

EMPOWERING STUDENT READING SKILLS THROUGH GUIDED READING SESSION FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACTS

This study explores The ability to read effectively is a fundamental skill that significantly influences students' academic performance and overall language development, particularly at the senior high school level where students are expected to engage with complex texts across various subjects. However, many students continue to struggle with reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and critical thinking, often due to traditional, one-size-fits-all instructional methods that fail to address individual learning needs. This study investigates the implementation of guided reading sessions as a strategic intervention to empower students' reading skills in senior high school settings. Guided reading, which involves small-group, leveled instruction, allows teachers to provide targeted support, adapt teaching to students' proficiency levels, and foster active participation in reading activities. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations, student interviews, and reading performance assessments over the course of the intervention. The findings indicate that guided reading sessions significantly enhance students' reading fluency, comprehension, and engagement by creating a supportive, student-centered environment. Furthermore, the collaborative aspect of guided reading encourages peer interaction and builds reading confidence. This research concludes that guided reading is an effective pedagogical strategy for promoting literacy growth and student empowerment. The study offers practical recommendations for educators seeking to implement guided reading in diverse classrooms and highlights the need for further research to refine its application in secondary education.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is not only a basic language skill but also a gateway to academic achievement and critical thinking across all subject areas. In the context of senior high school education, reading proficiency becomes increasingly important as students are expected to comprehend and analyze complex texts in subjects such as literature, science, and social studies. According to (Wang 2023). reading involves more than decoding symbols; it requires the integration of vocabulary knowledge, syntactic awareness, and inferential thinking. However, in many classrooms, reading instruction still relies heavily on traditional whole-class methods that (Lovett et al. 2021). often overlook the diverse needs of individual learners. This results in a gap between students' actual reading abilities and the demands of the curriculum, especially for those who struggle with comprehension and motivation (Oclarit and Casinillo 2021).

In response to these challenges, guided reading has emerged as a promising instructional strategy. Develop and popular, guided reading is a structured, small-group approach that places students at the center of the learning process. (Grabe and Stoller 2019). Students are grouped based on their reading levels and work with texts that are slightly above their independent reading abilities, allowing for meaningful instructional scaffolding. The teacher plays a crucial role as a facilitator, modeling strategies, prompting comprehension, and encouraging discussion. This aligns with theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and teacher support in advancing cognitive growth. Guided reading allows instruction to be personalized, ensuring that each student receives the right level of challenge and support. (Yolanda et al. 2025).

Empirical research supports the effectiveness of guided reading in improving both reading fluency and comprehension. For instance, found that students who regularly engaged in guided reading activities demonstrated greater reading gains than those taught using traditional methods. Moreover, (Renandya and Jacobs 2016). emphasize that guided reading fosters not only academic improvement but also increased motivation, engagement, and self-confidence. The small-group setting encourages active participation, peer learning, and meaningful interaction with texts. These elements are essential for building a strong reading identity, particularly among students who have previously experienced reading difficulties (Tahmidaten and Krismanto 2020).

Given the positive potential of guided reading, this study aims to explore its role in empowering senior high school students' reading skills. Specifically, the research investigates how guided reading sessions can enhance comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, reading fluency, and learner motivation in a high school setting. The study also examines the instructional strategies employed by teachers and how they adapt guided reading principles to meet diverse student need (Musahrain, Suryani, and Suharno 2018). Through classroom-based data collection and analysis, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on differentiated instruction and provides practical recommendations for educators seeking to implement effective reading practices. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of moving beyond one-size-fits-all instruction toward more inclusive, student-centered approaches that support all learners. (Unesco 2017).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate how guided reading sessions empower senior high school students in developing their reading skills. The qualitative approach was chosen to capture the depth and complexity of students' experiences, perceptions, and progress throughout the implementation of guided reading. According to (Mertler 2024). Descriptive methods allowed the researcher to provide a detailed and systematic account of instructional practices, student responses, and the learning environment in a natural classroom context without manipulating any variables. The focus was on understanding the process, rather than measuring outcomes statistically, making it suitable for exploring instructional strategies like guided reading.

The data collection techniques included reading comprehension tests, observation checklists, student reflection journals, and semi-structured interviews. Data collection techniques included classroom observations, student interviews, teacher field notes, and reading performance tasks. Observations focused on student engagement, participation, and use of reading strategies during the sessions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with

selected students to explore their perceptions of the guided reading experience and its impact on their confidence and reading habit .(Madrigal, n.d.) The research was conducted at a public senior high school in Indonesia, involving an English teacher and 30 eleventh-grade students as participants. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting students who demonstrated a range of reading abilities from struggling to proficient readers based on prior assessments and teacher recommendation (Meletiou-Mavrotheris et al. 2018).

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing the researcher to identify recurring patterns and key themes related to student development, instructional effectiveness, and classroom dynamics. The analysis followed a systematic coding process, starting with data familiarization, generating initial codes, identifying themes, and interpreting the findings in relation to existing theories and literature. To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher applied strategies such as triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. According to (Kiili and Kulju 2024). While reading, students engaged in silent and shared reading, using strategies like skimming and annotating. Post-reading tasks included comprehension exercises and group discussions. Through this methodological approach, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of how guided reading can serve as an empowering strategy for enhancing reading skills in senior high school students.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

One of the most significant findings from the guided reading intervention was the substantial improvement in students' reading comprehension. Initially, many students demonstrated difficulty in identifying main ideas, making inferences, and synthesizing information from texts. After consistent exposure to guided reading sessions, students showed marked improvement in their ability to comprehend and respond to both literal and inferential question.(Gyimah 2021) This development can be attributed to the explicit instruction in comprehension strategies such as predicting, summarizing, and questioning, which were embedded in each session. Research supports the idea that guided reading facilitates the acquisition of these critical strategies by allowing learners to engage in structured yet flexible reading experiences tailored to their individual needs (Dobson and Dobson 2021).

Another crucial outcome observed during the study was the improvement in students' vocabulary knowledge. Throughout the guided reading sessions, learners were introduced to a wide range of vocabulary items embedded within authentic, level-appropriate texts. Teachers facilitated vocabulary acquisition by encouraging students to infer word meanings from context, engage in discussions about new words, and use them in sentences. This approach aligns with emphasis on the importance of context in vocabulary development, highlighting that learners are more likely to retain new words when they encounter them in meaningful and repeated contexts (Pyo et al. 2023). Students began incorporating these new words into their oral and written language, indicating not only memorization but also functional application of vocabulary.

Reading fluency, which encompasses accuracy, rate, and prosody, also showed notable improvements among participants. At the start of the study, many students read slowly and without expression, often stumbling over complex words (Hamra and Syatriana 2012). Through guided reading, which involved repeated reading, teacher modeling, and peer support, students gradually developed smoother and more expressive reading. By the end of the intervention, students were able to read with greater confidence and natural rhythm, making their reading more enjoyable and comprehensible. This outcome is consistent with findings emphasized that repeated and supported reading is key to developing fluency, especially among adolescent readers.(Alemu, Defa, and Bedada 2023)

Student engagement during reading activities significantly increased throughout the implementation of guided reading. In traditional whole-class reading settings, students often appeared disengaged, with minimal participation or interaction with the text. However, the small-group nature of guided reading encouraged active participation, fostered a sense of accountability, and made students feel more connected to the learning process.(Hamra and Syatriana 2012). They were more inclined to ask questions, express opinions, and discuss ideas openly. This increased engagement, which posits that learners are more motivated and involved when they feel a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness within the learning environment (Lovett et al. 2021).A notable change observed in the study was the enhancement of students' confidence in reading. Many students who initially felt intimidated by texts, especially when reading aloud, gradually overcame their anxiety and began participating more willingly in reading tasks. The supportive and non-threatening environment of guided reading groups allowed students to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them without fear of judgment (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2011). As their skills improved, so did their self-perception as capable readers. This finding supports theory of self-efficacy, which emphasizes the role of mastery experiences in building confidence and motivation in learners.

Guided reading enabled the teacher to implement differentiated instruction effectively, accommodating students with diverse reading abilities and learning styles. By grouping students based on their instructional reading level, the teacher could tailor activities and discussions to match the needs of each group.(Fischer and Guzel 2023) More advanced students tackled analytical tasks, while less proficient readers received targeted support in decoding and comprehension. This individualized approach is supported by (Ortega 2025), who advocates for differentiation as a means to promote equity and maximize learning outcomes for all students.

The structure of guided reading inherently promotes collaborative learning, and this was evident in the way students interacted during sessions. Learners worked together to decode challenging passages, interpret textual meanings, and reflect on their understanding.(Robinette 2023). Peer discussion encouraged deeper processing of information and helped students see multiple perspectives. This collaborative aspect also fostered a supportive community where learners could rely on one another sociocultural theory underscores the value of social interaction in learning, suggesting that knowledge is constructed through dialogue and shared experiences. Perhaps the most impactful finding was the progress made by struggling readers. Students who previously displayed little interest in reading or who consistently underperformed in assessments began to show signs of improvement. The structured and supportive nature of guided reading sessions gave them the tools and confidence needed to engage with texts meaningfully(Teng and Zhang 2020). Their increased participation and performance in class reflected a sense of empowerment and a belief in their ability to succeed. This finding assertion that struggling readers benefit significantly from small-group, differentiated reading instruction tailored to their specific needs.

Guided reading did more than enhance basic reading skills; it also played a crucial role in developing students' critical thinking(Robinette 2023).As students became more comfortable with texts, they began to analyze characters' motives, question author intentions, and draw connections between the content and their own experiences. These higher-order thinking activities were integrated naturally into the discussions and fostered through open-ended questioning by the teacher (Grabe and Stoller 2019).This evolution mirrors Bloom's Taxonomy, in which analysis, evaluation, and synthesis are considered essential components of advanced cognitive development in learners.

Students expressed a noticeable increase in their motivation to read, both within and outside the classroom. Interviews revealed that students found the guided reading sessions enjoyable and appreciated having a choice in the reading materials. The sense of accomplishment they felt after completing texts and successfully participating in discussions contributed to a positive feedback loop, reinforcing their desire to read more. This motivation is a key predictor of sustained academic success identified motivation as a central factor in engaged reading.(Alemu, Defa, and Bedada 2023).

Another noteworthy outcome was the development of students' textual analysis skills. Through guided reading, students learned to examine literary devices, narrative structure, and authorial purpose.(Krashen 2004).They began to identify foreshadowing, irony, and symbolism in texts, which enriched their understanding and appreciation of literature. These analytical skills were cultivated through targeted teacher prompts and group discussions that encouraged close reading. Such capabilities are particularly important in preparing students for high-stakes assessments and academic writing.The guided reading model contributed to an overall improvement in classroom dynamics. Students formed more positive relationships with peers due to the collaborative structure of the sessions. They were also more likely to engage respectfully in dialogue and support one another's learning. Teachers reported that students became more cooperative, attentive, and reflective during literacy instruction.(Unesco 2017). This finding aligns with research which highlights the importance of positive peer interaction and emotional safety in effective classroom environments.

Throughout the sessions, the teacher used scaffolding techniques to gradually release responsibility to the students. This process included modeling, guided practice, and independent application. Over time, students became less reliant on the teacher's prompts and more confident in navigating texts independently. (Mertler 2024).This strategic scaffolding approach is consistent with Wood. which emphasizes the role of guided support in helping learners bridge the gap between current ability and potential performance.

Students began transferring reading strategies learned in guided reading to other academic subjects and real-life contexts. For instance, they applied summarization and questioning techniques when reading science or social studies texts. This transfer of skills underscores the versatility of reading strategies and the importance of teaching them in ways that transcend subject boundaries.(Golo and TADO 2024). It also indicates that students were not just memorizing techniques but internalizing them as tools for lifelong learning.

The implementation of guided reading also prompted significant professional growth for the teacher. Through regular reflection and assessment, the teacher gained deeper insights into students' reading needs and adapted instruction accordingly(Pyo et al. 2023).The process fostered a more responsive and reflective teaching practice, wherein planning and instruction were continuously informed by student progress and feedback. This evolution is in line with concept of the reflective practitioner, which advocates for continuous teacher learning through practice (Teng and Zhang 2020).

Finally, the study highlighted both the potential and the challenges of sustaining guided reading practices in high school settings. While the benefits were clear, issues such as time management, scheduling, and resource availability posed challenges.(Braun and Clarke 2006).Teachers interested in implementing guided reading at this level need institutional support, professional development, and sufficient planning time. With these supports in place, guided reading can be a sustainable and impactful instructional approach that fosters deep and lasting improvements in students' reading proficiency(Gyimah 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the impact of guided reading sessions on improving the reading skills of senior high school students, responding to the persistent challenges faced by learners in areas such as comprehension, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and critical thinking. The research employed a qualitative descriptive method involving classroom observations, student interviews, and reading assessments. Through this comprehensive approach, the study was able to gather authentic, contextualized data that revealed both the academic and emotional growth of the students throughout the intervention. The guided reading model proved highly effective in addressing varied student needs by providing differentiated instruction in small, supportive groups. The findings demonstrated that students not only improved in core literacy skills, but also showed heightened engagement, confidence, and motivation to read.

The interactive, student-centered design of guided reading created opportunities for active participation, meaningful dialogue, and collaboration, which were especially beneficial for struggling readers. Additionally, it encouraged critical thinking through text analysis and interpretation, equipping learners with higher-order literacy skills applicable across subjects and in real-world contexts. From a methodological perspective, the study's success highlights the importance of employing classroom-based, student-responsive approaches to language teaching. The qualitative framework allowed for deep exploration of learners' progress and the dynamic role of the teacher as facilitator. Moreover, the continuous feedback cycle between observation and instruction enabled adjustments that optimized student learning outcomes. Teacher reflection and adaptation played a crucial role in maintaining the effectiveness and relevance of the guided reading sessions.

In conclusion, guided reading stands as a powerful pedagogical strategy capable of transforming reading instruction at the senior high school level. Its capacity to deliver personalized, engaging, and cognitively rich literacy experiences supports the development of independent, proficient readers. For maximum impact, it is essential that schools provide training, planning time, and institutional support to enable sustainable implementation. This study recommends broader adoption of guided reading in secondary education and further research to explore its scalability, long-term impact, and integration with digital learning environments.

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