



The Implementation of Interactive Reading Approach in English Language Learning at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah

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ABSTRACT

This research explored the application of the Interactive Reading Approach (IRA) in the teaching of narrative texts to eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah. The study was carried out in response to students' low reading comprehension and the lack of active interaction during English lessons. It aimed to portray how IRA was implemented in the classroom, analyze patterns of interaction between teachers and students, and identify challenges encountered throughout the learning process. Using a qualitative descriptive design, the data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students, and relevant documents, and were analyzed through coding, thematic analysis, and triangulation. The results indicated that IRA was conducted through a series of pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities, which promoted students' active involvement in interpreting narrative texts through discussion and guided support from the teacher. Although challenges such as limited vocabulary mastery, uneven student participation, and limited learning resources were encountered, the findings suggest that the Interactive Reading Approach contributed positively to classroom interaction and supported students' reading comprehension.

Keywords: Classroom Interaction, Interactive Reading Approach, Narrative Text, Qualitative Study, Reading Comprehension

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English has become a crucial subject and one of the core competencies that students are expected to master starting from junior high school. The ability to read English effectively is considered a fundamental skill that supports the attainment of comprehensive language proficiency. However, data from the Ministry of Education and Culture indicate that many junior high school students still face difficulties in understanding English texts. This has led to low average achievement scores in several regions, including Central Bengkulu.

The low level of interest and ability in reading English texts among students is believed to be influenced by teaching methods that remain conventional and lack interactivity as suggested by Constructivist Theory Collins et al., (2021) Instruction that depends solely on teacher explanations and textbooks tends to make students passive and less motivated to actively engage in reading or understanding learning materials. This condition is further exacerbated by the absence of engaging learning media that match the characteristics and learning styles of today's learners.

Technological advances in information and communication offer potential for developing more interactive and engaging educational media. Tools such as digital applications, online quizzes, instructional videos, and animations have been shown in various studies to support student motivation and learning experiences. For instance, research by Prasetya et al. (2022) indicated that interactive learning media incorporating voice recognition technology supported junior high school students in developing their listening, speaking, and reading skills in English.

Nonetheless, at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah, the use of interactive learning media which may result in less dynamic classroom practices. As a result, student have fewer opportunities to develop their English literacy skills. As an initial step to understand the actual teaching environment, the researcher conducted two early observations on 13 November 2025 and 15 November 2025. These observations confirmed that the English teacher at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah utilized the Interactive Reading Approach when delivering narrative text lessons. The findings further indicated meaningful interaction among the teacher, the students, and the reading materials, showing that the approach was implemented in authentic classroom settings.

Previous studies on interactive English learning have primarily focused on the development of digital learning tools and their role in supporting students' literacy and interest in reading. However, interactive reading has been discussed in previous studies as a promising approach in language learning, particularly for fostering reading comprehension. Several studies have demonstrated its role in supporting students' engagement and cognitive skills.

However, there remains a significant lack of research that investigates how interactive reading is actually implemented in real classroom environments, especially at the junior high school level in regions such as Central Bengkulu, which pose unique contextual and infrastructural challenges. Islam & Eltilib (2020) argue that "there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the techniques used to develop the reading skills through classroom interaction" (p. 2). A similar concern is echoed by Fitria et al. (2024), who state that "there is still not enough information on specific strategies that can be used to solve these problems in the Indonesian setting" (p. 73). Likewise, Hermansyah, (2025) highlighted that "many studies are context-specific making generalization challenging" (p. 1012). These findings collectively indicate the need for further qualitative investigations that explore how interactive reading is applied and experienced in real classroom situations.

This study seeks to address that gap by employing a qualitative approach to explore the implementation, strategies, and challenges involved in applying interactive reading as a method of teaching English at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah. The approach aims to present a holistic view of effective teaching practices that are aligned with student needs and local learning conditions.

By focusing on the actual classroom application of interactive reading strategies, this research also aims to identify both the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the implementation, as well as the roles that teachers and students play in the learning process. These findings are expected to provide practical recommendations for enhancing English teaching quality in similar educational settings.

This study is expected to contribute to the field of language education and educational technology by offering valid empirical evidence on how interactive reading strategies are implemented at the junior high school level, especially in areas that have yet to experience widespread digital innovation. Theoretically, the study aims to enrich the development of interactive learning models that are contextually relevant and adaptable to the specific characteristics of under-resourced schools.

Furthermore, the findings of this research are anticipated to support the development of digital literacy applications in language learning within Indonesia's local educational context. Practically, the results can serve as a reference for teachers at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah and similar schools to optimize the creative use of available media and teaching methods—without relying on expensive or advanced technological infrastructure.

In addition, this study is also intended to offer valuable insights to curriculum developers and local education authorities in designing policies that promote equitable quality in English language education across Indonesia. These findings may serve as a foundation for crafting more effective and engaging learning strategies while fostering inclusivity and reducing disparities in communication skills and academic achievement.

The main objective of this study is to qualitatively describe how the interactive reading approach is applied at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah and to identify the benefits and obstacles encountered during the process. The study is expected to strengthen the concept of interactive learning within the broader field of language education.

The implementation of this approach at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah is also driven by the region's specific challenges. As an area located outside the island of Java, Central Bengkulu often faces infrastructure limitations and restricted access to modern learning resources Rahmawati et al. (2022). Therefore, an interactive reading model that emphasizes discussion, group collaboration, and opportunities for students to express their understanding both orally and in writing offers a promising solution for building their self-confidence and developing academic communication skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to capture how interactive reading is implemented in English language instruction at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah. In this design, the researcher serves as the key instrument, supported by additional tools such as observation sheets, interview protocols, and documentation checklists to ensure systematic and reliable data collection. The choice of this method is further reinforced by recent studies that have effectively employed qualitative descriptive designs to explore reading practices in school contexts.

The English teacher was considered a key source of data because of her central involvement in planning, delivering, and evaluating the teaching process. This research also recognizes contemporary perspectives that highlight the importance of interaction between teachers and students in promoting successful learning. Consequently, the teacher's approaches and thoughtful evaluations play a key role in grasping how guided reading sessions facilitate students' ability to comprehend texts. Participant selection was guided by purposive sampling. The English teacher was chosen due to her central role in delivering interactive reading to the eighth grade, students were purposively included to represent different academic achievement levels high, moderate, and low so that the findings could capture a wide variety of perspectives and learning experiences. Secondary sources refer to written records, archives, and supplementary materials that support the investigation of interactive reading practices. The study's sample group consisted of one English instructor and twelve students from the eighth grade at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah. Utilizing purposive sampling, the participants were chosen specifically because of their active role in interactive reading sessions. Crucially, the selection was made to include students who represented a range of English competency levels specifically high, moderate, and low achievers. This rigorous selection process was employed to gather diverse viewpoints and comprehensive experiences, thus guaranteeing a thorough understanding of how interactive reading is implemented.

The data collection techniques used in this research were observation, interviews and documentation. The data analysis technique used is, the qualitative data analysis framework utilized in this study follows the model established by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three core steps: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Throughout the research process, data collection and analysis were carried out simultaneously, allowing the researcher to continuously examine the emerging patterns and meanings related to the implementation of the Interactive Reading Approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Findings

The analysis was conducted by integrating the study's findings with the theoretical framework discussed in the preceding chapter.

1. Aktiviton Of Prior Knowledge – Schema Theory

In the pre-reading stage, the teacher asked students to make predictions based on the title of the story. This activity effectively activated their prior knowledge, aligning with Anderson's theory that schema activation enhances text comprehension. Most students in the high and medium categories reported that understanding the general idea beforehand made it easier for them to follow the story.

2. Contruction Of Meaning – Interactive Model of Reading

The discussion, question-answer activities, and group presentations within the IRA framework enabled students to construct meaning through interaction. The interactive reading model suggests that comprehension emerges from both bottom-up processes (text-driven) and top-down processes (knowledge- and experience-driven). The findings indicate that students understood the stories more easily after participating in group discussions and responding to the teacher's questions.

3. Scaffolding – Vygotsky (Zone Of Proximal Development)

Throughout the reading activity, the teacher scaffolded the students by defining vocabulary, illustrating sentence use, and giving additional explanations when needed. This instructional support mirrors Vygotsky's scaffolding theory, which states that learners can access material slightly beyond their current ability when assisted by an expert. The findings reveal that low-category students experienced noticeable improvement in comprehension when such scaffolding was consistently provided.

4. Differentiated Intruction Approach

The categorization into high, medium, and low levels demonstrates that students require varying degrees of instructional support. The IRA framework allows teachers to adapt their teaching methods to suit each learner's proficiency. This corresponds with differentiation principles, which emphasize acknowledging students' diverse needs and capacities to ensure effective learning outcomes.

5. Instructional contrains

The challenges related to students' vocabulary limitations and the short instructional timeframe indicate that the IRA demands well-structured planning. Effective implementation requires the teacher to select texts that match learners' abilities and to organize the lesson time carefully so that each component of the IRA can be executed optimally.

Documentations Findings

Both observations confirm that the English teacher consistently applied core components of the interactive reading approach in teaching narrative texts.

Documentation served as an additional source of evidence to confirm and strengthen the findings obtained throughout classroom observations and interviews. The collected

documentation comprised instructional materials, administrative records, and various written or visual artifacts related to the English reading lessons. These documents functioned as supporting proof to verify that the interactive reading approach was implemented consistently throughout the learning process.

The documentation checklist encompassed several forms of evidence, including the teacher's lesson plan (RPP), the syllabus, student worksheets, teaching materials, assessment records, and classroom and photographs. Each of these items was evaluated to determine their availability, relevance, and consistency with the instructional tools utilized in teaching narrative texts.

Table 1. Documentations Checklist

| Documentation Item | Available | Not Available | Notes |
|--|-----------|---------------|---|
| Teacher's Lesson Plan (RPP) For Narrative Text | √ | | RPP outline pre-, while-, and post-reading phases |
| English Syllabus (Grade IX) | √ | | Supports the reading competency standards |
| Teaching Material (Textbook/Printed Text) | √ | | Material used during both observations |
| Student Worksheets LKS | √ | | Used for group activities and comprehension tasks |
| Learning Media (Whiteboard/Printed media/LCD) | √ | | Teacher use printouts and board explanations |
| Classroom Attendance List | √ | | Confirm student presence on observation days |
| Classroom Activity Photos | √ | | Visual evidence of interactive learning |
| School Academic Calendar | √ | | Confirm teaching schedule and class timing |

The collected documentation demonstrates that the teacher consistently utilized instructional tools that aligned with the Interactive Reading Approach. The lesson plan and student worksheets provided structured guidance for reading activities, while the teaching materials supported students' exploration and comprehension of the text. Additionally, field notes and photographs corroborated the presence of interaction among the teacher, students, and the text. Collectively, this documentation strengthened the triangulation

process by confirming that classroom implementation was consistent with the planned instructional design.

The teacher's lesson plan also reflected the implementation of the Interactive Reading Approach. It included pre-reading activities to stimulate students' prior knowledge, while-reading tasks to facilitate comprehension, and post-reading exercises to assess understanding. This lesson plan provided evidence that the Interactive Reading Approach was applied in a structured and systematic manner in the classroom.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicated that the implementation of the Interactive Reading Approach (IRA) enhanced students' motivation, reading comprehension, and active participation in narrative text learning. Beyond demonstrating its effectiveness, the results offered deeper insights into the underlying cognitive and social processes that enabled IRA to function effectively in an EFL junior high school setting characterized by diverse student abilities and limited instructional resources. These findings addressed the research question by illustrating how IRA scaffolded learners' engagement both cognitively and socially.

The increased level of student engagement observed during the implementation of IRA was interpreted using interactive and constructivist learning perspectives, which view learning as an active and socially constructed process. Classroom observation data showed that collaborative discussions, teacher-facilitated questions, and student-led presentations encouraged learners to jointly construct meaning. Cognitively, this process supported students in activating prior knowledge, making inferences, and evaluating narrative content critically, in line with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which suggests that comprehension deepens when appropriate scaffolding is provided by both teachers and peers.

The results aligned with previous studies (Rianto et al., 2024; Dewi, 2022; Sari & Wulandari, 2023; Rintaningrum, 2022; Qasserras, 2023), which emphasized that interactive reading practices enhanced comprehension, motivation, and collaborative skills through discussion-oriented learning activities. Reflecting on this convergence, it appeared that IRA could effectively address both affective and cognitive domains, providing empirical support that even under-resourced classrooms can achieve meaningful learning outcomes through carefully structured interaction.

The findings further indicated that IRA was effective across students with varying proficiency levels. Higher-proficiency students demonstrated advanced analytical skills, whereas medium- and low-proficiency learners gained substantial benefits from systematic instruction and continuous scaffolding. The sequential stages of pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading offered an instructional framework that accommodated individual learning capacities while promoting inferential reasoning and critical reflection. This suggests that IRA not only enhances comprehension but also fosters metacognitive awareness and strategic reading skills, directly answering the research question regarding how IRA facilitates comprehensive student engagement with narrative texts.

From a cognitive perspective, IRA promoted both bottom-up and top-down processing (Qasserras, 2023). Students decoded vocabulary and interpreted sentence structures while activating prior knowledge and making anticipatory inferences. Familiar stories, such as Cinderella and Lebai Malang, further supported schema activation, enabling learners to integrate new textual information with existing cognitive frameworks. This dual engagement reflected that comprehension was an active, interpretive process rather than mechanical decoding. Reflecting on this, students who connected the text to personal experiences demonstrated deeper interpretive understanding, highlighting IRA's ability to enhance both inferential reasoning and reflective interpretation.

Despite these encouraging outcomes, several challenges emerged. Limited instructional

time and students' restricted vocabulary, particularly among low-proficiency learners, constrained deeper textual exploration. Cognitively, this affected students' ability to activate relevant prior knowledge and construct meaningful inferences. However, teacher strategies such as vocabulary clarification, simplified texts, and pre-reading exercises effectively scaffolded understanding, demonstrating IRA's flexibility in overcoming contextual constraints. These observations underscored that even in low-resource contexts, IRA could mediate cognitive processes and support meaningful interaction with texts.

Importantly, this study contributed to the literature by showing that IRA's effectiveness did not depend on digital technology. In contrast to multimedia-focused studies (Irmawati et al., 2024), teacher-student interaction and structured instructional support were more critical in promoting reading comprehension. Cognitively, these interactions facilitated schema activation, inferential reasoning, and integration of new information, reinforcing IRA's relevance and adaptability in schools with limited technological access.

Overall, the findings suggested that IRA enhanced students' reading comprehension, self-confidence, critical thinking, and collaborative skills. Cognitively, learners were encouraged to actively connect prior knowledge, make inferences, evaluate ideas critically, and negotiate meaning with peers. This aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum, emphasizing student-centered learning, active participation, and meaningful interaction. Reflecting on these findings, it became evident that IRA could foster both cognitive and socio-emotional development, offering a practical and theoretically grounded model for EFL reading instruction in under-resourced junior high schools. Consequently, this study advances the field by providing qualitative evidence that IRA can be successfully implemented to support comprehensive student engagement with narrative texts, directly addressing the research question and highlighting its pedagogical significance.

Subsequent qualitative studies may examine the use of the Interactive Reading Approach in diverse text genres and educational levels to better understand its flexibility and long-term influence on students' reading development

CONCLUSION

The present study confirmed that the Interactive Reading Approach (IRA) was systematically applied and successfully integrated into the teaching of narrative texts for eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 30 Bengkulu Tengah. The structured sequence of IRA, including pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading stages, allowed students to actively engage with texts, peers, and the teacher, fostering continuous meaning-making and reflective learning. These findings directly addressed the research question by illustrating how IRA scaffolds cognitive processes, encourages inferential thinking, and promotes collaborative interpretation of narrative texts in an EFL context.

The research indicated that IRA significantly enhanced students' comprehension, particularly in recognizing narrative structures, following plot development, and interpreting thematic messages. The deliberate use of familiar narratives, such as Cinderella and Lebai Malang, successfully activated learners' prior knowledge and facilitated schema-based processing, consistent with schema activation theory. From a cognitive standpoint, students engaged in both bottom-up and top-down processes: decoding vocabulary and sentence structures while simultaneously drawing upon prior knowledge, making anticipatory inferences, and integrating new information. This dual cognitive engagement suggests that comprehension was not merely mechanical decoding but a dynamic process of constructing meaning.

Teacher scaffolding played a critical role in mediating these cognitive processes. Detailed vocabulary explanations, strategic questioning, and constructive feedback enabled

students at varying proficiency levels to participate effectively. High-proficiency learners demonstrated advanced analytical and interpretive skills, medium-level learners progressed through guided support, and low-proficiency learners gained confidence and understanding through repeated reinforcement. These findings highlight IRA's adaptability to heterogeneous classrooms and emphasize that cognitive development in reading is closely intertwined with structured pedagogical support.

Despite these positive results, several challenges were observed, including limited vocabulary mastery, heterogeneous reading abilities, and restricted instructional time. These factors affected students' capacity to independently activate prior knowledge and generate meaningful inferences. Nevertheless, the teacher employed strategies such as simplified texts, pre-reading exercises, and scaffolded interactive tasks, which mitigated these limitations. Reflecting on these findings, it became evident that IRA is flexible and capable of fostering higher-order comprehension, critical thinking, and reflective interpretation, even in low-resource settings.

Additionally, the study showed that IRA's effectiveness did not rely heavily on digital technologies. In contrast to multimedia-based approaches (e.g., Irmawati et al., 2024), teacher-student interaction, structured guidance, and collaborative engagement were the primary drivers of comprehension. These interactions facilitated schema activation, inferential reasoning, and the integration of new information with existing knowledge, demonstrating IRA's relevance in under-resourced contexts. Overall, IRA enhanced not only students' comprehension but also their motivation, self-confidence, critical thinking, and collaborative skills. Aligning with the Merdeka Curriculum, the approach emphasized student-centered learning and active participation, showing that pedagogical strategies targeting cognitive and social dimensions yield significant educational benefits. This study thus provides empirical qualitative evidence that IRA supports comprehensive engagement with narrative texts, scaffolds inferential and reflective thinking, and offers a practical, theoretically grounded model for EFL instruction in junior high schools.

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