

Fostering Student Engagement in Reading Class through Kinesthetic-Based Reading Race for Eighth Grade Students

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Abstract: This Classroom Action Research investigated the impact of a kinesthetic team-based Reading Race activity on multidimensional student engagement among eighth-grade English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in an Indonesian junior high school. Focusing on five dimensions of engagement—enthusiasm, physical engagement, teamwork, text comprehension, and self-regulation (confidence and discipline), the study used classroom observations and a 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire to collect data before and after one intervention cycle consisting of two meetings. Quantitative analysis revealed high levels of engagement across all dimensions, with teamwork and physical engagement scoring the highest. Qualitative observations supported these findings, highlighting active participation, collaboration, and increased motivation during the kinesthetic reading task. While text comprehension and self-regulation showed positive improvements, both also indicated areas for further development. The study concluded that the Reading Race method effectively fostered holistic engagement in EFL classrooms by integrating movement, competition, and cooperative learning. The findings offer practical insights for educators seeking to accommodate diverse learning styles and improve reading instruction in Indonesian junior high schools.

Keywords: Student engagement, Kinesthetic learners, Reading contests

Abstrak: Penelitian Tindakan Kelas ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh aktivitas Reading Race yang bersifat kinestetik dan berbasis tim terhadap keterlibatan multidimensi siswa kelas delapan dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) di sebuah sekolah menengah pertama di Indonesia. Fokus penelitian meliputi lima dimensi keterlibatan, yaitu antusiasme, keterlibatan fisik, kerja sama tim, pemahaman teks, serta pengaturan diri (kepercayaan diri dan kedisiplinan). Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas dan angket Likert 20 item sebelum dan sesudah satu siklus intervensi yang terdiri dari dua pertemuan. Analisis kuantitatif menunjukkan tingkat keterlibatan yang tinggi pada semua dimensi, dengan skor tertinggi pada kerja sama tim dan keterlibatan fisik. Temuan kualitatif dari observasi mendukung hasil tersebut dengan menunjukkan partisipasi aktif, kolaborasi, dan motivasi yang meningkat selama aktivitas membaca yang kinestetik. Meskipun pemahaman teks dan pengaturan diri menunjukkan peningkatan positif, kedua aspek tersebut juga menunjukkan potensi pengembangan lebih lanjut. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa metode Reading Race efektif dalam mendorong keterlibatan holistik di kelas EFL dengan mengintegrasikan gerakan, kompetisi, dan pembelajaran kolaboratif. Temuan ini memberikan wawasan praktis bagi pendidik yang ingin mengakomodasi gaya belajar yang beragam dan meningkatkan pengajaran membaca di sekolah menengah pertama di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Keterlibatan Siswa, Pembelajar Kinestetik, Reading Race

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is a critical factor in successful language learning, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms where motivation and active participation can vary widely among learners. Engagement is a multidimensional construct that includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement, all of which contribute to student motivation, learning processes, and achievement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). In the context of EFL classrooms in Indonesia, fostering engagement is particularly important because of the diverse learning styles and challenges that students face in acquiring English proficiency.

Recent studies in Indonesia have highlighted the positive impact of creative and interactive teaching methods on student engagement. For example, a study by (Putri et al., 2019) showed that blended learning environments significantly increased students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement by providing opportunities for active participation, collaboration, and self-regulation. Similarly, a study conducted in Surabaya found that 90% of students showed higher enthusiasm and engagement when creative teaching strategies were implemented, which in turn improved their learning outcomes (Setiawan et al., 2019). These findings emphasize that engagement is more than just passive attendance or listening; it involves enthusiasm, physical involvement, teamwork, understanding, and self-regulation such as self-confidence and discipline.

Another study revealed that Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) has been proven effective in improving students' reading comprehension skills through collaborative learning, which is in line with the team-based nature of the Reading Race method used in this study. Research by [Azhar, 2025] found that CIRC significantly improved students' ability to comprehend English reading texts compared to conventional methods. Inspired by this, the Reading Race method was designed to incorporate similar cooperative elements combined with kinesthetic activities to stimulate multidimensional engagement.

Despite its importance, in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning in Indonesia, developing effective reading skills remains a significant challenge for many students. Many students find it difficult to engage with English texts due to limited vocabulary, unfamiliar sentence structures, and cultural references that differ from their own context. These linguistic and contextual barriers can make reading feel inaccessible and demotivating, especially when students are expected to comprehend texts with little scaffolding or support. According to a study by Munawaroh (2020), students with kinesthetic learning styles who learn best through physical activity and hands-on experiences often struggle with traditional reading instruction methods that rely heavily on visual and auditory input. This mismatch can lead to decreased motivation and suboptimal reading comprehension outcomes among kinesthetic learners. Other research suggests that kinesthetic learning approaches, such as Total Physical Response (TPR), emphasize the importance of physical engagement in language acquisition. These methods increase student motivation and engagement, especially among young learners who benefit from movement-based activities (Kara, 2024).

Kinesthetic learners require learning activities that involve movement, interaction, and active participation to effectively process and retain information. Traditional reading methods that rely on passive engagement often fail to meet their learning needs. To address this, Reading Race offers an interactive and competitive approach that aligns with kinesthetic preferences. In this method, students read aloud or silently within a timed game framework, either individually or in teams. The competitive element increases motivation and focus, while the physical movement involved—such as switching roles or moving around—helps reinforce memory and comprehension. Repeated exposure to the text through this active format also supports the development

of reading fluency. By combining physical activity with reading practice, Reading Race creates a dynamic learning experience that engages kinesthetic learners more effectively than traditional approaches.

Both of these methods highlight the importance of incorporating physical engagement and social interaction into reading activities to support kinesthetic learners. By engaging learners in hands-on, dynamic tasks rather than passive reading, these approaches increase motivation, comprehension, and fluency. Thus, integrating interactive, movement-based strategies such as Reading Race and Jigsaw reading can effectively meet the unique learning needs of kinesthetic learners, leading to improved reading outcomes.

Based on this understanding, this Classroom Action Research aims to explore how a kinesthetic team-based Reading Race activity can foster multiple dimensions of engagement among eighth-grade EFL learners. Multidimensional student engagement, including enthusiasm, physical engagement, teamwork, text comprehension, and self-regulation, is essential for effective language learning. Previous research highlights that addressing these dimensions holistically leads to better learning outcomes (Wenny, 2023). Unlike traditional reading instruction that often prioritizes cognitive achievement alone, this study focuses on five key aspects of engagement: enthusiasm, physical engagement, teamwork, text comprehension, and self-regulation, which includes students' self-confidence and discipline. Conducted over a single cycle consisting of two meetings, this study seeks to provide practical insights for English teachers in Indonesian junior high schools who seek to accommodate diverse learning styles and foster a more holistic and dynamic reading learning experience.

METHOD

Classroom Action Research is an effective method for improving the teaching and learning process through iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This method empowers teachers to systematically investigate and improve their teaching practices while directly engaging students in the learning process (Sari et al., 2023). This approach has been shown to significantly improve student learning outcomes, such as language skill development, by allowing for contextual and responsive interventions (Mohamed, 2023)

This research was conducted in the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year at SMPN 4 Surabaya involving 25 students of class VIII A as research subjects. The selection of this class was based on the observation that most students have a kinesthetic learning style, so an active and interesting reading learning method is needed.

This research was conducted in one cycle consisting of two meetings. Before the cycle was implemented, a preliminary study was conducted to identify students' learning styles and basic reading skills. The cycle began with careful planning, including designing Reading Race activities, preparing teaching materials focused on recount texts, and developing data collection instruments. The implementation stage included implementing the Reading Race method for two meetings, where students were involved in competitive reading activities tailored to their kinesthetic learning preferences. During

the implementation, systematic observations were conducted to monitor students' enthusiasm, physical involvement, teamwork, text comprehension, and self-regulation (self-confidence and discipline). A reflection session was conducted after each meeting to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and plan necessary adjustments.

In this study, data collection focused on observational instruments and questionnaires to capture multidimensional aspects of student engagement, including enthusiasm, physical engagement, teamwork, text comprehension, and self-regulation. Unlike cognitive achievement data such as test scores or worksheets, which typically require predetermined mastery criteria, the use of qualitative and perceptual data from observations and questionnaires does not require the establishment of strict completion thresholds. Instead, indicators of success are based on the percentage of active student participation observed and the average positive response obtained from the engagement questionnaire. This approach is in line with the goal of measuring affective and behavioral dimensions of engagement, emphasizing descriptive and interpretive analysis rather than quantitative mastery levels. Thus, this study uses percentage and Likert-scale average benchmarks to evaluate the effectiveness of the Reading Race method in promoting student engagement in the classroom context.

Systematic classroom observation is an important tool for assessing the quality of instruction and student engagement. Reliable observation protocols, such as the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), provide a structured framework for evaluating multiple dimensions of classroom interaction and behavior. This instrument has demonstrated good inter-rater reliability and validity across educational contexts, making it suitable for monitoring engagement during interventions (Kohake, 2024). Additionally, the use of observation checklists aligned with the research objectives facilitates consistent and objective data collection (Lynch, 2024).

Likert scale questionnaires are widely used to measure students' attitudes, motivation, and engagement due to their ease of administration and ability to capture nuanced responses across multiple dimensions. Validity and reliability testing, including content validity, construct validity, and internal consistency, are essential to ensure that the instrument accurately reflects the targeted constructs (Dauzón & Izquierdo, 2023). Recent research has successfully applied Likert scale questionnaires to assess multidimensional engagement in language learning contexts, confirming their effectiveness in capturing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects (Ramadhani et al., 2024).

Data collected from classroom observations and student questionnaires were analyzed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative descriptive methods. Observational data, recorded through checklists and field notes, were analyzed descriptively by calculating the percentage of students who demonstrated active participation, enthusiasm, teamwork, and self-regulation during the Reading Race activity. In addition, qualitative descriptions were used to capture patterns of student behavior and interactions. Questionnaire data, consisting of Likert-scale items, were analyzed quantitatively by calculating frequencies, percentages, and mean scores to assess student perceptions across five dimensions of engagement. Open-ended questionnaire responses were analyzed qualitatively to identify common themes. Triangulation of observational and questionnaire findings was conducted to provide a

comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional engagement fostered by the Reading Race method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Group Observation Results

Classroom observations during the Reading Race activity were conducted for six groups. Each group was rated on five dimensions of engagement—enthusiasm, physical engagement, teamwork, text comprehension, and self-regulation (confidence & discipline)—using a four-point scale (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good, 4 = Excellent). The results of these observations provided valuable insights into how each group engaged with the Reading Race activity across the five targeted dimensions. The following sections detail the findings for each aspect.

Enthusiasm:

Most groups showed a very high level of enthusiasm, as reflected by the frequent score of “4”. Students seemed very motivated and excited to participate in the Reading Race activity, creating a lively classroom atmosphere. Only one group (Group D) showed slightly lower enthusiasm, which may have been due to less compact group dynamics.

Physical Involvement:

Physical engagement was also rated high, indicating that students were actively moving and engaging with the kinesthetic elements of the lesson. Groups generally participated fully in the physical aspects, although some (Groups D and E) showed slightly lower engagement, perhaps due to passive members or less coordinated teamwork.

Cooperation:

Teamwork was a strong aspect in most groups, with high scores reflecting effective collaboration and communication. However, the records show that some groups experienced problems such as dominant or passive members (Groups C and E) or lack of cohesion (Group D), indicating that although overall teamwork was very good, some groups could benefit from better group management.

Text Comprehension:

Overall comprehension of the text was good, with most groups demonstrating a good understanding of the material. One group (Group D) scored significantly lower (2), indicating the need for additional support or clearer instructions for certain groups to ensure all students reach the desired level of understanding.

Self-Regulation (Self-Confidence & Discipline):

Self-regulation, which includes self-confidence and discipline, was consistently rated as “good” (3) across all groups. Observation notes highlighted recurring challenges such as time management issues and uneven participation, indicating that while students generally adhered to rules and maintained discipline, there was room for improvement in fostering individual responsibility and consistent group discipline.

Overall interpretation of the observational data suggests that the Reading Race method was successful in fostering high levels of enthusiasm, physical engagement, teamwork, and text comprehension in most groups. The kinesthetic and collaborative nature of the activity effectively engaged students and encouraged active participation throughout the lesson. Enthusiasm received the highest mean score (3.83), reflecting

students' strong motivation and desire to participate. Physical engagement and teamwork both received solid mean ratings of 3.67, indicating that students were generally active and cooperative during the activity. Text comprehension also showed positive results with a mean score of 3.50, indicating that most groups understood the reading material well. However, self-regulation emerged as an area that needed further development, with a consistent rating of "good" (3.00) rather than "excellent." Challenges such as time management and uneven participation among group members were commonly observed, highlighting the need for strategies that increase individual accountability and promote equitable involvement within the group.

Qualitative insights from observational notes further contextualize these findings. While the majority of groups demonstrated active engagement, some encountered difficulties related to group dynamics, including dominant or passive members and occasional issues with time discipline. These observations highlight the importance of addressing strengths and areas for improvement to optimize the effectiveness of the Reading Race method in future implementations. To further illustrate these findings, the following table presents the mean scores for each aspect of engagement observed across student groups.

Table 1. Average Score per Aspect

Aspect	Average Score	Interpretation
Enthusiasm	3.83	Very good
Physical Ailment	3.67	Very good
Teamwork	3.67	Very good
Text Comprehension	3.50	Very good
Self-Regulation	3.00	Good

Interpretation rating scale:

3.25 – 4.00 = Very Good

2.50 – 3.24 = Good

1.75 – 2.49 = Quite Good

1.00 – 1.74 = Bad

Group observation data confirmed that the Reading Race activity effectively promoted high engagement across most dimensions, particularly in enthusiasm, physical engagement, teamwork, and text comprehension. Self-regulation remains an area for further development, highlighting the importance of balancing group and individual responsibility in a kinesthetic and collaborative learning environment.

Questionnaire Results

Analysis of a student engagement questionnaire, completed by 25 eighth-grade students after participating in the Kinesthetic Reading Race activity, revealed high levels of engagement across five key dimensions: enthusiasm, physical engagement, teamwork, text comprehension, and self-regulation (confidence and discipline). The questionnaire consisted of 20 Likert-scale items rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), grouped into four items per dimension. Two additional open-ended questions allowed students to express their opinions freely.

Table 2. Mean scores for each dimension of engagement

Dimensions of Engagement	Average Score	Interpretation
Enthusiasm	3.87	High Engagement
Physical Ailment	3.92	High Engagement
Teamwork	4.12	High Engagement
Text Comprehension	3.54	High Engagement
Self-Regulation	3.70	High Engagement

Interpretation Criteria:

4.20 – 5.00: Very High Engagement

3.40 – 4.19: High Engagement

2.60 – 3.39: Medium Engagement

1.80 – 2.59: Low Engagement

1.00 – 1.79: Very Low Engagement

Enthusiasm (3.87 – High Engagement):

Students reported that they felt motivated and excited during the Reading Race activity. The competitive and interactive nature of this method seemed to foster a positive attitude toward the reading task, thereby increasing their desire to actively participate.

Physical Involvement (3.92 – High Involvement):

In keeping with the kinesthetic learning style targeted by the intervention, students demonstrated high levels of physical activity and movement during the lesson. This physical engagement helped maintain their focus and made the reading process more dynamic and enjoyable.

Teamwork (4.12 – High Involvement):

The highest average score was achieved in teamwork, reflecting strong collaboration and communication among group members. The team-based format encouraged students to support each other, share responsibilities, and work together to complete the Reading Race challenge.

Text Comprehension (3.54 – High Engagement):

Students felt that the Reading Race method improved their comprehension of recount texts. Although this dimension scored slightly lower than the others, it still reflects a positive impact on their cognitive engagement with the reading material.

Self-Regulation (3.70 – High Involvement):

This dimension, which includes self-confidence and discipline, indicates that students feel more confident in their reading abilities and show increased focus and adherence to rules during activities. Such self-regulation is essential for maintaining engagement and effective learning.

The overall mean score across all dimensions was 3.83, indicating a high level of multidimensional engagement fostered by the Reading Race method. Open-ended responses further supported these quantitative findings, with many students expressing enjoyment, increased motivation, and appreciation for the active and collaborative learning environment.

This comprehensive analysis highlights the effectiveness of Reading Race as a kinesthetic team-based teaching strategy in promoting multidimensional student engagement in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

In addition to quantitative data, students provided valuable qualitative feedback through two open-ended questions. The majority of responses highlighted the fun and engaging nature of the Reading Race activity. Many students stated that the competitive element made reading more engaging and less monotonous than traditional lessons. For example, one student wrote, *"I enjoy going around and reading with my friends; it makes learning more fun."* Other comments, *"Teamwork helps me understand the text better because we discuss it together."*

Several students also noted that the physical movement involved helped them stay focused and engaged during the lesson. Several mentioned that the method increased their confidence in reading aloud and increased their discipline in following class rules. Several students suggested providing more time for discussion to deepen their understanding of the text, indicating a desire for further support in understanding the material.

Overall, the open-ended responses strengthened the quantitative findings by illustrating how the Reading Race method positively impacted students' motivation, collaboration, and self-regulation, thereby creating a supportive and dynamic learning environment.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the impact of a kinesthetic team-based Reading Race activity on various dimensions of student engagement among eighth-grade EFL students. Findings from classroom observations and student questionnaires consistently showed that the Reading Race method effectively promoted high levels of engagement in terms of enthusiasm, physical involvement, teamwork, text comprehension, and self-regulation.

Integration and Interpretation of Findings

The questionnaire data revealed that students perceived themselves as highly engaged, with mean scores across all dimensions falling within the "high engagement" category. Most notable was the strong teamwork dimension, which received the highest mean score (4.12 out of 5), reflecting students' positive experiences in collaborating in groups. This was consistent with the observational data, where most groups demonstrated excellent teamwork behaviors, such as supporting each other and communicating actively during the activity. The synergy between self-reported perceptions and observed behaviors strengthens the validity of the findings and suggests that the Reading Race team-based format effectively promoted cooperative learning and social engagement. Physical engagement was another dimension that scored highly across both datasets. Observations confirmed that students were actively moving and participating physically, which is important for kinesthetic learners who benefit from movement-based learning. The high enthusiasm scores from the questionnaire were consistent with the lively and energetic atmosphere seen during the observations, where students showed excitement and eagerness to participate. These results support existing literature emphasizing the

importance of incorporating physical activity to enhance engagement and motivation in language learning classrooms.

Text comprehension, although still rated high, scored slightly lower than the other dimensions. This suggests that although the Reading Race method positively influenced students' comprehension of recount texts, there is still room for further instructional support to deepen cognitive engagement. Observations indicated that all groups achieved good levels of comprehension, but some groups showed varying levels of participation and comprehension, perhaps due to differences in group dynamics or individual learner readiness. These findings highlight the need for balanced attention to the affective and cognitive aspects of engagement in kinesthetic learning activities.

Self-regulation, which includes self-confidence and discipline, was consistently rated as "good" in observations and "high" in questionnaires. While students generally showed increased self-confidence and adherence to rules, observation notes indicated occasional challenges such as uneven participation and time management issues in groups. These challenges are common in collaborative and movement-based learning environments and suggest that self-regulation skills remain critical to maximizing learning outcomes.

The convergence of quantitative and qualitative data underscores the effectiveness of Reading Race as an innovative teaching strategy that addresses multiple learning styles, particularly kinesthetic learners, by integrating movement, collaboration, and competition. This method not only engages students behaviorally and emotionally but also supports cognitive processes through interactive reading tasks. For English teachers in junior high schools in Indonesia, these findings suggest combining kinesthetic and team-based activities to enhance multidimensional engagement and create a more inclusive and motivating learning environment.

This study's reliance on a single intervention cycle and relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the lack of cognitive achievement data, such as worksheets or test scores, limits the ability to assess the impact on overall academic performance. Future research could expand the intervention to multiple cycles, include larger and more diverse samples, and integrate cognitive outcome measures to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of Reading Race's effectiveness.

Additionally, further research might explore strategies to enhance self-regulation in group activities, such as explicit training in time management and equitable participation, to enhance individual and collective engagement.

CONCLUSION

This Classroom Action Research has shown that the implementation of a kinesthetic team-based Reading Race activity significantly increased multidimensional student engagement among eighth-grade EFL students in a junior high school in Indonesia. The research findings, drawn from classroom observations and student questionnaires, revealed that Reading Race effectively fostered high levels of enthusiasm, physical engagement, teamwork, text comprehension, and self-regulation, which are essential components of active and meaningful learning.

Specifically, students showed increased enthusiasm and motivation, actively participating in dynamic and competitive reading tasks. The physical engagement

dimension confirmed that integrating movement into learning activities is well suited to kinesthetic learners, making reading lessons more engaging and enjoyable. Teamwork emerged as a particularly strong aspect, as the group-based format encouraged collaboration, communication, and mutual support, creating a positive social learning environment. Although text comprehension scores were slightly lower than the other dimensions, they still showed significant improvements in students' comprehension of recount texts through interactive reading. Self-regulation, which includes self-confidence and discipline, also improved, although observational data indicated the need for further development in managing time and equitable participation in groups.

The practical implications of this study emphasize the importance of combining kinesthetic and cooperative learning strategies to accommodate diverse learner needs and increase engagement in EFL classrooms. EFL teachers are encouraged to adopt similar movement-based and team-oriented activities to create more inclusive, motivating, and effective reading instruction that goes beyond traditional passive methods.

However, the study also acknowledged its limitations, including the short duration of the intervention and the lack of direct measures of cognitive achievement. Future research should consider longer-term implementation, larger sample sizes, and integration of academic performance data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of Reading Race. Additionally, exploring targeted strategies to strengthen self-regulation skills in group activities may further optimize student engagement and learning outcomes.

In conclusion, Reading Race is a promising pedagogical approach that not only stimulates students' behavioral and emotional engagement but also supports cognitive processes, thus contributing to a holistic and dynamic EFL learning experience.

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