

**ENHANCING ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH
NARRATIVE ENGAGEMENT AMONG THAI ELEMENTARY
STUDENTS: AN EXPLANATORY MIXED METHOD STUDY**

ARTICLE

*Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Education (S. Pd)
English Education Program*

By:

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**Unlocking The Secrets of Narrative Engagement: Fostering English Reading
Comprehension among Students in a Thai School**

Menjadi:

**Enhancing English Reading Comprehension through Narrative Engagement among
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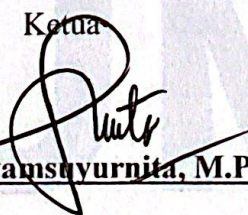
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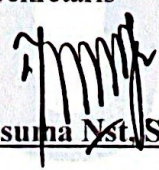
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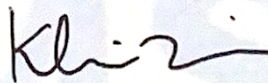
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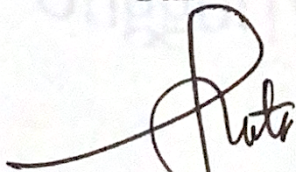
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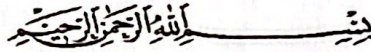
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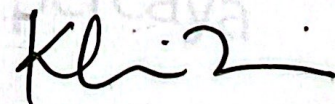
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Enhancing English reading comprehension through narrative engagement among Thai elementary students: An explanatory mixed method study

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly globalized world, English reading comprehension is an essential skill, particularly for young learners in non-native English-speaking contexts such as Thailand. This study investigates the role of narrative engagement in enhancing English reading comprehension among Thai elementary students using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The participants consisted of 27 fifth- and sixth-grade students from a primary school in Satun Province, Thailand. Data were gathered through a reading comprehension post-test, a questionnaire, and classroom observation. Quantitative results showed a relatively high post-test mean score ($M = 86.67$, $SD = 8.77$). However, the absence of a pre-test or control group limits the ability to claim substantial improvement, as no baseline or comparison was available. Qualitative findings revealed that students developed emotional connections, maintained attention, and identified with story characters. Many reported feeling engaged, vividly visualizing scenes, and relating to the narratives. These findings suggest that narrative engagement can foster both cognitive and emotional involvement in reading, potentially supporting comprehension. Nevertheless, the small sample size ($N = 27$) restricts the generalizability of the results. The study recommends integrating narrative texts into English instruction to create more engaging and motivating reading experiences for young EFL learners, while future research should employ larger samples and experimental designs to strengthen the evidence.



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Introduction

Reading comprehension is a critical skill for both academic achievement and cognitive development. This skill becomes even more essential for students who are learning English as a foreign language (Snow, 2002). Previous studies also highlight that effective reading comprehension plays a central role in shaping overall language proficiency (Hà & Bellot, 2020).

In Thailand, the government has introduced national reforms to improve English education, including the English Programme (EP) initiated in 2001. However, despite these initiatives, English reading instruction in many schools remains largely teacher-centered (Taladngoan, 2019). Such practices often result in low comprehension outcomes, limited vocabulary acquisition, and decreased student motivation (Yulianawati et al.,

2022; Putri, Nugraha, & Ridwan, 2020). Similar findings were also reported by Okasha (2020), who noted that teacher-centered methods reduce opportunities for active learning and engagement. These findings collectively underscore the need for more interactive, student-centered approaches to foster meaningful engagement with texts.

A growing body of research suggests that emotionally and cognitively engaging practices, especially through narrative texts, can enhance reading comprehension. Such approaches not only improve linguistic outcomes but also nurture empathy and critical reflection (Howell et al., 2024). Narrative engagement, defined as the psychological immersion of readers into a story, encompasses four dimensions: attentional focus, emotional involvement, narrative understanding, and identification with characters (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). Engagement across these dimensions promotes sustained attention, deeper empathy, and stronger internalization of meaning, all of which contribute to improved reading comprehension and retention.

Recent studies also demonstrate the effectiveness of narrative-based instructional strategies. Techniques such as storytelling, story mapping, digital storytelling, story retelling, collaborative learning, and the CIRC method have been shown to improve both reading outcomes and student participation (Santoso, Ginting, & Yulianto, 2023; Rahmawati, Pahlevi, & Wachyudi, 2021; Khusmiati, Nugraha, & Kartini, 2023). Other research further emphasizes that summarizing narrative texts helps students understand plot structures, character development, and thematic meanings more effectively (Ramirez-Avila & Barreiro, 2023; Sahibzada et al., 2021).

Despite these promising findings, research specifically examining narrative engagement as a psychological construct in Southeast Asian EFL contexts remains limited. The Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education (2022) highlights the importance of engagement in linking reading strategies, motivation, and academic performance. However, Thai elementary classrooms remain relatively underexplored in this area.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the influence of narrative engagement on Thai elementary students' English reading comprehension. More specifically, it explores how narrative engagement affects both the cognitive and emotional involvement of learners, as well as their post-test reading performance. This study is guided by two research questions: (1) to what extent does narrative engagement influence Thai elementary students' English reading comprehension? and (2) how does narrative engagement contribute to students' cognitive and emotional involvement in reading?

Method

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the influence of narrative engagement on English reading comprehension among Thai elementary school students. The design began with a quantitative phase, followed by qualitative data collection to contextualize and interpret the results (Johnson et al., 2007).

The research was conducted at Darul Maaref School Foundation, Satun Province, Thailand, from August 1 to 27, 2024. The population consisted of Grade 5 and 6 students learning English as a foreign language. Using purposive sampling (Sugiyono, 2017), 27 students were selected based on their enrollment in English classes, variation in reading abilities, and willingness to participate. While this sampling technique ensured relevance to the research focus, the small sample size from a single school represents a limitation for external validity, as findings cannot be generalized even within the province.

The independent variable was narrative engagement, defined as students' emotional, cognitive, and experiential immersion in narrative texts (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). The dependent variable was English reading comprehension, measured through a post-test and classroom observation. The post-test consisted of six multiple-choice items and one open-ended essay question, with a maximum score of 100 points. Although this test provided an overview of comprehension, the limited number of items raises concerns about the reliability and validity of assessing such a complex construct. Moreover, no information on piloting, adaptation, or validation of the test and questionnaire was available, which further challenges the robustness of the instruments.

The questionnaire comprised ten Likert-scale items measuring aspects of engagement such as attention, interest, and emotional involvement. Responses were scored on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Data were analyzed descriptively using mean and standard deviation. While descriptive statistics offered a snapshot of student performance, the absence of inferential analysis or baseline measurement (e.g., pre-test or control group) prevents strong causal claims about the impact of narrative engagement. Potential confounding factors such as the Hawthorne effect or normal learning progress could not be ruled out.

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured classroom observations were conducted using checklists and field notes. Observed indicators included attentiveness, participation, and emotional responses during reading

activities. Data were analyzed thematically and triangulated with quantitative findings to provide contextual explanations.

The overall flow of the explanatory sequential design is presented in Table 1, which illustrates the integration of quantitative and qualitative procedures. This design enriched interpretation by linking numeric outcomes with observed engagement behaviors. However, methodological constraints—such as the limited sample, weak instrumentation, and reliance on descriptive analysis—should be acknowledged when interpreting the results.

Table 1. Flow of Data Collection in Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design

	Phase	Procedure	Product
	Data Collection	Test (Post-Test) and Questionnaire	Numeric data
Quantitative	Data Analysis	- Administering the reading comprehension post-test. - Distributing and category the questionnaire. - Using excel	Descriptive statistic
Qualitative	Data Collection	Observation (Semi-structured)	- Participation behaviour - Emotional engagement - Field notes
	Data Analysis	- Reviewing observation - Connecting qualitative findings	- Active or passive participation - High or low emotional engagement
	Integration of Findings	Interpretation and explanation of the quantitative and qualitative results	- Discussion - Implications - Future research

Result and Discussion

Result

The Impact of Narrative Engagement on Students' English Reading Comprehension

The post-test results indicated that students generally achieved relatively high and homogeneous scores. The mean score was 86.67, with a median of 90 and a standard deviation of 8.77. The fact that the median was higher than the mean suggests that most students performed well, with only a few lower scores pulling down the overall average. The standard deviation of 8.77 (8.77% of the maximum score of 100) reflects low variability, indicating that students' performance was fairly consistent.

For the essay component, the average score was 35.19 out of 40, with a standard deviation of 5.09. These findings confirm that students were not only able to answer multiple-choice questions but also articulate their understanding in writing, for instance, by explaining plot structure, character development, and the moral messages of the texts. However, without additional data such as frequency distributions, score ranges, pre-test comparisons, or a control group, claims regarding homogeneity and improvement remain limited to descriptive analysis. In other words, the results suggest a positive tendency but cannot serve as strong causal evidence.

Contribution on Students Cognitive and Emotional Involvement

The questionnaire consisting of ten items provided insights into students' engagement with narrative texts. Most students reported that the stories were interesting, easy to visualize, and evoked emotional connections with the characters. Low standard deviation values (0.6–0.8) on most items indicate consistency in students' experiences. For example, the majority agreed that they could "clearly imagine the scenes of the story" (SD = 0.6) and "felt emotionally connected to the characters" (SD = 0.7).

Nevertheless, some variation emerged in aspects such as the relevance of the stories to personal experiences (SD = 0.8) and sustained attention throughout the narrative (SD = 0.8). This suggests that not all students felt equally connected to the content. Classroom observations enriched these findings: some students appeared enthusiastic when discussing character motivations, while others participated only minimally. For instance, one student expressed, "I felt like I was inside the story when the character faced difficulties," whereas another stated, "I found it hard to follow the middle part of the story because there were many new words."

These findings indicate that narrative engagement contributes to students' cognitive and emotional involvement, though the intensity of experiences varied. Thus, narrative-based learning can enhance motivation and comprehension, but its effectiveness is still influenced by individual factors such as language ability and prior experiences.

Table 2. Summary of Narrative Engagement Questionnaire Results

Question	Interpretation
I found the story interesting and engaging.	Most students strongly agreed; the story effectively captured their attention and engagement.
I could clearly imagine the scenes in the story.	Students could visualize scenes vividly; low SD (0.6) suggests shared visualization experiences.
I felt emotionally connected to the characters in the story.	Strong emotional connection reported; slight variation (SD = 0.7) among responses.
The story captured my attention from beginning to end.	Generally positive, but with more variation (SD = 0.8); some students lost focus at certain parts.
I could easily picture the settings described in the story.	Most could imagine settings clearly; minor variation in perception.
I felt like I was part of the story while reading it.	Students felt immersed in the narrative; SD (0.6) shows consistent experience across the class.
The story made me think about similar situations in my own life.	Mixed responses; SD (0.8) suggests varied levels of personal relatability
I wanted to know what would happen next as I read the story.	High curiosity among students; SD (0.7) indicates some variation in narrative suspense experienced.
The story helped me to understand the characters' feelings and motivations.	Strong agreement; character development was well understood, with minimal response variation (SD = 0.6).
I found it easy to follow the plot of the story.	Students generally found the plot easy to follow; SD (0.6) indicates consistency in comprehension

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that narrative engagement can positively influence Thai elementary students' reading comprehension. Post-test data revealed a relatively high mean score (M = 86.67, SD = 8.77), while the essay test also showed strong performance in plot analysis, characterization, and interpretation of moral messages. These findings suggest that students were not only able to recall content but also demonstrate deeper levels of understanding.

The questionnaire results reinforced this outcome, as most students reported that the stories were engaging, easy to visualize, and emotionally meaningful. Observational data further supported this, showing that students were attentive, responsive, and actively participated during the lessons. Together, these findings highlight the potential of narrative texts to foster both cognitive and emotional involvement in reading.

Previous research has similarly emphasized the effectiveness of narrative-based strategies in EFL classrooms. For instance, Santoso, Ginting, and Yulianto (2023) reported that storytelling improved comprehension outcomes. Rahmawati, Pahlevi, and Wachyudi (2021) found that narrative tasks increased student motivation and participation. Other studies also highlighted the importance of narrative structures and emotional immersion in strengthening comprehension and critical thinking (Ramirez-Avila & Barreiro, 2023; Sahibzada et al., 2021). These parallels suggest that the present findings are consistent with broader evidence in the field.

From a theoretical perspective, the four dimensions of narrative engagement—attentional focus, emotional involvement, narrative understanding, and character identification—were clearly observable in the classroom (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). Students displayed sustained concentration, expressed laughter or sympathy during the stories, and often related personal experiences to the text. Such behaviors align with Dual Coding Theory, which posits that comprehension improves when verbal and visual channels are activated simultaneously (Paivio, 1991). Schema Activation Theory also provides an explanation, as learners constructed new understanding by linking narratives to prior experiences (Anderson, 2010).

Despite these encouraging findings, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged. The absence of a pre-test or control group makes it difficult to determine whether the observed outcomes were solely due to narrative engagement. In addition, the small sample size (N = 27) limits the generalizability of the results to wider EFL populations. Finally, reliance on self-reported questionnaire data may introduce bias, as younger students tend to provide socially desirable responses.

Taken together, the findings suggest that narrative engagement has considerable pedagogical potential, particularly in fostering student motivation, attentional focus, and emotional connection to texts. However, these conclusions must be interpreted with caution. Future studies should employ more rigorous experimental designs, including baseline measures, larger samples, and comparative groups, to provide stronger evidence of causal relationships. Exploring long-term effects of narrative-based instruction would also help determine its sustainability in enhancing reading comprehension

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of narrative engagement on the English reading comprehension of Thai elementary school students using an explanatory sequential mixed-method design. The findings suggest that narrative-based reading activities may enhance students' comprehension, as indicated by relatively higher post-test scores and students' self-reported engagement with narrative texts. Participants described experiencing attentional focus, imaginative visualization, emotional connection with characters, and sustained interest, which appeared to support their understanding of plot structure and thematic elements. These results provide preliminary support for the theoretical framework of narrative engagement theory (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009) and indicate the potential value of narratives in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved a small sample from a single school, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. The post-test consisted of a limited number of items, raising concerns about measurement validity. In addition, the short intervention period did not allow for examination of long-term effects on comprehension or motivation.

In light of these limitations, the results should be interpreted with caution. While the findings provide useful insights, they are not sufficient to make strong pedagogical claims. Future research should employ larger and more diverse samples, use more robust assessment instruments, and explore longer-term implementations of narrative engagement across different genres and educational contexts.

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THE DEER AND THE CROCODILE



One sunny day, the deer was thirsty and wanted to drink from the river. However, he knew that the river was full of hungry crocodiles. The deer thought cleverly. He shouted from the riverbank, "Hey Crocodile! I have a message from the King of the Forest. He wants to count how many crocodiles are in this river." The crocodiles who heard this immediately surfaced and lined up. The deer jumped from one crocodile to another while counting, "One, two, three..." until he managed to cross to the other side of the river safely. The deer laughed and said, "Thank you, crocodiles! Now I know how many of you there are!" The crocodiles realized that they had been tricked by the deer's cleverness.

The Deer And The Crocodile

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Name: Al - Ameen

Class: 5/1

School: Darul Maaref

1 What did the deer feel at the beginning of the story?

- A. Hungry
- ☒ B. Thirsty
- C. Angry
- D. Happy

10

2 What did the deer do to cross the river?

- A. Swim
- B. Jumped from stone to stone
- ☒ C. Jumped over the crocodile
- D. Fly

10

3 Why did the crocodiles follow the deer's orders?

- A. Because they were hungry
- B. Because they were afraid of the deer
- ☒ C. Because they wanted to know their numbers
- D. Because they wanted to play

10

4 Why did the deer shout from the riverbank?

- A. To ask for help
- B. To count the crocodiles
- ☒ C. To trick the crocodile
- D. To greet the crocodile

10

5 What did the deer say to the crocodiles?

- A. That he wanted to swim
- ☒ B. That the King of the Forest wanted to count them
- C. That he wanted to feed them
- D. That he wanted to be friends with them

10

6 What can we learn from this story?

- A. Strength is everything
- B. Always share with friends
- ☒ C. Ingenuity can defeat strength
- D. Never trust anyone

10

SHORT ESSAY

Why is the deer called clever in this story? Give an example from the story that supports your answer.

Because he easily made the crocodile follow his request

40 very good

$$60 + 40 = \underline{\underline{100}}$$

QUESTIONNAIRE

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

NAME: Al- Ameen DATE OF BIRTH: DAY 5 MONTH 1 YEAR 5/1 CLASS: 5/1

GENDER: ☐ Male ☐ Female SCHOOL: Darul maref

INSTRUCTION:

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your experience with the story. Use the scale below to respond:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

QUESTIONS:

RATING SCALE:

	1	2	3	4	5
I found the story interesting and engaging. ฉันพบว่าเรื่องราวนี้มีความน่าสนใจและน่าดึงดูด	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
I could clearly imagine the scenes in the story. ฉันสามารถจินตนาการจากในเรื่องได้อย่างชัดเจน	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
I felt emotionally connected to the characters in the story. ฉันรู้สึกเชื่อมโยงทางอารมณ์กับตัวละครในเรื่อง	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
The story captured my attention from beginning to end. เรื่องราวดึงดูดความสนใจของฉันตั้งแต่ต้นจนจบ	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
I could easily picture the settings described in the story. สามารถนึกภาพฉากที่บรรยายไว้ในเรื่องราวได้อย่างง่ายดาย	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
I felt like I was part of the story while reading it. ฉันรู้สึกเหมือนเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของเรื่องราวในขณะที่อ่านมัน	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
The story made me think about similar situations in my own life. เรื่องนี้ทำให้ฉันคิดถึงสถานการณ์คล้ายๆ กันที่เกิดขึ้นในชีวิตของฉันเอง	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
I wanted to know what would happen next as I read the story. อยากรู้อะไรจะเกิดต่อไปเมื่ออ่านเรื่องนี้	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
The story helped me to understand the characters' feelings and motivations. เรื่องนี้ช่วยให้ฉันเข้าใจความรู้สึกและแรงจูงใจของตัวละคร	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
I found it easy to follow the plot of the story. ฉันพบว่าการติดตามเนื้อเรื่องเป็นเรื่องง่าย	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐

PERMOHONAN PERSETUJUAN JUDUL SKRIPSI

Dengan ini saya:

Nama Mahasiswa : Heny Ristianty
NPM : 2102050022
Prog. Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

Judul	Diterima
Unlocking The Secrets of Narrative Engagement: Fostering English Reading Comprehension Among Students in a Thai School	

Bermohon kepada Dosen Pembimbing untuk mengesahkan Judul yang telah diajukan kepada Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris.

Disetujui oleh
Dosen Pembimbing



Khairun Nissa, M.TESOL.

Medan, Januari 2025
Hormat Pemohon,



Heny Ristianty

Kepada Yth: Bapak Ketua & Sekretaris
Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
FKIP UMSU

Perihal : PERMOHONAN PERSETUJUAN JUDUL SKRIPSI

Dengan hormat yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini:

Nama Mahasiswa : Heny Ristianty
NPM : 2102050022
Prog. Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Kredit Kumulatif : 139 SKS

IPK= 3,80

Persetujuan Ket./Sekret. Prog. Studi	Judul yang Diajukan	Disahkan oleh Dekan Fakultas
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	The Role of Narrative Techniques in Improving English Reading Comprehension: A Classroom Based Study	
	Using Interactive Multimedia to Enhance Pupils Reading Comprehension: A Case Study at School Thai	

Demikianlah permohonan ini saya sampaikan untuk dapat pemeriksaan dan persetujuan serta pengesahan, atas kesediaan Bapak saya ucapkan terima kasih.

Medan, Januari 2025
Hormat Pemohon,


Heny Ristianty

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- Untuk Mahasiswa yang bersangkutan



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Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
FKIP UMSU

Assalamu'alaikum Wr, Wb

Dengan hormat, yang bertanda tangan dibawah ini:

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NPM : 2102050022
Prog. Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

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Heny Ristianty

Keterangan

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Judul Penelitian : **Unlocking The Secrets of Narrative Engagement; Fostering English Reading Comprehension Among Students in a Thai School.**

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3. Pembimbing.
4. Mahasiswa yang bersangkutan

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Pada hari ini Senin Tanggal 30 Bulan Juni Tahun 2025 diselenggarakan seminar prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris menerangkan bahwa:

Nama Lengkap : Heny Ristianty
N.P.M : 2102050022
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Judul Proposal : Unlocking The Secrets of Narrative Engagement: Fostering English Reading Comprehension Among Students in a Thai School

No	Masukan dan Saran
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Panitia Pelaksana

Ketua



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Ketua Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan,
Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, menerangkan di bawah ini:

Nama Lengkap : Heny Ristianty
N.P.M : 2102050022
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Judul Proposal : Enhancing English Reading Comprehension through Narrative
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Method Study

benar telah melakukan seminar proposal skripsi pada hari Senin Tanggal 30 Bulan Juni
Tahun 2025

Demikianlah surat keterangan ini dibuat untuk memperoleh surat izin riset dari Dekan
Fakultas. Atas kesediaan dan kerjasama yang baik, kami ucapkan terima kasih.

Medan, Agustus 2025

Ketua,

Dr. Pirman Ginting, S.Pd., M.Hum.



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Proposal yang sudah diseminari oleh mahasiswa di bawah ini:

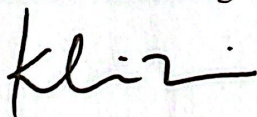
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NPM : 2102050022
Prog. Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Judul Artikel : Enhancing English Reading Comprehension through Narrative Engagement among Thai Elementary Students: An Explanatory Mixed Method Study

Pada hari Senin,, Tanggal 31 Bulan Juni Tahun 2025 sudah layak menjadi Artikel skripsi.

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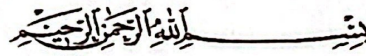


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7/1 '25	Planning the outline	Kh
22/1 '25	Designing Research Questions	Kh
14/2 '25	Planning the literature review and review introduction	Kh
11/3 '25	Referencing	Kh
11/3 '25	write the Methodology (chapter 3)	Kh
21/4 '25	Review Research Methodology	Kh
28/4 '25	Finalizing the proposal	Kh
14/5 '25	Acc	Kh

Medan, Desember 2024

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Heny Ristianty

Medan, Sumatera Utara

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Profile Summary

A fresh graduate in English Education with teaching experience from the Kampus Mengajar Batch 6 and KKNi Thailand program. Skilled in lesson planning, classroom management, and engaging students in cross-cultural learning. Passionate about improving English language skills and fostering effective education

Education

2021 - 2025 | Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara

English Education, Bachelor of Education, 3.81/4.00

Experience

2023 | Kampus Mengajar Batch 6

Taught multiple subjects at the elementary level, focusing on students' communication skills and confidence. Assisted teachers in applying innovative strategies and designing activities to boost student engagement.

2024 | International KKNi Program

Collaborated in cross-cultural education by developing English learning materials and strengthening adaptability and communication in multicultural settings.

Skills & Language

- **Hard Skills:** Microsoft Office (Microsoft Office, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Power Point), Google Workspace, Canva.
- **Soft Skills:** Time Management, Communicative, Organized, Teamwork, Negotiation, Disciplined, Multitasking, Critical Thinking, Responsible, Public Speaking.
- **General Administration:** Reports, correspondence, email, scheduling, Google Forms.
- **Language:** Bahasa Indonesia (Active), English (Passive)