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Teaching Reading Narrative Text Using The "Read Aloud" Technique to Grade 10 Students at One Senior High School

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of the read aloud technique in teaching narrative text reading comprehension across three instructional sessions, together with teachers' and students' responses, the obstacles encountered, and students' difficulties in identifying main ideas and interpreting word meaning. An exploratory sequential mixed-methods design was applied, in which quantitative findings were gathered first and later examined more deeply through qualitative data. Thirty tenth-grade students from a vocational senior high school in West Bandung, together with one English teacher, took part, with data gathered through documentation, classroom observation, a teacher interview, a student questionnaire, and a reading comprehension test based on the narrative text "Situ Bagendit." Findings revealed a slight rise in students' mean scores, from 78.20 on the pretest to 78.93 on the posttest; a Wilcoxon signed-rank test, however, confirmed the difference lacked statistical significance, indicating the three-session intervention had not yet produced measurable cognitive improvement. Even so, both the teacher and students expressed favorable views toward the technique, particularly its contribution to motivation, participation, and a less anxiety-inducing reading atmosphere. Students nonetheless continued to struggle with determining main ideas and inferring unfamiliar vocabulary, while variation in reading fluency stood out as the principal barrier affecting instructional pacing. The study concludes that read aloud carries pedagogical value as a supplementary narrative-text strategy, though measurable comprehension gains appear to depend on the duration and intensity of implementation, and should therefore be paired with explicit techniques for strengthening main-idea recognition and vocabulary inference.

Keywords: Read Aloud Technique; Reading Comprehension; Narrative Text; Exploratory Sequential Design

INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the essential skills taught in Indonesian schools due to its position as an international language in education, technology, and global communication. Among the four language skills, reading is a receptive skill that underlies students' ability to acquire information, expand vocabulary, and comprehend language structures more broadly (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). Nevertheless, Indonesian students' reading comprehension of English texts remains relatively low, particularly for narrative texts, which demand an understanding of plot, main ideas, and contextual word meaning (Nanda & Azmy, 2020; Rizqon & Andreani, 2021).

Several previous studies have identified that students' difficulties in comprehending English narrative texts are primarily attributable to limited vocabulary and insufficient background knowledge of the story context (Rizqon & Andreani, 2021). Similarly, high school students have been found to face structural obstacles in identifying both explicit and implicit main ideas within narrative texts (Sari et al., 2020). Various instructional techniques have been trialed to address these problems, including the Know-Want-Learn (KWL) strategy combined with

multimedia (Azwar et al., 2024), the Question and Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy (Alvionita et al., 2025), and the repeated reading technique (Jannah et al., 2025). While these techniques have generally proven effective in improving reading comprehension, most were trialed on descriptive, recount, or report texts, leaving a gap in mixed-methods research specifically targeting narrative texts at the senior/vocational high school level.

One technique believed to help bridge this gap is read aloud, an oral reading technique that allows students to hear a model of pronunciation, intonation, and phrasing directly from the teacher or peers (Binh, 2024). Through read aloud, students are not only trained to recognize the sounds of the language accurately but are also guided to focus their attention on textual meaning rather than solely on word-by-word decoding (Sadyawati & Rosmawati, 2020). Prior research in EFL contexts has shown that read aloud can enhance reading comprehension while reducing students' anxiety in engaging with foreign-language texts (Binh, 2024). However, most of these studies were conducted at the tertiary level or outside the Indonesian context, leaving empirical evidence on the effectiveness of read aloud for narrative text comprehension at the Indonesian senior/vocational high school level including teachers' and students' responses and the technical challenges of classroom implementation still limited.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to describe the implementation of the read aloud technique in teaching reading comprehension of narrative texts to tenth-grade students, including its effect on students' reading comprehension scores, while also identifying teachers' and students' responses, the challenges that emerge during instruction, and students' difficulties in determining the main idea and interpreting word meaning. To achieve this aim, the study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, in which quantitative data from the reading test were analyzed first and subsequently elaborated through qualitative data from observations and questionnaires, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of both the process and outcomes of student learning.

Based on this rationale, the present study addresses three interrelated research questions. First, it examines how the read aloud technique is implemented in teaching narrative text reading comprehension to tenth-grade students, including the extent to which this implementation is reflected in changes to students' reading comprehension scores. Second, it investigates the responses exhibited by both teachers and students toward the implementation of the read aloud technique in teaching narrative text reading comprehension. Third, it explores the challenges and difficulties that emerge during the implementation of the read aloud technique, particularly in relation to students' ability to determine main ideas and interpret word meaning in narrative texts.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, specifically an exploratory sequential design, in which quantitative data are collected and analyzed first to identify general patterns, followed by qualitative data collection to explain and elaborate on those initial results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design was considered appropriate for the present study because it allowed the researchers to first establish whether a measurable change in students' reading comprehension occurred after the implementation of the read aloud technique, and subsequently to explore, through observation and questionnaire data, how teachers and students experienced and responded to that instructional process (Creswell, 2023).

PROJECT
PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGLISH EDUCATION

Participants and Research Site

The participants were 30 tenth-grade students (14 male, 16 female) at a vocational senior high school (SMK) in West Bandung, together with one English teacher who acted as a key informant for the qualitative phase. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, based on the consideration that the class had not yet received specific instruction using the read aloud technique. The study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year.

Research Procedure

The research procedure consisted of the following stages: (1) a pretest was administered to measure students' initial reading comprehension of a narrative text; (2) the read aloud technique was implemented across three instructional sessions, using the narrative text "Situ Bagendit," during which the teacher and students alternately read the text aloud while the researcher observed classroom interaction using an observation sheet; (3) a posttest, parallel in format to the pretest, was administered to measure any change in students' reading comprehension; and (4) a questionnaire was distributed to both the teacher and students to capture their perceptions of and responses to the technique. This sequence allowed the quantitative pretest–posttest data to be interpreted more deeply through the qualitative observation and questionnaire data collected afterward.

Instruments

The reading comprehension test was developed based on a blueprint of indicators covering the narrative text elements to be measured (e.g., main idea, word meaning, and specific/inferential information), and its content validity was established through review by the research supervisor prior to administration. Because this was a small-scale classroom study, statistical reliability testing (e.g., Cronbach's alpha or KR-20) was not conducted; the trustworthiness of the instrument was instead supported through triangulation with observation and questionnaire data, consistent with common practice in small-sample classroom-based mixed-methods research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the pretest and posttest were analyzed descriptively (mean, median, standard deviation) and then tested for normality using the Shapiro–Wilk test. Because the data were not normally distributed, a non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores (Fein et al., 2022). Qualitative data from the observation sheets and open-ended questionnaire responses were analyzed thematically by categorizing recurring patterns related to students' engagement, teachers' and students' perceived benefits, and the technical obstacles encountered during implementation. The quantitative and qualitative findings were then integrated in the Results and Discussion section to provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the effectiveness of the read aloud technique. This procedure of moving systematically from familiarization with the data to the identification and refinement of recurring patterns is consistent with recommended practice for conducting thematic analysis in qualitative and mixed-methods research (Naeem et al., 2024).

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, research permission was obtained from the school principal and the English teacher of the class involved, given both orally and in writing. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary. All data collected were treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes. This procedure reflects the broader principle that voluntary participation and full disclosure of the research purpose constitute the foundation of ethically sound research involving human participants, particularly within school-based settings (Salim & Habsi, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Quantitative Findings

The following quantitative results address the first research question by presenting the pretest–posttest data used to determine whether the implementation of the read aloud technique produced a measurable change in students' reading comprehension scores. The reading comprehension test was administered to 30 tenth-grade students before (pretest) and after (posttest) the implementation of the read aloud technique across three instructional sessions using the narrative text "Situ Bagendit." Descriptive statistics showed a slight increase in the students' mean score, from 78.20 (SD = 7.55) on the pretest to 78.93 (SD = 5.02) on the posttest, with the median increasing from 78.50 to 80.00 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistical Result

			Statistic	Std. Error
Pretest Score	Mean		78.20	1.378
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	75.38	
		Upper Bound	81.02	
	5% Trimmed Mean		78.37	
	Median		78.50	
	Variance		56.993	
	Std. Deviation		7.549	
	Minimum		60	
	Maximum		90	
	Range		30	
	Interquartile Range		13	
	Skewness		-.156	.427
	Kurtosis		-.505	.833
Posttest Score	Mean		78.93	.917
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	77.06	
		Upper Bound	80.81	
	5% Trimmed Mean		78.96	
	Median		80.00	
	Variance		25.237	
	Std. Deviation		5.024	
	Minimum		70	
	Maximum		88	

Range	18	
Interquartile Range	6	
Skewness	-.371	.427
Kurtosis	-.590	.833

↑

A normality test was conducted prior to hypothesis testing. The Shapiro–Wilk test indicated that both the pretest (p = .155) and posttest (p = .115) scores were normally distributed, whereas the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated a violation of normality for the posttest scores (p = .011), while the pretest scores met the normality assumption (p = .200). Given this inconsistency between the two normality tests, a non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used as a more conservative approach to examine the difference between the pretest and posttest scores (see Table 2).

Table 2. Normality test of Pretest and Posttest

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest Score	.105	30	.200*	.949	30	.155
Posttest Score	.184	30	.011	.944	30	.115

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Prior to hypothesis testing, a homogeneity of variance test was further conducted using Levene's Test to determine whether the pretest and posttest scores exhibited equal variance. As shown in Table 3, the test produced a Levene statistic of 6.707 (df1 = 1, df2 = 58, p = .012), indicating that the variance between the two sets of scores was not homogeneous. This finding, taken together with the normality violation detected in the posttest scores, provided further justification for adopting the non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test rather than a parametric alternative, which would otherwise require both normally distributed data and homogeneous variance across the compared groups.

Table 3. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pretest–Posttest Score	6.707	1	58	.012

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed Z = -0.474 with an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.636 (see Table 4). Since this significance value exceeds the conventional alpha level of .05, the null hypothesis was retained, indicating that the increase in students' mean scores from pretest to posttest did not reach statistical significance.

Table 4. Non-parametric Test Statistics

Test Statistics[a]

Posttest Score - Pretest Score

Z	-.474[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.636

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
b. Based on negative ranks.

2. Qualitative Findings

Before presenting the qualitative results, it is necessary to clarify which instrument was used with which participant group. Because the teacher served as a single key informant capable of offering reflective, in-depth insight into the instructional process, data from the teacher were collected through a semi-structured interview conducted individually after the three instructional sessions concluded. This format enabled the researcher to probe the teacher's reasoning and classroom observations more flexibly than a fixed-response instrument would allow. In contrast, given that the students formed a larger group of thirty individuals, their perceptions were gathered through a questionnaire (angket) containing closed- and open-ended items, administered collectively at the end of the intervention. The qualitative data reported below therefore draw on two complementary sources an interview with the teacher and a questionnaire completed by the students analyzed thematically alongside the observation sheets used across all three sessions.

Implementation of the teaching scenario. Observation data indicated that the teacher implemented the read aloud technique largely in accordance with the planned scenario, allocating approximately fifteen minutes at the start of each session, alternating teacher-led and student-led reading, and following up with comprehension questions about the plot and characters.

Teacher's response (interview). The interview revealed a generally favorable evaluation of the technique. The teacher noted it integrated easily into the existing lesson plan and that alternating reading roles appeared to sustain attention more effectively than conventional silent reading, with even reluctant students showing greater willingness to participate.

Students' response (questionnaire). Questionnaire responses similarly indicated a positive perception. Most students reported that the activity made reading feel more engaging and helped them follow the story, particularly compared with prior silent, individual reading tasks.
Student difficulties (questionnaire and observation). Despite these positive perceptions, triangulated data revealed persistent difficulty in two areas: determining the main idea, especially when implied rather than explicitly stated, and identifying the meaning of unfamiliar words, a pattern corroborated by observed pauses and clarification requests during reading.

Obstacles in implementation (observation and interview). Both sources converged in identifying variation in students' reading fluency as the main obstacle, which affected session pacing and required the teacher to provide additional guidance to less fluent readers, occasionally disrupting the intended flow of instruction.

Discussion

The discussion below is organized according to the three research questions guiding this study, addressing in turn the implementation of the read aloud technique, the responses it elicited from the teacher and students, and the difficulties students continued to experience in narrative text comprehension. Rather than restating the results, this section interprets these findings against relevant theoretical and empirical literature to clarify their pedagogical implications.

PROJECT
PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGLISH EDUCATION

Implementation of the Read Aloud Technique in Teaching Narrative Text Reading Comprehension

The observation data indicate that the read aloud technique was implemented with a reasonable degree of procedural fidelity across the three sessions, following a consistent sequence of teacher-led and student-led oral reading supplemented by comprehension questions on plot and characterization. This structured, staged format resembles other classroom interventions that rely on a clearly sequenced series of reading-related activities rather than a single unstructured exposure to text, such as the explicit pre-reading stages of brainstorming, skimming, and vocabulary preview shown to significantly improve comprehension outcomes among eighth-grade EFL learners (Rahmi Mawadah, 2026). The procedural consistency observed in the present study therefore suggests that read aloud, when delivered according to a defined instructional scenario, can be integrated into regular classroom routines without demanding substantial departure from existing lesson planning.

Despite this procedural consistency, the quantitative results revealed only a marginal, statistically non-significant increase in students' reading comprehension scores following the three-session intervention. This outcome contrasts with studies reporting more substantial gains, such as the significant improvement in reading comprehension observed after a structured speed-reading intervention supported by visual aids among eighth-grade students, where scores rose from a considerably lower baseline (Munir & Azizah, 2024). This pattern parallels evidence from a read-aloud intervention among EFL elementary learners, in which comprehension gains only became statistically significant after ten weeks of implementation, while the initial five-week phase yielded no significant improvement in narrative-element retelling (Salhab, 2025). A plausible explanation for this discrepancy lies in the difference in intervention intensity and duration: whereas the technique in the present study was implemented across only three sessions, more substantial comprehension gains in comparable EFL contexts have generally emerged only after sustained, repeated engagement with the same or similar texts over an extended period (Husni, 2024). This pattern implies that the effectiveness of oral reading interventions may be less a function of the technique itself than of the frequency and duration with which it is applied, echoing the broader finding of this study that a single-cycle implementation constitutes an initial rather than a conclusive stage of intervention.

A further consideration concerns the specific mechanism through which read aloud is believed to support comprehension. Unlike extensive, self-paced silent reading, which has been reported to cultivate comprehension gradually through repeated independent exposure to varied texts over time (Lindawati, 2022), read aloud operates primarily through guided oral modeling within a compressed classroom timeframe. This distinction helps explain why the technique, despite being implemented largely as planned, did not yet translate into a statistically measurable improvement in comprehension: its instructional logic emphasizes pronunciation, pacing, and shared engagement with the text rather than the kind of cumulative, self-directed textual exposure associated with more gradual comprehension development. Taken together, these findings suggest that procedural fidelity in delivering read aloud is necessary but not sufficient on its own to produce measurable cognitive gains within a short intervention window.

Teacher and Student Responses to the Implementation of the Read Aloud Technique

Both the teacher interview and the student questionnaire converged on a favorable evaluation of the read aloud technique, particularly regarding its capacity to sustain engagement and reduce the passivity often associated with silent, individual reading tasks. This pattern of positive affective response despite limited immediate cognitive gain is not unique to the present study. Similar dynamics have been documented in research on digital comics as a reading medium,

where the visual-textual format was found to enhance not only comprehension but also learners' confidence, motivation, and willingness to participate in reading activities (Kembaren, 2026). The convergence between these findings and the present results suggests that instructional techniques capable of transforming reading from a solitary, text-only task into a more interactive or multimodal experience tend to generate favorable affective responses regardless of the specific medium employed, whether through digital visual support or through oral, socially mediated reading such as read aloud.

The teacher's report that the technique integrated smoothly into the existing lesson plan, together with the observation that reluctant students appeared more willing to participate when reading aloud was framed as a shared activity, further supports the interpretation that read aloud primarily influences the classroom's motivational and participatory climate. This finding aligns with evidence from extensive reading research, in which learners consistently reported positive attitudes and perceptions toward the reading activity even when comprehension gains required a longer period to materialize (Lindawati, 2022). It is also consistent with earlier action-research evidence suggesting that learners' affective responses toward a newly introduced reading strategy tend to emerge before, rather than simultaneously with, measurable improvements in comprehension scores (Azwar et al., 2024). Read the two patterns together, the favorable responses documented in the present study should therefore be understood as an early indicator of instructional acceptability, signaling that the technique is likely to be sustainable in classroom practice, rather than as direct evidence that the technique has already achieved its full cognitive potential.

Challenges and Difficulties in Determining Main Ideas and Interpreting Word Meaning

The persistence of students' difficulty in determining the main idea of the narrative text, particularly when it was implied rather than explicitly stated, reflects a comprehension challenge that extends beyond issues of oral fluency or pronunciation. From a cognitive perspective, identifying an implicit main idea requires readers to integrate information distributed across multiple sentences and to connect this information to relevant background knowledge, a process that develops through sustained practice rather than through exposure to a fluent oral model alone (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). This difficulty is consistent with earlier findings that Indonesian EFL learners frequently struggle to identify both explicit and implicit main ideas due to limited contextual and background knowledge of the narrative content (Rizqon & Andreani, 2021). The persistence of this difficulty despite three sessions of read aloud instruction suggests that oral reading modeling, while beneficial for pronunciation and engagement, does not by itself provide the explicit cognitive scaffolding, such as guided questioning or structured inference practice, needed to strengthen main-idea identification.

A related and equally persistent difficulty concerned students' limited ability to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words encountered during reading. This finding corresponds with substantial evidence linking vocabulary knowledge directly to reading comprehension performance among Indonesian EFL learners, including a moderate but statistically meaningful correlation between vocabulary mastery and comprehension scores among senior high school students (Khatami, 2026), and a comparable positive relationship between vocabulary knowledge and broader English competence among Indonesian secondary students (Hartini, 2024). These correlational patterns reinforce the theoretical expectation that vocabulary constitutes one of the most persistent obstacles to comprehension among Indonesian secondary school learners (Nanda & Azmy, 2020), and that vocabulary-related problems tend to be more prevalent than structural or organizational reading difficulties in this population (Sari et al.,

2020). Given that read aloud primarily strengthens phonological and prosodic familiarity with a text rather than directly building lexical knowledge, its limited impact on word-meaning interpretation in the present study is theoretically unsurprising.

The variation in students' reading fluency, identified as the principal obstacle during implementation, offers additional insight into these comprehension difficulties. Survey evidence on EFL learners' reading strategy use across different academic text types indicates that problem-solving strategies, which include techniques for resolving comprehension breakdowns such as inferring word meaning from context, tend to be applied less frequently than more general or supportive reading strategies (Nuzulianti, 2023). This tendency may help explain why less fluent readers in the present study required repeated teacher guidance rather than resolving comprehension gaps independently. Evidence from repeated reading interventions further suggests that reading fluency and comprehension develop most reliably through multiple, cumulative exposures to the same text rather than through a single oral reading session, with fluency gains directly preceding measurable comprehension improvement (Husni, 2024).This comparison reinforces the interpretation that a single-cycle read aloud implementation, while effective in creating a supportive and engaging reading atmosphere, represents only a preliminary stage in addressing the specific cognitive demands of main-idea identification and vocabulary inference.

Taken together, the findings across the three research questions indicate that the read aloud technique was implemented with reasonable procedural consistency and was well received by both teacher and students, yet its contribution to measurable comprehension gains remained constrained by the short intervention period and by the technique's inherent focus on oral modeling rather than explicit comprehension-strategy instruction. This pattern should not be interpreted as evidence that read aloud is ineffective, but rather as an indication that the available data remain inconclusive given the limited scope and duration of the present intervention (Edelsbrunner & Thurn, 2024), a caution that is particularly relevant for small-sample classroom studies, which are frequently underpowered to detect genuine intervention effects (McGrath, 2016). These findings point toward a practical implication for classroom practice: read aloud is best positioned as a complementary strategy for building motivation and participatory engagement in narrative text reading, one that should be deliberately paired with explicit instruction targeting main-idea identification and vocabulary inference, and extended across a longer instructional period, in order for its potential cognitive benefits to become statistically detectable.

CONSLUSION

This study set out to address three research questions concerning the implementation of the read aloud technique in teaching narrative text reading comprehension to tenth-grade students. With respect to the first research question, the findings demonstrate that the technique was implemented with reasonable procedural fidelity across the three instructional sessions, following a consistent sequence of teacher-led and student-led oral reading supplemented by comprehension questions on plot and characterization. Despite this consistency, the increase in students' mean reading scores from pretest to posttest did not reach statistical significance, suggesting that procedural fidelity in delivering read aloud, while necessary, is not on its own sufficient to produce measurable cognitive gains within such a brief intervention window; a longer and more intensive implementation period appears necessary before firm conclusions regarding the technique's cognitive effectiveness can be established.

Regarding the second research question, both the teacher and students expressed favorable perceptions of the technique, particularly in terms of the more engaging and less anxiety-inducing reading atmosphere it fostered. This favorable reception, despite the absence of a statistically significant quantitative gain, indicates that read aloud primarily influences the classroom's motivational and participatory climate rather than directly accelerating higher-order comprehension processes. Such affective responses should therefore be interpreted as an early indicator of the technique's instructional acceptability and sustainability in classroom practice, rather than as direct evidence of its cognitive effectiveness.

With regard to the third research question, students continued to face difficulty in determining the main idea of the narrative text, particularly when it was implied rather than explicitly stated, and in inferring the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary encountered during reading. Variation in students' reading fluency emerged as the primary obstacle during implementation, further constraining the technique's capacity to produce measurable comprehension gains within the available instructional time. These persistent difficulties suggest that read aloud, by nature, strengthens pronunciation and auditory familiarity with a text more directly than it builds the inferential and lexical skills required for deeper comprehension.

Taken together, these findings indicate that read aloud can be recommended as a complementary technique for cultivating motivation and engagement in narrative text reading, but it should not yet be regarded as a stand-alone solution for improving reading comprehension outcomes. Teachers are therefore advised to pair the technique with explicit strategies targeting main-idea identification and vocabulary inference, while allocating sufficient preparation and instructional time to allow its potential cognitive benefits to become measurable. This study is limited by its short intervention period, its single-class sample of thirty students, and the absence of a control group, all of which restrict the generalizability of its findings. Future research is recommended to extend the intervention period, incorporate a comparison group, and examine the sustained effect of read aloud on reading comprehension across a broader range of text types, in order to disentangle its motivational benefits from its longer-term contribution to measurable comprehension achievement.

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