

# Teachers' Understanding and Mastery of the Syntax of Advanced Reading for Elementary School Students during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the understanding and mastery of elementary school (SD) teachers in Central Java in applying the syntax of advanced reading learning models during the covid-19 pandemic. Focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted by involving 30 elementary school teachers using the open inquiry method. The discussion discussed several topics related to the teacher's perspective on the application of the advanced reading learning model that was applied during the pandemic, and the advantages and disadvantages of the learning model that became the basis for analyzing the extent to which teachers understand and master the learning models they have implemented in schools so far. Interactive analysis was used to collect, reduce, present, and draw conclusions from the data obtained. The results of this study indicate that during the covid-19 pandemic, teachers implemented advanced reading learning models both online and blended learning. Blended learning is more widely applied because if it is only online learning, there are many technical obstacles and students still need face-to-face teacher assistance. Most teachers stated that they needed a learning model that could be flexibly applied to online, offline, and mixed learning to maximize advanced reading skills. Teachers also need innovative and varied learning models to learn during the pandemic, which is uncertain when it will end.

**Keywords:** *Comprehension, Mastery, Syntax, Advanced Reading, Elementary School*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of human resources is considered as a fundamental factor in advancing and developing the state and nation. One of the skills required in this 21st century is literacy skill. Literacy (reading and writing) must exist in individuals and is more dominant than oratory skills (speaking and listening). A good and high literacy skill will later have an impact on the information obtained, as well as someone's personal life and how he lives his life. Referring to the statement put forward by Hasan (Farihatin, 2013), basic literacy skill is critical for an individual's survival to succeed in academic life. Literacy must be a weapon for the Indonesian generation, and it must be taught and instilled in the individual from a young age.

Reading skills are lifelong skills that can be used in school and throughout one's life. In reading activities, students must be able to analyze the truth of the information contained in the reading material [1]. According to [2] reading is a basic life skill. [3] in [4] argued reading (literacy) activity is not

limited to both receptive and passive activities. It does, however, expect and encourage its readers to think actively. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and professional success will inevitably be lost. Learners with satisfactory reading skills will later be able to obtain a variety of information from a variety of written reading sources that they read. Reading is one of the most challenging fields in the education system. The ever increasing demand for a high level of literacy in our technological society exacerbates the problem [5].

According to [6], reading is defined as an activity with such a broad scope that it encompasses both mental and physical aspects. Physical activity has been linked to visual acuity and eye movement. The mental activity includes comprehension and memory. One of the factors that affect the level of students' advanced reading ability is the learning model. The learning model is a method used by educators to achieve various learning objectives [7]. Learning to read in school is divided into two stages. It is referred to as preliminary reading activity for students in grades I, II, and III, and

advanced reading activity for students in grades IV, V, and VI. Reading for beginners is defined as learning that focuses on reading skills that are limited to intonation and pronunciation [8]. Advanced reading can be defined as the level of mastery of the reading process that is intended to obtain the content of information or messages in writing. In some cases, advanced reading is used as a reference and guide during the recoding and decoding process [9]. There are two levels of advanced reading: learning to read and reading to learn. Learning to read level is used to help students understand the writing system, which is a visual representation language. Meanwhile, the level of reading to learn is the level of mastery of the reading process required to obtain the information or messages contained in the writing. These two levels are a continuum. In this case, at the beginning reading level, which focuses on mastering the writing system, an individual has also begun to learn to read further with even limited understanding [10]. Commonly, the stages of reading development in elementary school children are classified as emergent, early, transitional, and extending [11]. Similarly, the presentation of teacher learning should be based on these stages to support children's reading development and ensure that they get enough practice with texts at their level of learning or development [12], [13]. Learning in the classroom is support for learners so that there is an important process in learning, namely the acquisition of knowledge [14].

According to the results of the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Indonesia was ranked 74th out of 79 countries in the category of reading skills [15]. This demonstrates that reading ability is quite low in Indonesia. Several factors can contribute to this low reading ability, including external and internal factors. From an internal perspective, it is stated that students' intelligence is lacking, so they have difficulty combining letters into a word with a specific meaning. Learners frequently forget the shape of the same letter, and their motivation is low. Students who experience this difficulty are also affected by external factors, specifically a dysfunctional family and a school environment that does not provide support. A good educational environment includes a wide range of participants in the learning process. The primary participants in the teaching and learning process are teachers, students, and parents. A positive interaction between the three components can aid in the achievement of the best possible learning outcomes [16].

Referring to the statement Joyce & Weil in

[17], this learning model consists of five basic elements, which are as follows: (1) this syntax is based on various operational learning steps, (2) this social system is defined by existing norms or atmosphere, and it also applies to ongoing learning, (3) this reaction principle specifies how teachers should react to, perceive, and act toward students, (4) this support system includes the entire learning environment, materials, tools, and facilities that assist in the learning process, and (5) instructional and nurturing effects on learning outcomes are obtained directly based on the intended goals (instructional effects) and non-intended goals (nurturant effects). An engaging learning model is required in elementary schools so that students can grasp the material presented by the teacher. As a result, teachers must be innovative in their use of various media, methods, or learning models so that the learning materials described can be accepted and understood by students, and the learning can proceed as planned. In advanced reading, effective learning models are needed so that students can get the messages from reading materials, and add insight to them.

Based on the results of interviews with educators at SD Muhammadiyah in Surakarta, the advanced reading ability of high-grade elementary school students remains low. This is demonstrated by students' lack of comprehension of reading, and there are still a number of students who are not fluent in reading. This is due to the minimum complexity of concepts in the text, complexity of vocabulary and syntax, length and amount of text, size and layout of the text on the page, as well as the number of contextual supports in the available illustrations [18]. The article titled Analysis of Critical Reading Skills of Grade IV and V Students at SD Muhammadiyah a Special Program for Kota Barat and SD Negeri Tegal Sari Surakarta showed that teachers still use a teacher-centered learning approach when teaching advanced learning [19]. Students are less active as a result of the limited learning practices, and the learning models used are not varied. As a result, students become disinterested in the learning, which has an impact on higher-grade students' low advanced reading ability.

Based on the explanation of the research's background, more research is needed to analyze teachers' understanding and mastery of the syntax of advanced learning models, particularly during the covid-19 pandemic. This research is intended to (1) identify the characteristics of the advanced reading learning model used, and (2) analyze the teacher's understanding and mastery of the syntax of the advanced reading learning model in the

application to elementary school students. The findings of this research are expected to serve as the foundation for future research, specifically the development of adaptive and modified learning models in year 2.

**2. METHOD**

This research used the descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research is research that is based on the reality experienced by the subject who developed during the research to obtain an understanding of the overall meaning [20]. This research looked into the "how" and "why," focusing on the events that were taking place in the field. Reality analysis was performed to get the overall meaning so that conclusions could be drawn.

**2.1 Research Time and Place**

This research was carried out in 30 elementary schools in Central Java, Indonesia, from January to June 2021. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. Sources of data in this study were elementary school teachers, including classroom teachers (grade IV, V, and VI) and related documents. The researchers' primary considerations in selecting research participants were that the selected teachers had adequate abilities, all schools had the same accreditation, and that all schools used the same curriculum unit. This research used peer review and triangulation of sources through discussion to determine the validity of the data. The research data were analyzed using the interactive analysis technique by Miles Huberman et al., (2009:14), including data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

**2.2 Research Approach and Method**

This case study explores the perspectives of elementary school teachers regarding (1) the

application of advanced reading learning models during online learning, and (2) the analysis of teachers' understanding and mastery of the syntax of advanced reading learning models in Central Java, Indonesia. Focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted with 30 elementary school teachers (grades IV, V, and VI) using the open inquiry method. The discussion covered a variety of topics, including the teacher's perspective on the use of advanced reading learning during online learning, the benefits and drawbacks of the advanced reading learning model, and the teacher's understanding and mastery of the advanced reading learning model.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1 The Use Advanced Reading Learning Models In High Grade**

When the participating teachers were asked about the advanced reading learning model in elementary school, the participants stated that they had used various types of advanced reading learning models at every level (IV, V, and VI). Class teachers frequently used various learning models in teaching advanced reading such as the Anticipation Guide model, Small Group Discussion, and Skimming, Round Robin Reading, PBL, PORPE (Predict, Organize, Rehearse, Practice, Evaluate), KWLA (What I Already Know, What I Want to Know, What I Learned, and The Effect of the Story), Directed Inquiry Activity), OH RATS (Overview, Headings, Read, Answer, Test-Study), Card Sort (Kartu Sortir), Index Card Match (Mencari Pasangan), Jigsaw, ECOIa (Extending Concept through Language Activities), SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review), and DRTA (Directed Reading-Thinking Activity). Table 1.1 shows the results of interviews with 30 elementary school teachers in Central Java.

**Table 1.**Advanced reading model employed by the teachers

Learning Model	Number of teachers who used the model
Anticipation Guide	2
DRTA (Directed Reading-Thinking Activity)	2
SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review)	4
ECOIA (Extending Concept through Language Activities)	1
Jigsaw	3
Index Card Match (Mencari Pasangan)	3
Card Sort (Kartu Sortir)	1
Directed Inquiry Activity	3
OH RATS (Overview, Headings, Read, Answer, Test-Study)	3
KWLA (What I Already Know, What I Want to Know, What I Learned, and The Effect of the Story)	1

Learning Model	Number of teachers who used the model
PORPE (Predict, Organize, Rehearse, Practice, Evaluate)	1
PBL	1
Round Robin Reading	1
Small-Group Discussion	1
Skimming	1
<b>Total</b>	30

According to interviews with several teachers, the SQ3R learning model is the most popular. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, all learning is done online and through blended learning. Blended learning not only provides a wider range of activities, but it is also more effective than online learning, which lacks the variety, engagement, social contact, relevance, and context required for maximum learning [21]. The results also reveal that the use of blended learning is more effective in

developing students' reading skills [22].

### 3.2 The Purpose Of Implementing The Advanced Reading Learning Model

The purpose of teachers using specific learning models when teaching advanced reading can be seen in table 1.2

**Table 2.** Teachers' purpose of implementing specific learning model in advanced reading

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
What are teachers' purposes for implementing specific learning models in advanced reading? (For example Anticipation Guide, DRTA, SQ3R, ECOla, Jigsaw, Index Card Match, Card Sort, OH RATS, Directed Inquiry Activity, KWLA, PORPE, PBL, Round Robin Reading, Small Group Discussion, and Skimming)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This jigsaw learning model can be used as an alternative choice in problem-solving because it has multiple effective learning steps when compared to conventional learning methods. One of the learning problems that the jigsaw learning model can solve is that of passive students. In this case, the jigsaw model will be extremely useful because there will be the formation of expert groups and origin groups. During this stage of forming the original group, each student will be instructed to solve a variety of problems assigned by the teacher. Learners work individually on these various problems based on their abilities, and the results of their work are later discussed in their home groups. Following completion of the discussion with the original group, the student will be required to discuss this topic with the expert group. During discussions with their expert group fellows, learners in the expert group were asked to express their opinions. Following this, the learner will return to his original group, make a report, and share the information with other students in his original group. Students must be actively involved in all learning steps when implementing this jigsaw learning model. (MTH, teacher of grade IV)</li> <li>2. Our pragmatic goal is for students to be able to extract important and relevant information or facts from the given text/manuscript and express their opinion in their language. (RNR)</li> <li>3. When you want to get the main idea from a reading source, use this reading technique. The reader does not need to read the text word for word with this method but rather jumps from one section to the next to review the main ideas of the text (TIP, Teacher of grade IV)</li> </ol>

**3.3 The Steps Of The Advanced Reading Learning Model That Have Been Carried Out By Teacher**

The advanced reading learning model was

chosen and implemented by the teachers based on their understanding and mastery. Several teachers also described the stages they went through when implementing the advanced reading learning model, as shown in table 1.3.

**Table 3.** Stages in implementing advanced reading learning model

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
How do teachers implement the advanced reading learning model?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The first stage is doing a survey, which involves examining or identifying the entire text. Second, question, which is the process of compiling a list of questions related to the text. Third, read, which is defined as actively reading the text to find the answers to previously prepared questions. Fourth, recite is defined as memorizing every answer obtained. Fifth, review is defined as going over all of the answers to the questions compiled in the second and third stages (MA)</li> <li>2. Students are divided into groups, and then they select a reading theme from a literacy board provided by the teacher. Following that, students search the readings with similar themes in the school library. After completing this stage, students read what they have learned, solve problems/questions prepared by the teacher, conclude the results of their group discussions, and present the results of their group discussions (DR).</li> <li>3.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Start reading from the title and subtitle of the book in order to understand the main idea of the reading sources</li> <li>2. Avoid reading word for word</li> <li>3. If necessary, read from the beginning to the end of the sentences of each paragraph</li> <li>4. Pay close attention to the final paragraph, which usually contains the conclusions.</li> <li>5. Pay attention to any illustrations in the form of photos or images. This is done to make it easier for readers to understand the text's contents</li> <li>6. After completing these stages, pause for a moment to understand the contents of the text (TIP, Teacher of grade IV)</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

**3.3 The Benefits And Obstacles Of Using The Advanced Reading Learning Model Applied By The Teacher**

When researchers asked the teachers what are the advantages or benefits of the applied learning model, several teachers explained the advantages or benefits of advanced reading learning models such

as Anticipation Guide, DRTA, SQ3R, ECOla, Jigsaw, Index Card Match, Card Sort, OH RATS, Directed Inquiry Activity, KWLA, PORPE, PBL, Round Robin Reading, Small Group Discussion, and Skimming, which was completed online or through blended learning by teachers in grades IV, V, and VI. Table 1.4 shows the benefits of the advanced reading learning model.

**Table 4.** The benefits of using an advanced reading learning model

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
What are the benefits of using advanced reading learning models?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The benefits and advantages of the jigsaw model include improving each student's self-ability and speaking skills, as well as increasing one's self-confidence. Furthermore, it can teach children to respect one another and the opinions of their peers</li> </ol>

	<p>(RS, Teacher of grade VI).</p> <p>2. The SQ3R Learning Method is defined as a method that assists students in carrying out thinking activities related to the text they read. As a result, when students read the text for the first time, they can understand the content. The SQ3R method can also help students improve their reading abilities and skills in reviewing the overall answers to various questions (MA).</p> <p>3. By using the inquiry model students are accustomed to thinking systematically and critically. Meanwhile, by using the method of the game, students are always enthusiastic when carrying out activities, so learning is fun and not boring (SKI).</p> <p>4. This reading method has the advantage of allowing you to skim through texts. This enables the reader to quickly search or explore many pages of a book. It is also possible to efficiently and quickly search for specific information on a reading text (TIP, Teacher of grade IV).</p>
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speaking skills and increasing their self-confidence.

The researchers concluded from the teacher's responses in table 1.4 that the advantages or benefits of the learning model chosen by the teacher are primarily focused on practicing students'

In table 1.4.1, some teachers discussed the challenges or obstacles they encountered when implementing the advanced reading learning model in elementary schools.

**Table 5.** Obstacles in implementing advanced reading learning model

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
<p>What are the obstacles you found in implementing the advanced reading learning model?</p>	<p>1. The challenge is preparing reading texts and questions that will stimulate students' critical thinking patterns. Furthermore, students continue to struggle with sentence development (MTH, Teacher of grade IV).</p> <p>2. Sometimes only a few students in a group do a good job, while the rest are silent or play alone. Another issue is students' reluctance to present the results of the discussion in front of their peers because they are embarrassed. (RS, Teacher of grade VI).</p> <p>3. Even after being stimulated, some students remain confused and do not understand the steps they should do. Furthermore, the students' lack of language and vocabulary skills hampered the implementation of the learning (MA).</p> <p>4. There are still students who are not fluent readers, so reading the text takes a long time (DR).</p> <p>5. Since learning is done online, the main issue is that the internet network must be stable. The lack of knowledge of students about the real problems they face is one of the problems associated with the implementation of PBL. In this case, the teacher must describe the problem in great detail, which takes a long time. The teacher's patience is essential in order for students to remain enthusiastic and interested in participating in learning (SC, Teacher of grade IV)</p>

With the implementation of online learning, which has been deemed less effective, particularly

in advanced reading learning, teachers must improve their skills or abilities in implementing

advanced learning models not only online, but also in combining online and offline learning to improve students' reading skills. In table 1.4.2 below, the

teachers described some of the skills or abilities required to implement the advanced reading learning model.

**Table 6.** Teachers' skills and abilities in implementing advanced reading learning model

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
How do teachers improve their abilities and skills in implementing advanced reading learning models?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organizing students into groups and supervising group projects to keep students engaged (MTH, Teacher of grade IV).</li> <li>2. Class management skills. Since activities in the classroom will take a long time, teachers must be able to manage both classes and time (SKI)</li> <li>3. Providing motivation to students so that they are more confident in expressing opinions in front of the class, as well as asking questions to them so that it is easier for them to express their opinions. In addition, the teacher can also give a reward in the form of praise or anything after the child has finished presenting in front of the class (RS, Teacher of grade VI)</li> </ol>

However, some teachers admitted that they still lack mastery in implementing advanced reading learning models, citing factors such as a lack of teacher motivation to use advanced reading learning models, a lack of mastery of reading comprehension techniques, and the teacher's inability to direct children to actively involve in discussion and express the results of discussions in front of other students.

**4. DISCUSSION**

The continuous COVID-19 pandemic compels the government to implement online education. This type of learning also affects the implementation of advanced reading in higher-grade students in elementary school.

Teachers used a variety of learning models during the implementation of online advanced reading learning, including Anticipation Guide, DRTA, SQ3R, ECOla, Jigsaw, Index Card Match, Card Sort, OH RATS, Directed Inquiry Activity, KWLA, and PORPE.

The application of the learning model is more effective when done through blended learning because if it is done offline, the teacher cannot monitor student progress, particularly in advanced reading skills. This is consistent with the theory that blended learning is more profitable than pure e-learning and provides many benefits to students, such as fostering a sense of community. Blended learning is regarded as an effective learning approach in terms of the student learning experience, student-student interaction, and student-teacher interaction, and it is expected to become the

dominant educational model in the future [23]. The characteristics of this learning model allow teachers and students to adjust conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic and implement government policies to prevent the virus's spread.

The majority of teachers stated that they needed an advanced reading learning model that could be used online, offline, or in a blended learning environment. The features of this learning model allow teachers and students to adjust conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic and implement government policies to prevent virus spread. Advanced reading learning during the COVID-19 pandemic must also provide students with comfort and pleasure by utilizing a variety of innovative learning models. This is consistent with the belief that teachers must develop learning that incorporates game elements and requires students to move and study in groups, as well as actively participate in learning [24]. Modifying learning strategies to meet the needs of students is effective, but these strategies frequently rely on consistent, intensive, and explicit instruction [25].

Based on the findings of this research, teachers must master each advanced learning model before implementing it. These findings can also be used as a resource to encourage teachers to explore their abilities in implementing advanced reading learning models.

**5. CONCLUSION**

This research shows that teachers used a variety of learning models during advanced reading lessons, including online and blended learning. In practice,

however, there are obstacles that make online learning less effective, so teachers prefer to use blended learning in teaching advanced reading. To achieve maximum learning objectives, teachers must improve their understanding and mastery of the advanced reading model syntax.

### **AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS**

All authors contributed to the completion of this article, beginning with the preparation of the research proposal and ending with the completion of the research report. Nur Amalia served as a supervisor and the team's leader in this research, along with two other lecturers, Fitri Puji Rahmawati and Dwi Yuniasih Saputri. Awalita Dhiyan Prihatiningtyas and Lisabela Mega Cahyaning Pertiwi were the students involved in the research, with Awalita Dhiyan Prihatiningtyas as the first author.

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