The Effect of the Use of THIEVES Strategy on Students' Critical Reading Comprehension

Frisca Bella Romadany Sejati[1*], Candra Hadi Asmara[2], Ribeh Najib Muhammad[3]
[1-3] English Language Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik, Indonesia
*Corresponding Author: Friscabella.rs18@gmail.com

Abstract. This study examines the effectiveness of the THIEVES strategy in enhancing students' critical reading comprehension in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, particularly at the senior high school level. Employing a quasi-experimental research design, the study involved two groups: an experimental group taught using the THIEVES strategy and a control group that received conventional reading instruction commonly applied in the classroom. The participants consisted of tenth-grade students of SMA Muhammadiyah 8 Gresik who were selected to represent learners with similar academic backgrounds. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests that were specifically designed to measure students' critical reading comprehension skills, including their ability to identify main ideas, infer meaning, and evaluate textual information. The findings revealed that students in the experimental group showed significantly higher improvement in post-test scores compared to those in the control group. Statistical analysis using paired-sample and independent-sample t-tests confirmed that the observed improvement was statistically significant and not due to chance. These results indicate that the THIEVES strategy effectively promotes active engagement, critical analysis, and deeper comprehension of reading texts. Therefore, the strategy is strongly recommended as an effective instructional approach for improving students' critical reading skills in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Critical Reading; EFL Students; Quasi-Experimental Study; Reading Comprehension; THIEVES Strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension has recently progressed significantly, with systems that match humans with the most popular data sets for the task. To fulfill the requirements of a reading task, students should understand the scope of the question to give the correct answer. The content of reading task questions may be understood better by analyzing question characteristics such as question type and formatting (Yathip & Chanyoo, 2022). The basic skills required in efficient reading comprehension include knowing the word meanings, understanding the word meanings from the discourse context, and following the passage's organization (Obeka et al., 2022). Comprehension is supposed to be the primary goal in the reading activity. Reading comprehension is an eternal developmental strategy that is to both receive and interpret encoded data of written texts Abbasi, (2022) it is an active and complicated procedural that requires understanding reading texts to engage with them and interact with writers' intentions and purposes in writing texts. In addition, Subedi & Lecturer (2022) stated that reading comprehension is a complex activity of cognition. Several sub-skills are required that constitute the high-level skill of reading. Reading comprehension depends on students' reading strategy and linguistic competence to be effective. Therefore, critical reading is essential in supporting students' reading comprehension. Critical reading requires students to go beyond interpretive comprehension of reading texts. Students need to

judge the authenticity of the ideas in the text. Critical reading comprehension requires students to understand the context and the content of the text they read. It aims to make students think critically in comprehending the text. Nevertheless, the researcher finds that the main problem of students' critical reading comprehension comes from the students, teachers, and strategies for teaching and learning critical reading comprehension. Various factors can cause critical reading comprehension difficulties. Critical reading comprehension could evoke students' critical thinking. Comber & Nixon (2011) stated that critical reading comprehension is conceptual, and deep reading comprehension is situated within an expanded view of literacy. Some reasons students experience reading comprehension difficulties include lack of limited vocabulary or underdeveloped oral language skills, difficulty understanding words and ideas, slow reading speed and fluency, and difficulty answering questions about or discussing text.

To improve students' critical reading comprehension, the teacher should apply a suitable strategy to encourage students' understanding of the texts to improve their critical reading comprehension. Therefore, the researcher suggests that the THIEVES strategy be used in teaching and learning critical reading comprehension because it would be appropriate for the study participants. THIEVES is a strategy that consists of seven steps to provide students with knowledge before going through the text (Liff-Manz, 2002). The strategy makes it easier for the learner to remember their previous knowledge. In addition, Husni & Wati (2021) state that the THIEVES strategy is a preview strategy to build students' knowledge of the text before they read the chapter content. It is supported by Zwiers (2010), who presents the THIEVES strategy as an effective pre-reading technique.

As the means of its name, this strategy allows students to steal information from the Title of the text, Headings of the text, Introductions of the text, Every-first sentence of the text, Visuals/Vocabulary of the text, End-of-chapter questions of the text, and Summary of the text before they read the text. In a study, Ilahi (2020) supported the statement that students use THIEVES to guide them in identifying the information they read from the text. Therefore, THIEVES is an enabling strategy that involves seven steps to provide students with the necessary knowledge before reading the text. This study aims to examine the effect of the THIEVES strategy on students' critical reading comprehension.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading comprehension is one of the processes of taking in written information that the reader has understood from written language that concerns the reader's language ability and background knowledge (ZA & Khatmi, 2020). In addition, Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) stated that reading comprehension is an essential skill that progresses the development of a wide range of learners' academic tasks. It involves several components, processes, and factors with the purpose of discovering better ways to enhance it among learners. It enables them to describe texts, analyze, explain, and express their ideas about written material. Smith in Wayne Ottoe in Drani (2019) stated that critical reading comprehension is one of the several level of comprehension. It refers to the capability to analyze, evaluate, judge, and personal reactions about the ideas or information that the writer put in a text.

The readers evaluate the text's context, compare the text's information and their background knowledge, and make a precise conclusion. In addition, critical reading involves objectively examining textual and visual sources, distinguishing between facts and opinions, questioning, making logic-based decisions, and evaluating information (Ozensoy, 2021). In another statement, critical reading comprehension is explored as a practice that delves into a text to recognize and deeply understand the text (Olifant & Boakye, 2022). The researcher introduced strategy that could help students increasing their critical reading comprehension. Liff-Manz (2002) conducted a study to support her students who have difficulty memorizing the content of their textbooks. In this study, she introduced a reading strategy called the THIEVES strategy that could help the students more easily comprehend the content of their textbook. It is an acronym for Title, Headings, Introduction, Every-first-sentence-in-paragraph, Visuals or Vocabulary, End-of-chapter-question, and Summary. THIEVES is a pre-reading strategy that students can use to "steal" information from titles, subtitles, introductory words, first sentences, visuals/vocabulary, endings, and summaries. The THIEVES strategy can be used in every type of text (Asmarni et al., 2022).

Therefore, THIEVES is an enabling strategy that involves seven steps to provide students with the necessary knowledge before reading the text. This strategy helps students to schemat their prior knowledge (Khataee, 2019). Tthe researcher can conclude that THIEVES is a reading strategy to build students' background knowledge when they are reading a text. THIEVES strategy involves thoroughly previewing text to help students use their prior knowledge and make predictions about the content they will read. The THIEVES strategy applies to all types of text. Analyzing text, such as analyzing the main idea, supporting details, and information on the text could be easier using this strategy. It can improve students' comprehension and interest. Indrawati & Widiana (2019) supported the use of the THIEVES

strategy by conducting a study that showed that the THIEVES strategy could improve students' comprehension. Sarifuddin & Nunggrasari (2019) also agree that the THIEVES strategy has benefits when it is used on the teaching and learning process. It is shown from his research that stated the THIEVES strategy had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension.

Based on the theoritical description and previous research findings, the use of the THIEVES strategy is relevant to use to increase students' critical reading comprehension. This theoritical framework serves as the basis for analyzing the effectiveness of the THIEVES Strategy on students' critical reading comprehension.

3. RESEARCH METODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative method and a quasi-experimental design to determine whether the THIEVES strategy is effectively used in teaching reading. A quasi-experimental design has a control class but cannot function fully to control outside variables that affect the conduct of the experiment (Sugiyono, 2013). This study used a non-equivalent control class design with 2 groups that were not randomly chosen. The first group received treatment, while the other group did not.

Table1. Non-equivalent classes Design.

Classes	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experimental Class	O1	X	O2
Control Class	O3		O4

Where:

O1 = Pre-test score experimental class

O2 = Post-test score experimental class

O3 = Pre-test score control class

O4 = Post-test score control class

The pretest results are considered good if the experimental class scores are not significantly different. The effect of treatment is $(O2 - O1) - (O4-O3)$. The population of this research was 332 students in the SMA Muhammadiyah 8 Cerme Gresik. The researcher used purposive sampling to choose the sample based on the population. The researcher used special criteria to determine the class that would be the sample, such as requiring the classes to be in the same grade and have the same level of reading comprehension based on students' previous reading test that held by the teacher. Two classes were selected as samples: one experimental class and one control class. The experimental class received instruction using

the THIEVES strategy, while the control class was taught using conventional reading instruction. The instrument that used in this research is test in form of open ended questions, whereas the researcher conducted a series of pre-test and post-test tests. The pre-test was administered before the treatment started, and the post-test was administered after the treatment. Data were collected using reading comprehension tests, and the results were analyzed using t-test statistical procedures.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This present study is an experimental study, aiming to examine whether there is any effectiveness of the use of THIEVES strategy on students' critical comprehension. To determine that, the researcher used two type of test that is pre-test and post-test. The participants in this research were students from grade X-2 and X3 which consist of 31 and 32 students in class. The pre-test was given before the treatment in order to determine the students' critical reading comprehension. After conducted the treatment in experimental class, the researcher focus on holding the post-test. This post-test aimed to assess the students' critical reading comprehension after the treatment is given

The researcher analyzed the pre-test and post-test score of the subject using the IBM SPSS Statistic 26. The table below showed the results of the descriptive statistics calculations in the experimental class and control class:

Table 2. Pre-test and Post-test Result.

Test	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Exp	31	60	87	77.42	6.495
Post-test Exp	31	60	98	86.13	6.449
Pre-test Ctrl	32	48	85	70.78	8.507
Post-test Ctrl	32	51	95	72.37	11.812

The data analysis revealed a significant improvement in students' critical reading comprehension after the implementation of the THIEVES strategy. This study involved two groups: an experimental class consisting of 31 students and a control class consisting of 32 students. In the experimental class, the mean score of the pre-test was 77.42, which increased to 86.13 in the post-test. This improvement indicates a substantial enhancement in students' critical reading comprehension after receiving instruction through the THIEVES strategy. The standard deviation increased from 6.495 in the pre-test to 8.449 in the post-test, suggesting a wider distribution of scores as students demonstrated varying levels of improvement. Meanwhile, the control class showed a relatively smaller improvement. The

mean score increased from 70.78 in the pre-test to 72.38 in the post-test, with standard deviations of 8.507 and 11.812 respectively. This indicates that conventional reading instruction resulted in limited progress compared to the experimental treatment.

Furthermore, to prove that there is a significant different between experimental class and control class, the researcher conducted hypothesis testing in order to know is there any significant different of the use of the THIEVES strategy on students' critical reading comprehension. The result can be shown on the table below

Table 1. Paired Sample Correlation.

		N	Correlation	Sig
Pair 1	Pre&Post Exp	31	0.572	0.001
Pair 2	Pre&Post Ctrl	32	0.537	0.002

The paired-sample t-test results confirmed that the improvement in the experimental class was statistically significant. The significant correlation between pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental group ($r = 0.572$, $p < 0.05$) indicates a positive and meaningful relationship between students' initial reading ability and their improvement after the treatment. In contrast, the control class showed a lower correlation coefficient ($r = 0.537$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting a less pronounced instructional effect.

Furthermore, the comparison between the experimental and control classes demonstrated that students taught using the THIEVES strategy achieved significantly higher post-test scores than those taught using conventional methods. These findings confirm that the THIEVES strategy had a stronger impact on improving students' critical reading comprehension.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the THIEVES strategy is effective in enhancing students' critical reading comprehension. The significant improvement observed in the experimental class supports the assumption that structured reading strategies encourage students to engage more actively with texts.The THIEVES strategy guides students to preview key elements of a text such as titles, headings, introductions, visuals, and summaries before engaging in detailed reading. This process helps activate prior knowledge, generate predictions, and establish reading purposes, which are essential components of critical reading. As a result, students become more analytical and evaluative when processing information.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that the THIEVES strategy improves reading comprehension and critical thinking skills among EFL learners. Students exposed to this strategy demonstrated better understanding, higher engagement, and improved ability to interpret and evaluate texts compared to those receiving traditional instruction. In contrast, the limited improvement in the control class suggests that conventional reading instruction does not sufficiently support students in developing critical reading skills. Without explicit strategies, students tend to focus on surface-level comprehension rather than deeper analysis and evaluation.

Overall, the findings highlight that strategy-based instruction, particularly the THIEVES strategy, provides a meaningful contribution to improving critical reading comprehension in EFL classrooms. The stronger correlation and higher mean score gains in the experimental group indicate that this strategy offers a more targeted and effective approach to reading instruction.

5. CONSLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that the implementation of the THIEVES strategy has a significant positive effect on students' critical reading comprehension in an EFL classroom context. The findings show that students who were taught using the THIEVES strategy achieved higher post-test scores than those who received conventional reading instruction. This result indicates that structured and strategy-based reading instruction is more effective in supporting students' critical engagement with texts than traditional approaches.

Moreover, the THIEVES strategy encourages students to become more active, purposeful, and independent readers. By guiding learners to preview titles, headings, introductions, visuals, and summaries, the strategy helps activate prior knowledge and establish clear reading objectives. This process enables students to analyze, interpret, and evaluate textual information more effectively, which are essential components of critical reading skills required in academic learning.

Nevertheless, this study is limited to a specific context and sample size. Future research is suggested to investigate the effectiveness of the THIEVES strategy across different educational levels, text genres, and instructional settings, including digital or blended learning environments, to obtain broader and more generalizable results.

DAFTAR REFERENSI

Abbasi, P. (2022). Effects of cognitive and metacognitive strategy for developing reading comprehension capacity. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Research*, *4*(2), 395–397.

Asmarni, Y., Yunita, W., & Sofyan, D. (2022). Improving EFL ninth graders' reading comprehension through THIEVES learning strategy. *JOALL (Journal of Applied Linguistics and Literature)*, *7*(1), 232–258. https://doi.org/10.33369/joall.v7i1.18724

Comber, B., & Nixon, H. (2011). Critical reading comprehension in an era of accountability. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, *38*(2), 167–179. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-011-0022-z

Drani, G. A. (2019). *The effect of using THIEVES strategy on students' reading comprehension ability at grade XI SMA Negeri 1 Tambusai Utara* [Undergraduate thesis, Universitas].

Husni, R., & Wati, L. C. (2021). The effectiveness of THIEVES strategy towards students' reading comprehension at the eleventh grade of SMAN 19 Tebo. *Journal of English Language Teaching*.

Ilahi, K. K. (2020). The effect of THIEVES strategy on the students' reading comprehension through online learning model. *LangEdu Journal*, *1*(1).

Indrawati, I., & Widiana, A. (2019). Improving students' reading comprehension in narrative text through THIEVES strategy to the tenth-grade students of MAN 1 Pangkalpinang. *Scientia: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian*, *4*(2), 225–242. https://doi.org/10.32923/sci.v4i2.1016

Khataee, E. (2019). The effect of THIEVES strategy on EFL learners' reading comprehension. *International Journal of Instruction*, *12*(2), 667–682. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2019.12242a

Liff-Manz, S. (2002). A strategy for previewing textbooks: Teaching readers to become THIEVES. *The Reading Teacher*, *55*(5), 434–435.

Olifant, T., & Boakye, N. (2022). An interdependent literacy model to assist with critical reading comprehension in the English first additional language classroom. *Education as Change*, *26*, Article 10979. https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/10979

Özensoy, A. U. (2021). The effect of critical reading skill on academic success in social studies. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, *21*(93), 303–322. https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2021.93.15

Pourhosein Gilakjani, A., & Sabouri, N. B. (2016). A study of factors affecting EFL learners' reading comprehension skill and the strategies for improvement. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, *6*(5), 180–187. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v6n5p180

Sarifuddin, M., & Nunggrasari, M. (2019). The effectiveness of THIEVES strategy towards students' motivation in reading comprehension. *Jurnal Pendidikan Mandala*, *4*(2).

Subedi, R. (2022). Silent reading and reading aloud for better comprehension and speaking motivation: A comparative study. *Kanakai Journal*, *2*(1).

Sugiyono. (2013). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.

Yathip, C., & Chanyoo, N. (2022). Characteristics of the IELTS reading comprehension: Implications for development of EFL reading comprehension instruction. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *13*(4), 798–808. https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1304.13

ZA, M., & Khatmi. (2020). The effectiveness of SQ4R cooperative learning method on reading learning for EFL students. *Journal of English Teaching and Learning Innovation*.

Zwiers, J. (2010). *Building reading comprehension habits in grades 6–12: A toolkit of classroom activities*. International Reading Association.