



## Improving Reading Interest and Ability Using Pictured Story Book Media for Grade 2 Students of State Elementary School 12 Buntok

Elva Susilawati<sup>1</sup>, Sekar Purbarini Kawuryan<sup>2</sup>, Setiawan Edi Wibowo<sup>3</sup>  
Faculty of Education, Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia

**Corresponding Author:** Elva : [elvasusilawati.2025@student.uny.ac.id](mailto:elvasusilawati.2025@student.uny.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve reading interest and early reading skills of second-grade students at SD Negeri 12 Buntok through the use of picture storybooks. Classroom Action Research (CAR) using the Kemmis and McTaggart model was conducted in two cycles consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Data were obtained through observation, reading tests, and reading interest assessments. The results showed a significant increase in both measured aspects. Students' reading interest increased from 52% in the initial observation to 61% in Cycle I and 77% in Cycle II. Early reading skills also increased from 59% to 64% and then to 82%. The use of picture storybooks has been proven effective in increasing students' motivation, engagement, and basic literacy skills.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Reading ability is one of the most important basic skills in the learning process in elementary school (Fauziyah, 2023; Simanjuntak & Fernando, 2024). In early education, reading is not only interpreted as the ability to recognize letters or pronounce words, but also includes the ability to understand the meaning of a text, which forms the foundation for students' intellectual development at the next level (Komari et al., 2024). Reading is the main gateway to knowledge mastery, because almost all aspects of learning – whether mathematics, science, or social – require students to understand written instructions. Students who have good reading skills tend to be easier to follow lessons, have a better understanding of concepts, and demonstrate more mature critical thinking (Rahayu & Daud, 2024; Simanjuntak & Fernando, 2024b). Conversely, students who have difficulty reading will face obstacles in understanding material, completing assignments, and actively participating in learning (Trisnawati et al., 2024; Yunisa & Lubis, 2024). Therefore, improving reading skills from the lower grades, especially in grade 2 of elementary school, is an important focus in the world of education (Nurasyifa et al., 2025; F. Rahayu & Mulyono, 2025).

In addition to reading ability, reading interest also plays a significant role in the success of the learning process. Reading interest is an internal drive that encourages students to feel happy, interested, and willing to spend time reading independently (Media et al., 2024; Wahyu et al., 2024). At elementary school age, especially in second grade, which is between 7 and 8 years old, reading interest is strongly influenced by external factors such as the type of reading media, the learning environment, and the learning model used by teachers (Assya et al., 2021). Children at this age are in the concrete operational cognitive development stage according to Piaget, a phase in which students' understanding is strongly influenced by visual stimuli, concrete experiences, and direct interaction with objects they see and feel. Therefore, second-grade children need learning media that are attractive, rich in color, and present illustrations that can stimulate their imagination. The use of appropriate learning media is key to fostering interest and consistently improving students' reading skills (L. Rahayu & Daud, 2024; Trisnawati et al., 2024).

One medium that can be used to support the reading learning process is picture storybooks. Picture storybooks are reading materials that combine simple text with engaging visual illustrations that are relevant to the storyline. This medium not only helps students understand the story through words but also provides a visual context that makes it easier for them to grasp the meaning of the text. Illustrations in storybooks play a crucial role as a source of additional information that can help understand the situations, characters, and conflicts in the story. According to visual learning theory, good illustrations can improve reading comprehension by up to 40% because they help students integrate text and images more effectively (Fauziyah, 2023; Simanjuntak & Fernando, 2024a).

The visual power of picture storybooks makes it easier for students to connect words with symbols, understand the story's context, and enhance their imagination and creativity (Latifa et al., 2023; Setiyaningrum et al., 2024). This aligns with cognitive development theory, which states that elementary school-aged children learn more easily through concrete, visual, and easily understood media. Therefore, the use of picture storybooks is a strategic alternative to streamline early reading instruction and increase students' interest in reading (Nurhidayati et al., 2025; Rahmawati et al., 2021).

However, real-world conditions indicate that the reading interest and ability of lower-grade students in many Indonesian elementary schools remain relatively low. Various literacy studies have shown that one of the causes of low reading ability is a lack of variety in learning methods and a reliance on conventional reading techniques such as reading aloud, spelling, and copying text. These methods tend to quickly bore students because they lack visually appealing supporting media. Furthermore, the use of textbooks as the sole reading resource also leads to a lack of enthusiasm for reading. Textbooks for lower-grade students are often perceived as monotonous, overly information-dense, and lacking adequate illustrations to aid comprehension (Assya et al., 2021; Maa & Mooduto, 2023).

Students' low reading ability is also influenced by the lack of reading materials that are appropriate for their cognitive development. Many students experience difficulty recognizing words, spelling syllables, and even understanding simple reading material. If this condition is not addressed promptly, students' reading development will be slow and impact overall academic achievement. Poor reading ability not only hinders comprehension but also affects students' ability to solve problems, think critically, and perform simple analyses (Nurasyifa et al., 2025; F. Rahayu & Mulyono, 2025).

Furthermore, an underdeveloped interest in reading is a significant obstacle. Many students lack interest in independent reading because the reading materials used in school are uninteresting, lack color, or don't align with their interests. Elementary school-aged children tend to need visual stimulation in the form of pictures, colorful illustrations, engaging characters, and simple yet engaging storylines. Without these visual elements, students quickly become bored, and reading is viewed as merely a school assignment, rather than a fun activity. If an interest in reading isn't fostered early on, children will struggle to keep up with lessons in subsequent grades. (L. Rahayu & Daud, 2024; Simanjuntak & Fernando De Napoli Marpaung, 2024b).

To address these issues, more engaging, innovative learning strategies are needed that are tailored to the developmental characteristics of elementary school-aged children. Using picture storybooks is one approach believed to be effective in increasing students' interest and reading skills. Through this medium, students can learn to read in a more enjoyable way because they not only see the text but also enjoy the illustrations that reinforce the meaning of the reading.

Picture storybooks also enable teachers to create an interactive learning environment, for example through shared reading activities, discussions about the plot, character recognition, and even conveying the moral message contained within the story (Maa & Mooduto, 2023).

Picture storybooks offer several advantages. First, cognitively, illustrations help students recognize new vocabulary, understand the meaning of words based on the context of the images, and strengthen long-term memory through visual experiences. Second, affectively, engaging images can increase students' intrinsic motivation, making them feel happy and not compelled to read. Third, socially and emotionally, stories often contain moral values and positive behaviors that can help students learn to socialize and develop noble character traits such as cooperation, empathy, and courage (Komari et al., 2024; Simanjuntak & Fernando De Napoli Marpaung, 2024a).

The use of picture storybooks in reading instruction can also help students develop critical thinking skills. Through discussions with teachers and peers, students can interpret images, predict plot lines, and infer moral messages. This type of interaction strengthens student engagement in learning, enabling them to not only read but also comprehend (Nurasyifa et al., 2025).

This research was conducted on second-grade students at Buntok 12 Public Elementary School, located in Buntok City, South Barito Regency, Central Kalimantan. Initial observations indicated that some students still had suboptimal reading skills and relatively low interest in reading. This was evident in the students' lack of enthusiasm for participating in reading activities, some students still had difficulty spelling simple words, and their low ability to comprehend the content of the reading. This condition indicates the need for innovation in reading learning strategies, particularly through the use of more engaging media that are appropriate to the development of lower-grade students.

Therefore, the use of picture storybooks was chosen as an alternative solution to improve reading interest and skills among second-grade students at SD Negeri 12 Buntok. It is hoped that through the use of this media, students will learn to read with greater enthusiasm, improve reading comprehension, and foster reading habits from an early age. Furthermore, this media is expected to help teachers create a more enjoyable and interactive learning environment, thus making reading learning more effective and meaningful.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Reading Interest and Ability***

Reading interest and reading ability are fundamental to early literacy development, particularly among elementary school students, particularly in the lower grades. Various studies have shown that reading interest is closely related to intrinsic motivation, emotional engagement, and the desire to actively interact with texts. Students with a strong reading interest tend to demonstrate greater persistence and, as a result, more optimal comprehension, illustrating the important role of motivation in generating literacy performance (Nasution et al., 2023). A study by Agustina et al. (2023) emphasized the need to introduce reading interest to early childhood through the use of picture storybooks. This

media not only serves to convey information but also provides a narrative structure that can help children improve their reading skills. Furthermore, Damayanti et al. (2024) noted that teaching methods involving text structure analysis can encourage children to understand the context of the reading, improving their decoding and fluent reading abilities. Furthermore, the study shared that picture storybooks can encourage interactive learning and increase students' emotional engagement with the teaching material. In the context of children with special needs, such as autism, the use of picture books has been identified as a potential way to improve their literacy skills (Wicks et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2018).

### ***Picture Story book media***

Picture books are a highly effective medium for children's learning and development. In an educational context, research shows that the use of picture books can increase children's interest in reading and language skills. For example, research by Agustina et al. found that through this medium, children's interest in reading can be significantly increased, involving children in conversation and introducing new vocabulary accompanied by engaging visuals (Agustina et al., 2023). Furthermore, Fitri and Hairiyah found that picture books can improve children's language skills, which supports their language development (Fitri & Hairiyah, 2024). Furthermore, picture books not only help develop reading and language skills, but they can also contribute to children's character development. Murniayudi and Sujarwo found that books based on local wisdom can help foster socially conscious character in children (Murniayudi & Sujarwo, 2021). This demonstrates that picture books have broad potential to support various aspects of child development, from cognitive to social.

### ***Recent Research on Characteristics of Grade II Elementary School Students***

In a recent study on the characteristics of second-grade elementary school students, several studies have highlighted the importance of understanding these characteristics to support effective learning. The developmental characteristics of children at this age encompass psychological, social, and cognitive aspects that significantly influence their readiness to learn in a school environment. First, a study by Pangestuti et al. (2019) explains that Indonesian children's school readiness can be assessed from various aspects, including physical, social, emotional, and cognitive. This study shares a framework that helps teachers identify indicators of children's readiness before entering elementary school. This comprehensive approach recognizes that not only academic factors need to be considered, but also children's social-emotional development, which is fundamental to the classroom setting.

Furthermore, research conducted by Rahayu and Nur Rahayu & Nur (2022) highlighted the characteristics of children experiencing learning delays in elementary school. The results suggest that teachers need to understand the abilities of each student in the class, including slow learners, to provide appropriate interventions. By recognizing students' unique characteristics, teachers can adapt teaching methods to better meet their educational needs.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses Classroom Action Research (CAR) as the main approach because it aims to improve students' early reading skills through concrete actions in the form of using picture storybooks. According to Arikunto (2015), CAR is research conducted by teachers through self-reflection to improve the learning process so that learning outcomes increase. This approach is relevant because improvements are made gradually through a cycle of actions. In addition, Kunandar (2013) emphasized that CAR is carried out collaboratively by designing, implementing, observing, and reflecting on actions in a repetitive cycle. This study uses the Kemmis and McTaggart model which includes the stages of planning, implementing actions, observing, and reflecting. The subjects of this study were 12 second-grade students of SD Negeri 12 Buntok in the 2024/2025 academic year with a total of 12 students consisting of 5 male students and 7 female students. The characteristics of second-grade students of SD Negeri 12 Buntok are children aged 7-8 years with heterogeneous ability backgrounds.

## RESEARCH RESULT

### 1) *Interest in Reading*

#### a) Initial observation

**Table 1. Results of the Initial Observation Assessment of Grade 2 students of SD Negeri 12 Buntok in the 2024/2025 academic year on reading interest**

No.	Number	Interest in Reading
1.	Fatima	50
2.	Aulia	40
3.	Abdullah	55
4.	Azzahrah	43
5.	Mikayla	45
6.	Erlangga	50
7.	Faqhie	50
8.	Anindita	50
9.	Case	50
10.	Athalah	70
11.	Kenzo	60
12.	Algazali	60
Amount		623

Table 1 shows the results of initial observations of second-grade students' reading interest before the use of picture storybooks. The data show that most students were in the Poor category, having scored below 60 based on the assessment criteria. Student scores ranged from 40 to 70, with a total of 623. This condition indicates that students' reading interest is still low and requires more engaging learning interventions that are appropriate to the characteristics of elementary school students. Only one student, Athalah, achieved the Fair category with a score of 70, while the others were in the Poor category, including Aulia with the lowest score of 40. The students' lack of interest was evident in their low ability to recognize text, understand simple reading materials, and demonstrate enthusiasm during reading activities. This was also reflected in students' lack of participation in answering teacher questions, difficulty connecting stories to everyday experiences, and rapid loss of focus when reading independently. These findings provide an important basis for implementing the use of picture storybooks, as they can provide interesting visual stimuli, facilitate comprehension of reading materials, and encourage students to participate more actively. Thus, the use of picture story books is expected to increase students' interest in reading as well as their basic literacy skills as a whole.

**b) Cycle I**

**Table 2. Results of the assessment of reading interest of grade 2 students of SD Negeri 12 Buntok in the 2024/2025 academic year in cycle I**

No.	Number	Interest in Reading			Amount	Final score
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3		
1.	Fatima	60	60	60	180	60
2.	Aulia	60	70	70	200	67
3.	Abdulla	60	60	70	190	63
4.	Azzahra	50	60	70	180	60
5.	Mikayla	50	50	60	160	53
6.	Erlangg	60	60	60	180	60
7.	Faqhie	50	60	60	170	57
8.	Anindit	70	50	60	180	60
9.	Case	60	60	70	190	63
10.	Athalah	70	70	70	210	70

11.	Kenzo	70	70	50	190	63
12.	Algazali	60	60	60	180	60
<b>Amount</b>					<b>736</b>	
<b>Rate-rate</b>					<b>61%</b>	

Table 2 illustrates the development of students' reading interest in Cycle I after the implementation of picture storybooks. The results show an increase compared to the initial observation, although it remains in the Sufficient category with an average of 61%. Most students' final scores range from 53 to 70. This indicates that the media used is starting to have a positive impact, but students still need to get used to it and be motivated to reach the Good category. For example, Athalah obtained the highest score of 70, which is in the Sufficient category, while Mikayla obtained a score of 53, which is still categorized as Poor. However, the increase in scores of several students, such as Aulia, Abdillah, and Keysa, indicates that the use of picture books is starting to attract students' attention in reading. Cycle I serves as the initial stage for assessing the effectiveness of learning media and as a basis for making improvements in subsequent cycles to optimally increase reading interest.

**c) Cycle II**

**Table 3. Results of the assessment of reading interest of grade 2 students of SD Negeri 12 Buntok in the 2024/2025 academic year in cycle II**

No.	Number	Interest in Reading			Amount	Final score
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3		
1.	Fatima	65	80	90	235	78
2.	Aulia	70	85	95	250	83
3.	Abdulla	65	80	90	235	78
4.	Azzahra	65	75	80	220	73
5.	Mikayla	70	80	85	235	78
6.	Erlangg	75	85	90	250	83
7.	Faqhie	70	80	90	240	80
8.	Anindit	65	75	80	220	73
9.	Case	70	75	90	235	78

10.	Athalah	70	70	80	220	73
11.	Kenzo	65	80	90	235	78
12.	Algazali	70	85	95	250	83
<b>Amount</b>						<b>777</b>
<b>Rate-rate</b>						<b>77%</b>

Table 3 shows the results of the assessment of students' reading interest in Cycle II, which experienced a significant increase compared to Cycle I. The average score reached 77%, thus entering the Good category, and most students achieved completion. Scores increased for almost all students, for example Aulia and Erlangga who achieved a final score of 83, and Algazali who also obtained a score of 83. This indicates that the use of picture storybooks is increasingly effective in attracting students' attention, helping them understand the storyline, and providing a more enjoyable reading experience. Students appeared increasingly enthusiastic during the learning process, as indicated by the increasing scores at each meeting. Picture media has been proven to stimulate imagination, help focus on reading, and increase motivation. In Cycle II, there were no students in the Poor category, indicating that the learning intervention was successful in increasing overall reading interest.

## 2) Beginning Reading Ability

### a) Initial Observation

**Table 4. Results of the Initial Observation Assessment of Grade 2 students of SD Negeri 12 Buntok in the 2024/2025 academic year on initial reading skills**

No.	Number	Interest in Reading
1.	Fatima	60
2.	Aulia	50
3.	Abdullah	70
4.	Azzahrah	70
5.	Mikayla	60
6.	Erlangga	50
7.	Faqhie	60
8.	Anindita	50
9.	Case	50

10.	Athalah	60
11.	Kenzo	70
12.	Algazali	60
<b>Am</b>		<b>710</b>

Table 4 illustrates students' initial reading skills before the intervention. Student scores ranged from 50 to 70, with a total score of 710. Based on the assessment criteria, most students were in the Sufficient and Poor categories, indicating that their initial reading skills still need improvement. This ability includes aspects of recognizing letters, reading simple words, understanding short sentences, and pronouncing text correctly. Only a few students, such as Abdillah, Azzahrah, and Kenzo, achieved a score of 70, while most others remained between 50 and 60. This finding indicates that students' basic reading skills are not optimal, thus requiring more effective and engaging learning strategies. Picture storybooks were chosen because they are believed to be able to help students understand texts with visual aids, thus hopefully improving their initial reading skills gradually.

**b) Cycle I**

**Table 5. Results of the assessment of the initial reading ability of grade 2 students of SD Negeri 12 Buntok in the 2024/2025 academic year in cycle I**

No.	Number	Beginning Reading Ability			Amount	Final score
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3		
1.	Fatimah	60	70	70	200	67
2.	Aulia	50	60	70	180	60
3.	Abdillah	70	70	80	220	73
4.	Azzahrah	70	70	70	210	70
5.	Mikayla	60	70	80	210	70
6.	Erlangga	50	60	60	170	56
7.	Faqhie	60	60	60	180	60
8.	Anindita	50	70	70	190	63
9.	Keysa	50	60	70	180	60
10.	Athalah	60	60	60	180	60
11.	Kenzo	70	70	80	220	73
12.	Algazali	60	60	60	180	60
<b>Amount</b>					<b>772</b>	
<b>Rate-rate</b>					<b>64%</b>	

Table 5 displays the results of initial reading skills in Cycle I. There was an increase compared to the initial observation, with an average score reaching 64%, categorized as Adequate. At this stage, students began to show progress in reading simple words and sentences, and began to understand the content of the reading, although not evenly. Some students, such as Abdillah and Kenzo, obtained a score of 73, categorized as Good, while others, such as Erlangga, still obtained a low score of 56. Nevertheless, the use of picture storybooks began to have a positive impact, as seen by the increase in scores for most students.

Cycle I became an adaptation phase for students in utilizing visual media, such as picture storybooks, to help understand text more easily and enjoyably. At this stage, students were introduced to reading methods supported by illustrations, so they could directly associate words with images. Observations showed that some students were able to recognize simple words and began to understand the storyline, while others still had difficulty following the content of the reading fluently. This indicates that although visual media provides positive stimulation, students' reading abilities still vary. Therefore, more intensive mentoring is very important, especially for students who are not used to reading or who have low literacy skills.

**c) Cycle II**

**Table 6. Results of the assessment of the initial reading ability of grade 2 students of SD Negeri 12 Buntok in the 2024/2025 academic year in cycle I**

No.	Number	Beginning Reading Ability			Amount	Final score
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3		
1.	Fatimah	90	80	90	260	87
2.	Aulia	70	80	90	240	80
3.	Abdillah	80	80	90	250	83
4.	Azzahrah	70	80	90	240	80
5.	Mikayla	80	90	90	260	87
6.	Erlangga	70	80	90	240	80
7.	Faqhie	80	90	90	260	87
8.	Anindita	70	80	80	230	77
9.	Keysa	80	90	90	260	87
10.	Athalah	70	80	90	240	80
11.	Kenzo	80	80	90	250	83
12.	Algazali	70	80	90	240	80
<b>Amount</b>					<b>991</b>	
<b>Rate-rate</b>					<b>82%</b>	

Table 6 shows that early reading skills experienced a significant increase in Cycle II, with an average score reaching 82%, categorized as Good, and some students achieved full mastery. Almost all students showed consistent improvement, such as Fatimah, Mikayla, Faqhie, and Keysa who achieved a final score of 87. This improvement indicates that picture storybooks are very effective in helping text comprehension, increasing reading accuracy, and improving students' reading fluency. The visuals in the storybooks help students connect images with words, making it easier for them to understand the meaning of the story. In addition, students appeared more motivated and enthusiastic when learning to read. There were no more students in the Poor category, indicating that the applied learning strategy was able to improve early reading skills comprehensively. Cycle II is evidence of the success of using picture media in improving students' basic literacy skills.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Increasing Students' Interest in Reading

The results of the study showed a significant increase in students' interest in reading after the implementation of picture storybooks. In the initial observation, the majority of students showed low interest in reading with scores ranging from 40–55. This low interest indicates that students do not yet have a strong interest in reading activities, which is partly caused by the use of learning media that is less varied and less interesting. Sadiman et al. (2014) emphasized that visual media can increase students' interest and attention because visualization is able to provide direct stimulation to the sense of sight, thereby increasing their motivation to learn.

The implementation of picture storybooks in Cycle I had a positive impact on student interest, as seen in the increase in average scores to 61%, in the Sufficient category. This is in line with Dale's (1969) theory. *Cone of Experience*, which states that visual-based learning experiences provide better understanding for students because they help them connect illustrations with material concepts. However, in Cycle I, several students were still found to have not shown optimal improvement, so strategy improvements were made in Cycle II.

In Cycle II, the use of more varied picture storybooks interspersed with interactive reading activities resulted in a more significant improvement. The average score for students' reading interest reached 77%, or in the Good category. Almost all students achieved completion. This supports Tarigan's (2015) opinion, which states that reading interest can be increased by providing interesting reading materials with supporting illustrations and age-appropriate reading materials. Therefore, it can be concluded that picture storybooks are an effective means of stimulating reading interest in elementary school students.

### 2. Improving Early Reading Skills

The improvement in early reading skills in this study also showed significant results. In the initial observation, students' reading skills were in the Sufficient category with a total score of 710. Many students experienced difficulties in recognizing letters, pronouncing syllables, reading simple words, and understanding the meaning of reading. According to Nurhadi (2016), early reading skills include the ability to identify letters, pronounce language sounds, and understand simple meanings in the context of images.

In Cycle I, after implementing picture storybooks, the average score increased to 64%. Although still in the "Sufficient" category, this improvement indicates progress in students' reading abilities. Visual media has been shown to help students connect text to context, making it easier for them to understand the words they read. However, some students still had difficulty reading fluently, requiring corrective action in Cycle II.

In Cycle II, reading instruction was conducted in a more structured manner through collaborative reading, pair reading, and brief discussions about the content of the images. The results showed an average increase in beginning reading ability to 82%, which is categorized as Good. Almost all students were able to read simple sentences, understand the content of the reading, and pronounce words correctly.

This supports Arsyad's (2017) opinion that visual media can accelerate the process of text comprehension because images provide a real context for the reading. These findings prove that picture storybooks are highly effective in improving students' beginning reading abilities.

### **3. Effectiveness of Picture Story Book Media in Learning**

The effectiveness of picture storybooks in this study can be seen from the significant improvement in two aspects: reading interest and early reading skills. Psychologically, visual media provides a fun and non-monotonous learning experience, enabling students to maintain focus for longer. Djamarah (2011) explains that the use of engaging media can increase students' intrinsic motivation to learn.

Cognitively, images help reinforce comprehension because students can connect illustrations to textual information. Images also serve as a bridge for predicting word meanings, understanding storylines, and remembering new vocabulary. Linguistically, visual media also contributes to reading fluency because students are aided by visual representations that are contextualized, thus increasing their confidence in pronouncing words and sentences.

Picture storybooks provide a multisensory learning experience that is very suitable for the cognitive development of elementary school students. This makes the media not only visually appealing but also helps strengthen the cognitive and linguistic processes in reading.

### **4. Comparative Analysis Between Cycles**

Inter-cycle analysis showed consistent, tiered improvement. In the initial observation phase, both students' reading interest and ability were in the low category. Cycle I showed improvement in both aspects, but this improvement did not reach the learning target because some students still had not achieved mastery. Therefore, strategy improvements were implemented in Cycle II to optimize results.

Data comparison shows that:

- a. Reading interest increased from 40–55 (Poor) to 61% (Sufficient) in Cycle I, then increased again to 77% (Good) in Cycle II.
- b. Initial reading ability increased from the Sufficient category (total score 710) to 64% (Sufficient) in Cycle I, then increased to 82% (Good) in Cycle II.

This significant improvement demonstrates that the interventions provided were appropriate and aligned with students' needs. Consistent use of visual media can improve the quality of early reading instruction.

### **5. Implications of Research Results**

This research has broad implications for reading instruction in elementary schools. First, teachers need to recognize the importance of using relevant and engaging media to improve learning outcomes. Picture books can be an alternative primary medium for reading instruction because they align with children's developmental characteristics.

Second, the reading process needs to be made fun and interactive. Lower-grade students generally learn more effectively through visual experiences and story-based activities that relate to their lives. Third, schools can make picture storybooks standard teaching materials to improve students' basic literacy.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results of the study indicate that the use of picture storybooks effectively increased the reading interest and ability of second-grade students at SD Negeri 12 Buntok. Significant improvement was observed from the initial observation to Cycle I, with completion achieved in Cycle II. Picture books were able to attract attention, facilitate text comprehension, and increase reading motivation. Therefore, this medium is suitable for implementation as a reading learning strategy in elementary schools.

## **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the study was conducted in only one class at Buntok 12 Public Elementary School, so the results cannot be generalized to a wider population. Second, the study was relatively short, spanning only two cycles, so the increase in reading interest and ability obtained does not reflect long-term development. Furthermore, the reading interest evaluation instrument relied on observation and a simple questionnaire, resulting in potential subjectivity.

For further research, it is recommended to involve a larger and more diverse sample so that findings can be compared across classes or schools. Research could also extend the duration of the intervention to obtain a more consistent illustration of reading skill development. The use of more comprehensive assessment instruments such as analytical rubrics, standardized tests, or in-depth interviews could increase data accuracy. Furthermore, further research could develop variations in picture book media or integrate them with digital technology to examine their impact on students' motivation and reading comprehension.

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