

Enhancing Junior High School Students' Reading Comprehension: The Effectiveness of Directed Reading Thinking Activity Technique

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the efficacy of the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) technique in enhancing reading comprehension among Junior High School students. Addressing a gap in traditional reading strategies, the research aimed to assess whether DRTA could improve comprehension of narrative texts for eighth graders at MTSN 2 Bandar Lampung. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study utilized pre-tests, post-tests, and student questionnaires to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The experimental group, which received DRTA instruction, showed significant improvements in post-test scores compared to their pre-test results, indicating enhanced comprehension skills. Qualitative feedback further revealed increased student engagement and motivation. The findings confirm that DRTA not only aids in comprehension but also promotes critical thinking and a deeper understanding of texts. Consequently, the study recommends the integration of DRTA into reading curriculums to meet contemporary educational demands and improve student learning outcomes effectively. This technique promises to bridge the gap between current educational practices and the evolving needs of students in the digital era.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of mastering English in the contemporary technological world is evident as it serves as a vital international language, continuously increasing in usage. English proficiency can be enhanced through various skills such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading, with reading being particularly crucial. Reading expands vocabulary and fosters an understanding of knowledge, science, and technology advancements. It is a complex cognitive process involving the interpretation and understanding of textual content, as emphasized by sources highlighting the vitality of technological aid in mastering English (Azzahara, Ruminda, et al., 2024).

Reading comprehension is fundamental to the reading process, allowing readers to grasp a text's underlying messages and ideas. Without comprehension, reading becomes meaningless, as

noted in the literature on the importance of English in educational settings (Bachtiar, 2024; Irasuti et al., 2024). Successful comprehension results in the reader fully understanding the information and ideas presented, which can convey diverse forms of messages including emotions.

In the context of the 2013 English Curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on developing students' ability to understand various textual meanings in descriptive, narrative, and procedural texts (Mavjuda Mardievna et al., 2020). However, challenges in reading comprehension have been observed, such as during field practices at SMP N 3 Negeri Agung, where students struggled due to insufficient vocabulary and unfamiliarity with key reading concepts like identifying main ideas and making inferences.

Further observations at MTSN 2 Bandar Lampung highlighted additional issues. The prevalent teaching method, Direct Reading Activity (DRA), where students read texts and answer questions without specific strategies to aid comprehension, proved ineffective. This method led to difficulties, particularly with lengthy texts and unfamiliar vocabulary, ultimately disengaging students. The literature supports the need for innovative teaching methods in English to effectively engage students and improve learning.

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Recognizing the need for more effective teaching techniques to improve reading comprehension, the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) developed by Russell Stauffer in 1969 offers a promising alternative. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Kusumawardani in 2012 and Zakiyah in 2015, demonstrated that DRTA significantly enhances students' reading comprehension and engagement by encouraging critical thinking and interactive learning. Given that prior research primarily focused on Senior High School students, this study aims to explore the impact of DRTA on Junior High School students' reading comprehension and their responses to this technique, addressing a noticeable gap in existing literature.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Reading

Reading is a crucial language skill that enables learners to gain input from written texts. Effective reading demands comprehension, which involves decoding written symbols and making sense of them. Comprehension is essential, facilitating the understanding of both explicit and implicit meanings within texts, and is seen as central to academic success in language learning (Bachtiar et al., 2024; Yunus et al., 2023). Researchers emphasize the importance of practice and exposure to text for developing reading proficiency. Techniques like question-answering and summarization are known to enhance comprehension (Hogan, Adlof, & Alonzo, 2014).

To further enhance reading skills, educators can utilize different strategies, such as reciprocal teaching, where students take turns assuming the teacher's role and leading discussions about the text. This method encourages interactive learning and helps deepen comprehension by allowing learners to collaboratively clarify, question, summarize, and predict text content. Such strategies improve understanding and actively engage students in the learning process, making them more autonomous readers (Hogan, Adlof, & Alonzo, 2014).

2.2. Aspects of Reading

Nuttall (1985) identifies five critical aspects of reading: main idea, specific information, reference, inference, and vocabulary. These components help students to navigate and understand texts effectively, involving skills from identifying core concepts to interpreting meaning based on context. Comprehensive reading skills are necessary for successful interpretation and engagement with texts, as outlined in foundational studies on reading comprehension (Davis, 1944).

Furthermore, Nuttall emphasizes the importance of speed and fluency in reading, which contribute to better comprehension and retention of information. This involves developing the ability to read quickly without sacrificing understanding, a skill that becomes crucial in academic and professional settings. Regular practice with varied texts can improve these aspects, enabling learners to access and process information more efficiently, thereby enhancing their overall academic performance (Carver, 1990).

2.3. Teaching of Reading Comprehension

Teaching reading comprehension involves enabling students to process ideas conveyed in texts effectively. The goal is to adapt reading techniques to the purpose and build knowledge of text structures. A phased approach to reading, involving pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities, facilitates a deeper linguistic understanding and content integration (Snow, 2010).

Moreover, differentiated instruction plays a key role in the teaching of reading comprehension. By tailoring activities and materials to meet diverse learner needs, educators can address varying levels of proficiency and learning styles. This approach ensures that all students receive appropriate support and challenges, helping them to develop their comprehension skills effectively across different texts and contexts (Tomlinson, 2001).

2.4. Narrative Text

Narrative texts serve to entertain and educate, structured around orientation, complication, and resolution. Effective narratives link these elements cohesively to construct a meaningful story, often encompassing a variety of text types, including folklore and fables (Djuharie, 2007).

Additionally, understanding character development and plot dynamics are essential for analyzing narrative texts. Readers must be able to identify with characters and follow their evolution throughout the story, which enhances engagement and emotional connection to the text. Teaching strategies that focus on character analysis and plot structure can help students appreciate the intricacies of narrative construction and its impact on the thematic expression of the story (Lukens, 2007).

2.5. DRTA Technique

Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) is a technique that enhances reading comprehension through structured prediction and discussion. It encourages students to predict, verify, and reflect on their understanding, fostering a proactive learning environment. DRTA has been shown to significantly improve reading comprehension outcomes in various educational settings (Baumann, Seifert-Kessell, & Jones, 1992).

DRTA offers numerous benefits, including fostering comprehension and critical thinking, and adapting to various texts and educational levels. However, its effectiveness may be reduced if students are familiar with the text, and it may present challenges in classroom management due to its interactive nature (Stauffer, 1969).

3. METHOD

This The research utilized a mixed-method approach to assess the efficacy of the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) technique on the reading comprehension of second-grade students at MTSN 2 Bandar Lampung. A one-group pre-test post-test design was adopted, with students undergoing a pre-test to gauge initial reading skills, followed by treatments, and a post-test to measure any improvements. Additionally, a qualitative analysis via questionnaires explored students' responses to the DRTA technique, aiming to gather insights into their attitudes and perceptions toward the learning process.

The population for this study consisted of eighth-grade students from MTSN 2 Bandar Lampung, specifically from two selected classes used as control and experimental groups. The purposive sampling method directed the selection process due to school system constraints. This setup aimed to compare outcomes between the groups where one received standard instructions (control) and the other experienced the DRTA intervention (experimental).

Data collection involved administering pre-tests and post-tests, comprising multiple-choice questions designed to evaluate students' reading comprehension before and after the interventions. Additionally, questionnaires were distributed post-treatment to analyze the students' motivation, critical thinking, and comprehension improvements. These questionnaires followed a specified structure to ensure a comprehensive assessment of the DRTA's impact.

The data analysis incorporated statistical methods, specifically the paired T-Test, to determine if significant improvements were observed in the students' reading comprehension due to the DRTA technique. The tests, conducted through SPSS 23.0, set a significance level at 0.05 to confirm the effectiveness of the educational intervention. This approach aimed to validate the hypothesis that DRTA significantly enhances students' reading achievement in narrative texts.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) technique on the reading comprehension abilities of second-grade students at MTSN 2 Bandar Lampung. Using a mixed-method approach, the research combined quantitative measures (pre-test and post-test scores) with qualitative feedback (student questionnaires) to assess outcomes.

4.1 Results of Try-Out and Pre-Test/Post-Test Analysis

The reliability of the testing instruments was confirmed through a try-out in Class VIII B, achieving a high-reliability score of 0.98. Adjustments were made based on item analysis, resulting in 37 high-quality questions used for both pre-test and post-test. The pre-test in Class VIII A revealed a mean score of 58.97, indicating moderate comprehension levels. After DRTA treatment, the post-test showed a significant improvement, with a mean score increase of 71.53.

The pre-test was administered in order to find out basic scores of students' ability in reading comprehension of narrative text before the treatment was given. The pre-test was given in experimental class for about 90 minutes. The researcher administered the pre-test on November 23rd in the experimental Class that was Class VIII A. There were 40 items to test objective reading with four answer options for each (a, b, c, or d) and one of them was the correct answer and the rest were distracters. The total score for pre-test in the experimental class was 1769. The mean of pre-test was 58,97; the highest score was 78, the lowest score was 46; the median was 59; the mode was 50 (see Appendix 8). The data of reading test was analyzed by using SPSS 23.0. The distribution of the students' pre-test score is presented as follows.

Table 1. Data Statistics

Statistics		
Pretest		
N	Valid	30
	Missing	0
Mean		58.9667
Median		59.0000
Mode		50.00
Std. Deviation		8.28161
Variance		68.585
Range		32.00
Minimum		46.00
Maximum		78.00
Sum		1769.00

Table 4.1 above, N showed the valid total data that could be processed, that is 30. The data were students' score and their scores represented their ability. Thus, it indicated there were 30 scores of reading narrative text pre-test from every student. The missing referred to the data that could not be processed and it showed 0. Thus, all the data could be processed. Furthermore, mean referred to the average score and the mean score above was 58.97. It indicated the average students' achievement of that pre-test was 58.97. Moreover, median is the middle value of the set data. It could be a point to separate between high and low students. Thus, those who got lower than 59 belonged to the lower group of students, while those who got scores more than 59 belonged to the upper group of students. By looking at the mean score, which was 58.97, it could be stated the average student's ability to do the pre-test was still low because their average score were lower than 58.97.

Table 2. Distribution Frequency of the Students' Pre-test Score

Posttest					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	60.00	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	62.00	4	13.3	13.3	16.7
	64.00	1	3.3	3.3	20.0
	65.00	2	6.7	6.7	26.7
	66.00	1	3.3	3.3	30.0
	67.00	1	3.3	3.3	33.3
	68.00	2	6.7	6.7	40.0
	70.00	3	10.0	10.0	50.0
	72.00	1	3.3	3.3	53.3

73.00	1	3.3	3.3	56.7
74.00	1	3.3	3.3	60.0
75.00	2	6.7	6.7	66.7
76.00	3	10.0	10.0	76.7
78.00	3	10.0	10.0	86.7
80.00	1	3.3	3.3	90.0
82.00	1	3.3	3.3	93.3
84.00	1	3.3	3.3	96.7
88.00	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that there were three students who got score 46, four students got score 50, two students got score 53, one student got score 54, one student got score 55, three students got score 56, one student got score 58, two students got score 60, three students got score 63, two students got score 65, three students got score 66, one student got score 67, one student got score 68, two students got score 70, one student got score 78. Overall, there were 30 students who took that pre-test.

In this study, the reliability of the reading comprehension test instrument was first confirmed via a preliminary try-out in Class VIII B. A high reliability score of 0.98 was achieved, indicating the consistency of the assessment. Based on item analysis, the instrument was refined to include 37 questions used in both pre-test and post-test assessments.

In the pre-test conducted in Class VIII A, the average score was 58.97, revealing moderate comprehension of the narrative text. The lowest score was 46, and the highest was 78. These scores indicated a relatively broad range of comprehension levels among students, with the median score of 59 separating higher- and lower-performing students. The standard deviation of 8.28 and variance of 68.59 showed a considerable spread in scores, and the data distribution confirmed that all 30 student scores were valid.

After implementing Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) treatment, the post-test scores demonstrated significant improvement, with the average score rising to 71.53. This gain reflects the effectiveness of the DRTA intervention, highlighting its potential to enhance reading comprehension. Specifically, the range of scores increased, and more students achieved scores closer to the upper end, as evidenced by the detailed distribution of scores in Table 2. The treatment facilitated noticeable gains in reading comprehension across the board.

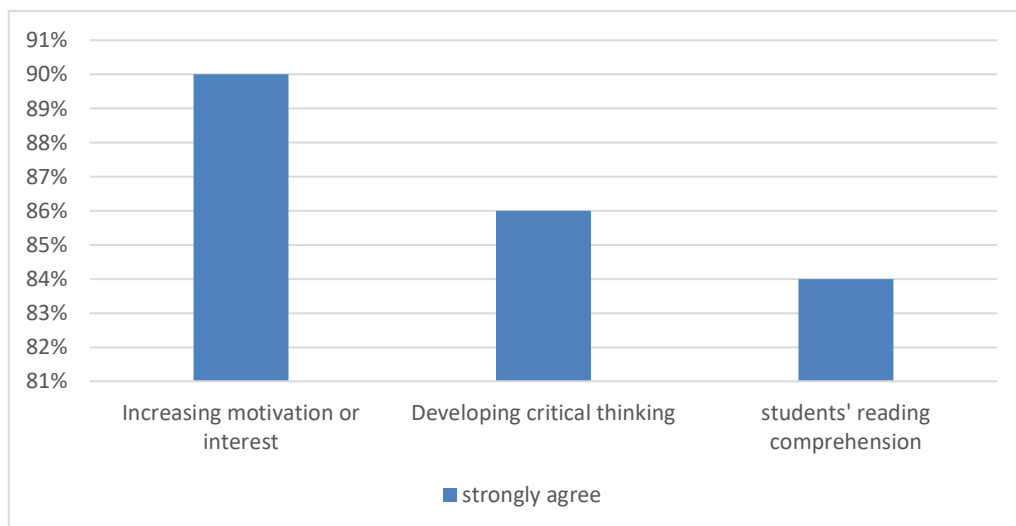
4.1.2 Result of the post-test

The total score of the post-test was 2146. The mean score was 71.53; the highest score was 88; the lowest score was 60; the median was 71; the mode was 62. The gain from the pre-test and post-test was 12.56. Those scores can be seen in Table 4.3 below.

N	Valid	30
	Missing	0
Mean		71.5333
Median		71.0000
Mode		62.00
Std. Deviation		7.30486
Variance		53.361
Range		28.00
Minimum		60.00
Maximum		88.00
Sum		2146.00

Table 3 shows that N showed the valid total data that could be processed, that is 30. The data were students' scores, and their scores represented their ability. Thus, it indicated there were 30 scores of reading narrative text in the pre-test from every student. The missing referred to the data that could not be processed and it showed 0. Thus, all the data could be processed. Furthermore, the mean referred to the average score, and the mean score above was 71.53. It indicated the average students' achievement of that post-test was 71.53. Moreover, median is the middle value of the set data.

It could be a point to separate between high and low students. Thus, those who got lower than 71 belonged to the lower group students, while those got score more than 71 belonged to the upper group students. By looking at the mean score of 71, it could be stated that the average student's ability to do the post-test was quite good because their average scores were higher than 71.



Graph 1. The Result of Questionnaire

Based on the data obtained from the questionnaire, it was found that most students like English subject and their interest increased after being taught by DRTA technique. Also, they are

Pair 1	Pretest -	-							
	Posttest	12,566	3,276	,59824	13,7902	11,3431	21,00	29	,000
		67	70		1	3	6		

The results from the post-test demonstrate significant improvement in reading comprehension scores after the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) treatment. The post-test mean score was 71.53, with the highest score being 88 and the lowest 60. The median score of 71 signifies that half of the students scored below this mark, while the mode of 62 shows that this was the most frequently attained score. The overall improvement from pre-test to post-test, a mean gain of 12.56, indicates that the DRTA technique effectively enhanced reading comprehension.

The reliability of the data is underscored by the fact that the N value of 30 indicates that all students participated in both tests, and no data was missing. The mean score of 71.53 reflects a commendable improvement, suggesting that the average student's post-test performance exceeded 71. The median value also effectively separates the higher- and lower-performing students.

A paired-samples t-test supports the statistical significance of these results, with a mean difference of -12.57 between the pre-test and post-test scores. The t-value of -21.01 and a p-value of 0.000 reinforce that the observed gains are unlikely due to chance.

Further, the analysis of the five aspects of reading comprehension—determining the main idea, finding supporting details, inference meaning, finding references, and vocabulary understanding—shows substantial improvement. Scores for determining the main idea rose by 20%, finding supporting details by 12%, inference meaning by 15%, finding references by 23%, and vocabulary understanding by 20%. These figures illustrate the consistent benefits of DRTA across various reading skills.

The results from the questionnaire align with these findings. It shows that 90% of students strongly agree that their interest in English increased after the DRTA treatment, and 86% believed that it enhanced their critical thinking. Furthermore, 84% felt that DRTA helped them understand the reading material better, supporting the conclusion that DRTA significantly improves students' reading comprehension.

4.2 Questionnaire Results and Student Feedback

Post-intervention, a questionnaire assessed students' responses to the DRTA technique. Analysis showed a high-reliability coefficient of 0.958, affirming the consistency of the questionnaire. Most students reported increased enjoyment and motivation in reading and improved comprehension skills.

From the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test in the experimental class, we can see that there is a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension achievement after being taught through the DRTA (Directed Reading Thinking Activity) technique. Meanwhile, the result of the computation shows that t-ratio is 21.006 in which the data based on t-table is at least 2.045. Thus, the t-value is higher than the t-table ($21.006 > 2.045$), and the two tails showed that $p < 0.05$ ($p = .000$). It means that H1 is accepted. Therefore, it could be stated that there was a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension achievement in narrative text after being taught through the DRTA technique.

Post-intervention results from the questionnaire demonstrated that students responded positively to the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) technique, revealing increased

enjoyment, motivation, and comprehension skills. The high-reliability coefficient of 0.958 indicated the questionnaire's consistency.

These findings align with existing literature, such as the study by Dewi et al. (2023), which reported that DRTA significantly improved students' reading comprehension of narrative texts in an experimental setting, as evidenced by a T-test value of 4.698 and a p-value below 0.05. Similarly, Kurnia (2022) found that a modified DRTA strategy enhanced students' reading comprehension and classroom participation. The study revealed that 88.88% of students scored above the success criterion after DRTA treatment, while participation improved by 83% (Dewi et al., 2023, Kurnia, 2022).

These results confirm that the DRTA technique has a significant positive impact on students' reading comprehension, with statistical support indicating improved performance and motivation. Additionally, the statistical analysis from the present study shows that the t-ratio of 21.006, which far exceeds the t-table value of 2.045, further solidifies the notion that the DRTA technique significantly enhances comprehension skills. This significant improvement is underscored by a p-value of less than 0.05, affirming that students' reading comprehension achievement in narrative texts has been positively influenced by the technique.

4. CONCLUSION

The study conclusively demonstrates that the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) technique significantly enhances reading comprehension skills among junior high school students. The quantitative results from the pre-test and post-test comparisons reveal a notable improvement in scores following the implementation of DRTA, highlighting its effectiveness in fostering a better understanding of narrative texts. Qualitative data from student questionnaires further support these findings, showing increased student engagement and motivation. This dual approach of quantitative and qualitative analysis not only strengthens the validity of the results but also provides a comprehensive view of the impact of DRTA on students' learning experiences. The adoption of DRTA thus appears to remedy deficiencies in traditional reading instruction methods, offering a more interactive and thought-provoking approach to learning.

Given the positive outcomes observed, it is recommended that educational practitioners consider incorporating the DRTA technique into their reading instruction frameworks. This method has proven to adapt well to diverse learning environments and can be particularly beneficial in addressing the varying comprehension needs of students. Schools should provide training for teachers on the effective implementation of DRTA to maximize its benefits. Furthermore, future research could explore the application of DRTA across different age groups and subject matters to fully ascertain its versatility and scalability. Ultimately, adopting DRTA could significantly contribute to the enhancement of reading comprehension standards within educational systems globally.

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