

Research Article

Using VOA news material through virtual small group discussion on the students' reading comprehension for university level

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the effect of using VoA News material through Virtual Small Group discussions on students' reading comprehension at the university level. It was carried out by using a quasi-experimental design. The population of this research was the second semester of PGMI-20 STIT AL-Kifayah Riau, Consisting of 222 students. The researcher took 47 students as the research sample, with 23 students as an experimental class in PGMI B-20 and 24 as control class in PGMI A-20. The sample was selected by using purposive sampling techniques. This research instrument was a written test used in the pre-test and post-test. The data were analyzed using a T-test of Independent sample t-test and a paired sample t-test. The study's findings indicated substantial changes in reading comprehension abilities between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group benefited from VOA News Material via Virtual Small Group Discussion.

Keywords: reading comprehension; virtual small group discussion; VOA news material

1. INTRODUCTION

At the university level, reading comprehension is critical. It will assist students in developing knowledge and the management of critical thinking in academic situations. University students with a reasonable degree of reading comprehension will grasp textual knowledge and process it as their own. The majority of the reading activity in the classroom still uses the material from the textbook. Even at the university level, most lecturers still use textbooks. Understanding textbook activities as part of teaching practice entails cognitive processes supported by teachers' knowledge, skills, and beliefs, among many other psychological traits (Gao & Zhang, 2020). As one of the learning materials, textbooks are significant in the success of teaching and learning. A textbook is a collection of instructional materials. It contains a wealth of information and knowledge. It is the primary source used by the instructor in the learning-teaching process. Textbooks are not only useful for teachers in terms of assisting them in preparing materials and achieving teaching aims and objectives, but they also assist students in achieving their learning needs (Nabijova, 2021). In reading comprehension class, students become bored and unmotivated. The reading topics in the textbook are out of date and dull. Students require more challenging material that is relevant to their daily lives. The lecturers must renew the reading material to keep the students' attention by providing authentic reading material.

According to (Nurholis et al., 2022) the teaching process includes students, teachers, material, techniques, media, assessments, and learning goals. These are referred to as components in the teaching process. Teaching material is one of the main factors of a successful teaching learning process. The study revealed that the student-given authentic material had a significant impact on the learners' reading comprehension. The non-authentic group, on the other hand, did not perform well in the post-test stage compared to the pre-test stage. According to the findings, the student who used authentic-based materials was more effective than non-authentic-based materials according to students' reading abilities' improvement. There was a significant difference between authentic and non-authentic-based materials in improving the reading comprehension of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. It proved that authentic reading material improves reading comprehension (Khoshbakht & Gorjian, 2017). Aftab and Salahuddin (2015) studied the effects of using authentic texts instead of traditional passages in an Asian ESL context. The findings revealed that non-authentic reading texts cannot help language learners improve their reading comprehension abilities, exceptionally high achievers, and average students in private sector schools (Nurfitri & Susilawati, 2019).

News articles are one type of authentic reading material. VOA is an effective content for a reading comprehension class. It contains a broad scope of topics that are both interesting and diverse. Reading VOA news material enhances not only reading comprehension and vocabulary mastery. This study first assessed the vocabulary level of Voice of America (VOA) news for its potential as voluminous reading material for mid-frequency vocabulary learning. The experiment then looked-

into how much VOA news input is required to encounter the majority of the first 9,000-word families enough for learning to occur. Every 500,000 words of VOA news were incrementally added to examine mid-frequency words for most words in the fourth to ninth 1,000-word-family levels. The figures can be used as a resource for English extensive reading practitioners and students interested in mid-frequency vocabulary learning (Hsu, 2019). So, VOA can provide both challenging materials and also not difficult for students. It is suitable for students reading comprehension development.

Good reading material also needs to be supported by an appropriate learning strategy. The teachers or lecturers must design the teaching and learning method to help students build their reading comprehension skills. Teachers can employ a variety of strategies when teaching reading. Anyone who teaches must understand the principles and assumptions on which each specific technique is based to use it effectively. There is no shortage of descriptions or labels for activities that can be classified as instructional a strategy is an action that a teacher takes to achieve one or more of her teaching-learning goals. The strategy can also be defined as a broad framework for teaching. To keep students interested in reading, the teacher should employ various strategies, including various methods, media, and games (Harmer, 2027). The primary function of teaching strategies is to make it easier to implement various teaching methods and techniques. The key is to create more interactive learning environments, incorporate technology into the learning experience, and employ appropriate collaborative learning strategies (Brown, 2004).

The teaching and learning methods have also been completely transformed into student-centered. As part of the changing method, they are asked to analyze and then produce something based on what they have already observed, they are exposed to understand what they learn on their own, and they are encouraged to be socially aware of their friends, surroundings, and aesthetic factors (Mulyarti, 2014). Small group discussion is one of the cooperative learning methodologies in which students work in groups of three or four. According to Barker, adopting small group discussion tactics in education, particularly reading comprehension, will enable students to figure out the meaning of a piece by gathering information from their peers and teachers. It says that a small institution is a small group of persons who work together to achieve a common objective through interaction and interdependent courtship. Furthermore, small group discussions can help pupils improve their reading comprehension (Kaur et al., 2021). It implies that using small group conversations to teach reading comprehension is a viable option. According to Sagala, a group discussion group with three to four college students is more powerful since it allows students to share their critiques or opinions with various college students readily (Wiyudo, 2016) It takes an institutional approach to dialogue, a discourse in which humans engage with at least one another, sharing ideas and criticisms.

The small group discussion allows students to negotiate the meaning of a passage by giving and receiving suggestions. Students in a small group discussion must combine their various ideas with other students in the same group to fully comprehend the text. According to Kondo's (2010) theory, group work activities provide positive responses such as helping each other, reducing individual workloads, and encouraging students to participate in these activities. So, a small group discussion strategy is appropriate for teaching reading comprehension. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way people interact. The lecturers need to consider this. Virtual small group discussion is one alternative solution to present a dynamic reading comprehension development strategy. However, the distance should not prevent group discussion (Putu Edi Sutrisna et al., 2021). Many studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of small group discussions in improving students' reading comprehension, but none have been conducted via virtual room. However the teacher should consider the virtual small group discussion in the classroom, to give the student flexibility in learning. So, this study focuses on using VOA News reading material through virtual small group discussions.

2. METHOD

Research Design

This section introduces the research design, population and sampling procedures, research instrument, and post-test scoring scheme. It emphasizes ensuring that the research design is appropriate for the research. Experimental design is "the blueprint of procedures that allow the researcher to test hypotheses by reaching valid conclusions about the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The research methodology is a quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Some hypotheses are offered to investigate the impact of VOA news material through virtual small-group discussions. The author employs a writing post-test performed on the sample after the conclusion of the four-week experiment.

Samples/Participants

The population of the study refers to all of the participants (formerly referred to as "subjects") in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For the objectives of this study, the population was selected from 222 second-year students at STIT Al-Kifayah Riau who was pursuing their studies in the academic year 2021/2022. Purposive sampling was used to collect the sample. It is another general sampling approach in which participants are recruited based on pre-selected criteria related to a particular research subject. Purposive sampling is intended to give information-rich examples for an in-depth investigation that volunteers are people who have the necessary position or expertise or are recognized to hold particular knowledge to supply the researchers with the information they seek (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher selects students with a stable internet connection and willing to participate in a discussion through Zoom conference. The sample was split into two equal groups of 24 students each. However, because one student could not participate in the study, the experimental group consisted of 23 students. For the context of this research, the experimental group of students is taught reading comprehension through virtual small group discussion using VOA news material.

In contrast, the control group is taught reading comprehension using textbook material. Furthermore, the pretest-posttest equivalent group design was used in this study. The following Table shows the statistics of the experimental and control groups.

Table 1. Statistics of the Sample Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Students	Strategy	Reading material
Experimental	23	Virtual small group discussion	VOA news material
Control	24	Individually	Reading material in a textbook book

Instruments

The study instrument is a reading comprehension test. The test was constructed from the "Longman Complete Course for TOEFL test" by Phillips (2011). The test consisted of 50 questions. The tests were in the form of multiple choice. The multiple-choice technique uses four choice options, and the students only choose one correct answer based on the questions. The questions were related to the components of reading comprehension. The scoring methodology is how the generated results are appropriately understood. The test was awarded a total score of (100). The test consists of fifty questions, each worth two points.

Data analysis

The data analysis were an independent sample t-test and a paired sample t-test which were used to examine the data in order to assess hypotheses based on pretest and post-test responses from participants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This part explains the data analysis, looks at the post-test findings, and confirms the hypotheses developed in the study. The hypotheses formulated in connection to the use of the VOA News Material through Virtual Small Group Discussion are:

- 1) There is no difference between the experimental and control groups according to the mean score of the pre-test.
- 2) There is no difference between the experimental and control groups according to the mean post-test score.
- 3) There is no difference between the mean scores for pre and post for experimental groups.

Pre-test comparison

In the pre-test, the control and experimental groups had remarkably similar results. The experimental group had a mean score of 66.87, whereas the control group received a score of (67.70), and a significance level of (0.674) The following parameters are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Pre-test T-score for the two groups

Group	t	DF	p
Experimental	-423	46	0.674
Control	-423	41.066	

The statistical results proves that there was no significant difference between the two groups in the pre-test. As a result, the first hypothesis is accepted, stating that there are "no significant variations in the mean scores of students' achievement in the pre-test between the two groups." This is a normal finding, and it may be explained by the fact that both the control and experimental groups were exposed to the same social and cultural environments while taking the same English language classes.

Post-test comparison

In the post-test, data analysis indicated a difference between the means of the control and experimental groups. The control group scored (74.16), whereas the experimental group scored (83.08) As stated in table (3), a (0.00) level of significance was found. In the post-test, there are statistically significant differences between the two research groups, as shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Post-test T-score for the two groups

Group	t	DF	p
Experimental	5.214	46	0.00
Control	5.214	41.066	

As a results, the second hypothesis, "no significant changes in the mean scores of students' achievement in the post-test between the two groups," is rejected. In other words, when VOA News Material through Virtual Small Group Discussion was used, the students improved their reading comprehension skills.

The pre-test and post-test experimental groups were compared

In the pre-test, the experimental group's mean score was (66.87). In the post-test, it was (83.08). The formula for the two samples is used to see whether there are any statistically significant variations in the mean scores obtained. The level of significance is 0,00.

Table 4. Results of the experimental group pre and post-test

Test	SD	DF	p
Pre-Test	6.67	51	0.00
Post-Test	7.74		

Table 4, reveals that the pre-and post-test scores of the experimental group, which is taught using VOA News Material in English classes through Virtual Small Group Discussion, change statistically significantly in favor of the post-test. As a result, the third hypothesis, "no significant variations in the mean scores of the experimental group between the pre-and post-test," is rejected.

The following factors may have contributed to these results:

1. The impact of using VOA News Material in English classes through Virtual Small Group Discussion, which improves reading comprehension.
2. Using VOA News Material in Virtual Small Group Discussions allowed students to express themselves and utilize the language effectively to reinforce their reading approach, expand vocabulary, and develop critical thinking skills.

Discussion

Literacy and Competency in 21st Century EFL Learning Technology has become an inseparable aspect of our life. Almost all aspects of life, including technical development, are affected. Technology may be employed for a variety of techniques or learning methods. This occurs because the smartphone's current content is both intriguing and diversified. When compared to a youngster who is addicted to devices, the gadget is never separated from everyday life. Technology provides EFL with an option to controlling students' self-study, since they can use it alone and have just privacy, which can be utilized to expand current EFL technology. As a global educational media, there are numerous areas of technology, particularly in EFL learning, such as communication labs, voice recognition software, the Internet, and TELL (Language Learning Improvement Technology)(Kaur et al., 2021)

According to Kwet (2019), a new type of colonization is currently taking place throughout the world, in which "instead of conquering of territory, Big Tech businesses are colonising digital technology" (p. 4). Google, Apple, Microsoft, Facebook, Amazon, and many other American multinational firms are among those mentioned by Kwet (2019) as wanting to rule the entire world. McPhail (2006) also feels that as significant components of the global communication system, multimedia agencies (CNN, BBC, and VOA) and global wire services (Reuters, Associated Press, and Agence France Presse) promote a core-based focus in reporting values both directly and indirectly. In his study on globalization and cultural change in Bangladesh, Atikur Rahman (2014) discovered that globalization affects all human lives and plays a significant influence in the modification of moral values and lifestyles in Bangladesh and other developing nations. Hasanzadeh and Alizadeh (2018) argue that generating "a sense of belonging to a group or groups with comparable cultural values and views" shapes and constructs instructors' and learners' second identities while teaching and studying a second or foreign language.

The small group discussion approach to teaching reading comprehension improves students' reading comprehension. They may read more thoroughly with their peers in a small group and then discuss their reading content. Integrating the reading text into small groups makes sense in order to increase students' sensitivity to finding the text's content (Harmer, 2001, p. 70). The outcomes of the study show that after the experimental group got therapy utilizing the VOA material through small group discussion, their scores were higher than those of the control group. According to this, VOA news content is good in improving reading skills. Virtual small group conversation was used to teach the experimental group. Teaching pupils to read utilizing tactics such as the communicative approach or dealing with unexpected words is critical for improving their learning quality. The utilization of tactics that encourage classroom involvement will make the teaching process more engaging (Nurfitri & Susilawati, 2019).

Students may readily catch subject knowledge more quickly and ideally if they have a sense of enthusiasm throughout classes. In addition to the correct tactics, the utilization of appropriate learning media, such as VoA news items mixed with virtual small group discussion, has a significant impact on learning outcomes. This finding is consistent with Kornelius ujang sabinus's (2018) assertion that the usage of VoA Learning English is highly recommended for English teachers, particularly those teaching reading comprehension, because it can increase students' reading skills. Furthermore, Rusdi (2018) said that small group discussions are an effective teaching strategy for teaching English reading comprehension (Soleimanifard et al., 2021).

4. CONCLUSION

This study came to the following findings based on the data analysis, outcomes, discussions, and hypothesis testing:

1. There is a significant improvement in the student's reading comprehension through Virtual Virtual Small Group Discussions.
2. Using VOA News in Virtual Small Group Discussions allows students to approach reading comprehension uniquely and productively, which is far superior to traditional techniques.
3. Using VOA News in Virtual Small Group Discussions allows learners to expand their vocabulary.
4. Using VOA News Material in Virtual Small Group Discussions allows students to communicate with one another and their instructor.

According to the findings of this study, the researcher also made some recommendations to the participants who may be impacted in using VOA news items as resources to teach reading. They are shown below: (1) For maximum benefit, the lecturers should carefully plan the instructional procedure. The lecturer must also thoroughly prepare the materials. It indicates that the lecturer should select content that is appropriate for the students' ability. (2) During the teaching-learning process, the lecturer should ensure that all pupils have access to the information. It implies that the classroom facilities should be adequate for using VOA news items as reading materials, and (3) it is strongly advised that students browse the VOA news outside of the classroom. They may read the news and develop their reading skills at home. It is because there are only a few hours in the classroom for English, which is insufficient to ensure that pupils grasp English skills, particularly reading.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors discussed the results and contributed to from the start to final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that he has no competing interests.

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