Examining English Reading Comprehension' Enhancement on Narrative Texts using the Application of Direct Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) Strategy

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ABSTRACT

The study reported in this article aims to investigate whether the use of the Direct Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy can help students find ways to enhance their English reading comprehension of narrative texts at a vocational senior high school in the Province of Gorontalo. The study focused on first-grade students, particularly in class X TKJ. A quantitative method was employed, utilizing a one-group pre-test post-test design to determine the significant difference in students' comprehension before and after being taught using the strategy. The results indicate that the use of the Direct Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy help enhances students' reading comprehension of English narrative texts. This was evidenced by a significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test (8.7) and post-test (18.48). The t-test result indicated that T-test was higher than T-list: $13.91 > 2.056$, with a significance level (α) of $0.05 = 2.056$. Thus, H1 was accepted since $L0 < L\text{-list}$ $(0.100 < 0.173)$. Moreover, the use of this strategy facilitated students in maintaining focus, fostering critical thinking, active engagement in the learning process, enhancing comprehension of reading components, and understanding reading texts more easily.

Keywords: Direct Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy; narrative texts, reading comprehension; vocational school

INTRODUCTION

English is considered the first foreign language in Indonesia, and it is taught formally from primary school through university. Given the importance of English, teachers need to devote more time to

tutoring and literacy in order for students to be able to communicate in the target language in both oral and written forms directly and simply (Maranatha, 2023). Writing, listening, reading, and speaking are the four skills that must be learned when learning English. These are crucial first steps in learning English (Prasetyo, Syam, Saifu, & Sangkala, 2018).

Reading is not merely a passive act of decoding words but an active process of constructing meaning from text (Ismail, Syahruza and Basuki, 2017). It entails the simultaneous creation and extraction of meaning from print (Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Effective reading strategies, including finding the main idea, gathering factual information, inferring meaning, and using reference words, are crucial for students' comprehension proficiency (Sua, 2021). Furthermore, reading comprehension is essential for language learning and communication (Badu, 2020; Kaganang, 2019), facilitating knowledge acquisition and success in academic and professional endeavors (Haerazi & Irawan, 2020).

For senior high school students, proficient reading comprehension is indispensable as it facilitates deeper understanding and analytical skills development. During our engagement with tenth-grade students at a vocational high school in a region in the Province of Gorontalo, Indonesia, during a teaching practicum program (henceforth refers to PPL 2), it became evident that students encountered challenges, particularly with narrative texts. These difficulties stemmed from struggles in comprehending and interpreting texts independently, compounded by encounters with unfamiliar vocabulary due to inadequate background knowledge. Additionally, the limited repertoire of reading strategies employed by teachers, mainly centered on task-based reading, further compounded students' challenges.

To address these issues, we sought an effective strategy to help students enhance their comprehension abilities. The Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) emerged as a suitable option. This strategy engages students in active participation by prompting them to make predictions based on guided questions before reading and subsequently confirming or revising these predictions during and after reading (Panjaitan & Siagian, 2020). DRTA not only fosters comprehension but also activates students' background knowledge, rendering it applicable across pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading stages.

The Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy, introduced by Stauffer in 1969, guides students to predict, confirm, and reflect on their understanding of texts. DRTA encourages active participation and critical reflection, promoting comprehension across various stages of reading (Safitri, Marhaban, & Erdiana, 2022). However, its efficacy relies on students' prior exposure to the text, and large class sizes may pose challenges in implementation (Safitri, Marhaban, & Erdiana, 2022). Carter (2004) delineates several steps in the DRTA strategy, emphasizing the importance of engaging students in genre discussions, making predictions, and reflecting on reading experiences. These procedures aim to foster active engagement and meaningful comprehension experiences among students. While DRTA encourages active participation and critical thinking, its effectiveness may be limited by students' familiarity with the text and challenges in classroom management, particularly in larger class settings (Bernhardt, 2011).

Previous studies have shed light on the effectiveness of various strategies in enhancing students' reading comprehension skills, providing valuable insights that inform the current research. For instance, Risdha (2019) conducted a study entitled "Improving Students' Reading Comprehension Through Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) Strategy at the ninth grade students of MTS Lautang Belawa". The results revealed a significant improvement in students'

reading comprehension following the implementation of the DRTA strategy. Specifically, the mean score of the pre-test was 46.875, which increased to 70 in the post-test, indicating a gain of 23.125. The post-test rate percentage surpassed the pre-test rate percentage in teaching reading, with the t-test value exceeding the t-table value. These findings reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, suggesting that the DRTA strategy effectively enhances students' reading comprehension.

Similarly, Marzona and Ikhsan (2019) conducted a study titled "An Analysis of Students' Reading Comprehension on Narrative Text at Second Grade at SMAN 1 Talamau". Their research highlighted several challenges faced by students in understanding narrative texts, including difficulties in determining main ideas, understanding word meanings, grasping implicit information, and comprehending the general structure and language features of narrative texts. These findings underscore the importance of improving teaching techniques and providing more exercises to enhance students' reading comprehension abilities, particularly in understanding narrative texts.

Furthermore, Rahman, Hikmah, and Fahira (2022) investigated the effectiveness of the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy in improving students' reading comprehension. Their study utilized multiple-choice, true/false, and matching word questions as instruments, revealing a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. The post-test scores were higher than the pre-test scores, indicating a positive impact of the DRTA strategy on students' reading comprehension of narrative texts. These findings align with previous research and emphasize the efficacy of the DRTA strategy as a tool for enhancing students' reading comprehension skills.

However, despite the insights provided by previous studies, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the efficacy of the DRTA strategy in enhancing students' English reading comprehension of narrative texts, particularly in the context of vocational schools in the Province of Gorontalo. This present study, therefore, aims to fill this gap. A key research question is formulated as follows: Does the use of the DRTA strategy help students enhance their reading comprehension when learning English narrative texts? By acknowledging the specific challenges faced by students and recognizing the significance of effective reading strategies, this study seeks to contribute to the improvement of English language education.

METHOD

This study utilized a quantitative approach, relying on evidence that can be measured and counted. In scientific inquiry, the quantitative approach employs tools such as inference, reduction to specific variables and hypotheses, measurement, observation, and theoretical tests. The study employed a pre-experimental design with one group pre-test and post-test. This design involved a single group subjected to pre-test (O1), treatment (X), and post-test (O2). Its objective was to ascertain whether the DRTA strategy could help enhance students' English reading comprehension in narrative texts.

We employed the purposive sampling technique, selecting only one class, X TKJ, consisting of 29 students, though one student was unable to participate from the first to the last meeting, resulting in a sample size of 28. This class was chosen due to its diverse range of student abilities and upon the English teacher's recommendation, suggesting it was the most suitable representation of the entire population's English proficiency diversity. Subsequent to data collection from the pre-test and post-test scores, manual analysis was conducted using the t-test formula for statistical

calculation. The hypothesis was evaluated employing the t-test, with normality tests conducted prior to the calculation of the t-test.

FINDINGS

The study reported in this article aimed to investigate whether the use of the DRTA strategy could enhance students' English reading comprehension of narrative texts. To begin with, we present an overview of the treatment sessions, followed by the results of the pre-and post-tests.

### Introducing DRTA strategy in the classroom

The inaugural session commenced with salutations and inquiries about the students' conditions. Following a brief prayer led by the class leader, attendance was taken, noting one absentee. We introduced ourselves and requested the students to reciprocate introductions in English. Subsequently, the narrative text's general aspects, including its structure, language features, and illustrative examples, were elucidated, paving the way for the implementation of the DRTA strategy. During this session, we expounded on how to comprehend narrative texts using the DRTA strategy, engaging students in collaborative practice. A discussion centered on the story "Roro Jonrang" ensued, accompanied by a visual aid and subsequent predictions by the students. Despite initial challenges in prompt prediction, the students progressively refined their critical thinking skills. Following comprehensive reading and prediction exercises, students were prompted to reflect on the accuracy of their predictions, fostering a deeper understanding of the text. Approximately 40 minutes into the session, students demonstrated improved predictive abilities, culminating in a challenge to discern the story's main ideas and structural elements. The session concluded with students offering conclusions related to narrative texts, particularly focusing on "Roro Jonrang", followed by expressions of appreciation.

The second session commenced with a similar routine, focusing on the narrative text "Malin Kundang". As in the previous meeting, students engaged in prediction exercises, demonstrating heightened anticipation and familiarity with the storyline. The session's conclusion mirrored the preceding meeting, with feedback, commendations for accurate predictions, and closure. The third session centered on the narrative text "Tangkuban Perahu", maintaining consistency with the prior meetings' structure and objectives. Students' adeptness at prediction and critical thinking continued to manifest, underscoring the effectiveness of the DRTA strategy. Feedback, commendations, and closure marked the conclusion of the session. The fourth session featured the narrative text "Rawa Pening", adhering to the established routine and objectives. The students' proficiency in prediction and critical analysis persisted, further validating the efficacy of the DRTA strategy. Feedback, commendations, and closure characterized the session's conclusion. The final session revisited narrative comprehension principles, exemplified through the text "Lake Toba". Students demonstrated heightened analytical skills, discerning the story's implied meanings and moral messages. The session concluded with feedback, commendations, and closure, marking the culmination of the research endeavor.

Test Results

Upon analysis of the pre-test data, it was observed that only 3 students scored low, while 15 scored high. This disparity in scores suggests a challenge stemming from conventional teaching methods, which may not sufficiently engage students in English learning. To address this issue, we employed the DRTA strategy, specifically tailored to aid students in comprehending narrative texts. The strategy was implemented across five sessions as described above, focusing on teaching narrative texts.

CHART 1. The pre-tet and post-test results
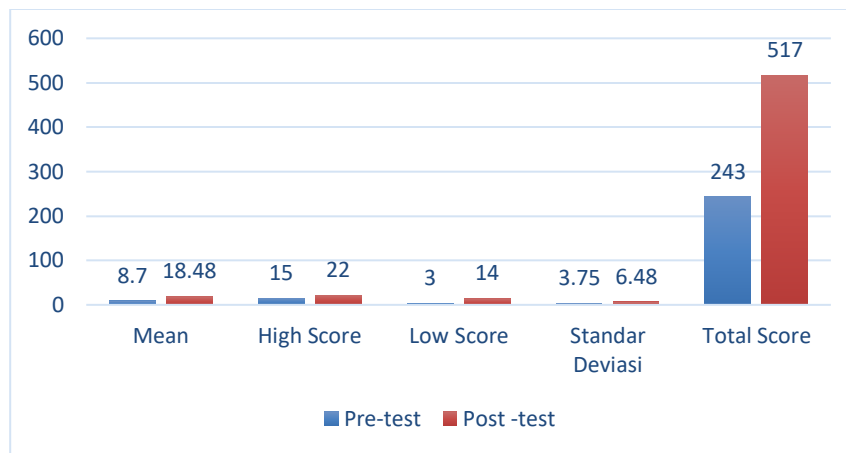
The effectiveness of the DRTA strategy was evident in the research findings, with the mean pre-test score of 8.7 significantly increasing to 18.48 in the post-test. This notable improvement indicates the strategy's ability to enhance students' reading comprehension of narrative texts. These findings suggest a promising avenue for improving student performance in English reading comprehension, emphasizing the potential impact of innovative teaching strategies on student learning outcomes.

DISCUSSIONS

Findings of this research showed that employing the DRTA strategy in learning enabled students to predict story content, thus enhancing their comprehension and fostering interest in English learning. Notably, during the second meeting, when the DRTA strategy was applied, all students exhibited enthusiasm in predicting and engaging with the text, particularly when encountering stories like Malin Kundang. Stauffer's (1969) theories underscore the significance of predictions in guiding language learners to enhance reading comprehension, emphasizing the role of pre-teaching vocabulary to facilitate accurate predictions.

Secondly, the study's findings underscored the potential for students to develop social skills through the learning process. Assignments, such as predicting story titles in narrative texts, encouraged critical thinking and fostered interaction, thereby contributing to improved reading comprehension. Stauffer's (1969) emphasis on student engagement in the DRTA strategy aligns

with these findings, highlighting the strategy's focus on predicting and validating predictions during reading.

Thirdly, the research identified various benefits of the DRTA strategy in enhancing reading comprehension. Students demonstrated the ability to predict story main ideas, acquire new vocabulary, grasp detailed information, engage in critical thinking, and anticipate story endings. These findings resonate with Sari, Drajati, and Rochsantiningsih's (2019) assertion that readers construct meaning by absorbing new information and comparing it to prior knowledge during text comprehension.

Moreover, we identified comprehension challenges among students in initial meetings, prompting the implementation of prediction exercises to promote critical thinking skills. With consistent practice and guidance, students exhibited improvement in prediction abilities, contributing to enhanced comprehension. Despite challenges encountered in implementing the DRTA strategy, the research findings support its efficacy in improving student reading comprehension, aligning with Stauffer's (1969) emphasis on active and thoughtful reading through prediction.

However, the research faced limitations, including one student scoring below the standard value on the post-test. While the study focused solely on legend stories in five meetings, adherence to DRTA Strategy points and steps was sometimes compromised due to situational factors in the classroom. Nonetheless, the majority of students achieved scores exceeding the standard value, affirming the success of the study in enhancing reading comprehension.

CONCLUSION

This study significantly helps students enhance their English reading comprehension of narrative texts through the implementation of the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy. The t-test results indicated a notable increase in the mean post-test score (18.46) compared to the mean pre-test score (8.7) in the pre-experimental class taught with the DRTA strategy. Specifically, the calculated T-test value (13.91) exceeded the critical T-list value (2.056) at the significance level (α) of 0.05, leading to the acceptance of H1 as L0 < Llist (0.100 < 0.173). Consequently, it can be concluded that the DRTA strategy effectively enhances students' reading comprehension of narrative texts. The observed improvement in students' reading scores post-treatment underscores the strategy's efficacy in facilitating comprehension, aiding vocabulary acquisition, and expanding knowledge related to narrative stories. Teachers can leverage the DRTA strategy to enhance their instruction of reading comprehension in narrative texts, thereby fostering students' literacy skills and engagement with textual content.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The treatment duration was limited to five sessions, potentially constraining the depth of comprehension improvement. Additionally, certain aspects of the DRTA strategy implementation may have been adapted to suit the classroom context, which could have impacted its effectiveness. For future research, it is recommended to explore the long-term effects of the DRTA strategy on students' reading comprehension across diverse text genres and linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, investigating optimal strategies for integrating DRTA into existing curriculum frameworks and assessing its scalability in various educational settings would provide valuable insights for educators and researchers alike.

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