

# The Application of Context-Based Multisensory Methods to Improve Reading Ability in Grade V Students of State Elementary School 003 Kongbeng

Hermin Lestari<sup>1</sup>, Pujaningsih<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Special Education Study Program, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, Email: [herminlestari.2024@student.uny.ac.id](mailto:herminlestari.2024@student.uny.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup> Special Education Study Program, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, Email: [puja@uny.ac.id](mailto:puja@uny.ac.id)

**Abstract.** This research is motivated by the results of observations in one of the Elementary Schools in Kongbeng sub-district, it was found that around 40% of 35 students could not read. This is due to the lack of literacy activities in schools and many students who could not distinguish letters. The Multisensory Method is expected to improve the reading ability of 5th grade students. The purpose of this study is to describe the application of the multisensory method to improve reading ability. This study aims to improve the results of reading ability with the multisensory method in grade V students at Public Elementary School 003 Kongbeng. This study used the Kemmis and Taggart Classroom Action Research Model with two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The results of the study, based on reading tests, showed that in cycle I, reading achievement reached 65% and increased by 20% in cycle II, reaching 85%. From the results obtained, it can be said that the Application of the Multisensory Method can improve the Reading Ability of 5th Grade Elementary School Students.

**Keywords** Multisensory, Reading Skills, Mild Intellectual Disabilities

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ability to read activities is an important foundation for Elementary school students are expected to master various learning materials. In fifth grade, students are expected to be able to read well, which includes recognizing new words, understanding text content, and drawing conclusions from reading. However, observations show that a number of students At this level, students still face challenges in reading, both in technical aspects such as recognizing words and in reading comprehension.

According to official BPS records in the year In 2021, only 61% of children over the age of 15 in Indonesia had good reading skills. This reflects the low literacy rate among students, including those at the elementary school level. Research conducted by Rahmawati (2020) showed that 40% of fifth-grade students at SDN 003 Kongbeng experienced challenges in reading comprehension, which negatively impacted their academic performance. This situation highlights the urgency of designing more optimal learning strategies that are relevant to the demands of the school. student.

An alternative step that can be implemented is multisensory approach with a specific context. A multisensory approach includes multiple senses, such as sight, hearing, movement, and touch, to help students learn in a more holistic and enjoyable way. By integrating approaches Which contextual, the learning process is designed to be related to the environment , experiences and interests of students, so that it is simpler to understand and apply to daily activities .

Research by Smith and Smith (2019) indicates that a multisensory approach can improve students' comprehension and mastery of reading content. Furthermore, context-based methods have been shown to help students connect the knowledge they acquire with factual situations, thereby increasing their enthusiasm for learning. By integrating these two approaches, it is hoped that students can overcome reading challenges while honing their critical and creative thinking skills.

At SDN 003 Kongbeng, the implementation of a contextual multisensory approach contributed to improving literacy skills in fifth-grade students . Using this approach, the learning process was more participatory, contextual, and tailored to student

Received: July 31, 2025

Revised: August 15, 2025

Accepted: September 19, 2025

Published: September 30, 2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.

Submitted for possible open

access publication under the

terms and conditions of the

Creative Commons Attribution

(CC BY SA) license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

needs. Thus, this study aims to explore the effectiveness of contextual-based multisensory methods in improving students' reading skills, while also contributing to efforts to improve literacy in Indonesia.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Understanding Beginning Reading Ability

According to Sessiani (2007:28), ability can be defined as the capability or skill. Meanwhile, reading is defined as the process of understanding and recognizing the content of writing, both verbally and mentally.

In his view, Abudrrahman (2012:158 ) stated that reading is a process that involves written symbols, namely the alphabet, which plays a role in supporting memory of reading and deepening knowledge through life experiences. owned.

In line with this, Susanto (2011:84) argues that reading means interpreting symbols (letters) into sounds that are arranged into words. This arrangement of words is designed so that we can learn to understand and read the existing notes.

According to Pertiwi (2016:760), initial reading is more focused on identifying and pronouncing sound signs in the form of letters, words, and simple sentences .

According to Nasir (2014:38), early reading skills are the skills of children as beginner readers in memorizing letters by recognizing the shape and sound of each letter; reading alphabet combinations in syllable units; then pronouncing syllable combinations in simple words that have a two-syllable pattern k-v-k-v (consonant-vowel-consonant-vowel). From the explanation, children in the early stages need to remember letters to recognize their shapes and sounds, then arrange the letters into syllables to form simple words.

Based on this theory, it can be stated that basic reading skills are the ability of children to recognize letters, name them, and understand the meaning of what they hear, and be able to arrange letters into a series of syllables and then read them as simple words .

### General Goals of Teaching Beginning Reading

According to Sessiani (2007:29), the initial stage of the reading learning process has objectives that include aspects that must be understood by students in general, namely:

- a. To introduce students to the alphabet as a symbol for sound or sound signs.
- b. To train students in arranging letters into pronounceable words.
- c. To learn about the letters of the alphabet and to train students in their vocal skills in a short time when learning to read at an advanced level.

According to Susanto (2011 :87) several reading targets for children at kindergarten age include :

- a. Expanding their linguistic development, which means to continue the evolution of their language.
- b. Providing them with personal knowledge about the purpose of writing means giving them an individual understanding of its function. Helping them understand books and the significance of reading means providing them with support regarding books and the importance of reading.
- c. The third goal can be further divided into several additional goals such as developing sensitivity to sound, understanding narrative flow, and understanding the role of the reader, which means the third goal can be broken down into several secondary goals including improving phonemic skills, understanding elements of story structure, and understanding the role of a reader. According to Brewer, this reading goal is the initial stage towards reading skills, because in this phase the reading activity that is has not actually started, because this activity is the first step in the reading process.

Based on this explanation , it can be stated that the main purpose of reading for early childhood is to Introducing letters, training children's skills and knowledge in recognizing letters, which is the first step in reading and also supports their language development .

### Stage Development Read

According to Abdurrahman (201 2 :15 9 - 161) , there are five phases in reading development , that is :

#### 1. Reading Readiness

This developmental phase spans the time from birth to when students begin learning to read, usually when they enter first grade. This readiness is evident in the growth phase necessary for effective learning .

#### 2. Beginning Reading

This stage generally begins when children enter grade 1 of elementary school at around 6 years of age, although some are sooner or later.

### 3. Speed Reading Skills

The stage for acquiring the ability to read quickly usually occurs when the child is in grade 2 or a to class 3.

### 4. Extensive Reading

The extensive reading phase typically occurs when children reach fourth or fifth grade. During this phase, they begin to love and enjoy reading. Along with this, they often read storybooks and magazines with enthusiasm, making lessons less challenging.

### 5. Real Reading

True reading stage generally emerges when children enter junior high school and continues into adulthood. At this stage, children no longer focus on learning to read, but rather use their reading skills for learning purposes.

## Multisensory Method

### a. Understanding Multi - Sensory Method

According to Yusuf ( 2003:94-95 ) approach Multisensory reading is a method of teaching children to read, in which the material is delivered through various modalities. The perceptual channels used include visual (seeing), tactile (touching), kinesthetic ( moving), and auditory (hearing) , known as the VAKT method. The multisensory reading approach involves activities such as seeing, listening, touching, and writing. There are two teaching methods that adopt a multisensory approach, namely the method developed by Fernald and the method developed by Gillingham.

According to Abdurrahman (2012 : 174) multisensory method is a reading teaching technique which is often called the VAKT Method, namely an approach which combines visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile by utilizing the vocabulary spoken by children in its entirety .

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the multisensory method is a reading learning strategy introduced by Fernald and Gillingham, which activates various senses through activities such as touching, hearing, writing and seeing .

### b. Steps of Multisensory Method

According to Joseph (2003:94 - 97) multisensory method divided into two approaches which developed by Fernald and Gillingham.

- 1) The multisensory method developed by Fernald is to train children to read words as a whole by selecting elements from stories they create themselves. In this method, there are four steps as follows:
  - a) Step One  
Students choose a word they want to learn, then the teacher writes it in large letters on the board. Next, the child touches the word with their finger. While doing so, they must also say the word aloud . They also see the word and hear their own voice as they read it. If they make a mistake, they must start over. Conversely, if they get it right, the word is stored in the child's word collection. Children can then create stories from the words they have mastered.
  - b) Step Two  
Children no longer need to touch words. They begin learning by observing the words written by the teacher, pronouncing them, and copying them back. Next, students are encouraged to compose stories while maintaining a collection of words .
  - c) Step Three  
Teachers are no longer obligated to copy words. Students begin reading from printed words or sentences. They see the word, say it again, and copy it. Teachers must monitor whether all the words are still remembered by the students.
  - d) Step Four  
Child Children can understand new vocabulary by comparing it with words they have previously learned. Children can also be encouraged to expand their reading material.

These four steps must be followed sequentially. Progress in reading may be slow, but to maintain children's interest, they are allowed to choose their own reading materials. Studies have shown that this method is effective in supporting children with literacy difficulties .

- 2) Gillingham's multisensory approach is systematic and emphasizes the sound-letter connection, with each letter taught in a specific way . Alphabet cards are color-coded, for example, black for consonants and white for vowels, and each card contains a single letter in the form of a keyword accompanied by a picture. Typical teaching steps include:
  - a) Show the letter cards to the child. The teacher says the name of the letter and the child repeats it several times. Once the child has mastered the sound, the teacher says the note, and the child repeats it. Finally, the teacher asks, "What sound does this letter make?"
  - b) Without using letter cards, the teacher makes the sound and asks, "Which letter makes this sound?"
  - c) The teacher gradually writes the letters while describing their shapes . The child follows by tracing the letters with his finger, copying them, writing them in the air, and then repeating without looking at the example . Finally, the teacher says, "Write the letter that makes the sound ..."

After understanding a number of letters, students can start . They are taught to combine letters into vocabulary . This stage of reading words is also used to practice spelling . This process involves repetition, pronouncing vocabulary, pronouncing the letters, and reading the written word .

From the description above, the stages of the Fernald and Gillingham methods show similarities in teaching strategies that activate several senses in learning to read . The difference between the Fernald and Gillingham methods is that the Fernald method teaches words to be recognized as a unified pattern to strengthen memory and mental imagery. Meanwhile, the Gillingham method emphasizes imitating the shape of letters one by one individually and is structured and oriented towards the relationship between sounds and letters.

Step by step method Which developed by Gillingham will be used in this study, related to the process of recognizing the sounds and shapes of vowels and consonants. The process of arranging syllables is carried out following the stages of the Fernald method . In implementing the steps of this method, the researcher uses media letter cards that are illustrated and colored..

### 3. METHODS

This research aims to improve students' reading skills using a multisensory method that focuses on context. Classroom Action Research prioritizes actions or interventions carried out directly in the classroom to improve the quality of instruction and learning outcomes. students. This study process was carried out repeatedly with the stages of design, implementation, monitoring, and reflection to assess and improve the actions that have been implemented. The object of this study was 10 fifth-grade students of SDN 003 Kongbeng in the 2024/2025 academic year with varying reading ability barriers.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on findings from a study on the implementation of a context-oriented multisensory approach to strengthen the literacy skills of elementary school students V, there are several important aspects that can be explored in more depth :

#### 1. Improving Reading Skills

Information derived from initial and final tests indicates significant progress in students' reading skills. Before the method was implemented, the average score for students' reading skills was at a sufficient level (58). However, after the method was implemented, the average increased to a good level (83). This statement is in line with the view of Smith and Smith (2019) who stated that a multisensory approach facilitates students' understanding of the material more efficiently because it involves multiple senses . By using a contextual-based approach, students not only read mechanically but also understand meaning in real-life contexts.

This improvement shows that the combination of multisensory methods with a contextual-based approach has a positive impact on students' cognitive abilities, especially in understanding reading texts.

#### 2. Student Involvement in Learning

Observational data shows that student engagement in learning increased from the first cycle (65%, moderate) to the second cycle (85%, high). This indicates that this method not only improves literacy skills but also fosters a pleasant classroom atmosphere .

A contextually based multisensory approach integrates activities involving visual (pictures), audio (listening to text), and kinesthetic (narrating or acting) elements. This makes the learning process more communicative and relevant to students' learning needs . Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the zone of proximal development supports these findings, stating that learning is more effective when activities occur within students' developmental zones with appropriate guidance.

### 3. Effectiveness of Contextual-Based Multisensory Methods

The implementation of this method has proven effective in improving students' reading skills, as indicated by the significant paired t-test results ( $p=0.000<0.05$   $p = 0.000 <0.05$   $p=0.000<0.05$ ). This supports Rahmawati's (2020) research, which found that multisensory methods can help students with various learning styles better understand the material.

A contextual approach enhances learning because students can connect the text to everyday experiences or environments, improving retention and comprehension. For example, students more easily understand a story about a market if they have previously observed or interacted directly in one.

### 4. Teacher and Student Perceptions

Interview results showed that teachers felt this method helped students focus better and comprehend the reading. Students also reported that learning became more enjoyable and less boring. This opinion confirms that this approach not only strengthens intellectual aspects but also... support students' affective aspects, such as motivation and interest in learning.

### 5. Limitations and Challenges

Although the results show success, there are several challenges faced in implementing this method: Learning time takes longer because it requires preparation of tools and materials for each multisensory activity. Teachers need additional training to master this method, especially in designing relevant contextually based activities.

## 5. CONCLUSION

**Effectiveness of Contextual-Based Multisensory Methods** ,The application of contextual-based multisensory methods has been proven to be successful in strengthening literacy skills. fifth grade students. This can be seen from the significant increase in post-test scores compared to pre-test, with an average increase of 25 points.**Student Engagement in Learning:** This method significantly increased student engagement, from moderate in the first cycle to high in the second. Engaging, multisensory activities relevant to everyday contexts made students more motivated to learn.,**Teacher and Student Acceptance** Teachers and students gave positive responses to the application of this method. Teachers feel this method helps the learning process become more interactive, while students find it easier to understand reading by using a multisensory approach. **Theoretical and Practical Support** ,This research supports the theory that learning methods that involve multiple senses, especially with real-life contexts, can improve students' understanding and retention of information.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, R. C., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J. A., & Wilkinson, I. A. G. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading*. National Institute of Education.
- Fernald, G. M. (1943). *Remedial techniques in basic school subjects*. McGraw-Hill.
- Hidayat, F. (2019). The impact of multisensory learning on literacy skills in primary school students. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 12(3), 45–55.
- Johnson, D. W. (2002). *Contextual teaching and learning: What it is and why it's here to stay*. Corwin Press.
- Lwin, M. (2017). Effectiveness of multisensory approaches in improving reading comprehension skills. *Asian Journal of Educational Research*, 5(2), 102–112.

- Lyon, G. R., Shaywitz, S. E., & Shaywitz, B. A. (2003). A definition of dyslexia. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 53(1), 1–14.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11881-003-0001-9>
- Nurhadi. (2003). Pendekatan contextual teaching and learning (CTL). Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional.
- Rahmawati, S. (2020). Challenges in reading comprehension: A case study in Indonesian primary schools. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Research*, 8(1), 65–80.
- Santrock, J. W. (2008). *Educational psychology* (4th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Smith, R., & Smith, K. (2019). Multisensory techniques for learning: Enhancing student engagement and retention. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 25(2), 87–102.
- Snowling, M. J., & Hulme, C. (2012). *The science of reading: A handbook*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Tarigan, H. G. (2008). *Membaca sebagai suatu keterampilan berbahasa*. Angkasa.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Willis, J. (2008). *The role of multisensory learning in engaging students and enhancing literacy development*. Guilford Press.