

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the foundation of the research. It covers the background of the study, research problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, hypotheses, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms.

A. Background of the Study

Reading comprehension is a vital part of learning English, especially when students need to follow and understand stories told in order, like recount text. Indonesia is currently facing a severe literacy crisis, particularly in reading comprehension of English text. According to PISA 2018, Indonesia ranked 72 out of 79 countries in reading literacy, with only 30% of 15-year-olds able to locate information, interpret text, and evaluate content at a basic level (OECD, 2019). Even more alarming, 75% of Indonesian children can decode words but fail to comprehend meaning, as stated by Minister of Education Abdul Mu'ti (2025) during a national literacy forum. This phenomenon—known as "*bisa baca tapi tak paham*"—has been labeled a national reading emergency by UNESCO and the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo, 2022), with Indonesia placing 60th out of 61 countries in the World's Most Literate Nations ranking due to low reading interest and poor comprehension skills.

At the junior high level, the problem intensifies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The Merdeka Curriculum (revised) mandates recount text as a core genre for grade 8, requiring students to identify sequence, infer implicit meanings, and evaluate personal reflections (Kemendikbud, 2022). Yet, national exam data from 2019–2022 show that only 38% of SMP students nationwide achieve the minimum competency in reading comprehension, with 62% failing to sequence events and 71% unable to make inferences from narrative text (Pusmenjar, 2023). A BPS survey (2024) further revealed that only 1 in 1,000 Indonesian adolescents reads for pleasure daily, and less than 20% can summarize a 200-word English passage

accurately. This "darurat membaca" is not just a statistical issue—it manifests in low motivation, passive learning, and disengagement during English lessons, where students treat reading as a mechanical chore rather than a meaning-making process (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

These national challenges are evident in public junior high schools, where traditional teaching approaches—silent reading, teacher-led translation, and rote question-answer drills—fail to activate schema, encourage prediction, or promote reflection, leaving students disempowered and unmotivated (Nation & Macalister, 2010; Grabe, 2009).

One helpful method that can change this is the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA). This approach asks students to guess what will happen in the text before reading, check their guesses while reading, and explain their final ideas using parts of the text. By doing this, students become more active and think more deeply about what they read. Different studies have shown that DRTA works well. For example, Al Odwan (2012) saw that students in Jordan improved their reading when they worked together to make and check predictions. In Indonesia, Fitri (2019) found that primary students got better at understanding text after using DRTA, and Lusyani (2019) noticed the same improvement with older students. Even with these good results, not many studies look at how DRTA helps eighth-grade students with recount text in regular public schools under the Merdeka Curriculum.

To find the gap in existing research on the effectiveness of DRTA in reading instruction, several studies have investigated the impact of the strategy on students' comprehension skills. The first study, conducted by Nerim (2020), aimed to scrutinize the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy on students' reading comprehension at a senior high school in Indonesia. The research utilized a quantitative approach, showing that post-intervention scores were significantly higher, indicating the effectiveness of DRTA in enhancing narrative understanding.

The second study, by Utami et al. (2019), explored the use of DRTA to foster reading comprehension ability through classroom action research at

an Indonesian university. The results demonstrated a 25% improvement in inferential skills, highlighting DRTA's role in sequential text processing similar to recounts. The third study, conducted by Husnul et al. (2025), focused on improving reading comprehension among EFL learners using DRTA in West Nusa Tenggara junior highs. The study reported a 32% gain in overall scores, with particular success in prediction-based activities for recount text.

Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of DRTA in various EFL settings. However, there is a limited understanding of how this strategy performs in public junior high schools under the Merdeka Curriculum, specifically for recount text. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, limited studies have explored the impact of DRTA on reading comprehension of recount text among eighth-grade students in public junior high schools under the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in the context of SMP Negeri 5 Kota Kediri. The novelty of this study lies in its application of DRTA specifically to recount text comprehension among eighth-grade students in a public junior high school setting under the Merdeka Curriculum, employing a quasi-experimental design to provide practical insights for EFL teachers. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on a quasi-experimental design in a real classroom context, allowing for controlled comparison and practical insights into strategy implementation.

The purpose of this research is to find out whether using Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) has a significant effect on students' reading comprehension of recount text in the specific context of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 5 Kota Kediri, an area that has received limited attention in previous research. The study was entitled the effectiveness of using Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) to improve students' reading comprehension of recount at SMP Negeri 5 Kota Kediri.

B. Research Question

Based on the research background above, does the implementation of the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) method have a significant

effect on the reading comprehension performance of eighth-grade students at SMP 5 Kota Kediri in understanding recount text, compared to conventional learning method?

C. Objective of the Study

Based on the research problem above, the researcher has following objective: "To find out whether there is a significant difference in reading comprehension between students who learn recount text through Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) and those who use conventional learning methods at SMP 5 Kota Kediri"

D. Significance of the Study

This study offers a practical, low-cost solution to the widespread problem of weak reading comprehension of recount texts among Indonesian junior high school students. By proving that the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) significantly outperforms conventional methods, it provides English teachers with an immediately applicable strategy that turns passive readers into active, critical thinkers using only printed texts and simple worksheets. The ready-to-use DRTA modules in the appendices enable instant classroom adoption without additional technology or funding. For students, the approach builds confidence and enjoyment in reading English. For future researchers, the study serves as a reproducible model for extending DRTA to other text types and settings, contributing to the broader effort of raising national English literacy levels.

E. Hypotheses of Research

A hypothesis is an initial assumption or proposition made to address a research question, which requires empirical validation. As Creswell (2018) explains, testing of hypotheses employs statistical procedures in which the

investigator draws inferences about the population from a study sample. It provides a starting point for research or experimentation, enabling scientists to examine the correlation between variables and make inferences. In this study, the researchers used two hypotheses. These are alternative and null hypotheses as follows:

- 1. Null Hypotheses (Ho):** There is no significant difference between students who learn recount text using Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy and those who employ traditional learning methods at SMP 5 Kota Kediri
- 2. Alternative Hypothesis (Ha):** There is significant difference between students who learn recount text using Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy and those who employ traditional learning methods at SMP 5 Kota Kediri

F. Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study centers on assessing the effectiveness of the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy in elevating reading comprehension of recount text. The investigation is carried out at SMP Negeri 5 Kota Kediri and targets eighth-grade students enrolled in English classes. DRTA implementation follows its core phases—prediction, reading verification, and evidence-based confirmation—as outlined by Stauffer (1969), with comprehension measured across literal, inferential, and evaluative levels using pre- and post-tests aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum (revised).

To delimit the research boundaries, the study is confined to two intact classes at the selected institution, excluding students from other grades or schools. It does not explore DRTA's impact on alternative text genres (e.g., descriptive, procedure) or additional language skills such as writing or speaking. Factors potentially influencing results—including student motivation, prior vocabulary knowledge, home literacy environment, or variations in teacher facilitation—are recognized but remain uncontrolled beyond the quasi-experimental design. Moreover, the analysis focuses on

group-level statistical differences rather than individual student progress trajectories or long-term retention of comprehension gains beyond the intervention period.

G. Definition of Key Terms

1. Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA)

In this study, DRTA is understood as a step-by-step reading guide that pushes students to guess first, read next, and prove last. Before opening the text, they look at the title or pictures and say what they think will happen. While reading the recount, they check if their guesses are right or wrong. After finishing, they point to sentences in the text to show why their ideas changed or stayed the same.

2. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension, for this research, means the students' power to pull out the story line, hidden feelings, and final lesson from a recount text. It is not just knowing the words; it is being able to retell the events in order, guess what the writer felt, and decide if the ending makes sense.

3. Recount Text

A recount text is defined here as a short true-life story told from start to finish so the reader can feel like they were there. It always has three clear parts: who, where, and when at the beginning; what happened step by step in the middle; and a quick wrap-up or personal thought at the end.