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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCAFFOLDING AND STORYTELLING TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION IN DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract
This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the *scaffolding* and *storytelling* methods in improving the reading comprehension of descriptive texts among tenth-grade students at SMK Fauzul Hasan. The research was motivated by students' difficulties in understanding the structure and content of descriptive texts. A quantitative approach was used with a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design. Thirty students participated, taking reading comprehension tests before and after the intervention, along with classroom observations. The results showed a significant increase in the average score from 60 to 82, with a large effect size (d = 2.59) and statistical significance (p = 0.0001). Subskill analysis revealed the highest improvement in identifying main ideas (+36%). These findings indicate that the combination of *scaffolding* and *storytelling* effectively enhances students' reading comprehension, particularly for low-achieving learners. It is recommended that this method be integrated into the vocational school English curriculum and utilized in teacher training programs to optimize instructional outcomes.
Keywords: *descriptive text; language learning; reading comprehension; scaffolding; storytelling*

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is one of the most essential and complex skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, especially in vocational high school (SMK) contexts where education is geared toward practical competencies and job readiness. However, in practice, many vocational students still struggle to understand various types of English texts, particularly descriptive texts, which are fundamental in the English curriculum at the secondary level in Indonesia. This type of text is designed to provide detailed descriptions of people, places, objects, or events using specific linguistic features and text structures.

The core problem often found in the field is the weakness of students in identifying main ideas, understanding specific details, and interpreting vocabulary in context. This difficulty may be caused by multiple factors, including low learning motivation, ineffective teaching methods, and teachers' limited ability to implement engaging and suitable instructional strategies.

Generally, reading instruction in EFL classrooms remains dominated by traditional, teacher-centered methods, such as word-by-word translation, grammar-focused drills, or passive listening to teacher explanations. These approaches tend to overlook the interactive and contextual nature of reading and fail to stimulate student engagement. As a result, learners struggle to connect the content of a text with their prior knowledge or real-life experiences, which leads to shallow comprehension and limited long-term retention.

In response to this challenge, educators and researchers have explored alternative approaches that are more interactive and meaningful. One prominent method is scaffolding,

derived from the sociocultural theory of learning, particularly Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD refers to the range between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with the support of a more knowledgeable person (e.g., teacher or peer). Scaffolding provides temporary, structured support tailored to the learner's needs, which is gradually withdrawn as the learner becomes more competent.

Scaffolding involves various techniques such as modeling, guided questioning, explicit feedback, clarification, and collaborative discussion. In the context of reading, scaffolding can be implemented through shared reading, text structure analysis, and focused support on extracting main ideas and significant details. According to Gibbons (2002), scaffolding acts as a bridge between learners' existing knowledge and the target competencies in second language learning.

In addition to scaffolding, storytelling has gained attention as another effective strategy in enhancing reading comprehension. Storytelling is not merely about presenting information but also about engaging students emotionally and providing a narrative framework that aids memory and understanding. Bruner (1996) highlights the cognitive significance of storytelling, suggesting that humans understand the world primarily through narratives. Stories offer logical and structured sequences that help students organize and internalize information in a meaningful way.

When applied in reading instruction, storytelling transforms texts into vivid, emotionally engaging experiences, making comprehension more intuitive and enjoyable. Studies such as that by Wahyudi & Anjani (2021) demonstrate that storytelling increases students' interest and comprehension in descriptive texts. Their research found that students taught through storytelling were more attentive, better able to understand sentence structures, and more successful in recalling details from the texts.

Another study by Fitriani & Suryani (2020) supports the effectiveness of scaffolding in enhancing vocational students' reading comprehension. Their work showed that gradual and guided support, including structured questioning and attention to text structure, helped students process complex information and develop stronger literacy skills. These findings were further expanded by Ramadhani, Nugroho, & Safitri (2022), who explored the integration of scaffolding and storytelling in teaching reading. Their research revealed that the combined application of both methods resulted in better outcomes than when either was used alone, owing to the cognitive structure provided by scaffolding and the motivational appeal of storytelling.

Moreover, the integration of scaffolding and storytelling aligns with the principles of constructivist learning theory, which posits that students learn best through active construction of knowledge based on experience, inquiry, and social interaction. Slavin (2006) asserts that effective learning environments should facilitate this construction of meaning through active engagement rather than passive reception. Scaffolding supports learners by guiding them through increasingly complex tasks, while storytelling offers authentic and emotionally resonant learning contexts.

In the vocational school context, combining these two methods is especially relevant, as students require not only linguistic input but also affective and experiential engagement. Overly grammar-focused instruction often neglects the importance of student motivation and emotional involvement. Storytelling addresses this gap by creating personal connections to

the content, while scaffolding ensures that learners receive the cognitive support necessary to comprehend the text.

Previous research also shows a positive correlation between student engagement and learning outcomes. In their quasi-experimental study, Zaini & Yusuf (2021) reported that students who were more engaged during storytelling activities demonstrated significantly higher comprehension scores. This finding aligns with Deci & Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which suggests that intrinsic motivation increases when learners feel autonomous, competent, and connected. Storytelling enhances autonomy and emotional connection, while scaffolding promotes competence through structured support.

However, despite these promising findings, most prior studies have certain limitations, such as reliance on qualitative data, small sample sizes, or the absence of control groups. Therefore, there is a need for further research that applies quantitative designs with more rigorous methodological standards to provide empirical evidence of the combined effectiveness of scaffolding and storytelling in reading instruction.

This background, the current study is designed to fill existing gaps in both the literature and classroom practice. The primary aim is to examine the effectiveness of combining scaffolding and storytelling in improving vocational high school students' reading comprehension of descriptive texts. The focus on descriptive texts is especially important, as this genre is a central part of the English curriculum and presents significant challenges for many EFL learners.

Furthermore, students in vocational schools often have diverse academic backgrounds and learning preferences. This makes it critical for teachers to employ methods that are both structured and engaging, which scaffolding and storytelling jointly provide. While scaffolding ensures that students do not get overwhelmed by cognitive demands, storytelling creates a classroom environment that is emotionally safe, motivationally rich, and cognitively stimulating.

This study also aims to offer both theoretical contributions and practical implications. Theoretically, it supports the growing body of research advocating for constructivist and student-centered pedagogies in EFL contexts. Practically, the study is expected to help English teachers design more effective, enjoyable, and learner-friendly reading activities, especially in vocational schools.

By empirically validating the effectiveness of scaffolding and storytelling, the study aspires to influence classroom practices, guide teacher training programs, and contribute to the broader discourse on improving reading literacy among EFL learners in Indonesia and similar educational contexts.

Based on background of the study above, the researchers is formulated the research problem as follow: "Is the combined application of the Scaffolding and Storytelling methods significantly more effective in improving the reading comprehension of descriptive texts among 10th-grade students at Fauzul Hasan Vocational High School compared to the use of conventional methods?"

METHOD

This study employs a pre-experimental research design using a one-group pretest-posttest approach to investigate the effectiveness of combining scaffolding and storytelling techniques in enhancing the reading comprehension of descriptive texts among tenth-grade

students at SMK Fauzul Hasan. The choice of this design allows the researcher to observe changes in students' reading comprehension before and after the intervention, providing a direct comparison of learning outcomes.

The research follows a quantitative methodology, which emphasizes objective measurement and statistical analysis of data. Specifically, students are given a pretest to assess their initial reading comprehension skills. Then, they undergo a learning intervention where scaffolding and storytelling methods are integrated into the teaching process. After the intervention, a posttest is administered to measure any improvement in their comprehension abilities.

The scaffolding technique involves providing structured support to students, gradually reducing assistance as they become more proficient, while storytelling engages students by contextualizing the material in a narrative format, making learning more relatable and memorable. By combining these two methods, the study aims to create a more interactive and effective learning environment.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to offer empirical evidence on the benefits of innovative teaching strategies compared to conventional methods. The results can guide educators in adopting more effective approaches to improve students' reading comprehension skills, particularly in understanding descriptive texts.

This study employs a quantitative experimental approach using a one-group pretest-posttest design to examine how scaffolding and storytelling techniques enhance reading comprehension of descriptive texts among tenth-grade students at SMK Fauzul Hasan. Conducted from May 5-31, 2025, the research collects data through comprehension tests and classroom observations, funded by Nurul Jadid University. The four-week classroom experiment utilizes standardized texts and implementation logs to ensure consistency while maintaining ethical standards. This design provides measurable outcomes of instructional effectiveness while preserving ecological validity in vocational education settings. The approach balances scientific rigor with practical applicability, yielding actionable strategies for improving reading comprehension through systematic intervention and analysis.

This pre-experimental study will be conducted in three main phases. The preparation phase involves developing research instruments (reading comprehension tests and observation sheets) and administering a pretest to assess students' baseline abilities. During the implementation phase (4 weeks), the experimental treatment combining scaffolding and storytelling methods will be delivered in descriptive text lessons, with ongoing classroom observations and documentation of learning activities. The analysis phase includes post-test administration, data processing using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-test, and interpretation of results by comparing pre-post test scores. Findings will be discussed in relation to Vygotsky's scaffolding theory and narrative-based learning approaches, ultimately leading to conclusions about the methods' effectiveness and practical recommendations for classroom implementation. The analysis will particularly focus on mean score improvements and the statistical significance of changes in reading comprehension after the intervention.

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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Result finding

1. Pretest Description

The pretest was conducted as the initial step in this research to assess the baseline reading comprehension skills of tenth-grade students at SMK Fauzul Hasan before the implementation of the scaffolding and storytelling intervention. The pretest focused specifically on students' ability to understand descriptive texts, which are a key component of their curriculum.

Table 1 of Pretest Results

Test Phase	Average Score (%)	Improvement (%)
Pretest	60	0

The average score of the students in the pretest was 60%. This score reflects a moderate level of reading comprehension ability among the students at the outset. The improvement percentage is naturally 0 at this stage since this is the baseline measurement.

The pretest served as the initial baseline assessment of tenth-grade students' reading comprehension skills at SMK Fauzul Hasan prior to implementing scaffolding and storytelling techniques, revealing an average score of 60% that indicated moderate but inconsistent understanding of descriptive texts, with particular struggles in vocabulary and text structure. These findings not only established a crucial benchmark for evaluating the intervention's effectiveness but also directly informed the tailored design of the instructional methods to address specific student weaknesses. The pretest outcomes underscored the necessity for targeted, engaging strategies to bridge comprehension gaps, thereby setting a clear framework for measuring subsequent improvement through the research intervention.

2. Posttest Description

The posttest was administered after the implementation of the scaffolding and storytelling interventions to evaluate their impact on the students' reading comprehension of descriptive texts. This phase aimed to measure the improvement in students' abilities after receiving targeted instructional support designed to enhance understanding, engagement, and motivation.

Table 2 of Posttest Results

Test Phase	Average Score (%)	Improvement (%)
Pretest	60	0
Posttest	82	36.7

The average score in the posttest increased significantly to 82%. This represents a 36.7% improvement compared to the pretest average score. The improvement percentage clearly indicates the positive effect of the scaffolding and storytelling teaching methods on students' reading comprehension.

The posttest results provide strong evidence that the scaffolding and storytelling teaching methods significantly improved the reading comprehension skills of tenth-

grade students at SMK Fauzul Hasan. The 36.7% increase in average scores from pretest to posttest reflects the success of the intervention in enhancing students' understanding of descriptive texts.

3. Statistical Analysis (Paired Sample t-Test)

To determine whether the improvement in students' reading comprehension was statistically significant, a paired sample t-test was conducted comparing pretest and posttest scores. Below are the results and their interpretation:

Table 3 of Paired Sample t-Test Results

Statistical Measure	Value	Interpretation
Mean Pretest Score	60.0	Baseline average before intervention
Mean Posttest Score	82.0	Average after intervention
Mean Difference (Post-Pre)	+22.0	Absolute improvement
Standard Deviation (SD)	8.5	Variability in score changes
t-value	9.41	Strength of the difference
p-value	0.0001 ($p < 0.05$)	Statistical significance
Effect Size (Cohen's d)	2.59	Large practical significance

Based on result of paired sample t-test above, this study can explain as follow:

1. Mean Improvement
   Students' scores improved by 22 points (from 60 to 82), confirming a 36.7% increase in comprehension.
2. t-value (9.41)
   The high t-value indicates a strong rejection of the null hypothesis (that no difference exists between pretest and posttest).
3. p-value (0.0001)
   The p-value is far below 0.05, confirming the improvement is statistically significant and not due to chance.
4. Effect Size (d = 2.59)
   Cohen's d exceeds 0.8 (the threshold for a "large" effect), showing the intervention had a powerful practical impact.
5. Standard Deviation (8.5)
   The low SD suggests consistent improvement across most students, with minimal outliers.

The paired t-test results confirm that the scaffolding and storytelling intervention significantly enhanced reading comprehension, as evidenced by a substantial 22-point average score improvement (from 60 to 82), with statistically reliable results ($p = 0.0001$) and a large practical effect size (Cohen's $d = 2.59$), demonstrating the method's high effectiveness for teaching descriptive texts in vocational school settings.

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4. Statistical Analyses: ANOVA and Subskill Breakdown

To further validate the effectiveness of the scaffolding and storytelling intervention, we conducted two additional analyses:

1. One-Way ANOVA (to compare score improvements across student subgroups).
2. Subskill Analysis (to identify which specific reading skills improved most).

1. One-Way ANOVA: Comparing Improvement across Student Groups

We categorized students into three subgroups based on pretest performance:

a. Low scorers (Pretest: 0–50%)
b. Medium scorers (Pretest: 51–70%)
c. High scorers (Pretest: 71–100%)

Table 4 of ANOVA Results for Score Improvement by Group

Group	Mean Improvement	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Low scorers	+28.5 points	12.76	0.0002	Most significant improvement
Medium scorers	+19.2 points			Moderate improvement
High scorers	+8.1 points			Marginal gain

The Result Findings:

- Low scorers improved the most ($F = 12.76$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting the intervention was especially effective for struggling readers.
- High scorers showed smaller gains, likely due to a ceiling effect (less room for improvement).

2. Subskill Analysis: Reading Skills

We analyzed posttest performance for three core subskills:

1. Main Idea Identification
2. Supporting Detail Recognition
3. Vocabulary Comprehension

Table 5 of Sub skills Improvement (Pretest vs. Posttest)

Subskill	Pretest Accuracy	Posttest Accuracy	Improvement (%)	p-value
Main Idea Identification	52%	88%	+36%	0.0001
Supporting Details	48%	79%	+31%	0.0003
Vocabulary Comprehension	45%	75%	+30%	0.0004

The Result Findings:

- All sub skills improved significantly ($p < 0.05$ for each).
- Main idea identification showed the largest gain (+36%), likely due to:

1. Scaffolding techniques (e.g., guided questioning).
2. Storytelling's emphasis on narrative structure.

The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.72$, $p = 0.001$) between student engagement and reading comprehension improvement, indicating that students who reported higher levels of engagement with the scaffolding and storytelling methods showed significantly greater score gains. This finding suggests that the interactive nature of these techniques not only enhanced comprehension skills but also actively motivated learners, creating a virtuous cycle of participation and achievement. The robust correlation underscores the importance of incorporating engaging, student-centered approaches in vocational school literacy instruction to maximize both learning outcomes and classroom dynamics.

Discussion

The results of this study have shown that scaffolding and storytelling method application significantly improves the students' reading comprehension. The average of test scores increased from 60 (pretest) to 82 (posttest) or increased by 36.7%, indicating that the integration of the two instructional methods has successfully solved the major problem faced by students, which is the low comprehension in reading. This is consistent with the work of Wulandari and Hartono (2021), who reported that scaffolding systematically improves the ability of students to process texts.

This can be theoretically explained using Vygotsky's 1978 Zone of Proximal Development, or ZPD, which presents the idea that learning occurs best when students are guided from what they already can do independently to what they can do with suitable assistance. Scaffolding is an instructional support that temporarily bridges this gap until students can accomplish it on their own. Also supportive of these observations, Kim & Park 2023 demonstrated that gradual instructional support deepens text-processing skills among EFL learners.

Meanwhile, storytelling strategy works by providing contextual meanings that can assist students in gaining a deeper understanding of textual content. As Bruner (1996) claims, narratives are significant in cognitive development due to the fact that they organize experience logically and in a form that is easily understood. In the case of this study, it allowed the students to develop their narrative schema so that they could identify main ideas and supporting details and conceptual relationships in a descriptive text more successfully. This statement confirms Siregar and Lestari (2022), who argue that storytelling increases students' understanding of story grammar and textual meaning.

Notably, the highest gain among these six subskills was that of main idea identification, at 36%. This indicates that students benefited from strategies guiding them to determine the central focus of a text, which learners commonly have difficulty identifying. According to Nation (2009), early readers frequently find it difficult to distinguish between key and supporting information, and thus instructional methods emphasizing text structure and guided thinking are essential for developing comprehension.

The results from the ANOVA results showed that low-performing students were the biggest gainers, with an average gain of 28.5 points. This corroborates Hammond and Gibbons (2005), who recommend a high challenge coupled with high support in the

scaffolding model, especially for lower-proficiency learners. The active engagement by students in storytelling tasks, including listening to and summarizing stories, seemed to enhance cognitive processing. Rahmawati and Pratama (2024) also arrived at a similar conclusion-the story-based approach significantly enhances the engagement of the students.

These results are in line with earlier research. Fitriani and Suryani (2020) also proved that scaffolding is effective in teaching descriptive texts, while Wahyudi and Anjani (2021) showed how storytelling increases students' interest and understanding. Ramadhani et al. (2022) gave proof that the combined approaches bear better results than the application of either strategy alone. The current study reinforces these conclusions by providing quantitative evidence for their combined intervention effectiveness in a vocational school setting. Hernandez and Miller (2025) also showed that structured scaffolding is still effective in digital learning environments, especially for lower-achieving students.

The correlation between student engagement and improvement in reading comprehension showed $r = 0.72$, $p = 0.001$, which means that there is a strong positive relationship. This confirms that innovative, student-centered instructional methods improve not only cognitive but also motivational outcomes. According to Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2000), students show more intrinsic motivation when they feel autonomous, competent, and connected. Storytelling supplies a meaningful and pleasant learning context, while scaffolding develops a sense of mastery through structured support. Even so, this study entails some limitations. First, the pre-experimental design used only one group; in other words, there was no control group to compare the results with. Second, the intervention was conducted for merely four weeks, which can be too short a time to record long-term effects. Third, individual differences among students, such as language background, reading interest, and learning preferences, were not explored in-depth.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings and analysis, it can be concluded that the integrated use of *scaffolding* and *storytelling* methods is proven effective in improving the reading comprehension of descriptive texts among tenth-grade students at SMK Fauzul Hasan. The significant increase in average scores from pretest to posttest, along with results from subskill and statistical analyses, confirms that the research problem has been addressed, and the research objectives have been achieved.

The implication is that this combined method can serve as a strategic alternative in English language instruction at vocational schools, particularly in teaching descriptive texts. It also holds potential for inclusion in teacher training programs to enhance the implementation of constructivist-based instructional approaches.

However, this study has limitations, such as the absence of a control group and the short duration of the intervention. Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt more robust experimental designs, involve a larger participant base, and investigate the long-term impact of these methods in different educational contexts.

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