

# Exploring The Use of The Make a Match Technique in Teaching Reading Comprehension in Senior High Schools

Qorinatul Jamila<sup>1</sup>, Feri Ferdiyanto<sup>2</sup>, Zainuddin<sup>3</sup>

Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup> qrnjmlh20@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup> feriferdiyanto99@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup> zainuddintutik@gmail.com

## Abstract

Reading comprehension is a fundamental component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction at the senior high school level. However, reading lessons in many classrooms remain predominantly teacher-centered, providing limited opportunities for collaborative meaning construction. This study aims to explore the implementation of the Make a Match technique in teaching reading comprehension and to examine students' responses during the learning process. The study employed a qualitative case study design conducted in an eleventh-grade class at MA Darul Lughah Wal Karomah. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings show that the implementation of the Make a Match technique occurred through several stages: lesson introduction, preparation of card-matching activities, cooperative interaction during the matching process, and confirmation or reflection. Students' responses were observed in three forms of engagement: behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and affective involvement. The findings indicate that the technique organizes classroom interaction through structured cooperative activities that encourage students to engage with reading texts collaboratively. This study contributes a process-oriented understanding of how cooperative learning structures shape interaction and student engagement in EFL reading classrooms.

**Keywords:** Reading Comprehension; Cooperative Learning; Make a Match Technique; Classroom Interaction; Qualitative Case Study

## INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension plays a crucial role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly at the senior high school level where students are expected to engage with a variety of texts and develop higher-order thinking skills (Elston et al., 2022). At this level, reading is not limited to recognizing words or sentences but involves complex cognitive processes such as identifying main ideas, understanding detailed information, making inferences, interpreting implicit meanings, and connecting textual information with prior knowledge. Through reading, students gain access to information, develop language competence, and build the ability to interpret meaning from written discourse. In the context of EFL classrooms, reading comprehension is often viewed as a process of meaning construction that involves both cognitive and social dimensions. From a cognitive perspective, readers actively process textual information by integrating linguistic knowledge, background knowledge, and reading strategies (Spivey, 2023). Meanwhile, from a social perspective, reading comprehension can develop through interaction with others, where students share interpretations, discuss ideas, and clarify misunderstandings collaboratively. Therefore, reading instruction ideally provides opportunities for students to engage actively with texts while interacting with peers in meaningful learning activities.

Despite the importance of reading comprehension in language learning, classroom practices in many educational contexts still tend to be teacher-centered. Reading lessons frequently follow a conventional pattern in which the teacher explains the material, students read the text individually, and then answer comprehension questions provided in worksheets or textbooks. Although this approach provides clear guidance and structure, it often limits opportunities for students to discuss ideas, negotiate meaning, or collaboratively interpret textual information. As a result, students may engage with the text only at a surface level and may rely heavily on teacher explanations rather than actively constructing understanding (Vaughn et al., 2024).

Preliminary observation conducted at MA Darul Lughah Wal Karomah revealed similar patterns in the reading classroom. The teacher commonly introduced the reading topic, asked students to read the text silently, and then instructed them to complete comprehension questions individually. During these activities, student interaction was relatively limited, and discussions among peers occurred only occasionally. Some students appeared hesitant to express their interpretations or verify their answers through collaborative dialogue. Consequently, opportunities for students to actively negotiate meaning and share perspectives during reading activities were relatively limited. From a theoretical standpoint, cooperative learning offers a pedagogical framework that can encourage greater interaction among students during learning activities. Cooperative learning emphasizes structured collaboration in which students work together to achieve shared learning goals while supporting each other's understanding (Geletu, 2022). Through cooperative activities, students have opportunities to exchange ideas, compare interpretations, and collectively construct meaning. Interaction within small groups can facilitate deeper engagement with learning materials because students must articulate their reasoning, listen to alternative viewpoints, and verify information collaboratively.

One cooperative learning strategy that facilitates such interaction is the Make a Match technique, introduced by Lorna Curran. The technique involves a card-matching activity in which students receive cards containing questions, answers, or related information connected to a learning topic. Students are required to find the corresponding pairs by interacting with their classmates. During the process of searching for matching cards, students read the information on their cards, discuss possible answers, and verify their interpretations. This activity integrates reading, discussion, and collaborative problem-solving in a structured learning environment. In the context of reading instruction, the Make a Match technique can create opportunities for students to interact with textual information in a more dynamic manner (Anwar, 2023). Instead of passively answering comprehension questions, students actively search for information, compare interpretations with peers, and verify their understanding of the text. The cooperative nature of the activity may encourage students to engage more deeply with the reading material while participating in meaningful classroom interaction. Previous studies have investigated the use of the Make a Match technique in language learning contexts, particularly in relation to students' learning outcomes. For example, Anwar (2023) found that the implementation of the Make a Match technique contributed to improved student participation and comprehension scores in reading classes. Similarly, Pratiwi and Fransiska (2022) reported that students taught using the Make a Match technique demonstrated higher achievement compared to those taught using conventional methods. In addition, Liu Wei (2023) highlighted that cooperative techniques, including card-matching activities, can enhance student motivation and engagement in language learning.

However, despite these contributions, most of these studies employ quantitative approaches, focusing primarily on test scores, learning outcomes, or statistical comparisons between

experimental and control groups. While such studies provide valuable insights into learning performance, they tend to emphasize product-oriented outcomes rather than the learning process itself. As a result, they offer limited explanations of how the Make a Match technique is actually implemented in real classroom settings. In particular, there is still limited qualitative research that explores the instructional procedures involved in the technique, the patterns of interaction that occur during the activity, and the ways in which students experience the cooperative learning process. This indicates a clear research gap in the existing literature, especially in understanding the classroom dynamics and interactional processes that occur during the implementation of the technique.

Therefore, the present study aims to address this gap by adopting a qualitative case study approach to explore the implementation of the Make a Match technique in teaching reading comprehension. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the instructional process and classroom interaction, particularly in examining how the technique is enacted, how students negotiate meaning during the activity, and how they respond to the cooperative learning experience. By providing a process-oriented perspective, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how cooperative learning strategies function in authentic EFL classroom contexts (Setiawan, 2023).

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative case study design, which is considered appropriate for exploring complex phenomena within real-life contexts and for gaining an in-depth understanding of classroom practices. According to Creswell (2021), qualitative research is suitable for investigating participants' perspectives and experiences in natural settings, particularly when the focus is on processes rather than outcomes. In addition, Yin (2018) explains that a case study design enables researchers to explore contemporary phenomena within their real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. More recent perspectives by Merriam and Tisdell (2021) emphasize that qualitative case studies are particularly useful for understanding how instructional practices are implemented and experienced by participants in educational settings. This design allows the researcher to capture detailed descriptions of classroom interaction, instructional procedures, and participants' responses. Therefore, the use of a qualitative case study design in this study is justified, as it enables an in-depth exploration of the implementation of the Make a Match technique and the dynamics of student engagement within the natural classroom context (Purba & Lubis, 2022).

The research was conducted at MA Darul Lughah Wal Karomah, focusing on an eleventh-grade classroom where English reading lessons were conducted as part of the regular curriculum. The participants involved in this study consisted of one English teacher who implemented the Make a Match technique and several students who participated in the reading activities. These participants were selected because they were directly involved in the instructional process where the technique was applied. Data were collected through three primary techniques: classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations were conducted to obtain direct descriptions of how the Make a Match technique was implemented during the reading lessons (Ratri et al., 2024). The observations focused on several aspects of the instructional process, including the stages of classroom activities, teacher facilitation strategies, student participation during the card-matching activity, and patterns of interaction among students. Field notes were used to document important events and interactions that occurred during the learning process.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher and several students to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives regarding the implementation of the technique. The interview questions were designed to explore participants' perceptions of the learning activities, the challenges encountered during the card-matching process, and the ways in which the activity influenced their engagement with the reading text. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions in order to clarify or expand participants' responses. Document analysis was also conducted to support the observational and interview data. The documents examined in this study included lesson plans prepared by the teacher, instructional materials used during the reading lessons, and student worksheets related to the Make a Match activity. These documents provided additional information about how the learning activities were planned and implemented in the classroom. The data collected from these sources were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative analysis proposed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman. The analysis process consisted of three interconnected stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing relevant information obtained from observations, interviews, and documents. During this stage, the researcher identified key themes related to the implementation of the Make a Match technique and students' responses to the activity (Rizkiyah & Nugraheni, 2025). After the data were condensed, they were presented through data displays in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic matrices. These displays allowed the researcher to organize the data systematically and identify patterns within the instructional process and student interactions. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying findings. Conclusions were developed by continuously comparing data across multiple sources, including observation notes, interview transcripts, and supporting documents. This process ensured that the findings were grounded in the data and accurately reflected the classroom context. To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, the study applied validation criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba, which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Enworo, 2023). Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation across different data sources and through member checking, in which participants were invited to review and confirm the interpretations of the data. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, while dependability and confirmability were addressed by maintaining systematic documentation of the research procedures and data analysis process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### 1. The Implementation of the Make a Match Technique in Teaching Reading Comprehension

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Make a Match technique in teaching reading comprehension was conducted through a sequence of structured instructional stages (Mulatu & Regassa, 2022). These stages include lesson introduction, preparation of the card-matching activity, the interaction process during the card-matching activity, and confirmation or reflection on the reading task. Each stage contributed to organizing classroom interaction and guiding students' engagement with the reading material. During the lesson introduction stage, the teacher began the learning process by explaining the objectives of the lesson and introducing the topic of the reading text. The teacher also asked several guiding questions related to the topic in

order to activate students' prior knowledge and encourage them to think about the content of the text. This stage served as an orientation phase that prepared students for the reading activity. As the teacher explained in the interview, *"I usually start by asking simple questions so students can connect the topic with what they already know before reading the text"*.

After the introduction, students were asked to read the text individually for a short period of time. This individual reading activity allowed students to gain a general understanding of the text before participating in the cooperative activity. During this stage, students began identifying important information such as main ideas, supporting details, and key vocabulary that would later be relevant during the card-matching process. The next stage involved the preparation of the Make a Match activity (Pratiwi & Fransiska, 2022). The teacher distributed a set of cards containing questions and answers related to the reading text. Some cards contained statements representing the main ideas of the text, while others included supporting details, vocabulary meanings, or explanations related to specific parts of the passage. Each student received one card and was instructed to find the corresponding pair among their classmates. The teacher highlighted the purpose of this activity by stating, *"Each student has to find their partner, so they need to read and understand their card carefully"*.

Before starting the activity, the teacher explained the rules of the game, the objectives of the activity, and the time limit for completing the task. These instructions helped students understand the procedures of the activity and ensured that the classroom interaction could proceed in an organized manner. The main classroom interaction occurred during the card-matching stage. Students moved around the classroom while reading the information written on their cards and discussing possible matches with their peers. Observation data revealed that students frequently asked questions, compared answers, and verified information through discussion. In several cases, students were observed returning to the reading passage in order to confirm whether their interpretations of the cards were correct. One student explained, *"I read the text again because I wanted to make sure my card matched the correct answer"*.

During this stage, the teacher primarily acted as a facilitator rather than a lecturer. The teacher monitored students' discussions, provided clarification when necessary, and encouraged students to justify their answers by referring to the reading text. This facilitative role created an environment in which students were able to interact more actively with both the text and their classmates. The teacher emphasized this role by stating, *"I don't give direct answers, I guide them so they can find the answer by themselves"*. The final stage of the activity involved confirmation and reflection. After students successfully found their matching pairs, each pair was asked to present their cards to the class and explain the relationship between the question and the corresponding answer. The teacher then reviewed the responses, provided feedback, and clarified any misunderstandings that emerged during the activity. This stage ensured that the cooperative learning activity led to accurate comprehension of the reading text. Overall, the findings indicate that the Make a Match technique functions as a structured cooperative learning procedure that integrates reading activities with interactive classroom engagement (Kusumaningtyas & Mirtasari, 2024).

## **2. Students' Responses to the Implementation of the Make a Match Technique**

Students' responses to the implementation of the Make a Match technique were identified through both classroom observations and Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher and selected students to explore their perspectives on the implementation of the Make a Match technique. The data were analyzed using thematic

analysis, resulting in several key themes related to behavioral, cognitive, and affective engagement. To enhance the depth of analysis, the findings are supported by representative excerpts from participants' responses, which demonstrate how students experienced the activity, interacted with peers, and engaged with the reading text. These excerpts provide illustrative evidence that complements the observational data and contributes to a richer interpretation of the classroom interaction. These responses were categorized into three forms of engagement: behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and affective involvement. Behavioral engagement was reflected in students' active participation during the card-matching activity. One student described the activity by saying, *"I had to talk to many friends to find the correct pair, so I couldn't just stay silent"*.

Observation data showed that students moved around the classroom, interacted with their peers, and participated in discussions while searching for the correct card pairs. Students were frequently seen asking questions, comparing answers, and negotiating possible matches with their classmates (Liu, 2023). Cognitive engagement was observed when students made efforts to understand the reading text more deeply during the activity. Several students reread certain sections of the text in order to verify the information written on their cards. As one student stated, *"Sometimes I was not sure, so I checked the text again to make sure my answer was correct"*. This behavior suggests that the activity encouraged students to process textual information more actively. Affective involvement was reflected in students' emotional responses during the learning process. Observation notes indicated that the classroom atmosphere became more dynamic and interactive during the card-matching stage. Many students appeared enthusiastic while participating in the activity. One student commented, *"It was more fun than usual reading class because we could move and discuss with friends"*.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the Make a Match technique functions not merely as a classroom activity but as a structured cooperative learning strategy that organizes interaction among students during reading lessons. The implementation stages observed in the classroom consisting of lesson introduction, preparation of the card-matching activity, interaction during the matching process, and confirmation or reflection demonstrate how instructional design can shape the dynamics of classroom engagement. These stages illustrate that reading instruction can move beyond individual text processing toward collaborative meaning construction (Hasni & Amelia, 2024). From the perspective of cooperative learning theory, the interaction patterns observed during the Make a Match activity reflect the principles of positive interdependence and promotive interaction, as proposed by Johnson and Johnson. In this activity, students depend on one another to complete the matching task because each student holds only one piece of information in the form of a card (Choirunnisa & Rodliyah, 2025). Consequently, the completion of the task requires communication, negotiation, and verification of ideas among peers. This structure encourages students to actively participate in discussions rather than passively receiving information from the teacher.

Another important aspect revealed in this study is the way the activity encourages students to revisit the reading text during the learning process. Observation data showed that students frequently reread specific sections of the passage to confirm the accuracy of the information written on their cards. This behavior suggests that the activity prompts students to engage in deeper cognitive processing of the text. Instead of relying solely on initial impressions, students

were required to verify their interpretations through repeated interaction with the reading material. This process aligns with the view that reading comprehension develops through iterative meaning construction in which readers continuously refine their understanding (Patty, 2023).

The findings also highlight the role of peer interaction in supporting comprehension processes. During the card-matching activity, students discussed possible answers, compared interpretations, and clarified misunderstandings together. These interactions created opportunities for students to articulate their reasoning and evaluate alternative perspectives presented by their classmates (Bjorn, 2023). Such collaborative dialogue can contribute to the development of interpretive skills because students must justify their answers and respond to differing viewpoints. In this sense, comprehension emerges not only from individual reading but also from social negotiation within the classroom environment. Furthermore, the findings reveal a shift in the role of the teacher during the learning process. Rather than dominating classroom discourse through continuous explanation, the teacher functioned primarily as a facilitator who organized the activity, monitored student interaction, and provided clarification when necessary. This facilitative role reflects the principles of student-centered learning in which teachers create conditions that enable students to participate actively in constructing knowledge. By stepping back from direct instruction during the activity, the teacher allowed students greater autonomy to explore and verify textual information collaboratively.

Students' responses to the implementation of the technique also provide insights into how cooperative learning structures influence classroom engagement. Behavioral engagement was evident through students' active participation in moving around the classroom, communicating with peers, and discussing possible matches. This pattern of participation suggests that the physical and interactive nature of the activity encouraged students to become more involved in the learning process compared with more conventional reading tasks that rely primarily on individual work. In terms of cognitive engagement, students demonstrated efforts to understand the text more deeply by rereading passages, comparing answers, and confirming information before identifying their card pairs. These behaviors indicate that the activity stimulated analytical thinking and careful examination of textual information. Rather than simply selecting answers from predetermined options, students were required to interpret and verify information through discussion and reference to the text.

The affective dimension of student responses is also noteworthy. The classroom atmosphere during the card-matching activity appeared more dynamic and interactive, and students expressed enthusiasm during both observation and interview sessions. The opportunity to move around the classroom and interact with peers contributed to a more engaging learning environment. This finding suggests that cooperative activities may help create a learning atmosphere that supports both social interaction and academic engagement (Tadesse et al., 2024). However, the findings of this study also suggest that the effectiveness of the activity in promoting meaningful interaction depends largely on how the teacher structures and facilitates the learning process. Without clear instructions and well-prepared instructional materials, cooperative activities may risk becoming purely game-like interactions that do not sufficiently support learning objectives. Therefore, careful planning of card content, time management, and reflective discussion stages is essential to ensure that the activity remains focused on reading comprehension.

Overall, the discussion highlights that the Make a Match technique provides a structured framework for integrating reading activities with cooperative interaction in the classroom

(Siwalette, 2025). Through discussion, collaboration, and verification of textual information, students participate in a learning process where comprehension develops through shared reasoning and interaction. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how cooperative learning strategies can reshape classroom dynamics and support student engagement in EFL reading instruction.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the implementation of the Make a Match technique in teaching reading comprehension at the senior high school level through a qualitative case study approach. The findings reveal that the technique was implemented through a sequence of structured instructional stages consisting of lesson introduction, preparation of the card-matching activity, cooperative interaction during the matching process, and confirmation or reflection. Students' responses to the learning activities were observed in three forms of engagement: behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and affective involvement. These responses demonstrate that the cooperative structure of the Make a Match activity encouraged students to participate actively in classroom interaction while engaging with the reading text. By focusing on the instructional process and classroom dynamics, this study contributes a contextual understanding of how cooperative learning techniques can shape interaction and engagement in EFL reading classrooms. The findings highlight the potential of cooperative learning activities to create interactive learning environments in which reading comprehension develops through collaboration and shared reasoning.

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