

Dialogic Reading in Intensive Reading Lessons: Indonesian Secondary EFL Teachers' Perspectives



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ABSTRACT

Intensive reading in Indonesian secondary EFL classrooms is often shaped by teacher-centered instruction, literal comprehension tasks, and examination-oriented practices. These conditions may limit students' opportunities to engage critically and personally with texts. This qualitative descriptive study investigated how nine senior high school English teachers in Surabaya perceived and planned Dialogic Reading strategies in intensive reading lessons. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and instructional portfolio analysis, including lesson plans and teaching modules. The data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The study was informed by Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory and Whitehurst's Dialogic Reading framework, particularly the CROWD prompts and PEER sequence. The findings indicate that several teachers attempted to move from an efferent, text-centered reading orientation toward a more transactional approach. Distancing, open-ended, and Wh-prompts were used to connect texts with students' sociocultural experiences, while non-judgmental evaluation and peer expansion supported safer classroom interaction. The study suggests that Dialogic Reading can provide a low-resource pedagogical framework for making intensive reading more interactive, contextual, and emotionally supportive in Indonesian secondary EFL classrooms.

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INTRODUCTION

Intensive reading remains a fundamental component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. The ability to understand and critically evaluate written texts is not merely an academic requirement. It is a vital twenty-first-century skill necessary for global participation, digital literacy, and professional advancement. Yet, in many secondary school classrooms across Southeast Asia, reading instruction often appears to function more as a mechanical task than as an interactive experience. In countries such as Indonesia and Myanmar, EFL reading pedagogy is frequently shaped by national testing demands and rigid curriculum. Instruction heavily emphasizes literal translation, the rapid scanning of discrete facts, and meticulous grammatical dissection. While this routine helps students extract surface-level information quickly to answer multiple-choice questions, it rarely provides the kind of collaborative dialogue necessary to foster higher-order thinking, personal engagement, and genuine comprehension.

This dynamic highlights a systemic educational challenge within the ASEAN region. Tias and Tongjean (2024) argue that English Language Teaching (ELT) reforms across ASEAN member states

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often face difficulties when implemented in local classroom contexts. Frameworks meant to standardize and improve education frequently clash with contextual constraints, ranging from inadequate school infrastructure and massive class sizes to widely mixed learner proficiencies. For adolescent learners in both Indonesia and Myanmar, reading a foreign academic English text presents two paralyzing barriers. First, there is the intense linguistic anxiety of dealing with unfamiliar syntax and complex vocabulary. Second, students may encounter cultural barriers when texts present contexts that are distant from their lived experiences.

When educators rely on teacher-centered questioning patterns, such as asking display questions and immediately judging students' answers as right or wrong, students may become reluctant to participate. Their critical reasoning may be constrained by fear of public failure, while their engagement may become passive and compliance-oriented. The English text is viewed as an intimidating foreign object that must be structurally dissected, rather than a meaningful medium for communication or critical reflection.

To address this pedagogical bottleneck, the field of EFL instruction must redefine what it means to "read" in a foreign language. Reading should be viewed not only as cognitive decoding but also as a social and affective process. This study frames reading through the epistemological lens of Louise Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory, which posits that true comprehension does not reside solely on the printed page, nor entirely within the reader's mind (Rosenblatt, 1978). Instead, meaning happens dynamically when a reader's personal background, prior knowledge, and culture intersect with the text. To facilitate this "transaction" in a classroom filled with anxious teenagers, teachers need practical tools. They cannot simply command students to "understand."

This is where Dialogic Reading (DR) enters the pedagogical landscape. Originally developed by Grover Whitehurst for early childhood literacy, Dialogic Reading offers a structured, evidence-based methodology to hand the conversation over to the students (Whitehurst et al., 1988). By using specific interaction loops like the PEER sequence and cognitive triggers known as CROWD prompts, teachers can step down from being the sole providers of absolute truth and instead act as facilitators of shared inquiry. Dialogic reading fundamentally alters the power dynamics of the classroom, transitioning the environment from monologic transmission to dialogic co-construction.

While Dialogic Reading was originally developed for parent-child interactions and preschool literacy development, recent studies emphasize the necessity of adapting these frameworks for older learners. In contemporary EFL reading pedagogy, dialogic teaching has emerged as a crucial instructional approach to confront the monologic typical of standard language classrooms (Jocuns, 2021). Dialogic teaching centers on a principled conception of classroom talk to enhance pedagogical practice (Wotring, 2025). It encourages learners to engage in meaningful discussions, exchanging ideas to construct shared knowledge rather than relying on mere traditional decoding (Darsan et al., 2025). For example, when implemented in collaborative settings, dialogic teaching can significantly improve student learning outcomes and cognitive achievement, particularly in subjects that require deep conceptual understanding. Furthermore, fostering a dialogic learning community enables students to consider different viewpoints and helps overcome foreign language speaking anxiety by prioritizing meaning and communication over strict grammatical perfection (Jocuns, 2021).

As students progress into secondary education, the demands of adolescent literacy shift significantly. It requires the ability to navigate complex text and engage in critical thinking (Darsan et al., 2025). In secondary EFL contexts, adapting theoretical dialogic principles into prescriptive practices is essential for addressing the realities of the classroom (Wotring, 2025). Dialogic reading practices, such as collaborative problem-solving, open-ended questioning, and structured peer feedback, have been shown to increase students' reasoning and overall contributions (Darsan et al., 2025; Van Hoe et al., 2024). By framing peer feedback as a dialogue, students transition from being passive receivers to active participants. Stressing oral interaction and providing supportive scaffolding equip adolescents with psychological safety to articulate their ideas freely without fear of embarrassment (Van Hoe et al., 2024). This enables older language learners to explore multiple

perspectives and connect academic texts directly to their own lived experiences. While Dialogic Reading (DR) is robustly researched in L1 (first language) and early childhood contexts, its application and adaptation within adolescent EFL classrooms remain surprisingly underexplored.

Recent studies suggest that dialogic teaching strategies, such as probing, revoicing, and pressing for justification, can improve comprehension, reasoning, and engagement in secondary and EFL contexts (Howe & Abedin, 2013; Karen Murphy et al., 2022). While Dialogic Reading is robustly researched in L1 (first language) and early childhood contexts, its application and adaptation within adolescent EFL classrooms remain underexplored. In Indonesia, contemporary reading research often focuses on solitary metacognitive strategies, explicit grammar instruction, or individual problem-solving techniques (Chinpakdee & Gu, 2024; Husna et al., 2023; Ramadhani et al., 2023). What remains largely invisible is the practical, daily reasoning of the teachers themselves: why they ask questions the way they do, how they balance bottom-up linguistic scaffolding with higher-order intellectual prompts, and whether dialogic principles are already present in subtle ways within their daily instructional routines. By investigating how secondary school teachers naturally adapt and utilize dialogic principles in their planning and reported practices, this study aims to uncover the practical realities behind their teaching moves.

Furthermore, this study extends the relevance of these Indonesian findings across borders. Both Indonesia and Myanmar share similar educational hurdles: large, overcrowded class sizes, limited English exposure outside school walls, heavily exam-oriented cultures, and students who often feel highly anxious about speaking up in front of their peers. Recent scholarly research out of Myanmar points to significant, ongoing struggles in implementing new communicative curriculums, utilizing effective questioning strategies without causing student panic, and sustaining meaningful engagement in fragile digital learning environments (Oo & Habók, 2022; Robson, 2023; Tun, 2023).

Therefore, this study argues that Indonesian teachers' adaptation of Dialogic Reading may offer practical insights for EFL educators facing similar constraints in the broader ASEAN context. By examining the shared ASEAN struggles and the specific mechanics of dialogic pedagogy, this study seeks to provide a practical blueprint for reviving student engagement, reducing linguistic anxiety, and promoting critical literacy across transitioning educational landscapes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intensive Reading and the Transactional Stance

Intensive reading typically involves the careful, guided, and concentrated study of shorter texts, or selected passages of longer texts—with the specific aim of developing detailed comprehension and an awareness of linguistic features. It operates on the premise that deep, focused reading builds the foundational vocabulary and syntactic awareness necessary for broader language acquisition. In many EFL contexts, including Indonesia and Myanmar, intensive reading is traditionally taught by terms of an Efferent Stance (Rosenblatt, 1978).

However, for reading instruction to be truly effective, memorable, and capable of fostering critical thinking, it must transition to an Aesthetic or Transactional Stance. In this state, the reader's attention is centered directly on what they are living through during the reading event. Students connect the text to their personal emotions, social realities, and prior experiences, experiencing the language rather than just translating it. The reader and the text are viewed as mutually shaping entities; the text guides the reader's thoughts, but the reader's unique background colors the interpretation of the text. Achieving this transaction in an EFL classroom requires the teacher to deliberately link micro-level language focus (like vocabulary and grammar) to macro-level meaning-making. It demands a pedagogy of engagement rather than a pedagogy of transmission.

The Architecture of Dialogic Reading: CROWD and PEER

Whitehurst's Dialogic Reading framework provides the practical, interactional mechanics to achieve this transactional goal (Whitehurst et al., 1988). Dialogic Reading fundamentally shifts the classroom dynamic from a monologue (where the teacher lectures and the students listen) to a dialogue (where meaning is co-constructed). It operates on two main mechanisms:

CROWD Prompts

These are the targeted questions used by the teacher to initiate and deepen the conversation, moving deliberately beyond simple “yes/no” binaries that often kill classroom momentum. This illustrates how these cognitive triggers are operationalized in recent EFL and dialogic research by these studies (Jocuns, 2021; Van Hoe et al., 2024). First, Completion prompts require teachers to leave a blank at the end of a sentence for students to complete. This provides a low-stakes opportunity for students to participate and builds vocabulary confidence. In recent dialogic learning, this manifests as structured starting sentence that students must complete to formulate critical thoughts. For instance, to help students generate constructive peer feedback without feeling overwhelmed, they are provided with incomplete sentences to finish, such as, “You can make your research question clearer by... because...”. Second is called *Recall*, when the teacher asks students to remember specific plot points, character details, or facts. This secures a baseline understanding of the text before moving to complex analysis. For example, in an EFL task, a teacher utilizes low-complexity recall questions like, “who cooks in your family?” to activate prior knowledge and establish basic context. Next is *Open-Ended*. At this stage, the teacher asks students to describe scenes, motivations, or concepts in their own words. Since there is no single “correct” answer, this prompt fosters expressive fluency.

In classroom practice, this includes authentic questions that require students to evaluate media or texts, such as asking, “How are women and men portrayed in the commercials”. Another important point is *Wh-Prompts*. By utilizing Who, What, Where, When, and Why to trigger analytical reasoning and force students to justify their thoughts. For instance, dialogic framework frequently uses these prompts to elicit collaborative reasoning and peer feedback, such as asking, “What do you think of this source...”. Lastly, *distancing* which is considered the most advanced and critical prompt in the framework. Distancing actively asks students to bridge the events or concepts in the text with their own sociocultural reality outside the classroom. It asks the student, “How does this relate to your life?”. Real world applications of this prompt require students to step into the narrative context from their own perspective, such as asking, “Are you happy with this advertisement, as a guy? Would you buy this product?”.

PEER Sequence (Interactional Loop)

While CROWD provides the sparks, the PEER sequence is the conversational architecture used to manage classroom discourse and sustain the dialogue over time. To illustrate it, this sequence is actively implemented in modern EFL and dialogic classroom according to several studies (Darsan et al., 2025; Jocuns, 2021; Van Hoe et al., 2024; Wotring, 2025). The first in the sequence is *Prompt*. The teacher initiates the interaction (using a selected CROWD prompt). For example, the teacher presents open-ended question or visual media to trigger students' background knowledge prior to a reading task. In collaborative or digital settings, this can also involve providing students with structured starting sentence from a dynamic question bank to help them confidently initiate peer feedback. Second, *Evaluate*. The teacher evaluates the student's response. Crucially, in a dialogic classroom, this evaluation is intentionally supportive and non-judgmental. It avoids harsh corrections, thereby keeping the communication flow open and lowering the student's affective filter.

Instead of giving immediate right-or-wrong judgments, the teacher asks clarifying questions to explore the reasoning behind students' answers. For example, students might use structured assignments to safely evaluate peer work and negotiate disagreements using polite reflective responses.

Third, *Expand*. The teacher (or increasingly, the peers) expands on the student's response by adding more information, connecting ideas, or correcting the language naturally through rephrasing. This step models complex thinking and delegates intellectual heavy-lifting back to the room. For example, teachers place students in heterogeneous discussion groups where advanced learners act as peer-tutors, assisting struggling classmates by translating difficult vocabulary or elaborating on complex concepts. This allows learners to collaboratively build upon each other's ideas. Last in the sequence is *Repeat*. The teacher encourages the students to internalize the expanded response, building linguistic habituation and confidence. For example, students are asked to reflect collaboratively on the feedback they received and summarize the newly expanded concepts. Following the dialogic exchange, students actively revise their initial inquiry outputs or written drafts to demonstrate their internalized understanding of the new language and ideas.

Shared Struggles in Indonesia and Myanmar

When we look at the broader regional context, Myanmar's EFL landscape mirrors many of the exact pedagogical and systemic challenges seen in Indonesia, making cross-border pedagogical exchange highly relevant and necessary. Tias and Tongjean (2024) asserted that while ASEAN nations continuously attempt to align their educational policies with international frameworks (like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, or CEFR) to boost graduate competitiveness in the global job market, the actual implementation is consistently hampered by local realities. Teachers often find themselves trapped in a pedagogical compromise, caught between ambitious, top-down government policies and the bottom-up realities of low student proficiency, inadequate facilities, and massive class sizes.

This friction is vividly documented in recent empirical studies from Myanmar. Tun (2023) investigated the implementation of a newly introduced communicative English curriculum in Myanmar primary and secondary schools. The study found a severe, systemic disconnect between policy intentions and classroom realities. Teachers, burdened by heavy workloads, administrative duties, and brief, inadequate cascade-model training, frequently reverted to the traditional Grammar-Translation Method. Classrooms were dominated by choral reading aloud and rote memorization. Tun also noted that teachers harbored strong, limiting beliefs that their students were simply "not ready" for interactive group work or critical thinking tasks, leading them to omit communicative activities entirely because they feared losing control of the classroom or failing to finish the syllabus.

Furthermore, the recent shift toward online and hybrid learning amid political, social, and infrastructural fragility in Myanmar has introduced entirely new layers of educational complexity. Robson (2023) explored online Zoom-based ESL instruction for Myanmar adolescents and highlighted intense affective barriers that destroy dialogue. These included anxiety-induced "camera-off" behavior, unpredictable connectivity, and technological disruptions that fracture communication. Yet, Robson also found a critical silver lining: when volunteer teachers stepped away from rigid, grammar-focused lectures and instead employed scaffolded, open-ended questioning and meaning-focused tasks, learners actively engaged, negotiated meaning, and participated despite the surrounding instability.

To bridge the gap between traditional rote learning and actual, critical comprehension, structured questioning is the key. Oo and Habó (2022) examined a Reflection-Based Questioning Approach (RBQA) among Grade-9 students in Myanmar. Their quasi-experimental study proved that deliberate questioning strategies significantly improved students' reading achievement scores. However, they also noted critical weaknesses in how typical teachers apply questions: teachers frequently failed to provide adequate wait time for students to process foreign vocabulary, asked too many complex questions at once causing cognitive overload, and relied entirely on teacher-led evaluation without allowing for peer interaction or collaborative meaning-making.

Dialogic Reading, with its specific, structured emphasis on peer-expansion and non-judgmental evaluation (the PEER sequence), offers a natural, evolved solution to the very challenges identified

across these Myanmar contexts. By examining how Indonesian educators navigate similar hurdles to foster active dialogue, we can extract practical, tested strategies for regional application.

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative descriptive design. According to Creswell et al (2018), qualitative research aims to explore and deeply understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem through rich, descriptive data. This study explored teachers' perspectives and pedagogical reasoning without imposing experimental or survey-based constraints. This approach allowed the researchers to investigate not just what teachers do in their classrooms, but why they do it, providing the thick description necessary to understand complex educational phenomena.

Participants

The study was conducted in urban Secondary High Schools located in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. The participants were nine English teachers, labeled Teacher A to Teacher I, who regularly taught intensive reading lessons at the senior high school level, Grades 10–12. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which emphasizes choosing rich, informative cases that can illuminate the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2012). The inclusion criteria required participants to have at least two years of teaching experience and active, daily involvement in teaching English reading comprehension. The selected teachers represented a wide spectrum of experience, from novice educators (2 years of experience) to highly experienced veterans (20 years of experience), providing a diverse and comprehensive range of pedagogical insights.

Table 1. *Demographic profiles of the teachers*

Participant	Gender	Teaching Experience
Teacher A	Female	2 Years
Teacher B	Male	11 Years
Teacher C	Female	7 Years
Teacher D	Female	5 Years
Teacher E	Male	10 Years
Teacher F	Female	15 Years
Teacher G	Female	20 Years
Teacher H	Female	5 Years
Teacher I	Male	3 Years

The sample of nine participants was considered sufficient because data saturation was achieved. In qualitative research, saturation dictate that data collection may cease when new data no longer yields additional insights or new themes. During the data collection and analysis process, thematic saturation occurred by the seventh and eighth interviews. No new pedagogical perspectives, interactional strategies, or challenges regarding the implementation of the dialogic reading framework emerged. Consequently, the nine participants provided a sufficiently rich redundant, and comprehensive dataset to fully illuminate the phenomenon and answer the research questions.

Data Collection

Data were gathered systematically through two primary techniques to ensure depth and triangulation: in-depth semi-structured interviews and instructional portfolio analysis. The interviews, lasting between 45 to 60 minutes each, were conducted individually and audio-recorded with explicit participant consent. A semi-structured format was chosen because it allowed the researcher to follow a predefined thematic guide while maintaining the flexibility to ask spontaneous, probing follow-up questions based on the teachers' unique responses. The interview protocol focused on three thematic areas derived from the theoretical framework: (1) transactional reading objectives, (2) CROWD

prompts, which explored how teachers used questioning types to trigger reasoning, reduce anxiety, and connect texts to students' realities, and (3) the PEER sequence, which examined how teachers managed discourse, handled incorrect answers, and expanded students' ideas without discouraging participation.

To ensure the verbal data was grounded in actual pedagogical practice rather than just theoretical idealism or wishful thinking, we conducted a rigorous portfolio analysis of the teachers' official Lesson Plans (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP)* or *Modul Ajar*). The documents were examined for evidence of planned dialogic elements, questioning strategies, assessment rubrics, and interactional design.

Instruments

As in most qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of the data collection (Yin, 2018). To assist the researcher in gathering systematic data, two primary instruments were utilized. First, an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions was prepared to explore teachers' perspectives based on the theoretical framework. Meanwhile, a portfolio checklist was developed to systematically gather the teachers' Lesson Plans (RPP). It focused on identifying written evidence of planned dialogic elements, such as the inclusion of authentic questions and interactive learning steps that align with the PEER and CROWD frameworks.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using an interactive model comprising three concurrent flows of activity: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2014). First, the audio recordings were meticulously transcribed and translated into English. The researchers read through the transcripts multiple times to code the data, filtering out irrelevant information and highlighting key statements related to dialogic reading strategies. Second, the coded data were organized using NVivo 12 software. A Matrix Coding Query was generated to visually map the distribution of themes across the nine participants, allowing for a clear cross-case comparison. Finally, the researchers synthesized the patterns within the matrix to form a cohesive narrative that directly answered the research questions.

Trustworthiness of the Data

To ensure strict credibility, dependability, and confirmability, and to mitigate social desirability bias (the tendency for teachers to report what sounds "good" rather than what they actually do), we employed methodological triangulation (Nowell et al., 2017). We constantly cross-referenced the teachers' subjective verbal claims from the interviews with the objective, documented evidence in their lesson plans. For example, if a teacher claimed to heavily rely on multimodal distancing prompts, we verified this by locating the specific activity and media links in their submitted *Modul Ajar*. Furthermore, member checking was utilized; during the interviews, the researcher frequently summarized and restated the teachers' points to ensure their pedagogical ideologies were accurately captured and interpreted.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the study. Participation among the teachers was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participating educators. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Individual data were not disclosed and were used solely for research purposes. Permission was obtained from the respective schools and the English Education Department to access the teachers' instructional portfolios (Lesson Plans/Modul Ajar) and to conduct audio-recorded interviews. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To understand how Dialogic Reading actually operates in the real classroom, we must examine the daily, practical reasoning of the teachers on the ground. The data reveals that implementing this strategy is not a rigid, mechanical routine learned from a textbook. Instead, it is a highly adaptive pedagogical process deeply influenced by the emotional climate of the classroom and the specific needs of adolescent learners. To provide a structural overview before diving into the narrative nuances, Table 4.1 presents a synthesized matrix illustrating the dominant dialogic components and reading objectives for each participant.

Table 2. *Matrix coding of Teachers' preference in Dialogic Reading Strategy*

Participants	Reading Objectives	CROWD Prompts	PEER Sequence	Overall Strategy Preference
Teacher A	Transactional / Aesthetic	Distancing & Wh-Prompts	Prompt & Expand (Media integration)	CROWD Dominant
Teacher B	Transactional / Aesthetic	Distancing	Evaluate (Non-judgmental)	CROWD Dominant
Teacher C	Transactional / Aesthetic	Open-ended	Evaluate (Non-judgmental)	Balanced
Teacher D	Transactional / Aesthetic	Distancing & Open-ended	Prompt (Schema activation)	CROWD Dominant
Teacher E	Efferent (Structural)	Distancing & Wh-Prompts	Expand (Contextualization)	Balanced
Teacher F	Transactional / Aesthetic	Recall & Completion	Repeat (Habituation)	PEER Dominant
Teacher G	Efferent (Main Idea)	Recall & Wh-Prompts	Expand (Chaining via peer-tutors)	PEER Dominant
Teacher H	Efferent (Main Idea)	Recall	Expand (Chaining) & Repeat	PEER Dominant
Teacher I	Efferent (Prior Knowledge)	Wh-Prompts	Prompt (Schema activation)	Balanced

Based on the matrix, teachers' perspectives are elaborated in the following subsections. The findings are organized around three core themes that emerged organically from the data: the shift in reading objectives, the strategic use of CROWD prompts to build cultural bridges, and the subversion of traditional classroom hierarchies through the PEER sequence. Throughout this discussion, we integrate the theoretical underpinnings of these actions and draw explicit, actionable parallels to the Myanmar EFL context to explore how these Indonesian insights can serve as a practical, cross-border blueprint.

Teachers' Perspectives on Reading Objective

In many Southeast Asian classrooms, intensive reading is heavily shaped by the immense gravity of high-stakes testing and rigid university entrance exams. Historically, this has positioned instruction within an efferent stance, in which reading is reduced to fact-finding (Rosenblatt, 1978). The text is treated merely as a container of data, and the student's only job is to extract that data successfully. We observed this lingering systemic pressure in a few of our participants. Teacher E, for instance, noted her primary goal was highly structural and analytical: "My main goal... is often so that the students can analyze the social function, then the structure, and the language features of each text genre itself" (Interview, Teacher E). Similarly, Teacher H relied heavily on rapid scanning, emphasizing the need for students to simply "find the main idea, what the text is actually about" (Interview, Teacher H). When the curriculum demands absolute efficiency, the text becomes an object to dissect rather than a voice to converse with.

However, the most crucial and transformative finding of this research was the profound pedagogical resistance exhibited by the majority of the teachers. Educators like Teachers A and B acutely realized that mechanical decoding is woefully insufficient for preparing adolescents for the

complexities of the real world. They actively pushed their classrooms away from the efferent trap and toward a *Transactional Stance*. For these teachers, true reading comprehension is not measured by multiple-choice accuracy or grammatical perfection, but by how the text connects to a student's lived reality and alters their perspective. Teacher A captured this sentiment perfectly, emphasizing depth over mechanics, stating "My main goal is for them to not just read the words, but to comprehend the meaning behind the text. So the goal is not just correct pronunciation, but understanding the meaning, both explicit and implicit" (Interview, Teacher A).

Teacher B provided a striking example when discussing a specific expository text focused on digital literacy. She argued that comprehension means real-world application and behavioral change:

"In my opinion, as long as the topic is relatable to them, I think it will push them to read, and then it will push them to apply what the text says in their own real lives... For example, with digital literacy... if they apply it, they question, 'Is this a hoax or not?... Should I click it?'" Well, I feel that can already be an indication that learning is beneficial to them" (Interview, Teacher B).

This demonstrates a highly conscious epistemological shift. The teachers did not position students as passive recipients of unfamiliar English texts; rather, they connected the texts to students' daily lives. By asking questions aimed at correlating the text with personal experiences, teachers like Teacher A and B are successfully operationalizing Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory inside the classroom, combining with the triangulation of interview and instructional portfolios. They are proving that in an EFL context, reading comprehension cannot organically begin on the printed pages of a textbook. It must first begin in the students' real lives. Distancing Prompts force the students to summon their own personal schema to the forefront of their minds, preparing them to merge their identity with the text. Ultimately, CROWD Prompts serve as the absolute catalysts that ignite this transactional event, proving that deep reading comprehension is achieved not by forcing the student to step into the world of the text, but by actively dragging the text into the world of the student.

For educators in Myanmar, this mindset shift is the fundamental prerequisite for dialogic instruction. Tun (2023) noted that Myanmar curriculum pressures, large class sizes, and massive workloads often force teachers to revert to grammar-translation and rote reading aloud out of a fear that students will not absorb the material if it is not spoon-fed to them. However, if the ultimate goal of the lesson remains purely efferent, the students will remain passive receptors. Tias and Tongjean (2024) reminded that while top-down national policies dictate *what* to teach, it is the teacher's agency in the classroom that determines *how* it is received. Moving from an efferent to a transactional mindset allows teachers to view student experiences and local contexts not as annoying distractions from the lesson, but as the very foundation of reading comprehension.

The Cognitive Dynamics of CROWD

In a typical EFL context, asking students to simply "read the passage and answer the questions below" often results in a heavy, defensive silence. Students face a paralyzing dual barrier: the linguistic anxiety of translating foreign syntax and the cultural alienation of reading about Western-centric topics (like seasons in Europe or foreign historical figures) that hold no relevance to them. To break this silence, the teachers in this study utilized CROWD prompts not merely as traditional comprehension checks, but as vital psychological and sociocultural bridges (Whitehurst et al., 1988).

Interestingly, among all the CROWD strategies, *Distancing Prompts* emerged as the absolute favourite and most effective tool. Teachers recognized that to neutralize the intimidation factor of English, they had to anchor the lesson in highly familiar, local territory first. When teaching narrative texts, Teacher B deliberately bypassed traditional, formal storybook introductions ("Once upon a time..."). Her lesson plans and interview revealed that she tapped directly into current social media algorithms to hook her students, asking: "Have you ever seen POV videos on TikTok, like 'POV Cinderella as a Gen-Z'?" (Interview, Teacher B). The portfolio analysis strongly corroborates this

pedagogical goal. Teacher B's lesson plan explicitly outlines a core activity requiring students to watch and compare a classic 1950 Cinderella story with a modern 2004 Cinderella story involving cellphones and emails. This formally documented activity uses distancing prompts to bridge the gap between classic literature and modern reality, capturing the students' attention by grounding the text in familiar digital concepts.

By challenging them to re-imagine classic folklore through the lens of modern digital culture, she instantly captured their attention. Similarly, Teacher C grounded a rigid expository text about the controversial nature of graffiti by asking his students to discuss local street art, specifically, the anniversary murals of the local Surabaya football club, Persebaya. He noted that by doing this, "the students' curiosity emerges... they want to know what the reading text contains." (Teacher C)

By initiating the lesson with these distancing questions, the teachers successfully lowered the students' affective filters. Students' cognitive resources may be less constrained by the pressure of decoding unfamiliar syntax without contextual support; instead, it is freed up to engage in the highly rewarding, confidence-building task of sharing personal narratives and opinions. This strategy holds immense inspirational value for the Myanmar context. As Robson (2023) observed, maintaining engagement in online, crisis-affected classrooms requires adaptable, low-bandwidth strategies that connect deeply with learners on a personal level. When students are stressed by external sociopolitical factors, abstract academic texts feel entirely irrelevant. Myanmar educators can easily replicate distancing prompts by replacing alienating textbook scenarios with local cultural touchstones. Instead of discussing a foreign topic, a teacher might tie a descriptive text to the bustling dynamics of a Yangon tea shop, or relate a narrative text to local Burmese folklore. This localized distancing validates students' cultural capital and sparks an intrinsic willingness to engage, proving that deep reading comprehension must begin in the students' real lives before moving to the printed page.

Simultaneously, the Indonesian teachers remained highly empathetic to their students' linguistic limitations. When complex *Open-Ended* or *Wh-Prompts* caused students to freeze, they seamlessly deployed *Recall* and *Completion* prompts as linguistic safety nets. Teacher F explicitly noted guiding her students by allowing them to express their thoughts in their native language first, before helping them translate and complete the sentence in English: "When they read I slip in the question, 'What is it about? It's a story from where?' ... If they can't answer with English... I will help them answer in English." (Interview, Teacher F).

This proves that in a truly dialogic classroom, the goal is to keep the conversation alive. Translanguaging (the fluid use of multiple languages) is not seen as a failure of English immersion, but as a necessary, supportive scaffold to maintain the dialogue and ensure that the students' voices are heard.

The enactment of the PEER Sequence

A common limitation of traditional reading instruction is the dominance of teacher-centered interaction patterns. This routine, in which the teacher asks questions, expects immediate answers, and evaluates correctness, may turn reading comprehension into a high-pressure activity. The findings deeply explore how teachers used the PEER sequence, originally conceptualized by Whitehurst et al. (1988), to consciously dismantle this rigid hierarchy and build a democratic classroom environment. This transformation was most radical during the *Evaluate* and *Expand* stages. In a normal setting, an incorrect answer is met with immediate correction. However, the teachers in this study consciously subverted this expectation to protect their students' fragile confidence. Teacher B adopted a strictly non-judgmental approach during evaluation, refusing to use negative verdicts:

"I never judge a student's answer by saying 'that's wrong' or 'that's incorrect'... I prefer asking, 'Why did you come up with that answer? What is your reason?' ... I don't dare shoot down a student's answer, because then they certainly wouldn't want to speak up again." (Interview, Teacher B)

Teacher C took this emotional safeguarding a step further. He understood that the fear of judgment often comes not just from the teacher, but from peers. He established a strict social contract at the beginning of the semester that explicitly forbade peer mockery:

“I always emphasize having a mutual agreement with the students... That when there are people or your friends speaking English, they shouldn’t be laughed at, judging them. If it happens, I usually give a minus grade” (Interview, Teacher C). By enforcing this rule, he eradicated the paralyzing fear of public embarrassment, allowing students to take linguistic risks.

Furthermore, the *Expand* stage was utilized as the primary method for democratizing the classroom. Instead of acting as the sole source of truth and answering every question themselves, teachers employed interactive “chaining” and “bouncing” techniques. Teacher G decentralized her authority by mobilizing proficient students to act as peer-tutors, formally requiring them to socialize and explain concepts to middle and lower-level students:

“For those who are already proficient, they will definitely help those who are not as proficient... I mobilize them, ‘What is the idea there?’. Once they have found it, they must be able to socialize with the middle and low-level kids.” (Interview, Teacher G)

This specific practice offers a highly effective, low-resource solution for Myanmar’s EFL classrooms. Tun (2023) highlighted that Myanmar teachers often avoid group work entirely because they hold beliefs that students are “too noisy,” “unable to control themselves,” or simply not proficient enough to help one another. This leads back to endless, teacher-led choral drilling. However, by intentionally stepping down from the authoritative podium and delegating intellectual responsibility to the students through structured peer-chaining, teachers can actually manage large, mixed-proficiency classes far more effectively.

Oo & Habók (2022) found that reflection-based questioning significantly improved reading scores in Myanmar, but they warned of a critical flaw: teachers often fail to provide adequate wait time, rushing to answer their own questions when faced with silence. The PEER sequence directly addresses this. By utilizing non-judgmental evaluation and bouncing questions back to the peers, the teacher removes the pressure of needing the “perfect” answer immediately.

Furthermore, as Robson (2023) noted, intense anxiety and “camera-off” behavior heavily disrupt online learning in crisis-affected areas. Establishing a strictly non-judgmental evaluation space and clear “no-mockery” rules can rapidly build the emotional safety needed to coax anxious students back into the dialogue, whether they are sitting in a physical classroom in Surabaya or logging into a Zoom room in Mandalay. The PEER sequence can therefore be understood not merely as a turn-taking technique but as a structure for redistributing participation in classroom discourse.

International Pedagogical Implications for the ASEAN EFL Landscape

Ultimately, the lived experiences of these Indonesian teachers reveal a fundamental truth about teaching reading in Southeast Asia: achieving critical comprehension requires a flawless synergy between cognitive stimulation and emotional safety. CROWD prompts are the absolute prerequisite to ignite the students’ willingness to care about the text, while the PEER sequence provides the supportive interactional architecture that keeps their voices alive.

Oo & Habók (2022) already proved that reflection-based questioning improves reading scores for Myanmar students. Dialogic Reading simply takes this a step further. It refines the questioning process, ensuring that the dialogue is culturally anchored (through Distancing) and emotionally secure (through Non-judgmental Evaluation and Peer Expansion). For our collaborative partners in Myanmar, and the broader ASEAN educational community, this study proves that transforming an intensive reading lesson does not require expensive technology, brand-new textbooks, or entirely overhauled curriculums. It simply requires a pedagogical shift, treating the student’s lived experience as the ultimate key to unlocking the foreign text, and valuing their voice over their grammatical accuracy.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of Dialogic Reading in secondary EFL classrooms is not a rigid, prescriptive method, but a highly adaptive, deeply empathetic pedagogical process. The participating Indonesian teachers successfully moved away from traditional, teacher-centered decoding and rote translation toward a student-centered Transactional Stance. Through their reported practices and documented lesson plans, teachers strategically utilized CROWD prompts particularly Distancing prompt. Through the PEER sequence, teachers deliberately dismantled their own traditional dominance, utilizing non-judgmental evaluation and structured peer-chaining to foster an emotionally safe, highly democratic classroom environment.

Achieving critical comprehension in an EFL setting requires a flawless synergy: cognitive stimulation to ignite the students' intrinsic willingness to care, and supportive interactional structures to ensure they feel safe enough to speak. By contextualizing these findings alongside recent research from Myanmar regarding curriculum struggles, questioning techniques, and fragile digital learning environments, it is evident that Dialogic Reading serves as a powerful, low-resource pedagogical blueprint for the broader ASEAN region.

For educators operating in transitioning, low-resource, or fragile contexts, this study highlights an indispensable truth: emotional scaffolding is just as critical as linguistic scaffolding. Students' reluctance to participate may reflect limited textual relevance and insufficient psychological safety rather than limited ability. As this study relied on teacher perspectives and instructional portfolios, future research should incorporate longitudinal classroom observations to measure the direct impact of dialogic reading on students' reading comprehension test scores across diverse ASEAN contexts.

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