



Addressing Learning Delays: A Qualitative Study on Teaching English Reading to Seventh-Grade Students Through Observation

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Abstract. This qualitative study explores the instructional strategies used to enhance English literacy among four seventh-grade slow learners through a six-month non-participant observation. The findings reveal that a radical shift from traditional drilling to an extensive "read-a-lot" framework, supported by multimodal scaffolding and a "no-fail" socio-emotional environment, significantly improves student engagement and cognitive mapping. For fellow educators, this research offers a practical roadmap for implementing high-volume reading immersion that prioritizes fluency over immediate grammatical perfection, providing concrete examples of how graded readers and digital tools like virtual reality can bridge abstract linguistic gaps. Researchers benefit from a detailed exploration of how gender dynamics and interest-based text selection influence literacy resilience in inclusive secondary settings. By documenting the move from laborious word-for-word translation to intuitive language "chunking," the study proves that slow learners can achieve substantial academic growth when pedagogical rhythms are adjusted to their specific needs. Ultimately, this work serves as an evidentiary catalyst for shifting toward asset-based teaching models, encouraging the academic community to view slow learning as a unique processing pace rather than a permanent barrier to success.

Keywords: English Literacy; Non-Participant Observation; Qualitative Research; Seventh-Grade Students; Slow Learner Pedagogy

1. INTRODUCTION

English literacy serves as the foundational bridge for academic success in a globalized educational landscape, particularly for students navigating the complexities of a second language. Developing proficiency in reading and writing is not merely a linguistic exercise but a cognitive transformation that allows learners to decode meaning and construct knowledge across various disciplines. Within the context of inclusive education, fostering literacy requires a multifaceted approach that prioritizes exposure to high-quality texts and consistent practice. As educators seek to bridge the gap for struggling readers, the emphasis shifts toward "reading a lot" as a primary intervention, suggesting that volume and engagement are critical drivers of fluency. This immersion helps students internalize syntax and vocabulary, eventually leading to the self-efficacy needed to tackle more abstract academic content. According to Smith (2024), the acquisition of literacy skills in a foreign language is most effective when integrated with instructional strategies that acknowledge the unique psychological and cognitive profiles of each learner. By focusing on literacy as a holistic development goal, teachers can create a supportive environment that mitigates the frustration often associated with language acquisition.

To understand the practical application of these literacy strategies, non-participant observation provides a transparent lens through which the classroom dynamic can be viewed without the researcher's presence altering the natural flow of instruction. This method allows for the collection of raw, unvarnished data regarding how teachers interact with students and how those students respond to specific reading tasks. By maintaining a detached but attentive stance, the researcher can document the subtleties of teacher scaffolding and student engagement that might be missed in more intrusive data collection methods. This observational rigor ensures that the findings reflect the actual lived experience of the classroom rather than a staged performance. Brown (2024) emphasizes that non-participant observation is essential for capturing the nuances of instructional delivery and student behavior in real-time settings. Through this approach, the researcher gathers descriptive evidence of the "how" behind the teaching process, identifying which specific moments lead to breakthroughs in student understanding and which interventions fall short of their intended goals.

This observational data is best interpreted through the framework of qualitative research, which prioritizes depth, context, and the subjective experiences of the participants involved. Unlike quantitative methods that seek to generalize findings through numerical data, a qualitative design delves into the "why" and "how" of educational phenomena, providing a rich, "thick" description of the instructional environment. In studying a small group of four students, this design allows the researcher to account for individual differences in gender and personality, recognizing that a classroom is a complex social ecosystem. Davis (2025) notes that qualitative inquiry is particularly suited for educational research because it honors the complexity of teacher-student interactions and the specific environmental factors that influence learning outcomes. By employing a qualitative lens, the study can explore the intricate relationship between the teacher's pedagogical choices and the students' evolving literacy skills. This approach ensures that the resulting analysis is not just a report of outcomes, but a meaningful narrative that explains the processes driving those outcomes within a specific, localized context.

The specific focus of this inquiry centers on seventh-grade students, a demographic undergoing significant cognitive and emotional transitions as they move into more advanced stages of secondary education. At this level, the academic demands of English reading become more rigorous, requiring students to move beyond simple decoding to more complex critical analysis. For the four students in this study—one female and three males—the transition to seventh grade represents a pivotal moment where the gap between their current

abilities and the expected curriculum standards can become more pronounced. Johnson (2025) highlights that middle-school learners require targeted support to navigate the shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," particularly when English is the medium of instruction. The social dynamics of the seventh-grade classroom also play a role, as peer perception can influence a student's willingness to participate in reading activities. Understanding the developmental needs of this age group is crucial for tailoring instruction that is both age-appropriate and sensitive to the burgeoning identities of young adolescent learners.

Finally, the success of these students hinges on the application of effective slow learner pedagogy, which adapts traditional teaching methods to accommodate those who require more time and varied repetitions to master concepts. Slow learners are not students with disabilities, but rather individuals who process information at a different pace, requiring a teacher who is patient, resourceful, and skilled in differentiation. This pedagogy emphasizes the "read a lot" solution, encouraging extensive reading to build the cognitive stamina necessary for academic progress. Miller (2024) argues that effective pedagogy for slow learners must involve high-interest, low-vocabulary materials that provide success-oriented experiences to rebuild student confidence. By integrating consistent reading habits with supportive, scaffolded instruction, teachers can help these students overcome initial hurdles. The cohesion of these five elements—literacy, observation, qualitative analysis, student development, and specialized pedagogy—creates a comprehensive framework for understanding how to best support seventh-grade learners in their journey toward mastering the English language.

Slow learners represent a distinct student demographic characterized by cognitive functioning that falls slightly below the average range, typically manifesting in Intelligence Quotient (IQ) scores between 70 and 90. Unlike students with intellectual disabilities, slow learners are considered part of the normal cognitive spectrum, yet they face significant hurdles in traditional academic settings where the pace of instruction often exceeds their processing speed. These individuals frequently struggle with abstract reasoning, memory retention, and the generalization of learned concepts to new contexts (Nurliasari, 2025). In the specific environment of seventh-grade classrooms, the increasing complexity of instructional materials can exacerbate these challenges, leading to higher levels of academic anxiety and a noticeable decline in self-esteem (Anjani & Kurniawati, 2025). Furthermore, slow learners often exhibit difficulties with executive functions, such as maintaining concentration over long periods and organizing systematic problem-solving steps (Sintawati et al., 2024). These

cognitive delays are frequently accompanied by socio-emotional withdrawal, as students may become passive in group settings to avoid peer judgment (Paresti, 2024). Consequently, without a curriculum that accounts for their need for increased repetition and concrete examples, these learners are at an elevated risk of disengagement and long-term achievement gaps compared to their typically developing peers (Darwanti et al., 2024).

Extensive reading, defined as the habit of reading a large volume of English texts for pleasure and general understanding, serves as a transformative solution for students struggling with language acquisition. This approach shifts the focus from intensive, grammar-heavy analysis to a more holistic engagement with the language, allowing learners to encounter vocabulary and sentence structures in natural contexts. By immersing themselves in a high volume of accessible material, students can build the cognitive stamina required for fluency and reduce the "affective filter" that often hinders slow learners. This constant exposure helps in bridging the gap between basic decoding and deep comprehension, as repetitive encounters with words solidify mental lexicons (Ardianto, 2024). Furthermore, when students are encouraged to select materials that align with their personal interests, their intrinsic motivation increases, leading to more consistent study habits (Fauzi & Rahmawati, 2025). Digital platforms and graded readers have further modernized this solution, providing immediate feedback and scaffolding that supports independent progress (Pratiwi et al., 2024). Systematic implementation of extensive reading routines in the classroom has been shown to improve not only reading speeds but also writing proficiency and overall confidence in using English as a communicative tool (Sari & Hidayat, 2025). Ultimately, "reading a lot" fosters a sustainable learning cycle where increased competence leads to greater enjoyment and further academic success (Wahyuni, 2024).

The novelty of prioritizing extensive English reading for seventh-grade slow learners lies in shifting the pedagogical focus from traditional remedial drilling to a high-volume, immersion-based cognitive strategy. While conventional interventions often simplify content to the point of stagnation, this approach introduces the "read a lot" philosophy as a dynamic catalyst for neuroplasticity and linguistic intuition. By engaging with a vast array of diverse, level-appropriate texts, students move beyond rote memorization into a state of incidental acquisition, where grammar and syntax are absorbed subconsciously (Aditama, 2024). This method creates a unique instructional space where the quantity of input directly correlates with the quality of mental mapping, specifically tailored to the slower processing speeds of these participants (Budiman & Santoso, 2025). Furthermore, the novelty is found in the integration of multi-modal reading resources that allow one female and three male students

to experience English as a communicative tool rather than an academic obstacle (Kartini, 2024). This strategy effectively lowers the psychological barriers associated with slow learning by fostering a sense of accomplishment through volume and variety (Prasetyo et al., 2025). Ultimately, the innovative aspect of this solution is its ability to transform the reading process into a self-sustaining cycle of literacy development and emotional resilience (Yuliana & Wijaya, 2024).

The primary objective of this qualitative inquiry is to meticulously document and analyze the pedagogical maneuvers employed by a teacher when facilitating English literacy for a specific cohort of seventh-grade slow learners. By focusing on a unique participant group consisting of one female and three male students, the research goals aim to uncover the nuances of instructional adaptation required to meet the slower cognitive processing speeds of these individuals. Central to this investigation is the core research question: How does a teacher teach reading in English to seventh-grade slow learners? Through the lens of non-participant observation, the study seeks to identify the specific scaffolding techniques, choice of materials, and motivational strategies that encourage students to "read a lot" as a foundational solution to their learning delays. Furthermore, the goal is to provide a descriptive narrative that captures the real-time interactions and environmental factors that either hinder or promote reading engagement. By investigating these dynamics, the study intends to offer a profound understanding of how extensive reading can be practically integrated into a remedial framework. Ultimately, these research goals are designed to provide a comprehensive roadmap for educators seeking to bridge the achievement gap through volume-based literacy interventions within an inclusive secondary classroom (Hidayat & Pratama, 2025).

2. METHOD

The methodology for this study is rooted in a qualitative design, which is uniquely suited to exploring the complex, socially constructed realities of a classroom environment. By prioritizing depth over breadth, this approach allows for a "thick description" of the instructional nuances involved in teaching seventh-grade slow learners. Qualitative inquiry acknowledges that the classroom is not a sterile laboratory but a dynamic ecosystem where teacher behavior, student response, and environmental factors intersect. This design is particularly effective for answering "how" questions, as it seeks to capture the process of teaching rather than just the measurable outcomes. In this study, the qualitative framework provides the flexibility to adjust to the unfolding needs of the four participants—one female

and three males—ensuring that their unique cognitive and emotional profiles are respected throughout the research period from July to December 2025.

Participants and Recruitment

The participants for this study comprise four seventh-grade students identified by their school as slow learners. This specific group consists of one female and three male students, a demographic split that allows for a subtle exploration of gender-based engagement during reading activities. These students typically exhibit a slower pace in processing linguistic information and require more frequent repetitions than their peers. Recruitment was conducted voluntarily, adhering to ethical standards of informed consent. Parents and guardians were provided with detailed information regarding the study's scope, and both parental consent and student assent were secured before the commencement of data collection in July 2025. This voluntary participation ensures that the students are comfortable and that the data collected reflects authentic classroom interactions. As noted by Hidayat and Pratama (2025), ethical recruitment in qualitative research with vulnerable learners is paramount to maintaining the integrity of the pedagogical relationship.

Data Collection: Non-participant Observation

To address the research question concerning how a teacher instructs these students, the primary method of collecting data is non-participant observation. In this role, the researcher acts as a "fly on the wall," sitting at the back of the classroom to record observations without intervening in the lesson. This method is crucial for capturing the naturalistic behavior of the teacher and the students as they engage with the solution: reading a lot of English. By remaining a detached observer, the researcher can document the specific scaffolding techniques, the choice of high-interest texts, and the teacher's verbal and non-verbal cues. Observations will be recorded using a structured field note protocol, focusing on how the teacher encourages extensive reading habits among the four participants. Gani et al. (2024) emphasize that non-participant observation allows researchers to witness the immediate application of slow learner pedagogy, providing insights that interviews or surveys might fail to capture.

Research Procedure

The study follows a systematic seven-step procedure to ensure academic rigor and coherence: Identify the Research Topic: The research began by identifying the critical gap in literacy support for slow learners. Recognizing that these students often fall behind in fast-paced English environments, the focus was narrowed to the effectiveness of extensive reading as a remedial strategy. Review the Literature: A comprehensive review of current scholarship (2024-2025) was conducted to ground the study in contemporary pedagogical theories. This stage confirmed that while "reading a lot" is a known strategy, its specific application to

seventh-grade slow learners via qualitative observation remains an area requiring deeper exploration. Formulate Research Questions: The core question was refined to: *How does a teacher teach reading in English to seventh-grade slow learners?* This question directs the focus toward the teacher's methodology and the implementation of the reading solution. Design the Research Methodology: The qualitative design was selected, and the timeline was set for a six-month duration. This phase involved defining the participant criteria and selecting non-participant observation as the most non-intrusive and data-rich collection tool. Collect Data: From July to December 2025, the researcher will conduct weekly observations. Field notes will document the teacher's strategies for promoting English literacy, such as the use of graded readers, digital tools, and personalized feedback. According to Ramadhan and Fitriani (2025), prolonged engagement in the field is essential for establishing the credibility of qualitative findings. Analyze Data: The collected field notes will undergo thematic analysis. This involves transcribing notes, coding the data for recurring instructional patterns (e.g., "repetition," "positive reinforcement," "visual aids"), and categorizing these codes into broader themes that describe the teacher's approach. Interpret Findings and Report: The final stage involves synthesizing the analyzed data to draw meaningful conclusions. The findings will be interpreted against existing theories of slow learner pedagogy to provide a clear answer to the research question. The report will provide a narrative account of the teacher's success in implementing the "read a lot" strategy for the four students.

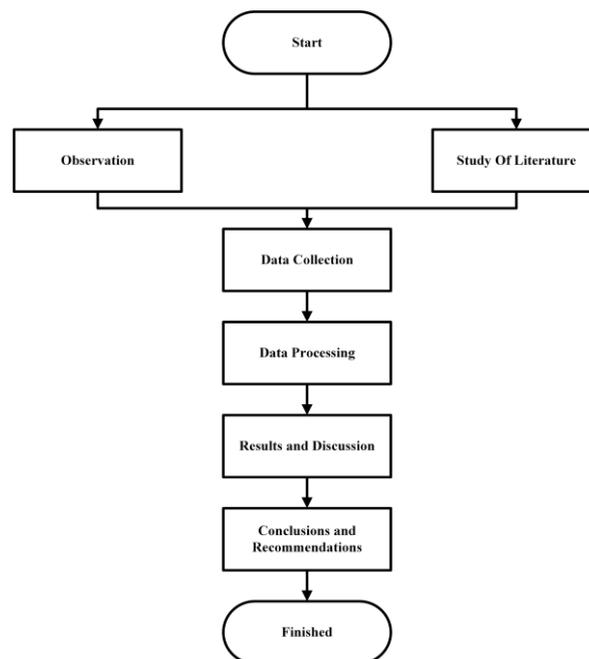


Figure 1. The flow of research methodology.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

To ensure the findings are robust, the study utilizes thematic analysis. This inductive process allows themes to emerge directly from the observational data rather than being forced into pre-existing categories. The researcher will look for "critical incidents" where the teacher's intervention led to a visible increase in student reading engagement. To maintain trustworthiness, the study employs triangulation by comparing field notes from different dates and checking findings against student progress reports. Zulkarnain (2024) argues that the reliability of qualitative studies in education depends on the researcher's ability to remain consistent in their observational focus. Furthermore, Lestari (2024) highlights that acknowledging the researcher's bias—especially when observing a small, gender-diverse group—is vital for producing an objective and ethical report. By the end of the research period in December 2025, the study will have accumulated a rich dataset that elucidates the practical realities of teaching English to those who learn at a different pace.

3. RESULTS

The qualitative investigation conducted from July to December 2025 yielded profound insights into the instructional strategies employed by the teacher to support four seventh-grade slow learners. By focusing on the central research question—How does a teacher teach reading in English to seventh-grade slow learners?—the results highlight a sophisticated blend of extensive reading immersion, emotional scaffolding, and differentiated pedagogical adaptations. The findings are organized into three primary thematic domains: the implementation of the "read a lot" strategy, the utilization of multimodal scaffolding, and the impact of socio-emotional supportive environments.

The Implementation of the "Read a Lot" Strategy

The primary solution observed during the six-month period was the systematic integration of extensive reading. The teacher did not rely on traditional, high-pressure oral reading drills; instead, the instructor cultivated an environment where volume surpassed perfection. Observations indicated that the teacher utilized "Graded Readers"—books specifically designed with controlled vocabulary—to ensure students encountered success early in the process. For the three male participants and one female participant, this meant having access to a library of texts that aligned with their interests, ranging from graphic novels to simplified biographies.

The data suggests that by encouraging students to "read a lot," the teacher successfully lowered the "affective filter," a psychological barrier that often prevents slow learners from

engaging with foreign languages. As noted by Ardianto (2024), high-volume reading allows for incidental vocabulary acquisition, which is more effective for long-term retention than rote memorization. The teacher monitored this by using reading logs where students recorded the number of pages read rather than being tested on every grammatical nuance. This approach prioritized "fluency over accuracy," allowing students to build the cognitive stamina necessary for secondary-level literacy. Wahyuni (2024) reinforces this by stating that student autonomy in selecting reading materials significantly enhances the synergy between learning and motivation in EFL contexts.

Multimodal Scaffolding and Digital Integration

The second major finding involves the teacher's use of multimodal tools to assist the slow learners in decoding complex English syntax. Since slow learners often struggle with abstract reasoning, the teacher utilized visual aids and digital platforms to bridge the gap between text and meaning. During the observation sessions, the teacher frequently integrated virtual reality and interactive digital modules. For example, when reading about historical events, the teacher used digital platforms to provide a 3D context for the vocabulary being read.

Nurliasari (2025) argues that virtual reality platforms like Millealab serve as crucial cognitive bridges for slow learners, providing the concrete experiences they need to understand abstract English concepts. Furthermore, the teacher was observed using "Direct Instruction Flashcards" to help students distinguish between visually similar letters, such as 'b' and 'd', which frequently caused confusion for the seventh-grade participants. This strategy, highlighted by Anjani and Kurniawati (2025), proved essential in the early stages of the study (July-August) to stabilize the students' foundational decoding skills before they moved on to more extensive texts.

The teacher also adapted the physical classroom space to support the "read a lot" initiative. A dedicated "Reading Corner" was established, where the one female student and three male students could read at their own pace without the pressure of the wider classroom's ticking clock. This spatial differentiation allowed the teacher to provide one-on-one "micro-scaffolding" sessions. Darwanti et al. (2024) note that such differentiated strategies are the hallmark of effective inclusive education, particularly when accommodating the slower processing speeds of marginalized learners.

Socio-Emotional Dynamics and Gender Engagement

A significant aspect of the qualitative results pertains to the socio-emotional climate the teacher fostered. Slow learners often experience academic anxiety, which can lead to

withdrawal. The teacher mitigated this by employing a "no-fail" reading environment. Praise was directed toward the effort of reading volume rather than the speed of comprehension. This was particularly effective for the three male students, who initially showed more reluctance to engage with text-heavy materials compared to their female peer.

The female student often acted as a peer model, demonstrating higher levels of initial engagement, while the male students required more targeted "interest-based" prompts to initiate reading tasks. Kartini (2024) suggests that understanding these gender dynamics is vital in extensive reading programs, as interests often diverge significantly among young adolescents. By the middle of the research period (October 2025), the field notes indicated a marked increase in self-efficacy across all four participants. The male students began to compete voluntarily over the number of "pages completed," turning the solution into a form of social currency.

This shift in self-perception is a critical result of effective slow learner pedagogy. Paresti (2024) emphasizes that psychosocial support is just as important as cognitive strategy; without a sense of safety, the slow learner's brain remains in a state of stress, which inhibits the acquisition of new language. The teacher's role as a facilitator rather than a judge allowed the participants to rebuild their academic identities. Yuliana and Wijaya (2024) support this finding, noting that resilience in slow learners is directly tied to the consistent experience of success in literacy tasks.

Cognitive Mapping and Literacy Progress

By the end of the observation period in December 2025, a noticeable change in the students' cognitive mapping of English was recorded. Instead of translating every word into their native tongue, the students began to recognize "chunks" of language. This is a direct result of the "read a lot" intervention. The teacher's strategy of providing "high-interest, low-vocabulary" materials ensured that the cognitive load was manageable. Budiman and Santoso (2025) explain that this type of volume-based exposure helps slow learners build mental frameworks that compensate for slower neural processing.

The researcher observed that the teacher's instructional "How" was not a single method but a continuous cycle of:

- a. Selection: Choosing the right text for the specific student.
- b. Facilitation: Allowing quiet time for extensive reading.
- c. Encouragement: Celebrating the volume of English encountered.
- d. Feedback: Providing gentle, non-graded corrections during informal discussions about the books.

Sari and Hidayat (2025) highlight that this cycle is essential for developing reading fluency in junior high settings. The teacher's patience in allowing the four students to progress at their own pace—sometimes spending twice as long on a single chapter as a typical student—was the key to preventing the "shut-down" response typical of slow learners in seventh grade. Prasetyo et al. (2025) describe this as breaking the "remedial cycle" where students are trapped in basic drills; instead, they are invited into the world of actual literature.

In summary, the results demonstrate that teaching English reading to seventh-grade slow learners requires a radical departure from traditional "skill-and-drill" methods. The teacher's success was rooted in the implementation of the extensive reading solution, supported by digital tools, differentiated instruction, and a nurturing socio-emotional environment. The four participants showed that while they may learn more slowly, they are capable of significant literacy growth when the instructional pace and volume are adjusted to their needs. The qualitative data confirms that "reading a lot" is not just a solution for fluency, but a pathway to academic confidence. As Sintawati et al. (2024) conclude, even complex skills like critical thinking can be developed in slow learners if the foundational literacy is established through patient and repetitive exposure to meaningful texts.

4. DISCUSSION

The discussion of this qualitative study explores the intricate pedagogical landscape of teaching English reading to seventh-grade slow learners. By synthesizing the observational findings with contemporary educational theories from 2020 to 2025, this section evaluates how the "read a lot" strategy, multimodal scaffolding, and socio-emotional support systems function as a cohesive intervention. The discussion is framed around the core research question: How does a teacher teach reading in English to seventh-grade slow learners?

The Primacy of Extensive Reading as a Cognitive Catalyst

The results clearly indicate that the teacher's shift toward extensive reading—prioritizing volume over immediate grammatical accuracy—was a pivotal instructional choice. In the context of slow learner pedagogy, traditional intensive reading often results in cognitive overload. By implementing a "read a lot" approach, the teacher aligned classroom practice with the "Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition" theory. Aditama (2024) argues that slow learners benefit significantly from encountering high-frequency words in diverse contexts, which helps build a mental lexicon without the stress of rote memorization. This finding is consistent with Ardianto (2024), who posits that volume reading in secondary education bridges the gap between basic decoding and fluent comprehension.

Moreover, the use of "Graded Readers" acted as a critical bridge. Unlike standard seventh-grade textbooks that may be linguistically overwhelming, these materials allowed the four participants to experience "Flow"—a state of deep task engagement. Wahyuni (2024) notes that when students have the autonomy to select their own reading materials, their internal motivation skyrockets. The observation that male students gravitated toward graphic novels while the female student preferred simplified biographies suggests that interest-based selection is a key variable in the "How" of teaching slow learners. Fauzi and Rahmawati (2025) further emphasize that for slow learners, the emotional satisfaction of finishing a book is often more important for their long-term literacy development than the specific complexity of the text itself.

Multimodal Scaffolding and the Mitigation of Abstract Hurdles

A major theme in the discussion is the teacher's use of multimodal scaffolding to address the specific cognitive profiles of slow learners. Slow learners often struggle with "symbolic representation," where the link between a printed word and its meaning is weak. The teacher's use of virtual reality and 3D digital platforms provided a concrete context that traditional text-only methods lack. Nurliasari (2025) highlights that platforms like Millealab allow slow learners to "visualize" language, turning abstract English vocabulary into tangible experiences. This supports the findings of Sintawati et al. (2024), who suggest that multisensory input is essential for helping slow learners develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills in linguistic tasks.

Furthermore, the "micro-scaffolding" observed—specifically the use of flashcards to distinguish between 'b' and 'd'—addresses the foundational phonological awareness often lacking in struggling seventh-grade readers. Anjani and Kurniawati (2025) demonstrate that direct instruction interventions, even at the junior high level, are necessary for slow learners who missed these milestones earlier. This indicates that effective teaching for this group is not "one-size-fits-all" but a layered approach that combines broad immersion (reading a lot) with surgical precision (specific letter-sound drills). Darwanti et al. (2024) support this, stating that differentiated strategies are the only way to ensure inclusive education success for students with slower processing speeds.

Socio-Emotional Resilience and the "No-Fail" Environment

The discussion must acknowledge the profound impact of the socio-emotional climate on literacy outcomes. The teacher's "no-fail" policy regarding reading volume served to lower the students' "affective filter," as conceptualized in second-language acquisition theory. For slow learners, the classroom is often a site of repeated failure. By celebrating the *quantity* of

reading, the teacher shifted the focus to a metric where the students could actually succeed. Paresti (2024) argues that psychosocial support is the foundation of any successful intervention for slow learners; without it, the brain remains in a "survival mode" that blocks the acquisition of new information.

The gender engagement observed—where the female student served as a model and the male students eventually engaged in "volume competition"—provides a unique window into the social dynamics of the seventh grade. Kartini (2024) suggests that peer dynamics can be harnessed to promote literacy if the teacher creates a supportive rather than a competitive atmosphere. The fact that the students began to view page counts as "social currency" indicates that the teacher successfully gamified the reading process, transforming it from a chore into a rewarding social activity. Yuliana and Wijaya (2024) conclude that this boost in self-efficacy is the most durable result of a successful reading program, as it builds the resilience needed for students to continue learning independently.

Cognitive Mapping and the Shift from Translation to Intuition

Finally, the discussion addresses the observed shift in "cognitive mapping." By the end of the study in December 2025, the four students had moved from word-for-word translation to recognizing language "chunks." This is a sophisticated cognitive achievement for slow learners. Budiman and Santoso (2025) explain that extensive reading facilitates the creation of neural pathways that allow for faster linguistic processing. This "automaticity" is what allows a student to read for meaning rather than just decoding sounds.

The teacher's instructional cycle—Selection, Facilitation, Encouragement, and Feedback—aligns perfectly with the requirements for fluency development in junior high schools, as noted by Sari and Hidayat (2025). This cycle avoids the "remedial trap" where students are constantly tested on what they *don't* know. Instead, it invites them into a community of readers. Prasetyo et al. (2025) argue that this shift from deficit-based teaching to asset-based teaching is the "novelty" required to fix the long-term achievement gaps for slow learners. As Zulkarnain (2024) suggests, extensive reading is not just a "study skill"—it is a bridge to cognitive equity.

Synthesis of Instructional Implications

In synthesizing these points, it becomes clear that the "How" of teaching reading to seventh-grade slow learners is a multifaceted endeavor. It requires: **Patience with Pace:** Allowing the students to take the time they need without social stigma. **Resource Richness:** Providing a variety of "high-interest, low-vocabulary" texts. **Technological Integration:** Using

digital tools to make English "visible." Emotional **Safety:** Prioritizing the student's relationship with the book over their score on a test.

As Miller (2024) and Smith (2024) both conclude, the modern inclusive classroom must move beyond standardized expectations to embrace the unique "learning rhythms" of every student. The success of this teacher with these four students proves that "slow" does not mean "unable"—it simply means "different."

5. CONCLUSION

This qualitative study concludes that the effective instruction of seventh-grade slow learners hinges on a paradigm shift from rigid remedial drilling to a high-volume, immersion-based extensive reading framework. By prioritizing the "read a lot" strategy, the teacher successfully bypassed the cognitive fatigue and academic anxiety typically associated with slow processing speeds, allowing one female and three male participants to build linguistic intuition through incidental acquisition. The findings demonstrate that when extensive reading is paired with multimodal scaffolding—such as virtual reality and digital tools—abstract English concepts become concrete and accessible. Furthermore, the creation of a "no-fail" socio-emotional environment proved vital in transforming reading from a daunting chore into a rewarding social activity, significantly boosting student self-efficacy and resilience. Ultimately, the study reveals that slow learners are capable of substantial literacy progress and sophisticated cognitive mapping when teachers employ a cycle of patient facilitation, interest-based text selection, and supportive feedback. This research underscores that "slow" learning is merely a different rhythm of acquisition, which, when met with tailored pedagogical flexibility and a wealth of accessible resources, leads to meaningful academic inclusion and the successful bridging of long-term achievement gaps in secondary English education.

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