

Teacher Strategies In Managing Reading Learning For Slow Learner Students In Inclusive Elementary School Classes

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Abstract

This study aims to describe teachers' strategies in managing reading instruction for slow learner students in inclusive elementary school classrooms. This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The research was conducted at SD Alam Mahira, Bengkulu City, involving the principal, fourth-grade classroom teachers, a shadow teacher, and slow learner students as research participants. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation. The findings revealed that teachers implemented several integrated strategies in managing reading instruction, including identifying students' initial reading abilities, preparing adaptive lesson plans, implementing phonics-based instruction, utilizing concrete and visual learning media, applying inclusive classroom management, providing individualized assistance, collaborating with the shadow teacher, and conducting continuous formative assessment. These strategies enabled teachers to accommodate the learning characteristics and needs of slow learner students while maintaining their active participation in inclusive classroom learning. The study concludes that successful reading instruction for slow learner students depends on teachers' ability to integrate adaptive instructional strategies, classroom management, and collaborative support in accordance with students' individual learning needs.

Keywords

Teacher Strategies ; Managing Reading Learning ; Slow Learner Students ; Inclusive Elementary School Classes



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INTRODUCTION

Reading ability is a fundamental skill that underpins students' success in elementary school. Through reading, students can comprehend information, develop thinking skills, and build literacy skills necessary for everyday life. At the elementary school level, reading

instruction not only aims to enable students to recognize letters and pronounce words, but also to comprehend the content of reading material, derive meaning, and use the information obtained as a basis for studying other subjects. Therefore, reading ability is a competency that must be developed from an early age, especially in schools that provide inclusive education. Inclusive education provides opportunities for all students, including those with special needs, to learn together in the same educational environment. One group of students often found in inclusive classes are slow learners. Slow learners have intellectual abilities that are below the average for students their age, but are not categorized as intellectual disabilities. They generally require longer study time, regular repetition of material, individual guidance, and learning strategies tailored to their learning characteristics. If learning is delivered using the same approach as regular students without any adjustments, slow learners can potentially experience difficulties in developing reading skills and optimally participating in learning.

Various studies have shown that the reading abilities of slow learners are influenced by the learning strategies implemented by teachers. Research by Hidayah and Utami (2024) indicates that reading instruction in inclusive schools is more effective when teachers use an adaptive approach, utilize visual media, and provide ongoing support to students. Similarly, research by Ma'idah et al. (2025) explains that differentiated learning can increase the participation and engagement of slow learners because the material, process, and assessment are tailored to their learning readiness. Furthermore, Utami et al. (2026) found that differentiation strategies, the use of concrete media, additional time, and collaboration between classroom teachers and assistant teachers contribute to improving the quality of learning for slow learners. These findings demonstrate that teacher strategies play a crucial role in supporting successful reading instruction in inclusive classrooms. However, most previous research has focused more on differentiated learning, the effectiveness of instructional media, or learning strategies for slow learners in general. Research specifically examining teacher strategies for managing reading instruction through the planning, implementation, classroom management, use of learning methods, media utilization, individual mentoring, teacher collaboration, and evaluation of learning in the context of inclusive elementary schools is still relatively limited. Yet, learning management is a crucial aspect in determining the success of inclusive education implementation because it encompasses the entire learning process, from planning to evaluation.

Based on the results of a preliminary study conducted by researchers at an elementary school providing inclusive education in Bengkulu City, it was found that teachers face various challenges in managing reading instruction for slow learners. Differences in reading ability, learning speed, memory, and concentration require teachers to make various adjustments to the learning process. Teachers not only deliver reading material but also identify students' initial abilities, select appropriate learning methods, use engaging learning media, provide individual mentoring, and collaborate with shadow teachers to optimally meet students' learning needs. This situation indicates that the success of reading instruction is determined not only by the

methods used but also by the teacher's ability to manage the entire learning process in an integrated manner.

The novelty of this research lies in the study that integrates various aspects of managing reading learning for slow learners in the context of inclusive elementary school classes. This study not only describes the learning methods used by teachers, but also analyzes teacher strategies ranging from identifying students' initial abilities, learning planning, learning implementation, use of phonics methods, utilization of learning media, classroom management, individual mentoring, collaboration with the teacher assistant, to learning evaluation as a whole, interrelated process. Thus, this study provides a more comprehensive picture of the practice of managing reading learning for slow learners in inclusive classes. Based on this description, this study aims to describe teacher strategies in managing reading learning for slow learners in inclusive elementary school classes. The results of the study are expected to contribute to the development of inclusive learning practices, serve as a reference for teachers in managing reading learning that is appropriate to the characteristics of slow learners, and provide input for schools in improving the quality of inclusive education services.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because it aimed to provide an in-depth description of teacher strategies in managing reading instruction for slow-learners in inclusive elementary school classrooms. Through this approach, researchers gained a comprehensive understanding of the planning, implementation, classroom management, media use, mentoring, and evaluation of reading instruction implemented by teachers, tailored to student characteristics. The study was conducted at SD Alam Mahira in Bengkulu City during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The research location was selected based on the consideration that the school, an elementary school providing inclusive education, has slow-learners in grade IV and implements various learning strategies tailored to their needs.

Research subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, selecting informants based on the consideration that they possess information relevant to the research focus. The informants in this study consisted of the principal, grade IV A teachers, grade IV B teachers, shadow teachers, and slow-learners in grade IV. These informants were selected because they were directly involved in the reading instruction process and understood the strategies implemented to support the development of students' reading skills. Research data were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly observe the reading learning process in inclusive classrooms, including teacher activities, the use of learning methods, learning media, teacher-student interactions, and the involvement of slow-learners during the learning process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, class teachers, and assistant teachers to obtain more in-depth information regarding teacher strategies in managing reading learning. Documentation was

used as supporting data, including teaching modules, learning tools, assessment sheets, photographs of learning activities, and other documents related to the research.

Data validity was maintained through technical triangulation and source triangulation. Technical triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. Meanwhile, source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the principal, class teachers, assistant teachers, and observational data to ensure more accurate and reliable information. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data condensation stage, the researcher selected, focused, and simplified the data from observations, interviews, and documentation according to the research focus. The data presentation stage was carried out by organizing the data into a descriptive narrative form based on the research themes, namely identification of students' initial abilities, learning planning, learning implementation, use of phonics methods, use of learning media, classroom management, individual mentoring, teacher collaboration, and learning evaluation. Next, conclusions were drawn through a process of interpretation of all analyzed data to obtain a complete picture of teacher strategies in managing reading learning for slow learners in inclusive elementary school classes..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results show that teachers' strategies for managing reading instruction for slow learners involve three interrelated stages: identifying students' initial abilities, developing adaptive learning plans, and implementing instruction tailored to student characteristics. These three stages serve as the basis for teachers in providing instructional services tailored to the needs of students in inclusive classrooms. The first stage is identifying students' initial reading abilities. Based on observations and interviews, teachers do not immediately provide the same instruction to all students, but first identify the characteristics, abilities, and learning barriers of each slow learner. Identification is carried out through observation during learning activities, giving simple assignments, and observing students' responses, interests, and readiness to learn. The class teacher explained that the identification process precedes determining instructional strategies.

"...the strategy for planning reading instruction for slow learners begins with first identifying the child's characteristics through observation. From these observations, teachers can determine the child's responses, interests, and abilities so that the instruction provided can be tailored to their needs..." (Interview with Mr. Cipto Roso, Grade IV A Teacher, April 20, 2026).

This statement indicates that teachers use observational findings as the basis for determining instructional strategies. Teachers not only pay attention to students' academic abilities, but also to non-academic aspects such as their mood, enthusiasm for learning, and

responses to assigned tasks. This approach allows teachers to adjust learning so that slow learners can still participate in learning activities according to their abilities.

These findings are supported by another classroom teacher who explained that identifying early abilities is done through observing students' behavior, communication, and basic reading skills.

"...I observe the child's behavior, their response when learning begins, their communication, and their attitude. For example, if a student already knows the letters A to Z, then learning can continue using simpler reading materials..." (Interview with Umi Oktavianita, Grade IV B Teacher, April 20, 2026).

The interview results show that the teacher uses early reading abilities as a basis for determining the level of difficulty of the material. The teacher does not apply the same targets to all students, but adjusts the learning based on each student's abilities. This strategy demonstrates that the learning has accommodated the principles of student-centered learning.

The research findings were also supported by interviews with shadow teachers. The mentor teacher explained that each slow learner has different characteristics, so the type of mentoring provided must be tailored to their individual needs.

"...the characteristics of slow learners need to be identified first. The child I mentor has a slow grasp and forgets easily, so the material needs to be repeated. Therefore, the learning methods and media must be tailored to the child's characteristics..." (Interview with Umi Kurnia Amalia, Grade IV A Mentor Teacher, April 20, 2026).

This statement demonstrates that the success of reading instruction is influenced not only by the teacher's ability to deliver the material, but also by their ability to understand the individual characteristics of the students. The mentor teacher plays a crucial role in providing information on student development so that learning strategies can be tailored to actual needs in the field.

After identifying the students' initial abilities, the teacher develops an adaptive learning plan. Based on observations, the teacher adjusts the learning objectives, materials, methods, media, and assessment formats without separating slow learners from regular students. The reading material is structured in stages, starting with letter recognition, syllable combination, word formation, reading simple sentences, and finally, understanding the content of the reading. In addition, teachers prepare learning media in the form of letter cards, word cards, pictures, and picture books to make it easier for students to understand.

These findings indicate that teachers have implemented adaptive learning principles oriented to student needs. Adjustments to materials, methods, and media represent a form of learning differentiation that allows each student to gain learning experiences tailored to their readiness and abilities. These research findings align with those of Ma'idah et al. (2025), who stated that learning for slow learners should begin with identifying learning readiness, followed by adjustments to materials, the learning process, and assessments to optimally meet students' learning needs. Furthermore, Hidayah and Utami (2024) explain that initial

assessments help teachers determine more effective reading instructional strategies for students experiencing learning difficulties.

Reading instruction begins with apperception, motivation, and repetition of previously learned material. Teachers then use phonics methods to help students recognize the relationship between letters and sounds before reading words and sentences. During the learning process, teachers provide individual guidance to students experiencing difficulties and collaborate with their assistant teachers to ensure students receive assistance tailored to their needs. The use of phonics methods is combined with visual media and repeated reading practice, enabling students to gain a more concrete and meaningful learning experience. These findings indicate that teachers' strategies for managing reading instruction are not solely focused on the use of a single method, but rather an integration of initial ability identification, adaptive lesson planning, flexible learning implementation, and collaboration between classroom teachers and assistant teachers. This strategic integration enables slow-learning students to receive learning services tailored to their characteristics while supporting inclusive learning. These findings align with research by Arnez and Utami (2023), who stated that successful learning for slow-learning students is influenced by teachers' ability to implement flexible learning, provide individual guidance, and build collaboration with assistant teachers and parents.

The results indicate that teachers employ the phonics method as the primary strategy in teaching reading to slow-learning students. Teachers first introduce letter sounds, then guide students in combining the sounds into syllables, words, and simple sentences. Based on observations, this approach helps students gradually understand the relationship between letter symbols and their sounds. These findings are supported by an interview with Umi Oktavianita, S.Pd., who explained:

"Sometimes, if slow-learners have completely forgotten their letters, I re-teach them the phonics method. I use this method because it's easier for students to recognize letter sounds before reading words. I introduce letter sounds, then encourage them to combine them into syllables, for example, the letters A and B become 'BA'." (Interview with Umi Oktavianita, S.Pd., Grade IV B Homeroom Teacher, April 20, 2026).

This statement indicates that teachers use the phonics method not only as a reading technique but also as a way to adapt their learning to the characteristics of slow-learners. Instruction begins with the most basic skill, namely recognizing letter sounds, then gradually progresses to forming syllables and words. This strategy provides students with the opportunity to systematically build decoding skills, making the reading process easier to understand. This finding aligns with Hariyati and Seinsiani (2025), who explain that systematic phonics instruction helps improve the reading accuracy and fluency of students with learning disabilities.

. The research results show that teachers implement the phonics method as one of the main strategies in teaching reading to slow learners. Based on observations, teachers teach letter sounds first before guiding students in combining the sounds into syllables, words, and

even simple sentences. This approach is implemented gradually to help students more easily understand the relationship between letter symbols and their sounds before they can read them in their entirety.

This finding is supported by an interview with Umi Oktavianita, S.Pd., a Grade 4 B teacher, who stated:

"Sometimes, if the 'slow learners' have completely forgotten their letters, I teach them the phonics method again. I use this method because it's easier for students to recognize letter sounds before reading words. I introduce the letter sounds, then combine the sounds into syllables. For example, I introduce the letter A, then the letter B, then encourage the children to combine them to form 'BA'." (Interview with Umi Oktavianita, S.Pd., Grade 4 B Teacher, April 20, 2026).

This statement indicates that the phonics method is used as a form of learning adaptation to the characteristics of slow learners who still have difficulty recognizing the relationship between letters and their sounds. Teachers begin learning with the most basic skills, namely letter sound recognition, then gradually develop students' ability to read syllables, words, and simple sentences. This strategy helps students systematically build decoding skills, making the reading process easier to understand.

These findings are also supported by an interview with a teacher, Umi Anisa Cordova, S.Pd., who explained that the phonics method is still used as a form of reinforcement when students begin to forget previously learned reading skills.

"To help children remember, we also use the phonics method. However, this method is no longer used as often because the children are in fourth grade and already recognize letters. However, if it is not repeated for a long time, for example after the semester break, children can forget again. Therefore, we use this method to help children recall letter sounds more quickly." (Interview with Umi Anisa Cordova, S.Pd., Grade IV B Teacher, April 20, 2026).

The interview results indicate that the phonics method is not only used as an initial strategy in teaching reading, but also as a reinforcement strategy to maintain students' reading skills. Repetition of material through the phonics method helps slow learners recall the relationship between letters and their sounds after a break in learning. This aligns with the characteristics of slow learners, who generally require continuous repetition and practice to retain learned information in long-term memory.

The findings of this study align with those of Hariyati and Seinsiani (2025), who stated that systematic and repeated phonics learning can improve pronunciation accuracy, reading fluency, and the ability to recognize the relationship between letters and sounds in students with learning disabilities. Furthermore, Hidayah and Utami (2024) explain that reading instruction for slow learners will be more effective if teachers use explicit strategies, provide gradual practice, and implement repetition according to the students' learning needs.

Based on these findings, it can be understood that the use of phonics is an effective strategy in managing reading learning for slow learners in inclusive classrooms. The success of this method is influenced not only by the learning steps but also by the teacher's consistency in providing practice, repetition, and ongoing support according to the development of each student's reading ability.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that teachers' strategies for managing reading instruction for slow learners in inclusive elementary school classrooms are implemented through a series of interrelated stages oriented to the students' learning needs. This strategy begins with identifying students' initial abilities through observation, diagnostic assessment, and communication with the accompanying teacher and parents as a basis for determining appropriate learning services. Next, teachers develop adaptive learning plans by adjusting objectives, materials, methods, media, and assessment formats based on the characteristics of slow learners.

During the learning process, teachers apply phonics methods, utilize concrete and visual learning media, create inclusive classroom management, and provide individual support to students experiencing reading difficulties. Teachers also collaborate with accompanying teachers (shadow teachers) to monitor reading progress and determine the type of support needed during the learning process. Learning evaluation is conducted continuously through observation, reading aloud, question and answer sessions, and assigning reading assignments to continuously monitor student progress.

The research results show that the success of reading instruction for slow learners is not determined by a single strategy, but by the integration of initial ability identification, adaptive learning planning, flexible learning implementation, the use of appropriate methods and media, supportive classroom management, individual mentoring, collaboration between teachers, and formative evaluation. This strategy integration provides slow learners with the opportunity to learn according to their characteristics and needs and supports the creation of more effective and inclusive reading instruction in elementary schools..

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