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Place-Based Multilingual Reading in the Kei Islands: A Context-Responsive Framework for English Education

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ABSTRACT

Students in the Kei Islands approach English texts through linguistic repertoires, cultural experience, and access conditions that differ from those assumed by many generic reading programmes. This article develops a locally responsive direction for university reading courses by integrating scholarship on L2 comprehension, sustained reading, multilingual meaning-making, place-oriented education, and digital literacy. Eighteen traceable academic sources were examined comparatively through qualitative synthesis. The comparison revealed five curriculum obligations: make texts materially and linguistically reachable; teach readers how to monitor understanding; employ several languages with a defined purpose; connect interpretation with island knowledge; and build critical judgement across paper and screen. These obligations are organized as KAM-READ, the Kei Archipelagic Multilingual Reading framework. Its recurring movements—access, connect, interpret, evaluate, and respond—link comprehension with learner agency and socially meaningful use. English remains the main object and medium of development, whereas Indonesian and Veveu Evav can activate knowledge, test interpretations, and support movement toward an accountable English response. KAM-READ offers a research-informed design rather than a claim of tested effectiveness. Its value must next be examined collaboratively in courses, schools, and communities across Tual and Maluku Tenggara.

Keywords: English reading; extensive reading; Kei Islands; multilingual literacy; place-based education; translanguaging

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INTRODUCTION

For an English Education student, reading is both a language practice and an entry point into disciplinary conversation. A page becomes understandable only when the reader brings words, prior experience, purposeful strategies, attention, and judgement into relation. Merely sounding out sentences does not produce that relation. Syntheses of L2 research show that coordinated strategy instruction supports comprehension and that sustained reading increases learners' contact with meaningful language (Yapp et al., 2021; Sangers et al., 2025). The implication is especially consequential in settings where regular encounters with English beyond formal study cannot be assumed.

The Kei Islands present a setting in which reading practices are influenced by multilingualism and geography. University students may use Indonesian, Veveu Evav, Ambon Malay, and English for different purposes, while their access to libraries, stable internet, devices, and printed texts can vary. Language use in Maluku is closely connected with context and social meaning, and Veveu Evav continues to carry cultural and intergenerational significance (Iye et al., 2023; Litaay & Rahawarin, 2023). English reading instruction should therefore build outward from students' linguistic and cultural resources rather than assuming that comprehension develops in a socially neutral, monolingual space.

Two established approaches offer useful but incomplete responses. Extensive reading encourages sustained engagement with texts that learners can understand and select, yet classroom programmes often require substantial teacher guidance before students become independent readers (Robb & Kano, 2024). Translanguaging, meanwhile, enables readers to use their full repertoires for predicting, annotating, paraphrasing, and discussing meaning (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; Mbirimi-Hungwe, 2022). Neither approach by itself fully addresses the relationship between reading, island place, local knowledge, and uneven digital access.

Place-based education connects learning to the cultural, ecological, and social worlds surrounding learners. A systematic review describes it as a broad family of experiential, contextual, and community-oriented practices rather than a single technique (Yemini et al., 2023). Research in rural English education likewise shows that local cultural content can strengthen relevance while exposing gaps in materials and teacher preparation (Shi & Ma, 2025). In the Kei context, place-responsive reading could include environmental texts, oral histories rendered in print, tourism communication, maritime livelihoods, customary knowledge, and comparative accounts of island development.

Existing studies discuss extensive reading, strategy instruction, multilingual scaffolding, local culture, or digital reading largely as separate concerns. A framework is needed that brings them into one coherent design for English Education in an archipelagic setting. This article asks which principles should guide context-responsive English reading in the Kei Islands and how those principles can be organized for course design. Its contribution is the Kei Archipelagic Multilingual Reading framework, abbreviated KAM-READ, which treats textual access, language repertoire, place, critical literacy, and learner response as interdependent.

RESEARCH METHODS

An integrative review was used to construct an explanation across bodies of scholarship that are usually discussed separately. Evidence about L2 reading, extensive engagement with texts, multilingual literacy, learning through place, and technology-supported reading was therefore read in relation to a single design problem. The analysis sought conceptual connections and pedagogical consequences; it did not recalculate the statistical results reported by prior researchers.

Sources were located through targeted searches of publisher databases, DOAJ, Crossref-linked journal pages, and Google Scholar. Search combinations included “second-language reading strategy meta-analysis,” “extensive reading review,” “translanguaging reading comprehension,” “place-based language education,” “digital extensive reading Indonesia,” “local culture reading materials,” and “Maluku or Kei language.” Priority was given to peer-reviewed works from 2019–2026, supplemented by directly relevant earlier studies. Eighteen sources were retained. Every source has a DOI or an official journal, publisher, or repository link so that readers can verify it.

Each source was coded for the reading problem addressed, pedagogical mechanism, language use, text selection, learner agency, place or culture, technological access, and assessment implications. Codes were compared across sources and consolidated into themes. A proposed framework component was retained only when it responded to a Kei-context condition, specified an observable reading practice, and could be implemented in a university course. Since no students or lecturers participated, the framework is a research-informed proposition rather than evidence of local effectiveness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The synthesis produced five priorities: accessible text choice, strategic comprehension, multilingual mediation, place-responsive content, and critical print-digital literacy. These priorities are complementary. A locally relevant text can still fail if it is linguistically inaccessible; an easy text can remain educationally shallow if learners are not asked to interpret or evaluate it; and a digital resource does not create inclusion when bandwidth or device demands exclude some readers.

Accessible and sustained reading

Readers need texts that offer achievable comprehension while gradually extending language knowledge. Recent meta-analytic evidence associates sustained, self-selected reading with gains across comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, motivation, and broader proficiency (Sangers et al., 2025). Classroom evidence also warns that choice alone is insufficient: teachers must curate levels, model selection, monitor progress, and create supportive transitions toward independence (Robb & Kano, 2024). Digital extensive reading can widen access in Indonesia, but programme design must account for platforms, teacher support, and uneven technology (Janah et al., 2022). For Kei courses, a balanced library should combine downloadable texts, compact printed collections, and locally produced materials at several levels.

Strategic comprehension and metacognitive control

The strongest reading instruction makes invisible decisions visible. Learners benefit from practising prediction, main-idea identification, inference, contextual vocabulary analysis, monitoring,

repair, annotation, synthesis, and evaluation in coordinated ways. A meta-analysis of 46 L2 strategy interventions found a strong overall benefit and emphasized the value of multi-strategy teaching (Yapp et al., 2021). Indonesian scholarship also stresses the need to move tertiary EFL reading beyond literal comprehension toward examination of assumptions, representation, and power (Setyaningsih, 2019). Strategy instruction should therefore move through modelling, guided use, collaborative explanation, and increasingly independent application.

Multilingual mediation for deeper interpretation

Using Indonesian or Veveu Evav during parts of a reading lesson does not necessarily reduce the status of English. Planned multilingual work can activate prior knowledge, clarify a difficult relationship, support paraphrasing, and enable readers to test interpretations before producing an English response. Pedagogical translanguaging calls for purposeful design rather than accidental switching (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021). Experimental and classroom research indicates that translanguaging can strengthen comprehension and metacognitive paraphrasing (Hungwe, 2019; Mbirimi-Hungwe, 2022). The instructional safeguard is progression: multilingual exploration should lead back to close engagement with the English text and an accountable response in English.

Place-responsive texts and critical print-digital literacy

Place-based reading gives learners a meaningful reason to compare text with experience. Systematic evidence frames place-based education around connections among curriculum, community, environment, and learner participation (Yemini et al., 2023). In language education, locally grounded content can help students represent their communities in English, although teachers require resources and preparation to avoid superficial cultural references (Shi & Ma, 2025). Reading about coastal ecosystems, local tourism, food security, oral tradition, migration, or customary relations can support disciplinary vocabulary and critical comparison between local and outside representations. At the same time, students must learn to evaluate authorship, evidence, purpose, omission, hyperlink structures, and the credibility of digital sources. Digital literacy influences how EFL learners locate and interpret information, not merely whether a screen is used (Mufidati, 2024; Mistang et al., 2025).

Table 1. The Kei Archipelagic Multilingual Reading (KAM-READ) Framework

Reading phase	Instructional purpose	Illustrative learning practices	Evidence of learning
Access	Match texts, formats, and support to readers.	Levelled choice, print/offline options, preview, vocabulary threshold check.	Text-choice rationale and reading plan.
Connect	Activate linguistic, cultural, and place knowledge.	Multilingual prediction, concept map, local-text comparison, question generation.	Annotated connections and discussion notes.
Interpret	Construct and monitor meaning.	Think-aloud, inference, main-idea mapping, paraphrase, repair strategy.	Reading log and evidence-based explanation.
Evaluate	Examine credibility, perspective, and representation.	Source tracing, claim-evidence analysis, bias check, print-digital comparison.	Critical response supported by textual evidence.
Respond	Use reading for communication and community learning.	English synthesis, bilingual resource, tourism brief, environmental or oral-history response.	Authentic product, reflection, and peer/community feedback.

KAM-READ is a recursive cycle rather than a rigid five-step lesson. A lecturer may return from evaluation to interpretation when students discover weak evidence, or from response to access when a text proves too difficult. The cycle nonetheless protects five essential questions: Can students reach and understand the text? What knowledge can they bring to it? How do they construct meaning? On what basis do they trust or challenge it? What can they do with what they have read?

Within the English Education Study Program at Universitas Doktor Husni Ingratubun Tual, the framework can connect Intensive Reading, Extensive Reading, Academic Reading, materials development, educational technology, and teaching practicum. Students might maintain levelled reading portfolios, compare English representations of Kei with community knowledge, create accessible local reading texts, or conduct small linguistic-landscape and library-access inquiries.

Assessment should combine comprehension accuracy with strategy explanation, source evaluation, sustained reading, and meaningful response.

The framework does not claim that locally themed texts are automatically effective. Cultural accuracy, permissions, linguistic difficulty, genre range, and intellectual challenge all require attention. It also does not treat translanguaging as unrestricted translation. Teachers must decide which language move supports comprehension and when learners should return to English. Finally, digital inclusion requires equivalent low-bandwidth or printed routes, not merely the availability of an online link.

The principal limitation is that the synthesis has not yet been tested in Kei classrooms. Future research should begin with a reading-needs analysis and participatory text audit, followed by iterative course design. Evidence could include comprehension measures, vocabulary growth, reading volume, strategy logs, interviews, classroom observation, digital-access records, and evaluation of student-created local texts. Collaboration with cultural knowledge holders is necessary whenever community narratives or customary knowledge are adapted for instruction.

CONCLUSION

A reading course in Kei should ultimately produce readers who can enter an English text, question it, connect it with lived reality, and use what they have understood for a defensible purpose. That outcome demands more than correct answers to short comprehension items. It requires reachable texts, deliberately taught strategies, disciplined use of multilingual knowledge, attention to whose version of island life is represented, and careful judgement of information encountered on paper or online. KAM-READ gathers those responsibilities into five recurring movements: access, connect, interpret, evaluate, and respond. Its originality lies in making geography, cultural knowledge, and unequal access active decisions in reading-course design while keeping English development explicit. The framework remains a proposition until local participants test it. Collaborative implementation can reveal which text collections, scaffolds, language choices, response tasks, and assessment criteria genuinely serve students in Tual and across the Kei Islands.

The framework also aligns with broader arguments that English education should prepare learners for diverse English use rather than a single cultural centre (Rose & Galloway, 2019), and with translanguaging theory's view of multilingual resources as an integrated repertoire (García & Li Wei, 2014). Indonesian work on KWL with multimedia and on locally grounded reading materials provides additional support for explicit activation of prior knowledge and culturally relevant texts (Azwar et al., 2024; Wulandari et al., 2018).

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