

Engaging Mind, Building Skill, and Autonomy: A Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) for Primary School EFL Reading Instruction

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Abstract—Engagement is crucial for creating meaningful learning experiences, yet studies on young learners' EFL reading engagement remain limited. This study explored the engagement of 102 Indonesian third graders during a 24-week intervention using the gradual release of responsibility (GRR) framework. The instruction included phonics, guided, collaborative, and independent reading stages. Behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement was assessed through rubrics and a questionnaire, while pronunciation and comprehension were measured by pre- and post-tests. Results showed that over two-thirds of students enjoyed and actively participated, favouring independent reading most. Engagement increased across stages, with ratings rising from

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2 to 4 on a 4-point scale. A t-test indicated significant improvements in pronunciation and comprehension ($p < .001$). Findings suggest that GRR instruction effectively supports language development and fosters high engagement as students transition from guided to independent learning.

***Index Terms*—Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR), primary EFL learners, engagement, EFL reading instruction**

I. INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Indonesia emphasises communicative proficiency and swift acquisition, challenging traditional teacher-centered methods. Active and enjoyable learning experiences are essential for language acquisition (Graf, 2011), necessitating innovative approaches like task- and problem-based learning (Lee & Van Patten, 2021) and fostering productive engagement and learner autonomy (Benson, 2021). Engagement and independence are critical, enabling learners to control their education and sustain motivation (Dörnyei & Csizer, 2021; Thomas, 2022).

This study examined the engagement of Indonesian primary school children learning English as a foreign language, focusing on reading. English mastery is vital as a life skill, but it must also consider learners' social and cognitive development (Pinter, 2017). Hence, educators must prioritise personal growth while fostering peer interaction (Graf, 2011). Employing the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) instruction (Fisher & Frey, 2013), this study emphasised teacher-student interaction, peer collaboration, and independent learning. These strategies addressed the relative neglect of autonomous learning in Indonesia's English teaching practices.

Despite interest in reading English literature among Indonesian children (Delfi & Yamat, 2017; Wahyuni, 2022), challenges include insufficient adult encouragement, lack of English storybooks, and inadequate library access (Wahyuni et al., 2016; Wahyuni, 2022). To address these, the study utilised school resources and collaborated with a community library to expand book availability and reading spaces, fostering home-school-community synergy, as advocated by studies that worked with Indonesian children ELLs (e.g., Susanty et al., 2021; Wahyuni & Tin, 2024).

Reading is fundamental in foreign language acquisition, enhancing vocabulary, spelling, writing style, and comprehension (Cho & Krashen, 2019) while introducing engaging topics (Morrow & Gambrel, 2011). This study aimed to instil reading habits among Indonesian EFL learners using GRR, which provides structured support and gradually shifts responsibility to students, cultivating engagement and autonomy. Research questions explored student responses to GRR instruction, its role in improving engagement and independent reading, and its impact on reading skills (pronunciation and comprehension). Pre- and post-tests assessed skill improvements (pronunciation and comprehension), offering insights into the instruction's efficacy. Three research questions directed the inquiry:

- 1) How do students respond to GRR instruction in their EFL reading classes?
- 2) How does GRR instruction improve student engagement and autonomous (independent) reading?
- 3) How does GRR instruction help improve the students' reading skills (word pronunciation and text comprehension)?

A. *Engagement and Autonomous Learning in Primary EFL Classrooms*

The rising prominence of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in primary education underscores the significance of engagement and autonomous learning. Young learners who actively engage and cultivate autonomy achieve better linguistic and lifelong learning outcomes (Benson, 2021). Engagement is defined as the attention, curiosity, and interest learners bring to the classroom (Fredricks et al., 2004) and is categorised into three dimensions: behavioural, emotional, and cognitive (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Behavioural engagement involves active participation, such as answering questions and group discussions (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Emotional engagement encompasses positive emotions like enjoyment, interest, and reduced anxiety (Mercer, 2019), while cognitive engagement refers to the mental effort invested in mastering language skills (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Learner autonomy, or the ability to take charge of one's learning process (Little, 2022), can be challenging to foster in primary EFL settings due to children's limited cognitive skills. However, scaffolding and appropriate strategies can aid its development (Little, 2007). Techniques like goal setting (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011), technology integration (Reinders & White, 2016), and teacher-guided responsibility transfer (Benson, 2011) have proven effective. Teachers are crucial in guiding learners to select resources, set goals, and reflect on their progress through autonomy-supportive practices, such as scaffolding and self-assessment (Benson, 2021). Students taught autonomy strategies exhibit higher motivation and academic achievement levels than their peers in traditional settings (Little, 2022).

Engagement and autonomy are interdependent, with each reinforcing the other. Engaged learners exhibit excellent initiative, while autonomous learners are more intrinsically motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Providing choices, such as allowing students to select reading materials or project topics, enhances interest and responsibility (Wahyuni & Ariyanto, 2024; Lambert & Zhang, 2019). Interactive methods like storytelling, games, and collaborative projects also foster engagement and autonomy (Ellis & Brewster, 2014).

Innovative EFL methodologies have shown potential in promoting engagement and autonomy. These include gamification (Dörnyei & Csizer, 2021), task-based learning (Ellis, 2020), and project-based learning (Thomas, 2022). In short, educators must prioritise active learning by integrating strategies that enhance engagement and empower learners

to take responsibility for their learning. Such approaches cultivate motivation, achievement, and lifelong learning skills. The strategies emphasise purposeful, active learning experiences (Pinter, 2017) that align with the principles of GRR instruction, which gradually transition students from guided to independent reading, fostering autonomy and motivation.

B. GRR Instructional Framework

The Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) instructional framework, introduced by Pearson and Gallagher (1983), has become influential in education for its scaffolded approach, guiding students from dependent to independent learning. Grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and zone of proximal development (ZPD), GRR emphasises learning within a supportive framework provided by more knowledgeable others. The framework progresses through four stages: modelling ("I do"), shared practice ("We do"), guided practice ("You do together"), and independent practice ("You do alone") (Fisher & Frey, 2013), fostering autonomy and self-regulation in learners.

GRR provides explicit, structured teaching strategies in EFL reading where linguistic and cultural barriers are prevalent. Research highlights its efficacy in improving EFL learners' reading proficiency. For example, Wu and Lin (2019) observed significant gains in reading comprehension among Taiwanese EFL students using scaffolded GRR. Chen and Tang (2020) found that the method helped Chinese high school students develop critical reading skills. Similarly, Kim and Park's (2020) quasi-experimental study with Korean middle school students demonstrated marked improvements in independent reading proficiency. A study by Ahmed and Baker (2021) reported enhanced vocabulary acquisition and fluency among Egyptian EFL learners. These findings underscore GRR's role in building reading skills and boosting learners' confidence and motivation.

Despite its benefits, implementing GRR in EFL contexts poses challenges, such as limited language exposure and vocabulary knowledge (Fisher & Frey, 2013). Teachers may struggle to balance scaffolding with promoting autonomy, particularly in classrooms with diverse proficiency levels (Zhang, 2022). Additionally, the time-intensive nature of GRR necessitates meticulous planning to ensure effective execution. Fisher and Frey (2013) emphasise that successful integration requires tailored approaches to meet learners' needs and access to resources. Key strategies include modelling reading processes through think-aloud to demonstrate decoding and inference skills, collaborative activities like group discussions and peer feedback for shared and guided practice and assigning levelled texts for independent reading. With deliberate planning and adaptation, GRR can address the unique needs of EFL students, equipping them with the skills and confidence required for reading proficiency.

C. Approach to Reading Instruction in Indonesian Primary School EFL Classrooms

This study adopted the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) framework (Fisher & Frey, 2013) to explore its application in an Indonesian primary school EFL reading classroom, examining student engagement and instructional effectiveness. Developing literacy in a foreign language presents challenges, particularly in Indonesia's multilingual and multicultural context. However, the rising global significance of English has driven increased focus on EFL instruction in Indonesian primary schools, emphasising text comprehension and a growing inclusion of phonics in the curriculum. Studies have shown that phonics instruction improves reading fluency and word recognition among young Indonesian ELLs (Susanti, 2018; Wahyuni, 2022).

Phonics instruction systematically teaches sound-letter correspondence, aiding decoding and pronunciation (Ehri, 2020). Given the complexities of English words, students also memorise entire word sounds (Wahyuni et al., 2016). Effective phonics programs incorporate graded books tailored to students' proficiency levels, enabling skill progression from decoding to comprehension (Torgerson et al., 2018). Alongside phonics, literature-based approaches using stories, poems, and other texts are increasingly adopted to foster emotional and intellectual engagement. Research suggests these methods enhance vocabulary acquisition and comprehension for Indonesian ELLs (Nurhayati, 2020). For instance, folk tales and culturally relevant stories connect students personally to the material (Hartati, 2019), emphasising the importance of selecting texts suited to students' proficiency and cultural contexts and fostering meaningful connections between language and students' heritage (Olsen, 2022).

Phonics instruction builds foundational skills, while literature-based approaches enrich learning. However, these methods often remain disconnected in Indonesian classrooms, with phonics focused on pronunciation and book reading on comprehension (Utami & Musthafa, 2022; Wahyuni, 2022). This study sought to integrate both methods through the GRR framework to enhance both skills, starting with phonics instruction and guided reading to model strategies, followed by collaborative and independent reading. Collaboration with a community library expanded reading material access, while students were encouraged to bring books from home to share with peers, fostering exploration and expression. This integrated approach aimed to transition from teacher-supported to independent learning seamlessly.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study examined the impact of gradual release of responsibility (GRR) instruction on engagement and reading skills in Indonesian primary EFL classrooms. Drawing on Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) and Skinner and Pitzer (2012), it assessed behaviour, emotional, and cognitive engagement through reading stages. Behaviour examined observable actions like effort and participation; emotion focused on enjoyment; and cognition evaluated reading skills through pre- and post-tests. Rubrics were developed based on these aspects, with details provided in the instrument development.

Story maps were used during guided, collaborative, and independent reading stages. As visual organisers, they highlight narrative elements like setting, characters, plot, problem, and resolution. These tools support comprehension by helping young learners structure story components (Morrison & Włodarczyk, 2009). They also enhance engagement, scaffold for limited language proficiency, and simplify complex texts to aid comprehension and vocabulary acquisition (Gibbons, 2015). Story maps were further used to assess students' understanding in both pre- and post-tests.

A. The School and Student Participants

The school involved in the study was a bilingual institution implementing Indonesian and Cambridge International curricula. Students were expected to follow research instructions and communicate with teachers and researchers in English, with Bahasa Indonesia used for clarification when needed. The study included 102 fifth-grade students (average age: 11), consisting of 47 boys and 55 girls from four classes (A, B, C, and D), along with their English teachers—three females and one male, all in their early thirties. The teachers were selected based on their similar academic background in English and equivalent teaching experience to maintain instructional consistency. All participants (teachers, students, and parents) obtained ethical consent. Participants were informed about research ethics, and pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity.

B. The Intervention

GRR instruction was delivered in 24 weeks in four sequential stages of weekly instruction, as delineated below (see Figure 1).

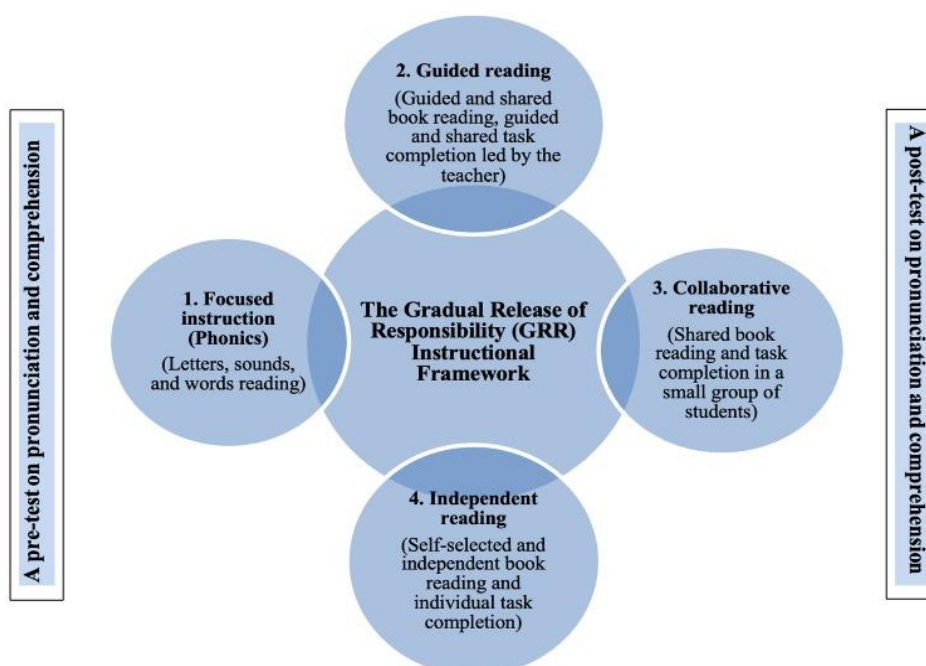


Figure 1. The Intervention of Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) Instruction

The reading intervention utilised the Oxford Phonics Reading Series (levels 5-7) and locally written storybooks. The intervention followed a structured procedure, starting with pre-assessing students' reading levels to identify their proficiency in word recognition, pronunciation, and comprehension. This pre-assessment helped determine the appropriate reading materials and pinpoint areas where students required additional support.

(a). Focused Instruction and Guided Reading

The first two stages, lasting eight weeks, involved focused instruction and guided reading, held weekly for 70 minutes. Students were taught phonics following systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) instruction, where they learned to break words into phonemes and blend them to form words. This method emphasised the connection between sounds and letters, progressing from simple to more complex words. Students were also taught to segment words, aiding in spelling. The structured, sequential, and explicit approach introduced phonics skills systematically (Ehri, 2020).

In guided reading, students worked with the teacher to read books, changing weekly based on their progress. The teacher paused periodically to discuss the text, clarify pronunciation, and explain word meaning, ensuring students understood the narrative flow. Story maps guided the discussion about the book's title, characters, setting, plot, problems, and solutions. These discussions were designed to improve students' comprehension and encourage text recall through teacher-led modelling and guidance (Fisher & Frey, 2013).

(b). Collaborative Reading

The third stage focused on collaborative reading for another eight weeks. This phase shifted attention to the school library, where students selected books together and engaged in group discussions. A story map was still used, fostering peer discussions that encouraged deeper engagement with the texts. Weekly 70-minute sessions allowed students to read one book weekly, with teachers providing supervision and support. A story map was completed and collected for each reading.

(c). Independent Reading

The final stage, independent reading, spanned eight weeks during the school's 60-minute weekly free reading period. It aimed to cultivate reading autonomy by allowing students to select books independently. A story map guided their reading and was completed after each reading. The goal was for each student to complete at least eight books, although the number varied depending on individual reading speed, comprehension, and engagement.

This intervention approach, combining focused instruction, guided reading, collaborative reading, and independent reading, sought to enhance students' reading skills through gradual progression, teacher support, and active student participation.

C. Data Collection

(a). A Pre-Test

The pre-test used a storybook from Oxford Reading Tree Level 6, Homework, by Roderick Hunt and Alex Brychta, consisting of 519 words. The book was selected based on when students start facing reading challenges. Students were assessed on two reading skills: word pronunciation and text comprehension. Following explicit phonics teaching principles (Ehri, 2020), pronunciation was individually recorded and graded based on the percentage of correctly pronounced words. Students were then given 15 minutes to read the book individually and another 15 minutes to answer questions on a provided story map. Comprehension was graded based on correct answers and the depth of their elaborations.

(b). Assessment of Student Engagement (Class and Group Readings)

Tables 1 and 2 below outline the criteria and scaling adopted from a study by Skinner and Pitzer (2012) for class and group observation. Student engagement was assessed using a classroom observation rubric, focusing on behavioural, emotional, and cognitive responses, with the percentage of active participants recorded (Table 1). The group rubric examined collaboration, task completion, effort, and initiative (Table 2). Observations were recorded weekly by the researchers with the teachers' help.

TABLE 1
CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT (FOCUSED INSTRUCTION AND GUIDED READING)

Criteria	Description	Rating Scale
1. Active participation	Volunteers answer, ask questions, and contribute to class discussions.	1 = Rarely; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Often; 4 = Always
2. Attention to tasks	Maintains focus on the reading material and instructions without distractions.	
3. Effort and initiative	Takes initiative in answering, asking questions, and contributing to class discussions.	
4. Estimated percentage of active students	The number of the students who actively participated in the activities.	4 = Very active participation (> 75 %) 3 = Active participation (51 % - 75%) 2 = Moderate participation (26 % - 50 %) 1 = Less participation (≤ 25 %)

TABLE 2
GROUP ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT (COLLABORATIVE READING)

Criteria	Description	Rating Scale
1. Collaboration	Works well with peers, listens actively, and shares ideas constructively.	1 = Rarely; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Often; 4 = Always
2. Task completion	Completes assigned reading and group activities on time and with attention to detail.	
3. Effort and initiative	Takes initiative in tasks, such as suggesting ideas or helping peers beyond minimal requirements.	

(c). Individual Assessment of Student Engagement

At the program's end, an individual questionnaire was administered to assess students' views on the GRR instruction and their reading experiences, including acceptance, enjoyment, and participation. The questionnaire, presented in English with explanations in Bahasa Indonesia, asked students to reflect on their preferred activities and share positive and negative experiences. Interviews with selected students provided more profound insights into their experiences.

(d). Post-Test

The post-test assessed students' improvement in pronunciation and comprehension after the instruction. The book used for the test, titled *Red Planet*, from Oxford Reading Tree Level 7, also by Hunt and Brychta, consists of 904 words. Like the pre-test, students read the book individually and were graded on pronunciation by reading aloud the text and completing a story map for the comprehension test.

D. Data Analysis

All pre-test and post-test scores were analysed using descriptive statistics and a paired sample t-test to assess improvement and determine significant differences in students' reading skills before and after the program. Descriptive statistics identified general patterns across the four classes, forming the basis for inferential analysis using the paired sample t-test (Friedman, 2012). This test compared the means of the same participants, which were measured twice, to evaluate score differences (Field, 2013). Student engagement was measured using scaling rates and percentages (see Tables 1 and 2), while closed-question responses in the questionnaire were analysed using percentages. Open-ended responses and interview results were analysed narratively. Narrative analysis explored how individuals constructed and conveyed meaning about their experiences during interviews (Riessman, 2008). In this study, narrative analysis provided insights into students' perspectives on the instruction and reading experiences, offering a deeper understanding of how they engaged with and responded to the intervention.

III. RESULTS

A. Pre-Test and Post-Test

(a). Pronunciation Test (Word Reading)

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE PRONUNCIATION TEST

Descriptive	Class A		Class B		Class C		Class D	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
N	23	23	24	24	27	27	28	28
Mean	67.6	78.5	68.8	79.8	69.8	80.9	69.8	79.1
Median	70	75.0	70.0	80.0	70	80.0	70.0	80.0
Standard deviation	5.41	4.63	5.37	4.29	5.63	5.55	5.35	4.92
Minimum	60	70	60	75	60	70	60	70
Maximum	75	85	80	90	80	90	80	85

Table 3 demonstrates a clear improvement in pronunciation skills across all classes following the instruction. Mean scores increased significantly from pre-test to post-test, with Class A improving from 67.6 to 78.5, Class B from 68.8 to 79.8, Class C from 69.8 to 80.9, and Class D from 69.8 to 79.1. Median scores similarly rose, with most classes achieving a post-test median of 80, except Class A (75). Reduced standard deviations in post-test scores indicate more consistent student performance, particularly in Class B. Minimum and maximum scores improved across all classes, reflecting overall growth in proficiency. These results highlight the effectiveness of the instruction in enhancing pronunciation skills uniformly across diverse student groups, which was supported by the result from the t-test that showed very low p-values (< .001), as summarised below Table 4.

TABLE 4
PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST OF PRONUNCIATION TEST

			Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Pair 1	Class A	Student's t	16.0	22.0	<.001	10.9	0.678
Pair 2	Class B	Student's t	18.4	23.0	<.001	11.0	0.600
Pair 3	Class C	Student's t	18.0	26.0	<.001	11.1	0.616
Pair 4	Class D	Student's t	16.6	27.0	<.001	9.29	0.558

$H_a \mu_{\text{Measure 1}} - \mu_{\text{Measure 2}} \neq 0$

Mean differences range from 9.29 (Class D) to 11.1 (Class C), with consistently low standard errors (0.558–0.678), highlighting substantial and uniform progress. Class B achieved the highest t-statistic (18.4), while Class C showed the most remarkable mean improvement. These results further confirmed the effectiveness of the instructional intervention, with minimal variability across groups, indicating consistent success in achieving learning objectives.

(b). Comprehension Test

TABLE 5
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR COMPREHENSION TEST

Descriptive	Class A		Class B		Class C		Class D	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
N	23	23	24	24	27	27	28	28
Mean	72.6	84.6	72.7	83.8	72.4	82.8	72.1	82.3
Median	75	85	70.0	85	75	85	72.5	80.0
Standard deviation	5.41	5.42	5.71	4.95	5.26	4.67	4.60	4.81
Minimum	65	75	65	75	65	75	65	75
Maximum	80	95	85	95	80	90	80	95

Table 5 shows consistent improvements in comprehension test scores across all classes. The mean scores increased from approximately 72 (pre-test) to over 82 (post-test) for each class, with median scores rising from 70–75 to 80–85. Standard deviations remained low (4.60–5.71), indicating minimal variability in performance. The minimum and maximum scores also improved uniformly, reflecting overall progress. Class A exhibited the highest mean post-test score (84.6), while Class D showed the most consistent improvement. These results highlight the significant impact of the intervention on students' comprehension skills, as supported by the t-test results (Table 6 below).

TABLE 6
PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST FOR COMPREHENSION TEST

		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference	
Pair 1	Class A	Student's t	19.7	22.0	< .001	12.0	0.608
Pair 2	Class B	Student's t	13.9	23.0	< .001	11.0	0.795
Pair 3	Class C	Student's t	19.6	26.0	< .001	10.4	0.529
Pair 4	Class D	Student's t	16.9	27.0	< .001	10.2	0.602

H_a $\mu_{\text{Measure 1}} - \mu_{\text{Measure 2}} \neq 0$

Table 6 indicates significant improvements in comprehension test scores across all classes ($p < .001$). Mean differences range from 10.2 (Class D) to 12.0 (Class A), with low standard errors (0.529–0.795), reflecting consistent progress. Class A achieved the most considerable mean improvement and the highest t-statistic (19.7), while Class D demonstrated slightly lower gains but remained statistically significant. These results confirm the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing students' comprehension skills, with uniformly positive outcomes across all groups.

B. Classroom Engagement

TABLE 7
CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT (PHONICS INSTRUCTION AND GUIDED READING)

Class (n students)	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	Average scale (μ)
Criteria 1: Active participation									
Class A (25)	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	4	3
Class B (26)	3	2	2	3	4	3	4	4	3.1
Class C (25)	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	2.5
Class D (26)	2	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	3.25
Average scale (μ)	2.25	2.25	2.5	2.75	3.5	3	3.75	3.75	3
Criteria 2: Attention to tasks									
Class A (25)	3	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	3.25
Class B (26)	2	2	3	3	3	4	3	4	3
Class C (25)	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	3	2.75
Class D (26)	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3.125
Average scale (μ)	2.25	2.25	2.75	3	3.25	3.25	3.75	3.75	3
Criteria 3: Effort and initiative									
Class A (25)	3	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	3.25
Class B (26)	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	4	2.75
Class C (25)	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	2.75
Class D (26)	2	3	3	2	3	4	3	4	3
Average scale (μ)	2.25	2.25	2.75	2.5	3.25	3.25	3.25	4	2.9
Criteria 4: Estimation of the percentage of active students									
Class A (25)	2	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	3.1
Class B (26)	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	4	2.9
Class C (25)	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2.6
Class D (26)	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	4	3
Average scale (μ)	2	2	2.5	3	3.5	3	3.5	3.75	2.9
Overall average (μ)	2.2	2.2	2.6	2.8	3.4	3.1	3.6	3.8	2.95

Over the eight weeks, student engagement in phonics instruction and guided reading significantly improved across all classes. Active participation, attention to tasks, effort and initiative, and the percentage of active students all increased, with Class D demonstrating the highest levels of engagement by Week 8. While Class C had more modest progress,

generally scoring lower across all criteria, Classes A and B showed steady improvement, especially in effort and participation. Overall, the data indicates that as students became more familiar with the activities, their engagement grew, with Class D leading in sustained improvement, followed closely by Class A.

C. Group Engagement

TABLE 8
GROUP ENGAGEMENT (COLLABORATIVE READING)

CLASS (N GROUPS)	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	AVERAGE SCORE (M)
CRITERIA 1: COLLABORATION									
CLASS A (5)	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.75
CLASS B (5)	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.6
CLASS C (5)	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	3.6
CLASS D (5)	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.75
AVERAGE SCORE (M)	3	3.25	3.5	3.75	4	4	4	4	3.7
CRITERIA 2: TASK COMPLETION									
CLASS A (5)	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	3.6
CLASS B (5)	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	3.5
Class C (5)	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	3.5
Class D (5)	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	3.6
Average score (μ)	3	3.25	3.5	3.5	3.25	4	4	4	3.6
Criteria 3: Effort and initiative									
Class A (5)	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	3.5
Class B (5)	2	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	3.4
Class C (5)	2	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	3.4
Class D (5)	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	3.5
Average score (μ)	2.5	3	3.25	3.75	3.5	3.5	3.75	4	3.4

Over the eight weeks, group engagement in collaborative reading steadily improved across all classes. Collaboration, task completion, effort, and initiative all increased, with the average score reaching four by Week 8. Like classroom engagement, Classes A and D consistently scored the highest across criteria, with Class A showing strong collaboration and task completion. Class B and C fluctuated but gradually grew, particularly in effort and initiative. Class C, while starting with lower scores, improved steadily by the end, reflecting enhanced group dynamics. The data suggests that group collaboration and effort became more effective as the weeks progressed, with Class A and D leading the way in sustained engagement.

D. Individual Questionnaire and Interview

TABLE 9
STUDENTS' RECEPTION TO THE GRR INSTRUCTION

Enjoyment of the GRR instruction		74.3% (enjoyed)	18.8% (so-so)	6.9% (bored)
The most preferred reading stage		20.8% (guided reading)	30.6% (collaborative reading)	48.6% (independent reading)
Instruction stages		Guided reading	Collaborative reading	Independent reading
Enjoyment	Enjoyed	51.5%	66.4%	78.2%
	Just so-so	34.6%	20.8%	12.9%
	Less enjoyed	13.9%	12.8%	8.9%
Participation	Actively participated	50.5%	63.4%	75.2%
	Just so-so	36.6%	25.7%	16.9%
	Less participated	12.9%	10.9%	7.9%

The data on students' reception to the GRR instruction reveals a generally positive response, with 74.3% of students enjoying the instruction. Independent reading emerged as the most preferred stage (48.6%), followed by collaborative (30.6%) and guided reading (20.8%). Across the three stages, independent reading was the most enjoyed (78.2%) and had the highest participation rate (75.2%). Collaborative reading also received positive feedback, with 66.4% enjoyment and 63.4% active participation. While the least preferred, guided reading still saw a significant portion of students (51.5%) enjoying the activity and actively participating. Overall, students strongly preferred independent reading, but all stages showed high levels of engagement and enjoyment.

Students' feedback on reading activities highlighted the advantages and challenges of different methods. In guided reading, students valued the teacher's support in comprehension. One student noted, "The teacher explained the story, which made it easier to understand" (Rudi, Class C). Auditory learners especially appreciated listening to the teacher's narration, while others highlighted the importance of correct word pronunciation. One student said, "I could ask and listen to my teacher on how to read English words correctly" (Eli, Class A). Students found the shared reading experience helpful for deriving meaning from texts and completing tasks like the story map. However, guided reading had its

drawbacks. Some students felt neglected due to the teacher's inability to focus on everyone, leading to boredom and disruptive behaviour. Limited book choices also dampened enthusiasm.

Like guided reading, collaborative reading has benefits like peer support in text comprehension. Chika from Class B shared, "I can ask my friends about the meaning of words." Harry from Class D also found collaboration useful: "It was helpful to work with my friends to complete the story map." However, group dynamics sometimes hindered effectiveness. One student complained, "Some friends were annoying and not helping with the story map" (Dan, Class C). At the same time, another expressed frustration over conflicting book preferences: "They always choose the book I am not interested in. It is boring" (Rossie, Class A). These challenges emphasise the need for strong communication skills and collaboration, as Ibrahim et al. (2015) noted.

Independent reading emerged as the most favoured activity. As shown in Table 9, many students preferred its autonomy, enabling them to choose books and read at their own pace. Dona from Class C noted, "I like reading alone because I can choose my favourite books and read when I want to." However, limited English proficiency posed challenges for some students, such as Hani from Class D: "My English is not good. I struggled to read and did not understand the story." These insights underline the importance of supporting diverse needs while promoting independent reading. The findings also suggest that combining guided, collaborative, and independent reading within the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) model could be compelling, as each stage complements the others.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to implement the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) instructional framework that Pearson and Gallagher (1983) proposed in Indonesian primary school EFL reading classes. The GRR model allowed students to progress from guided to independent learning, providing them the space and pace necessary to build their language skills. This approach was particularly crucial for Indonesian children learning English, a complex foreign language. The study's results indicated that the implementation of GRR instruction yielded positive outcomes. Students' emotional (enjoyment) and behavioural (participation) engagement in reading activities gradually increased from approximately 50% to over 75% across the instructional stages (Table 9).

Additionally, other criteria (Tables 7 and 8) shifted from scale 2 (sometimes) to scale 4 (always), and students' language mastery, measured by tests on pronunciation and comprehension, significantly improved, with a low p-value ($< .001$). These findings align with previous research on the efficacy of GRR instruction in EFL contexts (e.g., Ahmed & Baker, 2021; Wu & Lin, 2019), further emphasising the role of engagement in students' academic success (Renninger & Hidi, 2016). Additionally, the shift in responsibility from teacher to student fostered increased autonomy and confidence, supporting the development of independent learners, as emphasised by Cho and Krashen (2019) and Cho (2017). The positive increase in enjoyment and participation suggested that students accepted the GRR approach, highlighting its impact on engagement and learning.

The study also revealed that classroom-guided and group reading activities contributed to this increased engagement (Tables 7 and 8). The findings suggested that collaborative reading, mainly through literature circles, helped students transition from teacher-directed learning to more peer-supported practices. This approach allowed students of varying language proficiency levels to support one another, fostering a supportive, collaborative learning environment. Previous studies have highlighted the benefits of collaborative reading in improving comprehension and social skills (Ibrahim et al., 2015; Sharif et al., 2023), and this study corroborated those findings by showing that small group settings promoted active participation, boosted confidence and fostered a sense of inclusion. These factors helped facilitate a more cooperative and effective learning environment.

Another key finding of the study was the importance of personal value experience in fostering engagement. The GRR model provided a structured progression for students. This approach accommodated students' varying developmental stages regarding language mastery and agency, as highlighted by previous scholars (e.g., Graf, 2011; Pinter, 2011, 2017). As students gained confidence and competence in their reading skills, over 75% demonstrated productive engagement and autonomy in the final stage of instruction. This finding supported the work of Cho and Krashen (2019) and Cho (2017), who emphasised the role of autonomy in ESL/EFL learning success. Additionally, engaged students tended to take greater ownership of their learning, navigating their progress and becoming more independent (Benson, 2021; Little, 2022).

The study's findings also aligned with the four phases outlined by Fisher and Frey (2013) in the GRR framework: "I do" (teacher modelling), "We do" (guided practice), "You do together" (collaborative practice), and "You do alone" (independent practice). The model significantly improved pronunciation and comprehension in the context of EFL reading. In the "I do" phase, the teacher modelled correct pronunciation, following systematic synthetic phonics (Ehri, 2020). During "We Do," the teacher provided corrective feedback as students practised reading aloud, helping them correct errors before they became ingrained (Gibbons, 2015). The "You do together" phase saw students practising pronunciation in collaboration, with peers offering feedback, which contributed to increased confidence and peer support. Finally, in the "You do alone" phase, students independently applied their skills in silent or oral reading tasks, reinforcing their pronunciation and comprehension abilities through self-monitoring (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

The GRR framework also promoted reading comprehension through gradual skill-building. In the "I do" phase, the teacher demonstrated comprehension strategies such as predicting, questioning, and summarising, providing students with

tools to engage with texts (Fisher & Frey, 2013). During "We do," guided practice allowed students to apply these strategies with the teacher's support, using scaffolding techniques, such as asking guiding questions or providing sentence starters, to help the students navigate challenging texts (Gibbons, 2015). The "you do together" phase enabled collaborative discussions, deepening comprehension as students exchanged ideas. Finally, independent practice in the "You do alone" phase allowed students to apply these strategies autonomously, building their confidence in analysing texts independently (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

In conclusion, the GRR framework provides a structured and practical approach to teaching reading in EFL contexts. By gradually transferring responsibility from teacher to learner, the framework supports students in developing pronunciation and comprehension skills, as evidenced by the significant improvement in student performance. The combination of explicit modelling, guided practice, collaborative learning, and independent application ensured that students received the necessary support to become proficient readers. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of engagement and autonomy in language learning, suggesting that a balanced approach incorporating all stages of the GRR model can enhance the cognitive and affective dimensions of students' reading experiences.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the effectiveness of a gradual, scaffolded approach to EFL reading, focusing on supporting students' diverse learning needs and individual pacing. The progression from guided to independent reading fostered independence and language proficiency, especially among young English language learners (ELLs). Focused instruction and guided reading helped students build decoding skills and engage in interactive discussions to enhance comprehension. The gradual transfer of responsibility increased engagement and allowed students at various skill levels to enjoy the story. Scaffolding instruction also addresses linguistic challenges and boosts both reading skills and confidence.

The study underscores the positive impact of group reading activities, such as literature circles, on comprehension and peer collaboration. Small group settings promoted a smooth transition to independent learning, fostered inclusion, and enhanced participation. Additionally, the study emphasised the importance of aligning learning activities with students' developmental stages and needs.

Language proficiency played a key role in shaping students' reading interests, with inadequate skills hindering their enjoyment and ability to form a reading habit. The gradual model scaffolded students' progression from guided to independent reading, helping develop skills and motivation. Thus, teachers should prioritise fostering self-directed learning while providing guided support tailored to individual needs.

The GRR framework offers a practical, structured approach to teaching reading by transferring responsibility from teacher to learner. Incorporating all four GRR stages (I do, We do, You do together, and You do alone) can enhance cognitive and emotional engagement. Group reading and peer collaboration improved student engagement and comprehension, while autonomy in book selection promoted intrinsic motivation.

While the study provided valuable insights, its limitations included the small sample size and focus on reading comprehension and pronunciation. Future research should explore the GRR framework's impact on other language skills like writing and listening, its long-term effects, and the role of cultural factors. Additionally, studies on gender-specific instructional approaches and group dynamics in collaborative reading could offer further insights.

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