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Exploring the Academic English Literacy among Fourth Grade Students at Sunrise Elementary School, Kerobokan, Badung

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explored the implementation of academic English literacy among fourth-grade students at Sunrise Elementary School, focusing on classroom practices, teaching strategies, and encountered challenges. Data collection involved observations, interviews, and document analysis, which were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that literacy was primarily practiced through reading and writing activities, supported by teacher strategies such as vocabulary pre-teaching, guided reading, modeling writing, questioning, and feedback. While these methods successfully supported students' basic literacy skills such as understanding vocabulary, identifying main ideas, and constructing simple sentences, students still faced significant challenges in higher-order academic literacy. Specifically, they struggled with critical thinking, analytical reading (e.g., making inferences), and coherent academic writing. In conclusion, although the current implementation effectively fosters foundational literacy, students require more intensive guidance and targeted practice to develop higher-level academic literacy skills. Consequently, teachers are encouraged to introduce more activities that promote critical thinking, analytical comprehension, and structured academic writing.

1. Introduction

Literacy is one of the fundamental skills that plays an important role in students' learning and academic development. In the modern educational era, literacy is no longer limited to the ability to read and write basic texts, but also includes the ability to understand, interpret, analyze, and communicate information effectively in academic and social contexts. According to Gee (2015), literacy involves the meaningful use of language within particular social and educational environments. This perspective indicates that literacy development is closely related to how

students engage with language through classroom interaction and learning experiences.

Within educational contexts, academic literacy has become an essential component of students' academic success. Academic literacy refers to the ability to understand and produce language used in academic settings, including reading informational texts, understanding academic vocabulary, and expressing ideas through structured writing. Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) emphasized that academic literacy enables students to access subject knowledge because much of school learning occurs through texts and academic language. Similarly, Cummins (2000) explained that students need to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in order to understand academic content and perform successfully in school-related tasks. Without adequate academic literacy skills, students may experience difficulties in comprehending learning materials and expressing their understanding effectively.

Although academic literacy is often associated with secondary or higher education, the development of these skills should begin from the elementary school level. Gibbons (2002) stated that classroom interaction and teacher scaffolding play an important role in supporting students' literacy development in early education. Furthermore, Snow (2002) highlighted that early literacy development significantly influences students' future academic achievement. Therefore, elementary school becomes an important stage for students to develop foundational academic reading and writing skills that support their long-term educational progress.

Recent studies have also highlighted the increasing importance of literacy development among elementary school students. Imran et al. (2025) and Wijayanti et al. (2024) found that literacy skills remain a central focus of elementary education in the digital era because they support students' ability to access information and participate in modern learning environments. Similarly, Nahdi et al. (2024) emphasized that reading literacy plays a significant role in helping elementary school students understand academic texts and develop comprehension skills across subjects. In addition, Kurniawati (2024) found that students with stronger literacy skills tend to achieve better academic performance in various subjects. Another study conducted by Balaquidan et al. (2025) revealed that literacy instruction and learning support significantly improve students' reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and confidence in literacy activities.

Despite the growing attention toward literacy research, many previous studies still focus mainly on reading literacy, digital literacy, or literacy achievement. Research specifically examining academic English literacy among elementary school students remains limited, particularly in the Indonesian context. In addition, many previous studies employ quantitative approaches that measure literacy through scores and assessments, which often fail to capture students' experiences and classroom interactions during the literacy learning process. Consequently, there is still limited qualitative evidence regarding how academic English literacy is practiced and developed within real classroom settings. Understanding students'

literacy experiences can provide deeper insights into how classroom interaction, teacher guidance, and instructional practices contribute to literacy development.

In the context of international elementary schools, academic English literacy becomes increasingly important because English is not only used for communication but also as the language of instruction in various subjects. Students are expected to understand academic texts, follow classroom instructions, and express ideas effectively through spoken and written English. However, students' academic literacy development may vary depending on their learning experiences, classroom practices, and teacher support. Although some students may demonstrate strong conversational English skills, they may still encounter difficulties in understanding academic texts, organizing ideas coherently, and producing structured academic writing. At Sunrise School Bali, English literacy is an important part of students' learning activities, especially for fourth grade students who are required to engage with various classroom tasks and academic materials in English. Students are expected to understand information from academic texts and express ideas meaningfully in classroom activities. However, the development of students' academic English literacy may differ based on their classroom experiences and instructional practices.

Therefore, this study aims to explore academic English literacy among fourth grade students at Sunrise School Bali using a qualitative approach. This study focuses on how academic English literacy is practiced in the classroom, the instructional strategies applied by the teacher, and the challenges encountered during the implementation process. By examining students' literacy experiences, classroom interaction, and literacy practices, this research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how academic English literacy develops in an elementary school context.

2. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. This design was selected because it allows the researcher to explore and understand the implementation of academic English literacy in a real classroom context in greater depth. A qualitative case study is appropriate for investigating classroom interaction, instructional practices, and students' literacy experiences within a specific educational setting. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research focuses on understanding participants' perspectives, experiences, and social phenomena in natural settings. Meanwhile, Yin (2018) explains that a case study design is suitable for examining contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

This research focused on exploring how academic English literacy is practiced among fourth grade students at Sunrise School Bali, the teaching strategies applied

by the teacher, and the challenges encountered during the implementation process. The study investigated classroom literacy activities, teacher-student interaction, and students' engagement in academic reading and writing practices. The data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations were conducted to examine literacy practices, classroom interaction, and instructional activities related to academic English literacy. Semi-structured interviews with the teacher were carried out to gain deeper insights into the instructional strategies, challenges, and perspectives regarding students' literacy development. In addition, document analysis was used to examine students' worksheets, classroom tasks, and learning materials related to academic literacy activities.

By using multiple data collection techniques, this study aimed to obtain comprehensive and detailed information regarding the implementation of academic English literacy in the classroom. The use of observation, interview, and document analysis also strengthened the credibility of the findings through data triangulation. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021), which involved identifying, categorizing, and interpreting themes related to academic English literacy practices, teaching strategies, and implementation challenges.

Population and Sample

This research was conducted in the fourth-grade classroom at Sunrise School Bali. The participants of this study consisted of one English teacher and fourth grade students who participated in academic English literacy activities in the classroom. Since this study employed a qualitative case study design, the participants were selected purposively based on their involvement in the literacy learning process. The students were chosen because they actively participated in classroom reading and writing activities related to academic English literacy. Meanwhile, the English teacher was selected because the teacher played an important role in implementing literacy practices and instructional strategies in the classroom. The focus of this study was not to generalize the findings to a larger population, but to gain an in-depth understanding of academic English literacy practices within this particular classroom context.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study were classroom observation, semi-structured interview, and document analysis. These instruments were selected to obtain comprehensive information regarding the implementation of academic English literacy among fourth grade students at Sunrise School Bali. Classroom observation was used to examine how academic English literacy was practiced during teaching and learning activities. Through observation, the researcher identified classroom interaction, literacy activities, teaching strategies, and students' participation in reading and writing tasks. The observation focused on students' engagement in academic literacy practices, such as understanding texts, answering comprehension questions, participating in discussions, and producing written responses. Field notes

were used to record important events and classroom situations during the observation process.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the English teacher to gain deeper insights into the instructional strategies, challenges, and experiences related to the implementation of academic English literacy in the classroom. The interview questions focused on literacy teaching practices, students' literacy development, classroom difficulties, and the teacher's perspectives on supporting students' academic reading and writing skills. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions and obtain more detailed explanations from the participant.

Furthermore, document analysis was used to support the findings obtained from observation and interviews. The analyzed documents included students' worksheets, reading tasks, writing assignments, and learning materials used during classroom activities. These documents were examined to identify students' literacy performance, writing organization, vocabulary use, and comprehension abilities related to academic English literacy.

To ensure the credibility and relevance of the instruments, the researcher developed the observation checklist, interview guide, and document analysis framework based on theories of academic literacy and previous related studies. The use of multiple instruments also strengthened the trustworthiness of the study through data triangulation, allowing the researcher to compare and confirm findings from different data sources.

Data Collection

The data in this study were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Several procedures were conducted during the data collection process. First, the researcher requested permission from the school and the English teacher at Sunrise School Bali to conduct the research in the fourth-grade classroom. After obtaining permission, the researcher prepared the research instruments, including the observation checklist, interview guide, and document analysis framework.

Second, the researcher conducted classroom observations to examine how academic English literacy was practiced during teaching and learning activities. The observations focused on classroom interaction, literacy activities, instructional strategies, and students' participation in reading and writing tasks. Field notes were used to record important classroom events and literacy practices observed during the lessons. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the English teacher to obtain deeper information regarding teaching strategies, classroom practices, and challenges encountered in developing students' academic English literacy. The interview also explored the teacher's perspectives on students' literacy abilities and instructional support provided during classroom activities.

Fourth, document analysis was carried out by examining students' worksheets, reading assignments, writing tasks, and learning materials used in the classroom. These documents were analyzed to identify students' literacy performance, vocabulary use, comprehension abilities, and writing organization related to academic English literacy. Finally, all collected data from observations, interviews, and document analysis were organized and documented systematically for further analysis. The use of multiple data collection techniques enabled the researcher to obtain comprehensive information and strengthen the credibility of the findings through data triangulation.

Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis. The collected data were obtained from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The analysis aimed to identify patterns, themes, and meanings related to the implementation of academic English literacy among fourth grade students at Sunrise School Bali. This study adopted the thematic analysis procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021). Several steps were conducted during the data analysis process. First, the researcher organized and reviewed all collected data, including observation notes, interview transcripts, and classroom documents, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the information obtained from the field. Second, the researcher carefully read and interpreted the data to identify important statements, classroom events, and participants' responses related to academic English literacy practices, teaching strategies, and implementation challenges. After that, the data were coded by labeling significant information relevant to the research questions. The coding process helped the researcher classify similar ideas and identify recurring patterns within the data.

Third, the researcher categorized the codes into broader themes and sub-themes based on their similarities and relationships. These themes represented the major findings of the study, such as classroom literacy practices, instructional strategies, students' literacy abilities, and challenges encountered during the implementation process. Finally, the identified themes were interpreted and discussed in relation to the research objectives and relevant theories of academic literacy. The findings from observation, interview, and document analysis were compared and connected through data triangulation to strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study based on data collected through classroom observation, teacher interviews, and document analysis. The findings are organized according to the three research questions of the study: (1) how academic English literacy is practiced in the classroom, (2) what teaching strategies are used by the teacher, and (3) what challenges are faced in the implementation process. The results focus on describing students' literacy abilities, classroom literacy

practices, instructional strategies, and challenges encountered during academic English literacy activities.

Academic English Literacy Practices in the Classroom

The findings revealed that academic English literacy in the fourth-grade classroom was primarily implemented through reading and writing activities. Classroom observations showed that students regularly engaged in reading short academic texts, identifying vocabulary, answering comprehension questions, and completing writing tasks related to the lesson topics. During reading sessions, students were actively involved in locating information from texts and discussing main ideas under teacher guidance. Observation data indicated that most students could answer questions whose answers were explicitly stated in the text. However, when students were asked inferential questions requiring interpretation of implied meanings, many hesitated and waited for teacher prompts before responding. Similarly, during writing activities, students were generally able to write simple sentences but encountered difficulties when asked to elaborate their ideas into longer paragraphs. The interview findings supported these observations. The teacher explained;

“Most students can understand basic vocabulary and answer direct questions from the reading passages. However, when they are required to explain ideas in their own words or make conclusions, many still need substantial guidance.”

The teacher further elaborated that students generally demonstrated stronger performance when responding to literal comprehension questions than inferential ones. According to the teacher;

“When we read a text together, I notice that almost all students can easily find facts that are explicitly written, like names of places or numbers. They can answer literal questions very quickly. But if I ask an inferential question, such as ‘Why do you think the character did that?’, the classroom suddenly goes quiet. They struggle to read between the lines and connect the clues independently.”

This interview finding was consistent with the classroom observations, during which students confidently responded to factual questions but frequently hesitated when required to interpret implied meanings or justify their answers. Many students waited for additional prompts from the teacher before attempting to respond, indicating that inferential comprehension remained more challenging than literal comprehension. The teacher also highlighted that students' vocabulary knowledge tended to remain at the recognition level rather than productive use. As the teacher explained,

“In terms of vocabulary, they are good at memorizing definitions or matching words. However, the real challenge appears when I ask them to paraphrase a paragraph or explain a concept using their own words. They tend to copy

sentences word-for-word from the textbook because they lack the confidence to restructure the academic language by themselves.”

Document analysis further supported the observation and interview findings. Students' worksheets demonstrated adequate performance in vocabulary recognition and literal comprehension tasks. As presented in Table 1, most students successfully understood basic vocabulary (87%), identified main ideas (73%), and answered literal comprehension questions (80%). However, only a small proportion of students were able to make inferences (27%) or explain ideas using their own words (20%).

Table 1. Students' Reading Literacy Performance

Reading Skill	Number of Students	Percentage
Understanding basic vocabulary	13	87%
Identifying main ideas	11	73%
Answering literal questions	12	80%
Making inferences	4	27%
Explaining ideas in own words	3	20%

The triangulated findings suggest that students possessed foundational academic literacy skills, particularly in recognizing vocabulary and understanding explicit information. Nevertheless, higher order literacy abilities, such as inferential comprehension and critical interpretation, remained underdeveloped. Document analysis also revealed similar patterns in writing performance. Students were generally able to construct simple sentences and apply basic grammatical structures. However, many struggled to organize ideas coherently and develop extended written responses. Document analysis further examined students' writing literacy performance, focusing on sentence construction, grammatical accuracy, coherence, and idea development. The findings indicate that students generally mastered basic writing conventions but encountered challenges in organizing and elaborating their ideas effectively. The summary of these findings is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' Writing Literacy Performance

Writing Skill	Number of Students	Percentage
Writing simple sentences	11	73%
Using correct basic grammar	9	60%
Organizing ideas into paragraphs	6	40%
Writing coherent paragraphs	2	13%

The interview findings further supported the observation and document analysis results. As shown in Table 2, students were generally able to produce simple sentences and apply basic grammatical structures. Nevertheless, many students encountered difficulties in organizing ideas coherently, developing paragraphs, paraphrasing information, and expressing critical understanding in written form. Frequent spelling and grammatical errors were also identified in students' written assignments. These findings suggest that students' academic English literacy remained focused mainly on surface-level comprehension rather than deeper academic literacy skills.

“Students are generally able to write short sentences, but many still struggle to connect ideas and develop them into complete paragraphs.”

Document analysis further showed that students frequently made grammatical and spelling errors and had difficulty expanding ideas beyond basic descriptions. These findings suggest that students’ writing abilities were still concentrated at a foundational level and that more intensive support is needed to develop coherent academic writing skills. The convergence of observation, interview, and document analysis indicates that while students have acquired basic writing competencies, higher-level literacy skills such as elaboration, organization, and critical written expression remain challenging.

Teaching Strategies Used by the Teacher

The findings from observation and interviews show that the teacher applied several instructional strategies to support students’ academic English literacy development. This finding is consistent with previous qualitative research showing that teachers play a central role in promoting literacy development through structured literacy activities, guided reading, and continuous instructional support (Fadhilah & Kasriman, 2026). The strategies included vocabulary pre-teaching, guided reading, questioning techniques, modeling writing, feedback, and scaffolding.

Vocabulary pre-teaching was commonly used before reading activities to help students understand unfamiliar academic words appearing in the texts. The teacher explained difficult vocabulary and provided examples before students started reading. This strategy helped students comprehend the texts more easily and reduced difficulties during reading activities. The teacher explained the rationale behind implementing vocabulary pre-teaching;

“I always do vocabulary pre-teaching before moving into the main reading passage. I introduce the academic words, explain the meaning, and give examples first. If I don't do this, the students get stuck on difficult words and lose their comprehension of the whole text. This strategy is highly effective to help them feel ready.”

Classroom observations supported this statement, as students appeared more confident when reading texts after receiving vocabulary explanations and examples before the lesson. Guided reading activities were also implemented during classroom instruction. The teacher guided students while reading texts by asking questions, explaining information, and encouraging students to identify important ideas from the reading passages. Through guided reading, students received support in understanding the meaning and structure of the texts. The teacher further described how guided reading and scaffolding were implemented during classroom instruction;

“During guided reading, I cannot just let them read alone. I break the text into small sections. I provide heavy scaffolding by asking checking questions

at the end of each paragraph to make sure everyone is on the same page before we move forward.”

Observation data also indicated that the teacher consistently paused after each section of the reading passage to ask comprehension questions and clarify unfamiliar information before continuing to the next section. In addition, the teacher used questioning techniques to stimulate students' comprehension and classroom participation. Most questions focused on identifying factual information and checking students' understanding of the texts. However, only limited opportunities were provided for students to answer analytical or inferential questions requiring deeper interpretation.

The teacher also applied modeling writing strategies by demonstrating how to construct simple sentences and short paragraphs before students completed writing tasks independently. Feedback was provided to students regarding grammar, spelling, vocabulary use, and sentence construction during writing activities. Furthermore, scaffolding techniques were used to support students gradually during literacy tasks through teacher guidance and classroom interaction. The teacher emphasized that modeling and immediate feedback played a central role in supporting students' writing development. The teacher explained;

“For writing, modeling and immediate feedback are the most effective strategies. I usually write a model sentence on the board first to show them the correct structure. When they practice, I walk around to check their spelling and grammar, giving them direct feedback. Controlled exercises like matching or sentence-ordering work best for their current level, but it does take time to move them toward independent writing.”

This interview finding was consistent with classroom observations, where the teacher frequently modeled sentence construction before assigning independent writing tasks and provided immediate corrective feedback while students completed their work. Overall, the triangulated findings from classroom observations and teacher interviews indicate that these instructional strategies effectively supported students' foundational academic English literacy, particularly in vocabulary development, literal comprehension, and sentence construction. However, opportunities for developing higher-order literacy skills, including inferential thinking, critical interpretation, and independent academic writing, remained relatively limited.

Challenges in the Implementation of Academic English Literacy

The findings also reveal several challenges encountered during the implementation of academic English literacy in the classroom. One major challenge was students' weak inferential thinking skills. Although students could understand explicit information in the texts, many of them struggled to interpret implied meanings and analyze information critically. Another challenge was students' limited language production skills, particularly in writing activities. Many students experienced difficulties in organizing ideas coherently, developing paragraphs, and expressing

understanding through written English. Students also showed dependence on structured tasks and teacher guidance when completing literacy activities.

Observation data revealed that students frequently depended on teacher assistance during literacy activities. During one writing session, several students paused for extended periods before beginning their responses and repeatedly asked whether their answers were correct. The observation notes recorded that students tended to wait for examples from the teacher before attempting independent writing. This finding was supported by the teacher's interview statement;

"Many students are still hesitant to write independently. They often want confirmation first because they are afraid of making mistakes."

The teacher further explained that students encountered particular difficulty when organizing ideas into coherent paragraphs, which contributed to their dependence on teacher guidance throughout the writing process. The teacher stated;

"The biggest challenge in writing is that students can create simple sentences, but they have major difficulties in organizing those sentences into a coherent paragraph. They lose track of how to connect ideas logically. Because of this, they become highly dependent on me. They will constantly ask, 'Teacher, is this correct?' or 'What should I write next?' before they even try to write a single line."

This interview finding was consistent with classroom observations, where many students paused before beginning their writing tasks and repeatedly sought confirmation from the teacher before continuing. Furthermore, grammatical and spelling errors frequently appeared in students' writing. The findings indicate that there was a gap between students' reading comprehension and their ability to communicate ideas effectively through writing. While students could understand basic information from texts, they still encountered difficulties in transforming understanding into meaningful academic communication. The teacher also highlighted the discrepancy between students' receptive and productive language skills. According to the teacher;

"There is a significant gap between their receptive and productive skills. They might look like they understand the text when reading, but when they are asked to analyze it and produce a critical response in writing, they get overwhelmed. Grammatical errors and spelling mistakes like writing 'littel' or 'huricans' frequently happen because they are focusing too hard on what to say, making them forget the structural rules."

This interview finding further supported the document analysis, which identified frequent grammatical and spelling errors in students' written work. Together, the observation, interview, and document analysis indicated that students still experienced difficulties in transforming reading comprehension into coherent academic writing.

Overall, the triangulated findings from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and document analysis demonstrate that although students possessed basic academic English literacy skills, they continued to experience difficulties in higher-order literacy skills, particularly inferential comprehension, coherent academic writing, and independent language production. These findings indicate the need for instructional practices that provide greater opportunities for critical thinking, analytical reading, and sustained writing activities to support students' academic English literacy development. The findings related to the research questions of the study, namely: (1) how academic English literacy is practiced in the classroom, (2) what teaching strategies are used by the teacher, and (3) what challenges are faced in the implementation process. The discussion is based on classroom observations, students' written work, document analysis, and the theoretical framework related to academic literacy development.

Regarding the first research question, the findings indicate that students' academic English literacy remains predominantly at a surface level. This finding also supports recent evidence indicating that conventional literacy performance often reflects surface-level understanding rather than students' authentic cognitive processes during reading activities (Ratnawati et al., 2026). This finding is supported by both quantitative data and classroom artifacts. The results showed that 87% of students were able to understand basic vocabulary and 80% could answer literal comprehension questions. These findings suggest that students possess basic literacy competencies, particularly in recognizing vocabulary and identifying explicit information from texts.

The analysis of students' classroom tasks further supports this conclusion. In vocabulary and word-formation activities, such as identifying words with the suffix -ation, students were generally able to recognize and locate target vocabulary items, including translation, radiation, and demonstration. This indicates that students had developed a functional level of lexical recognition. However, their understanding appeared to remain largely mechanical because there was limited evidence that students could apply the vocabulary meaningfully in broader contexts or independent communication. Observation notes showed that students frequently hesitated when answering inferential questions. Similarly, the teacher stated that students often required guidance when explaining ideas beyond explicit information. These findings suggest that students' literacy abilities remain focused on literal comprehension. This finding is consistent with Grabe (2009).

In relation to the second research question, the findings from students' writing samples reveal that students were generally capable of producing simple sentences using familiar vocabulary and grammatical patterns. For example, students wrote sentences such as "Six old blue and red T-shirts" and "Australia is a friendly and cheerful big country." These examples demonstrate partial control of sentence construction and vocabulary use. Nevertheless, the structures remained basic and occasionally inaccurate, particularly in adjective order, grammar, and spelling. This

suggests that students were able to reproduce learned language patterns but still struggled to use language flexibly and accurately in meaningful contexts.

From the perspective of Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy, these performances can be categorized within lower-order thinking skills, particularly remembering and understanding. Students were able to recognize, recall, and apply familiar language forms, but they demonstrated limited ability to analyze, evaluate, or create meaning independently. The absence of extended written responses and elaborated ideas further indicates that students' literacy development had not yet reached higher-order literacy levels.

The classroom artifacts also provide important insights into the instructional approaches implemented by the teacher. The use of structured worksheets, such as vocabulary searches, matching activities, and adjective-order exercises, appeared effective in helping students develop foundational literacy skills. Similar findings were reported in previous qualitative research, which emphasized that teachers' instructional strategies, classroom interaction, and scaffolding play an important role in supporting students with limited reading ability (Rahman et al., 2026). These activities supported vocabulary recognition and introduced grammatical structures in controlled learning situations. This finding aligns with Gibbons (2002), who emphasized the importance of scaffolding in supporting second language learners during literacy activities.

However, the findings also suggest that the strong reliance on guided and closed-ended tasks limited opportunities for deeper cognitive engagement. Although students successfully completed matching and ordering exercises, their independent writing showed limited ability to transfer learned knowledge into meaningful communication. This indicates that classroom instruction may still emphasize language form rather than meaning-making and functional language use. Consequently, students developed procedural knowledge without fully internalizing academic language for independent literacy practices.

Drawing on the sociocultural theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978), particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), students appeared to operate within a learning zone where they could complete tasks successfully with teacher support and scaffolding but still experienced difficulties performing independently. The structured activities and teacher guidance provided necessary support during classroom tasks. Nevertheless, the transition from guided practice to independent language production seemed insufficiently developed.

To address this issue, literacy instruction should move beyond recognition-based activities toward more productive and interactive literacy practices. For example, students should be encouraged to use newly learned vocabulary in meaningful sentences, short paragraphs, classroom discussions, and reflective responses. In addition, integrating reading and writing activities, such as summarizing texts, expressing opinions, and responding critically to reading passages, may help students process information more deeply and internalize academic language more effectively. This finding supports Fisher and Frey (2021) and Pramadhita and

Rahmawati (2026), who emphasized that literacy development requires gradual movement from teacher-supported activities toward independent learning and critical thinking.

Regarding the third research question, the findings reveal several significant challenges in the implementation of academic English literacy. These challenges are strongly reflected in both the quantitative findings and students' written work. The low percentage of students able to make inferences (27%) and explain ideas independently demonstrates that many students still struggle with deeper comprehension and higher-order literacy skills.

Several important challenges emerged from the findings. First, students demonstrated limited inferential thinking abilities. Most literacy tasks focused primarily on identifying correct answers and recognizing explicit information rather than interpreting meaning critically. Second, students showed weak language production skills, particularly in writing activities. Their written responses were generally short, descriptive, and lacking elaboration. Students also experienced difficulties in sentence construction, grammar, vocabulary use, and coherence. Third, students appeared highly dependent on structured tasks and teacher guidance. This finding was also reflected in the teacher's statement;

“Students often wait for examples before starting their work because they are afraid of making mistakes when expressing ideas independently.”

The interview evidence confirms that students' reliance on teacher guidance remains a significant challenge in developing autonomous literacy practices. They performed better in controlled exercises than in open-ended literacy activities requiring independent thinking and language production. This indicates limited learner autonomy in academic literacy practices. Fourth, frequent spelling and grammatical errors, such as “Huricans,” “erthqast,” and “littel,” suggest that students' basic language control was still developing. These findings indicate that students' academic literacy development is constrained not only by linguistic limitations but also by cognitive and pedagogical factors. Classroom learning appeared to focus more on task completion than on deeper meaning-making processes. As a result, students had limited opportunities to engage critically with texts and express understanding independently.

Furthermore, a clear gap was identified between reading comprehension and writing production. While students were generally able to recognize and understand vocabulary and explicit information from texts, they still struggled to reorganize and communicate those ideas independently through writing. This gap is particularly significant because academic literacy fundamentally involves the ability to construct, interpret, and communicate meaning effectively in academic contexts. Therefore, the findings highlight the need for instructional improvement that promotes deeper comprehension, inferential thinking, critical literacy practices, and independent language production among elementary school learners.

4. Conclusion

This study investigated the implementation of academic English literacy among fourth-grade students at Sunrise Elementary School, Kerobokan, Badung. The findings indicate that students' academic English literacy remains at a developing stage, particularly in higher-order literacy skills. While most students demonstrated adequate abilities in understanding vocabulary, identifying main ideas, answering literal comprehension questions, and constructing simple sentences, they continued to experience difficulties in making inferences, organizing coherent paragraphs, paraphrasing information, and expressing ideas critically in written form.

The study also found that the teacher implemented various instructional strategies, including vocabulary pre-teaching, guided reading, questioning techniques, modeling writing, and scaffolding. These strategies effectively supported students' foundational literacy development and classroom participation. However, classroom instruction remained primarily focused on lower-order cognitive skills, providing limited opportunities for analytical thinking, independent interpretation, and extended academic writing. Furthermore, students encountered several challenges, including weak inferential thinking, limited language production, dependence on structured tasks, and frequent grammatical and spelling errors. These findings suggest that students still face difficulties in transforming reading comprehension into meaningful academic communication.

The findings should be interpreted within the context of this study because the research was conducted in a single classroom with a limited number of participants. Consequently, the results cannot be generalized to broader elementary school or EFL contexts but instead provide context-specific evidence regarding the implementation of academic English literacy in an Indonesian elementary school. Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the importance of instructional practices that extend beyond basic literacy skills to foster critical thinking, analytical reading, and independent academic writing. Future studies are recommended to involve more diverse participants, different educational settings, and various instructional approaches to gain a broader understanding of academic English literacy development among young learners.

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