

Teaching German Reading Comprehension (*Leseverstehen*) at the A1 Level in Indonesia: Challenges, Literature Insights, and Pedagogical Implications

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to examine and address the multifaceted challenges in teaching German reading comprehension (*Leseverstehen*) at the A1 level to Indonesian learners. Adopting an experience-based reflective methodology, it draws on classroom experience and literature to identify hurdles across linguistic, cultural, cognitive, pedagogical, technical, motivational, and assessment domains. Indonesian beginners face fundamental linguistic differences between German and Indonesian, unfamiliar cultural references in texts, and often lack effective reading strategies. Limited instructional time and resources, first-language interference, and low learner motivation further impede comprehension. Moreover, traditional assessment practices are frequently inadequate for evaluating A1-level reading progress. In response, the paper discusses pedagogical implications for practice in Indonesia. It advocates a holistic approach to A1 *Leseverstehen* instruction – integrating explicit vocabulary scaffolding, culturally contextualised texts, strategy-based reading training, diversified media use, and formative assessment – to mitigate these challenges. This approach aligns with research emphasising that conscious application of reading strategies at the A1 level is vital for building foundational comprehension, expanding vocabulary, and enhancing cultural understanding. Ultimately, the study seeks to transform beginner reading lessons from a daunting exercise into an engaging, meaningful learning experience that improves basic skills and broadens learners' cultural horizons.

KEYWORDS: A1 level (CEFR); German language teaching; Indonesian learners; *Leseverstehen*; reading comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension (*Leseverstehen*) is a fundamental skill in foreign language learning, enabling learners to access information, acquire vocabulary, and develop other language competencies. In the context of German as a foreign language (*Deutsch als Fremdsprache, DaF*) at the A1 level (beginner proficiency under the Common European Framework of Reference), reading typically involves simple texts such as short announcements, timetables, personal descriptions, or basic messages. Despite the apparent simplicity of these texts, teaching and learning reading comprehension at the A1 level can be challenging, especially in environments like Indonesia where German is not widely spoken. Mastering *Leseverstehen* at this level is crucial: it not only provides immediate practical benefits (e.g. understanding basic written information) but also lays the groundwork for higher-level language skills. Research has highlighted that reading proficiency supports overall language development, reinforcing vocabulary acquisition, grammar knowledge, and even cultural understanding. In other words, learning to read effectively in German can enrich students' communicative competence by exposing them to new words and grammatical structures in context, thereby reinforcing writing and speaking skills as well.

However, beginner learners in Indonesia face an array of difficulties when approaching German texts. First, the linguistic distance between Indonesian and German is substantial. German's complex grammar (e.g. case endings, gendered nouns, verb conjugations and placement) and lengthy compound words differ starkly from Indonesian grammar, which is more analytical and lacks inflection. Such differences mean that decoding even a basic sentence in German can be an intimidating task for A1 learners. Furthermore, learners' limited vocabulary at the start (typically a few hundred words) often falls short when confronted with unfamiliar words in texts, slowing down comprehension. Second, cultural and contextual gaps can impede understanding. Texts designed for beginner German learners often contain references to everyday life in German-speaking countries – from *Weihnachtsmarkt* (Christmas market) to *Biergarten* (Beer Garden) – that Indonesian learners may not readily relate to. Without familiarity or prior knowledge of these concepts, students struggle to infer meaning, highlighting the role of cultural background

knowledge in reading comprehension. Third, cognitive factors and reading strategies come into play. Novice readers tend to adopt an inefficient approach, such as translating word-for-word or reading in a linear, laborious fashion without skimming or scanning for main ideas. They often lack awareness of strategies that more experienced readers employ, and their heavy cognitive load in juggling new vocabulary and grammar leads to fatigue and frustration. Additionally, affective factors like motivation and anxiety are crucial at this stage. Many Indonesian students take German due to curriculum requirements (extrinsic motivation) and may not have intrinsic interest, which can result in a lack of engagement with reading texts. If the materials seem irrelevant or overly difficult, learners' motivation can further wane. Anxiety about misreading or the perception that "German is hard" – reinforced by unfamiliar letters like *ß* or *ü* and long words – can create a fear of reading that hampers performance.

All these challenges are interrelated and can compound the difficulty of teaching reading comprehension to beginners. In Indonesia, German is typically taught in high schools or universities with limited contact hours, making it even more pressing to address these issues effectively. Without targeted pedagogical interventions, learners risk developing poor reading habits, shallow comprehension, or even aversion to reading German texts. Indeed, prior studies have documented that beginner learners of German and other foreign languages frequently struggle with reading due to limited vocabulary and lack of effective strategies. For instance, Julaikah (2018) observes that many novice German learners face difficulties understanding texts because of minimal lexicon, low motivation to read, and heterogeneous skill levels in the classroom. These observations align with broader research in foreign language pedagogy: Bruen [2] found that beginner university students of languages (German, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese) employ a range of reading strategies, but often need guidance to use them effectively. In short, the challenges are well-recognized, and there is a clear need for instructors to adopt informed, research-based approaches to help students overcome these hurdles.

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges in teaching German reading comprehension at the A1 level to Indonesian learners and to propose pedagogical implications drawn from relevant literature. The discussion is structured as follows: first, an overview of insights from literature on foreign language reading comprehension is presented, highlighting the nature of reading as an active, multi-dimensional process and the importance of strategy instruction. Next, the specific challenges encountered in this context are examined in detail, categorized into linguistic, cultural, cognitive, pedagogical, technical, interference-related, motivational, and evaluative domains. Each category of challenges is expanded with academic perspectives and examples. Finally, the paper explores pedagogical implications and recommendations to address these challenges, integrating scholarly suggestions with practical strategies for the classroom. By critically combining the content of a research seminar presentation of ours *Tantangan dalam Pengajaran Leseverstehen* (Challenges in Teaching *Leseverstehen*) (30.10.2025; Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia) with empirical findings and theoretical insights from the literature, the paper seeks to offer a scholarly yet practical guide for educators in improving reading comprehension instruction for beginning German learners in Indonesia.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading Comprehension as an Active, Multi-dimensional Process: Contemporary theories of reading in a foreign language view it not as a passive skill of mere decoding but as an active, constructive process involving multiple layers of competence. Mardanova [3] emphasizes that foreign language reading competence is inherently multifaceted, comprising at least linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural dimensions. The linguistic dimension refers to the reader's command of the language code – grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and orthography – which forms the basis for decoding the text. A solid linguistic foundation is indispensable; without it, even basic comprehension is impeded. At the same time, reading engages cognitive processes such as memory, attention, and inference. Readers must actively construct meaning, relate text information to prior knowledge, and infer unstated implications. This cognitive dimension means that two readers with the same linguistic knowledge might understand a text differently depending on their strategic reading skills and mental engagement. Additionally, the socio-cultural dimension of reading highlights that understanding a text often requires knowledge of the context in which it was produced – cultural references, genre conventions, and pragmatic cues. Readers bring their world knowledge and cultural schemata to interpret nuances in the text. For foreign language readers, gaps in cultural background can lead to misinterpretation or missing the subtler shades of meaning. Sladovniková [4], for example, underlines that comprehension is significantly enhanced when learners possess intercultural competence – familiarity with the target culture's practices and the ability to orient themselves between their own culture and the foreign context of the text. In essence, reading in a second language is a dynamic interaction between the reader and the text, where meaning is co-constructed by decoding linguistic signs, applying cognitive strategies, and contextualizing information within a cultural framework.

This active view of reading marks a departure from older pedagogical models. Historically, under grammar-translation approaches, reading was often treated as a secondary exercise aimed at reinforcing grammar and vocabulary, rather than a skill in its own right. Texts were translated sentence by sentence, focusing on form over meaning, and students were rarely encouraged to infer or interpret beyond literal translation. By the late 20th century, influenced by communicative language teaching and cognitive psychology, scholars began to treat reading as an inferential and communicative act. Research in psycholinguistics

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showed that readers do not simply absorb textual information; they make hypotheses, fill in gaps using prior knowledge, and construct a mental model of the text's meaning. Reading became recognized as a *multidimensional process* – not a straightforward mapping of text to understanding, but one that involves pre-processing and integrating various text components before a coherent mental representation emerges. Cosentino [5] describes how successful comprehension requires interaction between reader and text, since texts often leave many things unsaid, expecting the reader to infer connections from context and background knowledge. This modern understanding implies that even beginner readers should be guided to move beyond word-by-word decoding to more holistic strategies that consider context and overall message.

Importance of Reading Strategies at the Beginner Level: Given the complexity of reading, explicit instruction in reading strategies has gained prominence, particularly for novice learners who may not intuitively apply such strategies. A number of studies have demonstrated that teaching learners *how* to approach texts can significantly improve their comprehension outcomes. Al-Faramawy et al. [6], in a study focusing on A1.1 German learners, found that the deliberate application of reading strategies (such as skimming for gist, scanning for specific information, guessing meaning from context, etc.) led to marked improvements in students' reading ability and even overall language proficiency. They argue that reading strategies are an *indispensable component* of the language learning process and advocate integrating them systematically into curricula from the earliest stages. Similarly, Bruen [2] assessed strategy use among beginning learners of various foreign languages at university and highlighted the need for educators to support strategic reading from the start of instruction. Many beginners tend to rely on limited tactics (for instance, laborious translation or consulting a dictionary for every unknown word) and may be unaware of more effective techniques. Bruen's findings suggest that while beginner learners do employ some strategies, there is room for improving their repertoire and effectiveness, which could be achieved through targeted strategy training [2].

The role of strategy training is further reinforced by Genç and Ünal [7], who observed a “significant deficit in reading strategy instruction” in both school and university contexts. In their work with Turkish students learning German, they implemented an **Explicit Training model** for reading strategies and reported positive outcomes. This model involves phases of raising awareness about a strategy, teacher demonstration (think-aloud modeling), student practice, and reflection. By explicitly teaching strategies like using titles to predict content or underlining key information, students became more autonomous and efficient readers in literature seminars. The broader implication is that novice readers benefit greatly from direct instruction on *how* to read, not just *what* to read. When beginners are coached on strategies – such as previewing a text for its gist, identifying cognates or familiar words, leveraging text layout and visuals, or monitoring their comprehension – they are better equipped to handle texts that might otherwise overwhelm them. Indeed, multiple studies [6]; [7]; [8] converge on the notion that learning *how to learn*, and specifically how to process written information strategically, is a crucial skill in language education. Ulker [8], focusing on academic reading, points out that many students enter university without having developed effective reading strategies, due to the false presumption that such skills were fully acquired in secondary school. As a consequence, they continue using surface-level approaches and struggle with deeper comprehension of texts. While Ulker's context is tertiary education, the takeaway is applicable to earlier stages: if strategy training is neglected, learners risk plateauing in their reading ability.

Challenges Specific to Beginner Learners of German: The difficulties that beginner language learners face have been documented across different contexts. A recurring theme is the *linguistic barrier* posed by limited vocabulary and the complexity of foreign grammar. Julaiakah [1], in an Indonesian university context, notes that A1-A2 German learners often lack sufficient vocabulary to easily understand texts, and this fundamental gap is a primary source of reading difficulty. The same study also highlights *low motivation for reading* as an issue among beginners, which may stem from the frustration of dealing with texts that feel inaccessible or from a lack of reading culture in the learning environment. Mardanova [3] suggests that beginner readers in a foreign language can be easily overwhelmed by cognitive load: they must simultaneously decode new words, parse unfamiliar structures, and try to grasp content, which taxes their working memory and attention. This aligns with the idea of reading being a demanding interactive process rather than a simple linear activity. Additionally, differences between the learners' first language (L1) and the target language can lead to *interference*. Beginners might apply reading habits or interpretive frameworks from their L1 that are not effective in the L2. For instance, if the L1 (like Indonesian) does not use inflectional endings or strict word order for grammatical meaning, learners might initially ignore these elements in German, resulting in misunderstanding of who does what to whom in a sentence. While the literature on L1 interference in reading is often more focused on advanced literacy (e.g., how different writing systems affect reading), its impact at beginner levels is evident in classroom anecdotes and small-scale observations. Genç & Ünal [7] indirectly touch on this: Turkish students, used to different conventions, often did not realize that paying attention to a title or headings could aid their comprehension until explicitly taught to do so. They also tended to underline large swathes of text without discrimination or focused too much on unknown words – behavior that suggests a lack of strategy and possibly a carryover of habits from reading in more familiar contexts (e.g., underlining what one does not understand in hope of translating later).

Another area identified in the literature is the challenge of selecting suitable reading materials for beginners. Saidakbarova [9] points out that finding texts that are at once level-appropriate, interesting, and culturally accessible is a non-trivial task for teachers. If texts are too linguistically complex or conceptually distant from learners' experiences, comprehension and motivation

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suffer. Likewise, if texts are oversimplified or trivial, learners may not be intellectually engaged or may not develop the necessary skills to progress. The balance is delicate. Rösler [10], analyzing beginner German courses outside German-speaking countries, discusses how the choice of themes and texts shapes learner engagement and cultural understanding. The selection of didactic materials in university courses often reflects compromises between authenticity and learnability. In practice, many beginner courses rely on globally published textbooks, which, as observed in Indonesian classrooms, sometimes feature scenarios and content that feel remote to local students (e.g., a dialogue about skiing holidays in the Alps, which might not resonate with tropical-country learners). Such mismatches can lower student interest and hinder their ability to use prior knowledge to comprehend the text. This challenge of material selection underscores the need for cultural contextualization in teaching resources.

In summary, the literature portrays beginner foreign language reading as a complex skill that must be actively taught and nurtured. Key points include: (1) Reading comprehension engages linguistic, cognitive, and cultural competencies, all of which need development at the A1 stage; (2) Explicit reading strategy instruction is highly beneficial for novices and should be integrated early to prevent fossilization of poor habits; (3) Beginners commonly struggle with limited vocabulary, unfamiliar grammar, and ineffective reading approaches, which can be mitigated by careful material selection and guided practice; (4) Cultural relevance and learner motivation are critical factors – texts and tasks should be designed to build confidence and interest, not just linguistic accuracy. These insights from prior research provide a framework for examining the specific challenges faced in teaching German reading comprehension to Indonesian A1 learners and for devising pedagogical responses to those challenges.

II. CHALLENGES IN TEACHING *LESEVERSTEHEN* AT A1 IN INDONESIA

Teaching *Leseverstehen* to A1-level Indonesian learners involves navigating a multifaceted set of challenges. Based on both practical observations (as outlined in our presentation *Tantangan dalam Pengajaran Leseverstehen*, v.s.) and supporting evidence from relevant studies, these challenges can be categorized into several interrelated domains. It is important to note that these factors often overlap – for instance, linguistic difficulties can exacerbate cognitive load, and cultural gaps can dampen motivation. Each category is discussed below with attention to how it hinders the reading comprehension process.

A. Linguistic Challenges

Structural Differences and Grammar Complexity: German's grammatical system presents one of the most immediate obstacles for Indonesian learners. At the A1 level, students are confronted with unfamiliar structures that do not exist in their mother tongue. German is an inflected language with case markings (nominative, accusative, dative, genitive) and gendered articles (der, die, das for masculine, feminine, neuter nouns, respectively). Indonesian, by contrast, has no grammatical gender and a relatively fixed SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) structure without case inflections. Beginners often struggle to understand German sentences where word order changes (e.g. the verb-second rule in main clauses and verb-final in subordinate clauses) or where a noun's role is indicated by an article ending rather than its position. A simple sentence like *Dem Mann gibt die Frau ein Buch* ("The woman gives a book to the man") can bewilder A1 learners because the first noun *Dem Mann* is the indirect object (marked by case), whereas a learner expecting an SVO order might misidentify it as the subject. Such misinterpretations are common when learners project their L1 syntax onto German. Research confirms that insufficient grasp of syntax can significantly hinder decoding of even basic texts. Cosentino [5] notes that many didactic models historically underemphasized syntax, but an "innovative eclectic model" of basic German grammar training helped beginners better parse sentences by focusing on fundamental structures (such as verb conjugation brackets and sentence fields). In a pilot study, beginners who received explicit instruction in core grammatical rules along with reading practice had far higher comprehension rates than those who did not. This underscores that lacking an understanding of German structural rules (word order variations, separable verbs like *anrufen* splitting into *rufe...an*, etc.) often leaves Indonesian students confused by sentences beyond the most elementary patterns.

Limited Vocabulary and Lexical Coverage: At A1, learners usually command only basic vocabulary (common nouns, verbs, adjectives related to everyday topics). Authentic or even textbook texts, however, frequently contain words outside this limited corpus. When a short reading passage includes too many unknown words, beginners tend to slow down, get stuck, or resort to translating nearly every word, breaking the flow of comprehension. Julaikeh [1] identified limited vocabulary as a major factor impeding Indonesian students' reading understanding. A restricted lexicon not only forces constant dictionary consultation (which interrupts comprehension) but also hampers the ability to infer meaning from context – a skill that requires some known words to triangulate the meaning of unknown ones. Rahmadillah et al. [11] similarly observe that for beginner English learners, encountering too many unfamiliar words causes reading to become "fragmented and laborious", often resulting in breakdowns in understanding. German poses an additional lexical hurdle with its penchant for *Komposita* (compound words). Words like *Lebensmittelgeschäft* ("grocery store") or *Krankenhaus* ("hospital"), while conceptually simple (being combinations of known roots), appear intimidatingly long to novices. Many A1 learners react to such long compounds with a sense of overload, sometimes not realizing that they can be broken down into familiar parts (e.g. *Lebensmittel* + *Geschäft*) if one knows the compounding mechanism. The orthographic features of German also play a role: the presence of letters like ä, ö, ü and ß, and

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capitalization of nouns, are visual cues that can initially confuse Indonesian readers, who may not distinguish *ü* from *u* or recognize *Straße* (with *ß*) as the same word if later seen as *Strasse*. These unfamiliar graphemes can slow down decoding. Moreover, differences in phonology and spelling between English and German can mislead learners who have studied English. For example, an Indonesian student might mispronounce *See* (lake) in German as /si:/ (as in English “see”) when it should be /zeh/, potentially hindering recognition of the word when reading. Such cross-language interference at the level of letters and sounds is a subtle but real challenge in early reading.

In summary, linguistic challenges manifest as a double burden: beginners must acquire a new grammatical system and expand their vocabulary rapidly to make sense of texts. Without sufficient support, these linguistic gaps often cause students to feel “lost” in a text, leading to frustration. Teachers need to be acutely aware that what might seem like a trivial sentence to a fluent speaker can contain multiple points of difficulty for A1 learners (an unfamiliar word here, an inverted word order there, a strange suffix on a noun, etc.). The result is that novice readers often feel they must decipher a puzzle rather than read for meaning, which is antithetical to developing good reading habits.

B. Cultural and Contextual Challenges

Unfamiliar Cultural References: Even when the language is understood, a text can remain opaque if it assumes knowledge that the reader does not have. Many beginner German texts include cultural elements ubiquitous in German-speaking countries but foreign to Indonesians. For instance, an A1-level dialogue might mention meeting “*am Marktplatz*” (at the market square) or going to a “*Biergarten*” (beer garden) in summer. Indonesian students, especially those who have never visited Germany, might not grasp these settings or their significance. Sladovniková [4] argues that intercultural knowledge is crucial for comprehension – readers need some familiarity with the culture and country pertinent to the text to fully understand it. Without that, misunderstandings or a very superficial grasp of the text can result. For example, a text about planning for *Weihnachten* (Christmas) might be interpreted by Indonesian Muslim students in a very limited way (or not at all), missing nuances like the importance of Advent calendars or Christmas markets in Germany. Cultural references act almost like another layer of “vocabulary” that learners must learn; they are not just learning words, but also the world behind those words. As Zhang [12] notes in a different context, broadening students’ cultural exposure in language courses is often needed to keep up with the global nature of language use. In the case of German A1 in Indonesia, the lack of direct experience with German culture means teachers must frequently bridge this gap by explaining or providing local analogies. Without such mediation, students may misinterpret text scenarios or fail to engage with them meaningfully. For instance, a text about winter and *Schneemann* (snowman) might elicit confusion or disinterest from someone who has never seen snow; the student might comprehend the sentence linguistically but not visualize or relate to it, thus losing the deeper connection with the text’s content.

Different Social Norms and Contexts: Language carries pragmatic and societal norms. German texts, even beginner ones, often reflect communication styles that differ from Indonesian norms. A salient example is the use of formal vs. informal address (*Sie* vs. *du*). An A1 reader might encounter sentences like “*Kommen Sie aus Deutschland?*” and “*Wo wohnst du?*” in the same chapter, addressing different people, and be puzzled why different pronouns or verb forms are used for “you”. In Indonesian, a single form (such as *Anda* or just the verb with no pronoun) might be used in both cases, so beginners may not initially grasp the social distinction. Without understanding that *Sie* denotes formality or respect (such as talking to a stranger or superior), they may not catch the context of a text – for instance, a conversation in a store (formal) versus one between friends (informal). These nuances are part of cultural competence. Additionally, norms like directness or content of small talk can differ. German texts might include seemingly mundane information (like mentioning precise timetables, or a character’s routine of being on time) that actually reflect cultural values (punctuality, planning) which might not be as strongly emphasized in the learner’s own cultural context. A student not aware of these values might not see the relevance of such details and thus might not pay attention to them, potentially missing hints in a text. Sladovniková’s work emphasizes self-orientation in an intercultural context, meaning readers should become aware of their own cultural assumptions and adjust to those of the text’s culture [4]. Beginners of course are just starting this process, so they need support to recognize cultural content in readings.

Lack of Local Relevance: Many instructional materials for German are designed for an international audience and often center on life in Germany (or Austria/Switzerland) by default. The characters, settings, and scenarios may thus feel distant to Indonesian learners. For example, a common A1 reading might describe a day in the life of a German teenager: waking at 6 AM to catch a train to school, having bread with cheese for breakfast, etc. Indonesian students, whose daily life might be quite different (e.g., commuting in heavy traffic, eating rice for breakfast), might find it hard to connect personally with the text. This lack of personal connection can diminish engagement and motivation. Students might perceive reading as a purely academic exercise unrelated to their reality, which can reduce intrinsic motivation to comprehend deeply. As noted in educational research, relevance enhances motivation: learners read more enthusiastically when they see the content as meaningful to their own lives or goals. If every text feels “far away” – both geographically and experientially – learners may not invest effort in inference or critical reading, treating texts as lifeless strings of foreign words. Saidakbarova [9] mentions that maintaining learner engagement is difficult if there is a “perceived lack of relevance” in the material. This is a real risk in the Indonesian context for German:

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unless teachers supplement or adapt materials, students could easily conclude that reading German has little to do with their lives beyond passing an exam.

In summary, cultural and contextual challenges underscore that reading comprehension is not only about language. A1 learners in Indonesia often find themselves not just learning German vocabulary and grammar, but also encountering a new cultural universe. Without guidance, they can misunderstand or simply not understand text elements that hinge on cultural knowledge or context outside their experience. Moreover, if the content remains unconnected to what they care about, their motivation to push through linguistic difficulties diminishes. Thus, cultural gaps can indirectly worsen linguistic and strategic challenges by reducing the learner's will to engage with the text. The net effect is that purely "mechanical" teaching of reading (focusing only on words and sentences) is insufficient – bridging cultural understanding and ensuring contextual relatability are essential in overcoming these challenges.

C. Cognitive and Strategy Challenges

Word-for-Word Translation Habit: A common observation in beginner foreign language classes is that students try to translate every word of a text into their native language, hoping that stringing those translations together will yield the meaning of the sentence. Indonesian A1 learners of German often fall into this pattern, partly because it feels like a straightforward method and partly because of insecurity with the new language. Unfortunately, this habit leads to very slow reading and often inaccurate comprehension. German and Indonesian word order differ significantly, so a literal translation in sequence can easily distort meaning. For instance, consider the German sentence "*Ich rufe dich morgen an*". A word-for-word translation in Indonesian order might come out as "*Saya menelepon kamu besok an*", which is nonsense until one realizes *anrufen* is a separable verb meaning "to call (on the phone)". Beginners unaware of separable verbs might translate *rufe* as "call", *dich* as "you", *morgen* as "tomorrow", and leave *an* as an odd residue, failing to grasp the whole meaning "I'll call you tomorrow". This example illustrates how an overly granular focus can mislead understanding. Cosentino [5] criticizes traditional "canonical word-for-word comprehension tasks" for giving learners the false impression that they must decode every single element and that all parts of a text are equally important. In reality, proficient reading often involves tolerating some uncertainty and focusing on the gist. But A1 learners typically have not developed this skill; they feel compelled to identify every word, perhaps influenced by test practices or fear of missing something. The cognitive consequence is a heavy load on working memory – by the time a student has laboriously translated clause 1 of a long German sentence, they may have forgotten the beginning or lost track of how it connects to clause 2. They also miss the forest for the trees: the overall message suffers because of fixation on individual lexical items.

Difficulty Identifying Main Ideas vs. Details: Related to the above, novice readers frequently struggle to distinguish key information from peripheral details. Everything in the text can seem equally important (or equally confusing) to them. An A1 reading exercise might include both critical information and background details – for example, a short informational text might say: "*Martin Müller, ein 35-jähriger Lehrer aus Berlin, fährt jeden Tag mit dem Fahrrad zur Schule.*" A student might get bogged down deciphering *35-jähriger* ("35-year-old") and miss that the sentence is mainly about who Martin is and what he does (a teacher in Berlin who bikes to work). If a comprehension question later asks, "What is Martin's profession and how does he commute?", an overly detail-focused approach could result in incomplete answers because the student did not prioritize the relevant pieces of information (teacher; by bicycle). A1 learners often get stuck on details that are not very important and lose the big picture. This is compounded by limited vocabulary: when half the words in a sentence are unknown, it is genuinely hard for a learner to tell which ones carry the main meaning and which are embellishments. The result is often either guessing incorrectly or expending cognitive effort evenly on all parts of the text, which is inefficient. Research by Bratytsya & Kalyniuk [13] suggests that teaching learners how to identify key ideas through strategies (like looking for topic sentences or repeated themes) is crucial even at early stages. Yet many beginners are never explicitly taught to do this. As Genç & Ünal [7] report, students without strategy training tend to either highlight almost everything or almost nothing when asked to mark important passages, indicating a lack of criteria for importance. This inability to sift main points from details means learners may feel overwhelmed by the amount of information and fail to grasp the core message of texts, leading to confusion and a sense that "I read it, but I don't know what it was about".

Lack of Effective Reading Strategies: Efficient reading involves a set of strategies that many experienced readers take for granted: previewing a text to anticipate content, skimming for a quick overview, scanning for specific facts, inferring meanings from context, and self-monitoring comprehension. A1 learners, unless guided, rarely employ these strategies. Instead, as described, they read laboriously from the first word to the last, often sub-vocalizing or translating mentally, and then have little energy left to interpret meaning. Bruen [2] underscores that novice learners approach texts in various ways, but explicit guidance can enhance their strategy use. Common strategies that beginners underutilize include: **skimming**, i.e. reading quickly to catch the general idea. Beginners often do not skim because they fear missing unknown words – ironically, skimming could help them identify sections to focus on. **Scanning** for specific information (like a date, a name, a number) is also seldom employed spontaneously; many will painstakingly read everything even if the task only asks for one detail. Moreover, beginners often fail to use **contextual clues**. If they see an unknown word, they might stop and panic or run to a dictionary, rather than look at

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surrounding words or the situation described. For example, if a sentence says “*Er trinkt gerne Apfelsaft, aber keinen Alkohol, denn er ist noch minderjährig*”, a student might not know *minderjährig* (underage). An experienced reader could infer its meaning from context (doesn’t drink alcohol because... likely underage). A novice might instead freeze at *minderjährig*. Teaching learners to infer such meanings from context can significantly improve comprehension and is a skill highlighted by many educators, yet at A1 it is rarely second nature. Another strategy issue is **metacognitive awareness**: beginners typically are not used to asking themselves if they have understood a text and re-reading if not. They might assume once through is enough or not know techniques like summarizing mentally after a paragraph. Mardanova [3] notes that metacognitive strategies – such as self-monitoring and self-regulation during reading – are essential for effective comprehension. A1 learners generally have not developed these; they often do not realize they misunderstood something until a teacher or question points it out, because they are not actively monitoring their comprehension. All these factors lead to a high **cognitive load**. Beginner readers often have to pay attention to “too many things at once” – new words, grammar, content – which makes them tire quickly and lose concentration. Reading becomes an exhausting exercise rather than an informative or enjoyable one. This cognitive overload can reinforce negative attitudes toward reading (e.g. “reading German is too hard, I can’t do it”).

In sum, cognitive and strategy challenges mean that beginner learners do not yet read German efficiently or effectively. They apply suboptimal methods, and without intervention, these can become ingrained habits. The outcome is poor comprehension, slow progress, and often frustration. Recognizing these issues is the first step; the greater challenge for educators is to train students out of these habits and into better ones, a point we will address in pedagogical implications. But as challenges, they highlight why simply giving students texts to read is not sufficient – novice readers need to be taught how to read in the foreign language context.

D. Pedagogical and Instructional Challenges

Beyond learner-centric difficulties, there are challenges rooted in the teaching context and methodologies used in Indonesian classrooms for German. These pedagogical challenges concern how reading is integrated into curricula, the approaches teachers employ, and the resources available to them.

Curricular Time Constraints: In many Indonesian educational institutions, German is an elective or a minor part of the curriculum with limited hours per week. Teachers often face pressure to cover a broad syllabus (encompassing speaking, listening, writing, grammar, and culture) within perhaps only 2-4 hours of class weekly. Under such constraints, reading activities can be rushed or superficial. The focus may shift to quickly getting correct answers to reading comprehension questions (to tick off syllabus requirements) rather than developing reading skills. Students might not get sufficient in-class time to practice reading strategies or to discuss texts in depth. Julaiakah [1] found that implementing innovative reading tasks required extensive preparation and class time, which is often at a premium; limited time was noted as a significant problem when attempting more involved reading activities like differentiated assignments. If teachers are forced by scheduling to move to the next topic, they might rely on translation or teacher explanation of texts to save time, which unfortunately deprives students of the opportunity to engage actively with reading. Thus, the structural issue of insufficient time allocation can impede effective *Leseverstehen* teaching.

Emphasis on Grammar and Translation: Traditional teaching approaches still influence many classrooms. There is a tendency, reported anecdotally and in some literature, for teachers to prioritize grammar instruction at the expense of communicative reading practice. In Indonesia, some German language programs might still use methods where reading is treated as a means to reinforce grammar points or vocabulary – e.g., reading a passage and then analyzing all the verbs in the past tense – rather than as a skill to extract meaning. While grammar is undoubtedly important (especially given the linguistic challenges noted), an overemphasis on form can lead students to see reading as an extension of grammar drills. Cosentino [5] notes that during the “cognitive turn” in language teaching, grammar instruction was somewhat marginalized, but ironically, if reading is taught only through grammar translation, it also marginalizes the real purpose of reading. The challenge is finding balance: Indonesian teachers may struggle to integrate strategy and meaning-focused reading activities when they feel pressured to ensure students master grammar rules for tests. Additionally, if teachers themselves were trained in a system that valued translation (for instance, translating German texts into Indonesian as a demonstration of understanding), they might perpetuate that in their classes. Rösler [10] discusses how methodological progression in courses can range from traditional to communicative approaches. If beginner courses stick to older methods, students may rarely practice skimming or inferencing; instead, they might spend time parsing sentences grammatically or doing dictionary exercises. The challenge here is partly attitudinal – convincing stakeholders that spending time on reading strategies and global comprehension is as important as drilling grammar, and that one can teach grammar in the context of reading rather than separately.

Inappropriate Text Difficulty or Topics: Selecting the right texts for A1 learners is notoriously difficult, as mentioned. Teachers sometimes inadvertently choose materials that are too challenging linguistically or too distant topically. For instance, using a real German news article at A1 would overwhelm students with unknown words; conversely, using only contrived textbook dialogues about exchanging personal information can become monotonous and fail to develop real reading skills. If texts

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are too difficult, students become demotivated and anxious (leading to the affective challenges described later). If texts are too easy or simplistic, students may not progress or may feel underestimated and bored. Rösler [10] highlights that defining progression – which includes the sequencing of text complexity and themes – is a key decision in course design. A challenge arises if curricula or available textbooks do not provide a smooth progression or relevant themes. For example, a textbook might jump from “greeting messages” to “historical notes about a city” with a lot of new vocabulary, leaving A1 learners floundering. Or a textbook might present only culturally European contexts that fail to engage Indonesian learners, as discussed. Teachers may need to adapt texts (simplify them or create glossaries) and supplement with more relatable content, which requires effort and creativity. Not all teachers have the resources or training to do this regularly. The risk of not addressing text appropriateness is that reading either becomes a task of decoding gibberish (when too hard) or a trivial exercise (when too easy), neither of which builds competence. Saidakbarova [9] explicitly mentions the difficulty teachers face in selecting texts that align with learners’ proficiency and interests, which can be interpreted as a call for more carefully curated reading materials for beginners.

Resource and Material Limitations for Teachers: Many German teachers in Indonesia rely heavily on a single textbook due to limited availability of teaching materials. Unlike English, where a plethora of graded readers and locally adapted materials exist, German teaching resources are fewer and often imported. This can result in a lack of variety in reading texts offered to students. If the textbook has only one short reading per chapter (a common scenario), students are not getting extensive reading practice. Moreover, without access to additional easy readers or authentic materials, teachers might hesitate to bring in extra readings. Some instructors rely on the textbook as the sole source, not using other materials like simple articles, advertisements, or other digital texts. This is partly due to convenience and partly to lack of alternative resources. There is also the issue of **teacher training** – not all teachers have been trained in modern reading instruction techniques. Genç & Ünal [7] argue that explicit reading strategy training should be part of teacher education, so that future teachers in turn integrate these practices in their classrooms. If current teachers did not receive such training, they might be unsure how to go beyond conventional reading exercises. The challenge is thus systemic: providing teachers with both the materials and the professional development necessary to teach reading effectively. Without these, even a motivated teacher may find it challenging to implement practices like differentiated reading tasks or interactive reading sessions. Julaikah [1] encountered very practical issues – creating varied assignments for reading (as part of *Binnendifferenzierung*) required extensive preparation and resources, which is burdensome if one is teaching many classes with limited support. Teacher workload and class size (often large in public institutions) further complicate the matter. Managing a classroom of 30-40 A1 students through a careful reading activity can be daunting, leading some teachers to default to teacher-centered approaches (like reading aloud and translating) simply to maintain control and cover content.

Assessment-Driven Teaching: How reading comprehension is evaluated in courses can strongly influence teaching practice. If exams primarily use multiple-choice questions to test reading (which is common for practicality and standardization), teachers may train students to hunt for specific answers rather than to read thoroughly. The presentation identified that many schools rely on multiple-choice or short factual questions in tests, focusing on literal comprehension. This can lead to a teaching-to-the-test scenario where inferential or critical reading skills are not cultivated because they are not measured. It is challenging for teachers to justify spending time on open-ended discussions or summary writing if the exam will never ask for it. Moreover, the pressure of exams can discourage risk-taking: teachers might avoid giving unfamiliar or lengthy texts to not stress students before tests, sticking to the narrow range of formats students will encounter in exams. This dynamic can reinforce some of the negative habits mentioned earlier – for instance, students learn that to answer a multiple-choice question, sometimes they can scan for a keyword and do not need to truly comprehend the passage. Over time, they may equate “reading comprehension” with a test trick rather than a genuine understanding process. Ulker [8] notes how at the university level, many students continue to employ “non-university” (i.e. inadequate) reading strategies because the system never corrected their assumption that their skill was sufficient after high school. The root of that problem lies partly in assessment: if high school reading exams did not require deep comprehension or strategy use, students carried those shallow strategies forward. In the Indonesian A1 context, if assessments remain low-level (e.g., find a word, translate a phrase), teaching might not challenge students to develop beyond that.

In summary, pedagogical challenges emphasize that even if students were capable, the structure and methods of instruction can facilitate or impede their reading development. Time constraints, traditional teaching focus, resource limitations, and assessment styles can collectively result in a scenario where reading is not taught in an optimal way. These are challenges for educators and institutions to address, as they often require changes in approach, investment in materials, or curriculum adjustments – tasks that go beyond the individual teacher’s influence, touching on educational policy and teacher training.

E. Technical and Resource Challenges

Scarcity of Appropriate Reading Materials: As touched on above, finding reading texts that are both level-appropriate and engaging is a well-noted challenge. Many authentic German materials (newspapers, websites, literature) are far above A1 level. Conversely, texts written for learners often come in one of two forms: overly simplistic narratives that may not reflect real-world text types, or generic topics that might not interest learners. Indonesian teachers sometimes have difficulty obtaining authentic

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materials like brochures, menus, flyers, or children's books in German. Such items can be very useful because they are short and often contain visual context, but unless a teacher personally sources them (during travel, via the internet, or from cultural institutions), they may not be readily available. The result is that classrooms might rely on textbook excerpts alone. International textbooks often feature European contexts by default, which may not resonate with local students. Additionally, truly local German reading materials (for example, a text about an aspect of Indonesia written in German) are extremely rare. This lack of localized content in German means students seldom see their own world represented in the target language, which could otherwise be a powerful motivator. Rösler [10] also mentions the use and selection of didactic materials as a key issue in beginner courses, implicitly suggesting that the quality and appropriateness of materials can vary widely.

Reliance on a Single Textbook: Many educational settings in Indonesia provide one core textbook for German and expect both teachers and students to follow it closely. While textbooks are valuable, an over-reliance means limited exposure to different text genres and formats. If the textbook's reading passages are mostly dialogues or short informational texts, students might never practice reading other forms like letters, announcements, or narrative paragraphs. This lack of variety can stunt the development of versatile reading skills. Some teachers stick strictly to the textbook without using additional materials such as short articles, posters, or digital texts. The challenge here might be both habit and necessity: teachers might not have access to or time to prepare additional materials, and students might not have resources to purchase anything beyond the main book. Consequently, reading practice becomes very narrow. In contrast, Bratytysa & Kalyniuk [13] advocate exposing learners to a wide range of text types (narrative, expository, etc.) to build comprehensive reading ability. Achieving that ideal is difficult without resource support.

Uneven Access to Technology: We live in a digital age where theoretically a wealth of German reading resources (websites, online articles, interactive readers) is available. However, access to technology in Indonesian schools can be uneven. Some urban schools or universities may have good internet and computer labs, while others, especially in rural areas, may have limited or no access. Even when schools have facilities, not all students have personal devices or data to use online resources outside of class. This disparity means not all classes can utilize online German materials or apps that could enrich reading practice. For instance, there are free websites with simplified German news (like *Nachrichtenleicht*) or libraries of graded e-readers. These would be excellent for providing additional reading practice, but if students cannot reliably go online or if class time does not permit lab sessions, these remain underutilized. Additionally, teachers themselves need the digital literacy and training to incorporate such resources effectively. Mardanova [3] points out the evolving role of digital literacy in reading competence and suggests that modern instruction should prepare learners for digital reading environments. In practice, if technology is scarce, teachers are limited to paper-based texts and traditional methods, potentially missing out on interactive and multimedia supports (like online dictionaries, hyperlinked texts, or educational software). This technical challenge is somewhat external to teaching methodology but has a direct impact: in classrooms lacking ICT (Information and Communications Technology) tools, reading activities cannot leverage things like projecting a text to do a joint class reading with highlights, or using audio accompaniments for texts (which help auditory learners). Amrillayevna & Bahromovich [14] recommend integrating technology, such as online dictionaries and interactive platforms, to aid reading comprehension. Without the necessary infrastructure, Indonesian teachers may not be able to follow such recommendations, leading to a more static and less engaging reading experience for students.

Classroom and Library Limitations: Physical factors can also influence reading practice. If classes are very large, individual reading difficulties might not be addressed; quiet reading time might be hard to manage in a crowded classroom. If a school's library has few or no German books, students have no opportunity for extensive reading outside the textbook. Some schools may not prioritize foreign language collections in their libraries due to budget or demand issues. Minimal German collections in libraries and the challenge of large class sizes are examples of non-pedagogical hurdles that still affect teaching. In a class of 40, a teacher can hardly pay attention to each student's reading process or strategy use; as a result, quieter students might pretend to read without actually comprehending, and the teacher may never know. Similarly, without additional reading materials, students who might want to practice more have no means to do so (unless they seek out their own, which at A1 is unlikely).

Overall, technical and resource challenges highlight that sometimes the environment is not conducive to implementing best practices in reading instruction. Even if a teacher knows the value of varied and authentic texts or the benefits of using digital resources, they may be constrained by what is available. These limitations often lead to a routine and repetitive reading curriculum: the same types of texts, tasks, and approaches reused, which can reduce student interest and limit skill development. A lack of resources can also dampen teachers' motivation to innovate – if one does not have the tools to diversify, one might stick to a safe, if unexciting, routine. Recognizing these challenges is important for institutions and policy-makers, as addressing them (through investment in libraries, technology, and material development) would significantly enhance the quality of reading comprehension teaching.

F. Language Interference Challenges

Influence of Indonesian (L1) on German Reading: When Indonesian learners read German, their instinct is to apply their knowledge of how reading works in Indonesian. This can lead to systematic misunderstandings. For instance, Indonesian has no articles and a relatively flexible word order without case marking. Thus, an Indonesian student might initially ignore German

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articles like *der*, *die*, *das* as redundant or hard-to-process words, focusing only on content words. However, in German those articles carry crucial information (gender and case) that affect meaning and relationships between words. If a student overlooks an article, they might miss who is the subject or object in a sentence. Students might ignore the function of the article or the shifted position of the verb, leading to incorrect understanding. This is a form of syntactic interference – the learner’s brain simplifies the German sentence to fit Indonesian patterns, often incorrectly. Another example is pluralization: Indonesian pluralizes nouns by doubling them or using context, whereas German uses endings (e.g., *-e*, *-en*, *-s*) or *Umlaute* (vowel changes). A novice might not recognize a plural form like *Häuser* (“houses”) as plural if they are looking for a simple *-s* or a numerical clue, because in Indonesian an equivalent might just be *rumah-rumah* or *banyak rumah* (many houses). They could misread the quantity implied. These subtle influences of L1 can persist until learners become more proficient and internalize L2 patterns.

Influence of English (L2) or Other Foreign Languages: Many Indonesian students study English before German. English and German share some cognates and linguistic features but also have “false friends” and differences. A learner might lean on English to interpret German words, which can be both a help and a hindrance. For example, encountering the German word *Gift*, an English-speaker would think of a present, but in German *Gift* means “poison” – a dangerous misunderstanding if context does not immediately clarify it. Or they might see *bekommen* and read it as “become” (since it looks similar), whereas it actually means “to receive”. Such false friends can mislead a learner’s comprehension significantly. On the other hand, the presence of many international words or English cognates in German (*Hotel*, *Computer*, *Taxi*) can sometimes lull learners into a false sense of security, where they assume an unfamiliar word might have an English equivalent – an assumption that fails when the word is actually uniquely German or from a different root. Jennifer Bruen’s comparative study [2] on beginners in various languages hinted at how strategy use might differ based on the language pair. While not explicitly about interference, one can infer that for languages with shared scripts or cognates, learners often use cross-language guessing as a strategy. With German learners, this could mean using English knowledge to guess German word meanings. This is a double-edged sword: sometimes it works (as with transparent words like *Radio* or *Universität*), and sometimes it fails (as with *bekommen* or *Gift*). Teachers must be aware of these typical pitfalls to warn students.

Borrowed Words and Similarities with Indonesian: Indonesian has borrowed many words from Dutch and English. Some German words might look familiar to Indonesian students because of Dutch influences in Indonesian. If a German word resembles an English or Dutch loanword in Indonesian, students might assume a meaning that is incorrect. Additionally, German uses Latin and Greek international terms that may have entered Indonesian through English. A student might recognize *Telephon* (old spelling for *Telefon*) or *Universität* due to their similarity to Indonesian *telepon* or *universitas*. This can actually assist comprehension – a positive transfer – but it can also cause pronunciation issues or confusion if spelling differs significantly. The key challenge here is that students have to navigate three languages in their head: Indonesian, English (if known), and German. Sometimes the lines blur. For example, a student reading a German text might mentally translate a concept into English instead of Indonesian if they learned it in English first (common with scientific or technical terms), which could cause a moment of confusion if the term is not exactly equivalent across languages.

Reading Habits from Other Languages: The act of reading itself – how one approaches a text – can be influenced by habits from one’s first or earlier languages. Indonesian students reading Indonesian texts often rely on a lot of context and may skim because Indonesian is familiar and largely unambiguous in written form. When they carry over this habit to German at A1, it may backfire because German sentences require careful attention to endings and function words to extract meaning. Conversely, if they learned in English classes to “guess from context” and skip unknown words, applying that to German might be harder at A1 because German sentences are more interdependent (an unknown verb at the end of a sentence might be the key to understanding the whole sentence). Genç & Ünal [7] observed that because foreign language reading is less efficient than native reading, learners need training to apply knowledge strategically and compensate for deficits. Until they receive such training, the default is to read in the way that feels familiar from other languages, which may not yield success in German’s case. For instance, an Indonesian reader might be used to reading quickly and getting the gist from keywords (since Indonesian has relatively straightforward word forms). If they do this in German without noticing a verb is plural or in past tense, they might misconstrue who did what when. Over time and exposure, learners usually adjust these habits, but at the beginning stage, interference in reading approach is indeed a hurdle – one less often documented in research but commonly seen by instructors.

In conclusion, language interference challenges mean that beginner readers have to overcome their own instincts and prior knowledge when reading German. Their brain continuously tries to make sense of German input using known frameworks (Indonesian, English), which can be helpful in some cases but detrimental in others. This is a less visible challenge – students themselves may not realize when interference is causing an error, they simply feel confused about why their interpretation does not fit. It requires a teacher with awareness of typical interference errors (like the false friends, misinterpretation of German word order, etc.) to correct and guide learners. Otherwise, students may persist with misconceived interpretations or reading methods that yield poor comprehension. Recognizing and explicitly addressing interference (for example, by pointing out false friends or differences in sentence structure explicitly) is a necessary part of teaching reading at this level.

G. Motivational and Affective Challenges

Foreign Language Reading Anxiety: Many A1 learners approach German texts with a degree of anxiety or self-doubt. The unfamiliar scripts (ß, umlauts), the length of words, and the reputation of German as a difficult language can intimidate students. This anxiety can manifest as a reluctance to even attempt reading beyond very short sentences. Learners may become visibly nervous when asked to read a paragraph, fearing that they will not understand it or will mispronounce words if reading aloud. Such anxiety is not unfounded; research in second language acquisition has documented the concept of foreign language reading anxiety, where learners experience apprehension and fear specifically when dealing with texts in the target language. Beginners often find German “scary” or “difficult” at first glance, which can cause them to focus more on their fear than on the content. This emotional state can create a vicious cycle: anxiety leads to poorer performance (due to distraction and lack of confidence), which in turn reinforces the anxiety. Ulker [8] touches on how students often misconceive their reading skills as adequate and then are shocked by the demands of academic reading, which can induce stress. While Ulker’s context is more advanced, the underlying principle applies: unprepared students facing a challenging text can feel overwhelmed [8]. For A1 Indonesians, simply seeing a solid block of German text can be overwhelming if they have never tackled one before. Without addressing this affective filter, some students may disengage, pretending to read or giving up quickly. It is a challenge for teachers to build a supportive environment where making mistakes in reading is seen as a natural part of learning, so that anxiety can be reduced.

Dominance of Extrinsic Motivation: In Indonesia, as noted, many students take German to fulfill a curriculum requirement or to pass an exam, rather than out of a personal passion for German culture or language. This extrinsic motivation means that students might be less inclined to read for pleasure or explore texts beyond what is assigned. They view reading tasks as just another assignment to complete, not as an opportunity to discover interesting information. Bratytysa & Kalyniuk [13] underscore that extrinsically motivated learners may do what is required for a reward or grade, but they do not engage as deeply or retain skills as effectively as those who read out of genuine interest. When reading is seen as a hurdle to clear (“I need to answer these questions correctly to get points”) rather than a meaningful activity, learners often do the bare minimum. They might avoid reading anything not expected to be on a test, or they might learn just to scan for answers instead of actually understanding texts. The challenge here is converting or supplementing extrinsic motivation with some level of intrinsic interest. At A1, students typically do not yet appreciate German literature or media, so intrinsic motivation has to be fostered by the teacher through engaging content or interactive tasks. Without that, reading remains a chore. Some learners consider *Leseverstehen* merely an academic obligation, not a useful skill. Such attitudes can lead to lack of practice (students will not read a bit more than required) and even resistance to challenging tasks (a student might say, “Why do we have to read this long text? Can’t we just translate some sentences and move on?”). This is a significant hurdle because motivation heavily influences effort and persistence in learning.

Lack of Interest in Reading Materials: This overlaps with earlier points on text relevance, but from the learner’s perspective. If the topics of the texts do not align with student interests (for example, an A1 text about someone’s family tree might bore a teenager, or a text about a historical monument might not captivate a student who prefers sports or music), then motivating them to put in the work to understand is difficult. Beginners, who already find the language itself challenging, need extra incentive to push through. A dry or irrelevant topic can be the deciding factor that makes them disengage. As cited earlier, Saidakbarova [9] mentions maintaining learner motivation is tough especially when facing challenging texts or perceived irrelevance. If given a choice, many students would avoid reading entirely; unlike speaking or listening, which have an immediate communicative appeal, reading can seem abstract or unnecessary to beginners (“Why read in German when I can barely speak it?” is a sentiment sometimes encountered). Without cultivating interest – for instance, by choosing a text about a popular German sport if the class likes sports, or a simple German song lyric if they like music – teachers face an uphill battle in engagement. This challenge is partly logistical (finding interesting texts) and partly knowing the students’ interests.

Frustration and Low Confidence: When confronting multiple difficulties (vocabulary, grammar, culture) in reading, students can become easily frustrated. If a learner attempts to read a passage and cannot make sense of it after some effort, they may feel a sense of failure. Repeated experiences of this sort can erode their confidence in ever being able to read German. Julaiakah [1] observed that lower-ability students did improve when given adapted tasks, but one can imagine that without such support, those students might have felt constant failure in regular reading tasks. Affective challenges include this sense of defeat that can set in. If a student believes “I just can’t understand German texts”, they may stop trying or rely entirely on translations or help, which further impedes development of their reading skill. Part of the teacher’s task is psychological – to create opportunities for small successes that build confidence (often called sense of achievement in educational literature). If students never feel a clear progress or success, their motivation drops. For instance, successfully understanding even a very simple authentic text (like a postcard or a menu) can boost morale. The challenge is that such successes need to be engineered; if texts are always too hard or not scaffolded, many students will rarely experience the “aha, I got it!” moment. Instead, they remain dependent on the teacher or answer keys, which does not foster self-efficacy. Affective factors are sometimes dismissed as student “attitude”, but in fact, they are integral to performance: a highly anxious or demotivated student is less likely to apply themselves or think calmly through a reading task, leading to poorer results regardless of ability.

H. Assessment and Evaluation Challenges

Predominance of Multiple-Choice Tests: Assessment methods in reading often drive how reading is taught and learned. In many educational systems, including some in Indonesia, reading comprehension is tested through multiple-choice or short-answer questions for ease of grading. While these formats can check certain understanding (e.g., identifying a specific detail or the main idea), they do not capture all aspects of comprehension and can inadvertently encourage shallow reading strategies. Multiple-choice questions tend to measure only literal comprehension and that students then read “just to find the right answer” rather than to truly understand the text. This is a significant challenge: even if a teacher tries to teach inferencing or summarizing, if the test only ever asks factual recall (“What time does the train leave?” or “Where does Anna live?” from the text), students may not practice the higher-order reading skills and teachers may not allocate time to them. Moreover, some students become adept at test-taking strategies such as scanning for keywords in the text that match the question, without actually comprehending the passage as a whole – a habit that can hamper them in any less-structured reading scenario. The format of evaluation can thus limit the scope of reading skills that students value and develop.

Limited Forms of Assessment: In connection to the above, if reading assessment never includes tasks like writing a summary, making inferences, or personal response, those skills remain underdeveloped. The lack of variety in assessment forms (e.g., rarely asking open-ended questions or engaging in discussion about a text). The challenge here is partly logistical: open-ended responses are harder to grade and require more time to evaluate. But the result of avoiding them is that students do not get tested (and therefore do not practice) on deeper comprehension or critical reading. For example, a multiple-choice test might ask “According to the text, what does Maria do on Sunday?” whereas a more open task might ask “Explain why Maria enjoys her Sundays, based on the text”. The latter assesses understanding of nuance and cause-effect, which multiple-choice might not. If students never face such questions, they might never learn to read for underlying meaning or tone. In essence, the challenge is an educational design one: expanding assessment to drive better learning. Without it, reading instruction risks staying at a superficial level.

Mismatch Between Text Level and Student Level in Tests: Another issue is that sometimes the texts chosen for exams are either too difficult (to be “challenging”) or occasionally too trivial, leading to mismeasurement of ability. If a test text is above A1 level (perhaps A2 or B1 in complexity), A1 students will likely perform poorly, not because they did not progress, but because the material was inappropriate. This can discourage students and give a false sense of failure. Conversely, if tests always use overly simplified texts (maybe even simpler than those used in class), a student might pass without actually being ready to tackle real A1 readings independently. Rösler [10] emphasizes appropriate progression in courses, which extends to assessment content. Ensuring tests reflect the level taught is an often overlooked challenge. Teachers might sometimes include a tricky text in an exam thinking it will stretch students, but that can backfire by causing undue stress and not yielding useful diagnostic information (if most students just guess or fail on it). On the other hand, making tests too easy might be done to avoid complaints or failures, but then it does not push students to apply and consolidate what they learned. Striking the right balance is a nuanced task and when done poorly, students either feel unfairly treated or become complacent.

Focus on Accuracy Over Process: Traditional assessments reward correct answers, not the process used to arrive at them. This means that a student who uses a clever strategy to figure something out gets the same credit as one who perhaps copied from a peer or guessed correctly – and conversely, a student who applied a good strategy but misunderstood one key word might get zero credit if their final answer is wrong. This exclusive focus on outcomes can discourage students from engaging with strategies. For instance, if a student is taught to write marginal notes or underline keywords while reading, those efforts are not visible in the final test score. Many learners, being pragmatic, will only adopt new reading behaviors if they perceive a tangible benefit in their grades or performance. In early stages, they might not see that benefit immediately (since strategy payoffs can be gradual), and they might revert to their old habits if tests do not explicitly demand strategy use. Genç & Ünal’s explicit training model tries to counter this by including a reflection phase where students articulate their strategy use – essentially assessing the process to some degree [7]. But such an approach is rarely used in standard testing. The challenge remains that teachers need to instill the value of good reading processes intrinsically, as extrinsic rewards (grades) might not reinforce them. Also, test anxiety can distort strategy use: a student may learn skimming in class, but under exam pressure, they might panic and go back to word-by-word reading, fearing missing something. Thus, if assessments are high-stakes and emphasize accuracy on first read, students may not practice flexible strategies, instead playing it “safe” with slow careful translation, which ironically often leads to incomplete comprehension under time constraints.

Test Anxiety and Performance: Finally, the pressure of being evaluated on reading can itself be a challenge. Some students might be able to understand texts in a relaxed setting but freeze up during exams, especially if they are timed. The stress of an exam often yields results that reflect anxiety rather than true ability. If a learner knows they have limited time to read and answer, they might not use the best strategies (like previewing the text) and instead jump straight to translating or looking for answers frantically. This means our measurement of their reading skill is confounded by their test-taking skill or their ability to manage stress. It is a challenge for educators to design assessments that minimize unnecessary anxiety – perhaps by being clear about the format, practicing similar tasks in class, or giving adequate time. Otherwise, a vicious cycle ensues: tests make students anxious;

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anxiety causes poor performance; poor performance discourages them and confirms their belief they're "bad at reading"; and they then approach the next text with even more fear.

In summary, assessment challenges highlight that how we test reading significantly affects how students learn to read. If not carefully addressed, evaluations can inadvertently reinforce the very problems we want to solve (like shallow reading or avoidance of strategic approaches). Therefore, any attempt to improve reading comprehension teaching must consider changes not just in instruction but also in evaluation methods.

III. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

Addressing the challenges outlined above requires a holistic and strategic approach to teaching reading comprehension. The multifaceted nature of the difficulties – linguistic, cultural, cognitive, etc. – means that no single solution will suffice. Instead, educators should aim for an integrative pedagogy that concurrently tackles various aspects of reading. Drawing on insights from the literature and best practices, this section discusses key pedagogical implications and concrete strategies for improving *Leseverstehen* instruction at the A1 level in Indonesia. The recommendations are organized in alignment with the challenges identified, ensuring that each major problem is met with targeted teaching interventions. Overall, the goal is to transform reading from a daunting task into a manageable and meaningful activity for beginners, thereby making reading instruction more effective and the learning experience more positive.

A. Adopting a Balanced and Holistic Teaching Approach

Given that challenges arise from multiple domains (linguistic, cognitive, cultural, affective), teachers/lecturers should adopt a balanced approach that addresses language form, reading strategies, and learner motivation in tandem. It is not sufficient to focus only on grammar or only on vocabulary. As Al-Faramawy et al. [6] argue, reading strategies must be integrated into language teaching from the outset as an *indispensable component* of the curriculum. This means that a typical reading lesson should involve pre-reading activities (to scaffold language and context), during-reading guidance (to practice strategies), and post-reading activities (to consolidate comprehension and relate it to students' experience). Mardanova [3] suggests a holistic model that considers linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural factors together. In practice, this could involve, for example, selecting a text that is culturally relevant (socio-cultural), pre-teaching key vocabulary and grammar structures (linguistic), and explicitly highlighting an inferencing or summarizing strategy to use while reading (cognitive/strategic). An integrated lesson of this sort ensures that students are not reading in a vacuum but are supported on all fronts. Teachers should resist the temptation to reduce reading lessons to vocabulary translation sessions or, conversely, to free-form discussions without attention to language accuracy. Both meaning and form can be taught in context. For instance, a teacher might focus on a grammar point *within* a text (say, noticing all the past tense verbs in a diary entry) but tie it to the comprehension of that text ("How do these past tense forms help us understand the sequence of events?"). By linking grammar and reading, students see structure as a tool for meaning, not an isolated drill. Likewise, vocabulary should be taught not as an abstract list but as words that help unlock the text at hand and future texts. This balanced approach aligns with the call for *long-term attention* to reading development that Maxim [15] suggests – if we start building both lower-level decoding skills and higher-level interpretive skills early, the transition to more advanced texts later (at B1 or B2 levels) will be smoother.

B. Scaffolding Vocabulary and Grammar (Pre-Reading Support)

To mitigate linguistic challenges, teachers/lecturers should provide scaffolding before students dive into a text. This can significantly reduce student anxiety and increase comprehension. Practical strategies include:

- **Pre-teaching Key Vocabulary:** Identify a handful of critical words in the text that are both unknown and essential for understanding the main idea. Introduce these words in an engaging way before reading – e.g., with pictures, synonyms, simple definitions, or example sentences. Rahmadillah et al. [11] emphasize that direct instruction of key vocabulary prior to reading can prevent breakdowns in understanding. For example, if a text is about a family picnic, teach words like *Picknick*, *Wiese* (meadow), *grillen* (to grill) up front. By clearing these roadblocks, students can approach the text more confidently and fluently.
- **Word-formation and Cognate Awareness:** Teach beginners how to break down German compound words into parts and point out any international words. This addresses the intimidation of long words. A mini-lesson on common compounding patterns or prefixes/suffixes can empower students. For instance, show that *Bahnhof* = *Bahn* (train) + *Hof* (yard) – a train station – or that *un-* at the start of a word (like *unbekannt*) means "not". Learners then start to decode new words more independently, an approach supported by vocabulary strategy recommendations. Encouraging recognition of cognates (e.g., *Universität* looks like "university") also gives students quick wins in identifying meaning.
- **Sentence Structure Focus:** If a complex sentence structure is going to appear in a text (e.g., a question with inverted word order, or a subordinate clause with the verb at the end), it is useful to practice that structure briefly before reading. For example, demonstrate a simple subordinate clause and show the verb-final rule ("*Ich weiß, dass du müde bist.*"). This preparation links to Cosentino's findings that explicit understanding of syntax aids comprehension [5]. The teacher/lecturer can say, "In the

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text, you'll see some sentences with 'dass' – remember the verb will come at the end in those sentences. Keep that in mind while reading." Such hints can prevent confusion when students encounter those constructions.

- **Activate Prior Knowledge and Build Context:** Before reading, teachers should activate students' background knowledge related to the text's topic (schema activation). Discussing a topic briefly in Indonesian or English can provide mental hooks for the new text. Amrillayevna and Bahromovich [14] recommend schema activation as crucial for comprehension. For example, if the text is about *der Zoo*, ask students about their experiences with zoos, animals they like, etc. This way, when they read, they have a mental framework to slot new information into, reducing cognitive load.

- **Set a Purpose for Reading:** Clearly tell students what they should look for or achieve in the reading. Are they reading to find specific facts? To enjoy a story? To answer comprehension questions? Setting a purpose can focus their attention. For beginners, it might be as simple as "Read this email and find out what time the person will arrive." Purposeful reading can curb the aimless word-by-word plodding, as students have a clear goal (this aligns with *skimming and scanning* techniques introduced in a guided way).

By heavily scaffolding before reading, teachers address linguistic gaps and lower the entry barrier to the text. Over time, scaffolding can be gradually reduced as students acquire more vocabulary and confidence. The ultimate aim is to enable students to eventually approach new texts independently, but at A1, structured support is still essential.

C. Contextualizing and Adapting Reading Materials

To overcome cultural and relevance challenges, teachers/lecturers should make texts more meaningful to Indonesian learners. This involves both choosing the right materials and adapting them when necessary:

- **Select or Modify Texts for Relevance:** Where possible, pick themes that resonate with students' lives or interests. If using a textbook text that is culturally distant, spend time bridging it. For example, if a text is about Christmas traditions in Germany, one could compare it with New Year traditions in Indonesia, inviting students to see parallels and differences. Alternatively, the teacher could adapt names, places, or details in a text to be more familiar (turn *Max und Moritz* into *Ani dan Budi* going to a *warung* instead of a *Bäckerei* if the focus is on transactional language rather than cultural specifics). However, one must balance authenticity – not everything should be changed or it defeats the purpose of learning culture. A good strategy is *localization*: keeping the German language intact but framing tasks or discussions in a way that students connect it to their own context. For example, after reading about a German student's daily routine, have students describe their own daily routine in German, noting differences (school start times, meals, etc.). This makes the reading personally relevant.

- **Cultural Scaffolding:** Just as we scaffold linguistics, scaffold culture. Sladovniková [4] emphasizes that intercultural knowledge greatly aids comprehension. Teachers/lecturers can give short explanations or show images/videos related to cultural elements in a text. If a reading mentions *Weihnachtsmarkt*, show a picture of one and explain it's like a festive night market. If a dialogue uses *du* vs. *Sie*, do a quick role-play to show formal vs. informal scenarios in Indonesia (like *kamu* vs. *Anda* usage in Indonesian, or name vs. title usage). By acting as a "cultural mediator", the teacher/lecturer helps students not feel alienated by unknown cultural content. Over time, learners build a repository of cultural knowledge (for instance, they will know what *Oktoberfest* or the *Autobahn* is) which makes future reading easier.

- **Use Authentic Texts Selectively and Wisely:** Authentic materials (real-world texts not designed for learners) are motivating if used appropriately. For A1, very short authentic texts with visual support can be great – things like menus, postcards, advertisements, signs, or social media posts. They provide a taste of "real German" and often carry cultural information. For example, a German restaurant menu shows cultural dishes and prices in Euro – students can learn culture (food items, currency) while practicing reading. Such materials should be chosen carefully to match A1 known vocabulary as much as possible (or be easily glossed). If authentic texts are too difficult, they can be *adapted*: Amrillayevna and Bahromovich [14] note that pre-reading like skimming is easier if the text is first approached in a simplified or preview form. A teacher might, for instance, take an authentic paragraph, rewrite a couple of sentences in simpler German, and then present it. This retains some authenticity but makes it level-appropriate. Another trick is to provide a translated version of key culturally loaded sentences so students do not get stuck and can appreciate the content.

- **Comparative Discussions:** Encourage brief discussions where students compare something from the text to their own culture or experience. This makes reading a two-way interaction – not only are they learning about German culture, but they also reflect on Indonesian culture. For example, after reading about German school schedules, ask: "How is this similar or different to your school? Would you like a German schedule? Why or why not?" Such questions spark engagement and show students that reading in German is not just about Germany; it is also about broadening perspectives and relating it back to themselves.

By contextualizing reading materials, teachers address the motivational issue as well – students are more likely to invest effort in a text that they find interesting or relevant. Moreover, linking reading to intercultural learning can increase their intrinsic motivation, as they start to see reading as a window into a new world rather than a dry language exercise. This approach echoes Maxim's [15] goal of helping even beginning learners view texts as carriers of cultural meaning, not just linguistic puzzles.

D. Explicit Teaching of Reading Strategies

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One of the clearest implications from the literature is that reading strategies should be explicitly taught and practiced at the beginner level. Teachers/lecturers cannot assume that A1 students will intuitively know how to approach texts effectively; these skills need to be demonstrated and reinforced. Several strategies stand out as particularly useful for novices:

- **Skimming for Main Ideas:** Teach students how to skim by modeling it. For example, take a short text and “think aloud” as you skim: “I’m quickly reading the first and last sentences to see the topic... I notice names and dates... It seems to be about a holiday trip.” By showing this process, students learn that it is okay not to read every word initially. You can then have them try skimming another text for 30 seconds and ask what they think the general topic is. This builds the habit of grasping the gist, which can improve overall comprehension speed.

- **Scanning for Specific Information:** Similarly, give practice in scanning. Pose a question like “What time is the train departure mentioned in the text?” and train students to let their eyes roam for numbers or keywords like *Uhr* (hour) without reading everything. This is a concrete, game-like task that students often enjoy (one can time them or make it a competition who finds it first). It also shows that one need not comprehend every single word to locate a detail. This skill is directly useful for exam situations as well, and Bruen [2] implies that identifying differences and commonalities in strategy use can help tailor such training.

- **Guessing Meaning from Context:** Make it a classroom norm to at least attempt to infer unknown words from context before rushing to a dictionary. You can do exercises specifically on context clues. Take a sentence from a text with an unknown word and together analyze clues around it. For instance, “*Die Kinder spielen im Garten mit einem Drachen.*” – students might not know *Drachen* (kite), but you can guide them: *Kinder spielen* – so it is likely a toy or something fun, *im Garten* – outdoors, maybe something like a ball? Then hint: *ein Drache* also means a mythical creature but here “with a dragon” makes no sense, so likely it is something else – do they know “to fly a kite” in English involves a “dragon” in some languages (German “*Drache*”)? By walking through this kind of reasoning, you train them to use both linguistic and logical clues. Cosentino’s research on inferential strategies basically revolves around teaching students to leverage what is understood to deduce what is not [5]. Encouraging such behavior at A1 (albeit with simple inferences) builds their confidence that they can figure things out even without dictionary or teacher/lecturer help.

- **Highlighting/Underlining Key Words:** Many beginners underline too much or the wrong parts. Teach them to be selective by giving criteria: e.g., “Underline the verbs, or underline names and places”, depending on the text. Or ask them to underline one sentence that they think is the main message of the paragraph. These tasks force them to make judgments about importance. Over time, they can learn to mark texts in a way that helps them (like circling unknown words to ask later, underlining main ideas, putting a question mark next to confusing sentences). Genç and Ünal’s findings that students often underline things they do not understand can be addressed by guiding them to instead underline things they *do* understand that seem important [7]. This flips the focus to the positive and builds “reading for meaning” habits.

- **Monitoring and Self-Questioning:** Even at A1, teachers/lecturers can instill a basic form of metacognition. For example, after reading a short text, ask students to rate their understanding: “Do you think you understood it well? What parts were unclear?” By normalizing this reflection, students start to internalize the practice of checking their comprehension. If a student says “Line 3-4 I did not get”, instead of the teacher/lecturer immediately explaining, the teacher/lecturer can encourage peer explanation or re-reading of that part, thereby training students to fix comprehension gaps. Mardanova [3] highlights the role of monitoring one’s understanding and using corrective strategies if needed. Teachers/lecturers can model this by occasionally saying, “Wait, I did not quite understand this part – let me read it again. Okay, now it makes sense.” This shows students that even proficient readers sometimes pause and reassess.

To implement strategy instruction systematically, one can follow the “Explicit Training” phases suggested by Genç and Ünal [7]: Awareness, Demonstration, Application, Reflection. For instance, *Awareness*: tell students “There is a strategy called skimming, which helps you get the main idea without reading every word.” *Demonstration*: show them how to skim a short text by doing it in front of them (thinking aloud). *Application*: have them try skimming a new text themselves, possibly in pairs, and share what they got. *Reflection*: ask them how it went – did they catch the main idea? Did skipping unknown words feel weird? This meta-talk helps solidify the strategy. Research suggests such explicit models not only improve immediate comprehension but also help transfer strategies to new contexts. Over time, students trained in strategies become more autonomous readers, able to tackle texts that initially seem difficult by employing the tools they have learned.

E. Fostering a Supportive and Motivating Learning Environment

To tackle motivational and affective challenges, pedagogical tactics should extend beyond cognitive training to include classroom atmosphere and task design:

- **Build Confidence through Gradual Progression:** Ensure that learners experience success regularly. Start with very short, simple texts and gradually increase length and complexity as their skills improve. Celebrate small victories – if a student who was initially anxious reads a paragraph and answers questions correctly, acknowledge that achievement. The use of *graded readers* (simplified books for learners) can be beneficial, if available, since they allow students to read a longer text without

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overwhelming difficulty, giving a sense of accomplishment. If graded readers in German are not accessible, the teacher/lecturer can simulate the effect by breaking a longer text into parts or giving a series of related texts that slowly introduce more language (e.g., first a simple description of a person, then a slightly longer biography, then a short story about the person). The key is to avoid big jumps that could lead to frustration. Julaiakah's approach of differentiating tasks for different levels shows the value of adjusting difficulty to student ability – low-ability students improved when they were allowed to choose easier subtasks [1]. In a typical classroom, this could translate to providing optional challenge sections so that stronger students are engaged while weaker ones can focus on core comprehension without feeling failure.

- **Encourage Intrinsic Motivation:** Try to turn some reading activities into enjoyable pursuits rather than just obligations. One way is to incorporate topics of genuine interest to the students (as previously noted, use texts about hobbies, celebrities, technology, whatever the class cares about). Another way is through *extensive reading*, which is reading for pleasure at or below one's comfortable level. While extensive reading might be limited at A1 due to lack of materials, teachers can still facilitate something like a mini class library of very easy German texts (even picture books or dual-language texts). If a student can read a simple children's story in German by themselves, it can spark joy and confidence, making them think "I can read German!" Amrillayevna and Bahromovich [14] mention extensive reading as beneficial for building fluency and vocabulary through pleasurable reading. Intrinsic motivation grows when learners find personal meaning or enjoyment in reading – maybe a student loves soccer and reads a short profile of a German football player, thus connecting language with passion. Teachers/lecturers should seek out such connections when possible.

- **Reduce Anxiety with Supportive Practices:** Create a classroom culture where mistakes in reading are treated as learning opportunities, not failures. This can be done by modeling a non-judgmental attitude (never ridiculing mispronunciations or misunderstandings, but gently correcting and praising effort). Techniques like choral reading (class reads together) or pair reading can help shyer students practice without being in the spotlight, reducing anxiety. As noted in Rahmadillah et al. [11], partner reading or group reading can reduce individual stress and provide peer support. For instance, doing a "think-pair-share" for reading comprehension: students first try individually, then discuss in pairs, then share with class – by the time of sharing, they have peer confirmation and feel more secure in their answers. Another tactic is allowing reading aloud volunteers rather than forcing everyone in turn (some beginners are extremely nervous reading German aloud; they should be given time to build confidence before being asked to). For test situations, training them with similar tasks beforehand and teaching relaxation techniques (like deep breathing, or starting with scanning the questions first so they feel more in control) can alleviate some test anxiety.

- **Peer Collaboration and Discussion:** Encourage students to work together on reading tasks. Collaborative learning can increase motivation and comprehension – students explain things to each other, which reinforces their own understanding. Julaiakah [1] found pair and group work beneficial, as higher-ability learners naturally helped the others, leading to overall improvement. When students discuss a text in small groups (even if partly in Indonesian to clarify meaning), they engage more deeply and often find it a more dynamic, less tedious process than silent reading alone. It also adds a social, communicative element to reading, which can appeal to those who are more orally or socially oriented.

- **Relevant and Purposeful Tasks:** Make sure that the tasks accompanying reading are meaningful and not just rote. If every reading is followed by the same dull comprehension questions, students lose interest. Mix up post-reading activities: sometimes ask them to draw something from the text, sometimes have them role-play a scenario from it, or write a short response (in Indonesian or simple German, depending on focus). Variety keeps motivation up. Also, frame reading as a skill with real-world payoff: e.g., "If you learn to read these signs, you will be able to navigate when you travel to Germany" or "Knowing how to read simple emails in German can help you make pen pals". When learners see a personal benefit or communicative purpose, they are more invested. Bratytysa and Kalyniuk [13] emphasize tapping into learners' interests and creating a supportive environment that nurtures a love for reading. So, if a class loves competitive activities, you could gamify reading tasks (like a treasure hunt in a text – find the answers to clues). If they are curious about German pop culture, include a short magazine blurb or song lyric to analyze.

The overarching principle is to humanize the reading experience – make it less about testing language and more about discovery, interaction, and personal growth. As learners feel more comfortable and engaged, their motivation will shift from purely extrinsic (grades) to at least partially intrinsic (enjoyment or interest), which in turn improves their effort and outcomes.

F. Diversifying Materials and Media

To deal with resource constraints and to keep reading instruction rich, teachers/lecturers can employ creativity and available technology:

- **Use Visual and Short Texts:** Not all reading has to be paragraphs. Reading comprehension can be practiced with menus, timetables, flyers, posters, infographics – many of which are visually supported and thus easier to understand at A1. These also train real-life reading skills (like finding information on a train schedule or interpreting a simple advertisement). Bratytysa and Kalyniuk [13] mentioned functional classification of tasks (receptive, reproductive, productive) – many visual or functional texts

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lend themselves to receptive tasks that confirm understanding of factual info. For example, give students a bus timetable and ask, “What time is the last bus to X?” This is reading in a different format than narratives, and some students who struggle with long prose might excel in extracting data from a table, boosting their confidence.

- **Integrate Technology Where Possible:** If the classroom has a projector or if students have smartphones, leverage these for reading activities. For instance, display a short webpage or social media post in German and navigate it together – teaching digital literacy alongside language. If internet is available, tools like online dictionaries (dict.cc or Leo) can be taught for smart usage (how to quickly find the meaning of a word and then continue reading, rather than translating the whole text). There are also interactive reading platforms or educational games that can make reading practice more engaging. Even something as simple as a Kahoot quiz about a text they just read can make the review fun (students reread the text to win the quiz). Mardanova [3] notes the need to prepare learners for digital reading environments – starting that at A1 with guided classroom use is forward-thinking. For schools with limited tech, teachers/lecturers might consider offline solutions: e.g., downloading and printing simple German web articles or using audio recordings (listening-reading combined exercises can help those who benefit from hearing the text while reading).

- **Provide Extensive Reading Opportunities:** If possible, encourage reading beyond class. A teacher/lecturer could maintain a small library of simple German reading materials (borrowed or self-made). Alternatively, the teacher/lecturer can hand out or recommend additional texts for curious students. In one strategy, some instructors prepare **reading folders** or **packets** at varying levels that students can take home – containing, say, a story and a glossary and a few questions for reflection. Students who finish class tasks early or want extra practice can use these. While not every student will take up extra reading, having materials available communicates that reading is a valued activity, not just homework. Additionally, consider cross-disciplinary collaboration – perhaps the German club (if one exists) or the library can host a “German corner” with magazines or short books.

- **Diversify Reading Task Types:** According to Laveau’s framework as cited by Bratytsya and Kalyniuk [13], tasks can be receptive (checking comprehension), reproductive (reorganizing info), or productive (using info creatively). In class, vary the tasks: sometimes a quiz (receptive), other times have students paraphrase or outline the text (reproductive), and occasionally do something creative like writing an ending to the story or a reply to a letter (productive). This not only keeps things interesting but also ensures a deeper processing of the text. For example, a productive task for A1 could be: after reading a short email of invitation, students write a short reply accepting or declining – this uses the text content but goes beyond it. Such tasks also integrate writing or speaking, making reading a springboard for other skills.

- **Leverage Multilingual Resources:** For contexts where pure German materials are scarce, teachers can use bilingual materials – like a story printed side-by-side in German and Indonesian. While some purists might worry this encourages translation, at the A1 stage it can actually build confidence and allow students to enjoy stories that would be too hard in pure German. They can read in Indonesian to grasp content, then inspect the German for specific features or to pick out familiar words. This way, reading time is increased (because they get through a story in Indonesian and learn some German from it) rather than decreased to a slog through incomprehensible text. Over time, as proficiency grows, reliance on L1 can be reduced.

By diversifying input, we address both the challenge of limited resources and the risk of boredom or narrow skill development. Students will encounter German in multiple formats and contexts, preparing them for real-world reading which is not just dense paragraphs from textbooks. Additionally, variety caters to different learning styles: visual learners appreciate charts and images, social learners enjoy interactive media or group tasks, etc. This inclusive approach can improve overall class engagement with reading [16].

G. Improving Assessment Practices

Finally, pedagogical improvement must extend to how we evaluate reading, to avoid the backwash effect of poor assessments:

- **Include a Variety of Question Types:** Design quizzes and tests to have not just multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank questions, but also a couple of open-ended questions. For example, after a short text, ask an open question like “Why do you think the character did X? Explain in Indonesian.” The answer can be graded leniently (completion points) but it forces students to process the text more deeply. Over time, as language allows, these can be answered in German with short sentences. Also consider tasks like sequencing events (to test overall comprehension), matching headings to paragraphs (to test main idea identification), or true/false with justification (so they have to confirm with a line from text). These items test more than fact recall and encourage careful reading. Alternative forms like summaries or responding to questions in one’s own words should be welcomed.

- **Test Strategies (Process) as well as Answers:** One innovative approach from Genç and Ünal [7] is reflection questions after strategy use. In a testing context, this could be adapted: for instance, part of a reading assignment could ask students, “What did you do to understand line 5?” or “Which word helped you figure out the answer to question 3?” This not only checks if they got the answer but if they used a strategy. Alternatively, during practice tests, a teacher/lecturer could observe students and note strategy usage for informal assessment. While formal tests in schools may not allow awarding marks for strategy description, teachers/lecturers can incorporate it in continuous assessment or class activities. For example, a reading portfolio could be kept where students sometimes write brief reflections on how they approached a text – this could be part of the grade, sending the

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message that process matters. Over time, this trains students to be conscious of their reading tactics, ideally leading them to improve those tactics.

- **Ensure Level-Appropriate Assessments:** Coordinators and teachers/lecturers should work together to choose test texts that align with what has been taught. If a slightly higher-level text is used, it should be because strategies to handle it have been taught. Fair assessment builds trust and reduces anxiety. Also, using some familiar formats or topics in tests (not entirely new everything) can help; for instance, if all semester students read short messages and menus, do not suddenly give a poem at exam. Consistency with variation is key – vary the exact content, not the fundamental skill demanded. If any test item turns out to be problematic (e.g., almost everyone gets it wrong due to a trick of the text), that is feedback to adjust either teaching or the test (perhaps the item was not suitable).

- **Use Formative Assessment:** Not all reading evaluation should be high stakes. Regular low-stakes quizzes or in-class exercises that are checked together can serve to inform teaching and reduce student fear. When students see reading as something that is practiced and improved upon, rather than a one-shot exam where you either get it or you do not, their approach may become more relaxed and methodical. Provide feedback that is constructive – instead of just marking wrong answers, write notes like “Check line 4 for this info” or “Remember the word order trick we learned – that could help here”. This guides students on how to do better next time, tying assessment back into learning. The presentation advocated formative feedback rather than just scores, which is crucial especially in skill development areas like reading.

- **Incorporate Student Self-Assessment:** Occasionally let students self-evaluate or peer-evaluate reading comprehension in a low-pressure setting. For instance, after a practice text and questions, give the class the answer key and have them check their own or a partner’s work. Encourage them to analyze why something was wrong – was it a vocabulary issue, a misreading, etc. This meta-cognitive element in evaluation helps them become self-correcting over time. Ulker [8] essentially points out that many students arrive at university unaccustomed to reflecting on their reading approach, which is something we can address early through such reflective practices.

By refining assessment, we ensure that our improvements in teaching are reinforced, not undermined. Students will direct their effort toward what they know will be expected of them. If they see that tests require understanding the text as a whole and applying strategies, they will be more inclined to practice those skills rather than memorizing translations or cramming vocabulary lists in isolation.

In conclusion, the pedagogical implications drawn from the identified challenges and the supporting literature suggest a comprehensive reorientation of how reading comprehension is taught at the beginner level. The emphasis is on an integrated approach: building linguistic competence, teaching effective strategies, mediating cultural knowledge, and nurturing positive attitudes, all within a supportive learning environment and a fair assessment framework. Implementing these recommendations can transform *Leseverstehen* instruction from “merely an academic exercise” into a more contextually relevant, engaging, and skill-building experience. Ultimately, the objective is not only to help Indonesian A1 learners overcome the immediate difficulties of reading German, but to lay a strong foundation for them to become independent, motivated readers as they progress to higher proficiency levels.

CONCLUSIONS

Teaching reading comprehension (*Leseverstehen*) in German at the A1 level to Indonesian learners is a complex endeavor that involves far more than introducing new words and grammar rules. It entails navigating a multidimensional array of challenges – linguistic, cultural, cognitive, pedagogical, technical, affective, and evaluative – each of which can impede learners’ ability or willingness to engage with texts. This paper has examined those challenges in depth, drawing on both the practical context and insights from a range of scholarly literature. The picture that emerges is one of a beginner reader who is often overwhelmed by unfamiliar language forms, puzzled by foreign cultural references, limited by nascent vocabulary, unsure of how to approach decoding, influenced (for better or worse) by other languages, and possibly intimidated or unmotivated due to the learning environment or prior experiences.

Crucially, these challenges do not operate in isolation. They intersect and compound one another: a student hampered by linguistic deficits might lose confidence and motivation; a culturally opaque text might lead them to resort to unproductive word-by-word translation; a lack of strategic know-how might inflate the difficulty of an already challenging text, and so on. Hence, addressing one aspect in isolation (for example, drilling grammar) is insufficient. An overemphasis on any single dimension can lead to a lopsided pedagogy – something we clearly wish to avoid. Instead, what is needed is a holistic and integrative approach to teaching reading. This means simultaneously developing language knowledge, strategy use, and cultural understanding, while also paying attention to student affect and providing a supportive learning infrastructure.

The pedagogical implications and strategies outlined in this paper offer a roadmap for such an approach. They advocate for **balanced instruction** that neither neglects form nor meaning – reinforcing that grammar and vocabulary can be taught in service of comprehension rather than as ends in themselves. The importance of **explicit strategy training** is underscored by multiple

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studies and has been reflected in our recommendations: even at the introductory level, learners can start to think about how they read, not just what they read, developing habits that will serve them as texts get more demanding. We also highlighted **cultural mediation**, recognizing that language and culture are entwined; reading comprehension improves when texts are made relatable and when learners are equipped to bridge cultural gaps. In parallel, we addressed **motivational factors**: by building a classroom culture that celebrates progress, uses relevant materials, and reduces anxiety, teachers can transform reading from a source of fear to a source of enjoyment or at least curiosity.

Another key theme is **diversification**. Diversity in text types, activities, and assessment methods prevents reading instruction from becoming monotonous or narrowly focused. As Bratytysa and Kalyniuk [13] suggest, viewing reading as a complex, active process means we should engage learners in various ways of interacting with texts – from scanning for facts to critically reflecting on content. By doing so, we cater to different learning styles and aspects of comprehension. The inclusion of technology and multimedia, where feasible, opens up new avenues for making reading interactive and appealing, aligning with modern literacies.

Importantly, improvements in teaching must be mirrored by improvements in **evaluation**. If assessments remain traditional and one-dimensional, they can counteract innovative teaching by pushing students back towards rote learning and superficial reading techniques. Conversely, well-designed assessments that reward global understanding and strategic reading can reinforce the skills and attitudes we aim to cultivate. The suggestion to include open-ended questions or summary tasks in tests, for instance, is meant to encourage teaching that prepares students for such tasks – essentially creating a constructive alignment between learning objectives, instructional activities, and evaluation methods.

Implementing the changes proposed is admittedly challenging. It requires teachers/lecturers to possibly shift their own long-held practices or undergo further professional development (for example, in strategy instruction or materials adaptation). It may require institutions to provide resources – simpler texts, technology access, training workshops – to enable these pedagogical shifts. It also involves a mindset change: viewing beginner readers not as passive recipients of language input who will eventually “pick up” reading skills, but as active learners who can be guided to become effective readers from the very start. The success of these approaches also needs to be empirically monitored; teachers/lecturer should observe and perhaps research in their own classrooms which strategies yield improvements in student engagement and comprehension, and be ready to iterate on their methods.

Nevertheless, the potential pay-off is significant. With a more robust foundation in reading comprehension at A1, students are likely to find subsequent levels of German less daunting, narrowing the infamous gap between basic and intermediate/advanced foreign language courses noted by Maxim [15]. Early strategy training can lead to smoother transitions to higher-level texts and foster greater learner autonomy – students who know how to approach a text are more capable of self-study and lifelong learning. Moreover, by making reading instruction more contextually relevant and enjoyable, we may instill a more positive attitude toward foreign language reading in general. Instead of dreading texts, students might begin to view them as opportunities to learn interesting things, both about the German-speaking world and about language use.

In the specific context of Indonesian learners, adopting these strategies could help overcome some local issues such as lower exposure to the target language and limited class time. For example, maximizing each encounter with a text via strategic reading and cultural discussions means students get more out of the limited input they have. Encouraging extensive reading and use of technology could compensate for the lack of immersion environment by providing extra practice beyond the classroom. Over time, one could envision a virtuous cycle: as students become better readers, they can independently access more German content (simple stories, webpages, etc.), which further improves their language proficiency and cultural knowledge, which in turn makes reading even easier and more engaging [17].

In closing, the challenges in teaching *Leseverstehen* at the A1 level, while numerous and interlinked, are not insurmountable. Through a concerted, research-informed pedagogical effort, teachers/lecturers can significantly alleviate these difficulties. By treating reading not as a peripheral exercise but as a core skill to be cultivated with the same care given to speaking or writing, we acknowledge its importance in the language curriculum. A beginner who learns not only basic German vocabulary and grammar but also *how to read* effectively in German is being equipped with a crucial tool for all future language learning. This empowers the student beyond the A1 classroom: it enables them to independently explore the language (through reading signs, messages, perhaps even simple books) and to connect with the culture (through reading about German life, customs, and perspectives). As such, improving reading comprehension instruction at the foundational level is an investment in learners’ overall communicative competence and intercultural development.

Ultimately, success in this endeavor means that *Leseverstehen* will no longer be seen by students as a daunting challenge or a “mechanical” task. Instead, it will be perceived as an accessible and meaningful skill – a bridge not only to better language proficiency but also to a richer understanding of the German-speaking world and an expansion of one’s own horizons. With thoughtful pedagogy guided by the insights of both practitioners and researchers, what once was a challenge can become an opportunity: the opportunity for students to find joy and purpose in reading, even in the early stages of learning a new language.

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