



Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Approach in Improving Students' Literacy Skills through the 15-Minute Literacy Program at Primary School

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Abstract: This research aims to analyze the effectiveness of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in improving students' literacy skills through a 15-minute literacy program. This approach is based on grouping students according to their ability levels, allowing teaching strategies to be tailored to students' needs. The method used in this study is descriptive with a qualitative approach, where data is collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Students are grouped based on their reading abilities: beginner, letters, words, paragraphs, and stories. The instruments used in this study are initial diagnostic and developmental tests conducted orally at the beginning and during the research process. These tests measure the overall development of students' reading skills over time. Data analysis is conducted to evaluate students' engagement and their responses to short but intensive literacy activities. The results indicate a significant improvement in students' literacy skills at all reading ability levels, both in comprehension and reading fluency. This improvement suggests that the TaRL approach can effectively enhance elementary school literacy skills. This research is expected to significantly contribute to developing more effective literacy strategies in elementary schools to optimize short yet effective learning time.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis efektivitas pendekatan Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) dalam meningkatkan kemampuan literasi siswa melalui program literasi 15 menit. Pendekatan ini didasarkan pada pengelompokan siswa berdasarkan tingkat kemampuan mereka, sehingga strategi pembelajaran dapat disesuaikan dengan kebutuhan siswa. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif dengan pendekatan kualitatif, di mana data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Siswa dikelompokkan berdasarkan tingkat kemampuan membaca, yaitu: pemula, huruf, kata, paragraf, dan cerita. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah tes diagnosis awal dan tes perkembangan, yang dilakukan secara lisan baik di awal maupun selama proses penelitian. Tes ini digunakan untuk mengukur perkembangan keterampilan membaca siswa secara menyeluruh dari waktu ke waktu. Analisis data dilakukan untuk mengevaluasi keterlibatan siswa serta respons mereka terhadap kegiatan literasi singkat namun intensif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam kemampuan literasi siswa di semua tingkat kemampuan membaca, baik dari segi pemahaman maupun kelancaran membaca. Peningkatan ini menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan TaRL dapat secara efektif meningkatkan keterampilan literasi siswa di sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi penting bagi pengembangan strategi literasi yang lebih efektif di sekolah dasar dalam mengoptimalkan waktu pembelajaran yang singkat namun tetap efektif.

A. Introduction

Literacy skills are a crucial educational foundation, supporting students' academic success and cognitive development. Literacy involves the ability to read words and encompasses critical, analytical, and creative thinking in understanding, interpreting, and applying information. Students who think critically while reading are better prepared to face everyday challenges because they can solve problems independently and innovatively. In other words, reading literacy is a tool for acquiring knowledge and a key to shaping broader and deeper thinking patterns. According to (Hidayanti & Wulandari, 2023), the role of education in a country is significant, and Literacy is one of the fundamental aspects of achieving quality education.

However, the low literacy levels in Indonesia still need to be solved. Research shows that many elementary school students still struggle to comprehend the texts they read. (Huang et al., 2022) revealed that only about 30% of elementary school students have adequate literacy skills. This directly impacts students' academic performance, as emphasized by (Blömeke et al., 2022), who pointed out that most students have not yet reached the expected literacy level.

International data highlights the low literacy levels among Indonesian students. The 2018 PISA results show that Indonesia is among the countries with low reading proficiency (Kemendikbud, 2019). The World Bank Report No. 16369-IND and IEA research in East Asia indicate that Indonesia ranks at the bottom in reading skills, scoring 51.7, lower than the Philippines and Thailand. Furthermore, the mastery of reading material among Indonesians still needs to improve, at only 30% (Meri et al., 2023).

According to research data, our country still needs to catch up in reading and mastering reading materials Susilowati (Siregar, 2023). This situation is worsened in several regions such as Maluku, NTT, NTB, and Papua, where more than 20% of second-grade students are still categorized as 'non-readers'—students who are unable to understand simple words in a text (Erfan et al., 2021). A survey by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2019) shows that NTB ranks 33rd out of 34 provinces in terms of reading proficiency (Meishanti & Fitri, 2022), while the AKSI (Indonesian Student Competency Assessment) survey places the province in 30th position out of 33 provinces in Literacy (Bardach & Klassen, 2020). Furthermore, an ACDP report notes that only one-third of 8th-grade students in West Nusa Tenggara can understand the content of a short story (Zamjani et al., 2020).

In this context, the analysis of the literacy gap in Indonesia shows that there are still significant challenges to be addressed, particularly regarding policies and the implementation of literacy programs at the elementary level. Most previous research has focused more on measuring literacy levels and has yet to offer concrete solutions to the problems. This study takes a different approach by applying the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) method, which focuses on grouping students according to their ability levels and adapting teaching methods to meet the individual needs of each student.

Facing these challenges, the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach becomes highly relevant. This approach groups students based on their ability levels rather than by age or grade to ensure that learning is tailored to individual needs. According to (Thijssen et al., 2022), students' literacy skills in TaRL are classified into five levels: beginner, letter, word, paragraph, and story. This approach provides a more focused learning experience, where students are taught how to read and trained to develop listening skills, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of texts (Toyamah & Usman, 2018). (Rokmana et al., 2023) further emphasize that the TaRL approach improves students' literacy skills and enhances their motivation and active participation in learning, as they feel they are learning at a pace that matches their abilities.

Although several studies have examined the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach, many have yet to highlight its practical implementation in Indonesia's primary education context, particularly in regions facing significant literacy challenges. This research aims to fill that gap by assessing the effectiveness of the TaRL approach in improving students' literacy skills through the 15-minute literacy program at elementary schools. Focusing on the local context, this study provides new insights into how the TaRL approach can be effectively applied in different situations and offers data and findings that can inform the development of literacy teaching methods in other schools.

The 15-minute literacy program in elementary schools uses short yet intensive learning periods to improve students' reading abilities gradually. In this program, students engage in daily 15-minute reading sessions, where the TaRL approach is applied to group them according to their literacy levels. According to (Zan, 2023), grouping students based on their abilities allows teachers to deliver more focused and relevant instruction, addressing gaps among students. In this way, lower-level students receive more intensive attention, while higher-level students are continuously challenged to advance their skills.

The TaRL approach aligns with the concept of differentiated instruction, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the needs and abilities of individual students. (Mitasari, 2023) Explains that differentiated instruction involves adapting teaching methods, materials, and assessments to meet the needs of various ability levels among students. In this context, the TaRL approach practically implements differentiated instruction, enabling students to learn in ways that best suit their needs. In implementing the 15-minute literacy program, the role of the teacher is crucial. Teachers do not merely function as instructors but also as facilitators who guide students through their learning process. This aligns with the view of (Umar, 2021), who emphasizes that in the TaRL approach, the teacher's role is to facilitate an active and engaged learning experience, allowing students to develop their literacy skills independently. By guiding students through ability-based grouping, teachers can provide more targeted instruction and help students set realistic learning goals.

The 15-minute literacy program also fosters a supportive environment where students can share their reading experiences. According to (Nuro & Kusumaningtyas, 2024), peer collaboration in reading activities can enhance student motivation and engagement. Through small group discussions or paired reading sessions, students can learn from one

another, exchange ideas, and support each other in understanding the texts they read. This social interaction is essential in Literacy, as it helps students feel more connected to the learning material and improves their comprehension.

However, challenges remain in implementing the TaRL approach and the 15-minute literacy program. One of the biggest challenges is the limited time and resources available in schools, especially in remote areas. According to (Mustafa et al., 2024), many primary schools in Indonesia need more appropriate reading materials and more time in their curriculum to conduct intensive literacy programs. This calls for innovation in delivering the program and using available resources. Despite these challenges, initial results from implementing the TaRL approach show promising potential. A study by (Puspitaningrum et al., 2024) found that programs focusing on grouping students by ability and providing appropriate instruction can improve learning outcomes, including literacy skills. In Indonesia, implementing this approach can help address the issue of low literacy proficiency in a more targeted and effective way.

This research seeks to answer several key questions: How is the TaRL approach applied in the 15-minute literacy program? What levels of reading ability are identified among the students? Moreover, how does implementing this method impact students' motivation and engagement in learning? Through this study, data and findings can be gathered to form the basis for developing literacy teaching methods in other schools. With a targeted approach like TaRL, it is anticipated that the challenges of low literacy skills among students can be addressed, positively impacting the quality of education in Indonesia.

The success of this study is also expected to contribute significantly to educational policy at both the local and national levels. By considering the specific characteristics of primary school students, this research can provide valuable information to policymakers and educators in designing a curriculum more responsive to students' needs. In a broader context, this study also has the potential to raise awareness about the importance of evidence-based approaches to improving Literacy and education in Indonesia. By integrating innovative and results-oriented approaches, this research is committed to providing real solutions to the challenge of low literacy rates in Indonesia. Implementing the 15-minute literacy program with the TaRL approach will create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students, laying a solid foundation for sustainable literacy development in the future.

Ultimately, this research not only aims to improve Literacy at the primary school level but also hopes to serve as a reference for future studies focusing on innovative educational approaches. In this way, the results of this study are expected to trigger positive changes in teaching practices, strengthen Literacy, and ultimately contribute to better educational development in Indonesia. In this endeavour, every student can enjoy an enjoyable, inclusive, and effective learning process regardless of their social and economic background or initial ability. Applying the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach is expected to create an adaptive learning environment where each student receives the

appropriate support based on their ability level. As a result, students will improve their reading skills and build confidence and motivation to continue learning, with the literacy skills they gain becoming a crucial foundation for their future success.

B. Method

This study uses a descriptive research design with a qualitative approach to analyze the effectiveness of the 15-minute reading literacy program by implementing the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) model at SDN 01 Sinar Petir. The research was conducted from August 26 to September 14, 2024, involving students as the research subjects. The location of the study is SDN 1 Sinar Petir, an area facing challenges in improving students' literacy skills. The subjects of this study are students from grades 1 to 4, totalling 93 students, who were purposively selected based on their reading abilities.

The instruments used in this study include an initial diagnostic test and a progress test, which were conducted to evaluate the improvement in students' reading literacy skills. These tests were administered orally and conducted twice – once at the beginning and again during the research process – to observe the development of students' reading abilities. Through these tests, data on the student's initial reading abilities and the progress achieved during the implementation of the 15-minute literacy program were gathered. Additional data were collected through direct observation during the 15-minute literacy activities, interviews with teachers and students, and an analysis of documents related to the learning activities. Observations assessed student engagement, reading abilities, material comprehension, and group dynamics during the literacy activities. During the implementation, students were divided into groups based on their reading abilities, consisting of five levels: beginner, letter, word, paragraph, and story. Each group received materials tailored to their needs and abilities, making the learning process more effective and focused.

In addition to observation, interviews with teachers were conducted to gain additional information about the implementation of the TaRL method and the teachers' views on the changes observed in the students. Interviews were also conducted with several students to understand their experiences during the literacy program better. All collected data were analyzed qualitatively by identifying themes from the observations and interviews.

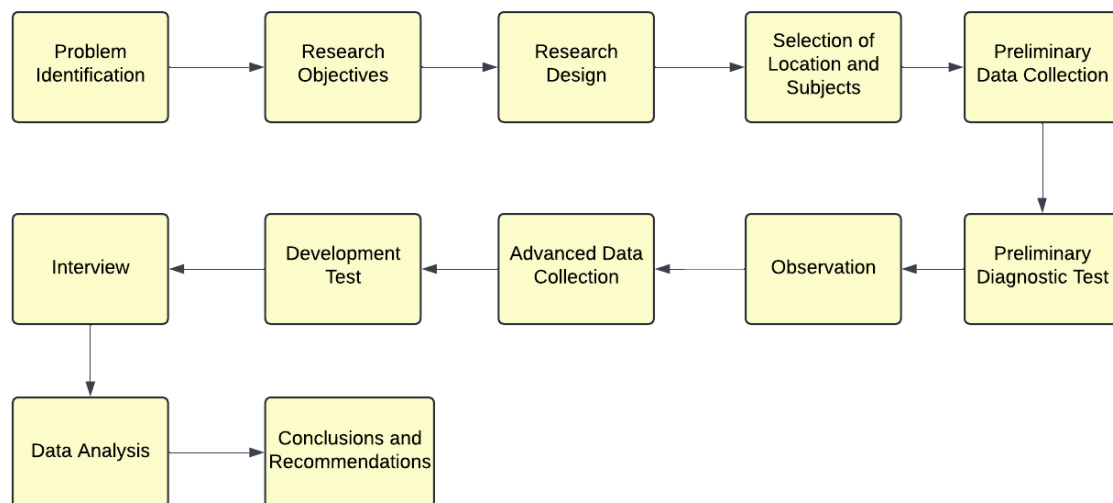


Figure 1. Research Flow Design

C. Result and Discussion

Result

The TaRL Learning Process: Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessment is a crucial initial step in the learning process, especially in the context of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach (Ray & Margaret, 2003). This study conducted the assessment over a month, starting with an initial test or diagnosis of students' reading abilities. This process involved calling students individually to read the prepared instruments. The primary aim of this assessment is to evaluate students' basic reading skills. This is done using simple tools to assess reading skills from long texts, sentences in paragraphs, and words and letters.

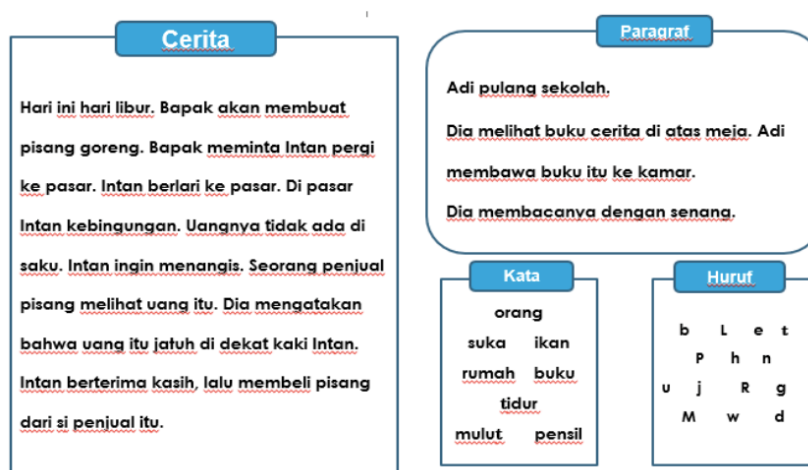


Figure 2. Diagnostic Instruments for Students' Literacy Skills

Source: (Ningsyih et al., 2022)

The image above displays a simple assessment format used to evaluate students' reading abilities: Story: Students are asked to read a story consisting of several paragraphs. This story serves to assess students' ability to read a full-length text. In this example, the story involves everyday activities like buying ingredients to make fried bananas. Paragraph: In this section, students are asked to read a shorter paragraph. The paragraph tells the story of Adi returning home from school and reading a book. The purpose is to test students' comprehension of short paragraphs. Word: This part focuses on the ability to read individual words. Example words provided include "person," "school," "house," etc. Letter: Students are also assessed based on their ability to recognize individual letters of the alphabet, such as "a," "b," "c," and so on.

Overall, this image presents a diagnostic tool designed to measure various levels of reading skills, from recognizing letters, words, and sentences to understanding longer texts. This is crucial for identifying students' skill levels and adjusting teaching methods to their needs, which aligns with the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach.

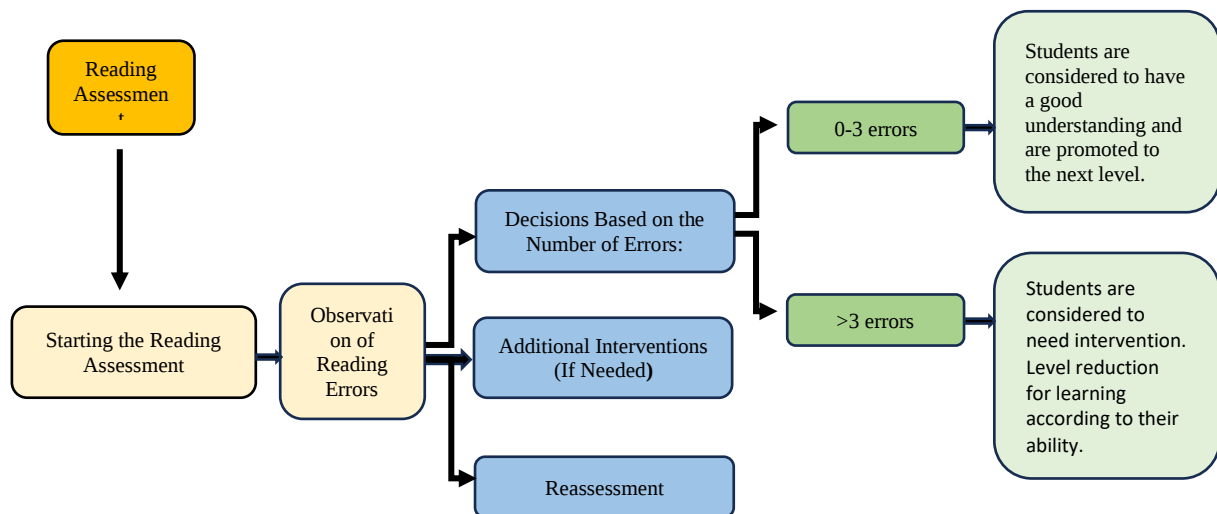


Figure 3. The Process of Assessing Students' Reading Abilities

The diagram above illustrates the assessment of students' reading abilities, where teachers conduct direct observations as students read sentences or words. Each mistake made during the reading process is recorded for analysis. Errors may include mispronunciations, word substitutions, or inability to recognize certain letters or words. If a student makes more than three mistakes, the student may not have mastered the material at that level. In this context, decisions are made based on the number of errors: students who make 0 to 3 mistakes are considered to have a good understanding and can be promoted to the next level, while students making more than three mistakes require extra attention, which may involve lowering their level to ensure they receive instruction that aligns with their current abilities. This assessment process not only evaluates reading ability but also aids teachers in designing appropriate and personalized interventions for each student. For example, students facing difficulties may receive additional time or extra practice before

being allowed to advance to a higher level. This way, the assessment becomes an effective tool for facilitating individualized learning and maximizing each student's potential. Additionally, the data generated from this assessment is valuable in discussions among teachers, parents, and school committee chairs, who can use this information to discuss student progress and plan more effective and targeted learning strategies. Thus, this initial assessment plays a crucial role in enhancing classroom learning quality (Dzahabiyah et al., 2024).

The results of this diagnostic assessment enable teachers to understand each student's characteristics and needs. Each student's reading level data is recorded in a provided table, creating a database to be analyzed in upcoming meetings. The success of this assessment is based on the understanding that student grouping should be conducted continuously, especially at the beginning of each semester, to adapt the material to the appropriate skill levels of new students.



Figure 4. Diagnostic Assessment Process
Source: (personal documentation)

Grouping

After conducting the initial assessment, the next step is to group students based on their reading ability assessment results. This grouping is divided into five categories: beginners, letters, words, paragraphs, and stories. Each group will receive different learning models and materials tailored to their skill levels.

Table 1. Grouping Students Based on Reading Ability Levels

Beginners	Letters	Words	Paragraphs	Stories
This category is intended for students who are just starting the	At this stage, students learn to recognize the letters of the alphabet,	Students begin to combine the letters into words. This category	Students learn to combine several words into sentences and	This category involves reading and understanding more complex

Beginners	Letters	Words	Paragraphs	Stories
reading process. The main focus is introducing them to letters, recognizing shapes and sounds, and building a solid foundation for further reading skills.	both uppercase and lowercase. This includes practising identification, writing, and correctly pronouncing letters, an essential initial step in learning to read.	focuses on introducing essential words, spelling, and pronunciation. Activities may include reading simple words and exercises for constructing and identifying words.	paragraphs at this stage. They are also taught about sentence structure, punctuation, and how to develop ideas in written form. Reading paragraphs also becomes an essential part of the learning activities in this category.	narrative texts. Students learn to analyze the content of the stories and understand the characters, plot, and themes. Activities here may also include retelling or discussing the stories they have read, which helps enhance their reading comprehension skills.

The table above explains the stages of reading development in students, from beginners to more proficient readers. This table outlines four categories of reading ability: Letters, Words, Paragraphs, and Stories. With clear grouping, teachers can design appropriate learning modules for each group. The learning process for beginners, letters, words, paragraphs, and story groups, is tailored to meet the specific needs of the students, allowing each student to learn most effectively.

1. Beginners Group

The beginner's group consists of students who still need to recognize letters or basic sounds. Learning for this group is organized through 12 activity packages designed to engage students and build a foundation in reading skills. These activities include the introduction of vowel and consonant letters, as well as various interactive activities that utilize enjoyable learning media. For example, students use letter cards and pictures of familiar objects as visual aids. These activities serve to recognize letters and train students to construct words and read simple words. This aligns with the perspective of (González-López, 2021), who emphasizes the importance of using visual aids in early learning to enhance student understanding.

At the end of each session, students are invited to provide feedback about their learning experiences using emoticon symbols, creating a positive learning atmosphere. According to Hattie (2009), constructive feedback can increase student engagement and motivate them to learn better.



Figure 5. Learning for the Beginners Group

Source: (personal documentation)

2. Letters Group

In the letters group, learning focuses on introducing and reinforcing reading abilities related to letters. Students in this group engage in more diverse and complex activities. Activities such as recognizing consonants and forming words aim to help students begin constructing simple words. The teacher acts as a facilitator, encouraging students to explore letters and syllables in a fun way. As stated by (Ramadani et al., 2024), social interaction in learning plays a significant role in students' cognitive development.

With this approach, students are expected to enhance their confidence in reading. Research shows that active involvement in the learning process can help students feel more comfortable and confident while reading (Sau & Ngandoh, 2024).



Figure 6. Learning Activities for the Letters Group

Source: (personal documentation)

3. Words Group

Students in the words group can already read simple words, so learning is focused on reinforcing reading skills and comprehension. Learning in this group includes activities that challenge students to think critically, such as completing sentences with missing words and creating sentences based on pictures. These activities train reading abilities and build

writing skills and understanding of grammar. Activities in the words group are designed to encourage students to interact more actively with the material. For example, they are invited to create sentences with the help of word cards and practice reading together. Through discussions and reflections after each session, students are expected to understand the material taught better and provide constructive feedback.



Figure 7. Learning Activities for the Words Group

Source: (personal documentation)

According to [Rachma et al \(2024\)](#), experiential and social interaction-based learning encourages students to better understand and absorb information. These activities invite students to participate actively so they learn to read, develop writing skills, and think critically.

4. Paragraphs Group

The paragraphs group involves students who can already read sentences and short paragraphs. In this group, the focus of learning is on enhancing students' reading comprehension and the correct use of grammar. Activities such as organizing sentences into paragraphs and reading together aim to strengthen students' understanding of more complex texts. The activities in this group are also designed to help students build critical thinking skills. For example, students are invited to discuss the content of the readings and identify critical information. Structured class discussions allow students to share their perspectives and receive feedback from their peers and teachers.



Figure 8. Learning Activities for the Paragraphs Group
Source: (personal documentation)

Tout (2020) emphasizes the importance of discussion in learning. Effective discussions encourage student engagement and help them develop critical thinking and analytical skills. Thus, the paragraph group allows students to practice and deepen their understanding of the readings.

5. Stories Group

The stories group comprises students with good reading skills who can handle longer texts. In this group, learning is focused on a deep comprehension of the reading material and the student's ability to summarize the content. Activities in this group include reading aloud, identifying the main ideas in comics, and rewriting the stories that have been read. The teacher in the stories group is responsible for encouraging students' creativity by introducing more complex texts and new reading challenges. Activities such as predicting events in the story and describing their favourite characters allow students to use their imagination.



Figure 9. Learning Activities for the Stories Group
Source: (personal documentation)

Research by [Purpura et al \(2011\)](#) states that literature-based learning can enhance students' comprehension skills and creativity. By using various learning resources, students are expected to understand texts more deeply and develop their critical thinking and creativity skills.

Assessment of Development

The implementation of learning using the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach was carried out for one month following a diagnostic assessment. At the end of this period, an assessment was conducted to evaluate student progress. The assessment instruments used include diagnostic assessment instruments, and teachers may also utilize other similar assessment tools or those they develop themselves. The research results indicate that students' reading abilities can improve thanks to quality teachers, appropriate teaching methods, and strategies, positively impacting students' academic achievement. Furthermore, it is crucial to establish a significant and ongoing relationship between teachers and students, as this relationship can influence students' flexibility in thinking and reading interests ([Meeks et al., 2014](#)). Additionally, teachers' knowledge during the learning process also significantly impacts students' learning achievements ([Banerji & Chavan, 2016](#)).

Discussion

The Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach aims to align learning materials with students' abilities, ensuring that every learner can learn according to their understanding level. Research conducted at SDN 1 Sinar Petir indicates a significant improvement in students' literacy skills after this approach was implemented, consistent with the fundamental concept of TaRL that emphasizes learning based on student's ability levels. Interviews with SDN 1 Sinar Petir teachers, such as Mrs. Okta, reveal that TaRL has positively impacted student motivation. She stated, "With TaRL, I can see individual progress in students, and they become more enthusiastic about learning because the materials taught match their ability levels." This aligns with the findings of ([Ningsyih et al., 2022](#)), which show that students taught using the TaRL approach experienced significant improvements in their literacy skills. This supports the hypothesis that ability-level-based learning enhances student motivation and learning outcomes.

However, field observations also found that some students, especially those with lower ability levels, often felt frustrated when the materials provided exceeded their capabilities. As Mr. Sahperi noted, "Sometimes we have to condense other materials, so the time for literacy becomes limited." This indicates a challenge in allocating time for literacy activities. Despite the effectiveness of the TaRL approach, implementing the 15-minute literacy program still requires adjustments to optimize results. The study also revealed a wide variation in students' ability levels, presenting a unique challenge in implementing TaRL. ([Sanisah et al., 2023](#)) Recorded that TaRL can enhance students' motivation to learn, which was evident in several students, such as Adi, a sixth grader who initially struggled

with letter recognition. However, after consistently participating in the 15-minute literacy program with the TaRL approach, Adi showed noticeable improvement in recognizing letters and gradually began to learn to spell. This is a concrete example of the connection between theory and achieved results, reinforcing (Syarifudin et al., 2022) findings that adjusting learning materials is crucial for increasing student engagement.

Nevertheless, challenges persist in implementing TaRL, particularly regarding resource limitations. Teachers often need help finding reading materials suitable for students' ability levels. Research by (Ahyar et al., 2022) emphasizes the importance of providing varied learning materials tailored to students' abilities. This lack of materials indicates a conflict between the expected outcomes and actual conditions on the ground, which still require improvements in resource provision to support the TaRL approach more effectively.

Overall, this study's results reinforce the concept that the TaRL approach is effective in enhancing students' literacy skills, particularly through the adjustment of materials that align with each student's ability level. However, the limitations of time and resources still need to be addressed to ensure better implementation of this program in the future.

D. Conclusion

Implementing the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in the 15-minute literacy activities at SDN 1 Sinar Petir has proven effective in improving students' reading abilities. By grouping students according to their skill levels, this approach maximizes individual potential and ensures that each student receives materials tailored to their needs. This supports the research hypothesis that appropriate grouping and targeted learning can significantly enhance student learning outcomes.

The results of this study have significant implications for educational practices in other schools. Applying the TaRL approach can serve as a model for developing better literacy programs and assisting schools in addressing the challenges of low reading skills at the primary level. Furthermore, this research can serve as a reference for policymakers to formulate more effective and sustainable literacy programs, thereby enhancing the overall quality of education in Indonesia.

Future research should explore further factors that may influence the successful implementation of the TaRL approach, such as teacher training, parental support, and community involvement. To obtain more comprehensive results, research could also involve more schools from diverse backgrounds. Thus, broader and more applicable recommendations for improving basic Literacy in Indonesia can be produced.

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