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Implementation of Dialogic Reading Strategy to Support Elementary School Young Learners' Engagement in Reading

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ABSTRACT

Background: Challenges encountered in reading literacy for elementary school students in Indonesia are low interest and motivation. The same problems in English reading skills and literacy are also faced by elementary school students living around the Bambu Kuning Child-Friendly Integrated Public Space (RPTRA). Therefore, a Dialogic Reading (DR) strategy is needed to engage elementary school students in reading and relevant for their characteristics as interactive activities by using questions can foster students' motivation.

Purpose of the Study: Pertaining its importance, this community service program aimed to investigate whether DR strategy supports elementary school students' engagement with the materials, readers, and peers.

Methods: The DR techniques, CROWD (Completion, Recall, Open-ended, Wh-questions, Distancing), and PEER (Prompt, Evaluate, Expand, Repeat) sequence were employed in the implementation. Approximately 40 elementary school students living around RPTRA Bambu Kuning participated in this program.

Results: The results indicated the children's engagement with the materials, the readers, and their peers. The attendance ranged from 43 to 50 participants across 4 sessions. They showed curiosity and interest in the story and illustrations of the book. They also interacted with the readers and their peers responsively, enthusiastically, and collaboratively during the shared reading sessions. It is expected that through this program, the children in this neighborhood will gradually develop a stronger interest in reading.

Keywords
Dialogic Reading; Young Learners' Engagement; Reading Literacy; Service-Learning Program

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Introduction

Developing literacy in reading as a fundamental skill for Indonesian children, particularly elementary school students, meets many challenges. According to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2022, the data shows that Indonesia is ranked 69th out of 80 countries and belongs to the bottom 12 countries in reading comprehension skills (OECD, 2022). The data indicates that Indonesian education still needs actions to improve literacy skills. There are some factors of low reading literacy skill in Indonesia, including internal and external factors (Khalifatussalam, 2023). The internal factors are grown from childhood or the formation of the family, meanwhile the external factors are encouragement from the surrounding environment. So, the engagement of reading literacy culture with learning patterns both at home and in schools is very close. For example, the school learning method focuses more on the reading mechanical aspect like fluency than comprehension skills. The learning mechanism involves reading to simply memorize the learning materials rather than providing various reading activities, such as reading short stories, poems, and other text types (Tahmidaten & Krismanto, 2020 as cited in Khalifatussalam, 2023). Besides, reading habits are still low because parents do not instill the tradition of compulsory reading in the house. In the digital and technological era, parents and children spend their time mostly scrolling through social media.

In addition, challenges found in reading literacy for elementary school students in Indonesia are children's low interest and motivation. In a study conducted by Abidin, Rakhmayanti, and Undayasari (2025), children's interest in reading is influenced by the reading facilities at home and the wise use of gadgets under the supervision of parents' guidance. It is predicted that children's interest in reading will grow healthily if the parents themselves have a good reading culture. Children's motivation to read is not directly influenced by teacher performance in class. In fact, giving excessive reading assignments to students has a negative effect on children's motivation to read. On this basis, good school programs in fostering children's reading literacy must also be followed by teacher training so that teachers do not only focus on improving literacy skills but are also wiser in cultivating children's self-efficacy and motivation in reading.

Beyond the importance of reading interest and comprehension, English competency is a key component in supporting individual values. English is no longer used solely in conversation since the digital era has transformed the world into a borderless world where much information is presented in English. Therefore, children in the younger generation need to be equipped with English skills as well as comprehension. The reading skill is very much essential for the elementary school students because it equips the students with necessary knowledge and understanding not only for building their own life but also for contributing positively to the socio-economic development of the nation. The promotion of the reading skill and identification of reading strategies of the elementary school students and turning them into lifelong learners are quite important for building a knowledgeable society (Wotsa & Yadav, 2023).

The problems in English reading skills and literacy are faced by elementary school students living around the Bambu Kuning Child-Friendly Integrated Public Space (RPTRA). RPTRA Bambu Kuning, located on Jl. K.S. Tubun, South Kota Bambu, Palmerah, West Jakarta, is a public facility offering various educational and social programs for the community, including elementary school age children. RPTRA serves as an alternative place for children. However, observation indicates a lack of reading support with English texts, whereas effective reading support can improve critical thinking skills and text comprehension (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1988). The elementary schools around RPTRA Bambu Kuning are mostly public schools where learning facilities, especially reading texts, are very limited and not supported by competent English teachers. Hence, the development of reading skills is still perceived as part of the responsibility of language subjects only. Based on the curriculum perspective, it is true that reading is one of the

competencies that must be taught in the language subject, so teachers of other subjects do not feel the need to participate in developing reading comprehension skills (Tahmidaten & Krismanto, 2020, as cited in Khalifatussalam, 2023). Moreover, reading materials, learning activities and practice/evaluation questions that exist in teaching materials in schools tend to still dwell on low-order thinking skills. The curriculum has been designed to strengthen high-order thinking skills, but the teachers unfortunately do not understand its implementation.

Facing those challenges, strategies to engage primary school students in reading interest are needed (Snow, 2002). One way to engage students in reading is the dialogic reading (DR) strategy. DR shifts away from students solely listening to a read aloud and answering occasional low-level questions to engaging students verbally and making the read aloud experience more interactive. It is essential to helping students acquire new knowledge (Mosher & Kim, 2023). This strategy also emphasizes the active engagement between children and their caregivers, such as teachers or parents, through open-ended questions, interactive discussion, and reflection toward the reading materials (Whitehurst et al., 1988). Mol et al. (2008) stated this strategy is different from passive reading because the DR encourages children to understand, analyze, and relate the reading content to their experiences. Additionally, DR involves discussion and interaction, which encourages students to participate in classroom discussion about the texts they are reading. This is in line with Vygotsky's social development theory (Vygotsky, 1978 as cited in Talenta & Himawati, 2023) that emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning. Students will be able to share their thoughts and engage critical thinking. Therefore, the dialogic strategy is expected to overcome the problems in reading literacy skills for elementary school students at RPTRA Bambu Kuning.

The DR strategy is relevant for the characteristics of elementary school students living around RPTRA because they learn to read English textbooks in a simple way. By modelling how to approach a text, DR is a proven way for children to acquire effective reading skills. It gets children into the habit of reading more thoroughly (Zavala, 2021). Then, DR is an interactive activity by using questions that grow students' motivation. Questions can help students become more interested in the text or story. Thinking about the motivations of characters and what will happen next in the story will make it more engaging for students. Furthermore, to make DR work for children, it is essential to create a safe environment in which children feel that they can ask questions, give opinions, and take risks without the fear of being judged or made fun of. Making mistakes is part of the learning process and is a byproduct of taking risks, which is a core part of the creative mindset. Therefore, considering the DR strategy brings benefits for children's reading literacy skills, the community service program focused on implementing DR to engage primary school students living around RPTRA Bambu Kuning in reading literacy skills. The program aimed to investigate whether DR strategy supports primary school students' engagement with the materials, readers, and peers.

Method

The community service program focusing on applying the DR method was conducted in the following steps.

Dialogic Reading Plan Preparation

Target Participant Selection

The permission from the Kota Bambu Selatan Subdistrict to run the program was obtained. Elementary school-aged children (6-11 years old) who regularly visited RPTRA Bambu Kuning located in Jl. K.S. Tubun, Kota Bambu Selatan, Palmerah, West Jakarta were welcome to join. The registration process was managed by the subdistrict, and the staff broadcasted the information by distributing the e-poster through WhatsApp groups of the community living in

Kota Bambu Selatan. After that, they sent the list of names of the children planning to join the program to the committee.

Facilitator Preparation

The preparation phase began on March 10, 2025. As this community service program was integrated with the IWK 102 Creativity in Non-Fiction course and IWK 206 Research Methodology course, offered in the even semester of the English Language Education Department, Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia, the lecturers of this course provided the students that later became the facilitators of this program with the information on the DR techniques and research methodology. The session conducted in the class covered the materials on the principles of DR, CROWD (Completion, Recall, Open-ended, Wh-questions, Distancing), and PEER (Prompt, Evaluate, Expand, Repeat) sequence.

Book Selection and Reading Analysis

In the in-class activities of IWK 102 Creativity in Non-Fiction, the students and the lecturers of the class selected the storybooks appropriate for children's age and their reading level. The criteria for selecting the appropriate books cover the simple lexical resources, engaging stories with easy flow and moral values, and supporting illustrations relevant to children's contexts. These guidelines were employed to analyze the selected books relevant to children's everyday contexts.

Reading Session Plan

The students helped by the lecturers developed interactive reading scenarios. Students designed prompt questions covering CROWD: Completion, Recall, Open-ended, Wh-questions, and Distancing. Then, they planned various techniques to simulate story reading such as intonation, expression, and hand gestures.

Dialogue Reading Practice and Simulation

The students practiced DR in front of lecturers and fellow students. The lecturers provided feedback on vocal clarity, expression, and interactions with the target children.

Dialogic Reading Implementation

The DR sessions were conducted four times in a structured way. Each session lasted 90 minutes from 15:00 to 16:30 consisting of pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading. Each group recorded the DR sessions.

Evaluation & Reflection

At the end of each learning session, an evaluation of the service-learning program implementation was conducted to assess the children's engagement at RPTRA Bambu Kuning with the reading materials, the readers, and their peers. Based on the video recording, each group prepared a children's responses identification sheet to record evidence of engagement through their questions, comments, responses to prompts, participation in discussion and collaborative interactions during the reading sessions.

The process used can be illustrated with the following flowchart:



Figure 1. The stages of the community service program

Result

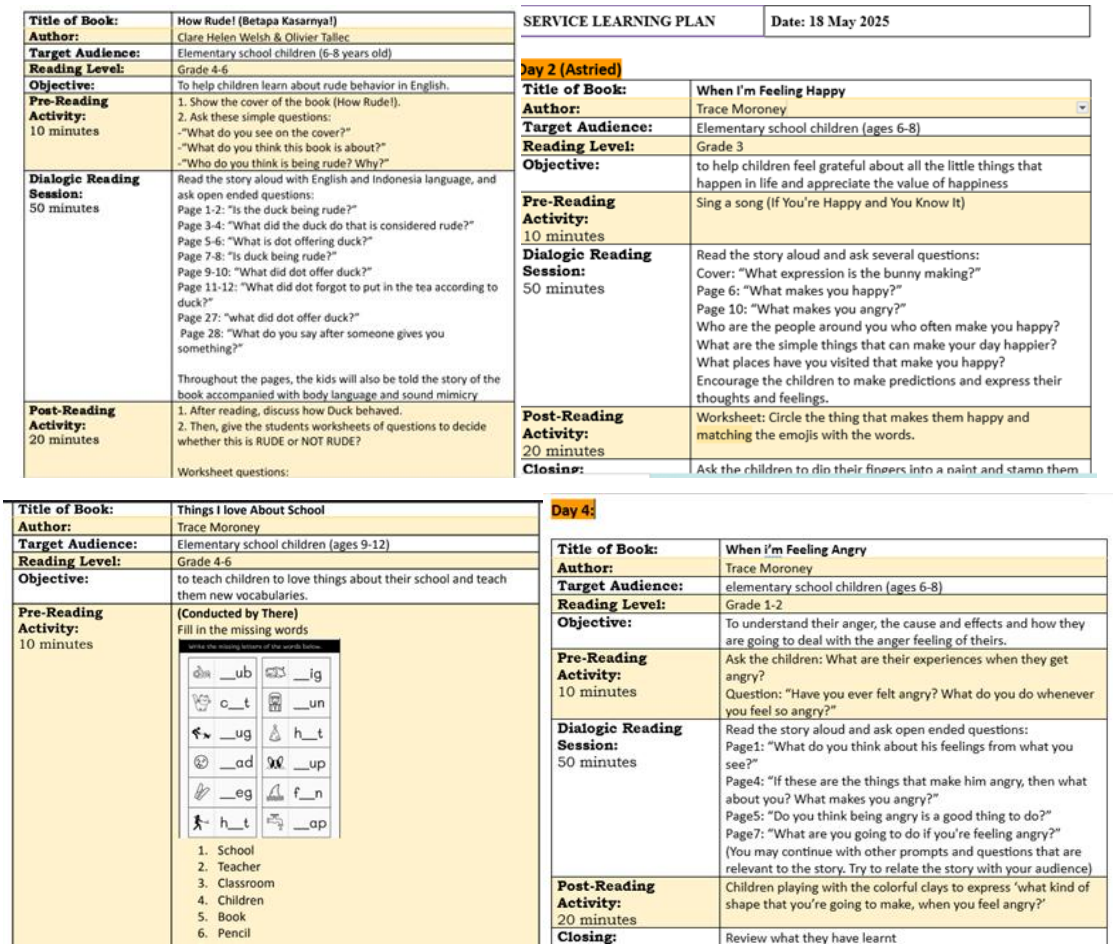
The target group for English language learning using the DR method is children in grades 1-6 at the Bambu Kuning RPTRA (Child-Friendly Integrated Public Space). The Bambu Kuning RPTRA (Child-Friendly Integrated Public Space), located on Jl. K.S. Tubun, South Kota Bambu, Palmerah, West Jakarta, is a public facility offering various educational and social programs for the community, including elementary school-aged children. This RPTRA serves as an alternative learning space for children. However, observations indicate there is no reading support with English texts. Effective reading support can improve critical thinking skills and text comprehension (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1988).

Dialogic Reading Plan Preparation

After obtaining permission from the South Kota Bambu Urban Village, which manages the Bambu Kuning RPTRA, the preparation phase began on March 18, 2025. Lecturers prepared the schedule, materials, and learning activities together with the 2024 class of students. This community service activity was integrated with the IWK 102 Creativity in Non-Fiction course and IWK 206 Research Methodology course. The following details the schedule for lecturers and students to prepare for learning activities for the DR plans. The learning activities were designed after the lecturers received information about the number of children who had enrolled for the program and their school levels.

Designing Dialogic Reading plans

During the first week, the students were first divided into seven groups, each of which consisted of 4-5 students. Secondly, each group was then assigned to be in charge of a group of children of the same school level. Thirdly, the lecturers distributed four books (fiction) to each group. After receiving the books, the students then studied the books and the reading plan template to start brainstorming for ideas for developing interesting learning activities for their DR plans. They discussed ideas to design pre-, during, and post-activities for four meetings. They studied each book to develop activities by following the PEER: (Prompt, Evaluate, Expand, Repeat) sequence, starting from developing pre-activities related to each story, creating prompt questions based on selected pages from each of the four-story books, and developing post activities. Their ideas were then developed into reading plan drafts saved in G-docs.



Title of Book:	How Rude! (Betapa Kasarnya!)
Author:	Clare Helen Welsh & Olivier Tallec
Target Audience:	Elementary school children (6-8 years old)
Reading Level:	Grade 4-6
Objective:	To help children learn about rude behavior in English.
Pre-Reading Activity: 10 minutes	1. Show the cover of the book (How Rude!). 2. Ask these simple questions: -"What do you see on the cover?" -"What do you think this book is about?" -"Who do you think is being rude? Why?"
Dialogic Reading Session: 50 minutes	Read the story aloud with English and Indonesia language, and ask open ended questions: Page 1-2: "Is the duck being rude?" Page 3-4: "What did the duck do that is considered rude?" Page 5-6: "What is dot offering duck?" Page 7-8: "Is duck being rude?" Page 9-10: "What did dot offer duck?" Page 11-12: "What did dot forgot to put in the tea according to duck?" Page 27: "what did dot offer duck?" Page 28: "What do you say after someone gives you something?" Throughout the pages, the kids will also be told the story of the book accompanied with body language and sound mimicry
Post-Reading Activity: 20 minutes	1. After reading, discuss how Duck behaved. 2. Then, give the students worksheets of questions to decide whether this is RUDE or NOT RUDE? Worksheet questions:

SERVICE LEARNING PLAN	Date: 18 May 2025

Day 2 (Astried)

Title of Book:	When I'm Feeling Happy
Author:	Trace Moroney
Target Audience:	Elementary school children (ages 6-8)
Reading Level:	Grade 3
Objective:	to help children feel grateful about all the little things that happen in life and appreciate the value of happiness
Pre-Reading Activity: 10 minutes	Sing a song (If You're Happy and You Know It)
Dialogic Reading Session: 50 minutes	Read the story aloud and ask several questions: Cover: "What expression is the bunny making?" Page 6: "What makes you happy?" Page 10: "What makes you angry?" Who are the people around you who often make you happy? What are the simple things that can make your day happier? What places have you visited that make you happy? Encourage the children to make predictions and express their thoughts and feelings.
Post-Reading Activity: 20 minutes	Worksheet: Circle the thing that makes them happy and matching the emojis with the words.
Closing:	Ask the children to dip their fingers into a paint and stamp them

Title of Book:	Things I love About School
Author:	Trace Moroney
Target Audience:	Elementary school children (ages 9-12)
Reading Level:	Grade 4-6
Objective:	to teach children to love things about their school and teach them new vocabularies.
Pre-Reading Activity: 10 minutes	(Conducted by There) Fill in the missing words __ub __ig c__t __un __ug h__t __ad __up __eg f__n h__t __ap 1. School 2. Teacher 3. Classroom 4. Children 5. Book 6. Pencil

Day 4:

Title of Book:	When i'm Feeling Angry
Author:	Trace Moroney
Target Audience:	elementary school children (ages 6-8)
Reading Level:	Grade 1-2
Objective:	To understand their anger, the cause and effects and how they are going to deal with the anger feeling of theirs.
Pre-Reading Activity: 10 minutes	Ask the children: What are their experiences when they get angry? Question: "Have you ever felt angry? What do you do whenever you feel so angry?"
Dialogic Reading Session: 50 minutes	Read the story aloud and ask open ended questions: Page1: "What do you think about his feelings from what you see?" Page4: "If these are the things that make him angry, then what about you? What makes you angry?" Page5: "Do you think being angry is a good thing to do?" Page7: "What are you going to do if you're feeling angry?" (You may continue with other prompts and questions that are relevant to the story. Try to relate the story with your audience)
Post-Reading Activity: 20 minutes	Children playing with the colorful clays to express 'what kind of shape that you're going to make, when you feel angry?'
Closing:	Review what they have learnt

Figure 2. Reading (Lesson) Plans

Planning the budget

Not only did the students discuss the activities, songs, and games, but they also designed or browsed for pictures, stationery, and other objects for their learning media. Each group started to budget for pictures or worksheets to print, colorful stamps, origami paper, paper dough, coloring pens/crayons, stationery (pens, pencils, glues, and markers), stickers, colorful post-it, and binders. They put their group budget on a spreadsheet in a G-drive.

Dialogic Reading Simulation: Peer Practice

When each group finished designing their first reading plan, they took turns to do a simulation of DR in front of the class. They practiced reading aloud techniques, making facial expressions and body language based on the characters in the book, questioning, interacting with their audience (their peers), handling children with misbehavior, singing children songs, holding the book while keeping eye contacts, making the right gestures, and interpreting to help the children without English knowledge to understand the story. The last part required them to manage their time and control to switch from reading aloud in English to interpreting it in Indonesian. The aim of this peer practice is to help them keep the children engaged during the DR activities. After the simulation, each group received feedback from their lecture and peers. Based on the feedback, each group was able to review their reading techniques to improve their voicing, facial expressions, and body language.

Completing the four Dialogic Reading plans

The peer practice helped the students reflect on their performance, provided them with feedback to revise and improve their reading plan, especially the prompt questions. During the reading plan designing, the lecturers also provided feedback through the G-doc, which helped them revise and finalize their four DR plan drafts.

Phase 3: Carrying out the program

The program was conducted for four days on Saturday and Sunday for two weeks in a row. The opening was held on the first day and the closing on the fourth day. The average number of the children' s attendance is 46.

Table 1. The Children's Attendance

Group	School Grade	Children's Attendance			
		Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
1	1	8	12	7	9
2	1 and 2	8	8	9	9
3	2	8	8	5	5
4	3	9	4	7	7
5	4	7	5	6	6
6	5	7	8	8	5
7	6	3	2	2	2
Total		50	47	44	43

On Day 4, as many as 7 participants came very late–near the closing time–and therefore their attendance was not recorded. Group 2 was a mix of Grade 1 and Grade 2, as the number of the participants from both grades outnumbered the other groups. From Day 1 through Day 4, the number of the participants from these two grades dominated all groups.

Opening and Day 1's Dialogic Reading Activities

On the first day, the committee introduced the DR program to the parents taking their children to the site, the staff at the RPTRA, and children as the participants. After the introduction, the committee divided the 50 participants into seven groups based on their school levels (Grade 1-6). There were two groups of Grade 1, as there were more than 10 children of Grade 1. Each group sat in a circle with a distance of 1 or 2 meters in between. In general, the participants in each group seemed to follow the facilitator's instructions by doing what they were asked to do. However, as they sat quite closely to each other, voice interference was inevitable. Some student facilitators had louder voices than the others, which caused distractions to the groups sitting nearby. Some participants apparently struggled to stay focused, and some others were even distracted during the DR session. As a result, most of the participants stayed quiet and rarely responded to the facilitator's questions. Only one or two participants were brave enough to respond to the student facilitator.

Nevertheless, one or two groups of Grade 1 to 3 succeeded in eliciting responses from the participants. The facilitators switched into Indonesian for the language instruction when they realized the participants did not understand English. As a result, the participants started to show more responses, such as by replying in Indonesian or pointing to the pictures. Interestingly, one or two participants responded to the facilitators' questions in English, as can be seen in in the 3rd

graders' group (Excerpt 1) below:

Excerpt 1

F: *Apa bahasa Inggrisnya bulan*? ((What is the English for "*bulan*"?))
C: Moon.
F: *Ayo hitung, landaknya ada berapa*? ((Let's count, how many porcupines are there?))
F: One, two, three...
C: Three!
F: *Apa warna ini dalam bahasa Inggris*? ((What is this color in English?))
C: Red!
F: *Apa bahasa Inggrisnya kelelawar*? ((What is the English for "*kelelawar*"?))
C: Bat.
F: *Matahari, bahasa Inggrisnya apa*? ((What is the English for "*matahari*"?))
C: Sun!
F: Facilitator
C: Child (Participant)

A different case occurred in the 4th grader group, in which the facilitator successfully elicited the participants' responses, and even received a question from one participant, as follows:

Excerpt 2

C1: *Kak kalo ini bahasa inggrisnya apa*? ((*while pointing at a drawing in the book)) ((What's the English word for this?))
F: *Itu bahasa Inggrisnya* ship *ya, apa bahasa Inggrisnya*? ((The English for that is ship ok, what's the English?))
Cs: Ship ((*in unison*))

The situation was more conducive during the post activities, as each group was busy with their own worksheets. The participants seemed more excited when working on the worksheets. Every participant in each group completed their worksheet, which was part of the student facilitators' assignment for their data collection in their Research Methodology course. The student facilitators assisted the participants who had difficulty in doing the task. The participants were also allowed to write their answers using Indonesian.



Figure 3. The Opening Session and Day's 1 Dialogic Reading Practice

Day 2's Dialogic Reading Activities

On the 2nd day, 47 participants attended the sessions. As they became familiar with the facilitators, they showed more enthusiasm and started to give more responses during the sessions. They were also more attentive during the DR session. The facilitators tried to control their voices so that they did not distract each other. During the question-answer session, some participants

started to respond not only in Indonesian, but also in English. They were cooperative in every activity, showing willingness to do the task given to them, such as coloring, sticking origami cut-outs, singing, and working on worksheets focusing on vocabulary use, such as picture-word matching.

The 3rd graders' group seemed to be the most successful in eliciting responses from the participants. The facilitators always started the session by asking the participants to sing together. It seems the singing activity helped build engagement between the facilitators and the participants, which resulted in the participants' willingness to be more open when expressing their thoughts. This can be seen in the following dialogue:

Excerpt 3

F: "*Kalian punya ketakutan yang sama seperti di gambar ini tidak?*" ((Do you have something you fear from these pictures?))
C1: "*Aku takut laba-laba!*" ((I'm afraid of spider))
C2: "*Aku takut gelap!*" ((I'm afraid of the dark))
C3: "*Aku takut ketinggian!*" ((I'm afraid of the height))
C4: "*Aku juga sama, takut gelap!*" ((I'm also afraid of the dark))



Figure 4. Day's 2 Dialogic Reading Practice

The first graders' group apparently was the most responsive one. The participants were not only willing to sing aloud with hand gestures–such as clapping and pointing to each other, but also responded to the facilitator's questions excitedly, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 4

F: *Apa ini coba*? ((What is this)) ((showing a picture on a piece on paper and pointing to it))
Cs: *Kodok!* ((Frog)) ((all participants shouting together chorally))
F: *Kodok bahasa Inggrisnya apa*? ((What is 'frog' in English))
Cs: Frog! ((all participants shouting together chorally)))
F: Kakak punya gambar. Ini ada gambar frog. Di atas ada perintahnya. ((I have a picture. This is a picture of a frog. There is an instruction above the picture)) ((Then, the facilitator read out the instruction.)
F: Nah, kira-kira ada yang tahu kakak bawa apa? ((I was wondering if any of you know what I brought with me))
C: Origami.
F: *Ya, kakak punya* origami. ((Yes, I have origami). *Ini kakak punya lima kertas* origami. *Ini ada berapa warna*? ((I have five colorful origami. How many colours are there))
Cs: *Lima*! ((Five)) ((shouting chorally))
F: *Ini warna apa?* (What colour is this))
Cs: Biru! ((Blue)) ((shouting chorally))
F: *Biru bahasa Inggrisnya apa*? ((What is blue in English))

Cs: Blue! ((shouting chorally))
F: *Ini*? ((This one))
Cs: Pink. Merah. ((Shouting chorally, but some shouted 'pink' and others shouted 'red'))
F: Bahasa Inggrisnya pink?
Cs: Pink. ((shouting chorally))
F: Pink. ((Giggling)) Kalau ini warna apa? ((How about this one. What colour is this))
Cs: Yellow! ((shouting chorally))
F: *Kalau ini*? (How about this one))
Cs: Red! ((shouting chorally))
F: *Kalau yang ini*? (How about this one))
Cs: Green! ((shouting chorally))

Day 3's Dialogic Reading Activities



Figure 5. Day's 3 Dialogic Reading Practice

On the 3rd day in the following week, there were 44 participants attending the program. The participants seemed more enthusiastic and active during each session. The situation was more conducive compared to the previous meetings; the group sitting was rearranged in such a way so that there were more spaces in between. The facilitators had learned to be more disciplined in organizing time and activities. They still had to use both languages—Indonesian and English—as the medium of instruction to encourage participants to be more active.

One example of how the participants seemed more engaged on Day 3 can be seen from the dialogue that occurred in a 2nd graders group, as follows:

Excerpt 5

Facilitator: *Aku akan tetap mencari tulangku* ((I'm still going to look for my bone))
Child 1: *Tulangku*! ((*mimicking the facilitator*)) (My bone!))
Facilitator: *Ayo, apa tulang bahasa Inggrisnya*? ((So, what's the English word for it?))
Children ((*in unison*)): Bone!
Facilitator: *Apa*? ((What?))
Child 2: Bone

The participants showed that they started to pick the English words they learned. By the third day, some of the participants started to show more confidence in responding to the facilitators' questions and in asking questions. In the 3rd graders' group, for example, a participant even took the initiative to ask questions to the facilitators as they grew closer to each other, as follows:

Excerpt 6

C: "*Kak, ini sudah benar belum?*" ((Is it correct?))
F: "*Coba pake bahasa Inggris. Gimana minta tolongnya?*" ((Try to ask in English. How do you say it?))

C: "Can you help me?"
F: "*Iya begitu. Setelah dibantu harus bilang apa?*" ((Yes, that's right. What should you say after getting helped?))
C: "Thank you!"

The participants not only showed more confidence, but also tolerance when working on their picture coloring worksheets together (Excerpt 7).

Excerpt 7

F: *Di sini kakak-kakak hanya punya 2 kotak krayon, jadi kalian harus berbagi ya.* ((Here, we only have 2 boxes of crayons, so you have to share them, okay?))
P: *Oke kak* ((Okay))
P1: *Eh warna biru dimana?* ((Where is the blue color?))
P2: *Masih aku pake* ((I'm still using it))
P1: *Oh oke* ((Okay))

Day 4's Dialogic Reading Activities and Closing

Before the closing session to end the program, the facilitators conducted the DR sessions. 43 participants attended the program. The biggest number was still grade 1, while there were only two participants from grade 6. The number of the other groups remained stable.

The following dialogue occurred in the 3rd graders' group.

Excerpt 8

F1: Mimi *emosinya sedang marah, teman teman apa bahasa inggrisnya marah*?
((Mimi is feeling angry. Friends, what is the English word for marah?))
P1: Angry!
P2: Angry!

The 4th graders' group was apparently successful in encouraging the participants to read aloud together. They not only read aloud a sentence in English, but also tried to translate it into Indonesian, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 9

F: *Ayo baca sama-sama.* Let's read together. ((Let's read together))
F: Sometimes I feel sad. *Ayo, bareng-bareng, bareng-bareng.* ((Let's [read] together))
F & Cs: One, two, three
F &Cs: Sometimes I feel sad because… ((the participants read aloud together))
F: *Artinya apa*? ((What does it mean))
Cs: *Kadang-kadang saya merasa sedih karena* ((Sometimes I feel sad because))
F: *Ayo, ganti-gantian.* ((Let's [do it] in turns))
C1: *Aku, aku. Eh, gak jadi.* ((Me, me. No, not me)) ((Raising her hand, smiling excitedly))
C2: *Dari* B. ((From B)) ((Pointing to a male participant))
F: *Ayo*, B. ((Come on, B))





Figure 6. Day's 4 Dialogic Reading Practice and the Closing Session

On this last day of the program, the participants still showed enthusiasm and willingness to participate in every activity. Most were active in giving responses and doing the activities. The participants in the 3rd grader group even were able to mention words they had learned in the previous session.

In the post-test, the group of the 3rd graders successfully completed their post-test. Almost all participants in this group were able to match the pictures and the English words they had learned from Day 1 to Day 4 without the facilitators' assistance.

After all the sessions ended, the committee held the closing, thanking the staff at the RPTRA, the parents who came to pick up their children, and the participants for their active participation. Some participants wrote on their worksheet that they were sad the DR program ended that day. They expected the program to last longer.

Dialogic Reading (Lesson) Plans

As this program is an integration of a course and a community service program, the learning materials for the children were designed, developed, revised, and finalized during the course. Each group designed and developed 4 DR Plans based on different pictorial story books.

Table 2. The Schedule of the Dialogic Reading Activities

Day 1's DR Activities	
Objective	a. To introduce DR activities to the participants. b. To familiarize the participants with the program. c. To help the participants to learn English vocabulary about feelings (patience, carefulness, curiosity, empathy, enthusiasm, anger, hardworking, kindness, family, friendship)
Activities	● Opening (15 minutes) ● Opening prayer. ● The student facilitator grouped the participants and explained how they were going to conduct the program and how long each session lasted. ● Pre-activity: warming-up games, singing, or Q-A (10 minutes) ● Main activity: DR – a facilitator led the participants to read while asking and answering questions using the question prompts (50 minutes) ● Post activity: working on worksheets (coloring, sticking colorful paper on pictures, sentence completion, matching pictures and words, singing) (15-20 minutes)
Day 2's DR Activities	
Objective	To help the participants to learn to use English vocabulary to express feelings and opinions (diversity, politeness, creative imagination, friendship, bedtime activities, school, myself)

Table 2. The Schedule of the Dialogic Reading Activities

Activities	• Pre-activity: warming-up games, singing, or Q-A (10 minutes) • Main activity: DR– a facilitator led the participants to read while asking and answering questions, using the question prompts (50 minutes) • Post activity: working on worksheets (coloring, sticking colorful paper on pictures, sentence completion, matching pictures and words, singing) (15-20 minutes)
Day 3's DR Activities	
Objective	To help the participants to learn to use English vocabulary to express feelings and opinions (loneliness, disappointment, happiness, feeling loved, grandparents, friendship)
Activities	• Pre-activity: warming-up games, singing, or Q-A (10 minutes) • Main activity: DR – a facilitator led the participants to read while asking and answering questions, using the question prompts (50 minutes) • Post activity: working on worksheets (coloring, sticking colorful paper on pictures, sentence completion, matching pictures and words, singing) (15-20 minutes)
Day 4's DR Activities and Closing	
Objective	To help the participants to learn to use English vocabulary to express feelings and opinions (fear, sadness, nervousness, friendship, patience, perseverance)
Activities	• Pre-activity: warming-up games, singing, or Q-A (10 minutes) • Main activity: DR– a facilitator led the participants to read while asking and answering questions, using the question prompts (50 minutes) • Post activity: working on worksheets (coloring, sticking colorful paper on pictures, sentence completion, matching pictures and words, singing) (15 minutes) • Closing (20 minutes) • Reviewing the program with the participants. • Thanking the staff at RPTRA Bambu Kuning for the facilities, thanking the parents for their support by taking their children to the site for four meetings, and thanking the participants for their active participation throughout the four-day program. • Giving souvenirs to the staff at RPTRA Bambu Kuning. • Distributing lunch boxes and souvenirs to the participants. • Closing prayer

Discussion

Pillinger and Vardy (2022, p. 1) support DR as a 'shared book reading activity' that "encompasses read-aloud methods and book-related activities that support children's language and literacy development." Through this activity, they believe children may acquire literacy skills such as the alphabet, numbers, pronunciation, and other aspects of language. In practice, through DR, the participants in our program were introduced to numbers, colors, name of animals, daily activities at home, things at home and school, family, friendship, and, most importantly, familiarized with feelings such as happiness, sadness, loneliness, anger, nervousness, boredom, empathy, patience, fear, carefulness, and curiosity. The program not only promotes literacy but also helps children learn about their feelings and emotions and learn how to express and deal with

them through post (after reading) activities, such as sticking colorful origami paper cut-outs on pictures of animals related to their fear, or coloring/drawing pictures related to the story they have just read.

The first principle of DR—(i) implementing "evocative techniques that encourage the child to actively participate in reading and practice language" (Pillinger & Vardy, 2022, p. 3) was carried out through the CROWD technique delivered in two languages: Indonesian (the participants' mother tongue) and English. Throughout the reading session, the facilitator asked the participants to complete (C—Completion) their sentences while reading out the story to make the participants stay engaged. They also flipped back the pages of the book to help the participants recall (R) the story. Open-ended (O) and WH- (W) questions predominated the question-answer sessions—mostly in Indonesian because the participants could not answer in English, except for mentioning words such as a few colors, numbers, things or animals in English. Through the question-answer session, the facilitators apparently tried to encourage the participants to express themselves and to be more confident in speaking. During this session, the facilitators also implemented the second principle of DR—(ii) "the use of informative feedback for the child regarding correct language use. At times they corrected the participants' incorrect answers or pronunciation" (Pillinger & Vardy, 2022, p. 3).

The third principle—(iii) "progressive changes where the adult adapts their reading style to the child's developing linguistic abilities" (Pillinger & Vardy, 2022, p. 3)—seemed to be continuously implemented by the facilitators immediately they sat together with each group of participants. The participants' facial and body expressions directly helped the facilitators to adjust their reading speed, questions, choice of language, and distance—which means implementing the last techniques of CROWD: Distancing. Some facilitators moved closer to the participants when they saw the participants seemed to have difficulty listening to their voices. Some started to switch their language from English to Indonesian when receiving confused looks and silence—an effort that was quite successful later in eliciting responses. It seems the use of Indonesian in asking questions reduces fear among the participants. Some others started to control their reading pace by using more pauses to provide more time for the participants to think before they answered the facilitators' questions. The facilitators' flexibility in using both Indonesian and English apparently resulted in positive impacts on the participants, as they became less nervous and got more courage to get closer to the facilitators—even some started to try to respond in either language. According to García and Wei (2014), these participants show willingness to participate and use their language skills flexibly as translanguaging provides space for flexibility, increasing their understanding during the activity.

However, even though on Day 1 most of the participants seemed to be passive listeners during the reading session, starting Day 2, they apparently showed more enthusiasm from the pre-activity before the DR session started. Many of the participants started to be more confident in responding to the facilitators' questions. Some of them also started to respond in English. The tension that dominated the first day of the DR program started to lessen on the second day. It could be seen from the participants' smiles and heard from their giggles and laughter. Therefore, DR seemed to play an important role in improving the social-emotional relationship between the facilitators (readers) and the children. Their active participation showed the facilitators' successful efforts in making them engaged. This is in line with Fleury's finding that found DR successfully "enhanced engagement (2013). They even showed more enthusiasm during the post activities. Most tried to complete their sticking/ coloring/ drawing tasks eagerly. During this post activity, they shared the coloring pencils/crayons, glues to stick the origami paper cut-outs, and patiently waited for the facilitators to check their work. Additionally, social interactions in DR activities significantly contribute to engagement (Alqahtani, 2024). Through the interaction between student and reader or student and peer, students have a sense of belonging in the groups and enable them to endure the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional demands of reading.

In line with Maharani et al. (2025), this DR program promoted children's literacy through story books. While Maharani et al. (2025) focused on improving students' literacy through local historical stories, this program boosted children's motivation and interest in reading by using colorful pictorial books. Improving children's pride in their identity through historical characters portrayed in the books is the goal of Maharani et al.'s study (2025). Meanwhile, this DR program focused on the children's social and emotional development through stories related to children's feelings about things close to their daily lives. Children can see the connection between the story, the activities, and their feelings as the interactive reading activity helps them see it through the direct interaction between the facilitators and the children (Schoppmann et al., 2023). The relevance of reading materials and activities during the DR program influences the participants' engagement, which can range from highly engaged to completely disinterested. It means that selecting readings that reflect participants' cultural and social backgrounds can facilitate more effortless engagement (Alqahtani, 2024). Through this DR program, the children learned about simple vocabulary related to their family, friends, home, and school. They did not only learn about the vocabulary through the DR session, but also through the post activities, which also helped exercise their creativity through coloring, drawing, and sticking origami paper cut-outs. While this program worked on children's literacy through various simple fun activities, Giyatmi et al. (2025) tried to help improve primary school students' literacy, especially their speaking skill, through a traditional game called Si SarPin (*Si Pasar Pintar*)—a role play activity for students to imitate a buying-and-selling activity at a market in a dialogue in front of a class.

This program inevitably benefited not only the participants involved, but also their parents and the government. The participants' active participation and engagement seemed to have boosted their motivation to learn English, to have promoted literacy by enhancing their interest in reading through the exposure of colorful pictorial books, and to have contributed to their social emotional development through playful activities such as singing, coloring, drawing or sticking paper cut-outs. The children seemed to have learned to be more patient, empathetic towards each other, and tolerant. Moreover, they also learned to express their true feelings, which may contribute to their emotional development. On the last day of the program, some participants said to their facilitators they enjoyed each activity and expected the program to last longer. They expressed their sadness towards the end of the session. Similarly, their parents also expressed their expectation for the program not to end quickly. Parents may have gained benefit from the program through their children's improved motivation and interest in reading or learning. Some parents said to the facilitators that they expected us to return to hold similar programs again in the future. Finally, the government also benefits from this program as it supports literacy development of the children, which is part of the government's SDG's fourth goal.

This DR program was successfully carried out because of the full support from 1) Kelurahan Tanah Abang, who allowed us to use RPTRA Bambu Kuning and its facilities (the room, lights, a loud speaker, microphones, and toilets) and helped promote the program by coordinating with the local leaders (RT) of the neighborhood families around the RPTRA; 2) the staff at RPTRA Bambu Kuning, who helped us with the facilities; 3) the participants' parents, who took their children to the site; and 4) the participants, who diligently attended the four-meeting program enthusiastically.

Conclusion

This service-learning program aimed to investigate whether the elementary school children grade 1-6 living around RPTRA Bambu Kuning were engaged with the materials, the readers (facilitators), and their peers through a continuous program held by the English Language Education Department, Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia. This program could be a solution to help children in the neighborhood learn English reading skills starting from literal

understanding to a love and an interest in reading activities. Implementing the DR strategies allows for interaction and discussion among children, materials, readers, and peers. The implementation of the program was divided into three stages which were the preparation stage, the implementation stage, and the evaluation stage. The results of this program were the children's engagement with the materials, the readers, and their peers. They showed curiosity and interest in the story and illustrations of the book. They also interacted with the readers and their peers responsively, enthusiastically, and collaboratively during the shared reading sessions. Their engagement is in line with the DR principles emphasizing the interaction and active participation in early literacy development. The interactive process here highlights social constructivist views of learning. It is hoped that through this program, the children in this neighborhood will gradually develop a stronger love for reading that can positively impact their reading skills.

There is a need for an evaluation by investigating the program's effectiveness. The participants' abilities to comprehend the reading texts before and after the program need to be examined and compared. Thus, the results of this program would contribute to the development of the program and the impact towards the community would be more evident. Also, the participants' perception and experience need to be explored to figure out how the children experience the program activities, which parts interest them the most, and the impact they feel after participating in the program. Their responses help refine the program. Future service-learning programs could also expand the scope of the learning activities by inviting junior high and senior high school students living around RPTRA Bambu Kuning to join the program. This initiation will provide a more comprehensive picture of the program's effectiveness across various age groups.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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