

THE INFLUENCE OF THE BALAGAR STRATEGY ON 3rd GRADE STUDENTS OF SD NEGERI 006 SOSOR GONTING IN UNDERSTANDING SENTENCE MEANING

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the effect of the BALAGAR (Read Scene Picture) strategy on the sentence meaning comprehension ability of 3rd-grade students at UPT SD Negeri 006 Sosor Gonting and to compare the learning outcomes of students using the BALAGAR strategy with those using conventional methods. This study uses a quantitative method with a quasi-experimental design. The research population consists of all 35 third-grade students from UPT SD Negeri 006 Sosor Gonting, divided into experimental and control classes. Data collection techniques were carried out thru pretest and posttest, observation, and questionnaires. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 29 software thru normality tests, homogeneity tests, hypothesis tests, and N-Gain analysis. The research results indicate that the BALAGAR strategy significantly affects the improvement of students' sentence meaning comprehension skills. This is evidenced by the hypothesis test results with an Asymp. Sig value < 0.05 , thus H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. The average score of the experimental class increased from 67.65 to 90.59, while the control class decreased from 46.11 to 40.56. The N-Gain analysis results for the experimental class obtained an average score of 0.7216 with a high category, while the control class obtained a score of -0.3068. Thus, the BALAGAR strategy has proven effective in improving the sentence meaning comprehension skills of third-grade elementary school students. Keywords: BALAGAR Strategy, Read Picture Plays, Sentence Meaning Comprehension, Reading Literacy, Interactive Learning.

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INTRODUCTION

The reading literacy skills of Indonesian students are still below the OECD average. The 2022 PISA results show that Indonesia's reading literacy score is only 359, while the OECD average reaches 476 (State, 2022). This condition indicates that many students still have difficulty understanding, interpreting, and deeply comprehending reading materials, which is influenced by the quality of classroom learning (Yusmar & Fadilah, 2023). This issue becomes important in elementary school because students are at the transition stage from learning to read to reading to learn. Third-grade students are not only required to read fluently but also to understand the meaning of sentences as a foundation for comprehending paragraphs and texts as a whole (Muchmaina et al., 2025; Sipayung, 2021). However, many students still struggle to find information, rearrange sentences, and understand implied meanings despite being able to read fluently (Frans et al., 2023; Agustiani & Vitoria, 2025). Reading literacy itself is understood as the process of constructing meaning thru the interaction between the reader and the text, not merely the technical ability to read (Mu'ti, 2025).

According to the PIRLS framework, reading is a process of meaning construction that involves the reader's prior knowledge, social context, and text characteristics (Mullis & Martin, 2019). PIRLS 2016 also emphasizes that reading literacy is related to the ability to understand and use written language in everyday life (Martin et al., 2016). Therefore, teachers need to implement interactive reading strategies that can actively engage students in understanding the text (Ashford, 2024). Interactive reading emphasizes the active relationship between the reader, the text, and peers to enhance comprehension and critical thinking skills (Buehl, 2017). However, reading instruction in elementary schools is still dominated by conventional teacher-centered methods, resulting in students being less involved in constructing the meaning of the text (Wallot et al., 2014).

One alternative that can be used is the BALAGAR strategy (Read-Act-Draw), which is an interactive reading strategy that integrates reading activities, role-playing, and drawing (Lestari & Ramadan, 2023; Dunda, 2021). This strategy is carried out thru three stages: reading the text, demonstrating the content thru role play, and visualizing the meaning in the form of drawings. This approach leverages the characteristics of elementary school students who enjoy playing, moving, and imagining, thereby creating a more meaningful multimodal learning experience (Awaliyah et al., 2025). Theoretically, the BALAGAR strategy aligns with Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and collaborative activities in meaningful learning (Nurjamilah, 2025).

Various previous studies have shown that interactive reading strategies, visual media, and role-playing methods effectively enhance the reading and critical thinking skills of elementary school students (Awaliyah et al., 2025; Lestari & Ramadan, 2023; Trisnawati & Fathoni, 2023; Az-Zahra, 2025; Indriani et al., 2025). Research by Mukherna et al. (2025) also highlights the importance of contextual learning in understanding connotative and denotative meanings, while Nimmanarati et al. (2019) found that visual media can enhance word meaning comprehension. However, research that specifically integrates reading,

role-playing, and drawing into a single structured strategy to enhance elementary school students' understanding of sentence meaning is still limited. Therefore, this research was conducted to examine the influence of the BALAGAR strategy on the ability to understand sentence meaning among third-grade students at UPT SDN 006 Sosor Gonting and to compare it with conventional teaching methods.

Learning strategies are plans or a series of actions designed to achieve learning objectives effectively. In its implementation, learning strategies must consider interactive, inspiring, enjoyable, challenging, and motivating principles so that learners can develop optimally (Akrim & PD, 2022). One of the strategies that can be used to improve reading and critical thinking skills is interactive reading. This strategy actively involves students thru discussions, questioning, summarizing, and interacting with both texts and peers (Tolhani et al., 2025; Farias & Ignacio, 2022). Interactive reading helps students understand texts more deeply thru techniques such as critical reading, group discussions, and concept mapping (Abidin, 2022; Awaliyah et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2021). In addition to enhancing understanding, these strategies also create a more dynamic, communicative, and participatory learning environment (Rianto et al., 2024). Teachers need to choose appropriate reading strategies because reading instruction in elementary schools is still often teacher-centered and lacks active student involvement (Nurjannah et al., n.d.; Friansyah & Battuta, 2025; Supit et al., 2023). Research also shows that interactive reading and collaborative learning can enhance students' literacy, communication, and engagement skills thru sharing and discussion activities (Liu et al., 2025; Cover, 2026; Hidayat, 2025).

The BALAGAR strategy (Read-Act-Draw) is a form of interactive reading that integrates reading activities, role-playing, and drawing. This strategy provides a deeper and more meaningful learning experience for students (Pebriana & Nurhaswinda, 2025). Reading is understood as the ability to comprehend the meaning of a text, whether read aloud or silently (Harras, 2014). The ability to read comprehension is very important in elementary school because it helps students understand text structure, vocabulary, draw conclusions, think critically, and connect information with everyday experiences (Sry Apfani et al., 2025). In the BALAGAR strategy, the "acting" stage is carried out thru role-playing methods that allow students to gain direct experience in understanding the content of the reading (LINGGA, 2025). Role-playing also helps students develop communication, cooperation, and interpretation of meaning thru active and collaborative activities (Mustika & Yusuf, 2024). The "image" stage is carried out by visualizing the meaning of the reading in the form of pictures. Drawing can enhance students' motor coordination, memory, imagination, and confidence in understanding the reading (Salam et al., 2021). The BALAGAR strategy is implemented thru three main stages: reading the text, role-playing, and illustrating the content of the reading (Shofira, 2022; Mustadi et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2024).

Understanding the meaning of sentences is related to the study of semantics, which is the study of meaning in language (Inovasi & Dasar, 2025; Zahra et al., 2024). Meaning is understood as the relationship between a word and the concept it contains, and it can change according to the development of

language and society. Types of meaning include lexical, grammatical, denotative, connotative, conceptual, associative, terminological, and idiomatic meanings (Inovasi & Dasar, 2025). Additionally, changes in meaning can occur due to narrowing, broadening, refinement, or socio-cultural changes (Astuti, 2017; Mukherna et al., 2025). The factors of meaning change are also influenced by the development of language, culture, fields of knowledge, and technology (Nursida, 2014).

This research was conducted in three stages: preparation, implementation, and final stage. The preparation stage included literature review, instrument development, and instrument validation. The implementation stage involved administering a pretest, applying the BALAGAR strategy in the experimental class, and administering a posttest. The final stage was carried out with data analysis thru statistical tests and the formulation of research conclusions. The research hypothesis states that the BALAGAR strategy has a significant effect on the sentence meaning comprehension ability of third-grade students at UPT SD Negeri 006 Sosor Gonting.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Reading literacy is an essential skill in elementary education because it supports students in understanding information, interpreting meaning, and developing critical thinking. However, the literacy achievement of Indonesian students remains relatively low. The PISA 2022 results revealed that Indonesia's reading literacy score was still below the OECD average, indicating that many students experience difficulties in comprehending texts deeply. Reading comprehension is not only the ability to read fluently, but also the ability to construct meaning from written texts through interaction between the reader and the text.

According to the PIRLS framework, reading comprehension involves a process of meaning construction influenced by prior knowledge, social context, and text characteristics. Interactive reading strategies are therefore important because they actively engage students in questioning, discussing, and interpreting texts collaboratively. Previous studies have shown that interactive reading can improve students' literacy skills, communication, and critical thinking abilities. Nevertheless, reading instruction in elementary schools is still often teacher-centered and relies on conventional methods that limit student participation.

One instructional strategy that can support reading comprehension is the BALAGAR strategy (Baca-Lakon-Gambar). BALAGAR integrates three learning activities: reading, role-playing, and drawing. Through reading activities, students are introduced to the text and its content. In the role-playing stage, students dramatize the story or sentence meaning, allowing them to gain direct and contextual learning experiences. Meanwhile, the drawing stage helps students visualize and reinforce their understanding of the text. This multimodal learning process is considered suitable for elementary school students because children learn effectively through movement, imagination, and visual representation.

The BALAGAR strategy is also supported by Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs through social

interaction and collaborative activities. By engaging students in discussion, dramatization, and visualization, BALAGAR creates meaningful learning experiences that encourage active participation. Research by Lestari and Ramadan (2023), Trisnawati and Fathoni (2023), and Awaliyah et al. (2025) found that interactive learning strategies, role-playing methods, and visual media significantly improve students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, understanding sentence meaning is closely related to semantics, which studies meaning in language. Semantic understanding includes lexical, grammatical, denotative, and connotative meanings. Students' ability to comprehend sentence meaning is important because it helps them identify information, infer implied messages, and connect ideas within a text. Visual media and contextual learning activities have been proven effective in improving vocabulary understanding and sentence interpretation among elementary students.

Based on previous studies, most research has focused separately on interactive reading, visual media, or role-playing methods. However, studies that combine reading, dramatization, and drawing into one integrated instructional strategy are still limited. Therefore, the BALAGAR strategy offers a new and meaningful approach to improving students' comprehension of sentence meaning through active, collaborative, and multimodal learning experiences.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental method to compare classes that use the Read-Act-Draw (RAD) strategy with classes that use conventional learning. The research design used is a quasi-experimental design with an experimental group and a control group (Sugiyono, 2013). The experimental group is given treatment using the RAD strategy, while the control group uses the regular learning method. The independent variable in this study is the BALAGAR strategy, while the dependent variable is the sentence comprehension ability of third-grade students at UPT SD Negeri 006 Sosor Gonting. The research was conducted at UPT SD Negeri 006 Sosor Gonting, Humbang Hasundutan Regency, over six weeks in the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The selection of the location was based on the researcher's observation as a teacher at the school, which found that students were able to read but did not yet understand the content of the reading. The research population consists of all third-grade students, totaling 35 students, namely class IIIA with 17 students and class IIIB with 18 students (Taniredja & Mustafidah, 2012; Suriani & Jailani, 2023; Amin et al., 2023; Firmansyah et al., 2022). Class IIIA was designated as the experimental group, while class IIIB served as the control group.

The research instruments included observation sheets, pretest and posttest, as well as student response questionnaires. Observation is used to observe the activities of teachers and students during the learning process using a 1–4 rating scale (Arikunto, 2013; IRMAWATI, 2013). Tests are used to measure students' ability to understand the meaning of sentences before and after the treatment. Test indicators include object identification, verbal actions, understanding of location or container, measurement accuracy, and activity sequence. The assessment of

students' abilities uses a rubric modified from Rostiana (2025). In addition, an observation sheet for teacher activities and a student response questionnaire related to the ease, attractiveness, visual clarity, usefulness of the play, and student learning independence were also prepared.

The research instruments were tested for validity and reliability before use. The validity test was conducted using the product moment correlation to determine the accuracy of the instrument in measuring the research variables (Arikunto, 2015; Mayasari, 2019; Taniredja & Mustafidah, 2012; Reza et al., 2026). The test results show that several items were declared valid with a category ranging from sufficient to very high (Arikunto, 2007). The reliability test was conducted using the Alpha formula to determine the consistency of the instrument (Akbar & Zahfa, 2025; Janna & Herianto, 2021; Khumaedi, 2012).

Data collection techniques were carried out thru pretest, treatment, and posttest. At the initial stage, the experimental and control class students were given a pretest to determine their initial abilities. Subsequently, the experimental group was taught using the BALAGAR strategy, while the control group used the question-and-answer method or direct instruction. At the final stage, both groups were given a posttest to determine the improvement in students' sentence meaning comprehension skills.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 29. The analysis stages included normality tests using Shapiro-Wilk to determine data distribution, homogeneity tests to see the similarity of variances between groups, and hypothesis tests using independent sample t-test or Mann-Whitney according to the data characteristics. Additionally, an N-Gain analysis was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the treatment by comparing pretest and posttest scores (Wahab et al., 2021). The N-Gain results were then classified into high, medium, and low categories. Student activity observations were also analyzed using the classification of student activity percentages (Nanola, 2025).

FINDING

This study was conducted using a quasi-experimental design involving two groups: an experimental class taught using the BALAGAR (Baca-Lakon-Gambar) strategy and a control class taught using conventional learning methods. The participants consisted of 35 third-grade students of UPT SD Negeri 006 Sosor Gonting, divided into 17 students in the experimental group and 18 students in the control group.

Tabel 1 Results of the Item Validity Test of the Test Instrument

Item	r calculate with the total score	Sig.	
item_1	0.583	0.018	Valid
item_2	-0.092	0.735	Not Valid
item_3	0.398	0.126	Not Valid
item_4	0.045	0.869	Not Valid
item_5	0.285	0.285	Not Valid
item_6	0.882	0.000	Valid

item_7	-0.092	0.735	Not Valid
item_8	0.398	0.126	Not Valid
item_9	-0.092	0.735	Not Valid
item_10	0.437	0.090	Not Valid

The results of the instrument test show that only item 1 and item 6 are valid at the 5% significance level, while the other items do not meet the validity requirements. Here are the results of the instrument validity test:

The findings of the study indicate that the BALAGAR strategy significantly improved students' ability to understand sentence meaning. The descriptive statistical analysis showed that the average pretest score of the experimental group was 67.65, while the posttest score increased to 90.59. In contrast, the control group experienced a decrease in performance, with the average score declining from 46.11 in the pretest to 40.56 in the posttest.

The effectiveness of the BALAGAR strategy was further confirmed through the N-Gain analysis. The experimental class obtained an average N-Gain score of 0.7216, which falls into the high category, whereas the control class obtained a negative N-Gain score of -0.3068, indicating that there was no meaningful improvement in students' comprehension ability.

The hypothesis testing using the paired sample t-test revealed that the experimental group showed a significant improvement with a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05). Meanwhile, the control group obtained a significance value of 0.276 (>0.05), indicating that there was no significant difference between pretest and posttest scores in the conventional learning class. Furthermore, the independent sample t-test showed significant differences between the experimental and control groups in posttest, gain, and N-Gain scores, with significance values below 0.05. These findings demonstrate that the BALAGAR strategy had a statistically significant effect on students' comprehension of sentence meaning.

In addition to test results, observations and questionnaires also supported the effectiveness of the BALAGAR strategy. Students showed high participation and enthusiasm during the learning process. Observation data indicated that students' learning activities were categorized as "very good," with an average observation score of 3.86. Teacher observations also demonstrated successful implementation of the strategy with an average score of 3.88. Moreover, questionnaire results showed that students responded positively to the learning activities, particularly because the strategy was interesting, enjoyable, and helped them understand sentence meaning more easily.

Tabel 2 Paired Sample T-Test Result

Group	Mean Pretest	Mean Posttest	Mean Difference	T	df	Sig.
Control	46.11	40.56	5.556	1.126	17	0.276
Experiment	67.65	90.59	-22.941	-7.488	16	0.000

Based on the table above, the control group obtained a significance value of 0.276, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest in the control group. The average actually decreased from 46.11 to 40.56. Practically, this indicates that the learning in the control group has not been able to significantly improve sentence meaning comprehension. In the experimental group, the significance value of 0.000 is much smaller than 0.05. This means there is a very significant difference between the pretest and posttest in the experimental group. The direction of the change is also positive, as the average increased from 67.65 to 90.59. In other words, the BALAGAR strategy not only resulted in a numerical score change but also demonstrated a strong and meaningful learning effect on the ability to understand sentence meaning.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study prove that the BALAGAR strategy is effective in improving students' comprehension of sentence meaning. The significant increase in the experimental group's posttest scores indicates that integrating reading, role-playing, and drawing activities can support students in constructing meaning more actively and contextually. The BALAGAR strategy allows students not only to read texts but also to experience and visualize the meaning of sentences through physical and visual activities. This learning process strengthens students' understanding because they are involved cognitively, affectively, and psychomotorically.

These findings are consistent with Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, which emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs through interaction and collaboration. In the BALAGAR strategy, students interact with texts, peers, and learning media simultaneously. Through role-playing activities, students actively reconstruct the meaning of the text, while drawing activities help them visualize and reinforce their comprehension. This multimodal learning experience makes learning more meaningful and easier to remember.

The findings also support previous studies conducted by Awaliyah et al. (2025), Lestari and Ramadan (2023), and Trisnawati and Fathoni (2023), which found that interactive reading strategies, visual media, and role-playing methods positively influence students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. However, this study offers a new contribution by integrating reading, dramatization, and drawing into one structured learning strategy specifically aimed at improving sentence meaning comprehension among elementary school students.

Another important finding is the difference in student engagement between the experimental and control groups. Students in the experimental class were more active, enthusiastic, and collaborative during the learning process. This suggests that interactive learning environments can increase students' motivation and participation. Conventional learning methods, which are generally teacher-centered, tend to limit students' opportunities to explore meaning independently. As a result, students may read fluently but still experience difficulties in interpreting sentence meaning deeply.

Therefore, the BALAGAR strategy can be considered an effective and innovative learning strategy for elementary school literacy instruction. By combining reading, acting, and drawing activities, the strategy creates an enjoyable and meaningful learning atmosphere that supports students' comprehension development. The results of this study imply that teachers should apply more interactive and multimodal learning strategies to improve students' literacy achievement, especially in understanding sentence meaning at the elementary school level.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results on the third-grade students of UPT SD Negeri 006 Sosor Gonting, class IIIA used the BALAGAR strategy while class IIIB used the conventional method. The research results show that the BALAGAR strategy has a significant impact on students' ability to understand the meaning of sentences. The average score of the experimental group increased from 67.65 on the pretest to 90.59 on the posttest with a high N-Gain value of 0.7216. The paired sample t-test results also showed a significance of 0.000 (<0.05), indicating a significant improvement in ability after the implementation of the BALAGAR strategy. The activity and responses of the students during the learning process were also in the very good category.

The comparison of learning outcomes between the experimental and control groups shows a very significant difference. The experimental group achieved a posttest score of 90.59 with a gain of 22.94 and an N-Gain of 0.7216 (high category), while the control group achieved a posttest score of 40.56 with a gain of -5.56 and an N-Gain of -0.3068 (low category). The results of the independent sample t-test showed a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05) with a posttest mean difference of 50.033 points. Thus, the BALAGAR strategy has proven to be more effective than the conventional method in improving students' understanding of sentence meaning.

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