Reading Strategies for Post-Pandemic Students' Reading Comprehension Skills

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A B S T R A K

Keterampilan membaca pemahaman sangatlah vital bagi pemerolehan informasi siswa di sekolah dasar. Namun, fakta di lapangan memperlihatkan semenjak pandemi COVID-19, keterampilan membaca siswa justru mengalami penurunan yang cukup memprihatinkan. Diperlukan solusi untuk mencegah permasalahan membaca pemahaman di sekolah dasar. Salah satunya adalah dengan menerapkan strategi pembelajaran yang melibatkan partisipasi aktif siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perbedaan pengaruh strategi DRTA dan strategi PQRST pada keterampilan membaca pemahaman siswa. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kuantitatif jenis quasi experimental dengan desain faktorial 2x2. Metode pengumpulan data dilakukan menggunakan tes esai yang terbagi menjadi pretest dan posttest. Instrument yang digunakan dalam mengumpulkan data yaitu soal tes. Sebanyak 98 siswa kelas IV diberikan perlakuan menggunakan strategi DRTA dan PQRST untuk menguji perbedaan signifikansi diantara keduanya dan pengaruhnya pada keterampilan membaca pemahaman. Data dianalisis menggunakan uji T. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat perbedaan signifikan dalam keterampilan membaca pemahaman pada kelompok yang diajar dengan strategi DRTA dan kelompok yang diajar dengan strategi PQRST. Disimpulkan kelompok DRTA memberikan pengaruh lebih baik. Pemilihan strategi pembelajaran yang tepat dapat mengembalikan kemampuan membaca pemahaman siswa yang menurun akibat pandemi.

A B S T R A C T

Reading comprehension skills are vital for students' information acquisition in elementary schools. However, the facts on the ground show that since the COVID-19 pandemic, students' reading skills have decreased, which is quite concerning. Solutions are needed to prevent reading comprehension problems in elementary schools. One way is to implement learning strategies that involve active student participation. This study aims to analyze the differences in the effect of the DRTA and PQRST strategies on students' reading comprehension skills. This research is a quasi-experimental quantitative research with a 2x2 factorial design. The data collection method used an essay test divided into a pretest and a posttest. The instrument used in collecting data is test questions. A total of 98 grade IV students were given treatment using the DRTA and PQRST strategies to test the difference in significance between the two and their effect on reading comprehension skills. Data were analyzed using the T-test. The results showed significant differences in reading comprehension skills in the group taught with the DRTA strategy and the group taught with the PQRST strategy. It was concluded that the DRTA group had a better effect. Choosing the right learning strategy can restore students' reading comprehension skills which have decreased due to the pandemic.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading skill is one the essential skills in education because this skill is the root of gaining knowledge and understanding of all subjects (Muhibbah, 2023; Tajinan & Tajinan, 2023). Reading plays an important role in helping someone reconstruct the real world because modeling problems faced at school or in the environment are often presented in text form (Erkek, 2022; Krawitz et al., 2022). One form of reading skill that students in Indonesia must master is reading comprehension skills. Reading comprehension skills allow readers to reconstruct the various meanings presented in writing (Hartati et al., 2020; Karakaita et al., 2019; Subagio, 2023). To get a deeper meaning from the text, readers can add other information according to their knowledge (Halik et al., 2022; Hidayana et al., 2021). Reading comprehension requires a high concentration level to analyze, dissect, classify, and extract the implicit meaning of a text (Ardhian et al., 2020; Erkek, 2022). Reading comprehension activities will train students' brains and minds to function perfectly to solve a problem or discover new things (Karmiani, 2018; Mardiyanti et al., 2022).

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The new information obtained will then be integrated with previously known information (Ludewig et al., 2022; Sarika, 2021).

It's just that the existence of the Covid-19 pandemic can negatively affect students' reading comprehension skills. Students tend to be lazy and reluctant to learn in class. Students' interest in reading decreased, even though reading skills are the basis for students to obtain information during learning activities (Aryandani et al., 2021; Rahmi & Marnola, 2020). Online learning, in particular, causes gaps in students' reading skills (Hevia et al., 2022; Starling-Alves et al., 2023). Interviews with teachers in selected schools showed that students' reading comprehension skills had decreased compared to previous years. It is evidenced by the lower grades in the Indonesian subject compared to the year before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Many students need help understanding the topic of reading. Teachers also admit that learning materials cannot be well received by students during online learning, which results in many students being left behind. One of the difficulties students face in reading activities is difficulty understanding reading, especially long texts (Daulay & Nurmnalina, 2021; Kuşdemir & Bulut, 2018). Indonesian students are used to reading short texts and only identifying basic information, so their comprehension skills are not honed properly (Amania et al., 2021). Of course, this problem must be addressed immediately because it can impact further learning. Students, especially elementary school students, must master reading comprehension skills well. If children have good reading skills, the learning process will run effectively, and vice versa.

One of the efforts that can be made to improve students' initial reading skills is to apply the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) learning strategy. The DRTA strategy allows students to participate fully in reading activities by making predictions from titles or pictures and then proving their predictions (Ardhian & Trisniawati, 2020; Marwani et al., 2022). DRTA techniques improve students' ability to read and think critically (Harefa et al., 2019; Salam et al., 2022). Through predicting activities, students are trained to connect prior knowledge to build meaning during the reading process (Ardiansyah & Nana, 2020; Utami & Sugirin, 2019). After making predictions, students read the text to confirm or revise previous predictions (Safitri et al., 2022; Satrianti et al., 2020). Activities that involve students actively can improve their reading comprehension skills. Another strategy that can be used to improve student's reading comprehension skills is the Preview Question Read Summarize Test (PQRST) strategy (Hadiatiningsih et al., 2021; Nigrum et al., 2022). PQRST is a learning strategy that aims to increase memory capacity in understanding reading content in depth (Halik et al., 2022). PQRST encourages students to understand reading independently, familiarizes students with concentrating on reading, trains speed reading skills, trains students to predict reading, develops critical and comprehensive reading skills, and helps them remember reading material (Ardhian et al., 2020; Hartati et al., 2020).

Several studies have previously revealed that the Directed Reading Thinking Activity strategy significantly affects the reading comprehension ability of fourth-grade students in elementary school (Hidayana et al., 2021). The results of other studies revealed that there were significant differences in the reading comprehension skills of students who were taught using the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) learning strategy assisted by flip chart media and students who were not taught using the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) learning strategy assisted by flip chart media (Karakaita et al., 2019). Further research revealed that implementing the PQRST strategy improved the reading comprehension skills of fifth-grade elementary school students (Hartati et al., 2020). Based on some of the results of these studies, the DRTA and PQRST learning strategies can significantly improve students' reading comprehension skills. In previous studies, no studies specifically discussed the effect of the DRTA and PQRST reading strategies on post-pandemic students' reading comprehension skills. So this study focused on this study to analyze the differences in the effect of the DRTA strategy and the PQRST strategy on students' reading comprehension skills.

2. METHOD

This research is quantitative experimental research, which was chosen because the research aims to find the effect of certain treatments on research subjects under controlled conditions. The research design used a matching pretest-posttest control group because two classes were given treatment. A pretest was conducted to assess initial abilities, and a posttest to assess students' abilities after treatment. The pretest and posttest results were compared to determine the differences between the experimental and control classes. This study applied two learning strategies, the DRTA and PQRST strategies, wherein each treatment, an investigation was carried out regarding the level of students' reading comprehension skills. Assessment of reading comprehension skills is carried out through pretest and posttest. The research design chart is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Matching Pretest Posttest Control Group Design

Group	Pretest	Treatment (X)	Posttest
Experiment	A1	X1	B1
Control	A2	X2	B2

The scope of the research population is the fourth-grade students of public elementary schools in Kertek District, Wonosobo Regency, Central Java. Four of 32 public elementary schools were selected as research samples. The research sample was selected using the cluster random sampling technique because the sample range is wide and heterogeneous. The selected research sample consisted of SDN 2 Karangluhur, SDN 1 Purwojati, SDN 2 Reco, and SDN Wringinanom. The determination of the experimental class and the control class was carried out using the sample equivalence hypothesis test. Researchers observed students' activeness in learning Indonesian in fiction story material. Classes active in question-and-answer activities are used as experimental classes. These results determined that SDN 1 Purwojati and SDN 2 Karangluhur were the experimental class, while SDN 2 Reco and SDN Wringinanom were the control class. There were of samples in the experimental class 51 students, and in the control class, there were 47 students, so the total sample was 98.

The data collection technique used to test techniques to measure the level of students' reading comprehension skills after being treated using the DRTA strategy for the experimental class and the PQRST strategy for the control class. The type of test used is in the form of a description test related to fictional story material. The reading comprehension skills test questions use Anderson's taxonomy levels at C4, C5, and C6 levels. The researcher made the questions for each based on the fourth-grade learning achievement of Indonesian. Previously, content validation was carried out to assess the validity of the questions. Lecturers in the Elementary Indonesian Language Learning course carried out content validation. The grid of reading comprehension skills tests questions after validation is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reading Comprehension Skills Test Questions after Expert Validation

Grid	Cognitive Aspect	Question Number	Validation
Identify main and secondary characters and their characters	C4	1,2	Invalid
Determine the right theme based on fictional story text	C4	3	Valid
Analyzing the setting in a fictional story	C4	4,5	Valid
Determine the right message/message according to the fictional text	C6	6	Valid
Construct exemplary behavior from fictional stories.	C6	7	Valid
Find facts and opinions in stories.	C6	8,9	Valid
Retelling fictional stories using their language politely	C6	10	Valid
TOTAL		**10**	**8**

Data analysis was carried out using the Z test. This hypothesis test was used to compare the average results of the experimental and control groups. Was there a significant difference between students' reading comprehension skills? The test was conducted to determine whether the students' reading comprehension skills in the experimental group were significantly greater than those in the control group. The Z test was chosen because the two groups were not mutually exclusive, and the number of samples (n) in each group was more than 30. Before testing the hypothesis, prerequisite tests were carried out as normality and homogeneity tests.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The pretest was conducted first to determine the student's initial skills in reading comprehension before applying the DRTA and PQRST strategies. The pretest also determines the division of groups according to the student's cognitive level. The experimental group was given treatment using the DRTA strategy, while the control group was given the PQRST strategy. After the treatment, it was followed by giving a posttest to determine progress in students' reading comprehension skills. The posttest questions are divided into two levels according to the student's initial reading comprehension level. Before carrying out the comparative test, the pretest-posttest values were first tested for normality and homogeneity. The normality test was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The sig value is known. The pretest of 0.013 and the posttest value of 0.011 are greater than the alpha value 0.05, indicating that the pretest and

posttest data for the two learning strategies are normally distributed. Homogeneity test using the Levene test obtained sig. 0.504, which is higher than the alpha value of 0.05. The data is homogeneous, so a hypothesis test can be carried out to compare the average results of the DRTA strategy group and the PQRST strategy.

Hypothesis testing was carried out to find out whether there were significant differences in the strategies used before and after being given treatment. Hypothesis testing using the Z test was carried out in the experimental class that implemented the DRTA strategy and the control class that implemented the PQRST strategy. The formula used in the Z test is the same as the formula for the independent sample t-test. The Z test results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Z Test of the DRTA and PQRST Strategies

Strategy	N	Pretest	Posttest	Sig.	Sig (2-tailed)
DRTA	51	61,27	78,92	0,837	0,000
PQRST	47	57,23	73,09	0,58	0,000
	Total		**5,836**		

Sig. Value in both groups is more than 0.05, meaning the data variance between the DRTA and PQRST strategies is homogeneous. The Z test shows a difference in the average score between the pretest and posttest values for the two strategies used. It can be seen that the sig. (2-tailed) of 0.000 <0.05, meaning there is a significant average difference between the class that was given the DRTA strategy treatment and the class that was given the PQRST strategy. The T-test is used to test the research hypothesis. The t count and t table values determine whether the DRTA and PQRST strategies affect the reading comprehension skill variable. The t-test was carried out on the results of the post-test reading comprehension skills of the experimental and control groups. The results of the T-test are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. T-Test Post-Test Experimental and Control Groups

		Sig.	t	df
Posttest Experiment-Control	Equal variances assumed	0.504	4.128	96
	Equal variances are not assumed.		4.148	95.888

The table above shows that the df value is 96, meaning the ttable value is 1.98498. That is, tcount = 4.128 > ttable = 1.98498, which indicates that applying the DRTA and PQRST strategies significantly affects students' reading comprehension skills. Decision-making in determining a better learning strategy is done by looking at the average obtained from classes that apply the DRTA strategy and classes that apply the PQRST strategy. The Z test shows the difference in the average post-test results of the two strategies, 5.836. The average on the DRTA strategy was 78.92, while on the PQRST strategy, the average obtained was 73.09. Both have a positive influence on students' reading comprehension skills. This means the DRTA and PQRST strategies still positively influence improving students' reading comprehension skills. Nonetheless, the DRTA strategy was considered to have a better effect on students' reading skills than the PQRST strategy because the results obtained were higher.

Discussion

In learning to read, reading comprehension activities play an important role in honing students' critical and rational thinking skills (Ludewig et al., 2022; Sarika, 2021). The initial study results indicate that students' reading comprehension skills are quite apprehensive, so a learning strategy is needed to facilitate students' needs in teaching reading comprehension. The use of the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) learning strategy is considered to be still effective in post-pandemic students' reading comprehension skills. The results showed that the experimental group that was given the DRTA strategy treatment obtained a better score than the control group that was given the PQRST strategy treatment. It then proves that the DRTA strategy better develops students' reading skills. The DRTA strategy's application is also proven to improve student's critical thinking skills throughout their stages (Safitri et al., 2022; Satrianti et al., 2020). Important elements in the cognitive process are prior knowledge, coding and encoding, associative learning, and retrieval (Ardiansyah & Nana, 2020; Utami & Sugirin, 2019). These four elements have been described in the DRTA learning technique. The DRTA strategy affects reading comprehension skills and students' metacognitive awareness (Marina, 2020). Metacognitive awareness is related to awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses (Harefa et al., 2019; Salam et al., 2022). This awareness involves thinking about perception, understanding, memory, etc.

The DRTA strategy is a strategy that focuses on student involvement in predicting and proving these predictions during reading activities (Kalabai et al., 2021). DRTA assists students in interpreting reading content in depth and stimulates students to become active and creative readers (Ardhian & Trisniawati, 2020; Marwani et al., 2022). The stages in the DRTA strategy are divided into three, namely the pre-reading stage, the reading stage, and the post-reading stage (Sefrianah et al., 2019; Yuliantika, 2018). The pre-reading stage is where students have to do activities to predict the story's contents just by looking at the pictures presented by the teacher. Here the students' imagination is stimulated to guess what topic is by the picture. The second stage is the reading stage, where students are asked to read the story and confirm the results of their predictions. After that, at the last stage, students were asked to retell the entire text coherently using their language. Of the three stages, predicting story content plays an important role in students' reading comprehension skills. This stage indirectly trains students' critical thinking skills to solve a problem, namely making assumptions about the story (Agao & Abogadil, 2023; Erkek, 2022).

The results of the Z test proved that both the DRTA strategy and the PQRST strategy had a significant effect on students' reading comprehension skills. However, the DRTA strategy has a better effect than the PQRST strategy. It is because the DRTA strategy has several advantages compared to the PQRST strategy, including the use of media images that attract more students' attention, learning syntax that is easy for students to do, and students have a broader picture of the topic of reading (Hartati et al., 2020; Karakaita et al., 2019; Subagio, 2023). Applying the DRTA strategy can motivate students to be actively involved in becoming skilled readers to make predictions about story content (Sunarti & Mernawati, 2022). Actively involving students in the learning process helps them absorb information more quickly. This strategy also increases students' enthusiasm for predicting stories through pictures to create interactive and fun learning (Ludewig et al., 2022; Sarika, 2021). Interactive learning helps students to understand lessons more easily by exploring and finding out for themselves (Hirschman & Wood, 2018). It is undeniable that the DRTA strategy has a positive impact on the development of students' critical and creative thinking skills. In the 21st century, critical and creative thinking is a skill students must master (Stehle & Peters-Burton, 2019). Critical thinking skills are shown in predicting stories, while creativity skills can be seen in how students reconstruct stories using their language.

The results obtained in this study align with previous research results, which also revealed that the Directed Reading Thinking Activity strategy significantly affected the reading comprehension ability of fourth-grade students in elementary school (Hidayana et al., 2021). The results of other studies revealed that there were significant differences in the reading comprehension skills of students who were taught using the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) learning strategy assisted by flip chart media and students who were not taught using the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) learning strategy assisted by flip chart media (Karakaita et al., 2019). Further research revealed that implementing the PQRST strategy improved the reading comprehension skills of fifth-grade elementary school students (Hartati et al., 2020). Based on some of the results of these studies, DRTA and PQRST learning strategies can significantly improve students' reading comprehension skills.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the data analysis that has been done, it can be concluded that the DRTA and PQRST strategies both have a positive effect on students' reading skills. The DRTA strategy is considered to have a better impact than the PQRST strategy.

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