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## The Impact of Reading, Covering, Remembering, Retelling on Students' Reading Comprehension

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## Abstract

The importance of reading comprehension is key for middle school children, especially in descriptive texts where narrative vivid, clear attention to the facts and sensory aspects is needed. But Indonesian eighth-grade students experienced some difficulties in reading because of a lack of vocabulary, have no reading strategy and have lower interest in reading. The purpose of study is to investigate whether the Read, Cover, Remember, Retell (RCRR) strategy effective in teaching reading comprehension of descriptive texts. A quasi-experimental approach with pre- and post-test measurements on experimental and control groups was used. Preliminary results revealed that students in both groups had mostly average reading comprehension abilities with little representation of high-or low-performers. The group of students that was exposed to RCRR made marked improvement - 77% in the excellent range, and one student at the level of very high. In comparison, the control group, taught in the traditional manner, gained only minimally with 55% achieving the high category and none the very high category. These findings indicate that not only does the RCRR intervention enhance comprehension, but it also leads to more students achieving advanced levels of comprehension. In short, the RCRR approach is a feasible and efficacious approach English teachers to enhance students' comprehension and engagement with descriptive texts.

## Keywords

Comprehension, Engagement, Descriptive Text, Reading Comprehension.

## 1. Introduction

For individuals studying English as a second language, the ability to read is crucial for advancing both their language proficiency and overall skills (Yapp et al., 2023). It acts as a key pillar for cognitive growth and success in various academic fields. Reading not only aids in expanding vocabulary and grasping language structures but also plays a pivotal role in developing critical thinking and interpretive capacities (Angraini et al. 2024). Therefore, it is considered an integral aspect of the human learning journey and a fundamental element in formal educational settings. Students who exhibit strong reading comprehension skills are more likely to engage deeply with texts and comprehend them meaningfully. As highlighted by Suseno et al. (2023), reading comprehension lies at the heart of reading itself, underscoring the need for educators to offer insightful guidance to help students fortify this skill.

However, many junior secondary students face challenges with reading comprehension due to ineffective reading strategies (Al-khresheh, 2023). Educators are recommended to utilize instructional methods that encourage active engagement and deeper text processing. Mirawati (2024) and Mat and Jamaludin (2024) emphasize the importance of interactive, student-centered approaches to enhance reading outcomes.

One such approach is the Read, Cover, Remember, and Retell (RCRR) strategy. Walef (2023) confirms that RCRR is effective in supporting readers at all grade levels, especially those who struggle with comprehension due to a preference for speed over quality reading. Other studies (Hariyanti et al., 2024; Maryansah & Ramadhani, 2021; Relawati et al., 2020; Mutia et al., 2022; Marpaung et al. 2019) advocate that RCRR promotes understanding, motivation, and classroom engagement. Nevertheless, most of the extant research has focused on RCRR in ordinary reading contexts, so its use in descriptive texts in junior high school EFL is an issue yet to be treated, which this study aims to address.

Although many reading strategies have been extensively investigated in the EFL context, the research primarily concerns the well-known skimming, scanning, or SQ3R, and little attention has been paid to the RCRR (Read, Cover, Remember, Retell) strategy. Yet little is known about eighth grade except for the fact that it is a driveway into reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. The majority of previous literature also focuses on test score, instead of the processes through which a strategy like RCRR may promote more active engagement and learning (Doulougeri, 2024). This study attempts to fill this gap by investigating whether the RCRR approach is successful at improving reading comprehension and student engagement at the junior high school level.

In view of these outcomes, investigating the impact of the RCRR strategy is crucial, especially concerning descriptive texts that demand attention to detail and the ability to retain information. This study delves into how RCRR influences the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at Junior High School. Employing a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-tests, the study aims to assess whether RCRR can effectively tackle the persistent issue of reading comprehension in EFL classrooms. By engaging with international and local academic debates, this study contributes to advancing strategic reading instruction and advocates for interactive methodologies to enhance students' reading skills within the Indonesian educational framework.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Definition of Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is a vital skill that enables learners to comprehend and interpret written texts by connecting them with their background knowledge and thought processes. According to Erlidawati (2023), reading comprehension is defined as the depth of understanding a reader acquires from a text, emerging through the interaction between written words and the reader's prior knowledge. This complex and dynamic process relies on integrating four key language components: phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Kheang et al. (2024) also support this view by emphasizing that reading comprehension poses challenges for students, as it involves decoding vocabulary and interpreting meaning beyond the surface level, making it a central focus in English language teaching.

Based on these insights, it can be concluded that reading comprehension is a complicated cognitive process which not only involves decoding words, but integrating prior knowledge and conceptualizing with the elements of language to gain meaning. As Tompkins (2019) and Kheang et al. (2024) call attention to this ability being indispensable but difficult for learners, therefore, an important focus within the teaching of English as a Foreign Language is developing effective strategies to foster this critical skill, ensuring students can successfully navigate and extract meaning from diverse texts

### **2.2. The Read, Cover, Remember, Retell (RCRR)**

The Read, Cover, Remember, Retell (RCRR) strategy is acknowledged as a valuable approach to bolster students' reading comprehension, especially for those who mistakenly associate reading proficiency with speed. Relawati et al. (2020) elucidates that the RCRR strategy encourages active interaction with the text and fosters the acquisition of vital comprehension skills, such as identifying main ideas, making inferences, and summarizing information. Moreover, its flexibility across different reading proficiency levels renders it a versatile and impactful teaching tool for educators in varied classroom settings. Sari et al. (2023) underscores that through the application of the RCRR strategy, students not only receive support and encouragement from peers but also actively engage in collaborative learning, nurturing a sense of community where they share insights and perspectives, thus stimulating discussions, analysis, and reflection on the content they've read (Wibowo, 2020).

This perspective is reaffirmed by La Ali et al. (2024), who affirms that the RCRR strategy effectively aids students from all grade levels in enhancing their reading comprehension and retention of textual information. Serving as an instructional approach, it empowers teachers to cultivate students' interest in engaging with specific reading materials, like descriptive texts, by encouraging active participation and structured reflection during the reading journey. Correspondingly, in Relawati et al. (2020) contend that the RCRR strategy boosts students' critical reading and summarizing abilities while fostering a deeper and reflective connection with texts.

## **3. Methods**

The study took place at MTs Nurul Yaqin Pomalaa, focusing on eighth-grade students as the target group. The research was conducted in a formal EFL classroom environment within a public junior high school situated in Kabupaten Kolaka, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The analysis was conducted on two intact classes selected through purposive sampling based on similar academic performance and availability of schedules. One class was designated as the experimental group, while the other functioned as the control group. Each group consisted of around 30

students aged between 13 and 14, showcasing comparable English proficiency levels as indicated by the school's internal assessments.

A quasi-experimental design was utilized in this study to gather statistical evidence regarding the impact of the Read, Cover, Remember, Retell (RCRR) strategy on students' comprehension of descriptive texts. Both the experimental and control groups underwent pre-test and post-test assessments. The experimental group received instruction using the RCRR strategy, while the control group was instructed using traditional methods commonly used by English teachers at the school. Data collection took place over a four-week period within regular English class hours to minimize disruption to the students' learning environment.

To evaluate reading comprehension, a set of multiple-choice tests based on descriptive passages aligned with the eighth-grade curriculum was developed and validated with expert input. The pre-test and post-test questions followed the same structure but contained different text to avoid memory bias. Each assessment consisted of 20 items aimed at evaluating students' ability to identify main ideas, specific details, word meanings, and inferences. The reliability of the assessment was confirmed by testing it on a separate class, resulting in a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating strong internal consistency. Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics, including independent and paired sample t-tests, to determine the significance of differences between the two groups. The analysis was conducted using SPSS 26 version which enabled accurate statistical computation and interpretation of the results.

#### 4. Results

The RCRR strategy was used as an educational technique to improve the reading comprehension abilities of students in the experimental group. Before implementing the strategy, a pre-test was conducted on all 26 students in this group to evaluate their initial reading comprehension skills. This pre-test functioned as a diagnostic measure to set a reference point for comparison with post-intervention findings.

**Table 1.** Frequency Distribution of the Pre-test Score in Experimental Class

Interval	Category	Frequency	Average
			Percentage
0-49	Low	4	15%
50-69	Enough	20	77%
70-89	High	2	8%
90-100	Very High	0	0%
Total		26	100%

Based on the data presented in Table 1, the distribution of pre-test scores among students in the experimental class showed diverse levels of reading comprehension before the RCRR strategy was introduced. Specifically, 4 students (15%) scored between 0-49, falling into the Low category; 20 students (77%) achieved scores ranging from 50-69, categorized as Enough; and 2 students (8%) scored between 70-89, classified as High. These findings indicate that the majority of students were performing at a moderate level of comprehension, with only a small percentage demonstrating high achievement. The pre-test scores were classified into four categories: Very High, High, Enough, and Low, to provide a clear basis for assessing progress in the post-test phase.

The control group comprised 29 students who were taught using traditional teaching methods commonly found in reading classes, without utilizing the RCRR strategy. Before the intervention, a pre-test was given to evaluate their initial

reading comprehension skills. The pre-test results for the control group are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Frequency Distribution of the Pre-test Score in Control Class

Interval	Category	Frequency	Average
			Percentage
0-49	Low	4	14%
50-69	Enough	21	72%
70-89	High	4	14%
90-100	Very High	0	0%
Total		29	100%

Based on Table 2, the pre-test score distribution in the control class showed that 4 students (14%) scored between 0-49, designated as Low; 21 students (72%) achieved scores from 50-69, placed in the Enough category; and 4 students (14%) obtained scores from 70-89, classified as High. These findings suggest that the majority of students displayed a moderate level of reading comprehension before the intervention, with comparable numbers of students in the low and high score categories. The pre-test scores were divided into Very High, High, Enough, and Low categories, establishing a framework for assessing performance changes following the instructional intervention.

A post-test was administered to the experimental class to evaluate the students' reading comprehension performance following the implementation of the RCRR strategy. The purpose of this assessment was to measure the extent of improvement after the treatment. The results of the post-test are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Frequency Distribution of the Post-test Score in Experimental Class

Interval	Category	Frequency	Average
			Percentage
0-49	Low	0	0%
50-69	Enough	5	19%
70-89	High	20	77%
90-100	Very High	1	4%
Total		26	100%

Based on the data presented in Table 3, the post-assessment outcomes of the experimental group revealed a significant enhancement in students' reading comprehension following the implementation of the RCRR strategy. Specifically, 5 students (19%) attained scores ranging from 50 to 69, denoted as the "Enough" category; 20 students (77%) obtained scores falling within the 70 to 89 range, characterized as "High"; and 1 student (4%) achieved a score in the 90 to 100 range, corresponding to the "Very High" classification. These results signify a substantial shift in the distribution of scores, with a majority of students transitioning to higher performance brackets. Similar to previous evaluations, the post-assessment scores were divided into the categories of Very High, High, Enough, and Low, offering a clear structure for assessing the efficacy of the educational intervention.

A post-test of the control class aimed to determine the result of students' reading comprehension after receiving conventional instruction. The result of the post-test was seen in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Frequency Distribution of the Post-test Score in Control Class

Interval	Category	Frequency	Average
			Percentage
0-49	Low	0	0%
50-69	Enough	13	45%
70-89	High	16	55%
90-100	Very High	0	0%
Total		29	100%

Based on the data presented in Table 4, the post-assessment outcomes of the control group indicate that 13 students (45%) attained scores falling within the 50-69 range, denoted as 'Enough', while 16 students (55%) obtained scores ranging from 70-89, labeled as 'High'. These findings imply a moderate enhancement in students' reading comprehension abilities when instructed through traditional teaching methodologies. Similar to prior evaluations, the post-assessment scores were segmented into the categories of 'Very High', 'High', 'Enough', and 'Low', offering a consistent framework for assessing students' performance.

## 5. Discussion

The results of this study show that the application of the Read, Cover, Remember, Retell (RCRR) strategy proved to be significantly effective in the experimental group's reading comprehension achievement (Bansa et al., 2023). Many of these students progressed to the High and Very High categories of proficiency, representing a significant change in performance from their baseline response. In contrast, the control group of students who received conventional teaching of linguistics did only a little better. This difference demonstrates the success of the RCRR intervention on improving reading comprehension for eighth-grade students.

These findings are in agreement with the previous studies of Sari et al. (2023), Esarni (2024), and Nurhalimatussakdiah et al. (2024), all highlighting RCRR's potential to encourage active involvement, retention, and enhanced comprehension of texts. The RCRR uses the tenants of reading carefully, cover, remember, recall, and retell. Such a cycle calls for active cognitive activity, and results in better grasp of the material compared to mere reading or memorisation. This engagement is very important for critical thinking skills to be obtained since reading is difficult in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Yuan et al., 2022).

Consistent with these results, Li et al. (2022) demonstrate that interactive reading strategies, including the recall and discussion of read-aloud texts, promote the vocabulary and comprehension of middle school readers. Similarly, Rudiawan and Jupri (2020) found that students who used memory and retelling strategies were more motivated and confident in reading, which led to better educational achievement. Furthermore, it also supports Nifriza and Walef (2023) stating that RCRR is applicable in any education level. They caution against confused reading expertise with speed, an error made by many students, EFLers in particular. Most value speed, resulting in shallow comprehension. RCRR challenges this by promoting a slower, more deliberate style of reading which allows students to concentrate on meaning rather than speed. This not only enhances understanding, but fosters metacognitive abilities, allowing students to track and control their own learning.

In addition to providing cognitive benefits, Rudiawan and Jupri (2020) highlight that RCRR encourages collaboration and peer interaction that enhance motivation and engagement. Immediate student feedback and learning occur through peer retelling in pairs or groups to express understanding and to correct misunderstanding (Boers, 2024). This study found that the RCRR strategy is effective in improving the reading comprehension of junior high-school students (Graciano, 2024). Its functionality to engage, encourage retention and understanding makes it perfect for the EFL classroom where students may find the reading of dense texts difficult (Maab et al., 2023). Educators may want to integrate RCRR into instruction and observe the impact on student achievement. Further work should consider the long-term effects of RCRR on reading and incremental and optimality with a broader range of text types. Studying the effectiveness of the approach among learners at different proficiency and background levels might help in extending the application and use of the approach.

## **6. Conclusion**

The present study results strongly emphasize the benefit of RCRR (Read, Cover, Remember, Retell) strategy to increase students' reading comprehension when it comes to descriptive text. The experimental class made significant gains compared to the control class, indicating RCRR's potential (as supported by prior research) of promoting active engagement, improving retention, and increasing understanding. These major implications indicate that incorporating RCRR into EFL settings could indeed be a viable way of addressing common reading difficulties among learners. This analysis is, however, subject to several limitations. The relatively low sample size and focus on only one grade level limit the generalization of the findings. Moreover, the research focused only on descriptive texts and did not test it on other text types. These limitations must be considered when interpreting the findings for wider application.

Avenues for future research include the efficacy of the RCRR strategy in higher and other grade levels and for different text genres such as narrative, expository, and argumentative. Longitudinal studies might also explore effects of RCRR on students' reading comprehension and retention of facts over the longer term. Additionally, an examination of the way that RCRR functions across educational settings and for different types of learners would be useful information for broader dissemination.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

### ***Ethical Approval and Originality Statement***

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

### ***Data Disclosure Statement***

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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