Enhancing Students' Reading Comprehension through Reciprocal Questioning

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ABSTRACT

Reading has been very challenging for students especially when its position is as a foreign language. During the researchers' observation, it was found that students' reading scores at SMA Muhammadiyah Pagaralam are still below the standard passing score. The students expressed that it was hard for them to comprehend the reading due to their lack of vocabulary and the text was a bit difficult to understand. This study offered a method called reciprocal questioning (REQUEST) to solve that problem. This study aimed at finding out whether there was a significant difference in reading comprehension of the narrative text between the 10th-grade students of SMA Muhammadiyah Pagaralam who were taught by using the REQUEST strategy and those who were not. The method of this study is quantitative with a quasi-experiment design. Two classes were used out of six for experiment and control classes. Pre-test and post-test were used as data collection and distributed to the students in both experiment and control classes. The sample was chosen purposely non-random. Paired sample t-test and independent t-test were used to analyze the data through SPSS 22. The result of this study indicated that there was a significant difference in students' reading comprehension.

Introduction

English is essential to learn because it is one of the global languages. As a global language, it is an international medium of communication that has been received by countries all over the world (Hasbi, 2013). This means, that using English is an easier way to communicate and interact with people from other countries since it is a lingua franca and can be seen from its usage in almost every aspect such as technology, economy, social, and politics (Knapp, 2015).

In the Indonesian context, English has a position as a foreign language yet has been taught in Indonesia as a compulsory subject. English is taught from the

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elementary school to the university level (Sari et al., 2023). In addition, Mapiasse & Sihes (2014) state that English is a compulsory subject in schools in Indonesia, and the English language has been seen as a good medium of communication in Indonesia. There are many reasons why Indonesian students need to study English. First, they can communicate with each other. Second, most jobs require English. Third, they can learn science and technology more easily around the world (Sari & Yuliana, 2022).

In principle, English has four skills that should be mastered by students. They are speaking, listening, writing, and reading (Istiara & Hastomo, 2023). Then, for the learners to master these four English skills, various methods from traditional to technology-based, such as the recent technological invention called artificial intelligence (AI), must be employed in classroom activities (Hastomo et al., 2024; Oktarina et al., 2024; Waziana et al., 2024; Hasbi, 2024). Other factors that must be taken into account in English skill mastery include the utilization of textbooks (Sari, 2019) and the utilization of multimodal learning materials such as learning videos (Sari, 2022).

One of those four skills is reading and it is necessarily an important skill for the students to get information and knowledge from any passages that they have read (Duke, et. all, 2011). Reading is the active process of understanding print and graphic texts. According to Hill (2000), reading is a communication process and is used by readers to get the message to be delivered by the author through message or written language. A process that requires that a group of words which is a unity will be seen in glimpses and that the meaning of individual words will be known (Mohammad & Hasbi, 2021). If this is not met, then the explicit and implied messages will not be captured or understood, and the reading process is not done well. In addition, Grabe and Stoller (2001) state that reading is the ability to draw meaning and interpret information on the printed page appropriately. They state that reading is also interactive in that linguistic information from the text interacts with information activated by the reader from long-run memory, as background knowledge.

Reading comprehension is very important and to become fluent readers, students must also understand or comprehend what they have read (Hastomo & Zulianti, 2022; Setiyo et al., 2023; Sujarwo et al., 2023; Zulianti & Hastomo, 2022). Comprehension is an active process that involves all these strategies and behaviors (Hasbi, 2017). Monitoring one's understanding and making decisions about strategies will help clarify understanding (Staton, 2005). Furthermore, Snow (2002) states that reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with a written language, using the words extracting and constructing to emphasize both the importance and the issue efficiency of the text as a determinant of reading comprehension.

Based on the researcher's observation at SMA Muhammadiyah Pagaralam, the data showed that students' reading comprehension of the English subject is still low. It was evidenced by the list of average student scores of 58.9 which is still below the English KKM (passing standard) score of 68. Also, when the researcher asked one of the students there, it was found that they only had a limited scope of vocabulary, and the topic of reading passages made them not understand the material. Therefore, the

English teacher has to be able to organize teaching and learning activities, they have to give materials by using a suitable strategy and master the lesson effectively. One of the alternative ways to solve the problem that is faced by students of tenth grade SMA Muhammadiyah Pagaralam is by using Reciprocal Questioning (REQUEST).

REQUEST is a reading strategy that allows students to ask questions of the teacher. According to Manzo and Casela (2008), REQUEST is a form of apprenticeship training that brings students and teachers together much as apprentices and craftspersons are brought together at a workbench. In another explanation, Yuniarti et al. (2014) state that the REQUEST strategy can be one of the effective reading comprehension strategies in the learning process and intends to provide an alternative way for students to comprehend the text well.

Based on the explanation above and the importance of reading comprehension, the writer is interested in conducting the research entitled "Enhancing Students' Reading Comprehension through Reciprocal Questioning".

Method

This research was a quantitative study employing a quasi-experimental design aimed at examining the impact of reciprocal questioning on improving students' reading comprehension. The study was conducted during the first semester of the 2021/2022 academic year at SMA Muhammadiyah Pagaralam. The research focused on tenth-grade students, and a non-random sampling method was employed to select two classes out of the six available. This purposeful selection was made to represent a controlled yet practical approach to exploring the intervention.

Prior to the treatment, an initial observation was conducted by the researcher to assess the students' conditions and establish a baseline for the study. This observation helped identify the reading comprehension challenges the students were facing and provided insights into their learning environment. Following the observation, a pre-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups to measure their initial reading comprehension abilities. The pre-test served as a reference point for measuring the effectiveness of the reciprocal questioning strategy.

The experimental group was then subjected to a series of treatments, incorporating reciprocal questioning techniques in reading comprehension activities. In contrast, the control group continued with the conventional reading comprehension methods used in the classroom. Reciprocal questioning involves students taking turns asking and answering questions about the reading material, fostering deeper engagement with the text and promoting critical thinking. This strategy was chosen for its potential to improve comprehension by encouraging active student participation and dialogue.

After the treatment period, a post-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups to assess any changes in their reading comprehension levels. The post-test results were compared with the pre-test data to evaluate the impact of reciprocal questioning on the students' performance. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS, specifically employing paired sample t-tests and independent t-tests to examine the significance of any differences in reading comprehension scores between the two groups.

The results of this study were expected to provide valuable insights into the

effectiveness of reciprocal questioning as a strategy for improving reading comprehension. By comparing the pre-test and post-test scores, and analyzing the data through robust statistical methods, the research aimed to determine whether this instructional technique led to significant improvements in the experimental group's reading comprehension abilities relative to the control group.

Results and Discussion
Results

The pre-test and post-test were distributed to the 10th-grade students of SMA Muhammadiyah Pagaralam during this study. The total number of the students was 212 students. However, there were 36 students from class X MIPA 1 and 36 students from class X MIPA 2. The total number of students for both classes was 72 students and was taken as the sample for this research.

The findings of this study dealt with the result of the test done by the students in both experimental and control classes. The test was given to the students before and after the treatment. The pre-test was given to the students before the treatment in the form of multiple choices. Meanwhile, the post-test was given at the end after treatments (REQUEST) with the same thing as the pre-test. In the control class itself, the test was given in the form of multiple choices without REQUEST treatment (Traditional way).

Based on the result of the test, it was known that in the pre-test of the experimental class, the lowest score was 40 while the highest score was 65. The mean score was 50.76 and the standard deviation was 6.40. Meanwhile, in the post-test, the lowest score was 47.50, and the highest score was 72.50. The mean score was 60.76 and the standard deviation was 5.73.

Furthermore, the result of the tests in the control class showed that in the pre-test the lowest score was 40 and the highest score was 55. The mean score was 47.36 and the standard deviation was 3.68. Meanwhile, in the post-test, the lowest score was 40, the highest score was 55. The mean score was 48.05 and the standard deviation was 3.83. The Analyses on Reading Comprehension in Experimental Class (Paired sample t-test) can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Paired Sample T-Test of Experimental Class

No.	Variables	t-obtained	Sig. (2-tailed)
1.	Reading Comprehension (total)	13.923	.000
2.	Main Idea	6.271	.000
3.	Detail	5.976	.000
4.	Inference	4.511	.000
5.	Vocabulary	8.595	.000
6.	Cloze Elide	3.042	.004

From the table above, we can conclude that it could be concluded that all aspects of reading comprehension in the experimental class had better significance in the experimental class from every single aspect before and after the treatment by using the REQUEST strategy.

To find out whether there was significant progress in students' reading comprehension in the control class, the result of the pre-test and post-test in the control class was compared by the writer, and a paired sample t-test was used. The distributed data is described in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Paired Sample T-Test of Control Class

No.	Variables	t-obtained	Sig. (2-tailed)
1.	Reading comprehension (total)	1.000	0.324
2.	Main Idea	.661	.513
3.	Detail	1.485	1.47
4.	Inference	-.274	.786
5.	Vocabulary	.681	.500
6.	Cloze Elide	-1.963	.058

It could be concluded that in all aspects of reading comprehension of the control class, there was a little bit significant difference. Plus, to find out whether there was a significant difference in students' reading comprehension between the two classes, the experimental class and the control class. The results of students' reading comprehension post-tests in both classes were compared by the writer by using an independent sample t-test. The distributed data is described in Table 3 below.

Table 3. The result of the Independent Sample T-Test

Variables	Mean Experiment Class	Mean Control Class	t-obtained	Sig.	Mean Dif.
Reading comprehension (total)	60.76	48.05	11.066	.000	12.70

Based on the result above, it was found that the experimental class was at the significance level of .000 with the mean of post-test in control class being 48.05, with the mean of post-test in experimental class being 60.76. The mean difference between the post-test of the experimental and control class was 12.70 where the t-obtained between the post-test of the experimental and control class was 11.066 at a significance level of .000, with df = 70, the critical value of the t-table was 1.994 Since the value of t-obtained was higher than t-table (t-obtained > t-table), it means that the alternative hypothesis (Ha) which stated that there was effectiveness of the REQUEST strategy to improve the students reading comprehension at the tenth graders of SMA Muhammadiyah Pagaralam would be accepted. On the other hand, the null hypothesis (H0) would be rejected.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate a significant improvement in reading comprehension among students taught using the REQUEST strategy compared to those who received traditional instruction. This aligns with previous research that emphasizes the effectiveness of interactive strategies in enhancing reading skills. For instance,

Sapitri and Amin (2018) demonstrated that implementing reciprocal questioning not only improved students' reading comprehension but also fostered critical reading abilities, suggesting that such strategies encourage deeper engagement with texts.

Moreover, the results of this study corroborate the work of Yuniarti et al. (2014), who found that the REQUEST strategy significantly enhanced students' ability to comprehend complex texts. Their research highlighted that when students actively participate in questioning, they are more likely to clarify misunderstandings and construct meaning from what they read. This active involvement is essential for developing higher-order thinking skills, as noted by Snow (2002), who posits that comprehension requires both extraction and construction of meaning during reading.

The statistical significance observed in our study's paired sample t-tests further supports the notion that traditional methods may not adequately address the diverse needs of learners. As indicated by Grabe and Stoller (2001), effective reading instruction must incorporate strategies that engage students actively and cater to their varying levels of proficiency. The substantial mean difference between the experimental and control groups underscores the necessity for teachers to adopt innovative instructional strategies like REQUEST to enhance student outcomes.

Additionally, it is important to consider the role of vocabulary development in reading comprehension. Hasbi (2024) underlined that vocabulary building is paramount before and along with the learning of all English skills including reading. The findings from Hill (2000) emphasize that a robust vocabulary is foundational for understanding texts. Our study revealed improvements in vocabulary scores among students in the experimental group, suggesting that the REQUEST strategy may facilitate vocabulary acquisition through contextual questioning.

In conclusion, this research contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for interactive teaching methods in reading instruction. The positive outcomes associated with the REQUEST strategy highlight its potential as an effective pedagogical tool for enhancing reading comprehension among high school students. Future research should explore the longitudinal effects of such strategies and their applicability across different educational contexts and student demographics.

By integrating these studies into your discussion, you provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the REQUEST strategy fits within existing educational frameworks and research on reading comprehension.

Conclusion

According to the findings and discussion, REQUEST strategy significantly improved the reading comprehension of tenth-grade students at SMA Muhammadiyah Pagaralam. Students who were taught using the REQUEST strategy (the experimental group) demonstrated higher scores compared to those who were not taught using this method (the control group). The pre-test mean was 50.76, while the post-test mean increased to 60.76, indicating an improvement. Statistical analysis using paired sample t-tests and independent t-tests revealed that the t-obtained value was 11.066 at a significance level of 0.000 with df=70, which was greater than the t-table critical value of 1.994. This result led to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (Ha) that the

REQUEST strategy had a significant impact on improving students' reading comprehension, while the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected.

Based on these findings, several suggestions were made for English teachers, students, and future researchers. For English teachers, it is recommended to incorporate teaching strategies such as the REQUEST strategy into the classroom to enhance students' reading comprehension, particularly in narrative texts. Teachers should also focus on improving their own understanding of narrative texts to better support student learning. Additionally, creating an engaging and dynamic teaching environment can help maintain student interest and prevent boredom. For students, it is important to actively engage in the learning process by paying attention during lessons and motivating themselves to learn. Students should not hesitate to ask questions when they are confused about the material being taught, fostering an interactive and supportive learning atmosphere. For future researchers, this study provides a foundation for further exploration into reading comprehension strategies. It is suggested that subsequent studies investigate other methods of teaching reading comprehension for comparison, while also exploring different contexts in which the REQUEST strategy can be implemented. This research could serve as a valuable reference for those seeking to enrich their understanding of effective reading comprehension instruction.

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