



Instructional Pedagogical Strategies for Reading Comprehension in Elementary Schools: A Problem-Based Analysis

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in primary education as it plays a critical role in supporting students' understanding of various subject areas. However, many elementary school students still experience difficulties in comprehending texts effectively. This study aims to identify problems in reading comprehension learning and to formulate instructional pedagogical strategies to improve students' reading comprehension. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed using a survey method. Data were collected through open- and closed-ended questionnaires distributed to 81 classroom teachers of grades 3 to 6 across elementary schools in West Sumatra. The findings indicate that although students demonstrate relatively high interest in reading, they encounter difficulties in identifying main ideas, retaining information, and connecting texts with prior knowledge. These problems are influenced by monotonous teaching methods, limited instructional media, unsupportive classroom environments, and diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The results also reveal the need for more interactive, contextual, and collaborative reading instruction supported by varied pedagogical strategies. Therefore, this study proposes instructional pedagogical strategies emphasizing interactive reading activities, collaborative discussions, contextual text engagement, and differentiated reading support to enhance students' reading comprehension. These strategies provide practical guidance for teachers in designing more effective reading instruction and fostering active student participation. The implementation of structured pedagogical strategies is expected to improve students' reading comprehension skills and support their overall academic development in elementary education.

Keywords: Elementary School; Instructional Strategy; Pedagogical Approach; Reading Comprehension; Reading Instruction

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INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a fundamental literacy skill in elementary education because it enables students not only to decode written language but also to construct meaning from texts in a deeper and more purposeful way (Muriyah et al., 2023; Nasrul et al., 2020; Sakinah & Ibrahim, 2023). In the context of primary schooling, this skill plays an essential role in supporting students' learning across subject areas, including mathematics, science, and social studies, all of which require the ability to understand, interpret, and respond to written information accurately (Irma Suryani, 2022; Sarika et al., 2021; Utami et al., 2025a, 2025b). Therefore, reading comprehension should be positioned as a core competency in elementary schools, as its development contributes directly to students' broader academic progress and long-term learning success.

Despite its importance, many elementary school students still experience substantial difficulties in comprehending the texts they read (Akyol & Sural, 2021; Apfani & Padang, 2018; de-la-Peña & Luque-Rojas, 2021). These difficulties are not limited to understanding explicit information, but also include identifying main ideas, retaining important details, making inferences, and connecting textual information with prior knowledge. Such conditions indicate that reading comprehension remains a persistent challenge in elementary classrooms and may hinder students' participation in more advanced learning processes. When students are unable to comprehend texts effectively, they are likely to face obstacles in processing information, engaging in classroom discussion, and developing critical thinking through reading activities.

The problems of reading comprehension in elementary schools are influenced by multiple and interrelated factors. From a pedagogical perspective, the use of monotonous and less engaging teaching methods often reduces students' involvement in reading activities and limits their opportunities to develop comprehension meaningfully (Apfani, 2022; Dewi Wulandari et al., n.d.; Kholilah Nasution et al., 2022; Hezam et al., 2022; Muhassin et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2022). From the students' side, psychological and cognitive aspects such as limited basic reading skills, difficulty linking text to background knowledge, and low motivation also contribute to weak comprehension performance (Dewi Wulandari et al., n.d.; Kim & Kim, 2022; Smith et al., 2021; Defi Antika et al., 2023; Svensson et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022; Elsa Oktaviani, 2021; Mitha & Basri, 2024; Satria Kurniawan et al., n.d.). In addition, external conditions such as socio-economic background, limited access to reading materials, and insufficient support for literacy activities at home may further intensify these challenges and widen disparities in students' reading development (Chotimah et al., 2018; Fitriani, 2014; Fahmi et al., 2020; Nurwati & Listari, 2021; Pristian & Astuti, n.d.; Ikhlasani et al., 2023; Zaim & Negeri Padang, 2018).

Given the complexity of these challenges, improving reading comprehension in elementary schools requires more than routine reading instruction or conventional teacher-centered practices. Students need learning experiences that actively engage them in constructing meaning, discussing ideas, relating texts to real-life contexts, and receiving support that matches their developmental needs. In this regard, instructional pedagogical strategies such as interactive reading activities, collaborative discussion, contextual learning, and the use of supportive media can provide more meaningful opportunities for students to develop comprehension skills (Apfani & Vamaliza, 2024; Hendriani et al., 2022; Krawitz et al., 2022; Kunci et al., n.d.; Smith et al., 2021). At the same time, teachers need to be able to recognize students' reading needs and implement approaches that are responsive to their cognitive development, interests, and classroom conditions, while schools and families should work together to create an environment that supports literacy learning more consistently (Zaim & Negeri Padang, 2018).

Although previous studies have widely discussed reading comprehension in elementary education, much of the existing literature has tended to examine isolated aspects of the issue, such as particular teaching methods, students' cognitive barriers, or socio-economic influences, rather than analyzing how these problems interact within actual classroom contexts. Several studies have highlighted the value of interactive reading, technology-assisted learning, or problem-based learning in improving students' reading performance (Muriyah et al., 2023; Apfani & Vamaliza, 2024; Hendriani et al., 2022), while others have emphasized the importance of background knowledge, motivation, and reading support systems in shaping comprehension outcomes (Smith et al., 2021;

Chotimah et al., 2018; Nurwati & Listari, 2021). However, limited attention has been given to a problem-based analytical perspective that systematically identifies the specific classroom problems of reading comprehension and uses those identified problems as the basis for formulating contextually grounded instructional pedagogical strategies. Therefore, a clearer integrative framework is needed to connect the diagnosis of reading comprehension problems with practical pedagogical responses in elementary school settings.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to identify the problems encountered in reading comprehension learning in elementary schools and to formulate instructional pedagogical strategies derived from a problem-based analysis of those challenges. By mapping the difficulties experienced in classroom reading practices and relating them to pedagogical needs, this study seeks to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of elementary literacy instruction. Theoretically, it offers a more integrated understanding of reading comprehension problems as multidimensional instructional issues. Practically, it provides guidance for teachers in designing more responsive, interactive, and context-sensitive reading instruction to enhance students' reading comprehension and participation in elementary classrooms.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study employed a descriptive survey design with qualitative interpretation to examine the problems of reading comprehension learning in elementary schools and to formulate instructional pedagogical strategies based on those identified problems. This design was considered appropriate because the study sought not only to describe the existing conditions of reading comprehension instruction, but also to interpret patterns emerging from teachers' responses in order to generate contextually relevant pedagogical strategies. The survey method was used to collect data from participants through a questionnaire as the main instrument, as survey research enables researchers to obtain information from a relatively broad group of respondents efficiently and systematically (Singarimbun & Efendi, 2008; Sugiyono, 2017).

The study was conducted in May 2025 and involved elementary school teachers of grades 3 to 6 from various schools in West Sumatra. The participants were selected purposively based on their relevance to the focus of the study, namely their direct involvement in classroom reading instruction at the elementary level. A total of 81 teachers participated in the study. The inclusion of teachers from different grade levels and school contexts was intended to provide a broader picture of the challenges encountered in reading comprehension learning across elementary classrooms. By focusing on teachers as the main respondents, this study was able to gather pedagogical perspectives grounded in direct classroom experience and instructional practice.

Data were collected using a questionnaire consisting of closed-ended and open-ended items. The closed-ended items were designed to obtain structured responses regarding students' reading interest, reading comprehension difficulties, classroom participation, teacher support, and the use of instructional media. Meanwhile, the open-ended items were intended to explore respondents' perspectives more deeply, particularly regarding the causes of reading comprehension problems and the instructional efforts needed to address them. The questionnaire items were developed based on key aspects of reading comprehension learning from the perspectives of students, teachers, and the learning environment. To support accurate responses, participants were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, and clear instructions were provided to ensure that each item was understood properly.

The collected data were analyzed through two complementary procedures. First, responses from the closed-ended items were processed using descriptive statistics to identify general tendencies in teachers' perceptions of students' reading interest, comprehension difficulties, classroom participation, teacher support, and the use of instructional media. These data were presented in the form of frequencies and percentages to provide a clear overview of the dominant patterns emerging from the survey results. Second, responses from the open-ended items were analyzed using thematic analysis. In this stage, the researchers read all responses carefully, coded relevant statements, grouped similar ideas into thematic categories, and interpreted the recurring patterns related to reading

comprehension problems and possible pedagogical responses. Through this combination of descriptive and thematic analysis, the study was able to generate both a general profile of the problem and a deeper interpretation of its instructional implications.

The analysis was specifically directed toward a problem-based framework. This means that the findings were not treated merely as descriptive information about classroom reading conditions, but were systematically examined to identify the major categories of problems underlying students' reading comprehension difficulties. These categories included problems related to students' comprehension performance, classroom participation, teaching practices, learning media, and environmental support. After the main problems were identified and interpreted, the researchers mapped them onto relevant instructional pedagogical strategies that could address the needs revealed in the data. In this way, the analytical process connected problem identification with pedagogical formulation, enabling the study to propose context-sensitive strategies for improving reading comprehension instruction in elementary schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study involved 81 respondents, all elementary school teachers, who responded to a research questionnaire regarding the challenges of reading comprehension. Demographically, 22 respondents were male and 59 female, representing a female predominance of 72.8%. This reflects the reality of the primary school teaching profession, which is predominantly female.

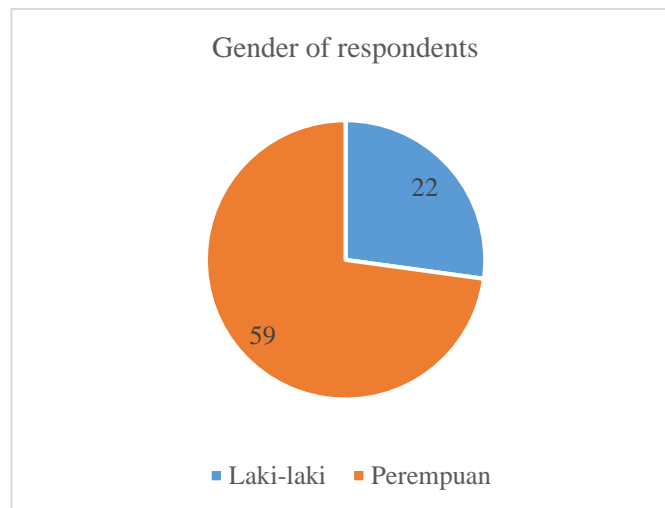


Figure 1. Gender of Respondents

In terms of age, the respondents represented a diverse range of age groups. The largest proportion of participants was in the 31–39 age group (26 teachers), followed by the 58–60 age group (24 teachers), the 40–48 age group (17 teachers), and the 49–57 age group (13 teachers), while only one respondent was above 60 years old. This distribution indicates that the study involved teachers with varied professional experiences and age backgrounds, which may enrich perspectives on reading comprehension instruction in elementary schools.

Table 1. Age group of respondents

Age Group	Frequency
31–39 years	26
40–48 years	17
49–57 years	13
58–60 years	24
Above 60 years	1

Meanwhile, the most recent educational background shows that the majority of respondents (48 people) had a bachelor's degree and 27 had a bachelor's degree + PPG (teaching and teaching) degree. A small number (6 people) had a master's degree, and no respondents had a doctoral degree. This composition indicates that respondents have adequate academic competence in the field of basic education, especially through professional teacher training such as the Teacher Professional Program (PPG).

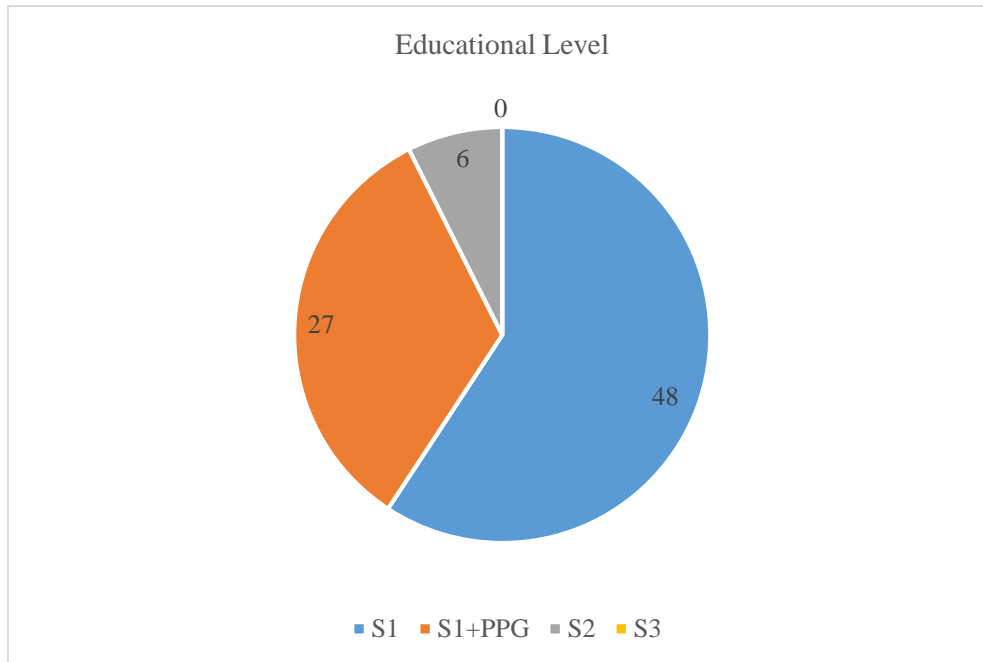


Figure 2. Educational Level

The respondents in this study came from various elementary education institutions, both public and private, spread across several areas in West Sumatra and the surrounding areas. Most of the respondents were teachers from public elementary schools such as SDN 38 Kuranji, SDN 20 Kalumbuk, SDN 32 Muaro Putuih, SDN 06 Bukik Malintang, and several other schools frequently featured in the data, such as SDN 05 Pauh and SDN 33 Kamang. This diversity of schools reflects a broad and diverse representation across social and geographic contexts.

In addition to public schools, several teachers come from integrated and private Islamic elementary schools, such as SDIT Adzkiya 2 Padang, SDIT Adzkiya 3 Padang, SDIT Andalusia Tapan, as well as SD IT Cahaya Madani Lubuk Sikaping and SD S Islam Terpadu Ar-Royyan. The presence of teachers from these Islamic educational institutions demonstrates that the problem of learning reading comprehension is not only found in public schools, but also presents a challenge in religious-based schools.

In addition to teachers, there were several respondents who were unemployed or still students, such as those from Adzkiya University. Although not yet actively teaching full-time, their participation provided perspectives from prospective teachers on the challenges of teaching reading comprehension. This diversity of institutional backgrounds enriched the data and demonstrated that the issues raised were cross-institutional. With the broad scope of institutions and the varied characteristics of the respondents, the results of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges of teaching reading comprehension at the elementary school level and assist in the formulation of applicable and contextual solutions.

Geographically, the respondents' schools are spread across various regions in West Sumatra, such as Padang, Lubuk Sikaping, Maninjau, Sijunjung, Tapan, Muaro Putuih, as well as Tembilahan (Riau) and Bandar Laksamana. This distribution demonstrates that the problem of learning to read comprehension is not a localized issue, but rather a widespread phenomenon across various regions, both urban and semi-rural. With a broad and varied representation of institutions, this data provides a

comprehensive picture that the problem of learning to read comprehension in elementary schools is not limited to a particular type of school, but is a shared challenge that requires systemic and contextual solutions based on the local conditions of each educational institution.

The results of the questionnaire showed that the majority of students had a fairly high interest in reading activities. In the statement "Students show a high interest in reading in class", as many as 16 respondents (20%) stated that they strongly agreed and 39 respondents (48.75%) agreed, while only 24 respondents (30%) disagreed and 1 respondent (1.25%) disagreed. However, in the statement "Students prefer other activities to reading", as many as 36 respondents (45%) agreed and 31 (38.75%) disagreed, which indicates that almost half of the students still do not make reading an interesting main activity. In addition, in the statement "Students feel uncomfortable reading in the classroom", as many as 26 respondents (32.5%) agreed and 24 (30%) disagreed. This indicates that the classroom atmosphere may not fully support reading activities, so there needs to be improvements in the physical environment and learning atmosphere to be more conducive.

The reading comprehension aspect, it is clear that students still have difficulty in understanding the text as a whole. In the statement "Students can understand the content of the reading well", only 10 respondents (12.5%) strongly agreed and 42 (52.5%) agreed, while 26 respondents (32.5%) disagreed and 2 (2.5%) disagreed. In addition, in answering the statement "Students can find important information in the reading", as many as 11 respondents (13.75%) strongly agreed and 35 (43.75%) agreed, but there were still 33 respondents (41.25%) who disagreed or disagreed. These data indicate that almost half of the students have not been able to capture the main information from the text. This is reinforced by the results of the statement "Students often forget the content of the reading after reading", where 29 respondents (36.25%) agreed and 11 (13.75%) strongly agreed, indicating weak reading retention in some students.

The factors of student confidence and active participation are also quite prominent issues. In the statement "Students feel confident reading in front of their friends", only 9 respondents (11.25%) strongly agreed and 39 (48.75%) agreed, while the remaining 28 (35%) disagreed and 4 (5%) disagreed. In addition, when asked whether students actively expressed their opinions in post-reading discussions, only 13 respondents (16.25%) strongly agreed and 36 (45%) agreed, while 29 (36.25%) disagreed and 2 (2.5%) disagreed. These data indicate that most students are still passive in post-reading discussions and interactions. This indicates the need for a more collaborative and supportive learning approach so that students feel safe and confident in conveying their understanding of the reading.

In terms of the role of teachers, the majority of respondents acknowledged that teachers have shown support for reading activities. Fifty respondents (62.5%) agreed and 20 (25%) strongly agreed that teachers encourage students to read various types of reading. Regarding the statement "Teachers provide special time for reading in class," 47 respondents (58.75%) agreed and 18 (22.5%) strongly agreed. However, the statement "Students' interest in reading is still low" was agreed by 36 respondents (45%), indicating that teachers themselves still perceive a lack of motivation in some students. Therefore, teacher strategies need to be adapted more creatively and contextually, such as selecting reading themes that are close to students' culture and experiences, and providing positive reinforcement.

Finally, learning media also plays an important role in increasing reading interest and comprehension. Regarding the statement "Using aids such as videos and images helps with reading comprehension," 40 respondents (50%) agreed and 27 (33.75%) strongly agreed, meaning 83.75% of students felt helped by visual media. Meanwhile, the statement "I prefer reading from printed books to digital screens" received 32 agrees (40%) and 21 strongly agrees (26.25%). This means that even though technology is quite effective, some students are still comfortable with printed media. This indicates the need for a combination approach in learning to read, namely integrating digital and printed sources in a balanced way to suit students' preferences and learning needs. The Table 2 was filled in by respondents.

Table 2. Summary of survey results of students' reading comprehension difficulties

No	Pernyataan	Sangat Setuju	Setuju	Kurang setuju	tidak setuju
1	Siswa menunjukkan minat yang tinggi untuk membaca buku.	16	39	24	1
2	Siswa selalu antusias saat ada waktu untuk membaca.	16	40	21	2
3	Siswa lebih suka aktivitas lain daripada membaca.	9	36	31	3
4	Siswa dapat memahami isi bacaan dengan baik.	10	42	26	2
5	Siswa kesulitan memahami bacaan yang diberikan.	6	31	38	4
6	Siswa mampu menjelaskan isi bacaan dengan tepat.	9	45	24	2
7	Siswa tidak memahami informasi penting dalam bacaan.	1	32	40	7
8	Siswa memiliki keterampilan membaca yang baik dan lancar.	19	47	12	2
9	Siswa sering terbata-bata saat membaca di depan kelas.	3	26	40	10
10	Siswa mampu memahami isi dari berbagai jenis teks dengan baik.	9	42	27	2
11	Siswa mengalami kesulitan saat membaca teks yang kompleks.	6	48	21	4
12	Siswa menikmati membaca dari berbagai jenis buku dan bacaan.	13	42	19	1
13	Saya menyediakan beragam genre bacaan untuk siswa di kelas.	10	63	6	1
14	Siswa tidak membaca buku di luar genre favoritnya.	5	27	38	2
15	Saya sering mengadakan diskusi kelompok setelah membaca untuk m	15	56	7	0
16	Siswa tidak berpartisipasi dalam diskusi setelah membaca.	0	20	46	9
17	Siswa tidak mau berbagi pendapat tentang bacaan yang telah dibaca.	1	11	54	14
18	Siswa mampu membaca secara mandiri tanpa bantuan.	19	46	11	1
19	Siswa kurang percaya diri saat harus membaca di depan kelas.	4	31	31	10
20	Orang tua siswa mendukung kegiatan membaca di rumah.	27	43	9	1
21	Orang tua tidak terlalu terlibat dalam kebiasaan membaca anak merek	6	29	35	9
22	Siswa berbagi bacaan yang mereka dengan orang tua.	11	46	20	3
23	Siswa sering melupakan bacaan mereka saat di rumah.	9	28	31	11
24	Siswa memiliki kebiasaan membaca setiap hari di kelas.	25	42	11	2
25	Penggunaan alat bantu digital membuat siswa lebih tertarik untuk mem	31	38	11	0
26	Siswa saya lebih suka bahan bacaan cetak daripada digital.	3	34	36	6
27	Siswa tidak merasa nyaman saat membaca di ruang kelas.	1	18	44	17
28	Siswa lebih suka membaca buku yang mereka kenal dan tidak mau m	2	18	47	13
29	Saya mendorong siswa untuk menjelajahi berbagai genre bacaan baru.	22	55	2	1
30	Siswa saya mampu menganalisis isi bacaan dengan baik.	6	47	26	1
31	Siswa terlalu sibuk dengan hal lain saat membaca.	3	33	34	9
32	Siswa tidak menganggap membaca sebagai kegiatan yang penting.	3	31	30	15
33	Saya menekankan pentingnya membaca kepada siswa.	48	33	0	0
34	Saya merasa bahwa minat siswa terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Indon	10	26	34	9
35	Siswa sering mengalami kesulitan dalam memahami materi pembelaja	9	44	17	10
36	Saya mengajarkan siswa untuk memahami ide pokok secara keseluru	38	41	1	0
37	siswa mamapu menemukan ide pokok dalam sebuah paragraf	13	58	8	1
38	siswa mampu menemukan ide pokok di akhir paragraf	8	62	8	2
39	siswa mampu menemukan ide pokok di tengah paragraf	9	58	11	2

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that reading comprehension learning in elementary schools still faces various challenges. Based on questionnaire data, most respondents acknowledged that students experience difficulties in understanding the content of the reading, especially in connecting information within the text and deducing its full meaning. This finding aligns with the views of Muriyah et al. (2023), Sakinah & Ibrahim (2023), and Nasrul et al. (2020), who stated that reading skills are not limited to just word recognition but require a deep understanding of the text's content.

One important finding is the low variety of teaching methods used by teachers. More than 60% of respondents stated that the methods used tended to be monotonous and not tailored to students' needs. This supports the arguments of Apfani (2022) and Kholilah Nasution et al. (2022) who stated that a lack of innovation in teaching is a contributing factor to poor reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, a dense curriculum and limited time for in-depth reading activities were also identified as major obstacles to developing reading comprehension skills.

Students' psychological and cognitive aspects are also significant factors. Data shows that students still have difficulty identifying important information, making inferences, and connecting texts to personal experiences. This supports the theory proposed by Smith et al. (2021) and Dewi Wulandari et al. (n.d.), which states that internal barriers such as a lack of critical thinking and metacognitive skills can hinder the reading comprehension process. Low reading interest and minimal learning motivation also exacerbate the situation.

The external environment also plays a significant role. Based on respondents' workplace data, most teachers come from public elementary schools spread across urban and semi-urban areas. Some come from religious-based private schools. This suggests that socioeconomic contexts and school facilities vary widely, which undoubtedly impact support for literacy activities. Consistent with the

findings of Chotimah et al. (2018) and Fitriani (2014), students from families with low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have limited access to quality reading materials outside of school, which directly impacts poor reading comprehension skills.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis and theoretical analysis, it can be concluded that the challenges of reading comprehension in elementary schools are complex and multidimensional. Factors such as inadequate teaching methods, limited time and resources, low student cognitive abilities, and a lack of supportive learning environments are the main causes of low reading comprehension. Students' inability to critically access and process information from texts can hinder overall academic progress.

To address these issues, several strategic steps are necessary. First, teachers need to receive ongoing training in interactive, differentiated, and contextual approaches to reading instruction. Second, schools need to enrich their collections of relevant and engaging reading materials for students and provide dedicated time for in-depth reading. Third, collaboration between schools and parents is essential in building a culture of literacy at home. Finally, it is crucial for policymakers to consider curriculum revisions that provide greater space for the development of reading comprehension skills as a core competency for students. This way, these skills can develop optimally and provide a strong foundation for cross-subject learning at the elementary level.

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