

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PARTNER READING STRATEGY IN READING TEACHING: PERSPECTIVES FROM STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AT MTs SWASTA AL-FALAH CIKAUM**

**Dea Guchi Putri Gunawan<sup>1</sup>, Dody Wahyudi Purnama<sup>2</sup>, Jufrianto Sibarani<sup>3</sup>**

English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education

Universitas Subang, Indonesia<sup>1,2,3</sup>

e-mail: [deaguchi12@gmail.com](mailto:deaguchi12@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [dodywp@unsub.ac.id](mailto:dodywp@unsub.ac.id)<sup>2\*</sup>, [jufriantosibarani@gmail.com](mailto:jufriantosibarani@gmail.com)<sup>3</sup>

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**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji efektivitas strategi *partner reading* dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca siswa serta mengeksplorasi persepsi siswa dan guru terhadap implementasinya dalam pembelajaran. Latar belakang penelitian ini didasarkan pada rendahnya kemampuan membaca siswa serta kurangnya keterlibatan aktif dalam kegiatan membaca di kelas yang masih didominasi oleh pendekatan konvensional. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan *mixed-methods* dengan desain kuasi-eksperimen melalui *pretest-posttest*, serta didukung oleh data kualitatif yang diperoleh melalui angket, observasi, dan wawancara. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari 30 siswa kelas VII dan beberapa guru di MTs Al Falah Cikaum. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan signifikan pada kemampuan membaca siswa setelah penerapan strategi *partner reading*, yang ditunjukkan oleh peningkatan skor rata-rata dari pretest ke posttest. Selain itu, siswa dan guru memberikan respons yang cenderung positif terhadap strategi ini, khususnya dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan, interaksi, dan motivasi belajar. Meskipun demikian, beberapa kendala seperti ketidakseimbangan partisipasi dan perbedaan kemampuan siswa masih ditemukan. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa strategi *partner reading* efektif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca siswa apabila diimplementasikan secara terstruktur dan didukung oleh fasilitasi guru yang optimal.

**Kata Kunci:** *Partner Reading, Pemahaman Membaca, Kelas EFL, Pembelajaran Kolaboratif*

**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the partner reading strategy in improving students' reading skills and to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of its implementation in classroom practice. The study is grounded in the issue of students' low reading proficiency and limited engagement in reading activities, which are often dominated by conventional teaching approaches. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining a quasi-experimental design using a pretest–posttest format with qualitative data collected through questionnaires, observations, and interviews. The participants consisted of 30 seventh-grade students and several teachers at MTs Al Falah Cikaum. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' reading performance, as indicated by the increase in mean scores from pretest to posttest. In addition, both students and teachers responded positively to the implementation of the partner reading strategy, particularly in enhancing engagement, interaction, and learning motivation. However, several challenges were identified, including unequal participation and differences in students' reading abilities. It can be concluded that the partner reading strategy is effective in improving students' reading skills when implemented in a structured manner and supported by appropriate teacher facilitation.

**Keywords:** *Partner Reading, Reading Comprehension, EFL Classroom, Collaborative Learning*

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is widely acknowledged as a fundamental skill that underpins students' academic achievement and overall intellectual development. It enables learners to access information, construct meaning, and engage critically with various forms of knowledge across disciplines (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). In the context of English language learning, reading serves not only as a receptive skill but also as a gateway to vocabulary acquisition, grammatical awareness, and the development of higher-order thinking skills (Taye & Teshome, 2025). Consequently, the ability to read effectively is essential for students to succeed in both academic and real-life contexts. However, despite its recognized importance, many students continue to experience difficulties in achieving adequate levels of reading proficiency, particularly in formal classroom settings (Amumpuni et al., 2025a; Gildore et al., 2025).

These difficulties are often associated with multiple interrelated factors. One prominent issue is the diversity of students' reading abilities within a single classroom (Gildore et al., 2025). Learners come from varied linguistic, cognitive, and socio-educational backgrounds, resulting in different levels of comprehension, fluency, and motivation (Amumpuni et al., 2025b). Such heterogeneity poses a significant challenge for teachers, who are required to design and implement instructional strategies that accommodate all learners effectively. In many cases, traditional teaching approaches tend to adopt a one-size-fits-all model, which may not sufficiently address individual learning needs (Psyridou et al., 2023). As a result, some students are left behind, while others are not adequately challenged, leading to suboptimal learning outcomes. Additionally, differences in ability, students' motivation and engagement in reading activities remain critical concerns. A considerable number of students perceive reading tasks as monotonous, difficult, or irrelevant to their interests. This perception often leads to low participation, minimal effort, and a lack of persistence when encountering challenging texts (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Psyridou et al., 2023). The problem is further exacerbated when instructional practices emphasize passive learning, such as silent reading without interaction or teacher-centered explanation without student involvement (Baloche & Brody, 2017). Under such conditions, students may fail to develop not only comprehension skills but also positive attitudes toward reading, which are essential for long-term literacy development.

To address these challenges, educators have implemented a range of instructional strategies aimed at improving reading proficiency. Among the commonly used approaches are phonics-based instruction, guided reading, and shared reading (Rogerson et al., 2018). Phonics instruction focuses on the relationship between sounds and letters, enabling students to decode written language. Guided reading provides targeted support through small-group instruction, allowing teachers to address specific learning needs. Shared reading, on the other hand, involves collective engagement with a text, where the teacher models reading strategies and facilitates discussion (Farid et al., 2020; White et al., 2022). While these approaches contribute to the development of essential reading skills, they may not always promote active student engagement or meaningful interaction, which are increasingly recognized as crucial components of effective learning.

In recent years, collaborative learning has emerged as a promising pedagogical approach that emphasizes interaction, cooperation, and shared responsibility among learners

(Amumpuni et al., 2025b; Deng et al., 2024; Watkins, 2020). Ingrained in sociocultural theory, collaborative learning views knowledge construction as a social process that occurs through interaction with others. Within this framework, students are not merely passive recipients of information but active participants who co-construct understanding through dialogue, negotiation, and mutual support (Beucher et al., 2020). Collaborative strategies have been shown to enhance not only cognitive outcomes but also affective factors such as motivation, confidence, and sense of belonging. One collaborative approach that has gained attention in reading instruction is partner reading (Izzati, 2023; Pebriantika, 2024; Watkins, 2020). Partner reading is an instructional strategy in which students work in pairs to read texts and assist each other in understanding the content (Izzati, 2023). Typically, students take turns reading aloud, providing feedback, asking questions, and clarifying meanings (Zulianti & Hastomo, 2022). This structured interaction allows learners to engage more deeply with the text while benefiting from peer support. Through this process, students are encouraged to take an active role in their learning, develop greater confidence in their reading abilities, and improve their comprehension through discussion and reflection (Purba et al., 2023; Zulianti & Hastomo, 2022).

The potential benefits of partner reading are numerous and taken a form of one of the potential learning methods (Mellinda et al., 2022). From a cognitive perspective, the strategy facilitates comprehension by enabling students to process information collaboratively and address misunderstandings in real time. From a social perspective, it fosters positive peer relationships and promotes cooperative learning. From an affective perspective, it can increase students' motivation and reduce anxiety, particularly for those who may feel intimidated when reading individually in front of the class (Harahap, 2021). These advantages suggest that partner reading has the potential to serve as an effective alternative to more traditional, teacher-centered approaches to reading instruction.

Nevertheless, the successful implementation of partner reading is not without challenges. Classroom realities, such as differences in students' proficiency levels, varying degrees of participation, and limited instructional time, may influence the effectiveness of the strategy. In some cases, stronger students may dominate the interaction, while weaker students become passive participants (Purba et al., 2023; Rizkina et al., 2025). Additionally, without proper guidance and structure, partner reading activities may lack focus and fail to achieve their intended learning objectives. Teacher facilitation, therefore, plays a crucial role in ensuring that the strategy is implemented effectively and that all students benefit from the collaborative process. Given these considerations, it is important to examine not only the outcomes of partner reading but also the perceptions of those directly involved in its implementation. Students' experiences can provide valuable insights into how the strategy affects their engagement, motivation, and comprehension. Similarly, teachers' perspectives can shed light on the practical challenges and pedagogical implications associated with the use of partner reading in real classroom contexts. Understanding these perspectives is essential for developing a comprehensive evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness.

Although previous studies have reported positive findings regarding the use of partner reading in improving reading skills and student engagement (Harahap, 2021; Izzati, 2023; Mellinda et al., 2022; Pebriantika, 2024; Rizkina et al., 2025), there remains a need for more context-specific research that integrates both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. In particular, limited attention has been given to studies that simultaneously examine measurable learning outcomes and the subjective experiences of students and teachers within a specific institutional setting. Such an integrated approach is necessary to capture the complexity of

classroom practices and to provide more nuanced insights into the effectiveness of instructional strategies.

In the context of Indonesian education, where classrooms are often characterized by large class sizes and diverse student abilities, the implementation of collaborative strategies such as partner reading warrants further investigation. Schools at the junior secondary level, including MTsS Al Falah Cikaum, represent a critical stage in students' literacy development, where effective reading instruction can have a lasting impact on their academic trajectory. Exploring how partner reading functions in this context can contribute to the development of more responsive and contextually relevant teaching practices. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the partner reading strategy in improving students' reading skills, as well as to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of its implementation at MTsS Al Falah Cikaum. By employing a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative data on reading performance with qualitative insights into classroom experiences, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of partner reading in enhancing reading instruction. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on collaborative learning and offer practical implications for educators seeking to improve reading outcomes in similar educational settings.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively integrate quantitative and qualitative data. The research design used a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest combined with a survey method (Creswell, 2009). The study was conducted at MTsS Al Falah Cikaum, Subang Regency, for one academic semester from August to November 2025. Participants consisted of 30 7th-grade students selected through a purposive sampling technique and a number of teachers as additional informants. The procedure began with the development and validation of the instrument through pilot testing before administering a pretest to measure the baseline of students' reading abilities. During the intervention, the partner reading strategy was implemented in several routine learning sessions, where students worked in pairs to engage in structured reading activities. The researcher positioned herself as a participant observer to document classroom interactions and student engagement patterns directly. All stages were designed to systematically measure the effectiveness of the strategy on dependent variables, such as reading comprehension, fluency, and students' learning motivation in a natural classroom environment.

Data collection techniques involved the use of reading test instruments, Likert-scale questionnaires, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. The reading test focused on identifying main ideas, recognizing details, and inferring text, while the questionnaire was used to gather perceptions of student engagement and motivation. Quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics and paired-samples t-tests using SPSS to determine the significance of differences between pretest and posttest scores (Hodgson & Chilvers, 1982; Ramdani et al., 2025). Prior to the analysis, rigorous assumptions of normality and homogeneity were tested to ensure statistical validity. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, including transcription, coding, and categorization (Sullivan & Artino, 2014). Researchers employed deductive and inductive approaches to identify challenges and interaction patterns during strategy implementation. The credibility of the findings was ensured through \*Cronbach's alpha\* reliability testing and data triangulation by comparing all instrument results to provide a rich and scientifically accurate interpretation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the partner reading strategy in improving students' reading skills and to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of its implementation. The findings are presented by integrating quantitative results with qualitative insights to provide a comprehensive understanding of the instructional impact.

#### Students' Perceptions

The questionnaire results revealed that students generally perceived the partner reading strategy as moderately effective. Most students reported participating in partner reading activities with moderate frequency, indicating that the strategy was implemented consistently but not intensively. In terms of enjoyment, responses were centered between neutral and positive, suggesting that the collaborative nature of the activity was appreciated, although not uniformly experienced by all students. Regarding comprehension, a considerable number of students indicated that partner reading helped them better understand the reading material. However, the level of improvement varied across individuals, reflecting differences in learning preferences and partner dynamics. Similarly, students reported moderate increases in engagement and confidence, particularly when they received support from their partners. Peer interaction was perceived as beneficial, with many students acknowledging that collaborative discussion facilitated their understanding of texts.

Despite these positive perceptions, some limitations were also identified. Not all students felt consistently engaged during the sessions, and the effectiveness of the strategy appeared to depend on the quality of interaction between partners. In some cases, unequal participation reduced the potential benefits of collaboration. These findings suggest that while partner reading can enhance student experience, its effectiveness is influenced by implementation factors such as pairing strategies and task structure.

#### Teachers' Perceptions

The findings from teacher questionnaires indicated that partner reading was perceived as moderately effective in improving students' reading skills. Teachers highlighted increased student participation and improved peer interaction as key strengths of the strategy. They observed that students were generally more active during reading activities and demonstrated greater willingness to engage with texts when working collaboratively. However, teachers also reported several challenges in implementing the strategy. One of the primary concerns was the variation in students' reading abilities, which made it difficult to ensure balanced and productive interactions within pairs. In some cases, more proficient students tended to dominate the activity, while less proficient students became passive participants. Additionally, teachers noted that without clear guidance and structured tasks, discussions between students often remained at a surface level and did not lead to deeper comprehension. Overall, teachers' responses reflected a balanced view of the strategy, acknowledging its potential benefits while recognizing the need for more structured implementation to maximize its effectiveness.

#### Improvement in Students' Reading Performance

The effectiveness of the partner reading strategy was first examined through students' performance on the pretest and posttest. The results are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Scores**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest (before)	30	55	96	69.43	12.530

PostTest (after)	30	62	91	77.20	9.514
Valid N (listwise)	30				

As presented in Table 1, the mean score of students increased from 69.43 in the pretest to 77.20 in the posttest. This increase indicates a positive shift in students' reading performance following the implementation of the partner reading strategy. In addition to the improvement in mean scores, the standard deviation decreased from 12.53 to 9.51, suggesting that students' performance became more consistent after the intervention. This reduction in variability implies that the strategy not only improved overall performance but also contributed to a more balanced distribution of reading ability among students.

To further examine the significance of this improvement, a paired-samples t-test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Paired-Samples t-Test Results**

Paired Samples Test									
Paired Differences									
		Std. Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PRETEST – POSTTEST	-7.767	8.780	1.603	-11.045	-4.488	<b>-4.845</b>	29	.000

The results of the t-test revealed that the calculated t-value (-4.845) exceeded the critical value (-2.045) at the 0.05 significance level. This finding indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between students' pretest and posttest scores. From the table above, since t is calculated  $< -t$  table ( $-4.845 < -2.045$ ), it can be concluded that  $H_0$  is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that the implementation of the partner reading strategy had a significant positive effect on students' reading comprehension.

### Discussion

The findings of this research suggest that partner reading strategies significantly enhance reading development among students, as evidenced by a substantial improvement in post-test scores. This growth confirms that reading comprehension is a socially mediated process where peer interaction facilitates knowledge construction. Such results are consistent with the work of Amumpuni *et al.* (2025b), who found that collaborative reading significantly boosts both comprehension and engagement in English as a Foreign Language classrooms. Furthermore, Sari *et al.* (2025) noted that students participating in partner-based tasks achieved superior outcomes compared to those working individually. Quantitatively, the shift in performance levels underscores the cognitive benefits of real-time peer discussion and the clarification of textual misunderstandings. This pedagogical approach transforms the classroom into a less intimidating space, encouraging active roles over passive reception. By moving beyond traditional reading activities, the strategy allows for a deeper processing of information through meaningful dialogue. Ultimately, these results validate the role of collaborative frameworks in achieving intended instructional goals while fostering supportive learning literacy environments for the system (Ammel *et al.*, 2021; Amumpuni *et al.*, 2025; Şanal, 2023; Thongkhotr & Chaijaroen, 2025).

Student perceptions collected through questionnaires and qualitative interviews indicate that partner reading is viewed as a moderately effective instructional tool. While a majority of participants reported regular involvement in these activities, the intensity of their engagement varied based on individual preferences and partner compatibility. Most students expressed a neutral to positive response regarding their enjoyment, suggesting that the social nature of the task reduced anxiety and increased motivation. This finding aligns with Watkins (2020), who emphasized that supportive peer environments encourage students to take risks and ask questions. Effective understanding of reading materials was frequently attributed to the immediate feedback received from partners, which allowed for the active construction of meaning. However, not all students experienced uniform benefits, as some students reported only slight gains in comprehension. This discrepancy highlights that internal motivation and the dynamics between pairs are crucial factors in determining the success of the strategy. Consequently, while the collaborative aspect is highly valued, the personal interest of the student remains a vital component in the overall impact (Cheng et al., 2021; Pratolo et al., 2025; Shaddad & Jember, 2024; Tambun et al., 2025).

From the teachers' perspective, partner reading is perceived as a beneficial method for increasing student activity and engagement during literacy sessions. Educators observed that students became more proactive when working in pairs, as the format naturally encouraged them to take ownership of their learning process. This shift from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction is a hallmark of contemporary pedagogical approaches that prioritize active participation over rote memorization. Teachers noted that the strategy facilitated significant peer interaction, where students assisted one another in decoding difficult passages and vocabulary. By reducing the reliance on direct teacher explanation, students developed more autonomous learning habits. These qualitative observations confirm that the collaborative classroom environment fosters a sense of communal achievement and reduces individual frustration. However, teachers also indicated that the success of the sessions was highly dependent on how well the tasks were structured to maintain focus. The transition toward a more participatory model requires careful planning to ensure that the increased activity translates into actual cognitive development and appreciation for the reading texts used (Gaudreau et al., 2020; Kielstra et al., 2022; Moutsinas et al., 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2025).

Despite the positive outcomes, the study identifies several challenges that limit the effectiveness of partner reading, particularly regarding the diversity of student abilities. Teachers reported that more proficient students often dominated discussions, while those with lower proficiency levels became passive observers, leading to an imbalance in learning benefits. Without explicit structure and clear roles, students often engaged in surface-level interactions rather than a deep analysis of the text. This finding underscores the necessity of instructional scaffolding to guide students toward more meaningful dialogue. As argued by Hadiananto *et al.* (2022), collaborative learning requires intentional support to prevent students from simply completing tasks without genuine cognitive engagement. Merely pairing students is insufficient; instead, teachers must provide discussion prompts and explicit instructions to facilitate deeper comprehension. These challenges suggest that the implementation of partner reading must be highly structured to accommodate varying proficiency levels effectively. Addressing these imbalances is essential for ensuring that the strategy serves as an equitable tool for development rather than a source of marginalization for struggling literacy students (Crebillo & Gilbas, 2025; Esparza et al., 2023; Navarro, 2026; Pratolo et al., 2025).

The moderate perceptions reported by both stakeholders suggest that while partner reading is a promising strategy, it should not be utilized as a standalone method. The integration

of collaborative tasks with explicit instruction is likely to yield more significant improvements in reading comprehension, as concluded by Deng *et al.* (2024). This study emphasizes that the potential of partner reading is maximized when it is part of a comprehensive instructional framework that includes differentiated instruction and teacher feedback. By addressing the identified challenges, such as partner dynamics and task design, educators can better support the cognitive, social, and affective development of their students. The research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence of how social interaction functions in real classroom settings. Future research should further explore how specific pairing strategies and varied task designs influence effectiveness across different educational contexts. Ultimately, partner reading is not just a technique but a pedagogical approach that thrives on thoughtful implementation and supportive classroom conditions to ensure that all students succeed.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the partner reading strategy in improving students' reading skills and to explore both students' and teachers' perceptions of its implementation in classroom practice. The findings demonstrate that partner reading contributes significantly to students' reading development by fostering active engagement, collaborative interaction, and improved comprehension. These results reinforce the view that reading is not merely an individual cognitive activity but a socially mediated process in which learners construct meaning through interaction and shared understanding.

The improvement in students' reading performance, accompanied by increased participation and more consistent engagement, indicates that collaborative strategies can create a more dynamic and supportive learning environment. In this context, partner reading serves not only as an instructional technique but also as a pedagogical approach that promotes student-centered learning, peer support, and shared responsibility. However, the findings also reveal that the effectiveness of this strategy is highly dependent on its implementation. Factors such as student pairing, task structure, and teacher facilitation play a crucial role in determining whether collaborative interaction leads to meaningful learning or remains superficial. Without adequate guidance, the potential benefits of partner reading may not be fully realized.

From a practical perspective, this study highlights the relevance of partner reading as an alternative approach to addressing challenges in reading instruction, particularly in classrooms characterized by diverse student abilities and varying levels of motivation. When implemented strategically, the strategy can support both cognitive and affective aspects of learning, making reading activities more engaging and accessible for students. Furthermore, this study contributes to the broader understanding of collaborative learning in reading instruction by providing empirical evidence from an authentic classroom context. Future research may explore the integration of partner reading with other instructional strategies, examine its long-term impact on students' literacy development, or investigate its applicability across different educational settings and learner characteristics.

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