

## STUDENTS' READING ABILITY OF NARRATIVE TEXTS (A Study at SMAN 2 VII Koto Sungai Sariak of Padang Pariaman Regency)

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### Abstract

*This descriptive research aimed to assess the reading comprehension abilities of students regarding narrative texts at SMAN 2 VII Koto Sungai Sariak of Padang Pariaman regency. The study utilized stratified cluster random sampling to select a sample of 60 students and collected data through a reading test. The study revealed that the students' overall ability to read narrative texts was low. Specifically, 65% of the students struggled to comprehend narrative texts. Within the narrative text components, 51% of students had difficulty understanding the orientation, 63% had trouble with the complication, 55% struggled with the resolution, and 67% found the reorientation challenging. Despite these difficulties, the study highlighted issues with students' learning motivation and the effectiveness of teaching strategies within the context of the current curriculum implementation, Kurikulum Merdeka. Based on these findings, the study recommends that English teachers should review and possibly revise the narrative text lesson materials and teaching strategies to make them more engaging and motivational for students. This is crucial for the successful implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, with the teacher profile of Guru Penggerak being a key factor in developing students' character and reading skills in English. Additionally, the study suggests focusing on vocabulary development to facilitate better comprehension of English texts. Future research should investigate the underlying causes of students' difficulties with reading narrative texts to develop more effective interventions.*

### Keywords:

*Reading Comprehension,  
Narrative Texts,  
Teaching Strategies,  
Students' Motivation*

### Abstrak

Penelitian deskriptif ini bertujuan untuk menilai kemampuan pemahaman bacaan siswa mengenai teks naratif Bahasa Inggris di SMAN 2 VII Koto Sungai Sariak Kabupaten Padang Pariaman. Penelitian ini menggunakan *stratified cluster random sampling* untuk memilih sampel sebanyak 60 siswa dan mengumpulkan data melalui tes membaca. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa kemampuan siswa secara keseluruhan untuk membaca teks naratif Bahasa Inggris masih rendah. Secara khusus, 65% siswa kesulitan memahami teks naratif. Dalam komponen teks naratif, 51% siswa mengalami kesulitan memahami orientasi, 63% mengalami kesulitan dengan komplikasi, 55% kesulitan dengan resolusi, dan 67% merasa reorientasi menantang. Meskipun mengalami kesulitan-kesulitan ini, penelitian ini menyoroti persoalan motivasi belajar siswa dan efektivitas strategi pengajaran dalam konteks implementasi kurikulum saat ini, Kurikulum Merdeka. Berdasarkan temuan-temuan ini, penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar guru bahasa Inggris meninjau kembali dan kemungkinan perlu merevisi materi pelajaran teks naratif dan strategi pengajaran agar lebih menarik dan memotivasi siswa. Hal ini penting untuk keberhasilan implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka, dengan profil guru Guru Penggerak menjadi faktor kunci dalam mengembangkan karakter dan keterampilan membaca siswa dalam bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, penelitian ini menyarankan untuk fokus pada pengembangan kosakata guna memfasilitasi pemahaman yang lebih baik terhadap teks bahasa Inggris. Penelitian di masa mendatang hendaknya menyelidiki penyebab mendasar kesulitan siswa dalam membaca teks naratif untuk mengembangkan intervensi yang lebih efektif.

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

While English is still taught as a foreign language in Indonesian schools, with varying levels of proficiency across different regions and institutions, it is an undeniable fact that English is an international language that not only connects countries but also deepens and develops scientific knowledge, as most science books are imported from abroad. English is spoken worldwide and serves as a common medium for communication. It is also one of the primary languages used for acquiring information and transferring knowledge. English is prevalent in teaching materials, the internet, and public discourse. Thus, it is essential for Indonesian students to acquire or master English to compete in the era of globalization (Septy, 2017; 2018).

The emphasis on communicative competence and language proficiency remains central in English language teaching, focusing on real-life communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, there may be an increased emphasis on integrating technology into language learning and promoting multicultural awareness and global citizenship. It's important to note that the implementation of curriculum changes may vary from one school to another, depending on factors such as resources, teacher training, and educational priorities. Therefore, the specific impact of the so-called "Kurikulum Merdeka" on English language teaching in Indonesia today may vary across different contexts.

Although the national curriculum has set the framework for English language teaching for decades, focusing on language skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as well as grammar and vocabulary, English is often considered a difficult subject for Indonesian students. This is partly because it is not the mother tongue or the national language used daily, which can lead to boredom and disinterest (Septy & Zuhari, 2023). This situation contributes to a low level of student mastery of English learning materials.

Despite the introduction of the current "Kurikulum Merdeka 2024" (the 2024 Independent Curriculum), which aims to provide more flexibility and autonomy to schools in designing their curriculum (Rokayah, et.al, 2023), changes or adaptations in the way English is taught do not simply solve the English language teaching problems. Teachers still have to find the best ways to manage English lessons in line with curriculum policies and student interests, incorporating innovative teaching methods and technologies. Quality teaching and effective classroom management are crucial for developing better teaching methods and strategies.

One of the English language skills considered in this study relates to reading. Although reading is an important skill that students must acquire to ensure success in both learning English and any content area (Nunan, 2003:69; Hacettepe et.al, 2016: 108), having good reading skills is vital in language learning. Reading skills are crucial in human life and can be developed through formal education, from elementary school to college. At the basic education level, developing reading skills requires a thorough and effective learning process.

However, developing reading skills is influenced by several factors such as task difficulty, student needs, student motivation, and teacher resources (Grabe et.al., 2002; Grabe, 2012) as well as the students' background knowledge, and concentration (Wainwright, 1977; Liu et.al , 2022; Sanir et al., 2023:19009- 19024). This condition is exacerbated by their generally low motivation in language learning, including reading.

In terms of their individual background knowledge, some students can grasp every word, sentence, paragraph, and the overall text because they possess diverse general knowledge. Additionally, their individual reading strategies and comprehension levels during the reading process are rarely constant. Each student has a unique reading pace, which affects how they understand texts. These factors result in differences in the strategies used by students who may be slow or weak in understanding texts compared to those who are proficient. Consequently, students may employ varying approaches to reading comprehension, reflecting their individual strengths and weaknesses.

This study focuses on students' reading skills in narrative texts. Understanding narrative texts not only entertains students but also helps develop their moral character, as these texts often convey meaningful lessons and values. A narrative is a type of text that tells a story, either imaginary or factual, in

oral or written form. The purpose of narrative text is to educate and impart moral values contained in the story (Setyosari, 2012: 221-223).

Narrative texts encompass various genres such as legends, fairy tales, folktales, and myths. They typically narrate a sequence of events from the past. Hasanah, et.al., (2019), suggests, the purposes of narrative texts include entertaining, expressing feelings, informing, and persuading readers. This may relate to the implementation of the current *Kurikulum Merdeka* that emphasizes the internalization of character building along with the reading skill.

There were several studies that might share similarities and differences with this current study on narrative texts, while a notable difference is the inclusion of an analysis of writing narrative texts in the previous studies. For example, a study conducted by Yuvirawan, et al. (2021) suggested that students had significant problems in reading narrative texts. Then a study conducted by Farihah, et. al. (2023) indicated that students had a variety of abilities in understanding narrative texts. A study conducted by Susanti & Oktaviana (2023) assessing students' writing ability in narrative texts through quantitative research, suggested that students' summary writing skills are included in the "fair" category, with an average of 66.6.

In spite of this condition, this study was considered important for several reasons. First, it is evident that many students still encounter difficulties in comprehending narrative texts (Khoirunnisa & Widodo, 2019); Azra et.al., 2023; Damayanti, et.al. 2024). These challenges include (1) lack of motivation to read among students, (2) difficulty locating detailed information within the narrative text, (3) understanding the generic structure of narrative texts but having difficulty identifying it within the text, and last but not least (4) requiring an extended period to extract implicit information from the narrative text.

Also, this study becomes important to provide valuable insights for teachers, students, and future researchers. For teachers, the findings offer valuable information about students' ability to comprehend narrative texts. This knowledge can guide teachers in designing effective teaching strategies tailored to address students' specific comprehension needs. On the other hand, for students, understanding their ability to comprehend narrative texts can serve as motivation to improve their reading skills. With this awareness, students can take proactive steps to enhance their reading comprehension abilities, ultimately leading to greater academic success. Additionally, this study can serve as a reference and provide valuable input for future research endeavors. Researchers can build upon the findings of this study to delve deeper into the factors influencing students' comprehension of narrative texts, thereby contributing further to the field of education and literacy.

Moreover, based on preliminary observations at SMAN 2 VII Koto Sungai Sariaik of Padang Pariaman regency, students seemed to face four main problems with reading skills, such as their low reading comprehension, difficulty in understanding the text, having struggled to grasp the outlines of different types of narrative texts, and a need a significant amount of time to understand the text. While all students could read, only some could comprehend what they had read, especially in English. This led to the perception that English is a very difficult subject, causing confusion due to the differences in meanings and letters between English and their native language.

On the other hand, from the teacher's point of view, the methods used in teaching reading significantly affect students' reading comprehension. Factors such as talking too fast, providing unclear explanations, and using monotonous techniques can cause students to lose interest in reading and learning. Therefore, this study would further identify students' ability to comprehend narrative texts with its aspects such as orientation, complication, resolution and reorientation, at SMAN 2 VII Koto Sungai Sariaik of Padang Pariaman regency and reviewing several possible factors that may strongly be associated with it, i.e. motivation and teaching strategies within the context of the current curriculum, *Kurikulum Merdeka* (MOECRT-RI. 2024).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study was descriptive in nature, aligned with Gay's (1987:189) definition, which emphasized collecting data to address questions about the current status of the subject. This study aims to provide an accurate, factual, and systematic depiction of the subjects' ability to comprehend narrative texts at the time of this investigation. Then, as "Population is the group of interest to this research, the group to which the researcher would like the results of the study to be generalizable" (Refnita, 2018:74), the population for this study consisted of eleventh-grade students at SMAN 2 VII Koto Sungai Sariaik of Padang Pariaman regency, totaling 118 students divided into four classes and two majors: MIPA and IPS.

Sampling entails choosing a smaller, representative portion from a larger population (Gay, et.al. 2012:124), this study applied a stratified cluster random sampling method which divided the population into two distinct groups: MIPA and IPS. From each group, one class was chosen to constitute the sample. To select the sample, each class was written on separate slips of paper and placed into two separate containers—

one for MIPA and one for IPS. After thoroughly mixing the slips, one class was randomly selected from each container: XI MIPA 1 from MIPA and XI IPS 1 from IPS, resulting in a total of 60 students.

To collect data on students' reading comprehension of the narrative texts, a multiple-choice reading test format was used. There were 30 items of the test, which were categorized into four parts: 6 items for orientation, 11 items for complication, 9 items for resolution, and 4 items for reorientation. For the trial test, 40 minutes were given to the students, whereas the actual test was completed in 30 minutes, a duration considered sufficient for the test's requirements. Each correct answer was awarded 1 point, and 0 points were received for incorrect answers.

Before administering the test to the sample group, a trial test was conducted with a separate group of students not included in the main study. The trial test, which consisted of 40 items, served several purposes: to ensure that students understood the test instructions, to assess whether the allocated time was sufficient for completion, and to evaluate the reliability of the test. Then, a series of analyses to evaluate the test's validity, reliability, and item effectiveness, ultimately selecting 30 items for the actual test, were conducted. Reliability, as defined by Gay, et.al. (2012:396), refers to the extent to which a test consistently measures what it aims to measure. In this study, the reliability of the test was assessed using the split-half method, which correlates scores from even-numbered and odd-numbered items. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used for this purpose, as outlined by Arikunto (2012:87).

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used for this purpose, as outlined by Arikunto (2012:87). Then to analyze the reliability coefficient for the entire test, the Spearman-Brown formula, a statistical method recommended by Arikunto (2012:223) for evaluating the consistency and reliability of test scores was applied. To classify the coefficient correlation of the test, the researcher used the category as follows (Arikunto, 2012:110).

0.81 – 1.00 = very high correlation

0.61 – 0.80 = high correlation

0.41 – 0.60 = moderate correlation

0.21 – 0.40 = low correlation

0.01- 0.20 = very low correlation

According to Gay, et.al. (2012:135), a good test should be both valid and reliable. The data analysis in this study revealed a reliability coefficient of 0.88, indicating very high reliability. This result demonstrates that the test was dependable and appropriate for use as the research instrument. Then, To evaluate the quality of the test items, item difficulty and item discrimination were analyzed. For item difficulty analysis, the formula recommended by Arikunto (2012:223) was employed then. Then, as suggested by Arikunto (2012:225), the test items were classified into three categories .

P = 0.00 – 0.30 (difficult)

P = 0.31 – 0.70 (moderate)

P = 0.71 – 1.00 (easy)

Item discrimination was evaluated by dividing students into two groups: the top half, designated as the high group, and the bottom half, designated as the low group. A criterion of 0.30 to 0.71 was used to assess item discrimination effectiveness. The analysis revealed that 36 items were moderately challenging, while 4 items were classified as difficult (see Appendix 6). As well, for the analysis of item discrimination, the formula recommended by Arikunto (2012:228) was employed. The result of the item discrimination was classified into the following categories; poor (.00 - .20), satisfactory (.21 - .40), good (.41 - .70), and excellent (.71 – 1.00). Item difficulty was evaluated using a range of 0.20 to 0.80, as recommended by Nurgiantoro (2010). According to McCowan & McCowan (1999) and Thorndike (in Azwar, 2009), during item selection, a discrimination value above 0.50 indicates a good item, while a discrimination index below 0.20 suggests that the item may be discarded. In this study, only items with a discrimination index greater than 0.20 were considered acceptable, and were categorized as satisfactory, good, or excellent. From the trial test, the researcher identified 4 items as good, 27 as satisfactory, and 9 as poor. Therefore, based on the analysis, 30 items were retained for the actual test.

The data for this research were derived from the students' scores on a reading comprehension test of the narrative texts. The following systematic steps were employed to evaluate the students' abilities; Administered the Test (provided the reading comprehension test to the students), Collected Answer Sheets (the completed answer sheets from the students were collected), Checked the Answers (meticulously checked

the answers for correctness), Scored the Responses (Each correct answer was awarded 1 point, and each incorrect answer received 0 points), and Calculated Total Scores (calculated the total scores for each student by summing the points from their correct answers).

In particular, data of this study were analyzed with the following steps;

- 1) Presented the Raw Scores: the raw scores of each student based on their test responses were organized and displayed. These scores represented the number of correct answers each student achieved.
- 2) Converted Scores into Percentages: The raw scores were then converted into percentage scores using the following formula
- 3) This formula was applied to standardize the scores and express the students' performance as a percentage, making it easier to analyze and interpret the results.

$$\text{Students score} = \frac{\text{students' score}}{\text{maximum score}} \times 100$$

4) Then, students' abilities were classified based on the *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* (KKM) at SMAN 2 VII Koto Sungai Sariak of Padang Pariaman regency, with a KKM score of 77. The criteria for evaluation based on this KKM are outlined as follows; Excellent (80 - 100), Good (70 - 79), Satisfactory (60 - 69), and Needs Improvement (Below 60).

5) The number of students who exhibited high and low abilities were identified and recorded. Following this, the percentage of students falling into each category (high and low ability) were calculated using the formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = percentage of the students' score

F = the sum of the students who get high, moderate, and low

N = the sum of the students

- 6) Finally, the results of the data analysis were interpreted.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### *Findings on the Students' Ability to Comprehend the Narrative Text*

As this study assessed the students' ability to comprehend narrative texts, specifically focusing on fairy tales, this study examined the data in terms of orientation, complication, resolution, and reorientation of narrative texts. In general, the data analysis revealed that most students in this study displayed a low ability to understand various aspects of narrative texts. This was identified in the highest score that was achieved was 93, and the lowest was 37. In particular, 21 students (35%) showed a high comprehension ability, while 39 students (65%) demonstrated a low comprehension ability.

Table 1: Summary of Students' Ability to Comprehend Narrative Texts

Component	High Ability	Low Ability	Percentage with High Ability	Percentage with Low Ability
<b>Overall Comprehension</b>	21 (35%)	39 (65%)	35%	65%
<b>Orientation</b>	29 (48%)	31 (52%)	48%	52%
<b>Complication</b>	22 (37%)	38 (63%)	37%	63%
<b>Resolution</b>	27 (45%)	33 (55%)	45%	55%
<b>Reorientation</b>	20 (33%)	40 (67%)	33%	67%

To be more specific, the data analysis of this revealed the following explanation. First, the subjects' Overall reading Comprehension of narrative text indicated that 35% of students had a high ability to comprehend narrative texts, while 65% had low ability. Then, this profile could be categorized into specific elements of the narrative text comprehension, such as Orientation, Complication, Resolution, and Reorientation as presented in table 1. This finding may imply that many students struggled with complications and reorientation in comprehending reading of narrative text. Therefore, targeted teaching strategies seem to be needed to improve comprehension skills, particularly in weaker areas.

Based on the data analysis, this study suggests that targeted teaching strategies, which also related to students' learning motivation, are necessary to improve comprehension skills, particularly in weaker areas, as many students had difficulty understanding the complications and reorientation in narrative texts. For instance, in terms of students' ability to comprehend the orientation of a narrative text, the researcher found that the highest score was 100 and the lowest score was 50. Students scoring below 77, as this refers to the school KKM, were categorized as having low ability, while those scoring 77 or above were categorized as having high ability. There were 29 students (48%) in the high-ability category and 31 students (52%) in the low-ability category. Regarding students' ability to comprehend the complication of a narrative text, the data analysis revealed that the highest score was 91 and the lowest score was 27. Using the same categorization, 22 students (37%) were identified as having high ability, while 38 students (63%) were in the low-ability category. For students' ability to comprehend the resolution of a narrative text, the highest score was 100 and the lowest score was 22. In this category, 27 students (45%) demonstrated high ability, while 33 students (55%) demonstrated low ability. Lastly, the data on students' ability to comprehend the reorientation of a narrative text revealed that the highest score was 100 and the lowest score was 25. There were 20 students (33%) with high ability and 40 students (67%) with low ability.

### ***Discussions on Issues Related to Students' Ability to Comprehend Narrative Texts***

Reading is a process through which readers interpret messages conveyed by an author through written language (Grabe, 2012). Reading comprehension refers to the ability to extract and understand information from texts to gain a deep understanding of their content. This process requires readers to engage with the entire text to discover underlying meanings. Comprehension is a complex cognitive activity that demands an intentional and active interaction between the reader and the text to construct meaning. In other words, comprehension is not a passive process; it requires readers to actively and purposefully work to derive meaning from their reading (Chard, 2008).

In relation to the findings of this study reflected in the results of the reading tests, this study highlights several important issues related to students' reading comprehension abilities. These issues align with those identified in the study's background, particularly concerning learning motivation and teaching strategies for reading. Both factors seem strongly affect the students' abilities theoretically and empirically, resulting in (a) low reading comprehension, (b) difficulty understanding texts, (c) struggles to grasp the outlines of different types of narrative texts, and (d) the need for a significant amount of time to understand the text.

Then, these issues suggest that English still remains a challenging subject for many Indonesian students, partly due to confusion caused by, for instance, differences in meanings and letters between English and their native language. This situation has underscored the need for English teachers to adopt better teaching practices. Moreover, factors such as speaking too quickly, providing unclear explanations, and using monotonous techniques also caused students to lose interest in reading and learning. In particular, in the current context of curriculum implementation, *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Anggraena, et.al, 2022; MOECRT-RI, 2024), this study would further argue the role of teaching that challenge to improve students' learning motivation and teaching strategies related to the reading comprehension of narrative text.

#### **a). Students' Motivation to Develop Reading Skill**

Students' motivation to develop reading skills plays a crucial role in their overall academic success and lifelong learning. Motivation can be defined as the internal drive that prompts students to engage in reading activities, persist in the face of challenges, and strive to improve their comprehension abilities. Several factors influence students' motivation to develop reading skills that are mainly Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation (Logan, et.al., 2011; Ives et. al., 2022).

When referring to the students' intrinsic motivation, this relates to their internal desire whether to read for pleasure, interest, or personal satisfaction. The students who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to engage in reading activities because they find them enjoyable and fulfilling. Encouraging a love for reading through exposure to a variety of interesting and relevant texts could foster intrinsic motivation.

In relation to the finding of this study, the students could not understand about the aspects of orientation, complication, resolution and reorientation of reading the narrative text may due to learning motivation.

To be more specific, the students' intrinsic motivation may include three important aspects to focus on that are significant to assist them in developing their reading comprehension. These are Self-Efficacy, Goal Setting, and Relevance and Interest. In terms of Self-Efficacy, the students' beliefs need to be guided that their own ability to succeed in reading tasks significantly would impact their motivation to develop reading skill. When students feel confident in their reading skills, they are more likely to take on challenging texts and persist in their efforts. Providing appropriate levels of challenge and support can help build self-efficacy.

Besides, goal setting also contributes to the learning motivation. The goal setting relates to attempts guiding the students setting specific, achievable goals that could motivate them to improve their reading skills. The goals could be related to, for instance, the number of books read, comprehension levels, or specific reading strategies. Clear and measurable goals would provide the students with a sense of direction and purpose. Furthermore, in the aspects of Relevance and Interest, the students would be more motivated to read when the material was relevant to their interests and lives. Connecting reading activities to students' experiences, hobbies, and future aspirations, for instance, could enhance their engagement and motivation.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation also influences the students to manage their reading skill developed accordingly (Logan, et.al., 2011; Ives et. al., 2022). Several studies include external factors such as grades, rewards, and recognition that could also motivate students to develop their reading skills. Although extrinsic motivation would only be effective in a short term, it is important to balance it with strategies that could build intrinsic motivation for long-term engagement.

Furthermore, extrinsic motivation may also indicate the importance of other aspects, such social support, teacher influence, and parent involvement. First, social motivation may relate to peer interactions and collaborative reading activities that could boost motivation. Book clubs, reading groups, and discussions about texts, for example, would create a supportive reading community and make reading a social and enjoyable activity.

Then, in terms of teacher influence, teachers play a pivotal role in motivating students to read. Enthusiastic and supportive teachers who could model good reading habits, provide constructive feedback, and create a positive reading environment would inspire students to develop their reading skills.

Last but not least, parental involvement is also important for the students' reading skill and development. Support from parents and guardians can also enhance students' motivation to read. Parents who read with their children, discuss books, and encourage reading as a leisure activity, for instance, would contribute to a positive reading culture at home. In short, by understanding and addressing these factors, educators and parents could create a supportive environment that would foster students' motivation to develop their reading skills, ultimately leading to improved academic performance and a lifelong love of reading.

## **b) Teaching Strategies to Improve Students Reading Skill**

The findings of this study revealed that the majority of students as the subjects of this study demonstrated a low ability to comprehend various aspects of narrative texts. This underscores the importance of implementing a variety of teaching strategies to significantly enhance students' reading skills. Several aspects have been considered to address this issue of reading comprehension.

These findings contrasted with previous studies by Baradika (2021) and Saputri (2021), which found that students generally had better abilities to comprehend narrative texts. Besides, these earlier studies did not specifically review the factors contributing to the variability in students' comprehension abilities. While past research indicated that students could effectively comprehend narrative texts, this recent study highlights the need for targeted interventions to address the specific challenges students face in understanding different components of the texts. Therefore, this study suggests that teaching factors and instructional strategies at the senior high school in Padang Pariaman Regency, in particular, should be reassessed. In other words, there is a need to improve teachers' teaching strategies to enhance students' understanding of narrative texts.

Furthermore, it is necessary to note that there are a variety of teaching strategies that could improve the students' reading skills by addressing different aspects of reading comprehension, fluency, and engagement. The findings of this study showed that most students (65%) exhibited low overall reading

comprehension abilities, with specific challenges observed across different elements of narrative texts. For instance, 52% of students had a low ability to comprehend the orientation of narrative texts, 63% struggled with understanding the complication, 55% had difficulty with the resolution, and 45% showed a low ability to grasp the reorientation. Therefore, implementing targeted teaching strategies could significantly enhance students' reading skills by addressing these specific areas of difficulty and improving their overall comprehension, fluency, and engagement with narrative texts.

To be more specific, there are several aspects of targeted teaching strategies including Explicit Instruction in Reading Strategies, Differentiated Instruction, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction, Vocabulary Development, Fluency Practice, Comprehension Instruction, Interactive Read-Alouds, and Use of Technology. How these strategies work could be explained as follow:

#### **(1) Explicit Instruction in Reading Strategies and Comprehension Instruction**

In applying these strategies, teachers should provide direct instruction on specific reading strategies such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and visualizing. By modeling these strategies through think-alouds and guided practice, students could learn how to apply them independently (Chinpakdee & Gu, 2021; Kasmiri, et.al.2023; Devi & Suroto, 2024). This explicit instruction would help students develop a toolkit of strategies to tackle different types of texts and comprehension challenges. Besides, teachers can use questioning techniques and activities that may promote higher-order thinking (Comprehension Instruction). By encouraging students to infer, predict, and summarize, they would deepen their understanding of the text. Making connections between the text and their own experiences, other texts, and the world around them could help students engage more deeply with what they read (Rahima, et.al, 2023).

#### **(2) Differentiated Instruction, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction**

The students may have diverse reading levels and needs, and this is important how teachers recognize individual learning needs to which teachers should tailor their instruction accordingly (Padmore & Ali, 2024). This involves providing different texts for different reading groups, offering more challenging materials to advanced readers, and giving extra support to struggling readers. Differentiated instruction ensures that all students are appropriately challenged and supported, which can improve their reading skills over time.

In the aspect of phonemic awareness, teachers could use activities and programs focused on phonemic awareness (the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words) and phonics (the relationship between letters and sounds). Games, songs, and systematic phonics instruction would help students develop the foundational skills needed for decoding words. As students become more proficient in these areas, their ability to read and understand text would improve (Khan & Khan, 2021).

#### **(3) Vocabulary Development and Fluency Practice**

In developing vocabulary, teachers should introduce new vocabulary words in context and use tools like graphic organizers to help students understand and remember them. Encouraging students to use new words in writing and speaking would further reinforce their understanding. A strong vocabulary is essential for comprehension, as it allows students to understand more complex texts and concepts (Rahmah, et.al., (2023)).

Fluency Practice is also an important aspect in developing students' reading comprehension. Through activities like repeated reading, choral reading, and reader's theater, students practice reading aloud with accuracy, speed, and proper expression. These practices may help students read more smoothly and with better comprehension. Feedback on their reading performance helps them improve and become more confident readers.

#### **(4) Use of Technology**

In this era of technological advancement, digital tools like e-books, audiobooks, and educational apps, for instance, could provide interactive and engaging reading experiences. Online reading programs, for instance, could offer personalized practice and track students' progress (Khusniyah, 2022). These technologies could motivate students to read more and provide additional support for developing their reading skills (Septy, 2017; Septy & Afifa, 2023). In summary, by incorporating these strategies, teachers could create a comprehensive and supportive reading environment that addressed the needs of all students. In short, this holistic approach could help students develop strong reading skills, which would be crucial for their academic success and lifelong learning.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

As an international language, English has been taught in Indonesian schools with varying levels of proficiency across different regions and institutions. It has become a compulsory subject alongside Bahasa Indonesia, essential for Indonesian students to master in order to compete in the era of globalization. The "*Kurikulum Merdeka*" curriculum has emphasized developing students' communicative competence and language proficiency, focusing on real-life communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. With the increased use of technology, English language learning has also become important for promoting multicultural awareness and global citizenship.

Despite its importance, English is often considered a difficult subject for Indonesian students, contributing to low levels of mastery in English learning materials. This study has specifically examined students' ability to comprehend narrative texts and analyzed data from reading comprehension tests. The findings revealed a low ability to understand various aspects of narrative texts, including orientation, complication, resolution, and reorientation. Then, as the students faced significant challenges in comprehending these components, exhibiting low abilities across all aspects of narrative text comprehension, this study highlights the need for improved instructional strategies and resources to support them in developing their reading comprehension skills. Therefore, this study has also emphasized on important issues related to students' reading comprehension abilities, particularly concerning learning motivation and teaching strategies. Both factors strongly affect the students' abilities theoretically and empirically, underscoring the critical role of teaching in improving students' reading comprehension overall.

In the current context of curriculum implementation, *Kurikulum Merdeka*, this study would further suggest improving the role of teaching that challenges students' learning motivation and teaching strategies related to the reading comprehension of narrative text. The "*Kurikulum Merdeka 2024*" aims to provide more flexibility and autonomy to schools in designing their curriculum. Along with the teacher profile of *Guru Penggerak* as labeled in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, teachers become a key factor in developing students' character and reading skills in English. Teachers need to find the best ways to manage English lessons, incorporating innovative teaching methods and technologies, and they are the great innovators in the arena of English language teaching.

Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, several suggestions are offered for teachers, students, and future researchers:

##### For Teachers

1. **Explore Diverse Teaching Methods:** English teachers should employ a variety of instructional methods to enhance students' reading comprehension skills. Incorporating different techniques could also cater to diverse learning styles and improve overall understanding.
2. **Provide Motivation:** Teachers should actively motivate students both before and after lessons. Encouraging words, setting achievable goals, and recognizing progress could boost students' enthusiasm for learning English and improve their reading abilities.
3. **Offer Support and Practice Opportunities:** Teachers should offer additional support for students to practice reading skills. Using engaging and appropriate learning materials and providing opportunities for students to practice reading outside of regular class time can help reinforce the reading process. This also includes using relevant technology tools and applications in the classroom.

##### For Students

1. **Enhance Reading Skills:** Students are encouraged to improve their English reading skills through regular practice. Expanding vocabulary, practicing reading comprehension, and engaging with a variety of English texts could help students better understand and analyze narrative texts.
2. **Self-Study and Practice:** Students should dedicate time to self-study and practice reading English texts regularly. Exploring diverse genres and themes can deepen their understanding and improve their reading proficiency.

##### For Future Researchers

1. **Utilize Findings for Further Research:** Future researchers are encouraged to use the findings from this study as a reference for further research on narrative text comprehension. This study can serve as a foundation for exploring new methods, comparing different approaches, or investigating other aspects of reading comprehension.
2. **Expand Research Scope:** Researchers might consider expanding the scope of future studies to include a broader range of schools or educational levels. This can provide a more comprehensive understanding of reading comprehension issues and potential solutions.

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