



EXTENDING READING COMPREHENSION ABILITY THROUGH DIRECTED READING THINKING ACTIVITY (DRTA) STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this research is to improve students' reading comprehension skills using the DRTA (Directed Reading Thinking Activity) strategy through classroom action research in a language class at a primary school. The researcher conducts systematic and reflective research on actions to address actual problems encountered in the field. In the action research (AR), the teacher has a dual role: (a) as a practitioner, and (b) as a researcher. Therefore, the objective of this AR is to improve and enhance the quality of teaching practices continuously, thereby enhancing instructional outcomes and teacher relevance, ultimately resulting in an effective learning model. Data collection techniques include tests and observations, with existing data analyzed using scales of excellent, good, sufficient, and insufficient to assess learning completeness when implementing the DRTA strategy to improve reading comprehension in elementary school students.

Keywords: DRTA, reading comprehension, strategy, action research

INTRODUCTION :

Reading is profoundly important in one's life because through reading, we gain knowledge about everything. There are numerous benefits to be gained from reading. Roger Fart (as cited in Zuchdi and Budiasih, 2001) stated, "Reading is the Heart of Education." Therefore, teaching reading is crucial, especially for elementary school-aged children. Reading provides essential information that can serve as a means to achieve a better life in the future (Kurniaman, Oktari, and Pahrurazi, 2019). Thus, it is not an exaggeration to emphasize the importance of teaching reading, as through reading, individuals can access useful information, broaden their perspectives, and acquire new knowledge, thereby enhancing their intelligence to better respond to life's challenges in the future.

Reading comprehension involves understanding cognitive operations that are complex in language skills, which students acquire differently (Yamashita & Shiotsu, 2015). Therefore, schools should implement strategies that encourage critical reading as an alternative to mere information processing or personal response approaches. This means readers engage more deeply with the text by analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating it (Epstein and Kemberger, 2006; Miri et al., 2007; Taglieber, 2008; Fadhillah, 2017). Thus, it is essential to teach reading comprehension in schools.

Reading activities are one of the language skills, alongside listening, speaking, and writing. According to Westwood (as cited in Rahim, 2005), a reader with good reading comprehension is "someone who employs various cognitive skills when they read. Additionally, readers use metacognitive skills to monitor their own understanding of the text. So, in the act of reading, we don't just look at letters or words arranged in a text; rather, readers must comprehend and communicate with the author through the written text they are reading. Reading is a connection between physical and mental activities. Physically, reading requires the sense of sight, and mentally, it requires understanding and memory (Saidah, 2017). Reading can build knowledge (Kurniaman et al., 2018).

According to Rahim (2005:44), Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy is a strategy used to broaden and strengthen students' reading abilities. This strategy aims to ensure that students have clear reading goals by connecting various knowledge they possess to build comprehension. The assumption is that comprehension can be enhanced by building background knowledge, setting specific reading goals, discussing, and developing comprehension after reading. The DRTA strategy consists of five components as follows:

- **Motivation and background development:** The teacher strives to stimulate students' interest in reading on a particular topic by helping them connect the subject matter with their own experiences or by using props to generate interest in subjects unfamiliar to the students. At this point, the teacher can determine whether students have the background experiences and language necessary to understand the story, and

if necessary, help them develop new concepts and vocabulary before they read the story.

- **Direct reading of the story** (silently and aloud): Before children read the story silently, the teacher provides purpose questions (or learning cues) or helps students set their own goals (by asking questions or predicting) to guide their reading activities. The next reading activity is for the students to read their answers aloud, for guided questions, read aloud to confirm or refute their predictions. The subsequent activity is for the students to read the reading material aloud, i.e., they read the story aloud according to its intonation.
- **Strategy or skill-building activities:** Throughout the lesson, the teacher provides direct instruction in one or more strategies or comprehension skills.
- **Follow-up exercises:** Children practice (implement) the strategies and skills they have learned. In this activity, children work on practice questions.
- **Enrichment activities:** In these activities, activities such as linking stories to the arts, such as drama, can be carried out.

DRTA, as one type of teaching strategy, has its own steps for implementation. These steps are carried out to achieve the learning objectives. The steps of the Directed Reading Activity (DRTA) teaching strategy outlined by Ennes in Rahim (2005:44) are as follows:

1. Forming groups of 4-5 members heterogeneously.
2. The teacher provides discourse/clippings according to the learning topic.
3. Silent reading of the provided discourse by the teacher.
4. The teacher monitors students while they read silently.
5. Students work together to read aloud and respond to the main ideas/content of the reading material, which are then written on paper.
6. Presenting or reading aloud the group's results. The teacher draws conclusions together and provides reinforcement for student responses, expanding on ideas.

METHODOLOGY :

This study is a classroom action research (AR). Classroom action research is a reflective form of research that involves specific actions to improve and/or enhance teaching practices in the classroom more professionally (Arikunto, 2008). Based on the above description, the researcher conducts systematic and reflective research on actions to address actual problems encountered in the field. In AR, the teacher has a dual role: (a) as a practitioner, and (b) as a researcher. Therefore, the objective of this AR is to improve and enhance the quality of teaching practices continuously, thereby enhancing instructional outcomes and teacher relevance, ultimately resulting in an effective learning model.

The subjects of this study are students at a language class in a primary school in Hanoi. There are 17 male students and 13 female students, totaling 30 students with different abilities. Data collection techniques include tests and observations, with existing data analyzed using scales of excellent, good, sufficient, and insufficient to assess learning completeness when implementing the DRTA strategy to improve reading comprehension in elementary school students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :

The research activities began with checking the attendance (roll call), and all 30 students were present and ready for the reading lesson scheduled for the first period of the day. The teacher initiated a pre-reading activity by asking questions about fairy tales, such as whether the students had ever read any fairy tales and which ones they had read. It turned out that on average, all students in class had already read fairy tales. Therefore, each student already had experience in reading fairy tales. The teacher then stated the learning objectives, which were to use the directed reading thinking activity strategy to teach reading fairy tales, with the hope that students would be able to retell the fairy tale accurately.

During the activity, the teacher first distributed the fairy tale text "The Mouse Deer and the Crocodile" to each student. The teacher then asked if any students had read the fairy tale "The Mouse Deer and the Crocodile" before. It turned out that two students had read the fairy tale before, but only remembered the main storyline. Next, the teacher asked the students to read the fairy tale text distributed to them for 10 minutes. While the students read the fairy tale silently, the teacher guided and monitored them to ensure orderly behavior.

After all the students finished reading the fairy tale, the teacher asked who was willing to be the first to come forward and narrate the story of "The Mouse Deer and the Crocodile." A student volunteered, came to the front of the class, and narrated the story. After all the students had taken turns coming forward to narrate the story, the teacher clarified and summarized the content and moral of the fairy tale comprehensively.

And what are the values that students should learn from the fairy tale? The lesson concluded with the teacher distributing an evaluation sheet to each student, which they completed individually within 10 minutes. During the evaluation process, the teacher guided students who faced difficulties in answering the questions. Then, together with the students, the teacher summarized today's learning regarding the students' ability to retell the story or fairy tale they had previously read silently for about 10 minutes. Next, the teacher informed the students that in the next language lesson, they would learn about retelling the story of "The Ant and the Cocoon," which would be taught by the teacher. The results of observing the teacher's activities are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Teacher Activity Data

Description	Phase 1		Phase 2	
	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 1	Meeting 2
Total score	10	12	15	17
Percentage	50	60	75	85
Category	low	sufficient	good	excellent

Based on the table above, the teacher's activities in Phase I, Meeting I, were categorized as low with a score of 10 or 50.00%. In the second meeting of Phase I, there was an improvement with a score of 12 or 60.00%, categorized as sufficient. In Phase II, Meeting I, the teacher's activities experienced improvement with a score of 15 or 75.00%, categorized as good, and in Phase II, Meeting II, the teacher's activities further improved with a score of 17 or 85.00%, categorized as excellent.

As for the students' reading comprehension abilities, there was an improvement in each phase, as evidenced by the scores from Assessment I (A1) and Assessment II (A2). This improvement indicates the effectiveness of implementing the DRTA strategy. An analysis of reading comprehension includes individual and class completion achievements. The data on individual and class completion can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Results of Reading Comprehension Skills and Classical Mastery

Learning Outcomes	Total Number of Students	Individual Mastery		Classical Mastery	Category
		Complete	Incomplete		
SD	30	12	18	39.69	Incomplete
A1		15	15	50	Incomplete
A2		22	8	78	Complete

The results from Table 2 above provide an overview of the reading comprehension abilities of the students using the DRTA strategy in terms of classical completion before the intervention, with an average of 39.69 categorized as incomplete. After the intervention with the DRTA strategy, the average classical completion score increased to 50, still categorized as incomplete. However, after reflecting on the learning in Phase I and addressing shortcomings in Phase II, the completion rate improved to 78, categorized as complete, although it did not meet the high improvement target.

One of the challenges in implementing this strategy is the transition to online learning, which complicates the management of students and their engagement in reading. Technology can also pose barriers to the learning process if not supported by adequate facilities (Kurniaman et al., 2020). The advancements in science and technology have brought about changes in all aspects of human life (Astiningtyas, 2018), and the problems arising from technology must be addressed by providing facilities to humans regarding technology as well. Reading serves as the foundation for technological literacy, which is essential as a 21st-century skill (Noviana, Kurniaman, & Huda, 2018), as almost everyone now uses technology in some form.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS :

Learning using the Directed Reading Activity (DRTA) strategy is capable of improving reading comprehension when a more mature planning is employed, especially in online learning that requires thorough preparation from both teachers and students, including technological readiness. The suggestion given to teachers is to provide training to students in using technology beforehand and to prepare more mature learning designs.

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