

An Analysis of Teachers' Strategies in Teaching Reading Comprehension at Grade Seventh of SMPN 25 Pekanbaru

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Abstract: This research aimed to determine English teachers' strategies in teaching reading comprehension to seventh-grade students in junior high school. This research was designed as descriptive qualitative research. The research participants were two English teachers who teach in the seventh grade of the school. Each English teacher had two meetings, during which the researcher observed them. The research instruments were observation and interview. The instruments were used to determine the teachers' strategies for teaching reading comprehension. The data results were analyzed and broken down into three stages: Data reduction, Data Display, and Concluding. The result showed that Teacher A used Question Answer Relationship Strategy (QAR), and Teacher B used a Graphic Organizer Strategy. Both teachers applied strategies that were very effective in teaching reading comprehension in that school. The students' motivation proved it, as did their attention and the teachers' ease in the teaching and learning process.

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a foreign language is crucial for educational success and human resource development.

Saraswati et al. (2021) state that English is widely used worldwide as a means of communication, regardless of the differing backgrounds of its speakers. The Indonesian education system emphasizes this by requiring junior high and high school students to pass an English test to graduate. Altbach (2007) concurs that the prominent role of English has established it as the primary international academic language in numerous countries. Acquiring communication skills in a foreign language requires significant time (Munjiana, 2018).

Therefore, teachers are crucial in providing knowledge and facilitating student learning. They should employ diverse strategies in teaching reading, including various methods and media, to engage students in the classroom. Krashen and Brown (2007) highlighted that the primary purpose of teaching strategies is to simplify the application of different teaching methods and techniques.

Effective teaching methods, appropriate media, pertinent textbooks, and reliable sources are essential components that correspond to the subject matter and effectively engage students. In

junior high school, students focus on acquiring proficiency in four essential English skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. This aligns with Harmer's (2007) assertion that mastering these four basic skills in English is crucial for students throughout the learning process.

Reading is pivotal as it enhances students' writing, speaking, and vocabulary skills. According to Ismail et al. (2019), reading is a receptive skill that allows students to absorb and understand information from written texts. Additionally, Ilyas (2020) stated that reading is a complex activity involving multiple actions, such as comprehension, imagination, observation, and memory. Reading comprehension is not a passive process but an active one, according to Pardede (2007). Current theories view reading as a process of extracting meaning from a text and connecting information in the text with the knowledge the reader brings to the act of reading.

By reading, students can broaden their vocabulary and continue their language-learning journey (Ahmadi, 2016). Mastery of these skills, such as eye movement and mental processing, greatly impacts reading comprehension and speed. Teachers need to use various approaches and effective strategies to aid the reading process in the classroom. Khulafiyah (2017) stated that classroom management involves a range of activities deliberately performed by the teacher to create optimal conditions for teaching and learning. These activities include pre-learning preparation, opening, learning activities, and closing.

They can create an engaging and friendly learning environment by acting as supportive coaches and mentors. Asking thoughtful questions, providing necessary information, and fostering a welcoming discussion atmosphere make English classes enjoyable and accessible. For EFL teachers, it is crucial to integrate various methods, media, and games to maintain student interest and use interactive materials and technology to enhance learning. Additionally, according to Amiruddin and Fadel (2022), appropriate collaborative learning strategies help address students' needs and learning styles, ensuring a more effective and inclusive educational experience.

Based on the researcher's experience in teaching practice at SMPN 25 Pekanbaru, particularly with seventh-grade English students, several issues were observed in teaching reading skills. Firstly, students struggled to understand their materials and lacked the confidence to read aloud. Secondly, most students had poor vocabulary mastery, with only a few using a dictionary. Lastly, when asked to read, analyze stories, and provide insights about the textbook, students found it challenging to respond or inquire about it. Consequently, many students did not fully participate and frequently used Indonesian during English lessons. To address these issues, a better strategy for teaching reading skills must be implemented.

Teachers must adopt new innovations and appropriate strategies to engage students in English learning. Teaching involves conveying information on a topic to students to help them acquire knowledge and understand the second language. To achieve this goal, teachers must be creative in selecting materials and planning lessons to ensure students can easily grasp the content. Additionally, the teacher's role is crucial, requiring effective strategies for teaching and managing the classroom learning process. Selecting the right media to captivate students' interest is essential. This research aims to identify and analyze the strategies used by teachers in teaching reading to seventh-grade students at SMPN 25 Pekanbaru.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative design. According to Royadi et al. (2019), qualitative research involves studying contexts and settings in their natural state rather than performing controlled experiments or manipulating variables. This research will be conducted at

SMP N 25 Pekanbaru during the 2022/2023 academic year, located on Kartama Street, Maharatu Subdistrict, Pekanbaru City, Riau Province. The study focuses on a single variable: the strategies employed by the English teacher at SMP N 25 Pekanbaru. The population for this research consists of English teachers who teach seventh grade, specifically the two English teachers at SMP N 25 Pekanbaru who teach this grade level. The distribution of participants' research can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The Participants of The Research

No	English Teacher	Class
1	Teacher A	7.1 – 7.2
2	Teacher B	7.3 – 7.4

Based on Table 1, the research population consists of English teachers who teach seventh grade. Two English teachers at SMP N 25 Pekanbaru teach this grade level. This study aims to identify the forms and features of these teachers' strategies in classroom activities. The strategies include verbal instructions for activities intended to convey information about the materials, provide guidance or direction, and request information and feedback. The forms and features of the teachers' strategies will be summarized, focusing on questioning, clarifying, predicting, and responding to what they are reading. The conceptual framework of this research can be illustrated as follows:

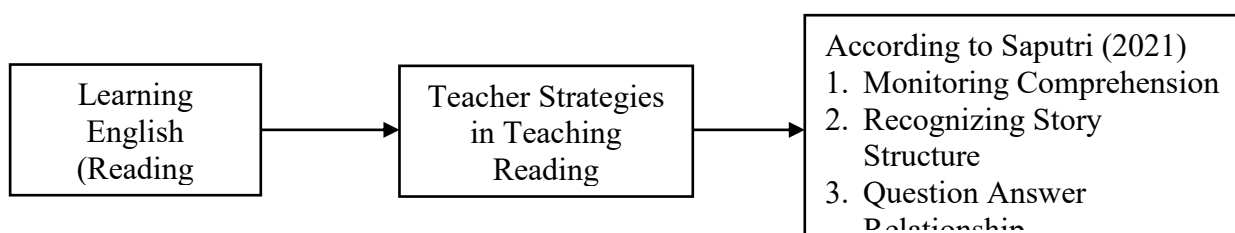


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Research

Data Analysis

The qualitative data sources include observation sheets, face-to-face interviews, and documentation. Consequently, the researcher employed an interactive model by Miles and Huberman to analyze the data. The procedures are as follows:

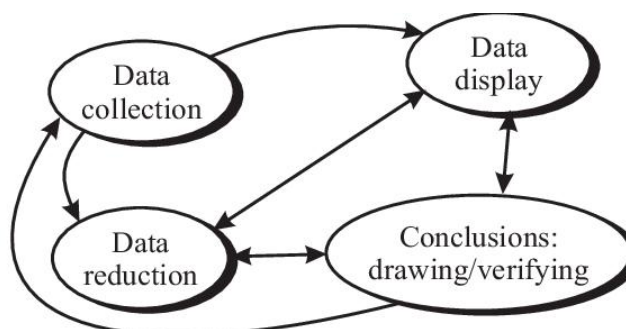


Figure 2. Interactive Model of Data Analysis

The figure above shows that data analysis followed three steps of procedures, namely:

- 1) Data collection: The researcher required various instruments to gather data, facilitating a more systematic, effective, and intensive approach. Methods used to collect the data included observation, interviews, and documentation.
- 2) Data reduction: is an ongoing process throughout the analysis. Initially, it involves editing, segmenting, and summarizing the data. In the intermediate stage, activities such as coding, writing memos, and identifying themes, clusters, and patterns occur. In the final stage, data reduction continues through conceptualizing and explaining, as the development of abstract concepts also helps reduce the data.
- 3) Data display: organizes, compresses, and assembles information. This research uses graphs, charts, and diagrams to clarify the data.
- 4) Conclusions: drawing/verifying. Reducing and displaying the data will help in the conclusion. While concluding logically follows the reduction and display of data. Then, the possible conclusions can be noted and verified for accurate results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Investigation to gather information on the teaching strategies used for reading comprehension among seventh-grade students involved interviewing the teacher and observing their classroom methods. Data collection included observation and an interview with the teacher to understand their approach thoroughly. The seventh grade at this school consists of four classes and two English teachers. The teaching and learning process for English subjects lasted 90 minutes. Observations revealed that the two teachers employed different strategies for the same material.

Strategy to Teach Reading Comprehension in Class 7.1 and 7.2 with Teacher A

The research began with an initial observation conducted by the researcher with Teacher A in Class 7.1 on Tuesday at 8 a.m., focusing on teaching students how to express various things, animals, and public places in English to enhance their reading comprehension skills. This observation revealed that Teacher A concentrated on developing students' reading comprehension abilities. A second observation in Class 7.2 on Wednesday at 10 a.m. showed Teacher A using the QAR (Question Answer Relationship) strategy to teach reading comprehension. The following section will detail Teacher A's activities in teaching reading comprehension to seventh-grade students. More details can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Observation Teaches Reading Comprehension in Class 7.1 and 7.2 with Teacher A

Class 7.1	Class 7.2
- Starting class with greetings and prayers. The teacher always motivates students to love English as their foreign language and make the situation happy.	- Greetings, praying before studying, and motivating the student.
- Asking for student preparation (worksheet, pen, etc.)	- Asking student preparation (worksheet, pen, etc.)
- Asking student vocab from day 1 whether they still remember or not	- Open the worksheet and explain the new chapter learned today.
- Explain again if the student doesn't understand or forgot the word that they have mentioned before	- Introduce a new vocabulary.
	- Asking the student the meaning of the word introduced by the teacher.
	- Ask students to read the worksheet in English and the word aloud.

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- Open the worksheet and start to explain the new chapter that will be learned today
 - Create 5 members in a group to make students understand about the chapter
 - After, make them discuss and explain their thought in front of class
 - Asking them to explain the word is very rare to hear
 - The teacher will give the result of the performance from the student, focusing on the weakness and motivating the student to fix that
 - Close the class by explaining how English is important in this era.
- The teacher asks the meaning behind every rare word in the paragraph.
 - The teacher asked students whether they understood the meaning of every word.
 - The teacher asked the students to bring a dictionary to every English class.
 - To make students understand, the teacher will evaluate their knowledge with evaluation on the worksheet in every chapter
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At the commencement of the class, the teacher initiated the proceedings by initiating a greeting, which involved saying Salam and praying together with the students before embarking on the lesson. Following this, the teacher then inquired about the student's attendance, posing the question, "Who is absent today?" to the class. Subsequently, the teacher employed a series of questioning techniques to build rapport and enhance communication with the students in preparation for implementing the QAR (Question Answer Relationship) strategy. These questions, delivered with a friendly and encouraging tone, included inquiries such as "Good morning, students? How are you feeling today? Who is your English teacher?". This approach aimed to foster a comfortable and inclusive learning environment for the students while building a positive relationship between the teacher and the class.

Following the initial greetings, the teacher undertook a comprehensive review of the previous lesson to ensure the students understood the material and were adequately prepared for the new material. To facilitate this, the teacher routinely requested that students bring a dictionary to each class and their textbooks and worksheets to ensure they had all the necessary materials for effective learning. By adopting this approach, the teacher aimed to create a conducive learning environment that encouraged students to participate actively in the learning process.

During the class, the teacher employed an innovative teaching method, the Question Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy. The teacher began by explaining the material to the students through a series of questions, utilizing the surroundings in the classroom as an educational tool. For instance, the teacher asked students to identify the objects around the classroom and encouraged them to express them in English. Through this approach, the students were challenged to think critically and apply their knowledge in a practical context, further enhancing their reading comprehension skills. Using the QAR strategy, the teacher aimed to develop students' critical thinking abilities while increasing their confidence in their English language proficiency.

The utilization of diverse teaching strategies by both Teacher A and Teacher B highlights the importance of utilizing multiple approaches to cater to students' varying needs and preferences in enhancing their reading comprehension skills. The QAR (Question Answer Relationship) strategy utilized by Teacher A is a well-known and effective approach that emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the question being asked and the text being read. This approach helps students to better understand the purpose of the text and improves their ability to answer questions accurately.

Strategy to Teach Reading Comprehension in Class 7.3 and 7.4 with Teacher B

On the other hand, Teacher B's utilization of the graphic organizer method is also a powerful approach to facilitating student comprehension in classes 7.3 and 7.4. This method uses diagrams or charts to organize information from a text visually and helps students better understand the relationships between ideas and concepts. Moreover, Teacher B's use of various teaching resources such as textbooks, LKS (Student Activity Sheets), and the Independent Learning Curriculum module books provides students with a wide range of learning materials to enhance their understanding.

Table 3. Observation Teaches Reading Comprehension in Class 7.3 and 7.4 with Teacher B

Class 7.3	Class 7.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open the class with greetings and pray together. The teacher always motivates the students to be interested and happy in learning English subject. - Asking student preparation (worksheet, pen, etc.) - Open the worksheet and explain the new chapter they will learn. - The teacher showed a picture related to the lesson today. The teacher took a picture of some fruits and things in daily use. I gave them the words in English, and a student asked them for repetition. - Explaining a new word from the picture. - Ask them again the meaning of the word that has been explained and make sure they understand. - Evaluate all the lessons today with a quiz. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Praying before studying and motivating the students. - Asking student preparation (worksheet, pen, etc.). - Open the worksheet and explain the new chapter they will learn. - Asking the student whether they still remember the words explained before. - The teacher divided students into groups. - The teacher gave every single group a picture and made them explain about the picture. - Ask them to explain the word's meaning related to the picture. - Comment on the student's performance, motivate them and explain how English is useful.

In addition, the incorporation of visually appealing images and PowerPoint presentations by Teacher B is a particularly effective approach to facilitating student comprehension. These visual aids help to break down complex information into more digestible pieces, making it easier for students to understand and remember. Furthermore, using PowerPoint presentations enables teachers to present information visually, engaging, and interactively, enhancing student motivation and interest in the material.

Overall, using different teaching strategies and resources by teachers A and B indicates their dedication and commitment to providing effective reading comprehension instruction to their students. Their flexible and dynamic approach to teaching is commendable, and it is no surprise that their efforts have yielded positive results in enhancing their students' reading comprehension skills.

The Teachers' Strategies in Teaching Reading at Grade Seventh of SMPN 25 Pekanbaru

By mastering reading, students can acquire a wealth of information, new ideas, and insights from their reading material (Martina et al., 2020; Martina et al., 2020; Wibowo et al., 2020). According to Afriani et al. (2020), the QAR strategy helps students consider information obtained by text or their background knowledge. Using this strategy, the teacher also knows more about students who understand and others who don't. So that the teacher can explain again or ask which

material the students have not mastered, reading skill material can be easier to comprehend for seventh-grade students.

Two teachers teach seventh grade at SMPN 25 Pekanbaru. The school has four classes, with each teacher assigned to two classes. Teacher A instructs classes 7.1 and 7.2. The researcher discovered that Teacher A employs the QAR (Question Answer Relationship) strategy to teach reading comprehension. This strategy aligns with the current curriculum, "Kurikulum Merdeka," and aids her in teaching.

On the other hand, Teacher B used a graphic organizer to teach reading comprehension in classes 7.3 and 7.4. She chose this strategy because it allows students to see pictures and organize the text in English, making them more actively involved. The graphic organizer enables students to process the reading material more deeply. It helps them summarize, integrate, and retell the text's ideas, enhancing their reading comprehension skills. According to Syah (2018), graphic organizers enhance students' reading comprehension through visual aids. Utilizing pictures, vibrant colors, charts, or diagrams in English learning engages seventh-grade students and facilitates better retention of vocabulary taught by the teacher, thereby making text comprehension easier.

From the explanation above, it is evident that the Merdeka Curriculum is used. This curriculum emphasizes concise materials, requiring students to exert effort in their learning while also demanding creativity from teachers in their instructional methods. It highlights the importance of teachers adapting materials according to student's abilities, especially in teaching reading comprehension to seventh-grade students. Each student learns at a different pace; quick learners grasp materials swiftly, whereas others may find it challenging, particularly those less interested in English learning since elementary school. Therefore, teachers should prioritize ensuring that all students comprehend the subject well. According to Poedjuastutie et al. (2018), reading comprehension is crucial in education as it is a primary objective that must be achieved in teaching English according to the Indonesian curriculum.

One crucial aspect of a teacher's daily responsibilities is motivating and supporting students to learn a foreign language effectively. This encouragement helps students build confidence in speaking and writing English for face-to-face and online communications. Based on the description provided earlier, the researcher identified that the teaching strategies employed by teachers are the QAR Strategy and Graphic Organizer Strategy. This finding aligns closely with Damayanti's (2021) previous study, which outlined five strategies for teaching reading comprehension in junior high school settings. However, the distinction lies in teachers at SMPN 25 Pekanbaru utilizing two out of these five strategies under the Merdeka Curriculum. This curriculum emphasizes students' active participation and creativity, positioning the teacher as a facilitator to help students achieve favorable outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions in the preceding chapter, this research reveals that teachers employ two main strategies for teaching reading comprehension to seventh-grade students: the QAR (Question and Answer Relationship) strategy and the Graphic Organizer strategy within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. In this curriculum framework, teachers act as facilitators for students, utilizing these strategies to actively engage students and foster their interest in learning English as a foreign language. The aim is to encourage students to enjoy comprehending the material, particularly in reading comprehension exercises.

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