

THE EFFECT OF DIRECTED READING THINKING ACTIVITY (DRTA) STRATEGY ON STUDENTS READING COMPREHENSION OF ARGUMENTATIVE TEXT

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Abstract

Mastering reading comprehension is fundamental for academic achievement, yet many senior high school learners struggle to identify central claims and arguments, especially in argumentative texts that require critical assessment of assertions, reasoning, and evidence. This study explored the implementation and impact of the Directed Reading Thinking Activity or DRTA strategy on eleventh grade students argumentative reading comprehension at SMAN 2 Slawi. Adopting a quantitative quasi experimental research design, the investigation involved 72 participants from two intact classes, with the experimental group receiving DRTA instruction and the control group undergoing traditional teaching. Data collection encompassed observational records along with pre test and post test scores, which were subsequently processed using paired sample and independent sample t tests. Findings indicated that DRTA implementation unfolded across three main phases, namely predicting, reading to confirm predictions, and revising predictions, over eight intervention sessions. In the experimental group, average scores surged from 52.43 at pre-test to 78.54 at post-test, showing a substantially higher gain than the control group's shift from 50.83 to 58.19. Results from an independent samples t-test confirmed that this difference in post-test outcomes was statistically significant ($t = 13.326$, $df = 70$, $p < .001$). These outcomes confirm that the DRTA approach successfully strengthens students capability to recognize main claims, supporting details, and logical connections in text, making it an effective reading strategy for secondary education.

Keywords: DRTA strategy; reading comprehension; argumentative text, senior high school.

1 INTRODUCTION

In English instruction, reading holds a key position by allowing learners to process information effectively, refine their language fluency, and evaluate ideas more critically. The primary goal of reading is comprehension, which occurs when readers connect their prior knowledge with new information in a text (Puspita et al., 2023; Yuvita et al., 2022). In practice, many students can read a text fluently but still struggle to grasp its main idea, particularly when identifying factual details and word meanings (Muchsin, 2023). National-level data reinforces this concern: a recent study found that a majority of senior high school students face limited vocabulary mastery, weak reading strategies, and difficulty recognizing text structure (Rohmawati et al., 2025), while the 2025 English Academic Ability Test recorded a national average of only 24 out of 100 (Alfiani, 2025).

Preliminary observation at SMAN 2 Slawi confirmed that eleventh-grade students found it difficult to identify main ideas, obtain specific information, understand vocabulary in context, make inferences, and recognize references in a text, a problem often linked to conventional teaching methods that merely ask students to locate answers already stated in the text. The Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy offers a promising alternative, as it guides students to make predictions about a text and then verify those predictions while reading (Mahdi, 2025), which helps them follow the logic of a text and construct meaning more actively. Although previous studies report positive outcomes of DRTA, most focus on narrative, descriptive, or procedural texts, while its application to argumentative texts, which require readers to recognize claims and evaluate supporting evidence (Christodoulou & Diakidoy, 2020), has received limited attention.

Addressing this gap, the current research examines how the DRTA strategy affects the reading comprehension of argumentative texts among eleventh-grade students at SMAN 2 Slawi. Specifically, this study aims to (1) explain how the DRTA strategy is implemented in teaching reading comprehension of

argumentative texts, and (2) To investigate the extent to which Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy improves students' reading comprehension of argumentative text.

2 METHODOLOGY

To evaluate how the DRTA approach impacts reading comprehension within an authentic school environment, this study adopted a quantitative quasi experimental design, as intact classrooms could not be randomly assigned (Sugiyono, 2022). The targeted population included 322 eleventh graders attending SMAN 2 Slawi during the 2025/2026 academic year. Through purposive sampling, 72 learners from two existing classes were selected, comprising Class XI 4 (36 participants) as the experimental group receiving DRTA strategy instruction, and Class XI 1 (36 participants) as the control group undergoing standard learning. Furthermore, a separate class of 36 students participated in the try out phase to establish instrument validity and reliability.

Before starting the lessons, both classes took a pre-test, followed by a post-test after eight sessions held over six weeks from May to June 2026. The research data came from classroom observations and pre- and post-test scores using a validated reading test on argumentative text. All data were processed with IBM SPSS Statistics 22. The analysis included descriptive statistics, tests for normality and homogeneity, paired sample t-tests to track improvement in each class, and an independent sample t-test to compare final scores between the two groups at a 0.05 significance level..

3 RESULTS

This section outlines how the DRTA strategy was applied and its impact on students' comprehension of argumentative texts, drawing upon classroom observations as well as the pre- and post-test scores from both experimental and control groups.

3.1 Implementation of the DRTA strategy

The DRTA strategy was implemented in the experimental class across eight treatment sessions, structured around three recurring stages: predicting a text's content based on its title and available clues, reading to test those predictions, and confirming or revising them according to evidence found within the text. As the sessions progressed, students steadily developed their ability to identify main ideas, distinguish opinions from arguments, recognize supporting details, detect both explicit and implicit information, and analyze the text's overall argumentative structure. Classroom observations revealed that students grew increasingly confident in generating and defending their predictions, engaged more critically with the reading material, and participated more actively in discussions as the treatment continued.

3.2 The effect of the DRTA strategy on students' reading comprehension

Data in Table 1 shows that while both classes recorded higher scores after the treatment, the experimental group achieved a much larger gain compared to the control group.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test scores.

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean
Experimental	36	52.43	78.54
Control	36	50.83	58.19

The data met the tests for normality and homogeneity, with scores normally distributed (Shapiro-Wilk $p > .05$) and equal variances between groups (Levene $p = .976$). Paired samples t-tests showed that both the experimental group (mean difference = 26.111, $p < .001$) and the control group (mean difference = 7.361, $p < .001$) made real progress, but the experimental group improved more than three times as much. An independent samples t-test on post-test scores also showed a clear gap between the two classes ($t(70) =$

13.326, $p < .001$). As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected, showing that students who used the DRTA strategy scored higher in reading comprehension than those taught with regular methods.

The empirical outcomes reinforce the interactive reading perspective, demonstrating that text comprehension relies on how readers merge their existing knowledge with written information (Mukamilah, 2024). This outcome aligns with previous literature establishing that DRTA enhances student engagement while raising comprehension levels (HS & Yuliah, 2021; Dewi et al., 2023; Al Janaydeh & Al Jamal, 2024). Unlike earlier scholarly works that centered on narrative, descriptive, or procedural texts, this study contributes fresh insights by examining argumentative texts which demand deeper critical reasoning. Ultimately, the evidence confirms that DRTA functions effectively across complex text types, assisting high school learners in detecting central claims, relevant backing evidence, and logical relationships in written discourse.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Results from this study confirm that implementing the DRTA strategy through the stages of prediction, reading to test, and confirming or revising enables eleventh grade students at SMAN 2 Slawi to become more active readers of argumentative texts. Students in the experimental group made noticeable progress in reading comprehension, as their average score increased from 52.43 to 78.54, whereas the control group only went from 50.83 to 58.19. This marked difference was further confirmed by the independent samples t-test ($t = 13.326$, $p < .001$). These outcomes suggest that the DRTA strategy effectively assists high schoolers in recognizing main arguments and supporting ideas. Therefore, teachers are recommended to apply this method during reading sessions, students should use it to enhance their critical thinking, and future researchers could test its effectiveness on larger samples and other text genres.

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