

## LITERACY BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF VOICE, CHOICE, AND OWNERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN LITERACY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of a literacy program grounded in the principles of voice, choice, and ownership to strengthen literacy among 4th-grade students at SD Negeri Kepanjen 2 Jombang. The study used a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design, involving 32 students as quantitative respondents and 11 qualitative informants. Data collection techniques include literacy tests, participatory observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired sample t-test, while qualitative data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The study found that program planning involves students in the needs analysis: 78 percent want a choice of books, and 82 percent are interested in creating literacy products. The program's implementation includes morning literacy, reading circles, writing workshops, and wall magazine projects, with high participation rates (76-92 percent). The impact of the implementation showed a significant increase in reading ability from 65 to 85 (31 percent), and in writing, from 58 percent to 88 percent of students were able to write structured paragraphs. Reading interest increased from 1.2 to 3.5 books per week. There was an increase in students' confidence, responsibility, creativity, and collaborative abilities, indicating that voice, choice, and ownership literacy programs were effective in improving students' literacy and social-emotional competence.

Keywords: literacy, voice, choice, ownership, elementary school

### INTRODUCTION

Literacy skills are an important foundation for elementary school students and determine their success in accessing various fields of knowledge at the next level of education. Reading and writing skills are not just the technical ability to spell letters or arrange words; they are also a means for students to understand information, express ideas, and actively participate in social life. In grade 4, elementary school students' mastery of literacy is crucial because at this stage, they shift from learning to read to learning to read, encountering increasingly complex texts and requiring a deeper understanding. Indonesia's literacy condition to date still faces various challenges that require serious attention. The results of international studies such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) show that Indonesian students' reading ability remains below the average of other countries. This problem is not only about technical reading skills but also about understanding critical reading and using the information read for various purposes.

SD Negeri Kepanjen 2 Jombang, like other basic education institutions, also faces challenges in improving students' literacy. Early observations show that most 4th graders still have difficulty understanding complex reading and experience obstacles when asked to express their thoughts in writing. Literacy learning carried out so far tends to be conventional, with an approach that positions students as passive recipients of information from teachers. Students are rarely allowed to express their opinions about the readings they have completed or to choose reading materials that suit their interests, which contributes to their low motivation for reading and writing. Various studies show that learning approaches that place students as active subjects

in the learning process can increase students' interest, engagement, and literacy skills. The approach based on the principles of voice, choice, and ownership offers a promising alternative to overcome literacy problems in elementary schools.

The principle of voice provides students with space to express their opinions, ideas, and responses in various literacy tasks, such as group discussions or writing responses. (Ayunda et al., 2023). The principle of choice gives students the freedom to choose the reading topic they are interested in or the assignment form they prefer, thereby increasing their interest and participation in the learning process. The principle of ownership instills a sense of ownership in students for the tasks or projects they are working on, such as creating their own booklets or videos, thereby increasing their interest in learning and their sense of responsibility. (Ayunda et al., 2023; Hamidi et al., 2023; Maylitha et al., 2023). Implementing literacy programs based on the principles of voice, choice, and ownership requires careful planning to ensure they run effectively and have an optimal impact on strengthening students' literacy. This study aims to describe the implementation of literacy programs grounded in the principles of voice, choice, and ownership to strengthen literacy among 4th-grade students at SD Negeri Kepanjen 2 Jombang by examining program planning, implementation, and impact. (Hamidi et al., 2023; Maylitha et al., 2023; Vito et al., 2025).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Literacy in Elementary School

The School Literacy Movement (GLS) and the National Literacy Movement (GLN) constitute a broad framework that positions literacy as the foundation for all other forms of literacy and 21st-century life competencies that elementary school students must possess. (Asrul et al., 2023; Sholikhah et al., 2023). Literacy is defined as the knowledge and skills to read, write, search, process, and understand information to analyze, respond to, and use written text for personal and social purposes. (Qori & Rohana, 2023; Rifai et al., 2022). At the elementary school level, literacy is the foundation for learning all subjects and the main buffer for building a society with a literacy culture. (Sholikhah et al., 2023).

The development of literacy in elementary school is divided into three stages, namely the habituation stage that focuses on fostering interest and reading habits, the development stage that deepens reading and writing comprehension and skills with various methods, and the learning stage that integrates literacy into all subjects (Rofiq & Septian, 2025). Grade 4 elementary school students are generally able to read narrative and informative texts fluently, but a deep understanding, such as summarizing, grading, and critiquing, is still weak for many students. (Qori & Rohana, 2023). The challenges of literacy in Indonesia include low reading culture and interest in reading, limited reading facilities and materials, and teacher competence that still needs strengthening for inclusive and positive literacy teaching. (Asrul et al., 2023; Muthia & Pratiwi, 2024; Rohim & Rahmawati, 2020)

### Principles of Voice, Choice, and Ownership in Literacy Learning

Literacy in elementary school can be situated within a sociocultural framework that views literacy as a socio-cultural practice that shapes and is shaped by students' identity, power, and participation, where voice, choice, and ownership are the main ways to give students agency in reading and writing. (Cook)-Sather, 2020; Forsling & Tjernberg, 2023; Galloway, 2023). The principle of voice is understood as the quality of language and language practice that reflects the author's choices, identity, perspectives, and social positions, and can be taught as a lens for understanding the processes of reading, writing, and learning.

The principle of choice in literacy learning is the provision of space for students to choose texts, assignments, ways of working, or product forms within the limits set by the teacher related to independence and intrinsic motivation (Conner et al., 2024). The principle of

ownership refers to the sense that learning belongs to students, where they feel they have a share in, control over, and responsibility for the learning goals, processes, and products (Galloway, 2023; Proctor et al., 2021; Saputra et al., 2024).

### Implementation of Voice, Choice, and Ownership-Based Literacy Programs

The implementation of literacy programs in elementary schools can be placed in the framework of the School Literacy Movement (GLS), which consists of a stage of habituation, development, and learning enriched by the principle of student agency, where students are positioned not only as the object of the program but as subjects who have a voice, choice, and ownership of literacy activities. (Burhan et al., 2020; Rohim & Rahmawati, 2020; Scott, 2020). Program planning is prepared through a context and needs analysis, involving students in mapping needs and activity ideas, determining literacy achievement goals that align with GLS goals, designing GLS three-stage activities with reading choices and methods, and collaborating across school, home, and community ecosystems to strengthen sustainability. (Merawati, 2023; Rochaendi et al., 2025; Safiah et al., 2025; Yasmin et al., 2025). The implementation of literacy programs in elementary schools is carried out in stages starting from the habituation stage with the provision of libraries and reading corners as well as reading activities 10-15 minutes before lessons, the development stage with library visits and writing or storytelling competitions, to the learning stage with the integration of literacy into all subjects through discussions, presentations, and written reflections. (Dasan, 2025; Scott, 2020).

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design, carried out at SD Negeri Kepanjen 2 Jombang for 12 weeks (October-December 2025). The quantitative method measures literacy improvement through tests, while the qualitative method explores the implementation of the principles of voice, choice, and ownership. The subjects of the study were 32 4th-grade students who met the following criteria: followed the full program, attended at least 80%, and were willing to participate with parental consent. Qualitative informants were selected by 6 students, 1 4th-grade teacher, 1 principal, and 3 parents.

Data collection was conducted using four techniques. First, the literacy test, in the form of a pre-test and post-test, includes 15 multiple-choice questions, 5 reading comprehension questions, and a writing paragraph task, with an assessment rubric on a scale of 1-100. Second, participatory observation of six literacy activities using a checklist with voice, choice, ownership, and enthusiasm indicators, where the percentage of participation is calculated from the number of active students divided by the total number of students. Third, semi-structured interviews with students about the experience of choosing books and sharing opinions, teachers about implementation strategies, principals about policies and monitoring, and parents about family literacy involvement were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Fourth, documentation in the form of a portfolio of written works, reading journals, photos of activities, wall magazines, and lesson plans.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests to test the differences between pre-test and post-test with participation categories: very low (<60%), low (60-69%), medium (70-79%), high (80-89%), and very high ( $\geq 90\%$ ). Qualitative data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, through the triangulation of sources and methods to enhance data credibility.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Voice, Choice, and Ownership Based on Literacy Program Planning

Literacy program planning at SD Negeri Kepanjen 2 Jombang is carried out in stages, involving various stakeholders, with an approach that positions students as active agents in the

learning process. The needs analysis conducted by the school literacy team identified the main problems: low student reading comprehension, which reached only 62% of the curriculum target, and a lack of active student involvement in literacy activities.

The principal explained that “we realize that the conventional approach that has been applied so far has not been optimal in increasing students’ interest in reading, so it is necessary to make a breakthrough involving students in literacy programs.” The planning process involved students through a class discussion forum in the first week of October 2025, during which students reported that 78 percent wanted more choices in selecting reading books and 82 percent were interested in creating literacy products such as wall magazines or group storybooks.

Student involvement in this phase of needs analysis aligns with the sociocultural framework of literacy, which views students as active agents with a voice and a right to participate in learning decisions (Cook-Sather, 2020; Parr & Hawe, 2020). Classroom discussion forums in the early stages of planning provide a space for students to express their preferences for literacy activities, in contrast to conventional program planning, which tends to be top-down and does not listen to students’ voices. The literacy team developed a program design that integrates the principle of voice through discussion and presentation activities, the principle of choice through the provision of reading corners with various genres of books, and the principle of ownership through the project of making student literacy works. Student involvement in planning reflects the implementation of the principle of student pedagogic voice, in which their opinions are genuinely addressed and influence program design (Gillett-Swan & Baroutsis, 2023). The program is designed in three stages according to the GLS framework, namely the habituation stage for the first 4 weeks, the development stage for the next 6 weeks, and the integrated learning stage until the end of the research period.

The planning component includes procuring 150 book titles with varying levels of difficulty and genres that accommodate students’ preferences. The 4th-grade teacher stated that “involving students in choosing the type of books and literacy activities makes them feel valued and more excited about the program.” This desire to accommodate students shows that student voices have real consequences, as the response to student voice is a crucial component that determines whether the practice is truly transformative or merely symbolic (Bauer et al., 2022; Tzika et al., 2020). Planning also includes rearranging the classroom reading corner by involving students in designing layouts, preparing portfolio assessment instruments, and organizing weekly activities such as reading circles every Wednesday morning and writing workshops every Friday afternoon. Collaborative planning with parents is carried out through school committee meetings, which result in an agreement on a family literacy program in which parents accompany their children to read at home for at least 15 minutes every day.

#### Implementation of Voice, Choice, and Ownership-Based Literacy Programs

The program began in the second week of October 2025 with a habituation stage that included a 15-minute morning literacy session, during which students were free to choose books from the classroom reading corner. Student participation in choosing books increased from 68 percent in the first week to 89 percent in the fourth week, indicating that the choice principle has increased student involvement. The teacher applies the “silent reading” strategy, followed by “share your favorite line,” in which each student shares one favorite sentence from their reading, providing space for students to express their voices. A student named Aisyah revealed that “I am happy because I can choose a book that I like and am not afraid to make mistakes when sharing my opinion about reading.” This activity is an effective example of providing space for student voices where each student shares a perspective on reading without fear of being judged wrong, which creates a classroom culture where each student’s voice is valued as an important foundation for developing students’ identity as critical and reflective readers (Sperling & Appleman, 2011).

The development stage, which begins in the fifth week, features a wider range of activities. The reading circle program is held every Wednesday morning, with students divided into small groups based on their interest in the reading genre: adventure stories, archipelago fairy tales, popular science, educational comics, and character biographies. The implementation of reading circles with interest-based groups demonstrates the principle of meaningful choice, as students' perceptions of choice in reading materials are positively correlated with literacy achievement (McClung et al., 2019). The discussion in the reading circle was active, with an average of 4 to 6 students contributing 4 to 6 questions or responses during the 30-minute session. The 85 percent participation in the reading circle shows that the choice offered is perceived as a "true choice" stemming from student autonomy rather than one set by the teacher (Conner et al., 2024). The reading circle structure, which places students in a facilitator role, in turn provides leadership experiences that strengthen their sense of ownership.

The classroom wall magazine project, which implements the principle of ownership, began in the eighth week, when students were divided into an editorial team comprising editors, writers, illustrators, and layout designers. Each team has autonomy to determine the theme, content, and design of their wall magazines. The 4th-grade teacher added that "through the wall magazine project, students learn to take responsibility for their tasks and work together in teams better." The wall magazine project is the most powerful manifestation of the principle of ownership, where students have complete control over the goals, processes, and products of the work. Students show high enthusiasm, with 92 percent actively contributing and completing assignments on time, indicating that when students feel they have a part to play and a sense of responsibility, they are more motivated and engaged (Galloway, 2023; Saputra et al., 2024). The resulting wall magazine featured 24 student-written articles, 16 poems, 12 original illustrations, and 8 comic strips that represented the identity and creativity of students exhibited in the school community.

The learning stage integrates literacy activities into other subjects, where in science lessons, students read science articles and write observation reports in their own language, which shows the implementation of comprehensive GLS where literacy is seen as a skill to learn in all fields rather than just a technical skill (Dasan, 2025; Sholikhah et al., 2023). The writing workshop, held every Friday afternoon, gives students the freedom to choose the type of text they write, such as short stories, poems, or informative articles. Participation in the writing workshop reached 82 percent, thanks to peer feedback sessions that allowed students to offer constructive feedback on their friends' work. The presentation of literacy works, held at the end of each month, achieved 88% participation, with students choosing their best works to be displayed in a gallery walk format. The family literacy program carried out at home achieved a consistency rate of 76 percent, with parents reporting that their children were more enthusiastic about literacy activities at home.

**Table 1. Implementation of the Principles of Voice, Choice, and Ownership in Literacy Activities**

Literacy Activities	Frequency	Voice	Choice	Ownership	Student Participation (%)
Silent Reading	Daily (15 minutes)	Share a favorite line	Choose your own book	Personal reading journal	89
Reading Circle	Weekly (30 minutes)	Opinion sharing group discussions	Choose a group based on your interests and genre.	Facilitators rotate among students	85
Writing Workshop	Weekly (45 minutes)	Peer feedback session	Select the type of text you write	Portfolio of papers	82
Classroom Wall Magazine	Monthly (2-week project)	Team editorial meetings	Choose a role in the editorial team	Teamwork products on display	92

Literacy Paper Presentation	Monthly (60 minutes)	Presentations and Q&A	Choose the best work to present	Gallery walk works	88
Family Literacy	Daily at home (15 minutes)	Stories of reading experiences	Choose a book with your parents	Family Literacy Journal	76

### The Impact of the Implementation of the Literacy Program on Literacy Ability

The implementation of the literacy program has a positive impact on the literacy ability of grade 4 students. In terms of reading ability, the assessment results showed a significant increase: the average reading comprehension score rose from 65 to 85, a 31% increase, after 12 weeks of implementation. This improvement in reading ability shows that voice, choice, and ownership-based literacy programs are effective in improving reading comprehension, as explained by motivational and self-determination theories: choice increases autonomy and intrinsic motivation, which in turn improve learning performance (Conner et al., 2024; McClung et al., 2019). When students have a choice in what they read and feel their opinions are valued, they are more engaged in the reading process. The principal emphasized that “the improvement of students’ literacy skills is quite significant, and this is evident from their enthusiasm in every literacy activity.”

Students’ writing skills also develop: at the beginning of the program, only 58 percent can write simple paragraphs with a clear structure. At the end of the program, this increases to 88 percent. Portfolio analysis showed improvements in text coherence, vocabulary variety, punctuation, and idea development. Improving writing skills aligns with findings that a literacy curriculum that focuses on students’ language and voice has a positive impact on writing skills (Proctor et al., 2021; Sperling & Appleman, 2011). Writing workshops that offer freedom of choice in text types and peer feedback sessions that provide space for voices create a supportive writing learning environment. The results of the paired-samples t-test showed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test, with  $t = 12.47$  and  $p < 0.001$ , confirming that the improvement in literacy ability was not due to chance but was a real effect of the program implementation.

**Table 2. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Literacy Ability**

Literacy Aspect	Pre-test (Mean ± SD)	Post-test (Mean ± SD)	Increase (%)	t-value	p-value
Reading Comprehension	65.3 ± 8.2	85.7 ± 6.4	31.2%	12.47	<0.001
Writing Skills	62.8 ± 9.5	83.4 ± 7.1	32.8%	11.89	<0.001
Total Literacy Score	64.1 ± 7.8	84.6 ± 6.2	32.0%	13.25	<0.001

The increase in reading interest is evident in the frequency of visits to the reading corner and the number of books read, with the average number of books per week increasing from 1.2 to 3.5. This increase in reading interest is a significant impact that reflects the program’s success in fostering intrinsic motivation (Afrida et al., 2023; Daniar & Rosdiana, 2021). The interviews revealed that 83 percent of students reported enjoying reading more because they could choose books based on their interests and share their opinions with friends, confirming that the combination of choice and voice is a powerful formula for increasing engagement. One of the students, named Rafi, stated, “Now I prefer to read because I can choose my own books and my friends listen to my opinion.” Increased motivation to learn, as evidenced by the attendance rate reaching 95 percent and by student initiatives proposing new literacy activities, such as cross-class book clubs.

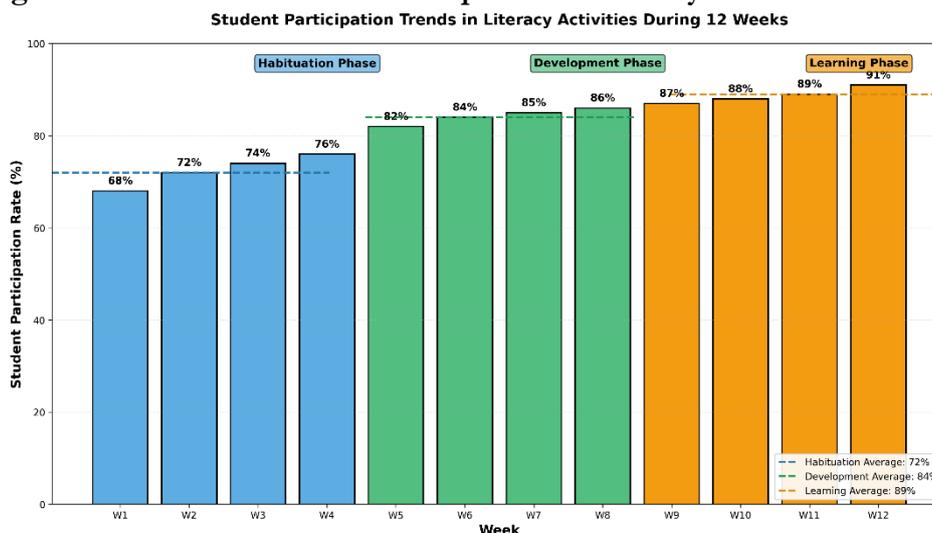
## The Impact of the Implementation of the Literacy Program on Character and Social-Emotional Competence

The impact on character can be seen in increased confidence, responsibility, and the ability to collaborate, demonstrating that literacy grounded in the three principles not only improves cognitive skills but also develops social-emotional competence. Teachers reported that students who were previously passive became more courageous in expressing their opinions in discussion forums. The increase in confidence is evident in observations that show 84 percent of students actively participate in presenting literary works, up from 45 percent previously. This improvement shows that when students are given space to express their voices in a safe environment, they develop confidence in their own abilities (Khasanah et al., 2025). The sense of responsibility increased, with a task completion rate of 91 percent compared to 67 percent before the program.

Students' creativity flourishes, as seen in the wall magazine featuring experimental poems, original comics, infographics, and literacy puzzles. Creativity that develops through the production of diverse works is evident when students have ownership over their creative process and explore new ways to express ideas (Galloway, 2023; Ruiz-Pérez, 2023). The ability to collaborate increased, as shown by the success of teamwork in the wall magazine project, where 89 percent of students contributed according to their roles and resolved conflicts through discussions. One of the students' parents said, "My son is now more confident and daring to express his opinion both at school and at home." The family literacy program also has a positive impact on parent-child relationships, with 76 percent of parents reporting that joint literacy activities became high-quality bonding moments.

Observations of student participation showed a consistent upward trend throughout the 12 weeks of program implementation. In the first to fourth weeks (habituation stage), the average participation was 72 percent, increasing to 84 percent in the fifth to eighth weeks (development stage) and peaking at 89 percent in the ninth to twelfth weeks (learning stage). This pattern of improvement indicates that students need time to adapt to new approaches that give them more autonomy and responsibility. These findings align with research indicating that implementing student agency requires a change in classroom culture that does not occur instantly but develops through consistent practice and teacher support (Forsling & Tjernberg, 2023; Parr & Hawe, 2020).

**Diagram 1. Trends of Student Participation in Literacy Activities for 12 Weeks**



## CONCLUSION

The implementation of a literacy program based on the principles of voice, choice, and ownership at SD Negeri Kepanjen 2 Jombang has proven effective in improving literacy among

grade 4 students. Program planning that involves students in the needs analysis results in program designs that are responsive to student preferences: 78 percent want a choice of books, and 82 percent are interested in creating literacy products. The implementation of the program through three stages of GLS integrates the principles of voice in discussion and presentation, choice in selecting books and text types, and ownership in the wall magazine project, with consistently high participation of 76-92 percent. The impact of implementation was significant, with increases in reading ability from 65 to 85 percent and writing ability from 58 percent to 88 percent. Students were able to write structured paragraphs, as evidenced by a paired-samples t-test that showed significant differences ( $p < 0.001$ ). Reading interest increased from 1.2 to 3.5 books per week, and learning motivation increased with attendance reaching 95 percent. The program also develops social-emotional competencies, with confidence increasing from 45 percent to 84 percent of students actively presenting, responsibility increasing to 91 percent of assignments completed, and creativity developing through diverse work. The study's findings confirm that the combination of voice, choice, and ownership is an effective approach for strengthening literacy and character development among elementary school students.

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