

Analysis Of The Application Of The Syllable Method In Reading Learning For Grade III Elementary School Students

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze and describe the application of the syllabic method in reading instruction for third-grade students at SDN 1 Jenggala in the 2025/2026 academic year. The background of this study is based on the finding that some students experience a decline in attention and enthusiasm when reading activities monotonously focus on the use of textbooks, which impacts their reading abilities. This study utilizes a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. Data collection was carried out through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with classroom teachers, students, and the principal, as well as documentation. The results showed that the implementation process of the syllabic method in grade III went very well and consistently through the stages of planning, implementation (initial introduction, blending, word construction), and evaluation. Reading exercises were carried out repeatedly so that students did not just spell but were able to read fluently and understand the content of the reading text. The main supporting factors include the use of a play-based learning approach (word guessing) which triggers joy, enthusiasm, and teacher appreciation that increases student confidence. Meanwhile, external inhibiting factors consist of limited time due to dense curriculum targets, and the lack of continuity in reading learning at home. Internal inhibiting factors include students' cognitive load when facing closed syllables (consonants) and double consonants. Overall, the application of the syllabic method is highly effective and has a significant positive impact on improving the reading skills of students in the lower grades.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a dynamic and ongoing process designed to prepare students for their future roles. As mandated by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, education is provided through guidance, teaching, and training to develop students' potential and develop them into quality human resources. One of the main pillars supporting the success of basic education is mastery of language skills. Language skills are crucial because language is the primary means of communication, social interaction, information acquisition, and the development of human knowledge (Djamaluddin & Wardana, 2021).

Language skills encompass four main domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these four skills, reading holds a fundamental position as the foundation of literacy. According to Nuraini and Silvia et al. (2021), reading is a unique basic skill that plays a crucial role in human life because it functions as a receptive tool for acquiring information. The process of acquiring reading skills begins early, when students learn to recognize visual representations of

language through letters, string them together into syllables, form words, and then combine them into sentences and paragraphs. Without adequate reading skills, students will lose the "master key" to unlocking various academic disciplines in school (Widodo & Indraswati, 2022).

For elementary school students, especially in the lower grades (grades I-III), early reading skills require routine and continuous training. This is because the subject matter is predominantly presented in written text. Students who experience delays or difficulties in reading will immediately face structural barriers in understanding the entire subject, which in turn can drastically reduce their academic achievement and learning motivation (Muammar, 2022). Therefore, educators bear a significant responsibility to not only dictate material but also to select and implement learning strategies and methods that are innovative, effective, and relevant to the characteristics of students' cognitive development (Syah, 2021).

One pedagogical approach considered highly effective in bridging students' difficulties in learning to read is the syllabic method. The syllabic method operates on synthetic-analytic principles, where the learning process does not emphasize abstract memorization of the alphabet, but rather begins with the introduction of sound units in the form of syllables. This method teaches students to read in a gradual manner, introducing various combinations of consonants and vowels (such as ba, bi, bu, be, bo), which are then arranged into meaningful words and sentences. The essential advantage of the syllabic method is that it avoids students of the cognitive burden of spelling each letter. This can significantly accelerate the process of mastering initial reading skills and facilitate the breakdown of words into their constituent elements (Mulyati & Cahyani, 2021; Tarigan, 2021).

However, the objective reality in the field often presents unique challenges for educators. Based on preliminary observations conducted in grade III of SDN 1 Jenggala during the 2025/2026 academic year, it was identified that most students initially demonstrated quite high enthusiasm for learning. However, this enthusiasm gradually decreased drastically when teacher-facilitated reading activities focused solely on a monotonous, conventional approach using textbooks. This textual and less interactive learning model not only led to boredom but also exposed the lag in some students who still stuttered, often stopped on one word, and even mispronounced letter sounds.

This situation creates an academic gap within the classroom, considering that by third grade, students should have transitioned from the 'learning to read' phase to the 'reading to learn' phase. To address this literacy emergency, third-grade teachers at SDN 1 Jenggala took strategic intervention steps by implementing the syllable method as an alternative primary solution. This method was not implemented rigidly, but rather integrated into various dynamic activities such as gradual reading, guided discussions, and word guessing games, thereby re-enabling active and student-centered learning (Palupi et al., 2023).

The urgency of this research is supported by the findings of several relevant previous studies. Dewi et al. (2022) concluded that the syllabic method successfully improved early reading skills in first grade, although students still encountered challenges when faced with single letters (consonants) at the end of words. Similarly, Aini (2022) demonstrated a progressive improvement in reading skills through a measurable cycle of classroom action. Aziz (2024) and Novianti (2024) also confirmed that the syllabic method, both independently and combined with visual media, had significant quantitative and qualitative effects on students' reading skills. Arisma et al. (2023) also emphasized that the syllabic method was closely correlated with increased student activity, interest, and self-confidence in the classroom.

Based on the literature reviewed above, it is clear that the majority of previous research tends to focus on first-grade students. Research examining the implementation of the syllable method as a 'literacy transition savior' for third-grade students, complete with a comprehensive analysis of the supporting and inhibiting factors in rural areas (such as North Lombok), is still very limited. Understanding how this method is actually implemented, the structural and psychological obstacles faced, and what supports enable its success is crucial for developing reading learning strategies in elementary schools. The novelty of this research therefore lies specifically in its focus

on third-grade students as a transitional cohort moving from the "learning to read" phase to the "reading to learn" phase, combined with an in-depth, contextualized analysis of the supporting and inhibiting factors of syllable method implementation within a rural, geographically distinct setting in North Lombok, an angle that has not been comprehensively examined by prior studies which predominantly center on first-grade learners in urban or semi-urban contexts.

Based on the problems and research gaps, the researcher felt very moved and saw the need to conduct an in-depth study. Therefore, this research was formulated with the main objectives: (1) Analyze and describe the process of implementing the syllable method in reading learning for grade III students of SDN 1 Jenggala in the 2025/2026 academic year, and (2) Identify supporting factors and inhibiting factors in implementing the method in the field. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical implications in enriching the treasury of basic education science, as well as contributing practical recommendations for teachers, principals, and policymakers at the institutional level to improve the quality of student literacy in the future.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. A qualitative approach is a research tradition that emphasizes efforts to understand social and humanitarian phenomena in depth, holistically, and naturally based on the perceptions and direct experiences of the research subjects (Hasibuan, 2021). Within this framework, the researcher acts directly as the primary instrument (human instrument) tasked with collecting data, observing live interactions, and interpreting the meaning of various pedagogical actions occurring in the classroom without manipulating any variables (Moleong, 2021). This descriptive research method was chosen with the primary objective of providing a detailed, structured, and factual picture of the objective reality related to the implementation of reading learning in schools.

This research activity took place at Jenggala 1 Public Elementary School, which is administratively located in Tanak Song Lauk Hamlet, Tanjung Village, Tanjung District, North Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province. This location was chosen based on two main considerations: first, this school is actively implementing a special literacy policy using the syllable method to catch up on the reading skills of third-grade students; and second, Jenggala 1 Public Elementary School has a high commitment profile to language learning innovation (proven by its Adiwiyata and Child-Friendly school status). Intensive data collection was carried out during the period of June 2026.

The data sources in this study are classified into two categories, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data is empirical data obtained directly from the field through interactions, observations, and conversations with key informants (Wani, 2024). Key informants in this study include: (1) Grade III Teacher of SDN 1 Jenggala (Mrs. Agustini, S.Pd.) as the designer and implementer of the method; (2) Grade III students as the learning subjects; and (3) Principal of SDN 1 Jenggala (Mr. Bambang Hartoyo, S.Pd.) as the person responsible for managerial policies. These three informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, based on the consideration that each possesses direct, information-rich knowledge relevant to the focus of the study: the classroom teacher as the direct designer and implementer of the syllable method, the students as the direct recipients and objects of the intervention, and the principal as the policymaker responsible for the school's literacy program. The number of informants was deliberately limited to these three key informants because this study employs a qualitative descriptive design that prioritizes the depth and richness of information (information power) over the breadth of respondents, and data collection was considered adequate once no new information relevant to the research focus emerged from further interaction with the informants (data saturation). Meanwhile, secondary data serves as a complement and strengthens the validity of primary data. Secondary data is collected from various school administrative documents, such as the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) / Teaching Module, student attendance books, Indonesian language textbooks, learning achievement records, and visual documentation (photos) of activities during the learning process.

To obtain reliable and meaningful data, researchers used three data collection techniques: passive participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were conducted by directly observing the dynamics of classroom interactions, student responses, and teachers' procedural steps in implementing the syllable method. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using flexible interview guidelines, allowing researchers to explore students' affective perceptions (such as boredom, anxiety, or enthusiasm), specific barriers perceived by teachers, and the principal's strategic perspective (Rosyidi, 2022). The interview guideline was developed in the form of a semi-structured question grid covering three main indicators, namely the implementation process, the supporting factors, and the inhibiting factors of the syllable method, which was prepared in advance based on the research focus and reviewed by the research team before being used in the field. Similarly, the observation activity was guided by an observation checklist covering aspects of the teacher's instructional steps, student responses, and classroom interaction dynamics, so that the data collected remained focused and consistent across observation sessions. Documentation studies complemented this process by reviewing student worksheets (LKPD) and visual teaching materials (syllable cards).

Qualitative data analysis in this study was conducted continuously, referring to the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (Sugiyono, 2019). This model consists of three main, simultaneous activity flows. First, data condensation, which is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data from field notes into manageable information. Second, data display, in which researchers arrange the condensed data into a systematic, narrative-descriptive text for easy understanding. Third, conclusion drawing and verification, which is the stage of formulating the essential meaning of the phenomenon being studied based on solid evidence and confirming it back in the field.

The credibility and validity of findings are essential for the quality of qualitative research. Therefore, the researchers implemented data validity testing procedures using triangulation and member checking techniques (Alfansyur & Mariyani, 2021). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing and cross-referencing information obtained from teachers with student testimonies and statements from the principal. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing the consistency between field observations, interview transcripts, and lesson plan documentation. Furthermore, member checking was implemented on the final day of data collection by discussing the preliminary conclusions with the third-grade teacher (Mrs. Agustini) to ensure that the research narrative aligned with the intent and reality of her actual actions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Process of Implementing the Syllable Method

The dynamics of reading learning in grade III of SDN 1 Jenggala, which demographically consists of 25 students (10 boys and 15 girls), demonstrate a crucial academic landscape. At this grade level, students should ideally have reached the stage of mastery of 'reading comprehension'. However, initial observations revealed glaring gaps. Several students appeared to withdraw from class activities; they preferred silence and showed clear signs of anxiety when asked to read aloud (reading anxiety). These students still stuttered and often paused for long periods when spelling letters when presented with standard storybooks. Responding to this micro-crisis, the class teacher initiated a specific pedagogical intervention by implementing the syllabic method to prevent further lag.

Based on direct observation and review of teaching modules, the implementation of the syllabic method is managed through three systematic stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the planning stage, teachers prepare specific materials by temporarily eliminating excessively long narrative texts. Teachers formulate clear instructional objectives, namely, that students be able to combine basic syllables into meaningful words. Teachers also prepare supporting visual instruments such as syllable cards, writing on the board, and student worksheets (LKPD) (Abdurrahman, 2021).

Entering the implementation phase, the teacher begins the introduction process from the simplest foundation, namely introducing basic consonant and vowel combination sounds (e.g., ba, bi, bu, be, bo). In an interview session, Ms. Agustini (Grade III Teacher) explained the mechanism:

"The implementation stage begins with an initial illustration, inviting students to read together to see how far they have mastered the word. Next, I introduce the syllable method... students are asked to connect two simple syllables. For those who still have difficulty, I provide individual guidance."

After the initial introduction, the activity progresses to the synthesis stage. Students are guided to combine syllables into a word, for example, ba + ju = shirt, bo + la = ball. This is followed up with choral reading, where the teacher and students pronounce the word together repeatedly (repetition). Confirmation of the effectiveness of this strategy was conveyed directly by student Nadia Dewi, who stated that she was taught how to connect words first before being given time to practice independently with her deskmate.

The final stage is evaluation and reflection, where teachers assess the students' synthetic (assembling) and analytical (breaking down words into syllables) understanding. Teachers facilitate independent reading exercises of simple texts, then check pronunciation fluency. This process integrates regular repetition; students detected as still reading haltingly are called to the front or given special guidance at their desks, ensuring that no students are overlooked in literacy improvement efforts.

3.2 Supporting Factors for Reading Learning

The successful implementation of this method is strongly supported by several synergistic driving factors. First, the educator's creativity in modifying the method is key. The syllabic method in this class is not presented in a dry theoretical manner, but rather brought to life through the integration of a game-based learning approach. The teacher packages the lesson using a word guessing game. The classroom atmosphere, which was previously tense during conventional reading lessons, transforms into a relaxed and joyful atmosphere. Ms. Agustini emphasized:

"The advantage of this method is that students read more fluently without spelling. During implementation, students were very enthusiastic, especially during the word guessing game stage... Reading exercises were carried out repeatedly so they understood the content of the story."

Second, intrinsic supporting factors from the students themselves include high enthusiasm and positive reception. The syllable method reduces the burden on students' working memory because they no longer have to memorize dozens of separate alphabets and assemble them in their heads, but instead directly use pre-made sound blocks (syllables). A student named Muhammad Zidan testified:

"Now I can read short story books. I like this method because it's a game in class. I rarely get the letters wrong anymore. I like this one that breaks up the syllables; it's quicker."

Third, systemic support from the school. The principal of SDN 1 Jenggala, Mr. Bambang Hartoyo, was very visionary in establishing a literacy policy for elementary grades. This support was manifested in granting teachers pedagogical freedom to adapt the curriculum and providing adequate infrastructure, such as illustrated print media (Palupi et al., 2023).

3.3 Factors Inhibiting Implementation

Despite its success, the implementation of this method is not without various obstacles that hinder its teaching effectiveness. These obstacles can be categorized into external and internal dimensions. The largest external obstacles are closely related to instructional time management and curricular demands. As a third-grade teacher, Ms. Agustini is burdened by the burden of learning outcomes (CP), where most students are targeted to be able to analyze text critically (advanced reading comprehension). This results in a very limited allocation of time for special guidance on beginning reading (Syah, 2021). Furthermore, the lack of

continuity in reading practice between the school and home environments slows down students' progress toward fluency.

Meanwhile, internal barriers stem from students' cognitive-phonological aspects when responding to more complex language structures. Specific obstacles arise when students encounter closed syllables (consonants at the end of a syllable) and double consonants. This was clearly expressed by student Pajri Ramdan:

"It's difficult when you find syllables that have a consonant letter at the end, like kas-ur or pin-tu. What's more difficult is when there are the letters 'ng' and 'ny'; they often get mixed up."

Difficulty associating abstract visual codes with sounds (such as the 'ng' cluster representing a single nasal phoneme) causes students to confuse words when reading quickly. This heightened cognitive memory load slows the transition to composing whole words, requiring educators to provide constant repetition and check for understanding.

3.4 Academic Discussion

The reality captured in the implementation of the syllable method in grade III of SDN 1 Jenggala represents a direct application of the analytical-synthetic learning principle within the realm of cognitivism. The finding that reading practice requires repeated practice aligns with the principle of meaningful learning, where the brain's automatic process of recognizing grapheme-phoneme relationships can only be formed through intensive practice. This approach successfully overcomes the weaknesses of the alphabetic spelling model, which, according to Tarigan (2021), often burdens elementary school children's short-term memory structures.

Teachers' creativity in combining the syllable method with games (such as word guessing) confirms the thesis that affective aspects (emotions and motivation) are inseparable from successful cognitive processing (Widodo & Indraswati, 2022). When reading anxiety is suppressed through a supportive and appreciative atmosphere, students feel free to express their reading without fear of judgment. This courage is a key modality emphasized by Arisma et al. (2023) in accelerating the transition of students from slow-reading classes to academically independent students.

However, the phenomenon of obstruction in closed syllables and double consonants ('ng', 'ny') confirms the argument of Abdurrahman (2021), who highlighted that one of the dominant difficulties in mild dyslexia or reading delay is confusion in distinguishing the visual form of compound letters. This finding provides strong justification that in special cases in grade III, intervention should not stop at providing basic material, but must be accompanied by differentiated guidance and specific repetition of complex phoneme clusters. Furthermore, the challenge of synchronizing higher-grade curriculum targets with basic skill improvement emphasizes the need for a systemically institutionalized literacy time management policy (such as a zero literacy program) throughout the school. Critically, although the findings of this study reinforce the effectiveness of the syllable method as reported in earlier studies (Dewi et al., 2022; Aini, 2022; Arisma et al., 2023), they also reveal a nuance that has received less attention in the existing literature, namely that difficulties with closed syllables and double consonants persisted even after the method was implemented consistently. This indicates that the syllable method, despite being highly effective as a foundational strategy, should not be positioned as a single, generalizable solution, but rather as one component within a broader, differentiated literacy intervention, particularly for students who continue to display specific phonological processing difficulties. Comparative or longitudinal research would therefore be valuable to critically examine whether these persistent difficulties diminish over a longer intervention period or require a distinct, targeted pedagogical approach.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on a series of qualitative data analysis and theoretical discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of the syllable method in learning to read for third-grade students of SDN 1 Jenggala is very effective and consistent. This application is constructed through three structured cycles: planning (selection of simple word material), implementation (introduction of consonant-vowel sounds, guidance on syllable synthesis, and repeated practice), and evaluation (checking fluency and understanding of word meaning). The teacher acts responsively by combining this method with a word guessing game approach, which has been empirically proven to be able to reduce the burden of student anxiety and increase reading fluency without having to go through the process of spelling each alphabet.

The dynamics of this success are supported by crucial supporting factors, including the use of interactive methods that bring joy, high student enthusiasm for learning due to the simplicity of the method structure, and supportive appreciation from teachers and support from school management. However, this implementation still faces external inhibiting factors, namely the lack of free time allocation due to clashing with the dense target of the advanced reading curriculum in grade III, as well as low learning repetition in the home environment. In the internal domain, specific obstacles arise when students try to string together closed syllables (consonants) and identify double consonants (such as 'ng' and 'ny'), which drain children's visual-phonological working memory.

This study recommends that elementary school educators continue to enrich their differentiated literacy strategies, modify teaching with a variety of media, and provide dedicated remedial tutoring without being constrained by rigid curriculum targets. Schools are also expected to establish stronger communication with parents and guardians to create a sustainable learning ecosystem between school and home, so that the mission of liberating students from illiteracy can be fully and holistically realized.

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