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Improving Students' Reading Comprehension through Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy of Seventh Grade Students at Junior High School Nurul Iman Sukakarya

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is an essential English language skill that enables students to understand, interpret, and evaluate information from written texts. However, seventh-grade students at SMP Nurul Iman Sukakarya experienced difficulties in comprehending texts, particularly in identifying main ideas, making inferences, and understanding characters' perspectives, while reading instruction tended to emphasize answering comprehension questions. This study aimed to improve students' reading comprehension through the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy. The study employed Classroom Action Research based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model and was conducted in two cycles involving 23 seventh-grade students. Data were collected through reading comprehension tests, classroom observations, and documentation. The findings showed that the students' mean score increased from 61.73 in the pre-test to 70.65 in post-test I and 77.39 in post-test. In Cycle II, 19 students (82.61%) achieved the KKM of 70. Therefore, the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy successfully improved students' reading comprehension.

Keywords: *Reading Comprehension, Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy, Classroom Action Research, English Language Learning, Seventh-Grade Students*

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INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a fundamental component of English language learning because it enables students to obtain information, construct meaning, and develop higher-order cognitive abilities through written texts. Reading is not merely a process of recognizing words and sentences; rather, it requires readers to integrate textual information with prior knowledge, interpret explicit and implicit meanings, identify important ideas, and construct coherent interpretations of a text (Abidin et al., 2021; Duke et al., 2021). In English as a foreign language (EFL) context, reading comprehension is particularly important because students encounter English texts as a major source of linguistic input and academic information. Consequently, students need to develop not only literal comprehension but also the ability to make inferences, identify references, interpret vocabulary in context, and understand the relationships among ideas presented in a text.

Despite its importance, reading comprehension remains a challenge for many students. The thesis underlying this study identifies several difficulties experienced by seventh-grade students, including problems in identifying main ideas, interpreting implicit information, understanding vocabulary from context, and drawing appropriate conclusions from reading texts. These difficulties are associated with limited vocabulary, low reading interest, insufficient independent reading habits, and classroom practices that may emphasize answering comprehension questions rather than developing the cognitive processes involved in constructing meaning. Such conditions indicate the need for instructional approaches that actively engage students in the process of interpreting texts rather than treating reading as a passive activity.

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Effective reading instruction requires students to become active participants in constructing meaning. Brown (2007) emphasizes the importance of interactive reading techniques, activation of background knowledge, strategic reading, and the integration of bottom-up and top-down processes. Similarly, Duke et al. (2021) explain that effective comprehension instruction should develop strategic processes that enable learners to monitor their understanding and construct interpretations from textual information. Therefore, teachers need to provide instructional activities that encourage students to make predictions, identify important information, connect textual content with prior experiences, generate inferences, and evaluate meanings. Such approaches are particularly relevant for EFL learners because reading comprehension involves both linguistic processing and cognitive engagement.

One strategy that may address these challenges is perspective-taking. Perspective-taking refers to the cognitive ability to understand a situation from another person's point of view, including their thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences (Davis, 1983; Gehlbach & Mu, 2023). In reading contexts, perspective-taking requires students to move beyond their own viewpoints and attempt to understand the perspectives of characters or other individuals represented in a text. This process can encourage students to examine why characters behave in particular ways, how they respond to events, and what experiences or motivations influence their decisions. The thesis conceptualizes the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy as an active reading approach in which students intentionally adopt the perspective of a character or position represented in a text in order to construct deeper meaning.

The theoretical relevance of perspective-taking to reading comprehension is supported by research on social cognition and literacy. LaRusso et al. (2016) found that perspective-taking and complex reasoning were associated with deep reading comprehension, particularly comprehension that requires students to move beyond surface-level information. Similarly, Brewer & Phillippe (2022) argue that taking a character's perspective can encourage readers to examine characters' motivations, emotions, and actions, thereby supporting deeper interpretation and inferential comprehension. Perspective-taking can therefore provide a bridge between literal understanding and deeper comprehension because students are encouraged to use textual evidence to construct interpretations of what characters think, feel, intend, or may do next.

Perspective-taking is also consistent with the view of reading as an active meaning-making process. Readers do not simply receive information from texts; they construct interpretations by interacting with textual information and their existing knowledge. The use of perspective-taking can strengthen this interaction by encouraging learners to consider alternative viewpoints and examine how different characters may understand the same event differently. Such activities may include identifying characters' thoughts and feelings, discussing characters' viewpoints, predicting actions from different perspectives, and responding to texts from alternative viewpoints. These activities are particularly relevant to narrative reading because narrative texts frequently contain multiple characters, conflicting motivations, and events that require readers to infer information that is not explicitly stated.

Previous research also suggests that perspective-taking is connected with broader cognitive and social processes involved in reading. Atkinson et al. (2017) demonstrated a relationship between theory of mind and emerging reading comprehension, indicating that the ability to understand others' mental states can contribute to comprehension development. Tamir et al. (2016) further demonstrated that reading fiction involves mental simulation associated with understanding the thoughts and experiences of others. In addition, Mar (2018) reviewed evidence concerning the relationship between fiction reading and social cognition. Together, these perspectives provide a theoretical rationale for using character perspective-taking as part of reading instruction, particularly when the instructional objective is to encourage students to interpret meaning beyond explicitly stated information.

Although previous studies have established relationships between perspective-taking, social cognition, and deeper comprehension, there remains a practical need to examine how

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perspective-taking can be systematically implemented as a classroom reading strategy for lower-secondary EFL students. The present study addresses this need by applying a structured Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy within classroom instruction. The strategy incorporates pre-reading activities to activate students' prior knowledge, while-reading activities to identify important information and characters' perspectives, deep-reading activities to examine thoughts, feelings, and motivations, interactive discussions to compare interpretations, and reflection activities to consolidate students' understanding. This approach is also compatible with strategic and collaborative reading instruction, in which students are supported in constructing meaning through guided interaction and discussion.

The need for this intervention is evident in the initial condition of the students involved in the present study. The research was conducted with 23 seventh-grade students at SMP Nurul Iman Sukakarya whose reading comprehension achievement was below the school's minimum mastery criterion. The preliminary assessment showed that the students' mean reading comprehension score was 61.73, while only 7 of 23 students (30.43%) achieved the minimum criterion of 70. Thus, most students had not yet demonstrated the expected level of reading comprehension. These initial conditions provide a concrete classroom problem that requires an instructional intervention capable of increasing students' cognitive engagement and comprehension.

Classroom Action Research (CAR) provides an appropriate framework for addressing this practical instructional problem because it allows teachers and researchers to systematically identify classroom difficulties, implement an instructional action, observe its effects, and reflect on the results for subsequent improvement. The present study therefore implemented the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy through two cycles consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The intervention was designed not only to improve students' reading test performance but also to increase their participation, engagement, ability to identify main ideas, ability to explain characters' perspectives, and willingness to express their interpretations during reading activities.

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate whether the implementation of the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy can improve the reading comprehension of seventh-grade students at SMP Nurul Iman Sukakarya. The study focuses on five major aspects of reading comprehension: identifying the main idea, finding factual information, identifying references, making inferences, and understanding vocabulary. These aspects reflect different levels of meaning construction and provide a comprehensive basis for examining students' reading comprehension development. The findings are expected to contribute to English language teaching by providing empirical classroom-based evidence concerning the use of perspective-taking as an alternative strategy for developing students' reading comprehension and active participation in EFL classrooms.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) to improve students' reading comprehension through the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy. Classroom Action Research was selected because it enables researchers and teachers to identify classroom problems, implement planned instructional actions, observe the learning process, and reflect on the results for subsequent improvement. The study adopted the Kemmis and McTaggart action research model, which consists of four interconnected stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection (Burns, 2019; Mertler, 2021). The research was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of planning the instructional activities, implementing the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy, observing the teaching and learning process, and reflecting on the results to determine the necessary improvements for the following cycle.

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Respondents

The respondents were 23 seventh-grade students of Class VII Al-Buruj at SMP Nurul Iman Sukakarya, Bekasi, West Java. The research was conducted during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The class was selected because the students' initial reading comprehension achievement was below the school's Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 70. The preliminary results showed that only 7 of the 23 students (30.43%) achieved the KKM, whereas 16 students (69.57%) had not achieved the criterion.

Instruments

Three instruments were used to collect the data: reading comprehension tests, observation sheets, and documentation. The reading comprehension test was the main instrument and was administered three times: a pre-test before the intervention, post-test I after Cycle I, and Post-Test II after Cycle II. The test assessed five aspects of reading comprehension: identifying the main idea, finding factual information, identifying references, making inferences, and understanding vocabulary in context. The test consisted of 20 items.

Observation sheets were used to record the teaching and learning process and students' classroom activities. The observation of students focused on their attention, participation, ability to identify the main idea, ability to explain characters' perspectives, willingness to express opinions, and active participation in reading tasks. The teacher observation sheet assessed the implementation of the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy, including explaining learning objectives, introducing the strategy, guiding students to read from characters' perspectives, facilitating discussions, providing feedback, and concluding the lesson. Documentation was used to collect supporting information related to the research setting, school conditions, learning activities, and research implementation.

Procedures

The research procedure followed the Kemmis and McTaggart model and was implemented in two cycles. Before Cycle I, a pre-test was administered to identify students' initial reading comprehension ability. In the planning stage, the researcher identified students' reading difficulties, prepared lesson plans incorporating the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy, selected appropriate reading texts, prepared learning materials and worksheets, and developed observation and assessment instruments.

During the action stage, students were introduced to the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy. They read the selected texts individually or collaboratively and identified important information, particularly the characters' thoughts, feelings, motivations, and viewpoints. Students were then encouraged to imagine themselves in the characters' positions, discuss different perspectives, express their interpretations, and answer comprehension questions. The teacher facilitated discussions and provided feedback to support deeper understanding of the texts.

During the observation stage, the researcher and collaborating teacher monitored students' participation, attention, engagement, and ability to apply the strategy. After the instructional activities, students completed the reading comprehension assessment. In the reflection stage, the researcher and collaborating teacher analysed the test and observation results to identify strengths, weaknesses, and aspects requiring improvement. The findings from Cycle I were subsequently used to revise the instructional activities in Cycle II.

Cycle II followed the same four stages. However, the instructional activities were revised based on the reflection from Cycle I, particularly to increase students' motivation, participation, and ability to interpret characters' perspectives. The revised strategy was implemented through cooperative learning and more intensive guidance. After the implementation, post-test was administered to determine students' reading comprehension achievement.

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Data Collection

Data were collected through reading comprehension tests, classroom observations, and documentation. The pre-test was administered before the implementation of the strategy to establish students' baseline reading comprehension. Post-Test I was administered after Cycle I, while post-test was administered after Cycle II. The tests were used to determine changes in students' reading comprehension achievement. Observation data were collected throughout the instructional activities to document students' participation and the implementation of the strategy. Documentation provided additional evidence of the research process and classroom activities.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the pre-test, post-test I, and post-test were analysed descriptively by calculating the students' total scores, mean scores, highest and lowest scores, and the percentage of students who achieved the KKM. The students' mean scores were compared across the three assessments to determine the development of reading comprehension. The qualitative data obtained from classroom observations were analysed descriptively by identifying changes in students' participation, attention, engagement, ability to identify main ideas, ability to explain characters' perspectives, and participation in discussions.

The improvement in students' reading comprehension was determined by comparing the results across the pre-test, post-test I, and post-test. The research findings showed that the mean score increased from 61.73 in the pre-test to 70.65 in post-test I and 77.39 in post-test. The number of students achieving the KKM also increased from 7 students (30.43%) in the pre-test to 11 students (47.82%) in post-test I and 19 students (82.61%) in post-test.

Criteria of Success

The research was considered successful when at least 75% of the students achieved a reading comprehension score of 70 or higher, which was the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) established by SMP Nurul Iman Sukakarya. The research would continue to the next cycle if the predetermined criterion had not been achieved. The study was terminated after Cycle II because 19 of the 23 students (82.61%) achieved the KKM, exceeding the predetermined success criterion of 75%.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy in the Learning Process

The implementation of the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy was conducted through Classroom Action Research using the Kemmis and McTaggart model, consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was carried out in two cycles involving 23 seventh-grade students of Class VII Al-Buruj at SMP Nurul Iman Sukakarya. The strategy was implemented by guiding students to read texts from the perspectives of characters, identify their thoughts and feelings, discuss different viewpoints, and express interpretations based on information contained in the texts. This procedure was designed to make students more actively involved in constructing meaning rather than merely answering comprehension questions. The implementation was consistent with the theoretical foundation of perspective-taking, which emphasizes the ability to understand and consider another person's psychological perspective and to interpret thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences represented in a text.

The observation results demonstrated a positive development in students' participation from Cycle I to Cycle II. Students who paid attention to the teacher's explanation increased from 17 students (73.91%) in Cycle I to 20 students (86.95%) in Cycle II. Students who were able to identify the main idea increased from 14 students (60.87%) to 19 students (82.60%). Similarly, students who could explain the characters' perspectives appropriately increased from 12 students (52.17%) to 19 students (82.60%). These results indicate that students became

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increasingly familiar with the learning procedures and were better able to engage with texts through the perspectives of the characters.

Students' participation in expressing their opinions or perspectives during classroom discussions also increased considerably, from 10 students (43.48%) in Cycle I to 17 students (73.91%) in Cycle II. In addition, students' active participation in completing reading assignments increased from 18 students (78.26%) to 20 students (86.95%). The improvement in these activities suggests that the strategy created greater opportunities for students to interact with texts and with their classmates. Rather than positioning students as passive recipients of information, the learning activities encouraged them to interpret characters' experiences, communicate their understanding, and compare different viewpoints.

The improvement in classroom participation was also supported by the development of teacher performance. The teacher observation score increased from 82% in Cycle I to 85% in Cycle II. The improvement indicates that the researcher became more effective in explaining the learning objectives, introducing the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy, guiding students to read from characters' perspectives, facilitating discussion, and providing feedback. Better implementation by the teacher contributed to a more organized learning environment and provided students with clearer guidance when interpreting the reading texts.

Table 1. Students' Percentage Activities in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

No.	Students Activities	Cycle 1		Cycle 2		Improving
		F	Percentage	F	Percentage	
1	The student pays attention to the teacher's explanation.	17	73.91%	20	86.95%	Improved
2	The student identifies the main idea of texts.	14	60.87%	19	82.60%	Improved
3	The student explains the character's perspective appropriately.	12	52.17%	19	82.60%	Improved
4	The student expresses their opinions or perspectives during discussions.	10	43.48%	17	73.91%	Improved
5	The student actively participates in completing the assigned reading task.	18	78.26%	20	86.95%	Improved

These findings are consistent with the principles of effective reading instruction presented in the theoretical framework of this study. Reading comprehension is an active process in which readers interact with texts, activate prior knowledge, make predictions, interpret information, and construct meaning. The Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy strengthens this process because students are encouraged to move beyond literal information and consider the thoughts, emotions, motivations, and viewpoints of characters. The increased participation observed in Cycle II therefore suggests that the strategy was not only an instructional technique but also a means of stimulating students' cognitive engagement during reading.

The reflection conducted after Cycle I also played an important role in improving the implementation of the strategy. Since only 47.82% of students achieved the KKM in Post-Test I, the researcher continued the intervention into Cycle II. The second cycle was designed to address weaknesses identified during Cycle I, particularly students' limited participation and difficulties in interpreting characters' perspectives. The revised implementation resulted in higher levels of student participation and engagement. Overall, the observation findings demonstrate that the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy was implemented increasingly effectively throughout the two cycles.

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Improvement of Students' Reading Comprehension through the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy

The reading comprehension test results showed a continuous improvement in students' achievement following the implementation of the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy. Before the intervention, the students' mean score was 61.73, with a total score of 1,420. Only 7 of the 23 students (30.43%) achieved the KKM of 70, while 16 students (69.57%) did not achieve the criterion. These results confirmed the initial problem identified by the researcher, namely that most students had difficulties in comprehending English reading texts.

After the implementation of the strategy in Cycle I, the students' mean score increased to 70.65, with a total score of 1,625. The highest score was 85 and the lowest was 60. The number of students achieving the KKM increased from 7 students (30.43%) in the pre-test to 11 students (47.82%) in Post-Test I. Although this result demonstrated an improvement of 8.92 points in the mean score, the success criterion had not yet been achieved because fewer than 75% of the students obtained scores of at least 70. Consequently, the researcher continued the study into Cycle II.

The second cycle produced a further improvement. The students' mean score increased from 70.65 in post-test I to 77.39 in post-test, representing an increase of 6.74 points. The total score also increased from 1,625 to 1,780. More importantly, 19 students (82.61%) achieved the KKM, while only 4 students (17.39%) remained below the criterion. The students' scores in post-test ranged from 65 to 90. These results demonstrate that the improvement was not limited to the class average but was also reflected in the number of students who achieved the expected level of reading comprehension.

The improvement in reading comprehension can be explained by the cognitive processes promoted through the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy. In this strategy, students were asked to identify characters' thoughts, feelings, motivations, and viewpoints and then interpret events from different perspectives. Such activities require students to connect explicit information with implicit meaning and to make inferences based on contextual evidence. This is particularly relevant to the reading comprehension aspects assessed in this study, including identifying main ideas, finding factual information, making inferences, identifying references, and understanding vocabulary.

The observation findings provide additional evidence supporting the improvement in comprehension. Students' ability to identify the main idea increased from 60.87% in Cycle I to 82.60% in Cycle II, while their ability to explain characters' perspectives increased from 52.17% to 82.60%. The increase in these two indicators suggests that students became more capable of understanding both the general meaning of texts and the psychological perspectives represented by characters. The strategy therefore supported the movement from literal comprehension toward deeper interpretation of textual meaning.

The findings are also consistent with the theoretical discussion in the thesis concerning perspective-taking in reading. Perspective-taking encourages readers to move beyond their own viewpoints and construct an understanding of another person's internal state. When applied to narrative texts, students are required to consider why characters behave in particular ways, what they may think or feel, and how their perspectives influence events. This process can encourage students to construct deeper interpretations and make inferences from textual information. Thus, the increase in students' reading comprehension scores can reasonably be associated with the increased cognitive engagement generated by the strategy within the classroom action research process.

Achievement of the Research Success Criteria

The overall results demonstrate that the predetermined success criteria of the Classroom Action Research were achieved in Cycle II. The research established that at least 75% of students should obtain a score of 70 or higher. In the pre-test, only 7 students (30.43%) achieved the criterion. After Cycle I, the number increased to 11 students (47.82%), but the result remained below the required 75%. Following the implementation of the revised action

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in Cycle II, 19 students (82.61%) achieved scores of at least 70. Therefore, the achievement exceeded the predetermined target by 7.61 percentage points.

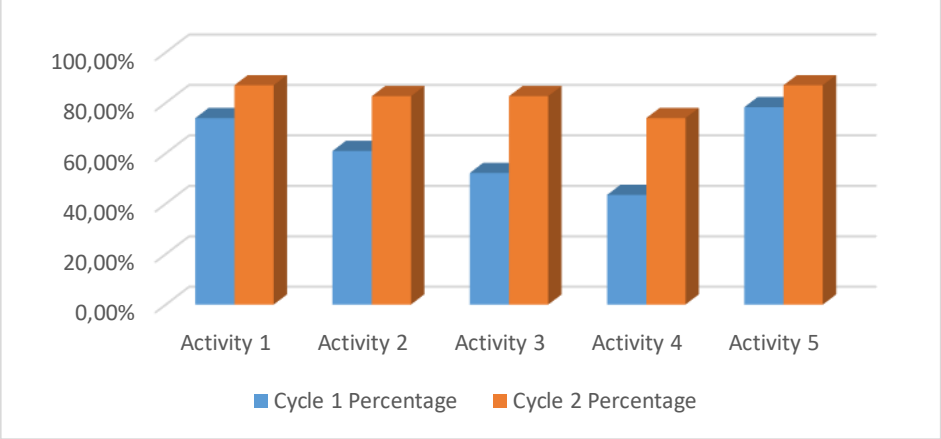

Figure 1. The Percentage of Students' Learning Activities in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

The development of the students' mean scores further confirms the successful progression of the intervention. The mean score increased from 61.73 in the pre-test to 70.65 in post-test I and finally to 77.39 in post-test. Overall, the increase from the pre-test to post-test was 15.66 points. This gradual improvement indicates that the implementation of the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy produced increasingly positive learning outcomes across the research cycles. The improvement also shows that the revision of instructional activities following Cycle I was useful in addressing the students' remaining difficulties.

The achievement of the success criterion was accompanied by improvements in students' learning activities. In Cycle II, the average percentage of student activities reached 82.60%, exceeding the predetermined activity criterion of 80%. The highest participation levels were observed in paying attention to the teacher's explanation and actively completing assigned reading tasks, both at 86.95%. Meanwhile, 82.60% of students were able to identify the main idea and explain the characters' perspectives, and 73.91% were able to express their opinions or perspectives during discussions. These results indicate that most students had become actively involved in the learning process by the end of the second cycle.

The improvement in student achievement and participation suggests that the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy addressed several difficulties identified at the beginning of the research. Initially, students experienced difficulties understanding reading texts and expressing their ideas during classroom discussions. Through the strategy, students received structured opportunities to examine characters' viewpoints, discuss interpretations, and connect textual information with different perspectives. As students became more accustomed to these activities, their participation increased and their reading comprehension achievement improved. The relationship between the learning process and learning outcomes is therefore visible in both the observational and test data.

The findings also support the conceptual position that reading comprehension requires more than recognizing individual words or retrieving explicitly stated information. Students need to interpret information, identify relationships among ideas, make inferences, and construct meaning from texts. The Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy provides a framework for these processes by requiring students to analyse characters' thoughts, emotions, motivations, and actions. In this study, the improvement in main-idea identification and perspective explanation provides behavioural evidence that students became more engaged in these higher-level comprehension processes.

Overall, the findings indicate that the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy was effective in improving the reading comprehension of seventh-grade students at SMP Nurul Iman Sukakarya. The effectiveness is demonstrated by the consistent improvement in mean scores, the increase in the proportion of students achieving the KKM, and the improvement in

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students' classroom participation. Since 82.61% of students achieved the KKM in Cycle II, exceeding the predetermined target of 75%, the Classroom Action Research was appropriately concluded at the end of Cycle II.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy successfully improved the reading comprehension of seventh-grade students at SMP Nurul Iman Sukakarya. The predetermined criterion of success was achieved in Cycle II, when 19 of 23 students (82.61%) obtained scores of at least 70, exceeding the target of 75% by 7.61 percentage points. This improvement was preceded by an increase from 7 students (30.43%) achieving the criterion in the pre-test to 11 students (47.82%) in Cycle I. The progressive improvement is consistent with the principles of Classroom Action Research, in which instructional actions are continuously evaluated and revised based on evidence from each cycle (Burns, 2009, 2019; Mertler, 2021). The results suggest that the revision of instructional activities following Cycle I contributed to addressing students' remaining difficulties and improving their learning outcomes.

The development of students' mean scores provides further evidence of improvement. The mean score increased from 61.73 in the pre-test to 70.65 in Post-Test I and 77.39 in Post-Test II, representing an overall gain of 15.66 points. This finding supports the view that reading comprehension develops when learners are explicitly supported in constructing meaning rather than simply decoding words or retrieving isolated information. Duke et al. (2021) emphasize that effective comprehension instruction should engage students in active meaning construction, comprehension monitoring, and inferential processing. Similarly, Abidin et al. (2021) conceptualize literacy as an active process through which learners construct meaning from information. The improvement observed in the present study therefore suggests that the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy provided students with cognitive opportunities that were relevant to the development of reading comprehension.

The results are particularly consistent with previous research concerning the relationship between perspective-taking and deep reading comprehension. LaRusso et al. (2016) found that perspective-taking, academic language, and complex reasoning contributed to deep reading comprehension among students. Their findings are relevant to the present study because the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy required students to move beyond literal information and consider characters' thoughts, feelings, motivations, and viewpoints. In a similar direction, Brewer & Phillippe (2022) argue that perspective-taking can help readers comprehend characters more deeply by encouraging them to consider motivations and experiences that are not always explicitly presented in a text. The present findings extend this argument to a classroom-based intervention with seventh-grade EFL learners, where systematic perspective-taking activities were followed by measurable improvements in reading achievement.

The improvement can also be interpreted from the perspective of social cognition. Perspective-taking requires learners to construct an understanding of another person's psychological state rather than relying exclusively on their own viewpoint (Davis, 1983; Gehlbach & Mu, 2023). During the intervention, students were encouraged to consider questions concerning what a character thought, how a character felt, why a character made a particular decision, and how an event could be interpreted from another character's position. Such activities potentially strengthened the cognitive processes required to understand perspectives represented in narrative texts. Gehlbach & Mu (2023) describe social perspective-taking as a dynamic process involving the collection of information, interpretation, and evaluation of another person's internal state. This theoretical explanation corresponds closely with the instructional activities implemented in the present study.

The findings are also compatible with research linking theory of mind and reading comprehension. Atkinson et al. (2017) reported that theory of mind was associated with emerging reading comprehension and identified both direct and indirect pathways through

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which social-cognitive processes could contribute to comprehension development. Kim (2017) similarly demonstrated that reading comprehension cannot be reduced to a single linguistic component because multiple cognitive and linguistic processes contribute to successful comprehension. In the present study, students were repeatedly required to interpret characters' psychological states while simultaneously processing textual information. Therefore, the improvement in reading comprehension may be understood as reflecting the integration of linguistic and social-cognitive processing during reading.

The observed increase in students' ability to identify main ideas and explain characters' perspectives further supports this interpretation. In Cycle I, only 60.87% of students were able to identify the main idea and 52.17% were able to explain a character's perspective appropriately. These figures increased to 82.60% for both indicators in Cycle II. This development is important because identifying the main idea requires students to integrate information across sentences and distinguish central information from supporting details, while explaining a character's perspective requires students to integrate textual evidence with an interpretation of the character's psychological position. Thus, the simultaneous improvement of these two indicators suggests a movement from surface-level processing toward more integrated comprehension.

The findings are also consistent with the principles of interactive reading instruction. Brown (2007) argues that effective reading instruction should balance bottom-up and top-down processing, activate background knowledge, encourage interactive reading, and explicitly develop reading strategies. The Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy implemented in this study incorporated several of these principles. Students first activated prior knowledge, then read the text, identified relevant information, analyzed characters' perspectives, discussed interpretations, and reflected on the meaning of the text. Klingner et al. (2024) similarly emphasize the importance of explicit and strategic comprehension instruction, particularly for learners who experience difficulties in understanding texts. Therefore, the improvement found in this study may partly be attributed to the structured nature of the intervention rather than to perspective-taking in isolation.

Student participation also improved substantially during the intervention. The average percentage of student activities in Cycle II reached 82.60%, exceeding the predetermined criterion of 80%. Attention to the teacher's explanation increased from 73.91% in Cycle I to 86.95% in Cycle II, while students' ability to identify the main idea increased from 60.87% to 82.60%. Their ability to explain characters' perspectives increased from 52.17% to 82.60%, and their ability to express opinions or perspectives during discussions increased from 43.48% to 73.91%. Students' completion of assigned tasks also increased from 78.26% to 86.95%. These changes indicate that the intervention influenced not only test performance but also students' engagement with the learning process.

The increase in classroom participation is theoretically meaningful because comprehension develops through active engagement with texts. Brown (2007) emphasizes that interactive reading encourages learners to make predictions, ask questions, connect textual information with prior knowledge, and evaluate meaning. In the present study, students were given opportunities to discuss characters' viewpoints and compare interpretations with their peers. This collaborative dimension may have encouraged students who were initially reluctant to express ideas to participate more actively. LaRusso et al. (2016) also highlight the importance of complex reasoning and perspective-taking in deep comprehension, suggesting that classroom activities requiring students to explain and justify interpretations can support more sophisticated reading processes.

The relatively large improvement in students' ability to explain characters' perspectives—from 52.17% to 82.60%—is particularly relevant to the nature of the intervention. Perspective-taking is fundamentally concerned with understanding how another individual may perceive a situation, including their thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences (Davis, 1983; Gehlbach & Mu, 2023). In the present study, students did not merely identify what happened in the text; they were asked to consider why characters behaved in

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particular ways and how characters might respond differently to the same situation. This process is consistent with Brewer & Phillippe (2022) argument that perspective-taking can help readers construct richer interpretations of characters and their actions.

The improvement in students' willingness to express opinions also corresponds with the social and cognitive dimensions of reading. Mar (2018) reviewed evidence connecting fiction reading with social cognition and argued that engagement with fictional characters can involve processes related to understanding other minds. Tamir et al. (2016) similarly demonstrated that reading fiction can engage processes associated with mental simulation. Although the present study did not directly measure theory of mind or empathy, the increase in students' participation in discussing characters' perspectives provides classroom-level evidence that the strategy encouraged students to engage with the social and psychological dimensions of the texts. Therefore, claims concerning social-cognitive benefits should be interpreted cautiously, but the observed participation patterns are consistent with the theoretical literature.

The findings also support the importance of repeated instructional cycles in improving classroom learning. Cycle I did not meet the predetermined success criterion, with only 47.82% of students achieving scores of at least 70. Rather than concluding the intervention after the first cycle, the researcher used the observation and assessment results to identify remaining difficulties and revise the instructional activities. Cycle II subsequently produced an achievement rate of 82.61%. This pattern illustrates the reflective character of Classroom Action Research described by Burns (2009, 2019), in which teachers systematically examine classroom evidence and modify instructional practices to respond to students' needs. Mertler (2021) similarly describes action research as a systematic process for identifying classroom problems, implementing interventions, collecting evidence, and using reflection to improve practice.

The findings are additionally consistent with the broader literature on reading strategy instruction. Manalu et al. (2023), for example, reported positive effects of the Direct Reading Thinking Activity strategy on students' reading comprehension. Although the strategy differs from Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy, both approaches emphasize active engagement with texts, prediction, interpretation, and meaning construction. Similarly, Wulandari et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of students' comprehension abilities in multiliteracy-oriented learning. These studies reinforce the argument that reading comprehension is more effectively developed when students are actively involved in processing and interpreting textual information rather than merely answering questions after reading.

The present findings therefore provide classroom-based evidence that perspective-taking can function as a meaningful reading strategy for seventh-grade students. The improvement from a mean score of 61.73 to 77.39 and the increase in mastery from 30.43% to 82.61% demonstrate that the intervention was associated with substantial improvement within the two research cycles. However, because this study employed Classroom Action Research with one classroom and did not use a comparison group, the findings should not be interpreted as definitive evidence of a causal effect that can be generalized to all students. Instead, the results demonstrate the practical effectiveness of the strategy within the specific classroom context investigated. This interpretation is consistent with the practical and context-specific orientation of Classroom Action Research (Burns, 2009, 2019; Mertler, 2021).

Overall, the findings strengthen previous research suggesting that reading comprehension benefits from instructional approaches that activate higher-order cognitive processing, social cognition, strategic reading, and interaction with texts. The distinctive contribution of the present study lies in applying these principles through a structured Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy in an authentic seventh-grade EFL classroom. By combining pre-reading activation, while-reading analysis, deep reading, interactive discussion, and reflection, the strategy provided students with repeated opportunities to construct meaning from different viewpoints. The achievement of 82.61% mastery in Cycle II,

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together with the improvement in classroom participation, indicates that the strategy was sufficiently effective to meet the predetermined criteria of the Classroom Action Research.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that the implementation of the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy improved both students' learning engagement and reading comprehension achievement among seventh-grade students at SMP Nurul Iman Sukakarya. Classroom observations revealed improvements in students' attention, ability to identify main ideas, explain characters' perspectives, express opinions, and participate in reading activities from Cycle I to Cycle II. Their reading comprehension mean score increased from 61.73 in the pre-test to 70.65 in post-test I and 77.39 in post-test. Similarly, the percentage of students achieving the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 70 increased from 30.43% to 47.82% and finally 82.61%, exceeding the predetermined success criterion of 75%. The improvements in Cycle II also reflected the effectiveness of instructional revisions based on Cycle I reflection. The strategy encouraged students to explore characters' thoughts and feelings, discuss different perspectives, and develop deeper text understanding. Therefore, the research objectives were achieved, and the Perspective-Taking Reading Strategy proved effective in improving students' reading comprehension.

DECLARATION

Author Contributions: Jihan Auliatul Alifah carried out the classroom intervention and documented the research process. Leroy Holman Siahaan supported the evaluation of learning outcomes, while Lenny Solo assisted in interpreting the classroom findings and reviewing the article.

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Ethical Approval: The classroom research was conducted with the necessary school authorization and consideration for student welfare.

Informed Consent: Permission and consent for student participation were obtained from the relevant parties, as required by school policy.

Use of Generative AI: No generative AI was involved in conducting the classroom intervention or analyzing the research data. Any language-editing assistance, if used, was supplementary.

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