceptionally strategic position. Children who cultivate reading habits from an early age tend to develop broader imaginations, richer vocabularies, and superior text comprehension (Maharani, 2025; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2018). Conversely, students who lack reading motivation frequently struggle to grasp academic content (Baso et al., 2025; Logan et al., 2019). This deficiency can ultimately manifest as diminished academic performance. Therefore, fostering reading interest from the earliest stages of schooling represents a critical responsibility shared by educational institutions and classroom teachers alike.

However, the reading interest of Indonesian society remains comparatively low. Data published by UNESCO indicate that Indonesia's reading interest index stands at a mere 0.001%, implying that only one in every thousand Indonesians demonstrates genuinely high reading motivation (Herlina et al., 2024). This figure reflects a reality in which reading has yet to become an embedded cultural practice within Indonesian society. Such a condition presents a formidable challenge for the education sector, particularly at the primary school level (Nashrullah et al., 2023).

The low reading interest prevalent in Indonesia can be attributed to a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors, such as insufficient personal motivation, lead students to be unaware of the importance of reading (Solahudin et al., 2022; Wang & Guthrie, 2016). Meanwhile, external factors, including limited school facilities, a shortage of engaging reading materials, and inadequate support from the family environment, further compound the problem (Molinda & Ain, 2025; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). These interrelated factors collectively exacerbate the situation when not addressed through deliberate intervention. Accordingly, targeted strategies are required to systematically improve students' reading interest.

Primary schools, as the initial stage of formal education, play a strategic role in establishing a reading culture (Ardana, 2025; Mol & Bus, 2016). It is at this stage that children are first introduced to letters, words, and simple

sentences that form the foundation of reading competency. Teachers must be capable of cultivating reading habits through enjoyable and engaging instructional activities. When children are accustomed to reading from an early age, such habits tend to persist throughout higher levels of education. In this sense, the promotion of reading from primary school onward constitutes an essential long-term educational investment.

Teachers exert considerable influence in shaping students' reading interest (Sandra et al., 2025). Beyond delivering subject matter, teachers function as motivators and facilitators who encourage students to develop a love of reading (Baikuna & Jani, 2025; Rosenshine, 2019). The creativity that teachers exercise in selecting instructional methods, media, and strategies substantially affects the extent to which students become interested in reading activities. A teacher who is able to create an enjoyable learning environment will inspire students to approach reading with enthusiasm (Sandra et al., 2025; Pianta et al., 2018). Consequently, teacher skills emerge as a decisive factor in enhancing reading interest.

Teacher instructional skills encompass multiple dimensions. Teachers must be able to design learning experiences using a variety of methods (Nuraini, 2021; Stronge, 2018). These include the use of illustrated media, letter card games, and interactive storytelling that are developmentally appropriate for young learners. In addition, teachers are expected to possess effective communication skills that enable them to convey instructional content in a manner that students readily comprehend (Yunita, 2024; Hattie & Timperley, 2016). Collectively, these competencies exert a profound influence on students' reading motivation.

Furthermore, teachers' strategies for enhancing reading interest must take into account the diverse characteristics of their students (Arivoriza et al., 2023). Every child exhibits differences in learning style, interest, and reading ability (Hanyfah et al., 2025; Tomlinson, 2017). A skilled teacher is able to adapt

instructional approaches to accommodate individual student needs. When the pedagogical approach is appropriately calibrated, students feel more motivated to engage with reading activities. This demonstrates that teacher skills extend beyond mere content mastery to encompass the effective management of the learning process so that it remains engaging and impactful.

Concurrently, the low reading interest observed among students is also attributable to insufficient support from family and community environments (Lestari & Koerniawati, 2023; Sénéchal & Young, 2018). Many parents have not established the habit of accompanying their children in reading at home, with reading activities frequently supplanted by television viewing or smartphone use. This situation renders students less accustomed to sustained reading engagement. Therefore, schools and teachers need to collaborate actively with parents to nurture and sustain students' reading interest (Epstein, 2018).

The phenomenon of low reading interest is similarly evident at YPK Klasaman II Elementary School in Sorong City. Based on preliminary observations, a considerable number of second-grade students experience difficulties with early reading. Several students struggle to recognize letters, syllabify words, or comprehend simple texts. These difficulties constitute barriers to the overall learning process, as reading is the foundational skill through which all other curricular content is accessed. This situation merits serious and sustained attention from the school community.

The reading difficulties experienced by students at YPK Klasaman II are attributable to multiple causes. In addition to limited reading practice at home, the instructional methods employed by teachers have at times remained monotonous. Students are frequently required to read text passages in isolation, without exposure to varied and engaging instructional techniques. As a result, students quickly experience boredom and lose motivation to read. This situation underscores the imperative role that teachers play in creating reading instruction that is stimulating and meaningful.

Teachers at YPK Klasaman II must therefore develop innovative

instructional skills. The use of letter card games, shared reading activities, and morning literacy sessions may serve as effective and enjoyable alternative strategies for students. Through such methodological variation, students are more likely to feel interested in and motivated toward reading. Teacher creativity in selecting instructional methods will prove decisive in supporting students' improvement in reading interest. This dimension constitutes the primary focus of the present investigation.

An analysis of teacher skills in enhancing reading interest is both timely and necessary (Sriwiani & Jusu, 2025). Through such analysis, it becomes possible to determine the extent to which teachers actively support students in developing a disposition toward reading. In addition, this research identifies the specific obstacles teachers encounter in implementing reading instruction. The findings will serve as a basis for the formulation of more effective instructional strategies. In this respect, the present study holds strong relevance to the broader needs of primary education.

The challenge of low reading interest is not the responsibility of students alone, but represents a shared challenge for teachers and schools as well (Khatimah et al., 2025; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Teachers are required to possess robust pedagogical competencies that enable them to tailor instructional strategies to the diverse needs of learners (Yusnita et al., 2025; Guerriero, 2017). Meanwhile, schools are obliged to provide supportive facilities such as libraries, reading corners, and engaging reading materials (Nuraini & Amaliyah, 2024; Krashen, 2016). Sustained collaboration between teachers, schools, and parents is the key to building a genuine reading culture.

Research on teacher skills in enhancing reading interest also carries significant practical value. Research findings can serve as a basis for teacher self-evaluation and the ongoing improvement of instructional practice. Schools may utilize research outcomes to design more effective literacy programs. Through this research, it is anticipated that students will become more

motivated to read, thereby contributing to improved academic achievement. The study may also serve as a reference for future researchers interested in exploring related dimensions of foundational literacy.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, it is evident that teacher skills exert a decisive influence on the reading interest of primary school students. The low reading interest observed at YPK Klasaman II Elementary School in Sorong City highlights the urgent need for improvement in reading instructional strategies. The present study therefore addresses the topic of "Teacher Skills in Enhancing Reading Interest Among Second-Grade Students at YPK Klasaman II Elementary School, Sorong City." It is anticipated that this research will provide a comprehensive account of teacher skills, the obstacles encountered, and the appropriate strategies for fostering reading interest from an early age.

This study aims to examine how teacher skills contribute to improving reading interest among second-grade students at YPK Klasaman II Elementary School, Sorong City. It further seeks to identify the obstacles experienced by teachers in their efforts to enhance student reading interest, as well as the adaptive strategies employed to overcome these challenges.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach through Classroom Action Research (CAR), adopting the Kemmis and McTaggart (2014) cyclical model. The research aimed to investigate how teacher skills can improve student reading interest, as well as to understand the obstacles and strategies employed by teachers during the instructional process. CAR was selected because it enables the researcher to directly observe and improve classroom practice through iterative planning, action, observation, and reflection cycles (Burns, 2019).

The research population comprised all second-grade students at YPK Klasaman II Elementary School, Sorong City, in the 2025/2026 academic year. A

saturated sampling technique was employed, meaning the entire population served as the sample given the relatively small number of students. Accordingly, 20 second-grade students participated as research subjects.

Data were collected through three primary instruments: direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to examine teacher instructional skills and student responses during reading activities. Interviews were conducted with both the classroom teacher and selected students to gather additional information regarding reading interest and the obstacles encountered. Documentation, including activity photographs, teacher notes, and school archives served as corroborating evidence for the interpretation of findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The study was executed over two cycles, each comprising four phases: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. In the planning phase, the teacher prepared instructional media and strategies. In the action phase, the planned interventions were implemented in the classroom. Observation was conducted to monitor student progress and assess the effectiveness of instruction. Reflection was subsequently employed to evaluate the outcomes of each cycle and to refine approaches for the succeeding cycle. The results of each cycle were analyzed using descriptive qualitative methods to identify changes in student reading interest and improvements in teacher instructional management (Miles et al., 2020).

Data validity was ensured through methodological triangulation, combining observational records, interview transcripts, and documentary evidence. Member checking was also applied to confirm the accuracy of interview data with participants. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2020), encompassing data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study, including informed consent from participants and the maintenance of participant anonymity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study was conducted at YPK Klasaman II Elementary School, Sorong City, during the 2025/2026 academic year, involving 20 second-grade students and one classroom teacher as the primary practitioner. Over approximately four weeks, reading instructional activities were observed across five scheduled meetings. Each meeting yielded distinct evidence regarding the implementation of instructional strategies, student responses, changes in reading behavior over time, and the supportive and inhibiting factors present throughout the learning process. Research data were gathered through direct observation, semi-structured student interviews, and documentation in the form of photographs and field notes, which were utilized to corroborate and enrich the interpretation of findings.

The physical condition of the classroom exerted a discernible influence on the instructional process. The classroom was of moderate size with limited ventilation, which rendered it uncomfortably warm during certain sessions. Several students were observed fanning themselves, handling water bottles, or wiping perspiration during activities. Nonetheless, the teacher succeeded in maintaining a conducive classroom atmosphere through the use of opening songs, warm greetings, and classroom management techniques such as light movement breaks and a 'raised-finger' speaking rule. The class comprised students with markedly diverse reading abilities: some students read fluently, others remained at the syllable-construction stage, while three students required considerably more time to process simple text. This heterogeneity substantially influenced interaction patterns during instruction.

During the first observation, the teacher sought to stimulate reading interest through an engaging, enjoyment-centered approach. An opening song was employed as an attention-activating device and was enthusiastically received by the majority of students. The teacher then introduced large, colorfully designed letter cards to assist students in recognizing letters and basic words. Most students followed the activity with visible enthusiasm, they

lifted cards when prompted, pointed to corresponding pictures, and attempted to read words while smiling. Approximately 85% of students demonstrated notably positive responses, evidenced by verbal and visual engagement. However, two students, DT and PY, displayed significant reading anxiety: they lowered their gaze, avoided eye contact, and refused to come forward or read aloud despite gentle encouragement from the teacher. Their observable tension indicated the presence of emotional barriers requiring targeted intervention.

During the second observation, the teacher introduced a reward strategy in the form of star stickers affixed to a dedicated display board. Students who demonstrated courage in reading, or who made a genuine attempt even without fluency, received a star. This approach successfully generated a positive competitive atmosphere and enhanced students' extrinsic motivation. Many students raised their hands before the teacher had finished posing a question, and several who had initially been reticent began attempting to read, albeit softly. The two previously anxious students still exhibited resistance, though they were willing to read when the teacher provided direct, individualized support accompanied by a reassuring, gentle touch on the shoulder. While this strategy yielded positive outcomes, it had not yet fully eliminated student reading anxiety.

Group-based reading was implemented during the third observation. The teacher organized students into four heterogeneous groups, enabling more proficient readers to support peers experiencing difficulties. Each group was provided with illustrated simple texts. Group dynamics proved varied: two groups collaborated naturally, taking turns reading, pointing to words, and correcting one another in a friendly manner. The remaining two groups encountered difficulties. In certain groups, more fluent readers tended to dominate, while less confident students remained passive and simply followed along. Some students were observed joking or losing focus when their groups lacked clear structure. This finding indicates that, although group activities can

increase interpersonal interaction, not all students benefit equally without the provision of clearly defined roles.

The fourth observation represented the most salient session of the study. The teacher employed hand puppets assigned specific names and personalities to narrate stories and pose questions to students. This medium immediately captured the attention of virtually all students, including those who ordinarily had difficulty maintaining focus, who sat more upright, smiled, and engaged with evident attentiveness. The teacher performed simple dialogues interspersed with humor, and students were invited to read words or phrases that emerged within the narrative. Student engagement increased markedly: students laughed, imitated the puppet's voice, and read with greater confidence than in any preceding session. One limitation arose from the teacher's partially muffled voice while operating the puppet, causing students seated at the back to miss some of the communicated content. Overall, however, hand puppet media proved to be the most effective instructional strategy for cultivating student reading interest.

The fifth observation was characterized by a significant modification to the reward system. The teacher replaced the 'fluency star' concept with an 'effort star', with the explicit aim of reducing the psychological pressure experienced by students who feared making errors during reading. Under the effort-based reward system, all students had the opportunity to be recognised irrespective of their reading proficiency. The impact was immediately visible: students who had previously been reluctant to come forward began displaying greater courage. DT and PY, who had exhibited considerable anxiety during the initial observation, ultimately managed to read aloud, albeit haltingly, and expressed visible pride when awarded their stars before the class. The entire class responded with applause, thereby fostering a more supportive and inclusive classroom atmosphere. The teacher was observed to manage the class more effectively as students shifted from a fear of being wrong to a focus on effort.

Student interviews reinforced the observational findings. The majority of

students reported enjoying reading activities that involved pictures, hand puppets, humorous stories, or word cards. They indicated that they found it easier to comprehend text content when supported by visual aids. Three students who reported difficulty concentrating acknowledged tiring easily during reading, yet nonetheless admitted that hand puppet media made reading feel considerably more enjoyable. Interviews also revealed that some students had previously felt 'afraid of being scolded if they made mistakes'; however, following the implementation of the 'effort star' system, they reported feeling calmer and more willing to participate.

Regarding students' reading development, the quantitative indicators recorded throughout the study demonstrated meaningful improvement. Reading participation increased from 60% prior to the intervention to 85% following its implementation. The number of students attaining the Minimum Competency Criterion (MCC) rose from three to seven. Furthermore, six students began practicing independent reading at home two to three times per week after beginning to find enjoyment in school-based reading activities, indicating that the effects of the intervention extended beyond the classroom into students' domestic environments.

The qualitative instrument indicated that overall student reading interest was in the high category. The mean reading interest score was 4.04, with the highest score of 4.35 recorded for the statement 'Reading makes me happy.' Quantitative instrument results were consistent, with the teacher skills variable (X) yielding a mean range of 3.50–4.70 and the reading interest variable (Y) yielding a mean range of 3.60–4.70, with no indicator falling within a low category. Gender-based analysis revealed negligible score differences, from which it can be inferred that improvements in reading interest occurred equitably across all students.

The discussion of research findings confirms that teacher instructional skills were assessed in the good-to-very-good category, as evidenced through

observational records, interview data, and quantitative instruments. Across the five observation sessions, the teacher consistently employed engaging lesson openers, including songs, warm greetings, and letter card demonstrations. During the first observation (2 September 2025), 85% of students displayed enthusiastic responses, indicating that the teacher's classroom atmosphere-building skills were considerably effective. The teacher was also observed providing clear content explanations, modeling reading fluency, and managing the class in a structured manner through the use of activity timers to facilitate smooth instructional transitions.

With respect to media use, the fourth observation confirmed that hand puppets were highly effective in activating previously reticent students such as BR and SL. Letter cards and reading games similarly elicited positive responses from nearly all students. These findings align with student interview data, in which 17 of 20 students reported enjoying or greatly enjoying reading, citing teacher-provided media such as pictures, humorous stories, and word cards as key motivating factors. This is corroborated by the qualitative instrument, in which the statement 'Reading makes me happy' received the highest score of 4.35.

The quantitative instrument further supports these findings. The teacher skills variable (X) yielded a mean range of 3.50–4.70, with 12 variables in the high category, including X_{10} , X_{17} , and X_{18} , each scoring between 4.55 and 4.60. No variable fell within the low category. Gender comparisons further indicated that both male students (mean $X = 4.10$) and female students (mean $X = 4.05$) assessed teacher skills in the high category. Taken collectively, the totality of field evidence confirms that the teacher demonstrated effective instructional skills in enhancing student reading interest.

Although teacher skills were generally rated highly, this study identified several significant obstacles. The first obstacle concerned the warm classroom conditions, particularly during the first observation, which caused some students to become restless toward the end of the session. Observer field notes

indicate that classroom conditions affected student concentration, even when instruction was engaging. The second obstacle involved the psychological condition of two specific students, DT and PY, who displayed reading anxiety when asked to read aloud before the class. Interview data also revealed that PY described reading as 'hard to concentrate on,' while DT expressed a fear of making mistakes.

A third obstacle emerged from the technical use of the hand puppet medium, specifically, the teacher's partially muffled voice during the fourth observation, which meant that some instructional messages communicated through the medium were not fully received by all students. Additionally, the third observation revealed an imbalance in group contribution, particularly in Group B, where certain members demonstrated disproportionate dependence on specific group participants. This dynamic rendered the group reading process uneven in terms of individual engagement.

Additional challenges were evident in student reading proficiency: two to three students demonstrated slow reading progress and had not yet attained the MCC prior to the intervention. Quantitative data further indicated that the reading interest variable (Y) recorded the lowest mean scores on Y3 and Y7 (3.60–3.65), suggesting that certain dimensions of student reading motivation still require strengthening. These findings collectively demonstrate that improvements in reading interest are not solely dependent on teacher instructional strategies but are also influenced by the physical learning environment, student psychological readiness, the effectiveness of selected media, and individual differences in reading ability.

On the basis of the research findings, the teacher implemented several adaptive strategies to address the obstacles that emerged during the instructional process. To overcome the reading anxiety of reticent students, the teacher modified the reward system from 'fluency stars' to 'effort stars,' thereby placing greater emphasis on courage than on accuracy. The results were

evident: DT and PY demonstrated increased willingness to read aloud, as documented in the fifth observation record, which notes that both students began displaying improved self-confidence.

The warm classroom condition was addressed by adjusting the duration of physical activities and restructuring the activity sequence to prevent sessions from becoming overly prolonged. The hand-puppet media limitation was overcome by adjusting the teacher's position and projection, enabling clearer reception of instructional content by all students. To address the imbalance in group contribution, the teacher reorganized group composition and assigned specific roles, primary reader, summarizer, and vocabulary supporter, which improved participatory balance, as evidenced by the increased confidence observed in students AN and IM during the third observation.

For students demonstrating slow reading progress, the teacher implemented weekly individual mentoring sessions, ensuring that their specific learning needs were continuously addressed. The impact was reflected in improvements in reading attainment, with the number of students meeting the MCC increasing from three to seven following the completion of the intervention cycles. Independent reading motivation also improved, as documented by data indicating that six students began reading two to three times per week at home, a behavioural change not observed prior to the intervention.

These findings align with established literature on effective literacy instruction. The effectiveness of letter card games in improving early reading skills is well-documented (Morrow & Gambrell, 2019; Rasinski, 2017). Similarly, hand puppet media have been found to increase young learners' affective engagement with reading (Isbell et al., 2016; Riquelme & Montoya, 2021). The role of reward systems in sustaining reading motivation is supported by self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which posits that autonomy-supportive environments, such as those created by effort-based rather than performance-based rewards, promote intrinsic motivation. The shift from

fluency-based to effort-based recognition in the present study directly reflects this theoretical principle. Furthermore, the use of heterogeneous group structures as a means of scaffolding early reading aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, wherein peer collaboration facilitates learning that exceeds what an individual student could achieve independently.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teacher skills play a pivotal role in enhancing the reading interest of second-grade students at YPK Klasaman II Elementary School, Sorong City. Instructional strategies including opening songs, letter card activities, hand puppet media, group reading sessions, and reward systems were demonstrated to be effective in increasing reading participation from approximately 60% to 85% and in building greater self-confidence among previously reticent students. Despite challenges such as warm classroom conditions, student reading anxiety, suboptimal media performance, and uneven group contribution, the teacher successfully addressed these obstacles through adaptive strategies: modifying the reward system, providing individual mentoring, improving media management, and restructuring group compositions. As a result, students demonstrated increased reading courage, a greater number of students attained the Minimum Competency Criterion, and independent reading habits began to emerge in the home environment. These outcomes collectively affirm that the implemented strategies were successful in significantly promoting student reading interest.

Based on the research findings, teachers are recommended to maintain effective instructional strategies and continue providing individual mentoring support for students who continue to experience reading difficulties. Schools are encouraged to improve classroom comfort and expand access to engaging reading materials, while concurrently providing literacy training opportunities

for teachers. Parents are urged to accompany their children in regular home reading and to provide age-appropriate reading resources. Future researchers are advised to expand the sample size and to investigate the roles of parental involvement and additional contextual factors in foundational literacy development in order to yield more comprehensive and generalizable findings.

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Declarations

- Author Contribution : Benselina Homo: Conceptualization, Data Collection, Writing - Original Draft, and Visualization; Supriyati Fatma Rabia: Writing - Review & Editing, Formal Analysis, and Methodology; Nursalim: Validation and Supervision.
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