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Improving Students' Reading Comprehension on Narrative Text by Using Story Mapping Strategy

(Meningkatkan Pemahaman Membaca Siswa pada Teks Naratif dengan Menggunakan Strategi Pemetaan Cerita)

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to find out whether story mapping strategy can improve students' reading comprehension or not. The population of this research is students of class VIII of SMP Negeri 15 Gorontalo City and the sample of this research is class VIII-2 which amounted to 20 students. This study used a pre-experimental design with one group pre-test and post-test. The results of this study showed that the mean value of the pre-test was 13.85, and the mean value of the post-test was 18.1. In addition, the results of the research hypothesis found that Tcount > Tlist or 11.172 > 2.101. This means that the hypothesis (H1) of this study is accepted. The students were able to map the basic components of the story such as character, setting, problem, and problem solving. Therefore, it can be concluded that story mapping strategy can improve the reading comprehension of students in class V111-2 SMP Negeri 1 Kota Gorontalo.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui apakah strategi pemetaan cerita dapat meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa atau tidak. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas VIII SMP Negeri 15 Kota Gorontalo, sedangkan sampel penelitian adalah kelas VIII-2 yang berjumlah 20 siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain pra-eksperimen dengan satu kelompok pre-test dan post-test. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai rata-rata pre-test adalah 13,85, sedangkan nilai rata-rata post-test meningkat menjadi 18,1. Selain itu, hasil uji hipotesis menunjukkan bahwa T_hitung lebih besar dari T_tabel, yaitu 11,172 > 2,101. Hal ini berarti hipotesis alternatif (H1) dalam penelitian ini diterima. Selama penelitian, siswa mampu memetakan komponen dasar cerita seperti tokoh, latar, masalah, dan penyelesaian masalah dengan lebih baik. Peningkatan ini menunjukkan bahwa strategi pemetaan cerita membantu siswa memahami struktur teks naratif secara lebih sistematis. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa strategi pemetaan cerita efektif dalam meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa kelas VIII-2 SMP Negeri 15 Kota Gorontalo.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In learning English, reading is the most useful skill for students because it increases information and knowledge. Reading is one of the four language skills taught in English learning, alongside speaking, listening, and writing. Mastering reading skills is essential for students, especially in the classroom, as reading is a complex process requiring comprehension of written words. Unlike other skills, the ability to read lasts longer and significantly impacts students' learning success, depending on their reading comprehension ability. Reading helps gather information, expand knowledge, enhance vocabulary, and serve as a source of pleasure. It is an active process that demands practice and skill. Grabe and Stoller (2002) stated that comprehension is the primary goal of reading. Therefore, reading involves understanding and interpreting texts correctly, including meaning, purpose, main ideas, and other critical information.

Reading comprehension is crucial for students in learning English. It is not just about reading texts but about gaining deep and thorough understanding. Brown (1997) emphasized that reading comprehension involves recognizing messages embedded in written texts, which is the most crucial element in reading. Students who possess better reading comprehension skills can easily understand the implied meaning in texts. However, many students struggle to achieve reading instruction targets, particularly in narrative texts. Narrative text is a genre that describes a sequence of fictional events. According to the 2013 Junior High School curriculum, students must master various text genres, including narrative, recount, descriptive, and procedural texts. At SMP Negeri 15 Gorontalo, narrative text is part of the reading material, but understanding it poses challenges.

Narrative text tells a story through interconnected events, aiming to entertain readers. Knapp and Watkins (2005) defined narrative text as a text that recounts events involving characters, which can be humans, animals, plants, or objects. This text type serves to engage readers, impart lessons, and explore social and moral values. Its structure consists of orientation, complication, and resolution. Students often face difficulties in understanding narrative texts due to their inability to identify the core message or analyze narrative elements effectively. Each student has a unique level of creativity and interpretation, necessitating guidance in comprehending and documenting their understanding. Kärbla et al. (2021) noted that many students struggle with text comprehension, and story mapping has been identified as an effective strategy for improving reading comprehension.

One solution to students' reading comprehension challenges is employing the story mapping technique. Story mapping is a strategy designed to enhance reading comprehension, particularly in narrative texts. It provides a visual structure that helps readers organize information, identify story elements, and connect events clearly. According to Sholichah (2017), story mapping aids students in improving their reading comprehension by visually organizing ideas. Hornby (2016) in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines a story as an invented description of events meant to entertain, while a map is a drawing that provides information about an arrangement. Thus, story mapping illustrates how concepts or keywords in a story relate.

Story mapping enables students to comprehend narrative texts by identifying essential elements such as characters, settings, problems, goals, events, and resolutions. Idol and Croll (1987) described story mapping as a procedure that helps beginners recognize the basic narrative framework to improve text understanding. Cure et al. (2021) also emphasized that story mapping enhances reading comprehension by encouraging students to recognize grammatical elements such as characters, settings, and problems. An initial interview with an English teacher at SMP Negeri 15 Kota Gorontalo revealed that students struggle to understand the purpose of narrative texts, extract specific information, and integrate the information they read. Additionally, the teacher mentioned that students require more time to process and comprehend texts. While reading is an essential skill, it remains one of the most challenging to teach and learn in the classroom. These challenges form the basis of this research.

The story mapping strategy presents an effective solution for improving students' understanding of narrative texts. Syafii (2021) and Murtadlo and Ekorini (2025) stated that identifying story grammar elements through story mapping improves comprehension abilities. Similar research conducted by Pratiwi (2022) titled "An Analysis of Story Mapping Technique to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension of Narrative Texts at Senior High School Plus in Riau" found that the story mapping technique enhances students' comprehension of narrative texts. While Pratiwi's study used qualitative methods, this research employs quantitative methods to deepen and complete the data. Previous research utilized observations, interviews, and questionnaires, whereas this study will implement tests and interviews. Thus, this research is titled "Improving Students' Reading Comprehension on Narrative Texts by Using the Story Mapping Strategy."

The research question for this study is: "Does the story mapping strategy improve students' reading comprehension of narrative texts?" The objective of this study is to determine whether the story mapping

strategy can enhance students' reading comprehension. The scope of this research focuses on students' reading comprehension using the story mapping strategy, specifically in narrative texts. Based on the 2013 curriculum for Grade VIII at SMP Negeri 15 Kota Gorontalo, the researcher utilizes Basic Competence (K.D 3.14) to understand social functions, text structures, and linguistic elements in narrative texts, particularly Indonesian fables. Additionally, Basic Competence (K.D 4.18) emphasizes capturing the meaning of spoken and written narrative texts in the form of Indonesian fables, presented in a simple and concise manner.

This research holds theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to literature on learning strategies, particularly the effectiveness of the story mapping strategy in improving reading comprehension in narrative texts. Practically, it benefits students by facilitating comprehension through visualizing storylines, increasing their interest and motivation, and enhancing critical thinking skills by identifying story elements such as characters, settings, conflicts, and resolutions. For English teachers, it provides insights into creative and engaging teaching strategies to improve students' reading skills and aids in designing structured lesson plans. Additionally, for other researchers, this study serves as a reference for further research on the effectiveness of story mapping in reading comprehension.

2. METHOD OF RESEARCH

This study employs a quantitative research approach to determine whether the story mapping strategy can enhance students' reading comprehension. The quantitative method involves collecting and analyzing numerical data using statistical techniques. As stated by Arikunto (2006), a quantitative approach is a research method that utilizes numerical data at every stage, from data collection to interpretation and presentation of research findings. By employing this approach, the research aims to provide measurable evidence regarding the effectiveness of the story mapping strategy in improving students' reading comprehension.

The study adopts a pre-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test format. This design examines differences in students' reading comprehension performance before and after implementing the story mapping strategy. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), the one-group pretest-posttest design involves administering a pre-test, followed by a treatment, and concluding with a post-test to measure changes in learning outcomes.

In this study, students took a pre-test to assess their initial reading comprehension abilities, followed by a structured treatment phase utilizing the story mapping strategy, and finally a post-test to evaluate any improvements. The research design is represented as follows:

Table 1. Design of One Group Pretest-Posttest Design

Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
O_1	X	O_2

(Source: Fraenkel et al., 2012)

The pre-test was conducted before implementing the treatment to assess students' initial reading comprehension skills, particularly in understanding narrative texts. The test consisted of 26 multiple-choice questions, with each correct answer receiving a score of 1 and incorrect answers receiving 0. The purpose of the pre-test was to establish a baseline of students' reading abilities before introducing the story mapping strategy.

Following the pre-test, students underwent a treatment phase in which the story mapping strategy was applied to improve their reading comprehension. The treatment was conducted over six sessions, utilizing narrative texts in the form of fables. During these sessions, students engaged in structured activities designed to enhance their ability to comprehend and analyze text through the use of story maps. This approach aimed to help students visualize the elements of a story, facilitating a deeper understanding of the narrative structure and content.

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a quasi-experimental design to measure the effectiveness of the Story Mapping Strategy in improving students' reading comprehension of narrative texts. The research was conducted through a structured implementation of story mapping techniques over multiple sessions, assessing students' comprehension before and after the intervention.

2.2 Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of 59 students from Grade VIII at SMP Negeri 15 Kota Gorontalo. A single class was selected as the sample through cluster random sampling, ensuring that all students in the chosen class participated in the study. This method provided a representative sample for analyzing the effects of the Story Mapping Strategy on reading comprehension.

2.3 Variables

The study involved two main variables. The independent variable (X) was the application of the Story Mapping Strategy, which was systematically implemented in the classroom. The dependent variable

(Y) was students' reading comprehension, which was measured before and after the intervention to assess improvements.

2.4 Data Collection

The data were collected through a multiple-choice test consisting of 50 items, designed to evaluate students' reading comprehension. The test measured five key aspects: identifying the main idea, finding specific information, making inferences, understanding vocabulary, and recognizing references. The structured assessment allowed for a detailed analysis of students' comprehension skills before and after applying the Story Mapping Strategy.

2.5 Instrument Validity and Reliability

The validity of the test was determined using the correlation coefficient formula as suggested by Sugiyono (2011). The results indicated that r_count was 0.860, which was higher than the r_list value of 0.361, confirming that the test was valid for measuring reading comprehension.

Where:

r_{xy} = Correlation coefficient of an item
n = Number of sample
$\sum X$ = the total of score for each instrument
$\sum y$ = the total of score obtained by the all students for one item.

The try out test was conducted by the same level of eighth grade students. This is the example of the validity test and how to calculate the test:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{(n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2\{n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2\}}}$$

$$= \frac{30 .1{,}086 - (25)(1{,}203)}{\sqrt{(30 .25 - (25)^2 (30 .50{,}501 - (1{,}203)^2))}}$$

$$= \frac{32{,}580 - 30{,}075}{\sqrt{(750 - 625)(1{,}515{,}030 - 1{,}447{,}209)}} = \frac{32{,}580 - 30{,}075}{\sqrt{(125)(67{,}821)}}$$

$$= \frac{2{,}505}{\sqrt{8{,}477{,}625}} = \frac{2{,}505}{2{,}911} = 0{,}860 = Valid$$

The reliability of the test was assessed using the Kuder-Richardson 20 (KR-20) formula, yielding a coefficient of 0.917. According to Arikunto (2002), this result classified the test as highly reliable, ensuring consistent and accurate measurement of students' reading comprehension skills.

2.6 Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, a normality test was conducted using the Liliefors method to determine whether the data distribution was normal. Hypothesis testing was then performed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Story Mapping Strategy. The formula applied (Arikunto, 2009):

$$t = \frac{Md}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum x2d}{N\ (N - 2)}}}$$

Where:
Md = the difference mean score between pre-test and post-test
Xd = the derivation of each sample (d-Md)
$\sum x2d$ =The total of square derivation
N = number of sample
d.f = the degree of freedom (n-2).

The study formulated a null hypothesis (H_0), stating that the strategy does not improve reading comprehension, and an alternative hypothesis (H_1), stating that the strategy enhances reading comprehension. The decision rule was based on comparing t_count with t_table, where a higher t_count value would indicate the acceptance of H_1, confirming the strategy's effectiveness.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Summary of Meetings

3.1.1 First Meeting (January 9, 2024)

The first session began with the teacher greeting students, leading a prayer, checking attendance, and offering motivational words. The lesson introduction included a discussion on students' familiarity with narrative texts. Some students responded actively, while others remained silent. The teacher then explained the definition and structure of narrative texts, along with the five aspects of reading comprehension: identifying main ideas, finding references, understanding vocabulary, making inferences, and extracting specific information. The Story Mapping Strategy was introduced using The Fox and The Crow as an example, guiding students in identifying narrative elements such as characters, setting, plot, and conflict. Students were then divided into groups to analyze The Rabbit and The Turtle using the story mapping technique. They discussed key narrative components, and each group presented their findings. The session concluded with a review of the lesson and a discussion of challenges faced by students, followed by an outline of the next session's objectives.

3.1.2 Second Meeting (January 11, 2024)

The second session began with a review of the previous lesson, emphasizing the social function, structure, and linguistic elements of narrative texts. Using The Lion and The Mouse, the teacher explained how references, particularly pronouns, function within stories. Students then worked in groups to analyze The Mouse Deer and The Crocodile, focusing on identifying references by carefully reading the text, noting key words, and understanding the relationships between different words. The story mapping approach continued, with students identifying the title, characters, setting, and plot of the story. Additionally, linguistic elements such as adjectives, action verbs, past tense, and adverbs of time were analyzed. Students actively participated, engaging in discussions and writing answers on worksheets. The session concluded with group presentations and reflections on their understanding of the material.

3.1.3 Third Meeting (January 16, 2024)

The third session began with greetings, an attendance check, and a review of the previous lesson. Students were divided into groups and introduced to The Monkey and The Cat. They identified its social functions, generic structures, and linguistic elements. The teacher demonstrated the use of a story mapping worksheet, guiding students step by step through the process. Students then analyzed The Ant and The Dove using story mapping, identifying the title, characters, setting, and plot. Engagement was high, with students eagerly participating in discussions and presenting their findings to the class.

3.1.4 Fourth Meeting (January 18, 2024)

In the fourth session, students worked in groups to analyze The Bear and The Bees using the story mapping approach. They identified key elements such as the title, characters, setting, and storyline. Additionally, the lesson included an analysis of The Mouse Deer and The Tiger, focusing on making inferences from the text. The session ended with group presentations, where students shared their findings, and the teacher provided corrections and clarifications.

3.1.5 Fifth Meeting (January 23, 2024)

The fifth session began with a review of previous lessons, followed by a group analysis of The Fox and The Hedgehog using the story mapping technique. Students then read The Ant and The Grasshopper and worked on extracting factual information from the text. After discussions and presentations, the teacher provided explanations and corrections to ensure students fully understood the material.

3.1.6 Sixth Meeting (January 25, 2024)

In the final session, the teacher provided a lesson on narrative texts, focusing on the differences between various fables. Students analyzed The Wolves and The Sheep using the structured story mapping approach. A post-test was conducted at the end of this session to measure students' reading comprehension improvements following the implementation of the Story Mapping Strategy. The test was identical to the pre-test and consisted of 26 multiple-choice questions about narrative legend texts. The results of the pre-test and post-test were compared to determine the strategy's effectiveness.

3.2 Pre-Test Results

The study involved a pretest, six treatment sessions using the story mapping strategy, and a posttest to assess its impact on students' reading comprehension of narrative texts. The pretest was conducted before the treatment to evaluate students' abilities in identifying main ideas, specific information, inferences, vocabulary, and references. A total of 20 students from class VIII-1 participated, answering 26 multiple-choice questions. The results showed that the highest score was 22, while the lowest was 7, with a mean score of 13.85 and a standard deviation of 3.703.

Based on the score distribution, 2 students scored between 7–9, 5 students between 10–12, 8 students between 13–15, 3 students between 16–18, 1 student between 19–21, and another 1 student between 22–24. The majority of students scored in the 13–15 range, indicating their initial reading comprehension level before the implementation of the story mapping strategy.

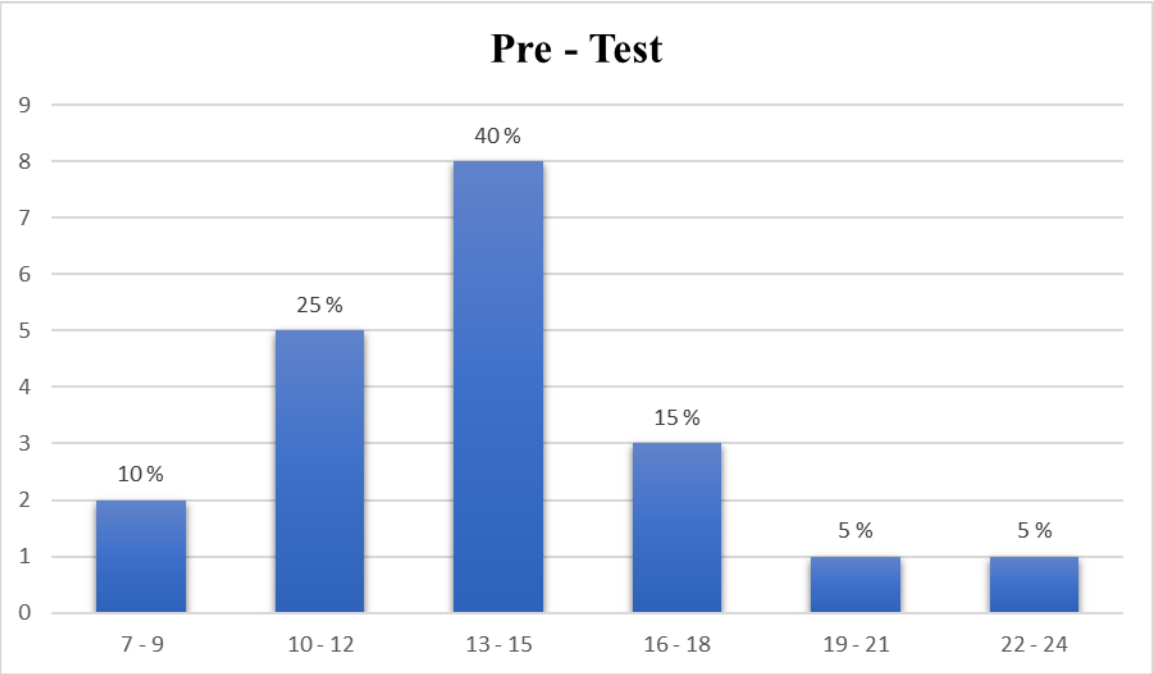


Figure 1. The Bar of Pre-Test Data

The figure indicates that before applying the story mapping strategy, most students had low reading comprehension. Only 5% (1 student) achieved the highest score, while the majority (40%) scored in the 13–15 range, showing a need for improvement.

For the treatment, the story mapping strategy was implemented over six meetings. Each session introduced a new story: The Rabbit and the Turtle, The Mouse Deer and the Crocodile, The Ant and the Dove, The Mouse Deer and the Tiger, The Ant and the Grasshopper, and The Rabbit and the Bear. At the end of each session, students presented their work to the class.

3.3 Post-Test Results

After the treatment, a post-test was conducted using the same instrument as the pre-test to assess students' reading comprehension improvement. The test consisted of 26 multiple-choice questions. The highest score was 24, the lowest was 9, and the mean score was 18.1, showing an increase from the pre-test.

The results indicate that most students scored between 15-22, with 20% scoring in the 15-17, 18-20, and 21-23 ranges. This suggests an overall improvement in reading comprehension after applying the story mapping strategy.

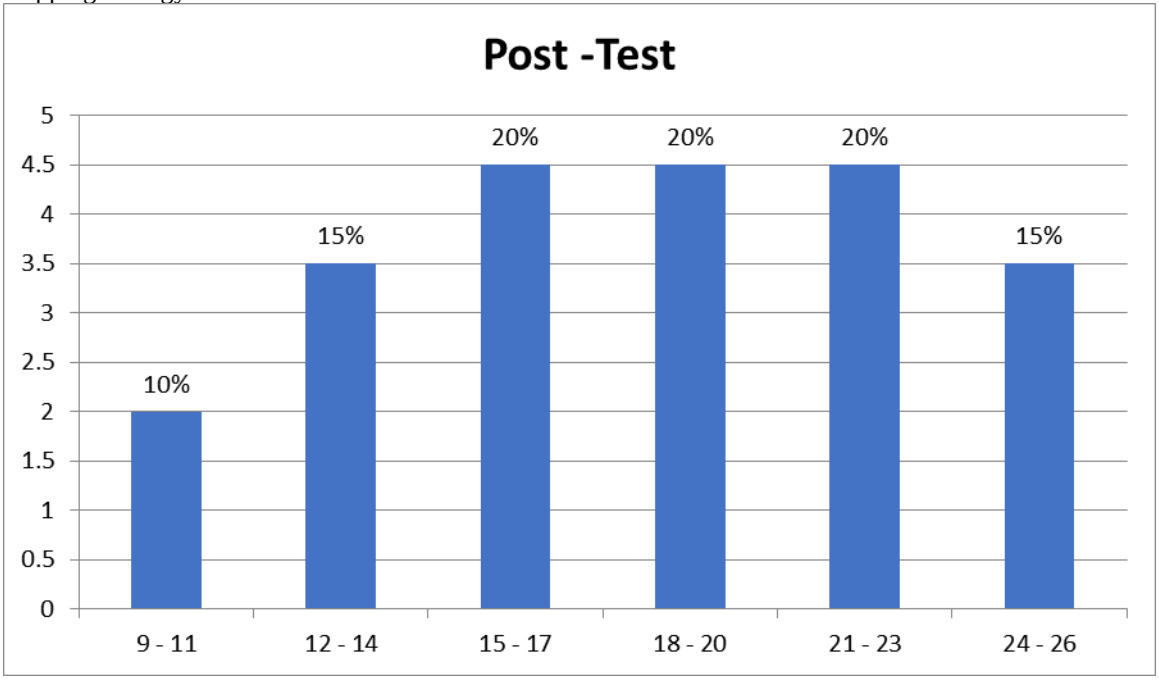


Figure 2. The Bar of Post-Test Data

The post-test results showed an overall improvement in students' reading comprehension after applying the Story Mapping strategy. The percentage of students scoring higher increased compared to the pre-test results. For normality analysis, the Liliefors method was used. The pre-test data had an L0 value of 0.131, and the post-test had an L0 value of 0.081, both of which were lower than the critical value (0.190), indicating that the data were normally distributed.

The hypothesis was tested using a t-test, with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ and a degree of freedom (df) of 18. The calculated t-value (Tcount) was 11.172, which was greater than the critical t-value (Tlist) of 2.101. Since Tcount $\geq$ Tlist, the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected, confirming that the Story Mapping strategy significantly improved students' reading comprehension.

The pre-test results showed that the students' average score was 13.85, with the highest score being 22 and the lowest being 7. Out of a total of 520 points, students answered 275 questions correctly, which accounts for 53%. After applying the Story Mapping strategy, the post-test results indicated a significant improvement. The average score increased to 18.1, with the highest score at 24 and the lowest at 9. The number of correct answers rose to 354 out of 520, or 69%, reflecting a 16% increase in student achievement.

Based on the analysis of reading comprehension aspects, improvements were observed in all categories. Understanding of the main idea increased from 50% in the pre-test to 68% in the post-test, showing an 18% improvement. The ability to identify specific information rose from 47% to 70%, marking a 23% increase. The ability to draw inferences experienced the highest improvement, from 40% to 75%, an increase of 35%. Understanding of difficult vocabulary improved from 53% to 60%, with a 7% rise. Meanwhile, the ability to determine references increased from 65% to 71%, showing a 6% improvement.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the Story Mapping strategy is effective in enhancing students' reading comprehension. The significant improvements in each aspect of comprehension indicate that this strategy helps students better organize information, allowing them to understand texts more effectively. The success of using the story mapping strategy to improve reading comprehension aligns with Gardil and Jitendra's (1999) theory, which states that story mapping enhances students' understanding of narrative texts (Narkon & Wells, 2013). This strategy effectively teaches reading by structuring stories using essential elements like characters, setting, and plot. Students applying this method could identify key aspects of the story, understand its conflicts, and analyze character roles, supported by Mathes et al. (1997), who define story mapping as a graphic representation of story elements.

The strategy was implemented through group discussions where students answered guided questions about story elements. They collaboratively identified characters, settings, and main events before presenting their findings. Individually, they wrote summaries, demonstrating their comprehension. Additional activities, such as determining the main idea, identifying references, making inferences, and expanding vocabulary, further reinforced their understanding.

Story mapping provided several benefits:

1. Enhanced comprehension – Students actively analyzed story structures, improving retention and engagement.
2. Familiarization with story elements – It helped students recognize patterns in narratives, making future reading easier.
3. Character analysis – Students understood character development and its impact on the storyline.
4. Increased motivation – The interactive and creative nature of story mapping made reading more enjoyable.

Despite its effectiveness, story mapping has some drawbacks. Teaching narrative texts using this method requires more time compared to traditional approaches. Initial difficulties included students struggling with unfamiliar concepts, requiring repeated explanations. However, dividing students into groups facilitated peer learning and problem-solving, making the strategy more effective.

The research results, supported by pre-test and post-test data, confirm that story mapping significantly improves students' reading comprehension. The hypothesis was accepted, demonstrating that this strategy not only enhances understanding but also fosters critical thinking, engagement, and collaboration in the learning process.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis, it shows that the use of story mapping strategy affects the reading comprehension of students in class VIII-1 SMPN 15 Gorontalo City. It has an effect on reading comprehension because this strategy makes students try to find text information by themselves which makes them active in class. The researcher concluded that the use of story mapping strategy can help students understand the structure of narrative stories better. They can identify important elements such as character, setting, plot, and conflict more clearly, thus helping students develop reading comprehension skills and

improve the ability to analyze narrative text more systematically. This shows that this strategy encourages students to learn English and has a positive effect on them which makes students stay focused and active in the learning process because students are interested and enjoy learning English by applying the story mapping strategy.

In addition, the pre-test and post-test scores are also different. Students' reading comprehension before the story mapping strategy was applied was still low. This can be seen from the average score of the students in the pre-test is 13.85. On the other hand, students' reading comprehension after applying the story mapping strategy has increased. This can be seen from the average post-test score of 18.1. It is proven that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test. Therefore, based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that students' reading comprehension increased due to the application of story mapping strategy in the teaching and learning process.

4.2 Suggestions/Recommendations

In this study, the researcher tried to give some recommendations to students, teachers, and future researchers. For students, they should improve their vocabulary mastery because this is the basic element of English. By mastering vocabulary, they can better understand and be active in the learning process so that they easily know the material. For teachers, story mapping strategy can be used as a technique to teach students to develop their reading comprehension skills. Based on the results of data analysis, the story mapping strategy is effective to use in the learning process because it can make students more active and interested and understand English learning during the teaching and learning process. For future researchers, this study can be a reference for those who want to conduct research in different text genres

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