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Predict, Read, Prove: Improving Third Graders' Comprehension of Narrative Texts through Directed Reading Thinking Activity

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Abstract

Reading comprehension of narrative texts remains a challenge for many primary school students, who often grasp only the literal information in what they read. This classroom action research aimed to improve the narrative text reading comprehension of Grade III B students at SDN Bangka 03 Pagi, South Jakarta, through the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) model. The study followed the cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection in two cycles with 20 students. Data were collected using reading comprehension tests, observation sheets, field notes, and informal interviews, and were analysed descriptively against a Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75. Before the action, 9 of 20 students (45%) reached the KKM. In Cycle I, 11 students (55%) reached it with a mean score of 74.55, and teacher and student activity was 47.5%. After the teacher clarified group-discussion guidelines, gave simple prediction examples, selected clearer pictures, added PowerPoint and Kahoot, and supported slower readers, 17 students (85%) reached the KKM in Cycle II with a mean score of 83.43, and activity rose to 87.5%. DRTA, which asks students to predict, read, and prove their predictions with evidence from the text, improved the students' comprehension of characters, plot, setting, and messages in narrative texts. Continued support is still needed for students with lower reading ability.

Keywords: reading comprehension; narrative text; Directed Reading Thinking Activity; classroom action research; elementary school

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INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a foundation of academic success in primary school, because students who cannot construct meaning from texts struggle in almost every subject. Reading with understanding requires more than decoding words; it depends on language comprehension, background knowledge, and the ability to draw conclusions from what is read (Nation, 2019). Recent studies in Indonesian elementary schools nevertheless report that students' reading literacy is still low and that interventions must be sustained and supported by teachers, learning resources, and a supportive school environment (Huda et al., 2025; Setyaningrum & Taofik, 2026). Classroom-based studies in lower grades have

likewise tried reading-literacy activities to strengthen students' understanding of what they read (Maharani et al., 2025; Yulianti & Takiddin, 2024).

The same problem was found in Grade III B at SDN Bangka 03 Pagi, South Jakarta. In the pre-research test, only 9 of 20 students (45%) reached the Minimum Mastery Criterion (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal, KKM) of 75. Students struggled to identify themes, character traits, and moral messages in narrative texts, and many could retrieve only literal information. Teaching that asks students to read and then answer questions leaves little room for them to think about the text while reading. A strategy that makes thinking visible during reading was therefore needed.

The Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA), introduced by Stauffer (1969), is such a strategy. In DRTA, students predict what a text will say, read to check their predictions, and then prove or revise them using evidence from the text (Safitri et al., 2022). Research supports its use: DRTA improved reading comprehension in elementary classes (Hidayana et al., 2021; Susanti et al., 2022; Amalia, 2023; Wahyudi et al., 2024; Hidayah et al., 2023; Mayanda et al., 2025), supported narrative text comprehension and the understanding of intrinsic elements (Dewi et al., 2023; Halimah Ahmad & Syamsuyurnita, 2025; Asih et al., 2026), and developed literal and inferential comprehension (Lela et al., 2025; Erwandi et al., 2025). A meta-analysis has also synthesised DRTA studies on their contribution to reading comprehension (Najva et al., 2024). In classroom action research, Ervitasari et al. (2026) reported that Grade IV students' mean score rose from 48 before the action to 68 in Cycle I and 81 in Cycle II, and DRTA has been tried with reading and critical thinking in Grade V (Yusina et al., 2026), in Grade IV (Zametrio & Adrias, 2026), and with narrative texts in junior high school (Antonio et al., 2026). Newer work even combines DRTA with artificial-intelligence tools (Nurhakim et al., 2026; Septiani et al., 2026).

Pictures and digital games are often used to strengthen such strategies. Picture media help students build mental images of a story before and during reading (Afdila et al., 2023; Kusuma et al., 2026; Sa'diah et al., 2026), and the game-based quiz platform Kahoot has been associated with learning motivation and outcomes in primary school (Hukunala et al., 2025). However, few studies describe in one classroom action research how DRTA, visual media, and monitoring of both teacher and student activity work together in Grade III. This study therefore aimed to improve the narrative text reading comprehension of Grade III B students at SDN Bangka 03 Pagi through DRTA, with a target of 85% of students reaching the KKM. It was hypothesised that the implementation of DRTA would increase students' test scores and their engagement in reading activities.

METHODS

This study used classroom action research (CAR), a cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection through which teachers improve their own practice (Kemmis et al., 2014). Two cycles were carried out. The independent variable was the DRTA model, and the dependent variable was students' reading comprehension of narrative texts, assessed through their ability to identify characters, plot, setting, themes, and moral messages. The study was conducted at SDN Bangka 03 Pagi, South Jakarta, The subjects were 20 Grade III B students

who had been identified as struggling with reading comprehension in the preliminary assessment. The classroom teacher acted as the action implementer and informant together with the students, and the first author acted as researcher and observer

Research procedure

Each cycle followed the steps of CAR. In planning, the researcher and the teacher prepared lesson plans, narrative texts, pictures related to the stories, PowerPoint slides, Kahoot quizzes, the observation sheet, and the comprehension test. In action, the teacher implemented the four DRTA steps: (1) students predicted the story from the title and pictures and discussed their predictions in small groups; (2) students read the text individually and then together, while the teacher paused at certain points to ask reflective questions; (3) students checked their predictions against the text and proved or revised them with evidence; and (4) students discussed their findings and reflected on how they had understood the text. In observation, the researcher recorded teacher and student activities on the observation sheet and wrote field notes. In reflection, the results were discussed with the teacher to decide on improvements for the next cycle.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected with a pre-research test and cycle tests of reading comprehension, structured observation sheets for teacher and student activities, field notes on the teaching process, and informal interviews with students about their learning experience. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively using the number and percentage of students who reached the KKM of 75 and the mean score. Observation results were converted into percentages of teacher and student activity. Qualitative data from field notes and interviews were analysed thematically to identify patterns in engagement and feedback. The action was considered successful when at least 85% of students reached the KKM.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

Implementation of DRTA brought improvements in both students' reading comprehension and classroom activity. Table 1 summarises the test results across the pre-research stage and the two cycles, and Figure 1 shows the change in mastery.

Table 1. Reading comprehension test results of Grade III B students (N = 20)

Stage	Students reaching KKM	Percentage	Mean score
Pre-research	9	45%	55.00
Cycle I	11	55%	74.55
Cycle II	17	85%	83.43

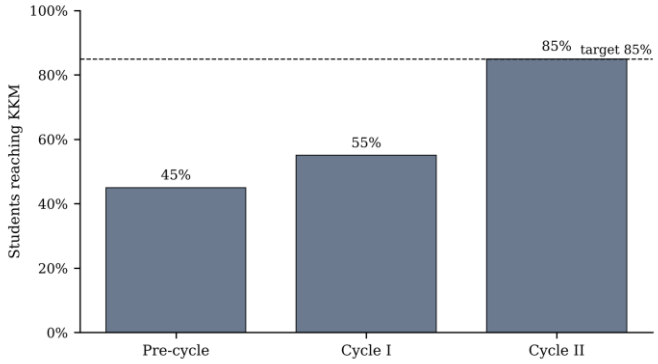


Figure 1. Percentage of students reaching the KKM in the pre-research stage, Cycle I, and Cycle II

Reading comprehension

Before the action, 9 of 20 students (45%) reached the KKM. In Cycle I, 11 students (55%) reached it, and the mean score was 74.55, just below the KKM. In Cycle II, 17 students (85%) reached the KKM and the mean score rose to 83.43, an increase of 8.88 points from Cycle I. Mastery thus increased by 10 percentage points from the pre-research stage to Cycle I and by a further 30 percentage points to Cycle II, so the target of 85% was reached in Cycle II. The students' answers showed better understanding of characters, plot, setting, and messages in narrative texts, not only of literal facts.

Teacher and student activity

Observation showed a clear change in classroom activity (Figure 2). In Cycle I, teacher and student activity reached 47.5%, well below the target. The teacher facilitated discussion and guided the reading process, but many students stayed passive in group work and only a few took part actively. Some students hesitated to share predictions, which seemed to come from a lack of confidence or fear of guessing wrongly, and unclear pictures confused several students. In Cycle II, activity rose to 87.5%. Students participated actively in discussion, were willing to share predictions, and appeared more confident in explaining the story. Informal interviews and field notes also indicated that students enjoyed the pictures, slides, and Kahoot quizzes. After Cycle II, one student still struggled with reading; the researcher and the teacher agreed to give additional support and to ask parents to guide regular reading practice at home.

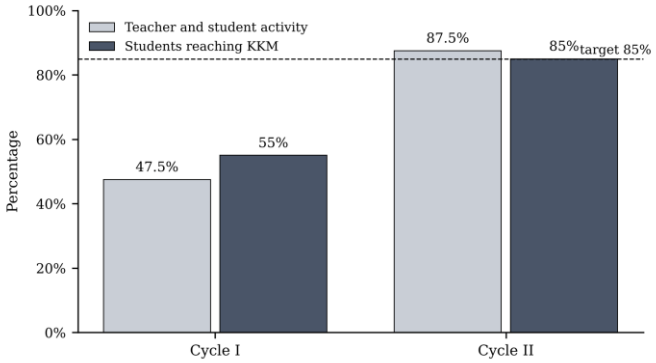


Figure 2. Teacher and student activity compared with students' reading comprehension mastery in Cycles I and II

Discussion

The results show that DRTA improved students' comprehension of narrative texts. At the pre-research stage, 45% of students reached the KKM, which indicates that many of them could read but could not yet explain themes, character traits, and moral messages. This agrees with the view that comprehension involves more than word reading and depends on language understanding and inference (Nation, 2019). DRTA addresses this gap because its steps of predicting, reading, and proving ask students to think about the meaning of the text before, during, and after reading (Safitri et al., 2022; Hidayana et al., 2021).

The gain from Cycle I to Cycle II followed concrete revisions made during reflection. In Cycle I, participation was unequal, some students were reluctant to predict, and unclear pictures caused confusion. In Cycle II, the teacher gave simple examples of predictions and positive reinforcement, so that students dared to guess without fear of being wrong. The teacher also set clearer guidelines for group discussion, chose more relevant pictures, and gave individual support to slower readers. These changes are consistent with studies reporting that pictures and visual media support reading comprehension (Afdila et al., 2023; Sa'diah et al., 2026; Kusuma et al., 2026) and with the reflective cycle of action research, in which each cycle's findings guide the next (Kemmis et al., 2014; Ervitasari et al., 2026).

The pattern of results is similar to that of other DRTA studies at elementary level. Ervitasari et al. (2026) found that a Grade IV class improved from a mean of 48 to 81 across two cycles, Erwandi et al. (2025) reported that the inferential reading scores of an experimental group rose from 70.69 to 80.69, and Susanti et al. (2022) and Mayanda et al. (2025) also found positive effects of DRTA on elementary students' comprehension. The mean score in the present study rose from 74.55 to 83.43, and the percentage of students reaching the KKM rose to 85%, which is in line with these reports and with the view that active, student-centred strategies strengthen reading skills.

The rise in activity from 47.5% to 87.5% suggests that students became more engaged when they were given a clear role in each step. Predicting from a title and pictures activated their prior knowledge, group discussion allowed them to share ideas, and reflective questions during reading encouraged them to compare

predictions with the text. Colourful PowerPoint slides and Kahoot quizzes made the lessons livelier and may have increased attention and motivation, as reported by Hukunala et al. (2025), although this study did not isolate the effect of the media from that of DRTA. The remaining student with reading difficulty shows that DRTA needs to be combined with continued literacy support from teachers and parents, as school literacy efforts depend on teacher involvement and resources (Setyaningrum & Taofik, 2026).

The study has limitations. It involved one class of 20 students without a control group, and the mean score of the pre-research stage was not available, so the results cannot be generalised and the gains cannot be attributed to DRTA alone. Future studies may use larger samples or a comparison class, add a delayed post-test to see whether comprehension is retained, and examine inferential questions and the use of digital tools.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of DRTA improved the narrative text reading comprehension of Grade III B students at SDN Bangka 03 Pagi. The percentage of students reaching the KKM rose from 45% before the action to 55% in Cycle I and 85% in Cycle II, the mean score increased from 74.55 to 83.43, and teacher and student activity rose from 47.5% to 87.5%. By asking students to predict, read, and prove their predictions, DRTA encouraged active thinking and collaboration. Teachers are advised to start with simple prediction examples, use clear and relevant pictures, set clear group-discussion rules, and give extra support to slower readers. Further research with larger samples and comparison groups is recommended to test the strategy more widely.

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