

Improving EFL Students' Reading Literacy through Fable-Based Texts in a Flipped Classroom

Bunga Ayu Lolyta

Master of English Language Education, Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia

email: bungaa.lolyta@gmail.com

Abstract:

Reading literacy remains a challenge for many elementary EFL learners, particularly in comprehending narrative texts beyond word recognition. In classroom practice, reading instruction is often conducted through teacher-centered approaches that provide limited opportunities for students to engage with texts independently. As a result, students frequently experience difficulties in identifying main ideas, understanding details, and constructing meaning from texts. This study aimed to describe the development of sixth-grade EFL students' reading literacy through the use of fable-based narrative texts in a flipped classroom. This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design with a pre-test and post-test approach. The participants were 20 sixth-grade students from a private elementary school in Semarang, Indonesia. Students' reading literacy was assessed using a reading comprehension test developed based on Grabe and Yamashita's reading comprehension framework, which focuses on identifying main ideas, understanding details, and making simple inferences from narrative texts. The instructional treatment involved the integration of fable-based texts in a flipped classroom model, where students engaged with reading materials prior to classroom instruction. The findings revealed a steady improvement in students' reading literacy. The mean score increased from texts after the implementation of the flipped classroom, particularly in identifying key ideas and understanding story details. Overall, the findings suggest that integrating fable-based narrative texts within a flipped classroom can support the development of reading literacy among elementary EFL learners.

Keywords: *EFL; fable-based texts; flipped classroom, reading literacy*

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading literacy is a fundamental skill in English as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly for elementary school students (Angraini, 2024; Ayu Kusmana et al., 2023; Nur Afni et al., 2025; van der Weel & Mangen, 2022). At this level, reading serves as a foundation for language development, enabling learners to construct meaning, acquire vocabulary, and comprehend simple texts. According to Grabe & Yamashita (2009), reading comprehension involves the ability to identify main ideas, understand details, and make inferences from texts. These components are essential for developing students' reading literacy in EFL contexts (Arfiandhani & Takeuchi, 2025).

In the Indonesian EFL context, reading instruction for elementary students is commonly conducted through conventional classroom practices, where students are exposed to texts only during lesson time (Campilla & Cariño, 2024). This approach often limits students' opportunities to engage with texts meaningfully and independently. Consequently, students tend to focus on word recognition rather than developing reading literacy skills such as understanding text structure and deriving meaning from context (Stiff et al., 2023).

Narrative texts, particularly fables, are considered appropriate reading materials for young EFL learners (Brighton et al., 2025; MGannon et al., 2025; Setyaji & Sodik, 2025).

Fables are short narrative texts that present simple plots, familiar characters, and clear moral values, making them accessible and engaging for elementary students. As a form of short stories, fables allow learners to understand narrative structure while simultaneously developing reading comprehension. Previous studies have suggested that narrative texts can support students' reading literacy by providing meaningful and contextual learning experiences (Khan et al., 2024; Lee & Roger, 2023; Mohammed et al., 2025; Musyaffa et al., 2023).

One instructional approach that may enhance the use of narrative texts is the flipped classroom model (Aljaber et al., 2023; Irianti, 2020). In a flipped classroom, students are introduced to learning materials before class, allowing classroom time to be devoted to discussion, clarification, and comprehension activities (Bode-Staud et al., 2025). This model encourages active learning and provides students with opportunities to interact with narrative texts more deeply (Walsh & Rísquez, 2020). Although the flipped classroom approach has been widely applied in secondary and higher education, its implementation in elementary EFL reading instruction, particularly using fables as narrative texts, remains underexplored.

Several studies have examined the implementation of flipped classrooms in EFL contexts; however, most of these studies focus on secondary or tertiary education and emphasize general language skills rather than reading literary development at the elementary level (Kiraly et al., 2025; Nja et al., 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2022). In addition, existing studies rarely integrate literary-based texts, such as fables, within flipped classroom instruction to support elementary EFL students' reading literacy. Most previous research has focused on skills such as speaking, grammar, or overall language achievement, leaving reading literacy particularly comprehension of narrative texts, underexplored at the elementary level. Therefore, a research gap exists in scrutinizing how fable-based narrative texts implemented through a flipped classroom model can support the development of reading literacy among elementary EFL learners.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the use of fable-based short stories in a flipped classroom to improve sixth-grade EFL students' reading literacy. The participants of this study were 20 students from a private elementary school in Semarang. The study addresses the following research question: Does the use of fable-based short stories in a flipped classroom improve EFL students' reading literacy? The findings of this study are expected to contribute to English language teaching practices by providing pedagogical insights into literature-based instruction and flipped classroom strategies for elementary EFL learners.

2. METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative design using a one-group pre-test and post-test approach (Creswell, 2020). The design was used to scrutinize students' reading literacy development before and after the implementation of fable-based narrative texts in a flipped classroom. The participants of this study were 20 sixth-grade EFL students from a private elementary school in Semarang, Indonesia. The group consisted of 10 female and 10 male students aged between 11 and 12 years old. All students participated in the quantitative phase of the study and completed both the pre-test and post-test. The participants were selected based on classroom availability and consent from the school.

Data Collection

The primary instrument used in this study was a reading comprehension test developed based on Grabe & Yamashita (2009) reading comprehension framework. The test measured students' ability to identify main ideas, understand details, and make simple inferences from narrative texts. The instrument consisted of 20 items, including 15 multiple-choice questions and 5 short-answer questions adapted to the students' proficiency level.

The pre-test was administered prior to the implementation of the flipped classroom treatment to measure students' initial reading literacy. After four weeks of instructional treatment using fable-based narrative texts in a flipped classroom model, a post-test was administered to measure students' reading literacy development. Each test was conducted during regular class hours and lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Table 1. Reading Comprehension Assessment Rubric (Based on Grabe & Yamashita (2009))

Score	Vocabulary Use	Description
0-44	Poor	Very limited comprehension; difficulty identifying main ideas, details, and basic meaning.
45-59	Fair	Limited comprehension; some details identified, but main ideas are often unclear.
60-74	Satisfactory	Basic comprehension; main ideas and some details are identified with minor misunderstanding.
75-89	Good	Good comprehension; main ideas, details, and simple inferences are mostly accurate.
90-100	Excellent	Strong comprehension; main ideas, details, and inferences are clearly and accurately identified.

Procedure

The study was conducted through three stages. First, a pre-test was administered to measure students' initial reading literacy. Second, the instructional treatment was implemented using fable-based narrative texts in a flipped classroom model. Third, a post-test was administered to measure students' reading literacy after the treatment.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed descriptively by calculating the mean, highest, and lowest scores of both pre-test and post-test. Each student's test score was calculated by converting the number of correct answers into a percentage score on a scale of 0-100. The mean score

was then obtained by summing all individual scores and dividing them by the total number of participants.

Students' reading literacy improvement was identified by comparing the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test results. In addition, students' performance levels were categorized based on the assessment rubric adapted from Grabe & Yamashita (2009) which classifies scores into five categories: poor, fair, satisfactory, good, and excellent. The comparison of pre-test and post-test mean scores was used to describe the extent of students' reading literacy development after the implementation of the flipped classroom.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the school, and students' participation was voluntary. Students' identities were kept confidential, and all data were used solely for research purposes.

3. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

3.1 Improvement of Students' Reading Literacy After the Implementation of Fable-Based Texts in a Flipped Classroom

The findings clearly answer the research question by indicating that the implementation of fable-based narrative texts in a flipped classroom improved students' reading literacy. As presented in Table 2, the mean score increased consistently across the three testing stages, from 58.60 in the pre-test to 70.10 during the instructional process and further to 83.50 in the post-test. This steady increase demonstrates a gradual development in students' comprehension abilities over the course of the treatment.

Table 2. Students' Reading Scores

Test	N	Mean	Lowest	Highest
Pre-Test	20	58.60	40	70
Test 2	20	70.10	60	75
Post-Test	20	83.50	70	90

The initial pre-test result ($M = 58.60$) suggests that students demonstrated limited reading comprehension prior to the intervention, particularly in identifying main ideas and understanding supporting details. However, after exposure to fable-based texts through flipped classroom activities, students began to show measurable progress. The increase in the mean score during the instructional phase ($M = 70.10$) indicates that students were developing greater familiarity with narrative structures and comprehension strategies.

The most substantial improvement was observed in the post-test ($M = 83.50$), where most students reached a good to excellent level of performance based on the assessment rubric. This result suggests that sustained exposure to narrative texts prior to classroom discussion may have facilitated deeper comprehension and more confident engagement with the texts.

The improvement observed in this study aligns with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of flipped classroom instruction in enhancing language learning outcomes (Khan et al., 2024; Lee & Roger, 2023; Setyaji & Sodiq, 2025). However, unlike previous studies that primarily emphasized speaking skills or overall language achievement, this study specifically focused on reading literacy development at the elementary level.

The integration of fable-based narrative texts may have played a crucial role in supporting comprehension development. Fables provide clear narrative structures and moral frameworks, which help young learners organize information and construct meaning. When

combined with a flipped classroom model, students were given more time to process vocabulary and storyline elements independently. This preparation likely enabled more meaningful discussion and comprehension-focused activities during class time.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study provide several pedagogical implications for English language teaching, particularly in elementary EFL contexts. First, the results suggest that the use of fable-based narrative texts can serve as effective reading materials for developing students' reading literacy. Fables present simple narrative structures, familiar characters, and clear moral values, which allow young learners to focus on meaning construction rather than linguistic complexity. Teachers may consider selecting narrative texts that are developmentally appropriate and culturally familiar to support students' comprehension and engagement in reading activities.

Second, the implementation of the flipped classroom model offers practical benefits for elementary EFL reading instruction. By allowing students to engage with reading materials prior to classroom instruction, teachers can maximize classroom time for comprehension-focused activities such as identifying main ideas, discussing story events, and clarifying misunderstandings. This approach shifts classroom practice from teacher-centered explanation to student-centered interaction, which is particularly important for supporting reading literacy development at an early stage.

Third, this study highlights the importance of aligning instructional practice with a clear theoretical framework. The use of Grabe's reading comprehension framework provides teachers with concrete guidance on what aspects of reading should be emphasized, including identifying main ideas, understanding details, and making inferences. Teachers can use this framework to design reading tasks, discussion questions, and assessment instruments that focus on meaning-based comprehension rather than isolated vocabulary or grammar practice.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that repeated exposure to narrative texts through structured reading activities can enhance students' confidence and familiarity with English texts. When students are given opportunities to read texts independently before class, they are more prepared to participate actively in classroom discussions. This practice may help reduce students' anxiety and increase their motivation to engage with English reading materials.

In practical terms, elementary EFL teachers may integrate short narrative texts into flipped classroom instruction by providing students with digital or printed reading materials prior to class and designing in-class activities that emphasize comprehension and interpretation. Such practices can be adapted to different classroom conditions and do not require advanced technological resources. Overall, this study suggests that combining fable-based texts with flipped classroom instruction can support the development of reading literacy in elementary EFL classrooms.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study involved a relatively small number of participants from a single private elementary school in Semarang. As a result, the findings reflect a specific educational context and may not be generalizable to other elementary EFL settings, such as public schools or schools in different regions.

Second, this study employed a descriptive quantitative research design without inferential statistical analysis. While the findings describe students' reading literacy development through mean score comparison, the study does not provide evidence of causal

relationships between the instructional approach and students' reading improvement. Future studies may employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs to further examine the effectiveness of flipped classroom instruction using narrative texts.

Third, the scope of the reading materials used in this study was limited to fable-based narrative texts. Although fables were found to be effective for supporting reading literacy, other text types, such as informational texts or contemporary narratives, were not explored. Future research may investigate the use of different text genres to examine how various types of texts contribute to students' reading literacy development.

In addition, this study focused primarily on students' reading performance as measured through comprehension tests. Other aspects of reading development, such as students' reading motivation, attitudes toward reading, or long-term retention of comprehension skills, were not examined. Future research may incorporate additional data sources to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' reading literacy development.

In conclusion, future studies are encouraged to involve larger and more diverse participant groups, employ more rigorous research designs, and explore a wider range of instructional approaches and text types. Such research may further advance understanding of effective strategies for developing reading literacy in elementary EFL contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to describe the development of sixth-grade EFL students' reading literacy through the use of fable-based narrative texts implemented in a flipped classroom. The findings indicate that students' reading literacy improved across the instructional stages, as reflected in the gradual increase in mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test. These results suggest that providing students with structured opportunities to engage with narrative texts before and during classroom instruction can support their reading comprehension development.

More importantly, this study contributes to the field of English language teaching by demonstrating how reading literacy can be developed through an instructional approach that is closely aligned with a well-established theoretical framework. By grounding the reading assessment in Grabe's reading comprehension framework, this study emphasizes reading as a meaning-construction process that involves identifying main ideas, understanding details, and making inferences. The improvement observed in students' reading performance indicates that fable-based narrative texts can effectively support these components of reading comprehension when implemented through appropriate pedagogical strategies.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of three key elements: fables as narrative texts, the flipped classroom model, and Grabe's reading comprehension framework within an elementary EFL context. While previous studies have examined flipped classrooms or literature-based instruction separately, limited attention has been given to their combined application for developing reading literacy at the elementary level, particularly in Indonesian private school contexts. This study addresses this gap by offering a context-specific example of how narrative texts can be meaningfully integrated into flipped classroom instruction to support young learners' reading literacy.

In addition, this study advances current practice by providing a practical model for elementary EFL teachers. The findings suggest that allowing students to interact with narrative texts prior to classroom instruction can enhance their readiness for comprehension-focused activities, thereby shifting classroom time from word-level decoding to meaning-based discussion. This pedagogical implication is particularly relevant for elementary

classrooms where instructional time is limited and students require repeated exposure to texts to develop reading literacy.

Despite its contributions, this study was limited to a single class in one private elementary school and employed a descriptive research design. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the specific context of the study. Future research may explore comparative or longitudinal designs to further examine the effectiveness of flipped classroom instruction using narrative texts across different educational settings and student populations.

In conclusion, this study highlights the potential of integrating fable-based narrative texts within a flipped classroom to support elementary EFL students' reading literacy development. By aligning instructional practice with Grabe's reading comprehension framework, this study contributes to a clearer understanding of how theory-informed pedagogy can enhance reading literacy in early EFL learning contexts.

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