

Directed Reading Thinking Activity as an Alternative Strategy to Improve Reading Comprehension

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is a crucial element of learning a language. It helps you do well in school and learn how to think critically. However, many students still have problems understanding texts since they don't think about them sufficiently and read them passively. The Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) is a novel education technique that can help students grasp what they read better, especially when studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). DRTA concentrates on prediction, verification, and reflection, which keeps readers interested before, during, and after reading. DRTA helps students become better readers and learn more about texts by making them think critically and be aware of their thoughts. The essay makes the case for DRTA as a helpful student-centered, inquiry-based technique by combining its theoretical underpinning, primary arguments, and real-world impacts. It also discusses how DRTA fits with current ways of teaching reading and writing and includes ideas for applying the method in the classroom to get students more interested in reading and writing.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Metacognition, Reading Comprehension, Reading Strategies

INTRODUCTION

The most essential component of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is helping students understand what they read. It allows learners to read text on a page, learn new vocabulary and grammar, become more independent, and grow their minds. When students learn to understand what they read, they acquire new words, strengthen their understanding of how sentences are put together, and become more mentally flexible to deal with new concepts. Also, when students become more sure of their ability to understand and create meaning, they rely less on the teacher's help and are more likely to take charge of their learning. Even though there are clear benefits, many EFL schools still use surface-level reading, which keeps students from really understanding what they read and makes them read in a mechanical way that makes it hard to understand.

Product-oriented education is a big reason why things aren't moving forward. Instead of getting students to think critically about the text, they are taught to get "correct" answers or make precise translations. Under such a model, pre-reading, current, and post-reading processes such as making predictions, monitoring comprehension, and reflecting on meaning are often ignored or treated as optional. Without this metacognitive strategy, learners fail to develop internal dialogues that bridge text and context, leaving them unable to adjust the comprehension process in real time or transfer reading skills to new and increasingly complex material.

Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) emerged as a powerful countermeasure to this deep-rooted shortcoming. The DRTA was first created by Stauffer in 1969 and is based on schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). It frames reading as a cycle of prediction, verification, and reflection. Before reading, students make guesses about the work based on headers, headings, or hints. As students go along, they actively look for proof that supports or contradicts their predictions, point out disparities, and improve their understanding. Lastly, talking about what they have read and writing about it afterward helps students think about how they feel, remember what they've learnt, and plan how they will read.

DRTA's focus on cognitive engagement and learning agents makes it different from other methods. The DRTA changes students from passive readers to investigative readers by asking them to make claims about what a book will say. To do this, they must acquire previous information, ask investigative questions, and talk about the text's meaning with their classmates and teachers. This method also works well with many different sorts of texts, from stories to expository articles, and it encourages collaborative learning through small group or whole class discussions. So, they taught themselves how to think critically by making inferences, evaluating evidence, and being conscious of their own thinking. All of these abilities were seen as crucial in the twenty-first century.

In the context of EFL, empirical studies consistently show that DRTA is useful. When DRTA substituted typical reading and response routines, several quasi-experimental studies found that students' comprehension scores, motivation levels, and engagement markers increased. For instance, those exposed to DRTA were better at figuring out hidden meanings, what the author meant, and putting together information from different paragraphs. In addition to their exam scores, DRTA students typically say they can handle difficult literature and are still interested in reading independently. So, DRTA not only helps students read better, but it also teaches them thinking skills that may be used in other areas of life, such as strategic planning, self-monitoring, and reflective assessment.

Based on these ideas, this essay argues that DRTA should not merely be used as a classroom tool now and then. Instead, it should be considered a basic reading instruction framework that fits with constructivist and metacognitive learning theories. This paper shows how DRTA can be a transformative strategy that brings EFL reading instruction back to life and gives students the flexible skills they need to do well in school and everyday life. It achieves this by using a mix of theoretical ideas, quantitative data, and practical steps to make it happen.

Reading Comprehension

The ability to read and understand written stuff is called reading comprehension. Not only do you need to be able to

recognize a word or phrase, but you also need to be able to think critically about the author's point of view or argument, make conclusions, and relate new knowledge to what you already know. Reading comprehension is crucial for learning any language, especially English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It helps students do well in school and learn the language properly. When students grasp things well, they may acquire new words, see how grammar works in real-life situations, and improve their critical and reflective thinking. Several parts are connected, such as decoding, reading fluency, vocabulary knowledge, and background information. All of these parts work together to help you grasp the text.

A lot of recent research in the field of EFL has focused on how important it is to have a good way to teach reading comprehension. Students still have a lot of trouble understanding texts because they don't have a lot of vocabulary or know how to read, and traditional education is too passive. This is what research from the previous five years demonstrates. For instance, Kurniyanti et al. (2022) did a quasi-experimental study with eighth-grade students in Indonesia and found that their average reading comprehension score went up a lot from 46.79 (before the test) to

87.68 (after the test) after they used the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA). In the same way, Hutapea et al. (2023) show through classroom action research that the number of students who reached the minimal level of competency rose from 15.6% to 90.6% in two cycles of instruction based on DRTA. These findings reflect cognitive gains and improved classroom engagement and student motivation.

Other studies have provided comparative insights. Wijaya et al. (2021) compared DRTA with the KWL strategy among grade IV students and found that DRTA resulted in higher learning improvements (N-gain of 73.8%) and higher post-test scores (85.6) than alternative methods. Hasan (2021), in a study involving high school students, showed that DRTA contributes to 72% of students' reading achievement, compared to only 49% with traditional methods. This is further supported by Alfiani et al. (2022), who reported a statistically significant increase among vocational school students in East

Java after the implementation of the DRTA.

In addition, Pangaribuan (2023) found that high school students' scores increased from 52.87 to 76.81 with DRTA, compared to a modest increase in the control group. Kurnia et al. (2024) also observed a steady increase in class comprehension and participation scores, with 88.88% of students meeting or exceeding their passing grades after using DRTA. Research by Fawahid et al. (2022) noted that most junior high school students scored in the range of "Good" to "Very Good" on post-intervention reading tasks.

From an international context, Maqbola and Yahya (2021) conducted a quasi-experimental study in Iraq, finding a significant increase in understanding when DRTA was implemented, with strong support from ANOVA statistical analysis. Meanwhile, Safitri et al. (2022) reviewed several studies and concluded that DRTA consistently improves reading comprehension of EFL students at all levels of education and regions.

These findings suggest that reading comprehension, when treated as an active and reflective rather than mechanical process, can be significantly improved through strategic instruction. Therefore, reading is an interactive and dynamic process in which students must engage cognitively and metacognitively through strategies such as summarizing, questioning, visualizing, and monitoring understanding. When teachers use these tactics in their lessons, students are better able to think critically and read independently. On the other hand, learners who don't understand things well can't get as much knowledge or learn on their own, and their cognitive and academic growth is limited. Because of this, it's crucial for teachers to plan lessons that encourage students to read texts in a strategic, meaningful, and reflective way, which research methods like the DRTA clearly support.

Directed Reading Thinking Activity

The Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) is a way for learners to read that makes them ask questions about what they read to grasp it better, think critically, and be conscious of their thinking. Russell Stauffer thought about DRTA in the late

1960s. Schema theory suggests that readers actively make meaning of what they read by linking it to what they already know. Teachers go beyond telling students to "read and understand" when using DRTA. Instead, they invite students to explore ideas through an organised cycle of prediction, reading, and verification.

Students look at the title, pictures, and diagrams during the prediction phase. This activation of cognitive schemas brings back relevant ideas, words, and memories, which creates a goal for reading. This practice is backed up by real-world evidence: Kurniyanti et al. (2022) observed that eighth graders' comprehension ratings in Indonesia went up from 46.79 to 87.68 following DRTA. This shows that having a defined reading objective helps students focus and get ready to link what they read to what they already thought.

During the reading phase, students go through parts of the text (such paragraphs or subchapters), marking significant words, underlining essential lines, and constantly comparing what they find to what they thought would happen. This active involvement makes them think, "Does this information support my prediction?" If not, what do I need to rethink? Changing reading from a passive scan of words into an active conversation between the mind and the text. Wijaya et al. (2021) did quasi-experimental research and found that primary school students who used DRTA had an average post-test score of 85.6 (N increase 73.8%), whereas students who used the KWL approach had lesser gains. This shows how DRTA can help students stay focused on important text elements.

During the verification phase, students work in pairs or small groups to discuss and check their predictions. Students want to know, "Why did you say that?" "Which fact surprised you?" or "How can we make sense of different interpretations?" By explaining their thinking and telling the difference between truth and inference, individuals get a better understanding of the material and improve their metacognitive abilities by keeping track of and judging their own thoughts. Hutapea et al. (2023) observed that after two cycles of DRTA-based education, the percentage of junior high students who mastered the material went up from 15.6% to 90.6%. This

shows how collaborative reflection helps students learn and feel more confident.

One of DRTA's best features is that it makes people think more deeply. Students practise inference (drawing out latent meanings), analysis (breaking down the structure of a text), evaluation (evaluating the validity of an argument), and reflection (going over both the content and the cognitive processes) by going back and forth between prediction and verification. Instead of just receiving information, learners become text researchers, which aligns with constructivist theory, which says that knowledge comes from actively interacting with text and context. Hasan (2021) showed this even further by showing that DRTA was responsible for 72% of the reading improvements made by senior high school students, which was far more than what traditional approaches did.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), DRTA has two benefits. First, its three-phase scaffold helps students become used to English texts: prediction breaks down language obstacles, staged reading focuses on manageable meaning units, and verification develops vocabulary and grammar skills. Pangaribuan (2023) found that high school students' comprehension scores rose from 52.87 to 76.81 with DRTA, whereas control groups had smaller improvements. This shows how well DRTA supports students. Second, being actively involved increases motivation and interest since students feel they own their reading path. This is seen in the study by Alfiani et al. (2022), where vocational students only obtained an average post-test score of 83.64 after DRTA was implemented.

Lastly, DRTA creates a dialogic and safe classroom for the mind, where students may ask questions, test their hypotheses, and make changes without being afraid of making mistakes. Kurnia et al. (2024) said that after two DRTA cycles, 88.88% of their junior high students passed or did better than the passing grade. They also had far greater involvement rates. These results show that DRTA is not just another way to read; it is a whole teaching framework that includes critical thinking, teamwork, communication, and creativity, the same 21st-century abilities necessary for lifelong learning. DRTA gives

EFL teachers the tools to help their students read strategically, reflectively, and independently. This ensures that the students become adaptable, critical thinkers long after leaving the classroom.

The Stages of Directed Reading Thinking Activity

The Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) is a reading approach that focuses on getting students to actively participate in understanding texts. In real life, DRTA has three key steps: making a guess, reading, and checking. First, instructors need to be ready by choosing acceptable reading material and breaking it up into logical parts. Teachers also need to develop leading questions and decide when to stop in the text so that students may make predictions. The first step is prediction. The instructor shows the title, pictures, or the first part of the text and asks the students to guess what will happen next or what the material is about based on those clues. This practice has students thinking about what they already know and helps them figure out why they are reading.

The second stage is reading, where students read the text segment by segment. After reading each portion, they evaluate their predictions, whether their assumptions were accurate, partially accurate, or need to be revised based on the new information. This stage improves literal comprehension and encourages critical and reflective thinking.

The final stage is verification and discussion, where students reflect on the overall accuracy of their predictions, discuss their reasoning, and conclude the text. The teacher facilitates this discussion, encouraging students to support their understanding with textual evidence. This phase can also be followed by post-reading activities such as writing summaries, creating mind maps, or responding to comprehension questions.

For DRTA to be effective, selecting the right reading material is crucial. Teachers should ensure that the chosen text:

- a. It is appropriate for students' proficiency level and is slightly challenging but still comprehensible.
- b. Contains conflict, suspense, or evolving ideas that allow for meaningful predictions (suitable for narrative and

expository texts).

- c. Provides contextual clues, such as titles, images, or subheadings, which students can use to anticipate the content.
- d. It can be divided into segments that support the step-by-step prediction process.
- e. It is interesting and relevant, which helps students engage with the book emotionally and intellectually.

Teachers may assist children to become active, strategic, and critical readers by continuously using the phases of DRTA. This method works well in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) schools because it assists students with trouble reading by using an organized, guided, and participatory approach.

Factors that Determine the Success of Directed Reading Thinking Activity

Five important and linked components must be fully present for Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) to work well in the classroom. First, instructors' ability to help is very important. Marlina Husni (2016) shows that instructors with a lot of experience and knowledge in pedagogy are better at picking the right texts, figuring out when to pause for predictions, and coming up with leading questions that make students think critically. Partono and Marfuah (2023) stressed that instructors who can build open discussion spaces and lead reflection well make the classroom a psychologically secure place, which makes students feel comfortable to share their thoughts without worrying about being incorrect.

Second, the quality and features of the reading materials are acceptable. It is worth noting how well DRTA works. The best literature should have a clear structure, be easy to break up into logical parts, and include interesting aspects like conflicts or unanswered questions that make students want to guess what will happen next. Partono and Marfuah's (2023) research found that using supporting visual media like LCD projectors and well-designed slides makes it easier for students to make and evaluate predictions. Luthfiana et al.'s (2018) study also shows that using PPT and flipcharts makes it easier to see text, which helps readers absorb the main ideas

and context faster.

Third, the involvement and engagement of the students are another important issue. Students must be completely involved in the steps of prediction, objective reading, verification, and reflection for DRTA. Marlina Husni (2016) said that students' motivation and confidence significantly impact how deeply they engage. When students feel appreciated and encouraged, they are more likely to be thrilled to participate in each DRTA aspect. Partono and Marfuah (2023) say that giving students enough relevance and assistance during the process, such as constructive comments, makes them more curious and determined to finish reading activities.

Fourth, good time management is important so that each part of the DRTA may be done in depth without being rushed. Partono and Marfuah (2023) found that insufficient time is set out for prediction or consolidation, limiting chances for reflection and meaningful debate. Instead, planned lesson design with the right pacing lets students completely comprehend the material and have meaningful discussions, which helps them understand it better.

Finally, using metacognitive methods and working together to learn are crucial for making reading an active and meaningful way to learn. Marlina Husni (2016) says that students grow more independent and can control themselves when they learn to check their comprehension, ask themselves questions, and judge their thinking process. Luthfiana et al. (2018) also noted that group discussions using pictures helped individuals grasp what they were reading better and made important debates better.

Teachers may use DRTA to help their EFL students read better, think more critically, and learn on their own by focusing on these five things: how to aid students, how to create texts, how to keep students interested, how to manage time, and how to use collaborative metacognitive processes.

The Advantages of Directed Reading Thinking Activity

Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) is a great way to educate students since it gets them more involved and helps them grasp what they are reading. One of its nicest things is

that it teaches active and strategic reading. This implies that learners aren't just passively soaking in information; they're also pushed to guess, keep track of, and check what they read as they go along. It has been found that this strategy considerably improves understanding. For instance, Kurniyanti et al. (2022) reported that the average reading score of eighth graders went from 46.79 to 87.68 following DRTA. This illustrates how systematic prediction and verification make reading a dynamic, goal-oriented activity. DRTA helps students think more critically and become more conscious of their thoughts by making them question what they know and modify how they understand things according to what they read. Marlina Husni (2016) found that students trained in DRTA became better at self-monitoring and learning independently.

DRTA also helps students improve their ability to make inferences, which means they may go beyond understanding things on the surface and start to understand concepts, character motives, and themes on a deeper level. Wijaya et al. (2021) showed this when DRTA participants had a N gain of 73.8%, which was far greater than their colleagues who used the KWL technique. This showed that they were better at drawing implicit meanings from text. Also, DRTA's interactive nature encourages student-centered learning by moving the focus from teacher-led explanation to group meaning-making. Luthfiana et al. (2018) discovered that small group conversations using DRTA and visual media (PPT and flip chart) helped students understand better and improved classroom conversation and respect for other points of view.

Students gain confidence in expressing their opinions via debates and guided inquiry. They also learn to accept different points of view and become more independent readers. Hasan (2021) said that high school students who learnt using DRTA were more confident when reading academic books they had never seen before. He said this was because of the strategy's organised scaffolding. Another great thing about it is that it can be used with different sorts of texts (narrative or expository) and at various grade levels and language levels. Alfiani et al. (2022) showed how flexible it is by getting big increases in understanding (mean post-test score of 83.64) in vocational

schools. Pangaribuan (2023) did the same thing with narrative texts in high school.

Also, studies have shown that DRTA makes students more motivated and involved. Hutapea et al. (2023) saw that the percentage of students who met competency standards went from 15.6% to 90.6% after two teaching cycles. They said this big jump was because DRTA makes students curious and gives them a feeling of purpose. In EFL settings, DRTA is especially helpful for students who don't know many words or have a lot of prior information. This is because the structured prediction verification process gives them significant assistance that decreases emotional barriers and boosts their confidence in using language. DRTA is a flexible and successful educational technique that helps students understand what they read. It also helps them develop crucial twenty-first-century talents like asking questions, thinking about things, communicating with others, and being autonomous.

The Disadvantages of Directed Reading Thinking Activity

Teachers need to think about the challenges and constraints of the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA), even though it has a lot of excellent things about it. One big concern with DRTA is that it might take a long time, which is terrible for schools because they don't have much time for classes. Perdana and Isnaini (2020) found that teachers often didn't give each stage of the DRTA enough time, which made the prediction or verification phases "rushed" and harmed reflective discussion. Afifah's (2019) study at IAIN Ponorogo indicated that the multi-step DRTA cycle could not allow adequate time for additional examination if the class isn't managed well.

Also, DRTA needs instructors to be very well-prepared. It's not always easy for beginning teachers to choose appropriate books that can be divided up into portions, have ideal stopping points, and ask questions and give tasks that make students think.

Junet et al. (2022) said that new professors often felt unqualified to lead prediction and debate, which made students' answers shallow. Al Nahhal et al. (2021) also noticed

that class discussions were "noisy" and unfocused when texts were too familiar. This shows that choosing the right texts is important to keep students interested.

Another problem with DRTA is that it relies too much on students being engaged and having prior knowledge. If students don't want to talk, don't have enough confidence, or don't know enough about the subject, they could have trouble making correct predictions or getting into the text. Junet et al. (2022) also said that EFL students with a little vocabulary often got bored or confused, which made it harder for them to make good predictions. Afifah (2019) also pointed out that lower proficiency learners had much more trouble since they didn't have enough access to helpful materials, such as textbooks at the right level. Also, DRTA might not always work for all kinds of texts. Very abstract texts do not follow a straight path, are full of facts, and cannot work with prediction-based methods. According to Al Nahhal et al. (2021), students had trouble using DRTA on complex expository texts, which didn't help them understand much. Lastly, it could be hard to tell how well students are doing during DRTA since much of the learning is centered on processes and reflection instead of results that can be measured immediately. These constraints suggest that DRTA is a fantastic teaching technique. Still, it must be utilised carefully with strong time management, teacher training, and supplementary strategies to ensure all students' needs are met.

CONCLUSION

This theoretical essay has looked at the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) as a realistic and research-based technique to teach reading comprehension, especially for people learning English as a foreign language (EFL). As we have discussed, understanding what you read is a complicated process involving more than just figuring out what the words mean. It also requires making assumptions, combining new knowledge, and thinking critically about texts. EFL reading classes still have difficulties with students who read passively, have a little vocabulary, and employ bad teaching methods. DRTA, on the other hand, offers a structured, student-centered approach that focuses on active prediction, engagement with

the text, and reflection after reading.

This article cites research from Indonesia, Iraq, and other countries that shows that DRTA regularly improves students' understanding, motivation, and participation in class. The technique encourages deeper learning through its cycle of predicting, reading, and verifying, strengthening higher-order thinking and metacognitive awareness. DRTA is also a great way to teach academic literacy and 21st-century skills like critical thinking, communication, and creativity since it can be used with any material and any degree of competency. It also works well with collaborative and inquiry-based learning.

This essay also admits certain problems with putting DRTA into practice. A few big problems need to be solved: not enough time, the necessity for teachers to have a lot of training, and the fact that students need to be involved and have the right reading resources. Research has shown that DRTA works best when lessons are well planned, teachers are good at leading them, and students get the right amount of support, especially for EFL learners who are not very good at English. So, teachers need to have enough training and assistance from their schools to include DRTA in their teaching style properly.

No tactic works for everyone, but DRTA is a strong, evidence-based way to help EFL students understand what they read. Its focus on cognitive engagement, systematic reflection, and learner autonomy fits well with modern educational ideals. When implemented correctly and with the proper resources and professional development, DRTA can help students read better. Still, it can also help them become lifelong readers who think about what they read and plan how to read it. This article says that EFL instructors and curriculum designers should consider DRTA essential to their teaching tools. However, they should also be aware of the adjustments needed to the context for it to operate successfully.

Several ideas may be made for future research and teaching based on the theoretical study of DRTA:

1. Teacher training and support: Teachers should have

enough training on using DRTA appropriately, including how to pick texts, come up with questions, and conduct discussions. Professional development programs should show how DRTA works in the actual world.

2. Adding DRTA to reading classes for children of all ages, especially in EFL settings, is a great approach to provide them with a regular opportunity to develop strategic reading.
3. Schools and instructors should make it obvious how to choose books for DRTA. These materials should be fascinating, not too hard, and let learners make predictions and have discussions that matter.
4. Support for diverse Learners: DRTA needs to be altered to meet the needs of diverse learners, such as those who don't know much about the topic, have problems reading, or learn in different ways. This might be teaching students crucial terms ahead of time or offering them illustrations to assist them comprehend.
5. More Research: Future studies should look at how DRTA impacts reading comprehension and motivation over time, as well as how well it works in diverse disciplines, such as science, history, or literature. You could also compare DRTA against other ways of reading to see how well it works.

Teachers may make their classrooms more open to questioning, thinking, and meaningful connection with books by adopting DRTA instead of standard reading teaching. All of them are key qualities for being a skilled and sure reader in the 21st century.

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